

## Space, Time, Myth, and Morals

# Collected Works of Jao Tsung-i

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VOLUME 3

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# Space, Time, Myth, and Morals

*A Selection of Jao Tsung-i's Studies on Cosmological  
Thought in Early China and Beyond*

*Translated and edited by*

Joern Peter Grundmann



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Cover calligraphy: Jao Tsung-i. The character 德 (*de*), commonly translated as “virtue,” signifies a key concept in early Chinese intellectual history.

Cover illustration: Jao Tsung-i. *Lotus in the Style of Jin Nong*. Water and Ink on Paper. 34×138 cm. 2013. Collection of Jao Tsung-I Foundation.



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## Collected Works of Jao Tsung-i: Series Introduction

Jao Tsung-i 饒宗頤 (1917–2018, studio name Xuantang 選堂) was one of the most remarkable scholars of the 20th century, in any country. He combined erudition in his own language with polyglot awareness of the major European languages and a mastery even of Sanskrit; he was a tireless, prolific researcher, who produced important books and articles without cease throughout seven decades; and he possessed phenomenal powers of memory to which the familiar adjective “photographic” barely does justice, since he had immediate recall of whole books of history, of calligraphic forms in all the different Chinese scripts, of millennia of music and painting and poetry. Indeed, perhaps the most remarkable thing about Jao Tsung-i as a scholar is that his achievements were not at all limited to scholarship. He was a true artist in the manner of the literati of past ages, whose paintings, poetry, and especially calligraphy grace museums and collections around the world.

Though scholarship was just one of the domains in which Jao excelled, then, it is this polymathic and polymorphic creativity that lies at the foundation of Jao's achievement as a scholar as well. As a scholar he combined a restless curiosity extending to more or less every domain of Chinese culture and beyond, with a depth of insight and fastidious attention to detail that led him to break new ground in each of the topics he addressed. His scholarly work is often fearsomely technical, as he is willing to devote page-long footnotes to clarifying distinctions among textual variants or different graphical forms of a single Chinese character. But it is also dazzlingly broad, as he surveys vast topics like the creation myths of all ancient cultures, or the relationship between morality and rhetoric. Despite his whole-hearted love of China's traditional culture, he is never content to rest with facile generalizations about that culture, but always pursuing a more nuanced understanding of its particular facets at different historical moments.

Jao was a scholarly prodigy who had already published an independent article under the editorship of one of the leading historians of the era, Gu Jiegang 顧頡剛 (1893–1980), before he was twenty years old. Yet his earliest scholarly production, coauthored with his father at the age of seventeen, was a *Bibliography of Literary Productions of Ch'ao-chou*, included in the local gazetteer of his hometown of Chaozhou in Guangdong province.<sup>1</sup> Jao later edited

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1 On Jao's life see Chen Zhi and Adam Schwartz, “Jao Tsung-i (Rao Zongyi) 饒宗頤 (1917–2018),” *Early China* 41 (2018): 1–7; Yan Haijian 嚴海建, *Rao Zongyi zhuan: Xiangjiang hongru 饒宗頤傳*: 香江鴻儒 (Nanjing: Jiangsu renmin chubanshe, 2012).

the complete gazetteer of Chaozhou, published in 1949, and throughout his life drew inspiration from the culture of his hometown. In the same year, though, he relocated to Hong Kong, where he would reside for most of his life and teach at both the University of Hong Kong and the Chinese University of Hong Kong. From that time on his scholarly work took full advantage of the international opportunities afforded to him there. In 1959 he was awarded the prestigious Prix Stanislas Julien from the Collège de France for his massive study of diviners in the oracle bone inscriptions. He studied Dunhuang manuscripts in Paris and collaborated on a still-unmatched bilingual study of Dunhuang lyrics with the Swiss scholar Paul Demiéville (1894–1979), published in 1971. And yet his scholarly horizons continued to expand after that, as he continually visited Japan to identify precious Chinese texts preserved there, and spent many months memorizing Vedas in India.

By the year 2003, Jao's scholarly works were collected into a twenty-volume set encompassing well over 10,000 pages, the *Rao Zongyi ershi shiji xueshu wenji* 饒宗頤二十世紀學術文集, published first in Taipei and then reprinted in Beijing in 2009. Though this collection is not quite comprehensive, as Jao remained prolific up to his passing in 2018, it provides convenient access to his main scholarly achievements. The main topics covered are the origins of Chinese civilization, the oracle bone inscriptions, bronze inscriptions, Buddhism, Daoism, historiography, Sino-foreign relations throughout history, Dunhuang studies, classical poetry and other literary forms, Chaozhou history, musicology, art history, and many other fields as well. Last but not least, the final volume contains Jao's own classical Chinese compositions, in itself a vast corpus of iridescent poetry and prose.<sup>2</sup> The fact that Jao was one of the great modern masters of classical Chinese composition is not irrelevant to evaluating his scholarship, for Jao's scholarly studies are written in elegant prose that is often closer to classical Chinese than the modern, colloquial register.

Indeed, Jao's scholarship is necessarily daunting even to many Chinese readers or to professional sinologists today, for three fundamental reasons: his oeuvre is composed in highly allusive and erudite prose; it comprises an extraordinary large quantity of publications in diverse domains; and finally, it employs extensive quotation of primary sources, many of them in themselves quite obscure for the modern reader. For these reasons, Jao scholarship has often been admired at a safe distance but not necessarily studied as closely as it deserves by other scholars, both in China and the West. Moreover, although the *Rao Zongyi ershi shiji xueshu wenji* has made his scholarship accessible to

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2 For a selection of these works in English, see Nicholas Morrow Williams, trans., *The Residue of Dreams: Selected Poems of Jao Tsung-i* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell East Asia Series, 2016).

readers throughout greater China, there are relatively few works introducing or adapting his key insights into Western languages.

In light of the great value of Jao's scholarship and its relative lack of appreciation in the West, the Jao Tsung-I Academy of Sinology, Hong Kong Baptist University has decided to produce a series of volumes translating key scholarly works by Jao into English, with annotation and explication making them accessible to 21st-century readers in the West. The first volumes will introduce major articles on Chinese musicology, Dunhuang studies, cosmology and origins of Chinese civilization, literature and religion, and oracle bone inscriptions. Future volumes will continue to highlight key areas of Jao's accomplishment. The translation series is by no means comprehensive; a complete translation of Jao's collected works would easily occupy fifty English tomes and is not conceivable at present. Instead, these volumes introduce key insights from Jao's scholarship and provide a gateway to his intellectual universe, showing the potential of a cosmopolitan vision that is never unfaithful to the demands of Chinese tradition.

First and foremost, the Jao Tsung-I Academy of Sinology and the project team would like to extend our sincere thanks to The Jao Studies Foundation for their generous support in funding this ambitious translation project and heroic efforts to make Professor Jao's lifelong scholarship accessible to a worldwide readership. From its outset, this project has received the full blessing of the Jao (rendered Yiu in Cantonese) family, most notably Professor Jao's daughters Ms Angeline Yiu and Ms Veronica Yiu, Permanent President and Permanent Administrative Director respectively of The Jao Studies Foundation.

Throughout the years, the Academy has been fortunate enough to be surrounded by like-minded people from all walks of life and benefited from their friendship and wisdom. A special mention goes to Dr and Mrs Simon Siu Man Suen, BBS, JP. Dr Suen is a remarkable entrepreneur, connoisseur of the arts, and champion of the humanities, whose generous support has enriched our work immeasurably.

The voluminous project that came to be known as *Collected Works of Jao Tsung-i: Xuantang Anthology* was first set up under the aegis of Hong Kong Baptist University and the leadership of former President Professor Roland Tai-hong Chin, BBS, JP. It continues to thrive under the auspices of the researched, liberal arts University under the Presidency of Professor Alexander Ping-kong Wai. We would like to express our gratitude to both Presidents and the University.

The Academic Advisory Committee of world-class Sinologists, namely Ronald Egan, Bernard Fuehrer, David R. Knechtges, William H. Nienhauser, Jr., Lauren Pfister, and Edward L. Shaughnessy, offered us timely advice at different stages

of preparation and implementation. The Editorial Board, composed of leading academics in their own fields, has also served as a bank of expertise and experience for guidance and assistance.

It has been a delight to publish the *Xuantang Anthology* with the Leiden-based academic publisher Brill and to work side by side with Acquisitions Editor Dr Shu Chunyan, whose professionalism and know-how were instrumental in making the process both smooth and efficient.

Last but not least, we have our professional team translators and proofreaders to thank. Since our team continues to grow with the addition of new volumes, full credit for individual contributions will be given in individual volumes, but special thanks go to the Senior Research Assistant of the project, Dr Linda Yuet Ngo Leung, for her meticulous work in post-editing and further proofreading for the entire series.

*Nicholas M. WILLIAMS*

*Adam C. SCHWARTZ*

*CHEN Zhi*

# Translator's Foreword

## Conception of this Volume

When I was asked to contribute a volume to this series of Professor Jao Tsung-i's scholarly works in English translation I felt very honored but also quite unsure as to whether or not I would be able to live up to this task. Professor Jao Tsung-i, whom many admire as a traditional literati scholar of exceptional talent, was certainly more than just that. Finding himself at the crossroads between tradition and modernity, he strove to rescue the scope and integrity of the classical Chinese tradition, bringing it into the modern era. One could even say that he was someone who made it his mission to re-establish the *Sitz-im-Leben*, or perhaps the *Sitz-in-der-Welt* of the classical Chinese tradition, of its broad diversity and its wide intercultural connections. His method may perhaps be best described as a symbiosis of cultural praxis and philology, of mythmaking and historiography, as well as of scholarship and art.

Although it had been agreed at the outset that this volume should cover one particular field of the pre-classical intellectual tradition of early China with a special focus on excavated sources, arriving at a definite selection of texts nevertheless required a tremendous amount of research, for Jao's collected scholarly works up to the year 2000, the *Jao Tsung-i ershi shiji xueshu wenji* 饒宗頤二十世紀學術文集 (hereafter *wj*), comprises no less than twenty massive volumes. Identifying and reading through the relevant passages took a number of months at the beginning of this project. Yet the experience of getting familiar with Jao's articles has always been similar. No matter where I began, I found myself almost immediately in the middle of a highly specialized philological discussion for which the reader must already possess a substantial amount of background information in order to follow Jao's line of argument. Indeed, most of Jao's writings may be characterized as extracts from ongoing scholarly debates, the beginnings of which the reader must seek elsewhere.

Soon I realized just how difficult it would be to put together a meaningful selection of texts, not just in terms of thematic coherence, but also and especially one that is accessible to a non-specialist readership. When I started weighing different fields and topics against each other, I suddenly noticed that regardless of the specific area of the early Chinese intellectual tradition Jao is writing about, the majority of his studies, in one way or another, all address the question of the human condition in early China vis-à-vis the conditions of human existence elsewhere in the ancient world, especially in the Near East and India. Whether his focus is on myth, history, philosophy, or divination, Jao

always tries to describe the Chinese version of a series of developments that are broadly associated with the Axial Age in the study of the ancient world in the West. He is particularly interested in showing how early China had developed its own notion of transcendence – a universal high god perceived as the ultimate instance of moral judgment for human conduct – as well as a system of prediction and morals that allowed man to act on his own account, without having to rely on divine providence. The clear goal in many of his studies is to elevate the early Chinese intellectual tradition to a position on par with its Near Eastern counterparts. To this end, he claims that the former can be both described without the help of Western concepts and at the same time be compared with the latter on equal terms. This then gave me the idea of organizing the present volume around this meta-concern by presenting a cross-section of Jao's studies from different but related sub-fields of the early Chinese intellectual tradition that all address the question of the human condition, albeit from various angles.

The articles combined in this volume touch upon the relation between man and the cosmos in the context of cosmic creation, astrological prognostication, ritual, and moral philosophy. In the first chapter Jao compares the theme of cosmogonic myths in early China and in the Near East. The second chapter focuses on human attempts to attune to the cosmic rhythms by means of astronomy, astrology and hemerology. The third chapter in turn explores how ancient Chinese have sought to overcome the ambiguity inherent in the reliance on divine providence through the help of a system of morals implemented within an all-embracing ritual code.

The studies assembled in the present volume are representative of one of the many facets of Jao's scholarship from the mid-1960s to the late 1990s. The publication date of the earliest article in this book, 1968, coincides with the year in which Jao joined the National University of Singapore, after having taught at the University of Hong Kong for more than fifteen years. The majority of the articles in the following chapters, however, were composed after Jao moved to the Chinese University of Hong Kong in 1973, or following his nominal retirement in 1978. Moreover, during these nearly four decades, Jao visited numerous academic institutions all over the world, including the *École pratique des hautes études* in Paris between 1974 and 1976.

### Notes and Conventions

Jao has often been characterized as one of the last traditional literati scholars of China in that he was as much a practitioner and advocate of the culture he

wrote about as he was a scholar in the modern academic sense of the term. In other words, his scholarly writings are typically somewhat more and less than modern academic studies. Not only does he habitually depart from the critical perspective of a scholar who is emotionally detached from the object of his analysis; in many of his writings Jao consciously adopts the perspectives advocated in his sources in that he aims to re-confirm cultural values and stances from within the cultural lore itself. What is most important to note in this regard, especially when it comes to issues of conceptual history, is that Jao seldom uses a critical terminology or even an analytic idiom different from that of his sources when advancing his arguments. More often than not, he lets the concepts and ideas found in the source texts “speak for themselves.” Indeed, many of Jao’s arguments amount to lists and rearrangements of passages from various traditional sources, accompanied by his own very minimal commentaries and observations. This in turn confronts the translator with the almost impossible task of rendering these sources in the way Jao must have understood them. Thus, there inevitably exists a discrepancy between Jao’s line of argument, often presented implicitly through the sources he cites, and my own interpretation of the latter. To further complicate the issue, Jao tends to quote his sources in a very elliptical manner, as his original target-audience would have known the majority of them by heart anyway. With the non-specialist Western audience in mind, I have in numerous instances undertaken the task of expanding Jao’s quotes to present each citation from traditional texts as a complete unit of meaning.

In the same vein, since Jao provides the reader with very few footnotes, I have decided to annotate the present volume according to modern academic standards. The footnotes throughout the book are therefore mostly mine. In cases where Jao does occasionally move a discursive remark to the footnotes, the respective passages are explicitly marked as “Jao points out/remarks here” in my translation. Jao’s sparse bibliographical references have also been retained, albeit updated and sometimes expanded to include additional secondary literature deemed helpful for further contextualizing Jao’s argument in the current field of scholarship on the respective topics, and thus making the translation more accessible to the Western reader.

## Acknowledgements

I would like to express my gratitude to the Jao Studies Foundation and the Jao Tsung-I Academy of Sinology at Hong Kong Baptist University for their generous financial support and for creating the scholarly environment that made this project possible. Special thanks are due to my colleague David J. Lebovitz for providing me with expert advice on numerous occasions. The translations assembled in this volume, moreover, benefitted greatly from the help of Adam C. Schwartz, Nicholas M. Williams, and Chen Zhi, who read and commented on parts of the manuscript during various stages of completion. I further would like to thank May Lai and Wang Xintong for taking care of the administrative side of this project. The greatest debt, however, is to Linda Leung, who read all of the English translations against the Chinese originals and commented on them with great care. She also acquired copyright permissions for all the texts and images in this volume and spared no efforts in helping me update all biographic references and citations.

Finally, I would like to thank Janice Wickeri for carefully proofreading the final manuscript and for saving me from countless errors. It goes without saying that any remaining shortcomings are solely my own responsibility.

## Abbreviations

- HJ* Zhongguo shehui kexueyuan Lishi yanjiusuo 中國社會科學院歷史研究所, ed., *Jiaguwen heji* 甲骨文合集, 13 vols. Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1978–83.
- JC* Zhongguo shehui kexueyuan Kaogu yanjiusuo 中國社會科學院考古研究所, ed., *Yin Zhou jinwen jicheng* 殷周金文集成, revised edition, 8 vols. Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2007.
- Mao* Hong Ye 洪業, Nie Chongqi 聶崇岐, et al., eds., *Maoshi yinde* 毛詩引得. Beijing: Yenching University Library, 1934.
- Shu* Gu Jiegang 顧頡剛, *Shangshu tongjian* 尚書通檢. Beijing: Harvard-Yenching Institute, 1936.
- TN* Zhongguo shehui kexueyuan Kaogu yanjiusuo 中國社會科學院考古研究所, ed., *Xiaotun nandi jiagu* 小屯南地甲骨, 2 vols. Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2007.
- White* Hsü Chin-hsiung, *Oracle Bones from the White and Other Collections*. Toronto: Royal Ontario Museum, 1979.
- wj* Jao Tsung-i 饒宗頤, *Jao Tsung-i ershi shiji xueshu wenji* 饒宗頤二十世紀學術文集, 20 vols., edited by Shan Zhouyao 單周堯 et al. Taipei: Xin Wen Feng, 2003.
- YC* Li Xueqin 李學勤, Qi Wenxin 齊文心, Ai Lan 艾蘭 (Sarah Allan), *Yingguo suo cang jiagu ji* 英國所藏甲骨集; *Oracle Bone Collections in Great Britain*, 4 vols. Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1985.
- Zuo* Yang Bojun 楊伯峻, *Chunqiu Zuozhuan zhu* 春秋左傳注. Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1981.

# Illustrations

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# Timeline

## Pre-Qin:<sup>1</sup> The Three Dynasties (Sandai 三代)

	BC
Xia 夏	fl. 21st–16th c.
Shang 商	fl. 1600–1045
Early Shang (Erligang 二里崗 period)	fl. 16th–14th c.
Late Shang or Yin Shang 殷商 (Anyang 安陽 period)	fl. 14th c.–1045
Zhou 周	1045–256
Western Zhou 西周	1045–771
Eastern Zhou 東周	770–256
Spring and Autumn (Chunqiu 春秋)	770–476
Warring States (Zhanguo 戰國)	475–221

## Dynasties of Imperial China

Qin 秦	221–206 BC
Han 漢	202 BC–220 AD
Former Han 前漢 (also Western Han)	202 BC–23 AD
Xin 新 (Wang Mang 王莽 reign)	AD 9–23
Later Han 後漢 (also Eastern Han)	25–220
Wei, Jin, Nan-Bei Chao 魏晉南北朝	220–589
Sanguo 三國 (Three Kingdoms)	220–280
Wei 魏 (Cao Wei 曹魏)	220–265
Han 漢 (Shu Han 蜀漢)	221–263
Wu 吳 (Sun Wu 孫吳)	222–280
Jin 晉	265–429
Western Jin 西晉	265–316
Eastern Jin 東晉	317–420
Six Dynasties 六朝	222–589
Sixteen Kingdoms 十六國	304–439
Nan-Bei Chao 南北朝 (Northern and Southern Dynasties)	420–579
Southern Dynasties 南朝	420–579
Liu Song 劉宋	420–479
Qi 齊	479–502

<sup>1</sup> Periods and dates given after Endymion Wilkinson, *Chinese History: A Manual, Revised and Enlarged* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000), 10–14.

Liang 梁	502-557
Chen 陳	557-589
Northern Dynasties 北朝	386-581
Northern Wei 北魏	386-534
Eastern Wei 東魏	534-550
Western Wei 西魏	535-556
Northern Qi 北齊	550-577
Northern Zhou 北周	557-581
Sui 隋	581-618
Tang 唐	618-907
Wudai Shiguo 五代十國 (The Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms)	902-979
Five Dynasties 五代 (North China)	907-960
Ten Kingdoms 十代 (South China)	902-979
Song 宋	960-1279
Northern Song 北宋 period	960-1127
Southern Song 南宋 period	1127-1279
Liao 遼 (Khitan)	916-1125
Jin 金 (Jurchen)	1115-1234
Xia 夏 [Xixia 西夏] (Tangut)	1038-1227
Yuan 元 (Mongol)	1279-1368
Ming 明	1368-1644
Qing 清 (Manchu)	1644-1912



**CHAPTER 1**

*Cosmogony and Myths of Origin in Ancient China  
and Beyond*

∴



# Introduction

When it comes to the study of early Chinese mythology, generations of scholars have struggled with what they perceived as an extreme paucity or even complete absence of myths in the received literary tradition prior to the Han dynasty. The main reason for this phenomenon is generally seen in a strong “euhemerizing”<sup>1</sup> tendency within early Chinese lore that must have led to the transformation of anything mythological into actual events and personalities of genuine human history. Moreover, neither the Confucian tradition with its focus on forms of human interaction and the interpretation of the course of human history, nor the competing Daoist worldview with its emphasis on man’s attunement to the eternal self-perpetuating cosmos, it has been conjectured, show any interest in the origins of the cosmos and of man. In his still very readable essay “Myths of Ancient China” from 1961, Derk Bodde (1909–2003) states:

It would be tempting but erroneous to conclude from this that there are no *myths* in ancient China. More accurate would be the statement that individual myths certainly do occur, but not a systematic *mythology*, meaning by this an integrated body of mythological materials. On the contrary, these materials are usually so fragmentary and episodic that even the reconstruction from them of individual myths – let alone an integrated *system* of myths – is exceedingly difficult.<sup>2</sup>

This difficulty becomes especially obvious if one looks for etiological or cosmogonic myths in pre-Han China. The apparent lack of any clearly discernable creation account prior to the appearance of the Pangu 盤古 (lit.: coiled antiquity) myth in the third century AD, which furthermore betrays some non-Chinese origins,<sup>3</sup> led many scholars to the conclusion that China is in a

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- 1 I use the term here in the way it is habitually understood in the field of early China studies as denoting “the transformation of what were once myths and gods into seemingly authentic history and human beings.” Derk Bodde, “Myths of Ancient China,” in *Mythologies of the Ancient World*, ed. Samuel Noah Kramer (Garden City: Anchor Books, 1961), 372–3. This is, however, the exact opposite of what the term means in its original Greek sense. William G. Boltz therefore speaks of a *reverse euhemerism* when referring to this sort of “humanized” mythology in his “Kung Kung and the Flood: Reverse Euhemerism in the *Yao tien*,” *T’oung Pao* 67.3–5 (1981): 141–53.
  - 2 Bodde, “Myths of Ancient China,” 370.
  - 3 For the Pangu myth see Bodde, “Myths of Ancient China,” 382–6, and Wu Xiaodong, “Pangu and the Origin of the Universe,” in *China’s Creation and Origin Myths: Cross-cultural*

way an exception among the ancient cultures of the world in that it simply possesses no creation myth.<sup>4</sup> While this position has persisted even to the present day, beginning with Eduard Erkes's (1891–1958) "Spuren chinesischer Weltschöpfungsmythen" (Traces of Chinese cosmogonic creation myths)<sup>5</sup> from 1931, individual scholars have time and again sought to refute this conviction by identifying and contextualizing fragments of cosmogonic myths they found scattered across various sources, often popular materials pertaining to different local and ethnographical contexts within the Chinese realm.<sup>6</sup> One such scholar was Professor Jao Tsung-i.

Jao became genuinely engaged with the field of creation myths when he studied cuneiform script and ancient Near Eastern history with the Assyriologist Jean Bottéro (1914–2007) at the *École pratique des hautes études* in Paris between 1974 and 1976, culminating in his own translation of the Mesopotamian Creation Epic also known as *Enūma Eliš* (lit. when on high) in Akkadian, into Chinese.<sup>7</sup> His preoccupation with the *Enūma Eliš* formed a point of departure for Jao to reflect on the state of etiological myths in early China,

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*Explorations in Oral and Written Traditions*, eds. Mineke Schipper, Ye Shuxian and Yin Hubin (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 163–76.

- 4 The most prominent among these viewpoints are brought together and discussed in Paul R. Goldin, "The Myth that China has no Creation Myth," *Monumenta Serica* 56 (2008): 1–22.
- 5 See *Young Pao* 28.3–5 (1931): 355–68.
- 6 See N. J. Giradot, "The Problem of Creation Mythology in the Study of Chinese Religion," *History of Religions* 15/4 (1975): 289–318, and the studies of Max Kaltenmark, Eduard Erkes, Wolfram Eberhard, Kwang-chih Chang (張光直) and others mentioned therein. The latest studies to reconfirm the existence of creation myths in early China are, to my knowledge, Goldin, "The Myth that China has no Creation Myth," and the contributions assembled in Schipper, Ye and Yin, *China's Creation and Origin Myths*.
- 7 Various accounts, chief among them Chen Hanxi's 陳韓曦, *Jao Tsung-i: Dongfang wenhua zuobiao* 饒宗頤 – 東方文化坐標 (Hong Kong: Open page, 2016), 175–7, claim that Jao had spent altogether fifteen years from 1976 to 1991 translating the epic from the original Akkadian text, revising his manuscript several times throughout the process. However, in his own postface to his *Jindong kaipi shishi* 近東開闢史詩 (The Near Eastern Epic of Creation) (Taipei: Xin wenfeng, 1991), 113, Jao names a third, revised version of James B. Pritchard's (1909–1997) English translation of the epic dating from 1963 as the base text for his Chinese translation of the *Enūma Eliš*. While there is no such translation done by Pritchard himself, it seems almost certain that what Jao was actually referring to is E. A. Speiser's (1902–1965) English rendering of the text in James B. Pritchard, ed., *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament*, third edition with supplements (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969 [1950]), 60–72; together with additions and amendments by A. K. Grayson in *ibid.*, 501–3. Indeed, the close resemblance in wording between the two translations suggests that Jao might have been working, at least to some degree, from Speiser's English version of the text. In any case, Jao's elegant and consistent rendering of the text into classical Chinese, be it from the original Akkadian source, from Speiser's English translation, or perhaps from both, nevertheless constitutes a remarkable achievement in its own right.

including their forms of transmission and contexts of use, their ethnographic and geographic distribution, as well as the striking parallels he saw between the paradigms and images underlying creation accounts from the greater Chinese cultural sphere, the Near East, and also India.

As is quite common in the study of early China, Jao regards cosmogony and anthropogony as two correlated aspects of creation myths. One of Jao's major concerns in studying the characteristics of mythological paradigms and their differences across cultural boundaries from a comparative perspective lies therefore with what these mythemes in their various elaborations reveal about the human condition in different cultural contexts. In a way, these basic considerations set the stage for the present volume, as the dynamics of the relationship between man and the cosmos, the latter including the sphere of the supernatural, form the overarching context for each of the studies assembled in this book.

The first article in the present chapter started out as a preamble to Jao's translation of the *Enūma Eliš* but is in fact very much a comparative study of creation myths in China and the Ancient Near East. As such it has been republished on its own in the first volume of Jao's collected scholarly works under the title "A preliminary comparison of creation myths and the origins of man in epics from China and beyond."<sup>8</sup> It begins with a definition of the term *epic* as denoting an orally transmitted narration or narrative poem that is inextricably linked to religious beliefs and the context of ritual ceremonies. It is here that Jao sees the main reason why we do not find any such texts in the early Chinese literary tradition. Yet Jao holds that China nevertheless must have had its own epic tradition at some point in the past, traces of which could and can still be found in performed oral folk literature among indigenous minority populations in China. Knowingly or not, Jao's approach shares with Marcel Granet's (1884–1940) opus magnum, *Danses et légendes de la Chine ancienne*,<sup>9</sup> the Durkheimian paradigm that myths derived from ritual drama and religious dance.<sup>10</sup> After briefly summarizing the plot of the *Enūma Eliš*, Jao identifies the struggle between the primordial gods Apsû and Tiamat as an instantiation of a generic dualistic opposition underlying all Near Eastern cosmologies.<sup>11</sup> In

8 wj 1: 364–84.

9 Marcel Granet, *Danses et légendes de la Chine ancienne*, 2 vols. (Paris: Librairie Félix Alcan, 1926).

10 Cf. Anne Birrell, *Chinese Mythology: An Introduction* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1993), 6, on the myth-as-ritual school in early to mid-twentieth century Sinology.

11 One may wonder why Jao did not link his findings to Claude Lévi-Strauss's (1908–2009) structuralist paradigm of a mediation between "binary opposites" underlying the operation of mythological narratives.

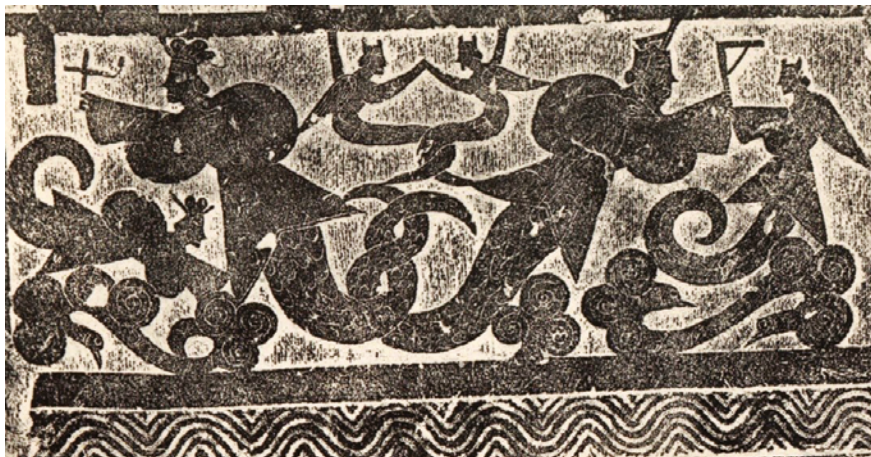


FIGURE 1 Ink rubbing of a carved stone relief showing Fuxi (right) and Nüwa (left) surrounded by smaller deities from the Wu Liang shrine 武氏祠 dating to the Eastern Han period. After Édouard Chavannes, *Mission archéologique dans la Chine septentrionale. Partie 1* (Paris: E. Leroux, 1909), Pl. 60, no. 123

the remainder of the study he turns to pointing out examples of archetypal binary oppositions, such as sky and earth, clear and murky, light-image and form, *yin* and *yang*, as well as their respective roles in creating the cosmos in various mythological episodes from Chinese minority populations and in early Daoist literature. In his conclusion, Jao juxtaposes the Near Eastern paradigm of a cosmic creation in terms of a struggle between two opposing deities to the Chinese notion of a cosmogenesis through the conjoining of two opposite but complementary elements by means of “stimulating and responding” (*ganying yi xiangyu* 感應以相與), expressed in the conception of Heaven and Earth as marital partners. This also applies to the conception of Fuxi and Nüwa as the first couple in Chinese mythology, and with Nüwa being credited with the creation of man, has a direct bearing on the position and the perception of humans within the cosmic creation.

However, in the next article Jao reveals a different facet of ancient Chinese mytho-history that does in fact resemble the Near Eastern paradigm of a struggle between the gods. He describes how, in his view, the primordial concept of the Thearchs of the Five Colors had been reduced over time to the opposition between the Yellow and the Flame Thearch engaging in battle with each other. For Jao, this struggle in its various depictions found in early Chinese sources, symbolizes an “antagonism between two paradigms” (二系的對立). He regards this dualistic paradigm as the result of the work of scribes and historians and conjectures that it must have developed from a theogony into a genealogy of

actual human sovereigns, establishing what he calls “the fundamental dualism in early Chinese history.”<sup>12</sup> While Jao does not draw any parallels between this paradigm and related mythemes in other cultures, except for a brief reference to the struggle between Apsu and Tiamat in the Near Eastern Creation Epic, Anne Birrell suggests that the antagonism between the Yellow and the Flame Thearch fits the bipartite conception of sovereignty that Georges Dumézil (1898–1986) has identified as a recurring motive in Indo-European mythology.<sup>13</sup>

In the last of the three articles in this chapter Jao explores some of the cosmogonic accounts found in the third to fourth century AD Daoist tradition, paying special attention to the various instantiations of the Pangu myth and to the idea of a primordial chaos (*hundun* 混沌) or “cosmic egg” standing at the beginning of the creation of the cosmos.<sup>14</sup> As has been mentioned above, the Pangu myth is generally believed to be of non-Chinese origin. While some scholars associate it with the mythology of the Miao and Yao tribes in South China, most scholars, including Jao, detect in it traces of the Vedic tradition from ancient India. Jao focuses here on the myth of the body of Pangu, or sometimes of Laozi, being transformed into the physical world, in which he sees a clear connection to the etiological myth of the giant deity Puruṣa related in the *Rig-Veda*.<sup>15</sup> He argues that this particular mytheme entered the Chinese Buddhist canon through the translation of the *Mātaṅga Sutra* into Chinese in the late Eastern Han period and has subsequently been retrieved, partly in terms of anti-Buddhist polemics, in the Daoist canon as well. However, at the same time, Jao also holds that there must have been an older type of Pangu myth predating these third to fourth century AD instantiations by several centuries. In the appendix to this chapter, he goes to great lengths to prove that

12 Jao does not proceed to explain the significance of this assumed dualism and how it might have related to actual conflicts in an early Chinese political or institutional context. In a more analytical approach to a related phenomenon, Sarah Allan does just that. In *The Heir and the Sage* (San Francisco: Chinese Materials Center, 1981), she traces the contradiction between the principles of rule by hereditary right and rule by virtue inherent in the cyclical interpretation of history in early China, beginning with the legends of Yao, Shun and Yu, and shows how they had to be mediated in each transfer of rule from one ruling house to another.

13 Birrell, *Chinese Mythology*, 131. Cf. Georges Dumézil, *Mitra-Varuna: Essai sur deux représentations indo-européennes de la souveraineté* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1940).

14 The scholarly literature found on this topic is especially vast. Some of the most important publications include N. J. Girardot, *Myth and Meaning in Early Taoism: The Theme of Chaos (hun-tun)* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983); David C. Yu, “The Creation Myth of Chaos in the Daoist Canon,” *Journal of Oriental Studies* 24.1 (1986): 1–20; and Kristofer Schipper, “The Wholeness of Chaos: Laozi on the Beginning,” in *China’s Creation and Origin Myths*, eds. Schipper, Ye and Yin, 135–52, to name just a few.

15 This connection has also been pointed out in Bodde, “Myths of Ancient China,” 384.

visual depictions of Pangu existed in Sichuan at least by the end of the second century AD, and thus already during the late Eastern Han period.

Overall, Jao's contributions to the field of early Chinese mythology are found primarily in his identification of parallels and shared patterns underlying myths from the macro-regions of China, India and the Near East, and especially in his tracing of mythological strands within the greater China region, including the connections between the often oral myths of minority populations and the Chinese mainstream literary tradition. His approach resembles to some degree that of Wolfram Eberhard (1909–1989) in his seminal work *Lokalkulturen im alten China* (Local cultures in ancient China).<sup>16</sup> However, unlike Eberhard, Jao does not conclude that the mythological traditions of various local cultures have become interfused over time to form a Chinese mythology. Quite the contrary, he thinks the various, seemingly related sets of myths from the fringes of the Chinese cultural sphere must have been influenced by a now lost mythology from the center of an early Chinese high culture.

Unfortunately for the non-specialist reader, Jao does not introduce the field of early Chinese myths in great detail in his studies. Perhaps somewhat irritatingly for the scholarly-trained reader, his investigations do not betray any consistent methodological approach either. One may wonder whether his work was influenced at all by such pioneering considerations on the methodology of studying early Chinese myths as, for instance, those assembled in volume seven of the important *Gushibian* 古史辨 (Debates on ancient history) series or in K. C. Chang's (1931–2001) "Chinese Creation Myths: A Study in Method."<sup>17</sup>

The non-specialist reader who wishes to be able to follow and appreciate Jao's arguments may therefore find it worthwhile to consult the excellent introductory works in the field of Chinese mythology by Bodde and Birrell.<sup>18</sup> To my mind, the works of Jaan Puhvel and William G. Doty (1939–2017) remain the best introduction to issues of comparative mythology such as those touched upon in the present chapter.<sup>19</sup>

16 Wolfram Eberhard, *Lokalkulturen im alten China*, 2 vols. (Leiden: Brill, 1942). A revised edition of volume 2 has been republished as *The Local Cultures of South and East China*, trans. Alide Eberhard (Leiden: Brill, 1968).

17 See Lü Simian 呂思勉 and Tong Shuye 童書業, eds., *Gushibian* 古史辨, vol. 7 (Shanghai: Kaiming shudian, 1941), and Chang Kwang-Chih 張光直, "Zhongguo chuangshi Shenhua zhi fenxi yu gushi yanjiu" 中國創世神話之分析與古史研究, *Bulletin of the Institute of Ethnology, Academia Sinica* 8 (1959): 47–79.

18 See Bodde, "Myths of Ancient China"; Birrell, *Chinese Mythology*; and Birrell, *Chinese Myth and Culture* (Cambridge: McGuinness China Monographs, 2006).

19 See Jaan Puhvel, *Comparative Mythology* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1987), and William G. Doty, *Mythography: The Study of Myths and Rituals*, 2nd ed. (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 2000 [1986]).

# A Preliminary Comparison of Creation Myths and the Origins of Man in Epics from China and Beyond

## *A Preamble to the Near Eastern Epic of Creation (Enuma Elish)*

The Babylonian creation epic *Enuma Elish* presents us with a precious mythological account from Asia Minor relating to the origins of man and the universe.<sup>1</sup> It counts as one of mankind's earliest extant epics, from which the Book of Genesis in the Hebrew Bible eventually derived. So far no one in the field of Chinese translations has undertaken the task of rendering this text in its entirety. This shall therefore be an attempt at a first full translation.<sup>2</sup>

The word *epic* has its root in the Greek ἔπος (“to say,” “that which is uttered in words”).<sup>3</sup> The Latin term *epicus* also bears within it the notion of “dialogue.” As a literary genre *epic* commonly refers to a “narration in a grand style,” resembling the classical Chinese literary form of *fu* 賦 (“rhapsody” or “poetic exposition”). Hence an epic may also be described as a narrative poem.<sup>4</sup>

There are several unique features that characterize an epic: it has to be transmitted orally, it cannot be separated from religious beliefs, and it is closely

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1 Originally, this article served as the introduction to Jao's Chinese translation of the *Enuma Elish* in his *Jindong kaipi shishi* 近東開闢史詩 (The Near Eastern Epic of Creation) (Taipei: Xin wenfeng, 1991). It was later republished as a stand-alone study under the title “Zhong wai shishi shang tian di kaipi yu zaorenshenhua zhi chubu bijiao – 近東開闢史詩前言 (A preliminary comparison of creation myths and the origins of man in epics from China and beyond: A preamble to the Near Eastern Epic of Creation) in *wj* 1: 364–84. The present translation follows the latter version of the text.

2 See Jao (1991), 21–70 for the complete Chinese translation.

3 Jao does not give a definition for the Greek ἔπος. My English rendering of the term's basic meaning follows Hans Neumann et al., “Epic,” in *Brill's New Pauly*, Antiquity volumes, eds. Hubert Cancik and Helmuth Schneider, English Edition by Christine F. Salazar, Classical Tradition volumes, ed. Manfred Landfester, English Edition by Francis G. Gentry. Consulted online on 26 August 2019 [http://dx.doi.org.ezproxy.is.ed.ac.uk/10.1163/1574-9347\\_bnp\\_e400210](http://dx.doi.org.ezproxy.is.ed.ac.uk/10.1163/1574-9347_bnp_e400210). First published online: 2006.

4 Cf. Shigeru Shimizu 清水茂, “Fu to jojishi” 賦と叙事詩, in idem, *Katari no bungaku* 語りの文学 (Tokyo: Chikuma Shobō, 1988), 3–16. See also Neumann et al., “Epic”: “It is evident that ἔπος from the earliest times meant not just ‘the word’, but evidently in a ‘poetological’ sense also ‘hexametric verse’, even ‘hexametric lines or an individual hexametric line’, and the epic concept in tandem with the evolving use of the hexameter post-Homer was attached to a highly varied range of poetic forms.”

connected to a people's ceremonial rites. In addition, epics tend to vividly depict and elaborate on the particulars of warfare. Most extol the revered gods of a certain place and try to make the heroic personae in the poem stand out as much as possible.<sup>5</sup> In his treatise on the *Erra* (title of an epic poem about the Akkadian plague god Erra or Irra [tr. note]), Luigi Cagni has discussed the characteristics of Near Eastern epics in great detail.<sup>6</sup>

In ancient times the Han people may have had their own epic. Yet early Chinese historiographers explicitly differentiated between the recording of “words” and the recording of “events,”<sup>7</sup> with the latter focusing overtly on chronological issues while treating the events themselves in a rather elliptical fashion. Hence in traditional Chinese historiography we do not find a similar emphasis on heroism as in Western epics. *Ellipses* or omissions in turn mark a very important rhetorical device.<sup>8</sup> With the use of ellipses being one of the characteristics of written Classical Chinese, particularly apparent in the frequent employment of elliptical sentences in divination inscriptions from the Shang dynasty, it should be no surprise that one does not find any elaborate narrative description of mythic personae in the early Chinese literary record. As for the *Elegantiae* (*ya* 雅) and *Hymns* (*song* 頌) in the *Book of Songs* (*Shijing* 詩經), those literary genres are already so far removed from the spoken idiom that they can hardly count as epic narrative forms. For this reason, it is commonly believed that early China did not bring forth any epics. Moreover, traditional historiography strictly preferred a succinct (*jian* 簡) and vague (*hui*

5 Cf. C. H. Wang, “Towards Defining a Chinese Heroism,” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 95.1 (1975): 25–35.

6 Luigi Cagni, *The Poem of Erra*, Sources and Monographs, Sources from the Ancient Near East 1/3 (Malibu, CA: Undena Publications, 1977).

7 This concept of traditional Chinese historiography, already part of the tradition itself, derives from Liu Zhiji's 劉知幾 (661–721) *Shitong* 史通, one of the earliest and most influential pre-modern works of historical criticism (*shiping* 史評). Cf. Endymion Wilkinson, *Chinese History: A Manual*, revised and enlarged edition (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000 [1998]), 489–491. In the “Zai yan” 載言 (Recording words) section of the *Shitong* it says: “In antiquity, words were recorded in the *Book of Documents* (*Shangshu* 尚書), events in the *Spring and Autumn Annals* (*Chunqiu* 春秋), thus dividing the historians into those on the left and those on the right according to their duty. [...] Hence it can be known that words and events were regarded as two separate fields. (古者言為《尚書》，事為《春秋》，左右二史，分戶其職。.....此則言、事有別，斷可知矣) (Liu Zhiji, *Shitong tongshi* 史通通釋, annot. Pu Qilong 浦起龍 [Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1978 (1752)], 2.2.33–34).

8 Henri Morier, *Dictionnaire de poétique et de rhétorique* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1961), 154. See also the entries for *Ellipse* and *Aposiopese* in Ulrich Unger, *Rhetorik des Klassischen Chinesisch* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1994), 77–88, 121.

晦) diction,<sup>9</sup> thus any sort of superfluous, detailed literary style was simply not appreciated. This began to change only with the appearance of the vernacular *bianwen* 變文 (transformation texts) style during Tang times and later on with that of the seven-word *tanci* 彈詞 (“plucking rhymes” or “story-singing”) genre that derived from it.<sup>10</sup> Works of *tanci* literature do not actually differ much in their composition and diction from the complex and redundant epics of India and Greece. In China, however, such genres emerged at a much later point in the literary tradition. This marks a development of literary form in a different direction from succinctness to complexity.<sup>11</sup>

Then again, a great number of “living” epics have been preserved in oral folk literature, especially among the orally transmitted literatures of Chinese ethnic minorities. For instance, the “Sadanglang” 薩當琅 (lit. dirge, elegy) in the long *Miluotuo* 密洛陀 epic of the Bunu Yao people from Western Guangxi counts more than two thousand lines.<sup>12</sup> Thirty-nine episodes from the Tibetan *Epic of King Gesar* have by now been fully recorded. If one adds to that the

9 Liu Zhiji's *Shitong* stresses this point. Cf. *Shitong tongshi*, 6.25.149. In Du Yu's 杜預 (222–285 AD) *Chunqiu Zuozhuan xu* 春秋左傳序 he describes the latter's style as “annalistic and vague” (*zhi er hui* 志而晦).

10 The name *bianwen* 變文 (lit. “transformation texts”) designates a prosimetric genre of Buddhist inspired popular literature from the Tang period which is solely associated with manuscript finds from Dunhuang 敦煌. *Bianwen* texts are commonly regarded as the earliest written examples of a storytelling and performance tradition in China. Cf. Victor H. Mair, *Tang Transformation Texts: A Study of the Buddhist Contribution to the Rise of Vernacular Fiction and Drama in China* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989). The term *tanci* 彈詞 in turn refers to a prosimetric romance genre that flourished during the late Ming and early Qing period, especially in the lower Yangtze delta. These texts were mostly composed by women writers and formed an integral part of the lower Yangtze's literate women's culture. Cf. Thomas Zimmer, *Der Chinesische Roman der ausgehenden Kaiserzeit*, in *Geschichte der Chinesischen Literatur*, 10 vols., ed. Wolfgang Kubin (Munich: Saur, 2002–2012), 2/2.533–42. For the influence of the *bianwen* style on the development of the later *tanci* literature see also Shuyun Crossland-Guo, “The oral tradition of *bianwen*: its features and influence on Chinese narrative literature” (Ph.D. diss., University of Hawai'i at Manoa, 1996).

11 Cf. Chen Yinke's 陳寅恪 (1890–1969) introduction to his “Lun ‘Zaisheng yuan’” 論再生緣, in idem, *Chen Yinke xiansheng lunwenji* 陳寅恪先生論文集 (Taipei: San ren xing, 1974), 335. The title *Zaisheng yuan* 再生緣 (*Love reincarnated*) refers to an unfinished Qing dynasty *tanci* novel written by Chen Duansheng 陳端生 (1751–ca. 1796).

12 The *Miluotuo*, named after a female creator figure in the mythology of certain groups of the Yao people, has been described as an encyclopedic creation epic. For an English translation of the text see Mark Bender, “A Tradition-oriented Yao Creation Epic,” in *The Columbia Anthology of Chinese Folk & Popular Literature*, eds. Victor H. Mair and Mark Bender (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), 244–75. In fact, the “Sadanglang” elegy does not form part of the *Miluotuo* epic per se but was composed later in the tradition of the *Miluotuo*. Cf. Huang Haiyun 黃海雲, “Guangxi Du'an Bunu Yao wan'ge

further sixty-seven so far ascertained but still uncollated episodes, the whole epic would amount to more than 800,000 lines, which even surpasses the scope of the Indian *Mahābhārata*.<sup>13</sup> Looked at from this perspective, it is indeed the case that “when the rites are lost [in the center], one seeks them at the peripheries” (禮失而求諸野).<sup>14</sup> Chinese epics are still very much alive and well preserved within a living oral tradition. This is why oral literature presents us with such an unfathomable treasure!

The incantation of epics happens only within the context of religious ceremonies. The rhapsodists who possess the skills to recite them are often revered as sages or prophets. In India they are called Kavi; the Persian *Avesta* (the primary collection of religious texts of Zoroastrianism [tr. note]) lists eight dynastic rulers all with the title Kavi prefixed to their names.<sup>15</sup> This suffices to testify to the elevated position of epic rhapsodists, who in some cases were even kings. In Chinese minority populations, rhapsodists who are competent to incant epics fulfil a role that somewhat resembles that of a shaman. They too enjoy a special position within their respective societies. For instance, the epic incantations of the Yi people (from southwestern Sichuan [tr. note]) are led by so called Beimao 唎耄 (lit. aged reciter) priests. The Beimao is a sort of shaman who recites epics.<sup>16</sup> In the Yi script, the name is written 𠵱𠵱.<sup>17</sup> Its first syllable sounds similar to the morpheme *bei* 唎 in the term *fanbei* 梵唎 (chanting of Buddhist songs and prayers), meaning “to chant verse.” The second element,

‘Sadanglang’ de wenhuaxue jixi” 廣西都安布努瑤挽歌《薩當琅》的文化學解析, *Guangxi Minzu yanjiu* 廣西民族研究 (2014) 3: 105–12.

- 13 Cf. Wang Yinuan 王沂暖 (1907–1998), “Guanyu Zangzu ‘Gesae wang zhuan’ de bu shu yu shi hang” 關於藏族《格薩爾王傳》的部數與詩行, in idem, *Gesae yanjiu lunji* 格薩爾研究論集 (Beijing: Zhongguo Zangxue chubanshe, 2017), 103–133. See also Geoffrey Samuel, “The Gesar Epic of East Tibet,” in *Tibetan Literature: Studies in Genre*, eds. José Ignacio Cabezon and Roger R. Jackson (Ithaca, NY: Snow Lion, 1996), 358–67.
- 14 This saying is ascribed to Confucius himself in the “Yiwen zhi” 藝文志 of Ban Gu’s 班固 (32–92) *Hanshu* 漢書.
- 15 Richard N. Frye, *The Heritage of Persia* (New York: The New American Library, 1966 [1963]), 60.
- 16 Cf. Ma Xueliang 馬學良, “Luo zu de wushi ‘beimao’ he ‘tianshu’ 傣族的巫師‘唎耄’和‘天書’, in idem, *Yunnan Yizu lisu yanjiu wenji* 雲南彝族禮俗研究文集 (Chengdu: Sichuan minzu chubanshe, 1983), 15–34.
- 17 Jao refers here to the traditional notation of the name Bimo, written *bimox* (pi<sup>33</sup>mo<sup>34</sup>) 𠵱𠵱 in the modern standardized Yi syllabary (𠵱𠵱𠵱𠵱 nuosu burma, or “Nuosu script”) from 1974. Apart from the version that Jao provides, following Ma Xueliang, “Luo zu de wushi ‘beimao’ he ‘tianshu,’” 15, there exist more than thirty variants for each morpheme in the various strands of the traditional Yi script. For an overview of all known variants see Dian Chuan Qian Gui Yiwen xiezuozu 滇川黔桂彝文協作組, eds., *Dian Chuan Qian Gui Yiwen ziji* 滇川黔桂彝文字集 (Kunming: Yunnan Minzu chubanshe, 2004), 6.35.

昴, seems to be a variant of the Chinese graph 昴 used here as a homophone loan graph with the pronunciation *mao*. The name is sometimes also written as *bimu* 筆姆, and the Hani people pronounce it as *pimo* 批莫. These are all near-homophonous variants of the same word.

The custom of reciting epics is conspicuously preserved in the context of solemn ceremonial rites such as seasonal rituals, as well as within marriage and mourning ceremonies. Unlike ordinary forms of folk musical theater (*Quyí* 曲藝),<sup>18</sup> epic performances are not meant for entertainment. Epics rank as holy texts in the minds of every minority population. Incanting an epic in fact resembles a performative instantiation of a people's theogony and of its divine roots. The incanting rhapsodists in turn may be understood to figure as their peoples' prophets, with their sacrificial altars providing the place where humans and gods communicate with each other. In the Nuo altar theater for instance,<sup>19</sup> performed by the shamans of the Tu people who live on the fringes of Guizhou province, the recital of creation epics takes a central role; the incanting shamans are simultaneously in charge of sacrificing, chanting, and dancing. This again strongly suggests that the recital of creation epics is indeed inextricably linked to the performance of religious ceremonies.<sup>20</sup>

Since epics relating the creation of the cosmos are particularly numerous in the oral literature of Chinese minority populations, there exists a definite desire to translate one of the oldest creation epics in world into Chinese in order to make its content accessible to Chinese scholars concerned with the study of myths in their own tradition. It is the intention of the present study to fill this gap.

The Near Eastern Creation Epic recounts the cosmic creation myth of the Akkadian people. It is named after its opening words "Enuma-eliš" (when on high). The entire text is written in cuneiform script, inscribed over seven large clay tablets. Its first half narrates the beginnings of heaven and earth as well as the clashes among the gods. In a long struggle between two major forces, the later-born sun god Marduk eventually defeats his opponent Tiamat, associated with the dark force. The second half recounts how Marduk set up dwellings for the three highest cosmic deities, Anu, En-lil and Ea, how he erected the temple of Babylon, and how he created mankind by extracting drops of blood from the body of a rebellious deity. The very end of the epic lists Marduk's glorious

18 Cf. "Quyí Performances," in *People's Republic of China Year-Book* (Beijing: Xinhua, 2002), <https://search.proquest.com/docview/211573812?accountid=11440> (accessed 05/09/2019).

19 Cf. Xiaohuan Zhao, "Nuo Altar Theatre on a Liminal/Liminoid Continuum: Reflections on the Shamanic Origins of Chinese Theatre," *The Drama Review* 63,2 (2019): 57–77.

20 Jao refers the reader here to Huang Lin 黃林, "Yinchang shishi bu tong yu shuochang quyí" 吟唱史詩不同於說唱曲藝, *Zhongguo yinyuexue* 中國音樂學, 2 (1987): 97–103.

achievements together with the more than fifty different names he had the honor to possess.

It is generally assumed that the time of the epic's composition falls into the Kassite period, the so-called mid-Babylonian era (1550–1155 BC),<sup>21</sup> following the reign of Hammurabi (1792–1750 BC).<sup>22</sup> The era is roughly contemporaneous with the late Xia 夏 period (trad. 21st–16th century BC) in early China.

According to Babylonian custom, the epic was recited on the fourth day of each new year during solemn seasonal celebrations. Incantations of episodes from or related to the *Enuma Elish* further served the following purposes:<sup>23</sup>

1. As part of the purification ceremony of the temple of E-Zida, perhaps at the temple of Nabû at Borsippa, the creation of the cosmos and the settlement of the gods in their dwellings by the sun god Marduk was recited.
2. The incantation of the epic formed part of a ritual program for the restoration of a temple, prescribing *inter alia* a recitation about the creation of the world and the various gods by Anu.
3. An episode related to the epic was recited during a ceremony to assist childbirth, announcing how man was first created from clay mixed with blood from a slain god.<sup>24</sup>
4. Another episode related to the *Enuma Elish* was recited by dentists during the extraction of aching teeth, cursing the worm (believed to be responsible for the ailment [translators note]) to cause no further harm.<sup>25</sup>

21 Jao remarks here that Babylon witnessed a succession of altogether 36 kings, reigning for a period of 576 years. The reign period of the first dynasty, named Sam-suditana, lasted from 1623–1595 BC.

22 Compare the discussion on the composition date of the Creation Epic in Stephanie Dalley, trans., *Myths from Mesopotamia: Creation, the Flood, Gilgamesh and others* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 228–30.

23 The list which follows is partly quoted and translated by Jao from M. L. West's introduction to the latter's translation of Hesiod's *Theogony*. See West, trans., *Hesiod: Theogony* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1966), 2. West in turn states these four points with reference to Alexander Heidel, *The Babylonian Genesis*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1951), 61–73, and others. Where applicable, my translation back into English adopts West's original wording.

24 Cf. E. A. Speiser, trans., "Creation of Man by the Mother Goddess," in Pritchard, *Ancient Near Eastern Texts*, 99–100.

25 Incantations against toothache were quite common during the Babylonian era. As early as the Old Babylonian period, the Mari documents included a tablet with the Akkadian label *ši-pa-at tu-ul-tim* (Toothache Incantations). Cf. Speiser, trans., "A Cosmological Incantation: The Worm and the Toothache," in Pritchard, *Ancient Near Eastern Texts*, 100–1. Speiser notes: "Among the incantations which contain cosmological material, one of the best-known attributes toothache to a worm that had obtained the permission of the gods to dwell among the teeth and gums" (*ibid*, 100).

The name Marduk represents a combination of the Akkadian term *mār* (son) and the Sumerian word *Utu* (sun), meaning *son of the sun*. He featured as the highest deity with everything under the sun considered to be his creation. In the hymns of the Akkadians, Marduk possesses fifty different epithets. Unrivalled in strength, he surpassed each exalted category. Thus, from very early on the idea of an omnipotent deity was deeply rooted in Asia Minor, from where it later moved on to Israel.

According to ancient Near Eastern faith, man has been created with the blood extracted from a malevolent cosmic deity that had been charged with a crime. This gave rise to the notion of an “original sin.” Moreover, humans were believed to have been conceived to serve the multitudinous gods, whom they had to attend. Deprived of any status, they were supposed to tremble under the gods’ awesome terror. This basic idea was later adopted by Israel as well.<sup>26</sup>

Some scholars assume that the Han people, on the other hand, constitute a pragmatic ethnicity, inclined towards charitable behavior. They hold that in China, primeval forms of nature religion never developed into a transcendent man-made religious system, thus causing the Chinese to be exempted from any kind of “original sin.” At the same time, they regard the absence of such a development as the reason why authentic early Chinese myths have only been transmitted in fragments, conveying their content in an obscure, dry and unsystematized fashion.<sup>27</sup> I do not agree with this point of view: I believe the presence or absence of the notion of an original sin depends on differences in the background from which the respective myths arose. The Chinese version of the creation of man belongs to the category of myths which describe how man was first modeled from clay, which is quite different from the Near Eastern version. The use of different writing materials must be taken into account as well. During the Shang and Zhou periods, documents were mostly inscribed on turtle plastrons, bronze vessels, and jade objects; some were also written on bamboo strips.<sup>28</sup> Those materials proved to be rather unsuitable for recording long narratives. Paired with the ancient historiographers’ fondness for succinct and vague phrasing, this perhaps posed the main obstacle for Chinese epics to

26 Jean Bottéro, *Naissance de Dieu: La Bible et l'historien* (Paris: Gallimard, 1986), 266–91.

27 See for instance Xiao Bing's 蕭兵 foreword to Wang Xiaolian 王孝廉, *Zhongguo de shenhua shijie* 中國的神話世界 (Beijing: Zuoja chubanshe, 1991) for an endorsement of this viewpoint.

28 For a comprehensive study of the history of early Chinese writing techniques and materials in English see Tsuen-Hsui Tsien (錢存訓), *Written on Bamboo & Silk: The Beginnings of Chinese Books & Inscriptions*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004 [1962]).

develop a long and detailed narrative form. However, oral folk literature has nevertheless been preserved and transmitted to the present day.

The Near Eastern *Creation Epic* states that at the beginning of the creation of the cosmos there was nothing, neither name (*ming* 名) nor form (*xing* 形), let alone fate. “Non-being” or “formlessness” (*wu* 無) was the original state of the cosmos, as during that primeval time none of the gods had yet been born.

Thus, at the very beginning, the epic repeatedly uses the negation *la*. The Akkadian language knows three negations, *la*, *ul* and *ai*.<sup>29</sup> *La* appears in the first, second, sixth, seventh and eighth verse from the first stanza.<sup>30</sup>

1. e-nu-ma e-liš    la na-bu-ú šá-ma-mu  
天之高兮        既未有名  
When on high the heaven had not been named,
2. šap-liš am-ma-tum    šu-ma la zak-rat  
厚地之庠兮        亦未賦之以名  
Firm ground below had not been called by name,  
[...]
6. gi-pa-ra la ki-iš-šu-ru    šu-ša-a la še<sup>2</sup>-ú  
無緯蕭以結廬        無沼澤之可觀  
No reed hut had been matted, no marsh land had appeared
7. e-nu-ma ilāni    la šu-pu-u ma-na-ma  
於時眾神        渺焉無形  
When no gods whatever had been brought into being,
8. šu-ma la zuk-ku-ru    ši-ma-tú la ši-i-mu  
名號不立        命運靡定  
Uncalled by name, their destinies undetermined –

The morpheme *la*, written 𒌦 in cuneiform script, also exists in Hebrew where it is written לָ. Both Akkadian and Hebrew belong to the same language family.

29 See Arthur Ungnad, *Grammatik des Akkadischen*. Completely revised by Lubor Matouš. Fourth edition (Munich: Beck, 1964), 111.

30 I provide here the English translation that Jao himself worked with, which is the now outdated rendering by Speiser in Pritchard, *Ancient Near Eastern Texts*, 60–72. For the latest authoritative translation of the *Enuma Elish* into English see W. G. Lambert, *Babylonian Creation Myths* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2013). The phonetic transcription has been updated according to Lambert.

In my rendering of the *Enuma Elish* I translate *la* as *wei* 未 (not [yet]), *wu* 無 (without/there is no) and *bu* 不 (not) respectively.

The first deity mentioned in the Near Eastern clay tablets is called Apsû, the “deep and dark ocean.”<sup>31</sup> This name might have derived from a Semitic root referring to the “earth’s surface” or the “banks of the ocean.” It signifies those waters that are clear. According to Professor Bottéro, *Mu-um-mu* is the nickname of Tiamat, resembling the Akkadian word *ummu* (mother). Apsû refers to the clear waters; Tiamat, in turn, deriving from the Semitic word for “deep and dark ocean,” “accumulated water” or “foam of the earth,” signifies those waters that are murky.<sup>32</sup> Together with Apsû it constitutes a contrastive pair. Interestingly, in classical Chinese the word *hai* 海 (“sea,” “ocean”) can also be found glossed as *hui* 晦 (“dark,” “murky”),<sup>33</sup> suggesting that in early China, too, the ocean was associated with the darkness.

Apsû and Tiamat, the clear and the murky, thus represent the two antagonistic forces that struggled with each other prior to the creation of heaven and earth. In the later Persian *Avesta*, we find the same struggle taking place between the two brothers Ahuramazda (creator of the world), associated with the light, and Ahriman (power of evil and darkness). This sort of dualism is archetypal for all ancient Near Eastern cosmologies.

After the primeval god Apsû came into existence, he brought forth Lahmu and Lahamu. The original import of their names is lost to us. Later Anšar and Kišar were born. The etymon *an* stands for heaven in the Sumerian language, *ki* means earth in Sumerian and *šar* signifies a totality. Accordingly, the “totality on high” refers to heaven, “the totality below” to the earth. The Babylonian *Creation Epic* is particularly known for employing such contrastive couplets. In the text of the epic *e-lis* means on high and *šap-lis* means down below. This dualism can be illustrated as follows:

31 Jao translates the name Apsû here as *ming hai* 溟海 (deep and dark ocean), the same term he uses to render the name Tiamat below. Since all the scholarship on this topic unequivocally associates Tiamat with the “primeval sea,” while Apsû stands for the earth’s body of fresh water, I suspect this first rendering of Jao’s to be accidental or perhaps even an editorial error. Jao’s further definition of Apsû and Tiamat as a contrastive pair below corroborates this suspicion. Cf. Lambert, *Babylonian Creation Myths*, 217, who translates the name Apsû as “cosmic water beneath the earth.”

32 Cf. Lambert, *Babylonian Creation Myths*, 236, for the import of the name Tiamat.

33 Compare the Eastern Han etymological dictionary *Shiming* 釋名 (Explanation of names) where it says: 「海，晦也。主承穢濁，其水黑如晦也。」 (The sea is also called “darkness.” It is the master over the impure and the muddy. Its water is as black as the darkness). See Wang Xianqian 王先謙 (1842–1917), *Shiming shuzheng bu* 釋名疏證補 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2008 [1896]), 1.4.19.

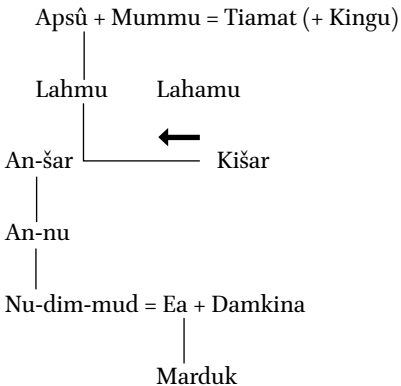
TABLE 1 Archetypes of Cosmic Dualism in the Ancient Near East

e-lis	săp-lis
an	ki
<i>tian</i> 天 (heaven)	<i>di</i> 地 (earth)

An-sar in turn gave birth to An-nu, with the morpheme *nu* glossed as master. Hence An-nu translates as the “Master of Heaven.” An-nu further gave birth to Ea, also known under the alternative name Nu-dim-mud. *Dim* means “to create,” the morpheme *mud* glosses as “life.” In a literal translation the epithet would therefore read “Master of Life.” Ea’s wife is called Dam-ki-na, which in Sumerian also reads Dam-gal-nun-na. *Dam* can be glossed as “chamber,” *gal* as “great,” while *nunna* means “prince.” Literally the name translates into “The Great Chamber of the Prince.”<sup>34</sup>

The Babylonian theogony prior to Marduk can be tabularized as follows:

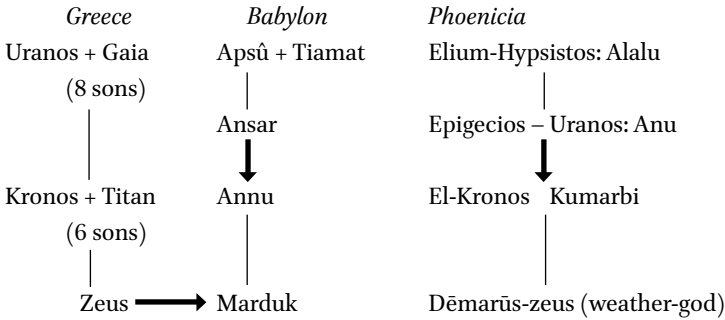
TABLE 2 Babylonian theogony prior to Marduk



Similar to the role of Anšar and Kišar in the Babylonian *Creation Epic*, in Hesiod’s *Theogony* Kronos and Titan are described as having created and separated heaven and earth prior to the appearance of Zeus. A further example of such a sequence can be found in the Phoenician theogony. The three genealogies may be tentatively juxtaposed as shown below:

34 Cf. various, *La naissance du monde: Egypte ancienne, Sumer, Akkad, Hourrites et Hittites, Canaan, Israel, Islam, Turcs et Mongols, Iran préislamique, Inde, Siam, Laos, Tibet, Chine*, Sources Orientales 1 (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1959), 117–51.

TABLE 3 Theogonies of Greece, Babylon and Phoenicia compared



Japanese ethnologists (such as Taryō Ōbayashi 大林太良 [1929–2001] for instance) hold that royal sovereignty in pre-modern Japan cannot be separated from myth. This position in fact derives from the scholarly model of Oriental Theocracy according to which secular sovereignty and divine authority fall together into one single concept.<sup>35</sup> This also is largely similar to the situation we find in ancient Greek and Near Eastern epics. However, Far Eastern theogonies do not necessarily resemble their Greek and Near Eastern counterparts in this point. One should refrain from drawing a forced parallel here.

What does deserve some attention in this context, are the similarities between the concepts of *name* (*ming* 名) and *fate* (*ming* 命) in the Far East and the Near East respectively.<sup>36</sup> At the beginning of the cosmic creation, according to the *Enuma Elish*, the multitudinous deities were not yet born, their names had not yet been established and their fate was not yet fixed. Only with the appearance of these deities themselves did their names and subsequently also their fates come into being. Thus, “nonbeing” was the state of the universe prior to the creation of heaven and earth. This resonates with a passage found in the book *Laozi* 老子, where it says: “Namelessness was the beginning of heaven and earth” (無名天地之始). At the start of the cosmic creation there were no names. With the birth of the multitudinous deities each received its name all the way to the Sun god Marduk, who, having been credited with unifying the cosmos and other glorious achievements, was bestowed with fifty epithets and ultimately became the unrivaled, omnipotent Babylonian high god. Hence,

35 Cf. Yoshida Atsuhiko 吉田敦彦, *Kodai Oriento bungaku to Girishia shimwa* 古代オリエント文學とギリシア神話, *Chikuma sekai bungaku taikai* 筑摩世界文学大系 1 (82) *Kodai Oriento-shū* 古代オリエント集 (Tokyo: Chikumashobō, 1978), 1–8.

36 Cf. Jao’s “Gudai wenzue zhi bijiao yanjiu” 古代文學之比較研究, *Chūgoku bungakuhō* 中国文学報 32 (1980): 1–36.

names and titles gain importance because they symbolize a culture's system of ideas. Marduk's fifty epithets, for instance, convey a diverse range of cultural meanings, both in abstract and in concrete terms. Whoever endeavors to comprehend the origins of Near Eastern culture cannot afford to ignore them, but instead should take them as a starting point for investigation.<sup>37</sup> When it comes to the study of ancient China, the philosophical essence symbolized by names and titles, especially as seen in the custom of bestowing posthumous temple-names (*shi fa* 諡法), should receive more attention as well.

What I am most interested in further discussing at this point are two topics in particular, namely cosmogonic creation myths and mythological accounts relating the creation of man. In fact, both these topics are so closely entangled, they can hardly be treated separately from each other. When it comes to the issue of creation myths in early China, one immediately thinks of the question of the Pangu 盤古 (Coiled Antiquity). As I have previously demonstrated elsewhere, a late Eastern Han mural from the Wen Weng ancestral shrine (*Wen Weng citang* 文翁祠堂) in Sichuan province already depicts an image of Pangu, of which a rubbing existed during the Song Dynasty.<sup>38</sup> Hence, I have always doubted the scholarly conviction that the idea of Pangu did not appear until the time of the Three Kingdoms. In the Chu Silk Manuscript (*Chu zengshu* 楚繒書 or *Chu boshu* 楚帛書) dating from the mid-Warring States period, we find a line stating that “the sun and the moon were brought forth by Qun” (*ri yue Qun sheng* 日月爰生) as well as a saying about Bao(Fu)xi 雹戲 and Nühuang 女皇 having four sons. This suffices to show that the account of Diqun 帝姁 being the highest deity who gave birth to the sun and the moon in the *Shanhai jing* 山海經 (*Classic of Mountains and Seas*) was indeed already a popular legend in the south during Warring States times. That Baoxi and Nühuang are in fact Fuxi 伏羲 and Nüwa 女媧 is by now an established fact,<sup>39</sup> which invalidates the position that these two figures first appeared in the “Lan ming xun” 覽冥訓 (Surveilling obscurities) chapter from the *Huainanzi* 淮南子.

37 Cf. Jean Bottéro “Les noms de Marduk, l'écriture et la 'logique' en Mésopotamie ancienne,” in *Essays on the Ancient Near East in Memory of Jacob Joel Finkelstein*, ed. Maria deJong Ellis (Hamden, CT: Archon, 1977), pp. 5–28; and Franz M. Th. Böhl, “Die fünfzig Namen des Marduk,” *Archiv für Orientforschung* 11 (1936–1937): 191–218.

38 Cf. Jao, “Pangu tu kao” 盤古圖考, *Zhongguo shehuikexueyuan yanjiusheng xuebao* 中國社會科學院研究生學報 (1986) 1: 75–6. An English translation is provided in the last part of this chapter.

39 Jao refers the reader here to his, *The Chu Silk Manuscript* (*Chu Boshu* 楚帛書). For the latest revised edition see Jao, “Chu boshu xin zheng” 楚帛書新證 (New proofs on the Chu Silk Manuscript), in idem, *Xuantang jilin: Shilin xin bian* 選堂集林：史林新編 (Xuantang's selected works: Selected works on history, newly edited), 3 vols., eds. Xiong Yushuang 熊玉霜 and Dong Xiujian 董秀娟 (Hong Kong: Zhonghua shuju, 2012), 3. 860–911.

The chapter titled “Jing shen xun” 精神訓 (Quintessential Spirit) in the *Huainanzi* says:

古未有天地之時，惟像無形 ...。有二神混生，經天營地；孔乎莫知其所終極，滔乎莫知其所止息；於是乃別為陰陽，離為八極；剛柔相成，萬物乃形；煩氣為蟲，精氣為人。

In primeval times when there was yet no heaven and earth, there existed only images but no forms. [...] There were two deities born from murkiness, one that established heaven and the other that constructed Earth. So vast! No one knows where they ultimately end. So broad! No one knows where they finally stop. Thereupon they split into *yin* and *yang* and separated into the eight cardinal directions. The firm and the yielding formed each other; the myriad things thereupon took shape. The turbid life-breath became creatures; the refined life-breath became humans.<sup>40</sup>

From the mention of the idea of two vital breaths or energies (*er qi* 二氣) in this passage, we can see that the cosmogony of the Yi peoples is in fact closely related to sayings from ancient Chu. The opening passage of the Yi-peoples' *Creation Account* (*Chuangshi ji* 創世紀) states:

The golden lock controlled the primordial chaos (*hundun* 混沌).

[...]

First [we] recount [the story of] *Ai* 哎 (lit. light-image) and *Bu* 哺 (lit. shape).

When *Ai* and *Bu* had not yet come into being

There were only *Sha* 啥 and *E* 呃.

*Sha* was clear and *E* was murky,

Thus appeared *Ai* and *Bu*.

The clear life-breath (*qing qi* 清氣) was profoundly azure;

The murky life-breath (*zhuo qi* 濁氣) was abundantly crimson.

[...]

*Ju* 局 emerged as the sun's light-image;

And the sun's light-image was glitteringly bright.

*Hong* 宏 manifested as the moon's shape;

And the moon's shape was dazzlingly golden.

40 The original quote has been slightly expanded based on the text in Liu Wendian 劉文典 (1889–1958), *Huainan honglie jijie* 淮南鴻烈集解, ed. Yin Guangxi 殷光熹 (Hefei/Kunming: Anhui daxue chubanshe/Yunnan daxue chubanshe, 1998), 7.218. The English translation has been adapted from Liu An, *The Huainanzi: A Guide to the Theory and Practice of Government in Early Han China*, trans. John S. Major et al. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), 240.

*Nao* 鬧 turned into azure smoke,  
 [...]
 *Nu* 努 became crimson mist.  
 [...]
 When the six shapes had not yet emerged,  
 There was no one who appeared first.  
 When the six shapes had emerged,  
*Ai* and *Bu*, light-image and shape came into being.  
 [...] <sup>41</sup>

Prior to the opening up of the primeval chaos there first were six shapes. This resembles *Zhuangzi's* 莊子 idea of “mounting the changes of the six life-breaths” (*cheng liu qi zhi bian* 乘六氣之變) found in its “Xiao yao you” 逍遙遊 (Free and easy wandering) chapter.<sup>42</sup> These six shapes are sub-divided into clear and murky ones. They represent six corresponding natural phenomena of the sky that can be tabularized as follows:

TABLE 4 Six corresponding natural phenomena of the sky

clear life-breath ( <i>qing qi</i> 清氣)	murky life-breath ( <i>zhuo qi</i> 濁氣)
Sha 啥	E 呃
Ai 哎 (light-image)	Bu 哺 (shape)
Ju 局 (sun)	Hong 宏 (moon)
Nao 鬧 (smoke)	Nu 努 (mist)

During that time there were as yet no heaven and earth, only *Sha* and *Ai*, the clear and the murky life-breath, which correspond to the two deities referred to in the *Huainanzi*, did exist. The Yi peoples' creation epic tells of a sage named Nulouzhe 努婁哲 who began to ascertain the secret of the sky being sealed off.

41 Guizhou sheng minzu yanjiusuo 貴州省民族研究所, ed. *Xinan Yizhi xuan* 西南彝志選 (Guiyang: Guizhou Renmin chubanshe, 1982), 1–5. *Sha* 啥 and *E* 呃 refer to clearness and murkiness respectively. *Ai* 哎 means “light-image” and *Bu* 哺 means “shape.” *Ju* 局, *Hong* 宏, *Nao* 鬧 and *Nu* 努 in turn refer to the sun, the moon, smoke and mist. These names are all transliterations of the original names in the Yi language. Cf. the notes in Guizhou sheng minzu yanjiusuo, ed. *Xinan Yizhi xuan*, 1–5.

42 The actual sentence in the *Zhuangzi* reads: “riding the changes of the six life-breaths” (*yu liu qi zhi bian* 御六氣之辯) with *bian* 辯 being interpreted as *bian* 變, “changes.” See Wang Xianqian 王先謙, *Zhuangzi jijie* 莊子集解 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1987), 1.4. The English translation has been adapted from Burton Watson, trans., *The Complete Works of Zhuangzi* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013 [1968]), 3.

He managed to open the golden lock and thus to open up heaven and earth.<sup>43</sup> Next, the epic relates how a spider casts its warp and woof to weave into being (the outlines of) the sky and the earth. Then “the nine maidens created the sky; the eight lads created the earth. Thousands upon thousands of *Ais* and *Bus* formed everything between heaven and earth.”<sup>44</sup> Is that not exactly what is meant by “establishing heaven and building the earth” (*jing tian ying di* 經天營地) in the *Huainanzi*? Moreover, it seems as though the Han people’s “establishing heaven and administering the earth” (*jing tian wei di* 經天緯地) ideology too has filtered into this account, simply with the addition of the Yi peoples’ idea of a spider conducting the work. The Yi peoples’ division of the sky and the earth into two systems is also somewhat similar to the Near Eastern notion of *an* as Sky and *ki* as earth, with both ideologies showing a dualistic tendency.

Let us now talk about the Naxi people’s creation myth as it is transmitted in the *Dongba Canon* (*Dongba jing* 東巴經). In the pictographic Naxi script (*Geba Naxi* 哥巴納西) its name is written as follows:

TABLE 5 The name of the *Dongba Canon* (*Dongba jing* 東巴經) written in pictographic Naxi script



(*chong* = mankind)



(*ban* = to migrate)



(*tu* = history of origins)

According to Naxi pronunciation the three graphs read *chong-ban-tu*, translating as “the history of the origins and the migration of mankind.”<sup>45</sup> To date there exist five different translations of the *Chongbantutu* which constitutes the most important text among the scriptures of the *Dongba Canon*. The text’s exalted position within the latter testifies to its importance. The main points related in the *Dongba Creation Account* amount to the following:

1. The world in a state of primeval chaos: The existence of the *Dong* 東 and the *Se* 色 deity,<sup>46</sup> and of “stones” and “woods”

43 Jao quotes this line from Guizhou sheng minzu yanjiusuo, ed., *Xinan Yizhi xuan*, 4, n. 7.

44 Ibid, 9.

45 Cf. Lin Xiangxiao 林向尚, “Dui Naxi zu chuangshi shenhua benlai mianmu de tantao – Chuangshiji kai tian pi di jiaozhu zhaji” 對納西族創世神話本來面目的探討 – 《創世紀·開天闢地》校注札記, in Zhongguo shaoshu minzu wenxue xuehui 中國少數民族文學學會 ed. *Shenhua xintan* 神話新探 (Guiyang: Guizhou Renmin chubanshe, 1986), 359–75.

46 *Dong* and *Se* stand for the benevolent deities of *yin* and *yang* respectively. See Yunnan sheng minzu minjian wenxue Lijiang diaochadui 雲南省民族民間文學麗江調查隊, *Naxi zu minjian shishi* 納西族民間史詩 (Kunming: Yunnan Renmin chubanshe, 1960), 1, n. 1.

In times of remote antiquity, when heaven and earth were still in a state of primeval chaos and not yet divided, the *Dong* deity and the *Se* deity arranged the myriad phenomena. Mankind was not yet born; stones were exploding, trees and woods were moving around.

2. “light-images” precede “forms”

When heaven and earth had not yet been separated, there first existed the light-images of heaven and earth. When the sun, the moon and the stars had not yet appeared, there first existed light-images of them. When mountains, valleys, seas, and rivers had not yet formed, there first existed light-images of them.

3. Three, nine, and the correlation between the myriad phenomena (distinguishing between benevolence [*shan* 善], malevolence [*e* 惡], the real [*zhen* 真] and the fabricated [*wei* 偽])

Three brings forth nine; nine brings forth the myriad phenomena. Among the myriad phenomena are “real” and “false” ones, as well as “actual” and “factitious” ones.

4. The hen laying eggs and the white and black life-breath

The real and the actual match and produce the brightly shining sun. The sunlight transforms and produces the turquoise [...] The turquoise in turn transforms and produces clusters of white vapor. The white vapor in turn transforms and produces [...] beautiful sounds. The beautiful sounds in turn transform and produce the benevolent deity Yigewoge 依格窩格. [...]

Yigewoge [...] resorted to magic [*zuo fa* 作法] and changed again, transforming into a white egg. From the white egg hatched a white chicken, [...] which named itself Enyu'enman 恩余恩曼. [...] Enyu'enman laid nine pairs of white eggs. One pair transformed into the sky's deity; another pair transformed into the earth's deity. One pair transformed into the nine brothers who opened up the sky, and yet another pair transformed into the nine sisters who opened up the earth. [...]

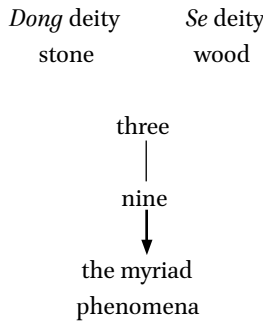
On the other side, when the false and the factitious matched, there appeared the clear cold moon. The moonlight transformed and produced the black onyx. The black onyx transformed and produced one puff after another of black vapor, The black vapor in turn transformed and produced the malevolent deity Yigudingna 依古丁那. [...]

Yigudingna resorted to magic and changed again, transforming into a black egg. From the black egg hatched a black chicken [...] which named itself Fujinannan 負金安南. Fujinannan laid nine pairs of black eggs from which spawned forth nine sorts of de-mons [...] and nine sorts of monsters.<sup>47</sup>

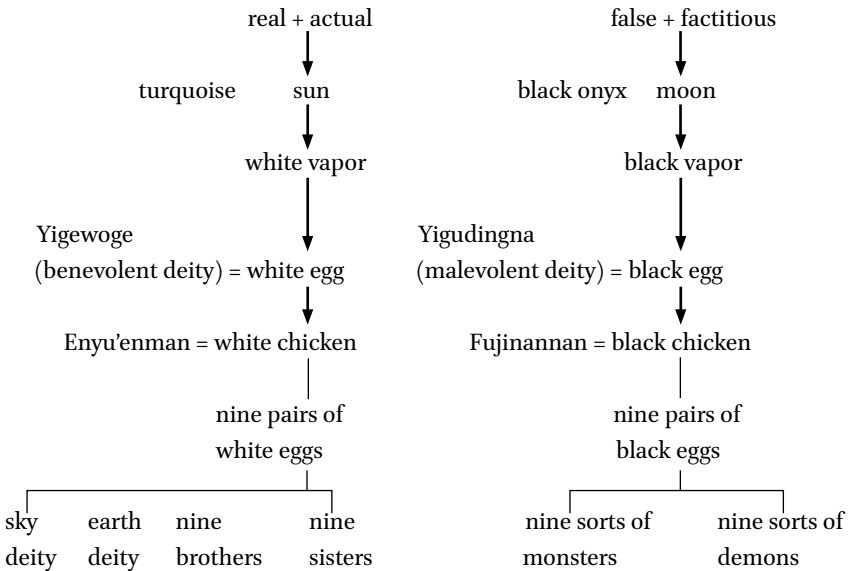
All the different characters appearing in the *Creation Account* may be tabularized as below:

TABLE 6 Different characters appearing in the Dongba *Creation Account*

(1)



(2)



47 Each of the above passages from the Dongba *Creation Account* are cited after the Chinese version in Yunnan sheng minzu minjian wenxue Lijiang diaochaui, *Naxi zu minjian shishi*. The English translation is my own.

Tracing the roots of this cosmogony is a rather intricate undertaking that shall not be attempted here in any detail. I think that there are also links to be found between the Naxi cosmogony and the Yi peoples' creation saga. For instance, the sequence of light-images preceding forms resembles the Yi peoples' differentiation between *Ai* and *Bu*. The idea of black and white vapor too resonates with the Yi conception of two life-breaths, a clear and a murky one; both in turn evolve from the doctrine of two vital breaths or energies (*er qi shuo* 二氣說). The image of the number three bringing forth nine and nine in turn giving birth to the myriad phenomena borrows from the Han people's system of ideas. As to the episode concerning the chicken egg, I suspect this to be inspired at least in part by the Indian *aṇḍa* theory,<sup>48</sup> and in part by the Tibetan belief system. According to the explanations in Fu Maoji's 傅懋勳 translation and study of the Naxi *Creation Account*,<sup>49</sup> the written form of Yigewoge, the deity representing benevolence, "borrows the Tibetan letter ཨ, writing it with a double-stroke as 𑄎." Similarly, the name of Yigudingna, the malevolent deity, is written with a double-stroke as 𑄏 in the *Dongba Canon*, "altering the Tibetan letter ས, representing the sound *na*, by adding a black dot." Black reads nag-po (ནགཔོ) in Tibetan and stands for darkness. These assumptions, however, belong to later theories that have been elaborated on the basis of earlier studies.<sup>50</sup>

What deserves special attention is the part about the primeval chaos. The worshipping of stones and woods reveals early man's perception of the primordial world as consisting of plants and minerals. Citing the scripture pertaining to the greeting of the *Dong* 動 deity ceremony in the "Dongding" 動丁 chapter of the *Dongba Canon*,<sup>51</sup> some scholars have pointed out that the earliest creation deities in Dongba belief are in fact *Dong* 動 (instead of *Dong* 東 [tr. note]) and *Se* 色. These resemble the *yin* and *yang* deities and constitute a pair of siblings who were joined together in matrimony. Thus, the Dongba religion uses stone to symbolize *Dong* and wood to symbolize *Se*. In general, each Dongba rite must involve a spirit stone, the "*Donglu* 動魯," and some wooden figurines called "*Musen* 木森." Sacrificial rice is scattered onto the spirit stone and the

48 Cf. Jao Tsung-i, "Anda lun yu Wu-Jin jian zhi yuzhouguan" 安荼論 (aṇḍa) 與吳晉間之宇宙觀 (The Kashmir Shaivist theory of the four spheres (aṇḍa) and the cosmology of the Wu and Jin periods), in *Xuantang jilin: Shilin xin bian*, 2:573–588.

49 Cited in Lin Xiangxiao, "Dui Naxi zu chuangshi shenhua benlai mianmu de tantao," 366–68.

50 Cf. Lin Xiangxiao "Dui Naxi zu chuangshi shenhua benlai mianmu de tantao."

51 Cf. He Zhiwu 和志武, trans., *Dongba jingdian xuan yi* 東巴經典選譯 (Kunming: Yunnan renmin chubanshe, 1994), 192–99.

wooden figurines are smeared with the blood of sacrificial animals. This suffices to testify to the Naxi people's worship of stones and woods.

In the *Creation Account* the *Dong* 動 deity is called *Dong* 東 (East). According to traditional Chinese glossaries the latter may in fact be explained in terms of the former. For instance, the *Guangyun* 廣韻 (Expanded Rhymes) states: “*Dong* 東 is synonymous with the region of spring, the *Shuowen jiezi* 說文解字 (Explaining simple and compound Graphs) translates it as movement (*dong* 動).” Hence the names *Dong* 東 and *Dong* 動 refer to one and the same deity. Moreover, if “East” figures as “movement” it belongs to the category *yang*.<sup>52</sup> Given that this is correct, it becomes clear that the Dongba myth relates the beginnings of the universe from the times of primeval chaos in dualistic terms. This can be illustrated as follows:

TABLE 7 The beginnings of the universe from the time of primeval chaos depicted in dualistic terms as related in the Dongba myth

<i>Dong</i> 東 (動) deity	<i>Se</i> 色 deity
Stone	Wood
<i>Yang</i>	<i>Yin</i>
Brother	Sister

Two among those pairs symbolize the matrimony of brother and sister, an idea which may have been influenced by the southern Yao people's belief that Fuxi and Nüwa were siblings. Furthermore, the names of deities and spirits appearing in the Naxi's *Dongba Classic* are exceptionally many, clearly bearing characteristics of polytheism. A preliminary count amounted to 2400 names. Evidently, the text of the *Dongba Canon* assimilates multiple outside influences which still await further research.

The majority among the epics of China's minority populations feature creation myths. Here we have only singled out those of the Yi peoples and the Dongba Naxi to allow for comparison. The remainder shall not concern us at the moment.

52 Jao possibly still refers here to the above cited gloss in the *Guangyun*, which continues: “The *yang*-breath moves, its season is Spring” (陽氣動，于時爲春) (Yiwen yinshuguan 藝文印書館, ed., *Jiaozheng Songben Guangyun* 校正宋本廣韻 [Taipei: Yiwen Yinshuguan, 1984], 1.22).

When it comes to legends pertaining to the creation of man, it is noteworthy that in Asia Minor the reason behind this undertaking was to have man serve the gods. Newly excavated clay tablets from the ancient city of Sippar in Iraq feature accounts of a great flood which predate those found in the Bible by about a thousand years. The clay tablets seem to relate that the heavenly deities devised man because lower ranking deities detested and refused to do their work. But “man” – this new species – reproduced too fast and proved to be extremely noisy, thus greatly angering the gods, who thereupon decided to drown all mankind. Only one man and his family were lucky enough to survive. This man was called Atrahasis, meaning “he who possesses wisdom.” He was said to have built an ark, in an episode in Babylonian history closely paralleling the account of Noah in the Bible. The entire epic of Atrahasis has been translated and recorded in René Labat et al., *Les religions du Proche-Orient asiatique: Textes babyloniens, ougaritiques, hittites*.<sup>53</sup> Its content is already widely known and does not need to be repeated here. Atrahasis was the only human still alive on earth after the great flood receded. We find a similar lore in the epics of some ethnic groups from Southwestern China. The Dongba *Creation Account* tells about a great flood overflowing the heavens, sparing only Congrenli 從忍利, the founding ancestor of the Naxi people, who alone managed to survive by hiding himself in a sack made from a bull’s fur and skin, which was suspended on nine iron shackles, three of them tied to a cypress tree, three to a pine tree and another three fastened to a rock. As the Dongba *Creation Account’s* leading character, his struggles with the torrent and his fight for the survival of mankind justifies calling him the Atrahasis of the ethnicities of Southwestern China. Previously, Tao Yunkui 陶雲逵 recounted an episode from the mythology of the Zhangzi 獐子 people from the Lukui 魯魁 mountain region, which says: “In former days a great flood created a disaster which annihilated mankind, sparing a single human named Ap’udamu, also known as Ap’u. Later, the heavenly deity Mumi sent three immortal maidens to descend into the world of mortals to mate with Ap’u. After seven years, the second of the immortals became pregnant and gave birth to a small calabash. Ap’u then divided the calabash into four slices which in turn became the founding ancestors of mankind. The biggest was the ancestor of the Han people, the second that of the Black Yi (Hei Yi 黑夷) (i.e., the Naxi [tr. note]), the third that of the Hani 哈尼 people, while the fourth became the ancestor of the White Yi (Bai

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53 René Labat et al., trans., *Les religions du Proche-Orient asiatique: Textes babyloniens, ougaritiques, hittites* (Paris: Fayard-Denoël, 1970), 26–36.

Yi 擺[白]夷).<sup>54</sup> According to a survey conducted by Ma Xueliang 馬學良 this myth still circulates widely among the Yi-regions of Yunnan today.<sup>55</sup>

Although the names Ap'u and Apsû, the first cosmic deity in the Near Eastern *Creation Epic*, as well as the names of the heavenly deities Mumi and Mummu sound strikingly similar, whether there exists a connection between them is very hard to tell. In the Museum of Yunnan, I once came across a bronze plate excavated from the Jinning 晉寧 mountain area that featured a type of numerical notation using round circles, somewhat similar to those used in ancient Sumer. Who knows, in remote antiquity the Near Eastern flood myth perhaps made its way to Yunnan together with the Western Qiang (Xi Qiang 西羌) minority. This question surely merits further research.

The text from the sixth clay tablet of the Babylonian *Creation Epic* concerns the creation of man from blood extracted from the body of a deity. Chinese legends in turn tell only of man having been sculpted from yellow soil, without the addition of a single drop of blood. The first appearance of this lore is found during the Eastern Han period in Ying Shao's 應劭 (140–206 AD) *Fengsu tongyi* 風俗通義 (Comprehensive Meaning of Customs and Mores). In a lost passage from the latter cited in the *Taiping Yulan* 太平御覽 (Readings of the Taiping era) it says:

俗說天地開闢，未有人民。女媧搏黃土作人，劇務，力不暇供，乃引繩於緹泥中，舉以為人。故富貴者黃土人也，貧賤凡庸者緹人也。

A popular saying has it that when heaven and earth first opened and unfolded there were as yet no humans. Nüwa rolled up yellow soil and fashioned man from it. Untiring though she worked, she lacked the strength to finish her task, so she drew ropes through the mud and raised them to become humans. Thus, wealthy and honorable men are those who have been made from yellow soil, poor and the ordinary men are those who have been made from ropes.<sup>56</sup>

54 Tao Yunkui 陶雲逵, "Dazhai Hei Yi zhi zongzu yu tuteng zhi" 大寨黑夷之宗族與圖騰制, *Bianjiang renwen* 邊疆人文 1.1 (1943), rpt. in idem. *Cheli Baiyi zhi shengming huan: Tao Yunkui lishi renleixue wenxuan* 車里擺夷之生命環：陶雲逵歷史人類學文選, ed. Yang Qingmei 楊清媚 (Beijing: Sanlian shudian, 2017), 154–55.

55 Ma Xueliang, "Lingzhu he tuteng" 靈竹和圖騰, in idem, *Yunnan Yizu lisu yanjiu wenji*, 3.  
56 *Taiping Yulan* 太平御覽, 78.8a–8b, in *Wenyuange siku quanshu* 文淵閣四庫全書 (Taipei: Taiwan shangwu yinshuguan, 1983–1986), 893.748, and also in *Taiping Yulan*, 360.8b, in *Wenyuange siku quanshu*, 896.308. Compare also the English translation in Birrell, *Chinese Mythology*, 35. See also Ying Shao 應劭, *Fengsu tongyi jiaoshi* 風俗通義校釋, coll. and punc. Wu Shuping 吳樹平 (Tianjin: Tianjin renmin chubanshe, 1980), 449.

In the Hebrew Genesis we read: “Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground.” All exegetes agree that the Hebrew word for “man” goes back to the basic meaning of red or yellow soil. In other words, man belongs to the things of the soil. Of even greater interest in this respect is that the Islamic creation myth too knows of man having been created from soil or clay. Studies of the mythological figure of Nüwa, both domestic and international, have so far not paid any attention to this. “El-Hijr,” the fifteenth surah from the Qur’an reads:

26We created man out of dried clay formed from dark mud. [...] 28Your Lord said to the angels, “I will create a mortal out of dried clay, formed from dark mud. 29When I have fashioned him and breathed My spirit into him, bow down before him.”57

The Qur’an further tells about Iblis, as the only one among the angles that refused to do so, saying: “I will not bow to a mortal You created from dry clay, formed from dark mud.”58 He was thereupon banished by the Lord. It is said that man has been created from soil since soil is gentle and possesses nurturing qualities. The devil in turn is said to have been made from fire since fire is associated with fierceness and destruction.59

While in Ying Shao’s account man has been created from yellow soil, the *Qur’an* holds that dried clay and dark mud was used, which is slightly different in color.

Many of the legends pertaining to the creation of man among Chinese ethnic minorities also relate how humans were made up from soil. They list as follows:60

### The Northwest

- |             |  |
|-------------|--|
| The Kazakhs | The sky goddess Jasağan created heaven and earth, and the sun and the moon for their illumination and heating. She further created man from soil. ( <i>Jasağan created the world</i> ) |
| The Uighurs | The sky goddess Ai Sema created Adam and used the soil of the earth to knead him into human shape.   |

57 My English translation follows M. A. S. Abdel Haleem, trans., *The Qur’an: A New Translation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008 [2004]), 163.

58 Ibid.

59 Cf. Qur’an 15.27: “the jinn We created before, from the fire of scorching wind” (Ibid).

60 Compare also the different legends listed in Wu Bing’an, “Chinese Creation Myths: A Great Discovery,” in *China’s Creation and Origin Myths*, eds. Schipper, Ye and Yin, 179–96; and in Mineke Schipper et al., “Anthology of Creation and Origin Myths,” in *ibid*, 277–324.

The Khorchin Mongols      The sky deity Mai Deer used soil to create man. (*The Creation account of the Goddess Mai Deer*)<sup>61</sup>

### The Southwest

The Yi                      Women were made of white soil, men were made of yellow soil. (*The Epic of Adi*)

The Lisu                    The sky deity Mupupha used heavenly soil to sculpt the earth, only from this point onwards were there also humans on earth. (*Creation Account*)

The Benglong (De'ang)      The great deity from the sky above, Gameihehushalmi, used lumps of soil to create man; the first was a male, named Pu, the second was a female, named Mu.

These legends all emerged at later points in history and may well have been adapted from the story of Nüwa, which was by then transmitted into numerous regions.<sup>62</sup>

Apart from these there are also different sayings about the origin of man which are listed below for reference:

The “Genesis” chapter from the *Meige* 梅葛 epic of the Yi      The sky deity Gezi 格滋 created man by casting down three handfuls of snow.

The Yao people’s epic *Miluotuo*      Man was made from beeswax.

The Tu people                      Man was made from stone.

The legend of Fuxi and Nüwa spread into western and southwestern regions at a very early stage.<sup>63</sup> Mentions of Nüwa are found in the earliest accounts of Tibetan lore, and the legend of Nüwa mending the sky figures prominently among the oral literatures of southwestern ethnic minorities.<sup>64</sup> In the Turfan Museum in Xinjiang I came across several paintings depicting Fuxi and Nüwa as two mating figures. These had been excavated from the early Tang tomb of

61 Jao also lists the Khorchin people in this section, however he does not offer any information on their creation myth.

62 Cf. Xiao Bing 蕭兵, “Nüwa kao” 女媧考, in idem, *Chuci yu shenhua* 楚辭與神話 (Nanjing: Jiangsu guji chubanshe, 1987), 329–91.

63 Zhao Hua 趙華, “Fuxi Nüwa zhi xiyuhua” 伏羲女媧之西域化, *Xinjiang Yishu* 新疆藝術 3 (1987): 63–65.

64 Cf. Birrell, *Chinese Mythology*, 69–72, for this episode of the Nüwa legend.

Zhang Xiong 張雄, where they were used to cover the coffin. Hence it is evident that people in the northwest must have been quite familiar with the story of Fuxi and Nüwa from very early on as well. Whether or not the Qur'an appropriated the legend of Nüwa using soil to create man from Han lore is a question worth pondering.

Two different views about the relationship between Fuxi and Nüwa have always existed. One position holds that they were a married couple. Another one refers to them as brother and sister. The latter view also originates from the *Fengsu tongyi*:

女媧，伏羲之妹，禱神祇置婚姻，合夫婦也。

Nüwa, the little sister of Fuxi, prayed to the gods for marriage and the siblings were thus joined in matrimony.<sup>65</sup>

In Li Rong's 李冗 (846–874) *Duyizhi* 獨異志 (Treatise on extraordinary and strange things) it says:

宇宙初生之時，只有女媧兄妹二人，在昆侖山下。

When the cosmos was just born, there were only two humans, Nüwa and her older brother, living below Mount Kunlun.<sup>66</sup>

These legends later became popular in the south and have been appropriated by the Miao and Yao peoples. The episode in the Dongba *Creation Account* describing the primordial cosmic deities Dong and Se in terms of siblings joined in matrimony was clearly influenced by these episodes.

In the mythology of the southern Chinese people of Chu, Bao Xi and Nühuang (wa) constitute humanity's first married couple. Nüwa rolled up yellow soil and created man from it. The Muslim belief that soil is gentle and nourishing resembles the Chinese view in the main.

The Near Eastern *Creation Epic* relates the opening and unfolding of heaven and earth in terms of the marriage between Apsu and Mummu, from which sprang forth Anšar (heaven) and Kišar (earth). The cosmic chaos in turn began

65 This passage is transmitted in De Gui's 德珪 Song dynasty annotations to the "Beginnings of heaven and earth" chapter in Shen Qing's 神清 (fl. first half 9th century AD) Tang dynasty *Beishan lu* 北山錄. See *Beishan lu jiaozhu* 北山錄校注, ed. and annot. Fu Shiping 富世平 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2014), 1.24.

66 *Xuxiu Siku quanshu* 續修四庫全書 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1995–2002), 364.464. See also the English translation in Birrell, *Chinese Mythology*, 35.

with the controversy which arose between the married Apsu and Mummu. In a way, the Near Eastern *Creation Epic* does not escape the pattern comprised in the statement: "The way of heaven and earth exhausts itself in [constellations of] *yin* and *yang*."

In China, the first part of the *Classic of Changes* (*Yijing* 易經) begins with the hexagrams Qian 乾 (pure *yang*) and Kun 坤 (pure *yin*), the second part starts with the hexagrams Xian 咸 (Reciprocity) and Heng 恒 (Perseverance). This arrangement has the beginnings of heaven and earth starting with matrimony. The hexagram Xian reveals the pattern of matrimony, its emphasis lies on the concept of "conjoining through stimulating and responding" (*ganying yi xiangyu* 感應以相與). Xian 咸 is synonymous with *gan* 感 (to stimulate) and stimulation necessarily elicits a response. Hence the commentary on the meaning of the divinatory hexagrams (*tuanci* 彖辭) says:

天地感而萬物化生。聖人感人心而天下和平，觀其所感，而天地萬物之情可見矣。

It is by mutual stimulation of heaven and earth that the myriad things are created. It is by the sage stimulating the hearts and minds of men that All under Heaven finds peace. If we observe how things are stimulated, the innate tendencies of heaven and earth and all the myriad things can be seen.<sup>67</sup>

Thus, in China the concept of Xian, reciprocity through mutual stimulation, symbolizes the mutual stimulation of heaven and earth. This stands greatly at odds with the idea of a married couple fighting each other and a son avenging himself on his father. Other events related in the Near Eastern *Creation Epic*, such as the dividing of Tiamat's carcass to create heaven and earth from it, or the extraction of drops of blood from Kingu to fashion mankind, would have been unimaginable in traditional Chinese thought as well. In this we can grasp the basic disparity between these two cultures. The reason why there is no notion of "original sin" to be found in China merits some in-depth research.

The Near Eastern *Creation Epic* has so far not been translated into Chinese in its entirety. Chinese scholars were only able to cite from it in scraps and fragments; they could not work with the complete text. Neither have there been attempts to further compare its contents with epic material from

67 The English translation has been adapted from Richard John Lynn, trans., *The Classic of Changes: A New Translation of the I Ching as Interpreted by Wang Bi* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 31.

Chinese ethnic minority populations. It is hoped that this study may help to fill this gap. All experts in the field are invited to comment on and correct its shortcomings.<sup>68</sup>

68 The last passage of the original text has been omitted in this translation as it does not directly relate to the article's main argument. Taking the "creation song" of the Miao people as an example, Jao discusses in this passage how the literary form of some of the legends of Chinese ethnic minorities have been influenced by the conventions of Han-Chinese poetic form.

# The Dualist Paradigm of Ancient Chinese History

This article presents a fresh investigation into the formation of the dual systems of the Flame Thearch (Yan Di 炎帝) and the Yellow Thearch (Huang Di 黃帝) found in early Chinese lore.<sup>1</sup> Based on evidence from numerous recently excavated materials, it reviews the transmitted accounts and proposes some new viewpoints on the issue.

## 1

Looked at from the perspective of the textual tradition, the structure of ancient Chinese history appears perfectly well ordered. The “Chang mai” 嘗麥 (Tasting of Wheat) chapter from the *Yi Zhoushu* 逸周書 (Lost Documents of Zhou) recounts: “Heaven brought forth two sovereigns; those were the Red Thearch (Chi Di) and the Yellow Thearch” (天誕二后為赤帝與黃帝).<sup>2</sup> The “Jinyu” 晉語 (Discourses of Jin) chapter from the *Guoyu* 國語 (Discourses of the States) records the following words of high officer Sikong Jizi:

黃帝以姬水成，炎帝以姜水成。成而異德，故黃帝為姬，炎帝為姜，二帝用師以相濟也，異德之故也。

The Yellow Thearch grew up relying on the Ji river; the Flame Thearch grew up relying on the Jiang river. They grew up [obtaining] different essential properties (*de*), thus the Yellow Thearch came to embody [the essential properties] of Ji; the Flame Thearch came to embody [the essential properties] of Jiang. That the two thearchs raised armies to destroy each other was due to their diverging essential properties.<sup>3</sup>

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1 “Gushi de eryuan shuo” 古史的二元說 appeared first in *Shoudu Shifan Daxue xuebao* 首都師範大學學報 4 (1999): 14–9. The present translation follows the version reprinted in *WJ* 1: 131–44.

2 This phrase does not actually appear in the transmitted version of the “Chang mai” chapter. Compare Huang Huaixin 黃懷信, Zhang Maorong 張懋鎔 et al., *Yi Zhoushu huijiao jizhu* 逸周書彙校集注, rev. ed. (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2007), 6.731, for the corresponding passage in the transmitted text.

3 The quote has been slightly expanded based on Xu Yuangao 徐元誥, *Guoyu jijie* 國語集解 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2002), 10.337. The verb translated here as “to destroy,” is actually

Many more sources mention the struggle between the Flame Thearch and the Yellow Thearch which, in general terms, appears as the antagonism between two paradigms. This problem has been addressed before by numerous archaeologists and experts on the history of antiquity.<sup>4</sup>

In recent decades a plethora of new material has been unearthed that needs to be combined and integrated with the old evidence, calling for the subject to be discussed anew. Having pointed this out, I would now like to present my views on the matter for everyone to comment on.

In the *Guicang* 歸藏 (Returning to be stored) manuscript from the wooden Qin slips excavated in Wangjiatai 王家台, Jiangling 江陵 county, there is an oracular statement (*yaoci* 繇辭) that reads:

同人曰昔者黃帝(帝) 与(與) 炎帝(帝) 战(戰)□

“Tongren” 同人 (Fellow men) says: “In former times, the Yellow Thearch and the Flame Thearch did battle.”<sup>5</sup>

This comes from the Yin-period *Guicang* text. The “section on thearchs and kings” (*huang wang bu* 皇王部) in the Song dynasty *Taiping Yulan* cites the *Guicang* as saying:

昔，黃神(帝) 與炎帝爭鬥涿鹿之野，將戰，筮於巫咸曰：果哉而有咎。

In the past, the Yellow Spirit (Thearch) fought with the Flame Thearch in the Wastes of Zhuolu. As they were about to engage in battle, [the Yellow Thearch] had Shaman Xian (Wu Xian) divine the matter by means

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written *ji* 濟 (to help, aid) in the original. Hence in the Chinese version of the present article Jao proceeds to explain: “How should one understand the phrase ‘they raised armies in order to aid each other (*yong shi xiang ji* 用師相濟): Wei Zhao 韋昭 (201–273) notes: ‘濟 should read *ji* 擠. 擠 in turn glosses as *mie* 滅 (to destroy).”

- 4 Jao explicitly lists here only Yan Wenming 嚴文明, “Yan-Huang chuanshuo yu Yan-Huang wenhua” 炎黃傳說與炎黃文化, in idem, *Nongye fasheng yu wenming qi yuan* 農業發生與文明起源 (Beijing: Kexue chubanshe, 2000), 273–83.
- 5 Jingzhou diqu bowuguan 荊州地區博物館, “Jiangling Wangjiatai 15 hao Qinmu” 江陵王家臺15號秦墓, *Wenwu* 文物 (1995) 1: 41. Compare the English translation in Edward L. Shaughnessy, *Unearthing the Changes: Recently Discovered Manuscripts of the Yi Jing (I Ching) and Related Texts* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014), 176.

of stalk divination. The latter exclaimed: "As expected, indeed there will be calamities."<sup>6</sup>

If the Chu manuscript "Tongren" line statement does in fact belong to the *Guicang* text from the *Three Changes* (*San Yi* 三易) the Zhou 周 people used for divination, then this would mean that the legend concerning the clash between the Flame- and the Yellow Thearch was known to the Yin 殷 people and that its origins are surely remote.

A passage from the recovered *Sunzi* 孫子 fragments found among the Yinqueshan 銀雀山 wooden slips reads:

〔黃帝南伐〕赤帝戰於反山(即阪泉)

[The Yellow Thearch to the south attacked] the Red Thearch [...] and did battle in the steppes of Mount Fan (i.e. the springs of Ban [*Ban quan*]) [...].

東伐〔青〕帝至於襄平，戰於平□

To the east he attacked the [Green] Thearch, penetrated as far as Xiangping, and did battle at Ping [...].

北伐黑帝.....至於武隧

To the north he attacked the Black Thearch, penetrated as far as Wusui [...].

西伐白帝，至於武剛。以勝四帝，大有天下，.....天下四面歸之。

To the west he attacked the White Thearch, penetrated as far as Wugang. [...] Having defeated the four thearchs he greatly possessed All-under-Heaven, [...] those from All-under-Heaven turned to him from the four cardinal directions.

湯之伐桀也，.....戰於薄田，

When Tang attacked Jie, [...] he did battle at Botian. [...]

6 *Taiping Yulan*, 79.4a, in *Wenyuange siku quanshu*, 893.752.

武之伐紂……至於鉞遂，戰牧之野。

When King Wu attacked Zhou, he penetrated as far as Jinsui,<sup>7</sup> and did battle on the Plains of Mu.<sup>8</sup>

This passage recounts how the Yellow Thearch pacified the Thearchs from the four cardinal regions. Hence it appears as if initially there had been the Thearchs of the five colors, from which the topic of a struggle between the Flame and the Yellow Thearch emerged later on.

The “Wu zheng” 五正 (Five correct rules) section in the “Jingfa” 經法 (The constancy of laws) passage from the Mawangdui Han tomb silk manuscript (Mawangdui Hanmu boshu 馬王堆漢墓帛書) relates:<sup>9</sup>

戰才(哉)。闢冉乃上起黃帝曰:「可以。……」

War broke out. Yan Ran raised the Yellow Thearch exclaiming: “Now it is time to act.” [...]

黃帝於是出其鏘(斯)鉞，奮其戎兵，身提鼓鞀(枹)，以禹(遇)之(蚩)尤，因而禽(擒)之。帝箸(著)之明(盟，盟)曰:「反義逆時，其刑視之(蚩)尤。」

Thereupon the Yellow Thearch brought out his battle ax and set his troops in motion. He personally took up drums and drumsticks to meet Chi You.<sup>10</sup> Therefore Chi You was taken prisoner and the Thearch swore and announced an oath. Its words were: “Those who go against proper conduct and act untimely will face the same punishment as Chi You.”<sup>11</sup>

7 The pronunciation of the graph 鉞 follows Bai Yulan 白於藍, “Yinqueshan Hanjian jiaoshi” 銀雀山漢簡校釋, *Kaogu* 考古 (2010) 12: 81–2. I thank Linda Leung for pointing this source out to me.

8 Yinqueshan hanmu zhujian zhengli xiaozu 銀雀山漢墓竹簡整理小組, *Yinqueshan Hanmu zhujian* 銀雀山漢墓竹簡一 (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 1985), 32. The English translation has been adapted from Roger T. Ames, trans., *Sun-tzu: The Art of Warfare, The First English Translation Incorporating the Recently Discovered Yin-ch'üeh-shan Texts* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1993), 183–4.

9 The passage actually belongs to the *jing* 經 (classics) or “Shi liu jing” 十六經 (sixteen classics) section in the Mawangdui silk manuscript.

10 For the mythological figure of Chi You see Birrell, *Chinese Mythology*, 50–3, and 296.

11 My English translation of this passage is based on the transcription and annotation in Qiu Xigui 裘錫圭 et al., eds., *Changsha Mawangdui Hanmu jianbo jicheng* 長沙馬王堆

Moreover, in the “Zheng luan” 正亂 (Rectification of disorder) section from the same passage it says:

力黑(牧)曰:「單(戰)數盈六十而高陽未夫，……」

Li Hei (Mu) proclaimed:<sup>12</sup> “The number of wars increased to sixteen and Gao Yang had yet not lost any battle.”<sup>13</sup>

戰盈才(哉)。大(太)山之稽曰:「可以。」於是出亓(其)鏘(折)鉞，奮亓(其)戎兵。黃帝身禺(遇)之(蚩)尤，因而禽(擒)之。剝亓(其)□革以為干侯，使人射之，多中者賞。劓(翦)亓(其)髮而建之天，名曰之(蚩)尤之翬(旌)。……

War broke out fully. Taishanzhiji exclaimed: “Now it is time to act.” Thereupon, bringing out his battle ax and rousing his troops, the Yellow Thearch personally encountered Chi You and captured him. He peeled off Chi You’s [...] skin and turned it into a target for shooting arrows. He had people shoot at it and awarded those who hit the target more accurately. He cut off Chi You’s hair and set it up high (on a flagpole) towards Heaven. He named it “Flag of Chi You.” [...]

腐亓(其)骨肉，投之苦醢(醢)，使天下雝(噤)之。上帝以禁。……

He minced Chi You’s bones and flesh, threw them into a bitter sauce, and ordered those from All-under-Heaven to drink from it. Thence, the Prohibition of Di on High (Shangdi 上帝) was proclaimed. [...]

亓(其)上帝未先而擅興兵，視之(蚩)尤共工。屈亓(其)脊，使甘亓(其)籛(俞)。

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漢墓簡帛集成, 7 vols. (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 2014), 4: 155–7. The original transcription has been slightly updated according to Qiu’s, without interfering with Jao’s reading of the passage. For a different translation see Zhang Chun, and Feng Yu, trans., *The Four Political Treatises of the Yellow Emperor: Original Mawangdui Texts with Complete English Translations and an Introduction* (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 1998), 154.

12 Li Mu is associated with the chief minister of the Yellow Thearch.

13 Gao Yang is an alternative name of the sky god Zhuanxu 顓頊. Cf. Birrell, *Chinese Mythology*, 297.

He who initiates military action prior to (the decision of) Di on High will be treated the same as Chi You. He will be forced to bend his back and made to consume feces.<sup>14</sup>

Among the depictions of the pacification of Chi You the above passage counts as the most detailed description. Many more literary sources record the struggle between the Flame- and the Yellow Thearch, such as the following:

The *Zuozhuan* 左傳 (Zuo Tradition) notes for the 25th year of Patriarch Xi 僖 (634 BC):

狐偃言於晉侯曰：「求諸侯莫如勤王。……」

Hu Yan said to the Prince of Jin, “For seeking the support of the princes no action is better than working on behalf of the Zhou king.” [...]

使卜偃卜之，曰：「吉。遇黃帝戰于阪泉之兆。」

The Prince of Jin had Diviner Yan divine about this. The diviner exclaimed: “Auspicious!<sup>15</sup> I encountered the crack signifying the Yellow Thearch engaged in battle at Banquan.”<sup>16</sup>

In section two of the “Wei ce” 為策 section from the *Zhanguo ce* 戰國策 (Stratagems of the Warring States) we read:

黃帝戰於涿鹿之野，而西戎之兵不至。

The Yellow Thearch did battle in the wastes of Zhuolu, but the armies of the Western Rong did not arrive.<sup>17</sup>

14 The English translation of this passage has been adapted from Zhang and Feng, trans., *The Four Political Treatises of the Yellow Emperor*, 157–60, based on the transcription and notes in Qiu Xigui et al., eds., *Changsha Mawangdui Hanmu jianbo jicheng*, 4: 159–61.

15 Presumably quoting this passage from memory, Jao’s original version up to this point reads: “Patriarch Mu of Qin divined about [the prospect] of working on behalf of the Zhou king and had Huyan prognosticate its auspiciousness (秦穆公卜勤王，使狐偃占之吉). As this passage is explicitly marked as a quote by Jao, my translation follows the actual wording of the transmitted *Zuozhuan* text.

16 *Zuo*, Xi 25.2, 431. The English translation has been adapted from Stephen Durrant, Wai-ye Li, and David Schaberg, trans., *Zuo Tradition. Zuozhuan 左傳: Commentary on the “Spring and Autumn Annals”* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2016), 389–91.

17 Fan Xiangyong 范祥雍, *Zhanguoce jianzheng* 戰國策箋證 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2006), 1325. Compare also the English translation of this passage in J. I. Crump,

The “Dao Zhi” 盜跖 (Robber Zhi) passage in the *Zhuangzi* 莊子 relates:

黃帝不能致德，與蚩尤戰於涿鹿之野，流血百里。

But the Yellow Thearch could not attain such virtue. He fought with Chi You in the wastes of Zhuolu until the blood flowed for a hundred *li*.<sup>18</sup>

The *Yellow River Chart* (Hetu 河圖) says:

玄女出兵符與黃帝，戰蚩尤。

The Dark Lady<sup>19</sup> sent out troops in accord with the Yellow Thearch and did battle with Chi You.<sup>20</sup>

In the “Shiji” 史記 (Historical Records) chapter from the *Lost Documents of Zhou* we read:

昔阪泉氏用兵無已，誅戰不休，……徙居至于獨鹿，諸侯叛之，阪泉以亡。

In former times, Banquan shi<sup>21</sup> ceaselessly employed weapons and fought wars without respite. [...] When he moved his residence to Dulu, the many lords abandoned him and Banquan therefore perished.<sup>22</sup>

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trans., *Chan-kuo Ts'è*, rev. ed. (Ann Arbor: Center for Chinese Studies at the University of Michigan, 1996 [1970]), 393.

- 18 Guo Qingfan 郭慶藩, *Zhuangzi jijie* 莊子集解 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1961), 995. The English translation has been adapted from Watson, trans., *The Complete Works of Zhuangzi*, 256.
- 19 Cf. Birrell, *Chinese Mythology*, 137, for the identity of the Dark Lady.
- 20 This line has been cited by Jao from the *Ju Song Guangyun* 鉅宋廣韻. Cf. Chen Pengnian 陳彭年, *Jusong guangyun* 鉅宋廣韻 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2017), 41.
- 21 Jao notes here that scroll 113 from the *Beitang shuchao* 北堂書鈔 (Book excerpts from the Northern Hall) quotes from the *Liu Tao* 六韜 (Six Secret Teachings) where 阪泉氏 is written “Fanhou shi” 煩厚氏. See Yu Shinan 虞世南 (558–638), *Beitang shuchao* 北堂書鈔 (Tianjin: Tianjin guji chubanshe, 1988), 472. (113.9). Another variant has “Fanyuan shi” 煩原氏. See also Dunhuang P. 2454, “Zhou zhi ershiba guo” 周志二十八國 (The catalogue of Zhou covering twenty-eight states) in *Dunhuang baozang* 敦煌寶藏, ed. Xinwenfeng bianjibu 新文豐編輯部 (Taipei: Xinwenfeng, 1986), 128: 385. The term *shi* 氏 normally translates as “clan.” However, in this context it functions as an epithet for a mythological figure and is thus left untranslated.
- 22 Again, presumably quoting from memory, Jao gives the phrase “When he moved his residence to Dulu” as “he penetrated as far as the wastes of Zhuolu (至於涿鹿之野).” My

The “Da huang bei jing” 大荒北經 (The great wilds of the north) passage in the *Shanhajing* 山海經 (Classic of Mountains and Seas) tells:

蚩尤作兵，伐黃帝，黃帝乃令應龍攻之冀州之野。應龍蓄水，蚩尤請風伯、雨師，縱大風雨。黃帝乃下天女曰魃。雨止，遂殺蚩尤。

Chi You fashioned weapons in order to attack the Yellow Thearch, so the Yellow Thearch commanded Yinglong (Responding Dragon) to launch an attack against him in the wastes of Jizhou. Yinglong stored up all the water, but Chi You asked the Lord of the Wind and the Master of Rain to unleash a great storm. The Yellow Thearch then sent down his heavenly daughter who was named Ba (Drought Fury), and then the rain ceased.<sup>23</sup> Afterwards [Yinglong] killed Chi You.<sup>24</sup>

The legend of Chi You, also known as the Red Thearch, engaging in battle with the Yellow Thearch was presumably already quite popular during the pre-Qin period. However, the name Chi You first appeared in the “Lü xing” 呂刑 (Punishments of Lü) chapter from the *Shangshu* 尚書 (*Book of Documents*), where it says:

蚩尤惟始作亂，延及于平民。……苗民弗用靈，制以刑。

It was Chi You who began to create disorder, which then extended to the general populace. [...] The [rulers of the] Miao people (*Miao min*)<sup>25</sup> did

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translation of the quote follows the transmitted version from the *Yi Zhoushu* as given in Huang Huaixin, Zhang Maorong et al., *Yi Zhoushu huijiao jizhu*, 8.965.

23 Cf. Birrell, *Chinese Mythology*, 132: “Besides his other functions as the god of war and inventor of military weapons, Chi You is a rain god with power over the Wind God (Feng Bo 風伯) and the Rain Master (Yu Shi 雨師). But the Yellow Emperor has control over superior forces, the Responding Dragon (Yinglong 應龍) and Drought Fury, his daughter, who can both afflict the world with severe drought by withholding water and rain.”

24 The original quote has been slightly expanded based on Yuan Ke 袁珂, *Shanhajing jiaozhu* 山海經校注 (Beijing: Beijing lianhe chuban gongsi, 2014), 362. My English translation of this passage from the *Shanhajing* has been adapted from Birrell, *Chinese Mythology*, 134; and Richard E. Strassberg, *A Chinese Bestiary: Strange Creatures from the Guideways through Mountains and Seas* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 221.

25 For the necessary interpretation of the term *Miao min* 苗民 as pointing to the ruler(s) of the Miao people see Qu Wanli 屈萬里, *Shangshu jishi* 尚書集釋 (Taipei: Lianjing, 1983), 252, n. 5. For the possible identity and location of the mytho-historical Miao people mentioned in in pre-imperial Chinese literary sources see Jao Tsung-i, “Mao min, Miao min

not employ [Di on High's] mandate and exercised their power by means of punishments.<sup>26</sup>

Hence, it seems that Chi You was the chief of the Miao people. The “Chang mai” chapter from the *Yi Zhoushu* relates the war between the Yellow Thearch and Chi You in some detail:

命赤帝分正二卿，命蚩尤字于少昊，以臨四方。.....蚩尤乃逐帝，爭于涿鹿之阿。.....

[Heaven] ordered the Red Thearch to distribute the [power of] government among two lords. [The Red Thearch thus] ordered Chi You to go and assist/reside with Shao Hao in order to oversee the four cardinal regions.<sup>27</sup> [...] Chi You thereupon chased the [Red] Thearch and fought with him in the hills of Zhuolu. [...]

赤帝大懼，乃說于黃帝，執蚩尤殺之于中冀.....名之曰絕轡之野。

The Red Thearch became greatly frightened and turned to the Yellow Thearch for help. [Subsequently, the Yellow Thearch] captured Chi You and killed him on the plains of Ji. [...] This place was henceforth called “The wastes of Juepei (lit. cut reins).”

乃命少昊請司(嗣)馬(為)鳥師，以正五帝之官。

The Yellow Thearch ordered Shao Hao to act as “Bird Master” minister and to put the offices of the Five Thearchs in order.<sup>28</sup>

The place where Chi You had reportedly been killed is variously given as *Banquan*, the wastes of *Zhuolu*, the wastes of *Jizhou*, or the Wastes of *Juepei*

kao” 覘民、苗民考, in idem, *Jao Tsung-i xin chutu wenxian lunzheng* 饒宗頤新出土文獻論證, ed. Shen Jianhua 沈建華 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2005), 27–31.

26 *Shu* 47.26–56. Compare also the translation in Bernhard Karlgren, “The Book of Documents,” *Bulletin of the Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities* 22 (1950): 74. My paronomastic reading of *ling* (\*[r]ʰeŋ) 靈 as *ling* (\*riŋ-s) 令 (*ming* 命), “charge” or “mandate” in the sentence “*Miao min fu yong ling* 苗民弗用靈” follows Qu Wanli, *Shangshu jishi*, 252, n. 5.

27 Cf. Birrell, *Chinese Mythology*, 309–10, for the god Shao Hao.

28 My translation of this difficult passage is based on my evaluation of the collected annotations in Huang Huaixin, Zhang Maorong et al., *Yi Zhoushu huijiao jizhu*, 6.731–36.

in different sources. The “Zhengluan” passage from the recovered Mawangdui manuscripts also has Li Hei (Mu) mention the name “Gao Yang.”

By the time of the Han period, at the beginning of the reign of Emperor Wen 文 (r. 180–157 BC), Jia Yi 賈誼 (200–168 BC) wrote in his *Zhi bu ding* 制不定 (Regulations indeterminate):

炎帝者，黃帝同父母弟也，各有天下之半。黃帝行道而炎帝不聽，故戰涿鹿之野，血流漂杵。

The Flame Thearch had the same father and mother as the Yellow Thearch, whose younger brother he was. Each of them possessed one half of the Universe. Whereas the Yellow Thearch followed the way (*dao*), the Flame Thearch did not obey. Thus they fought each other on the wastes of Zhuolu, the blood flowing in streams from their clubs.<sup>29</sup>

This indicates that the two paradigms associated with the Flame and the Yellow Thearch respectively had already been officially established by that time. The “Wu Di de” 五帝德 (Virtue of the Five Thearchs) chapter in the *Da Dai Liji* 大戴禮記 (Records of ritual matters by Dai the elder) depicts the war between the Yellow Thearch and the Flame Thearch on the wastes of Zhuolu as having required three battles before the former reached his goal. The Grand Historian (Sima Qian 司馬遷 [tr. note]) adopted this account when compiling the “Wu Di ji” 五帝記 (Basic annals of the Five Thearchs), adding to it the following details:

蚩尤作亂，不用帝命。於是黃帝乃徵師諸侯，與蚩尤戰於涿鹿之野，遂禽殺蚩尤。

Chi You created disorder and did not employ the Thearch’s charges. It was thereupon that the Yellow Thearch recruited troops among the various allied lords and did battle with Chi You on the wastes of Zhuolu.<sup>30</sup>

He thus equated the Flame Thearch with Chi You, treating them as one and the same person. The *Jingfa* passage belongs to the Warring States *Huang Di shu*

29 Yan Zhenyi 閻振益, Zhong Xia 鍾夏, *Xinshu jiaozhu* 新書校注 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2000), 70. Compare also the translation of this passage in Birrell, *Chinese Mythology*, 132.

30 Sima Qian 司馬遷, *Shiji* 史記 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1982), 1.3. Compare also William H. Nienhauser Jr., ed., *The Grand Scribe’s Records, Volume I: The Basic Annals of Pre-Han China* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), 5, for a slightly different translation of this passage.

黃帝書 (Treatises of the Yellow Thearch). Sima Qian presumably consulted this text at some point and therefore employed its formulation.

To summarize the evidence from the above quoted material, it can be noted that the concept of the Thearchs of the five colors had been reduced to that of the Flame Thearch and Yellow Thearch, which subsequently led to the fundamental dualism in early Chinese history. This view was extremely popular during the Spring and Autumn period, yet its origins are much older than that.

## 2

From the Spring and Autumn period onwards, the opposition between the Flame- and the Yellow Thearch gained political support as well. This started with the institutionalization of the upper and lower *zhi* 峙 sacrificial sites during the reign of Patriarch Ling 靈 of Qin 秦 (r. 424–415 BC). In the “Fengshan shu” 封禪書 (Treatise on the Feng and Shan sacrifices) the *Shiji* 史記 (*Grand Scribe's Records*) records the sacrificial ordinances of the Qin people:

秦襄公既侯，居西垂，自以為主少皞之神，作西峙祠白帝。

After Patriarch Xiang of Qin had become a vassal lord, since his domain was on the western borders [of the confederacy], he adopted the spirit of Shao Hao as his patron deity and set up the *zhi*-altar of the west where he offered sacrifices to the White Thearch.

秦文公……作酈峙，……祭白帝焉。

Patriarch Wen [...] constructed the *zhi*-altar of Fu, where he [...] conducted sacrifices to the White Thearch.

秦宣公作密峙於渭南，祭青帝。

Patriarch Xuan set up the *zhi*-altar at Mi, south of the Wei river, where he sacrificed to the Green Thearch.

秦靈公作吳陽上峙，祭黃帝。作下峙，祭炎帝。

Patriarch Ling constructed at the southern slope of Mt. Wu an upper *zhi*-altar, where he sacrificed to the Yellow Thearch, and a lower *zhi*-altar, where he sacrificed to the Flame Thearch.

秦獻公.....故作畦疇櫟陽而祀白帝。

Patriarch Xian [...] set up the field and garden *zhi*-altar at Yueyang, where he offered sacrifice to the White Thearch.<sup>31</sup>

The Qin only knew of four Thearchs. Moreover, due to Qin's location in the west, offerings made to the White Thearch were especially numerous. That Patriarch Ling constructed an upper and a lower *zhi*-altar at the southern slope of Mt. Wu was because the Yellow Thearch belonged to the realm above and the Flame Thearch to the realm below. The opposition between the two Thearchs was thus for the first time acknowledged and reflected in the official ritual institutions.

Under the Qin there was no notion of a Black Thearch. When Han Gaozu 漢高祖 (r. 202–195 BC) entered the area within the Pass (Guanzhong 關中) in the second year of his reign, he remarked: "I have heard that there are five Thearchs, why are only four of them [worshipped]" (吾聞天有五帝，而有四和也?) As no one was able to offer an explanation, Gaozu exclaimed: "Indeed it is up to me to complete the five" (乃待我而具五也). He accordingly set up a site of worship for the Black Thearch, called the *zhi*-altar of the north. Only then were the five *zhi*-altars corresponding to the Thearchs of the five colors complete. When Gaozu first rose to power, he sacrificed to Chi You and anointed his drums and flags with sacrificial blood; he also ordered an official spirit invoker to set up the sacrifices to Chi You in Chang'an 長安.<sup>32</sup>

That Patriarch Ling of Qin conjoined [the sacrifices for] the Yellow Thearch and the Flame Thearch with the construction of an upper and lower *zhi*-altar, seems to have been influenced by the legend concerning the dual opposition between the two thearchs, which had been popular from the Shang to the Spring and Autumn period.

This dualistic paradigm finds its manifestation in the ritual ordinances. In Yin oracle bone writing one comes across the terms "Upper Ancestors" (*Shangshi* 上示) and "Lower Ancestors" (*Xiashi* 下示).<sup>33</sup> Cao Dingyun 曹定雲

31 *Shiji*, 28.1358, 1360, 1364, 1365. My English translation has been adapted from Burton Watson, trans., *Records of the Grand Historian: Han Dynasty II*, rev. ed. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993 [1961]), 7–11.

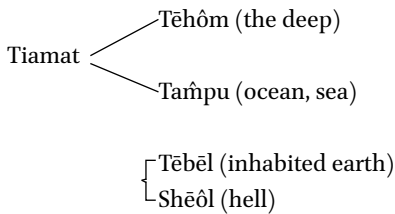
32 Much of this passage is a more or less verbatim quote from the *Shiji*'s "Fengshan shu." Compare also the translation in Watson, trans., *Records of the Grand Historian: Han Dynasty II*, 18–9.

33 Cf. David N. Keightley, *Working for His Majesty: Research Notes on Labor Mobilization in Late Shang China (ca. 1200–1045 BC), as Seen in the Oracle-Bone Inscriptions, with Particular*

has demonstrated that the royal ancestors starting from Zu Yi 且乙 and above were addressed as *Shangshi* 上<sub>上</sub> and those from Zu Xin 且辛 downwards as *Xiashi* 下<sub>下</sub>, thereby combining the appellations of the various temple hosts into two groups.<sup>34</sup> This is different from the Qin people's practice of using an upper and a lower *zhi*-altar to conduct offerings to the two thearchs.

If we look into the ancient history of the West, we find that this dualism also surfaces in epics of the Near East. Linguistic studies found evidence for this dualism going back to the division of the realms of heaven and earth into above and below. In the Near Eastern Creation Epic, which I have translated into Chinese, the slaughtered opponent Tiamat is associated with the negative; she represents the abyss, the primeval ocean, in fact, even hell and the nether world.

TABLE 8 Tiamat and the division of the realms of heaven and earth into above and below in the Near Eastern Creation Epic



The Semitic term *ensetu* (earth) has its origins here. The “Zheng luan” passage’s depiction of Chi You having his hair cut off and his flesh and bones minced and pickled after he was captured closely resembles the situation Tiamat was facing. Since ancient times, defeated [gods] unanimously sink into an abyss, serving as the roots of all evil. This is the same in legends all over the world.

*Attention to Handicraft Industries, Agriculture, Warfare, Hunting, Construction, and the Shang’s Legacies* (Berkeley: Institute of East Asian Studies, University of California, 2012), 334, 347–48.

34 Cao Dingyun 曹定雲, “Lun Yinxi buci zhong de ‘Shangshi’ yu ‘Xiashi’: Jianlun xiangguan de jihe miaozhu” 論殷墟卜辭中的‘上示’與‘下示’:兼論相關的集合廟主, in *Zhongguo kaoguxue luncong: Zhongguo shehui kexueyuan kaogu yanjiusuo jiansuo 40 nian jinian* 中國考古學論叢: 中國社會科學院考古研究所建所40年紀念ed. Zhongguo shehui kexueyuan kaogu yanjiu suo 中國社會科學院考古研究所 (Beijing: Kexue, 1993), 289–97.

## 3

Sikong Jizi 司空季子 of Jin 晉 (d. 622 BC) exclaimed:

昔少典娶于有蟠氏，生黃帝、炎帝。黃帝以姬水成，炎帝以姜水成。.....故黃帝為姬

Formerly, Shaodian took a wife from the Youjiao clan and gave birth to the Yellow Thearch and to the Flame Thearch. The Yellow Thearch grew up relying on the Ji river; the Flame Thearch grew up relying on the Jiang river. [...] Hence the Yellow Thearch became known as Ji and the Flame Thearch as Jiang.<sup>35</sup>

Ji and Jiang serve as place and river names in Yin oracle bone inscriptions (hereafter OBI), with mentions of Qiang 羌 being especially numerous. Furthermore, the graph *qiang* 洸 also functions as the name of a hunting ground (HJ 37233). It has been inferred that the Qiang people constituted the community of the Liujia 劉家 culture. Ji appears in the OBI within the compound Jilu 姬蓁 (麓) (HJ 27547). The “Discourses of Jin” further mention that the Yellow Thearch had twenty-five sons, of whom fourteen obtained surnames, of which there were twelve, Ji 姬, You 酉, Qi 祁, Ji 己 and so forth. Only Qingyang 青陽 and Canglin Shi 倉林氏 were of the same surname, Ji, as the Yellow Thearch. Most of these clan surnames can be verified in Shang oracle bone writing and in bronze inscriptions.<sup>36</sup> Those surnamed Ji among the descendants of the Yellow Thearch were the nephews of Fanglei 方雷; one of them was Yigu 夷鼓, a nephew of Tongyu Shi 彤魚氏. I have been doing some research on Fanglei and Tongyu; their geographical location can still be confirmed to some degree.

The name Leifang appears on the Li *juzun* 盞駒尊 (a bronze beaker cast in the form of a horse with an inscribed front [tr. note]), excavated in Meixian county 郿縣, Shaanxi, in 1955.<sup>37</sup> Its inscription mentions the names “Fanglei Luozi” 方雷駱子 and “Fanglei Zhuizi” 方雷騅子 respectively. Lei also appears as a surname and as a place name, Lei 潘, in Shang OBI. The Zhouyuan 周原 oracle bone fragment H11.113 records: “Chasing rhinoceroses in Xi”

35 *Guoyu jijie*, 10.336–7.

36 Jao refers the reader here to his introduction to the chapter on government officials (*zhiguan renwu* 職官人物) in Jao Tsung-i, *Jiaguwen tongjian* 甲骨文通檢, Vol. 4 (Hong Kong: Zhongwen daxue chubanshe, 1995), 7–31.

37 *JC* 6011–2. See also Constance A. Cook and Paul R. Goldin, eds., *A Source Book of Ancient Chinese Bronze Inscriptions* (Berkeley: The Society for the Study of Early China, 2016), 80–3 for an English translation of the inscription.

(逐寔兕).<sup>38</sup> This refers to the same place as does the “Lu yu” 魯語 (Discourses of Lu) passage: “[King] You met his demise in Xi” (幽每于戲).<sup>39</sup> The vicinity of Xi corresponds to the Xi 戲 river valley east of modern day Lintong 臨潼. The archaeological excavation of Xiduan 西段 village near Lingkou 零口 in the Lintong district belongs to the former territory of the Lirong 驪戎 people.<sup>40</sup>

Tongyu is perhaps a compound place name. In Shang times there has been a Yu 魚 clan. The origins of the name Tong 彤 go back to the Xia 夏 period. The “Xia benji” 夏本紀 (Basic annals of Xia) in the *Shiji* mentions that among those who have been enfeoffed by the ruler of Xia, there was a “Tongcheng Shi” 彤城氏 (lit. “The Clan of the walled city of Tong” [tr. note]). According to the *Shiben* 世本 (Generational records), there was a “Tongshi” 彤氏 known during Zhou times as well. The “Gu ming” 顧命 (Testamentary charge) from the *Shangshu* mentions a Tongbo 彤伯 (Elder Tong). The geographical location of Tong was in Shaanxi. The “Liu guo biao” 六國表 (Chronological table of the Six States) relates: “Lord Shang died in Tong” (商君死於彤).<sup>41</sup> In the southeast of Hua 華 county lies the ancient walled city of Tong where once archaeological discoveries were made. The *Yantielun* 鹽鐵論 (Discourses on salt and iron) was aware of the fact that “Lord Shang was trapped in Pengchi” (商君困於彭池),<sup>42</sup> which refers to the same place. Tongyu Shi might have been the forebear of Tongbo.

A number of extant texts and archaeologically retrieved artifacts may serve to confirm the geographical locations as well as the clan- and surnames associated with the origins of the Flame and Yellow traditions in the sources listed above.

When analyzing the paradigms of ancient history, one needs to take into consideration their various geographical origins. Moreover, apart from the different interpretations of historians and ritualists, there further exist the sayings of planetary prognosticators (*xingzhanjia* 星占家) and military strategists (*bingjia* 兵家).

The names Taihao 太昊, Shaohao 少昊, and Zhuanxu 顓頊 all figure in the texts of the planetary prognosticators, such as in the Mawangdui “Wu

38 Cf. Cao Wei 曹瑋 ed., *Zhouyuan Jiaoguwen* 周原甲骨文 (Beijing: Shijie tushu, 2002), 79.

39 *Guoyu jijie*, 4.172.

40 Jao refers the reader here to the following publication: Liu Hengwu 劉恒武, Hu Lingui 呼林貴, “Xiduan yizhi yu gu Xidi, Lirong diwang tantao” 西段遺址與古戲地、驪戎地望探討, *Yuanwang ji: Shaanxisheng kaogu yanjiusuo huadan sishi zhounian jinian wenji* 遠望集—陝西省考古研究所華誕四十周年紀念文集 (Xi'an: Shaanxi renmin meishu chubanshe, 1998), 234.

41 *Shiji*, 15.723.

42 Wang Liqi 王利器, *Yantielun jiaozhu* 鹽鐵論校注 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1992), 231.

xing zhan” 五星占 (Prognostics of the five planets) manuscript for instance, recorded in the first year of Emperor Qin Shihuang 秦始皇. The text matches the agent “wood” (*mu* 木) from the eastern position (*dongfang* 東方) with the name “Taihao” 大浩, which is precisely the same as “Taihao” 大昊; the thearch associated with the northern position, “Zhuanyu” 湍玉 refers to “Zhuanxu.”

This period saw the integration of the cosmologies of the five planets and the five agents (*wuxing* 五行). The above cited account of the battles between the Yellow Thearch and the thearchs of the four colors from the Yinqueshan slips also comes from a period after the doctrine of the five agents, metal (*jin* 金), wood (*mu* 木), water (*shui* 水), fire (*huo* 火) and soil (*tu* 土) had become prominent.

Before it speaks about the Yellow Thearch and Chi You, the “Zheng luan” passage mentions the name “Gao Yang.” If one looks at the rhymed passage from the inscription on the stone chime of Patriarch Jing 景 of Qin (r. 576–537 BC), which reads: “Gao Yang has numinous power, may the four cardinal regions be led to security and peace” (高陽有靈，四方以鼎平)，<sup>43</sup> and combines it with line “Scion of the High Lord Gao Yang” (帝高陽之苗裔)<sup>44</sup> from the *Lisao* 離騷 (Encountering sorrow), then one finds that at the beginning of the Spring and Autumn period Gao Yang was regarded as the common ancestor of Qin and Chu. Wang Yi 王逸 (89–158 AD) states: “Gao Yang was the epithet of Zhuanxu after he became the ruler over All-under-Heaven” (高陽，顓頊有天下之號)。<sup>45</sup> The “Di xi” 帝系 (Genealogy of Thearchs) chapter in the *Da Dai Liji* recounts:

顓頊娶於騰隍氏女而生老僮，為楚人之先。

Zhuanxu wedded a woman from the Tenghuang clan and gave birth to Laotong, who became the ancestor of the Chu people.<sup>46</sup>

In comparison, the genealogical tables from the various sources mentioned read as follows:

43 The English translation of this passage has been adapted from Martin Kern, *The Stele Inscriptions of Ch'in Shih-huang: Text and Ritual in Early Chinese Imperial Representation* (New Haven: American Oriental Society, 2000), 89–90.

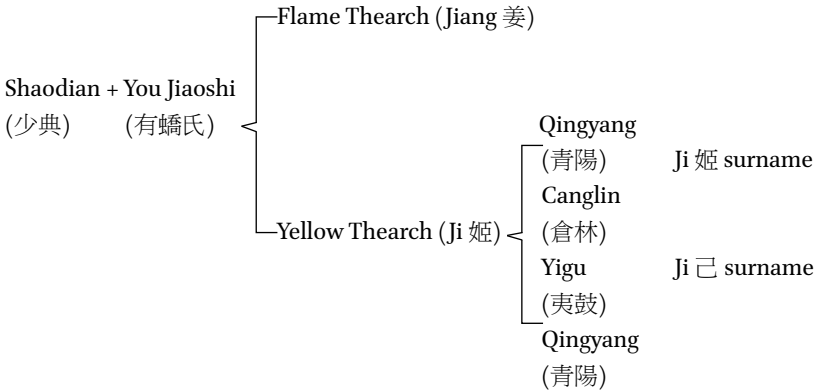
44 Hong Xingzu 洪興祖, *Chuci buzhu* 楚辭補注 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1983), 3. The translation of this line follows David Hawkes, trans., *The Songs of the South: An Ancient Chinese Anthology of Poems by Qu Yuan and other Poets* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1985), 68.

45 *Chuci buzhu*, 3.

46 Jao's quote slightly differs from the original version. See Wang Pinzhen 王聘珍, *Da Dai Liji jiegou* 大戴禮記解詁, punc. and coll. Wang Wenjin 王文錦 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1983), 127.

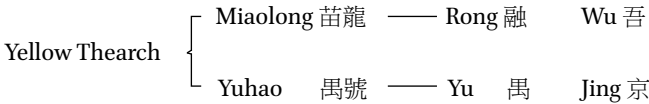
TABLE 9 The genealogy of thearchs in the account of Sikong Jizi 司空季子 in the “Jin yu” 晉語; in the “Da huang dong jing” 大荒東經; and in “Di xi” 帝系 from the *Da Dai Liji* 大戴禮記

The account of Sikong Jizi in the “Jin yu”:

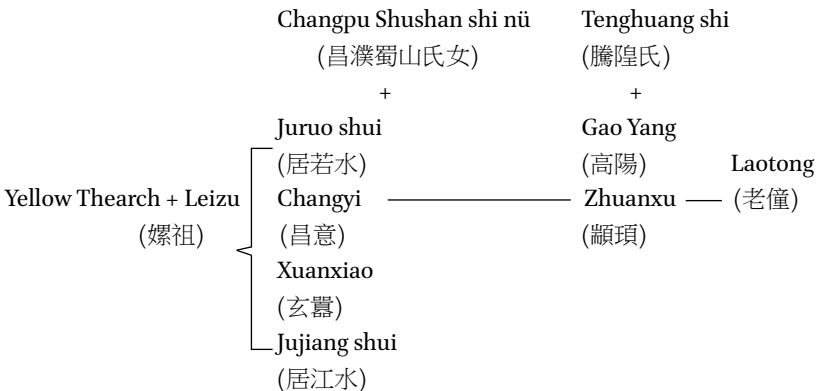


“Da huang dong jing” 大荒東經 (The great wilds of the east):

Quanrong 犬戎 = Baiquan 白犬



*Da Dai Liji*, “Di xi”:



The name Laotong also appears in the wooden slips excavated from tomb 1 at Wangshan 望山:

先老禳、祝〔融〕(一二〇)，媿□各一牂(一二一)，先老禳□(一二二)，融各一羝(一二三)。

First [offerings to] Laochong, Zhu (Rong) (120); [Offer to] Chi and [...] one female sheep each (121); First [offerings to] Laochong and [...] (122); [Offer to] Rong one he-goat each (123).<sup>47</sup>

The graph is written with the signifier *shi* 示 as *chong* 禳 here. The “Chi You zhuan” 蚩尤傳 (Biography of Chi You) in the *Lu shi* 路史 (Stories from the provinces) has Zaixiong 崽熊, which is also written Yixiong 屹熊.

I very much suspect that the reason for the “Da huang dong jing” to name the Yellow Thearch as ancestor of the Rong people goes back to the Western Rong people supporting this version. The variant of Zhuanxu being the descendant of the Yellow Thearch finds further backing in the Chu bamboo manuscript “Wu Wang jian zuo” 武王踐祚 (King Wu ascends the throne) where it says:

王禳(問)市(師)上(尚)父曰:「不智(知)黃帝參(禳)堯(舜)之道才(在)唐(乎)」

The King inquired with Master Shangfu saying: “I do not know where the way of the Yellow Thearch, of Zhuanxu and of Yao and Shun lies.”<sup>48</sup>

參(禳) is to be understood here as a variant of Zhuanxu 顓頊, which the “Wuxing zhan” gives as Zhuanyu 湍玉. The “Wu Wang jian zuo” manuscript clearly lists Zhuanxu after the Yellow Thearch, thus presenting him as one of the Five Thearchs. The “Da huang dong jing” mentions Yujing 禹京 among the descendants of the Yellow Thearch. In the *Guicang* it says: “In the past, Prince Mu divined the hexagram with Yu Qiang” (昔穆王子筮卦於禹強).<sup>49</sup> The “Da

47 See Hubei sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo 湖北省文物考古研究所 and Beijing Daxue zhongwenxi, eds., *Wangshan chujian* 望山楚簡, 78. The numbers in brackets indicate the fragment numbers.

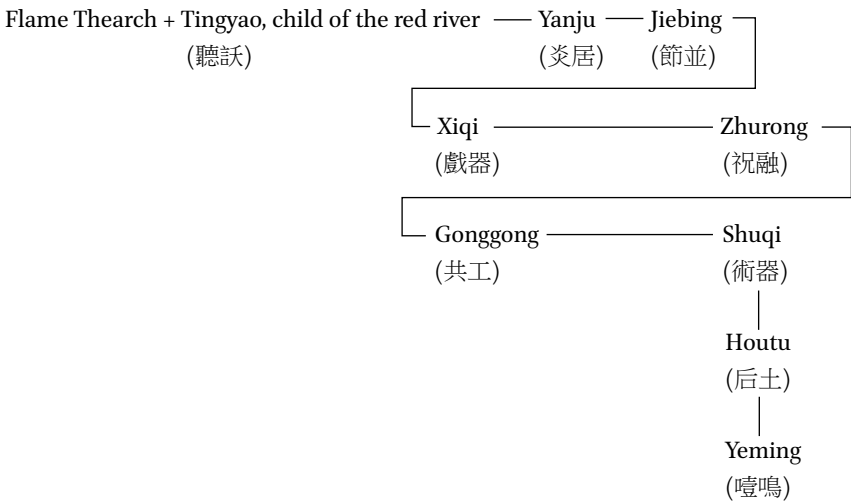
48 Cf. Liao Mingchun 廖名春, *Xinchu Chujian shilun* 新出楚簡試論 (Taipei: Taiwan guji chubanshe, 2001), 264. Jao's original transcription of this passage has been slightly amended according to the transcription produced by Chen Peifen 陳佩芬 in Ma Chengyuan 馬承源, ed., *Shanghai Bowuguan cang Zhanguo Chu zhushu* 上海博物館藏戰國楚竹書, vol. 7 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2007), 151.

49 This line is quoted in Lu Deming's 陸德明 (556–627) *Jingdian shiwen* 經典釋文. See Huang Zhuo 黃焯, ed., *Jingdian shiwen huijiao* 經典釋文彙校 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2006), 754. It does not appear in the excavated *Guicang* manuscript

zong shi” 大宗師 (The great and venerable teacher) chapter in the *Zhuangzi* relates: “Yuqiang got it and stood at the limit of the north” (禹強得之，立於北極).<sup>50</sup> The *Jingdian shiwen* 經典釋文 (Explanative writings to the classical canons) quotes from the Jianwen 簡文: “As to the deities of the Northern Sea, one is named Yujing, he is the grandson of the Yellow Thearch” (北海神也，一名禹京，是黃帝之孫也),<sup>51</sup> thus adopting the version from the *Shanhajjing*. Yet the *Zhuangzi* regards the Yellow Thearch, Zhuanxu and Yuqiang as different strands that are not subordinated to each other.

As to the name “Flame Thearch,” the Warring States Silk Manuscript excavated from Zidanku 子彈庫 in Changsha 長沙 relates: “Thereupon the Flame Thearch commands Zhurong” (炎帝乃命祝融).<sup>52</sup> Gonggong 共工 is known as Zhurong’s son. The name Gonggong appears in the Silk Manuscript as well, where it is written as 豐攻, consisting of the element 叟. The respective passage goes: “Gonggong moves with large steps” (共工 走步).<sup>53</sup> When viewed as a whole, Gonggong too belongs to the order of the Flame Thearch. The Genealogy of the Flame Thearch in the “Hai nei jing” 海內經 chapter from the *Shanhajjing* reads:

TABLE 10 The Genealogy of the Flame Thearch in the “Hai nei jing” 海內經 chapter from the *Shanhajjing* 山海經



from Wangjiatai. My translation of this passage follows Shaughnessy, *Unearthing the Changes*, 154.

50 My English translation of this passage follows Watson, trans., *The Complete Works of Zhuangzi*, 46.

51 See Wang Xianqian, *Zhuangzi jijie*, 2.60.

52 Compare Jao, “Chu Boshu xinzheng,” in idem, *Xuantang jilin: Shilin xin bian*, 3. 860–911.

53 Compare *ibid.*

The records of ancient history are diverse and confused, which makes it very hard to manage them completely. Now, with the help of newly available insights, there gradually emerges an outline, yet it is still impossible to reach final conclusions. One must wait for future archaeological finds to become available in order to conduct further investigations and to re-formulate the results.

The “Jinyu” records that among the sons of the Yellow Thearch, there were two with the name Qing Yang. One shared the surname Ji 己 with Yigu, the other one had the surname Ji 姬 as did Canglin. The accounts in this case vary widely and are not altogether very convincing. Lei Xueqi 雷學淇 believes that the reason why those of the Ji 姬, clan did not obtain the throne was Xuanxiao 玄囂, the son of the Lady Leizu 嫫祖 of the Xiling 西陵 clan. The Chu people offered the territory west of Qingyang, which is now in the vicinity of Changsha, to Qin. There is a Qingyang mound in the Yunyang mountains 雲陽山 in Chaling 茶陵 county. It was there, where Xuanxiao realized his kingdom.<sup>54</sup> However, this is but one possible explanation to bear in mind.

The *Lüli zhi* 律曆志 (Treatise on harmonics and the calendar) in the *Hanshu* 漢書 (*Book of Han*) quotes from a text called *Kao de* 考德 (Investigating virtue), where it says: “Shao Hao was called Qing; this Qing in turn was Qing Yang, the son of the Yellow Thearch” (少昊曰清，清者，黃帝之子青陽也).<sup>55</sup> “Kao de” is the title of the lost chapter 42 from the *Yi Zhou shu*. This quote constitutes a recovered fragment from this chapter. The “Jini neijing” 計倪內經 (Inner classic of the book of the young master of accountancy) chapter from the *Yuejue shu* 越絕書 (Book of the end of the kingdom of Yue) records the following:

臣聞炎帝有天下，以傳黃帝……故少昊治西方，蚩尤佐之，使主金。

I have heard that the Flame Thearch had All-under-Heaven and passed it on to the Yellow Thearch [...] Thus Shao Hao administered the western region, supported by Chi You, whom he put in charge over [the element] metal.<sup>56</sup>

The “Wu xing” 五行 (Five agents) chapter from the *Guanzi* 管子 (Master Guan) relates: “Formerly, the Yellow Thearch obtained Chi You and made Heaven’s

54 Lei Xueqi 雷學淇, *Zhushu jinian yizheng* 竹書紀年義證 (Taipei: Yiwen yinshuguan 1976), 2.

55 Ban Gu 班固, *Hanshu* 漢書 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1962), 21B.1012.

56 Li Bujia 李步嘉, *Yuejueshu jiaoshi* 越絕書校釋 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2013), 110. Compare also the English translation in Olivia Milburn, trans., *The Glory of Yue: An Annotated Translation of the Yuejue shu* (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 153.

way manifest” (昔者黃帝得蚩尤而明天道).<sup>57</sup> Surprisingly the “Jie he” 結和 (Concluding peace) chapter from the *Yantielun* tells us that Xuanyuan 軒轅 did battle at Zhuolu, killed the two Yi 暉 (Hao 昊) and Chi You and thus rose to become Thearch. These kinds of narratives that put the Flame Thearch in front of the Yellow Thearch, having Chi You to assist the latter, or having the Yellow Thearch killing the two Hao’s, all developed at rather late points in time. The more detailed their account, the later their date of composition.

As to the legend of the two Hao’s, Tai Hao 大皞 and Xiao Hao 小皞, I have written another article which discusses this episode in greater detail.<sup>58</sup>

Qiao Zhou’s 譙周 *Gushi kao* 古史考 (Investigations into ancient history) associates the Flame Thearch with Dating shi 大庭氏. In the annotations to the “Zhenling weiye tu” 真靈位業圖 (Diagram of the positions of the perfect numina) from the *Daozang* 道藏 (Repositories of the Dao) we read:

炎帝大庭氏，諱慶甲，天下鬼神之宗，治羅鄴山。

The Yellow Thearch-Dating shi, known by the posthumous title Qingjia, was the Master of ghosts and spirits in All-under-Heaven. He had been in charge of administering Mount Luofeng.<sup>59</sup>

The Paleolithic ruins of Yandunbao 煙墩堡 in Fengdu 酆都 county, Sichuan, testify to the very early human habitation of the area, again suggesting that the Flame Thearch was indeed the common ancestor of the peoples from Chu and Shu 蜀. The name Dating shi also appears in the *Zuozhuan* in the account of the eighteenth year of Patriarch Zhao 昭 (523 BC): “Zi Shen ascended the Dating lineage’s storehouse” (梓慎登大庭氏之庫).<sup>60</sup> The latter was located in Shandong. In the “Shun Dao” 順道 (Following Dao) passage from the Mawangdui manuscripts “the Yellow Thearch asked Li Hei (Mu): ‘When Dating

57 Li Xiangfeng 黎翔鳳, *Guanzi jiaozhu* 管子校注, ed. Liang Yunhua 梁運華 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2018), 15.955.

58 Jao refers the reader here to his “Zhongguo gudai dongfang niaozu de chuanshuo: jianlun taihao, shaohao” 中國古代東方鳥族的傳說——兼論大皞少皞, in Li Yiyuan 李亦園 and Wang Qiugui 王秋桂, eds, *Zhongguo Shenhua yu chuanshuo xueshu yantaohui lunwenji* 中國神話與傳說學術研討會論文集 (Taipei: Hanxue yanjiu zhongxin, 1996), 61–75.

59 Xu Yimin 許逸民, ed., *Youyang zazu jiaojian* 西陽雜俎校箋 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2015), 126, n. 1.

60 *Zuo*, Zhao 18.3, 1394. The English translation of this passage follows Durrant, Li, and Schaberg, trans., *Zuo Tradition*, 1553.

possessed All-under-Heaven [...]” (大草氏之有天下也).<sup>61</sup> The name is written here with the graph 艸, composed with the radical *cao* 艸 (grass). The twenty rulers of antiquity listed in the “Qu qie” 祛篋 (Rifling trunks) chapter from the *Zhuangzi* are “Rongcheng shi 容成氏, Dating shi, Bohuang shi 伯皇氏 [...] Xuanyuan shi 軒轅氏 [...] Zhurong shi 祝融氏, Fuxi shi 伏羲氏 and Shennong shi 神農氏.”<sup>62</sup> The respective periods are numerous and confused, but the name [Dating shi] already appears in excavated manuscripts, even though there is as yet no proof for the epithet Flame Thearch.

To follow Qiao Zhou’s assumption and to regard the Flame Thearch as supreme deity of Fengdu would seem somewhat too fantastic. But if we look at the new and old historical material laid out comprehensively above, we may arrive at two insights:

1. The names of the Thearchs of antiquity mentioned in transmitted texts can all be verified in the accounts from excavated manuscripts; hence they are certainly not completely without basis.
2. From as far back as the line statements from the Yin-period *Guicang*, to as recent as the early Han *Huangdi shu* 黃帝書 (Books of the Yellow Thearch) and the astrological charts from Mawangdui, as well as in the Warring States bamboo and silk manuscripts, do we find evidence for the long pedigree of the story of the struggle between the Flame and the Yellow Thearchs and the respective strands they constitute in ancient Chinese history.

This dualist paradigm must therefore be seen as the result of the collation work of scribes and historians. The paradigm presumably developed from a theogony into a genealogy of ruling Thearchs. The establishment of the upper and lower *zhi* sacrifices by the Qin people led to the deification of the Yellow and the Flame Thearchs, at the same time that the notion of a theocracy in the human realm began to take shape.

In antiquity the recording of history rested in the hands of ritualists in charge of fixing the genealogies of ruling houses. The *Shiben* ranges among the

61 The entire question reads: “The Yellow Thearch asked Li Hei (Mu): ‘When Dating possessed All-under-Heaven he did not differentiate between *yin* and *yang*, he did not count the days, neither did he know the four seasons. And yet heaven opened up timely and the earth brought forth its riches. How did this come about?’” (黃帝問力黑曰：大草(庭) 氏之有天下也，不辨陰陽，不數日月，不志(識)四時，而天開以時，地成以財。其為之若何)。See Qiu Xigui et al., eds., *Changsha Mawangdui Hanmu jianbo jicheng*, 4.170.

62 Guo Qingfan 郭慶藩, *Zhuangzi jishi* 莊子集釋 (Beijing: Zhonghua chubanshe, 2018), 4B.369.

genealogical treatises that are still extant today. Important ritualist writings, such as the “Wu Wang jian zuo” preserved in the *Da Dai Liji*, have also been discovered in Chu burial mounds. Hence, we know this text took its form during the Warring States period and did not originate from the hands of the Han people as some scholars previously doubted. Sima Qian’s “Wu Di ji” discusses the Yellow Thearch, Zhuanxu and Di Ku 帝嚳 quite carefully. Based on the “Wu Di *de*,” it also takes into account the records of the ritualists. Today, based on the evidence found in excavated manuscripts, we may at least affirm that these treatises are indeed of pre-Qin origin and do not constitute Han fabrications.

Although the theory of the dualism of Ancient Chinese history laid out in the pages above presents but an attempt to arrange a vast array of different sayings into a coherent order, there are in fact numerous regional thearchs of antiquity that have not yet been accounted for. To name one example, the discovery of the Sanxingdui 三星堆 culture in Sichuan opened up a whole new chapter in the history of China’s Southwestern civilizations. It is well known that in the Kingdom of Shu 蜀 there was a Wang Di 望帝 (The far gazing thearch) (title of the mythological king Duyu 杜宇 [Cuckoo] [tr. note]). However, Chang Qu’s 常璩 (fl. 291–361 AD) *Huayang guozhi* 華陽國志 (Chronicles of Huayang) says:

開明〔立〕，號曰叢帝，叢帝生盧帝，盧帝攻秦，至雍，生保子帝，帝攻青衣，雄張獠獍。

Kaiming (Enlightened, i.e. Duyu’s likewise mythological successor Bieling 鰲靈 [Turtle Spirit] [tr. note])<sup>63</sup> was installed; his reign title was Cong Di (Thearch of thickets). Cong Di gave birth to Lu Di (Thearch of the hut). Lu Di attacked Qin, reaching as far as Yong. [Lu Di] gave birth to Baozi Di (Thearch protecting the son). [Baozi] Di attacked Qingyi and boldly spread his rule to include the Liao and the Bo tribes.<sup>64</sup>

The *Fengsu tongyi* refers to the latter as “Lubao” 盧保, presumably combining the titles “Lu Di” and “Baozi Di” into one. Prior to the Qin people’s conquest, the region of Shu saw a number of thearchs bearing the title “Lu Di.” In a previous investigation I have shown that the name “Lu Di” appears in Shang OBI, where it is the subject of a Shang attack. The respective inscriptions read:

63 Cf. Terry F. Kleeman, *Great Perfection: Religion and Ethnicity in a Chinese Millennial Kingdom* (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 1998), 22–3.

64 Liu Lin 劉琳, *Huayang guozhi xin jiaozhu* 華陽國志新校注 (Chengdu: Sichuan daxue chubanshe, 2015), 103.

翌甲子伐盧.....陳衛伐盧帝 (HJ 33086)

Attacking Lu on the next *jia-zi* day [...] there while lodging (?) in X, [before] attacking Lu Di.<sup>65</sup>

□.....卜□與虍□ (TN2118)

[...] crack-making [...] reward (?) Lu [...]

伐周、壹(彭)、盧方 (YCo2425)

Attacking Zhou, Peng and Lu Fang.<sup>66</sup>

The character 盧 appears here in three graphic variants. One simply gives the upper part of the character, 虍, another one adds to this the radical *min* 皿, and the last variant enhances the form 盧 with the element *ge* 戈.<sup>67</sup> That the name “Lu Di” indeed existed during the Yin period may serve to verify Chang Qu’s account.<sup>68</sup> These examples further prove that the appellation *di* was also used beyond the central plains.

As there exists no easy solution to the topic under discussion, the above account shall merely present a new perspective, one which may serve to put the issue on somewhat firmer ground. At least the very last passage, which complements the study’s argument with a discussion on Lu Di in the ancient Ba-Shu 巴蜀 region, comes up with some comparatively tangible evidence. I remember it was last year (1998 [tr. note]), when Chen De’an 陳德安 of the Sanxingdui Museum told me during a personal conversation about numerous excavated artefacts relating to Lu Fang that have not been published yet. Very few people are familiar with the fact that the ancient people from Lu Fang employed the title *di*, so perhaps this marks a new discovery which may help to bolster the account in Chang Qu’s work.<sup>69</sup>

65 The graph 衛 is missing in the original. A blank between 陳 and 伐 suggests that this is due to an editorial mistake.

66 I have updated the transcription of this OBI fragment according to Jao’s more recent interpretation of this passage found in his “Yindai lishi dili san ti” 殷代歷史地理三題, in *Jao Tsung-i xin chutu wenxian lunzheng*, 95–114.

67 In his “Yindai lishi dili san ti” (96) Jao amends his view on the last variant, claiming it is composed of 盧 and the element *yue* 戔.

68 Cf. the more detailed discussion on this issue in Jao’s “Yindai lishi dili san ti,” 95–100.

69 The last paragraph has been shortened in the English translation, for it includes many lines that Jao addressed directly to the audience present during his first presentation of this article.

# On the Daoist “Genesis”

The *Genesis* is a literary work composed by the Israelites in the style of oral story telling.<sup>1</sup> In the Hebrew original the name Genesis is *Bereshith* בְּרֵאשִׁית, meaning “in the beginning,” “at first.” The word is etymologically related to the Assyrian *barû* or *banu*. The morpheme *bere* appears also in the Phoenician language, where it is pronounced *bara*. The English name Genesis, in turn, derives from the Ancient Greek word *génésis* γένεσις (origin). The morpheme *gene inter alia* signifies “pedigree.” Hence in addition to relating the creation of heaven and earth as well as the origins of mankind, Genesis also figures as the account of the genealogy of Abraham. If we consider ancient Chinese historiographical and ritualistic writings, we find that apart from etiological myths there are also other categories such as the so called “fixing of the genealogies” (*dian shixi* 奠世系) mentioned in the *Zhouli* 周禮 (Rituals of Zhou).<sup>2</sup> The ancient Near Eastern Creation Epic *Enūma Eliš*, recorded in more than one thousand lines inscribed on seven large clay tablets, begins with the struggle between multitudinous gods, and continues with the triumph of the sun god Marduk and the subsequent erection of the temple. Finally, it narrates the legend of humans having been created from drops of blood extracted [from the body of a rebellious deity], among other tales. Although quite different from the Hebrew Genesis, the *Enūma Eliš* in fact constitutes mankind’s earliest creation account. There is furthermore the *Gilgamesh* epic, recorded on ten clay tablets; these were published by George Smith (1840–1876) in 1872. The account of a great flood in the latter can be compared to the respective passage in the Bible. Although any kind of discussion on morals and ethics is completely missing from the Babylonian epic, it nevertheless provides invaluable help in understanding the historical background of the Near East.

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1 This article was first published as “Lun Daojiao chuangshiji” 論道教創世紀 (On the Daoist “Genesis”) in *Zhongguo wenhua yanjiusuo xuebao* 中國文化研究所學報 5 (1996): 31–8. This translation follows the version republished in *WJ* 5: 177–87.

2 Cf. the passage “Chunguan zongbo” 春官宗伯 (the official for Spring, the minister of cult) in the *Zhouli*, where it says: “The Minor Scribe (*xiao shi* 小史): He is in charge of maintaining the treatises of the states and statelets (*zhang bang guo zhi zhi* 掌邦國之志), of fixing the genealogies (*dian xishi* 奠系世), as well as of determining the Zhao-mu 昭穆 temple sequences” (Sun Yirang 孫詒讓 [1848–1908], *Zhouli zhengyi* 周禮正義 [Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1987 (1899)], 51.2098).

While there is no such text as a *Genesis* to be found in the Daoist canon, the cosmogonies devised by Daoist disciples are even more concerned with the provenance of mankind. Daoism originated in the region of Shu 蜀 in Sichuan, where according to Han lore the first creator figure, Pangu shi 盤古氏 (Coiled Antiquity), initially appeared. Among the personae carved in the mural of the Wen Weng 文翁 stone chamber by the hand of the provincial governor of Yizhou 益州, Zhang Shou 張收, in the first year of the Xingping 興平 era (194 AD) under Emperor Xian 獻 (r. 189–220 AD) at the end of the Eastern Han period, Pangu and Li Lao 李老 (i.e., Laozi 老子 [tr. note]) were found juxtaposed in a position above the genealogy of rulers. It almost seems as if Pangu was regarded as creator of the cosmos. I have previously published an article titled, “Pangu tu kao” 盤古圖考 (An investigation into the chart of Pangu), where I rectify the long held false assumption that the name Pangu first appeared during the Wu 吳 (220–280 AD) period in Xu Zheng’s 徐整 (fl. 220–265 AD) *Sanwu Liji* 三五曆記 (Three and five calendrical records).<sup>3</sup>

Li Lao, who shares the top position with Panggu, presumably is a shortened form for Lord Li Lao (Li Lao jun 李老君). Scroll twelve of the *Guang hongmingji* 廣弘明集 (Expanded collection for the propagation and clarification of Buddhism) quotes the *Xumi tu jing* 須彌圖經 (Chart and scripture of Mount Sumeru) as saying:

寶應聲菩薩化為伏羲，吉祥菩薩化為女媧，儒童應化作孔丘，迦葉化為李老。

The Bodhisattva *Baoyingsheng* (Treasure Response) transformed into Fuxi, Bodhisattva *Jixiang* (Auspicious) transformed into Nüwa, Rutong (Learned-youth) transformed into Kong Qiu (i.e. Confucius [tr. note]), and Kāśyapa transformed into Li Lao.<sup>4</sup>

Thus, Li Lao is regarded here as the reincarnation of Kāśyapa. This may serve to prove that Li Lao indeed refers to Lord Li Lao. Li Lao’s position is furthermore given as on a par with Kong Qiu, Fuxi and Nüwa.

Daoist disciples often tended to plagiarize Buddhist writings. This trend intensified from the Western Jin 晉 period (266–316 AD) onwards, after Wang Fu 王浮 (fl. 290–306 AD) wrote his *Huahu jing* 化胡經 (Scripture on converting

3 Cf. Jao, “Pangu tu kao,” 75–6.

4 Cited in the eighth argument of the monk Minggai’s 明槩 *Juedui Fu Yi fei foseng shi* 決對傅奕廢佛僧事. Cf. Daoxuan 道宣 (596–667), *Guang hongming ji* 廣弘明集 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1991), 12.181. See also Livia Kohn, *Laughing at the Tao: Debates among Buddhists and Taoists in Medieval China* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), 183, for this text.

the Barbarians).<sup>5</sup> The seventh argument in the above cited rebuttal of monk Minggai states: "The *Huahujiing* has been produced by Wang Fu by borrowing from the Biography of Pangu and from the writings of the various [Warring States] masters" (化胡經，王浮所製，或取盤古之傳，或取諸子之篇)，<sup>6</sup> naming the *Pangu zhuan* as the work that Wang Fu had relied on during the Western Jin. Fragments from the original *Huahujiing* are still extant today.<sup>7</sup> The tenth scroll in particular tells of numerous episodes related to the creation of the cosmos in remote antiquity, episodes that may well have originated from the *Pangu zhuan*.

The eleventh transformation statement (*bianci* 變詞) in the *Huahujiing* reads:

十一變之時，生在南方閩浮地，造作天地作有為。化生萬物由〔猶〕嬰兒。陰陽相對共相隨。眾生享氣各自為。番〔蕃〕息眾多滿地池。生活自衛田桑靡〔麻〕。劫數滅盡一時虧。洪水滔天到月支，選擇種民留伏羲。思之念之立僧祇，唯有大聖共相知。

At the time of the eleventh transformation, [Lord Lao] was born in the terrestrial world in the south, where he created heaven and earth and their movements. He transformed and brought forth the myriad phenomena as if giving birth to infants. *Yin* and *yang* appeared in opposition while following upon each other. The multitudinous beings all enjoyed the vital breath and existed by themselves. They multiplied and became so numerous that they filled up the terrestrial pond. They lived defending themselves and cultivating mulberries and hemp. The number of cosmic eras (*kalpas*)<sup>8</sup> was exhausted until it came to a complete end. A great flood filled up the sky until it reached Tokhara. From the selected "seed

5 The exact title of this work reads *Taishang lingbao Laozi huahu miaojing* 太上靈寶老子化胡妙經 (Wondrous Scripture on Laozi's Conversion of the Barbarians from the Great High Numinous Treasure).

6 *Guang hongming ji*, 12.181.

7 This refers to the version transmitted in the Dunhuang manuscripts, P.2007 (scroll one), and P.2004 (scroll 10), the originals being held in the Bibliothèque nationale de France (Jao erroneously gives them as P.2207 and P.2204 respectively). The text of the Dunhuang *Huahujiing* has been transcribed and recorded in Luo Zhenyu 羅振玉 (1866–1940), ed., *Dunhuang shishi yishu* 敦煌石室遺書, in *Luo Xuetao Xiansheng quanji* 羅雪堂先生全集, third series, 20 vols. (Taipei: Wenhua, 1968–1976 [1909]), 6: 2225–77.

8 William Edward Soothill and Lewis Hodous, eds., *A Dictionary of Chinese Buddhist Terms: With Sanskrit and English Equivalents and a Sanskrit-Pali Index* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., 1937 [1934]), 232, glosses the word *jie* 劫 as "a kalpa, aeon, age; also translit. ka; a fabulous period of time, a day of Brahmā or 1, 000 Yugas, a period of four hundred and thirty-two million years of mortals, measuring the duration of the world."

people,”<sup>9</sup> only Fuxi was left alive. In order to commemorate this event, Fuxi set up a *sānghika* (i.e. a complete set of land and buildings for a monastery), which was only known among great sages.<sup>10</sup>

The idea of the “selected seed people” (*xuanzhuo zhongmin* 選擢種民) in these lines is precisely equal to that of the Hebrew “Chosen People.” One might even say that this passage constitutes a miniature version of the Daoist adherents’ Genesis, where in the aftermath of a great flood only Fuxi survives from among humanity’s seed people, as did Noah in the Near East. Depictions of the legend of Fuxi and Nüwa appear widespread among the Han tile paintings excavated in Sichuan. These two figures mark the beginning of humanity in the minds of the Han people. The legend of Fuxi was especially popular in the Northeast, thus Chengji 成紀 county in Gansu is commonly regarded as Fuxi’s mythical birthplace. Due to its transmission through the Qiang 羌 people, the lore of Fuxi has been carried all the way to Tokhara. Curiously enough, one also finds in Tokhara a legend of a great flood.

Starting from Wang Fu, all sorts of creation myths began to subsequently appear in the Daoist canon, some among them emulating the legend of Pangu, such as the *Zhenshu* 真書 (Book of perfects) cited in the Daoist work *Yuanshi shangzhen zhongxianji* 元始上真眾仙記 (The many immortals of the supreme perfectness of the primordial beginning):<sup>11</sup>

昔二儀未分，溟滓鴻濛，未有成形，天地日月未具，狀如雞子，渾沌玄黃，已有盤古真人，天地之精自號元始天王，遊乎其中。……

Formerly, when heaven and earth were not yet separated,<sup>12</sup> when the amorphous mass and the vital energy had not yet shaped into forms,

9 The term *zhong* 種 can be interpreted variously as “seed,” “to plant/establish,” or in the sense of a “religious group” or “communion” (Erik Zürcher. “Prince Moonlight: Messianism and Eschatology in Early Medieval Chinese Buddhism,” *T’oung Pao* 68 (1982) 1/3: 5 n. 10. The translation “seed people” is the most common. Cf. Livia Kohn, ed., *Daoism Handbook* (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 265.

10 Luo Zhenyu, *Luo Xuetang Xiansheng quanji*, 6: 2249.

11 Cf. Kristofer Schipper and Franciscus Verellen, *The Taoist Canon: A Historical Companion to the Daozang*, 3 vols. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2004), 1.107–8, for this text. My translation of this passage is based on the interpretation in Liu Cunren 柳存仁, “Daojiao qian shi er zhang” 道教前史二章, in *Zhonghua wenshi luncong* 中華文史論叢 51 (1993), reprinted in idem, *Hefeng Tang xin wenji* 和風堂新文集 (Taipei: Xin wenfeng, 1997), 241–54.

12 Liu Cunren identifies the term *eryi* 二儀 (lit. two principles) with the concept *liangyi* 兩儀, referring to heaven and earth in the *Xici zhuan* 繫辭傳 (Tradition of attached statements) passage from the *Yijing* 易經 (Classic of Changes).

when heaven, earth, the sun and the moon were not yet complete and the black and yellow primal chaos resembled a chicken's egg, there was already the immortal/perfected Pangu, the essence of heaven and earth, calling himself Celestial King of the Primordial Beginning,<sup>13</sup> who floated amidst the chaos. [...]

復經四劫，二儀始分，相去三萬六千里，崖石出血成水.....

After another four *kalpas* (cosmic eras) had passed, heaven and earth began to separate, creating a distance of 36,000 *li* between them. Blood emanated from the cliffs and stones and turned into water. [...]<sup>14</sup>

元始天王在天中心之上，名曰玉京山。山中宮殿，並金玉飾之，常仰吸天氣，俯飲地泉。復經二劫，忽生太元玉女，在石澗積血之中，.....號曰太元聖母。元始君下遊見之，乃與通氣結精，招還上宮。.....

The Celestial King of the Primordial Beginning resided on Jade Capital Mountain on top of the center of heaven. The palace in the middle of the mountains was adorned with gold and jade. Facing up, he often inhaled the vapor of heaven; when looking down he drank from the springs of the earth. After another two *kalpas* had passed, he suddenly gave birth to the Jade Maiden of the Grand Origin amidst the blood accumulated among the stones and mountain streams [...], whose name was Holy Mother of the Grand Origin. When the Primordial Beginning roamed down to meet her, he penetrated her energy and joined their essences after which he subsequently returned to the highest palace. [...]

太元母生天皇十三頭，治三萬六千歲，書為扶桑大帝東王公，號曰元陽父；又生九光玄女，號曰太真西王母，是西漢夫人。天皇受號十三頭，後生地皇，地皇十一頭，地皇生人皇九頭，各治三萬六千歲。

The Mother of the Grand Origin gave birth to the thirteen-headed Celestial Sovereign, who governed for 36,000 years and became known

13 According to Liu Cunren, the term Tianwang 天王 stands here for the Buddhist concept of Tianzun 天尊, which Soothill and Hodous gloss as "the most honoured among devas, a title of a Buddha, i.e., the highest of divine beings; also used for certain *maharāja* protectors of Buddhism and others in the sense of honoured devas" (Soothill and Hodous, *A Dictionary of Chinese Buddhist Terms*, 145).

14 Jao omits this passage in the original. I have decided to add it to facilitate the understanding of the next passage below.

as the “Eastern King-Patriarch, Great Thearch Supporting the Mulberry;” his name was “Father of the Original Yang”; She further gave birth to the “Mysterious Maiden of the Nine Brilliances,” the Lady of Western Han, whose agnomen was “utmost perfected Queen Mother of the West.” The Celestial Sovereign received the agnomen “Thirteen-headed.” Afterwards he gave birth to the eleven-headed Terrestrial Sovereign. The Terrestrial Sovereign then brought forth the nine-headed Human Sovereign; each of them governed for 36,000 years.<sup>15</sup>

This work is also recognized under the title *Ge Hong Zhenzhongshu* 葛洪枕中書 (Ge Hong’s book in the headrest), although its actual authorship is unknown. One passage that reads: “Hong exclaimed: ‘These matters are remote and obscure, ordinary scholars have no knowledge about this’” (洪曰:此事玄遠,非凡學所知), has presumably been fictitiously ascribed to the name Ge Hong 葛洪 (283–343). Liu Cunren 柳存仁 (1917–2009) considers this work very important. He believes it may be regarded as the Daoist Genesis.<sup>16</sup> The work refers to Pangu in terms of a “perfected man” or “immortal” (*zhenren* 真人), moreover conferring on him the agnomen “Celestial King of the Primordial Beginning (Yuanshi Tianwang 元始天王)” This title further appears in the *Han Wudi neizhuan* 漢武帝內傳 (The inner story of emperor Wu of Han) where it says:<sup>17</sup> “Even when in the ‘chamber of Elixirs’ this Celestial King of the Primordial Beginning was still uttering sublime words” (此元始天王在丹房中仍說微言). The concept of a “Celestial King” can be found both in Buddhist scriptures as well as in the apocryphal *Chunqiu weishuo tici* 春秋緯說題辭 (Synopsis and appraisal of the apocrypha on the Spring and Autumn Annals). It might have made its first appearance in Han times, although it was not yet linked to the name Pangu at that time. In Zhen Luan’s 甄鸞 (535–566) *Xiao Dao lun* 笑道論 (Laughing at the Daoists) from the Northern Zhou 周 period (557–581) we read: “The text [*Yuanshi zhuan* 元始傳 (Biography of master Yuanshi)] says that the Celestial King of the Primordial Beginning, the Highest Lord of the Dao (Taishang daojun 太上道君) and the many celestial deities (Tianshen ren 天神人), developed through the coagulation of spontaneous and pure primordial energy.”<sup>18</sup> Hence the order that puts the Celestial King of the Primordial Beginning in front of the Highest Lord of the Dao must have already been in place by the

15 The original quotation has been slightly expanded following the text in *Zhengtong Daozang* 正統道藏, 61 vols. (Taipei: Xin wenfeng, 1985–1988), 5: 13–4.

16 Cf. his “*Daojiao qian shi er zhang*” 道教前史二章. See n. 164 above.

17 For this text see Schipper and Verellen, *The Taoist Canon*, 1: 115–6.

18 My translation of this passage has been adapted from Kohn, *Laughing at the Tao*, 65.

time of the Northern Zhou. The *Zhenshu* furthermore elevates the Queen mother of the West and the Eastern King-Patriarch by conferring new agnomens on them. Most amusing to read, however, are such fantastic remarks that describe the Three Sovereigns (San Huang 三皇) as having thirteen, eleven and nine heads respectively. Then again, the "Xia lan" 遐覽 (Looking farther afield) chapter in Ge Hong's *Baopuzi* 抱朴子 (Master embracing simplicity) cites the now lost Daoist scripture *San Huang neiwen* 三皇內文 (The apocryphal text of the Three Sovereigns) as consisting of three scrolls, one concerning heaven, one relating to the earth and one dealing with humans.<sup>19</sup> The identification of the Three Sovereigns with the Celestial Sovereign (Tian Huang 天皇), the Terrestrial Sovereign (Di Huang 地皇) and the Human Sovereign (Ren Huang 人皇) seems to appear first in apocryphal texts such as the *Yiwei kunling tu* 易緯坤靈圖 (Diagram of the spirit of the hexagram *Kun*) and the *Chunqiu wei mingli xu* 春秋緯命曆序 (Preface to the ordinances calendar from the apocrypha to the Spring and Autumn Annals), suggesting that this tripartite model was presumably already extant during the Han period. This would explain why one of the era names in the reign of Wang Mang 王莽 (45 BC–23 AD) reads "Terrestrial Sovereign." The *Lu shi yulun* 路史餘論 (Remaining remarks on the stories from the provinces) cites the *Mingli xu* 命曆序 (Preface to the ordinances calendar) as saying: "From the creation of the cosmos until the capture of the unicorn, 3,27,6000 years had elapsed. Sima Zhen 司馬貞 (679–732) follows this count in his *San Huang benji* 三皇本紀 (Basic annals of the Three Sovereigns)." Under the reign of Wang Mang, a work titled *Sanwanliuqian sui li* 三萬六千歲曆 (36,000 year calendar) was produced. Unfortunately, though, the entire material has already been lost. The *Taiping Yulan* cites the *Chunqiu mingli xu* relating: "The Human Sovereign had nine heads. Mounting the cloud wagon, he rode the six fabulous birds; exiting the entrance of the valley, he divided the nine provinces."<sup>20</sup> According to the *Guweishu* 古微書 (Ancient apocryphal texts), the episode further continues as follows: "[The Human Sovereign] erected walled towns for each of the nine provinces. 150 generations [of humans] concurred with a period spanning 45600 years."<sup>21</sup> During the time of Ge Hong all these books were still extant in their entirety and the compilation of the *Sanhuang neiwen* must have relied on these sources.

19 Cf. James R. Ware, trans., *Alchemy, Medicine, Religion in the China of AD 320: The Nei P'ien of Ko Hung (Pao-p'u tzu)* (Cambridge, Mass.: The M.I.T. Press, 1966), 69.

20 *Taiping Yulan*, 78.2b, in *Wenyuange siku quanshu*, 893.745.

21 Sun Jue 孫穀, ed., *Gu wei shu* 古微書, in *Congshu jicheng chubian* 叢書集成初編 (Changsha: Shangwu yinshuguan, 1939), scroll 13, p. 246.

During the Wu and Shu 蜀 (221–263) periods, historians spoke about the Three Sovereigns in various terms. The “Section on heaven” (*tianbu* 天部) from the *Taiping Yulan* cites Xu Zheng’s *Sanwu Liji* as saying:

天地渾沌如雞子，盤古生其中，萬八千歲。天地開辟，陽清為天，陰濁為地，盤古在其中，一日九變，神於天，聖於地。天日高一丈，地日厚一丈，盤古日長一丈。如此萬八千歲，天數極高，地數極深，盤古極長，後乃有三皇。

Heaven and earth were in a state of primal chaos, resembling a chicken’s egg, and Pangu was born amidst, living for 18,000 years. When heaven and earth opened up, the clear *yang* became the sky and the murky *yin* became the earth. In between them, Pangu went through nine transformations each day, turning into the immortals in the sky and into the sages on the earth. The sky grew one *zhang* (ten foot) higher each day, the earth grew one *zhang* thicker each day and Pangu grew one *zhang* bigger each day, continuously for 18,000 years. The sky became extremely high, the earth became extremely deep and Pangu grew to the utmost. Afterwards the three Sovereigns emerged.<sup>22</sup>

The “Section on sovereigns and kings” (*huang wang bu* 皇王部), from the same works quotes three passages from the *Sanwu Liji*:

溟滓始芽，濛鴻滋萌，歲起攝提，元氣肇啟，有神靈人十三(頭)，號曰天皇。

The primal chaos began to sprout and the vital energy started to burgeon, when the yearly cycle set in with *sheti* (the first solar month) and the vital breath kicked off. [At this time] there was a thirteen-headed spirit immortal called the Celestial Sovereign.<sup>23</sup>

有神聖人十二頭，號地皇。

There was a twelve-headed immortal sage called the Terrestrial Sovereign.<sup>24</sup>

22 *Taiping Yulan*, 2.7a, in *Wenyuange siku quanshu*, 893: 181.

23 *Taiping Yulan*, 78.1a, in *Wenyuange siku quanshu*, 893: 744.

24 *Taiping Yulan*, 78.2b, in *Wenyuange siku quanshu*, 893: 745.

有神聖人九頭，號人皇。

There was a nine-headed immortal sage called the Human Sovereign.<sup>25</sup>

Song Jun's 宋均 (d. 76 AD) annotations to the *Mingli xu* state: "The term 'nine heads' refers to 'nine brothers.'"

When it comes to the different sayings about the age of the three Sovereigns, there is yet another variant to be found in Xiang Jun 項峻 of Wu's (ca. 3rd century AD) *Shixue pian* 始學篇 (Essay on beginning studies):

天皇十二頭，號曰天靈，治萬千歲。

The twelve-headed Celestial Sovereign/the twelve Celestial Sovereigns was/were called Celestial Spirit(s), he/they ruled for 18,000 years.<sup>26</sup>

地皇十二頭，治萬八千歲。

There were twelve Terrestrial Sovereigns, each [ruled/lived?] for 18,000 years.<sup>27</sup>

人皇九頭，兄弟各三分，人各百歲。

There were nine Human Sovereigns, each with three brothers; each human [enjoyed a lifespan of] one hundred years.<sup>28</sup>

For an annotation of Xiang Jun's *Shixue pian* see scroll 388 in the *Taiping Yulan*. The *Suishu jingji zhi* 隋書經籍志 (The bibliographic treatise in the Book of Sui) relates that in the Liang 梁 period there existed a work called *Shixue* 始學 (Beginning studies) in twelve scrolls, written by the Wu Gentleman of the Interior (*langzhong* 郎中) Xiang Jun. The biography of Bi Zong 薛綜 in the *Wu zhi* 吳志 (Record of Wu) records a memorial presented to the emperor by the official Hua He 華覈 (219–278 AD) that reads:

25 *Taiping Yulan*, 78.3a, in *Wenyuange siku quanshu*, 893: 745.

26 *Taiping Yulan*, 78.1b, in *Wenyuange siku quanshu*, 893: 744.

27 *Taiping Yulan*, 78.2b, in *Wenyuange siku quanshu*, 893: 745.

28 *Taiping Yulan*, 78.3a, in *Wenyuange siku quanshu*, 893: 745.

大皇帝末年，命太史令丁孚、郎中項峻撰《吳書》，孚、峻俱非史才。

In the last year of his reign, the Great Emperor (i.e., Sun Quan 孫權 [182–252 AD], founder of the state of Eastern Wu during the Three Kingdoms period [tr. note]) commanded the Grand Scribe Ling Dingfu as well as the Gentleman of the Interior, Xiang Jun, to write the *Wushu* (Book of Wu). Yet neither Fu nor Jun is a skilled historian.<sup>29</sup>

The “Tang zhi” 唐志 (The bibliographic treatise in the Book of Tang) also mentions Xiang Jun’s *Shixue pian* in twelve scrolls. Scroll nine in the *Chuxue ji* 初學記 (Notes to first learning) and scroll eleven in the *Yiwen leiju* 藝文類聚 (Classified collection of various matters from the classics and other literature) list this work as well.

According to a quote in scroll 78 from the *Taiping Yulan*, there is, furthermore, Wei Zhao’s 韋昭 (201–273 AD) *Dongji* 洞紀 (Grotto annals), that also presents us with an account of the Three Sovereigns. The *Suishu jingji zhi* lists the *Dongji* as consisting of four scrolls written by Wei Zhao. The work is said to record matters starting from the time of Paoxi 庖羲 (i.e., Fuxi [tr. note]) until the 27th year of the Jian’an 建安 period [sic] in the Han.<sup>30</sup> The biography of Wei Zhao in the *Wu zhi* states: “[I have] composed the *Dongji* by consulting various biographies, investigating their differences and similarities, as well as by choosing from what I have heard” (按傳記考合異同，採摭耳目所及以作《洞紀》).<sup>31</sup> The work itself states: “In antiquity hostages have been counted in heads, just as birds and beasts are nowadays” (古人質，以頭為數，猶今數鳥獸，以頭計也).<sup>32</sup> This means that the phrase *Tianhuang shi’er tou* 天皇十二頭 (lit. “Celestial Sovereign twelve heads”) actually refers to twelve persons.

The *Dongming ji* 洞冥記 (Records of the darkness in the grotto) says: “*Tianhuang shi’er tou* refers to twelve people of the same surname.” Accordingly, nine heads (*jiu tou* 九頭) reads “nine people.”<sup>33</sup>

29 Zhao Youwen 趙幼文, *Sanguo zhi jiao jian* 三國志校箋, ed. Zhao Zhenduo 趙振鐸 (Chengdu: Ba Shu shushe, 2001), 1713.

30 The Jian’an period (196–220 AD) in fact only lasted for twenty-five years. I thank Nicolas Williams for pointing this out to me.

31 *Sanguo zhi jiao jian*, 2001.

32 This line is in fact given as an annotation to the text of the *Dongji* in *Taiping Yulan* 78.1b. See *Wenyuange siku quanshu*, 893.744.

33 Jao remarks here that “the *Tangshu* 唐書 (Book of Tang) names Guo Xian 郭憲 (ca. 1st century AD) as the author of the *Dongming ji*. The *Zhizhai shulu jieti* 直齋書錄解題 of 陳振孫 Chen Zhensun (1179–1262) also says it has been written by the ‘Eastern Han Grand Master for Splendid Happiness (Guanglu dafu 光祿大夫), Guo Xian Ziheng 郭憲子橫: *The Nihon-koku genzai shomokuroku* 日本国見在書目錄 lists the *Dongming*

Thus, initially the interpretation of “heads” as a quantifier for people goes back to Wei Zhao’s *Dongji*. Then again, the “Xiangshui zhu” 湘水注 (Commentary on the Xiang River) in the *Shuijing* 水經 (Water classic) relates:

衡山下有舜廟，南有祝融冢，楚靈王之世，山崩得《營丘九頭圖》。

At the foot of Mt. Heng there is a temple dedicated to Shun. To its south one finds the burial mound of Zhurong. During the time of King Ling of Chu (d. 529 BC) the mound collapsed, exposing the *Yingqiu jiu tou tu* (Chart of the nine heads of Yingqiu).<sup>34</sup>

Compare also Sheng Hongzhi’s 盛弘之 (fl. 4th century AD) *Jingzhou ji* 荊州記 (A record of Jingzhou). The phrase “nine heads of Yingqiu” should be understood in the same way as the description “Great serpent with nine heads” (Xionghui jiu shou 雄虺九首) [we come across in the *Tianwen* 天問 (Heavenly questions) from the *Chuci* 楚辭 (*Songs of the South*) (tr. note)], by interpreting the graph *tou* 頭 as “head” (*shou* 首) (in contrast to *tou* 頭, which may serve both as the word “head” and as a quantifier [tr. note]). The phrase then would describe a phenomenon similar to the anthropomorphic figure depicted with three heads and ox hooves, placed next to the portion of the text relating to the fifth lunar month in the Zidanku Silk Manuscript.<sup>35</sup> Hence the use of *tou* as a quantifier for people represents a later meaning of the term.

In the *Shu zhi* 蜀志 (Records of Shu) from the *Sanguo zhi* 三國志 (Records of the Three Kingdoms) Qin Mi 秦宓 (d. 226) addresses the Grand Protector (Taishou 太守) of Guanghan 廣漢, Xiahou Zuan 夏侯纂 (2nd century AD), saying: “The Three Sovereigns mounted a carriage that took them out of the entrance of the valley, that is present day Xie valley” (三皇乘祗車出谷口，今之斜谷是也).<sup>36</sup> By the time Chang Qu wrote his *Huayang guozhi* he knew that “the ancestral line of Shu 蜀 began with the Human Sovereign; [the polity of

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*ji* as a work in one scroll, dating from the reign of Emperor Wu 武 of Han, written by Guo Xian Ziheng.”

34 Li Daoyuan 酈道元, Chen Qiaoyi 陳橋驛 annot., *Shuijingzhu jiaozheng* 水經注校證 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2013), 894.

35 Cf. Hayashi Minao, “The Twelve Gods of the Chan-kuo Period Silk Manuscript Excavated at Ch’ang-sha,” trans. Noel Barnard, in *Early Chinese Art and its Possible Influence in the Pacific Basin: A Symposium Arranged by the Department of Art History and Archaeology, Columbia University, New York City, August 21–25, 1967*, eds. Noel Barnard and Douglas Fraser (New York: Intercultural Arts Press, 1972), 145–9.

36 *Sanguo zhi jiaojian*, 1324.

Shu] shared its geographical confines with [the polity of Ba 巴].<sup>37</sup> He further quotes from the *Luoshu* 洛書 (Scripture from the Luo River):

人皇始出，繼地皇之後，兄弟九人，分里九州為九囿。

When the Human Sovereign first emerged and succeeded the Terrestrial Sovereign, the nine brothers divided the nine provinces into nine enclosures.<sup>38</sup>

The title *Luoshu* collectively refers to a number of apocryphal texts such as the *Luoshu lingzhun ting* 洛書靈準聽, the *Luoshu zhenyaodu* 洛書甄曜度 and the *Luoshu luyun fa* 雒書錄運法 among others. The recovered fragments of these lost texts are all compiled in the *Guweishu*. In sum, it appears that sayings about the Three Sovereigns thrived during the time of the Three Kingdoms in the context of the study of apocryphal texts on the Confucian Classics (*chenwei* 讖緯). The assertion in Ge Hong's *Zhenzhongshu* that the “thirteen-headed Celestial Sovereign, the eleven-headed Terrestrial Sovereign and the nine-headed Human Sovereign each reigned for 36,000 years” is based on much older evidence. He invented none of this. His *Zhenzhongshu* was originally titled *Yuanshi shangzhen zhongxian ji* 元始上真眾仙記 (The many immortals of the supreme perfectness of the primordial beginning). Mr Liu holds that this book can be taken as the missing Genesis in the Daoist tradition, although he doubts [the authenticity of] the phrases “penetrating the energies and joining the essences” (*tongqi jiejing* 通氣結精) and “the mingling of the two vital energies” (*er qi yinyun* 二氣氤氳) that appear in the *Zhenshu*. Yet in fact the *Xici zhuan* 繫辭傳 (Tradition of attached statements) in the *Classic of Changes* already mentions the joining of male and female essences (*nan nü gou jing* 男女媾精). Moreover, numerous erotic drawings (*mixitu* 祕戲圖) found in Eastern Han rock tombs (*yaimu* 崖墓) in Sichuan may serve to substantiate the frequent mentions of Daoist sexual practices (*fangzhongshu* 房中術, lit. “arts of the bedchamber”) in the *Xiang'er zhu* 想爾注 (Xiang'er commentary [to the *Laozi* (tr. note)]).<sup>39</sup>

37 Jao's quote from the *Huayang guozhi* differs markedly from the original text which reads: “The existence of Shu as a polity, sharing its geographical confines with the polity of Ba, began with the Human Sovereign” (蜀之為國肇於人皇). See Chang Qu 常璩, *Huayang guozhi jiaobu tuzhu* 華陽國志校補圖注, ed. Ren Naiqiang 任乃強 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji, 1987), 3-113.

38 Ibid.

39 See Jiang Yuxiang 江玉祥, *Shilun zaoqi daojiao zai bashu fasheng de wenhua beijing* 試論早期道教在巴蜀發生的文化背景, *Daojia wenhua yanjiu* 道家文化研究 7 (1995): 323-37.

What the *Zhenshu* refers to as “the amorphous mass resembling a chicken’s egg” (溟滓狀如雞黃) is described as “watery chaos” and “cosmic egg” in Western creation accounts. These concepts appear in Phoenician as well as in Indian myths. However, the text’s identification of Pangu as an immortal or perfected man (*zhenren* 真人), bestowing on him the epithet “Celestial King of the Primordial Beginning,” clearly presents a bizarre Daoist version of the Pangu material.

The myths of the Yao Yao people adopted even more Daoist thought. Their *Panhuang ge* 盤皇歌 (Songs of the August Pan) tradition as well as their paintings are not only closely related to the topic of creation myths, they also conflate with Daoist praxis.

Professor Jacques Lemoine once resorted to Henri Maspero’s (1883–1945) theory of the transformation of Laozi to explain this phenomenon.<sup>40</sup> As far as I know, scroll 43 in the *Lingbao duren jing* 靈寶度人經 (Lingbao scripture of salvation) relates:<sup>41</sup>

眼為日月，頭為崑崙，眉為華蓋，髮為山林，腸胃江海，呼吸風雲，聲為雷霆。

[Laozi’s] eyes turned into the sun and the moon; his head became [Mount] Kunlun. His brows turned into the Flowery Canopy;<sup>42</sup> his hair became mountains and woods. His intestines turned into the rivers and the ocean; his breath, into wind and clouds; and his voice became the sound of thunder.<sup>43</sup>

The same account also features in scroll three of this work. From the fact that the *Duren jing* has been annotated by Yan Dong 嚴東 (dates unknown) during the Southern Qi 齊 period (479–502 AD) one can tell its approximate date of composition. In comparison, the first passage, “Zaoli tiandi” 造立天地 (The creation of heaven and earth), in Zhen Luan’s Northern Zhou *Xiao Dao lun* reads:

40 Cf. Jacques Lemoine, and Donald Gibson, *Yao Ceremonial Paintings* (Bangkok: White Lotus Co. Ltd., 1982), passim, for Daoist elements in Yao religious art and for their possible routes of transmission. For Maspero’s theory of the transformation of Laozi see Henri Maspero, *Taoism and Chinese Religion*, rev. ed., trans. Frank A. Kierman Jr. (Melbourne: Quirin Press, 2014 [1981]), 381.

41 Cf. Michel Strickmann, “The Longest Taoist Scripture,” *History of Religions* 17. 3/4 (1978): 331–54; and Schipper and Verellen, *The Taoist Canon*, 2: 1083–4, for this text, the full title of which is *Lingbao wuliang duren shangpin miaojing* 靈寶無量度人上品妙經 (Lingbao Wonderful Superior Scripture of Immeasurable Salvation).

42 The name Flowery Canopy (*huagai* 華蓋) refers to the stellar constellation Cassiopeia and to the lungs in the human body. See Kohn, *Laughing at the Tao*, 55, n. 11.

43 Anonymous, *Lingbao wuliang duren shangpin miaojing* 靈寶無量度人上品妙經, *Zhonghua daozaog* 中華道藏, Vol. 34, (Beijing: Huaxia chubanshe, 2004), 42.606.

太上道君造立天地，《初記》稱.....老子遂變形，左目為日，右目為月，頭為崑崙山，髮為星宿，骨為龍，肉為獸，腸為蛇，腹為海，指為五嶽，毛為草木，心為華蓋。乃至兩腎合為真要父母。

The Highest Lord of the Dao created heaven and earth. The *Chuji* (Record of beginnings) states: “[...] Laozi changed his shape. His left eye became the sun; his right eye turned into the moon. His head became Mount Kunlun; his hair turned into the celestial alignments. His bones turned into dragons; his flesh into wild beasts; and his intestines into snakes. His belly became the ocean; his fingers, the five sacred mountains. The hair on his body turned into grass and trees; his heart into the Flowery Canopy. Last, his testicles joined to become the true father and mother of humankind.”<sup>44</sup>

In the much later *Zaojing* 竈經 (Scripture of the Stove God) we find a somewhat similar account. In the Ming dynasty block printed copy of the *Taishang laojun shuo pingan zaojing* 太上老君說平安竈經 (The Highest Lord of the Dao discusses the scripture of the placation of the Stove God) from my personal collection we read:

爾時太上老君.....在玉境山中，說上界種火之母。玉頂仙說：聖母元君分身下界，化為世界，左眼化為日，右眼化為月，頭髮化為山林樹木，血脈化為清泉，手足化為確磨，舌頭化為簸箕，四肢化為四時，三百六十骨節化為三百六十日。

At the time when the Highest Lord of the Dao [...] resided amidst Jade Realm Mountain, he explained [the meaning of] the mother of the seed-fire in the upper sphere.<sup>45</sup> The Great Immortal from the Jade Peak spoke: “The Holy Mother Goddess reproduced herself in the lower sphere and transformed into the mundane world. Her left eye became the sun; her right eye, the moon. Her hair turned into the mountain forests and woods; her blood-vessels became the clear springs. Her hands and feet

44 *Guang hongming ji*, 9.150. The English translation has been adapted from Kohn, *Laughing at the Tao*, 52–5.

45 Cf. Maspero who states: “[The Daoists of the Six Dynasties] admitted that the Dao, in order to instruct gods and men, takes human form and becomes the Lord of the Dao, Daojun 道君. The personage who had been known in Zhou times under the name Laozi was, to them, the Very High Lord of the Dao, Taishang daojun 太上道君 or, as he was also called, the Very High Old Lord, Taishang laojun 太上老君; the Laozi of the ancient texts is only one of his numerous descents into this world to instruct men and to teach them the way of salvation.” (Maspero, *Taoism and Chinese Religion*, 312).

turned into pestles and grindstones; her tongue became a winnowing pan. Her four limbs turned into the four seasons and her three hundred and sixty joints became [the year's] three hundred and sixty days." (See the plate below)

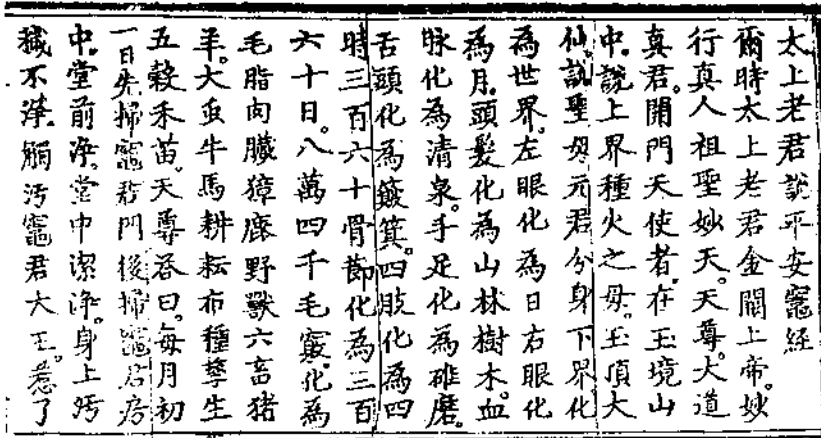


FIGURE 2 Photocopy of the above translated page from the Ming dynasty block printed edition of the *Taishang laojun shuo pingan zaojing* held in Prof. Jao's collection

This passage also developed out of the above cited account. As it took shape comparatively late, its content appears even more bizarre. The Daoist material that Maspero quotes from belongs to exactly this sort of text.

Let us further look at the first scroll from the *Mātāṅga Sutra* (*Modengjia jing* 摩登伽經):

If we were born from Brahmā (*Fantian* 梵天), everyone would be the same. [...] Again, according to your [i.e. Brahman] laws, the Self-existing one in the heavens (*zi zai tian zhe* 自在天者) created the world. His head became the heavens; his feet turned into the earth. His eyes became the sun and moon; his stomach became empty space; his hair turned grasses and trees; his tears, into rivers. His bones became mountains, and his feces and urine all became the sea. All this is something that you Brahmans have wrongly propounded.<sup>46</sup>

46 Cited after *Taishō shinshū daizōkyō* 大正新修大藏經. Compiled by Takakusu Junjirō 高楠順次郎 and Ono Genmyō 小野玄妙 et al., 85 vols. (Tokyo: Taishō shinshū daizōkyō kankōkai, 1988), 21: 402. My translation of this passage has been adapted from

If we compare this text with the Daoist sayings discussed so far, the traces of copying and borrowing appear obvious. Upon close reading, however, it becomes evident that this passage from the *Mātaṅga Sutra* presents the Buddhist objection that there is no true meaning in the Vedic scriptures; hence it labels the above cited account as Brahman nonsense. Its wording is clearly intended to denounce the sayings of the *Vedas*. The epithet “Self-existing one in the Heavens” stands for Maheśvara, which in Chinese translation simply means “self-existing in the heavens.”<sup>47</sup> Cave number eight from the Yungang grottoes (*Yungang shiku* 雲岡石窟) features a statue of Maheśvara. What the *Mātaṅga Sutra* translates as *Fantian* 梵天 is the god Shiva from the Indian pantheon,<sup>48</sup> the term *Veda* refers here to the ninetieth hymn in the tenth book of the *Rig-Veda*, titled “Puruṣa” (giant/colossus).<sup>49</sup>

The following passages from the latter may serve as an example of how the Indian *Vedas* relate the idea of Puruṣa:

*sahasraśīrṣā puruṣaḥ sahasrākṣaḥ sahasrapāt*  
*sa bhūmiṃ viśvato vṛtvāty atiṣṭhad daśāṅgulam*

A thousand heads hath Puruṣa, a thousand eyes, a thousand feet.  
On every side pervading earth he fills a space ten fingers wide. (1)

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Rolf W. Giebel, trans., “The Mātaṅga Sutra,” in *Esoteric Texts*, ed. Bukkyō Dendō Kyōkai America, Inc (Moraga: BDK America, Inc., 2015), 51.

47 Jao bases his translation on entry 318 in the *Mahāvīyutpatti* (*Fanyi mingyi daji* 翻譯名義大集 [Great volume of precise understanding]). See Sakaki Ryōsaborō 榊亮三郎, *Fan Zang Han He siyi duijiao fanyi mingyi daji* 梵藏漢和四譯對校翻譯名義大集, 2 vols. (Taipei: Huayu chubanshe, 1986), 1: 221. Jao gives the transcription of the Sanskrit name महेश्वर according to the *Mahāvīyutpatti* as “Maheçvaraḥ.” I have chosen the more common transcription Maheśvara for this translation. According to Soothill and Hodous, however, the appellation *zi zai tian* 自在天 translates as *Īsvara*deva, a title of Shiva, king of devas. Maheśvara, in turn, presents an alternative title of Shiva, which translates into Chinese as *da zi zai tian* 大自在天 (lit. the Great Self-existing one in the Heavens). See Soothill and Hodous, *A Dictionary of Chinese Buddhist Terms*, 218. Yet Jao might have, perhaps rightly so, understood the name *zi zai tian* as *da zi zai tian*, as he refers to the latter below.

48 I believe there must have been an authorial or editorial mistake, as the term *Fantian* unequivocally translates the Sanskrit name *Brahmaveda* or *Brahmā*, the ruler of this world. See Soothill and Hodous, *A Dictionary of Chinese Buddhist Terms*, 353.

49 Jao translates the name Puruṣa somewhat ambiguously as *juven* 巨人 (giant or colossus). A more common English translation for the name Puruṣa, as it appears in the *Rig-Veda*, is “primordial being” or “cosmic man.” Cf. Klaus K. Klostermair, *A Survey of Hinduism*, 3rd edition (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2007 [1989]), 87.

*puruṣa evedaṃ sarvaṃ yad bhūtaṃ yac ca bhavyam  
utāmṛtatvasyeśāno yad annenātirohati*

This Puruṣa is all that yet hath been and all that is to be;  
The Lord of Immortality which waxes greater still by food. (2)

*etāvān asya mahimāto jyāyāṃś ca pūruṣaḥ  
pādo 'sya viśvā bhūtāni tripād asyāmṛtaṃ divi*

So mighty is his greatness; yea, greater than this is Puruṣa.  
All creatures are one-fourth of him, three-fourths eternal life in Heaven. (3)

[...]

*yat puruṣeṇa haviṣā devā yajñam atanvata  
vasanto asyāsīd ājyaṃ grīṣma idhmaḥ śarad dhaviḥ*

When Gods prepared the sacrifice with Puruṣa as their offering,  
Its oil was spring, the holy gift was autumn; summer was the wood. (6)

*taṃ yajñam barhiṣi praukṣan puruṣaṃ jātam agrataḥ  
tena devā ayajanta sādhyā ṛṣayaś ca ye*  
They balméd as victim on the grass Puruṣa born in earliest time.  
With him the Deities and all Sādhyas and Ṛṣis sacrificed. (7)

[...]

*yat puruṣaṃ vy adadhuh katidhā vy akalpayan  
mukhaṃ kim asya kau bāhū kā ūrū pādā ucyete*

When they divided Puruṣa how many portions did they make?  
What do they call his mouth, his arms? What do they call his thighs and  
feet? (11)

*brāhmaṇo 'sya mukham āsīd bāhū rājanyaḥ kṛtaḥ  
ūrū tad asya yad vaiśyaḥ padbhyāṃ śūdro ajāyata*

The Brahman was his mouth, of both his arms was the Rājanya made.  
His thighs became the Vaiśya, from his feet the Śūdra was produced. (12)

*candramā manaso jātaś cakṣoḥ sūryo ajāyata  
mukhād indras cāgniś ca prāṇād vāyur ajāyata*

The Moon was gendered from his mind, and from his eye the Sun had birth;  
Indra and Agni from his mouth were born, and Vāyu from his breath. (13)<sup>50</sup>

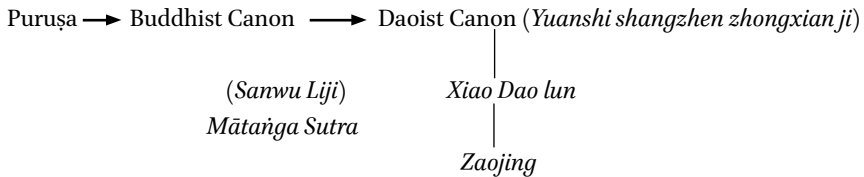
The above cited *Mātāṅga Sutra* has been translated into Chinese by Zhu Lüyan 竺律炎 (fl. third century AD) and Zhi Qian 支謙 (ca. 220–252 AD) during the Wu period. Before that an Eastern Han translation of the text had been produced by An Shigao 安世高 (ca. 148–180 AD). An Shigao came to Luoyang 洛陽 in the first year of the *Jianhe* 建和 era (147–149 AD) under Emperor Huan 桓 (r. 146–168 AD) and later moved to Kuaiji 會稽. Only fragments of An's translation exist today. However, what can be asserted is that through the Eastern Han translation of the *Mātāṅga Sutra* the Vedic concept of a giant deity (i.e., Puruṣa [tr. note]) as well as the myth of Maheśvara (*da zi zai tian* 大自在天), which the Buddhists opposed, had by that time already permeated into China. Later, the material was subsequently appropriated by Daoists.

Hence, we know that the Daoist model of the cosmic creation borrows its ideas from Buddhist scriptures (*Mātāṅga Sutra*). Buddhist scriptures in turn cite and denounce the *Vedas*. These Buddhist scriptures made their way into China just at the end of the Eastern Han period.

This transmission process can be illustrated as follows:

TABLE 11 The appropriation of Buddhist ideas in the Daoist Canon

*Vedas*



50 Jao's original article only includes verses 11–13 from this Vedic hymn. To provide the reader with a better understanding of the myth of Puruṣa, I have decided to quote some of the preceding verses as well. The translation of these passages follows Ralph T. H. Griffith, trans., *The Hymns of the Ṛgveda*, new rev. ed., ed. J. L. Shastri (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1986 [1973]), 602–3.

Therefore, we may further infer that the Pangu creation account in the Daoist canon may have originated from the same source as the Buddhist scriptures. It might be worthwhile to consider this possibility.

The myth about Zhuyin 燭陰 (Torch-Darkness) in the *Shanhaijing* is also very similar in this respect. Guo Pu 郭璞 (276–324 AD) holds that Zhuyin “stands for Zhulong 燭龍 (Torch Dragon). [Zhulong] illuminates the nine-fold darkness, hence derives his name.” *Zhuyin* is the deity of the Bell Mountain (Zhongshan 鐘山), the location of which corresponds to the Kunlun Mountains. This lore might have originated in the West as well. Already in the *Tianwen* passage from the *Chuci* we read: “What land does the sun not shine on and how does the Torch Dragon light it” (日安不到燭龍何照)?<sup>51</sup> Zhulong is the sun god, and its name was already known in Pre-Qin times. One can find its appearance depicted in Chu murals. If it turns out that Zhulong is in fact related to Brahmā, then this would be an example of what Ren Fang 任昉 (460–508) labels “ancient lore” (*gu shuo* 古說) or “pre-Confucian lore” (*xianru shuo* 先儒說) in his discussion on Pangu in his *Shuyiji* 述異記 (Tales of strange matters).<sup>52</sup>

Another Daoist scripture has been regarded as the equivalent of Genesis. This is the *Taishang laojun kaitianjing* 太上老君開天經 (Scripture on the creation of the world by the Highest Lord of the Dao), extracted and copied from the now lost *Da Song tiangong cang* 大宋天宮藏 (Great Song canon of the Heavenly Palace), compiled by Zhang Junfang 張君房 (ca. 10th–11th century AD) on imperial command during the Tianxi 天禧 era (1017–1021 AD) under Emperor Zhenzong 真宗 (r. 997–1022 AD) in the Northern Song period.<sup>53</sup> This scripture quotes the *Taishang lingbao tiandi yundu ziran miaojing* 太上靈寶天地運度自然妙經 (Lingbao scripture on the laws of movement of heaven and earth)<sup>54</sup> in discussing the phenomenon of the obstruction of the earth and the deficiency

51 *Chuci buzhu*, 93. The translation of this passage follows Hawkes, trans., *The Songs of the South*, 44–5.

52 Jao gives the section “Xuanzhongji” 玄中記 (Stories from the midst of mystery) from the collection *Gu xiaoshuo gouchen* 古小說鉤沉 (Rediscovering lost ancient stories) as the source for this text. Yet Ren Fang’s discussion on Pangu is not actually included in the version of the *Shuyiji* found in Lu Xun’s 魯迅 (1881–1936) *Gu xiaoshuo gouchen*, neither does it appear in Guo Pu’s *Xuanzhongji*. We do find a passage on Pangu in the first part of the *Shuyiji* fragments transmitted in Cheng Rong’s 程榮 (ca. 1600) Ming dynasty work *Han-Wei congshu* 漢魏叢書 (Changchun: Jilin Daxue chubanshe, 1992), 697, which has been translated into French by Maspero and subsequently into English by Kierman in Maspero, *Taoism and Chinese Religion*, 381.

53 Cf. Schipper and Verellen, *The Taoist Canon*, 1.108–9. For an English translation of this text see Edward Schafer. “The Scripture of the Opening of Heaven by the Most High Lord Lao,” *Taoist Resources* 7.2 (1997): 1–20.

54 See Schipper and Verellen, *The Taoist Canon*, 1: 241, for this text.

of heaven, relating that after the time of divine ancestor Shaohao 少昊 the number [of revolutions] of the greater “yang-nine” (*yangjiu* 陽九) and the greater “hundred six” (*bailiu* 百六) [cycles] had been 9900; and the number [of revolutions] of the lesser “yang-nine” and the lesser “hundred six” [cycles] had been 3300. This borrows from the older “yang-nine, one-hundred-six” (*yangjiu bailiu* 陽九百六) paradigm dating back to Han times.<sup>55</sup> The *Taishang laojun kaitian jing* also states that the primordial chaos (*hundun* 混沌) bore two sons. After they died, the elder, Huchen 胡臣, became the mountain deity, and the younger, Huling 胡靈, turned into the river god. This saying borrows from the myth of the Giant Spirit Hu (*juling hu* 巨靈胡).<sup>56</sup> The *Suoyin* 索隱 commentary to the “Fengshan shu” in the *Shiji* quotes the *Kuodi zhi* 括地志 (Comprehensive gazetteer) depicting the Yellow River God (Heshen 河神) as the “Giant Spirit Hu, with terrifying strength of hands and kicking feet” (巨靈胡手矍腳踢).<sup>57</sup> The “Heshui zhu” 河水注 (Commentary on the Yellow River) passage in the *Shujing* quotes the following lines from the *Dunjia kaishan tu* 遁甲開山圖 (Chart to open the mountains by use of the hidden shield):

有巨靈胡者，徧得坤元之道，能造山川，出江河。

There was the Giant Spirit Hu. He chanced to obtain the Way of Divine Prime Cause, and he was able to fashion mountains and rivers and send forth rivers and water courses.<sup>58</sup>

Yang Xiong’s 揚雄 (53 BC–18 AD) *Hedong fu* 河東賦 (Rhapsody on Hedong) relates: “The Yellow River Spirit, flinching in fright, grasps Mt. Hua and tramples Mt. Shuai” (河靈矍陽，掌華蹈衰);<sup>59</sup> whereas in Zhang Heng’s 張衡 (78–139 AD) *Xijing fu* 西京賦 (Rhapsody on the Eastern Capital) we read:

55 See Stephen R. Bokenkamp, “Time after Time: Taoist Apocalyptic History and the Founding of the T’ang Dynasty,” *Asia Major* 3rd ser. 7.1 (1994): 59–88, for the idea of “yang-nine, one-hundred-six” (*yangjiu bailiu* 陽九百六).

56 Cf. Schafer, “The Scripture of the Opening of Heaven by the Most High Lord Lao,” 8. See also Birrell, *Chinese Mythology*, 41–2, for the myth of the river god Hu.

57 This line is actually found in the *Zhengyi* 正義 (Correct meaning) commentary which has *dang* 盪 (unrestrained) instead of *jue* 矍. See *Shiji*, 28.1372.

58 *Shujingzhu jiaozheng*, 102. The English translation has been adapted from Birrell, *Chinese Mythology*, 42.

59 *Shujingzhu jiaozheng*, 104. Jao only gives the first verse in the original. The English translation has been adapted from David R. Knechtges, trans., *The Han Shu Biography of Yang Xiong* (53 BC–AD 18) (Tempe: Center for Asian Studies, Arizona State University, 1982), 26.

巨靈轟屬，高掌遠蹠，以流河曲。

The Giant Spirit, exerting great force, reached high with his hands, stretched his legs, thereby allowing the winding Yellow River to flow through [the peaks of Mt. Hua].<sup>60</sup>

In yet another version, Zunlou 尊婁 follows upon Yuan Huang 元皇 (Primal Sovereign); after Zunlou came Goulou 勾婁, and after Goulou came Hexu 赫胥.<sup>61</sup> The *Liu Tao* 六韜 (Six secret teachings) mentions a Zunlu shi 尊盧氏.<sup>62</sup> The latter, as well as Hexu and other names all originate in the *Zhuangzi*. Another tradition has Shaohao follow upon the Yellow Thearch. In the time of Shaohao, Lord Lao descended and became his teacher. Called by the name of Suiyingzi 隨應子 (Responding and fulfilling master), he produced the *Xuanzang jing* 玄藏經 (Scripture of the occult hoard).<sup>63</sup> This tradition further divides Gao Yuan 高原, Gao Yang 高陽 and Gao Xin 高辛 into three generations. The names Suiyingzi, Gao Yuan and so forth, all seem to be fabrications without any supporting historical evidence. The *Xuanzang jing*, however, is mentioned in The *Yunji qiqian* 雲笈七籤 (Cloudy bookcase with seven labels).<sup>64</sup> The saying according to which Lord Lao's mouth emitted this scripture seems even more abstruse, hence there is no need to discuss it here.

60 Xiaotong 蕭統 (501–531 AD) comp., Li Shan 李善 (630–689 AD) annot., *Wenxuan* 文選 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1986), 49. Jao only gives the first verse in the original. The English translation has been adapted from David R. Knechtges, trans., *Wen Xuan or Selections of Refined Literature, Volume One: Rhapsodies on Metropolises and Capitals* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), 183.

61 Zhang Junfang 張君房 ed., *Yunji qiqian* 雲笈七籤 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2003), 27.

62 *Taiping Yulan*, 76.8a, in *Wenyuange siku quanshu*, 893: 733.

63 Chinese original to be found in the 太上老君開天經 (Scripture on the creation of the world, by the Highest Lord of the Dao). The translation has been adapted from Schafer, "The Scripture of the Opening of Heaven by the Most High Lord Lao," 15.

64 *Yunji qiqian*, 28.

# An Investigation into the Chart of Pangu 盤古

## *An Account of Eastern Han Murals from the Shu Region Depicting the Image of “Pangu” as Seen by Renowned Personalities from the Tang and Song Periods*

It is a long-held assumption that the name Pangu 盤古 (Coiled Antiquity) made its first appearance in Xu Zheng’s 徐整 (ca. 220–265 AD) *Sanwu Liji* 三五曆記 (Three and five calendrical records).<sup>1,2</sup> However, in the first of Wang Xizhi’s 王羲之 (321–379 AD) *Shiqi tie* 十七帖 (Seventeen notes) we read:

I know about a lecture hall dating back to the Han period. Under which Han emperor had it been built? I know there are original depictions of the Three August Ones and of the Five Thearchs to be found in it. These are refined and marvelous, and very pleasant to look at. Who could have

- 1 This article first appeared under the title “Pangutu kao” 盤古圖考 (An investigation into the chart of Pangu) in *Zhongguo Shehuikexueyuan yanjiushengyuan xuebao* 中國社會科學院研究生院學報 (1986) 1: 75–6, as well as in *Zhongguo gudai, jindai wenxue yanjiu* 中國古代、近代文學研究 4 (1986). It has subsequently been republished as “Shu Songren suo jian Donghan Shu di kehui ‘Pangu’ de bihua” 述宋人所見東漢蜀地刻繪「盤古」的壁畫 (An account of Eastern Han murals from the Shu region depicting the image of “Pangu” as seen by renowned personalities from the Song period) in *Zhongyang minzuxueyuan xuebao* 中央民族學院學報 63.2 (1989): 8–9. This translation is based on the final, augmented version, “Pangutu kao: Shu Tang-Songren suo jian Donghan Shu di kehui ‘Pangu’ de bihua” 盤古圖考 – 述唐宋人所見東漢蜀地刻繪「盤古」的壁畫 (An investigation into the chart of Pangu: An account of Eastern Han murals from the Shu region depicting the image of “Pangu” as seen by renowned personalities from the Tang and Song periods), republished 2003 in *WJ* 1: 278–82.
- 2 Professor Jao adds a lengthy footnote here stating: “In his *Xianqin shi* 先秦史 (History of the Pre-Qin period) as well as in his *Du shi zhaji* 讀史札記 (Notes on reading historiographical works) Lü Simian 呂思勉 (1884–1957) corroborates his investigations on the topic of Pangu with quotes from the *Sanwu Liji* as well as from the *Wu yun linian ji* 五運曆年記 (Chronicle of the five cycles of time). These are in turn citations from Ma Su’s 馬驢 (1621–1673) Qing dynasty work *Yishi* 繹史 (Unravelling history). According to the latter, the account from the *Sanwu Liji* has been borrowed from Indian sources. Yet Ma Su was not able to quote the original Sanskrit sources to substantiate his claim. Cf. my *Xuantang jilin: Shilin* 選堂集林 史林 (Xuantang’s selected works: Selected works on history), 3 vols. (Hong Kong: Chungwa, 1982), 311 [Anḍa lun yu Wu-jin jian zhi yuzhouguan 安荼論 (anḍa) 與吳晉間之宇宙觀.]”

produced them? I would like to take rubbings of them, but I don't know whether this is possible.<sup>3</sup>

When Zhou Fu 周撫 [Wang's friend, to whom many of the seventeen notes were addressed (tr. Note)] was in Yizhou 益州 (Yi province), Wang Xizhi, "who is not only esteemed as the greatest calligrapher of all times, but who was also a skilled painter,"<sup>4</sup> commissioned him to investigate these paintings of the Three August Ones and of the Five Thearchs produced in Han times. It turned out that this Han period lecture hall had been built by the chief official (*shou* 守) of Shu 蜀 commandery, Wen Weng 文翁 (fl. mid-second century BC) during the reign of Emperor Jing 景 of Han (r. 156–140 BC).<sup>5</sup> The fragmentary remains of the *Yizhou xueguan miao ji* 益州學館廟記 (Record of academies and adjacent temples in Yi province) stone stele inscription read:

[...] Wen Weng was the administrator [of Shu commandery], who was initially drawn to the arts of letters [...] by the time of the hundredth-sixth year of its existence, a disastrous fire [...] [the hall as well as] [...] [Only] the stone chamber remained intact. By the first [year of the Xingping 興平 era (194 AD) of the Han dynasty ... Jupiter] [...] the hall was named the ritual hall of the Duke of Zhou (Zhou Gong 周公). On its [walls] were depictions of Pangu, Li Lao 李老 [i.e. Laozi 老子 (tr. note)] [...], as well as images of the historical thearchs and kings. On the roof beams one could find depictions of Zhongni 仲尼 [i.e. Confucius (tr. note)] [and] his seventy-[two ...], these had been produced by Zhang Shou 張收, a Regional Inspector (*cishi* 刺史) of Yi province. On examining [...] now [all] [...] [the illustrations on the pillars] are even more [refined] and marvelous, and very pleasant to look at. [...] [produced] by Liu Quan 劉俊 (438–498 AD), the Regional Inspector of Yi province, [...]

[...] By the time the virtue of the element fire (*huode* 火德) declined, All-under-Heaven was in great disorder, the western region of Shu

3 Jao cites this passage from Bao Shichen's 包世臣 (1775–1855) handwritten *Shiqi tie shuzheng* 十七帖疏證. Cf. Bao Shichen, *Yizhou shuangji* 藝舟雙楫 (Shanghai: Jiaoyu shudian, 1937), 198–210.

4 「書為古今冠冕，丹青亦妙」。Quoted from Wang Xizhi's biography in scroll five of Zhang Yanyuan's 張彥遠 (fl. ninth century AD), *Lidai minghua ji* 歷代名畫記 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1985), 175.

5 See *Hanshu*, 89.3625–3627. For an English translation of Wen Weng's biography see John K. Shyrock, *The Origin and Development of the State Cult of Confucius* (New York: Paragon, 1966 [1933]), 68; and Witold Jablonski, "Wen Wong," *Rocznik Orientalistyczny* 21 (1957): 135–6.

became a remote and faraway place where the imperial era names were not known. Thus the old name of the fifth year of the Chuping 初平 era (194 AD) was chosen [for commemorating the repair (tr. note)]. In the fourth year, Jupiter was in the position *gui*-[*you*] 癸[酉], in the fifth year it [stood at *jia-xu* 甲戌] [...] For the first year of the Xingping era, the calendar of the *Hanshu* records Jupiter being at *jia-xu*, which fits with the inscribed account.<sup>6</sup>

This stele has been erected on *geng-xu* 庚戌 day in the second month of the first year of the Yonghui 永徽 reign period (651 AD) in the Tang dynasty. An epigraph inscribed on the back of the stele reads: “Yan Youyi 顏有意 of Langya 琅雅, the present Senior Commandant-in-chief of Cavalry (*shangqi duwei* 上騎都尉) of Chengdu 成都 county.” According to the last line, “this account has been composed by He Suiliang 賀遂亮.”<sup>7</sup> A paragraph under the section “Names of lost paintings” in Huang Xiufu’s 黃休復 (fl. early eleventh century) Song dynasty *Yizhou minghua lu* 益州名畫錄 (Records of famous paintings from Yi province) states:

The *Yizhou xueguan ji* 益州學館記 (Record of academies in Yi province) says: In the first year of the Xingping 興平 era (194 AD) of Emperor Xian 獻 of Han (r. 184–220 AD), Gao Shun 高眈 of Chenliu 陳留 was made administrator of Yi province. He repaired the Jade Hall stone chamber in Chengdu. To the east he built another stone chamber which he used as a ritual hall for the Duke of Zhou. On its walls were depictions of Pangu, Li Lao and other divinities from high antiquity, as well as images of the historical thearchs and kings. Moreover, on the roof beams could be found depictions of Zhongni and his seventy-two disciples, as well as of the Three August Ones and of various recent ministers. The *Qijiu* 耆舊 (On elders)<sup>8</sup> relates that these had been produced in the Western

6 Lu Zengxiang 陸增祥 (1833–1889), *Baqiong shi jinshi buzheng* 八瓊室金石補正 (Taipei: Wenhai, 1974), scroll 35.1–2.

7 Jao remarks here that this line is badly damaged in the original and has been reproduced by him according to record #03378 in the *Beituo ben* 碑拓本 held at Academia Sinica in Taipei.

8 This title presumably refers to the *Yibu qijiu zhuan* 益部耆舊傳 (Biographies of the elders of Yi province), a now lost work written by Chen Shou 陳壽 (233–297 AD) that relates the biographies of eminent personalities from the Yizhou area between the Western Han and the period of the Three Kingdoms. However, the title could also stand for *Yizhou qijiu zhuan* 益州耆舊傳 (Biographies of the elders of Yi province) or for *Yizhou qijiu zaji* 益州耆舊雜記 (Miscellaneous accounts of the elders of Yi province), both lost works of unknown provenance. Parts of all three works are preserved in Pei Songzhi’s 裴松之 (372–451 AD) commentary to Chen’s *San guo zhi* 三國志 (Records of the Three States). A work called *Qijiu* is

Jin 晉 period by Zhang Shou, a Regional Inspector of Yi province during the Taikang 太康 era (280–289 AD). Of old there was a *Yizhou xuetao tu* 益州學堂圖 (Illustrations of the Yi province lecture hall). In the tenth year of the Yongming 永明 period (493 AD) of the Qi 齊 dynasty, Liu Tian 劉瑱 (460–501 AD) and Liu Quan, the Regional Inspector of Chengdu, again repaired the ritual hall and the Jade Hall. [...] Quan's younger brother was Tian. [...] He was very talented and produced illustrations of Zhongni and of the major disciples, including carriages, garments, and ritual implements. Today these have been replaced by other illustrations, leaving no traces of the old ones.<sup>9</sup>

The passage we find quoted here has been transmitted almost without loss of text and can be used to fill the gaps in the above cited passage from the *Yizhou xueguan miao ji*, which is quite a rare coincidence. During Huang Xiufu's time the Wen Weng stone chamber had already been refurbished several times by others at later dates, and no traces of the illustrations of Pangu dating from the Eastern Han period were left on its walls. For this reason, these are listed under the section "Names of lost paintings."

Section thirty-one of the *Yuanhe junxian tu zhi* 元和郡縣圖志 (Maps and records of commanderies and districts of the Yuanhe period), dealing with the area of Chengdu county, states that: "In the south part of the outer walls stands the Wen Weng lecture hall, also known as the ritual hall for the Duke of Zhou." In the *Huayang guozhi* we read: "Wen Weng established a lecture hall as a place for refined studies and made a stone chamber for it, which one source refers to as Jade Hall."<sup>10</sup> Li Ying's 李膺 (fl. early sixth century) *Shu ji* 蜀記 (Records of Shu) says:

During the Zhongping 中平 period (184–190 AD) of the Later Han, a fire spread through the academy, its side rooms and corridors, destroying them at once. Only this hall was not reached by the blaze. Its structure is ancient and strange, unique and marvelous. Illustrations of ancient sages and worthies can be found on its walls. In its rafters are incised the

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cited once underneath a quotation from the *Yizhou qijiu zaji* in *San guo zhi* 45.1088, indicating that it is indeed an abbreviation which could stand for any of the three longer titles.

9 Huang Xiufu's 黃休復, *Yizhou minghua lu* 益州名畫錄 (Beijing: Renmin meishu chubanshe, 1964), 61. Parts of the English translation have been adapted from J. Michael Farmer, "Art, Education & Power: Illustrations in the Stone Chamber of Wen Weng," *T'oung Pao* LXXXVI (2000): 112–16.

10 See *Huayang guozhi jiaobu tuzhu*, 3.152.

Transmitter of Culture and his seventy-two disciples. It was illustrated by Liu Tian during the Yongming period of the Qi dynasty. When Zhu Lingshi 朱齡石 (379–418 AD) pacified Qiao Zhong 譙縱 (d. 413 AD) he inscribed the order of Emperor Wu 武 of Song 宋 (r. 420–422 AD) on the chamber's stone walls. Dai Wang 代王 (i.e., Yuwen Da 宇文達 [550–580 AD] [tr. note]) further embellished the extant old paintings on Emperor Wu's behalf with cinnabar and azurite. He moreover added images of Doulu Bian 豆盧辨 [盧辯 (d. 557 AD)] and Su Chao 蘇綽 (498–546 AD).<sup>11</sup>

This stone chamber therefore underwent several restorations and extensions, ultimately encroaching into the Shu area's treasure-house of art. The stages of its transformations are often found described in literati accounts, where they make for an extraordinary reading experience. Scroll seventy-two in Lou Yue's 樓鑰 (1137–1213 AD) *Qiujuan daquan wenji* 秋澗大全文集 (Complete collected works of Qiujuan) [sic] contains a “Han Wen Weng jiangshi huaxiang tiba” 漢文翁講室畫像題跋 (Short comment on the images in the Wen Weng Han lecture hall), where we read:<sup>12</sup>

I have read in the Five Books from the Han and Wei Periods (*Han Wei wu shu* 漢魏五書) that “during the Han period there was a Wen Weng – Gao Shun stone chamber situated in Chengdu. Images of a sequence of sages and worthies, beginning with the Three August Ones and the Five Thearchs, had been incised on the space of its walls by the hands of the Grand Protector (Taishou 太守) Zhang Shou. Shou was a contemporary of Emperor Xian [of Han]. When I recently visited the Liu 劉 family academy, I had the chance to behold the actual images myself. Starting from Pangu Shi 盤古氏 all the way to Zhongni and his seventy disciples, approximately one hundred and thirty personages were depicted, executed in an utmost exquisite manner that reveals an ancient simplicity. Having passed through countless dangerous cliffs they have come down to us without showing the slightest traces of damage. Who except some deity would have been able to protect and preserve them like this? From

11 Li Jifu 李吉甫 (fl. early ninth century AD), *Yuanhe junxian zhi* 元和郡縣志 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1983), *juan* 31, 768. Parts of the English translation of this passage have been adapted from Farmer, “Art, Education & Power,” 110.

12 The work from which Jao quotes here is in fact the *Qiujuan xiansheng daquan wenji* 秋澗先生大全文集, authored by Wang Yun 王惲 (1228–1304), and not by Lou Yue. The original passage can be found in Wang Yunwu 王雲五 (1888–1979) et al., eds., *Sibu congkan chubian suoben* 四部叢刊初編縮本, 110 vols. (Taipei: Taiwan Shangwu yinshuguan, 1965), 74: 704.

somewhat later in time we have the calligraphic copy that Dongpo 東坡 (i.e. Su Shi 蘇軾 [1037–1101 AD]) produced of Wang Yishao's 王逸少 (Wang Xizhi) note in which the latter desires to possess rubbings of these images. This outstanding note bears the distinct style of Yan Lu Gong 顏魯公 (Yan Zhenqing 顏真卿 [709–785 AD]). Marveling at it over and over again, one is suddenly overcome with a sense of deep veneration, causing one to harbor thoughts of retreating into the world of antiquity. This is indeed quite extraordinary.

Among the so called “Five Books from the Han and Wei Periods” there is a work called *Han guanyi* 漢官儀 (Etiquette of officials in the Han) which Lou (sic) discusses in some detail in a separate work titled “Du Han-Wei wu shu” 讀漢魏五書 (On reading Five Books from the Han and Wei eras).<sup>13</sup> The album of the paintings incised in Gao Shun's stone chamber in the Wen Weng lecture hall that Lou (sic) had caught sight of in the Liu family academy starts with the image of Pangu Shi. “Its walls are engraved with Images of the Three August Ones and the Five Thearchs” says Lou, whereas Li Ying's *Shu ji* states: “In its rafters are incised the Transmitter of Culture and his seventy-two disciples.” In Lou's account these are engraved in stone, corresponding to the fact that what Gao Shun had originally built was the stone chamber. Thus, what Lou had seen must have been rubbings of the original images. Since he describes them as having been “executed in an utmost exquisite manner, revealing an ancient simplicity” (極精妙簡古) and as “having come down to us by passing through countless dangerous cliffs without showing the slightest traces of damage” (經千有餘歲無絲髮剝壞), it can only mean that Lou was still able to see with his own eyes, what Huang Xiufu had no longer been able to behold! Lou also points out that these portraits have been drawn by Zhang Shou, Grand Protector of Shu. But who was this painter Zhang Shou? When Zuo Si 左思 (250–305 AD) wrote his *San du fu* 三都賦 (Three capitals rhapsody), he once visited Zhang Zai 張載 (fl. late third to early fourth century AD) to inquire of him about the affairs of Shu. The “Zai zhuan” 載傳 (Biography of Zai) in the *Jinshu* 晉書 (Book of Jin) says: “Zai's father, Shou, had been Grand Protector in the commandery of Shu. During the Taikang era Zai travelled to Shu to pay his father a visit. When he passed through Jiange 劍閣 he produced an inscription to commemorate the occasion. Zhang Min 張敏, Regional Inspector of Yi province, found the inscription quite unusual and added a note of appreciation

13 This piece as well has been written by Wang Yun and not by Lou Yue. For the work under discussion see Ying Shao 應劭, *Han guanyi* 漢官儀 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1985).

to it.<sup>14</sup> Thus, according to the *Jinshu*, Shou indeed once held the position of Grand Protector of Shu commandery. Following He's *Yizhou xueguan miao ji*, the ritual hall of the Duke of Zhou that Gao Shun erected in the first year of the Xingping era under emperor Xian of Han bore the image of Pangu on its walls side by side with that of Li Lao and those of numerous other deities. With his image captured in a mural, it is obvious that the name Pangu must have been known at the end of the Han period as well. The first year of the Xingping period corresponds to the year 194 AD.

What Zhang Shou had painted were probably the seventy-two disciples of Zhongni as well as all the important officials since the time of the Three August Ones. At least this is what *Yizhou qijiu* 益州耆舊 (On the elders of Yi province) wants us to believe.<sup>15</sup> Yet during the time of Huang Xiu fu in the Northern Song 宋 period (960–1127 AD), Shou's original designs had already been painted over. Liu Quan's work, created during the Southern Qi 齊 period (479–502 AD), endured to the time of Emperor Gaozong 高宗 of the Tang 唐 (628–683 AD). But it too had been painted over during the Northern Song and can no longer be seen. According to the *Lidai minghua ji* Liu Quan's younger brother, Liu Tian, excelled at painting women. Another elder brother of Tian was Liu Hui 劉繪 (458–502 AD). Information on his life can be found in the "Hui zhuan" 繪傳 (Biography of Hui) in the *Nan Qishu* 南齊書 (Book of the Southern Qi).<sup>16</sup> Neither the name Zhang Shou nor that of Liu Quan appear in Zhang Yanyuan's work. They should be added to it based on the sources cited above.

All of the extant historical images of Pangu from the Yao 僬 region, such as a Song period image of Pangu from Hunan, as well as a Qing period image from Guibei 桂北, are entirely of a rather recent date.<sup>17</sup> Thanks to He's inscriptional account, we now know that the production of images of Pangu was already popular in the Shu area towards the end of the Han period. Accordingly, the myth of Pangu must have formed sometime prior to the Eastern Han dynasty as well.

Under the section "Shu gu zhi mihua zhentu" 述古之秘畫珍圖 (Listing secret paintings and precious images from antiquity) in the *Lidai minghua ji* we find a work named *Yizhou xuetao tu* 益洲學堂圖 (Images from the lecture hall of Yi province), consisting of ten scrolls. The commentary says:

14 Fang Xuanling 房玄齡, *Jinshu* 晉書, (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2012), 55. 1516–7.

15 Jao presumably refers to the work given as *Qijiu* in the quote from the *Yizhou minghua lu* above. See footnote 225 above.

16 Xiao Zixian 蕭子顯, *Nanqishu* 南齊書, (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2013), 841–3.

17 Jao refers here to the beginning of the first part of the collection *Pan Wang da ge* 盤王大歌 (The great song of King Pang) (Changsha: Yuelu shushe, 1987).

[The work] depicts the Sage Thearchs from Antiquity as well as seventy Worthies. At a later point in time, the images of Han and Jin Emperors together with their important officials, as well as of the worthy minister of Shu, chief official Shou, have been added. These have presumably been produced by someone who had lived during the Eastern Jin period.<sup>18</sup>

These later additions did in fact come from the hands of Zhang Shou. Zhang must have been so fond of this book that he added this line of commentary to the title.

Xu Zheng's *Sanwu Liji* states: "heaven and earth were in a state of primal chaos, resembling a chicken's egg, and Pangu was born amidst, living for 18,000 years."<sup>19</sup> Zheng was a man from the state of Wu 吳 who lived during the time of the Three Kingdoms (San guo 三國 [189–263 AD]). The *Suishu jingji zhi* mentions a work named *Maoshi pu* 毛詩譜 (Chronological record of the *Mao Odes*) in three scrolls, about which it says: "This work has been composed by Xu Zheng 徐整, Chamberlain for Ceremonials (*Taichang qing* 太常卿) of Wu."<sup>20</sup> The *Jingdian shiwen xu lu* 經典釋文序錄 (Introductory records to the explanatory writings to the classical canons) lists Zheng Xuan's 鄭玄 (127–200 AD) *Shipu* 詩譜 (Chronological record of the *Songs*) in two scrolls. Further down it says: "Xu Zheng [wrote] a *chang* 暢 (elucidation) [to it] and Tai Shuqiu 太叔裘 [provided] an *yin* 隱 (rectification)."<sup>21</sup> The *Sui zhi* mentions another *Maoshi pu* in two scrolls which "has been annotated by Tai Shuqiu and Liu Xuan 劉炫 (fl. 546–613 AD)."<sup>22</sup> We may therefore assume that Xu Zheng elucidated Kangcheng's 康成 (i.e., Zheng Xuan's) notes, enjoying a similar prestige as Tai Shuqiu in his day. The *Sui zhi* further lists a lost work from the Liang 梁 period (502–557 AD), called *Sanwu li shuo* 三五曆說 (Three and five calendrical explanations), consisting of one scroll of images from an unknown author. Should this work have been composed by Xu Zheng as well, then this would mean that the *Sanwu Liji* originally also comprised a scroll with images, which certainly must have included an image of Pangu. Zheng's style name was Wencao 文操; he was a native of Yuzhang 豫章 in Jiangxi province.

18 *Lidai minghua ji*, 3:131.

19 Jao cites this passage from Ouyang Xun 歐陽洵, *Yiwen leiju* 藝文類聚 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1965), *juan* 1, p. 2.

20 Wei Zheng 魏徵, Linghu Defen 令狐德棻, *Suishu* 隋書 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1973), 1024.

21 See Wu Chengshi 吳承仕 (1884–1939), *Jingdian shiwen xu lu shu zheng* 經典釋文序錄疏證 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2008), 83–4.

22 *Ibid.*

In conclusion, images of Pangu, even in the form of murals, already existed before the time of Xu Zheng. Ren Fang's 任昉 *Shuyiji* 述異記 (Tales of strange matters)<sup>23</sup> tells of popular stories about Pangu that circulated during the Qin and Han periods. The origins of the myth of Pangu must therefore be quite ancient.

### Supplementary Note

More information on the stone stelae from the Wen Weng lecture hall can be found in the tenth scroll of Shi Zhecun's 施蟄存 *Shuijingzhu bei lu* 水經注碑錄 (A list of stelae in the commentary on the water classic).<sup>24</sup> The sources cited by Shi may be consulted to supplement what has not been covered in the present study. Six fragmentary remains of Gao Shun's inscription in the stone chamber are still extant today. These are also treated in Shi's account.

23 Cf. the passage on Pangu in the first part of the *Shuyiji* fragments transmitted in Cheng Rong's 程榮 (ca. 1600) Ming dynasty work *Han-Wei congshu* 漢魏叢書 (Changchun: Jilin Daxue chubanshe, 1992), 697, which has been translated into French by Maspero and subsequently also into English by Kierman in Maspero, *Taoism and Chinese Religion*, 381.

24 Shi Zhecun 施蟄存, *Shuijingzhu bei lu* 水經注碑錄 (Tianjin: Tianjin guji chubanshe, 1987), 387–400.

**CHAPTER 2**

*Hemerology, Astrology and Correlative Thought  
in Early China*





# Introduction

One major aspect of creation myths concerns the alignment of the celestial bodies in the vault of heaven, the initiation of their movements and with these the differentiation of cosmic time into day and night, months, the seasons, and the years. The perceived organic connection between man and the cosmos in early civilizations led to mankind's primordial concern with the attunement of human activities to the cycles and the order of nature. This attunement was perhaps the most central task associated with the institution of rulership everywhere across the ancient world. In the introduction to his seminal work, *Kingship and the Gods: A Study of Ancient Near Eastern Religion as the Integration of Society & Nature*, Henri Frankfort (1897–1954) makes an important remark in this respect:

[I]f we refer to kingship as a political institution, we assume a point of view which would have been incomprehensible to the ancients. We imply that the human polity can be considered by itself. The ancients, however, experienced human life as part of a widely spreading network of connections which reached beyond local and national communities into the hidden depths of nature and the powers that rule nature. [...] Whatever was significant was imbedded in the life of the cosmos, and it was precisely the king's function to maintain the harmony of that integration.<sup>1</sup>

This archaic concept of kingship is what Eric Voegelin (1901–1985), in his opus magnum *Order and History*, has defined as a “cosmological order,” for which reason he refers to the ancient Middle Eastern empires as “cosmological empires.” It is such a primordial “compact mythological consciousness” as Frankfort describes it in the passage quoted above, that causes man to create the human communal order in analogy to the cosmos as it is perceived by the former.<sup>2</sup>

To a significant degree, this observation also applies to early China as can be seen in the specific concerns expressed in the earliest extant sources, the oracle bone inscriptions from the late Shang period, and later in the importance

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1 Henri Frankfort, *Kingship and the Gods: A Study of Ancient Near Eastern Religion as the Integration of Society & Nature*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1948), 3.

2 Cf. Maurice P. Hogan's introduction to Eric Voegelin's *Order and History Volume I: Israel and Revelation*, ed. Maurice P. Hogan (Columbia and London: University of Missouri Press, 2001 [1956]), 1–14, as well as Voegelin's own introduction (*Ibid.*, 39–53).

attached to the offices of the royal astronomer and astrologer in the ritual classics.<sup>3</sup> By the late Warring States period, the origins of astronomy itself received its fixed place in the origin myth of the Chinese ecumene. In the “Yao dian” 堯典 (Canon of Yao) from the *Book of Documents* we are told that the legendary ruler Yao had

commanded Xi and He, in reverent accordance with their observation of the wide heavens, to calculate and delineate the movements and appearances of the sun, the moon, the stars and the zodiacal spaces and so to deliver respectfully the seasons to the people.<sup>4</sup>

The chief concerns of early Chinese astronomy are twofold: Firstly, it was the task of the royal astronomer’s office to calculate the beginning of the year, the twelve months, intercalary months, the twenty-four solar terms and the movement and positions of the five planets so as to determine the calendric standard (*lifa* 曆法) for the lunisolar year.<sup>5</sup> The second important concern was with the observation of celestial phenomena, such as patterns of planetary movements and lunar phases from an astrological perspective. These patterns and the observed irregularities in them, especially solar and lunar eclipses, formed the basis for prognostication at the court and played an important role in the composition of day books (*rishu* 日書) and other sorts of hemerological manuals used by wider groups of the early Chinese elites.<sup>6</sup>

A special position within this corpus of early Chinese astro-hemerological literature is occupied by the Chu Silk Manuscript (*Chuboshu* 楚帛書), today better known as Zidanku Silk Manuscript I, sometimes given the working title \**Sishi ling* 四時令 (Ordinances of the four seasons). This important manuscript text combines elements of cosmogonic creation myths such as have been dealt with in the first chapter, with concerns of astronomy, astrology, calendrics, and hemerology. Perhaps a few words of introduction should be spent on this extraordinary artefact and the intricate history leading to its eventual

3 Cf. Joseph Needham, *Science and Civilisation in China, Volume 3: Mathematics and the Sciences of the Heavens and the Earth* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970 [1959]), 186–94.

4 *Shu* 1.60–77; Translation adapted from James Legge, *The Chinese Classics, Volume III: The Shoo King, or The Book of Historical Documents* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 1960 [1865]), 18.

5 Cf. Needham, *Science and Civilisation in China, Volume 3*, 390–7.

6 See the contributions in Donald Harper and Marc Kalinowski, eds., *Books of Fate and Popular Culture in Early China: The Daybook Manuscripts of the Warring States, Qin and Han* (Leiden: Brill, 2017), for an introduction to the field of early Chinese hemerology.

publication, as well as on Jao's involvement in the decipherment and study of the manuscript.

Unearthed from Zidanku 子彈庫 in Changsha 長沙, Hunan 湖南 during a grave robbery in 1942, the Zidanku Silk Manuscripts have been of immense importance to the study of early Chinese texts and to manuscript culture as a whole. Li Ling 李零, now the foremost scholar of these manuscripts both in China and worldwide, outlines the find's significance as follows:

First, it yielded the first corpus of original pre-Qin writings discovered in the 20th century; what is more, these were not documents of archival character, but veritable texts that can be related to the books transmitted from China's classical tradition. Second, this was the first time that scholars were able to see an actual early manuscript written on silk. To date, silk manuscripts have been unearthed only twice – the first time at Zidanku, the second time from Tomb 3 at Mawangdui 馬王堆 (ca. 168 BC), likewise at Changsha. As Warring States silk manuscripts go, those from Zidanku remain the only ones known. Third, the discovery of the Zidanku Silk Manuscripts constituted the beginning of the study of the Chu script, which has since become the best known among the several Warring States-period scripts.<sup>7</sup>

The Zidanku manuscripts, dating from around 300 BC, still constitute the sole extant Warring States writings done on silk. Prior to the discovery of the bamboo-slip manuscripts from Guodian 郭店 tomb 1 in Jingmen 荊門, Hubei 湖北, in 1993,<sup>8</sup> and the subsequent appearance of bundles of unprovenanced bamboo-slip manuscripts on the Hong Kong antiques market in 1994 that are currently held and curated by the Shanghai Museum,<sup>9</sup> the silk manuscripts had, in fact, been the only known example of a pre-Qin period manuscript text.

Despite their importance, it was not until more than twenty years after their discovery that high-quality photographic images of Zidanku Silk Manuscript I were made available to scholars. (Manuscript II and III, as well as some additional fragments the from the Zidanku find, were only rediscovered and identified in 1992.) At first, its contents had been accessible only in the form of a

7 Li Ling, *The Chu Silk Manuscripts from Zidanku, Changsha (Hunan Province), Volume 1: Discovery and Transmission*, trans. and ed., Lothar von Falkenhausen (Hong Kong: The Chinese University of Hong Kong Press, 2020), xv.

8 See Jingmen Shi Bowuguan 荊門市博物館, ed., *Guodian Chu mu zhujian* 郭店楚墓竹簡 (Beijing: Wenwu, 1998).

9 See Ma Chengyuan 馬承源, ed., *Shanghai bowuguan cang Zhanguo Chu zhushu* 上海博物館藏戰國楚竹書, 9 vols. (Shanghai: Shanghai guji, 2001–2012).

hand drawing done by Cai Jixiang 蔡季襄 (1897–1980), the first person to possess and to start conservation work on the manuscript. A set of photographic images was also produced by the Freer Gallery of Art in 1947, a year after Cai sold the manuscript to John Hadley Cox (1913–2005), who had brought it to the United States with the intention of finding a buyer.<sup>10</sup> It was based on these images from the Freer Gallery that Jao produced his first transcription and study of the manuscript in 1958.<sup>11</sup> They were still the only available set of photographs, apart from Cai's own hand drawings, when Shang Chengzuo 商承祚 (1902–1991) wrote his “Zhanguo chuboshu shulue” 戰國楚帛書述略 (Cursory remarks on the Warring States period Chu Silk Manuscript) in 1964,<sup>12</sup> regarded as the most influential treatment on the topic within China at the time.<sup>13</sup>

Two years after the manuscript was finally purchased by Dr Arthur M. Sackler (1913–1987) in 1965, the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York produced magnified infrared photographs of the text, allowing scholars to identify a significant number of previously illegible graphs and thus to arrive at a better understanding of the text. Among the first studies to make use of these newly available images were Jao's “Chu Zengshu zhi moben ji tuxiang: Sanshoushen, Feiyi yu Yindu gushenhua zhi bijiao” 楚繒書之摹本及圖像 – 三首神、肥遺與印度古神話之比較 (A facsimile of the Chu Silk Manuscript and its images: A comparison of the Three-headed Deity, Feiyi and ancient myths from India) and his “Chu Zengshu shuzheng” 楚繒書疏證 (Annotations and proofs on the Chu Silk Manuscript), both published in 1968.<sup>14</sup> These were followed by the publication of Noel Barnard's (1922–2016) scientific examination of the manuscript

10 See Li/von Falkenhausen, *The Chu Silk Manuscripts from Zidanku*, for a detailed account of the incredible history of the manuscript's discovery and transmission.

11 See his *Changsha chutu Zhanguo zengshu xin shi* 長沙出土戰國繒書新釋 (New explanations on the Warring States Silk Manuscript excavated in Changsha) (Hong Kong: Yiyou changji yinwu gongsi, 1958).

12 *Wenwu* (1964) 9: 8–20.

13 Two other important studies published outside of China during that time are Hayashi Minao 林巳奈夫 (1925–2006), *Chōsa shutsudo Sengoku hakusho kō* 長沙出土戰國帛書考, *Tōhō gakuhō* 東方學報 36.1 (1964): 53–97, and idem, *Chōsa shutsudo Sengoku hakusho kō hoshō* 長沙出土戰國帛書考補正, *Tōhō gakuhō* 37 (1966): 509–14.

14 See Jao Tsung-i, “Chu Zengshu zhi moben ji tuxiang: Sanshoushen, Feiyi yu Yindu gushenhua zhi bijiao” 楚繒書之摹本及圖像 – 三首神、肥遺與印度古神話之比較, *Gu Gong jikan* 故宮季刊 3.2 (1968): 1–26; and idem, *Chu Zengshu shuzheng* 楚繒書疏證, *Bulletin of the Institute of History and Philology* 40.1 (1968): 1–32. Revised and enlarged versions of this study, later renamed “Chu boshu xin zheng” 楚帛書新證 (New proofs on the Chu Silk Manuscript) have been re-published several times. The final version of the study, last revised in 2002, appeared in *Xuantang jilin: Shilin xin bian*, 3: 860–911.

done at the invitation of Arthur M. Sackler himself.<sup>15</sup> Jao's "Chu Zengshu shu-zheng" in turn figured among the main sources consulted by Barnard in his seminal study and translation of the Silk Manuscript into English from 1973.<sup>16</sup> Both remained standard works on the manuscript for decades to come, paralleled only by the publication of Li Ling's *Changsha Zidanku zhanguo Chuboshu yanjiu* 長沙子彈庫戰國楚帛書研究 (Studies on the Chu Silk Manuscript from Zidanku in Changsha) in 1985.<sup>17</sup>

Renewed interest in the Zidanku corpus arose in 1992 after Cox anonymously donated the remaining fragments of the manuscript find that were still in his possession to the Freer/Sackler gallery of the Smithsonian Institution, Washington DC, where the Zidanku Silk Manuscript I has been housed since the establishment of the Arthur M. Sackler Gallery of Art in 1987. It took the conservation team until 2007 to unfold, clean and produce digital images (including new images of Manuscript I) of the fragments now known as Zidanku Silk Manuscript II and III.<sup>18</sup>

The most up to date study on the entire Zidanku corpus following the eventual publication of all the extant fragments is undoubtedly Li Ling's opus magnum *Zidanku Boshu* 子彈庫帛書 (The Chu Silk Manuscripts from Zidanku), published in two volumes in 2017.<sup>19</sup> The first volume, which includes an account of the find's fascinating journey from 1942 to the present day, has already been rendered into English by Lothar von Falkenhausen. Until Donald Harper's forthcoming translation of the second volume is published, the most recent, although barely annotated English translation of Zidanku Silk Manuscript I remains the 1994 rendering of the text by Li Ling, as adapted by Constance A. Cook with amendments by Michael Puett and John Major.<sup>20</sup>

15 Noel Barnard, *Scientific Examination of an Ancient Chinese Document as a Prelude to Decipherment, Translation, and Historical Assessment: The Ch'u Silk Manuscript, Revised and Enlarged*. Studies on the Ch'u Silk Manuscript, pt. 1. Monographs on Far Eastern History, vol. 4 (Canberra: Australian National University, 1972).

16 Noel Barnard, *The Ch'u Silk Manuscript: Translation and Commentary*. Studies on the Ch'u Silk Manuscript, pt. 2. Monographs on Far Eastern History, vol. 5 (Canberra: Australian National University, 1973).

17 Li Ling, *Changsha Zidanku zhanguo Chuboshu yanjiu* 長沙子彈庫戰國楚帛書研究 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1985).

18 Cf. Li Ling, "The Zidanku Silk Manuscripts," in Harper and Kalinowski, *Books of Fate and Popular Culture in Early China*, 259–67. For the latest images of the fragments of Zidanku Manuscript I, II and III, see Li Ling, *Zidanku Boshu* 子彈庫帛書, 2 vols. (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 2017), 2: 5–40.

19 Li Ling, *Zidanku Boshu*.

20 Li Ling and Constance A. Cook, "Translation of the Chu Silk Manuscript," in *Defining Chu: Image and Reality in Ancient China*, ed. Constance A. Cook and John Major (Honolulu:

Zidanku Silk Manuscript I consists of three interrelated texts arranged in the form of a rectangle with the two longer texts A and B juxtaposed in the center, enclosed by the third, shorter text C that occupies the four sides. The arrangement of the three texts is further encompassed by two sets of peripheral figures. The first, inner set comprises drawings of twelve spirits, corresponding to each of the twelve months from text C.<sup>21</sup> The outer set consist of drawings of four trees, one placed in each of the four corners of the silk sheet. Their placement and color (green, red, white, and black respectively) suggest they represent the four seasons. The two center-texts are of unequal length and, most importantly, are written from vertically opposite angles so that one text always stands on its top. Whoever attempts to read both halves must shift the manuscript around 180 degrees in the process. Scholars mostly agree on the order of the manuscript as proceeding from the two texts A and B in the center to the shorter text C, located on the four sides. The arrangement of this shorter text marks the division of the year into four seasons and on a microlevel reproduces the sequence of the twelve months.<sup>22</sup> Disagreement persists as to the sequence of the two inner texts. Most scholars now follow Li Ling in assuming the longer text A to precede the shorter text B. Jao, on the contrary, for reasons explained in the first article translated below, holds that what is now recognized as text B, should mark the logical beginning of the sequence.

Text B presents us with a cosmogonic creation myth of the kind we encountered in the first chapter. The text, given in the translation of Li and Cook below, starts with the marriage of the two cosmic deities Baoxi 包戲 and Nütian 女填 (now associated with the deities Fuxi 伏羲 and Nüwa 女媧 known from the transmitted literature),<sup>23</sup> who then embark on the creation of space and time:

[T]hey [...] rested and acted (in turn) controlling the sidewalls (of the calendrical plan); they helped calculate time by steps. They separated

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University of Hawai'i Press, 1999), 171–6, reprinted in Li Ling, *Chu boshu yanjiu* (shiyi zhong) 楚帛書研究(十一種) (Shanghai: Zhongxi shuju, 2013), 244–51.

21 Cf. Hayashi, “The Twelve Gods of the Chan-kuo Period Silk Manuscript Excavated at Ch'ang-sha,” 123–86.

22 Li Xueqin 李學勤 (1933–2019) has shown that the names of the twelve months in text C of Zidanku Silk Manuscript I correspond to those of the Chu months found in the transmitted *Erya* 爾雅 (Approaching elegance). See his “Zhanguo timing gaishu” 戰國題銘概述, *Wenwu* (1959) 7: 50–4, (1959) 8: 60–3, (1959) 9: 58–61; as well as his “Bulun Zhanguo timing de yixie wenti” 補論戰國題銘的一些問題, *Wenwu* (1960) 7: 67–8.

23 Yan Yiping 嚴一萍 (1912–1987) and Jin Xiangheng 金祥恆 (1918–1989) were the first to draw this connection. See Yan Yiping, “Chu zengshu xinkao” 楚繒書新考, *Zhongguo wenzi* 中國文字 26 (1967): 1–32, 27 (1968): 1–36, 28 (1968): 1–11; and Jin Xiangheng, “Chu zengshu ‘Paoxi’ jie” 楚繒書“嫫廬”解, *Zhongguo wenzi* 28 (1968): 1–9.

(heaven) above and (earth) below. Since the mountains were out of order, they then named the mountains, rivers, and four seas. [...] [W]hen there was yet no sun or moon, [...] the four gods stepped in succession to indicate the year; these are the four seasons. [...]

After hundreds and thousands of years, the sun and the moon were finally born, (but) the Nine Continents were not level so the mountains [... (collapsed?)]. Therefore, the gods created [...] to cover (the Nine Continents). When the skydome shook, they used green, red, yellow, white, and black trees as supporting poles. Yan Di thereupon ordered Zhurong to make the four gods descend to set up the Three Heavens and with [...] distribute the four poles. [...]

Gong Gong calculated and set in motion the Ten Days and the Four Times. [...] When the hundred spirits and the wind and rain became calendrically incorrect and disordered, he made the sun and the moon take turns working and resting. Thus, we have the divisions of late night, morning, afternoon and evening.<sup>24</sup>

Here we encounter again the Flame Thearch (Yan Di 炎帝) and Zhurong 祝融, however, unlike the etiological myths discussed in the first chapter, the Chu Silk Manuscript presents us with a strictly cosmogonic creation myth. The cosmos of the Silk Manuscript clearly differentiates between the sphere of humans, confined to the earth below, and the heavens as the sphere of the gods. These two realms, however, exist in correlation and cosmic order only prevails if both spheres are in accordance with each other. It is man's obligation to actively maintain this integration by attuning his activities to the rhythms of nature revealed through him through the movements and recurring patterns of the celestial bodies. Failure to do so by neglecting or deliberately contravening the natural order results in irregularities occurring in the cosmic movements which in turn exert adverse effects on the livelihood of man by causing natural disasters to happen. Thus, in part A of Zidanku Silk Manuscript 1, the second part in Jao's interpretation, we read:

When heaven and earth create calamities, the Heaven's Cudgel (Tianpou) star creates (sweeping) destruction, sending (the destruction) down throughout all four regions (of the earth). Mountains collapse, springs gush forth geysers. This is called "contravention." If you contravene the years (and) the months, then upon entering the seventh or eighth day of

24 Li Ling, *Chu boshu yanjiu* (shiyi zhong), 247–8.

the month there will be fog, frost, and clouds of dust, and you will not be able to function according (to heaven's plan).

In such a year, there will be trouble in the western territories, and if the sun and the moon get out of order, there will be halos surrounding (them) and trouble in the eastern territories. All under heaven will be at war and harm will come to the king.<sup>25</sup>

As if to provide an answer on how to avoid contravening the cosmic rhythms, the third text consists of unfavorable and favorable hemerological indications for each of the individual months, several instances of which will be discussed in the first article of this chapter.<sup>26</sup>

While the overall conception of the manuscript is now generally agreed on, positions still vary as to whether one should categorize it together with the monthly ordinances from the transmitted ritual classics and regard it as a daybook-type of almanac, or see in it an astronomical treatise of the sort found in the official dynastic histories. This issue brings us back to Jao Tsung-i. Apart from transcribing and annotating the manuscript,<sup>27</sup> Jao was a lively participant in these sorts of debates. He expounded his views on the nature, import and context of Zidanku Silk Manuscript I in a systematic fashion at a symposium titled "Early Chinese Art and its Possible Influence in the Pacific Basin," arranged by the Department of Art History and Archaeology of Columbia University in New York City, from August 21–25, 1967. His conference manuscript has been translated into English and published by Noel Barnard in the conference proceedings under the title "Some Aspects of the Calendar, Astrology, and Religious Concepts of the Ch'u People as Revealed in the Ch'u

25 Li Ling, *Chu boshu yanjiu* (shiyi zhong), 246.

26 Chen Mengjia 陳夢家 (1911–1966) was the first to systematically compare Zidanku Silk Manuscript I with transmitted books of ordinances and to point out the hemerological nature of text C from the manuscript. See his "Zhanguo Chu boshu kao" 戰國楚帛書考, unpublished manuscript (1962), posthumously published in *Kaogu xuebao* 考古學報 (1984) 2: 137–57, rpt. in *Chen Mengjia xueshu lunwenji* 陳夢家學術論文集 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2016), 572–95.

27 Taking into account the immense progress that has been made in the conservation and study of the manuscript within the last thirty years, as well as the fact that most of the findings in Jao's "Chu Zengshu shuzheng" are discussed in English in Barnard (1973), it would not make much sense here to attempt a translation of even the latest revision of Jao's "Chu boshu xin zheng," as for the most part the latter basically follows the initial version from 1968. For the time being, the reader should refer to translation of Li Ling and Cook to gain a basic understanding of the text's import.

Silk Manuscript.”<sup>28</sup> Numerous studies were to follow over the next decades.<sup>29</sup> In the two articles chosen for this chapter, we follow Jao in exploring the relation between the text from Zidanku Silk Manuscript 1 and astronomical treatises from the ritual classics and early imperial dynastic histories. The Manuscript, in the way Jao understood it, preserves an important part of the astronomical and astrological knowledge of the ancient Chu culture. It was his declared goal to establish the manuscript as a Chu counterpart to the transmitted “Tianguan shu” 天官書 (Treatise on celestial offices) in the *Shiji*.<sup>30</sup>

However, the main reason I have chosen to include these articles in this volume, is because Jao time and again addresses in them the overarching concern of this book, namely man’s attunement to the cosmos and the world of the gods as the basis for ritual praxis and morals. In the quotation above from part A of Zidanku Silk Manuscript 1 we have learned that when humans contravened the cosmic order the heavens were believed to send down signs in the form of celestial or meteorological portents, sometimes paired with natural calamities. Jao focuses here particularly on the phenomenon of lunar irregularities, *de (ce) ni* 德(側) 匿,<sup>31</sup> that are frequently mentioned throughout the Manuscript. He draws a direct connection between the slowing down of the moon and the ruler over men concealing (匿) his virtue (德). In other words, Jao underscores the idea that natural calamities do not occur arbitrarily but always constitute cosmic reactions to a lack in virtue or morality in the leaders of men, hinting that the ultimate agency in shaping the fate of humanity lies with man. A key passage to substantiate this assumption are the guidelines for ritual activity found in part A of the Silk Manuscript:

28 Barnard and Fraser, eds., *Early Chinese Art and its Possible Influence in the Pacific Basin*, 113–122.

29 See his *Chuboshu* 楚帛書 (The Chu Silk Manuscript) (Hong Kong: Chung Hwa, 1985), and *Chu di chutu wenxian san zhong yanjiu* 楚地出土文獻三種研究 (Three categories of studies on excavated manuscripts from the area of Chu) (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1993), both co-authored and co-edited with Zeng Xiantong 曾憲通.

30 Following K. C. Chang, who opened up the field of Chu-studies with his pioneering “Huanan shiqian minzu wenhuashi tigang” 華南史前民族文化史題綱/“A Working Hypothesis for the Early Cultural History of South China” (English summary), *Bulletin of the Institute of Ethnology, Academia Sinica* 7 (1959): 43–103, Jao was among the first to define the distinct culture of pre-imperial South China in terms of Chu 楚 or Jing-Chu 荊楚 culture. See his “Jing-Chu wenhua” 荊楚文化 (The culture of Jing-Chu), *Bulletin of the Institute of History and Philology, Academia Sinica* 41.2 (1969): 273–315.

31 The interpretation of the binome *deni* 德匿 as *ceni* 側匿 (slowing down [of the moon]) in certain instances within Zidanku Silk Manuscript 1 goes back to Shang Chengzuo 商承祚, “Zhanguo Chu boshu shulüe” 戰國楚帛書述略, *Wenwu* (1964) 9: 13.

Only when the gods, the Five Governors [of the Five Phases], and the four risings are without problems and the reliable (calendrical) constancies guide the people will the Five Governors be illuminated and the Hundred Spirits be thus presented with sacrificial feasts. This is what is called “Favor and Affection,” when the many spirits are favorable. The God said: “Extend your respect to them! Never be disrespectful. When heaven creates good fortune, the spirits will then bring it to you. When heaven creates demonic (influences), the gods will (likewise) provide you with them. Be attentive and respectful in (your) preparations and the heavenly pattern will thus be the guiding standard. In the end, the heavenly [... (pattern?)] will be the model for the people below. Respect it without fail!”<sup>32</sup>

The logic behind ritual praxis is seen here as the fulfilment of good government in terms of the ritual integration of the human polity into the cosmic order. This is again quite similar to what Voegelin writes with respect to the Ancient Near East:

In Mesopotamian and Egyptian societies of the ancient Near East, the order of the empire is symbolized as an analogue to the order of the cosmos; its creation and perpetuation as well are symbolized in terms of cosmic creation. The rituals refer to the empire as an already existent and established part of the cosmos.<sup>33</sup>

This statement in turn reverberates with Frankfort’s observation cited above, that “whatever was significant” in the perception of early man “was imbedded in the life of the cosmos, and it was precisely the king’s function to maintain the harmony of that integration.” For Jao, maintaining this harmony is linked to the idea of establishing constancy (*heng* 恆) arrived at by revering (*jing* 敬) the cosmic rhythms according to the logic of the Silk Manuscript. In emphasizing this primary concern in terms of reverence and by relating it to the idea of a ruler’s virtue (*de* 德), Jao foreshadows the big topic of the third and last chapter of this book, namely the all-important notion of honoring or revering virtue (*jing de* 敬德) in early Chinese thought.

32 Li Ling, *Chu boshu yanjiu* (shiyi zhong), 247.

33 Eric Voegelin, *Anamnesis: Zur Theorie der Geschichte und Politik* (Munich: Piper, 1966), 201. The translation into English is my own.

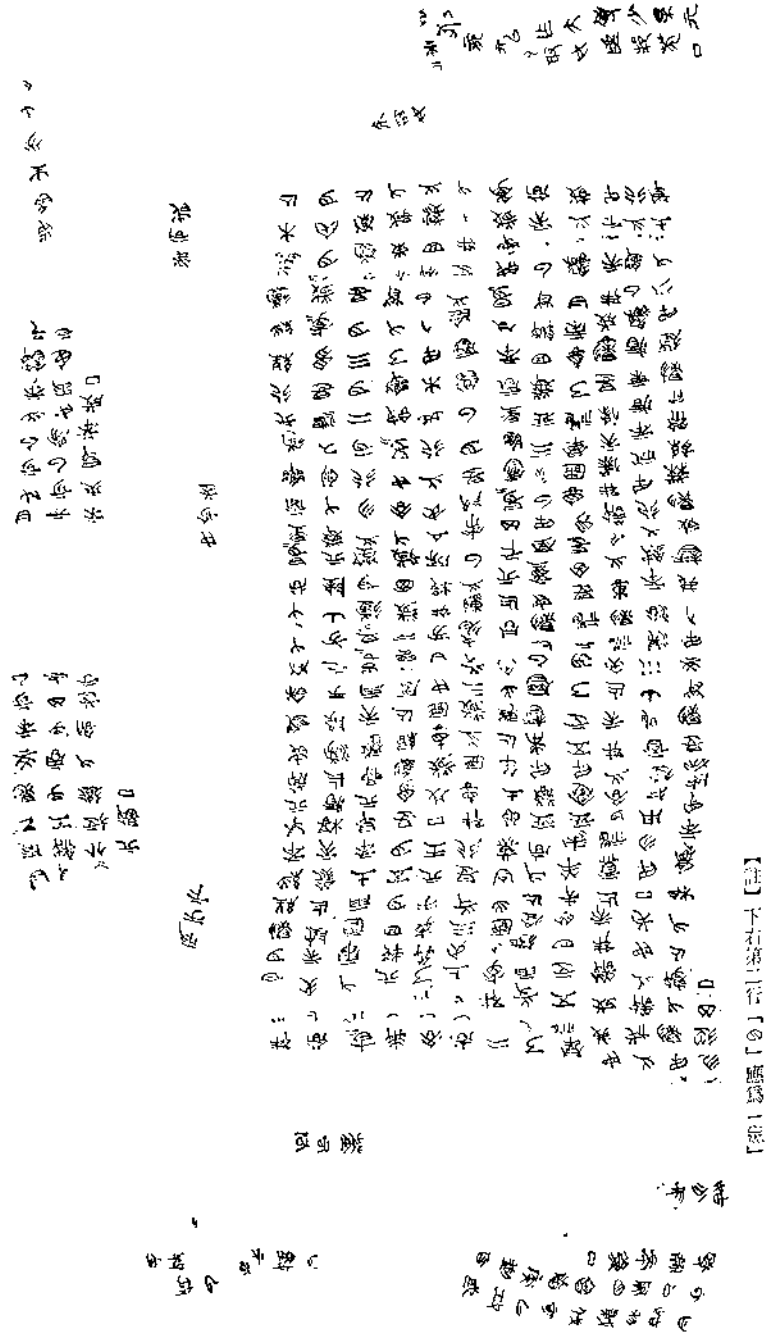


FIGURE 3 Prof. Jao Tsung-i's hand copy of Zidanku Silk Manuscript 1, based on magnified infrared photographs made by the Metropolitan Museum of Art in 1967

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# On the Meaning of the Chu Silk Manuscript

Proposals as to the meaning and nature of the Chu Silk Manuscript (Chuboshu 楚帛書) include explaining it in terms of monthly ordinances (*yueling* 月令), regarding it as a “Hall of Brightness” chart (*mingtang* 明堂[圖]), or reading it as an avoidance calendar (*lijì* 曆忌), to name just a few.<sup>1</sup> Most recently, Li Ling 李零 has written several articles in which he discusses these options.<sup>2</sup> According to Li, not only does the Silk Manuscript not match the categories of the five agents (*wuxing* 五行), it also does not discuss the various natural phenomena associated with the different seasons. Instead, he presents detailed arguments to show that the text lists prohibitions and avoidances for each month, and thereby reaches the following conclusions:

- 1) The Silk Manuscript differs from the Xuangong tu 玄宮圖 (Chart of the dark palace) in the *Guanzi*, as they describe opposite directions.
- 2) The Silk Manuscript does not present a “Hall of Brightness” chart, since it does not establish the “Four Palaces” (*si gong* 四宮); in addition, it lacks a “Grand Chamber” (*taishi* 太室) as well as a “Middle Court” (*zhongting* 中廷).<sup>3</sup>
- 3) The nature of the Silk Manuscript comes closest to the genre of monthly ordinances in that it only discusses the prohibitions and avoidances for each month. In a way, it seems to constitute a sort of prototype of a monthly ordinance.

He therefore conjectures that the Silk manuscript should be ascribed to the category of avoidance calendars, citing the *Zaji li* 雜忌曆 (Miscellaneous avoidance calendar), the *Baiji li* 百忌曆 (Hundred avoidance calendar), the *Taishi baiji litu* 太史百忌曆圖 (Grand scribe hundred avoidance calendar diagrams) and other works listed under the five agents category in the *zi bu*

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1 This article was initially published in 1985 under the title “Chuboshu zhi neihan ji qi xingzhi shishuo” 楚帛書之內涵及其性質試說 (On the meaning of the Chu Silk Manuscript) in the monograph *Chuboshu* 楚帛書 (The Chu Silk Manuscript) (Hong Kong: Chung Hwa, 1985), co-authored by Jao Tsung-i and Zeng Xiantong 曾憲通. The current translation is based on the version reprinted as “Chuboshu zhi neihan shishuo” 楚帛書之內涵試說 (On the meaning of the Chu Silk Manuscript) in 2003 in *wj* 3: 313–329.

2 See Li Ling, *Changsha Zidanku zhanguo Chuboshu yanjiu*.

3 I assume the name *zhongting* 中廷 to be an editorial mistake and that the term should actually read “*riting*” 日廷 (Day Court). See the contributions in Harper and Kalinowski, eds., *Books of Fate and Popular Culture in Early China*, for an introduction into the terminology of early Chinese hemerology.

子部 (Masters section) of “Jingji zhi” 經籍志 (Bibliographic treatise) from the *Suishu* 隨書 (Book of Sui) as evidence for his claim.<sup>4</sup> Yet the works which Li adduces as being related to the genre of avoidance calendars are altogether very late sources. The “Jiri” 譏日 (Refuting day avoidances) and “Jieshu” 詰術 (Criticism of mantic practices) chapters in the *Lunheng* 論衡 (Assay of arguments) as well as other similar sources repeatedly point to the fabricated nature of the prohibitions and avoidances that were fashionable during that time. One among the lost chapters from the *Fengsu tongyi* was titled “Shi ji” 釋忌 (Explaining avoidances). Similarly, among the daybook manuscripts from the wooden tablets from Qin 秦 we find numerous avoidance days for travelling (行忌), day avoidances (日忌) and the like that provide us with a limited understanding of the ideas expressed in avoidance calendars from the Qin and Han periods. They are not entirely the same as those laid out in the Silk Manuscript.

The *Zaji li* in two scrolls was written by Gao Tanglong 高堂隆 (d. 237 AD) of Wei 魏. According to the *Xu Hanzhi* 續漢志 (Treatises of the sequel to the *Book of Han*), the *Taishi baiji li* grew out of Grand Scribe Ling’s 令 endeavors to select favorable days and to determine the seasonal prohibitions and avoidances.<sup>5</sup> In his *Kaozheng* 考證 (Textual criticism [on the *Xu Hanzhi*]) Yao Zhenzong 姚振宗 (1842–1906) states that the nature of the *Zaji li* is somewhat similar to the records of malefic planets (凶星) and various avoidances found in contemporary “regulating time books” (*shixian shu* 時憲書).<sup>6</sup> This is quite different from the literary form of the Silk Manuscript as a whole. Besides, the latter talks about both appropriate (*yi* 宜) and inappropriate or prohibited (*ji* 忌) activities, whereas miscellaneous avoidance books (*zaji shu* 雜忌書) only mention avoidances and prohibitions. The Silk Manuscript addresses appropriate and inappropriate activities for the twelve months of the year, with a focus on military and matrimonial affairs. See for instance the following passages:<sup>7</sup>

4 See Li Ling, *Changsha Zidanku zhanguo Chuboshu yanjiu*, 39, 46.

5 See *Hou Hanshu* 後漢書, comp. Fan Ye 范曄, comm. Li Xian 李賢 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1973), 25-3572.

6 See *Suishu jingji zhi kaozheng* 隋書經籍志考證, comp. Yao Zhenzong 姚振宗, rpt. in *Ershiwu shi yiwen jingji zhi kaobu cuibian* 二十五史藝文經籍志考補萃編 (Beijing: Qinghua daxue chubanshe, 2014), 15-1493.

7 All citations from the Chu Silk Manuscript in this article have been updated and at times expanded according to the latest version of Jao’s “Chu boshu xin zheng,” in idem, *Xuantang jilin: Shilin xin bian*, 3: 860–911. The translation follows, where possible, Jao’s own annotations. In cases where Jao’s notes are not sufficiently clear or where he does not provide explanations, the most up to date transcription of and annotations on the text of the manuscript in Li Ling, *Zidanku boshu*, 2: 43–77, have been consulted together with Li’s and Cook’s

取月 Month Qu	𠄎(作)□北征，率(帥)有咎。 If you make [...] and attack to the north, the commander-in-chief will meet with misfortune.
如月 Month Ru	可𠄎(以)出禾(師)，𠄎(築)邑。不可𠄎(以)𠄎(嫁)女，取臣妾。 It is permitted to send out an army and to build a settlement. It is not permitted to marry off a daughter or to take in slaves.
廌月 Month Qie	不可以出師。 It is not permitted to send out an army.
姑月 Month Gu	利𠄎(侵)伐，可以攻𠄎(城)，可以聚眾。 It is beneficial to invade and strike [another polity]. It is permitted to attack walled cities. It is permitted to assemble multitudes.
荼月 Month Tu	不可以攻 ..... 城 ..... It is not permitted to attack [...] walled cities [...]

The sentence patterns “it is permitted” (可以), and “it is not permitted” (不可以) are used frequently in the Silk Manuscript. Moreover, since the text overtly addresses military issues, we may conjecture that it is interspersed with theories of the *Yin-Yang* and Militarist schools (*bingjia* 兵家).

Both in form and content the Silk Manuscript falls into three parts, but scholars hold different views as to the correct sequence of these parts and how they relate to each other. Recently, Li Xueqin 李學勤 (1933–2019) revised his former theory. He says that in collating the *Taichan tu* 胎產圖 (Chart of the generation of the fetus), the *Yu cang tu* 禹藏圖 (Chart of the entombment according to Yu) and other charts found in the newly excavated Mawangdui Silk Manuscript from Changsha,<sup>8</sup> he noticed that the direction of south always marks the top of the chart. The direction of south should therefore be regarded as indicating the top of the text in the Silk Manuscript as well. In renouncing

“Translation of the Chu Silk Manuscript,” in *Defining Chu*, eds. Cook and Major, 171–6, rpt. in Li Ling, *Chu boshu yanjiu* (shiyi zhong), 244–51.

8 Li Xueqin 李學勤, “Chuboshu zhong de tianxiang” 楚帛書中的天象, in idem, *Jianbo yiji yu xueshu shi* 簡帛佚籍與學術史 (Nanchang: Jiangxi jiaoyu chubanshe, 2001), 38.

his former conviction, he now agrees with the order deployed in Cai Jixiang's *Wan Zhou zengshu* 晚周繒書 (Late Zhou silk manuscript).<sup>9</sup> Cai assumes that part A records the ancestral genealogy of [the ruling house of] Chu 楚, part B addresses astronomical phenomena and part C lists the appropriate and inappropriate activities for the four weeks of each month. I myself have been following the sequence proposed by Cai for many years. In fact, there are three reasons why we should support Cai's original theory:

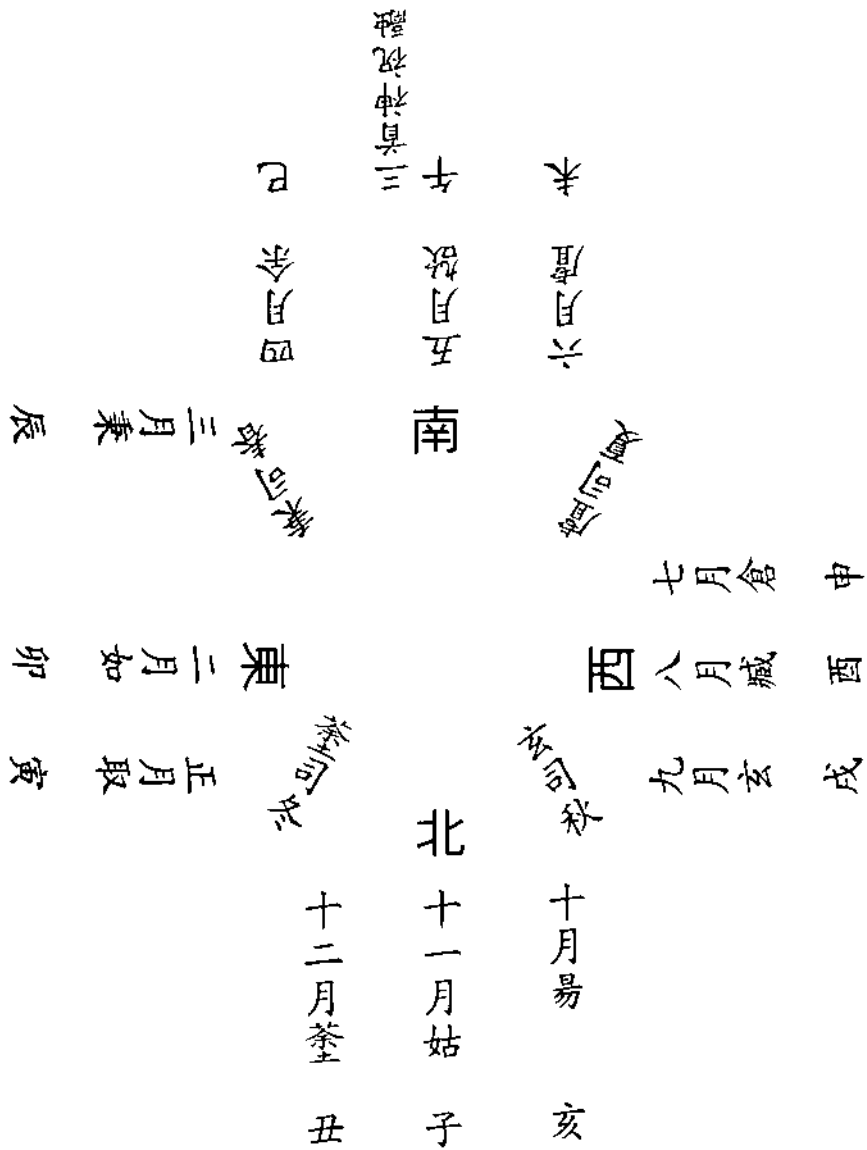
- 1) Part A of the manuscript begins with the introductory phrase “*yue gu* 曰故” (It is said that in former times), which resembles the opening passage “曰若稽古 *yue ruo ji gu*” (examining into antiquity) in the “Gao Yao mo” 皋陶謨 (Counsels of Gao Yao) from the “Yao dian” in the *Book of Documents* for instance.
- 2) The text of part B is written upside down. As it discusses a ruler's loss of virtue, it mentions that the moon will gain and regress (贏絀). It is written upside down to symbolize this loss of order. Thus, there is no good reason to assume that this passage should mark the beginning of the manuscript.
- 3) The Silk Manuscript represents the Xia (dynasty) standard (夏正)<sup>10</sup> and the spirit symbolizing the fifth month is the three-headed deity Zhurong 祝融. The center south position should be occupied by the ancestors of [the royal house of] Chu. The direction of the south must therefore constitute the top of the manuscript.

Thus, we may know that the manuscript should be placed in such a manner that the top corresponds to the south and the bottom to the north, as it is shown in the following chart:

9 See Cai Jixiang 蔡季襄, *Wan Zhou zengshu kaozheng* 晚周繒書考證 (Shanghai: Zhongxi shuju, 2013).

10 The Xia standard or, more precisely, the Xia standard month, which is the lunar month coinciding with the beginning of spring was used as the basis for the month-count in early imperial China.

TABLE 12 The spatial arrangement of the Chu Silk Manuscript according to the four cardinal directions



The dipper handle of the third month in the above chart indicates the branches (*chen* 辰) that correspond to this month. The Chu people had been using the Xia standard, with the first month of the calendar year or “standard month” (*zhengyue* 正月), *Zou* 陬, connected to the *yin* 寅 branch.<sup>11</sup> In the *Chuci jizhu* 楚辭集註 (Collected annotations on the *Songs of the South*) we read:

正月為陬，蓋是月孟春昏時斗柄指寅，在東北隅，故以為名。

The standard month is *Zou*. The reason for this might be that during the first month of spring, at dusk the dipper handle points to the *yin* branch, which is located in the north-eastern corner, from which the month takes its name.<sup>12</sup>

In our chart too, the standard month corresponds with the month *qu* 取, which is located exactly in the north-eastern corner of the manuscript, where it occupies the *yin* branch position. This serves to illustrate that the Chu calendar is established on the *yin* branch, with the chart conforming to the *Lisao*.

As to why the text of part A is written in a conventional manner and that of part B upside down, we may have to seek an answer in their content. Part A relates the myth of how the sun, the moon and the four seasons took shape, starting from the moment of the cosmic creation. After the great flood, the four spirits in charge of the four seasons paced in succession to indicate the year. The Heavenly Thearch (天帝) and *Diqun* 帝夔 initiated the movements of the sun and the moon, having thereby created the division of the day into night, morning, afternoon and evening that provides the people with their temporal rhythms. The content of part B is based on the ancient teaching of honoring and complying with the seasons of the people, conveying the imperative that “one must not in any way fail to show reverence” (毋弗或敬). If one were to violate the temporal rhythms of the people, one would inevitably incur Heaven’s disasters. A ruler losing his virtue resonates with the astronomical phenomenon of the sun, the moon and the stellar lodges deviating from their fixed movements, resulting in the advent of numerous calamities and famines. This bespeaks the idea of lunar irregularities (*de [ce] ni* 德[側] 匿)<sup>13</sup> of which the text warns multiple times.

11 Cf. Li Ling, “The Zidanku Silk Manuscripts,” in *Books of Fate and Popular Culture in Early China*, eds. Harper and Kalinowski, 265–66.

12 Zhu Xi 朱熹, *Chuci jizhu* 楚辭集註, coll. and punc. Jiang Lifu 蔣立甫 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2001), 7.

13 Cf. Shang Chengzuo, “Zhanguo Chu boshu shulüe,” 13; Li Ling, “The Zidanku Silk Manuscripts,” 263, and Li Ling, *Zidanku Boshu*, 2: 52 for the concept of *de ni* or *de (ce) te*, in the Chu Silk Manuscript. See also Jao’s discussion below.

In sum, part A of the manuscript discusses the order of the four seasons, part B records variations occurring in the astronomical phenomena, whereas part C distinguishes between auspicious and inauspicious actions for each month. Part A tells about constancy, part B about changes. The former therefore must precede the latter. Moreover, the text of part A is written in a regular manner, while that of part B is written upside down, thus providing an indication for the order in which they should be read. The meaning of this arrangement may be inferred.

The “Chun guan” 春官 (Offices of spring) section in the *Zhouli* states:

馮相氏掌十有二歲、十有二月、十有二辰、十日、二十有八星位，辨其敘事，以會天位。冬夏致日，春秋致月，以辨四時之敘。

The Royal Astronomer (Fengxiang shi) is in charge of the twelve years (i.e. the twelve stations or positions of Jupiter in the planet’s twelve-year orbital cycle), the twelve months, the twelve branches, the ten suns, and the twenty-eight planetary positions (stellar lodges). He distinguishes their order to compile a general chart of the state of Heaven. He observes the summer and winter solstices as well as the equinoxes in spring and autumn to determine the order of the four seasons.

保章氏掌天星，以志星辰日月之變動，以觀天下之遷，辨其吉凶。

The Royal Astrologer (Baozhang shi) is in charge of the stars. He records shifts occurring in the celestial bodies, the moon and the sun, so as to observe the changes taking place in human affairs and to distinguish between auspicious ones and inauspicious ones.<sup>14</sup>

Jia Gongyan’s 賈公彥 *Zhouli yishu* 周禮義疏 (Commentary on the Meaning of the *Zhouli*) states:

馮相氏掌日月星辰不變依常度者，保章氏掌日月星辰變動，與常不同，以見吉凶之事。

The Royal Astronomer is in charge of those unchanging aspects of the sun, the moon, and the stars that follow constant rules. The Royal Astrologer, in turn, is in charge of detecting changes in the way that the

14 *Zhouli zhushu* 周禮注疏 (Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe, 2000), 26.823–27.

sun, the moon and the stars are behaving, in order to determine auspicious and inauspicious affairs.<sup>15</sup>

One is concerned with constancies and the other one with changes. Their fields of investigation are completely opposite to each other. Since antiquity, this difference governs the official institution in charge of observing the heavenly phenomena. The same difference also accounts for and is mirrored in the peculiar arrangement of part A and B in the Silk Manuscript, marked by the diametrically opposed direction of writing.

Part B of the Silk Manuscript begins with the words:

隹(惟)□□(𠄎)，月則羸(退)紕，不尋(得)其(當)。

[...] the moon will gain and retreat and will not obtain its proper position.

Further it relates:

日月星曆(辰)，變(亂)遊(失)其行，羸(退)失(亂)，卉木亡(常)。

When the sun, the moon, the stars, and the stellar lodges become confused and divert from their [proper] movements, the [process of] gaining and retreating becomes disorderly, thus causing the grasses and trees to lose their constancy.

The duty of the Royal Astrologer was to record any changes that occurred in the regular movements of the sun, the moon, and the stars. Zheng Xuan's annotations to this passage in the *Zhouli* read:

星謂五星；辰，日月所會。五星有羸縮、圜、角，日有薄食、暈、珥；月有盈、虧、朏、側匿之變。七者右行列舍，天下禍福變移，所以皆見焉。

The term planet/star (*xing*) refers to the five planets [i.e. Mercury, Mars, Venus, Jupiter, and Saturn]; branches (*chen*), designate the places where the sun and the moon meet. The five planets have their gain and retreat, their circles and horns; the sun has its veilings and eclipses, its faints and parhelia; the moon has its waxing and waning, [at times] it is speeding

<sup>15</sup> Ibid, 26.827.

up (*tiao*), [at other times] it is slowing down (*ce ni*).<sup>16</sup> These seven celestial bodies travel to the right (anticlockwise) and in doing so, describe a series of lodges. The changes in fortunes and misfortunes in All-under-Heaven can all be discerned from [the movements of] these seven celestial bodies.<sup>17</sup>

The Silk Manuscript refers several times to the ideas of [the five planets'] gaining and retreating as well as of lunar irregularities. Thus, we may gain a glimpse of the lost astrological ideas related to the office of the Royal Astrologer. The numerous celestial phenomena mentioned in the passage from the *Zhouli*, however, merit some further in-depth discussion. This discussion has to start from clarifying the meaning of the terms *chen* 曆 and *sui* 歲.

The Silk Manuscript also mentions several times the sequence of the sun, the moon, the stars and the branches (日、月、星、曆). *Chen*, [says Zheng Xuan,] is where the sun and the moon meet. Jia Gongyan's commentary on the passage further relates:

十有二歲者，歲調太歲，左行於地，行有十二辰，一歲移一辰者也。……云二十八星者，東方角、亢、氐、房、心、尾、箕，北方斗、牛……等為二十八星也。

The term *sui* in the designation “twelve *su*” refers to the [stations of the twelve-year cycle of the] planet Jupiter (Taisui). From the perspective of the earth, Jupiter moves leftwards (clockwise). There are twelve branches in its cycle, and each year it traverses one of them. [...] Then there are the twenty-eight stars (*xing*). In the east we find Horn (Jue), Gullet (Kang), Base (Di), Chamber (Fang), Heart (Xin), Tail (Wei), and Winnower (Ji); in the north there are Dipper (Dou), Ox (Niu) [...] and so on, altogether twenty-eight stars.

若指星體而言謂之星，日月會於其星，即名宿，亦名辰，亦名次，亦名房。

16 According to Christopher Cullen, “these terms refer respectively to when the moon appears in the west on the last day of a lunar month, or in the east on the first day of a month. The second-century CE commentator Zheng Xuan attributes the first to the moon speeding up and the second to it slowing down. See *Wenxuan* 文選 (Selected literature), 58, 1249” (Christopher Cullen, *The Foundations of Celestial Reckoning: Three Ancient Chinese Astronomical Systems* [London and New York: Routledge, 2017], 390, n. 57).

17 *Zhouli zhushu*, 26.827.

A celestial body is referred to as *xing*. When the sun and the moon meet in the position of a celestial body, the latter is then called lodge (*su*). The lodges are also known as branches (*chen*), stations (*ci*) and chambers (*fang*).<sup>18</sup>

This is the accurate interpretation of the term *xingchen* 星辰 (stellar branches). The notion of the branches is inextricably linked to the twenty-eight lodges. The names of the latter can be found as early as on the lacquer ware that has been excavated from the tomb of Marquis Yi of Zeng 曾侯乙 (ca. 4th century BC) in Sui 隨 county, while people must have already possessed ample knowledge about the twenty-eight lodges at least since the time of the Spring and Autumn period. In places where the Silk Manuscript has “the sun, the moon, the stars and the branches,” *chen* stands for the twenty-eight lodges. The Silk Manuscript also says:

不尋(得)其參(參)職天雨。

Obtaining no confirmation; it is in control of Heaven sending down rain.

The form of the graph 參 is similar to that of a graph found on Marquis Yi of Zeng’s lacquer ware. Gan Shi’s 甘氏 *Suixing fa* 歲星法 (The method of the Year Star [i.e., Jupiter]) states: “Jupiter has missed its station and appeared in Triaster” (其失次見於參).<sup>19</sup> Originally, *shen* 參 referred to the planet Triaster, which stood for one of the stellar lodges visible to the naked eye. It is for this reason that, by analogy, *shen* also came to denote the meaning of “to investigate/to examine” (*canyan* 參驗). Thus, while “*bu de qi shen*” (不得其參) literally means “not [being able] to see Triaster,” it here implies the notion of having no confirmation. We may therefore determine that the composer of the Chu Silk Manuscript must have been familiar with the twenty-eight lodges.

The branches and the twenty-eight lodges move leftwards together with the entire canopy of heaven, which is exactly the opposite to the planet Jupiter’s rightwards movement. The ancients habitually used the term *sui* 歲 to refer to *tai sui* 太歲 (Grand Year [implying the sequence of the twelve branches

18 Ibid, 26.823.

19 Wang Xianqian 王先謙, *Hanshu buzhu* 漢書補注 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2008), 6.843.

or chronograms (辰) which marks the passage of the twelve-year cycle of Jupiter (tr. note)] or *sui yin* 歲陰 (Counter-Jupiter) respectively.<sup>20</sup> Zheng Xuan remarks:

歲謂太歲。歲星與日同次之月，斗所建之辰也。歲星為陽，右行於天，太歲為陰，左行於地，十二歲而小周。其妖祥之占，甘氏《歲星法》其遺像也。

The term *sui* refers to the Grand Year. The months where both Jupiter and the sun make station are the branches established by the dipper. [...] Jupiter embodies *yang*, it moves rightwards on the dome of heaven; [the branches of] the Grand Year embody *yin* and move leftwards from the perspective of the earth. The twelve years mark the lesser circuits. The ominous and auspicious prognostications in Gan Shi's *Suixing fa* are based on these principles.<sup>21</sup>

Jia Gongyan's commentary further relates:

此太歲在地，與天上歲星相應而行。歲星在陽，右行於天，一歲移一辰。.....

The Grand Year belongs to [the perspective of] the earth, it moves in conjunction with Jupiter in the sky above. Jupiter is in *yang*, it moves rightwards in the sky, each year it proceeds one branch. [...]

歲星為陽，人之所見；太歲為陰，人所不目覩。既歲星與太歲雖右行、左行不同，要行度不異。

Jupiter embodies *yang*, it can be perceived by the human eye; the Grand Year embodies *yin*, it cannot be perceived by human sight. Although Jupiter and the Grand Year move in different directions – one

20 Cf. Ethan Harkness, "A Parallel Universe: The Transmission of Astronomical Terminology in Early Chinese Almanacs," in *The Circulation of Astronomical Knowledge in the Ancient World*, ed., John M. Steele (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 405, for an explanation of the term *sui yin* 歲陰 (Counter-Jupiter).

21 *Zhouli zhushu*, 26.823, 830.

anticlockwise and the other clockwise – the *du*<sup>22</sup> of their movements is nevertheless the same.<sup>23</sup>

The designation *da sui* 大歲 (Great Year) existed already during the late Shang period. In the following oracle bone fragment from period IV we read:

辛亥貞：王子，又(侑)多公歲，弼(勿)又(侑)于大歲。𠄎。

Testing on *xin-hai* day: On *ren-zi* day we ought to perform a *you* and a *sui* sacrifice to the Many Lords; we ought not perform a *you* sacrifice to the Great Year.<sup>24</sup>

This phrase occurs twice in the extant OBI corpus.<sup>25</sup> In the “Ru xiao” 儒效 (Teachings of the Ru) chapter from the *Xunzi* 荀子 we read:

武王誅紂，行之日以兵忌，東面而迎太歲。

When King Wu went [on campaign] to punish and execute Zhou, he moved on a day that coincided with an avoidance day for warfare. He faced eastward and greeted the Great Year.<sup>26</sup>

The inscription on the *Li gui* 利簋 (Li's tureen), unearthed in Lintong 臨潼 county, Shaanxi, in 1976 reads:<sup>27</sup>

22 A *du* 度 is a measure of displacement of a heavenly body against the background of the stars, equal in this period to the amount of the sun's daily motion, then taken as being constant throughout the year. See Christopher Cullen, *Heavenly numbers: Astronomy and Authority in Early Imperial China* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 33–4.

23 *Zhouli zhushu*, 26.823, 824.

24 *HJ* 33692+33693. The graph 𠄎 has so far not been deciphered.

25 Jao remarks here that the text from fragments nos. 1022 and 33692 in Frank H. Chalfant's and Roswell S. Britton's *Ku Fang ershi cang jiagu ji* 庫方二氏藏甲骨集 (The Couling-Chalfant Collection of Inscribed Oracle Bone) (Taipei: Yiwen yinshuguan 1966 [1935]) is identical and that they therefore present two listings of one and the same fragment. This might be the reason why the *Heji* does not list them separately. On page 224 in his *Yinxu buci zongshu* 殷墟卜辭綜述 (Beijing: Kexue Chubanshe, 1956), Chen Mengjia refutes the idea of Jupiter being mentioned in this fragment. He holds that after *tai* 大 there is a graph missing. Yet Chen is wrong about this. Thanks to the entry of the two fragments bearing an identical text, we know it does in fact mention Jupiter.

26 *Xunzi jijie* 荀子集解, comp. Wang Xianqian 王先謙, punc. and coll. Shen Xiaohuan 沈嘯寰, Wang Xingxian 王星賢 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2013), 8.159.

27 *JC* 4131.

珷征商，佳甲子朝，歲鼎(貞)，克聞，夙有商。

When King Wu attacked Shang it was the morning of *jia-zi* day (day one in the sexagesimal *ganzhi* cycle) and Jupiter was in its correct position. Victory could be perceived [by Di-on-High], so that by dawn, Shang was taken.

*Sui* refers here to the Year Star (歲星) or Jupiter, already accounted for in late Shang astronomy. Somewhat problematic is the designation *da sui*, which, according to Zhang Hongzhao 章鴻釗, must have referred to Jupiter and not to Counter-Jupiter as it does in later sources.<sup>28</sup>

The early Western Han *Wu xing zhan* 五星占 silk manuscript from Mawangdui records that:

出三百六十五日而夕入西方，伏三十日而晨出東方，凡三百九十五日百五分而復出東方。

From the time it emerges until it enters in the west at dusk, [Jupiter] spends three hundred sixty-five days. It then hides for thirty days, until it emerges again in the east in the morning. This makes for a total of three hundred ninety-five days and one hundred and five parts until it emerges again in in the east.<sup>29</sup>

What one actually arrives at is  $395 \frac{105}{240} = 395.44$  days, differing 0.44 days from the modern-day calculation of 395.88 days.<sup>30</sup> This gives us an idea of how advanced the Chu people's knowledge of the planet Jupiter was during the Han period. The Taiyin 太陰 (Great Yin) year count (i.e., the passage of the twelve-year Jupiter cycle [tr. note])<sup>31</sup> might have come in use during the late Spring and Autumn period. Parts of the Gan Shi *Suixing jing* 甘氏歲星經

28 Zhang Hongzhao 章鴻釗, *Zhongguo gu li xiyi* 中國古曆析疑 (Beijing: Kexue chubanshe, 1958), 45–8.

29 Quote slightly expanded according to Qiu Xigui et al., eds., *Changsha Mawangdui Hanmu jianbo jicheng*, 4.223.

30 Jao remarks here that according to the account in the Silk Manuscript, one *du* 度 equals 240 *fen* 分 (parts).

31 According to Daniel Patrick Morgan, “Taiyin is a terrestrial deity that moves clockwise through the twelve branches at the rate of one per year, mirroring Jupiter’s roughly 12-year sidereal period. Once referred to as ‘Counter-Jupiter,’ it is actually Taiyin that determines the planet’s position, month of FMR, and the progression of the twelve so-called ‘Jovian years’” (Morgan, “The Planetary Visibility Tables in the Second-Century BC Manuscript

(Gan Shi's scripture of the Year Star) are preserved in the *Kaiyuan zhanjing* 開元占經 (Divinatory manual of the Kaiyuan reign period [ca. 725 AD]). The last passage of scroll twenty-three has:

歲星凡十二歲而周，皆三百七十日，而夕入于西方。三十日復晨出于東方，視其進退左右，以占其妖祥。

The Year Star accomplishes one revolution every twelve years. Each year lasts for three hundred seventy days before the Year Star enters in the evening in the west. After another thirty days it emerges again in the east. By observing its advancing and retreating from left to right one may prognosticate what is ominous and what is auspicious.<sup>32</sup>

Comparing the three hundred seventy days given as the length of one year in Gan Shi's account with the three hundred sixty-five days for the same period proposed in the *Wu xing zhan*, it becomes clear that the former is far less accurate. Gan De 甘德 was a man from Chu who lived during the Warring States period.<sup>33</sup> The "Tianguan shu" in the *Shiji* says:

近世十二諸侯七國相王，言從衡者繼踵，而尹(皋)、唐(昧)、甘(德)、石(申)，因時務論其書傳，故其占驗凌雜米鹽。

In more recent times the twelve Vassal Lords and Seven States dealt with one another as kings, and proponents of the vertical and horizontal alliances [among the competing powers] succeeded one another without interruption. Because [Yin] Gao, Tang [Mo], Gan [De], and Shi [Shen] devoted their efforts to discoursing on the writings and traditions each in his own time, the end result was that their prognostications and verifications are disorderly, mixed up, and trifling.<sup>34</sup>

Wu xing zhan 五星占," *East Asian Science, Technology, and Medicine, International Society for the History of East Asian Science, Technology, and Medicine* [ISHEASTM] [2016], 13).

32 Qutan Xida 瞿曇悉達, *Kaiyuan zhanjing* 開元占經, in *Wenyuange siku quanshu*, 807: 344.

33 Jao bases his assertion on a line found in Ruan Xiaoxu's 阮孝緒 (479–536 AD) *Qi lu* 七錄 that reads: "Lord Gang was a man from Chu, during the Warring States period he composed a work called *Tianwen xing zhan* (Astrology and planetary prognostication) in eight scrolls" (甘公楚人，戰國時作《天文星占》八卷). The *Qi lu* is in fact a lost work. The line Jao is referring to appears in the *Shiji*. See *Shiji*, 27.1343.

34 *Shiji*, 27.1344. The English translation follows that of David W. Pankenier in his *Astrology and Cosmology in Early China: Conforming Earth to Heaven* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 505.

Tang Mei 唐昧, a man from Chu, died during the Battle of Chuisha 垂沙, which took place in the first year of King Zhao 昭 of Qin (r. 306–251 BC).<sup>35</sup> The “Yiwen zhi” 藝文志 (Treatise on the arts and letters) in the *Hanshu* has: “At the time of the Six States, there was a Lord Gan in Chu” (六國時，楚有甘公).<sup>36</sup> The passage on Tianpou 天棊 (Heaven’s Cudgel star) in scroll 85 of the *Kaiyuan zhanjing* cites the sayings of Gan Shi on several occasions. Thus, it may be used to confirm the account on Tianpou in part B of the Silk Manuscript. According to the excavation report of the Hunan provincial museum from 1973, the pottery which had been found in the same tomb that contained the Silk Manuscript can be used to date the latter to the mid-Warring States period.<sup>37</sup> This is the time during which Tang Mei and Gan De had been active. The prognostications on the ominousness and auspiciousness of affairs [based on the movements of the planets], as well as the records of the station of each of the twenty-eight lunar lodges for each year in Gan Shi’s *Suixing fa* can be read in conjunction with the text of the Chu Silk Manuscript. The former says:

歲星處一國，是司歲十二名攝提格之歲。

Jupiter occupies one state per year, therefore it officiates the year. The twelfth is called *shetige* year.<sup>38</sup>

Beginning from “in a *shetige* year, *sheti* is in [chronogram] *yin* and Jupiter in [chronogram] *chou*” (攝提格之歲。攝提在寅，歲星在丑),<sup>39</sup> the names of the twelve years [that constitute the cycle of Jupiter] are *shetige* and so on. The year count starts with the [dipper] being at [the chronogram] *yin* 寅. This is because in Chu the Xia standard was used. That the name *sheti* can further be found in the *Lisao* shows that the Astronomy of Lord Gan clearly belongs in the learned tradition of Chu. Moreover, many of the extravagant sayings concerning ominous and auspicious actions in the Silk Manuscript overlap with those in the *Suixing fa*. The statement in the latter according to which “*sheti* is in [chronogram] *yin* and Jupiter in [chronogram] *chou*,” serves to prove that Jupiter was understood to move rightwards, while Counter-Jupiter was seen as moving leftwards. Since the Silk Manuscript is contemporary with Lord Gan’s

35 Jao refers the reader here to the first chapter in Liu Tan’s 劉坦, *Zhongguo gudai zhi xingsui jnian* 中國古代之星歲紀年 (Beijing: Kexue chubanshe, 1957), 1.1–125.

36 *Hanshu*, 30.1775.

37 See “Changsha zidanku zhanguo muguo mu” 長沙子彈庫戰國木槨墓, in *Wenwu* (1974) 2: 36–43.

38 *Kaiyuan zhanjing*, in *Wenyuange siku quanshu*, 807: 345.

39 *Ibid.*

sayings, we may conjecture that during the Warring States period, the state of Chu had already established a theory as to the leftward movement of the Great Year (Counter-Jupiter). The second paragraph in part B of the Silk Manuscript reads:

凡歲(歲)惠匿，女(如)曰(亥)佳(惟)邦所，五灾之行.....

In all years in which lunar irregularities occur, if *hai* is the position of the polity [when Jupiter resides there], the orbit of the five evil planets [...]

(惟)佳惠匿之歲，三寺(時).....縣(繫)之以素(素)降。是月以婁，曆為之正。

In years with lunar irregularities, the three seasons [...] making offerings of silk for [...] to descend. Taking the moon's [appearance in lodge] Lou (pasture) to estimate its standard.<sup>40</sup>

According to the astronomer Yu Xi 虞喜 (307–345 AD), the Silk Manuscript takes *Zou* 陬 to be the standard month as Jupiter makes station in Juzi 娵訾 (Simmah) during this time. The *Lüshi Chunqiu* 呂氏春秋 (Master Lü's Spring and Autumn annals), as well as the *Huainanzi*, both state that during the first month of spring (孟春) the sun is in *Yingshi* 營室 ([Lay out the] House [ $\alpha$  Pegasi]). From the middle of the Warring States period onwards, the twelve planetary stations had been conjoined with the *gan-zhi* 干支 (stems and branches) count. In terms of the twelve stations, Jupiter being in Juzi (*shiwèi* 豕韋) corresponds to the *Yingshi* and *Dongbi* 東壁 ([Eastern] Wall [ $\gamma$  Pegasi]) positions in the system of the twenty-eight lunar lodges, as well as to chronogram *hai* 亥 in the sequence of the twelve branches. The phrase “*hai* is the position of the polity” (亥惟邦所) in the Silk Manuscript implies that one's polity is aligned with the *hai* branch when the dipper establishes the standard month in *Yingshi*.<sup>41</sup> The relation of Jupiter to the Grand Year is comparable to that of the solar stations (*richan* 日躔) to the “month establisher” or dipper

40 Jao's original article has *qian* 遷 (displacement) instead of *lou* 婁 (pasture). The quote has been updated here according to Jao, *Xuantang jilin: Shilin xin bian*, 3: 888.

41 Jao refers the reader here to the table “Zhanguo suixing jinian fa” 戰國歲星紀年法 (The method behind the Jupiter year-count in Warring States times), in Chen Jiujin 陳久金, “Cong Mawangdui boshu ‘Wuxingzhan’ de chutu shitan wo guo gudai de suixing jinian wenti” 從馬王堆帛書五星占的出土試探我國古代的歲星紀年問題, *Zhongguo tianwen xueshi wenji* 中國天文學史文集 (Beijing: Kexue chubanshe, 1978), 1: 51.

establishment (*yuejian* 月建). The Grand Year and Jupiter move in opposite directions, one leftwards and one rightwards, with twelve years constituting one lesser circuit (小周). The solar stations and the month establisher too move into opposite directions, with twelve months constituting one lesser circuit. When the solar station moves anticlockwise into chronogram *hai* of Juzi, then the month establisher moves clockwise and establishes the standard month in chronogram *yin*.<sup>42</sup> The Silk Manuscript uses the Xia standard, hence it takes the month *Qu* 取 as its standard month. When the stellar lodge of the standard month makes station in *Yingshi*, Jupiter makes station in Juzi, i.e., the chronogram where it resides is *hai*. Therefore, what is meant by “*hai* is the position of the polity,” is that the stellar station one’s polity is aligned with is *hai*.

The arrangement of the twelve months in the Silk Manuscript is based on *Zou* 陬 being the standard month, marked by the month establisher standing in chronogram *yin*. The awareness that Jupiter has to “exceed a chronogram” (*chao chen* 超辰) [every 144 years (tr. note)] came only later.<sup>43</sup> During the Warring States period, calculations were still solely based on the twelve months, so that the year could not be properly attuned to the movements of the Heavenly bodies [i.e., Jupiter (tr. note)]. Therefore, there had been sayings such as “the first months of the year were lost, and the handle of the Dipper lost its direction” (孟陬殄滅·攝提失方),<sup>44</sup> and “the first month of the year has no standard” (孟陬無紀).<sup>45</sup> The Silk Manuscript uses the Xia standard, according to which the first month of the year is established at the chronogram *yin*, thus it takes the first month of the year to be *Zou*. This is different from the Han people’s use of the Zhou standard, wherein *Zou* marks the eleventh month of the year. At that time, the method of having Jupiter “exceed a chronogram” was not yet known, thus the astronomical phenomenon of lunar irregularities occurred quite frequently. The Silk Manuscript dates approximately to the mid-Warring States period and it mirrors the actual state of astronomical knowledge of its time.

42 Cf. “Zuozhuan sui zai zhizhang tu” 左傳歲在指掌圖, in Cheng Guan 成權 (1763–1842), *Ruoyuan rizha* 筭園日札 (Beijing: Shangwu yinshuguan, 1958), 4.222–24.

43 Cf. Morgan, “The Planetary Visibility Tables,” 15. The fact that Jupiter’s mean sidereal period is actually 11.86 years was compensated for by having the planet “exceed a chronogram” every 144 years.

44 *Hanshu*, 21.973. Translation follows Cullen, *The Foundations of Celestial Reckoning*, 366, who remarks: “The failure to keep the year in step with the seasons meant that the Dipper was no longer seen to point in the expected direction for the month in question when first visible in the evening” (ibid., 366, n. 12).

45 *Hanshu*, 36.1964.

[The *Zhouli* states that] the Royal Astrologer (Baozhang shi) “examines the characteristics of the twelve years in order to determine what is ominous and what is auspicious in the world of human affairs” (以十二歲之相，觀天下之妖祥).<sup>46</sup> According to Zheng Xuan’s annotations, the prognostications found in the *Gan Shi suixing jing* constitute remnants of those associated with the office of the Royal Astrologer.<sup>47</sup> These are the prognostications for each of the twelve years it takes for Jupiter to complete one circuit of heaven. Within each of these years there are the prognostications for each of the twelve months, for which responsibility was borne by the Royal Astronomer. The account on the Royal Astrologer is too terse to contain any records pertaining to the monthly prognostications. But if we look at the appropriate and inappropriate activities listed for each month of the year in part C of the Chu Silk Manuscript, we find that these passages in fact do nothing else but to distinguish what is auspicious and what is ominous in each month. Some of the prognostications therein are concerned with [the movements of] Jupiter. For instance:

𠄎(作)𠄎北征，率(帥)有咎。(取月)

If you make [...] and campaign to the north, the commander-in-chief will meet with disaster. (Month Qu)

龍其..... (余月)

Dragon (particle) [...] (Month Yu)<sup>48</sup>

Some record lunar irregularities, such as:

以匿不見月在日𠄎(𠄎月)

Because of lunar irregularities, one cannot see the moon at [...] (Month Gao)

Others note the appearance of inauspicious birds, such as:

46 *Zhouli zhushu*, 26.830.

47 *Ibid.*

48 Jao remarks here that *long* 龍 (dragon) could stand for the Azure Dragon (*cang long* 蒼龍).

又梟(梟)內(入)于上下。(倉月)

A maleficent bird entered the space between heaven and earth (Month *Cang*)

These three passages are perfect examples of what Zheng Xuan calls “the indicators for the changes of fortune in All-under-Heaven are all visible” (天下禍福變移，所在皆見)，<sup>49</sup> in providing predictions and verifications for each of the twelve months’ omens. *Xiao* 梟 (hornless or short-eared owl) represents an evil bird. The office of the nest remover (*checushi* 誓蒺氏) in the “Qiu guan” 秋官 (Autumn offices) passage of the *Zhouli* was specialized in dealing with ominous birds. Its method was as follows:

以方(版) 書十日之號，十有二辰之號，十有二月之號，十有二歲之號，二十有八星之號。縣其巢上，則去之。

On wooden tablets he writes the appropriate names of the ten days, of the twelve chronograms, of the twelve months, of the twelve years, and the twenty-eight stellar lodges. He suspends the tablets above the nests and then removes them.<sup>50</sup>

Part two from the “Za pian” 雜篇 (Miscellaneous tales) in the *Yanzi Chunqiu* 晏子春秋 (The Spring and Autumn annals of Master Yan) records how Patriarch Jing 景 of Qi 齊 (r. 547–490 BC) commissions Bochang Qian 柏常騫 (dates unknown) to perform an exorcism to get rid of owls [who were dwelling in the Patriarch’s newly built Luqin 路寢 tower]. Bochang did so by putting up a new building and placing white reeds in it. He performed the exorcism overnight, causing the owls to die.<sup>51</sup> It was a popular belief in ancient times that when building a house one had to perform an exorcism to expel evil birds. The Chu Silk Manuscript touches several times upon the subject of building a new house.

The eleventh month, Gu 辜, was regarded as one of the most auspicious months, “favorable for employing an army, for convening the many lords and for executing chief criminals” (利用兵及會諸侯，型首事). The ancients

49 *Zhouli zhushu*, 26.827.

50 *Ibid.*, 37.1154. Translation adapted from Martin Kern, “Offices of Writing and Reading in the *Rituals of Zhou*,” in *Statecraft and Classical Learning: The Rituals of Zhou in East Asian History*, eds. Benjamin A. Elman and Martin Kern (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 92.

51 Cf. Olivia Milburn, trans. and annot., *The Spring and Autumn Annals of Master Yan*, (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 341–342.

also regarded the tenth month as an auspicious month for it represented an abundant number. The account for the sixteenth year of Patriarch Zhuang 莊 (677 BC) in the *Zuozhuan* has:

公父定叔出奔衛。三年而復之，曰：「不可使共叔無後於鄭。」使以十月入，曰：「良月也，就盈數焉。」

Gongfu Dingshu fled to Wei. But after three years, the Liege of Zheng restored him, saying, “We cannot allow Gongshu Duan to be without posterity in Zheng.” He had Gongfu Dingshu enter the domain in the tenth month, saying, “It is an auspicious month. We take from it the fullness of its number.”<sup>52</sup>

Ten is a full number, thus the tenth month is regarded as an auspicious month. There probably was a specific reason why the Chu Silk Manuscript took the eleventh month as the most auspicious one instead.

In observing what is auspicious and what is inauspicious, the Royal Astrologer further differentiated the feudal polities based on the territories governed by [each of the twenty-eight] stellar lodges. Zheng Xuan’s annotations state:

主用客星，彗、孛之氣為象。

When the main effect comes from the guest star, the vapors of *hui* (“broom” star; i.e., comet with a tail) and *bei* (“fuzzy” star; i.e., comet without a tail) provide the images.<sup>53</sup>

Jia Gongyan’s *yishu* states:

按《公羊傳》昭十七年冬，有星孛于大辰，孛者何？彗星也。

According to the Gongyang commentary, in the winter of the seventeenth year of Patriarch Zhao, a star exploded in the great chronogram. What does that mean? It means that there was a broom star.<sup>54</sup>

52 *Zuo*, Zhuang 16.3, 202. The English translation follows Durrant, Li, and Schaberg, trans., *Zuo Tradition*, 179.

53 *Zhouli zhushu*, 26.828. Compare Zhentao Xu, David W. Pankenier, *East-Asian Archaeoastronomy: Historical Records of Astronomical Observations of China, Japan, and Korea* (Amsterdam: Gordon and Breach Science Publishers, 2000), 125–129, for the notion of guest stars, broom stars and fuzzy stars.

54 *Zhouli zhushu*, 26.829.

He Xiu's 何休 (129–182 AD) annotations in turn explain that “*hui* and *bei* refer to a vapor of malefic disorder” (孛、彗者，邪亂之氣).<sup>55</sup> The Chu Silk Manuscript states:

□□□歲，西國又吝。如曰日月既亂……東國又吝。

[...] Jupiter, there will be grudge in the western polities. If one were to say, since the sun and the moon are already in disorder, [...] there will be grudge in the eastern polities.

This passage also addresses the issue in terms of the affairs of the feudal polities. Although in the text above the word “Jupiter” is missing, the meaning of the phrase should nevertheless resemble that of the following statement in the *Zuozhuan*:

越得歲而吳伐之，必受其凶。

Since Wu has attacked Yue when the year star is in Yue's celestial field, Wu is certain to suffer baleful consequences.<sup>56</sup>

We further come across the phrase *bei-bei* 孛孛 (in a volatile/exploding manner) in the Silk Manuscript. This refers to the praxis of “discussing auspiciousness and inauspiciousness by observing the vapors of the broom star and the fuzzy star (以彗孛之氣論妖祥). Possibly this constitutes another piece of the lost records of the Royal Astrologer. The early Han Mawangdui silk manuscript “Tianwen qixiang zazhan” 天文氣象雜占 (Assorted astronomical and meteorological prognostications) lists twenty-nine broom star charts, together with the names of eighteen individual broom stars.

Eight of their names also appear in the “Tianwen zhi” 天文志 (Astronomical treatise) of the *Jinshu*, such as Tianhao 天蒿 (Celestial Vine), Qiangxing 牆星 (Wall Star), Chiyou qi 蚩尤旗 (Chi You's Banner), Tiandi 天翟 (Celestial Pheasant), Ribai guan 日白灌 (?), Tianchan 天欖 (Celestial Magnolia), Zhouxing 帚星 (Broom Star), and so on.<sup>57</sup> In his commentary to the “Wen Di ji” 文帝紀 (Annals of Emperor Wen) in the *Hanshu*, Wen Ying 文穎 (ca. 2nd century AD)

55 *Chunqiu Gongyang zhuan zhushu* 春秋公羊傳注疏 (Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe, 2000), 23,582.

56 *Zuo*, Zhao 32.2, 1518. The English translation has been adapted from Durrant, Li, and Schaberg, trans., *Zuo Tradition*, 1719.

57 Cf. Xi Zezong 席澤宗, “Yi fen guanyu huixing xingtai de zhengui ziliao: Mawangdui Han mu boshu zhong de huixingtu” 一份關於彗星形態的珍貴資料：馬王堆漢墓帛書

differentiates between three categories of comets: “fuzzy” (孛) stars, “broom” (彗) stars and “elongated” (長) stars. He states:

其占略同，而其形小異。孛星光芒短，其光四出，蓬蓬孛孛也，彗星光芒長，參參如掃慧。星光芒有一直指，或竟天，或十丈，或三丈，或二丈，無常也。

The prognostications for fuzzy, broom and elongated stars are roughly the same, but their shapes are slightly different. The rays of light of a fuzzy star are short; the light comes out in all four directions and is snarled and volatile looking. The rays of the broom star are long and wispy like the sweeping motion of a broom. The rays of the elongated star point straight outward in a single direction, some stretching all the way across the sky, some for ten feet, some for three, some for two, without regularity.<sup>58</sup>

This is a rather broad classification. Liu Xi's 劉熙 (ca. 200 AD) *Shiming* 釋名 (Explanation of names) states:

彗星，光稍似彗也。孛星，星旁氣孛孛然也。筆星，星氣有一枝，末銳似筆也。

On a broom star, the rays of the star are trailing like a broom. On a fuzzy star, the vapor all around the star is volatile. On a brush star,<sup>59</sup> the vapor of the star has just one branch and the tip is pointed like a brush.<sup>60</sup>

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中的彗星圖, in *Mawangdui Han mu yanjiu* 馬王堆漢墓研究, eds. Hunan Provincial Museum (Changsha: Renmin chubanshe, 1981), 198–203.

58 This quote has been slightly expanded. Jao's original does not include Wen Ying's description of elongated stars. See *Kaiyuan zhanjing*, scroll 88, in *Wenyuange siku quanshu*, 807: 817, for the Chinese text. The English translation has been adapted from Ku T'ieh-fu 顧鐵符, Donald J. Harper, trans., “A Summary of the Contents of the Ma-wang-tui Silk-scroll Book ‘Assorted Astronomical and Meteorological Prognostications’” *Chinese Studies in Archaeology* 1.1 (1979): 65–6.

59 According to Harper, the “brush star” must be a synonymous term for “elongated star.” See, Ku/ Harper, “A Summary of the Contents of the Ma-wang-tui Silk-scroll Book ‘Assorted Astronomical and Meteorological Prognostications,’” 72 n. 28.

60 Liu Xi 劉熙, *Shiming* 釋名 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2016), 1.8. This quote has been expanded from Jao's original, which only includes Liu Xi's description of a broom star. The English translation has been adapted from Ku/ Harper, “A Summary of the Contents of the Ma-wang-tui Silk-scroll Book ‘Assorted Astronomical and Meteorological Prognostications,’” 66.

In observing what is auspicious and what is inauspicious, it was mainly the vapors of the broom-star and the fuzzy-star that were used as images for prognostication. As this is also the case in the Chu Silk Manuscript, the latter should be regarded as preserving the old rules of the Royal Astrologer.

In part B of the Chu Silk Manuscript we frequently come across the formulation *de ni* 德匿. The “Wu Di de” 五帝德 (Virtue of the Five Thearchs) chapter in the *Da Dai Liji* has:

契作司徒，教民孝友，敬政率經。其言不惑，其德不慝，舉賢而天下平。

When Xie acted as Minister of Instruction, he instructed the populace and acted respectfully towards his peers. He honored the affairs of government by following the correct norms. His words were not misleading, and his moral commitment (*de*) was not biased. He appointed the worthy in order to reconcile All-under-Heaven.<sup>61</sup>

In Wang Pinzhen's 王聘珍 *jiegu* 解詁 (Explanations and philological notes [on the *Da Dai Liji*]) *te* or *ni* 慝 is glossed as *xie* 邪 (irregular/biased).<sup>62</sup>

In the account from the Silk Manuscript, we find instances of *ni* being mentioned without *de*:

以匿，不見月，在日☐

Due to a [lunar] irregularity, one cannot see the moon; as to the sun [...]

In Zheng Xuan's annotations to the passage concerning the Royal Astrologer in the *Zhouli* we read:

月有盈、虧、朏、側匿之變。

The moon has its waxing and waning, [at times] it is speeding up (*tiao*), [at other times] it is slowing down (*ce ni*).<sup>63</sup>

61 Kong Guangsen 孔廣森, *Da Dai Liji buzhu* 大戴禮記補注, punc. and coll. Wang Fengxian 王豐先 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2013), 62.133.

62 *Da Dai Liji jiegu*, 62.123.

63 *Zhouli zhushu*, 26.827.

Jia Gongyan's *Zhouli yishu* cites the *Shangshu wuxing zhuan* 尚書五行傳 (The tradition of the five agents in the *Book of Documents*) as saying:

晦而月見西方謂之朏，朔而月見東方謂之側匿，側匿則侯王其肅，朏則侯王其舒。

When the moon is visible in the west on the first day of the month it is called *tiao*. When the moon is visible in the east on the last day of the month it is called slowing down (*ce ni*). In the case of the moon slowing down, the sovereign is worried; in case of the moon speeding up, the sovereign is at ease.<sup>64</sup>

This quote is taken from Fu Sheng's 伏勝 (dates unknown) *Shangshu dazhuan* 尚書大傳 (Great tradition of the *Book of the Documents*). 「匿」 is also written as 「慝」. In the account of the seventeenth year of Patriarch Zhao 昭 (524 BC) in the *Zuozhuan* we read:

夏六月甲戌朔，日有食之。祝史請所用幣。昭子曰：「日有食之，天子不舉，伐鼓於社；諸侯用幣於社，伐鼓於朝，禮也。」平子禦之，曰：「止也。唯正月朔，慝未作，日有食之，於是乎有伐鼓、用幣，禮也。其餘則否。」

In summer, in the sixth month, on the *jia-xu* day, the first day of the month, there was an eclipse of the sun. The invocators and scribes asked what sacrificial goods should be used. (Shusun) Zhaozi said, "When there is an eclipse of the sun, the Son of Heaven does not dine with full ceremony, and he has drums struck at the altar of earth. The princes offer sacrificial goods at their altars of earth, and they have drums struck in court. That is in accordance with ritual propriety." Ji Pingzi forbade it. "Stop. It is only when there is an eclipse of the sun on the first day of the first month, before the adverse forces have begun their rise, that beating drums and offering sacrificial goods is in accordance with ritual propriety. At other times it is improper."<sup>65</sup>

Du Yu 杜預 (222–285 AD) remarks:

64 Ibid, 26.828.

65 *Zuo*, Zhao 17.2, 1384. The English translation follows Durrant, Li, and Schaberg, trans., *Zuo Tradition*, 1543.

慝，陰氣也。四月純陽用事，陰氣未動而陽，災重，故有伐鼓用幣之禮。

Adverse forces refer to the *yin*-vapor. In the fourth month, pure *yang* is in effect, while the *yin* breath has not yet moved, indicating grave disasters. Thus, there is the ceremony of striking drums and offering sacrificial goods.<sup>66</sup>

This account has been cited from the words of Shusun Zhaozi 叔孫昭子 (d. 517 BC). Zhaozi once inquired with Tanzi 邴子 (dates unknown) about the offices for birds (鳥官), hence he must have been familiar with the field of astronomy. What this passage tells us is that already during the Spring and Autumn period people had been referring to the astronomical phenomenon of “the moon slowing down.”<sup>67</sup>

Below is a list of phrases and passages from the Chu Silk Manuscript that include the compound *de ni* 德匿:

凡戡(歲)德匿，女(如)曰乃(亥)佳(惟)邦所，五災之行.....

In all years in which lunar irregularities occur, if *hai* is the position of the polity [when Jupiter resides there], the orbit of the five evil planets [...]

(惟)佳德匿之歲，三寺(時)..... 繫(繫)之以素(素)降。是月以婁，惟之正。

In years with lunar irregularities, the three seasons [...] making offerings of silk in order for [...] to descend. Taking the moon's [appearance in lodge] Lou (pasture) to calculate its standard.

佳(惟)亨〔德〕匿，出自黃(鼎)，土身亡(異)；出內(入) 〔不〕同。乍(其)下凶。

66 *Chunqiu Zuozhuan zhengyi* 春秋左傳正義 (Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe, 2000), 48.1564.

67 *Hanshu*, 27.1496. Jao remarks here that the “Wuxing zhi” 五行志 (Treatise on the five agents) in the *Hanshu* quotes the words of Pingzi 平子, according to which “*ni* is called *yin yao* (broken line composing one third of a trigram) when the moon is in correct *yang* and pure *qian* (Vigor)” (正陽純乾之月，慝調陰爻也). Here the *yin-yang* system of the hexagram lines (卦爻) [in the *Changes*] is used to explain the phenomenon of lunar irregularities.

When a fuzzy star [appears during a time] when the motion of the moon slows down and, rising from the yellow spring, Saturn appears, then there will be no calamities. When its moving in and out is not consistent, it will create misfortune for those below.

建丑(恆)襲(禡) 民，五正乃明，丌(其) 神是高(享)。是謂惠匿，群神乃惠。

When constancy/the standard is established, the Five Governors will be bright, and the spirits will enjoy their offerings. This is to say [when the spirits receive their offerings, then even though] lunar irregularities may occur, the multitudinous spirits [will still] act favorably (*de*) [towards the living].<sup>68</sup>

The compound *de ni* should be understood as the concealment (匿) of *de* (i.e., of virtue).<sup>69</sup> According to the passages cited above, occurrences of *ni* inevitably happen on the first day of a month (朔日). The sun may witness eclipses and the moon may speed up or slow down in its movement. The latter might appear in the east, or it might not be visible at all, whereas a comet appears instead.

When referring to a lunar event, we find the compound *ce ni* also written as *suo nü* 縮朒 (contract, reduce). The *Shuowen jiezi* explains: “When the moon is visible in the east on the first day of the month then this is called *suo nü* (朔而月見東方謂之縮朒).<sup>70</sup> Both *tiao* 朓 (surplus) and *nü* 朒 (reduce) refer to changes in the appearance of the moon. The *Shangshu wuxing zhuan* has *ce ni* 側匿 instead. According to Zheng Xuan’s annotations, *ce ni* describes a manner of contracting and slowing down. (縮縮行遲貌).<sup>71</sup>

Some scholars interpret the first part of the compound *de ni* in terms of *de* as it is used in the antagonistic pair *xingde* 刑德 (punishments and rewards).

68 The translation of the last passage follows the notes in Jao, “Chu boshu xinzheng,” 892. Li Ling also interprets the last phrase of this passage as “even if there are lunar irregularities, [if the above-mentioned conditions are fulfilled], the multitudinous spirits will [nevertheless] act favorably [towards the living]. See Li Ling, *Zidanku Boshu*, 2: 55. However, judging from Jao’s discussion below, his understanding of this passage seems to be somewhat different in the context of the present article.

69 Jao presumably refers here to the last instance of the compound as it appears in the last of the four cited passages.

70 Xu Shen 許慎, *Shuowen jiezi* 說文解字, punc. and coll. Xu Xuan 徐鉉 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1963), 141 (7A.9).

71 *Shangshu dazhuan shuzheng* 尚書大傳疏證, annot. Pi Xirui 皮錫瑞 (1850–1908) (woodblock print edition prepared by Shifu tang 師伏堂 in the twenty-second year of the Qing Guangxu era [1896]), 4.3b.

However, the conceptual division of *xing* and *de* is not yet obvious in the Silk Manuscript. Here it means that if the sovereign over the people below conceals (匿) his virtue (德), Heaven without fail causes lunar irregularities (德匿) to happen so as to condemn the sovereign's lack of virtue.<sup>72</sup>

The import of part B of the Chu Silk Manuscript seems closest to that of the “Yong bing” 用兵 (The use of military) chapter in the *Kongzi sanchaoji* 孔子三朝記 (Confucius' account of the Three Dynasties) passage from the *Da Dai Liji*. Below I will try to point out the similarities between both texts:

**“Yong bing” chapter:**

人生有喜怒，故兵之作，與民皆生。

[The capacities for] happiness and anger are innate human attributes. Thus, the invention of weapons coincided with the advent of humanity.

妖替天道，逆亂四時。

Distorting and abandoning the way of Heaven, violating and disturbing [the order of] the four seasons.

曆失制，攝提失方，鄒大無紀。

The calendar loses its system, *sheti* is not in its place and there is no fixed order to determine when it is the first month of the year.

於是降之災.....民多夭疾。

[Heaven] therefore sends down great disaster [...] [causing] the people to die young and suffer from illnesses.

夫天下之報殃於無德者也，必與其民。

When Heaven sends down its retribution on those immoral tyrants, it accords with the wish of the people.<sup>73</sup>

72 Jao remarks here that this conception is markedly at variance from what is being communicated in the *Xingde* 刑德 silk manuscript excavated at Mawangdui in Changsha.

73 *Da Dai Liji jiegou*, 11.210–12. The original quote has been slightly expanded.

**Chu Silk Manuscript:**

☐〔天下〕乃兵，𠄎(害)于丌(其)王。

All-under-Heaven will be at war, and harm will come to the king.<sup>74</sup>

日月星曆(辰)，𠄎(亂)遊(失)丌(其)行。

The sun, moon, stars, and planets will erratically overstep their paths.<sup>75</sup>

日月既𠄎(亂)，歲季乃☐。

Once the sun and the moon have fallen into disorder, the division of the year will then [...].<sup>76</sup>

四月、五月，是胃(調)𠄎(亂)紕(紀)

If it is the fourth or the fifth month, it is called a disordered cycle.<sup>77</sup>

天𠄎(地)乍兼(祥)，天𠄎(梃)灋(將)乍(作)灋(湯)，降於其方。

When heaven and earth create ominous anomalies, the Heaven's Cudgel star creates [sweeping] destruction, sending down [calamities] throughout the regions [of All-under-Heaven].<sup>78</sup>

佳天乍粟(福)，神則各(格)之。佳天乍突(祆)，神則𠄎(惠)之。𠄎敬佳𠄎(備)，天像是𠄎。戒(虔)佳天𠄎，下民之𠄎(祇)。

When Heaven creates good fortune, the spirits will then bring it to you. When Heaven creates demonic [influences], the spirits will [likewise] provide you with them. Be attentive and respectful in [your] preparations and the Heavenly patterns will thus be the guiding standard.

74 The reconstruction of Tianxia 天下 (All-under-Heaven) for the two missing graphs follows in Li Ling, *Zidanku Boshu*, 2.51. The translation as well follows Li Ling, *Chu boshu yanjiu* (shiyi zhong), 246.

75 Translation follows *ibid.*, 246.

76 Translation follows *ibid.*, 247.

77 Translation adapted from Li Ling, *Chu boshu yanjiu* (shiyi zhong), 246.

78 Translation adapted from *ibid.*, 246.

Being respectful towards Heaven, this is providing a pattern for the people below.<sup>79</sup>

The overall message of the “Yong bing” chapter implies that Heaven requites sovereigns who are found to be lacking in virtue with calamities he and his subject population will have to suffer from. Part B of the Chu Silk Manuscript in turn interprets years in which lunar irregularities occur in terms of Heaven and earth creating harm. Both accounts show considerable overlap. We may thus conclude that these accounts belong to the repertoire of the Militarist and *Yin-yang* schools dating from somewhere between the mid- and late Warring States period.

The *Kongzi sanchao ji* is the result of Confucius replying to the questions of Patriarch Ai 哀 of Lu 魯 (r. 494–469 BC). We can find similar accounts in further remnant works from the states of Qi 齊 and Lu. For instance the “Yueshu” 樂書 (Treatise on music) in the *Shiji* has:

子夏答曰：「夫古者天地順而四時當，民有德而五穀昌，疾疢不作而無祲祥，此之謂大當。」

Zixia replied [to the marquis Wen of Wei 魏文侯]: “In ancient times heaven and earth were in compliance with each other, and the four seasons were in their correct order. The people were virtuous, and the five grains produced abundantly. Diseases did not break out, and no ominous anomalies occurred. This is what is called [a period of] great order.”<sup>80</sup>

The “Tian yuan” 天圓 (Roundness of heaven) chapter in the *Da Dai Liji* has:

聖人慎守日月之數，以察星辰之行，以序四時之順逆，謂之麻。

The sages carefully kept watch over the numbers of suns and moons in order to scrutinize the movements of the celestial bodies so as to be able to deduce the direct and retrograde motion [of the celestial bodies] as they occur throughout the four seasons. This is what is called an “astronomical [or calendrical] system.”<sup>81</sup>

79 Translation adapted from *ibid.*, 247.

80 *Shiji*, 24.1223.

81 *Da Dai Liji jiegou*, 5.100. The rendering of li 麻 as “astronomical [or calendrical] system” is based on the discussion in Cullen, *Heavenly Numbers*, 24.

The “Qing zhong ji” 輕重己 (Economic Policies VI) chapter from the *Guanzi* relates:

正生曆，曆生四時，四時生萬物，聖人因而理之。

Correctness gave rise to the calendar, the calendar gave rise to the four seasons, and the four seasons give rise to the myriad things. Being in accord with this, the sages set things in order.<sup>82</sup>

According to these sayings, when the world is well ordered, the movements of the celestial bodies show no anomalies, this is what is called a “period of great order” (大當). The opposite is the case when “[the moon] gains and retreats and does not obtain its proper position (贏詘不得其當). Part B of the Silk Manuscript argues from the contrary position by talking at lengths about changes occurring in the movements of the celestial bodies, warning that calamities will befall those who lack virtue. It takes upholding reference as its core doctrine by carrying on the ancient wisdom of “revering and complying with the seasons of the people” (敬順民時), interspersed with saying from the *Yin-yang* and Militarist schools. It is not very hard to grasp the objective of the Silk Manuscript and to recognize that it does not merely touch upon the issues associated with avoidance calendars.

The “Tianwen zhi” from the *Hanshu* relates:

凡天文在圖籍昭昭可知者，……彗孛飛流，日月薄食，……此皆陰陽之精，其本在地，而上發于天者也。政失於此，則變見於彼，……是以明君睹之而寤，飭身正事，思其咎謝，則禍除而福至。

All sorts of astronomical observations [from throughout the ages] can be clearly reconstructed from [extant] charts and writings. [...] Broom stars and the fuzzy stars cross through the sky, the sun and the moon have their veilings and eclipses, [...] all these phenomena come down to the essence of *yin* and *yang*. They originate on the earth and appear up in heaven. If government fails on earth, then anomalies are to be observed in the sky. [...] This happens so bright rulers may observe these phenomena and become aware [of faults in government] so that they are able to

82 *Guanzi jiaozhu*, 24.1688.. The English translation has been adapted from W. Allyn Rickett, trans., *Guanzi: Political, Economic, and Philosophical Essays from Early China, Volume II* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), 510.

command themselves to set their affairs in order and consider their faults so as to avoid calamities and allow for good fortunes to arrive.<sup>83</sup>

Nor does the lengthy discussion on the logic of celestial phenomena and human affairs corresponding to each other in part B of the Silk Manuscript exceed the notion of “if government fails on earth, then anomalies are to be observed in the sky” (政失於此，則變見於彼). Gan De’s *Suixing jing* claims that “By observing the advancing and retreating of the year star, one may prognosticate what is ominous and what is auspicious” (視歲星進退，占其妖祥).<sup>84</sup> As to the Silk Manuscript stating that “the seasonal rains will come and go without regularity or constancy” (時雨進退，亡又常恆);<sup>85</sup> “the people do not understand the year” (民人不知歲); these issues fall into the responsibility of the Royal Astrologer. The composition of the Silk Manuscript coincides with the lifetime of Gan De. The main topics it touches upon still belong to the astronomical knowledge and the miscellaneous divination practices of the Chu people. It therefore seems justified to regard the Silk Manuscript as a remnant of the “Treatise on Celestial Offices” of the Kingdom of Chu.

83 *Hanshu*, 26.1273.

84 *Kaiyuan zhanjing*, in *Wenyuange siku quanshu*, 807: 344.

85 Translation adapted from Li Ling, *Chu boshu yanjiu* (shiyi zhong), 247.

# An Explanation of the Phenomena Called ‘*Xiang Wei*’ 象緯 and ‘*De Ni*’ 德匿 in the Chu Silk Manuscript

I have always surmised that the Zidanku Chu Silk Manuscript (子彈庫楚帛書) constitutes the remnant of a lost “Treatise on Celestial Offices” (天官書) of the Kingdom of Chu 楚, whereas other venerable scholars regard the text to consist of “month prohibitions” (月禁).<sup>1</sup> Recently, I re-read the text of the Silk Manuscript against that of the “Tianguan shu” 天官書 in the *Shiji*, probing into the matter once more in order to prove and to show that my theory is not based on groundless presumptions. I will also spare no effort in explaining my points in detail below.

## 1 *Chen Wei* 晨禱 Reads *Chen Wei* 辰緯 (Weft of Constellations)

In Du Fu’s 杜甫 (712–770 AD) *You Longmen Fengxian si* 遊龍門奉先寺 (Visiting Fengxian Temple at Longmen) we find the line:

天闌象緯逼 Peering into the heavens, the constellations’ weft (*xiang wei*) draws near.<sup>2</sup>

The ancients peered into the heavens through hollow tubes. What they caught sight of was a sky full of stars, which they referred to as *xiang wei* 象緯 (weft of constellations). The Silk Manuscript uses the name *chen wei* 晨禱 for

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- 1 Some of the material in this article appeared originally in an earlier study of Jao’s, called “Chuboshu tianxiang zai yi” 楚帛書天象再議 (Revisiting the issue of celestial phenomena in the Chu Silk Manuscript), published in *Zhongguo Wenhua* 中國文化 3 (Beijing: Shenghuo, dushu, xinzhì sanlián shūdiàn, 1990): 66–73. A first version of the article we are looking at has been published under the title “Chuboshu xiang wei jie” 楚帛書象緯解 (Explaining the weft of constellations in the Chu Silk Manuscript) in the monograph *Chu di chutu wenxian san zhong yanjiu* 楚地出土文獻三種研究 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1993), co-edited and co-authored by Jao Tsung-ian and Zeng Xiantong 曾憲通. The present translation is based on a revised and expanded version of the latter, re-published as “Chuboshu xiang wei ji de ni jie” 楚帛書象緯及德匿解 (An explanation of the phenomena called ‘*xiang wei*’ and ‘*de ni*’ in the Chu Silk Manuscript) in 2003 in *WJ* 3: 333–46.
  - 2 Du Fu 杜甫, *Dushi xiangzhu* 杜詩詳註, annot. Qiu Zhao’ao 仇兆鰲 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1979), 1.1.

referring the same phenomenon.<sup>3</sup> In the past, I have read the graph *wei* 緯 as *wei* 違 (to go against/to offend), taking it to tally with the meaning of “*luan zuo*” 亂作 (to become disordered) in the same passage cited below. Yet it actually should be rendered “*wei*” 緯 (weft or woof). 緯 is used interchangeably with 緯 [to write the same word, {緯}]. According to the “Tianguan shu” in the *Shiji*, the Purple Palace (紫宮), Chamber and Heart (房心), [Weight and Balance Beam (權衡), Mineral Spring (咸池), Ruins and Roof, are the Sectional Asterisms within the array of lodges].<sup>4</sup> These are regarded as the Five Offices of Heaven. Their seats constitute the immobile warp (經). Water, Fire, Metal, Wood, and Saturn, these five stars are Heaven's Five Assistants. They are the weft, appearing and disappearing in their seasons, and where they pass by and where they gain and regress in their movements all have their regular measures.<sup>5</sup> The *Taiping Yulan* cites a passage from the “Tianwen zhi” of the *Hanshu*, which has:

五星，天之五佐，為經緯，見伏有時。

The five stars are Heaven's Five Assistants. Constituting warp and weft, (their) appearing and disappearing have (their) seasons.<sup>6</sup>

The graph 𠄎 is a graphical variant of *chen* 晨, which is used interchangeably with the graph *chen* 辰 [to write the word {辰}(stellar branch/lodge)]. The “Zhouyu” 周語 (Discourses of Zhou) chapter in the *Guoyu* has “The [layout of the (?)] cultivated fields [follows (?)] the standard of the stellar branches” (農田辰正).<sup>7</sup> The Silk Manuscript adds the radical *ri* 日 (sun) in writing the graph as 𠄎. Thus, the term *chen wei* comprises the warp and weft of the constellations.

3 Jao remarks here that the phrase “the refined vapor permeates the woof of constellations” (精氣貫辰緯) in the *Songshu* 宋書 (Book of Song) still uses the same term. See Shen Yue 沈約, *Songshu* 宋書 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2013), 95.2332.

4 David W. Pankenier explains that “these are highlighted as representing the Five (cardinal) Palaces of the heavens. The *Purple Palace* is the Center; *Chamber and Heart* are the East, *Weight and Balance Beam* are the South, *Heavenly Mineral Spring* is the West, and *Ruins and Roof* are the North” (David W. Pankenier, *Astrology and Cosmology in Early China*, 509, n. 322).

5 In this passage, Jao closely paraphrases the original text of the *Shiji*'s “Tianguan shu.” The English translation has been adapted from Pankenier, *Astrology and Cosmology in Early China*, 509.

6 *Taiping Yulan*, 5.9b, in *Wenyuange siku quanshu*, 893: 208.

7 The meaning of this phrase in isolation is not sufficiently clear. Moreover, neither does the phrase appear in the transmitted *Guoyu*, nor, to my knowledge, in any other pre-imperial text.

The warp refers to the Five Offices of Heaven, the weft to the five stars. The latter, in turn, are also known as Heaven's Five Assistants.

At the very end of part A of the Silk Manuscript we read:

百神風雨，𠄎(晨)禱亂作，乃逆(逆)日月以遯(傳)相𠄎思。又宵又朝，又晝又夕。

When the multitudinous spirits [sent down] wind and rain, when the weft of constellations became disordered, [Gong Gong 共攻] made the sun and the moon take turns working and resting. Thus, we have the divisions of late night and morning, afternoon, and evening.<sup>8</sup>

This line concludes the preceding argument in part A and at the same time introduces that of part B. Part B of the Manuscript, in turn, records the appearances and disappearances of the five wefts [i.e., the five planets] as well as the circumstances of their gains and regresses (贏縮) in the course of their movements.<sup>9</sup> Especially with the introduction of the phrase “*luan zuo*” 亂作 (to become disordered) this passage serves as an anticipation for phrases such as “becoming confused and diverting from the [proper] movements” (亂失其行); “disordered cycle” (亂紀); and “once the sun and the moon have fallen into disorder” (日月既亂) in part B. What also becomes apparent here, once more, is that the sequence of the text in parts A and B of the Silk Manuscript follows a certain arrangement.

## 2 Becoming Confused and Diverting from the [Proper] Movements

The graph 遊 appears in multiple places throughout the Silk Manuscript. In the past, I have rendered it as *da* 達 (to penetrate/to attain). Today, taking into account the newly available evidence from the Guodian bamboo manuscripts

8 All citations from the Chu Silk Manuscript in this article have been updated and at times expanded according to the latest version of Jao's “Chu boshu xin zheng,” in idem, *Xuantang jilin: Shilin xin bian*, 3: 860–911. The translation follows, where possible, Jao's own annotations. In cases where Jao's notes are not sufficiently clear or where he does not provide explanations, the most up-to-date transcription and annotations on the text of the manuscript in Li Ling, *Zidanku boshu*, 2: 43–77, have been consulted together with Li's and Cook's English translation of the Chu Silk Manuscript in Li Ling, *Chu boshu yanjiu* (shiyi zhong), 244–51.

9 According to Pankenier, “gaining” and “regressing” refer to a planet's unexpectedly rapid advance or retrogradation followed by resumption of direct motion. See Pankenier, *Astrology and Cosmology in Early China*, 473, n. 164.

(郭店簡),<sup>10</sup> it becomes clear that the graph should in fact be rendered *shi* 失 (to lose). The term refers here to the notion of “deviating from the right sequence/missing a station.” The Silk Manuscript says:

日月星曆(辰)，變(亂)遊(失)其行，羸絀失亂，卉木亡尚(常)。

When the sun, the moon, the stars, and the stellar lodges become confused and deviate from their [proper] movements, the [process of] gaining and retreating becomes disorderly, causing grasses and trees to lose constancy.

喜(嘻) = ！是☐遊(失)月，閏之勿行。一月、二月、三月，是胃遊(失)冬(終)。

Alas! This is [...] deviating moon. Intercalate it and keep still. If it is the first, second, or third month, it is called missing the (proper) end.

The *Shiji*'s “Tianguan shu” has:

夫自漢之為天數者，星則唐都，氣則王朔，占歲則魏鮮。故甘、石曆五星法，唯獨熒惑有反逆行；逆行所守，及他星逆行，日月薄蝕，皆以為占。

Now, since the Han dynasty has continued the reckonings of Heaven, for celestial bodies there is Tang Du,<sup>11</sup> for vital breath (*qi*) there is Wang Shuo,<sup>12</sup> for predicting the harvest there is Wei Xian.<sup>13</sup> Thus, when Gan [De] and Shi [Shen] studied the patterns of the five planets, only Mars appeared to reverse course and retrograde; nowadays what Mars guards as it retrogrades, together with the retrogradations of the other planets and the dimming and eclipsing of the sun and moon, all are grounds for prognostication.

余觀史記，考行事，百年之中，五星無出而不反逆行，反逆行，嘗盛大而變色；日月薄蝕，行南北有時:此其大度也。

10 See Scott Cook, *The Bamboo Texts of Guodian: A Study and Complete Translation* (Ithaca, New York: East Asia Program, Cornell University, 2012), for this corpus.

11 See Michael Loewe, *A Biographical Dictionary of the Qin, Former Han and Xin Periods (221 BC–24 AD)* (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 502, for biographical information on Tang Du.

12 See *ibid.*, 553.

13 See *ibid.*, 578.

In my own perusal of the scribal accounts, I have examined their events and movements, and in the past one hundred years there has not been one instance when the five planets have appeared and not reversed course and retrograded. On reversing and retrograding the planets regularly become large and full and change color. The dimming and eclipsing of the sun and moon and their movements to the south and north have their seasons. This is the general rule.<sup>14</sup>

When it comes to the issue of direct and retrograde motion (順逆) [of the celestial bodies], the movements of the sun and the moon have been studied in order to discern Jupiter's direct and retrograde motion. Thus, the phenomenon of gains and regresses was observed in Jupiter as well. The "Tianguan shu" further relates:

歲星贏縮，以其捨命國。所在國不可伐，可以罰人。其趨舍而前曰贏，退舍曰縮。贏，其國有兵不復；縮，其國有憂，將亡，國傾敗。

When Jupiter gains or regresses, the state's fate is determined by the lodge the planet occupies. The state wherein Jupiter is located may not be attacked but may attack others. If Jupiter advances prematurely into a lodge and gets ahead of itself, it is called "gaining." Premature withdrawal from a lodge it is called "regressing." If Jupiter gains, that state's troops will not return. If Jupiter regresses, the state from which it withdrew will be beleaguered, its general lost, and the state overthrown and defeated.<sup>15</sup>

This is one further account of Jupiter deviating from its proper sequence/missing its proper station when it should have appeared in a certain stellar lodge. This notion seems to have originated from statements found in Shi Shen's 石申 *Shishi Xingjing* 石氏星經 (Shi's classic of stars), such as "Jupiter should be in Dipper and Led Ox, but it missed its proper station and appears in Ladle" (星在斗牽牛，失次見杓).<sup>16</sup> We may cite another example:

赤奮若歲：歲陰在丑，星居寅，以十二月與尾、箕晨出，曰天皓。黓然黑色甚明。其失次，有應見參。

14 *Shiji*, 27.1349–50. The English translation follows, with one minor adaption, that in Pankenier, *Astrology and Cosmology in Early China*, 509.

15 *Shiji*, 27.1312. The English translation follows that in Pankenier, *Astrology and Cosmology in Early China*, 473.

16 Quoted in *Yuhai* 玉海, comp. Wang Yinglin 王應麟, 2.27b, (Nanjing: Jiangsu guji chubanshe, Shanghai: Shanghai shudian, 1987), 33.

In a *Chifenruo* year, Counter-Jupiter is located in chronogram *chou*; Jupiter occupies chronogram *yin*. In the twelfth month it appears at dawn with lodges Tail and Winnowing Basket and is called Celestial Vastness. Jupiter's darkling somber color is very luminous. Should Jupiter miss its proper station a response will appear in Triaster.<sup>17</sup>

大淵獻歲：歲陰在亥，星居辰。以十月與角、亢晨出，曰大章。蒼蒼然，星若躍而陰出旦，是謂「正平」。起師旅，其率必武；其國有德，將有四海。其失次，有應見婁。

In a *Dayuanxian* year, Counter-Jupiter is located in chronogram *hai*; Jupiter occupies chronogram *chen*. In the tenth month it appears at dawn with lodges Horns and Neck and is called Heavenly Augustness. Jupiter is greenish-white. If it speeds ahead and emerges faintly at dawn, this is called "Correct Peace." If armies and companies are raised, their commanders must be aggressive. Their politics will be virtuous, and they will possess all within the Four Seas. Should Jupiter miss its proper station a response will appear in Pasture.<sup>18</sup>

The Silk Manuscript mentions that "in years with lunar irregularities [...] it is during that month, that Jupiter [appears in lodge] Lou (pasture)" (德匿之歲 .....是月以婁). We may infer from the passage quoted above that this particular year with lunar irregularities should have coincided with a *Dayuanxian* year when Jupiter appeared in chronogram *hai*. Earlier in the Silk Manuscript it says: "In all years in which lunar irregularities occur, if it is said that *hai* is the position of the polity [when Jupiter resides there] [...]" (凡歲惡匿，如曰亥惟邦所). This position should be expected to be the lodge Pasture.

The retrograde motion of stellar branches marks major events that had been used as grounds for prognostications by astrologers. From the account in the Silk Manuscript we may catch a glimpse of the Chu people's history of ideas from around the time of Tang Mei 唐昧 (d. 301 BC). From records of the phenomenon of [the celestial bodies'] gaining and regressing (贏縮) we learn about the notion of "[Jupiter] missing a station" and also of examples of the practice of intercalating (置閏).

17 *Shiji*, 27.1316. The English translation follows, with one minor adaption, that in Pankenier, *Astrology and Cosmology in Early China*, 476.

18 *Shiji*, 27.1315. The English translation has been adapted from Pankenier, *Astrology and Cosmology in Early China*, 476.

### 3 “Gaining and Regressing” and the Planet Saturn

The five planets as well as other celestial bodies exhibit the phenomenon of gaining and regressing. There are further the phenomena of [the planets’] “anomalous motion” (失行), as well as of them missing their lodges (失舍). The Silk Manuscript has:

☐日月則經(贏)縮(縮)，不尋(得)其<sup>當</sup>(當)。

[...] the sun and the moon will gain and regress, and will not obtain their proper position.

日月星曆(辰)，變(亂)遊(失)丌(其)行。

The sun, moon, stars, and planets will erratically overstep their paths.<sup>19</sup>

As to what is called “not obtaining the proper position,” the “Tianguan shu” has the following record on the Garrison Star (Saturn):

當出不出，未當入而入，天下偃兵，兵在外，入。

If it should appear but does not, or should not yet disappear but does, hostilities cease in All-under-Heaven and troops abroad return.

未當出而出，當入而不入，〔天〕下起兵，有破國。

If it should not yet appear but does, or if it should disappear but does not, weapons will be taken up in All-under-Heaven and states will be destroyed.

其當期出也，其國昌。

If Venus appears on schedule its state will flourish.<sup>20</sup>

It also records an anomalous motion of the Great White (Venus):

<sup>19</sup> Translation follows Li Ling, *Chu boshu yanjiu* (shiyi zhong), 246.

<sup>20</sup> *Shiji*, 27.1324. The English translation has been adapted from Pankenier, *Astrology and Cosmology in Early China*, 483.

其出行十八舍二百四十日而入。入東方，伏行十一舍百三十日；其入西方，伏行三舍十六日而出。當出不出，當入不入，是謂失舍，不有破軍，必有國君之篡。

After Venus appears, it traverses eighteen lodges in two hundred forty days and then disappears. After disappearing in the east, it invisibly traverses eleven lodges in one hundred thirty days; after disappearing in the west it invisibly traverses three lodges in sixteen days and reappears. If it ought to appear but does not appear, or if it ought to disappear but does not disappear, this is called missing its lodge – if the army is not shattered the rulership of the state must be usurped.<sup>21</sup>

It further says:

當居不居，居之又左右搖，未當去去之，與他星會，其國凶。

If [Jupiter] ought to occupy a place but does not, or occupies it but wavers to left and right; or if it ought not yet depart but leaves and meets up with another planet, it is malefic for that state.<sup>22</sup>

“Not obtaining the proper position” (不得其當) means “not [appearing at] the proper time” (不當期) or “not [appearing in] the proper place” (不當居), indicating inauspiciousness. As to the phenomenon of the stellar branches moving in and out, this is what the Silk Manuscript refers to as “moving in and out” (出內[入]), as per the following passage:

佳(惟)孛〔惡〕匿，出自黃(開)，土身亡(異)；出內(入)□〔不〕同。乍(其)下凶。

When a fuzzy star [appears during a time] when the motion of the moon slows down and, rising from the yellow spring, Saturn appears, then there will be no calamities. When its moving in and out is not consistent, then this will create misfortune for those below.

21 *Shiji*, 27.1322. The English translation follows Pankenier, *Astrology and Cosmology in Early China*, 482.

22 *Shiji*, 27.1316. The English translation follows Pankenier, *Astrology and Cosmology in Early China*, 476.

The celestial bodies above and earth below are connected through and belong to the same vital essence or *materia vitalis* (精氣). The word *tu* 土 (earth) in the phrase “*tu shen wu yi*” 土身無異 (lit. no variation to earth’s [i.e., Saturn’s] appearance) refers to “Tianxing” 填星 (Garrison Star [i.e., Saturn]). Saturn’s color is yellow, it has nine rays, thus we read: “It rises from the yellow spring.” The Tang dynasty work *Kaiyuan zhanjing* quotes the *Jingzhou [xing] zhan* 荊州[星]占 ([Stellar] prognostications of Jingzhou) as saying:

填星，常晨出東方，夕伏西方；其行，歲填一宿，故名填星。

The Garrison Star; it habitually appears in branches in the east; in the evening it hides in the west. In its motion, it completes one lodge in one year, thus it is called the Garrison Star.<sup>23</sup>

“*Wu yi*” 無異 means “*wu bianyi*” 無變異 (no variation). The graph *yi* 異 merely features the signifier *niao* 鳥 (bird) as an additional graphical element, similar to the graph *shang* 商 (Shang [dynasty]) sometimes also being written 鷗. “*Yi*” 異 refers to “*yi wu*” 異物 (rarity/alien or strange matter) or “*yi xiang*” 異祥 (strange auspices). The “*Wuxing zhi*” 五行志 (Treatise on the five agents) in the *Hanshu* has: “When strange things appear, this is called fault/calamity” (異物生，謂之眚).<sup>24</sup> Thus “no variation” (無異) also means “no calamities” (無眚). The phrase “*chu nei (ru) [...] tong*” (出內(入)同) is missing one graph. However, if we compare this passage to similar formulations [in the Chu Silk Manuscript] such as “The celestial bodies are not consistent/are different from each other” (星曆不同), we may conclude that the lost graph should be “*bu*” 不 (not) and read the phrase accordingly as “[when] its moving in and out is not consistent” (出入不同). The message of the whole passage is therefore that when a fuzzy star appears during a time when the motion of the moon slows down and Saturn is visible, then there will be no calamities. If Saturn, however, is not consistent in its moving in and out, then this will create misfortune for the polity below. In this case, the graph *zuo* 乍 should be read *ze* 則 (if/then). “Where it stops” (其所居), says the “*Tianguan shu*,”

23 *Kaiyuan zhanjing*, in *Wenyuange siku quanshu*, 807: 476.

24 *Hanshu*, 27.1353.

五星皆從而聚于一舍，其下之國，可〔以〕重致天下。

If all five planets follow Saturn and gather in the one lodge, that state below will be able to heavily attract All-under-Heaven.<sup>25</sup>

The compound *qi xia* 其下 in the Chu Silk Manuscript evidently refers to “the polity below” (其下之國). Saturn is also sometimes referred to as “Zhenxing” 鎮星 (Quelling Star). The “Shi tian” 釋天 (Explaining the heavens) passage in the *Guangya* 廣雅 (Expanded [*Er*]ya) has: “The Quelling Star is called *Lord of the Earth*” (鎮星謂之地侯).<sup>26</sup> The “Tianguan shu” also relates:

歷斗之會以定填星之位。曰中央土，主季夏，日戊、己，黃帝，主德，女主象也。歲填一宿，其所居國吉。……其一名曰地侯，主歲。

Track its meetings with the [Southern] Dipper to determine the location of the Garrison Star. The latter is [associated with] the Center, Earth, and governs the last month of summer; its [stem] days are *wu* and *ji*. The Yellow Thearch governs virtue and is the image of the female ruler. [The Garrison Star] weighs on one lodge annually and is auspicious for the state it occupies. [...] One name for it is *Lord of the Earth*, governor of the harvest.<sup>27</sup>

Judging from the parallels in this passage, it becomes evident that the graph *tu* 土 in the phrase “*tu shen wu yi*” (土身無異) from the Silk Manuscript refers to the Garrison Star (填星). The phrase “*chu nei*” 出內 in turn should be read as “*chu ru*” 出入 (moving in and out) just as in the “Tianguan shu” where it says: “It should appear but it does not; it should disappear and it does” (當出不出，當入而入). “Moving in and out” or “appearing and disappearing” belongs to the generic terminology of the celestial offices.

“Gaining and regressing” are phenomena that occur in [the movements of] the celestial bodies. Let us once again cite the “Tianguan shu” in this context:

25 *Shiji*, 27.1320. The English translation has been adapted from Pankenier, *Astrology and Cosmology in Early China*, 479.

26 *Guangya shuzheng* 廣雅疏證, comp. Wang Niansun 王念孫, punc. and coll. Zhang Qiyun 張其昀 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2019), 9A.678.

27 *Shiji*, 27.1319–20. The English translation has been adapted from Pankenier, *Astrology and Cosmology in Early China*, 478–9.

贏，為王不寧；其縮，有軍不復。填星，其色黃，九芒，音曰黃鍾宮。其失次上二三宿曰贏，有主命不成，不乃大水。失次下二三宿曰縮，有后戚，其歲不復，不乃天裂若地動。

[If the Garrison Star] gains, the king will not rest easy; if it regresses an army will not return. The Garrison Star is yellow colored, with nine rays; its sound is said to be that of the Yellow Bell, and its note gong. If it skips two or three lodges ahead of its proper station it is said to “gain” and the ruler’s commands are unfulfilled; if not, there are great floods. If it falls behind its proper station by two or three lodges, it is said to regress, the Consort will suffer distress and the year will not be seasonable; if not, then the sky will split open, and the ground will shake.<sup>28</sup>

Part C of the Chu Silk Manuscript records the appropriate and the inappropriate or prohibited activities (宜忌) for each of the twelve months of the year. This also corresponds to [the idea of prognostication based on] astronomical phenomena. For instance, we read that during the month *Gao* 𠄎 (sic),<sup>29</sup>

不可以出師，水，師不復。

It is not permitted to send out an army on a naval expedition. The army will not return.

For the month *Zang* 𠄎 the text has:

不可〔以出〕師。𠄎不還(還)，其邦又大變(亂)。

It is not permitted [to send out] an army. It will fall sick and not return, causing the polity to fall into chaos.

The line “*shi bu fu*” 師不復 is synonymous with the phrase, “the army will not return” (有軍不復) in the “Tianguan shu.” This prediction in the Silk Manuscript therefore must have been influenced in some way by the phenomenon of a celestial body missing its proper lodge due to a “regression” (縮) in its movement. Further, for the month *Ru* 如 the text of the Manuscript records:

28 *Shiji*, 27.1320. The English translation has been adapted from Pankenier, *Astrology and Cosmology in Early China*, 479.

29 The record cited below is actually for the month *Qie* 𠄎 (tr. note).

不火(火)，尋(得)不成。

Without fire, one cannot have accomplishments.

“*Bu cheng*” 不成 is to be understood in a similar way as in the phrase “the ruler’s commands are unfulfilled” (有主命不成) in the “Tianguan shu.” This state of affairs, in turn, must have been brought about by a celestial body missing its proper lodge due to a “gaining” (贏) in its movement.<sup>30</sup>

#### 4 Years with Fuzzy Stars

Part B of the Chu Silk Manuscript has:

天墜(地)乍兼(祥)，天棊(棊)灑(將)乍(作)灑(湯)，降於其方。山陵兀(其)雙(發)，又淵□泄(泊)。是胃(謂) 孛=。(孛)歲□月內(入)月七日八□，又(有)電雹雨土，不尋(得)其孽(參)，〔則〕職天雨。

When Heaven and earth create ominous anomalies, the Heaven’s Cudgel star creates [sweeping] destruction, sending down [calamities] throughout the regions [of All-under-Heaven], with mountains collapsing and springs gushing forth geysers. This anomaly is called [i.e., is associated with the appearance of] a fuzzy star. In those years in which a fuzzy star appears, upon entering the seventh or eighth day of [...] month there will be thunderstorms and torrential rain. Orion hides and is not to be seen. It should be in charge of Heaven sending down rain.<sup>31</sup>

隹(惟)孛〔惡〕匿，出自黃池(淵)，土身亡隹(異)。

When a fuzzy star [appears during a time] when the motion of the moon slows down and, rising from the yellow spring, Saturn appears, then there will be no calamities.

30 Jao mentions once more at this point that the graph *zuo* 乍 in the above quoted passage “when its moving in and out is not consistent, then this will create misfortune for those below” (出入〔不〕同。乍其下凶), should be read as *ze* 則 (if / then) by citing evidence for the two graph’s interchangeability from the *Lüshi Chunqiu* 呂氏春秋 (Master Lü’s Spring and Autumn Annals) and from the “Yue ling” 月令 (Monthly ordinances) chapter in the *Liji* 禮記 (Book of Rites).

31 Translation adapted from Li Ling, *Chu boshu yanjiu* (shiyi zhong), 246.

The graph *bei* 孛 is sometimes explained as *li* 李 (i.e., *Li xing* 李星 [Li star]). However, in the above context this rendering makes no sense, as the graph is followed by a reduplication marker. *Taiping Yulan* quotes the explanation of the phenomenon of a fuzzy star from the *Tianwen lu* 天文錄 (Records of astronomical matters) as follows:

芒氣四出曰孛，孛謂孛孛然也。

When a blurred vapor goes out in all four directions, then this is called *bei*. *Bei* means *bei bei* 孛孛 (in a volatile/exploding manner).<sup>32</sup>

Within a reduplicative compound *bei* can only refer to a fuzzy star. The binome *beisui* 孛歲 in turn refers to a year in which a comet appears. In this context, we find the term also written as *fu* 莠. For instance, the “Tianguan shu” has:

朝鮮之拔，星莠于河戍；兵征大宛，星莠招搖。

when the Chaoxian Kingdom was taken, a star became fuzzy in Heshu (River Garrisons); when the armies campaigned against Ferghana, a star became fuzzy in Zhaoyao (Twinkling Indicator).<sup>33</sup>

According to the *Suoyin* 索隱 commentary, the phonetic value of the graph 莠 is identical to that of 佩, which is *pei*, meaning fuzzy star (*bei xing* 孛星).<sup>34</sup> For the seventeenth year of Patriarch Zhao 昭, the *Zuozhuan* has: “There was a star that exploded in Dachen and swept west as far as the Celestial Han River [i.e., the Milky Way]” (有星孛于大辰，西及漢).<sup>35</sup> In his annotations to the *Zuozhuan* Du Yu remarks that “in the eighth month of the Xia-standard, Mercury appears west of the Celestial Han River” (夏之八月，辰星見在天漢西).<sup>36</sup> For the same year the *Gongyang zhuan* 公羊傳 (Gongyang tradition) records:

32 *Taiping Yulan*, 7.12b–13a, in *Wenyuange siku quanshu*, 893: 223.

33 *Shiji*, 27.1349. The English translation follows Pankenier, *Astrology and Cosmology in Early China*, 508.

34 *Shiji*, 27.1349. Jao further mentions here that there are passages on *bei* 孛 and *yu tu* 兩土 in scroll 875 and 877 in the *Taiping Yulan* respectively.

35 *Zuo*, Zhao 17.5, 1390. The English translation has been adapted from Durrant, Li, and Schaberg, trans., *Zuo Tradition*, 1547.

36 *Chunqiu zuozhuan zhengyi*, 48.1574.

有星孛于大辰。孛者何？彗星也。其言于大辰何？在大辰也。大辰者何？大火也。大火為大辰，伐為大辰，北辰亦為大辰。

There was a star that exploded in Dachen. What is meant by exploded? It describes [the movement of] a comet. Why does it say in Dachen? Because it was [visible] in Dachen (i.e., the Great Asterism). What does Dachen mean? It refers to [the Jupiter station] Great Fire (Antares). Great Fire is called Great Asterism; *Fa* (the halberd of Orion [*shen* 參]) is further called Great Asterism and the Northern Asterism is also referred to as the Great Asterism.<sup>37</sup>

He Xiu's annotations to this passage read:

大火謂心，伐謂參伐也。大火與伐，天所以示民時早晚天下所取正，故謂之大辰。辰，時也。北辰，北極，天之中也。常居其所。

Great Fire refers to the asterism Heart (α Sco); *fa* denotes the halberd of Orion (*shen* 參). Heaven uses Great fire and the halberd of Orion in order to show to the people the beginning and the end of the seasons, so that All-under-Heaven may take their standard from it. Thus, they (i.e., Great fire and the halberd of Orion) are called the Great Asterism. *Chen* means time/season [indicator]; the Northern Asterism is synonymous with the Northern Culmen which marks the center of the heavens that is fixed in its permanent position.<sup>38</sup>

The “Shi tian” passage in the *Guangya* also states: “The halberd of Orion is called Great Asterism” (參伐謂之大辰).<sup>39</sup> In the “Shao nan” 召南 (South of Shao) section from the *Shi* 詩 (*Songs*) we read: “And there are Orion and the Pleiades” (維參與昴).<sup>40</sup> The *Maozhuan* 毛傳 (Mao commentary) explains that “Orion refers here to the halberd [of Orion]” (參，伐也).<sup>41</sup> Zheng Xuan in turn elaborates that:

37 *Chunqiu Gongyang zhuan zhushu*, 23,581–2. Cf. Joseph Needham, *Science and Civilisation in China, Volume 3*, 249–50, for my interpretative rendering of this passage.

38 *Chunqiu Gongyang zhuan zhushu*, 23,582. Compare also Pankenier, *Astrology and Cosmology in Early China*, 59, for He Xiu's commentary.

39 *Guangya shuzheng*, 9A.679.

40 *Maoshi zhengyi* 毛詩正義 (Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe, 2000), 1.113.

41 *Ibid.*

伐屬白虎宿，與參連體而言參星。

The halberd [of Orion] belongs to the constellation White Tiger. When *fa* appears in conjunction with *shen*, it refers to Triaster.<sup>42</sup>

Thus, we may know that Great Fire in the asterism Heart is the Dragon Star (constellation? [tr. note]) and the halberd of Orion refers to the constellation White Tiger.

The *Xia xiaozheng* 夏小正 (The small calendar of the Xia) takes the celestial phenomenon “in the first month [...] during the beginning of dusk, Orion stands in the middle [of the firmament in the south]” (正月.....初昏參中)<sup>43</sup> to mark the start of the year. As far as concerns all the remaining months of the year it just notes that Orion either hides (伏) or appears (見).

In some cases, *chen* also specifically refers to Great Fire. In the *Zuozhuan*, Zichan 子產 explains to Shuxiang 叔向:

昔高辛氏有二子，伯曰闕伯，季曰實沈，居于曠林，不相能也，日尋干戈，以相征討。后帝不臧，遷闕伯于商丘，主辰。商人是因，故辰為商星。

Gaoxin had two sons. The elder was named Ebo, the younger Shishen, and they dwelt in the Great Forest. Since they did not get along, every day they resorted to shields and dagger axes, attacking and chastising each other. Emperor Yao did not approve and moved Ebo to Shangqiu, to be in charge of the Chen asterism. The Shang people followed him in this, and Chen therefore became the Shang asterism.

實沈于大夏，主參，唐人是因，以服事夏、商。

The Emperor moved Shishen to Daxia to be in charge of the asterism Shen (Orion) The Tang people followed him in this, as they served the Xia and the Shang.<sup>44</sup>

42 The original reads: “The halberd [of Orion] belongs to the constellation White Tiger, it appears in conjunction with *shen*. The six stars are called the six tassels to symbolize the halberd.” (伐屬白虎宿，與參連體，而六星言六旒，以象伐) See *Maoshi zhengyi*, 1.113.

43 *Da Dai Liji jiegou*, 47.29.

44 *Zuo*, Zhao 1.12, 1217–18. The English translation has been adapted from Durrant, Li, and Schaberg, trans., *Zuo Tradition*, 1325, and from David W. Pankenier, “Applied Field-Allocation Astrology in Zhou China: Duke Wen of Jin and the Battle of Chengpu (632 BC),” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 119.2 (1999): 266.

The differentiation between the Eastern Dragon and the Western Tiger [which are representing the constellations of the eastern and western palaces of the heavens (tr. note)],<sup>45</sup> coincides with the location of the asterisms that Shang and Xia are in charge of respectively. Therefore, Orion is also called the Great Asterism. The “Jin yu” 晉語 (Discourses of Jin) furthermore states: “Chen and Orion constitute the great thread of the heavens” (辰、參，天之大紀).<sup>46</sup> The Xia calendar takes the appearance of Orion during the beginning of dusk to mark the start of the year. Above we have cited the Silk Manuscript as saying: “In those years in which a fuzzy star appears upon entering the seventh or eighth day of the eighth month, Orion hides and is not to be seen. It should be in charge of heaven sending down rain.” Orion is the Great Asterism that provides the standard for [Heaven’s] bestowing the seasons to All-under-Heaven. This is the reason why [the *Xia xiaozheng*] explicitly notes when Orion is visible or not.<sup>47</sup>

## 5 *Ni* 匿 (Concealment) and *De Ni* 德匿 (the Concealment of Virtue)

The compound *de ni* 德匿 appears in several places within the Silk Manuscript. However, we also find instances of *ni* being mentioned without *de*, such as the account of the month Gao 𠄎 in part C of the Manuscript:

曰𠄎:𠄎(馭)銜(帥)𠄎(得)。以匿，不見月。在𠄎𠄎不可以享祀，凶。

[The fifth month] is called Gao. [During this month] the leader of the thieves will [...] obtain. Due to a [lunar] irregularity, one cannot see the moon. During [...] it is not permitted to sacrifice, as this would bring bad luck.

45 Cf. Pankenier, *Astrology and Cosmology in Early China*, 57–8.

46 This line does not appear in the transmitted version of the “Jin yu.” Instead, it has been recorded in the *Guangya*. See *Guangya shuzheng*, 9A.680.

47 Jao remarks here that some scholars read *shen* and *zhi* 職 (to be responsible for/duties) in conjunction while explaining the phrase in terms of harmonizing *yin* and *yang*. However, not only does this idea belong to the Three Excellencies (三公) tradition and thus should not be randomly associated with the kingdom of Chu, he says, such a reading also would not fit the logic of the text. What Jao refers to here as the “Three Excellencies” is likely short for “The deliberation of the Three Excellencies” (三公議), a 2nd century AD debate on the beginning of the calendar that was held among astronomers in front of Three Excellencies, the highest officials in the state. Cf. Christopher Cullen, “Actors, Networks, and ‘Disturbing Spectacles’ in Institutional Science: 2nd Century Chinese Debates on Astronomy,” *Antiquorum philosophia* 1 (2007): 237–67.

In the account of the seventeenth year of Patriarch Zhao 昭 (524 BC) in the *Zuozhuan* we read:

唯正月朔，慝未作，日有食之，於是乎有伐鼓、用幣，禮也。

It is only when there is an eclipse of the sun on the first day of the first month, before the adverse forces have begun their rise, that beating drums and offering sacrificial goods is in accordance with ritual propriety.<sup>48</sup>

The *Shangshu dazhuan* has:

朔而月見東方謂之側匿。

When the moon is visible in the east on the first day of the month it is called *ce ni* (slowing down).<sup>49</sup>

If a lunar irregularity falls on the first day of the month the moon should be visible. If it is not visible, then this constitutes a bad omen, marking the respective days as inappropriate for conducting sacrifices.

Most scholars read the compound *de ni* 德匿 as a phonetic loan for *ce ni* 側匿 (slowing down). Yet in Part B of the Silk Manuscript we read:

建丕(恆)襲(禡)民，五正乃明，丌(其)神是享(享)。是謂慝匿，群神乃慝。

When constancy/the standard is established among the people, the Five Governors will be bright, and the spirits will enjoy their offerings. This is to say [that when the latter receive their appropriate offerings, then even though] virtue is concealed, the multitudinous spirits [will still] promulgate virtue (*de*) [towards the living].<sup>50</sup>

This passage proves rather difficult to interpret. Many scholars read *de ni* 德匿 here in terms of “punishments and rewards” (刑德), with *de* referring to Heaven’s rewards and *ni* to Heaven’s punishments. Yet nowhere in the Silk Manuscript

48 *Zuo*, Zhao 17.2, 1384. The English translation follows Durrant, Li, and Schaberg, trans., *Zuo Tradition*, 1543.

49 *Shangshu dazhuan shuzheng*, 4.3b.

50 The translation of this passage deviates somewhat from the notes in Jao, “Chu boshu xinzheng,” 892, in order to match Jao’s interpretation below.

do *xing* and *de* appear as an opposite pair. In fact, the Silk Manuscript's entire argumentation has nothing in common with the ideas found in the *Xingde* 刑德 (Punishments and rewards).

I hold that *ni* 匿 can in some cases refer particularly to the phenomenon of *ce ni* 側匿 or *ze ni* 仄匿 (slowing down). If it is paired with or modified by *de* 德 its meaning should be different from the notion of *ce ni*. The "Tianguan shu" concludes with an account of the Thearchs of the five colors all having promulgated their virtue. It further states:

天行德，天子更立年；不德，風雨破石。

When Heaven promulgates virtue, the accession year of the Son of Heaven changes; when [Heaven] does not promulgate virtue, wind and rain shatter stones.<sup>51</sup>

The *Suoyin* commentary explains that "when the Northern Asterism is radiant, it indicates the promulgation of virtue" (北辰有光耀，是行德也).<sup>52</sup> The passage "when a fuzzy star appears, virtue is concealed" (惟孛德匿) in the Silk Manuscript implies that in years in which a comet appears, Heaven cannot promulgate virtue, which is then called the concealment (匿) or obliqueness (側) of virtue. Since there will be no [promulgation of] virtue, calamities such as "wind and rain shattering stones" will inevitably occur. The term "wind and rain" appears in various places throughout the text of the Silk Manuscript, for instance in "wind and rain will announce themselves" (風雨是於),<sup>53</sup> or "when the multitudinous spirits send wind and rain, when the woof of constellations became disordered" (百神風雨，𠄎(農) 禕亂作) in part A of the Manuscript. From this we gather that the Five Governors (i.e., Mercury, Mars, Venus, Jupiter, and Saturn – the five stars acting as the five assistants of Heaven –) will be bright and, because the multitudinous spirits receive their appropriate offerings, they may replace Heaven in promulgating virtue even in times when virtue is concealed. This is how the passage from the Silk Manuscript quoted above should be read in order to make sense.

The "Lishu" 曆書 (Monograph on the calendar) in the *Shiji* cites the Grand Scribe as saying:

51 *Shiji*, 27.1351. The English translation follows Pankenier, *Astrology and Cosmology in Early China*, 511.

52 *Shiji*, 27.1351.

53 See Jao, "Chu boshu xinzheng," 865–6 for the interpretation of this phrase.

黃帝考定星曆，建立五行，起消息，正閏餘，於是有天、地、神、祇、物類之官，是謂五官。各司其序，不相亂也。民是以能有信，神是以能有明德。

The Yellow Thearch examined and fixed the revolutions of the planets, established the five agents, gave rise to the evaporations, and made the proper intercalations. Thus came into being the offices for the heavens, the earth, the spirits above and below, and for the various categories of things. These are called the five offices, each presiding over their own order, without getting mixed up with one another. The people are therefore able to show loyalty and trust and the spirits can confer bright *de*.

少暉氏之衰也，九黎亂德，民神雜擾，不可放物，禍菑薦至，莫盡其氣。顓頊受之，乃命南正重司天以屬神，命火正黎司地以屬民，使復舊常，無相侵瀆。

After Shao Hao's age of decline, the Nine Li confounded the *de*-order, deities and humans intermingled and became indistinguishable. Calamities overspread the human realm, and nobody could live out their days. Zhuan Xu then inherited the realm and ordered Chong, the Principal of the South, to administer the realm of heaven so as to assemble the spirits [in their proper place], and he commissioned Li, the Fire Principal, to oversee the realm of the earth, gathering men [where they belong]. Thus, he restored the old order and there were no more mutual encroachments.<sup>54</sup>

It is well known that this passage has been adapted from the “Chu yu” 楚語 (Discourses of Chu). Li, the Fire Principal, is none other than Zhurong 祝融, who in turn is the mythical ancestor of the Chu people. The Silk Manuscript states:

炎帝乃命祝融，以四神降，奠三天，累思設(敷)奠四極。

The Flame Thearch (Yan Di) thereupon ordered Zhurong to send down the four spirits to set up the three heavens and with [...] distribute the four poles.<sup>55</sup>

54 *Shiji*, 26.1257.

55 Translation adapted from Li Ling, *Chu boshu yanjiu* (shiyi zhong), 248.

群神五正，四<sub>鳥</sub> 夫 (堯=饒)羊(祥)，建丞(恆)製(禡)民，五正乃明，丌(其)神是亨(享)。

The multitudinous spirits and the Five Governors provide exuberant auspiciousness to all four directions. When constancy / the standard is established to conjoin the people, the Five Governors will be bright, and the spirits will enjoy their offerings.

*Shu min* 禡民 should be rendered as “*zhu min*” 屬民 (conjoining the people). “Zheng” 正 (Principal) denotes the position of the Fire Principal Zhurong. Part B of the Silk Manuscript repeatedly stresses the sincere relationship between the bright spirits and the people. Zhurong (Li) separates the spirits from the people and differentiates between their respective tasks. That the Silk Manuscript follows the example of former virtue may be seen as sufficient evidence that it bases its argument on this reality of veneration (sic). As to the passage “this is to say [that when the spirits receive their appropriate offerings, then even though] virtue is concealed, the multitudinous spirits [will still] promulgate virtue (*de*) [towards the living],” we may get a firm grasp on its meaning by reading it against the text of the “Lishu.” “The Five Governors will be bright” means “the spirits will confer bright *de*,” and a year with lunar irregularities can be paraphrased as seasons of “confounded virtue” (亂德).

Although the notion of conjoining the people is unproblematic, the concept of *heng* 恆 (constancy) in the phrase *jian heng* 建恆 (establishing constancy) requires some explanation. The Silk Manuscript says that “the seasonal rains will come and go without regularity or constancy” (寺[時] 雨進退，亡又[有] 常恆). The “Hong fan” 洪範 (Great plan) has: “constant wind; constant rain” (恆風、恆雨).<sup>56</sup> The Silk Manuscript further states: “Do not agitate the multitudinous people, in order [...] three constancies” (毋童[動] 群民，以三恆).

The “Daofa” 道法 (Method of the Way) silk manuscript from the Mawangdui corpus says:

天地有恆常，萬民有恆事，貴賤有恆位，畜臣有恆道，使民有恆度。  
天地之恆常，四時、晦明、生殺、柔剛

Heaven and earth have persistent constancies, the multitudinous people have their constant affairs, the noble and the lowly have their constant positions; in fostering one's subjects one follows constant ways; in

56 *Shangshu zhengyi* 尚書正義 (Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe, 2000), 12.380.

employing the people one uses constant measures. The persistent constancies of heaven and earth are the four seasons, darkness and light, life and death, softness and hardness.<sup>57</sup>

Here we read about “persistent constancies” (恆常), which is written in the reverse order as *chang heng* 常恆 in the Silk Manuscript. From the viewpoint of the theories on the ways of heaven, the notion of constancy is of utmost importance. The *Xici zhuan* passage from the *Yi* 易 (Changes) has: “The *Changes* has great extremes. This gives life to the two properties” (易有太極，是生兩儀).<sup>58</sup> The instantiation of the *Changes* in the Mawangdui silk manuscripts has instead “the *Changes* has great constancy” (易有大恆).<sup>59</sup> Among the wooden Chu slips from the Shanghai Museum, we find a manuscript with the title *Heng xian* 恆先 (Constancy preceding) consisting of 497 graphs written over thirteen slips. From this plethora of sources we may glimpse the importance of the concept of *heng*. “*Tai heng*” 大恆 (great constancy) is synonymous with “*tai ji*” 大極 (lit. great extreme), thus “establishing constancy” (建恆) may be explained in terms of “establishing one’s highest point of excellence” (建其有極).<sup>60</sup> The “*Du wan*” 度萬 (Measuring the myriad things) chapter from the *Heguanzi* 鶡冠子 (Master Pheasant Cap) has:

天地陰陽，取稽於身，故布五正以司五明。

Heaven and earth, *yin* and *yang*, take their model from [the order of the] body. Therefore, display the five governances and use them to direct the five luminaries.<sup>61</sup>

In the “*Wu zheng*” 五政 (Five governances) passage from the Mawangdui silk manuscript we read about the Yellow Thearch inquiring with Yan Ran 闞冉:

57 Qiu Xigui et al., eds., *Changsha Mawangdui Hanmu jianbo jicheng*, 4: 127.

58 *Zhouyi zhengyi* 周易正義 (Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe, 2000), 7:340.

59 See Edward L. Shaughnessy, *I Ching: The Classic of Changes* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1996), 198–9.

60 This phrase appears in the text of the “Hongfan” chapter from the *Book of Documents*. See *Shangshu zhengyi*, 12:364.

61 *Heguanzi jiaozhu* 鶡冠子校注, comp. Huang Huaixin 黃懷信 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2014), 8, B.147.

五正既布，已司五明，左右執規，以寺(待) 逆兵。

When the five governances have been displayed, use them to direct the five luminaries; appoint officials left and right to manage their implementation in order to be prepared against rebellious armies.<sup>62</sup>

We hereby know that the five governances belong to the discussion of luminaries, which in turn features prominently in the sayings of the Militarists. Furthermore, Master Heguan was a man of Chu as well. This means that the two passages can serve as proof for each other. The Zidanku Silk Manuscript further says:

民祀不寤(莊)，帝暉(將) 繇(繇) 以亂[ ]之行。

If the offerings of the people are not generously arranged, Di causes [the celestial bodies] to become confused and to [deviate] from their proper movements.

Although there is a lacuna after the graph *luan* 亂, if we read this line against the passages “when the sun, the moon, the stars and the stellar lodges become confused and deviate from their proper movements” (日月星辰，亂失其行), it becomes quite obvious that we should substitute the missing graph with *shi* 失 (to deviate). If the people do not generously arrange their offerings, then they are not able to show their reverence and instead appear as disrespectful. If this is the case, Heaven will send down calamities that announce themselves through celestial portents and materialize in the form of all kinds of natural disasters. It is in this aspect where we find the value of the Silk Manuscript as a historiographical source closely related to the ancient history of the region of Chu.<sup>63</sup>

62 Qiu Xigui et al., eds., *Changsha Mawangdui Hanmu jianbo jicheng*, 5: 155.

63 Not included in this translation are the two appendices to this article given in the latest version in *wj* 3: 333–46. The first of these appendices reproduces Jao's response to a criticism on an earlier version of the present article voiced by Liu Xinfang 劉信芳 in his “*De ni yiji xiangguan wenzi de shidu*” 德匿以及相關文字的釋讀 (An interpretation of ‘*de ni*’ and other related terms), *Huaxue* 華學 5 (2001): 130–39. The second appendix gives an overview of episodes from the mythology of Chu, which are in some way or another related to the text of the Chu Silk Manuscript. As these episodes have been dealt with in the studies translated in chapter 1 of the present volume, I have omitted them here.



**CHAPTER 3**

*Resolving Doubts: From Divine Providence to  
Moral Standards and Human Agency*

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# Introduction

Throughout the previous two chapters we have noticed that one term in particular, *de* 德, plays an important role in the discussions on the human order, both from a socio-political perspective as well as in terms of cosmological considerations. Although the sources where it occurs in undeniably cover a variety of contexts where *de* must mean different things, in the majority of instances quoted by Jao the term obviously functions as a symbol for a ruler's ideal conduct in terms of attuning his rule to the cosmic rhythms and of binding his subject population by means of vertical solidarity and mutual commitment. *De*, in other words, seems to denote the very essence underlying the notion of early Chinese sovereignty as we have defined it in the introduction to the preceding chapter. This claim, however, stands in stark contrast to how surprisingly little we actually know about the concept's import and the contexts in which it appeared and evolved throughout the early Chinese intellectual tradition.

This concession is by no means limited to the insights we have gained in the previous chapters of the present volume as the idea of *de*, commonly rendered as virtue or morality, is still widely regarded as a generic, more or less self-explanatory category within early Chinese thought, one that somehow had always been there.<sup>1</sup> Jao, in turn, was among the first non-Western scholars to raise questions about its intellectual context and the particular needs it was responding to.<sup>2</sup> His investigations led him to specific concerns characterizing the political discourse during the late Shang and early Zhou period. In several scholarly articles published between the latter half of the 1970s and the late 1990s, the most important of which are translated in this chapter, he shows how the idea of *de* evolved as a counter draft to an older, more archaic mindset according to which human affairs relied solely on divine providence.

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- 1 Two of the very few notable studies to address the early conceptual history of the term are Donald J. Munro, *The Concept of Man in Early China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1969), 84–116; 185–97; and Vassili Kryukov, “Symbols of Power and Communication in Pre-Confucian China (On the Anthropology of *de*): Preliminary Assumptions,” *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 58.2 (1995): 314–33. A complete overview of the conceptual history of *de* from late Shang times to the late Han period as well as a discussion of various conflicting scholarly opinions on this topic has been attempted in Scott A. Barnwell, “The Evolution of the Concept of De 德 in Early China,” *Sino-Platonic Papers* 235 (2013).
  - 2 In the West, apart from Munro, *The Concept of Man*, and Kryukov, “Symbols of Power and Communication,” David S. Nivison's, *The Ways of Confucianism: Investigations in Chinese Philosophy*, ed. Bryan W. Van Norden (Chicago: Open Court, 1996), 17–119, also deserves mention in this context.

Its development describes a shift in human decision making from the reliance on divination to human agency based on moral and ritual parameters. The context for this paradigm change, according to Jao, must be seen in the intellectual separation of the human realm from the sphere of the gods as well as in the attribution of the highest instance of moral authority and judgment to a transcendent high god.<sup>3</sup> Closely related to this paradigm change is the appearance of the notion of the Heavenly Mandate (*tian ming* 天命) or the Great Charge (*da ling* 大令 or *da ming* 大命 as it is referred to in Western Zhou bronze inscriptions) during the same period. While mostly associated with the ideological justification for the Zhou military conquest over Shang, as well as for dynastic change and ecumenic rulership in general, there is another, perhaps even more important side to the conception of the Heavenly Mandate. The imperative for the human ruler to match the ideal of a universal Heavenly order through the implementation of his rule over the inhabited earth below, as we find it in conjunction with claims of the receipt of the Mandate in Western Zhou bronze inscriptions as well as in the *Songs* and *Documents*, presupposes a basic disjunction between human and cosmic order, thus necessitating pragmatic action by the human sovereign to overcome it. Again, it was Benjamin I. Schwartz (1916–1999) who first recognized this point:

At its deepest level, the idea of Heaven's Mandate presents us with a clear apprehension of the gap between the human order as it ought to be and as it actually is.<sup>4</sup>

Jao addresses this issue several times by citing the mythological episode of the violent excesses of Chi You and the Miao people that led to the separation of the realms of man from that of the spirits and Heaven. This separation could only be partially overcome by the human sovereign's matching the order of Heaven through a strict adherence to the rules of *de*.

However, the category of *de* as Jao sees it presents us first and foremost with a hallmark of the Axial Age in early China in that it marks the emancipation of human agency from divine providence. This particular significance of *de*

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3 Benjamin I. Schwartz was arguably the first to point out this distinction between the divine sphere and the socio-political geography of man that led to the identification of Heaven and Di with the universal pattern for human order and the attribution to it of the ultimate judgment over the course of human conduct which he defines as the hallmark of the intellectual transition from the Shang to the Zhou period. See Benjamin I. Schwartz, *The World of Thought in Ancient China* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1985), 41–55.

4 Schwartz, *The World of Thought in Ancient China*, 53.

is perhaps most obvious in Jao's studies on the various transmitted and excavated versions of the *Changes* (*Yi* 易) and its commentaries. Jao holds that the concept is employed in the different layers of commentary on the work in an effort to reinterpret the institution of divination in moral terms by providing a guideline for resolving doubts and securing long-term favorable conditions. In texts such as the *Book of Documents*, the same concern translates into the parameters for maintaining universal rulership, while later Warring States sources reveal attempts at projecting the notion of *de* into a sort of "moral cosmology." Considering a wide array of sources, Jao scrutinizes the ways in which the early Chinese literary tradition develops the idea of *de* in terms of a surrogate institution aimed at overcoming the element of contingency inherent in human relations, as well as in human interactions with the cosmic realm.

The first article in this chapter takes us back to the origins of the ancient Chinese intellectual tradition, at least insofar as it concerns written sources. The earliest evidence we possess of early Chinese intellectual activity is undoubtedly the textual fragments found on late Shang oracle bone inscriptions (hereafter OBI).<sup>5</sup> These very formulaic and technical writings provide us with some limited insight into a highly specialized activity that must have occupied the Shang kings and their peers to a significant degree, thus allowing for some conclusions on the late Shang elite worldview. The bulk of the oracle bone fragments found to date are inscribed with charges concerning natural or human events about to take place or not to take place in the immediate future. Often written out in positive-negative pairs, these charges were delegated to turtle plastrons or bovine scapulae for divination or verification through pyromancy. Among the most crucial decisions for the anthropologist is whether these charges ought to be understood as questions posed to the spirit world or rather as proposals or even decisions which were then tested for their validity.<sup>6</sup>

This decision comes down to how we interpret the meaning of the word signified by the graph 鼎 (貞) that is used to introduce the great majority of charges found in Shang OBI. When OBI were first deciphered after their initial discovery in 1899, scholars were quick to embrace the *Shuowen jiezi*'s interpretation of the graph *zhen* as "to question by crack-making" (*bu wen* 卜問), concluding that it must mean something along the lines of "asking" or "inquiring by means of divination."<sup>7</sup> Consequently, these charges were henceforth

5 The best English-language introduction to the field of Shang OBI and the history of their study is David N. Keightley, *Sources of Shang History: The Oracle-Bone Inscriptions of Bronze Age China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978).

6 See *ibid.*, 28–56 an overview of Shang divination inscriptions.

7 Cf. the discussions in Li Xiaoding 李孝定, *Jiagu wenzi jishi* 甲骨文字集釋 (Taipei: Academia Sinica, 1965), 1104–08.

read and understood as questions. Jao was in fact the first scholar to question this convention in the foreword to his 1959 opus magnum *Yindai zhenbu renwu tongkao* 殷代貞卜人物通考 (Comprehensive study of Yin dynasty diviners), where he points out that, as far as syntax is concerned, nothing suggests the charges should be read as questions. Further on in the book, in a section titled “*zhen' zi shi yi*” 貞字釋義 (on the different meanings of the graph *zhen*), Jao proposes four different interpretations of the graph *zhen* as it is used in the context of divination. Because of its significance for the articles translated in this chapter I have decided to provide the whole passage in translation below:<sup>8</sup>

1. The most general meaning of *zhen* is “to make an inquiry through pyromancy (lit. crack-making)” (*buwen* 卜問), which denotes the entire procedure of divination. The “Tian fu” 天府 (Keeper of the Temple Treasures) passage from the “Chun guan” 春官 (Offices of Spring) section in the *Zhouli* relates: “In the last month of winter one arranges the jade objects in order to determine the good and bad fortunes of the coming year” (季冬陳玉以貞來歲之嫩惡). In Zheng Sinong’s 鄭司農 (d. 83 AD) commentary to this passage we read: “*Zhen* means to inquire (*wen* 問).” In the OBI we find the following line: “[Crack-making] on *ren-yin* (day 39), diviner Que testing: “... the correct [placement] of the jades” (壬寅〔卜〕設貞:… 正〔玉]).<sup>9</sup> The phrase “*zheng yu*” 正玉 (lit. to correct / set right the jade) probably means to arrange jade pieces into a certain order, to perform a divination with them. (Another inscription reads: “Crack-making on *yi-si*, Bin testing: On *ding-wei*, in the present week, perform ale-libation and Bi will make the sui-sacrifice to Ding; in arranging [sacrificial items], give pieces of jade joined together as an offering.” [乙巳卜，旁貞:翌丁未，內鬯歲于丁，奠出珏(珏)].<sup>10</sup> The phrase 出珏 reads “*you jue*” 侑珏, meaning “to lay out paired jades and present them as an offering.” The “Tai bu” 太卜 (Grand Diviner) passage from the “Chun guan” has: “For all major determinations of the polity, such as divining about establishing a ruler or divining about a major enfeoffment, [the Grand Diviner] inspects the prepared turtle plastron and then applies

8 Jao Tsung-i, *Yindai zhenbu renwu tongkao* 殷代貞卜人物通考, 2 vols. (Hong Kong: The University of Hong Kong Press, 1959): 1: 70–1. My translation below follows the reprinted version of this work in *wj* 2: 70–1.

9 Hu Houxuan 胡厚宣, *Zhanhou Jing-Jin xinhuo jiaquji* 戰後京津新獲甲骨集 (Shanghai: Qunlian, 1954), no. 1343 = *Heji* 7053 recto.

10 Hu Houxuan 胡厚宣, *Jiagu xucun* 甲骨續存, 3 vols. (Shanghai: Qunlian, 1955), 3: 72 = *Heji* 4059 recto.

- heat to the drilled hollows” (凡國大貞，卜立君，卜大封，則眡高作龜). Zheng Sinong’s commentary again reads: “*Zhen* means to inquire.”
2. *Zhen* also glosses as *dang* 當 (attend to, undertake responsibility for), denoting the “being in charge of / supervising the divination.” In the “Luo gao” 洛誥 (Proclamation at Luo) chapter from the *Shu* 書 (*Documents*) we read: “We two men have been in charge of [reading the oracle]” (我二人共貞). To this the *Shiwen* cites Ma Rong 馬融 saying: “*Zhen* means *dang* here.” In ancient times, the graph 貞 (OC \**tʰen*? [tr. note]) was written 鼎 (OC \**tʰen*? [tr. note]) and glossed as *dang* 當. *Dang* in turn means *dangzhi* 當值 (to be on duty). It makes sense to adopt this interpretation in reading the phrases “*bu mou zhen*” 卜某貞 (Crack-making, someone was in charge of the divination) and “*mou zhen*” 某貞 (someone was in charge of the divination) in the OBI. These statements supposedly name the official in charge of [supervising] the divination act, the so-called *li bu* 蒞卜 (Divination Supervisor). In some cases, the expression was modified with “being in charge of” omitted, resulting in the phrase “*bu mou zhen*” being abbreviated to “*bu mou*” 卜某 (Crack-macking, someone) or “*mou bu*” 某卜 (someone, crack-making).
  3. In some cases, the term *zhen* exclusively refers to ‘setting right the turtle’ (*zheng gui* 正龜). By extension it also denotes the correctness of a matter. This meaning of *zhen* addresses the procedure and the outcome of the divination act. In the *Zhouli* we read: ‘When the polity is about to conduct a major relocation, the Taishi 大師 (Grand Preceptor) sets right the turtle’ (國大遷，大師則貞龜). Zheng Xuan’s commentary to this passage reads: ‘This means placing the turtle correctly on the place of divination’ (正龜于卜位也). The Zheng commentary further remarks: “To inquire about the correctness of a matter is called *zhen*” (問事之正曰貞). The *Changes* say: “The rectitude of the troops is auspicious for the senior man” (師貞，丈人吉). The *Tuan* 象 (Judgment) commentary says: “*zhen* 貞 means *zheng* 正 (rectitude, correctness).” The “Shi gu” 釋詁 (Explaining ancient terms) passage in the *Guangya* has: “*zhen* means *zheng* (correct).” Thus, there are good determinations (*liang zhen* 良貞) and bad determinations (*bu liang zhen* 不良貞). The “Gui ce liezhuan” 龜策列傳 (Arrayed traditions of the tortoise and milfoil) in the *Shiji* states: “Today is a good day for performing a good determination” (今日良日，行一良貞). The text further says:

靈龜卜祝曰：「假之靈龜，五筮五靈，不如神龜之靈，知人死，知人生。某身良貞……」

The invocation concerning pyromancy with numinous turtles says: “[In divination], one should rely on numinous turtles [as the main medium]. Using milfoil to divine about a matter, although one obtains an auspicious outcome five times out of five, is not as efficacious as the auspiciousness obtained from a divine turtle. [The divine turtle] knows about a person’s living and dying, and whether or not someone will achieve a good determination.” [...]

Judging from this account, it follows that *liang zhen* means [a determination is] auspicious whereas *bu liang zhen* indicates inauspiciousness. These terms therefore function as determinatives used in prognostication. In OBI we frequently find the word *zheng*, for instance in “auspicious rectitude” (吉正),<sup>11</sup> and “crack-making on *wu-zi* day, Diviner Bin ... ‘correct.’ The king prognosticated, saying: ‘auspicious, correctness’” (戊子卜，旁...正。王曰：吉，正).<sup>12</sup> The ode *Wenwang you sheng* 文王有聲 (Renowned was King Wen) from the *Book of Songs* has: “The turtle determined it” (維龜正之), which means inquiring about a matter and obtaining the correct [way to proceed]. A hexagram statement (*guaci* 卦辭) in the *Changes* says: “favorable for determination / correctness” (利貞). The *Kun* 坤 (Compliant) hexagram says: “favorable for the determination / correctness of a mare” (利牝馬之貞). In these examples the word *zhen* entails the meaning of *zheng* as well.

4. The graph *zhen* sometimes also glosses as *ding* 定 (to set / fix / determine) and in some cases we find 貞 replaced by the graph *ding* 鼎 (tripod). Since *zhen* glosses as *zheng* its meaning can be extended to comprise the notion of *ding* 定. The *Shiming* says: “*Zhen* means *ding*.” The graphs 定 and 鼎 represent the same sound value. In the entry for the graph 鼎, the *Shuowen jiezi* notes: “In pre-Han seal script (*zhouwen* 籀文) the graph 鼎 is often used to write the word *zhen* 貞.” In OBI as well there are numerous instances where the graph 鼎 is being borrowed to write the word *zhen*. Hence this practice did not just start with the development of the seal script. In fact, we now know that many seal script forms have their origin in the script from the Yin 殷 period. To put this to a test, we find that the graphs 鼎 and 貞 appear together on the same fragment, both writing the word *zhen* (here: to test [the charge] [A/N]), in several instances of

11 Jao gives this fragment as *Tun yi* 屯乙 5989. I was not able to confirm this information or to locate the fragment in *HJ*.

12 *Jiagu xucun*, 1: 655 = *HJ* 17684.

OBI dating from the time of King Wu Ding 武丁 (ca. 1250–1192 BC). For instance, the damaged scapulae fragment *Tun yi* 屯乙 8888 reads:

己巳鼎(貞):帚(婦)嬖允亡凶(憂)。貞媻亡凶(憂)

“Testing on *ji-si* day: Lady X indeed will not have misfortune. Chi encounters no misfortune.”

In the first instance, the graph 鼎 is used to write the word *zhen*; in the second, the graph 貞 is used instead.

In summing up this discussion, Jao holds that while the graph *zhen* in some cases does indicate an interrogative mood when used in the sense of “to test [a charge by means of divination]” (*zhenwen* 貞問), in other contexts, however, it takes on an explicitly affirmative mood, for instance when conveying the notion of “being on duty” (*dangzhi* 當值). In yet another context it appears in the sense of divining about a matter in order to “resolve doubts” (*de zheng* 得正 [lit. “to obtain correctness”]). He concludes that “the commonly held assumption that a question mark should be placed after each instance of the word *zhen* in many cases makes no sense.”<sup>13</sup>

While Jao’s views on the topic were at first dismissed and later neglected among scholars in Taiwan and mainland China,<sup>14</sup> similar points had been made in the West starting from the early 1970s onwards. The first western sinologist who proposed that OBI charges ought not to be read as questions, but rather as statements expressing a certain desire was David N. Keightley (1932–2017) in 1972, followed by Fr. Paul L-M Serruys (1912–1999) in 1974.<sup>15</sup> Keightley in particular pointed out that Han and Jin commentators of the *Shuowen jiezi* frequently modified the latter’s interpretation of the graph *zhen*, which they explained in terms of “to rectify/ regulate” (*zheng* 正) or “to fix” (*ding* 定).<sup>16</sup> Moreover, he suggests that the OBI graph 貞 (貞) belongs to a word-family whose basic

13 Jao, *Yindai zhenbu renwu tongkao*, 1: 71.

14 Reflecting on his argument about thirty years later, Jao remarks: “At that time, no one was willing to accept my opinion. This was particularly true of the students of Dong Zuobin 董作賓 (1895–1963), who not only would not agree but did not even deign to disagree” (“Early China Forum: Jao Tsung-i 饒宗頤,” trans. Edward L. Shaughnessy, *Early China* 14 [1989]: 134).

15 See David Keightley, “*Shih cheng*: A New Hypothesis about the Nature of Shang Divination,” paper presented at the conference “Asian Studies on the Pacific Coast,” Monterey, California, 17 June 1972; and Paul L-M Serruys, “Studies in the Language of the Shang Oracle Inscriptions,” *T’oung Pao* 60.1–3 (1974): 12–120.

16 Keightley, “*Shih cheng*,” 9–11.

meaning was to “regulate, correct, stabilize.”<sup>17</sup> Similar conclusions as to the meaning of *zhen* were subsequently voiced by David S. Nivison (1923–2014) who proposed to understand the meaning of *zhen* in Shang OBI as “to verify the correctness of a prognostication through the act of divination.”<sup>18</sup>

In China, the problem of the mode of OBI charges was again addressed by Qiu Xigui 裘錫圭 in 1988 in his influential “Guanyu Yinxu buci de mingci shifou wenju de kaocha” 關於殷墟卜辭的命詞是否問句的考察 (An examination of whether the charges in Shang Oracle-Bone Inscriptions are questions).<sup>19</sup> Qiu’s article prompted Edward L. Shaughnessy to render it in English translation; it was published alongside of Nivison’s hitherto unpublished “The ‘question’ question” as the opening papers for an *Early China* forum on the topic of OBI charges, featuring further studies and responses by Fan Yuzhou 范毓周, Jao Tsung-i, David N. Keightley, Jean A. LeFeuvre (1922–2010), Li Xueqin and Shaughnessy himself.<sup>20</sup> At least since then, the great majority of scholars understand the verb *zhen* in OBI charges as seeking affirmation of a desired or decided upon course of affairs and henceforth to read the charges as statements.

Jao, who contributed to the 1989 *Early China* forum with a short commentary piece,<sup>21</sup> took up this discussion again in 1998. In the first article translated below, he expands the issue into a full-fledged philosophy of “*zhen*.” By providing the means to foretell and to anticipate the future, the idea behind *zhen*, in Jao’s view, constituted the very rationale on which the standards of compliance between the human and spiritual realms could be established in the worldview of the late Shang diviners. Summarizing the points made in the *Early China* forum to some extent,<sup>22</sup> Jao begins his study by showing that the aspect of inquiry implied in the notion of *zhen* lies in determining the correctness of a matter. To become meaningful, the act of divination had to be preceded by human resolve and determination as to the course that future events should take. Jao emphasizes the crucial role that human decision-making had

17 Ibid, 1–4; 40–41.

18 David S. Nivison, “The ‘Question’ Question,” paper presented to the International Conference on Shang Civilization, East-West Center, Honolulu, Hawai’i, September 1982, subsequently revised and published in *Early China* 14 (1989): 115–25.

19 Qiu Xigui 裘錫圭, “Guanyu Yinxu buci de mingci shifou wenju de kaocha” 關於殷墟卜辭的命詞是否問句的考察, *Zhongguo yuwen* 中國語文 (1988) 1: 1–20.

20 See *Early China* 14 (1989): 77–172.

21 “Early China Forum: Jao Tsung-i 饒宗頤,” 133–38.

22 Somewhat problematically in my view, he does not name, let alone give credit to any of the participants of the *Early China* forum, although he clearly reiterates points made therein by Qiu Xigui, Nivison, Keightley and Li Xueqin, oftentimes citing the same sources as they did to furnish their arguments, throughout his own study.

played in the process of divination. He then proceeds to analyze the concept's import in the different recensions of the *Changes* and their commentarial layers. He shows how in the divinatory classics *zhen* is associated with the idea of attaining correctness and appropriateness in human affairs, so that a sovereign might obtain a perpetual mandate to rule. Citing the Ruist reception of the *Changes*, he suggests that the ultimate means to attain this state of appropriateness was to study the moral implications of the hexagram- and line-statements and to develop an attitude of revering virtue (*jing de* 敬德), both in socio-political and in ritual matters. The somewhat opaque notion of "revering virtue," which Jao does not explain in analytical terms, resonates with current findings by Dennis Schilling, whose important work on the tradition of the *Changes* interprets the meaning of *de* with respect to its occurrence in the hexagram statements as implying the "duties and obligations of the sovereign as well as of the people obligated to him."<sup>23</sup> In terms of the *Change's* predictive function, he points out that *de* "can be said to be the power to fulfill one's destiny," for "'virtue' makes developments predictable and, like duty and obligation, ensures perseverance and continuity in the political and social sphere."<sup>24</sup> This amounts to the quintessence of the latter part of Jao's philosophy of *zhen* put in modern analytical terms.

In the next article, Jao traces the origins of morals in early China, as well as in the ancient world in general, back to the worship of a universal sky god, closely following the argument in F. M. Cornford's (1874–1943) seminal study, *From Religion to Philosophy: A Study in the Origins of Western Speculation* (New York: Longmans, Green and Co., 1912). For Jao, the idea of virtue or morals in early China emerged in the form of a reverential attitude towards Heaven that expressed itself in ritual propriety and accountability for the well-being of the people. The latter task he sees inextricably linked to a ruling house's receipt of the Heavenly Mandate.<sup>25</sup> The element of contingency introduced into the human condition through the notion of the Mandate led, according to Jao, to a mentality of fearfulness and reverence among the ruling elites which in turn prompted the necessity to produce such works as the *Changes* and the ritual classics. Jao continues this line of thought into the last article of this chapter where he stresses that due to Heaven's design becoming manifest in an ideal ecumenic human order, the human ruler is capable of assuming the

23 Dennis Schilling, "Virtue in the 'Book of Changes,'" *Journal of Chinese Philosophy* 48 (2021): 126.

24 *Ibid.*, 128.

25 This relation has been first pointed out in Herrlee Creel, *The Origins of Statecraft in China, Volume 1: The Western Chou Empire* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1970), 81–100.

role of Heaven by abiding by a set of heavenly decreed moral rules. This in turn opened the path for the development towards autonomy of human agency in early Chinese thought.

The last two articles in this chapter may be seen as an attempt to reconstruct the early conceptual history of *de*. Yet despite the almost encyclopedic effort Jao undertakes in collating the different sources, these two articles also reveal the limitations of the sort of traditional “literati-scholarship” that Jao had been practicing. By letting the sources largely speak for themselves, or by using the language of the sources in describing the latter, Jao stops short of developing an analytical terminology that would have made it possible for him to state his argument in a more scientific manner. This often leaves the reader, especially the translator, guessing as to the modern scholarly interpretation of the various sources he cites. More often than not, the rendering of these passages and concepts into English necessarily reflects the translator’s own understanding of them rather than Jao’s.

# The Philosophy of “Zhen” 貞

## 1 “Zhen” 貞 as a Means of Communication between Humans and Spirits during the Yin 殷 Period (ca. 1600–1050 BC)<sup>1</sup>

The graph *zhen* 貞 appears in almost every single one of the inscribed oracle bone fragments excavated at Yinxu 殷墟 (The ruins of Yin, i.e. modern-day Anyang 安陽 [tr. note]), with instances numbering in the ten-thousands. Its meaning comprises more than just “to inquire through (crack-making) divination” (*buwen* 卜問). Instead “*zhen* means to inquire into the correctness of a matter” (問事之正曰貞). I have already stated this in detail elsewhere.<sup>2</sup> The graph *zhen* 貞 (OC \**trey*) should be glossed *zheng* 正 (OC \**tey-s*).<sup>3</sup> In the ode *Wenwang you sheng* 文王有聲 (Renowned was King Wen) from the *Book of Songs* we read:

考卜維王， He examined the oracle, our king,  
宅是鎬京。 And took his residence in the capital Hao.  
維龜正之， The turtle determined it,  
武王成之。 King Wu accomplished it.<sup>4</sup>

In his *Jizhuan* 集傳 (Collected commentaries [on the *Book of Songs*]) Zhu Xi 朱熹 (1130–1200 AD) explains: “*Zheng* 正 means *jue* 決 (to determine) here.”<sup>5</sup> The sage kings of the Yin 殷 (ca. 1600–1050 BC) and Zhou 周 periods (ca. 1050–221 BC)<sup>6</sup> employed numinous turtles (*linggui* 靈龜) to establish the most impartial and unbiased divination result, and to receive the proper (*zheng*)

1 This article was originally published under the title “‘Zhen’ de zhexue” 「貞」的哲學 (The philosophy of “*zhen*”) in *Huaxue* 華學 3 (1998): 1–13, and was republished unrevised several times thereafter. The present translation is based on the latest version in *wj*, 4: 134–60.

2 See “*Early China* Forum: Jao Tsung-I 饒宗頤,” 133–8.

3 The Old Chinese reconstructions have been added by the translator according to the “Baxter-Sagart Old Chinese reconstruction, version 1.1 (20 September 2014),” <http://ocbaxter.sagart.lsa.umich.edu/>.

4 *Maoshi zhengyi*, 16.1237 (*Mao* #244).

5 *Shi jizhuan* 詩集傳, comp. Zhu Xi 朱熹, punc. and coll. Zhao Changzheng 趙長征 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2017), 16.289.

6 The approximate dates provided here by the translator denote the archeological periods corresponding to Shang and Zhou historical dates as given in Roderick Campbell, *Violence, Kinship and the Early Chinese State: The Shang and their World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 270–2, for the Yin-Shang; and in Lothar von Falkenhausen, *Chinese*

course for their actions from the spirits. In pre-Qin 秦 (221 BC) times, when spiritual activities were governed by turtle divination, the concept of *zhen* used to control the entire system of ideas. Providing the means to foretell and anticipate the future, *zhen* constituted the rationale on which the standards of compliance between the human and spiritual realms were established. Hence the abstract idea of *zhen* successively turned into the center of the Yin and Zhou peoples' system of ideas. The account in the only extant genealogy of the Yin period, the *Er jiapu* 兒家譜 (Er family genealogy), held in the British Museum, is introduced by the word *zhen*, leading many scholars to doubt the bone fragment's authenticity.<sup>7</sup> This, however, is due to a misunderstanding of the implications of the term *zhen*. Centuries later, scholars of the *Changes* began to elaborate on the abstract meaning of *zhen* by extending its connotations to such manifold applications as determining [patterns of mutual] overcoming, determining the correct parameters of observation, determining [degrees of] brightness and unity, thereby creating a truly marvelous and rich philosophy. So for instance in the following statement from "Xici zhuan":

吉凶者，貞勝者也。天地之道，貞觀者也。日月之道，貞明者也，天下之動，貞夫一者也。

The [prevailing of] auspiciousness or inauspiciousness is determined through [a constant pattern of mutual] overcoming;<sup>8</sup> the way of heaven and earth is what determines correct observation; the way of the sun and the moon is what determines the correct [degree of] brightness; the movement of All-under-Heaven is determined through [the principle of] unity.<sup>9</sup>

Zhu Xi invokes the model of the "four virtues" (*si de* 四德), in order to explain the meaning of the phrase *li zhen* 利貞. "Li zhen," he says, "means 'favorable

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*Society in the Age of Confucius (1000–250 BC): The Archaeological Evidence* (Los Angeles: Cotsen Institute of Archaeology, University of California, 2006), 6, for the Zhou.

7 See Chen Guang Yu 陳光宇, "Ershi jiapu keci zongshu ji qi quwei zhenpin de zhengju" 兒家譜刻辭綜述及其確為真品的證據, Center for Unearthed Texts and Ancient Character Studies at Fudan University, November 21, 2011, accessed October 24, 2021, <http://www.fdgwz.org.cn/Web/Show/1715>, for the most recent discussion of this issue.

8 My interpretation of this phrase follows the reading of Zhu Xi 朱熹 in idem. *Zhouyi benyi* 周易本義 (Taipei: Taida chuban zhongxin, 2016), 253, n. 5.

9 *Zhouyi zhengyi*, 8.348–9.

or suitable for [attaining] correctness / rectitude” (利于正也).<sup>10</sup> He brings it accurately to the point in plainly stating that *zhen* means correct.

The “Luo gao” 洛誥 (Proclamation at Luo) chapter from the *Book of Documents* states:

公既定宅，伻來，來視予卜，休。恆吉。我二人共貞。

When the Patriarch [of Zhou] had determined the site of the [royal] residence, he sent a messenger to come and show me the oracle, it was favorable, [implying] constant auspiciousness. We two men [i.e., the king speaking and the Patriarch of Zhou (tr. note)] together have been in charge of [reading the oracle].<sup>11</sup>

Ma Rong 馬融 (79–166 AD) interprets *zhen* here as *dang* 當 (attend to, undertake responsibility for).<sup>12</sup>

In the sacrificial prayer slips from the Baoshan 包山 manuscripts we find eighteen instances of the phrase *heng zhen* 恒貞 (constant / long-term determination) which all appear within a fixed sentence pattern:

某某以保冢(家)為某某占[貞].....某某占之，恒貞吉。.....某某占之，曰吉。

X, using yarrow,<sup>13</sup> tested through divination on behalf of X [...] X prognosticated (i.e., interpreted the divination result) the matter, the long-term determination is auspicious. [...] X prognosticated the matter, saying: “auspicious.”<sup>14</sup>

The sentence pattern “long-term auspiciousness [...] together have been in charge of [reading the oracle]” (恆吉.....共貞) in the “Luo gao” is slightly

10 Zhu Xi 朱熹, *Zhuzi yulei* 朱子語類, 66.5a, rpt. in *Sikuquanshu* 四庫全書 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1987), 701: 330.

11 *Shangshu zhengyi*, 15.479.

12 *Ibid.*, 15.479.

13 For the interpretation of the binome *baojia* 保家 as *baoshi* 苞蓍, “*Achillea millefolium*,” commonly known as yarrow, see Zhu Xiaoxue 朱曉雪, *Baoshan Chujian zongshu* 包山楚簡綜述 (Fuzhou: Fujian renmin chubanshe, 2013), 505. Li Ling 李零 reads *baojia* 保家 as *baogui* 寶龜 (treasure turtle) (*ibid.*). Jao, on the other hand, transcribes the graph 冢 as *wo* 我 (I, me), which in my view does not make any sense. Perhaps we are dealing with an editorial mistake here.

14 *Chudi chutu Zhanguo jiance shisi zhong* 楚地出土戰國簡冊十四種, comp. Chen Wei 陳偉 et al. (Beijing: Jingji kexue chubanshe, 2009), 92.

different from the pattern “determining through divination [...] the constant determination is auspicious” (貞.....恒貞吉) found in the Baoshan slips, yet the meaning is the same. The “Luo gao” says: “We two men together have been in charge of [reading the oracle].” The formulation “X determined through divination on behalf of X” in the Baoshan slips also involves two persons, only in this case there exists a difference between the one who performs the divination and the one whose fate is determined through the divination. The person performing the divination is identified as *zhenren* 貞人 (diviner) in numerous instances in the OBI.

The role of the term *zhen* in Shang OBI as well as questions concerning the existence of diviners have sparked numerous debates in recent years. See for instance the new standpoints put forth by He Zheng 何靖 from Sichuan in his *Shang wenhua kuiguan* 商文化窺管 (Limited views on Shang culture).<sup>15</sup> I hold that the conclusiveness from each of the Baoshan slips featuring the phrase “X determines through divination on behalf of X” can be trusted, and therefore that the existence of diviners cannot be denied.

The Baoshan slips provide us with some further insight in this respect. The word *zhen* cannot simply be rendered “to inquire through crack-making” (*buwen* 卜問) as Xu Shen 許慎 (fl. 58–148 AD) suggests.<sup>16</sup> Instead it seems appropriate now to follow Zheng Xuan’s explanation:

貞之為問也，問於正者，必先正之，乃從問焉。

*Zhen*, in the sense of “to ask,” denotes an inquiry into the correctness [of a matter]. This means that the matter in question needs to be first set right so that one can then ask about the correctness of it.<sup>17</sup>

According to Zeng Yunqian 曾運乾 (1884–1945), the import of the passage cited above from the “Luo gao” is similar to that of the following passage found in the “Da gao” 大誥 (Great announcement): “The great business I am about to engage in will turn out favorably. My divination cracks, one after the other, have been auspicious” (我有大事休，朕卜並吉).<sup>18</sup> In the former, Zeng states, “the graph *zhen* 貞 stands for *ding* 鼎, meaning *dang* 當 (attend to, undertake responsibility

15 He Zheng 何靖, *Shang wenhua kuiguan* 商文化窺管 (Chengdu: Sichuan daxue chubanshe, 1994).

16 *Shuowen jiezi*, 3B.69.

17 *Zhouli zhushu*, 24.754.

18 *Shangshu zhengyi*, 13.408. The English translation of this quote has been suggested to me by Adam C. Schwartz in a personal communication.

for). Hence the phrase reads: ‘[we] two men together are accountable for this auspiciousness’ (二人共當此吉).<sup>19</sup> Zeng presumably adopts Ma Rong’s explanation here. We find quite a few instances in the OBI where the graph *zhen* is openly replaced with *ding*. This may serve as proof for Ma’s reading (the respective OBI passages alluded to are well known).

After the Zhou had overthrown the Yin, not only did they reform the latter’s sacrifices, they also greatly reduced the complexity of Yin divination by more or less limiting its use to the divinatory determination of major affairs. Those are called “major determinations” (*da zhen* 大貞) in the *Zhouli*. In the “Xiao zongbo” 小宗伯 (Vice Minister of Rites) passage we read:

若國大貞，則奉玉帛以詔號。

If the state must make a major determination, offerings of jade and silk need to be laid out in order to announce the matter to the spirits.<sup>20</sup>

Zheng Sinong says: “A major determination denotes a crack-making divination about the establishment of a ruler or about a major enfeoffment” (大貞謂卜立君、卜大封). We can find this term already in the OBI within a fragment that reads: “determining a major enfeoffment [...] there likely arises disaster” (貞大封.....其凡) <sup>21</sup> (*White* 懷1520). The term “major enfeoffment” might refer here to the establishment of a ruler. Unfortunately, however, the preserved inscription is damaged and therefore incomplete. The “Tian fu” 天府 (Keeper of the temple treasures) passage from the *Zhouli* further relates:

冬季陳玉，以貞來歲之嫩惡。

In the season of winter, one arranges the jade objects to determine the good and bad fortunes of the coming year.<sup>22</sup>

19 See Zeng Yunqian 曾運乾, *Shangshu zhengdu* 尚書正讀 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1964), 5.202.

20 *Zhouli zhushu*, 19.578.

21 This reading is arrived at by interpreting the graphs 凡 in the direct transcription as *huo xing* 禍興 (disaster arises). Cf. Shen Baochun 沈寶春: “Shi ‘fan’ yu ‘gua fan you ji” 釋「凡」與「凡出疾」, in *Di er jie guoji zhongguo guwenzixue yantaohui lunwenji* 第二屆國際中國古文字學研討會論文集 (Hong Kong: Department of Chinese Language and Literature, the Chinese University of Hong Kong, 1993): 109–31.

22 *Zhouli zhushu*, 20.625.

To this the Zheng commentary remarks:

問事之正曰貞。問歲之美惡，謂問於龜。……凡卜筮實問於鬼神，龜、筮能出其卦兆之占耳。

To inquire about the correctness of a matter is called *zhen*. To inquire about the good and bad fortunes of a year is called to inquire with the turtle. [...] All sorts of crack-making and milfoil divinations are in fact inquiries addressed at the spirits. Their answer can be prognosticated through interpreting the hexagrams and cracks that the milfoil and turtle-shells reveal.<sup>23</sup>

The “Tai bu” 太卜 (Grand Diviner) passage has:

凡國大貞，卜立君，卜大封，則眡高作龜。

For all major determinations of the polity, such as divining about establishing a ruler or divining about a major enfeoffment, [the Grand Diviner] inspects the prepared turtle plastron and then applies heat to the drilled hollows.<sup>24</sup>

To this Zheng Sinong remarks:

貞，問也。國有大疑，問於著龜。……玄謂貞之為問，問於正者，必先正之，乃從問焉。《易》曰：「師，貞：丈人吉。」

*Zhen* here means to inquire. When the state faces major uncertainties, the matter is inquired about by using milfoil and turtle-shell [divination]. [Zheng] Xuan states that *zhen* in the sense of ‘to ask’ denotes an inquiry about the correctness [of a matter]. This means that the matter in question needs to be first set right so that one can then ask about the correctness of it. The *Changes* say: “The Troops, determining: Auspicious for the senior man.”<sup>25</sup>

Zheng Xuan quotes the hexagram statement (*guaci* 卦辭) from the *Shi* 師 (Troops) hexagram in the *Changes*. Wu Yi 武億 (1745–1799) interprets *zhen* here

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> *Zhouli zhushu*, 24.753–4.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

as to ask (*wen* 問), reading the phrase *zhen zhangren* 貞丈人 as an inquiry about the senior man. Yet in the Mawangdui version of the *Changes* the passage reads: “The Troops: Determination for the big man is auspicious; there is no trouble” (師貞大人吉無咎).<sup>26</sup> Moreover, the *Kun* 困 (Entangled) hexagram statement in the silk manuscript has: “Determination for the big man is auspicious” (貞大人吉),<sup>27</sup> having big man (*daren* 大人) instead of senior man (*zhangren* 丈人). Lu Deming’s 陸德明 (556–627 AD) *Jingdian shiwen* takes *zhen zhangren* 貞丈人 as one phrase: “Determination for the senior man (or determining about the senior man).”<sup>28</sup>

According to the *Zhouli*, apart from turtle-shells and milfoil, the implements for ancient oracle prognostication also included pieces of jade laid out for divination. The *Zhouli* records such a procedure for the winter season, revealing the solemn nature of it. Zheng Xuan’s commentary to this passage reads: “*Zhen* means to inquire into the correctness of a matter” (問事之正曰貞). His following remark, “it needs first to be set in order” (必先正之) means here specifically to “place the turtle correctly” (*zheng gui* 正龜).<sup>29</sup> Thus *zhen* has to be understood as *zheng* 正 (correct).

From a philological point of view, *zhen* and *zheng* have always been explained in each other’s terms. See for instance the following examples:

The Statement following the Hexagram *Qian* 乾 (Vigorous) in the *Changes* has: “favorable to determine” (利貞). To this the *Zi Xia* 子夏 commentary says: “*zhen* 貞 means *zheng* 正 (to determine).”<sup>30</sup>

The “*Shi gu*” passage in the *Guangya* has: “[The terms] *zhen* 貞, *gan* 幹, *ji* 集, *yin* 殷, *shi* 矢, mean *zheng* 正 (correct).” Wang Niansun’s 王念孫 (1744–1832) *shuzheng* 疏證 (Annotations and proofs) remarks: “The *Tuan zhuan* 彖傳 (Judgment commentary) to the hexagram *Shi* 師 says: ‘*zhen* 貞 means *zheng* 正.’ The first line statement (*yao ci* 爻辭) for the hexagram *Gu* 蠱 (Parasite) reads ‘First Six: The stem father’s parasite’ (初六幹父之蠱). Yu Fan’s 虞翻 (164–233 AD) annotation to this passage reads: ‘*gan* 幹 means *zheng* 正.’ The *Wenyan zhuan* 文言傳 (Commentary

26 Qiu Xigui et al., eds., *Changsha Mawangdui Hanmu jianbo jicheng*, 3: 26. The translator suspects that the manuscript version has been confused in the original text, as the first three graphs of this hexagram statement, which read *shi zhen zhang* 師貞丈 (lit. troops, determination, senior) are illegible in the Mawangdui manuscript.

27 Qiu Xigui et al., eds., *Changsha Mawangdui Hanmu jianbo jicheng*, 3: 30.

28 Huang Zhuo, ed., *Jingdian shiwen huijiao*, 2: 37.

29 *Zhouli zhushu*, 20: 625. Cf. Jao’s “‘Zhen’ zi shi yi” 「貞」字釋義 (On the different meanings of the graph *zhen* 貞) in the introduction to the present chapter.

30 *Zhouyi zhengyi*, 1.1.

on the words) for the hexagram *Qian* says: ‘As to *zhen*, it is the trunk of all matters’ (貞者，事之幹也).<sup>31</sup> If we follow Yu’s comments, it should be glossed as the correctness of affairs.

In the *Songs* we find the phrase “being fond of the correct and upright” (好是正直). The same phrase cited in the \**Zi yi* 緇衣 (Black Robes) manuscript from the Chu slips has *zhen zhi* 貞植 (correct and upright) instead.<sup>32</sup>

The phrase “lords and kings obtained the one and through it became the standard (*zhen* 貞) of All-under-Heaven” (侯王得一以為天下貞) from chapter thirty-nine in the *Laozi* 老子 reads “lords and kings obtained the one and through it became standards (*zheng* 正)” in Mawangdui manuscript A, and “lords and kings obtained the one and through it became the standard (*zheng*) of All-under-heaven” in Mawangdui manuscript B.<sup>33</sup> In both manuscript versions the term “standard” (i.e., the embodiment of correctness [tr. note]) is written *zheng* 正 and not *zhen* 貞. The denomination *zhen chen* 貞臣 (upright ministers) from the phrase “when the state is in disorder, there are upright ministers” (國家昏亂有貞臣) in chapter eighteen of the *Laozi* is written *zheng chen* 正臣 in the Guodian 郭店 version.<sup>34</sup> This is another obvious example of how the terms *zhen* and *zheng* were used interchangeably in antiquity.

In the “Lie yukou” 列御寇 chapter from the *Zhuangzi* we read:

魯哀公問於顏闔曰：「吾以仲尼為貞幹，國其有瘳乎？」

Patriarch Ai of Lu inquired with Yan He saying: “If I were to make Confucius my standard, do you think it would improve the health of the state?”<sup>35</sup>

The way *zhen* and *gan* are employed here in conjunction must have been modeled on the above cited passage from the *Wenyan zhuan*, which proves that the latter was earlier than the “Lie yukou.”

31 *Guangya shuzheng*, 1A.19.

32 *Chudi chutu Zhanquo jiance shisi zhong*, 163.

33 *Boshu Laozi jiaozhu* 帛書老子校注, comp. Gao Ming 高明 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2018), 8–9.

34 There must have been an authorial or editorial mistake here. In both the transmitted Wang Bi and Heshang gong versions the phrase under consideration reads “When the state is in disorder, there are loyal ministers” (國家昏亂有忠臣). The Mawangdui version, however, has *zhen chen* 貞臣 instead of *zhong chen* 忠臣 (loyal ministers). Cf. *Chudi chutu Zhanquo jiance shisi zhong*, 156.

35 *Zhuangzi jishi*, 10A.1054.

In the OBI we read:

貞:王亡不正。

Testing: There is nothing that is not correct in the king's [conduct].

辛未卜，旁貞:王出不正。

Crack-making on *xin-wei* day, [diviner] Bin testing: There is something that is not correct in the king's [conduct]. (*Heji* 5354).

The charges “there is nothing that is not correct” and “there is something that is not correct” being employed here in a parallel divination suffices to show that the concept of *zheng* was regarded as important during the Yin period.

In a speech delivered upon the receipt of my honorary doctor's degree from the École pratique des hautes études in 1993, I addressed questions of Chinese religion and literature. At the very beginning I mentioned the term *zhen*, which I compared to the Hebrew word *din* דין, meaning judgement or obedience but also comprising the same associations as *zheng*.<sup>36</sup>

Producing divinatory cracks on a turtle shell was a major sacred affair requiring the proper placement of the turtle and the correct attire of the diviner. The “Jinteng” 金滕 (Metal-bound coffer) chapter from the *Documents* refers to the matter as “solemn crack-making” (*mu bu* 穆卜).<sup>37</sup> Here we read:

乃命于帝庭，敷佑四方，用能定爾子孫于下地，四方之民罔不祗畏。

The invocation [to the former kings] says: “[... King Wu] has been appointed in Di's court to extensively possess the four cardinal regions, thereby enabling him to firmly establish your descendants on the earth here below. Among the populations of the four cardinal regions, there are none who do not revere and fear him.”<sup>38</sup>

36 Jao cites Francis Brown, *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1957), 192, for the definition of *din* דין.

37 *Shangshu zhengyi*, 13:393.

38 *Ibid*, 13:395.

Zeng Yunqian states:

本經言「命于」者皆為受命，如「乃命于帝庭」，即武王受命于帝也；「即命于元龜」，即就受命於元龜也；「小子新命于三王」，即親受命于三王也。或謂「即命」龜詞，失之。

Every instance of the phrase *ming yu* (to charge in / at / from) in the *Documents* invariably denotes the receipt of a charge (*shou ming*). For instance, the phrase “[King Wu] has been appointed in Di’s court” means that King Wu received the Charge from Di. Similarly, “to be about to announce a charge to the great turtle” means nothing else than to at once receive a charge from the great turtle, and “the heir has been newly appointed by the three kings” also means that he had personally received a charge from the three kings. Some scholars wrongly take the phrase *ji ming* to mean “to announce a charge to the turtle.”<sup>39</sup>

Zeng is quite right about this. In Shang OBI we find a somewhat similar phrase: “To request that Gongfang shall receive a mandate from X” (句舌方于受令) (*Heji* 6155). This particular example will concern us in more detail below.

In the OBI, the word *zhen* indeed possesses the notion of “to inquire.” This is unmistakably the case in parallel positive-negative divination charges. In most instances, however, *zhen* appears within non-interrogative phrases where it would be wrong to add a question mark as we are clearly dealing with an affirmative mood.

In the Zhouyuan 周原 OBI, the word *zhen* is always followed by *zheng* or *you zheng* 又正 (there is correctness):<sup>40</sup>

癸巳，彝文武帝乙宗。貞.....凶又正。

On *gui-si* day, performing the *yi*-ritual at the temple of the accomplished and martial Di Yi; testing: [...]. We desire that there be correctness. (H111)

貞:王其奉又大甲，暫周方白(伯)，熹，凶正，不于受又(有祐)。

39 *Shangshu zhengdu*, 141.

40 The following direct transcriptions have been updated according to Cao Wei, *Zhouyuan Jiaguwen*. The interpretative transcriptions follow Liu Xiang 劉翔 et al., eds., *Shang-Zhou guwenzi duben* 商周古文字讀本, rev. ed. (Beijing: Shangwu yinshuguan: 2017 [1988]), 55-6.

Testing: The king will seek assistance from Da Jia and perform a promissory sacrifice to the head of the Zhou people. We desire that it be correct and not harm in the receipt of their aid.<sup>41</sup> (H11:84)

弼(弼) 巳(祀) , 其彝 , 凶正 。

Assisting in sacrifice, we will perform the *yi*-ritual. We desire that it be correct.<sup>42</sup> (H11:13)

曰吉 , 其五...正 , 王受[右] 。

[...] is called auspicious; five [...] correct, the king obtained [blessings / divine assistance]. (H11:189)

All instances of the graph *xin* 𠄎 may be read here in the predicative sense of *si* 思 (desire it to be) or *si* 斯 (it shall be).<sup>43</sup> A Shang OBI fragment from the time of King Wu Ding 武丁 (fl. 1250–1192 BC) reads:

庚午卜 , 般貞:正 。

Crack making on *geng-wu* (day 7), Que testing: [It will be] correct. (HJ 371 recto)

This is part of an inscription from the shell of a giant turtle, recording a testing as to whether [Di] will send down (agreement, blessings, disaster, etc. [tr. note]), and whether the royal ancestors Fu Yi 父乙 and Fu Xin 父辛 will harm the king's affairs. The diviner in this case is Que 般. The charge records but the single word *zheng*, thus testifying to the relatedness in meaning of the terms *zhen* and *zheng*.

41 My interpretation and translation of this fragment as well as the next one follows closely that of Shaughnessy with some minor adaptations. Cf. Shaughnessy, “Zhouyuan Oracle-Bone Inscriptions: Entering the Research Stage?” *Early China* 11/12 (1985–1987): 156–60.

42 The inscriptional text cited by Jao does not conform to the inscription on fragment H11:13. It is somewhat similar, however, to the inscription on fragment H11:114 which is transcribed as 弼巳其彝 𠄎 凶正 in Cao Wei, *Zhouyuan Jiaguwen*, 80. Jao does not offer an interpretation for the phrase 弼巳. My rendering of the phrase as *bi si* 弼祀 (to assist in sacrifice) follows Chen Quanfang 陳全方, *Xizhou jiawen zhu* 西周甲文注 (Shanghai: Xuelin chubanshe, 2003), 25.

43 Cf. Li Xueqin 李學勤, “Xu lun Xizhou jiagu” 續論西周甲骨, *Renwen zazhi* 人文雜誌 (1986) 1: 71, on this topic.

We have already pointed out above that the Baoshan slips repeatedly make use of the phrase *heng zhen* 恒貞 (constant / long-term determination), which in a similar fashion also appears in the “Luo gao” chapter from the *Documents*. In the Zhouyuan inscriptions we further find the phrase *bao zhen* 保貞.

凶御于永冬(終)，凶御于休令(命)保貞，宮(官)吉。

We desire that we may perpetually receive a favorable mandate, ensuring correctness. The office will be auspicious.<sup>44</sup> (H3:1 Qijia 1)

This records the testing into the desired possibility of perpetually obtaining a favorable mandate. *Bao zhen* here means to ensure correctness (*bao zheng* 保正). We will discuss the implications of *yong* 永 and *bao* 保 in greater detail below.

There are epigraphic instances of *zhen* being placed at the end of a phrase as in the OBI fragments unearthed in Fangdui 坊堆 village, Hongdong 洪洞 county, Shanxi, one of which reads:

疢，凶疢三沚(趾)又(有)疾，貞

Having fallen over. May this falling over be due to the three toes having a disease. Correct.<sup>45</sup>

It goes without saying that *zhen* couldn't possibly be interpreted as a question word in this case. Moreover, the many instances of “*mou zhen*” 某貞 (sth. *zhen*) and “*mou mou zhen*” 某某貞 (sth. sth. *zhen*) type of phrases in the *Classic of Changes* as well as in the newly excavated Mawangdui *Yi zhuan* 易傳 (Commentary on the *Changes*) (see table 1) cannot be meaningfully rendered as “to ask” in any case.

44 My translation of this fragment is based on the interpretation in Li Xueqin, “Xizhou jiagu de ji dian yanjiu” 西周甲骨的幾點研究, *Wenwu* (1981) 9: 8. The Interpretation of *gong* 宮 (palace) as *guan* 官 (office) however, is Jao's, as is the reading of *bao zhen* as a verbal compound instead of the taking *bao* to be a diviner's name.

45 My very tentative translation of this fragment is based on the interpretation in Li Xueqin, “Zai tan Hongdong Fangduicun you zi bugu” 再談洪洞坊堆村有字卜骨, *Wenwu shijie* 文物世界 1 (1990): 1–3.

TABLE 13 The use of the term *zhen* 貞 in the *Classic of Changes*<sup>a</sup>

<i>Jian zhen</i> 艱貞 (Determination about difficulty)	<i>Taixu</i> 大畜 (Great Storage) hexagram, nine in the third	Favorable for determination about difficulty (利艱(根)貞)
<i>Ju zhen</i> 居貞 (Determine about dwelling / to adhere to what is firm and correct)	<i>Sui</i> 隨 (Following) hexagram, six in the third Nine in the fourth	In following there is seeking to get; favorable to determine about dwelling / to adhere to what is firm and correct (隨有求得，利居貞) Determination is inauspicious (貞凶)
<i>Mie zhen</i> 蔑貞 (exorcism determination)	<i>Bo</i> 剝 (Flaying) hexagram	Determination about exorcism is inauspicious (蔑貞，凶)
<i>Ke zhen</i> 可貞 (permissible to determine)	<i>Kun</i> 坤 (Compliant) hexagram <i>Sun</i> 損 (Decrease) hexagram	Enclosing a pattern; it is permissible to determine (含章可貞) It can be determined (可貞); it cannot be determined (不可貞)
<i>Heng zhen</i> 亨貞 (Determination about receipt)	<i>Kun</i> 困 (Entangled) hexagram	Receipt; determination for the big man is auspicious; there is no harm (亨貞大人吉無咎)
<i>Nü zhen</i> 女貞 (Determination about a maiden / rectitude of a maiden)	<i>Jiaren</i> 家人 (Family Members) hexagram	Favorable to determine about a maiden / favorable for the rectitude of a maiden (利女貞)
<i>Li pinma zhi zhen</i> 利牝馬之貞, (favorable for the determination of a mare), <i>an zhen</i> 安貞 (contended determination)	<i>Kun</i> 坤 (Compliant) hexagram	Prime receipt; favorable for the determination of a mare [...]; contended determination is auspicious (元亨利牝馬之貞.....安貞吉)
<i>Bu xi zhi zhen</i> 不息之貞 (unceasing determination / correctness)	<i>Sheng (Deng)</i> 升(登) (Ascending) hexagram, elevated six	Dark ascent; favorable for unceasing determination / correctness (冥登利于不息之貞)
<i>Wuren zhi zhen</i> 武人之貞 (a military man's determination / rectitude)	<i>Suan (Xun)</i> 筭(巽) (Calculations) hexagram	Initial Six: [...] favorable for a military man's determination / rectitude (初六.....利武人之貞)

a The translation of the passages in this table follows Shaughnessy, *I Ching*, except where Shaughnessy's reading conflicts with Jao's interpretations.

TABLE 13 The use of the term *zhen* 貞 in the *Classic of Changes* (cont.)

<p><i>Xiao zhen</i> 小貞 (minor determination / correctness), <i>da zhen</i> 大貞 (major determination / correctness)</p>	<p><i>Mu He</i> 繆和</p>	<p>Lü Chang asked the teacher, saying: "The Nine in the Fifth line of the <i>Changes</i>' <i>Zhun</i>, 'Hoarding' hexagram says: 'Hoarding its fat; minor determination / correctness is auspicious, major determination / correctness is inauspicious'; what is this supposed to mean?" (呂昌問先生曰:《易》屯之九五曰:屯其膏,小貞吉,大貞凶,將何謂也)</p>
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The passages forming the "Er san zi wen" 二三子問 (The several disciples asked) section of the *Mawangdui Yi zhuan* quote the words of Confucius. Several among those passages touch upon the interpretation of the term *zhen*. As this concerns rather new material, I shall reproduce the respective passages below:<sup>46</sup>

*Ding* 鼎卦 (Cauldron) hexagram: The determination / rectitude of the big man (大人之貞)

《易》曰:鼎玉鬯(鉉), [大]吉,無不利。孔子曰:鼎大矣。鼎之遷也,不自往,必入(人)舉之,大人之貞也。.....

The *Changes* say: "The cauldron's jade bar; [greatly] auspicious; there is nothing that is not favorable." Confucius said: "The cauldron is grand indeed. As for shifting the cauldron, it does not go on its own accord, there must be someone who lifts it. This is the determination / rectitude of the big man. [...]"

明君立正(政),賢輔(弼)之,將合為而不利,故曰「大吉」。

When an enlightened ruler establishes government, and worthy men support and assist him, what could be done that would not be favorable? Therefore, it says: 'Greatly auspicious.'<sup>47</sup>

<sup>46</sup> The following translations follow, with minor adaptations, that of Shaughnessy, *I Ching*.  
<sup>47</sup> Qiu Xigui et al., eds., *Changsha Mawangdui Hanmu jianbo jicheng*, 3: 44.

*Weiji* 未濟 (Not yet Completed) hexagram: The determination / rectitude of the little man (小人之貞)

卦曰：未濟，亨，[小狐]涉川幾濟，濡其尾，无迺(迺)利。孔子曰：此言始易而終難也，小人之貞也。

The hexagram says: "Not yet completed: Receipt; [the little fox] fording the river and almost completed, wets his tail; there is no place favorable." Confucius said: "This speaks of the beginning being easy and the end being difficult, the determination / rectitude of the little man."<sup>48</sup>

(*Qian* [乾] [Vigorous]) hexagram: The determination / rectitude of the sage and gentleman (聖人君子之貞)

卦曰：見龍在田，利見大人。孔子曰：□□□□□□□□謙(謙)易告也，就民易遇也，聖人君子之貞也。度(庶)民宜之，故曰利以見人。

The hexagram says: "Appearing Dragon in the fields; favorable to see a superior man." Confucius said: "... .. modesty it is easy to report and according with the people it is easy to meet, is the determination / rectitude of the sage and gentleman. The masses of people regard it as appropriate; therefore it says 'favorable in order to see the big man.'"<sup>49</sup>

*Zhun* 屯 (Hoarding) hexagram: Minor determination / correctness (小貞); major determination / correctness (大貞)

[卦曰：屯其膏，小貞吉]，大貞凶。孔子曰：屯□而上通其德，無□□小民家息以綴衣□□□□□□□□屯輪之，其吉亦宜矣。大貞□□□□□□□□川流下而貨?留□年穀十.....。

[The hexagram says: "Hoarding its fat; minor determination / correctness is auspicious], major determination / correctness is inauspicious." Confucius said: "To hoard .. and making its virtue penetrate above, there is nothing ... the little people's families rest in order to sew clothing .. .. hoarding and circulating it, its auspiciousness is

48 Ibid, 3: 57.

49 Ibid, 3: 46.



## 2 Testing through Divination and Moral Determination

The *Guicang* 歸藏 (Returning to be stored) is known as the *Changes* of the Yin period. A version of the text has been rediscovered within a Chu slip manuscript find made in Hubei province. In the present text we find a passage that reads: “The Yin King tested [the charge] through crack-making divination” (殷王貞卜), employing both the terms *zhen* and *bu* 卜 ([crack-making] divination) in conjunction. In transmitted texts the conjunction of *zhen* and *bu* is not limited to turtle and milfoil divination, but it is also found in discussions about oneiromancy from the Spring and Autumn period. For the seventeenth year of Patriarch Ai 哀 of Lu 魯 the *Zuozhuan* records the following:

衛侯夢于北宮，見人登昆吾之觀，被髮北面而譟曰：

The Prince of Wei had a dream in the northern palace. He saw a man climbing the Kunwu Tower, where, with his hair hanging free, he faced north and shouted:

登此昆吾之墟，	<i>I climb this, the barrow of Kunwu,</i>
緜緜生之瓜。	<i>Where with long tendrils the gourd vines grow.</i>
余為渾良夫，	<i>I am Hun Liangfu,</i>
叫天無辜。	<i>And I cry to Heaven that I am blameless.</i>

公親筮之，胥彌赦占之，曰：「不害。」與之邑，寘之而逃，奔宋。衛侯貞卜。

The patriarch personally divined about the dream with milfoil stalks. Interpreting the results, Xumi She said, “The dream will do no harm.” The lord gave him a settlement, but once he had been installed, he absconded and fled to Song. The Prince of Wei then tested / set right the matter by means of crack-making divination.<sup>54</sup>

Du Yu glosses the two words “*zhen bu* 貞卜” together as “to set right through divination whether the dream is auspicious or inauspicious” (正卜夢之吉凶).<sup>55</sup> In this case Du takes *zhen* to mean *zheng*. *Zhen* and *bu* must furthermore be read as two words, meaning: “To determine through some method of divination”

54 *Zuo*, Ai 17.5, 1709. The English translation has been adapted with minor alterations from Durrant, Li, and Schaberg, trans., *Zuo Tradition*, 1959.

55 *Chunqiu zuozhuan zhengyi*, 60.1956.

(貞於某卜). The Wu yu 吳語 (Discourses of Wu) chapter in the *Guoyu* relates how at the summit of Huangchi 黃池, the ruler of Jin 晉 sends Dong He 董褐 to report back [to the King of Wu] saying:

曩君之言，周室既卑，諸侯失禮于天子(指不朝貢)，請貞于陽卜，收文、武之諸侯。

According to the words of your honorable ruler, it is that the royal house of Zhou is weak, and the many regional lords lack their ritual propriety towards the Son of Heaven (i.e., they do not pay tribute to the court). Hence your honorable ruler intends to set the matter right through turtle-shell divination and to bring the regional lords from the time of Kings Wen and Wu under control.<sup>56</sup>

In Wei Zhao's annotations to this passage we read: "*zhen* means *zheng*. Turtle [-shell divination] is what is called *bu* 卜; Cracks appear by applying heat [to the shell], hence it is called *yang* 陽. The phrase purports that Wu intends to set [the matter] right through plastromancy, and to subdue the regional lords in order to present them to the Son of Heaven."<sup>57</sup> Wei Zhao taking *zhen* to mean *zheng* again shows that already in pre-modern philology the term *zhen* has been recognized to possess a more differentiated meaning than simply "to inquire through divination."

The ancient methods of divination and prognostication were quite diverse. Yet plastromancy and milfoil divination as well as oneiromancy, all included the step of determining [the correctness of a matter] through divination. Although this process was necessarily different in each of these three methods, it nevertheless was aimed at the same goal: To follow and proceed with what is auspicious.

The Dunhuang manuscript version of the "Da Yu mo" 大禹謨 (Counsels of the Great Yu) chapter from the *Guwen Shangshu* 古文尚書 (Old script *Book of Documents*) relates:

兪(禹)曰：「枚卜。功臣惟『吉』之册(從)。」帝曰兪(禹)：官占惟先弊(今作蔽)志，昆命于元龜(龜)。朕志先定，詢謀僉同，鬼神丕依，龜筮(龜筮)葉(協)册從。卜不習，吉。

Yu proclaimed: "I shall choose my ministers by means of divination. I shall follow the oracle in each case in which the prognostication for a certain meritorious minister is 'auspicious.'" Di replied to Yu saying: "An

56 *Guoyu jijie*, 19.551.

57 *Ibid.*, 19.551-2.

official in charge of prognostications always fixes his determination first and then refers (his decision) to the great turtle. If I first make up my mind, then consult and deliberate (the matter) with all (my ministers), and if they are of one accord with me, then the spirits will signify their assent and the turtle and milfoil stalks will concur. In order for it to be auspicious, a divination should not be repeated.”<sup>58</sup>

Xue Jixuan’s 薛季宣 (1134–1173) *Shu guwen xun* 書古文訓 (Philological glosses on the old script *Documents*) has *bi zhi* 蔽志,<sup>59</sup> as does the transmitted version of the text. *Bi* glosses as *duan* 斷 (here: to decide). The diviner needs to first fix his determination, meaning he needs to decide and make up his mind about a matter before he proceeds to divine about it. Hence the text reads: “I first make up my mind” (朕志先定). The sequence of this process can be tentatively tabularized as follows:

TABLE 14 The divination process

The diviner	
First makes up his mind,	Human determination comes first
And then refers his decision to the turtle	the decisions of the spirits are announced through auspicious or inauspicious prognostications
	The sprits and man are in accord with each other, this is called <i>da tong</i> 大同 (Great Harmony)
The outcome is only auspicious if the divination is not repeated	One proceeds if the determination of the spirits matches that of man

58 My rendering of this passage follows Jao’s punctuation of the text. However, I had to add a full stop before the last sentence after 從, to arrive at a meaningful translation. My interpretation in turn conforms with Jao’s reading of the last phrase in table 11 below. For a copy of the original Dunhuang manuscript (Stein 801) see Gu Jiegang 顧頡剛 (1893–1980) and Gu Tinglong 顧廷龍, eds., *Shangshu wenzi hebian* 尚書文字合編, 4 vols. (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1996), 1: 164.

59 See Xue Jixuan 薛季宣, comp., *Shu guwen xun* 書古文訓, in sixteen *juan* (woodblock print edition held by Tongzhitang 通志堂, preserved at the Library of the Harvard-Yenching Institute, Harvard University), 2.6b.

Although the “Da Yu mo” is a rather late text, the passage under consideration can nevertheless be regarded as reliable.

The term *zhi* 志 (intent[ion], resolve, will) appears with great frequency in ancient texts. Among those we find the phrase *xi zhi* 徯志 (to make one’s intentions clear). The “Gao Yao mo” has:

其弼直(憲)，惟動丕應。徯志以昭受上帝，天其申命用休。

Let your assistants be morally committed so that your movements shall be grandly responded to. Make your intentions clear and await the mandate [to proceed] from Di on High, and Heaven will renew your appointment and bestow blessings on you.<sup>60</sup>

The “Xia benji” in the *Shiji* has *qing yi* 清意 (clear / honest intent) instead of *xi zhi* 徯志.<sup>61</sup> The Grand Scribe explains *zhi* in terms of *yi*. Hence the phrase “Make your intentions clear and await the mandate [to proceed] from Di on High” implies that the intentions of the diviner have to await a clear mandate from Di on High in order for the diviner to obtain “favorable auspiciousness” (*xiu ji* 休吉). In the three “Pan Geng” 盤庚 chapters from the Yin section in the *Book of Documents* the term *zhi* is mentioned twice. In “Pan Geng 1” we read:

予告汝于難，若射之有志。

I announce this difficult enterprise to you with a determination like that of an archer aiming at his target.<sup>62</sup>

“Pan Geng 11” has:

汝分猷念以相從，各設中于乃心。

Share in my plans and thoughts and follow me; may each one of you conform to the correct norm in your heart.<sup>63</sup>

60 This passage actually appears in the “Yiji” 益稷 (Yi and Ji) chapter from the *Shangshu* and not in the “Gao Yao mo.” See *Shangshu zhengyi*, 5.137–8. To arrive at a meaningful translation, I had to choose the generally accepted punctuation over Jao’s choice, which reads: 「其弼直惟動，丕應徯志，以昭受上帝，天其申命用休」.

61 *Shiji*, 2.79.

62 *Shangshu zhengyi*, 9.277.

63 *Ibid.*, 9.285.

The word *zhi* in the phrase *she zhi you zhi* 射之有志 glosses as *di* 的 (target). The ode *Bin zhi chu yan* 賓之初筵 (The Guests are taking their Seats) has:

獻爾發功， Present your deeds of archery,  
發彼有的， Shoot at the mark,  
以祈爾爵。 That you may be rewarded with the cup.<sup>64</sup>

The *Maozhuan* says: “*Di* 的 means *zhi* 質 (target, aim).”<sup>65</sup> This means when shooting arrows, one must hit the target. Shang dynasty sources frequently mention the “three hundred archers” (*san bai she* 三百射), as well as a great archery rite (*da she li* 大射禮). This may explain why the process of pyromancy was often metaphorically compared to the act of shooting an arrow. The word *zhong* 中 in the phrase *she zhong yu xin* 射中于心 also bears some connection to the term *di*. Moreover, numerous instances of the phrase *li zhong* 立中 (to establish the correct norm / the center) in Shang OBI suggest that the significance of the notion of the center was already quite common and widespread during the Yin period. This in turn shows that the Yin people might have developed an idea of fixing one’s determination. This is why we can find a sentence such as “a determination like that of an archer aiming at his target” in the “Pan Geng” chapter. The mention of *xi zhi* 愬志 (to make one’s intentions clear) in the “Gao Yao mo” may furthermore serve as proof that the notion of “fixing one’s determination” (蔽志) did in fact exist. Divinatory prognostication had to be preceded by the diviner making up his intent. That means human consideration came before the counsel of the spirits. If both could be brought into accord with each other, then this was called *da tong* 大同 (Great Harmony). All this may further serve to bolster the reliability of the “Hong fan” chapter from the *Books of Documents*.<sup>66</sup>

The word *zhi* 志 in its broadest sense refers to a sort of decision. According to the *Mengzi* 孟子 [a person’s] *zhi* (will) is the commander of [his] *qi* 氣 (vital breath / life-force). The dictum that the *Songs* articulate *zhi* also understands

64 Mao #220 (*Maoshi zhengyi*, 14.1028). The English translation follows Arthur Waley, trans., *The Book of Songs: The Ancient Chinese Classic of Poetry* (New York: Grove Press, 1996), 207.

65 *Maoshi zhengyi*, 14.1028.

66 The passage from the “Hong fan” chapter which Jao alludes to here reads:  
汝則有大疑，謀及乃心，謀及卿士，謀及庶人，謀及卜筮。汝則從，龜從，筮從，卿士從，庶民從，是之謂大同。  
“When you have a great doubt, then consult with your heart; consult with the high ministers and officers, consult with the common people, consult the turtle-shell and milfoil stalks. If you consent, the turtle-shell consents, the ministers and officers consent, and the common people consent; this is what is called great concord” (See *Shangshu zhengyi*, 12.372).

the concept in terms of ambition or intent. In Western philosophy, no one discusses the importance of the will as brilliantly as Immanuel Kant (1724–1804). In German there are the words “Willkür” ([capacity for] choice) and “Wille” (will) which both mean “will” or “determination.” However, there is a difference between the two. In his *Metaphysics of Morals*, Kant strictly distinguishes between “Wille” and “Willkür:”

Signifying pure determination, “Wille” is the designation for a practical principle, a definite order, and hence for moral regulations.

Signifying confused choice, “Willkür” constitutes an operational criterion which is rational in its function.

In a literal sense “Wille” means determination, whereas “Willkür”<sup>67</sup> bears the notion of “willfulness” and “arbitrariness.” The former is tight, the latter relaxed; the former is fixed, the latter is not. Kant says: “The capacity for choice (Willkür) can submit to the regulations of the will (Wille) without losing its freedom.”

We may try to explain this with the help of a saying from the *Mengzi*. “Wille” evolves through the accumulation of propriety (*yi* 義) and “Willkür” does not. “To make one’s behavior appropriate is what is called propriety” (行而宜之之謂義).<sup>68</sup> “Wille” is nothing else than confirmed moral behavior:

Act / take action	—	making it appropriate	—>	Propriety ( <i>yi</i> 義)
Willkür		Wille		

Kant further differentiates between two sorts of Willkür:

- |     |                   |                                    |
|-----|-------------------|------------------------------------|
| (1) | Tierische Willkür | (animal choice [arbitrium brutum]) |
| (2) | Freie Willkür     | (free choice)                      |

This is where the dividing line between humans and animals lies. Hence the Ruist saying:

67 Jao further explains that the word “Willkür” constitutes the contracted form of “will” and “kürzen” (shorten), hence bearing the notion of a short distance. However, as this claim is patently wrong, I have decided to move this passage into the footnotes. Cf. „willkür, f.“, *Deutsches Wörterbuch von Jacob Grimm und Wilhelm Grimm*, digitalized version in Wörterbuchnetz des Trier Center for Digital Humanities, Version 01/21, <https://www.woerterbuchnetz.de/DWB?lemid=W21666>.

68 *Han Changli wenji jiaozhu* 韓昌黎文集校注, coll. and annot. Ma Qichang 馬其昶, ed. Ma Maoyuan 馬茂元 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1986), 1.13.

人之所以異於禽獸者幾希。

That, whereby man differs from birds and beasts, is small indeed.<sup>69</sup>

The former has not undergone the process of moral evaluation whereas the latter, “Wille,” constitutes a decision that is born from the accumulation of propriety (集義所生的決定).

Let us further discuss the phrase *heng zhen* 恒貞 (constant / long-term determination) in this regard. In this combination too the graph *zhen* glosses as *ding* 定 (to set / fix / determine). In the “Yuzao” 玉藻 (The jade-bead pendants of the royal cap) chapter from the *Liji* 禮記 (Book of Rites) it says:

卜人定龜，史定墨，君定體。

The diviner fixes the turtle-shell; the scribe sets [the charge in] ink; and the ruler determines the figures (produced through the cracks).<sup>70</sup>

Fixing the turtle (定龜) means to put the turtle in the right position (貞龜), referred to as *zheng gui* 正龜 in the *Shijing*. The “Shi yanyu” 釋言語 (Explaining Terms and Phrases) chapter in Liu Xi’s *Shiming* says:

貞，定也，精定不動惑也。

*Zhen* means *ding*, it refers to [the state of being] perfectly set and unstirred by confusion.<sup>71</sup>

In the “Xici” from the *Yijing* we read:

天下之動，貞夫一者也。

The movements of All-under-Heaven are constantly subject to this one rule.<sup>72</sup>

69 *Mengzi zhengyi* 孟子正義, comp. Jiao Xun 焦循, punc. and coll. Shen Wenzhuo 沈文倬 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1987), 16.612.

70 *Liji zhengyi* 禮記正義 (Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe, 2000), 29.1028.

71 *Shiming*, 4.54. Further below, in the original version of this article Jao explains: “The phrase ‘*bu dong huo* 不動惑’ means ‘*bu dong yu huo* 不動於惑’ (unstirred by confusion).”

72 *Zhouyi zhengyi*, 8.349.

Being subject to one [rule] means nothing else than being settled through unity (定於一). The following statement from the *Mengzi* – “how can All-under-Heaven be settled? It can be settled through unity” (天下惡乎定? 定于一) – seemingly borrows this saying from the “Xici.”<sup>73</sup> The phrase “unstirred by confusion” (不動惑) too is related to the idea of an “unstirred heart” (*bu dong xin* 不動心) found elsewhere in the *Mengzi*.<sup>74</sup> In the *Lunyu* 論語 (Analects of Confucius) we read: “By the age of forty I was not confused” (四十而不惑).<sup>75</sup> Liu Xi’s “unmoved by confusion” means nothing else than “not being confused” (不惑).

Cai Yong’s 蔡邕 (132–192 AD) *Duduan* 獨斷 (Solitary judgments) says:

清白自守曰貞。

Pure self-integrity is what is called *zhen*.<sup>76</sup>

The “Shifa” 諡法 (The order of posthumous names) chapter from the *Yi Zhoushu* has:

大慮克就曰貞。

The overcoming of great concerns is what is called *zhen*.<sup>77</sup>

In the Chu manuscript version of the *Laozi* we find the following statement: “I would settle them [i.e., princes and kings (tr. note)] down by means of the simplicity of the nameless” (我將占之以無名之樸).<sup>78</sup> The graph 占 is used here to write the word *zhen* 貞. Other versions have the graph *zhen* 鎮 (to press down / to calm) in place of 占 (貞). Moreover, the phrase “When [the *dao* 道 (way) (tr. note)] is cultivated within one’s self, its virtue will be settled” (修之身，其德乃真) from the Chu slip *Laozi* is written with the graph *zhen* 真 (true).<sup>79</sup> It follows that ancient manuscript versions of the *Laozi* preferentially used

73 *Mengzi zhengyi*, 3.77.

74 *Ibid.*, 6.203.

75 *Lunyu jishi* 論語集釋, comp. Cheng Shude 程樹德, punc. and coll. Cheng Junying 程俊英 and Jiang Jianyuan 蔣見元 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1990), 3.37.

76 Cai Yong 蔡邕, *Duduan* 獨斷, C.18a, rpt. in *Siku quanshu* 四庫全書 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1987), 850: 95. Jao quotes this line as 清心自守. I have decided to give the transmitted version in the translation.

77 Huang Huaixin, Zhang Maorong et al., *Yi Zhoushu huijiao jizhu*, 6.662.

78 *Chudi chutu Zhanguo jiance shisi zhong*, 140.

79 *Ibid.*, 152.

the graph 貞. In the “Yu gong” 禹貢 (Tribute of Yu) chapter from the *Book of Documents* we read:

兗州.....厥田惟中下，厥賦貞。

Yan Zhou [...]. Its fields were the lowest of the middle class. Its contribution of revenue was fixed at what would just be deemed the correct amount.<sup>80</sup>

Zheng Xuan comments on this passage, saying: “*zhen* means here *zheng* 正.”

When a decision is made through careful consideration, the resulting movements / actions will necessarily be “uniform” (*yi* 一) and fixed (*zhen* 貞) on “one [purpose]” (*yi* 一). The term *zhen* bears in it the notion of a decision. How to avoid calamities and secure auspiciousness still lies within the capacities of humans to determine matters for themselves. Human consideration outweighs the counsel of the spirits. The planning of matters belongs to the realm of man and is still contingent upon one’s own decision.

### 3 The “*zhen*” 貞 of the *Wenyan zhuan* 文言傳 (Commentary on the Words) on the Hexagram *Qian* 乾 and the Four Virtues (*si de* 四德)

The discovery of Shang OBI towards the end of the Qing period significantly altered the way in which the *Changes* were understood. Because everyone explained the frequent appearance of the graph *zhen* 貞 in the OBI as “to inquire through (crack-making) divination,” the term *zhen* from among the four virtues (*si de* 四德), *yuan* 元 (great beginning), *heng* 亨 (unobstructed development), *li* 利 (harmonious gain) and *zhen* 貞 (correct firmness)<sup>81</sup> listed in the *Yi zhuan*

80 *Shangshu zhengyi*, 6.166–8. My translation of this passage follows Legge, trans., *The Shoo King*, 99.

81 These four terms originally appear in a row in the hexagram statements of the hexagrams *Qian* and *Sui*. Their interpretation is highly contested. Two basic readings prevail: The first reading, suggested by James Legge (1815–1897), takes the line as a coordinated sequence of attributes: “Great and originating, penetrating, advantageous, correct and firm” (*The I Ching*, trans. James Legge, [New York: Dover publications, 1963], 57). The second reading, favored by Richard Wilhelm (1873–1930), divides the line into two coordinated phrases: “The Creative works sublime success, furthering through perseverance” (Richard Wilhelm, *The I Ching or Book of Changes*, trans. Cary F. Baynes [Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1977], 100). Gao Heng 高亨 [1900–1986] was the first to understand the statement in the context of divination. He translates: “For a great sacrifice a beneficial prognostication” (Gao Heng, “Yuan heng li zhen jie” 元亨利貞解, in idem.

was henceforth also read as “to ask.” Moreover, some scholars insisted this was the only correct interpretation and that previous viewpoints were altogether wrong. (I remember it was Gao Heng 高亨 [1900–1986] who voiced that claim.) Even the implications of *zhen* in statements such as “[being] correct and firm suffices to manage affairs” (貞固足以幹事) in the *Wenyan* commentary,<sup>82</sup> or “to abandon one’s position and to indulge in licentiousness; this cannot be called ‘correct’” (棄位而姣，不可謂「貞」), recorded under the ninth year of Patriarch Xiang 襄 (563 BC) in the *Zuozhuan*,<sup>83</sup> were altogether overthrown. The damage this misunderstanding has caused still persists today, as the academic community has yet not clarified the matter. Fortunately, significant archaeological evidence has come to light in the meantime. The archaeological site at Mawangdui produced a manuscript find of the sixty-four hexagrams as they had circulated in the area of Chu, together with previously unknown commentaries to the *Changes*, including the so called “Er san zi wen,” “*Yi zhi yi*” 易之義 (The properties of the *Changes*), “*Yao*” 要 (The essentials), and the “*Mu He*” 繆和 commentary. The “*Yao*” commentary, a guide for interpreting the *Changes*, describes Confucius’s method of reading the *Changes* as neglecting

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*Zhouyi gujing jinzhu* 周易古經今注 [Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1984], 110). Shaughnessy, *I Ching*, in turn translates: “Initial receipt, beneficial to determine.” Cf. Richard Kunst, “The Original ‘Yijing’: A Text, Phonetic Transcription, Translation, and Indexes, with Sample Glosses” (Ph.D. diss. University of California, 1985), 369–80; and Xia Hanyi 夏含夷 (Edward L. Shaughnessy), “*Zhouyi* ‘yuan heng li zhen’ xinjie” 《周易》「元亨利貞」新解 (A new interpretation of the line ‘yuan heng li zhen’ in the *Changes of Zhou*), in idem, *Xing yu xiang: Zhongguo gudai wenhuashi lunji* 興與象：中國古代文化史論集 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2012), 20–46, for an in-depth discussion of these four terms, their meaning and their syntactical relation in the text of the *Changes*. Jao follows the definition of these four terms as individual concepts developed in the *Wenyan* commentary:

「元」者，善之長也；「亨」者，嘉之會也；「利」者，義之和也；「貞」者，事之幹也。君子體仁足以長人，嘉會足以合禮，利物足以和義，貞固足以幹事。

What is called ‘great beginning’ is the first and chief quality of goodness; what is called ‘unobstructed development’ is the assemblage of excellences; what is called ‘harmonious gain’ is the harmony of all that is right; and what is called ‘correct and firm’ is the trunk of all endeavors. Embodying fellow-kindness, the gentleman is fit to preside over men; presenting the assemblage of excellences, he is fit to show in himself the union of all propriety; benefiting (all) things and matters, he is fit to harmonize all that is right; correct and firm, he is fit to manage (all) affairs (Translation adapted from Legge, *The I Ching*, 408).

82 *Zhouyi zhengyi*, 1.14.

83 *Zuo*, Xiang 9.3, 965–6.

the divinations of scribes and shamans and at the same time elevating the significance of virtue and propriety (*de-yi* 德義). The passage reads:

子曰：《易》，我復其祝卜矣，我觀其德義耳也。幽贊而達乎數，明數而達乎德，又仁□者而義行之耳。贊而不達於數，則其為之巫；數而不達於德，則其為之史。史、巫之筮，鄉之而未也，好之而非也。

The Master said: "As for the *Changes*, I do indeed put its prayers and divinations last, only observing its virtue and propriety. Intuiting the commendations to reach the number, and understanding the number to reach virtue, is to have fellow-kindness and putting it into motion appropriately. If the commendations do not lead to the number, then one merely acts as a shaman; if the number does not lead to virtue, then one merely acts as a scribe. The divinations of scribes and shamans tend toward it but are not yet there, delight in it but are not correct.

後世之士疑丘者或以《易》乎？吾求其德而已，吾與史巫同涂而殊歸者也。君子德行，焉求福？故祭祀而寡也；仁義，焉求吉？故卜筮而希也。祝巫、卜筮，其後乎！

Perhaps it will be because of the *Changes* that learned men of later generations will doubt me. I seek its virtue and nothing more. I am on the same road as the scribes and shamans but end up differently. The conduct of the gentleman's virtue is to seek blessings; that is why he sacrifices, but he does so sparingly; the propriety of his fellow-kindness is to seek auspiciousness; that is why he divines, but he does so rarely. Do not the divinations of priests and magicians come last!"<sup>84</sup>

This is a very poignant and profound statement. In intuiting the commendations from the spirits, one has to arrive at a number; for if one does not, one necessarily sinks to the level of a shaman and invocator. If one arrives at a number but fails to attain virtue, then one merely acts as a scribe. Confucius does not appreciate shaman invocators and scribes for they lack accomplished virtue. We may conjecture that seeking blessings and auspiciousness were matters of secondary importance to Confucius. Instead, he elevated the implications of virtue and propriety inherent in the *Changes* to a new level.

84 Qiu Xigui et al., eds., *Changsha Mawangdui Hanmu jianbo jicheng*, 3: 118. Translation adapted from Shaughnessy, *I Ching*.

He stresses the idea of morals (*dao-de* 道德) and turns it into the extension of fellow-kindness and propriety (*ren-yi* 仁義). To further liberate the position of man from the ties of the spirits as well as to pursue the perfection of virtue; this is the essence of the *Changes*.

Above I have mentioned the *Wenyan* commentary to the *Changes* and discussed in some detail the four virtues named in it. In recent times many scholars hold that the word *zhen* does not fit the meaning of a divinatory charge. This tallies with the words of Mu Jiang 穆姜 (d. 564 BC) in the *Zuozhuan* passage recounting the events from the ninth year of Patriarch Xiang.<sup>85</sup> Now, if we look at the “Er san zi wen” commentary we come across the following statement: “Yuan is the beginning of goodness” (元，善之始也).<sup>86</sup> The “Mu He” passage further relates:

子曰：「謙者，謙然不足也。亨者，嘉好之會也。夫君子者，以德下天（其）人，人以死報之。」

The master said: “Modesty’ means being modestly unsatisfied. ‘Prosperous development’ is the conjunction of goodness. If one who is ruler over man uses virtue to put himself below them, they will then exert themselves to repay him.”<sup>87</sup>

While one passage touches upon the notion of “prime,” the other talks about “receipt,” thus revealing the ancient origins of the theory of the four virtues. Patriarch Ai 哀 (508–468 BC) alludes to the *Wenyan* commentary when he calls Confucius the “upright trunk of the state” (國之貞榦).<sup>88</sup> Explaining the four

85 The passage in question reads as follows:

《周易》曰：「隨，元、亨、利、貞，無咎。」元，體之長也；亨，嘉之會也；利，義之和也；貞，事之幹也。體仁足以長人，嘉德足以合禮，利物足以和義，貞固足以幹事。

The *Changes of Zhou* says, “Following: great beginning, unobstructed development, harmonious gain and correct firmness, no blame.” “Great beginning” is the first and chief quality of the body; “unobstructed development” is the assemblage of excellences; “harmonious gain” is the harmony of what is right; “correct firmness” is the trunk of endeavors. Embodying fellow-kindness suffices to preside over men, excellent virtue suffices to meld ritual propriety, benefiting (all) things and matters suffices to harmonize all that is right, and being correct and firm suffices to manage (all) affairs. (*Zuo*, Xiang 9.3, 960.)

86 Qiu Xigui et al., eds., *Changsha Mawangdui Hanmu jianbo jicheng*, 3: 49.

87 *Ibid.*, 3: 134. Translation adapted from Shaughnessy, *I Ching*.

88 *Zhuangzi jishi*, 10A.1054.

virtues in terms of “great beginning,” “prosperous development,” “harmonious gain” and “correct firmness” goes back to an ancient commentarial tradition that has been laid out by Mu Jiang during the Spring and Autumn period. That her speech has been recorded in the *Zuozhuan*, testifies to the antiquity of the tradition.<sup>89</sup> Time-honored sayings of this sort have been cited over and over by various personages. The Han bamboo manuscript titled *Yinshu* 引書 (Pulling book) quotes the words of Pengzu 彭祖:<sup>90</sup>

春產、夏長、秋收、冬藏[藏]，此彭祖之道也。

Spring [is the season of] birth, summer [is the season of] growing, autumn [is the season of] harvest, and winter [is the season of] storing. This is the way of Pengzu.<sup>91</sup>

Kong Yingda's 孔穎達 (574–648 AD) *Zhouyi zhengyi* 周易正義 (The correct meaning of the *Changes of Zhou*) uses the way of the four seasons to further illuminate the concept of the four virtues.<sup>92</sup> Relying on the new evidence from the *Yinshu*, we find that this connection originates from the ancient sayings of Pengzu.

#### 4 Discussing the Concepts “*yong zhen*” 永貞, “*li yong zhen*” 利永貞 and “*linian de zheng ming*” 歷年得正命

Let us now take a look at the formulaic expressions *yong zhen* 永貞 (perpetual correctness / determination), *yuan yong zhen* 元永貞 (great perpetual correctness / determination) and *li yong zhen* 利永貞 (favorable for perpetual correctness /determination) from the hexagram statements in the *Zhouyi*:

89 Jao remarks here that that Emperor 武 of Liang's 梁 (r. 502–549 AD) ascription of this interpretation to King Wen 文 has no factual basis.

90 See Birrell, *Chinese Mythology*, 187–8 for the myth of Pengzu.

91 According to Gao Dalun 高大倫, *Zhangjiashan Hanjian Yinshu yanjiu* 張家山漢簡《引書》研究 (Chengdu: Ba Shu shushe, 1995), 90, this passage uses the agricultural cycle as metaphor for the rhythm of the *yang* life-breath (陽氣).

92 *Zhouyi zhengyi*, 1.1–2.

*Yuan yong zhen* 元永貞 (great perpetual correctness /determination)

*Bi* 比 (Alliance) hexagram

比吉原筮，元永貞，无咎。不寧方來，後夫凶。

Alliance: Auspicious. The original milfoil divination: Great perpetual correctness / determination, there is no trouble. The unpeaceful land comes. For the latter one ominous.<sup>93</sup>

*Li yong zhen* 利永貞 (favorable for perpetual correctness / determination)

*Gen* 艮 (Stilling), First Six line statement

艮其趾无咎利永貞。

Stilling his foot. There is no trouble. Favorable for perpetual correctness / determination.<sup>94</sup>

*Yong zhen* 永貞 (perpetual correctness / determination)

*Cui* 萃 (Gathering), Nine in the Fifth line statement

元永貞，悔亡。

Prime perpetual correctness / determination, regrets gone.<sup>95</sup>

*Xiao Guo* 小過 (Lesser Surpassing), Nine in the Fourth line statement

勿用，永貞。

Do not use, perpetual correctness / determination.<sup>96</sup>

A related phrase, “to seek perpetual correctness” (求永貞), can also be found in the *Zhouli*. The passage describing the official position of the “Grand Invocator” (*Da zhu* 大祝) says:

大祝掌六祝之辭以事鬼神示，祈福祥，求永貞。

The Grand Invocator is in charge of the formulae of the six invocations, employed to serve the spirits, to pray for blessings and good fortune and to seek perpetual correctness.<sup>97</sup>

93 *Zhouyi zhengyi*, 2.64. Translation adapted from Shaughnessy, *Unearthing the Changes*, 81. Jao remarks that this version is similar to that of the Mawangdui manuscript.

94 *Zhouyi zhengyi*, 5.251; Shaughnessy, *Unearthing the Changes*, 125. Jao points out here that the Mawangdui version has *gen* 根 instead of *gen* 艮.

95 *Zhouyi zhengyi*, 5.223; Shaughnessy, *Unearthing the Changes*, 117.

96 *Zhouyi zhengyi*, 6.290; Shaughnessy, *Unearthing the Changes*, 135.

97 *Zhouli zhushu*, 25.774.

The *Zhouli* lists six invocations (六祝) as well as six prayers (六祈):

The six invocations are: *Shun zhu* 順祝 (invocation for the natural order), *nian zhu* 年祝 (invocation for the year), *ji zhu* 吉祝 (invocation for auspiciousness), *hua zhu* 化祝 (invocation to avert natural disasters), *ruì zhu* 瑞祝 (invocation for favorable weather conditions), *ce zhu* 策祝 (written invocation to the spirits).<sup>98</sup>

The six prayers are: *lei* 類 prayer (to Shang Di), *zao* 造(灶) (stove) prayer (to ancestral spirits), *hui* 禴 prayer (to nature spirits to prevent illness and premature death), *rong* 禳 prayer (to astral and earth spirits to overcome natural disasters), *gong* 攻 prayer (by beating the drum and chanting to nature spirits) and *shui* 說 prayer (invocations to nature spirits).<sup>99</sup>

In Shang OBI we repeatedly come across the phrase “it is upon the king to invoke the [sacrificial] year” (歲惟王祝) (such as in *Heji* 25923). *Sui zhu* 歲祝 refers here to the same ritual as *nian zhu*, which is the year invocation. *Ce zhu* 策祝 means *ce zhu* 冊祝 (written invocation to the spirits). The term *gong* 攻 from the six prayers also appears in the Baoshan Chu slips; the graph *shui* 說 is also written *dui* 兌 (exchange). The “*Yi zhi yi*” commentary to the *Mawangdui Changes* explains the phrase “tying the sack there is no trouble” (括囊无咎) from the line statement to the Hexagram *Kun* 坤 (Compliant) by quoting the meaning of “not speaking” (不言) from the words of Confucius:

君子苟(苟)得其冬(終)，可必可盡也。君子言於無罪之外，不言於有罪之內，是謂重福。《易》曰「利永貞」。此川(坤)之羊(祥)說也。

If the gentleman gains his end, it can be necessary and can be finished. The gentleman speaks outside of innocence and does not speak inside of guilt; this is called doubled good fortune. It is what the *Changes* call “[favorable] for perpetual correctness / determination.” This is the auspicious *shui* prayer of *Chuan* (*Kun*) ([The Flow] Compliant).<sup>100</sup>

The term *shui* 說 in the phrase “*kun zhi yang shui*” 坤之羊說 (sic) refers to the *shui* from the six invocations (sic). Hence what we have here is a prayer asking for auspicious blessings. The “seeking for perpetual correctness,” conducted by the Grand Invocator, is therefore originally to be found in the line statements

98 *Zhouli zhushu*, 25-774.

99 *Ibid.*

100 Qiu Xigui et al., eds., *Changsha Mawangdui Hanmu jianbo*, 3:105-6. Translation adapted from Shaughnessy, *I Ching*.

of the *Changes of Zhou*. How can one attain the state of not being troubled? The key lies in “not speaking.” This is the origin of Laozi’s “practicing instructions without the use of speech” (行不言之教). If the gentleman speaks, the key is that he does so only outside of innocence. If inside of guilt, one should not arbitrarily speak. This is called doubled good fortune. If one manages to act without obtaining trouble one can arrive at auspicious blessings. This is what is meant by the *Kun* hexagram’s “tying the sack.” This way one is further able to attain perpetual rectitude / correctness. The *Kun* hexagram’s tying of the sack illustrates that one must understand the profoundness of not speaking. If one does not speak lightly one may attain a state of not being troubled and not being famed. This is what is meant by “perpetual correctness”; such a person may be said to have “doubled good fortune.” Of course, being able to secure doubled good fortune through “seeking perpetual correctness” is what everyone desires. There is no one who does not hope to obtain pleasing fruits through praying for blessings. This is the goal in praying to the spirits. Up until today, people still practice praying. It is an expression of the shared hope of the masses. Zheng Xuan glosses the term *nian zhu* in the “Da zhu” passage from the *Zhouli* as follows:

年祝，求永貞也。……永，長也。貞，正也。

The year invocation describes a pursuit for perpetual rectitude / correctness (永貞). [...] *Yong* means *chang* (long); *zhen* means *zheng* 正 (rectitude / correctness).<sup>101</sup>

Jia Gongyan’s *Zhouli yishu* says:

經「祈福祥，求永貞」，祈亦求也。今鄭云：求多福，即經「祈福祥也」。「歷年得正命」，即經「求永貞」也。

The term *qi* (praying) in the phrase: “to pray for blessings and good fortune and to seek perpetual correctness” is also a sort of seeking (求). Zheng’s formulation of “seeking for manifold blessings” corresponds to the passage “to pray for auspicious blessings” in the text of the *Zhouli*; his “to receive a correct mandate / fate year after year” paraphrases the passage “seeking for perpetual correctness.”<sup>102</sup>

101 *Zhouli zhushu*, 25.774. The first phrase in this gloss is in fact attributed to Zheng Sinong and not to Zheng Xuan.

102 *Zhouli zhushu*, 25.774.

Glossing *zhen* as *zheng* in this context does not cause any problems.

The “Jin xin” 盡心 (Exhausting the heart) chapter from the *Mengzi* says: “Following and accepting what is proper, there is nothing that is not fate / mandate” (順受其正，莫非命也).<sup>103</sup> In later Ruist discussions on *ming* 命 (fate / destiny / mandate) we encounter the theory of [a hierarchy of] the three fates headed by *zheng ming* 正命 (standard fate). The apocryphal *Xiaojing yuanshen qi* 孝經援神契 (Qi-credentials of the assisting divinities [attached to the] scripture of filial piety)<sup>104</sup> also mentions three divisions of *ming*. There is received fate (*shou ming* 受命), which is considered as good fortune (*ren qing* 任慶) (?), there is incidental or adverse fate (*zao ming* 遭命), which is considered a violent disaster (*zhe bao* 謫暴) (?), and there is consequent fate (*sui ming* 隨命), which depends on investigation (*du xing* 督行).<sup>105</sup> Received fate refers to one’s life expectancy; incidental or adverse fate means that despite doing good works, one encounters calamities; consequent fate is what one receives according to whether one’s acts are favorable or bad (quoted from Kong Yingda’s commentary on the *Liji*’s “Jifa” 祭法 [Laws of sacrifices] chapter).<sup>106</sup> The “Ming yi” 命義 (Meaning of fate) chapter in the *Lunheng* says:

《傳》曰：「說命有三：一曰正命，二曰隨命，三曰遭命。」正命謂本稟之自得吉也。

The Commentary says: “There are three explanations of fate: The first is called standard fate, the second consequent fate and the third is called incidental or adverse fate.” Standard fate refers to the case when one receives good fortune from one’s own basic endowment at birth.<sup>107</sup>

The “Qi shou” 氣壽 (Long life and vital breath) chapter states:

凡人稟命有二品，一曰所當觸值之命(此遭命也)。二曰彊弱壽夭之命(此正命也)；正命以百為數，故百歲之命，是其正也。

103 *Mengzi zhengyi*, 26.945. Whether intentionally or by mistake, Jao reverses here the order of the text, which in the transmitted version reads: “There is nothing that is not destiny / mandate, [one should] follow and accept what is proper” (莫非命也，順受其正).

104 Compare Stephan Peter Bumbacher, *Empowered Writing: Exorcistic and Apotropaic Rituals in Medieval China* (St. Petersburg: Three Pines Press, 2012), 53, for the translation of this title.

105 Cf. Lisa Raphals, “Languages of Fate: Semantic Fields in Chinese and Greek,” in *The Magnitude of Ming: Command, Allotment and Fate in Chinese Culture*, ed. Christopher Lupke, (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2005), 87–9 for these three divisions of *ming*.

106 *Liji zhengyi*, 46.1523.

107 *Lunheng jiaoshi* 論衡校釋, comp. Huang Hui 黃暉 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2018), 2.54–5.

Everyone has two sorts of inborn fates: The first is called the fate which one encounters regardless of what one does (this is the incidental or adverse fate). The second is called the fate of strength and weakness, of longevity and short life (this is the standard fate). The corresponding number of the standard fate is one hundred. Hence a life span of a hundred years is considered standard.<sup>108</sup>

From this we can infer that *zheng ming* refers to a regular (*zhengchang* 正常) fate which emerges from one's natural endowment (*bingfu* 稟賦). Hence the *Lunheng*'s formulation: "receiving good fortune on one's own account" (自得吉也). The hexagram statement from the hexagram *Qian* in the *Changes* reads:

各正性命，保合太和，乃利貞。

Everything obtains its correct inborn fate, preserving in union [the conditions of] great harmony. The result is favorable for correctness.<sup>109</sup>

The phrase "everything obtains its correct inborn fate" exactly describes the meaning of the term "standard fate." Now, the Jia commentary's intention behind the explanation of *li yong zhen* 利永貞 as obtaining standard fate (得正命) based on theories developed in the *Mengzi* and in apocryphal texts becomes evident. However, the reason why the term is preceded by the words "year after year" (*li nian* 歷年) in Zheng Xuan's annotations also has a history to it. See further the discussion below.

## 5 Receiving Heaven's Perpetual Mandate, Fixing Fate, and Employing Virtue

In order to seek Heaven's Perpetual Mandate (*tian yongming* 天永命) one has to commit oneself to venerate and uphold one's moral commitment (*jing de* 敬德). The formulation "to receive a correct mandate year after year" (歷年得正命) in Zheng's annotations bespeaks the most important theory set forth in the "Shao gao" 召誥 (Announcement of the Duke of Shao) chapter from the *Book of Documents*. Towards the end of the chapter, the "Shao gao"

108 Ibid, 1.31. The last two phrases from this quotation do not appear in the transmitted text of the *Lunheng*.

109 *Zhouyi zhengyi*, 1.8–10. This passage is actually found in the *Tuan* 彖 commentary to the hexagram *Qian*.

meticulously expounds the reason and principles leading to the Zhou’s receipt of the Heavenly Mandate:

其惟王位在德元(居德之首)，小民乃惟刑用于天下，越王顯(光明)。上下勤恤(憂)。其曰:我受天命，丕若(大順)有夏歷年，式勿替(廢)有殷歷年。欲王以小民受天永命。

If the king’s position is at the head of *de* (moral commitment), then the lesser *min* (i.e., non-Zhou polities and tribes considered as part of the ecumene)<sup>110</sup> will imitate him throughout All-under-Heaven and the King will thus become illustrious. Let above and below labor with anxious care, saying: ‘We have received the Mandate of Heaven, may it grandly equal the series of years of Xia and not miss the series of years of Yin. Would that the king receives Heaven’s perpetual mandate with and through [the help of] his lesser peers.<sup>111</sup>

Earlier, the same text mentions several times the pressing need to survey and learn from the examples of Xia and Yin:

- (1) 我不敢知曰，有夏服天命，惟有歷年。

I do not presume to know and say, “[the rulers of] Xia were to hold the Mandate of Heaven just for (so many) years.”

我不敢知曰，不其延。惟不敬厥德，乃早墜厥命。

Nor do I presume to know and say, “it could not be prolonged.” It was that that they did not reverently attend to their moral commitment, and so they prematurely dropped their mandate.

- (2) 我不敢知曰，有殷受天命，惟有歷年。

(Similarly), I do not presume to know and say, “[the rulers of] Yin were to hold the Mandate of Heaven just for (so many) years.”

我不敢知曰，不其延。惟不敬厥德，乃早墜厥命。

Nor do I presume to know and say, “it could not be prolonged.” It was that that they did not reverently attend to their moral commitment, and so they prematurely dropped their mandate.<sup>112</sup>

These two passages employ a contrastive exposition to explain how the two ruling houses of Xia and Yin prematurely lost their mandate due to failure in

110 For this interpretation of the term *min* 民, see my “The Term *min* 民 as a Political Concept in Western Zhou Thought,” *Bulletin of the Jao Tsung-iAcademy of Sinology* 4 (2017): 111–35.

111 *Shangshu zhengyi*, 15.472–4.

112 *Shangshu zhengyi*, 15.471.

upholding their moral commitments. This is what is meant by “Zhou surveyed the two [past] dynasties” (周監於二代). The text continues to explain:

今天其命哲，命吉凶，命歷年；知今我初服，宅新邑。肆惟王其疾敬德？王其德之用，祈天永命。

Now Heaven endows with wisdom, it endows with good or bad fortune, it endows with a [longer or shorter] course of years. We know [only] that now we begin to assume our duties, taking up residence in this new settlement. May the king be quick to reverently attend to his moral obligations. When the king fulfills his moral commitment, he may then pray to Heaven for a perpetual mandate.<sup>113</sup>

The Kong commentary says:

今天制此三命，惟仁所修。修敬德則有智、則常吉、則歷年；（反之）為不敬德，則愚、凶、不長。雖說之，其實在人。

As for the three endowments that Heaven administers, it is up to man to cultivate them. If one practices adherence towards one's moral obligations one will attain wisdom, constant auspiciousness, and a long course of years. If (on the contrary) one does not adhere to one's moral obligations, the result will be ignorance, inauspiciousness, and brevity [of years]. Although these are ascribed to Heaven, their realization lies within the hands of man.<sup>114</sup>

Accordingly, the so-called three endowments include (1) wisdom and ignorance, (2) auspiciousness and inauspiciousness, and (3) a long and a short course of years respectively. Although all three are decreed by Heaven, control over them lies in the hands of man. If man can live up to his moral commitments, he may pray to Heaven for a prolonged mandate, causing his receipt [of the mandate] to last many years. (Otherwise, man necessarily loses his mandate as Heaven will disapprove of him). Hence [Zhou] sought “to proceed along the path that brought success for the Xia and the Yin” (順[若]行夏、殷所以成功之道). Only if “the King's position is at the head of *de* and above and below labor with anxious care,” can the pleasing outcome of “[successfully] praying to Heaven for a perpetual mandate” be achieved.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid, 15.472.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid, 15.473.

The logic of “receiving Heaven’s Perpetual Mandate” (受天永命), pronounced in the “Shao gao” chapter, in fact derives from the Yin period. The “Pan Geng” chapter from the *Documents* says:

先王有服，恪謹天命……今不承于古，罔知天之斷命，矧曰其克從先王之烈。若顛木之有由蘖，天其永我命于茲新邑。

In dealing with their tasks, the former kings reverently attended to the commands of Heaven [...] If we do not continue this time-proven (practice), then we are ignorant of the fact that Heaven will cut off our mandate; how much less shall we be able to follow up the deeds of the former kings! Just as the stump of a fallen tree grows new sprouts and shoots, so Heaven will perpetuate our mandate in this new settlement.<sup>115</sup>

The “Gaozong rongri” 高宗彤日 (Day of the Rong-sacrifice to Gaozong) chapter relates:

天監下民，典厥義。降年有永有不永，非天天民，民中絕命。

When Heaven inspects man’s (communities) below, it takes as its standard the propriety (of their conduct), and it bestows on them perpetual or finite (lifespans accordingly). It is not Heaven that prematurely ends men’s lives; it is the (communities of) man themselves who terminate their lives in the middle.<sup>116</sup>

In the OBI we often come across prognostications pertaining to whether or not (Di or the royal ancestors) will send down perpetuity (*jiang yong* 降永). OBI passages such as, “crack-making on *geng-chen* day: X will not send down perpetuity” (庚辰卜:不降永) (*Heji* 34711) or “*ji-wei* day [...] will perhaps send down perpetuity [...] will not send down perpetuity” (己未...其降永...不降永) (*Tunman* 3594), are sufficient to verify the account in the “Gaozong rongri” chapter. What is referred to as “to terminate (their) lives” (*jue ming* 絕命) in the latter is conterminous with the phrase “to cut off (our) mandate” (*duan ming* 斷命) in the “Pan Geng” chapter. Both variants are antonyms of the notion of “perpetual mandate / lifespan” (*yong ming* 永命).

The term *yong ming* also features prominently in Western Zhou bronze inscriptions. Consider for instance the following passages:

<sup>115</sup> Ibid, 9.268.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid, 10.304.

用祿（祿）壽句永令（命）。

[May I use these bells] to pray for old age and a perpetual lifespan / mandate.<sup>117</sup>

縮鞶（綽）永令（命），萬年無疆（疆）。

[May I use this cauldron to pray for a] rich perpetual mandate / lifespan and ten thousand years without end.<sup>118</sup>

There is an OBI fragment from the time of King Wu Ding, the meaning of which is not entirely clear. The text reads:

.....于受令。

[...] from the conferrer of lifespans / mandates.<sup>119</sup>

句舌方于受令。

Beg Gong Fang from the conferrer of lifespans / mandates.

貞:于受令句。

Testing: Beg with the conferrer of lifespans / mandates. (HJ 6155)

Begging Gong Fang and mandate-conferring Heaven,<sup>120</sup> the phrase *yu shou ling* 于受令 appears here altogether three times. It may be read as to confer lifespans / mandates (*shou ming* 受命). Perhaps it refers specifically to “Heaven’s” conferral of lifespans / mandates. Since only Heaven possesses the authority to

117 Xing *zhong* 癩鐘 I (Xing’s bell I), JC 246.

118 Shi Bo Shuofu *ding* 史伯碩父鼎 (Scribe Bo Shuofu’s cauldron), JC 2777.

119 In this and the following two passages Jao reads *shou* 受, “to receive” as *shou* 授, “to give to,” “to confer.” My rendering of *shou ming* 受命 as the agent who confers lifespans / mandates follows Jao’s discussion below.

120 The meaning of this phrase, which in the original reads 「句求舌方，而于受命之天」, is not quite clear to me. Moreover, Jao’s conventional reading of *gai* 匄 as *gaiqiu* 匄求 (*qiu* 乞求), “to beg for,” does not seem to fit the context very well. As Gong Fang names a tribe considered as enemies by the Shang, the possible alternative meaning of *gai* as “to attack” (see *Kanji Shichū* 漢字私註, accessed October 24, 2021, <https://www.hiemalis.org/~acy/mnc/2680301m1d16.html>.) or to harm would make more sense to me here.

bestow lifespans / mandates, the agent of the verb-object phrase *shou ming* can only be Heaven.<sup>121</sup> The third part of the “Fei ming” 非命 (Against fatalism) chapter in the *Mozi* 墨子 relates: “In former times, Jie and Zhou held to ‘a belief in Heaven’s Mandate’ and acted accordingly” (昔桀、紂執「有命」而行).<sup>122</sup> It follows that *shou ming* must be understood as a substitute term for Heaven: [the one who] confers lifespans / mandates is conterminous with Heaven. This suffices to show that the term *ling* 令 in the OBI passage “*qiu Gongfang yu shouming*” (句舌方于受令) stands for “*you ming*” 有命 ([Heaven’s] Mandate).<sup>123</sup>

In the *Book of Documents* as well as in bronze inscriptions, the “Heavenly Mandate” (*tian ming* 天命) is also referred to as the “Great Charge” (*da ming* 大命):

明大命于妹邦。

Make clearly known the great charge in the polity of Mei.<sup>124</sup>

肆文王受茲□□[大令(命)]。

Thereupon King Wen received this [Great Charge].<sup>125</sup>

The inscription from the Western Zhou Hu *gui* 獸簋 (Hu’s tureen) has “Great Auspicious Charge” (*da lu ming* 大魯命). *Lu* 魯 glosses here as *jia* 嘉, “excellent,” “auspicious.” The graph 綸 [in the following quote] is a complex variant form of *ming* 命:

121 The seemingly misplaced phrase “receiving Heaven’s Great ‘Charge’” (受天有大「命」) preceding the statement “only Heaven possesses the authority to bestow commands [...]” (惟天纔有受命的權威...) in the original has been omitted in the English translation.

122 Sun Yirang 孫詒讓, *Mozi jianqu* 墨子閒詁, punc. and coll. Sun Qizhi 孫啟治 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2018), 9.280. It is generally agreed upon that what *Mozi* is criticizing in this chapter is the idea of fate or fatalism. Hence, in most translations of the *Mozi* the above quoted passage reads: “In former times, Jie [and Zhou] held to a belief in fate and acted accordingly.” From the discussion below, however, it becomes clear that Jao understands the term *ming* here to refer to the notion of the Heavenly Mandate and not to an idea of fate.

123 In the original the phrase reads 「足證卜辭『句舌方于受令』之即指『有命』」。 I suspect that perhaps due to an editorial mistake the object behind the subordination marker *zhi* 之, “from” or “of,” has been omitted, otherwise the phrase would make no sense. Judging from the context I assume the missing object is *ling* 令 (the early written form of *ming* 命).

124 “Jiu gao” 酒誥 (Announcement on Wine), *Shangshu zhengyi*, 14.440.

125 He *zun* 兕尊 (He’s goblet), *JC* 6014.

馱乍(作)甯彝寶殿(簋)，用康惠朕(朕)皇文刺(烈)且(祖)考，其各(格)前文人，其瀕才(在)帝廷陟降，鬻(申)鬻(恪)皇上帝大魯令，用綸保我家、朕(朕)立(位)、馱身。

I, Hu, have made this sacrificial vessel, this precious *gui*-tureen, to sustain with grace my august forebears, patterned and bright. May it welcome down the former cultured men; may they descend and rise to the court of Di, reverently preserving great august Di's greatly auspicious charge, using it to protect well my house, my throne, and my person.<sup>126</sup>

The last part of the “Fei ming” chapter in the *Mozi* quotes the words of the “Tai shi” 太誓 (Great oath) saying:

上帝不順，祝降其喪，惟我有周，受之大帝。

Di on High was not content and therefore sent down calamities. Our [house of] Zhou received it (i.e., the mandate) from the Great Di.<sup>127</sup>

When the Zhou people replaced the Yin as rulers over man, they proclaimed for themselves to have received a mandate from Heaven. So, for instance, in the following passages found in Western Zhou bronze inscriptions:

丕顯文武受命。

Greatly illustrious [Kings] Wen and Wu received [Heaven's] Mandate.<sup>128</sup>

丕顯玟(文)王受天有大令。在珣(武)王嗣玟(文)作邦。

Greatly manifest King Wen received Heaven's Great Charge. At the time King Wu succeeded King Wen, he created the [Zhou] polity.<sup>129</sup>

Based on these and similar epigraphic statements, some scholars hold that the conception of Heaven and the Heavenly Mandate was purely a Zhou invention. I believe it is correct to assume that the Zhou people emphasized the

126 Translation adapted from Robert Eno, “Inscriptional Records of the Western Zhou,” last modified January 2017, [http://www.iub.edu/~g380/3.10-WZhou\\_Bronzes-2010.pdf](http://www.iub.edu/~g380/3.10-WZhou_Bronzes-2010.pdf).

127 *Mozi jiangou*, 9.281–2.

128 Jao gives the name of the carrier of this inscription as Wu *gui* 珣簋 (Wu's tureen), however it should be Xun *gui* 詢簋 (Xun's tureen), *JC* 4321.

129 Yu *ding* 孟鼎 (Yu's cauldron), *JC* 2837.

notion of Heaven, yet unless one accepts the three “Pan Geng” chapters to be products of Zhou historiogenesis, it would be very difficult to maintain that they are original Zhou creations.

The third among the five felicities (*wu fu* 五福) mentioned in the “Hong fan” chapter is called “ease and tranquility” (*kang ning* 康寧); the fourth is called the “cultivation of a fine virtue” (*you hao de* 攸好德); and the fifth, “fulfilling one’s life / mandate to the end” (*zhong ming* 終命). The phrase *zhong ming* also appears in the inscription from the Jing Hou *gui* 井侯簋 (Marquis of Jing’s tureen):<sup>130</sup>

克奔走上下帝，無（撫）夙（終）命于有周。

[May I] serve well the deities above and below and nourish a full life / mandate to the end in Zhou.

Being unable to fulfil one’s life / mandate all the way through the end is called to drop one’s mandate (*zhui ming* 墜命), as related in the Yu ding inscription:

我聞殷述（墜）令（命）。

I have heard that Yin has dropped its mandate.

The “Pan Geng” chapter refers to this as “to cut off / being cut off from one’s life / mandate” (*duan ming* 斷命),<sup>131</sup> whereas the “Gaozong rongri” chapter calls it “to terminate one’s life / mandate” (*jue ming* 絕命).<sup>132</sup> The term *zhong ming*, moreover, is synonymous with *yong ming* 永命 “perpetual life / mandate.”

The Great Charge lies at the center of the Zhou people’s discursive claim to rightfully replace the Yin at the head of the Tianxia ecumene. Judging from the many instances of the phrase *jiang yong* 降永, “to send down perpetuity,” in the *Shangshu*’s 尚書 (Documents of Shang) “Pan Geng” chapter as well as in the OBI, it becomes evident that the focus on “*ming*” (as heavenly ordained lifespan / mandate [tr. note]) did not just originate with the advent of the Zhou. The *Zhouli*’s idea of “seeking perpetual correctness” (求永貞) and the “Pan Geng’s” notion of “reverently attending to the commands of Heaven” (恪謹天命) are very likely closely related to each other. Otherwise, the “Shao

130 JC 4241.

131 *Shangshu Zhengyi*, 9.268.

132 *Ibid.*, 10.304.

gao's" admonishment wouldn't have been so easily accepted by both the Yin and the Zhou, let alone would it have generated such profound persuasiveness.

Let us take another look at the three parts of the "Fei ming" chapter in the *Mozi*. These passages ridicule the Ruist belief in the existence of fate (or the Heavenly Mandate in Jao's understanding [tr. note]) which Mozi considers as harmful. He proclaims that those who insist on the existence of fate (or the Heavenly Mandate) are not *ren* 仁, (humane / benevolent). The respective passages in the *Mozi* cite the following lost passages from different canonical texts:

《禹之總德》有之曰：「允不著，惟天民不而葆，既防凶心，天加之咎，不慎厥德，天命焉葆？」

There is a saying in the "Yu zhi zong de" (Collected virtues of Yu): "If promises are not fulfilled, Heaven and the people will not be able to protect one. If one gives free rein to a cruel heart, Heaven will send down disasters. If one does not carefully cultivate one's virtue, how can Heaven's Mandate protect one?"

《仲虺之告》曰：「我聞有夏，人矯天命于下，帝式是增(憎)，用爽厥師。」

The "Zhong Hui zhi gao" (Announcement of Zhong Hui) says: "I have heard that [the last ruler of] Xia feigned the Mandate of Heaven and issued forth orders to his subjects. Di thereupon resented him and destroyed his armies."<sup>133</sup>

《太誓》之言也，於《太子發》曰：「惡乎君子！天有顯德，其行甚章，為鑑不遠，在彼殷王。謂人有命，謂敬不可行，謂祭無益，謂暴無傷，上帝不常，九有以亡，上帝不順，祝降其喪，惟我有周，受之大帝。」

133 *Mozi jianqu*, 9.280. Jao remarks here that in the transmitted *Book of Documents* this passage reads:

夏王有罪，矯誣上天，以布命于下。帝用不臧，式商受命，用爽厥師。

The king of Xia was an offender, falsely and calumniously alleging the sanction of supreme Heaven to spread his commands down below. On this account Di viewed him with disapprobation and chose Shang to receive his appointment, [ordering them] to straightforward employ their troops [against Xia]. (*Shangshu zhengyi*, 8.234. Translation adapted from Legge, *The Shoo King*, 179).

As to the words of the *Great oath*, the *Taizi Fa*, says: “Ah princes! Heaven has manifest virtue. Its actions are clear. It made a ‘mirror’ near at hand and that was the Yin king. He claimed each man had his own fate, reverence should not be practiced, sacrifices were of no avail, and cruelty could do no harm. Di on High was not pleased, and the Nine Regions met with destruction. Di was not content, and he sent down calamities. It was our house of Zhou that [henceforth] received it (i.e., the mandate) from the great Di.”<sup>134</sup>

The word *bao* 葆 here is coterminous with *bao* 保 (protect, safeguard) as it appears in the phrase “[Heaven] watched over me and protected me (?)” (臨保我不同) from the Yu *ding* inscription,<sup>135</sup> as well as in “using the mandate to protect well my house” (用綸保我家) from the Hu *gui* inscription. The origins of this idea cannot but predate the Zhou period. As Mozi proclaims, Jie held to a belief in the existence of Heaven’s Mandate and acted accordingly; Tang 湯 rejected it and composed the *Announcement of Zhong Hui*. Zhou 紂 held on to a belief in the existence of Heaven’s Mandate and acted accordingly; King Wu rejected it by composing the *Great oath* and the *Taizi Fa*. What Jie and Zhou held on to might have been a written announcement of some kind, proclaiming their receipt of the Heavenly Mandate. This means that the rulers of both Xia and Yin had persuaded themselves that the Heavenly Mandate indeed existed and that they were in possession of it. In any case, the origins of the theory concerning the Mandate of Heaven must reach back far into antiquity. What Mozi rejected about this idea was the pretentious appropriation of the Heavenly Mandate by cruel rulers. He states:

在於商、夏之詩書曰：『命者暴王作之。』且今天下之士君子，將欲辯是非利害之故，當天有命者，不可不疾非也。」孰有命者，此天下之厚害也，是故子墨子非〔之〕也。

It is said in the *Songs* and the *Documents* of Shang and Xia: “The Mandate is the creation of evil kings. Moreover, for gentlemen and rulers of the present age who wish to distinguish the causes of right and wrong and of

134 *Mozi jiangqu*, 9.280–2. The English translation of all three passages from the *Mozi* above has been adapted from Ian Johnston, trans., *The Mozi: A Complete Translation* (Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 2010), 343–5.

135 I am unable to make sense of the phrase 「臨保我不同」, nor does it appear in the Yu *ding* inscription, where we find the following statement instead: “Heaven watched over his son and greatly protected our former kings [in their possession of] the four quarters” (天異(=惟)臨子，灑(廢=大)保先王，□有四方).

benefit and harm, it is proper that a belief in the Mandate of Heaven cannot but be resolutely rejected.” To hold that there is a Mandate is of great harm to the Tianxia ecumene, which is why Master Mozi rejected it.<sup>136</sup>

Following the words of Mozi, we can no longer simply assume that the notion of the Heavenly Mandate was a genuine Zhou innovation.

## 6 The Meaning of “*de yuan*” (德元)

What conditions need to be fulfilled before one can pray for Heaven’s perpetual Mandate? Whether or not one receives Heaven’s support depends on one’s ability to venerate and uphold one’s moral commitment. Political leaders need to position themselves at the head of [a state’s] moral commitment (德元), as stated in the “Yao dian” chapter in the *Documents*: “Honest commitment to one’s moral obligations stands truly at the beginning” (惇德允元).<sup>137</sup> The notion of *de yuan* 德元 implies that if a ruler puts himself in a position at the head or origin of [a state’s] moral commitment, he will be able to cause his affiliates across all ranks to be anxious and diligent so that the [task of fulfilling the Heavenly Mandate] can be accomplished. For this to succeed, even the common people will need to make their bright moral commitment manifest.

There is a plethora of principles that sustain the notion of “praying for blessings and good fortune and seeking for perpetual correctness” (祈福祥，求永貞). It is crucial to be quick to “venerate and uphold one’s moral commitment” (敬德), only then can one “pray to Heaven and [obtain a] perpetual mandate” (祈天、永命), which will make one’s rulership last for a long period of time. The three sorts of *ming* mentioned in the “Shao gao” chapter are “the endowment with wisdom, with good or bad fortune, and the endowment with a [longer or shorter] course of years” (命哲，命吉凶，命歷年). Their meanings have later been extended by the Ruists to denote “standard fate” (正命), “adverse fate” (遭命) and “consequent fate” (隨命) respectively. The implications of the latter set are somewhat different from that of the former:

One pertains to the question of wisdom, it divides human nature into wise on top, and ignorant down below.

<sup>136</sup> *Mozi jiangou*, 9.277.

<sup>137</sup> *Shangshu zhengyi*, 3.85. This sentence actually occurs in the “Shun dian” 舜典 (Canon of Shun) and not in the “Yao dian.”

One relates to the auspiciousness and inauspiciousness of one's encounters. This is what Wang Chong describes as "the fate which one encounters regardless of what one does" (觸值之命).<sup>138</sup>

One addresses the question of a longer or shorter course of years. This should be similar to what is called correct mandate / fate (正命).

A correct mandate / fate is also referred to as *ding ming* 定命 (fixed mandate / fate). For the thirteenth year of the reign of Patriarch Cheng 成 (577 BC), the *Zuozhuan* cites Liu Patriarch Kang 劉康公 as saying:

民受天地之中以生，所謂命也。是以有動作禮義威儀之則，以定命也。能者養之以福，不能者敗以取禍。

Humans are born of the spirit of central harmony between heaven and earth, and this is what is called their mandate. That is why there are models for action and movement, ritual propriety and duty, majesty and bearing for securing this mandate. The able ones nurture this mandate and find their way to good fortune; the feckless ones ruin this mandate and bring on disaster.

是故君子勤禮，小人盡力。勤禮莫如致敬，盡力莫如敦篤。敬在養神，篤在守業。

That is why noble men are assiduous in fulfilling ritual propriety, while common men exert themselves to the utmost in physical labor. In being assiduous in fulfilling ritual propriety, there is nothing equal to offering reverence. In exerting oneself to the utmost in physical labor, there is nothing equal to steady dedication. Reverence lies in nurturing the spirits; dedication lies in keeping to one's vocation.

國之大事，在祀與戎。祀有執爓，戎有受脤，神之節也。

The great affairs of the domain lie with sacrifice and warfare. With sacrifices, there is the ritual of distributing roasted sacrificial meat; with warfare, there is the ritual of receiving sacrificial meat. These are the critical junctures in serving the spirits.<sup>139</sup>

<sup>138</sup> *Lunheng jiaoshi*, 1.31.

<sup>139</sup> *Zuo*, Cheng 13.2, 860–1. The English translation of this passage follows with minor amendments that of Durrant, Li, and Schaberg, trans., *Zuo Tradition*, 803. Jao explains here that

The meaning behind the phrase “seeking perpetual correctness” (求永貞) is “to [try to] perpetually achieve one’s correct [conduct]” (永得其正). The necessary precondition for this endeavor is to “fulfill one’s moral commitments” (德之用). Statements such as “being able to make manifest one’s great *de*” (克明俊德)<sup>140</sup> in the “Yao dian,” or “to make manifest one’s brilliant *de*” (明明德) in the *Daxue* 大學 (Great learning)<sup>141</sup> all evolved from this theory. Rectifying one’s mandate and the notion of making manifest / venerate and uphold one’s moral commitment come down to one and the same thing.

The advocacy of *de* developed into the theory of *de yuan* during the Western Zhou period. Texts from bronze inscriptions repeatedly stress the importance of the term *de*. Foremost among them ranks the Shi Zai *ding* 師鬲鼎 (Commander Zai’s cauldron) inscription:<sup>142</sup>

唯王八祀正月，辰才(在)丁卯。王曰：師鬲！女(汝)克蠱(蓋=進)乃身，臣朕皇考穆王。用乃孔德(孫(遜)屯(純)，乃用心引(矧)正乃辟安德，夷(助)余小子肇(肇)盥(淑)先王德。

It was in the King’s eighth year, in the first month at *ding-mao* day. The King spoke: “Commander Zai! You were able to offer up yourself in the service of my August Deceased Father King Mu. Because your great *de* is integer, you were able to employ your heart and to make upright and settle the *de* of your ruler as well, assisting me, the young heir, in succeeding to match the former Kings’ *de*.”

易(賜)女(汝)玄袞黼(黼)屯(純)、赤市、朱纁、緼(鑿)旂、大師金雁(鷹)、攸(鑿)勒。用井(型)乃聖且(祖)考隣(鄰)明(令)辟前王，事余一人。

“I present you with a dark ceremonial robe with embroidered hem, a red apron, a vermilion jade pendant, a banner hung with bells, a grand commander’s breast plate of bronze, and a bridle adorned with bronze. Use

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the bestowal of sacrificial meat to the participants of the rituals as well as to the common people all amount to gifts the spirits made to man.

140 *Shangshu zhengyi*, 2.31.

141 *Liji zhengyi*, 60.1859.

142 *JC* 2830. Jao quotes this inscription in highly abbreviated form. For the convenience of the reader, I have decided to give the inscription here in full length. For extensive notes on my philological choices, see my “Command and Commitment: Terms of Kingship in Western Zhou Bronze Inscriptions and in the *Book of Documents*” (Ph.D. Diss., University of Edinburgh, 2019), 302–6.

these to emulate your sage forbears' brightly manifest and exhaustive service to the former Kings, and so serve me, the solitary man.”

飗拜稽首，休白(伯)大師(夷)刪(任)飗臣皇辟。天子亦弗諱(忘)公上父(胡)德。飗蔑曆白(伯)大師:不(丕)自乍(作)小子，夙夕專(薄)由先且(祖)刺(烈)德，用臣皇辟。白(伯)亦克(纂)由先且(祖)竈(蠱)，孫子一(刪)皇辟(懿)德，用保王身。

Zai bowed prostrate. The retiring elder Grand Commander put forward Zai to serve his august ruler. Nor did the Son of Heaven forget the far reaching *de* of Patriarch Shangfu. Zai praised the valor of the Grand Commander. “I myself am merely a small child. Reverently day and night I strive to follow the example of my forebears' bright *de* in serving my august ruler. The elder Grand Commander as well was truly able to continue his forebears' affairs. Together their descendants share in the burden of their august ruler's exclusive and enduring *de*-commitment, protecting the person of the King.”

飗敢(釐)王，卑(俾)天子(萬)年。(東=範) (隸=圍)白(伯)大師武(=迹)臣保天子，用(厥)刺(烈)且(祖)口(節)德。

“I, Zai, dare to pray for the King's good fortune; may the Son of Heaven be granted ten thousand years! I, Zai, shall follow the scope and pattern of the elder Grand Commander in serving and protecting the Son of Heaven; in this, I shall follow my bright forebears' correct *de*.”

See also the beginning of the text from the Qiang *pan* 牆盤 (Qiang's basin) inscription:<sup>143</sup>

古文王初(戾)獻(和)于政，上帝降(懿)德大(屏)。

In antiquity, when King Wen first brought stability and harmony into the affairs of his government, Di on High sent down brilliant *de* and great protection.

The above cited inscriptions modify the term *de* by combining it with various attributes, resulting in a number of bound forms, including *kong de* 孔德 (great *de*), *lie de* 刺(烈)德 (bright *de*), *jie de* 口(節)德 (correct *de*), *yi de*

143 JC 10175.

慤(懿)德 (brilliant *de*) and so on. *Kong de* appears also in the *Daodejing* 道德經 (Classic of the Way and of Virtue) in the phrase “the behavior of the great *de*” (孔德之容).<sup>144</sup> 節德 stands for *jie de* 節德. The “Ai Gong wen” 哀公問 (Questions of Patriarch Ai) chapter in the *Liji* has: “to make their clothes fit the correct category” (節醜其衣服).<sup>145</sup> The *shu* 疏 commentary explains: “*Jie* 節 means *zheng* 正 (correct). *Chou* 醜 means *lei* 類 (kind, category).”<sup>146</sup> For the seventh year of Patriarch Wen 文 (619 BC), the *Zuozhuan* notes: “Correcting *de*, using things advantageously, and enriching livelihood are the three official affairs.” (正德，利用，厚生，謂之三事).<sup>147</sup> Hence the first of the three official affairs is to “correct one’s *de*.”

In the “Shao gao” we read: “When the king fulfills his moral commitment, he may pray to Heaven for a perpetual mandate” (王其德之用，祈天永命).<sup>148</sup> Therefore, we know that fulfilling one’s moral obligations is what is most favorable for achieving perpetual correctness. When the king positions himself at the head of [his state’s] moral obligations, then this called “*de yuan*.” The many officials also need to “accept and protect the awesome decree” (保受威令) and “make manifest their moral commitment” (明德) in order to be able to provide the king with what is necessary to successfully pray to Heaven for a perpetual mandate. The entire text serves as a constant reminder for the house of Zhou to honor their moral commitment. As such it constitutes the teachings of Zhou. The reason why Confucius put prayers and divinations last, attaching greater importance to virtue and propriety instead, is because he was carrying on the lessons of the Zhou people. Although Confucius belonged to the Yin people, he himself proclaimed: “I follow Zhou” (吾從周).<sup>149</sup> His philosophy amply shows this inclination.

## 7 Concluding Remarks: A Philological Philosophy

The present article brings together insights I have gained over the course of several decades of meticulous philological study of the classics and related epigraphic material. I have long since planned to write these down in order to seek

144 *Laozi Daodejing zhu jiaoshi* 老子道德經注校釋, coll. and annot. Lou Yulie 樓宇烈 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2018), 21.52.

145 *Liji zhengyi*, 50.1604.

146 *Ibid*, 50.1605.

147 *Zuo*, Wen 7.2, 564. The English translation of this passage follows Durrant, Li, and Schaberg, trans., *Zuo Tradition*, 507.

148 *Shangshu zhengyi*, 15.472.

149 *Lunyu jishi*, 6.182.

the opinion and criticism of learned colleagues. The idea of “a new epoch of great revival” (貞下起元) in Feng Youlan’s 馮友蘭 (1895–1990) *Zhenyuan sanshu* 貞元三書 (Three books of the Great Revival)<sup>150</sup> finds its origins in the concept of the four virtues, *yuan* 元 (great beginning), *heng* 亨 (unobstructed development), *li* 利 (harmonious gain) and *zhen* 貞 (correct firmness), as they are laid out in the *Changes’ Wenyan* commentary to the hexagram *Qian*. Ancient man had to adjust to the four seasons. In this context, *zhen* belongs to the season of winter.<sup>151</sup> The *Yinshu* manuscript relates how Pengzu spoke about birth, growing, harvest and storing. In proceeding from winter to spring, ancient man became aware of the pattern of a new beginning coming after each period of correctness, where each virtue brings forth another. Zhu Xi thus states: “If not *zhen*, then there is nothing to bring forth *yuan*” (不貞則無以為元).<sup>152</sup> With the discovery of Shang 〇BI numerous instances of the graph *zhen* 貞 came to light, which scholars subsequently glossed as “to ask,” while at the same time abandoning the theory of the four virtues. They overlooked the fact that *zhen* should be interpreted in terms of *zheng* 正 (correct / rectitude) and that “great beginning” is the first and chief quality of goodness (善之長), also referred to as the “beginning of virtue or moral commitment” (德元) in the “Shao gao” chapter.<sup>153</sup> From the Zhou people’s practice of perpetuating this wisdom in important official documents, as well as from the newly excavated *Mu He* commentary to the *Changes*, where we find Confucius being quoted as saying: “unobstructed development is the convergence of goodness” (亨者嘉好之會也),<sup>154</sup> we know the notion of the four virtues is an old pre-Qin concept. Shang Binghe’s 尚秉和 (1870–1950) assumption that the eight phrases in the *Wenyan* commentary present the earliest commentarial literature on the *Changes* comes close to the truth.

We now know that *zhen* 貞 glosses as *zheng* 正, as well as that these two graphs were used interchangeably. Both the Yin and the Zhou people thought it important to determine the correct way to proceed with their endeavors. In seeking perpetual correctness, they resorted to plastromancy to create a communication channel between man and spirits. The “Da Yu mo” chapter says that one needs to first make up one’s mind and then refer (one’s decision) to the great turtle. Human counsels and spirit counsels need to be conducted

150 See Yin Ding 殷鼎, *Feng Youlan* 馮友蘭 (Taipei: Dong da chuban, 1991), 47–8 for the historical implications of this title.

151 Cf. Shang Binghe 尚秉和, *Zhouyi Shangshixue* 周易尚氏學 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1980), 27.

152 *Zhuzi yulei*, 68.27b, rpt. in *Sikuquanshu*, 701: 392.

153 *Shangshu zhengyi*, 15.472.

154 Qiu Xigui et al., eds., *Changsha Mawangdui Hanmu jianbo jicheng*, 3:134.

in tandem in order for the consultations and deliberations to all be of one accord. The account in the “Da Yu mo” may be taken as proof that what we find described in the “Hong fan” chapter is not fabricated. What the phrase “the turtle determined it” (維龜正之) from the *Songs* emphasizes is how to arrive at [the ideal of] correctness through divination and how to establish the correct way to proceed with the help of the numinous turtle. The usage of *zhen* as to ask must tally with the notion of [determining what is] correct. The act of pyromancy merely functions as a means within this process. That the Yin people introduced each act of plastromancy with the word *zhen* precisely shows the dignity of “determining a matter through the turtle” and the proper goal of possessing virtue. *Zhen* 貞 may be regarded as the shared order which allowed humans and spirits to communicate with each other. The ability to maintain firm correctness resulted in the possession of a gracious mandate, thus the Western Zhou people continued to adhere to the Yin people’s old customs.

In the “Dao zhu” 禱祝 (Prayer invocator) chapter from the *Zhouli*, the quest for “favorable perpetual correctness” (利永貞) is linked to the question of a “[longer or shorter] course of years” (歷年) and of a “correct fate / mandate” (正命), an issue which has its origins in the “Shao gao” chapter from the *Book of Documents* and in Liu Patriarch Kang’s exposition on the notion of a “fixed fate / mandate” (定命). There is no way to arrive at the term’s true explanation if one does not master all of the Classics. If one wants to elucidate the connotations of *zhen* by looking at the phrase “the turtle determined it” in the *Wenwang you sheng* ode from the *Songs*, one needs take into consideration also the *Documents*, the *Li* 禮 (Ritual classics), the *Chunqiu* 春秋 (Spring and Autumn Annals) and the *Zuo zhuan*, as well as the evidence from OBI, bronze inscriptions and from the newly excavated Chu manuscripts, to arrive at a thorough interpretation. Moreover, in order to come to the understanding that *zhen* means *zheng*, one has to rely mainly on the help of philology. My friend Yang Liansheng 楊聯陞 (1914–1990) once advocated the idea of a “philological historiography.” I think we should rather promote the method of a “philological philosophy.” The verification and interpretation of a number of historical concepts cannot be accomplished without applying the methods of philology. The meaning of *zhen* is a perfect example of this.

It is my opinion that the study of ancient Chinese philosophy should free itself from two sorts of obstacles: The first is the obstacle posed by the adherence to Western conventions; the second obstacle is the tendency of overtly doubting antiquity. The fountainhead of Eastern thought grew out of and flourished on its own native ground and brought forth its own pattern. There is no need to make it fit into Western models. When it comes to the question of how to deal with textual sources as well as with the language of the Classics, it

is not enough to merely clarify their literal import, one needs to further comprehend the texts' hidden layers of meaning and establish links between synonyms in the languages employed across related Classics. The *Old Script Book of Documents* contains numerous quintessential ideas that still await systematic collation. The lost writings quoted in the *Mozi* are of particular concern in this respect. The task of collating these textual variants should not be treated lightly, neither should those instances be regarded as forgeries and therefore be ignored. The present study makes use of the “Da Yu mo” and “Yu zhi zong de” chapters to explain the terms *bi zhi* 蔽志 (to fix one's determination) and *xi zhi* 徯志 (to make one's intentions clear), as well as the meaning of *she zhong nai xin* 設中于乃心 (to conform to something in one's heart), relating them to the opposition against tyrants' attempts to change Heaven's Mandate in the “Fei ming” chapter of the *Mozi*. This then serves to prove that the concept of the Heavenly Mandate betrays a long history and early origin and was certainly not just established by the Zhou people. Ancient written records are still very useful in this regard.

# Moral Speculation and the Conception of a Sky God

The present study should be seen as an experiment.<sup>1</sup> Although its title reads “Moral Speculation and the Conception of a Sky God,” the range of topics it touches upon is significantly broader. The central issue it addresses may perhaps best be described in terms of the development “from Religion to Philosophy” in ancient Chinese thought.<sup>2</sup> Among the relevant works inquiring into the origins of Western speculation, F. M. Cornford’s study deserves mentioning. From the scattered literary records of Ancient Greece, he manages to identify a common thread, pointing out two traditions, a scientific one and a mystical one, that underlie the formation of Western thought. He furthermore traces the origins of such important concepts as Nature, God, and the Soul. In these respects, his book may serve as a reference for our present endeavor. At some points it even mentions materials related to Chinese *yin-yang* thought.<sup>3</sup> As we are concerned here with the investigation into similar matters, we as well, from time to time, must resort to Western sources for the sake of comparison. In view of certain abstract problems, this method may facilitate our understanding and grasping of key issues. Yet in using these sources one needs to be rather cautious. At the same time, Chinese texts, especially the Confucian Classics, often suffer from being interpreted out of context by some scholars. Hence when it comes to understanding the semantic import of primary sources, the present study seeks a more appropriate approach in order to avoid faulty interpretations as much as possible. When citing passages from the *Book of Documents*

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- 1 Jao presented a preliminary version of the present article during the Symposium on Scientific Methods of Research in the Study of Ancient Chinese Bronzes and Southeast Asian Metal and other Archaeological Artifacts in Melbourne, Australia, October 6–10, 1975. His conference paper has been translated into English by Noel Barnard (1922–2016) as “The Character *te* in Bronze Inscriptions,” in *The Proceedings of a Symposium on Scientific Methods of Research in the Study of Ancient Chinese Bronzes and Southeast Asian Metal and other Archaeological Artifacts*, ed. Noel Barnard (Melbourne: National Gallery of Victoria, 1976), 145–54. A significantly expanded Chinese version was published three years later under the title “Tianshenguan yu daode sixiang” 天神觀與道德思想 (Moral Speculation and the Conception of a Sky God) in *Bulletin of the Institute of History and Philology, Academia Sinica* 49.1 (1978): 77–100. This translation is based on the latter version as reprinted in *wj* 4: 326–61.
  - 2 Jao quotes here the first part of the title from F. M. (Francis MacDonald) Cornford’s (1874–1943) seminal study, *From Religion to Philosophy: A Study in the Origins of Western Speculation* (New York: Longmans, Green and Co., 1912), which to some degree constitutes the Western counter draft for this study.
  - 3 “Regrettably though,” Jao remarks, “these passages are limited to the insights from J. J. M. (Jan Jakob Maria) de Groot’s (1854–1921), *The Religion of the Chinese* (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1910), therefore, it can be said that they are entirely without use to us.”

or the *Zuozhuan* for instance, each individual meaning will need to fit into the respective passages' larger context, often requiring a process of repeated consideration before a decision on a certain interpretation can be confirmed. Thus, for some of the material cited below several explanations and perspectives will be provided. As this method is somewhat at variance with the established scholarly conventions, I have felt it necessary to explain my approach here in advance.

Based on the example of Greek intellectual history, it is a generally agreed scholarly consensus that questions about the origins of morals in the West, such as concerning the relatedness of "destiny" and "law," can be traced back to the announcement of Thales of Miletus (fl. 624/623–548/545 BC), according to which "the ultimate nature of all things is water, and the universe is alive – 'has soul in it' – and is full of spirits of gods."<sup>4</sup> Here one already finds mentioned the two concepts of "God" or "Spirit" and "Soul."<sup>5</sup> Note that the "Shui di" 水地 (Water and earth) chapter in the *Guanzi* also states:

水者何也？萬物之本原。

What is water? It is the origin of the myriad phenomena.<sup>6</sup>

In his preface to the *Shujing zhu* 水經注 (Commentary on the water classic), Li Daoyuan 酈道元 (fl. 466/472–527 AD) holds that water precedes all phenomena. He further quotes the following statement from Guo Pu's 郭璞 (276–324 AD)<sup>7</sup> *Xuanzhongji* 玄中記 (Stories from the mid of mystery):

水之為物，澤合靈宇，神莫與並。

As to the element of water, it moistens the entire world; among the spirits none can equal it.<sup>8</sup>

4 Cornford, *From Religion to Philosophy*, 4.

5 Ibid.

6 *Guanzi jiaozhu*, 14.831.

7 In the original, Jao gives the author as Guo [...] 郭□, put in brackets.

8 The original quotation in Li Daoyuan's preface reads: "Water accounts for the majority of the matter that makes up the world. It floats in the heaven's and it carries the solid land; above and below there is nothing it does not reach; among the myriad phenomena there is nothing it does not moisten. Its life-breath even runs within stone, merging completely with it. It takes not even an entire morning for it to moisten the entire world; among the spirits none is able to equal it." (天下之多者水也，浮天載地高下無不至，萬物無不潤。及其氣流屈石，精薄膚寸，不崇朝而澤合靈宇者，神莫與並矣). Cf. *Shujing zhu jiaozheng*, 1.

This saying may serve as an analogy to the Greek example.

The first religious poet of Greece, Hesiod (fl. 750 BC), repeatedly states that “Nature is moral.” He tells us that men will receive blessings when they do good, whereas when they commit offenses, they necessarily will become subject to Heaven’s wrath. Man’s loss of morals causes Heaven to send down great torments. The incest of Oedipus therefore resulted in tremendous natural disasters. In the belief of the ancient Greek philosophers the “Heavenly order” was conceived of as a moral category.<sup>9</sup> This closely resembles the ancient Chinese reasoning expressed in the phrase:

天道福善禍淫。

The way of Heaven is to confer blessings on the morally good, and to make the depraved suffer from calamities.<sup>10</sup>

In early China, the graph “*de*” 德 (commonly translated as “virtue” or “moral commitment” [tr. note]) appears as early as in the writings of the Yin period. The “Pan Geng” chapter from the *Book of Documents* says:

肆上帝將復我高祖之德，亂越我家。

Now Di-on-High will restore the *de* of my high ancestor and [help us to] restore order to our house.<sup>11</sup>

The appellation “high ancestor” refers here to Cheng Tang 成湯 (the first Shang King, fl. 17th–16th century BC); the rehabilitation of the ancestral virtue is described as depending on the High God’s will and power. This suffices to show that people had recognized a strong connection between *de* and Di-on-High at this time. This integrated notion of morals and the idea of a Sky God presumably began to take shape during the late Yin period.

9 In the above passage, Jao paraphrases the argument in Cornford, *From Religion to Philosophy*, 5–6. In his footnotes, he directly quotes from Cornford’s work the phrases “all nature is poisoned by the offence of man” (p. 5), and the “order of Nature is a moral order” (p. 6).

10 “Tang gao” 湯誥 (Announcement of Tang), *Shu* 12.85–90.

11 *Shu* 16.1164–76.

## 1 The Beginnings of the Worship of Di 帝 and the Deity of Heaven

The highest entity [in the cosmos] is called Heaven. Since in the knowledge and perception of man there is nothing bigger than the vault of the sky, Heaven became the subject of man's veneration. This reverence towards the sky arose spontaneously out of man's interaction with nature. Moreover, the worship of Heaven constitutes a common feature of belief shared by ancient religions all over the world.<sup>12</sup>

The numerous instances of the graph *di* 帝 found in OBI from the Yin period in fact all stand for the notion of a Heavenly High God (Tian Di 天帝). Di was endowed with universal powers; the movements of the sun, the moon, and the stellar constellations, as well as winds, clouds, thunder, and rain were all commanded by it. The occurrences of floods and droughts, of rich and poor harvests too were controlled by Di. In sum, Di epitomized the highest universal deity during the Yin period. It is safe to say that a very concrete idea of the divine was already in place by that time. A line from the "Xuan niao" 玄鳥 (Dark bird) hymn in the "Shang song" 商頌 (Hymns of Shang) section of the *Book of Songs* reads:

古帝命武湯	Anciently Di appointed Cheng Tang
正域彼四方	to campaign and take residence within these four cardinal regions. <sup>13</sup>

Di in this passage evidently refers to the Heavenly High God. The succession of ruling houses took place according to Di's commands as well. Moreover, both the socio-political realm of man and the natural world were determined through Di's commands.<sup>14</sup>

12 Jao quotes here the following statement from Wen Tingshi's 文廷式 (1856–1904) *Chun-changzi zhiyu* 純常子枝語, scroll 28: "When it comes to the religions of each region in the world, in ancient times they all shared a common focus on the worship of the sky." (東西各邦宗教，上世同以拜天為宗旨); as well as: "Although humans are born with intellectual capacities, what they see when turning their gaze upward is that there is nothing vaster than the sky. Even though they might have developed independently of each other, veneration and worship of the sky must have had the same meaning everywhere" (人生既有知識，則舉目所見，莫大于天。即使不出一源，而敬天祭之，必無異議) (*Qingdai xueshu biji congnan* 清代學術筆記叢刊, [Beijing: Xueyuan chubanshe, 2005], 67-432).

13 Mao #303 (*Maoshi zhengyi*, 20.1700).

14 Jao refers the reader here to the passage called "The Sky-Religion" in E. O. (Edwin Oliver) James (1888–1972), *Prehistoric Religion: A Study in Prehistoric Archaeology* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1957), 204–28.

The names of winds and clouds are sometimes found modified by the epithet *Di* in OBI. Such as *yun* 雲 (clouds) being referred to as *Di-yun* 帝雲 (Di-clouds),<sup>15</sup> or *feng* 風 (wind) being referred to as *Di-feng* 帝風 or *Di-shi-feng* 帝史(使)風 (Di's emissary, wind).<sup>16</sup> At the same time, “*di*” 帝 functions as a name for a sacrifice; to conduct a *di*-sacrifice to the four cardinal regions is called “*Fang-di*” 方帝.<sup>17</sup> Di was truly a super God in possession of the four cardinal regions (i.e. the known world and the cosmos [tr. note]). When the Yin people were sacrificing to the deified winds of the four cardinal regions, they also conducted a “Di-sacrifice.” The above discussion suffices to show that the highest Sky-God in Yin OBI is Di. Di's awesome power controlled the fortunes and misfortunes in the human realm. When it comes to the natural realm, weather patterns and the changing fortunes of agricultural production all depended on Di's commands. Protecting and destroying were the two functions overseen by Di.

The Shang kings are named *wang* 王 (king) in the OBI, as is the case with the High Ancestor Wang Hai 王亥 for instance. Only towards the end of the late Shang period do we find designations such as Wen Wu Di 文武帝, Wen Wu Di Yi 文武帝乙 (on a newly excavated OBI fragment from Zhouyuan 周原, Shaanxi)<sup>18</sup> or Di Xin 帝辛. The appellation Shang Di 上帝 (Di-on-High) only appears in the following instances from the corpus of Shang OBI:

卜，爭〔鼎(貞)〕：上帝降奠。

Crack-making, Zheng [testing:] Di-on-High sends down calamities.<sup>19</sup> (*HJ* 10166; Wu Ding 武丁 [fl. 1250–1192 BC])

兄……(貞)：上帝……出。

Xiong …… [testing:] Di-on-High …… come out / emerge (*HJ* 24979; Zu Geng 祖庚–Zu Jia 祖甲 [fl. 1191–1148 BC])

15 “Testing: Conducting a *di*-sacrifice to the *Di*-clouds” (貞帝于帝云) (*HJ* 14227).

16 “Crack-making on *xin-wei* day: *Di*-wind. Not use. Rain” (辛未卜帝風不用雨) (*HJ* 34150 + *HJ* 18915 + *HJ* 35290). For “*Di*'s emissary, wind” (帝史[使]風), see Guo Moruo 郭沫若 *Buci tongzuan* 卜辭通纂 (Beijing: Kexue chubanshe, 1983 [1933]), 398.

17 For “*Di*-sacrifice to the *Fang*” (方帝), see Luo Zhenyu 羅振玉, *Yinxu shuqi* 殷虛書契, (Beijing: Zhongguo qingnian chubanshe, 1999), scroll 7, p. 1, no. 1; scroll 4, p. 17, no. 5.

18 See fragment H11:1 in Cao Wei, *Zhouyuan Jiaquwen*.

19 Cf. Chen Mengjia 陳夢家, *Yinxu buci zongshu* 殷虛卜辭綜述 (Beijing: Kexue chubanshe, 1956), 564, for the various sorts of disasters associated with the graph 奠 in late Shang OBI.

夷(惟)五鼓上帝，若。王〔受〕又二。

Striking the drums five times to Di-on-High, [Di is] compliant. The King [will receive] assistance. Second [crack]. (*HJ* 30388; Lin Xin 廩辛–Kang Ding 康丁 [fl. 1147–1135 BC])<sup>20</sup>

Mention of the title “Wang-Di” 王帝 (lit. King-Thearch) can be found in OBI dating from the reigns of Zu Geng 祖庚 and Zu Jia 祖甲 (fl. 1191–1148 BC):

□□王卜，曰：茲下若，茲~~來~~于王帝。

On [...] the King divined through crack-making, proclaiming: From here downwards it signals content. In this case, [supplicatory prayer is to be conducted] towards Wang-Di (*HJ* 24980; Geng-Jia)<sup>21</sup>

貞：佳王帝〔人〕不若。

Testing: It is Wang-Di and his peers (?) / the [one] man (?) who (*HJ* 24978)<sup>22</sup>

.....禹王帝，今日.....

[...] addressing Wang-Di, now saying [...] (*HJ* 30389; Lin-Kang)<sup>23</sup>

20 See Chang Yuzhi 常玉芝, “You Shangdai de ‘Di’ kan suowei ‘Huang Di’” 由商代的“帝”看所謂“黃帝”, *Wen shi zhe* 文史哲 (2008) 6: 36–8, for slightly different transcriptions and interpretations of the three fragments cited above.

21 This OBI passage is somewhat problematic. See Chang Yuzhi, “You Shangdai de ‘Di’ kan suowei ‘Huang Di’,” 45–6, for a discussion of possible readings.

22 The possible identity of the graph between *di* 帝 and *bu* 不 as *ren* 人 (man, person, often used in the compound *yu yi ren* 余一人 [I, the one / lone man] as self-reference for the king in Shang sources) has originally been suggested by Chen Mengjia as a tentative preliminary interpretation (*Yinxu buci zongshu*, 579). Chang Yuzhi instead identifies the graph in question as *wang* 亡 (to not have, be without) and reads the entire passage as 「佳王，帝亡不若」 (as to the [affairs of the] King, there are none that Di is not compliant with). See Chang Yuzhi, “You Shangdai de ‘Di’ kan suowei ‘Huang Di’,” 45–6.

23 Chang Yuzhi suggests reading this passage as: 「.....[東] 禹王，帝今日.....」 ([as for] the king raising troops in the east, today [he will receive] Di’s [assistance]). See Chang Yuzhi, “You Shangdai de ‘Di’ kan suowei ‘Huang Di’,” 45–6.

In OBI from periods two and three,<sup>24</sup> the epithet Di had already been transferred from the Sky God onto the human thearch, thus we can find the designation “Wang-Di.”<sup>25</sup>

As far as concerns the evidence from OBI, the concept of “Tian” 天 (Heaven) was not as important as that of “Di.” Some scholars take the scarcity of the graph 天 in the OBI as proof that the elevation of Heaven’s position only took place under the Zhou people, just as the Romans had substituted Jupiter for Zeus.<sup>26</sup> Tradition has it that during the late Yin period, Wu Yi 武乙 (fl. 1147–1112 BC) had made an idol which he called “Sky God” (*tian shen* 天神). He then faced upward and shot it with an arrow.<sup>27</sup> This may be taken as circumstantial evidence for the Shang’s contempt of Heaven. Although the veneration of

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- 24 Jao refers here to Dong Zuobin’s division of the Late Shang or Anyang period (ca. 1200–ca. 1051 BC) into five sub-periods according to different diviner groups, a periodization still widely used for the dating of OBI by early China scholars today. Cf. Dong Zuobin, *Jiaguwen duandai yanjiu li* 甲骨文斷代研究例 (Taipei: The Institute of History and Philology, Academia Sinica, 1963 [1932]). See also David N. Keightley, *Sources of Shang History: The Oracle-Bone Inscriptions of Bronze Age China*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), 91–133.
- 25 Citing the same three OBI passages as Jao does here, both Chen Mengjia and Hu Houxuan 胡厚宣 (1911–1995) attested the existence of the appellation Wang-Di 王帝 in late Shang OBI before him. See Chen Mengjia, *Yinxu buci zongshu*, 579; and Hu Houxuan, “Yin buci zhong de Shang-Di yu Wang-Di (xia)” 殷卜辭中的上帝與王帝(下), *Lishi yanjiu* 歷史研究 (1959) 10: 89–110. However, whereas Jao understands the term to mean “human thearch” (i.e., the Shang king), Chen and Hu interpret the binome as denoting the High-god Di (i.e., Shang-Di or Di-on-High) and the reigning Shang king’s parents respectively. Chang Yuzhi in turn reads *wang* and *di* as two separate terms in all three passages. Pointing to numerous further OBI passages that mention both the King and Di within the same charge, she claims that the appellation Wang-Di does not exist in extant Shang OBI. See Chang Yuzhi, “You Shangdai de ‘Di’ kan suowei ‘Huang Di,’” 46–8.
- 26 Jao refers the reader here to “The Origin of the Deity T’ien,” in Herrlee G. (Glessner) Creel’s (1905–1994), *The Origins of Statecraft in China, Volume One: The Western Chou Empire* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1970), 493–506.
- 27 Jao cites here the following related passage from “Yin benji” 殷本紀 in the *Shiji*: “Thearch Wu Yi had no principles; he made an image which he called ‘Sky God.’ He gambled with it, ordering others to act on its behalf. When the ‘Sky God’ did not win, he abused it. He made a leather bag which he filled with blood, threw it up into the air and shot at it. This he called ‘Shooting at Heaven.’” (帝武乙無道，為偶人謂之天神。與之博，令人為行。天神不勝，乃謬辱之。為革囊，盛血，叩而射之，命曰「射天」) (*Shiji*, 3.104). Jao also mentions that Marcel Granet once compared this episode to the *Dalasi* 達拉斯 people’s custom of shooting arrows at Heaven whenever they encounter thunderstorms, in an effort to render the Gods compliant. I was unable to identify the name of the people behind the transliteration *dalasi*, nor could I locate the source of Granet’s alleged statement. For Granet’s treatment of the myth of Wu Yi shooting the sky, see his *Danses et Légendes*, 2: 537–48. Jao further points to Michel de Montaigne, who states in his *Essais* “that the soul expends its passions upon false objects, where the true are wanting” (Comme l’ame discharge ses passions sur des objets faux, quand les vrais luy defaillent)

Heaven increased under the Zhou people, their conception of Di-on-High did not become devalued in turn. In fact, in Western Zhou writings Di-on-High and Heaven are sometimes used interchangeably. For instance, in the *Shi Xun gui* 師旬殷 (Commander Xun's tureen) inscription we read:

肆皇帝亡𠄎，臨保我𠄎周于四方。

And so, August Di unremittingly watched over and protected our Zhou and the four cardinal regions.<sup>28</sup>

The Mao Gong *ding* 毛公鼎 (Patriarch Mao's cauldron) inscription has:

肆皇天亡𠄎，臨保我有周。

And so, August Heaven unremittingly watched over and protected our Zhou.<sup>29</sup>

In the “Wen Hou zhi Ming” 文侯之命 (Charge to Marquis Wen) chapter from the *Book of Documents* it says:

惟時上帝集厥命于文王。

Thereupon, Di-on-High sent down its mandate on King Wen.<sup>30</sup>

Another passage in the Mao Gong *ding* reads:

唯天集厥命。

It was that Heaven sent down its mandate [on Zhou].

One instance has “Di-on-High sent down its mandate,” the other has “Heaven sent down its mandate.” The Zhou people were also still worshipping Di-on-High. The Tian Wang *gui* 天亡殷 (Tian Wang's tureen) inscription, dating from

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(*Essais De Montaigne* [Paris: Firmin-Didot, 1907], book 1 chapter 4, p. 42), to explain the reason for such behavioral patterns.

28 JC 4342.

29 JC 2841.

30 *Shu* 48.27–36. My interpretation of ji 集 as “to send down” in this and the following examples follows Liu Zhao 劉釗, “Ji’ zi de xing-yin yi” 「集」字的形音義, in idem, *Shuxinji xubian: chutu wenxian yu guwenzi luncong* 書馨集續編：出土文獻與古文字論叢 (Shanghai: Zhongxi shuju, 2018), 240–61.

the reign of King Wu 武 (r. 1049/45–1043 BC), records the “conducting of a millet offering to Di-on-High” (事喜上帝).<sup>31</sup> The Hu *zhong* 馱鐘 (Hu’s bell) inscription from the time of King Zhao 昭 (r. 977/75–957 BC) states:

佳皇上帝百神保余小子，朕猷有成亡競。我佳司配皇天王。

It was that August Di-on-High and the many [ancestral] spirits protected me, the little one, so that my plans have been successful without competition. I therefore succeed to match the August Heavenly King (i.e., the royal protagonist’s deceased predecessor [tr. note]).<sup>32</sup>

Here we find the appellations “August Di-on-High” and “August Heavenly King” appearing within the same inscription. A similar phenomenon can be observed in a passage from the Zhou Gong *gui* 周公馱 (Zhou Gong’s tureen) inscription depicting the protagonist [or his deceased forebear (tr. Note)] as having been “able to arduously serve Di above and Di below” (克奔走上下帝).<sup>33</sup> The expression Shang-xia Di 上下帝 presumably refers to Di-on-High in Heaven and the kingly thearch (Wang Di 王帝) below on earth. Other inscriptions from musical instruments, such as that from the You *zhong* 猶鐘 (You’s bell), have:

先王其嚴在帝左右。

The Former Kings solemnly reside to the left and to the right of Di.<sup>34</sup>

Compare also the following passage from the Tu Wang Yichu *duan* 郟王義楚鐺 (Tu King Yichu’s goblet) inscription:

用鬯于皇天及我文考。

[May I use this goblet] to make offerings to August Heaven and to my Cultured Forebear.<sup>35</sup>

31 JC 4261.

32 JC 260. My punctuation of this passage differs slightly from Jao’s, which reads: 「佳皇上帝百神，保余小子朕猷，有成亡競。我佳司配皇天王」.

33 JC 4241.

34 JC 49. This bronze is better known by the name Bidi *zhong* 馱狄鐘 (tr. note).

35 JC 6513. The name of this inscription is more commonly transcribed as Xu Wang Yichu *zhi* 徐王義楚觶 (Xu King Yichu’s goblet) (tr. note).

Having matched Heaven, the deceased king (i.e., the father of King Yichu, to whom this goblet is dedicated [tr. note]) was able to reside next to the Heavenly Di. Both constitute objects of veneration and sacrifice for the living. The Heavenly Di and the kingly thearch in combination become Di above and Di below. Since we find the designation Shang-xia Di on Zhou bronze vessels, we know that they did not replace Di with Heaven. Quite the contrary, in the conception of the Western Zhou people, Di and Di-on-High controlled the living, hence their positions were of utmost importance. This is not only the case in inscriptions from sacrificial vessels, in the early Zhou announcements (*gao* 誥) and commands (*ming* 命) [transmitted in the *Book of Documents* (tr. note)], there are numerous terms and phrases employing the notion of Di, such as “Di *ting*” 帝庭 (The court of Di), “Shang Di *ming*” 上帝命 (The command of Di-on-High), “Shang Di *geng ming*” 上帝耿命 (the bright command of Di-on-High), “Huang Tian Shang Di” 皇天上帝 (August Heaven and Di-on-High), “*jing shi* Shang Di” 敬事上帝 (reverently serve Di-on-High), “Shang Di *jian min*” 上帝監民 (Di-on-High observes the people) and others.<sup>36</sup> The “Kang *gao*” 康誥 (Announcement of Kang) relates that King Wen’s establishment of order throughout the Zhou’s Western lands became known to Di-on-High. Di-on-High therefore sent down his grace. Heaven accordingly greatly charged King Wen to exterminate Yin, and to grandly receive its appointment.<sup>37</sup> The “Li Zheng” 立政 (Establishment of government) chapter relates how Cheng Tang arose and grandly administered the bright command of Di-on-High, before Di eventually sent down punishments on him (i.e., on the last Shang king Di Xin 帝辛 or Shou 受 [fl. 1075–1046 BC][tr. note]), subsequently replacing the Shang with the Zhou as the recipients of his charge.<sup>38</sup> In sum, all dynastic changes followed the will of Di-on-High. Judging from the way the admonishments of Di-on-High are

36 All of these instances are listed in appendix one in Jao’s original article.

37 The original passage in the *Book of Documents* reads:  
文王修我西土.....。冒聞于上帝，帝休。天乃大命文王，殪戎殷，誕受厥命。  
King Wen established order throughout our western lands [...]. His endeavours became known to Di on High, and Di [bestowed] his grace [on him]. Heaven accordingly greatly charged King Wen to exterminate Yin, and to grandly receive its appointment. (*Shu* 29.67–125).

38 The original passage in the *Book of Documents* reads:  
成湯陟，丕釐上帝之耿命[...] 其在受德瞽，惟羞刑暴德之人，同于厥邦。[...] 帝欽罰之，乃俘我有夏，式商受命，奄甸萬姓。  
Cheng Tang arose and grandly administered the bright command of Di-on-High. [...] When it came to Shou, his character was impetuous. He chose men of severity and violent character to act as his associates in his polities. [...] Di-on-High then punished him, and caused us [i.e., the Zhou] to possess the lands of Xia, replacing the Shang with us as the recipients of his charge to govern the myriad families. (*Shu* 39.133–232).

presented in written announcements from the early Zhou period, one can say with certainty that the Zhou people did not show any sort of contempt towards the high god Di when they set up their polity. Later commentaries to the Confucian classics all hold that “Di-on-High is an alternative name for Heaven” (上帝者，天之別名也).<sup>39</sup> This interpretation is still valid. The inscription on the Li *gui* 利簋 (Li’s tureen), the earliest extant Western Zhou bronze vessel dating from the reign of King Wu, unearthed in Lintong 臨潼 county, Shaanxi, reads:

珷征商，隹甲子朝，歲鼎(貞)，克聞，夙有商。

When King Wu attacked Shang it was the morning of *jia-zi* day (day one in the sexagesimal *ganzhi* cycle) and Jupiter was in its correct position. The campaign could be perceived [by Di-on-High (according to Jao’s interpretation below) (tr. note)], so that by dawn, Shang was taken.<sup>40</sup>

The phrase “could be perceived, by dawn Shang was taken” (克聞，夙有商) closely resembles the meaning of the passage “[King Wen’s] fame became known to Di on High [...], [Heaven accordingly greatly charged King Wen] to exterminate Yin” (冒聞于上帝.....殄戎殷) in the “Kang gao” chapter. The attack on Shang was perceived by Di-on-High, hence the battle on *jia-zi* day could result in a swift success. It was precisely this extermination of the Yin (殄戎殷) that has been mandated by Di-on-High. Thus, when it comes to the Zhou people’s image of Di-on-High one notes that there is in fact no difference between the ranks of Heaven and Di.

## 2 The Graph *de* 德 in Writings from the Yin and Zhou Periods

As has been mentioned above, the graph “*de*” 德 can already be found in OBI from the Yin period. The revised edition of the *Jiaguwen bian* 甲骨文編 (Dictionary of the oracle bone script) reconfirms that the OBI forms 𠄎 and 𠄏

39 For the shared meaning and the interchangeable use of the terms Di and Tian, Jao refers the reader further to Ikeda Suetoshi 池田末利 (1910–2000), “Shaku tei ten” 稷帝·天, in idem, *Chūgoku kodai shūkyōshi kenkyū: seido to shisō* 中國古代宗教史研究：制度と思想 (Tokyo: Tokai University Press, 1998), 25–46. He also mentions Zheng Xuan’s annotations to the *Xiaojing* 孝經 (Classic of Filial Piety) as saying: “Di-on-High is an alternative name for Heaven” (上帝者，天之別名也) (Zheng Xuan 鄭玄, annot.; Pi Xirui 皮錫瑞, comp., *Xiaojing zhengzhu shu* 孝經鄭注疏 [Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2016], 77).

40 JC 4131.

should be transcribed as 德.<sup>41</sup> According to Luo Zhenyu 羅振玉, the graph was borrowed to write the word *de* 得, “to obtain,”<sup>42</sup> which at the time still lacked its own graphical representation. Indeed, it seems quite possible to read the commonly found OBI phrases “*you de*” 有(出)德 and “*wang de*” 亡德 as *you de* 有得 (will obtain) and *wang de* 亡得 (will not obtain) respectively. But consider for instance the following OBI fragment:

庚辰卜，王貞：朕德尙。六月

Crack-making on *geng-chen* day, the king tested: “I will *de fang*.” Sixth month<sup>43</sup>

This instance of the graph 德 contains the element *xing* 行 (to move); the graph 尙 is composed from the element *fang* 方 and can be read as *pang* 旁, conveying the meaning of “*pu*” 溥 (vast)<sup>44</sup> or “*da*” 大 (big).<sup>45</sup> Accordingly, a reading of the fragment as “Our *de* will be vast” (朕德溥) would also be possible.

Among the numerous phrases containing the term *de* in the three parts of the “Pan Geng” chapter, *huang de* 荒德 (abandoning *de*), *shuang de* 爽德 (forfeiting *de*) or *xiong de* 凶德 (malignant *de*), for instance, all constitute negative expressions which go contrary to the idea of *de* proper, whereas the compounds *shi de* 實德 (substantial *de*), *ji de* 積德 (accomplished *de*) as well as the phrase *fu min de* 敷民德 (extending *de* to the people) confirm the idea. What is more, the phrase “Di-on-High is about to reinstate my high ancestor’s *de*” (上帝將復我高祖之德), where *de* is extended to and associated with the former kings, evidently echoes such common expressions of the Zhou people as “to emulate the former cultured ancestors’ honoring of bright *de*” (型先文祖共明德). In the same vein, the phrases “*ruo de*” 若德 (complying with *de*) and “*zheng jue de*” 正厥德 (to correct one’s *de*) in the “Gaozong rongri” belong to the same group of stock phrases as “*zheng de*” 正德 (correct / upright *de*) and “*Xianwang ruode*” 先王若德 (the former kings complied with *de*) found in the inscriptions from the Yu *ding* 盂鼎 (Yu’s cauldron) and Mao Gong *ding* respectively. The notion of *de* therefore should have already been established during the Shang period. At least we do not have any good reason to deny this possibility.

41 Sun Haibo 孫海波 et al., eds., *Jiaguwen bian* 甲骨文編, 3rd rev. ed. (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1965), 74.

42 Ibid.

43 *HJ* 20547.

44 *Shuowen jiezi*, 7.

45 *Guangya shuzheng*, 1A.2.

When it comes to Western Zhou bronze inscriptions, the graph *de* surfaces broadly; for instance, in the inscriptions of such important vessels as the Ke *ding* 克鼎 (Ke's cauldron),<sup>46</sup> the Yu *ding* and the Ban *gui* 班簋 (Ban's tureen).<sup>47</sup> During the early Western Zhou period, the graph was also used as a personal name. Among the massive De *ding* 德鼎 cauldrons from the time of King Cheng 成 (r. 1042/35–1006 BC), three are inscribed with a text commemorating a royal gift of cowries bestowed on a person named De.<sup>48</sup> A fourth one bears an inscription mentioning a bestowal on a person named Shu De 叔德.<sup>49</sup> De and Shu De might well have been the same person. The name Shu De resembles the form of the agnomen of Zhou Gong Dan 周公旦 (Dan, the Duke of Zhou), Shu Dan 叔旦. That this donor chose *de* as his byname precisely reflects the importance ascribed to the concept in early Zhou times.

The received Classics from the Western Zhou period time and again refer to *de* in instructions and admonishments, such as can be found in the “Kang gao,” the “Shao gao,” the “Jun Shi” 君奭 (Prince Shi), the “Li zheng” and other chapters from the *Book of Documents*. In texts from bronze inscriptions too, the instances of the graph *de* constitute by no means isolated cases. Among them we find formulae and idiomatic expressions that can be compared to those in the transmitted Classics, such as the examples in the following table:

TABLE 15 Idiomatic expressions including *de* 德 in the *Book of Documents* and in texts from Western Zhou bronze inscriptions

	Classics	Bronze inscriptions
<i>zhong de</i> 中德 (central <i>de</i> )	“Jiu gao” 酒誥 (Announcement on alcohol)	Cai Hou <i>zhong</i> 蔡侯鐘 (Count Cai's bell)
<i>yuan de</i> 元德 (primordial <i>de</i> )	“Jiu gao”	Fan Sheng <i>gui</i> 番生毀 (Fan Sheng's tureen); Li ding 曆鼎 (Li's cauldron)
<i>jing de</i> 經德 (constant <i>de</i> )	“Jiu gao”	Zhe X <i>zhong</i> 者汙鐘 (Zhe X's bell) (here written 汙德); Chen Man <i>fu</i> 陳曼簋 (Chen Man's panner)

46 JC 2836.

47 JC 4341.

48 JC 2405 + 2661 + 3733.

49 JC 3942.

TABLE 15 Idiomatic expressions including *de* 德 in the *Book of Documents* (cont.)

	Classics	Bronze inscriptions
<i>jing de</i> 敬德 (honoring <i>de</i> )	“Shao gao”; “Wu yi” 無逸 (Against luxurious ease); “Jun shi”	Ban <i>gui</i>
<i>bing de</i> 秉德 (uphold <i>de</i> )	“Jun shi”	Shan <i>ding</i> 善鼎 (Shan’s cauldron); Bo Dong <i>gui</i> 伯紘簋 (Bo Dong’s tureen); Jin Gong <i>fu</i> 晉公簠 (Patriarch of Jin’s pannier)
<i>ming de</i> 明德 (bright / manifest <i>de</i> )	“Duo fang” 多方 (Many regions); “Zi cai” 梓材 (Timber of the Rottlera); “Wen hou zhi ming” 文 侯之命 (Charge to the Marquis Wen)	Shu Xiang <i>gui</i> 叔向簋 (Shu Xiang’s tureen); Da Ke <i>ding</i> 大克鼎 (Greater Ke’s cauldron); Qin Gong <i>gui</i> 秦公簋 (Patriarch of Qin’s tureen); Guo Shu <i>zhong</i> 虢叔鐘 (Guo Shu’s bell)

As the above account shows, the conventional phrase “*bing mingde*” 秉明德 (uphold / maintaining bright / manifest *de*) was still extensively in use during the Spring and Autumn period within the spatial confines of the former Zhou realm. It was employed by the polities of Guo 虢, Qin 秦, and Jin 晉 to proclaim their carrying on of the former Zhou kings’ manifest *de*, not daring to show the slightest bit of idleness and repose. The customary phrase “*mu-mu bing de*” 穆穆秉德 (solemnly and reverently maintain *de*) is already attested in the Western Zhou Jing Ren Ning *zhong* 邢人妥鐘 (Jing Ren Ning’s bell) inscription.<sup>50</sup>

The compound *zhengde* 政德, which is found inscribed on ritual bronze vessels from the polities of Qi 齊 and Xu 徐, constitutes an adaption of the Da Yu *ding*’s usage “*Wen wang zheng-de*” 玟王正德 (the upright *de* of King Wen). Hence the graph *zheng* 政 is to be read *zheng* 正 (upright / correct). The phrase “*jing yong ming de*” 丕雍明德 (constant harmonious bright *de*) seems to be related to the phrase “*jing yong de*” 敬雍德 (to honor harmonious *de*) in the Yu *ding*, with *yong* 雍 conveying the sense of *he* 和 (harmonious). The compound “*Jing de*” 丕德, written 丕德 in the inscription from the Yue *zhong* and 經德 in that from the Chen Man *fu*, means *chang de* 常德 (constant *de*). 丕 represents

50 JC 109–12.

the complex from of the graph 經. As can be inferred from these examples, the phrase “*jing de-yi*” 經德義 (constant *de* and propriety) in the *Zuozhuan*<sup>51</sup> and the *Mengzi*'s 孟子 “*jing-de bu hui*” 經德不回 (constant *de* does not bend)<sup>52</sup> have quite a long history. The compound *tun de* 屯德 in the inscription from the *Sizi hu* 嗣子壺 (Sizi's flagon)<sup>53</sup> derives its meaning from the phrase “the former cultured men adhered to *de*, thereby revering their integrity” (前文人秉德共屯[恭純]) found in the *Bo Dong gui* inscription.<sup>54</sup> 屯德 reads *chun de* 純德, meaning uncorrupted *de*, as the term is employed in the line “And oh, how illustrious, the uncorrupted *de* of King Wen!” (於乎不顯，文王之德之純) from the *Book of Songs*.<sup>55</sup>

### 3 Standing in Awe of Heaven's Daunting Authority and the Establishment of the Idea of *jing de* 經德 (Honoring *de*)

The two graphs *jing* 敬 and *de* 德, combined to form a phrase, appear with great frequency in the *Zhoushu* 周書 (Documents of Zhou). See for instance the “*Shao gao*”:

嗚呼！天亦哀于四方民，其眷命用懋，王其疾敬德。

Truly, Heaven had compassion for the people of the four cardinal regions; its favoring appointment lighted on our earnest founders. Let the king sedulously honor his *de*.<sup>56</sup>

王先服殷御事，比介于我有周御事，節性惟日其邁。王敬作所，不可不敬德。……惟不敬厥德，乃早墜厥命。

Let the king first bring under his influence the managers of affairs of Yin, associating them with the managers of affairs of our Zhou. This will regulate their natures, and they will make daily advancement. Let the king

51 *Zuo*, Ai 2.3, 1614. Cf. Durrant, Li, and Schaberg, trans., *Zuo Tradition*, 1845.

52 *Mengzi* 7B. 33. Cf. D. C. Lau, trans., *Mencius: A Bilingual Edition*, rev. ed. (Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 2003 [1984]), 324–25.

53 *JC* 9719–9720.

54 *JC* 4302.

55 “*Wei Tian zhi ming*” 維天之命 (The Charge that Heaven gave), *Mao* #267 (*Maoshi zhengyi*, 19.1510). The English translation has been adapted from Waley, trans., *The Book of Songs*, 291.

56 *Shu* 32.280–96; Translation adapted from Legge, *The Shoo King*, 426.

make reverence the resting-place (of his mind). He may not but honor his *de*. [...] It was by not honoring their *de* that (Xia's) appointment fell prematurely to the ground.<sup>57</sup>

王乃初服。嗚呼！若生子，罔不在厥初生，自貽哲命。今天其命哲，命吉凶，命歷年；知今我初服，宅新邑。肆惟王其疾敬德？王其德之用，祈天永命。

Thus, the king commenced his duties. Oh! it is as on the birth of a son, when all depends on (the training of) his early life, through which he may secure his wisdom in the future, as if it were decreed to him. Now Heaven may have decreed wisdom (to our king); it may have decreed good fortune or bad; it may have decreed a (long) course of years; we only know that now is with him the commencement of his duties. Dwelling in this new settlement, let the king sedulously honor his *de*. When he is all-devoted to this *de*, he may pray to Heaven for a long-abiding appointment.<sup>58</sup>

In the “Wu yi” chapter we read:

嗚呼！厥亦惟我周太王、王季，克自抑畏。文王卑服，即康功田功。徽柔懿恭，懷保小民，惠鮮鰥寡。

Oh! There likewise were King Tai and King Ji of our own Zhou, who attained to humility and reverential awe. King Wen dressed meanly and gave himself to the work of tranquillization and to that of husbandry. Admirably mild and beautifully humble, he cherished and protected the lesser people, and showed a fostering kindness to the wifeless men and widows.<sup>59</sup>

自殷王中宗及高宗及祖甲及我周文王，茲四人迪哲……則皇自敬德。

Those kings of Yin, Zhong Zong, Gao Zong, and Zu-jia, with King Wen of our Zhou, these four men carried their knowledge into practice, [...] then they paid great and reverent attention to their *de*.<sup>60</sup>

57 *Shu* 32.431–507; Translation adapted from Legge, *The Shoo King*, 429–430.

58 *Shu* 32.556–609; Translation adapted from Legge, *The Shoo King*, 430–31.

59 *Shu* 35.269–304; Translation adapted from Legge, *The Shoo King*, 468–69.

60 *Shu* 35.480–516; Translation adapted from Legge, *The Shoo King*, 472.

Further in the “Jun shi” we come across the following statement:

其汝克敬德，明我俊民，在讓後人于丕時。

If you can but reverently cultivate your virtue (now), and bring to light our men of eminent ability, then when you resign (your position) to some successor in a time of established security, (I will interpose no objection).<sup>61</sup>

A similar reasoning can also be found in the inscription from the Western Zhou Ban *gui*:

隹(唯)民亡咎(造)才(在)彝，恣(昧)天令，故亡。

It was that the people did not accomplish (to establish and maintain) constant moral principles.<sup>62</sup> They were blind to the charge of Heaven and thus had to perish.<sup>63</sup>

允才(哉)顯隹(唯)苟(敬)德，亡遠(攸)遠。

Evidently indeed, only through honoring one's *de*, will (the danger of) perishing be distant.<sup>64</sup>

All the above passages can be regarded as famous remarks of the Zhou people. By ignoring Heaven's charge, one brings destruction upon oneself. It is therefore of utmost importance to maintain and honor one's *de*.

In the inscription from the Da Yu *ding* we further read the king's words as proclaiming:

61 *Shu* 36.657–72; Translation adapted from Legge, *The Shoo King*, 485.

62 Chen Jian 陳劍 suggests that *zao* 造 is used here in a similar manner as in the Mao ode “Si Zhai” 思齊 (*Mao* #240): “If grown men have *de*, young people can have accomplishments” (肆成人有德、小子有造 [*Maoshi zhengyi*, 16.1189]). See Chen Jian, “Shi ‘zao’” 釋造 in idem, *Jiagu jinwen kaoshi lunji* 甲骨文考釋論集 (Beijing: Xianzhuang shuju, 2007), 175.

63 My punctuation of this passage differs slightly from Jao's original, which reads: 「隹(唯)民亡咎，才(在)彝。恣(昧)天令，故亡」.

64 Note that Jao reads *yuan* 遠 (distant, far) here instead of the established rendering of the graph 遠 as *wei* 違 (to go against, to disobey). There is, however, the chance that the graph 遠 is the result of an editorial mistake, in this case the last line would read “there will be no place where there is resistance” (亡攸遠).

今余隹(唯)令女(汝)孟豐(邵)燮(榮)夙(敬)離(雍)德，翌(經)敏，朝夕入(納)讜(諫)，言(駿)奔走，畏天畏(威)。」

Now I charge you, Yu, to assist Rong in honoring (the standards of) harmonious *de*. Be constantly assiduous, remonstrate with me from dawn to dusk and hurry about (in service), standing in awe of Heaven's awesomeness.

Here we come across the formulation “*jing yong de*” 敬雍德 (honouring harmonious *de*), where *yong* 雍 means *he* 和 (harmonious). Similar phrases appear in the Mao Gong *ding* inscription:

女(汝)母(毋)敢彖(墜)在乃服，鬩(劬)夙夕，敬念王畏(威)不暘(易)。

Do not dare to fail in your service, improve yourself day and night.<sup>65</sup> Respectfully bear in mind the King's imperturbable awesomeness.<sup>66</sup>

And in the “Gu ming” chapter from the *Zhoushu*:

昔君文王、武王宣重光，奠麗陳教，則肄肄不違，用克達殷集大命。在後之侗，敬迓天威，嗣守文、武大訓，無敢昏逾。

The former sovereigns, Kings Wen and Wu, displayed in succession their equal glory, making sure provision for the support of the people, and setting forth their instructions. (The people) accorded a practical submission; they did so without any opposition, so that their influence extended to Yin, and the Great Appointment (of Heaven) was secured. After them, I, the stupid one, reverently received the awesomeness of Heaven, and continued to keep the great instructions of Wen and Wu, not daring blindly to transgress them.<sup>67</sup>

Here we find the expressions “respectfully bearing in mind the king's awesomeness” (敬念王畏) and “reverently receiving the awesomeness of Heaven” (敬迓

65 For the interpretation of 鬩 as *shao* 劬 (improve), see Chen Bingxin 陳秉新, “Shi ‘X’ ji xiang guan zi ci” 釋“鬩”及相關字詞, *Guwenzi yanjiu* 22 (2007): 96–100.

66 *JC* 2841.

67 *Shu* 42.77–119; Translation adapted from Legge, *The Shoo King*, 547.

天威) respectively. In order to be able to establish the charisma of the king it is necessary to stand in awe of Heaven's awesomeness.

Dong Zhongshu 董仲舒 (179–104 BC) once proclaimed in his *Duice* 對策 (Rescripts and responses):

天人相與之際，甚可畏也。

The juncture between Heaven and man must be held in awe indeed.<sup>68</sup>

The *Chunqiu wei* 春秋緯 (Apocrypha on the Spring and Autumn annals) also says:

天之與人，昭昭著明，甚可畏也。

As to the joining of Heaven and man, evidently, this must utterly be held in awe.<sup>69</sup>

Theories concerning the joining of the spheres of Heaven and of man were quite advanced during the Han period, yet the idea of “revering Heaven” (畏天) began to develop quite early, with plenty of examples to be found in the *Songs* and *Documents* as well as in bronze inscriptions. Passages from the *Elegantiae* and *Hymns* that mention the reverence of Heaven include the following examples:

旻天疾威      Compassionate Heaven, arrayed in terrors,

.....

如何昊天      How can it be, mighty Heaven?

.....

胡不相畏      How do you not stand in awe of one another?

不畏于天      You do not stand in awe of Heaven.<sup>70</sup>

旻天疾威      The terrors of Compassionate Heaven,  
敷于下土      Spreading out over the lands below.<sup>71</sup>

68 *Hanshu*, 56.2498. See further Michael Loewe, *Dong Zhongshu, a “Confucian” Heritage and the Chunqiu Fanlu* (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 87–100 for Dong Zhongshu's *Duice*.

69 Hui Dong 惠棟, *Hou Hanshu buzhu* 後漢書補注 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1985), 15.660.

70 “Yu wu zheng” 雨無正 (Rain without limit); *Mao* #194 (*Maoshi zhengyi*, 12.854–57). Translation adapted from Waley, *The Book of Songs*, 172–73.

71 “Xiao min” 小旻 (Foreboding); *Mao* #195 (*Maoshi zhengyi*, 12.862). Translation adapted from Waley, *The Book of Songs*, 174.

昊天已威      Immense are the terrors of great Heaven,  
予慎無罪      But I am truly without blame.<sup>72</sup>

不愧于人      He is not ashamed before men;  
不畏于天      He does not stand in awe of Heaven.<sup>73</sup>

我其夙夜      Do not I, night and day  
畏天之威      Revere the majesty of Heaven,  
于時保之      To preserve its favor.<sup>74</sup>

Sayings about Heaven sending down its awesome terror are particularly numerous in extant admonitions from the Western Zhou period. These may be excerpted as below:

今我民罔弗欲喪，曰：『天曷不降威？』大命不摯，今王其如台？

Our people now all wish (the dynasty) to perish, saying, “Why does not Heaven send down its awesome terror?” Why does not (someone with) its great appointment make his appearance? What has the present king to do with us?<sup>75</sup>

予不敢閉于天降威，用寧<文>王遺我大寶龜，紹天明。……天降威，知我國有疵，民不康。

Nor shall I dare to reject the inflictions that Heaven sends down (on us). King Wen left to me the great precious tortoise-shell, to bring into connection with me the intelligence of Heaven. [...] As Heaven sends down its terrors, it appears as obvious that there are defects in our polity and the populace is not tranquil.<sup>76</sup>

72 “Qiao yan” 巧言 (Clever words); *Mao* #198 (*Maoshi zhengyi*, 12.883). Translation adapted from Waley, *The Book of Songs*, 179.

73 “He ren si” 何人斯 (What sort of person); *Mao* #199 (*Maoshi zhengyi*, 12.890). Translation adapted from Waley, *The Book of Songs*, 181.

74 “Wo jiang” 我將 (We bring); *Mao* #272 (*Maoshi zhengyi*, 19.1530). Translation adapted from Waley, *The Book of Songs*, 293.

75 “Xi Bo kan Li” 西伯戡黎 (Chief of the West’s conquest of Li); *Shu* 19.65–86; Translation adapted from Legge, *The Shoo King*, 271.

76 “Da gao” *Shu* 27.82–137; Translation adapted from Legge, *The Shoo King*, 364–66.

惟天降命，肇我民，惟元祀。天降威，我民用大亂喪德，亦罔非酒惟行。

When Heaven was sending down its favoring decree and laying the foundations of (the eminence of) our people, (wine) was used only in the great sacrifices. When Heaven has sent down its terrors, and our people have thereby been greatly disorganized and lost their virtue, this may be traced invariably to their indulgence in wine.<sup>77</sup>

我有周佑命，將天明威，致王罰，敕殷命終于帝。.....惟帝不畀，惟我下民秉為，惟天明畏。

We, the Zhou, received (Heaven's) favoring decree. We accordingly felt charged with its bright awesomeness; carried out the punishments which kings inflict; rightly disposed of the appointment of Yin. [...] Di was not for (Yin), as appeared from the conduct of our inferior people, in which there is the brilliant dreadfulness of Heaven.<sup>78</sup>

我亦不敢寧于上帝命，弗永遠念天威越我民罔尤違，惟人。.....天壽平格，保乂有殷，有殷嗣，天滅威。.....後暨武王誕將天威，咸劉厥敵。.....告汝朕允保奭。其汝克敬以予監于殷喪大否，肆念我天威。

I also do not dare to rest in the favor of Di's mandate, not forecasting at a distance the terrors of Heaven in the present time when there is no murmuring or disobedience among the people; (the issue) is with man. [...] Heaven gives long life to the just and the intelligent; it was thus that (those ministers) maintained and regulated the dynasty of Yin. He who came last to the throne was extinguished by the terrors of Heaven. [...] Afterwards, [these men of virtue] along with [King Wu], in great reverence of the majesty of Heaven, slew all his enemies. [...] What I tell you, O prince, are my sincere thoughts. O Shi, the Grand-Protector, if you can but reverently survey with me the decay and great disorders of Yin, and thence consider the dread majesty of Heaven (which warns) us.<sup>79</sup>

77 "Jiu gao" *Shu* 30.40–65; Translation adapted from Legge, *The Shoo King*, 399–400.

78 "Duo shi" 多士 (Many officers); *Shu* 34.35–93; Translation adapted from Legge, *The Shoo King*, 454–55.

79 "Jun shi"; *Shu* 36.59–622; Translation adapted from Legge, *The Shoo King*, 475–84.

天惟求爾多方，大動以威，開厥顧天。

Heaven then sought among your many regions, making a great impression by its terrors to stir up one who might look (reverently) to it.<sup>80</sup>

五刑之疑有赦，五罰之疑有赦，其審克之！簡孚有眾，惟貌有稽。無簡不聽，具嚴天威。……今天相民，作配在下。……永畏惟罰，非天不中，惟人在命。天罰不極，庶民罔有令政在于天下。

When there are doubts as to the infliction of any of the five punishments, that infliction should be forborne. When there are doubts as to the infliction of any of the five fines, it should be forborne. Do you examine carefully, and overcome every difficulty. When you have examined, and many things are clear, yet form a judgement from studying the appearances of the parties. If you find nothing on examination, do not listen to the case anymore. In everything, stand in awe of the dread majesty of Heaven. [...] Now Heaven, wishing to help the people, has made us its representatives here below. [...] Ever stand in awe of the punishment of Heaven. It is not Heaven that does not deal impartially with men, but men ruin themselves. If the punishments of Heaven were not so extreme, nowhere under the sky would the people have good government.<sup>81</sup>

People during the Han period held that that the notion of “*jing*” 敬 (reverence, to revere) constituted the core of the instructions of Yin. In the “*san jiao pian*” 三教篇 (Chapter on the three instructions) in the *Baihutong* 白虎通 (The comprehensive discussions in the White Tiger Hall) we read:

殷人之王教以敬，其失鬼，救鬼之失莫如文。周人之王教以文，其失薄，救薄之失莫如忠。

The kings of the Yin people instructed by reverence and failed by [falling into] superstition. For the correction of superstition there is nothing better than *wen* (diligence / self-exertion).<sup>82</sup> The kings of the Zhou people

80 “Duo fang”; *Shu* 38.393–406; Translation adapted from Legge, *The Shoo King*, 501.

81 “Lü xing” *Shu* 47.569–908; Translation adapted from Legge, *The Shoo King*, 604–10.

82 Due to its “basic openness which allows it to absorb different meanings according to different circumstances” (Martin Kern, “Ritual, Text, and the Formation of the Canon: Historical Transitions of ‘Wen’ in Early China,” *T’oung Pao* 87.1 [2001]: 44), the term *wen* has no exact English equivalent. Moreover, its concordant translation as “pattern” or “culture” does not make much sense in the given passage. As far as concerns a Western Zhou

instructed by *wen* and failed by [falling into] profligacy. For the correction of profligacy there is nothing better than loyalty.<sup>83</sup>

The text further says:

殷教以敬，故先祭器，敬之至也。

The [kings of] Yin instructed by reverence, therefore they preferred the sacrificial vessels, so as to express the utmost reverence.<sup>84</sup>

The “Yin benji” 殷本紀 (Basic annals of Yin) quotes the following passage from the *Tang zheng* 湯征 (Punitive expedition of Tang):

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ritual context, scholars point to a possible semantic affinity between the terms *wen* 文 (\*mə[n]), *min* 敏 (\*mrə[n]ʔ) “diligent” and *min* 黽 (\*mʰrəŋʔ) “to exert oneself, to strive.” See Lothar von Falkenhausen, “The Concept of Wen in the Ancient Chinese Ancestral Cult,” *CLEAR* 18 (1996): 18–9. Others, such as Chow Tse-Tsung 周策縱 (1916–2007), direct our attention to the semantic significance of the Western Zhou epigraphic form of the graph 文 as 𠄎 (恣), with the element *xin* 心 “heart” or “mind” written in the middle. “As for the association of *wen* with the mind,” says Chow, “the *Shuowen* lists an entry *min* 恣, which it defines as ‘to exert oneself’ 自勉彊也, and supports it with a quotation from the ‘Li zheng’ 立政 of the *Book of History* [i.e. the *Book of Documents* (tr. Note)] ‘在受德恣.’ Since in the present edition of the *History* the word is given in the form 瞽 and no other printed record contains this form as shown in the *Shuowen*, the word is not widely noticed. But in the *Lunyu* Confucius is quoted as saying: ‘In self-exerting (or ‘in letters’) I am equal to other people. But as regards the superior man’s carrying out in his conduct what he professes, I have not attained it.’ 文莫吾猶人也；躬行君子，則吾未之有得. (7:32) The term 文莫 has bothered many commentators. A few scholars have noticed in the *Shuowen* an entry *mu* 慤 which is also defined as ‘(self)-exerting’ 勉也, so they have suggested that 文莫 must be 恣慤. Considering the bronze inscription form of *wen* with the ‘mind’ in the middle, I would think this last epigraphic form probably had been transcribed into 恣 by some, and 文 by others during Qin-Han times when the clerical style of writing (*lishu* 隸書) was created.” (Chow Tse-tsung, “Ancient Chinese Views on Literature, the Tao, and Their Relationship,” *CLEAR* 1 [1979]: 12). I am following Chow’s alternative translation of *wen* as “self-exertion” or “diligence,” not only because this meaning fits best with categories of *jing* 敬 “reverence,” and *zhong* 忠 “loyalty,” with whom it is associated in the cited passage from the *Baihutong*, but also because it resonates with Jao’s definition of the Western Zhou usage of *jing* as being alert, assiduous and diligent below.

83 Chen Li 陳立 annot., *Baihutong shuzheng* 白虎通疏證 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2018), 8.369. The English translation of this passage follows Tjan Tjoe Som (曾珠森), trans., *Po Hu T’ung* 白虎通: *The Comprehensive Discussions in the White Tiger Hall*, 2 vols. (Leiden: Brill, 1949–52), 2: 555.

84 *Baihutong shuzheng*, 8.372; Som, *Po Hu T’ung*, 2: 557–58.

湯曰：「汝不能敬命，予大罰殛之，無有攸赦。」作湯征。

Tang spoke: "If you cannot respect my commands, I will inflict upon you the penalty of death. Amnesty will not be granted." Thus, the *Punitive expedition of Tang* was composed.<sup>85</sup>

To say that the instructions of Yin were based on the idea of reverence is certainly not without justification. The "Zhou benji" 周本紀 (Basic annals of Zhou) recounts how King Wu enters the palace of Zhou 紂 (d. 1046 BC) (the last Shang king with the posthumous name Di Xin 帝辛 [tr. note]):

尹佚筮祝曰：「殷之末孫季紂，殄廢先王明德，侮蔑神祇不祀，昏暴商邑百姓，其章顯聞于天上帝。」

Yin Yi read out the prayer from the written bamboo slip:<sup>86</sup> "The last descendant of Yin, Zhou, forsook his ancestors, the former kings' bright *de*, defied the deities by not offering them sacrifices, and, in his dullness, was cruel to the families of the many cognomens of the settlement of Shang. Let these [transgressions] be obvious and known to Heavenly August Di-on-High."<sup>87</sup>

Another version of the text has "August Heaven Di-on-High" (皇天上帝), whereas the "Ke Yin jie" 克殷解 (Overthrowing the Yin explained) chapter from the *Yi Zhoushu* writes "Vast Heaven Di-on-High" (昊天上帝). During this period the two concepts "Heaven" and Di-on-High are found to have been conflated. Abandoning bright *de* was listed as a major crime committed by [the last Shang king] Zhou. The first part of the "Fei yue" 非樂 (Condemning music) chapter in the *Mozi* quotes a passage from the "Tang zhi guan xing" 湯之官刑 (Code of punishment of Tang), where Yin Yi is depicted as condemning the [last king of] Yin:

85 *Shiji*, 3.93-4.

86 Jao remarks here that Yin Yi 尹佚, also known as Scribe Yi (Shi Yi 史佚) is associated with the diviner grand historian of the Zhou court under King Wu and King Cheng. The Mohist section of the "Bibliographic Treatise" (Yiwenzhi 藝文志) in the *Hanshu* lists a text bearing his name which, however, only exists in fragments today.

87 *Shiji*, 4.126. Translation adapted from Nienhauser Jr., ed., *The Grand Scribe's Records, Volume I*, 62.

上帝弗常，九有以亡，上帝不順，降之百殛。

Di-on-High will not help him, so the nine lands are lost. Di-on-High opposes him and sends down many curses.<sup>88</sup>

The meaning of the binome *Jiuyou* 九有 resembles that of *Jiuzhou* 九州 (Nine Provinces) and *Jiuxian* 九縣 (Nine Counties) in that all of them stand for the notion of All-under-Heaven. If what the *Mozi* is citing does in fact originate from a Yin penal code, then the idea of Di-on-High taking disciplinary measures against the human sovereign would have already been written into the wooden manuscripts of the Yin people.

The “Wu Wang jian zuo” chapter from the *Da Dai Liji* holds that the way of the Yellow Thearch and Zhuan Xu is transmitted in the cinnabar document (*dan shu* 丹書), quoting the following words from the latter:

敬勝怠者吉，怠勝敬者滅，義勝欲者從，欲勝義者凶。

Auspicious is when reverence surpasses idleness; idleness surpassing reverence equals destruction. Propriety surpassing desires, this is to follow / comply with; ominous is when desires surpass propriety.<sup>89</sup>

The *Di ming yan* 帝命驗 (Examination of Di’s mandate) from the *Shangshu wei* 尚書緯 (Apocrypha to the *Book of Documents*) says:

季秋之甲子，赤爵銜丹書入于豐，止于(姬)昌戶，其書曰：「敬勝怠者吉云云。」

On the last *jia-zi* day in autumn, a red sparrow, holding a cinnabar document in its beak, entered [the Zhou royal capital] Feng, and stopped at the door of Ji Chang [i.e., King Wen of Zhou (tr. note)]. The document reads: “Auspicious is when reverence surpasses idleness and so forth.”<sup>90</sup>

88 Sun Yirang, *Mozi jiangou*, 8.260–61 Translation adapted from John Knoblock and Jeffrey Riegel, *Mozi 墨子: A Study and Translation of the Ethical and Political Writings* (Berkeley: Institute of East Asian Studies, the University of California, 2013), 282.

89 *Da Dai Liji jiegou*, 6.104.

90 Cited in *Shiji*, 4.115.

Compare also the “Ming zhuan” 明傳 (enlightened tradition) chapter in the work *Liu Tao*.<sup>91</sup> It is obvious how far back the origins of the concept *jing* actually reach. In the “Chu yu” we read:

敬恭明神者，以為之祝……。于是乎有天地神民類物之官，是謂五官，各司其序，不相亂也。民是以能有忠信，神是以能有明德，民神異業，敬而不瀆。

One honors and reveres the bright spirits in that one invokes them in sacrificial rites. [...] Thus, there are the offices of heaven and earth, spirits and humans and of the categories of things. These are called the five offices, each in charge of its own order, without getting mixed up with one another. The people are therefore able to show loyalty and trust and the spirits can confer bright *de*. The affairs of men and of spirits are differentiated, with [the people] showing reverence [to the spirits] without being disrespectful.<sup>92</sup>

The people attached great importance to the value of reverence and were therefore able to hold their distance to the spirits. Yet no matter at how far a distance they kept them (遠乎鬼神), they still had to maintain their reverent attitude towards the spirits. The *Lunyu*'s call “to apply oneself to the responsibilities due to men, and to revere the spirits while keeping them at a distance” (務民之義，敬鬼神而遠之) provides clear evidence for this assessment.<sup>93</sup> Furthermore, in the Chu Silk Manuscript we read:<sup>94</sup>

毋弗或敬，惟天作福，神則各[格]之；惟天作實[祿]，神則[惠]之。□(欽)<sup>95</sup>敬佳燦(備)，天像是愍。戒(虔)惟天□(象)<sup>96</sup>，下民之祇。敬之毋弋[忒]。

91 D. C. Lau 劉殿爵, Chen Fong Ching 陳方正, *Liutao zhuzi suoyin* 六韜逐字索引 (Hong Kong: Shangwu yinshuguan, 1997), 5.

92 *Guoyu jijie*, 18.513–14.

93 *Lunyu jishi*, 12.406.

94 The following interpretative transcription of the Chu Silk Manuscript has been updated according to the latest version of Jao's “Chu boshu xin zheng,” in idem, *Xuantang jilin: Shilin xin bian*, 3, 860–911. Some graphs left unidentified in Jao's transcription have been supplemented from the most recent transcription of the manuscript's text in Li Ling, *Zidanku boshu*, 2: 43–77.

95 This reconstruction follows Li Ling, *Zidanku Boshu*, 2: 56.

96 This reconstruction follows *ibid.*

Never be disrespectful. When Heaven creates good fortune, the spirits will then cause it to arrive to you. When Heaven creates calamities, the spirits will (likewise) confer them on you. Be attentive and reverent in serving the spirits and take Heaven's patterns as standard. Revere the Heavenly patterns and the people will bring them sacrifices. Respect them [i.e., Heaven's patterns] without deviation.

From this ardent admonition we may know that the notion of *jing* was related in a most important way to the business of serving the spirits.

The *Shi Daxu* 詩大序 (The great preface to the *Book of Songs*) proclaims:

先王以是成孝敬。

Through poetry, the former kings effected filial devotion and respect [towards the spirits].<sup>97</sup>

It is in conjunction with each other that reverence towards the spirits and filial piety become statutory. The strong association between *jing* and offering sacrifices is also clearly stated in the *Liji*. The "Ji yi" 祭義 (The meaning of sacrifices) chapter has: "Importunateness [in sacrificing] is inconsistent with reverence." ([祭]煩則不敬).<sup>98</sup> The "Ji tong" 祭統 (A summary account of sacrifices) chapter says:

天子諸侯非莫耕也，王后夫人非莫蠶也。身致其誠信，誠信之謂盡，盡之謂敬，敬盡然後可以事神明，此祭之道也。

It was not that the Son of Heaven and the princes had not men to plough for them, or that the queen and the princely wives had not women to tend the silkworms for them; it (them ploughing the fields and tending the silkworms themselves [tr. note]) was to give expression to their personal sincerity. Such sincerity is what is called doing their utmost; and such doing of their utmost is what is called reverence. When they had reverently done their utmost, they could serve the bright spirits. Such was the way of sacrificing.<sup>99</sup>

97 *Maoshi zhengyi*, 1.12. Compare Stephen Owen, *Readings in Chinese Literary Thought* (Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press, 1992), 44–5.

98 *Liji zhengyi*, 47.1528. Translation adapted from James Legge, trans., *Li Chi: Book of Rites*, 2 vols., edited by Ch'u Chai and Winberg Chai (New Hyde Park: University Books, 1967 [1885]), 2: 210.

99 *Liji Zhengyi*, 49.1573. Translation adapted from Legge, *Li Chi*, 2: 239.

The text of this passage continues:

天子藉千畝，婦繅絲養牲為祀，以祭先王先公。

The Son of Heaven had his sacred field of a thousand acres, his wives unwound the silk threads [from the cocoons of the silkworms] and raised the sacrificial animals which were to be offered in sacrifice to the former kings and patriarchs.<sup>100</sup>

Also in the “Xiang yin jiu yi” 鄉飲酒義 (The meaning of the drinking festivity in the districts) we read:

仁義接，賓主有事，俎、豆有數曰聖。聖立而將之以敬曰禮，禮以體長幼曰德。德也者，得於身也。

Intercourse being conducted on the basis of fellow-kindness and propriety, guests and host exchanging toasts and the number of stands and dishes being properly fixed, this is called consecration. When consecration is established, and the procedures are handled with reverence, this is called ritual etiquette. Ritual etiquette embodying the distinction between old and young is called *de*. *De* is that which is the characteristic of (lit. obtained within [tr. note]) the person.<sup>101</sup>

This passage explains *de* 德 paronomastically in terms of *de* 得 (to obtain) and defines the honoring of *de* as the foundation of ritual propriety (*li* 禮).

The Zhou people's conquest over the Yin does indeed mark the rise of a new power, similar to the case of Persia overthrowing Babylon. The Zhou people had their own original ideas on how to establish their state. “Honoring *de*” is really an elaboration and advancement of the instructions of Yin. *Jing* refers to the veneration of Heaven whereas *de* marks the essence of cultivating one's person. To put it in concrete terms, *jing* may be described as the expression of standing in awe of Heaven; magnificent *de* in turn implies a person's perfected dignified deportment, which takes its pattern from the Heavenly High god. In his “Dian yin” 典引 (Elaboration on the canon), Ban Gu 班固 (32–92 AD) proclaims: “Vast and impressive is this *de*, a thearch's utmost deportment.”

100 This passage does not appear in the *Li ji* and has, to my knowledge, no verbatim counterpart in any of the transmitted classics.

101 *Liji zhengyi*, 61.1902. Translation adapted from Legge, *Li Chi*, 2.438.

(洋洋乎若德，帝者之上儀).<sup>102</sup> Although this saying comes from a person living in the Han period, its meaning without doubt must have been informed by ancient wisdom.

The hymn “Jing zhi” 敬之 (Reverence) in the *Zhou song* 周頌 (Hymns of Zhou) section from the *Book of Songs* reads:

敬之敬之	Reverence, reverence!
天維顯思	By Heaven all is observed;
命不易哉	Its appointment is not easy to hold.
無曰高高在上	Do not say it is high, high above,
陟降厥士	Going up and down about its own business.
日監在茲	Day in day out it watches us here. <sup>103</sup>

Mighty Heaven oversees man at every turn, it is thus absolutely necessary to be “reverent, reverent.” The “Shao gao” chapter furthermore says:

Let the king first bring under his influence the managers of affairs of Yin, associating them with the managers of affairs of our Zhou. This will regulate their characters, and they will make daily advancement. Let the king make reverence the resting-place (of his mind). He may not but honor his *de*.<sup>104</sup>

Human character provides the pattern of human existence. One therefore needs to control and restrict one’s unyielding (sanguinary?) nature in order to advance in the cultivation of *de*. Honoring *de* requires one to control one’s character, only then can one arrive at a stage of advanced *de*. Patriarch Shao warns over and over again that it was because the Xia and the Yin “did not revere their *de*, that their appointment had prematurely fallen down” (不敬厥德，乃早墜厥命) and that “the king should therefore act in accordance with *de* and pray to Heaven for an eternal mandate” (王其德之用，祈天永命). Thus, he who is reverent will secure Heaven’s assistance, whereas he who is not will meet his demise. Judging from the evidence found in the *Songs* and *Documents* we may say that revering *de* constitutes the center of Western Zhou moral philosophy.

102 *Wenxuan*, 48.2161.

103 *Mao* #288 (*Maoshi zhengyi*, 19.1583). Translation adapted from Waley, *The Book of Songs*, 302.

104 See pp. 234–35 above for the Chinese text.

The “Shifa” chapter in the *Zhoushu* 周書,<sup>105</sup> explains the meaning of the term “*jing*” as “being alert at all times during day and night” (夙夜警戒).<sup>106</sup> The *Daxue* quotes the following lines from the “Tang zhi panming” 湯之盤銘 (Tang’s inscription on a basin): “Be cautious each day anew, every day, day after day” (苟日新，日日新，又日新).<sup>107</sup> Many Confucian scholars from the Qing period understand the graph *ji* 苟 from the phrase 苟日新 in terms of the *Shuowen jiezi*’s glossing of the graph as “to be unrelentingly cautious on one’s own account” (自急救也).<sup>108</sup> The graph 𠄎(苟) from the *Yu ding* inscription represents the short form of 敬, hence the graph 苟 from the Tang *pan* can also be read 敬. This means the phrase “be cautious each day anew” should also be read “be reverent each day anew” (敬日新). The *Shuowen* glosses *jing* 敬 as *su* 肅 (respectful, solemn), which it further explains as “to be reverent when conducting sacrificial services” (持事振敬也) under the entry “*su*” 肅.<sup>109</sup> The *Shiming* moreover says: “*jing* 敬 reads *jing* 警 (to be alert). This means to keep oneself respectfully alert” (敬，警也；恒自肅警也).<sup>110</sup> Thus 敬日新 more precisely means to be alert each day, not daring to indulge in leisure. This tells us that the Yin people originally also upheld reverence in managing their affairs. Since the notion of *jing* had already existed, the Zhou people merely placed renewed emphasis on it. Generally, the term must have implied to be on alert in one’s affairs. For this reason, *jing* was also written “*jing*” 敬, meaning “to warn,” “warning.” In the “Lu yu,” we find the following passage:

昔聖王之處民也，擇瘠土而處之，勞其民而用之，故長王天下。夫民勞則思，思則善心生；逸則淫，淫則忘善，忘善則惡心生。

Formerly, the sage kings administered their subject populations by choosing plots of barren soil for them to settle on and by employing them in hard labor. It was thus that they were able to govern All-under-Heaven for extended periods of time. When the common people find themselves employed in hard labor, they become considerate; when they become

105 This text corresponds to the “Shifa jie” 諡法解 (The Order of Posthumous Names Explained) chapter in the *Yi Zhoushu* (tr. note).

106 Huang Huaixin, Zhang Maorong et al., *Yi Zhoushu huijiao jizhu*, 6.670.

107 *Liji zhengyi*, 1861.

108 *Shuowen jiezi*, 9.188. Jao refers the reader here to the passage “*jing ri xin*” 苟日新 in Chen Pan’s 陳槃 (1905–1999), *Jingyi jiwén* 經義紀聞. See Chen Pan, “Daxue ‘ji ri xin, ri ri xin’ yi” 《大學》「苟日新日日新」義, *Shumu jikan* 書目季刊 16, no. 2 (1982): 3–7. Collected in *Jianzhuang wenlu* 澗莊文錄, in idem, *Chen Pan zhuzuo ji* 陳槃著作集 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2010), 7: 177–79.

109 *Shuowen jiezi*, 9.188; 3.65.

110 See *Shiming shuzheng bu*, 4.111.

considerate, benevolent behavior arises. If they are allowed to dwell in leisure, then they tend to become immoderate. When they become immoderate, malicious behavior arises.

沃土之民不材，淫也。瘠土之民莫不嚮義，勞也。是故天子大采朝日，與三公、九卿祖識地德；日中考政，與百官之政事，師尹維旅、牧、相宣序民事。

That people living on fertile land tend to lack many capabilities is due to them indulging in leisure. That among those who live on barren lands there are none who do not tend towards behaving socially conscious and responsible, is due to them being employed in hard labor. For this reason, every year on the day of the spring equinox, the Son of Heaven wears the five colored imperial robe and worships the sun god. He meets with the three patriarchs and the nine dignitaries to inquire into and to learn about the *de* of the ground. At noon he examines the successes and failures of his government and inquires into the daily tasks of the hundred officials, including how the senior officials, the many servicemen, the herdsmen and the chancellors of the states promoted the order of government within the people's affairs.

少采夕月，與大史、司載糾虔天刑；日入監九御，使潔奉禘、郊之粢盛，而後即安。

Every year on the day of the autumn equinox, the Son of Heaven wears the three colored embroidered robe and worships the moon god. He meets with the grand historian and the court astronomer to devoutly survey the Heavenly patterns. After sunset he inspects the nine imperial concubines and orders them to purify and to prepare the offerings for grand imperial sacrifices and for the ceremonial grain offerings in the suburbs. Only after this has been done does he go to rest.

諸侯朝修天子之業命，晝考其國職，夕省其典刑，夜儆百工，使無惰淫，而後即安。

Every morning, the regional rulers receive and implement the commands of the Son of Heaven. During the day, they carry out the affairs of their polities and in the evening, they reflect on their statutes. At night, they admonish their many officials not to indulge in excess and only then do they go to rest.

卿大夫朝考其職，晝講其庶政，夕序其業，夜庀其家事，而後即安。士朝受業，晝而講貫，夕而習復，夜而計過無憾，而後即安。自庶人以下，明而動，晦而休，無日以怠。

In the morning, the high officials carry out their main duties, during the day, they go about their various governmental obligations, in the evening, they set their affairs in order and at night, they regulate their households and only then go to rest. The servicemen receive their orders in the morning, during the day, they are involved in executing their tasks, in the evening, they revise them, at night, they recapitulate the successes and failures without regrets and only then they go to rest. All the commoners go about their affairs at dawn and go to rest at dusk. Not one single day is spent in idleness.<sup>111</sup>

This portion of speech is ascribed to Jing Jiang 敬姜, wife of Mu Bo 穆伯, the mother of the high official Gongfu Wenbo 公父文伯 of Lu 魯. It ranks among the most eminent sayings transmitted from antiquity and can be read as an annotation to the “Wu yi” chapter from the *Documents*. Jing Jiang explains here that at the time of the spring equinox the *de* of the ground had to be inquired into and learned about, whereas at the time of the autumn equinox the patterns of Heaven needed to be observed reverently. According to Wei Zhao’s commentary, “As to what made [the notion of the] *de* of the ground to become so eminent” (地德所以廣生):

言天子與公卿，因朝日以修陽政而習地德，因夕月以治陰教而糾天型。日照晝，月照夜，各因其明以修其事。

It is said that the Son of Heaven together with the patriarchs and dignitaries studied the *de* of the ground, for during the time of the spring equinox they were cultivating the governing standards of *yang*; they investigated the patterns of Heaven, for during the time of the autumn equinox they were focusing on the instructions of *yin*. The sun illuminates the day; the moon illuminates the night. Each of these conditions of illumination was associated with different affairs that had to be put in order at their respective time.<sup>112</sup>

111 *Guoyu jijie*, 5.194–97 My translation of this passage is informed by the notes in *Guoyu jijie* as well as by the modern Chinese rendering in Lai Kehong’s 來可泓 *Guoyu zhijie* 國語直解 (Shanghai: Fudan daxue chubanshe, 2000), 280–83.

112 *Guoyu jijie*, 5.194.

On the occasion of *da cai zhao ri* 大采朝日 (lit. greater colored morning sun), conducted on the day of the spring equinox, [the Son of Heaven] wore a five-colored robe; on that of *shao cai xi ri* 少采夕日 (lit. lesser colored evening moon), conducted on the day of the autumn equinox, [the Son of Heaven] wore a three-colored robe. There exist many different interpretations as to the style and color of the *da cai* and *shao cai* robes, which shall not further concern us here. However, it should be noted that both the terms *da cai* and *xiao cai* (sic) can already be found in the OBI. What Jing Jiang refers to as inquiring into and learning about the *de* of the ground during the morning sun, investigating the successes and failures of government at noon, and observing the patterns of Heaven during the autumn equinox, falls into the affairs of the Son of Heaven. The regional rulers too had to investigate during the day, reflect in the evening and be alert at night: “being assiduous every day” (惟日孳孳), moving about when it gets bright and going to rest when it gets dark, “from morning to mid-day, and from mid-day to sundown, not allowing oneself leisure to eat” (自朝至于日中昃，不遑暇食).<sup>113</sup> This sort of diligent and earnest labor is what the “Shao gao” refers to as “*jing de*.” Thus, the industrious idea of reverence the Zhou people were promoting is in fact quite different from the tranquil notion of reverence advocated by the people of Song 宋 (the polity ruled by the descendants of the house of Yin during the Western and Eastern Zhou period [tr. note]).

During the Spring and Autumn period, many eminent personalities came forth with refined and sharp explanations for the term *jing*. Consider for instance the following quotations from the *Zuozhuan*:

白季使過冀，見冀缺耨，其妻饁之，敬，相待如賓，與之歸，言諸文公曰，敬，德之聚也，能敬必有德，德以治民，君請用之.....。

Jiu Ji (i.e., Xu Chen 胥臣 [d. 622 BC]) had been sent on a mission and was passing through Ji. He saw Xi Que (d. 597 BC) hoeing, and his wife carrying food to him. They were respectful, treating one another like guests. He took Xi Que back with him and spoke of him to Patriarch Wen (Patriarch Wen of Jin 晉, Chong'er 重耳 [697–628 BC] [tr. note]): “Respect is the accumulation of *de*. To show respect one must first possess *de*. *De* is what is used to govern the people. I am asking, my lord, that you employ him [...].”<sup>114</sup>

<sup>113</sup> *Shu* 35.305–15.

<sup>114</sup> *Zuo*, Xi 33.6, 501. The English translation has been adapted from Durrant, Li, and Schaberg, trans., *Zuo Tradition*, 453.

Moreover, *li* 禮 (ritual propriety) and *jing* are often referred to as a conceptual pair as in the following two examples:

禮，國之幹也，敬，禮之輿也，不敬則禮不行，禮不行則上下昏，何以長世。

Ritual propriety is the pillar of the domain, and respect is the vehicle of ritual. If one does not show respect, then ritual will not advance. And if ritual does not advance, then the order of superior and inferior will be confused. How then will his line extend for generations?<sup>115</sup> (Inner Scribe Guo 過 criticizing the Prince of Jin for behaving slothfully upon receiving a piece of ceremonial jade.)

禮，身之幹也，敬，身之基也。

Ritual propriety is a person's trunk; reverence, a person's foundation.<sup>116</sup> (Meng Xianzi 孟獻子 accusing Xi Que 郤缺 of speaking disrespectfully.)

Not being reverent means being indolent and careless. The *Shuowen jiezi* says: "Indolence means to be irreverent" (惰，不敬也).<sup>117</sup> Zhou people hold that it is not only necessary to revere one's superiors but also to show respect to those below. Thus, they say:

敬，民之主也，而棄之，何以承守

Reverence sustains one as the master of the people. If one abandons it, how can one uphold and guard one's patrimony?<sup>118</sup> (Mu Shu 穆叔 [d. 538 BC] discussing the necessity of upholding reverence.)

Reverence constitutes the basis of *de*, whereas a person's character relies on ritual propriety and reverence to become established. "Without ritual propriety, one's character cannot be established, without reverence there is no stability"

115 *Zuo*, Xi 11.2, 338. The English translation follows Durrant, Li, and Schaberg, trans., *Zuo Tradition*, 305.

116 *Zuo*, Cheng 13.1, 860. The English translation follows Durrant, Li, and Schaberg, trans., *Zuo Tradition*, 801.

117 *Shuowen jiezi*, 10.220.

118 *Zuo*, Xiang 28.11, 1151. The English translation follows Durrant, Li, and Schaberg, trans., *Zuo Tradition*, 1229.

(無禮則身不立，不敬則不安).<sup>119</sup> These utterances can be understood as the Zhou people's elaboration of the notion of *jing de*. This proves that reverence, understood as a mode of instruction, reaches quite far back in time.

#### 4 The Interrelation of Politics and Morals within the Conception of the Heavenly Mandate

The term “*Di ming*” 帝命 (Di's Mandate) is synonymous with the idea of the Heavenly Mandate which implies that the rise and fall of universal rulers is decided through Heaven's decree. After the House of Yin had been replaced by that of Zhou, the position of the ruler became closely linked with the concept of the Heavenly Mandate, giving rise to the narrative of its bestowal. The “*Shao gao*” states:

嗚呼！皇天上帝，改厥元子茲大國殷之命。惟王受命，無疆惟休，亦無疆惟恤。嗚呼！曷其奈何弗敬？

Alas! August Heaven and Di on High altered their principal heir and with it the Mandate of this great settlement Yin. It was King [Wen] who then received [and assumed] the Mandate, infinite its blessings, yet infinite also its burdens. Alas! How could he possibly not be reverent?<sup>120</sup>

Similarly, the “*Da gao*” states:

弗造哲，迪民康，矧曰其有能格知天命.....敷賁敷前人受命，茲不忘大功。.....

I cannot accomplish wisdom and lead the people to prosperity; how much less should I be able to reach the knowledge of the Mandate of Heaven! It is upon me to arduously serve the charge received by the former men (i.e., the former kings).<sup>121</sup> Now, I do not forget their great achievements. [...]

119 Quoted from Yan Shigu's 顏師古 (581–645) annotations to the “*Wu xing zhi*” 五行志 (Treatise of the five agents) in *Hanshu*, 27.1357.

120 *Shu* 32.191–226. See also the interpretations of this passage in Shaughnessy, “The Duke of Zhou's Retirement in the East and the Beginnings of the Minister-Monarch Debate in Chinese Political Philosophy,” *Early China* 18 (1993): 61, and Nivison, “An Interpretation of the ‘*Shao gao*,’” *Early China* 20 (1995): 180.

121 Pi Xirui 皮錫瑞, *Jinwen Shangshu kaozheng* 金文尚書考證 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1989 [1897]), 13.279, and Chen Mengjia 陳夢家, *Shangshu tonglun* 尚書通論 (Beijing:

已！予惟小子，不敢替上帝命。天休于寧(文)王，興我小邦周。寧(文)王惟卜用，克綏受茲命。.....

Alas! I am but the young heir, and I do not dare to abandon Di on High's Mandate.<sup>122</sup> Heaven bestowed his grace on King Wen and thus promoted our small polity Zhou. King Wen divined and acted accordingly, and so he was able to receive and assume this (great) Appointment. [...]

爽邦由哲，亦惟十人迪知上帝命越天棗忱。.....爾亦不知天命不易。.....肆朕誕以爾東征。天命不僭，卜陳惟若茲。

Among all the wise men of the polity, only the ten of you obey and know the Charge of Di, and the sincere assistance Heaven grants us. [...] How can it be that you do not know Heaven's Mandate cannot be changed! [...] It is on these accounts that I make this expedition in force to the east. There is no mistake about the Decree of Heaven. The indications given by the tortoise-shell are all to the same effect.<sup>123</sup>

When during the rebellion of the San Jian 三監 (Three Guards) and the Huai Yi 淮夷,<sup>124</sup> the Duke of Zhou attended upon the decree of King Cheng to lead a military campaign to [the former Shang stronghold (tr. note)] in the east, he composed this announcement in order to extend [the Zhou's receipt of] the Heavenly Mandate. This illustrates the legitimacy of the Zhou in replacing Yin as rulers over All-under-Heaven. Numerous admonitory words like these appear in the *Book of Songs*, in the *Documents* as well as in bronze inscriptions. The term “*da ming*” 大命 (Great Charge), as in “to promulgate the Great Charge in the polity of Mei” (明大命于妹邦) in the “Jiu gao,” and in “to exert oneself [in the implementation of] the Great Charge” (勞董[勤]大命), as well as in “to extend and revere the Great Charge” (黜貉[恪]大命) in the Mao Gong *ding* and Shan Bo *Zhong* inscriptions refers to the Heavenly Mandate. The expression

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Zhonghua Shuju, 2005 [1957]), 211, argue that the phrase “敷賁敷前人受命” reflects the old text tradition of the *Documents* and should read “奔傳前人受命” (to arduously serve the charge received by the former men) in the new text version. My translation follows their interpretation. Jao's choice in punctuating the passage as 「[...]敷賁。敷前人受命」, does not allow for a meaningful English translation.

122 The interpretation of *ti* 替 as *fei* 廢, “to discard,” “to abandon,” follows Zeng Yunqian, *Shangshu zheng du*, 3.152.

123 *Shu* 27. 39–551. Compare Legge, *The Shoo King*, 362–375.

124 I.e., the Wu Geng rebellion during which the three guards allied with several Yi tribes and the last Shang prince to overthrow the government under the Duke of Zhou, which they regarded as illegitimate (tr. note).

“to reverently heed to the Heavenly Mandate” (恪謹天命) from the “Pan Geng” chapter in the *Documents* even developed into a sort of set phrase. Because of the shifting position of the ruler, there arose sayings of the sort of “the Mandate of Heaven is not unchanging, never [allow yourself to] be neglectful” (天命靡常，匪懈). Consider for instance the following passages from the *Elegantiae* and the *Hymns* sections in the *Book of Songs*:

有周不顯 帝命不時 .....	Illustrious was the House of Zhou Enduring the Mandate of Di.
商之孫子 其麗不億 上帝既命 侯于周服	The descendants of the House of Shang innumerable were their hosts Yet Di-on-High gave his command And by Zhou they were subdued.
侯服于周 天命靡常	By Zhou they were subdued Heaven's Mandate, it does not last perpetually. <sup>125</sup>
綏萬邦 婁豐年 天命匪解	He pacified the myriad polities He secured successive years of abundance Heaven's Mandate he never neglected. <sup>126</sup>
維天之命 於穆不已	The Charge that Heaven gave May it solemnly last without end. <sup>127</sup>

When we come to the time of the Han period, discussions on the conditions of a sovereign's receipt of the Heavenly Mandate flourished even more. Ban Biao's 班彪 (3–54 AD) *Wang ming lun* 王命論 (Treatise on the mandate of kings) mentions five reasons that led to the rise of Han Gaozu 漢高祖 (Emperor Gaozu of Han [256–195 BC]). During the Eastern Han period, Fu Gan 傅幹 (b. 175 AD) composed the *Wang ming xu* 王命敘 (Order of the mandate of kings) where he discusses the four events leading up to Shizu's 世祖 (Emperor Guangwu

125 Wen wang 文王 (King Wen), *Mao* #235 (*Maoshi zhengyi*, 16.1121–27). Translation adapted from Waley, *The Book of Songs*, 227–28.

126 Huan 桓 (Bold), *Mao* #294 (*Maoshi zhengyi*, 19.1614). Translation adapted from Waley, *The Book of Songs*, 306.

127 “Wei Tian zhi ming,” *Mao* #267 (*Maoshi zhengyi*, 19.1509). Translation adapted from Waley, *The Book of Songs*, 291.

光武 of Han [5 BC–57 AD]) rise to power.<sup>128</sup> By the time Li Delin 李德林 (532–592 AD) wrote his *Tian ming lun* in the Sui 隋 dynasty (581–618 AD), this practice had already developed into a set routine.

The doctrine that the “Mandate of Heaven is not constant” underwent an important development during the Spring and Autumn and Warring States periods. In a passage from the *Zuozhuan*, listed under the fifth year in the reign of Patriarch Xi 僖 (655 BC), Gong Zhiqi 宮之奇 is depicted as remonstrating against attacking the polity of Guo 虢:

臣聞之，鬼神非人實親，惟德是依。故周書曰：「皇天無親，惟德是輔」

I have heard that ghosts and spirits are not actual kin to the living, it is *de* that they attach to. Thus, in the *Documents of Zhou* it says:<sup>129</sup> “August Heaven has no kin, Heaven only supports [those displaying] *de*.”<sup>130</sup>

In his *Lisao* 離騷 (Encountering sorrow), Qu Yuan 屈原 (fl. 340–278 BC) proclaims:

皇天無私阿兮	August Heaven knows no partiality
覽民德焉錯輔	It looks for the virtuous and makes them his ministers
夫維聖哲以茂行兮	For only the wise and good can ever flourish
苟得用此下土	It is given to them to possess the earth below. <sup>131</sup>

In his commentary to the above passage, Wang Yi remarks:

皇天神明，無所私阿。觀萬民之中有道德者，因置以為君，使賢能輔佐，以成其志。

August Heaven is divinely enlightened and therefore knows no partiality.<sup>132</sup> It observes the multitudinous people looking for those among them who

128 See Yan Kejun 嚴可均 (1762–1843), ed., *Quan shanggu sandai Qin Han Sanguo Liuchao wen* 全上古三代秦漢三國六朝文 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1958), 910–11, for this text.

129 Jao cites here Du Yu's commentary to the *Zuozhuan*, according to which the title *Zhoushu* refers to a lost work.

130 *Zuo*, Xi 5.8, 307–10.

131 *Chuci buzhu*, 23. The translation of this passage has been adapted from Hawkes, trans., *The Songs of the South*, 73.

132 The binome *shenming* 神明 (divinely enlightened) should be understood as a legal term here. Throughout the Western Zhou and Spring and Autumn period, the spirits,

display (or possess) *dao-de* (virtue). Those it puts into the position of rulers, having able men of worth assist them. This is how Heaven accomplishes its intent.<sup>133</sup>

This states that only those possessing or displaying *de* are able to rule All-under-Heaven. In the “Kang gao,” the king admonishes the young Zhou prince Feng 封 with the words:

嗚呼！肆汝小子封。惟命不于常，汝念哉！無我殄享。

Alas! Now, youngster Feng, as to the Mandate, it is not eternal, be aware of that! Do not stop serving me.<sup>134</sup>

To be able to receive Heaven’s assistance it is absolutely necessary to practice *de*. That the human sovereign receives the Heavenly Mandate is because he possesses *de* and implements it tirelessly; thus, Heaven grants him its support. The Ban *gui* inscription says:

惟民之(sic)循(造)在彝。

The accomplishment of the people (sic!) consists (in maintaining their) constant moral principles.

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including Heaven, were regarded as the guarantors and overseers of covenants who would detect and mete out punishments against any party who is found in breach of the terms of a covenant. “The spirits’ being *ming*,” says Piotr Gibas, “means that they can (1) see peoples’ intentions; (2) evaluate peoples’ virtue and truthfulness; (3) reveal peoples’ true virtue. *Ming* is the spirits’ power to discriminate and to evaluate, and it is *ming* that defines them” (Piotr Gibas, “Mozi and the Ghosts: The Concept of *ming* 明 in *Mozi’s ‘Ming gui’* 《明鬼》,” *Early China* 40 [2017]: 109).

133 *Chuci buzhu*, 23–4.

134 *Shu* 29.878–89. Most Chinese and Western commentators read this sentence either in the sense of “Don’t make me terminate your charge,” or “don’t cause (Heaven) to revoke our charge.” However, in light of the rhetoric we have observed in the preceding examples, I suggest to interpret *wo* 我 here as the object of the sentence, “me,” standing in an exposed position in front of the predicate. This kind of syntactical accentuation is well known from oath formulae in the *Zuozhuan*. Compare for instance the following two examples: “The covenant said: ‘We shall not deceive you, and you shall not defraud us.’” (盟曰：「我無爾詐，爾無我虞。」) (*Zuo*, Xuan 15.2, 761); “With every generation they swore covenants and vows to establish good faith with one another, saying, ‘you will not rebel against us, and we will not force you to sell anything, nor will we in any case importune you or seize anything from you.’” (世有盟誓，以相信也，曰：「爾無我叛，我無強賈，毋或勾奪。」) (*Zuo*, Zhao 16.3, 1380).

The phrase *zai yi* 在彝 (consisting in / depending on constant moral principles) may be explained through a passage from the ode “Zheng min” 烝民 (The multitudinous people) in the *Book of Songs*:

天生烝民	Heaven gave birth to the multitudinous people,
有物有則	furnishing them with customs and standards. <sup>135</sup>
民之秉彝	The people held on to their constant moral principles,
好是懿德	as they were fond of this excellent <i>de</i> . <sup>136</sup>

*Yi* 彝 also means “*chang*” 常 (constant, enduring), as in “the constant moral principles were set forth in their due order” (彝倫攸敘),<sup>137</sup> referring to some kind of moral system. This sort of constant *de* is not just important for a sovereign to embrace; ordinary people should also live according to it. The result of not being reverent amounts to “forfeiting the mandate and bringing disaster on oneself instead” (棄命而取禍). This means to lose the harmonious influences brought forth and raised by Heaven and earth and not being able to secure one’s mandate / fate. For the thirteenth year of the reign of Patriarch Cheng 成 (577 BC), the *Zuozhuan* cites Liu Patriarch Kang as criticizing Chengzi 成子 (Patriarch Cheng of Su 成肅公 [dates unknown]) for not being reverent upon receiving sacrificial meat at the altar of the earth. The passage further includes the following exposition:

吾聞之，民受天地之中以生，所謂命也。是以有動作禮義威儀之則，以定命也。能者養之以福，不能者敗以取禍。

I have heard that men are born of the spirit of central harmony between Heaven and earth, and this is what is called their mandate. That is why there are standards for action and movement, ritual propriety, and duty, as well as for proper deportment employed to secure this mandate. The able ones nurture this mandate and find their way to good fortune; the feckless ones ruin this mandate and bring on disaster.

135 For the interpretation of the term *wu* 物 as “customs” see Fu Sinian’s 傅斯年 (1896–1950) *ba* 跋 on pp. 194–97 in Chen Pan’s, “Chunqiu ‘Gong shi yu yu Tang’ shuo” 春秋「公矢魚于棠」說, *Bulletin of the Institute of History and Philology Academia Sinica* 7.2 (1936): 175–97.

136 *Mao* #260 (*Maoshi zhengyi*, 18.1432). Translation adapted from Waley, *The Book of Songs*, 275.

137 This passage appears in the “Hong fan” chapter of the *Documents*. See *Shu* 24.67–70.

是故君子勤禮，小人盡力。勤禮莫如致敬，盡力莫如敦篤。敬在養神，篤在守業。

That is why noble men are assiduous in fulfilling ritual propriety, while common men exert themselves to the utmost in physical labor. In being assiduous in fulfilling ritual propriety, there is nothing equal to offering reverence. In exerting oneself to the utmost in physical labor, there is nothing equal to steady dedication. Reverence lies in nurturing the spirits; dedication lies in keeping to one's vocation.

國之大事，在祀與戎。祀有執爓，戎有受脤，神之大事也。今成子惰棄其命矣，其不反乎。

The great affairs of the domain lie with sacrifice and warfare. With sacrifices, there is the ritual of distributing roasted sacrificial meat; with warfare, there is the ritual of receiving sacrificial meat. These are the critical junctures in serving the spirits. In the present case, Cheng Patriarch Su was slack; he has cast aside his charge. Surely, he will not return!<sup>138</sup>

What Liu Patriarch Kang refers to as “men are born of the spirit of central harmony between Heaven and earth” describes exactly the import of the term *ming*. *Zhong* 中 stands for “*zhong*” 衷 in the sense the term is employed in the “Tang gao” 湯誥 (Announcement of Tang) chapter from the *Documents*:

降衷有恆性。

[August Di-on-High] confers a moral sense and a constant nature.<sup>139</sup>

The “Shi gu” passage in the *Guangya* states: “*Zhong* 衷 means *shan* 善 (good, virtuous).”<sup>140</sup> The conditions for a secure or fixed mandate rest with one's actions and behavior as conforming to the standards of proper deportment (*weiyi* 威儀). These standards (*ze* 則) are the same standards which the Greater Elegantiae in the *Book of Songs* refer to in the verse pair:

138 Zuo, Cheng. 13.2, 860–61. The English translation of this passage follows with minor amendments that of Durrant, Li, and Schaberg, *Zuo Tradition*, 803.

139 The actual text reads “August Di-on-High conferred a moral sense on men, compliance with which results in their nature becoming constant.” (惟皇上帝，降衷于下民。若有恆性). See *Shu* 12.29–41. Cf. Legge, *The Shoo King*, 185.

140 *Guangya shuzheng*, 1A.11. Jao notes here that this is Wang Niansun's 王念孫 explanation.

Heaven gave birth to the multitudinous people,  
furnishing them with customs and standards.

These standards can be understood in terms of the people's discipline. As far as concerns rulers and noble men, they must be assiduous in fulfilling ritual propriety, offering reverence to nourish the spirits. The task of nourishing the spirits is fulfilled through ritual sacrifices. These sacrifices in turn form one aspect among the major affairs of the state. The *Hou Hanshu* 後漢書 (Book of the Later Han) records a strategic advice by Xun Shuang's 荀爽 (128–190 AD):

昔者聖人建天地之中而謂之禮。禮者，所以興福祥之本，而止禍亂之源也。

In former times, the sages established the central harmony between heaven and earth and called this ritual propriety. Ritual propriety is the basis for auspicious fortunes to flourish and the source for calamities and disorder to stop.<sup>141</sup>

Xun appropriates here the text from the *Zuozhuan* in stating that “the central harmony between heaven and earth is what constitutes ritual propriety.” The idea of offering one's reverence manifests itself in the act of nourishing the spirits. Hence the notion of reverence was based in the context of offering sacrifices to the spirits. This is why reverence was associated with ritual propriety. Not being reverent equals idleness. Chengzi had been idle, thus he ran the danger of forfeiting his “mandate.”

The term *ding ming* 定命 (secure / fixed mandate) originally appeared in the *Book of Songs*. In the ode “Yi” 抑 (Grave) we read:

無競維人	Unsurpassed were these men,
四方其訓之	Whom all world took their lesson from
有覺德行	To their upright virtuous conduct,
四國順之	All the world rendered obedient homage.
訏謨定命	With great counsels did they secure their mandate,
遠猶辰告	Through far-reaching plans and timely announcements.
敬慎威儀	Reverently attentive to their proper deportment,
維民之則	They became a standard to their people. <sup>142</sup>

141 *Hou Hanshu*, 62.2054.

142 *Mao* #256 (*Maoshi zhengyi*, 18.1367).

Liu Patriarch Kang says that the “standards for action and movement, ritual propriety and duty, as well as for proper deportment” need to be employed to secure one’s mandate. In the ode “Yi” this is achieved through great counsels and far-reaching plans, the implementation of which also depends on paying reverent attention to one’s proper deportment so one can become a pattern for the people. Both meanings complement each other.

Starting from the Spring and Autumn period, the notion of the Heavenly Mandate changes every so often from a political into a moral concept. The *Guliang zhuan* 穀梁傳 (Guliang’s commentary) states:

人之於天也，以道受命；於人也，以言受命。不若(順)於道者，天絕之也。不若(順)於言者，人絕之也。臣子大受命。

In their relations with Heaven, humans receive their mandate from the former through the way [of Heaven]. In their relations with one another humans receive their mandate through words. Those who do not conform to the way [of Heaven], Heaven cuts off. Those who do not obey words, men cut off. Officials of the states greatly receive (both these) mandates.<sup>143</sup>

The *Guliang zhuan* differentiates here between the Heavenly Mandate on the one hand, which is to be received through “the way” (*dao* 道), and human mandates on the other hand, which are received by means of “verbal commands” (lit “words,” “speech” [*yan* 言]). The importance of the notions of “the way” and of “words” or “speech” exactly lies in those being the tools for implementing the respective “mandates” (*ming*). This is in fact a very fresh point of view. Extending the implications of *ming* to include human affairs as well as verbal utterances marks a further step in the development of the concept. In antiquity there was a special rite used for the conferral of mandates. The “Da zongbo” 大宗伯 (Greater minister of rites) section in the *Zhouli* states:

王命諸侯則饋之，是來受命。

When the king commands the regional rulers, he receives them as guests so they would come and accept their mandates from him.<sup>144</sup>

143 *Chunqiu guliang zhuan zhushu* 春秋穀梁傳注疏 (Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe, 2000), 5.71–2.

144 The passage Jao purports to quote in fact reads: “When the king commands the regional rulers, he receives them as guests” (王命諸侯則饋). It appears in the “Chunguan zongbo”

The ritual occasion marking the conferral of commands was therefore regarded as a very important event. Similar to the Heavenly Mandate, the king's appointments were not to be treated lightly. Those who did not conform to the way were cut off by Heaven; those who did not obey the wording of a command or appointment were cut off by man. Heaven confers its mandate by means of its way. The way of Heaven is absolute.

After King Helu 闔廬 of Wu 吳 (fl. 537–496 BC) had been assassinated (sic),<sup>145</sup> Jizha 季札 (fl. 576–484 BC) arrived [back in Wu] and proclaimed:

苟先君無廢祀，民人無廢主，社稷有奉，國家無傾，乃吾君也，吾誰敢怨？哀死事生，以待天命。

So long as the former rulers do not cast aside our sacrifices, the people do not cast aside their masters, the altars of the domain maintain their ceremonies, and the domain and patrimony are not overturned, then he is our ruler. Against whom should we presume to bear a grudge? We mourn for the dead and serve the living, awaiting Heaven's commands.<sup>146</sup>

When one finds oneself confronted with the most adverse conditions that prove to be beyond human power to overcome, one assumes an attitude where

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section of the *Zhouli*. See Sun Yirang, *Zhouli zhengyi*, 35.1412. What Jao actually quotes here, however, is a line of commentary from the *Chunqiu Guliang zhuan zhushu* 春秋穀梁傳注疏 which reads: “The ‘Da zongbo’ section in the *Zhouli* says: ‘When the king commands the regional rulers, he receives them as guests.’ Thus they would come and receive their mandates from him.” (《周禮·大宗伯職》曰「王命諸侯則饋之」，是來受命) (*Chunqiu Guliang zhuan zhushu*, 5.75).

145 According to the tradition recorded in the *Zuozhuan*, it was King Liao 僚 of Wu (d. 515 BC) who had been assassinated by Zhuan Shezhu 鱄設諸 (d. 515 BC) on behalf of his nephew, Prince Guang 光, who then usurped the throne to become King Helu of Wu. The respective passage in the *Zuozhuan* reads:

夏四月，光伏甲於堀室而享王。[...] 鱄設諸寘劍於魚中以進，抽劍刺王，鉞交於胸，遂弑王。闔廬以其子為卿。

In summer, in the fourth month, Prince Guang hid armored men in a basement chamber and offered the king ceremonial toasts. [...] Zhuan Shezhu, disguised as a server, brought in a fish with a sword hidden in it. He pulled the sword out and stabbed the king with it even as the guards' cutlasses pierced his own chest. And with that he assassinated the king. Prince Guang, now King Helu, appointed Zhuan Shezhu's son as a high minister (*Zuo*, Zhao 27.2, 1484. The English translation follows Durrant, Li, and Schaberg, *Zuo Tradition*, 1675).

146 *Zuo*, Zhao 27.2, 1484. The English translation has been adapted from Durrant, Li, and Schaberg, trans., *Zuo Tradition*, 1675.

one accepts and is content with one's fate without complaining. The *Zhong yong* 中庸 (Doctrine of the mean) quotes Confucius as saying:

居易以俟命，無入而不自得。

Living peacefully and at ease and waiting for one's *ming*, one does not find oneself in any situation wherein one would not be at ease with oneself.<sup>147</sup>

“Living peacefully and at ease” (*ju yi* 居易) means to find oneself in an ordinary situation, which is exactly the opposite to the dangerous situation Ji Zha found himself in. But what both situations have in common is that they equally call for the decision to await one's destiny (*mingyun* 命運). When Patriarch Wen 文 of Zhu 邾 (d. 615 BC) divined about relocating his capital to Yi 繹, his scribe said:

「利於民而不利於君。」邾子曰：「苟利於民，孤之利也。天生民而樹之君，以利之也。民既利矣，孤必與焉。」左右曰：「命可長也，君何弗為？」邾子曰：「命在養民。死之短長，時也。民苟利矣，遷也，吉莫如之！」

“It will benefit the people but will not benefit you.” The Viscount of Zhu replied, “So long as it benefits the people, then it is a benefit to me. Heaven gave birth to the people and set up a ruler for them in order to benefit them. If the people are to benefit, I too must have some part in it.” His retainers said, “If your life-span (*ming*) can be prolonged, why do you not act upon it?” The Viscount of Zhu said, “My charge (*ming*) is to nourish the people. Whether death comes early or late, that is a matter of timeliness. So long as the people benefit from it, we will relocate the capital. Nothing else could be so auspicious.”<sup>148</sup>

147 “The superior can find himself in no situation in which he is not at ease with himself. In a high position he does not treat his inferiors with contempt. In a low position he does not court the favor of his superiors. He rectifies himself and seeks nothing from others, hence he has no complaints to make. He does not complain against Heaven above or blame men below. Thus, it is that the superior man lives peacefully and at ease and waits for his destiny (*ming*) while the inferior man takes to dangerous courses and hopes for good luck” (君子無入而不自得焉。在上位不陵下，在下位不援上，正己而不求於人，則無怨。上不怨天，下不尤人。故君子居易以俟命，小人行險以徼幸) (*Liji zhengyi*, 52.1672). The English translation follows Wing-Tsit Chan, trans., *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963), 101–2.

148 Zuo, Wen 13.3, 597–8. The English translation of this passage has been adapted from Durrant, Li, and Schaberg, trans., *Zuo Tradition*, 533. Compare also Schaberg, “Command and the Content of Tradition,” in *The Magnitude of Ming: Command, Allotment and Fate*

Du Yu remarks here:

文公以百姓之命為主，百姓之命乃傳世無窮。

That the *ming* of the people could be passed on from generation to generation without end was because Patriarch Wen made it his utmost priority.<sup>149</sup>

The Viscount of Zhu did not care about his personal disadvantages. He did not consider his own lifespan as something worthy to be concerned about, since what constituted the conditions of Heaven's mandate was nourishing the people. Being able to forfeit one's own life-span (*ming*) in favor of striving for a greater commitment (*ming*); this can be called "knowing [about the cost of Heaven's] mandate" (知命).<sup>150</sup> In the same vein, Confucius later remarked that "knowing Heaven's mandate / ordinances" (知天命), "taking pleasure in Heaven, knowing one's lot, one therefore does not worry" (樂天知命故不憂).<sup>151</sup> The *Mengzi* as well states:

夭壽不貳，修身以俟之，所以立命也。

Not to allow any double-mindedness regardless of longevity or brevity of life, but to cultivate one's person and wait for [destiny to take its own course] is the way to fulfill one's lot.<sup>152</sup>

The span of one's life is not worth worrying about. However, to cultivate one's person in order to await destiny's arrival, that is the spirit adopted by Ji Zha and the Viscount of Zhu. As this represents the common view on destiny during the Spring and Autumn period, these two episodes may testify to the influence this view had on Confucian thinking.

The Greeks referred to the idea of destiny as *Moirai*. According to the ancient Homeric epics, the celestial deities are subordinate to *Moirai*, the ordinance of

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*in Chinese Culture*, ed. Christopher Lupke, (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2005), 23-4, for a discussion of the different meanings of the term *ming* that are employed in a playful way in this passage.

149 *Chunqiu zuozhuan zhengyi*, 19B.628.

150 My interpretation of the phrase *zhi ming* follows Schaberg, "Command and the Content of Tradition," 24.

151 This line is quoted from the *Liezi* 例子 (Master Lie). See Yang Bojun 楊伯峻 annot., *Liezi jishi* 列子集釋 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1979), 4.114.

152 *Mengzi zhengyi*, 26.878. The English translation is adapted from Chan, *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy*, 78.

which constitutes a moral decree. As such, destiny surpassed the power of all deities. When the latter committed a crime, not even Zeus could go against the ordinance of faith, having been subject to moral sanctions himself.<sup>153</sup>

Within the system of polytheism, the idea of destiny in ancient Greece functioned as a decree of moral obligation that served to limit all individual powers, both human and divine.<sup>154</sup> In ancient Chinese bronze inscriptions we come across phrases referring to the concept of the Heavenly Mandate, such as “to exert oneself [in the implementation of] the Great Charge” (勞勤大命), “to extend and revere the Great Charge” (黷恪大命) and “to help making broad the Mandate of Heaven” (惠弘天令), as well as warnings that those who are ignorant of the Heavenly Mandate will bring destruction upon themselves. These repeated admonitions suffice to illustrate that the fate which has been decided upon by Heaven above is absolute; it follows from the will of Di-on-High and cannot be transgressed. In the polytheism of the ancient Greeks, contradictions and struggles still prevailed between the deities, whereas the Chinese of the Yin and Zhou period had long since developed the notion of a universal or even transcendent high god. Shangdi 上帝 (Di-on-High), Huang Shangdi 皇上帝 (August Di-on-High), Huang Tianshen 皇天神 (August Sky-deity) and Huangtian Shangdi 皇天上帝 (August Heaven Di-on-High) are all honorific appellations for one and the same deity, Tian 天 (Heaven), the latter being the alternative name for Di-on-High. This renders the impact of the Heavenly Mandate all the more authoritative, while the conflation of Heavenly Di with the highest instance of moral judgement establishes the former in terms of a meaningful institution.

In the Zhou Hymns from the *Book of Songs* we read:

維天之命	The Charge that Heaven gave,
於穆不已	Boundless in its beauty,
於乎不顯	And alas most glorious,
文王之德之純	The limitlessness of King Wen's <i>de</i> .
假以溢我	With blessings he has whelmed us,
我其收之	We need but gather them in.
駿惠我文王	High favors has King Wen vouchsafed to us;
曾孫篤之	May his descendants hold them fast. <sup>155</sup>

153 This passage constitutes a paraphrase of Cornford, *From Religion to Philosophy*, 12–14.

154 See *ibid.*, 14.

155 “Wei Tian zhi ming,” *Mao* #267 (*Maoshi zhengyi*, 19.1509–10). The English translation has been adapted from Waley, *The Book of Songs*, 291, taking into consideration Jao's own philological notes on page 88 of the original text, which have not been reproduced in the present translation.

The main significance of this hymn lies in its interconnecting the idea of the Heavenly Mandate with the notion of “profound *de*” (*chun de* 純德). A passage from the inscription cast on the Shi Zai *ding*, dating from the time of King Gong 共 (r. 917/15–900 BC), reads:

王曰：師鬻！女（汝）克蠱（蓋=進）乃身，臣朕皇考穆王。用乃孔德（遜）屯（純），乃用心引（矧）正乃辟安德。

The King spoke: “Commander Zai! You were able to offer up yourself in the service of my August Deceased Father King Mu. Because your great *de* is integer, you were able to employ your heart and to make upright the settled *de* of your ruler as well.”<sup>156</sup>

Here we now find with “*kong de*” 孔德 (great *de*) and “*an de*” 安德 (settled *de*) two further expressions comprising the term *de*. The reason why the graph *de* appears with such frequency in bronze inscriptions lies in the fact that in antiquity, “ritual vessels were bestowed in order to award those who display *de*” (賜祭器，正所以章有德).<sup>157</sup>

## 5 The Mental Worries and Anxieties that Led to the Composition of the *Changes* (Yi 易) and the Establishment of Cultivated *de*

Human religiosity arose from the fear, amazement, and disappointment that man experienced in being exposed to nature’s phenomena. Its goal was to provide a source of mental consolidation and trust. Religion was born from emotions, whereas academia originated from wisdom. In its broadest meaning, religion means belief. Its mental expressions can be found in the reverence towards meteorological or astronomical phenomena as well as in

156 JC 2830. For the entire inscription and the notes on my philological choices in the English translation see my “Command and Commitment: Terms of Kingship in Western Zhou Bronze Inscriptions and in the Book of Documents” (Ph.D. Diss., University of Edinburgh, 2019), 302–6.

157 Jao gives as the source for this citation the following passage from the “Wei Kangshu shijia” 衛康叔世家 (Hereditary house of Kangshu of Wei) in the *Shiji*: “When King Cheng grew up and took charge of affairs, he promoted Kangshu to the post of Minister of Justice of the Zhou, and bestowed upon Wei treasures and sacrificial vessels, so as to manifest [Kangshu’s] *de*” (成王長，用事，舉康叔為周司寇，賜衛寶祭器，以章有德 [*Shiji* 37.1590]). The English translation has been adapted from William H. Nienhauser Jr., ed., *The Grand Scribe’s Records, Volume V.1: The Hereditary Houses of Pre-Han China, Part 1* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006), 243.

apprehensiveness and caution in human affairs, to name only a few. In Wen Zhongzi's 文中子 (i.e., Wang Tong 王通 [584–617 AD]) "Zhou Gong pian" 周公篇 (Tract on the Duke of Zhou) we read:

易之憂患，業業焉、孜孜焉，其畏天憫人，思及時而動乎？

As to the anxieties and worries of the *Changes*, encounter them with cautiousness and diligence. How can one not stand in awe of Heaven and sympathize with man and carefully consider the right time to act?<sup>158</sup>

These lines capture the spirit of the *Changes* quite well. It is generally believed that the "Xici" 繫辭 (Appended statements) to the hexagrams (*gua* 卦) of the *Changes* have been composed by King Wen. The "lun gua yao ci shui zuo" 論卦爻辭誰作 (A discussion on who devised the hexagram and line statements) in Kong Yingda's *Zhouyi zhengyi* states:

其周易繫辭凡有二說：一說所以卦辭爻辭，並是文王所作。

There exist two theories as to who composed the "appended statements" of the *Changes of Zhou*: One theory states that both the "hexagram statements" and the "line statements" have been devised by King Wen.

知者，案繫辭云：「易之興也，其於中古乎？作易者，其有憂患乎？」

This position is based on the "Xici," where one reads: "Was it not in the middle period of antiquity that the *Changes* began to flourish? Did not he who created the *Changes* suffer from anxieties and worries?"

又云：「易之興也，其當殷之末世，周之盛德邪？當文王與紂之事邪？.....」

It further says: "Was it not in the last age of Yin, when the *de* of Zhou had reached its peak, and during the troubles between King Wen and Zhou 紂 (i.e., the Last Shang king) that the *Changes* began to flourish?"

史遷云：「文王囚而演易」即是作易者其有憂患乎？.....

<sup>158</sup> See Zhang Pei 張沛, annot., *Zhongshuo jiaozhu* 中說校注 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2013), 4.122.

The Grand Historian [Sima] Qian says: “King Wen was in confinement when he elaborated the *Changes*.” Doesn’t this mean precisely that he who devised the *Changes* was troubled with anxieties?

二以為驗爻辭多是文王後事，……左傳韓宣子適魯，見易象云：「吾乃知周公之德。」周公被流言之謗，亦得為憂患也。……

According to the second position, the “line statements” verifications fell largely into the time after King Wen. [...] The *Zuozhuan* relates that when Han Xuanzi (d. 514 BC) went to the state of Lu and saw the *Images of the Changes* (Yi xiang 易象), he spoke: “Now I understand the *de* of the Zhou Duke.” The Duke of Zhou was defamed by rumors; thus he too was plagued by anxieties and worries.<sup>159</sup>

Regardless of whether these “Statements” had been produced by King Wen or by the Duke of Zhou, in any case they arose out of anxieties and worries and were written down as instructions. Kong Yingda’s *shu* 疏 commentary further states:

若無憂患，何思何慮？不須營作。……身既患憂，須垂法示於後，以防憂患之事，故繫之文辭，明其失得與吉凶也。

Without anxieties and worries, there would have been nothing to ponder and be concerned about. There would have been no need to devise these statements. [...] Yet if one finds oneself amidst misfortunes and hardships, the need arises to pass down the measures devised against them and show them to posterity to prevent further misfortunes from happening. It was thus that these were committed to writing, to make clear where gains and losses lie and how to discern between auspiciousness and ominousness.<sup>160</sup>

The latter part of the “Xici” commentary therefore says:

易之為書也不可遠，為道也屢遷。……唯變所適，其出入以度，外內使知懼，又明於憂患與故，无有師保，如臨父母。

159 “Zhouyi zhengyi xu” 周易正義序, in *Zhouyi zhengyi*, 10–11.

160 Ibid, 8,368.

As a book the *Changes* cannot be distanced, as a way it frequently shifts. [...] It only alternates where it goes. The goings and comings are according to rule and measure; the [visible] outer and the [invisible] inner cause one to know fear. It makes plain the nature of anxieties and calamities, and the causes of them. It does not have a master to protect it and yet it is close like a father and mother.<sup>161</sup>

Both outer and inner teaches one to fear, so one stays alert day and night, seeking to avoid making mistakes. Thus the “Xici” further says:

子曰：「危者，安其位者也；亡者，保其存者也；亂者，有其治者也。是故，君子安而不忘危，存而不忘亡，治而不忘亂；是以身安而國家可保也。易曰：『其亡其亡，繫于苞桑』。」

The Master said: “He [who is apprehensive about] dangers, will secure his position; he [who is apprehensive about the danger of] perishing will protect his [continued] existence; he [who considers the dangers of] disorder will maintain order. Therefore, the superior man, when resting in safety, does not forget that danger may come; when in a state of security, he does not forget the possibility of perishing; and when all is in a state of order, he does not forget that disorder may come. Thus, his person is kept safe, and his domain with all its families can be preserved. The *Changes* say: ‘We may perish! We may perish! (so let the state of things become firm, as if) bound to a clump of bushy mulberry trees.’”<sup>162</sup>

The [texts explaining the] sixty-four hexagrams are all concerned with how to cultivate *de* and how to avoid calamities. Following the sentence “he who created the *Changes* had anxieties and worries” (作易者其有憂患), the second part of the “Xici” lists nine most basic hexagrams; the central concern of each of them is how to cultivate *de*:

履，德之基也；謙，德之柄也；復，德之本也；恆，德之固也；損，德之脩也；益，德之裕也；困，德之辨也；井，德之地也；巽，德之制也。

161 Ibid, 8.370–71. The English translation has been adapted from James Legge, trans., *The Sacred Books of China: The Texts of Confucianism, Part II: The Yi King*, in *Sacred Books of the East*, vol. 16, ed. Max Müller (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, 1966 [1882]), 399; and Shaughnessy, *I Ching*, 231.

162 *Zhouyi zhengyi*, 8.362. The English translation has been adapted from Legge, *The Yi King*, 391.

Lü (Treading), is the foundation of *de*; Qian (Modesty), its handle; Fu (Returning), its basis; Heng (Constancy), its sturdiness; Sun (Decrease), its cultivation; Yi (Increase), its abundance; Kun (Entangled), its exercise of discrimination; Jing (The Well), its ground and Xun (Compliance), its regulation.<sup>163</sup>

As the purpose of these nine hexagrams is to cultivate *de* and to avoid calamities, I have listed them here to illustrate the uses of *de*. In a passage from the “Zhouyu” 周語 (Discourses of Zhou) in the *Guoyu*, Rui Liangfu 芮良夫 states:

夫王人者，將導利而布之上下者也，使神人百物無不得其極(正)，猶日怵惕，懼怨之來也。

As king one has the obligation to set free one's resources and to distribute them to the people above and below to enable the spirits, people and the myriad phenomena to all reach their equilibrium. Moreover, [a king] should be fearful every day, fearing that there might be blame.<sup>164</sup>

As to “being fearful every day” (日怵惕), the nine in the third line statement to the hexagram Qian 乾 (Vigorous) in the *Changes* says:

君子終日乾乾，夕惕若厲，无咎。

The nobleman to the end of the day is so vigorous; in the evening is fearful as if there is danger. There are no misfortunes.<sup>165</sup>

The *shu* commentary explains that:

君子在憂危之地，故終日乾乾，言每恆終竟此日，健健自強，勉力不有止息。夕惕者，謂終竟此日，後至向夕之時，猶懷憂惕。

The superior man finds himself in a position filled with anxieties and dangers, therefore he needs to be vigorous all day long. This means that he vigorously strengthens himself, exerting himself without ever pausing,

163 *Zhouyi zhengyi*, 8.368–69. The English translation has been adapted from Shaughnessy, *I Ching*, 231.

164 *Guoyu jijie*, 1.13–14.

165 *Zhouyi zhengyi*, 1.5. The English translation has been adapted from Shaughnessy, *Unearthing the Changes*, 214.

permanently throughout and to the end of this day. Being fearful in the evening means that throughout the entire day and even into the night, the superior man still carries with him his anxieties and fears.<sup>166</sup>

It is exactly this mentality of fearfulness that leads one to develop the commendable habit of “approaching one’s tasks with a sense of solicitude” (臨事而懼). Studying the *Changes* may help one not to make mistakes, but to avoid misfortunes, one must moreover maintain an attitude where one allows the [visible] outer and the [invisible] inner to cause one to know fear. The Duke of Zhou warning the young heir in the “Da gao,” to “always be mindful of hardships” (永思艱), became an everlasting sincere admonition for all rulers to come after.

In talking about the *Changes*, Wen Zhongzi promotes the attitude of standing in awe of Heaven and sympathizing with man. Fearing the calamities Heaven might send to punish man for his crimes, one therefore cultivates *de* to avoid misfortunes. The spirit of putting anxieties first and enjoyments last bears strong religious overtones but does not amount to being fearful of the spirit world. The explanations in Søren Kierkegaard’s (1813–1855) *The Concept of Dread* lead a humanity carrying the burden of an “original sin” to tremble and repent in front of God in the face of cruel natural disasters.<sup>167</sup> In ancient China there was no notion of an “original sin.” The mentality of anxiety we find in the commentarial literature of the *Changes* is therefore greatly different from the mentality of dread.

The hexagram *Zhen* 震 (Thunder) depicts a twofold thunder, a quite frightening weather phenomenon, thus [the “Xiang zhuan” 象傳 (Image commentary)] says:

君子以恐懼修省。

The superior man is fearful and apprehensive; therefore, he cultivates (his *de*) and examines (his faults).<sup>168</sup>

One does not stop at being frightened, but one takes this fear as an incentive to cultivate and examine oneself. The hexagram *Ji Ji* 既濟 (Already Across) indicates that although one has already succeeded in crossing over to the opposite

166 *Zhouyi zhengyi*, 1.5.

167 See Søren Kierkegaard, *The Concept of Anxiety: A Simple Psychologically Orienting Deliberation on the Dogmatic Issue of Hereditary Sin* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980).

168 *Zhouyi zhengyi*, 5.246. Translation adapted from Legge, *The Yi King*, 330.

shore, one is still not fully satisfied. The “Xiang zhuan” to this hexagram further says:

君子以思患而豫防之。

The superior man guards against misfortunes by keeping (their possibility) in mind.<sup>169</sup>

Trying to avoid misfortunes constantly and without ceasing; this is exactly the mentality of anxiety that speaks to us through the *Changes*.

In interpreting each of the hexagrams, the creator of the “Xiang” commentary to the *Changes* time and again uses the term *de*. For instance, the “Xiang zhuan” to the *Kun* 坤 (Compliant) hexagram says:

君子以厚德載物。

The noble man supports things with his profound *de*.<sup>170</sup>

The “Xiang zhuan” to the *Meng* 蒙 (Folly) hexagram says:

以果行育德。

Striving to be resolute in one’s conduct and to nourish one’s *de*.<sup>171</sup>

The “Xiang zhuan” to the *Xiao Chu* 小畜 (Lesser Livestock) hexagram says:

以懿文德

Adorning one’s *de* with excellence.<sup>172</sup>

The “Xiang zhuan” to the *Pi* 否 (Negation) hexagram says:

以儉德辟難。

Avoiding calamities by moderating one’s *de*.<sup>173</sup>

169 *Zhouyi zhengyi*, 6.293.

170 *Ibid*, 1.32.

171 *Ibid*, 1.46.

172 *Ibid*, 2.70.

173 *Ibid*, 2.83.

The “Xiang zhuan” to the *Yu* 豫 (Relaxed) hexagram says:

以作樂崇德。

Honoring one's *de* by composing music.<sup>174</sup>

The “Xiang zhuan” to the *Gu* 蠱 (Parasite) hexagram says:

以振民育德。

Assisting the people by nourishing one's *de*.<sup>175</sup>

The “Xiang zhuan” to the *Da Chu* 大畜 (Greater Livestock) hexagram says:

以多識前言往行，以畜其德。

Accumulating one's *de* by storing a vast amount in one's memory of the words and deeds of former men.<sup>176</sup>

The “Xiang zhuan” to the *Kan* 坎 (Pit) hexagram says:

以常德行習教事。

Practicing instruction by making one's *de*-conduct constant.<sup>177</sup>

The “Xiang zhuan” to the *Jin* 晉 (Advancing) hexagram says:

以自昭明德。

Giving oneself to make more brilliant one's bright *de*.<sup>178</sup>

The “Xiang zhuan” to the *Jian* 蹇 (Lame) hexagram says:

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174 Ibid, 2.101.

175 Ibid, 3.109.

176 Ibid, 3.141.

177 Ibid, 3.154.

178 Ibid, 4.178.

以反身修德。

Cultivating one's *de* by turning around and examining oneself.<sup>179</sup>

The “Xiang zhuan” to the *Guai* 夬 (Resolute) hexagram says:

以施祿及下，居德則忌。

Bestowing emoluments on those below oneself, for accumulating (undispensed) *de* (here: gifts) triggers jealousy.<sup>180</sup>

The “Xiang zhuan” to the *Sheng* 升 (Ascending) hexagram says:

以順德積小以高大。

Obeying one's *de* and accumulating its small developments till it is high and great.<sup>181</sup>

The “Xiang zhuan” to the *Jian* 漸 (Progressing) hexagram says:

以居賢德善俗

Making the manners of the people good by attaining and maintaining one's extraordinary *de*.<sup>182</sup>

The “Xiang zhuan” to the *Jie* 節 (Moderation) hexagram says:

以制數度議德行。

Discussing one's *de*-conduct by devising numberings and measurements.<sup>183</sup>

For fourteen out of the sixty-four hexagrams in the *Changes* the “Xiang zhuan” mentions the word *de*, mostly communicating the idea of advancing or

179 Ibid, 4.194.

180 Ibid, 5.212.

181 Ibid, 5.225.

182 Ibid, 5.254.

183 Ibid, 6.282. The English translation of all the above passages from the “Xiang zhuan” have been adapted from Legge, *The Yi King*.

accumulating it. In the case of ominous hexagram images, it suggests staying vigilant. The advice to moderate one's *de* when encountering *Pi*, to make one's *de* constant in the case of the *Kan*, to cultivate one's *de* in the case of *Jian*, or to discuss one's *de* when encountering *Jie* are all such examples.

The *Wenyan* commentary explains the hexagram *Qian* in terms of *yuan* 元 (great beginning), *heng* 亨 (unobstructed development), *li* 利 (harmonious gain) and *zhen* 貞 (correct firmness), to which it refers as “*si de*” 四德 (four virtues). The name “*si de*” appears first in the *Zuozhuan*, in the account of the ninth year of Patriarch Xiang 襄. A scribe explains why Mu Jiang 穆姜 (d. 564 BC) encountered *Gen* 艮 (Stilling) going to *Sui* 隨 ䷐ (Following) in her milfoil divination. He said about Mu Jiang (sic):<sup>184</sup>

今我婦人，而與於亂。固在下位，而有不仁，不可謂元。不靖國家，不可謂亨。作而害身，不可謂利。棄位而姤，不可謂貞。有四德者，隨而無咎。我皆無之，豈隨也哉！

Now I, as a woman, was yet party to fomenting disorder; and undeniably in a lowly position, I was yet not showing fellow-kindness; this cannot be called ‘great beginning.’ I did not bring peace and stability to the domain and patrimony; there cannot be ‘unobstructed development.’ My action harmed my person; this cannot be called ‘harmonious gain.’ I abandoned my position to indulge in licentiousness; this cannot be called ‘correct firmness.’ With these four virtues, ‘Following’ is yet ‘no blame.’ But since I have none of them, how can this be deemed ‘Following’?<sup>185</sup>

Because she chose a harmful course of action, blame necessarily ensued. The convention of referring to *yuan*, *heng*, *li* and *zhen* as the “four virtues” goes all the way back to the Spring and Autumn period. As to the arrangement of the line statements commenting on the hexagram *Qian*, “initial nine” protects its dragon-*de* (sic!), “nine in the second” says: “*de* is plentiful and transformation ensues” (德博而化); “nine in the third” says: “advancing *de* faithfully and honest” (忠信進德); “nine in the fourth” says: “The superior man advances in his *de* by cultivating his duties, wishing to do so at the proper time” (進德脩業，

184 The *Zuozhuan* ascribes this passage of speech to Mu Jiang, who also refers to herself in these lines (tr. note).

185 *Zuo*, Xiang 9.3, 965–6. The English translation has been adapted from Durrant, Li, and Schaberg, trans., *Zuo Tradition*, 955.

欲及時).<sup>186</sup> Everywhere we look, *de* forms the main topic. Thus, the *Wenyan* commentary says:

君子以成德為行，日可見之行也。

The superior man's conduct shows in his accomplished *de*, which can be observed in his daily affairs.<sup>187</sup>

The accomplishments of the superior man consist in his *de*-conduct. The creators of the “*Shi yi*” 十翼 (Ten Wings) commentaries combined all these connotations of *de* in order to bring out and elaborate on the true essence of the *Changes*.<sup>188</sup>

186 Jao cites these three lines with slight adaptations from the *Wenyan* commentary to the line statements of the hexagram Qian. See *Zhouyi zhengyi*, 1.17–20.

187 *Ibid.*, 1.25.

188 The present translation does not include the last paragraph of the original where Jao presents a short philosophy of time in ancient China, as it has no direct connection to the article's main topic.

# Rationalism and the Idea of Divine Law (Selection)

## 1 The Changing Positions of the Gods and of Man<sup>1</sup>

The “Lü xing” 呂刑 (Punishments of Lü) chapter in the “Zhoushu” 周書 (Book of Zhou) relates:

皇帝.....遏絕苗民，無世在下。乃命重、黎，絕地天通，罔有降格。

August Di [...] halted and exterminated the Miao people, so that they should not continue to future generations. Then he charged Chong and Li to sever the links between earth and Heaven, so that there be no more descending (of spirits to earth) and ascending (of men [i.e., men rising to divine powers]).<sup>2</sup>

The text further states:

上帝不蠲，降咎于苗，苗民無辭于罰，乃絕厥世。

Di-on-High would not hold them guiltless and sent down calamity on the Miao. The Miao people had no plea to allege in mitigation of their punishment, and so their posterity was cut off.<sup>3</sup>

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- 1 This article, “Shendao sixiang yu lixing zhuyi” 神道思想與理性主義 (Rationalism and the idea of divine law), was intended as a sequel to the above translated “Tianshenguan yu daode sixiang” 天神觀與道德思想. It was published in the same year as the latter in the *Bulletin of the Institute of History and Philology, Academia Sinica* 49.3 (1978): 489–513. This partial translation is based on the latest reprint in *wj* 4: 362–99. The passages left out in this translation consist for the most part detailed philological analyses based on the interchangeability of homophonous or near-homophonous graphs that are almost impossible to render into intelligible English, as well as of long lists of partial citations from original sources that would have taken up an unreasonable amount of space if translated in their entirety. The specialist reader may refer to the original publication for these omitted passages.
  - 2 *Shu* 47.127–59. The English translation has been adapted from Legge, *The Shoo King*, 592–93; and Karlgren, “The Book of Documents,” 74. For the possible identity and location of the mytho-historical *Miao* people see Jao Tsung-i, “Mao min, Miao min kao.”
  - 3 *Shu* 47.373–90. Translation adapted from Legge, *The Shoo King*, 599; and Karlgren, “The Book of Documents,” 76.

Di-on-High afflicted his punishments on the Miao people, causing them to be without posterity. On the level of political measures, he commissioned Chong and Li to separate earth from Heaven, to prevent mutual encroachments between the two realms. According to Guan Shefu's 觀射父 (fl. fifth century BC) reply to King Zhao 昭 of Chu (fl. 523–489 BC) in the "Chu yu," it was in Shao Hao's 少昊 age of decline that the Nine Li (九黎) confounded the *de*-order and everyone acted like a shaman official. This led to the ranks of deities and men, of above and below, becoming conflated. Originally the spirits belonged to the Heavenly realm and men to the earth below. [Zhuan Xu 顓頊 (Shao Hao's successor [tr. note])] therefore ordered Chong 重, the Principal of the South, to administer the realm of Heaven so as to assemble the spirits [in their proper place], and he commissioned Li 黎, the Fire Principal, to oversee the realm of the earth, gathering men [where they belong]. Thus, he caused both spheres to be separate again.<sup>4</sup> The "Lu yu" records the following statement ascribed to Zhongni 仲尼 (i.e., Confucius):

山川之靈足以綱紀天下者，其守為神，社稷之守者公侯。

The spiritual essences of the mountains and streams are sufficient to order All-under-Heaven with them. Their guardian may be called divine. Those who protect the altars of the spirits of the soil and grain are the dukes and princes.<sup>5</sup>

The collected explanations (集解) to the "Lu shija" 魯世家 (Hereditary house of Lu) section in the *Shiji* cites Wang Su 王肅 (195–256 AD) as saying:

守山川之祀者為神，謂諸侯也。

As to those who guard the sacrifices to the mountains and streams being divine, this refers to the many princes.<sup>6</sup>

Wei Zhao's annotations to this passage explain:

主山川之君為羣神之主，故謂之神也。

4 Compare the original passage in *Guoyu jijie*, 18.512–16; as well as the English rendering of this passage in Birrell, *Chinese Mythology*, 94–5.

5 *Guoyu jijie*, 5.202.

6 *Shiji*, 47.1913.

The ruler presiding over the mountains and streams is the master of the various deities, therefore he is called divine.<sup>7</sup>

This means that, in antiquity, those among the princes who were in charge of conducting the sacrifices to the mountains and streams were called divine, although they were human. The people of Chu, a regional culture in which humans and deities still intermingled, placed great importance on the art of shamanism. Qu Yuan referring to his ruler as *lingxiu* 靈修 (god / spirit), means nothing other than that Qu Yuan must have considered the latter to be an actual deity. For the fifth year of Patriarch Xi 僖 (655 BC) the *Zuozhuan* notes:

[虢]公曰：「吾享祀豐絜，神必據我。」

The Patriarch [of Guo] spoke: “My offerings and sacrifices are abundant and pure, the spirits [of the ancestors] cannot but rely on me.”<sup>8</sup>

The assumption that as long as one’s sacrificial offerings are abundant the spirits are able rely on men, still follows the old belief that spirits and humans cannot be entirely separated from each other.

However, already in the “Gao Yao mo” we read:

天聰明自我民聰明，天明畏自我民明畏，達于上下，敬哉有土。

Heaven hears and sees through the hearing and seeing of our people; Heaven brightly rewards and displays its terrors through the bright rewarding and awing done by our people. There is communication between above and below. Alas! Be reverent, masters of territories!<sup>9</sup>

What is above is called Heaven, what is below is called the people. The terms *ming* 明 (bright) and *wei* 畏 (frighten) refer to “rewards” (賞) and “punishments” (罰) respectively. This passage compares the roles of Heaven and men. Originally it was men’s lot to “stand in awe of Heaven’s majestic terror” (畏天畏); here, however, we read about Heaven’s ability to reward and punish being dependent on men’s conducting of rewards and punishments. The first part of the “Tai shi” also attaches great importance to the role of the people in this assemblage in claiming that “what the people desire, Heaven will be

<sup>7</sup> *Guoyu jijie*, 5.202.

<sup>8</sup> *Zuo*, Xi 5.8, 309.

<sup>9</sup> *Shu* 4.299–322.

found to give effect to” (民之所欲，天必從之)，<sup>10</sup> or by stating that “Heaven sees through the seeing of our people; Heaven hears through the hearing of our people” (天視自我民視，天聽自我民聽).<sup>11</sup> This means nothing other than that Heaven’s every move was ultimately contingent upon men. Heaven could not but abide to every request that men made. Men’s rise to a position in which they were able to influence Heaven clearly marks a very important change in early Chinese intellectual history. But it is not until Eastern Zhou times that we find references to the people as masters of the gods. Under the sixth year of Patriarch Huan 桓 (706 BC), the *Zuozhuan* cites Ji Liang 季梁 of Sui 隨 as saying:

臣聞小之能敵大也，小道大淫。所謂道，忠於民而信於神也。上思利民，忠也；祝史正辭，信也。今民餒而君逞欲，祝史矯舉以祭，臣不知其可也。.....

I have heard that when the small can match the large, it is because the small is in accord with the Way and the large is debauched. What is meant by being “in accord with the Way” is being devoted to the people and being honest with the spirits. When superiors think of benefiting the people, that is being devoted. When the invocators and scribes are correct in what they say, that is being honest. Now, the people are starving while you, my lord, satisfy your desires. The invocators and scribes falsely praise you in offering sacrifices. I, your servant, do not know how this can be acceptable. [...]

夫民，神之主也，是以聖王先成民而後致力於神。故奉牲以告曰「博碩肥腍」，謂民力之普存也。.....

The people are the masters of the gods. Therefore, the sage-kings first achieved success with the people and only then expended effort on service to the gods. That is why, when presenting sacrificial animals, they announced, “Broad, large, sleek, and fat.” This means the strength of the people is widely preserved. [...]

10 *Shu* 21.283–90. Translation follows Legge, *The Shoo King*, 288. Jao notes here that this passage is also quoted both in the *Zuo*, Xiang 31 and in the “Zheng yu” 鄭語 [Discourses of Zheng] passage in the *Guoyu*.

11 *Shu* 21.514–25.

於是乎民和而神降之福，故動則有成。今民各有心，而鬼神乏主；君雖獨豐，其何福之有？.....

In such circumstances, the people were at peace and the gods sent down blessings upon them. That is why, when they acted, they had success. But today, each person has his own intentions, and the ghosts and spirits lack a master. Although it is true that you yourself, my lord, enjoy abundance, what blessings could there be?<sup>12</sup>

According to this passage, one only achieves “accordance with the Way” when one is devoted to the people and honest with the spirits. One first needs to ensure that the people’s livelihood is abundant, and that the polity’s strength is ample, only then will there be well-fed and flawless sacrificial animals to offer to the spirits. Only when the people are not starving will the gods send down blessings. If the people are starving, a ruler’s sacrifices will merely “satisfy his own desires” (逞欲) and the invocators and scribes will “falsely praise” (矯舉) him for it. This in turn would amount to neglecting (不忠) the people and being hypocritical (不信) towards the spirits. As to Ji Liang exclaiming: “The people are the masters of the gods” (民，神之主也), this presumably means that the people’s condition being adequate constitutes the most important premise that must be met before a ruler may sacrifice to the gods. It does not mean that the people can act as actual masters over the spirits, let alone that they can replace the gods in their position. On the Han dynasty Xiyue Huashan *bei* 西嶽華山廟碑 (The Stele of Mount Hua Temple at the West Alp) we find the phrase:

深達和民事神之義。

To internalize the meaning of harmonizing the people and serving the spirits.<sup>13</sup>

To be able to sacrifice to the spirits, a ruler needs to harmonize the people first. People of the Han era also clearly understood the significance behind this idea. Under the thirtieth year of Patriarch Zhuang 莊 (663 BC) (sic!),<sup>14</sup> the *Zuozhuan* cites a scribe named Yin 鬻 as saying:

12 *Zuo*, Huan 6.2, 111–12. The English translation follows Durrant, Li, and Schaberg, trans., *Zuo Tradition*, 97–9.

13 “Xiyue Huashan miao bei” 西嶽華山廟碑, *Quan Hou Han wen* 全後漢文, 100.6, rpt. in Yan Kejun, ed., *Quan shanggu sandai Qin Han Sanguo Liuchao wen*, 1012.

14 The passage cited below is in fact recorded under the thirty-second year of Patriarch Zhuang (661 BC).

虢其亡乎！吾聞之：國將興，聽於民；將亡，聽於神。神，聰明正直而壹者也，依人而行。虢多涼德，其何土之能得？

Surely Guo will perish! I have heard that when a domain is about to prosper, it heeds the people, but when it is about to perish, it heeds the spirits. Spirits are keen of ear and eye, upright, straightforward, and constant: they act according to the conduct of the supplicant. The domain of Guo in many cases has shown little enough virtue. What lands will it be able to obtain?<sup>15</sup>

This passage claims that the spirits act according to the conduct of men. In sustaining his polity, it is thus befitting for the ruler over men to cherish his people. If he loses his people, then the spirits are without sacrifices to feast on. The spirits are keen of ear and eye, upright and straightforward. Similarly, for the nineteenth year of Patriarch Xi 僖 (640 BC), the *Zuozhuan* quotes Sima Ziyu 司馬子魚 (i.e., Prince Mu Yi 目夷 of Song 宋 [fl. seventh century BC]) as saying:

古者六畜不相為用，小事不用大牲，而況敢用人乎？祭祀以為人也。民，神之主也。用人，其誰饗之？

In ancient times, the six domestic animals were not substituted for one another in sacrifices. For a small affair, they did not sacrifice a big domestic animal. How much less would they dare to sacrifice a human being? Sacrifices are for the benefit of human beings. The people are the masters (hosts) of the gods. Which of the gods will relish it if you sacrifice a human being?<sup>16</sup>

This passage denounces as inappropriate Patriarch of Song's choice of using a person (Zengzi 曾子 [Master of Zeng]) as sacrificial victim. Here too, we find employed the phrase "The people are the masters of the gods" (民，神之主也). It seems this notion was already very much in general use during Eastern Zhou times. Moreover, the claim that "sacrifices are for the benefit of human beings" (祭祀以為人也) and not for that of the spirits presents us with a very

15 *Zuo*, Zhuang 23.3, 252–53. The English translation follows Durrant, Li, and Schaberg, trans., *Zuo Tradition*, 223.

16 *Zuo*, Xi 19.3, 381–82. The English translation follows Durrant, Li, and Schaberg, trans., *Zuo Tradition*, 343. Durrant, Li, and Schaberg translate *zhu* 主 here as host, a rendering which seems to befit the context better than "master." However, this reading does not match with Jao's interpretation of the passage in the following.

progressive idea, indicating that the position of man had already been raised to a higher level by then.

Under the twenty-fourth year of Patriarch Xi (635 BC), the *Zuozhuan* has Fu Chen 富辰 (fl. seventh century BC) saying:

大上以德撫民，其次親親，以相及也。昔周公弔二叔之不咸，故封建親戚以蕃屏周。……召穆公思周德之不類，故糾合宗族于成周……。

The supreme achievement is to pacify the people by means of virtue (*de*), while the second greatest achievement is to draw one's kin close and extend that sentiment to others. Formerly, the Zhou Duke grieved that the two younger brothers were not in accord with him. That is why he distributed power and granted domains to kinsmen and relatives as a hedge and a screen for Zhou. [...] The Shao Duke Mu worried that the virtue (*de*) of Zhou had degenerated. Therefore, he gathered together the house at Chengzhou. [...]

庸勳、親親、暱近、尊賢，德之大者也。

To reward merit, to draw close to kinsmen, to trust close advisers, and to honor the worthy, these are great acts of virtue.<sup>17</sup>

“Pacifying the people by means of *de*” (以德撫民) describes a ruler's utmost obligation, followed by the similarly important virtue of establishing the venerable worthies by granting them domains. This is because “other than those of worth, there are none with whom to encourage meritorious deeds; other than those who are close of kin, there are none to assist in governance” (非賢無與興功，非親無與輔治).<sup>18</sup> This passage allows us to catch a glimpse of the governing principles the Western Zhou kings employed to establish their realm. What Fu Chen calls “The supreme achievement is to pacify the people by means of *de*” (太上以德撫民) was later retrieved by Shu Sunbao 叔孫豹 (fl. sixth century BC) in discussing the “three merits that never perish” (三不朽):

17 *Zuo*, Xi 24.2, 420–24. The English translation follows Durrant, Li, and Schaberg, trans., *Zuo Tradition*, 381–83.

18 Chen Shou 陳壽, *Sanguo zhi* 三國志, coll. and punc. Chen Naiqian 陳乃乾 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1959), 20.592.

太上有立德，其次有立功，其次有立言。

The highest of all is to establish virtue (*de*); next to that is to establish achievements; next to that is to establish words.<sup>19</sup>

The “Qu Li” 曲禮 (Summary of the rules of propriety) chapter from the *Liji* also says: “The highest of all is to cherish virtue (*de*)” (太上貴德).<sup>20</sup> It is this sort of moral thought, centered on the notion of *de* that constitutes the teachings of the Zhou people. In the account of the fifth year of Patriarch Xi (655 BC) in the *Zuozhuan*, Gong Zhiqi relates that “ghosts and spirits are not actual kin to the living, it is virtue (*de*) that they attach to” (鬼神非人實親，惟德是依).<sup>21</sup> To corroborate his assertion he quotes the following two passages from the *Songs* (sic):<sup>22</sup>

黍稷非馨，明德惟馨。

Millet alone is not fragrant; it is manifest virtue (*de*) which makes it fragrant.<sup>23</sup>

民不易物，惟德絜物。

The people do not alter their customs, it is virtue (*de*) which binds [those of different] customs together.<sup>24</sup>

19 *Zuo*, Xiang 24.1, 1088. The English translation follows Durrant, Li, and Schaberg, trans., *Zuo Tradition*, 1125.

20 *Liji zhengyi*, 1.20.

21 *Zuo*, Xi 5.8, 307–10.

22 According to the *Zuozhuan*, Gong Ziqi quotes these passages from the *Zhoushu* 周書 (Documents of Zhou), a work that has long since been lost.

23 *Zuo*, Xi 5.8, 309. A verbatim version of this passage is found in the “Jun Chen” 君陳 chapter from the *Guwen Shangshu* 古文尚書 (Old Text *Book of Documents*). See *Shu* 41.72–9.

24 *Zuo*, Xi 5.8, 309. A slightly different version of this passage is found in the “Lu Ao” 旅獒 (Hounds of Lu) chapter from the *Guwen Shangshu*. See *Shu* 25.81–88. My interpretation of these two passages is based on Takezoe Kōkō’s 竹添光鴻 (1842–1917) commentary: “Millet alone is not fragrant; it is manifest *de* which makes it fragrant.’ The same applies to the people as well. Although they do not alter their customs, if there is *de*, they will submit to it” (黍稷非馨，明德惟馨。民亦如此，雖不易物，唯有德則服也) (*Zuozhuan hui jian* 左傳會箋, annot. Du Yu 杜預 and Takezoe Kōkō [Taipei: Tiangong shuju, 2005 (1911)], 354).

This means that under a ruler who is lacking *de*, the people will not be in accord with each other, and the spirits will not consume their offerings. Whom the spirits will stand by is he who displays *de*.<sup>25</sup> The same reasoning can be found in an inscription cast on an old sword:

帶之以為服，動必行德。行德則興，倍德則崩。

Carry it (i.e., the sword) as an ornamentation, it shall only be used to implement virtue (*de*). By implementing virtue (*de*), [the domain] will be brought to flourish; by abandoning *de*, it will collapse.<sup>26</sup>

Whether one acts according to *de* will ultimately decide the fate of one's domain. At the beginning of the Zhou dynasty, this knowledge had already become a maxim. This sort of moral thought focused on the role of the people was obviously meant as a warning directed at the ruler over men.

In the account of the third year of Patriarch Xuan 宣 (606 BC) in the *Zuozhuan*, King Zhuang 莊 of Chu (r. 613–591 BC) enquires about [the size and weight of] the cauldrons,<sup>27</sup> to which the Zhou official Wangsun Man 王孫滿 (fl. seventh century BC) replies:

在德不在鼎。昔夏之方有德也，遠方圖物，貢金九牧，鑄鼎象物.....

Size and weight depend on virtue (*de*), not on the cauldrons. In the past, just when Xia possessed virtue (*de*), men from afar depicted various creatures, and the nine superintendents submitted metal, so that cauldrons were cast with images of various creatures. [...]

用能協于上下，以承天休。桀有昏德，鼎遷于商，載祀六百。商紂暴虐，鼎遷于周。德之休明，雖小，重也。其姦回昏亂，雖大，輕也。天祚明德，有所底止。.....

Thus, they were able to harmonize with those above and below them and to receive Heaven's blessings. [The last Xia king,] Jie, possessed dimmed

25 Although not marked as such, the last two sentences are almost verbatim quoted from the same passage in the *Zuozhuan*. Compare *Zuo*, Xi 5.8, 310.

26 Yu Shinan, *Beitang shuchao*, 122.2 (504). The same passage is also found in the “Wu Wang jian zuo” chapter from the *Da Dai Liji*. My English translation follows the interpretation in Gao Ming 高明, *Da Dai Liji jin zhu jin yi* 大戴禮記今註今譯 (Taipei: Taiwan shangwu yinshuguan, 1975), 219–20.

27 The nine cauldrons (*jiu ding* 九鼎) are legendary symbols of royal dynastic legitimacy.

virtue (*de*), and the cauldrons were moved to the house of Shang, there to remain for six hundred years. [The last] Shang king, Zhou, was violent and tyrannical, and the cauldrons were moved to the house of Zhou. When virtue (*de*) is bright and resplendent, the cauldrons, though small, are heavy. When virtue (*de*) is distorted, dimmed, and confused, the cauldrons, though large, are light. Heaven blesses those of bright virtue (*de*), giving them the place for realizing and maintaining it.<sup>28</sup>

Even though it be very small, bright, and resplendent virtue cannot but attract Heaven's attention. When it comes to the greatest atrocities, Heaven would naturally not consider them upright. Therefore, those of bright virtue cannot but earn Heaven's blessings. Heaven's eyes are bright, perceptive and just. It is said that "Heaven blesses those of bright virtue (*de*), giving them the place for realizing and maintaining it" (天祚明德，有所底止). Wangsun Man traces the notion of *de* all the way back to the Xia dynasty (fl. 2070–1600 BC), so we get an idea of the great age of this ideology.

## 2 De 德 (Rewards) and *xing* 刑 (Punishments)

During the Western Zhou period, the notion of *de* was venerated above all else. However, in the "Lü *xing*" chapter from the *Documents*, which dates from the time of King Mu 穆 (r. 956–918 BC), we read:

惟呂命，王享國百年，耄，荒度作刑，以詰四方。

When (the prince of Lü) received his charge, the king had enjoyed the rule over the polity for a hundred years. Although he was high in his years, he gave great consideration to the appointment of punishments, in order to control (the populations of) the four quarters.<sup>29</sup>

The same text also states:

上帝監民，罔有馨香德，刑發聞惟腥。

28 *Zuo*, Huan 3.3, 669–72. The translation follows Durrant, Li, and Schaberg, trans., *Zuo Tradition*, 601–3.

29 *Shu* 47.3–19. Translation adapted from Legge, *The Shoo King*, 588; and Karlgren, "The Book of Documents," 74.

Di-on-High surveyed the people, and there was no fragrance of virtue (*de*) arising from them, as the odor emitted by their punishments was rank.<sup>30</sup>

August Di had to obtain clarity by enquiring with the people below, pointing out that Di “awed the people by the majesty of his virtue (*de*), and rewarded them by its brightness” (德威惟畏，德明惟明).<sup>31</sup> These two phrases are quite important in this context. “To awe” (惟畏) and “to enlighten” (惟明) separately address the same idea we found expressed in the “Gao Yao mo” in the passage: “Heaven brightly rewards and displays its terrors” (天明、畏). *Ming* refers to rewards and *wei* to punishments. The “Biao ji” 表記 (The record on example) chapter in the *Liji* quotes two phrases from the “Fu xing” 甫刑 (Punishments of Fu),<sup>32</sup> to which Zheng Xuan’s commentary remarks:

德所威，則人皆畏之，言服罪也；德所明，則人皆尊寵之，言得人也。

When (Di’s) *de* is awe-inspiring (punishing), the people are all afraid of him, which means that they admit their crimes. When (Di’s) *de* is bright (rewarding), the people all honor and obey him, which means that (Di) obtains the people’s (hearts).<sup>33</sup>

According to this interpretation, the notion of *de* could equally contain the facets of *wei* and of *ming*: One is the negative aspect of punishments; the other the positive aspect of rewards. The former surfaces in the banishment of the three Miao (三苗), the latter in the appointment of the three sovereigns (三后). *Wei* and *ming* are both combined within the semantic scope of *de*. In yet another passage from the “Lü xing” we read:

士制百姓于刑之中，以教祗德。穆穆在上，明明在下，灼于四方，罔不惟德之勤。

Thereupon (the three sovereigns)<sup>34</sup> exercised among the people the restraint of punishment in exact adaptation to each offence, so as to

30 *Shu* 47.113–26. Translation adapted from Legge, *The Shoo King*, 592; and Karlgren, “The Book of Documents,” 74.

31 *Shu* 47.186–93. Translation adapted from Legge, *The Shoo King*, 593–95.

32 *Liji Zhengyi*, 54.1736.

33 *Ibid.*

34 According to Sun Xingyan 孫星衍 (1753–1818), *Shangshu jin-guwen zhushu* 尚書今古文注疏, edited by Chen Kang 陳抗 and Sheng Dongling 盛冬鈴 (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju,

instruct them to carefully revere virtue (*de*). Devoted and grave was the sovereign above, diligent and industrious those below him. Shining forth to the cardinal regions, all were rendered diligent in cultivating their virtue (*de*).<sup>35</sup>

Everyone is diligent in cultivating *de*, and the goal of devising punishments lies in instructing the people in how to revere *de* by incorporating the notion of punishments within the teachings of *de* (sic).<sup>36</sup> This means that virtuous punishments (德威) and virtuous rewards (德明) must be equally applied. The “Lü xing” further states:

朕敬于刑，有德惟刑。

I think with reverence of the subject of punishments, for the end of it is to promote virtue (*de*).<sup>37</sup>

In promoting virtue among the people, punishments constitute a decisive factor. When applying punishments carefully, the people will receive [the influence] of *de*; excessive punishments in turn cause the people to suffer. Being careful in applying punishments therefore forms part of the notion of revering *de* as well.

In discussing the way of settling and pacifying the people, the “Gao Yao mo” suggests having man fulfil the role of Heaven in accomplishing the latter’s work, and not letting those officials who are supposed to govern the people neglect their responsibilities. Because Heaven’s task was delegated to and executed by man, such institutions as Heaven’s order (天敘), Heaven’s ranks (天秩), Heaven’s mandate and Heaven’s punishments (天討) had to be devised in order to achieve “satisfaction in the affairs of government” (政事懋哉). These can be outlined as follows:

Heaven arranges its statutes (天敘有典)  
 Heaven regulates the rites (天秩有禮)  
 Heaven appoints the virtuous (天命有德)  
 Heaven punishes the criminals (天討有罪)

1986 [1815], 27.526 The Han edition of the text has *yuan* 爰 (thereupon, then) instead of *shi* 士 (official).

35 *Shu* 47.234–63.

36 This phrase is syntactically and grammatically problematic in the original.

37 *Shu* 47.830–37. Translation follows Legge, *The Shoo King*, 609.

Thus were there the five ordinances (五典), the five rites (五禮), the five garments (五服) as well as five corporal punishments (五刑). The garments refer to the Heavenly mandate (sic!), meaning those who are virtuous receive praise and rewards; the corporal punishments refer to Heaven's punishments, meaning that those who commit crimes should be punished accordingly. The Heavenly mandate is tantamount to what is implied by the phrase "the brightness of *de* shows in rewards" (德明惟明), whereas Heaven's punishments can be paraphrased as "the awesomeness of *de* is felt through punishments" (德威惟畏). As to the statutes ordained by Heaven and the Heavenly regulated rites, they follow from the natural standards of the Way of Heaven. This sort of order, so it seems, was believed to have originated from the will of Heaven.

Although "statutes," "rites," "*de*," and "corporal punishments" (chastisements [罪]) present us with four distinct matters, it should be noted that corporal punishments and *de* do not yet constitute two directly opposed categories, since the former must be seen as a measure of last resort within the context of revering *de*. Somewhat later in time, the *Analects* of Confucius advocate guiding [people] through virtue (*de*) and keeping them in line through corporal punishments while at the same time conceding that the use of rites in order to achieve the latter goal should in any case be preferred over the application of corporal punishments.<sup>38</sup> In the same regard the *Analects* also state that "he who exercises government by means of virtue (*de*) may be compared to the north polar star" (為政以德，譬如北辰)，<sup>39</sup> thus stressing the role of *de* in particular.

The use of punishments and *de* was further differentiated in terms of near and far. For the twenty-fifth year of Patriarch Xi (635 BC), the *Zuozhuan* relates that when Jin 晉 began to develop the region of Nanyang 南陽,<sup>40</sup> the polity of

38 The passage Jao is alluding to reads in its entirety: "Guide them by edicts, keep them in line with corporal punishments, and though the people will stay out of trouble, they will have no sense of shame. Guide them through virtue (*de*), keep them in line through rites, and they will develop a sense of shame while adjusting themselves (to moral principles)" (道之以政，齊之以刑，民免而無恥；道之以德，齊之以禮，有恥且格) (*Lunyu jishi*, 3.68. The English translation has been adapted from D. C. Lau, trans., *The Analects* [*Lun yü*] [Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1979], 63).

39 *Lunyu jishi*, 3.61. The English translation has been adapted from James Legge, trans, *The Chinese Classics, Volume I: Confucian Analects*, rev. 2nd edition (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 1960 [1893]), 145.

40 According to Durrant, Li, and Schaberg, trans., *Zuo Tradition*, 390 n362, Nanyang 南陽 is the designation for an area that extended from the northern bank of the Yellow River in the south to Taihang 太行 in the north. This corresponds to the present-day Xinxiang 新鄉 region of Henan.

Yangfan 陽樊 did not submit to its rule. On this occasion, Cangge 倉葛, a resident of Yangfan, is depicted as saying:

德以柔中國，刑以威四夷，宜吾不敢服也。

With virtue (*de*) one placates the central domains; with punishments one intimidates the four Yi peoples. Fitting it is that we dare not submit.<sup>41</sup>

This explains that when engaging with the rulers of the central domains, the king should apply *de* and only resort to corporal punishments when dealing with the Yi peoples on the fringes of his realm. As a region located near the royal domain, the people of Yangfan did not submit to Jin when the latter approached them through a military campaign, as warfare was considered a category of punishments. Shenshu shi 申叔時 also said that “virtue (*de*) and punishments” function as weapons in the context of warfare (sic).<sup>42</sup>

By the time of the Warring States period, warfare and corporal punishments had become the major tools for governing a dominion. Xunzi 荀子 (fl. 310–235 BC) always longed for how things had been in former times. In his “Yi bing pian” 義兵篇 (Debate on the principles of warfare) he analyzes three methods of annexing populations. Those are:

有以德兼人者，有以力兼人者，有以富兼人者。

To employ virtue (*de*) in order to annex them; to use raw force to annex them; and to use riches to annex them.<sup>43</sup>

Yet only “he who annexes populations through virtue (*de*) is a true king” (以德兼人者王)<sup>44</sup> able to “make his authority stern and fierce without having to wield it, as well as to establish his punishments without having to use them” (威厲而不試，刑錯而不用).<sup>45</sup> An army led by fellow-kindness and

41 Zuo, Xi 25.2, 434. The English translation follows Durrant, Li, and Schaberg, trans., *Zuo Tradition*, 391.

42 See Zuo, Cheng 16.5, 880. In the original passage, *de* and punishments are not actually referred to as “weapons” (武器), but as “instruments of battle” (戰之器也) on par with circumspection (詳), obligations (義), ritual propriety (禮), and trust (信).

43 *Xunzi jijie*, 10.341. Translation follows John Knoblock, trans., *Xunzi: A Translation and Study of the Complete Works, Volume II: Books 7–16* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990), 233.

44 *Xunzi jijie*, 10.342.

45 Ibid., 10.336.

righteousness (仁義之兵) causes those near and far to come and offer their submission without having to bloody its swords:<sup>46</sup>

德盛於此，施及四極。

When *de* flourishes at the center, it extends outwards until it reaches the limits in each of the four cardinal directions.<sup>47</sup>

The differentiation between *de* and raw force (力) marks that between a true king and an overlord (*ba* 霸). Mengzi 孟子 also says:

以德行仁者王，以力假仁者霸。

He who puts fellow-kindness into effect through *de* is a true king, whereas he who employs force in feigning fellow-kindness is but an overlord.<sup>48</sup>

Xun Qing's 荀卿 (i.e., Xunzi's) disciple Han Fei 韓非 (fl. 280–233 BC) holds that the method by which an enlightened ruler controls his ministers consists of two handles (二柄): Punishments (*xing* 刑) and rewards (*de* 德).<sup>49</sup> *De* and *xing* are explicitly juxtaposed in opposition to each other, hence the taxonomy of the “two handles.” Moreover, Han Fei discusses the evolution of the human ages in terms of three stages divided into “high antiquity” (上古), “the middle ages” (中世), and the “present” (當今). The notion of *de* is associated with high antiquity in this division. For instance in the “Wu du” 五蠹 (Five vermin) chapter from the *Hanfeizi* 韓非子 we read:

46 Jao paraphrases here from the text of the *Xunzi*.

47 *Xunzi jijie*, 10.331.

48 Jao paraphrases here from the *Mengzi*. The original has: “He who employs force in feigning fellow-kindness is an overlord. In order to become an overlord, he must first gain control over a large domain. He who puts fellow-kindness into effect through *de* is a true king. His success in becoming a king does not depend on the size of his domain” (以力假仁者霸，霸必有大國，以德行仁者王，王不待大) [*Mengzi zhengyi*, 7.239].

49 The *Hanfeizi* uses the pair *xing-de* as a synonym for *shang-fa* 賞罰 (reward and punishment). In this context the meaning of *de* should be rendered as “rewards” or “favor” as is suggested in the text of the *Hanfeizi* itself: “The two handles are *xing* and *de*. What is meant by *xing* and *de*? To inflict mutilation and death on men is called *xing*; to bestow honor and rewards is called *de*” (二柄者，刑、德也。何謂刑德？曰：殺戮之謂刑，慶賞之謂德) [*Hanfeizi jijie* 韓非子集解, annot. Wang Xianqian 王先謙, punc. and coll. Zhong Zhe 鍾哲 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2018), 2.42]. The English translation has been adapted from Burton Watson, trans., *The Basic Writings of Han Fei Tzu*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1964), 30.

上古競於道德，中世逐於智謀，當今爭於氣力。

Men of high antiquity strove for moral virtue (*daode*); men of the middle ages sought out wise schemes; men of the present age vie to be known for strength and spirit.<sup>50</sup>

The “Ba shuo” 八說 (Eight sayings) chapter states:

古人亟於德，中世逐於智，當今爭於力。

Ancient men were urgent about virtue (*de*); men of the middle ages sought after wisdom; men of the present age vie to be known for strength.<sup>51</sup>

Although the notion of *de* belongs to high antiquity, Han Fei merely regarded it as an outdated concept. Yet even though Qin conquered All-under-Heaven by means of military and punitive campaigns, it did not entirely forget about *de*. This may be gained from the fact that Qin re-named the Yellow River *Deshui* 德水 (Virtuous water). Qin presumably did so by adopting the saying of Zou Yan 鄒衍 (fl. 305–240 BC). In the “Fengshan shu” from the *Shiji* we read:

自齊威、宣之時，騶子之徒論著終始五德之運，及秦帝而齊人奏之，故始皇采用之。

From the time of Kings Wei and Xuan of Qi, the disciples of Master Zou were very active in propounding their master’s theory of the five agents (*wu de* 五德 [lit. five virtues]) succeeding each other in unending cycles.<sup>52</sup> When the ruler of Qin took on the title of thearch, the men of Qi accordingly explained to him this theory, and hence it was that the First Thearch [of Qin] adopted it.<sup>53</sup>

This is very clear evidence for our assumption. Moreover, the “Qin Shihuang ji” 秦始皇紀 (Basic Annals of the First Thearch of Qin) in the *Shiji* state:

50 *Hanfeizi jijie*, 19.487. Translation adapted from Watson, *The Basic Writings of Han Fei Tzu*, 100.

51 *Hanfeizi jijie*, 18.465.

52 In the context of Warring States correlative thought, *de* comes to denote the powers, potencies, or, more generally, the attributes associated with the natural elements of wood, fire, earth, metal, and water. Cf. Chan, trans., *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy*, 249–50.

53 *Shiji*, 28.1368.

始皇推終始五德之傳，以為周得火德，秦代周德，從所不勝。方今水德之始，改年始，朝賀皆自十月朔。衣服旄旌節旗皆上黑。數以六為紀，符、法冠皆六寸，而輿六尺，六尺為步，乘六馬。更名河曰德水，以為水德之始。

The First Thearch believed in the five agents succeeding each other in unending cycles, assuming that the Zhou dynasty had ruled by the power of the agent fire and that Qin had to replace the agent of Zhou by conforming to what the latter could not overcome. To mark then the beginning of the water-agent era, he changed the beginning of the year, with the New Year court ceremony always to begin on the first day of the tenth month, and all official regalia, oxtail banners and signal pennants honored the color black. Among numbers, six was regarded as the standard, so that tallies and official caps were all six inches, the width of carriages was six feet, six feet were taken to make up one pace, and carriages were drawn by six horses. [The First Thearch] renamed the Yellow River into *Deshui* (Virtuous Water) in order to indicate the beginning of the water-agent era.<sup>54</sup>

Later, the notion of punishments and rewards was combined with the idea of *yin* and *yang*. The section titled “Guan” 觀 (Investigation), from the *Huangdi* 黃帝 (Yellow Thearch) silk manuscript unearthed in Mawangdui, features numerous passages that discuss *xing* and *de*, such as “When *yin* is at its fullest *de* [begins to] spread” (羸陰布德), or “when *yang* is abiding punishments [start to] reshape” (宿陽脩刑). The respective argument reads as follows:

不靡不黑(纁)，而正之以刑與德。春夏為德，秋冬為刑。先德後刑以養生。姓生已定，而适(敵)者生爭，不謹(戡)不定。凡謹之極，在刑與德。刑德皇皇，日月相望，以明其當，而盈□無匡。

Do not coercively restrict people but set them in order by applying punishments and rewards according to their natural rhythm. Spring and Summer are the seasons of accretion (*de*); autumn and winter are the seasons of recision (*xing*).<sup>55</sup> Give priority to rewards over punishments so as

54 *Shiji*, 6.237–38. Translation adapted from Burton Watson, trans., *Records of the Grand Historian: Qin Dynasty* (Hong Kong: The Chinese University of Hong Kong, 1993), 43–4; and *The Grand Scribe's Records*, 6, 136.

55 John S. Major has pointed out that it does not make any sense to translate the conceptual pair *xing* and *de* as “punishments” and “rewards” in contexts where they are employed as cosmological terms, where they function as virtual synonyms of *yin* and *yang*. In these

to nourish life. When the clans and tribes have already taken shape, struggles come into being through contention. The situation cannot become stable without rectification. The best method of rectification lies in the use of punishments and rewards. So brilliantly evident are punishments and rewards as are the sun and moon set in turn to illuminate according to the brilliance proper to each, and to wax [and wane] without error.<sup>56</sup>

In matching the notion of punishments and rewards with the four seasons, in having *de* correspond with spring and summer, and punishments with autumn and winter respectively, this passage echoes precisely the “Si shi” 四時 (Four seasons) chapter from the *Guanzi*, which states:

德始於春，長於夏，刑始於秋，流於冬。

Accretion (*de*) begins in the spring and grows during the summer. Recision (*xing*) begins in the autumn and flows into the winter.<sup>57</sup>

The “Si shi” chapter, moreover, adds the notion of “harmony” (和) to the conceptual pair of *xing* and *de* to match them with the three different lights of the sun, the moon and the stars respectively. Whereas punishments and *de* stand in opposition to each other, the harmony of the stars can be understood as “conjoining” (合):

日掌陽，月掌陰，星掌和，陽為德，陰為刑，和為事。……是故聖王日食則修德，月食則修刑。……德生正(政)，正生事。

The sun controls *yang*, the moon controls *yin* and the stars control harmony. *Yang* embodies accretion (*de*), *yin* embodies recision (*xing*), and

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cases, he suggests translating *xing* as “recision” and *de* as “accretion.” See Major, “The Meaning of Hsing-te,” in *Chinese Ideas about Nature and Society*, edited by Charles Le Blanc and Susan Balder (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 1987), 281–91. I have adopted Major’s translation in those instances where *xing* and *de* unambiguously refer to cosmological principles in the present article.

56 Qiu Xigui et al., eds, *Changsha Mawangdui Hanmu jianbo jicheng*, 4152. Translation adapted from Leo S. Chang and Feng Yu, trans. *The Four Political Treatises of the Yellow Emperor: Original Mawangdui Texts with Complete English Translations and an Introduction* (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 1998), 146–47, based on the interpretations in Chen Guying 陳鼓應, *Huangdi si jing jin zhu jin yi – Mawangdui Hanmu chutu boshu* 黃帝四經今註今譯 – 馬王堆漢墓出土帛書 (Taipei: Taiwan Shangwu yinshuguan, 1995), 276–80.

57 *Guanzi jiaozhu*, 14.947.

harmony governs the affairs (of the polity). [...] Therefore, when the sun was eclipsed, the sage kings devoted themselves to bestowing rewards and benefits (*de*). When the moon was eclipsed. They devoted themselves to punishments. [...] *De* produces government policies; and government policies produce the affairs (of the polity).<sup>58</sup>

The argument from this passage can be tabularized as below:

TABLE 16 The argument from the “Si shi” 四時 chapter in the *Guanzi* 管子

Yin 陰	yang 陽	harmony (和)
Moon	sun	stars
Punishments	<i>de</i>	→ policies → affairs of the polity

The “Tianguan shu” in the *Shiji* says:

日變德修，月變省刑，星變結和。

If the [light of the] sun changes, rewards should be cultivated; if the [light of the] moon changes, the use of punishments should be examined; if the [light of the] stars changes, harmony should be strengthened.<sup>59</sup>

The “Yiwen zhi” in the *Hanshu* mentions a work called *Xingde* 刑德 (Punishments and *de*), consisting of seven scrolls, listed under the rubric of “Specialists of the Five Agents” (五行家). The “Tianwen xun” 天文訓 (Treatise on celestial patterns) chapter from the *Huainanzi* explains that *yin* and *yang*, *xing* (recession) and *de* (accretion), have seven habitations. According to the School of the Five Agents, each year and each month is subdivided into phases of recession and phases of accretion:

德在室則刑在野，德在堂則刑在術。德在庭則刑在巷，陰陽相德，則刑德合門。

When accretion is in the room, recession is in the field. When accretion is in the hall, recession is in the road. When accretion is in the court, recession

58 Ibid, 14.945, 947.

59 *Shiji*, 27.1351.

is in the lane. When *yin* and *yang* are of equal power (*xiang de*), then recession and accretion are together in the gate.<sup>60</sup>

We further find a passage titled “Xing-de fang” 刑德放 (Revelations on *xing* and *de*) in the *Shangshu wei* as well as the fragmentary “Xing-de” manuscript excavated from Tomb no. 3 in Mawangdui, Changsha. Thus, this theory was obviously widespread at the beginning of the Han period.

The *xing-de* theory has also been used by the masters of the military school (兵家). In the “Tianguan” 天官 (Heavenly offices) chapter of the *Weiliaozi* 尉繚子 (Master Wei Liao) we read:

梁惠王問曰：「黃帝刑德，可以百戰且勝。」

King Hui of Liang asked [Wei Liao zi]: “Can one use the *xing-de* [method] of the Yellow Thearch in order to emerge victorious from many wars?”<sup>61</sup>

The *Hanshu*’s “Tianwen zhi” quotes from the *Wuxing zhuan* 五星傳 (Tradition of the five stars and planets [of the Yellow Thearch]):<sup>62</sup>

日者德也，月者刑也。

The sun coincides with *de*; the moon coincides with punishments.

People during the Han viewed growth and decline in terms of *xing* and *de*. The “Tianwen xun” chapter from the *Huainanzi* states:

60 *Huainanzi jijie* 淮南子集釋, annot. He Ning 何寧 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2018), 3.212. The English translation has been adapted from Major et al., trans., *The Huainanzi*, 124.

61 The passage that Jao cites here differs from the original source text and remains ambiguous without Master Wei Liao’s reply. The transmitted version of the entire passage reads: “King Hui of Liang asked Wei Liao zi: ‘[I have heard that] the *xing-de* [method] of the Yellow Thearch enables one to emerge victorious from many wars, is that true?’ Master Wei Liao replied: ‘Punishments (*xing*) are used to attack [one’s enemies], and benefits (*de*) are used to protect [one’s polity]. This has nothing to do with the offices of Heaven, the seasons and days, or the opposition of *yin* and *yang*. What the Yellow Thearch was referring to are merely the human affairs [of punishment and rewards].’” (梁惠王問尉繚子曰：「黃帝刑德，可以百勝，有之乎？」尉繚子對曰：「刑以伐之，德以守之，非所謂天官時日陰陽向背也。黃帝者，人事而已矣。」) (Liu Zhongping 劉仲平, *Weiliaozi jinzhushu jinyi* 尉繚子今註今譯 [Taipei: Taiwan shangwu yinshuguan, 1977], 1.1).

62 The text of the *Hanshu* gives the title of this work as *Xingzhuan* 星傳 (Tradition of the Stars and Planets). See *Hanshu*, 26.1291.

日冬至則斗北中繩，陰氣極，陽氣萌，故曰冬至為德。

When the sun is at the winter solstice, the Dipper [points] north, exactly on the [north-south] marking-cord line. The *yin* breath is at its maximum, and the *yang* breath begins to grow. Thus, it is said that the winter solstice produces accretion (*de*).

日夏至則斗南中繩，陽氣極，陰氣萌，故曰夏至為刑。

When the sun is at the summer solstice, the Dipper [points] south, exactly on the [north-south] marking-cord line. The *yang* breath is at its maximum, and the *yin* breath begins to grow. Thus, it is said that the summer solstice produces recision (*xing*).<sup>63</sup>

Because *yang* begins to sprout with the winter solstice, the latter is associated with the beginning of growth. As *yin* begins to grow with the summer solstice, it is associated with the beginning of the period of decline. The “Benming” 本命 (Basic destiny) chapter in the *Da Dai Liji* states:

凡地:東西為緯，南北為經。山為積德，川為積刑。

The east-west dimensions of the earth are called weft, the north-south dimensions are called warp. Mountains are the cumulative [result of] accretion, streams are the cumulative [result of] recision.<sup>64</sup>

This passage in turn explains the taking shape of mountains and streams in terms of recision (*xing*) and accretion (*de*). These are all new theories that have gradually developed from the conception of *xing-de* as defined by the *Yin-yang* school at later points in time.

63 *Huainanzi jijie*, 3.208. The English translation has been adapted from Major et al. (2010), 123. Jao only cites the two phrases 「冬至為德」 and 「夏至為刑」 in the original. For the sake of comprehension, I have decided to cite them in their immediate context.

64 *Da Dai Liji jin zhu jin yi*, 80.477. The English translation has been partly adapted from the translation of a near synonymous passage in the *Huainanzi* in Major et al., trans., *The Huainanzi*, 159. I have again slightly expanded Jao's original quote.

### 3 Five Elements Thought and the Cosmological Meaning of *de*-Propriety (德禮)

The theory of the five elements (五材) circulated in its plainest form during the Spring and Autumn period. The *Zuozhuan's* account for the twenty-seventh year of Patriarch Xiang 襄 (545 BC) relates how Zi Han 子罕 (dates unknown) stresses the importance of weapons, the use of which necessitates employing each of the five elements and making manifest the virtue of culture. His speech goes:

天生五材，民並用之，廢一不可，誰能去兵？兵之設久矣，所以威不軌而昭文德也。聖人以興，亂人以廢。

Heaven gives rise to the five elements, and the people use all of them. Discarding even one of them will not do. Who can remove weapons? Weapons have been in use for a long time: such is the means for using authority to forestall transgressions and for making manifest the virtue of culture. The sages rise by them, and those who foment disorder fall by them.<sup>65</sup>

Using weapons to quell disorder and to strike terror precisely proclaims the virtue of culture (文德) that consists in “establishing heaven and administering the earth” (經天緯地). This is what is meant by the phrase “Awing through the majesty of virtue” (德威惟畏) in the “Lü xing” chapter. As to the five elements, Du Yu’s annotations define them as “metal” (金), “wood” (木), “water” (水), “fire” (火) and “earth” (土). These five raw materials form the basis of the livelihood of the people. Thus, the *Guoyu* states:

地之五行，所以生殖也。

It is because of the five agents of the earth that there is reproduction.<sup>66</sup>

The five elements together with food are referred to as the “six treasuries” (六府), which in turn belong to the “nine endeavors” (九功). In the *Zuozhuan's* account of the seventh year of Patriarch Wen 文 (619 BC), Xi Que 郤缺 [of Jin

65 *Zuo*, Xiang 27.6, 1136. The English translation follows Durrant, Li, and Schaberg, trans., *Zuo Tradition*, 1203–5.

66 *Guoyu jijie*, 4.161.

晉] (d. 597 BC) discusses the import of “*de*-propriety” (德禮) with Xuanzi of Zhao 趙宣子 (d. 601 BC):

非威非懷，何以示德？無德，何以主盟？子為正卿，以主諸侯，而不務德，將若之何？.....

If you are neither majestic nor concerned, how do you display your virtue? And without virtue, how can you preside over a covenant? You are the chief minister and thereby preside over the princes. But if you do not strive for virtue, what good will it do? [...]

九功之德皆可歌也，謂之九歌。六府、三事，謂之九功。水、火、金、木、土、穀，謂之六府；正德、利用、厚生，謂之三事。

The virtues of the nine endeavors can all be sung about, and we call these ‘the nine songs.’ The six treasuries and the three official affairs are called the nine endeavors. Water, fire, metal, wood, earth, and grain are the six treasuries. Correcting virtue, using things advantageously, and enriching livelihood are the three official affairs.

義而行之，謂之「德禮」(sic)。無禮不樂，所由叛也。若吾子之德，莫可歌也，其誰來之？

To practice them in accordance with one’s proper duty is called “*de*-propriety” (sic).<sup>67</sup> Without ritual, one will not perform music, and that is the path to disaffection. If with virtue like yours there is nothing that can be sung of, then who will be drawn to come here?<sup>68</sup>

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- 67 Jao’s reading of the *de* 德 and *li* 禮 as “*de*-propriety” is somewhat unusual. Most commentators of the *Zuozhuan* follow Du Yu in reading *de* and *li* as two distinct concepts. So do Durrant, Li, and Schaberg, who translate the phrase as: “To practice them in accordance with one’s proper duty is called virtue and ritual propriety” (義而行之，謂之德、禮) (Durrant, Li, and Schaberg, trans., *Zuo Tradition*, 507). The editors of the *Shisan jing zhushu zhengli ben* 十三經注疏整理本 (Collated Edition of the Annotated Version of the Thirteen Classics) note that several extant editions of the *Chunqiu Zuozhuan* text, such as the *min* 閔, *jian* 監, *mao* 毛, and *zuantu* 纂圖 versions have *de* 得 (to obtain) instead of *de* 德. See *Chunqiu Zuozhuan zhengyi*, 600, n2. Hence Legge translates accordingly: “The accomplishment of them with righteousness shows the possession of propriety” (義而行之，謂之德禮). See James Legge, trans., *The Chinese Classics, vol. V: The Ch’un Ts’ew, with the Tso Chuen* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 1960 [1872]), 250.
- 68 *Zuo*, Wen 7.8, 563–564. Translation adapted from Durrant, Li, and Schaberg, trans., *Zuo Tradition*, 507.

This passage originally also cites the *Xiashu* 夏書 (Documents of Xia). The extant version of the “Da Yu mo” chapter from the *Guwen Shangshu* has:

德惟善政，政在養民。水、火、金、木、土、穀，惟修；正德、利用、厚生、惟和。九功惟敘，九敘惟歌。

Virtue (*de*) is seen in the goodness of government, and [good] government lies in the nourishing of the people. There are water, fire, metal, wood, earth, and grain, – these must be duly regulated; there are correcting virtue (*zheng de*), using things advantageously, and enriching livelihood, – these must be harmoniously attended to. When the nine endeavors [thus indicated] have been orderly accomplished, let the order of these nine [endeavors] be celebrated by songs.<sup>69</sup>

The “nine orders” (九敘) are nothing else than the “nine endeavors” (九功), which are discussed here in conjunction with the six treasuries and the three official affairs. The six treasuries refer to six sorts of matter, while the three official affairs are congruent with the three talents (三才). The [paragraph explaining the duties of the] Da Siyue 大司樂 (Musician in Chief) in the *Zhouli*. The latter also mentions a “Song of the Nine Virtues” (九德之歌).<sup>70</sup> Zheng Sinong explains these nine virtues in terms of the six treasuries and the three official affairs from the *Zuozhuan*.<sup>71</sup> Jia Gongyan’s *Zhouli yishu* 周禮義疏 states:

正德，人德；利用，地德；厚生，天德。

Correcting virtue refers to the virtue of men; using things advantageously refers to the virtue of the soil; enriching livelihood refers to the virtue of heaven.<sup>72</sup>

According to the *Yi zhuan*, “the great virtue of heaven and earth is giving and maintaining life” (天地之大德曰生).<sup>73</sup> Providing abundant means of sustenance (厚生) may be called the virtue of heaven (天德). All of them in conjunction are referred to as “*de*-propriety” (德禮) as is shown in the table below:

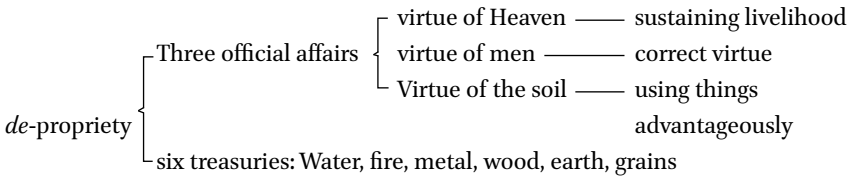
69 *Shu* 3.184–215, Translation adapted from Legge, *The Shoo King*, 55–6.

70 *Zhouli zhengyi*, 43.1757.

71 The original has *ci zhuan* 此傳 (this commentary) instead of *Zuozhuan* 左傳, which must clearly be an erratum.

72 *Zhouli zhengyi*, 43.1778.

73 *Zhouyi Zhengyi*, 8.349. Translation adapted from the English translation has been adapted from Legge, *The Yi King*, 381.

TABLE 17 The concept of “*de*-propriety” (德禮)

The “Yu gong” chapter from the *Book of Documents*, as well, has: “The six treasures were fully attended to” (六府孔修).<sup>74</sup> The six treasures of course refer to the six official duties concerned with water, fire, metal, wood, soil, and grains. It must have been that in antiquity specialized offices were assigned within the government to oversee these matters. Food crops constituted the basis of the sustenance of the people; thus, grains have been made an additional category on top of the five elements. The name “six treasures” appears simultaneously in the “Yu gong,” the “Da Yu mo,” and in the *Zuozhuan*. Hence the account in the “Song of the Nine Endeavors” (九功之歌) (sic!) should be trustworthy. The five elements and the six treasures are vital for the livelihood of the people. As the basis of sustenance, nothing is more important than these. Since the ancients valued production, they have combined the affairs of enriching livelihood, using things advantageously and correcting virtue, and turned them into the three goals of *de*-propriety. As to each of the six treasures having a special official in charge, this may be corroborated from the words of Cai Mo 蔡墨 transmitted in the account of the twenty-ninth year of Patriarch Zhao 昭 (512 BC) in the *Zuozhuan*:

夫物，物有其官，官修其方，朝夕思之。一日失職，則死及之。失官不食。官宿其業，其物乃至。若泯棄之，物乃坻伏，鬱湮不育。故有五行之官，是謂五官。

Every kind of thing has its official, who is charged with perfecting the methods for it and keeping these in mind day and night. If one day the official fails in his duties, then death comes to him, for a failure in carrying out his official duties means that he does not receive his salary. When the official remains in his duties, then the kind of thing to which his office is devoted will make itself manifest. If he abandons his duties, then that

74 *Shu* 6.1050–53. Translation adapted from Legge, *The Shoo King*, 141.

thing will hide away, becoming obstructed and unproductive. Thus, there were the officials of the five agents, known as the Five Officials.<sup>75</sup>

This may serve to prove that originally there had been officials in charge of each of the five elements, including the procurement of the five big types of substances, increasing production, and ensuring the sustenance of the people with clothes, food, and daily necessities. The name “five agents” (*wu xing* 五行) first appears in the “Gan shi” 甘誓 (Harangue at Gan) from the *Xiashu*, where You Hu Shi 有扈氏 (The Prince of Hu) is accused of the crime of “violating and despising the five agents, and of having idly abandoned the three correct standards” (威侮五行，怠棄三正).<sup>76</sup> Perhaps this was meant to criticize the prince’s misuse of resources and his failure to carry out his tasks in compliance with the seasons. Later in the tradition, the “Hong fan” advocates “paying reverent attention to the five agents” (敬用五行) (sic!) in an exclusive discussion on the use of the resources associated with the five agents.<sup>77</sup> These statements belong to the five agents and the five elements of the six treasuries and thus to the relatively earlier, primitive theories of the five agents, which were essentially materialistic in nature. However, as far as it concerns the issues of correcting virtue, using things advantageously, and enriching people’s livelihood, those belong to the context of “*de*-propriety.” This marks the first stage of the relationship between the five agents and *de* during the Spring and Autumn period.

During the Spring and Autumn period, when *de*-propriety (德禮) had already become an established term, the meaning of propriety (禮) gained a new level of cosmological significance, equaling the early Zhou concept of *wen* 文 (diligence / self-exertion) in importance. There are many important sayings in the *Zuozhuan* relating to that matter:

禮以順天，天之道也。

To comply with Heaven through ritual propriety is the correct Way of Heaven.<sup>78</sup>

禮，上下之紀、天地之經緯也，民之所以生也。

75 *Zuo*, Zhao 29.4, 1502. Translation adapted from Durrant, Li, and Schaberg, trans., *Zuo Tradition*, 1699.

76 *Shu* 7.25–32. Translation adapted from Legge, *The Shoo King*, 153.

77 The original passage from the “Hong fan” reads: “paying reverent attention to the five affairs” (敬用五事). See *Shu* 24.99–102.

78 *Zuo*, Wen 15.11, 614. Translation follows Durrant, Li, and Schaberg, trans., *Zuo Tradition*, 551.

Ritual propriety is the marking line of superior and inferior, the warp and woof of Heaven and earth, and the basis for the people's livelihood.<sup>79</sup>

夫禮，天之經也，地之義也，民之行也。天地之經，而民實則之。

Ritual propriety is the warp thread of Heaven, the proper duty of earth, and the best conduct of the people. It is the warp thread of Heaven and earth, and it is this that people make their model.<sup>80</sup>

禮之可以為國也久矣，與天地並。.....先王所稟於天地以為其民也。

The usefulness of ritual propriety to governing a domain is old, as old as Heaven and earth. [...] This is what the former kings received from Heaven and earth for the managing of the people.<sup>81</sup>

This aligning of ritual propriety with the cosmos may in some way be regarded as a “reprint” of *wen*.

The “Li yun” 禮運 (The conveyance of rites) chapter from the *Liji* states that in order to become established, ritual propriety needs to first have its origin in Heaven and subsequently take its pattern from the earth as well as from the five sacrifices and the four seasons.<sup>82</sup> The concept of ritual propriety and dutifulness (禮義) [in the “Li yun” chapter] denotes not only “the major promptings of men” (人之大端), but also the “great standards by which one serves the spirits” (事鬼神之大端). The passage constitutes an advanced theory of ritual propriety in that it lays out the interrelations between ritual propriety, Heaven, earth and the spirits very thoroughly. In his “Shi li” 釋禮 (Explaining Ritual Propriety) Wang Jing'an (Guowei) 王靜安(國維) (1877–1927) points out that the ancient form of the graph 禮 was 豐. From its original association with a sort of sacrificial item, the graph came to further denote the action of sacrificing to spirits and humans and hence also took on the meaning of ritual propriety.<sup>83</sup> To infer the uses of ritual from its implements is a reliable approach and we may trust Wang's conclusions. As to the various issues surrounding the

79 Zuo, Zhao 25.3, 1459. Translation follows Durrant, Li, and Schaberg, trans., *Zuo Tradition*, 1639.

80 Zuo, Zhao 25.3, 1457. Translation follows Durrant, Li, and Schaberg, trans., *Zuo Tradition*, 1637.

81 Zuo, Zhao 26.11, 1480. Translation follows Durrant, Li, and Schaberg, trans., *Zuo Tradition*, 1671.

82 Jao refers the reader further to Zheng Xuan's annotations to this passage. *Liji zhengyi*, 21.773.

83 Wang Guowei 王國維, *Wang Guowei shou ding Guantang jilin* 王國維手定觀堂集林, punc. and coll. Huang Aimei 黃愛梅 (Hangzhou: Zhejiang jiaoyu chubanshe, 2014), 6.156.

meaning of the concept of *li*, these are very intricate and shall not be discussed here in greater detail.

In the “Zheng yu” 鄭語 (Discourses of Zheng) Scribe Bo 史伯 says:

先王以土與金木水火雜，以成百物，……建九紀以立純德，合十數以訓百體。

The Former Kings mixed earth with metal, wood, water, and fire to create the myriad phenomena. [...] They set up the nine standards in order to establish pure *de*, and they introduced ten different ranks so as to instruct numerous officials.<sup>84</sup>

There are two main points in this passage worth noting:

- 1) It claims that earth marks the dominant element [among the five agents], as it mingles with all the myriad phenomena. At the time of the Spring and Autumn period, Scribe Mo 墨 says: “Heaven has its three heavenly bodies, earth has its five agents” (天有三辰，地有五行).<sup>85</sup> Zhan Qin 展禽 (fl. 720–621 BC) in turn says:

及天之三辰，民所以瞻仰也；及地之五行，所以生殖也；及九州名山川澤，所以出財用也。

As to the three heavenly bodies, they cause admiration in the people; as to the five agents, they enable reproduction; as to the renowned mountains, streams, and marshes of the nine provinces, they provide material resources for use.<sup>86</sup>

They all associate the five agents with the earth because the five agents are dominated by (the element) earth; metal, wood, water and fire are all produced and nurtured by the earth.

- 2) It claims that the nine standards amount to pure *de*. Given that the “Hong fan” mentions five standards (五紀), referring to the year (or the planet Jupiter), the moon, the sun, the stars, and planets, the zodiacal spaces and the calendric calculations respectively, it follows that the nine standards

84 *Guoyu jijie*, 16.470–71.

85 *Zuo*, Zhao 32.4, 1519. Translation adapted from Durrant, Li, and Schaberg, trans., *Zuo Tradition*, 1723.

86 *Guoyu jijie*, 4.161.

as well must have been official standards for dividing time [in a given period]. Maybe they formed part of teaching the seasons to the people as related in the “Yao dian.” A close relationship should exist between the nine and the five standards.

The establishment of the nine standards (including the categories of the five standards), serving as official norms to determine the right time, helped to ensure that the affairs of the people did not miss out on the right season, so as to maximize the development of production. This is what is referred to as “pure *de*,” the meaning of which corresponds with the term “*de*-propriety” from the *Zuozhuan*.

The primitive theories of the five agents and the five elements laid out above have all developed from the analysis of the forms and characteristics of actual objects with the goal of serving the three official affairs. This sort of *de*-propriety was centered on the livelihood of the people and had nothing to do with the idea of cultivating one’s personal moral behavior.

#### 4 Heaven’s Laws and the Laws of *de*

On the reverse side of the *Laozi* manuscript A from Mawangdui we find a few hand copied passages from texts that are no longer extant. Apart from the passages [which the editors of the manuscript find] titled “Yi Yin” 伊尹 and “Jiu zhu” 九主 (Nine rulers) towards the end of the appendix,<sup>87</sup> there are also paragraphs discussing the actions of *de* (德之行) as well as quotations from *Shizi* 世子 (Master Shi) (i.e. Shi Shuo 世碩) among others. The discussions on *de* found therein are quite innovative and can be excerpted as follows:

德之行五，和胃(調)之德；四行，和胃(調)之善(善。善)，人道也；德，天道也。<sup>88</sup>

There are five kinds of virtuous action, [when all five are in] harmony, it is called *de*. When [only] four kinds of action are in harmony, it is called good. Good is the way of men. *De* is the way of Heaven.<sup>89</sup>

87 Jao refers the reader here to Ling Xiang 凌襄, “Shilun Mawangdui Hanmu boshu Yi Yin Jiuzhu” 試論馬王堆漢墓帛書《伊尹·九主》, *Wenwu* (1974) 11.

88 The transcription of this passage has been updated according to Qiu Xigui et al., eds, *Changsha Mawangdui Hanmu jianbo jicheng*, 4: 58; obvious editorial errors in the original have been amended.

89 Compare the annotated translation in Mark Csikszentmihalyi, *Material Virtue: Ethics and the Body in Early China* (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 312–13.

According to Yang Liang's annotations of the passage "Some men follow the model of the ancient kings in a fragmentary way [...]. They have initiated a theory for which they claim great antiquity, calling it the five agents / actions." (略法先王.....。案往舊造說，謂之五行)，<sup>90</sup> ascribed to Zisi and Mencius, *wu xing* 五行 refers here to the five constants (五常) which are fellow-kindness (仁), dutifulness (義), ritual propriety (禮), wisdom (智) and trustworthiness (信).<sup>91</sup> Further down in the text, the four actions (四行) are referred to as fellow-kindness, dutifulness, ritual propriety and wisdom. The manuscript then continues with the words:

君子之為善也，有與始也，有與終也。君子之為德也，有與始也，無與終也。金聲而玉振之，有德者也。金聲，善也。王（玉）言（音），聖也。善，人道也。德，而（天）道也。唯有德者，然筭（後）能金而玉振之。<sup>92</sup>

When a gentleman performs good acts, there is something with which he begins and something with which he finishes. When a gentleman performs virtuous acts, there is something with which he begins but nothing with which he finishes. To open (a performance) with the sound of bells and to conclude it with jade chimes, this is what describes (a person of) virtue. The sound of bells is good; the tone of jade chimes is sage. Goodness is the way of men; virtue is the way of Heaven. It takes a (a person of) virtue to be able (to open with) bells and (to conclude with) jade chimes.<sup>93</sup>

The phrase "to open with the sound of bells and to conclude with jade chimes" (金聲而玉振) also appears in the "Wan Zhang" 萬章 chapter from the *Mengzi*. I suspect that both the goodness and the virtue discussed in this passage should have an end and a beginning, just like what the *Mengzi* refers to as "[to open with bells] is to begin in an orderly fashion; [to conclude with jade tubes] is to end in an orderly fashion" (金聲也者，始條理也；玉振之也者，終條理也).<sup>94</sup> This passage might therefore present us with a lost text in which Xunzi discusses Zisi's and Mencius's sayings on the idea of *wu xing* 五行.

90 *Xunzi jijie*, 3.110. Translation adapted from John Knoblock, trans., *Xunzi: A Translation and Study of the Complete Works, Volume I: Books 1-6* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988), 224. The quote has been slightly expanded.

91 *Xunzi jijie*, 3.110.

92 See Qiu Xigui et al., eds, *Changsha Mawangdui Hanmu jianbo jicheng*, 4: 58.

93 Translation partly adapted from Csikszentmihalyi, *Material Virtue*.

94 *Mengzi zhengyi*, 20.723. Translation adapted from Lau, trans., *Mencius*, 219.

Goodness is regarded here as the way of men, whereas virtue is taken to be the way of Heaven. In juxtaposing virtue and goodness, the text perceives them in terms of the relation between Heaven and men. Further below the text additionally says:

聞君子道，惛(聰)也。聞而知之，聖也。聖人知而〈天〉道。知而行之，聖〈義〉也。<sup>95</sup>

[Being able] to perceive the way of the gentleman is being keen-eared. [Being able] to perceive and to comprehend [the way of the gentleman] is sagely. The sage knows the way of Heaven. Knowing and acting on it is dutifulness.<sup>96</sup>

Being able to perceive the way of the gentleman and to implement it, this is sagely. This sort of reasoning evidently belongs to the realm of Ruist thought. Perhaps Zou Yan's idea of the "five agents succeeding each other" (五德始終) is in some way related to these theories. The view that *de* denotes the way of Heaven especially deserves our attention.

Zou Yan refers to the five agents (五行) in terms of five virtues (五德) so as to use them to explain human affairs. In particular, the theory behind the principle that sovereigns should rise to power conforming to their destiny constituted a new philosophy of history, including the following three main principles:

- 1) What determines the fate of each generation of sovereigns is the inborn quality or virtue (德) of the corresponding agent.
- 2) Based on the mutual generation and the mutual overcoming of the five agents, the idea of the five virtues succeeding each other is taken to have initiated the theory of the cyclical succession of sovereigns.
- 3) The year-cycle has been expanded to describe the cycle of a historical period and has thereby been developed into the theory of a macro-cycle.

The origins of the theory of the five agents overcoming each other are quite remote. Scribe Mo's sayings about fire overcoming metal and of water overcoming fire, transmitted in the *Zuozhuan* (Zhao. 30; Ai. 9), had already been adopted by the Mohists (墨家), the Militarists (兵家), and the School of Names (名家). There is the discussion on the five combinations (五合) in the *Mozhi's* "Jing shuo" 經說 (Explanations on canons) as well as that of the five dragons (五龍) in the "Gui yi" 貴義 (Esteem for propriety) chapter from the same work.

95 See Qiu Xigui et al., eds, *Changsha Mawangdui Hanmu jianbo jicheng*, 4: 59.

96 Translation adapted from Csikszentmihalyi, *Material Virtue*, 319.

The “Xu shi” 虛實 (Weak points and strong) chapter from the *Sunzi bingfa* 孫子兵法 (Sunzi’s art of warfare) explains that none of the five agents can constantly prevail (五行無常勝),<sup>97</sup> and the “Tongbianlun” 通變論 (Universalities and changes) chapter from the *Gongsun Longzi* 公孫龍子 (Master Gongsun Long) corroborates the view that wood harms metal (木賊金).<sup>98</sup> At that time, the theorists of the five agents were divided between those who advocated the constant prevalence of one of the agents over the rest and those who argued that none of the agents prevails constantly.<sup>99</sup> That Zou Yan adhered to the former position in explaining the course of history was not aimed at exalting the theory by making it match with reality. Rather, he established the connection by looking at the big picture. The “Mengzi Xun Qing liezhuan” 孟子荀卿列傳 (Biography of Mencius and Xun Qing) in the *Shiji* states:

騶衍睹有國者益淫侈，不能尚德，若大雅整之於身，施及黎庶矣。乃深觀陰陽消息而作怪迂之變，終始、大聖之篇十餘萬言。……

Zou Yan saw that those who possessed domains had become even more dissolute and were unable to exalt virtue, while those who possessed great refinement had put their virtue in order and extended it to the black-haired common folk. He therefore carefully observed the growth and decay of *yin* and *yang* and wrote of the strange and uncanny in essays like “Zhong shi” 終始 (Ends and Beginnings) and “Da sheng” (The Great Sage) in over ten thousand graphs. [...]

稱引天地剖判以來，五德轉移，治各有宜，而符應若茲。……

97 *Shiyi jia zhu Sunzi jijiao* 十一家注孫子集校, ed. Liu Chunsheng 劉春生 (Guangzhou: Guangdong renmin chubanshe, 2019), B.233. Jao notes here in brackets that the chapter from the *Sun Bin bingfa* 孫臏兵法 (Sun Bin’s Art of Warfare) manuscript that has been excavated in Lin Yi 臨沂 in Shandong province speaks about the “relative merits of the five kinds of earth” (五壤之勝), where it says: “Azure-colored earth prevails over yellow-brown, yellow-brown prevails over black, black prevails over red, red prevails over white, and white prevails over azure” (青勝黃，黃勝黑，黑勝赤，赤勝白，白勝青). The English translation of the *Sun Bin* passage follows D. C. Lau and Roger T. Ames, trans., *Sun Pin: The Art of Warfare* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1963), 159–60.

98 *Gongsun Longzi xuanjie* 公孫龍子懸解, annot. Wang Guan 王琯 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2018), 4.82.

99 Jao refers the reader here to Luan Diaofu 樂調甫 (1889–1972), “Liang Rengong wuxing shuo zhi shangque” 梁任公五行說之商榷, in Gu Jiegang 顧頡剛 et al., eds, *Gushi bian* 古史辨, 7 vols. (Hong Kong: Taiping shuju, 1963 [1926–1941]), 5: 378–88.

He described from the splitting of heaven and earth the ways the five virtues (or agents) revolve, how during each era there was a government appropriate to [each revolution], and how human response to the heavenly omens should also be appropriate to [each revolution]. [...]

其術皆此類也。然要其歸，必止乎仁義節儉，君臣上下六親之施。

His methods were all like this. But in summing up his intent, he was sure to turn to fellow-kindness, propriety, frugality, and the six relationships of lord and vassal, superior and inferior.<sup>100</sup>

Zou Yan still took Ruist ethics as the basis for his thought, but he advocated exalted virtue (尚德). The “Feng-shan shu” claims that he “won fame among the many lords for his theories of *yin* and *yang* and the rotation of dominant positions” (以陰陽主運顯於諸侯).<sup>101</sup> The idea of the “rotation of dominant positions” (主運) tallies with the topic of the “Li yun” chapter in the *Liji* as Ru Chun 如淳 points out in his annotations on the term: “The sequence and the rotation of the five agents determined the [nature of the] dresses [to be worn] through their respective aspects” (五行相次轉用事，隨方面為服).<sup>102</sup> This should be what is meant by “The five colors, the six embroidered patterns and the twelve robes, come each one, in their revolutions among themselves, to give the character of the dress that is worn.” (五色、六章、十二服還相為質也).<sup>103</sup> *Fu* 服 means dress color (服色). Starting from the Qin and Han periods, everyone discussed “altering the commencement of the year and month and the changing of the color of the dresses” (改正朔、易服色), seemingly building on Zou Yan’s rotation of dominant positions. As for “Zhong shi” (Ends and beginnings) and “Da sheng” (The great sage), the great sage evidently refers to the thearch-king. The “Shifa jie” 諡法解 (The order of posthumous names explained) chapter in the *Yi Zhoushu* states: “[He, whose] *de* resembles [that of] heaven and earth acts as / becomes thearch” (德象天地為帝).<sup>104</sup> The question of how one can match the requirements of becoming a thearch seems to have been the main topic of discussion among scholars of the late Warring States period. If

100 *Shiji*, 74.2344. Translation follows William H. Nienhauser, Jr., ed., *The Grand Scribe’s Records, Volume VII: Memoirs of Pre-Han China*, trans. Tsai-fa Cheng et al. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), 180–81, with some minor adaptations.

101 *Shiji*, 28.1639.

102 *Ibid*, 28.1639.

103 *Liji zhengyi*, 22.805. The original has *yi* 衣 instead of *fu* 服.

104 Huang Huaixin, Zhang Maorong et al., *Yi Zhoushu huijiao jizhu*, 6.628. The original reads “[He, whose] *de* resembles [that of] heaven and earth is called thearch” (德象天地曰帝).

we look at the *Da Dai Liji*, there are numerous chapters, such as “Wu Di de” 五帝德 (Virtue of the five thearchs), “Shengde” 盛德 (Abundant virtue) and “Yu dai de” 虞戴德 (The glory of the power of Yu), where this matter appears. The “Shengde” chapter discusses the flourishing virtue of sage kings, stating:

明堂者，天法也。禮度，德法也。所以御民之嗜慾好惡，以慎天法，以成德法也。

The [ceremonies] of the Bright Hall (*mingtang* 明堂) take their model from [the laws of] Heaven. The institutions of ritual propriety take their model from [the standards of] virtue. The way to control the people’s desires and emotions lies in being attentive to the laws of Heaven and in establishing the standards of virtue.<sup>105</sup>

In analyzing the concepts of the laws of Heaven (天法) and the standards of virtue (德法) it becomes clear that both these ideas oppose the legalists’ position of controlling the defects of the people through the application of criminal laws.

夫民善其德，必稱其人；故今之人稱五帝三王者，依然若猶存者，其法誠德，其德誠厚。夫民思其德，心稱其人，朝夕祝之，升聞於皇天，上帝歆焉，故永其世而豐其年。

The one whose virtue the people consider to be excellent, they will praise. Thus, the people of the present age praise the Five Thearchs and the Three Sovereigns as if they were still alive, for their regulations were genuinely virtuous and their virtue was sincere. The one whose virtue the people long for, they will praise in their hearts and pray to him from dawn to dusk. This will become known to August Heaven and Di-on-High will be greatly satisfied, causing his era to last long and his years to be abundant.<sup>106</sup>

The standards of virtue that the “Sheng de” chapter describes have been modelled on the standards of Heaven. Zou Yan advocated exalted virtue which had to be first completed within oneself before it was applied to the people. This could not have been much at odds with the argumentation of the “Sheng de” chapter. The Yellow Thearch and Zhuan Xu, and the various sovereigns

<sup>105</sup> *Da Dai Liji jin zhu jin yi*, 281.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid*, 284.

described in the “Wu Di de” chapter from the *Da Dai Liji* had all been rulers who understood to conjoin in themselves the virtue of Heaven and earth. The passage relating the story of the Yellow Thearch states:

治五氣，設五量，撫萬民，度四方；教熊羆貔豹虎，以與赤帝戰於阪泉之野，三戰然後得行其志。黃帝黼黻衣，大帶黼裳，乘龍辰雲，以順天地之紀，幽明之故，死生之說，存亡之難。

[The Yellow Thearch] controlled the five energies, cultivated the five kinds of grain, soothed the multitudinous peoples, and surveyed the four cardinal regions. He trained black bears, grizzly bears, foxes, panthers, lynxes, and tigers to fight with him against the Flame Thearch in the wastes of Banquan. After fighting three battles, he was able to fulfil his intent. The Yellow Thearch put on embroidered robes, a great belt, and embroidered garments; he rode in a dragon-chariot with cloud-sails so as to comply with the celestial and terrestrial movements, the dark and bright prognostications, the disputations on life and death.

時播百穀草木，故教化淳鳥獸昆蟲，歷離日月星辰；極畋土石金玉，勞心力耳目，節用水火材物。生而民得其利百年，死而民畏其神百年，亡而民用其教百年，故曰三百年。

He sowed and planted the hundred crops, grasses, and trees according to their respective seasons, thereby transforming the birds, beasts, and insects. He also prepared a record of the movements of the sun, moon, and stars; the flow of the tides; and the properties of clay, stones, metals, and gems. He devoted much careful attention to these things, and his observations were applied to ascertaining how fire, water, wood, and other elements could be used economically. When he was alive, the people profited from his deeds for a hundred years. After he had passed away, the people stood in awe of his spirit for another hundred years. After he had perished, the people used his teachings for yet another hundred years. Hence [the era of the Yellow Thearch] is said to have lasted for three hundred years.<sup>107</sup>

His major contribution to the people was that the latter profited from him, that they revered his spirit and used his teachings. This constitutes the standard for

<sup>107</sup> Ibid. 236.

the virtue of a thearch. Only by fulfilling these virtues does a ruler qualify as a major sage. The *Wenyan* commentary to the *Changes* says:

與天地合德，日月合明。

The virtue [of the sage] is in harmony with [that of] Heaven and earth; his brightness is in harmony with [that of] the sun and moon.<sup>108</sup>

The “Yao dian” states:

光被四表，移于上下。

His bright [influence] was felt through the four cardinal regions and reached to [Heaven] above and [earth] beneath.<sup>109</sup>

The *Shangshu wei* explains the phrase *ji gu* 稽古 (to examine into antiquity) in terms of *tong tian* 同天, which Yu Zhengxie 俞正燮 (1775–1840) understands as “to take one’s model from Heaven” (法天).<sup>110</sup> Only thearchs with great sagacious properties are qualified to become persons whose virtue matches that of Heaven and earth.

## 5 Conclusion

In the West, the notion of rationalism appeared quite late. Although there too it was defined by emancipation from divine providence, in ancient Greece it evolved around the idea of objective knowledge. In the Middle Ages the authority of the church controlled everything, and the position of men had to bend to the supernatural power of God. Men’s own reason did not constitute a value in itself. Individual morality was completely controlled by the church, under the heteronomy of which there was no room for any kind of self-determination. The discovery of the individual came much later. The awareness of the self has paved the way for the autonomy of the “rational individual” to slowly take shape and thus for rationalism to enter the realm of philosophy. In China, the

108 *Zhouyi jijie zuanshu* 周易集解纂疏, annot. Li Daoping 李道平, punc. and coll. Pan Yuting 潘雨廷 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2004[1994]), 2.128.

109 The original has *ge* 格 instead of *yi* 移. See *Shu*, 1.22–29.

110 Yu Zhengxie 俞正燮, *Guisi leigao* 癸巳類稿, 1.5, rpt. in *Qingdai xueshu biji congkan* 清代學術筆記叢刊 (Beijing: Xueyuan chubanshe, 2016), 39: 133.

Western Zhou elites promoted the principle of revering and making their virtue manifest. Above, they were matching the Heavenly Mandate; below, they were implementing pure virtue, so that Heaven and men were relying on each other. In the development from the *de*-propriety of the Spring and Autumn period to the standards of virtue in Warring States times, describing the change from the rule of propriety to the rule of laws and standards, *de* continued to provide the content for these models of socio-political cohesion.

The sky deity guides men but does not control or restrict them. In China there is no notion of original sin, so men did not have to supplicate the deities for redemption. If they were able to comply with the rules of *de*-propriety in going about their affairs on their own initiative, this could already be called self-affirmation.

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