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EPIPHANIES OF SOVEREIGNTY AND THE RITE OF JADE DISC IMMERSION IN WEFT NARRATIVES

Grégoire Espesset*

Abstract

This article deals with facets of the political ideology of late pre-imperial and early imperial China as documented by remnants of a dozen texts belonging to an under-explored genre known in English as weft (*wei* 緯) writings or the "Confucian Apocrypha." Its focus is on the transcendence of hierarchy and sovereignty, the transfer of dynastic legitimacy, and the pragmatic vehicle of "tangible" revelation. After a terminological introduction, the study turns to weft concepts of society and sovereignty as being consubstantial with the intrinsic hierarchical order of the universe, then moves on to explore how these concepts are dealt with in a cluster of weft narrative materials. Focused on a rite of jade disc immersion, the final section bridges the gap between the "mythical" sphere of weft narrative and conventional history, showing how some weft ideas actually determined political action. Weft theories contributed to the formation of the early imperial ideas of sovereignty and legitimacy and remained active throughout the early medieval era, having a lasting impact on the political sphere as well as liturgical practices intended to reenact the transcendent experience of epiphany.

This article is devoted to facets of the political ideology of late pre-imperial and early imperial China. It focuses on the transcendent origin and nature of hierarchy and sovereignty, the role of ritualized epiphany in the heavenly-controlled process of dynastic legitimacy transfer, and the pragmatic vehicle of "tangible" revelations—what Seidel called "imperial treasures."[1] The study shows how some of

* Grégoire Espesset, 郭艾思, Centre de Recherche sur les Civilisations de l'Asie Orientale (CRCAO), Paris; email: gresp@yahoo.com.

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1. Anna Seidel, "Kokuhō. Note à propos du terme 'trésor national' en Chine et au Japon," *Bulletin de l'École française d'Extrême-Orient* 69 (1981), 229–61; Anna Seidel,

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these ideas, still commonly labeled as myths, actually determined political action, thus durably impacting Chinese history. New light is cast upon the politico-religious imagination of ancient China, by contrast with such enduring vignettes as "evil last rulers are overthrown by virtuous rebels" and other simplistic representations.[2]

This study is mainly documented by remnants of a group of texts not belonging to the official corpus of Chinese orthodoxy and, as such, still suffering from an unfavorable assessment in academic publications. In contemporary China, these texts are still commonly regarded as being the expression of "superstition" (*mixin* 迷信), whatever the context and historical period under consideration.[3] In the West, the author of a general history of Chinese thought, published fifteen years ago, devotes only a short section to them, calling them a "big grab-bag" and describing them, somewhat derisively, in the following Prévert inventory: "revelations, prophecies, codified political imagery, but also etymologies, glosses, pseudo-scientific data in astrology, numerology, geomancy, physiognomy, and so on."[4] And yet these texts were abundantly quoted throughout the literary history of the imperial era. Therefore, in contrast with the reductionist or deprecatory views like those just mentioned, the basic assumption of this study is that these texts may be seen and used as an alternative source of knowledge for the study of Chinese thought in the early imperial era. In English, these texts are known as the "Confucian Apocrypha," or simply "Apocrypha," or "weft" (*wei* 緯) writings.[5]

"Imperial Treasures and Taoist Sacraments: Taoist Roots in the Apocrypha," in *Tantric and Taoist Studies in Honour of R.A. Stein*, vol. 2, ed. Michel Strickmann (Brussels: Institut Belge des Hautes Études Chinoises, 1983), 291–371.

2. The formula, aptly coined, is quoted from p. 569 of Mark Edward Lewis, "The Mythology of Early China," in *Early Chinese Religion. Part One: Shang through Han (1250 BC–220 AD)*, ed. John Lagerwey and Marc Kalinowski (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2008), 543–94.

3. Examples include Wang Yujin 王玉金 and Li Jian 李建, "Henan Nanyang Han hua yu Han dai chenwei mixin sixiang" 河南南陽漢畫與漢代讖緯迷信思想, *Nandu xuetan* 南都學壇 14 (1994), 6–11; Zhou Shan 周山, "Chenwei yu xiandai mixin" 讖緯與現代迷信, *Shehui kexue luntan* 社會科學論壇 2000.7, 52–54; and Qing Zijin 青子衿, "Bei Song huangdi de chenwei mixin" 北宋皇帝的讖緯迷信, *Wenshi zazhi* 文史雜誌 149 (2010), 75–78.

4. Anne Cheng, *Histoire de la pensée chinoise* (Paris: Seuil, 1997), 308.

5. To my knowledge, there is no comprehensive, up-to-date bibliography on this literature; references to Chinese and Japanese studies may be found in *Shin'i shisō no sōgōteki kenkyū* 讖緯思想の総合的研究, ed. Yasui Kōzan 安居香山 (Tokyo: Kokusho, 1984), 427–39 (210 items); *Jingxue yanjiu lunzhu mulu (1912–1987)* 經學研究論著目錄, ed. Lin Qingzhang 林慶彰 (Taipei: Center for Chinese Studies, 1989), 821–26 (84 items); *Jingxue yanjiu lunzhu mulu (1988–1992)*, ed. Lin Qingzhang (Taipei: Center for

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Terminology in Dated Material

The original terminology of the texts under consideration was much more varied than their modern designations suggest.[6] Combining the words *chen* 讖 ("prediction") and *shu* 書 ("writing") was already done in the *Huainanzi* 淮南子, presented to Emperor Wu 武帝 (r. 141–87 B.C.E.) by Liu An 劉安 (c. 179–122) in 139 B.C.E.[7] Whatever documents the *Huainanzi* thus referred to, they must be distinguished from what would also be called "predictive writings" in the Han 漢 (206 B.C.E.–220 C.E.) era. In particular, they bear no relationship with the Classics (*jing* 經).

In 130 B.C.E., an imperial pronouncement transcribed in the *Han shu* 漢書 (92 C.E.) alludes to "the chart and writ emitted by the [Yellow] River and the Luo" (*He Luo chu tu shu* 河洛出圖書), an early reference to the well-known *River Chart* (*He tu* 河圖) and *Luo Writ* (*Luo shu* 洛書).[8] In

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Chinese Studies, 1995), 1123–38 (188 items); *Jingxue yanjiu lunzhu mulu (1993–1997)*, ed. Lin Qingzhang and Chen Hengsong 陳恆嵩 (Taipei: Center for Chinese Studies, 2002), 1387–1401 (177 items); *Liang Han zhuzi yanjiu lunzhu mulu 1912–1996* 兩漢諸子研究論著目錄, ed. Chen Ligui 陳麗桂 (Taipei: Center for Chinese Studies, 1998), 495–516 (278 items); *Liang Han zhuzi yanjiu lunzhu mulu 1997–2001*, ed. Chen Ligui (Taipei: Center for Chinese Studies, 2003), 248–55 (86 items); *Liang Han zhuzi yanjiu lunzhu mulu 2002–2009*, ed. Chen Ligui (Taipei: Center for Chinese Studies, 2010), 219–26 (121 items).

6. This section is a chronological introduction dealing with terminology. For historical introductions, Western readers may consult Jack L. Dull, "A Historical Introduction to the Apocryphal (*Ch'an-wei*) Texts of the Han Dynasty," Ph.D. dissertation, University of Washington (Seattle, 1966), 1–445; Seidel, "Imperial Treasures," 291–323; Tiziana Lippiello, *Auspicious Omens and Miracles in Ancient China: Han, Three Kingdoms and Six Dynasties*, Monumenta Serica Monograph Series no. 39 (Sankt Augustin, 2001), 40–65; Zongli Lu, *Power of the Words: Chen Prophecy in Chinese Politics AD 265–618* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2003), 12–30; Licia Di Giacinto, "By Chance of History: The Apocrypha under the Han," Ph.D. dissertation, Ruhr-Universität Bochum (Bochum, 2007), 1–51. I thank Timothy D. Baker for drawing my attention to the latter work.

7. *Huainan honglie jijie* 淮南鴻烈集解, ed. Liu Wendian 劉文典 (Beijing: Zhonghua, 1989), 531 ("Shuoshan xun" 說山訓 16): "六畜生多耳目者不祥, 讖書著之"; translation in John S. Major, Sarah A. Queen, Andrew Seth Meyer, and Harold D. Roth, *The Huainanzi: Liu An, King of Huainan: A Guide to the Theory and Practice of Government in Early Han China* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), 638: "If one of the six domestic animals is born with an additional ear or eye, it is unlucky, [but] it is recorded in the books of omens." For the date of this source, see Charles Le Blanc, "*Huai nan tzu* 淮南子," in *Early Chinese Texts: A Bibliographical Guide*, ed. Michael Loewe, Early China Special Monograph Series no. 2 (Berkeley, 1993), 189–95.

8. Ban Gu 班固 (32–92 C.E.) et al., *Han shu* (Beijing: Zhonghua, 1962), 58.2613–14. Both titles actually refer to different documents depending on the sources and context; see Isabelle Robinet, "*Hetu* and *Luoshu* 河圖 洛書," in *The Encyclopedia of Taoism*, ed. Fabrizio Pregadio (London: Routledge, 2008), 483–85; Bent Nielsen, *A*

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the founding work of Chinese historiography, the *Shi ji* 史記 (91 B.C.E.), Sima Qian 司馬遷 recounts how Shi Huangdi 始皇帝 (r. 246–210 B.C.E.) of the Qin 秦 dynasty (221–207 B.C.E.) famously misunderstood as foretelling a "barbarian" (*hu* 胡) menace the contents of a document (*tushu* 圖書, literally "a chart and a writ" or an "illustrated writ") given him by a scholar (*sheng* 生) from Yan 燕 (in modern Hebei) surnamed Lu 盧, in 215, which instead prophesized the coup d'état of his son Hu Hai 胡亥, the future Second Emperor 二世皇帝 (r. 210–207 B.C.E.) and last Qin ruler.[9] This may well be the earliest mention of a political prediction in the imperial era, but elsewhere in the *Records of the Historian*, the phrase *tushu* usually denotes maps and administrative documents,[10] a meaning the *Book of the Han* and later dynastic histories would retain, except in cases of obvious reference to the aforementioned *River Chart* and *Luo Writ*. The bibliographic treatise (*zhi* 志) of the *Book of the Han*, section on "Astronomy" ("Tianwen" 天文), lists "17 volumes of secret records of charts and writs" (*tushu miji shiqi pian* 圖書祕記十七篇) as its last item, without further elaboration.[11] At this point, it is worth remembering that, in the *Han shu* (and the *Hou Han shu* 後漢書), archives deposited in the Imperial Library, whose access was highly restricted, were commonly referred to as "secret" (*mi*) documents.[12]

An early Great Peace (*taiping* 太平) text, reportedly revealed, appeared under the emperors Cheng 成帝 (r. 32–7 B.C.E.) and Ai 哀帝 (r. 6–1 B.C.E.), as the Han dynasty began to face difficulties. To the book, submitted by the esoteric technician Xia Heliang 夏賀良 with full support from the official Li Xun 李尋 (fl. 8–5 B.C.E.), was joined a prediction (*chen*) from a perfected person (*zhenren* 真人) named Chijing zi 赤精子, stating that the mandate of sovereignty of the Han had reached a cyclical juncture where it must be renewed. In an edict dated 5 B.C.E., Emperor Ai eagerly saw in this revelation the token of the reception of the mandate of sovereignty (*shou ming zhi fu* 受命之符) by the Han dynasty, only to change his mind less than two months later, rejecting

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Companion to Yi Jing *Numerology and Cosmology: Chinese Studies of Images and Numbers from Han* 漢 *(202 BCE–220 CE) to Song* 宋 *(960–1279 CE)* (London and New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003), 103–5 and 169–71.

9. *Shi ji* (Beijing: Zhonghua, 1959), 6.252; translation in *The Grand Scribe's Records*, vol. 1: *The Basic Annals of Pre-Han China by Ssu-ma Ch'ien*, ed. William H. Nienhauser, Jr. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), 145: "prophetic graphs and writings."

10. For instance, *Shi ji*, 53.2014.

11. *Han shu*, 30.1765.

12. See pp. 240–42 of Michael Nylan, "Textual Authority in Pre-Han and Han," *Early China* 25 (2000), 205–58.

it as false and punishing its proponents, under the pretext that the reforms they had advocated had proved inefficient.[13]

In the beginning of 9 C.E., the regent Wang Mang 王莽 (45 B.C.E.–23 C.E.), who *de facto* held imperium during the minority of Liu Ying 劉嬰 (d. 25 C.E.), submitted a memorial to the Empress Dowager, in which he stated that the Great Peace text formerly revealed, which had been kept in the imperial archives, was a predictive writing (*chenshu*) announcing a change of sovereign legitimacy to his own benefit.[14] The same year, having ascended the throne, Wang had 42 volumes of writings betokening his mandate of sovereignty (*fuming sishi'er pian* 符命四十二篇) spread in the Empire.[15] Probably inspired by Emperor Ai's edict, the phrase *fuming* combines a token (*fu* 符), originally a "symbol" or *tessera* used for authentication,[16] with an order (*ming* 命), here denoting the mandate of sovereignty conferred by Heaven upon kings or emperors. The following year (10 C.E.), in order to put an end to abuses—after Wang's accession, anyone producing a "betokening of the mandate" had been raised to nobility—any such document differing from those already published was proscribed.[17]

Numerous predictions and "betokenings of the mandate" surround the Han restoration, in what Dull rightly calls "ideological warfare,"[18] including some produced by Liu Xiu's 劉秀 (5 B.C.E.–57 C.E.) opponents—in particular Gongsun Shu 公孫述 (7–36 C.E.), who ruled as

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13. *Han shu*, 11.340 and 75.3192–93. For a detailed account of the event, see Barbara Kandel, *Taiping jing: The Origin and Transmission of the 'Scripture on General Welfare'—The History of an Unofficial Text*, Ostasiatische Gesellschaft monograph (Hamburg, 1979), 3–23.

14. *Han shu*, 99A.4093–94; translation in Homer H. Dubs, *The History of the Former Han Dynasty by Pan Ku* (Baltimore: Waverly Press, 1938), 3:251.

15. *Han shu*, 99B.4112–14 and 4116; translation in Dubs, *The History of the Former Han Dynasty*, 3:288–89. Following Dubs, Dull first translates the phrase as a book title ("A Historical Introduction," 160: "*The Mandate of Heaven Made Known by Tallies*"), then suggests that its meaning was later "commands revealed through tallies" (p. 164), a category of esoteric documents. Indeed the phrase appears quite often in the chapters of the *Book of the Han* (99A–C) devoted to Wang Mang, in the compiler's own wording as well as in quotations of original material, the earliest datable one being perhaps a response by Wang Mang to a petition dated 10 C.E.; see *Han shu*, 99B.4119–20; translation in Dubs, *The History of the Former Han Dynasty*, 3:303–4: "mandate [given by] portents."

16. Robert des Rotours, "Les insignes en deux parties (fou 符) sous la dynastie des T'ang (618–907)," *T'oung Pao* 41.1–3 (1952), 1–148; Stephan Peter Bumbacher, *Empowered Writing: Exorcistic and Apotropaic Rituals in Medieval China* (St. Petersburg: Three Pines Press, 2012), 13–32.

17. *Han shu*, 99B.4122; translation in Dubs, *The History of the Former Han Dynasty*, 3:284, 307–8.

18. Dull, "A Historical Introduction," 186.

emperor in Chengdu for twelve years (25–36 C.E.) before being destroyed by Han armies. Shortly before the restoration, the expressions *tuchen* 圖讖 ("charts and predictions") and Kong Qiu *mijing* 孔丘祕經 ("secret Classics of Confucius") first appear in a long letter by Su Jing 蘇竟, which won Liu Xiu two allies, plus their retinue and troops.[19] In 25 C.E., the very year of his enthronement, Liu Xiu, alias Emperor Guangwu 光武帝 (r. 25–57), addressed a prayer to Heaven, in which first appears the compound *chenji* 讖記 ("prediction records").[20]

Guangwu relied as heavily as Wang Mang on predictions. In 31 C.E., after a few years of reign, he explicitly stated his intention to decide upon the affairs of the Empire "by means of predictions."[21] As soon as he had been enthroned, he had ordered scholars to collate all such documents, resulting in an official edition spread in the Empire in 56, shortly before his death.[22] From the same year dates the earliest occurrence of *jingchen* 經讖 ("Classics and predictions"), on a stele erected at imperial command on the occasion of Guangwu's performance of the *feng* 封 and *shan* 禪 sacrifices on Mount Tai 泰山 (in modern Shandong), whose inscription was transcribed in the *Book of the Later Han*, in the treatise on "Sacrifices" ("Jisi" 祭祀) probably compiled by Sima Biao 司馬彪 (c. 240–c. 306).[23] Indeed Guangwu, against the advice of some respected high officials, had encouraged the study of predictions together with the Classics. This had been made easier by the growing popularity of recent commentaries to the Classics such as Jing Fang's 京房 (77–37 B.C.E.) interpretation of the *Changes* (*Yi* 易), *en vogue* throughout the Later Han dynasty.[24] As a result, the contents of

19. Letter transcribed in Fan Ye 范曄 (398–445), *Hou Han shu* (Beijing: Zhonghua, 1965), 30A.1041–46 (see 1043 and 1046). *Tuchen* sometimes refers to the *River Chart*.

20. Prayer transcribed in *Hou Han shu*, 1.22, and *Hou Han shu, zhi*, 7.3157–58.

21. "天下事吾欲以讖決之." See Yuan Hong 袁宏 (330–78), *Hou Han ji* 後漢紀 (Beijing: Zhonghua, 2002), 6.148 and 8.233; *Dongguan Han ji* 東觀漢記 (*Siku quanshu* 四庫全書 ed.), 14.535. The latter source was compiled in five installments between 72 and 225 but the extant edition is a eighteenth-century reconstruction; see Hans Bielenstein and Michael Loewe, "*Tung kuan Han chi* 東觀漢記," in *Early Chinese Texts*, ed. Loewe, 471–72.

22. *Hou Han shu*, 1B.84.

23. *Hou Han shu*, *zhi*, 7.3166. The paternity of this treatise is examined in B.J. Mansvelt Beck, *The Treatises of Later Han: Their Author, Sources, Contents and Place in Chinese Historiography* (Leiden: Brill, 1990), 94–97. A later occurrence in the body text (completed 445) is understood as being a simplified rendition of "Five Classics and prediction records," or "records of predictions [based on, or from] the Five Classics" (*wujing chenji* 五經讖記); see *Hou Han shu*, 35.1203.

24. Dull, "A Historical Introduction," 89–90. On Jing Fang, see Nielsen, *A Companion to* Yi Jing *Numerology and Cosmology*, 129–32.

predictions and the so-called Current Script (*jinwen* 今文) trend of interpreting the Classics tended to get closer to one another.[25]

In Han times, *wei* 緯 primarily meant a parallel of latitude, without any connection to predictions or the Classics. *Wujing liuwei* 五經六緯, a phrase from the letter, dated about 8 B.C.E., sent by Li Xun to the Commander-in-chief (*da sima* 大司馬) Wang Gen 王根 (d. 6 B.C.E.), in all likelihood has to do with cosmography.[26] About a century later, Wang Chong's 王充 *Lun heng* 論衡 (c. 83 C.E.), which criticizes predictions while frequently mentioning them, still uses phrases such as *chenshu miwen* 讖書祕文 ("predictive writings and secret texts").[27] The earliest application of "weft" to predictions related to the Classics is sometimes ascribed to Zheng Xuan 鄭玄 (127–200 C.E.).[28] From the late Han era on, the phrase *tuwei* 圖緯 ("charts and the weft," or "illustrated weft") occurs frequently to designate these documents.[29]

The expressions *chenwei* 讖緯 ("predictions and weft" or "predictive weft") and *weishu* 緯書 ("weft writings"), both favored by modern scholarship, seem of comparatively late origin. In quoted material, the former does not appear before the early fourth century,[30] while the first firmly datable mentions of the latter appear to date to the fifth century (C.E.).[31]

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25. Zheng Jiewen 鄭杰文, "Qi pai jinwen jingxue yu chenwei guanxi de chubu kaocha" 齊派今文經學與讖緯關係的初步考察, *Qi Lu xuekan* 齊魯學刊 2003.5, 17–20. However, the so-called Current Script/Ancient Script (*guwen* 古文) controversy is a Qing academic conflict retrospectively set in Han context; both were rather "two poles between which a great variety of opinions was possible," quoting p. 62 of Hans van Ess, "The Apocryphal Texts of the Han Dynasty and the Old Text/New Text Controversy," *T'oung Pao* 85.1–3 (1999), 29–64.

26. *Han shu*, 75.3179. See Huang Fushan 黃復山, *Han dai Shang shu chenwei xueshu* 漢代尚書讖緯學述 (Taipei: Hua-Mu-Lan, 2007), 58–60.

27. *Lun heng* (*Siku quanshu* ed.), 26.3a–b ("Shi zhi" 實知 26.78); translated in Alfred Forke, *Lun-Hêng. Part II: Miscellaneous Essays of Wang Ch'ung* (1911; reprint ed. New York: Paragon Book Gallery, 1962), 117, "prophecy books and other mystic writings." On Wang Chong's ambivalent attitude towards predictions, see Wu Congxiang 吳從祥, "Cong *Lun heng* kan Wang Chong yu chenwei zhi guanxi" 從論衡看王充與讖緯之關係, *Xinan jiaotong daxue xuebao* 西南交通大學學報 2010.1, 119–24, 129.

28. In particular by Huang Fushan, *Han dai Shang shu chenwei xueshu*, 66–71. For Zheng Xuan's biography, see *Hou Han shu*, 35.1207–13.

29. For instance, by the warlord Sun Ce 孫策 (175–200) in a letter of reprimand to Yuan Shu 袁術 (d. 199), composed c. 196 and transcribed in *Hou Han shu*, 75.2441.

30. Ge Hong 葛洪 (283–343), *Baopu zi neipian jiaoshi (zengding ben)* 抱朴子內篇校釋 (增訂本), ed. Wang Ming 王明 (Beijing: Zhonghua, 1985), 2.21 ("Lun xian" 論仙); translated in James R. Ware, *Alchemy, Medicine, Religion in the China of A.D. 320: The Nei P'ien of Ko Hung (Pao-p'u tzu)* (Cambridge, Mass., and London: Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1966), 50: "divinatory texts".

31. In the treatise on "Astronomy" ("Tianwen"), compiled circa 439 by He Chengtian 何承天 (370–447) and later edited for inclusion in the *Song shu* 宋書

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As to the distinction between weft supplements to the Classics and predictions as pointing to two different sorts of documents, it would seem to be an invention of the *Sui shu* 隋書 (636 C.E.), where both are dealt with in the section on "Classics" (*jing*).[32] Texts belonging to either sort were kept within the Imperial Library until the Tang at least, the repeated governmental prohibitions being solely directed against private ownership of copies outside the Palace.[33]

However, most of this literature was lost by the Song 宋 dynasty (960–1279) and only a handful of texts, poorly transmitted, remain today, plus thousands of excerpts quoted in Chinese and Japanese sources. Yasui Kōzan 安居香山 (1921–89) and Nakamura Shōhachi 中村璋八 carefully collected both materials—full texts and fragments—and compiled what may be called the weft corpus, published as a six-volume critical edition under the title *Isho shūsei* 緯書集成.[34] This edition, according to Yasui's own estimate, contains 43% of "predictions," 46% of "weft," and 11% of various other materials.[35] No less than 176 different titles of weft texts are mentioned, including variants. The meaning of these titles is not always clear, not to mention, in some cases, the purpose of the texts themselves and the meaning of their

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(Beijing: Zhonghua, 1974), 23.678; and in Xu Mao's 許懋 (464–532) advice to the throne, dated 502 or soon after, where "weft writings" and "orthodox Classics" (*zhengjing* 正經) are opposed; see Yao Cha 姚察 (533–606) and Yao Silian 姚思廉 (d. 637), *Liang shu* 梁書, completed 636 (Beijing: Zhonghua, 1973), 40.575.

32. Wei Zheng 魏徵 (580–643), *Sui shu* (Beijing: Zhonghua, 1973), treatise on "Bibliography" ("Jingji" 經籍), 32.940–41; see Dull, "A Historical Introduction," Appendix I, 478–79. This treatise was probably compiled by Yan Shigu 顏師古 (581–645), under the supervision of Linghu Defen 令狐德棻 (583–666), then Zhangsun Wuji 長孫無忌 (594–659), rather than by Wei Zheng (as assumed by Di Giacinto, "By Chance of History," 34–36), who did supervise the compilation of chronicles and biographies but left the scene soon after the compilation of the treatises began; see Zhu Wentao 朱文濤, "*Sui shu* 'Jingji zhi' zuozhe bianzheng" 隋書經籍志作者辯證, *Guilin shifan gaodeng zhuanke xuexiao xuebao* 桂林師範高等專科學校學報 2008.1, 34, 47.

33. According to Dull, "A Historical Introduction," 405–6, the earliest proscription of weft literature "occurred within the last five years of the [Eastern] Han dynasty"—before 217. Zeng Dexiong 曾德雄, "Chenwei de jinjue yu jiyi" 讖緯的禁絕與輯佚, *Yunmeng xuekan* 雲夢學刊 2011.5, 58–66, lists records of governmental proscriptions in 267 (see n.211 below), 375, 444, 485, 457–64, 502–19, 593, 767, 976, 1004, 1055, 1273, 1284, and 1373. Compare Lu, *Power of the Words*, 39–70, for a focus on the early medieval era.

34. The first edition, entirely handwritten and published between 1959 and 1964 by the Kan Gi bunka kenkyūkai (Tokyo), included many erroneous characters. It was revised, fully typeset, and republished as *Jūshū Isho shūsei* 重修緯書集成 from 1971 to 1992 (Tokyo: Meitoku) in 6 volumes. Following Yasui's demise in 1989, Nakamura became the sole editor of the tome published last (vol. 4B).

35. See *Isho no kisoteki kenkyū* 緯書の基礎的研究, ed. Yasui Kōzan and Nakamura Shōhachi (Tokyo: Kokusho, 1966), 37.

fragments.[36] Due to the thematic richness of the corpus, data of different natures naturally coexist therein—hence the Prévert inventory quoted above.

The present study is mostly based on disconnected quotations ascribed to a dozen weft sources, often examined out of their original context due to their fragmentary nature. In addition to their heterodox reputation, they are considered (and often prove to be) corrupted due to their textual history of repeated proscription, loss, unclear transmission lines, and suspected forgery. Even though the most obvious errors can be corrected, the risk of misinterpretation may never be totally excluded.

Transcendent Hierarchy and Sovereignty

In weft literature, the organization of human society is understood not as being in the first place the creation of an individual or human group, but as being consubstantial with the intrinsic hierarchical order of the universe. This is particularly clear in a few passages from a "weft of the *Changes*" (*Yiwei* 易緯) known as *Regulations Chiseled by Qian* (*Qian zuodu* 乾鑿度) [no. 5].[37] Not only is *Regulations Chiseled by Qian* one of the earliest surviving weft texts, it is also one of the very few of them today not in a fragmentary condition—the extant version has two chapters (*juan* 卷).[38] A commentary, ascribed to Zheng Xuan, on the first chapter exclaims:

天地陰陽尚有尊卑先後之序, 而況人道乎！

36. Before the compilation of the Japanese critical edition, Chen Pan 陳槃 (1905–99) began discussing the titles of a selection of Weft texts in a series of papers published in issues of the *Bulletin of the Institute of History and Philology, Academia Sinica* (*Zhongyang yanjiuyuan Lishi yuyan yanjiusuo jikan* 中央研究院歷史語言研究所集刊) spanning forty years (1948–88). These papers were revised and republished as a book under the title *Gu chenwei yantao ji qi shulu jieti* 古讖緯研討及其書錄解題 (Taipei: National Institute for Compilation and Translation, 1991). Chen's pioneering work was introduced to the Western audience by Max Kaltenmark (1910–2002) in his review article "Les Tch'an-wei," *Han-Hiue: Bulletin du Centre d'Études Sinologiques de Pékin* 2.4 (1949), 363–73. For further elements of modern and contemporary historiography, see Di Giacinto, "By Chance of History," 52–59.

37. Nielsen, *A Companion to* Yi Jing *Numerology and Cosmology*, 304, renders this title as "Chiseling Open the Regularity of *Qian* (Heaven)." The most complete account of this source in a Western language is Bent Nielsen, "The *Qian zuo du*. A Late Han Dynasty (202 BC–AD 220) Study of the *Book of Changes*, *Yijing*," Ph.D. dissertation, Københavns Universitet (Copenhagen, 1995). I am indebted to B. Nielsen for kindly providing me with a copy of his work. Numbers between square brackets refer to the Appendix below.

38. For a discussion of the date of the *Qian zuodu*, see Nielsen, "The *Qian zuo du*," 21–23.

> Heaven and Earth, Yin and Yang are already disposed according to standing and precedence; a fortiori the Way of men![39]

Zheng's commentary probably owes something to the later strata of the composite *Zhuangzi* 莊子.[40] But this cosmological justification of human hierarchy is also formulated in the same *Regulations Chiseled by Qian*, which sees it as parallel to the binary hierarchy of Yang (Heaven, above) and Yin (Earth, below) in the following terms:

> 君道倡始, 臣道終正. 是以乾位在亥, 坤位在未, 所以明陰陽之職, 定君臣之位也.

> The Way of lords initiates the beginning and the Way of vassals terminates the norm. Consequently, *Qian* is positioned on *hai* (B12) and *Kun* is positioned on *wei* (B8),[41] whereby the purpose of Yin and Yang is made obvious and the positions of lord and vassal are determined.[42]

On a more technical level, the vertical, six-line structure of hexagrams is described as encapsulating human hierarchy, beginning with the first (or lower) line:

> 初爲元士, 二爲大夫, 三爲三公, 四爲諸侯, 五爲天子, 上爲宗廟.

> The initial [line] corresponds to senior servicemen, the second [line] to grand masters, the third [line] to the three dukes, the fourth [line] to the feudatories, the fifth [line] to the son of Heaven, and the upper [line] to the ancestral temple.[43]

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39. *Qian zuodu*, Chapter 1, in *Jūshū Isho shūsei*, 1A:20 ("Eki" 易 I).

40. *Zhuangzi* (4th–2nd cent. B.C.E.), partly by Zhuang Zhou 莊周 (c. 370–301 B.C.E.), "Tiandao" 天道 13, "夫天地至神, 而有尊卑先後之序, 而況人道乎" (*Zhuangzi zhuzi suoyin* 莊子逐字索引, Institute for Chinese Studies Concordance [Hong Kong: Commercial Press, 2000], 13/35/17); translation in Angus C. Graham, *Chuang-Tzŭ: The Seven Inner Chapters and Other Writings from the Book Chuang-Tzŭ* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1981), 261: "Heaven and earth are supremely daemonic yet have sequences of the exalted and the lowly, the first and the last, how much more the Way of Man!" According to Graham, *Chuang-Tzŭ*, 28 and 257–58, this passage belongs to a textual stratum authored by a group of "Syncretists" who also compiled the received edition of the text during the second century B.C.E.

41. The numbered abbreviations S and B refer to the sequence of the ten Heavenly Stems (*tiangan* 天干) and twelve Earthly Branches (*dizhi* 地支) respectively: S1 means "first Heavenly Stem," etc. According to the post-celestial (*houtian* 後天) order, the trigram *Qian* (Heaven/pure Yang) is situated in the North-West, where *hai* 亥 (B12) is also located, while the trigram *Kun* (Earth/pure Yin) is situated in the South-West, the location of *wei* 未 (B8). In the pre-celestial (*xiantian* 先天) order, these trigrams are situated in the South and the North; see Nielsen, *A Companion to* Yi Jing *Numerology and Cosmology*, 107–10, 264–68.

42. *Qian zuodu*, Chapter 1, in *Jūshū Isho shūsei*, 1A:23.

43. *Jūshū Isho shūsei*, 1A:32.

After a brief commentary, the body text resumes:

> 凡此六者, 陰陽所以進退, 君臣所以升降, 萬人所以爲象則也. 故陰陽有盛衰, 人道有得失. 聖人因其象, 隨其變, 爲之設卦. 方盛則託吉, 將衰則寄凶.

> These six ones are that whereby Yin and Yang advance or withdraw, lords and vassals rise and fall, and what the myriad people take as model. Therefore Yin and Yang know prosperity and decline, and the Way of humans knows gain and loss. The saintly man relies on their images and follows their transformations to set up the hexagrams. When prosperity is at hand, they express the auspicious; when decline is imminent, the inauspicious.[44]

The first five denominations in the opening half of the quotation refer to the official hierarchy, in ascending order, of the Zhou 周 royal dynasty (1049/1045–256 B.C.E.).[45] According to *Regulations Chiseled by Qian*, the structures both of human society and of the hexagrams of the *Changes* share a vertical logic, expressed here in the basic context of prognostication and reversal of fortune. Interestingly, Chapter 2 of the same Weft text—as poorly transmitted as the first one, if not more corrupted[46]—proposes a variant of this passage. The text deals with a technique used to associate each hexagram line with a social rank. The mid-Qing 清 (1644–1911) dynasty exegete Zhang Huiyan 張惠言 (1761–1802) invites the reader to distinguish this technique from the usual method of pairing trigrams and hexagrams with calendar data, known as *guaqi* 卦氣 ("diagrams and pneumata").[47] During the Former Han 前漢 dynasty (206 B.C.E.–8 C.E.), "one of the leading theorists" of this

44. *Jūshū Isho shūsei*, 1A:32. Except for the fourth rank, the English renderings are from Charles O. Hucker, *A Dictionary of Official Titles in Imperial China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1985), 399 (no. 4871), 465 (no. 5939), 533 (no. 7139), and 596 (no. 8237).

45. The pre-imperial dates given in this article follow *The Cambridge History of Ancient China: From the Origins to 221 B.C.*, ed. Michael Loewe and Edward L. Shaughnessy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 25, Table 1.

46. Nielsen, *A Companion to* Yi Jing *Numerology and Cosmology*, 304, describes the extant *Regulations Chiseled by Qian* as "[suffering] from lacunae, interpolations, and dislocations of words and fragments. A large portion of the text in the beginning of the second [chapter] is a verbatim repetition of paragraphs scattered throughout the first [chapter] and is probably only included because the identical passages have different commentaries."

47. On this method, see Jiang Wanling 江婉玲, *Yiwei shi Yi kao* 易緯釋易考 (Taipei: Hua-Mu-Lan, 2010), 159–70; and Shi Shaobo 史少博, "*Qian zuodu* de 'guaqi' shuo" 乾鑿度的卦氣說, *Dezhou xueyuan xuebao* 德州學院學報 2003.5, 28–31. *Qi* 氣, mostly rendered as "vapor," "breath" or "energy" in English, designates the basic metaphysical constituent of all things, as well as any particularized form of the cosmic *materia prima*;

footnote continued on next page

method was the scholar Meng Xi 孟喜 (1st cent. B.C.E.).[48] The text first connects the lines of the hexagrams with the duration of the tropical, or solar, year ("365 ¼ days"),[49] then enunciates the following guideline:

> 以卦用事, 一卦六爻, 爻一日, 凡六日. 初用事, 一日 [天王] (元士) 諸侯也. 二日大夫也. 三日卿, 四日三公也. 五日辟, 六日宗廟. 爻辭善則善, 凶則凶.
>
> When operating with the hexagrams, each single hexagram has six lines and each line [corresponds to] a day; [there are] altogether six days [per hexagram.] Beginning when you operate, the first day [corresponds to] senior servicemen[50] and the feudatories; the second day, to grand masters; the third day, to ministers, and the fourth day, to the three dukes; the fifth day, to the ruler,[51] and the sixth day, to the ancestral temple. If the line formula[52] is lucky, then [the prognostication] is lucky; if it is inauspicious, then [the prognostication] is inauspicious.[53]

The whole passage this excerpt comes from is not entirely clear and it is tempting to regard it as being textually corrupt. At any rate, the denominations again refer to the Zhou hierarchy, albeit in a slightly different order than in the preceding quotation, and with the addition of the rank of minister (*qing* 卿). Invariably in both renditions, human hierarchy is rooted in low-ranking civil service and topped by the ancestral temple (the past sovereigns), while the reigning sovereign occupies the penultimate rank. It should also be emphasized that all the instances above occur against the technical background of a text whose main purpose was, according to Nielsen, "[to correlate] the hexagrams of the *Book of Changes* with the calendars known in the first century [C.E.] in order to be able to calculate the duration

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see Ulrich Libbrecht, "Prāna = pneuma = ch'i?," in *Thought and Law in Qin and Han China: Studies Dedicated to Anthony Hulsewé on the Occasion of his Eightieth Birthday*, ed. Wilt L. Idema and Erik Zürcher (Leiden: Brill, 1990), 42–62.

48. See Nielsen, *A Companion to* Yi Jing *Numerology and Cosmology*, 177–78.

49. *Qian zuodu*, Chapter 2, in *Jūshū Isho shūsei*, 1A:49 ("三百六十五日四分日之一").

50. Although the text reads *tianwang* 天王, literally "heavenly king," the passage previously quoted and the hierarchical logic both point to a corruption of *yuanshi* 元士. *Tianwang*, which refers to the Zhou king in the *Spring and Autumn* (*Chun qiu* 春秋) chronicle of the state of Lu 魯 (10th. cent.–256 B.C.E.), would become "an indirect reference to an Emperor" in imperial times (Hucker, *A Dictionary of Official Titles*, 510, no. 6723).

51. Zheng Xuan's commentary on the passage confirms that *bi* 辟 designates "the son of Heaven" (*Qian zuodu*, Chapter 2, in *Jūshū Isho shūsei*, 1A:50: "辟, 天子也").

52. *Yaoci* 爻辭, the formula encapsulating the meaning of each line of the hexagrams.

53. *Qian zuodu*, Chapter 2, in *Jūshū Isho shūsei*, 1A:50. In addition to the four entries referred to in a preceding note, see Hucker, *A Dictionary of Official Titles*, 173, no. 1255.

of the [Han] dynasty and lend support to Emperor Guangwu's accession."[54]

A hierarchical pattern similar to that in the second fragment above appears in another weft of the *Changes*, *Examining the Charts* (*Jilan tu* 稽覽圖) [no. 12], also subsisting in two chapters.[55] Just like *Regulations Chiseled by Qian*, this weft text comes with a commentary ascribed to Zheng Xuan. It describes a method for distributing hexagrams in groups of five allocated to the twelve months, for a total of sixty hexagrams—leaving aside the four primary hexagrams *Kan* 坎, *Zhen* 震, *Li* 離 and *Dui* 兌. For example, hexagrams *Xiaoguo* 小過, *Meng* 蒙, *Yi* 益, *Jian* 漸, and *Tai* 泰 are allocated to the first month. The method uses the same hierarchical structure as in the passage just quoted to organize the hexagrams within each monthly group of five by attributing a social rank to each hexagram; in the example above, *Xiaoguo* corresponds to the eight hundred feudatories (*babai zhuhou* 八百諸侯), *Meng* to the twenty-seven grand masters (*ershiqi dafu* 二十七大夫), *Yi* to the nine ministers (*jiu qing* 九卿), *Jian* to the three dukes (*sangong*), and *Tai* to the son of Heaven (*tianzi*). Five series of twelve hexagrams are thus defined, but only the series called "son of Heaven" seems to obey an internal logic: from the hexagram *Fu* 復 (Yang appearing within Yin in the eleventh month) to *Kun* 坤 (pure Yin in the next tenth month), it clearly follows the twin fluctuation of Yin and Yang throughout a full annual cycle.[56] Modern Chinese scholarship traces this method back to a specialist of the *Changes* who claimed to be a disciple of Meng Xi, Jiao Yanshou 焦延壽 (1st cent. B.C.E.).[57] It may be noted that the figures added to the ranks—800, 27, 9, and 3—alter the reference to Zhou officialdom only in the case of the nine ministers, which Hucker documents for the entire imperial era, but not

54. See Bent Nielsen, "Calculating the Fall of a Dynasty: Divination Based on the *Qian zuo du*," *Zhouyi Studies (English Version)* 6.1 (2009/2010), 65–107. In addition to his masterful elucidation of the intricate mathematical operations involved in the calendar speculations of this weft text, Nielsen addresses several instances of textual corruption and criticizes the opinions professed by major post-Han and contemporary scholars of the *Changes*.

55. Nielsen, *A Companion to* Yi Jing *Numerology and Cosmology*, 307, renders this title as "Consultation Charts" and describes its contents as dealing with "a great variety of topics related to divination and various correlations of the hexagrams with directions, numbers, etc."

56. Fung Yu-lan, *A History of Chinese Philosophy*, vol. 2, *The Period of Classical Learning (from the Second Century B.C. to the Twentieth Century A.D.)*, translated by Derk Bodde (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1953), 106–9.

57. Liu Bin 劉彬 and Wang Min 王敏, "*Yiwei jilan tu* 'yi yao zhi yi ri' guaqi shu kao" 易緯稽覽圖一爻直一日卦氣術考, *Zhou Yi yanjiu* 周易研究 2005.5, 30–36. On Jiao Yanshou, see Nielsen, *A Companion to* Yi Jing *Numerology and Cosmology*, 126.

earlier.[58] Also, the senior servicemen of the first line and the ancestral temple of the sixth line from the hierarchy in *Regulations Chiseled by Qian* do not appear in this fivefold pattern.

The fact that, in both weft sources, a sociological and administrative terminology was used for the purpose of calendar- and prognostication-related techniques cannot be regarded as incidental. To put it differently, the choice, by anonymous authors, of the official hierarchy as an ordering criterion in contexts otherwise unrelated to officialdom must be significant. It is tempting to interpret these data as being a clear rhetorical manifestation of the well-known interweaving of socio-political and cosmological concerns in classical China, or as reflecting "the mutual construction of cosmology and power," to quote Aihe Wang.[59]

These prolegomena lead us to materials scattered in other weft texts, which share a fragmentary state—in sharp contrast with the two texts quoted above—and an utterly unclear origin and textual history. In these texts, not only is hierarchy immanent in mankind due to its cosmic origin and nature, the forms of sovereignty themselves basically correspond to cosmic norms. An assumed companion to the long-lost *Classic of Music* (*Yue jing* 樂經), *Examination of the Glorious Blessings* (*Ji yaojia* 稽耀嘉) [no. 7] is also regarded as belonging to the group of earliest weft texts. One of its surviving fragments describes a simple binary rule for the succession of kings (*wang* 王). According to this rule, the reign of a first king is rooted in the Heavenly Way (*ben tiandao* 本天道), whose qualities are "family closeness and substantive frugality" (*qin qin er zhi sheng* 親親而質省). Once these heavenly qualities are abandoned, his successor rises, who models his own reign on the Earthly Way (*fa didao* 法地道), whose qualities—expectedly the antitheses of those of the Heavenly Way—are "reverence for the exalted and formal over-elaboration" (*zun zun er wen fan* 尊尊而文煩). Once these earthly qualities in turn are lost, the next king then reverts to the former heavenly profile—an explicit case of binary cycle, which leaves out the third component we more than half expect to find next: the Human Way.[60]

That such a model leaves little room for human personality and creativity is obvious, but finds its justification in the simple fact that the person of the ruler is viewed as partaking of universal equilibrium. This is plainly stated in the following fragment attributed to the *Weft*

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58. Hucker, *A Dictionary of Official Titles*, 176, no. 1296.

59. Aihe Wang, *Cosmology and Political Culture in Early China* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 210–12.

60. *Jūshū Isho shūsei*, 3:96 ("Shi – Rai – Gaku" 詩・禮・樂), 5th dotted item.

of the Classic of Filial Piety (*Xiaojing wei* 孝經緯) [no. 9], a text of uncertain date, whose title probably refers to an unspecified "weft of the *Book of Filial Piety*":

> 主德大, 則斗極星明, 甘露下.
>
> When the ruler's virtue is grand, the stars of the Dipper[61] and the Polar Star[62] are luminous and sweet dew descends.[63]

Variants of this motif abound in Chinese sources, describing the auspicious or inauspicious responses of Heaven and Earth to a virtuous or evil reign. Typically, these responses concern the timeliness or untimeliness and regularity or abnormality of astronomical phenomena, the abundance or paucity of harvests, and the appearance of propitious or ill-omened beasts and plants. That the idea had a great significance to the Han mind is illustrated in a proposal submitted by the respected scholar Gongsun Hong 公孫弘 (c. 200–121 B.C.E.) to the throne between 140 and 130 B.C.E., during the early years of Wudi's rule.[64] Here is how this scholar exalts the state of harmony (*he* 和) in this famous composition:

> 今人主和德於上, 百姓和合於下, 故心和則氣和, 氣和則形和, 形和則聲和, 聲和則天地之和應矣. 故陰陽和, 風雨時, 甘露降, 五穀登, 六畜蕃, 嘉禾興, 朱草生, 山不童, 澤不涸. 此和之至也. 故形和則無疾, 無疾則不夭, 故父不喪子, 兄不哭弟. 德配天地, 明並日月, 則麟鳳至, 龜龍在郊, 河出圖, 洛出書, 遠方之君莫不說義, 奉幣而來朝. 此和之極也.
>
> Now the human ruler harmonizes virtue above and the hundred clans[65] harmonize concord below. Therefore hearts are harmonious, then

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61. Dou 斗, here for Beidou 北斗 (Northern Dipper), the asterism composed of the seven brightest stars of the constellation Ursa Major. Due to its circumpolar location, the Northern Dipper seems, for a terrestrial observer situated in the northern hemisphere, to rotate at night around the Polar Star. The successive directions its "handle" points at during this rotation are used as markers with cosmological, calendar, and predictive purposes.

62. *Jixing* 極星, the apparent axis of the nightly rotation of the starry sky. Due to Earth's precession and the proper motion of stars, the choice of a Polar Star varied through historical periods; for ancient China, see Léopold de Saussure, "Les Origines de l'astronomie chinoise. H: Les anciennes étoiles polaires," *T'oung Pao* 20 (1921), 86–116; Osaki Shōji 大崎正次, *Chūgoku no seiza no rekishi* 中國の星座の歴史 (Tokyo: Yūzankaku, 1987), 210–18.

63. *Jūshū Isho shūsei*, 5:114 ("Kōkyō – Rongo" 孝經・論語), 5th dotted item.

64. On the problematic date of this document, see Michael Loewe, *A Biographical Dictionary of the Qin, Former Han and Xin Periods (221 BC–AD 24)* (Leyden: Brill, 2000), 126.

65. *Baixing* 百姓, which may also refer to the officialdom as a whole.

> pneuma is harmonious; pneuma is harmonious, then bodies[66] are harmonious; bodies are harmonious, then voices are harmonious; and when voices are harmonious, the harmony of Heaven and Earth responds. Therefore Yin and Yang are harmonious, wind and rain seasonable, and sweet dew descends; the five cereals flourish and the six domestic animals propagate; blessed grain rises and vermilion grass sprouts; mountains are not barren nor do marshes dry up. This is harmony at its best. Since bodies are harmonious, there is no ailment; when there is no ailment, there is no premature death, and therefore fathers do not mourn sons, elder brothers do not shed tears over younger brothers. When [the ruler's] virtue consorts with Heaven and Earth and [his] enlightenment merges with the sun and moon, unicorns and phoenixes arrive; turtles and dragons are in the outer suburbs;[67] the [Yellow] River emits [its] chart and the [river] Luo, [its] writ; no lord of a remote region does not delight in righteousness, pay a tribute and come to the court. This is the utmost of harmony.[68]

Here the emphasis is not on stellar order itself, but rather on a generalized state of harmony, which encompasses all levels from the micro- to the macrocosm—the person, the family, society as a whole, remote regions, and natural as well as supernatural phenomena—and the propitious effects of the ruler's virtue (*de* 德) and enlightenment (*ming* 明).

The theme of the consubstantiality of the ruler and the astral realm is further developed in *Spring and Autumn: Token of Bestirred Essences* (*Chun qiu ganjing fu* 春秋感精符) [no. 4], a fragmentary weft companion to the Lu chronicle and one of the earliest weft texts.[69] One of its surviving fragments explains:

> 人主含天光, 據璣衡, 齊七政, 操八極. 故明君聖人道得正, 則日月光明, 五星有度.

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66. *Xing* 形, the perceptible bodily form; see p. 14 of Nathan Sivin, "State, Cosmos, and Body in the Last Three Centuries B.C.," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 55.1 (1995), 5–37.

67. The southern outer suburb of the capital was the location of an important state cult to Heaven, which Dong Zhongshu 董仲舒 (198/179–118/104 B.C.E.) claimed to revive, but probably created as part of a religious reform, and failed to convince Emperor Wu of the Han dynasty to perform; see Marianne Bujard, *Le sacrifice au Ciel dans la Chine ancienne: Théorie et pratique sous les Han occidentaux* (Paris: École Française d'Extrême-Orient, 2000). For Dong Zhongshu's dates, see Bujard, "La vie de Dong Zhongshu: Énigmes et hypothèses," *Journal Asiatique* 280.1–2 (1992), 145–217.

68. *Han shu*, 58.2616.

69. For the meaning of this text title, see Huang Guozhen 黃國禎, *Dong Zhongshu* Chunqiu fanlu *yu weishu* Chun qiu wei *zhi guanxi yanjiu* 董仲舒春秋繁露與緯書春秋緯之關係研究 (Taipei: Hua-Mu-Lan, 2009), 58.

> The ruler of humans contains the light of Heaven, relies on the Northern Dipper,[70] levels the Seven Regulators,[71] and holds the eight extremities [of the world]. Therefore [when] the Way of the enlightened lord and saintly person is rectified, then the sun and moon are resplendent and the five planets regulated.[72]

Thus is the sovereign of humanity first and foremost a cosmic sovereign—a cosmocrat. Then the same source naturally understands the diachronic succession of rulers as being rooted in stellar order:

> 蒼帝之始二十八世, 滅蒼者翼也. 滅翼者斗, 滅斗者叁, 滅叁者虛, 滅虛者房.
>
> With the Verdant[73] Emperor began twenty-eight generations (of rulers).[74] That which annihilated verdancy was the Wing (L27). That which annihilated the Wing was the [Northern] Dipper; that which annihilated the [Northern] Dipper was Triaster (L21); that which annihilated Triaster was the Tumulus (L11); and that which annihilated the Tumulus was the Chamber (L4).[75]

The anonymous commentator—perhaps the third-century scholar Song Jun 宋均, who is named in the majority of fragments of this text to which a commentary is attached—adds names of mythic rulers to the sequence in the following manner:

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70. *Ji heng* 璣衡, literally "the Armillary Sphere and the Beam": the first four (the "bowl") and last three stars (the "handle") of the Northern Dipper, and a synecdoche for the entire asterism.

71. The sun, moon, and five planets.

72. *Jūshū Isho shūsei*, 4A:183 ("Shun jū" 春秋 I), 2nd dotted item.

73. I use "verdant" to render *cang* 蒼, in order to distinguish it from *qing* 青, which I render as "green," and *lü* 綠, "emerald." In the Five Agents system, all three colors correspond to the Wood agent and its correlates.

74. Twenty-eight naturally seems to echo the number of solar lodges, or mansions (*xiu* 宿). The underlying logic of the passage, however, is quinary, and this is why "Dipper" (Dou 斗) here refers to the Northern Dipper—the circumpolar constellation—rather than to the first lodge of the northern quadrant (L8). This is confirmed by the commentary attached to the fragment.

75. *Jūshū Isho shūsei*, 4A:186, 7th dotted item. "L" and the ensuing number refer to the sequence of the twenty-eight lodges, divided into four groups of seven lodges, each group corresponding to a quadrant, following the sequence East, North, West, and South. The Wing (L27) is the penultimate lodge of the southern quadrant, whose acronyc rising announces the last lunation of summer; Triaster (L21), the last lodge of the western quadrant, whose heliac setting marks the beginning of autumn and which probably remained visible throughout autumn; the Tumulus (L11), the central lodge of the northern quadrant, corresponding to the winter solstice, and the Chamber (L4), the central lodge of the eastern quadrant, to the vernal equinox. See Gustave Schlegel, *Uranographie chinoise* (Leiden: Brill, 1875), 113–38, 214–33, 391–403, 466–77.

> 堯, 翼之星精, 在南方, 其色赤. 舜, 斗之星精, 在中央, 其色黃. 禹, 參之星精, 在西方, 其色白. 湯, 虛之星精, 在北方, 其色黑. 文王, 房之星精, 在東方, 其色青. 五星之精.
>
> Yao, the stellar essence of the Wing (L27), was in the southern quadrant, whose color is scarlet red; Shun, the stellar essence of the [Northern] Dipper, in the centre, whose color is yellow; Yu, the stellar essence of Triaster (L21), in the western quadrant, whose color is white; Tang, the stellar essence of the Tumulus (L11), in the northern quadrant, whose color is black; and King Wen, the stellar essence of the Chamber (L4), in the eastern quadrant, whose color is green—the essences of the five asterisms.[76]

Thus commented upon in the light of the Five Agents theory, the fragment appears to unfold the following spatiotemporal sequence of sovereigns, beginning and ending in the eastern quadrant: Verdant Emperor (East), Yao 堯 (South), Shun 舜 (center), Yu 禹 (West), Tang 湯 (North), and King Wen 文王 (East again). Here again, whatever individuality and free will may have been conceded to the Verdant Emperor and his twenty-seven successors would seem to be of secondary import to (since it is totally absent from) the logic at work, which implies, for example, that a sovereign ruling by virtue of the South (agent Fire and color red) must have a successor ruling by virtue of the center (agent Soil and color yellow), and so on. However, weft sources often disagree on the correlation of a given ruler with a particular color and agent, suggesting that there did not exist a unified system. Again, what is of interest here is this peculiar notion of sovereignty not primarily defined according to the abilities of exceptional individuals, but as being part and parcel of universal mechanisms. This basically agrees with the views of the historian Ban Biao 班彪 (3–54 C.E.), who wrote his essay *On the Royal Mandate* (*Wangming lun* 王命論) in support of the Han restoration.[77] Ban Biao, while stressing the moral qualities of

76. *Jūshū Isho shūsei*, 4A:186, 7th dotted item, commentary. In view of the context, *wuxing* 五星 seems to refer to the five lodges just mentioned rather than to the "five planets"—Mars, Saturn, Venus, Mercury, and Jupiter. All the prestigious figures named in this fragment return in the next sections of this article.

77. The earliest of the half dozen sources quoting Ban Biao's essay in full seems to be Xun Yue's 荀悅 (148–209) *Han ji* 漢紀 (200 C.E.) (Beijing: Zhonghua, 2002), 30.310–11; translation in *Sources of Chinese Tradition*, ed. W. Theodore de Bary, Wing-tsit Chan and Burton Watson (New York: Columbia University Press, 1960), 193–96. Disregard for weft material probably explains, at least in part, why the importance of this short text has been overestimated somewhat; indeed, its translation was removed from later editions of the *Sources of Chinese Tradition*. For a fair assessment, see Michael

footnote continued on next page

the Liu 劉 clan, stated clearly that "this sacred vessel, the rule of the empire, … cannot be won either by craft or force."[78]

Let us consider two last fragments dealing with hierarchy, sovereignty, and the crucial concept of mandate change—that is, the transfer of sovereignty from a ruling person or lineage to another one. Both fragments are attributed to the *Spring and Autumn: Germ of the Primordial Mandate* (*Chun qiu yuanming bao* 春秋元命包) [no. 1], another companion to the chronicle of the state of Lu, and also one of the earliest weft texts.[79] The first fragment illustrates the superhuman legitimacy of political authority and the necessity to rule in accordance with the celestial realm:

> 諸侯不上奉王之 [正] (政), 則不得即位. [正] (政) 不由王出, (則) 不得 [焉正] (爲政). 王不承於天以制號令, 則無法. 天不得正其元, 則不得成其化也.
>
> The king cannot ascend the throne if the feudatories do not accept his political authority. The king cannot rule if political authority does not originate in him. The orders the king proclaims bear no legality if they are not received from Heaven. Heaven cannot effect its transformative action if it cannot normalize its origin.[80]

The person chosen by Heaven to assume monarchical power may only ascend the throne once all the feudatories have recognized his legitimacy, thereby confirming that he is the right candidate. A living depository of political authority, the new king nevertheless must conform his governance to the will of Heaven, lest his rule be deprived of legitimacy. He must also adopt the right, new cosmic norm (*yuan* 元, "origin" in my translation, may refer to a ruler's regnal title as well as the epoch of a calendar system), which will enable universal cycles to resume and heavenly processes to be effective. The second fragment states:

Loewe, "The concept of sovereignty," in *The Cambridge History of China. Volume I: The Ch'in and Han Empires, 221 B.C.–A.D. 220*, ed. Denis Twitchett and John K. Fairbank (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 726–46 ("The Mandate of Heaven: Pan Piao's Essay," 735–37).

78. Translation from *Sources of Chinese Tradition*, 194.

79. On the semantic richness of this title, see Yin Shanpei 殷善培, *Chenwei sixiang yanjiu* 讖緯思想研究 (Taipei: Hua-Mu-Lan, 2008), 122–23.

80. *Jūshū Isho shūsei*, 4A:57, 2nd dotted item. I amend characters following a similar passage from He Xiu's 何休 (129–82 C.E.) commentary on the Gongyang 公羊 tradition of the *Spring and Autumn*; see *Chun qiu Gongyang zhuan zhushu* 春秋公羊傳注疏 (Beijing: Beijing daxue, 2000), 1.12a. In He Xiu's commentary, the passage is part of a lengthy discussion of the Five Beginnings (*wushi* 五始); on which, see below.

> 王者受命, 昭然明於天地之理. 故必移居處, 更稱號, 改正朔, 易服色, 以明天命, 聖人之寶. 質文再而改, 窮 (明) [則] 相承, 周則復始. 正朔改則天命顯.
>
> The reception of the mandate by the ruler is made luminously obvious by the order of Heaven and Earth. Therefore he must move his residence, modify titles, adopt a new calendar,[81] and change the color of vestments, so as to make clear the heavenly mandate, treasure of the saints. The substantive and the formal change as they recur, succeeding to one another when they reach their limit and beginning again when their cycle is complete. The Heavenly mandate is manifest when the new calendar is adopted.[82]

Besides a change of regnal title, the accession of a new ruler implies many symbolic and practical adjustments designed to reflect and espouse the change of macrocosmic regimen. We find again the idea of the alternation of the substantive and the formal (*zhi/wen* 質/文), two opposite ruling modes we met above in a fragment of *Examination of the Glorious Blessings*, now in a cyclical formulation in line with the binary rhythmics of Yin and Yang. But in another fragment of the same text, binarity evolves into ternarity as each founder of the three royal dynasties (*sanwang* 三王) is said to have established his own guiding principle, the principles of the three dynasties being referred to as the "three moral principles" (*sanjiao* 三教): the Xia 夏 established loyalty (*zhong* 忠); the Shang/Yin 商/殷 (c. 1570–1045 B.C.E.), reverence (*jing* 敬); and the Zhou, formality (*wen*). The fragment states that the second and third principles (reverence and formality) were each born out of the limitations of their respective preceding principle (loyalty and reverence).[83] This threefold system assigns King Wen's guiding principle to the lowest rank, thus perhaps departing from the traditional high Confucian regard for Zhou kingship.

The same system was used in the *Records of the Historian* to expel the Qin dynasty from the normal ternary succession cycle, to the benefit of the Han house. In the "Basic Annals of Gaozu" ("Gaozu benji" 高祖本紀), Sima Qian quotes his father Sima Tan 司馬談 as stating that the dynastic guiding principle of the Qin was penal laws (*xingfa* 刑法), which *de facto* discarded the Qin as embodying any of the three moral principles above. Thus was justified the congruence of the Han dynasty with loyalty—the highest rank, corresponding to the unifying principle of Heaven (*tiantong* 天統).[84]

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81. *Gai zhengshuo* 改正朔, literally "change the normative lunation," the first day of the first lunation.

82. *Jūshū Isho shūsei*, 4A:53, 4th dotted item. The correction is suggested by a variant reading of the fragment indicated by the Japanese editors in a marginal note on the same page.

83. *Jūshū Isho shūsei*, 4A:56, 4th dotted item.

84. *Shi ji*, 8.393–94.

Epiphanies of Sovereign Legitimacy

It is well known that political legitimacy and the succession of sovereigns are at the core of weft ideology, and that the authors of weft texts singled out every new ruler by means of extraordinary conception or birth and peculiar bodily features, and constructed a concept of sovereignty based on stories of supernatural appointment and of post-enthronement thanksgiving performances to the highest cosmic entities.[85] In this section I focus on the narratives used by the authors of weft literature to account for the succession of early Chinese rulers, and on how the concept of sovereignty—including social hierarchy and political legitimacy as described in the preceding section—was dealt with in these narratives. Let it be clear that discussing the historicity of the "mythical" figures and earliest dynasties mentioned hereafter does not come into the scope of this work.[86]

Our survey naturally begins with Fu Xi 伏羲, the first of the Three August Ones (*sanhuang* 三皇) in most of the sources of traditional Chinese historiography.[87] Our first source is a weft companion to the *Venerable Documents* (*Shang shu* 尚書) bearing the title *Venerable Documents: Accurate Observations* (*Shang shu zhonghou* 尚書中候) [no. 10].[88] This work contained the following passage describing Fu Xi's enthronement:

> 伏羲氏有天下, 龍馬負圖出于河, 遂法之畫八卦, 又龜書洛出之也.
>
> [When] Sire Fu Xi possessed the world, a dragon-horse carrying on its back a chart came out of the [Yellow] River. Thereupon [Fu Xi] followed its

85. Zeng Dexiong 曾德雄, "Chenwei zhong de diwang shixi ji shouming" 讖緯中的帝王世系及受命, *Wenshizhe* 文史哲 2006.1, 37–46.

86. Xu Shunzhan 許順湛, "Sanhuang wudi jiedu" 三皇五帝解讀, *Chongqing wenli xueyuan xuebao* 重慶文理學院學報 2011.6, 1–8, invites us to understand mythical figures prior to the Xia dynasty as being personifications of names of tribes or nations. Kwang-chih Chang, "China on the Eve of the Historical Period," in *The Cambridge History of Ancient China*, ed. Loewe and Shaughnessy, 37–73, stresses that archaeological evidence proves the existence of a Xia dynasty. According to David N. Keightley, "The Shang: China's First Historical Dynasty," in *The Cambridge History of Ancient China*, ed. Loewe and Shaughnessy, 232–91, the first period for which historical materials exist is the Shang/Yin dynasty.

87. Variants of the group called "Three August Ones" combines seven figures—Fu Xi, Nü Wa 女媧, Shen Nong 神農, Zhu Rong 祝融, Sui Ren 燧人, Gong Gong 共工, and Huang Di 黃帝. See Xu Shunzhan, "Sanhuang wudi jiedu," 1–4. Chang, "China on the Eve of the Historical Period," 70, calls them "demigods".

88. *Zhonghou* 中候 does not refer here to the homonymous official title rendered as "Watch Officer" in Hucker, *A Dictionary of Official Titles*, 190, no. 1558. See also Zhang Jiazi 張甲子, "*Shang shu zhonghou* tiyi kao" 尚書中候題意考, *Henan keji daxue xuebao* 河南科技大學學報 2010.3, 14–17.

> example and drew the eight trigrams; [there was] also the writ of the turtle, emitted by the [river] Luo.[89]

The fragment recounts how, as soon as Fu Xi acceded to the throne, two supernatural beasts sprang out of the two central rivers, emissaries sent to reveal to Fu Xi two esoteric documents, the famous *River Chart* and *Luo Writ*. Fu Xi used the former as a model to conceive the eight trigrams, which could not have been possible without the prior dragon-horse epiphany. Just as Fu Xi's emperorship descends from above, one of the most famed achievements Chinese tradition ascribes to him basically hinges upon revelation.

Another fragment of the same text introduces Huang Di, the Yellow Emperor, who is either the last of the Three August Ones or the first of the Five Emperors (*wudi* 五帝) according to the sources:[90]

> 帝軒提像, 配永循機. 天地休通, 五行期化. 河龍圖出, 洛龜書威, 赤文 (像) [綠] 字, 以授軒轅.

> Emperor Xuan[91] cast the constellations and arrayed the eternal rotation of the Northern Dipper.[92] Heaven and Earth communicated favorably and the Five Agents transformed periodically. The dragon chart of the [Yellow] River appeared and the turtle writ of the [river] Luo inspired awe, [both] transmitted to Xuan Yuan in scarlet red signs and emerald characters.[93]

Versions of the same episode in *(a)* the late fifth-century treatise on "Auspicious Phenomena as Tokens" ("Furui" 符瑞) of the *Book of the Song*[94] and *(b)* the anonymous commentary on the document known as the *Annals Written on Bamboo* (*Zhushu jinian* 竹書紀年), a Wei 魏 state (403–225 B.C.E.) official chronicle recovered from a burial site around 280 C.E. and whose authenticity remains debated, both read

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89. *Jūshū Isho shūsei*, 2:73 ("Sho – Chūkō" 書・中候), 3rd dotted item.

90. Variants of this group also combine seven figures: Huang Di, Shao Hao 少昊, Zhuan Xu 顓頊, Ku 嚳, Yao, Shun, and Yu (who is generally given as the first king of the Xia dynasty); see Xu Shunzhan, "Sanhuang wudi jiedu," 4–8. Chang, "China on the Eve of the Historical Period," 70, refers to this group as "legendary kings".

91. Di Xuan 帝軒. The name of the Yellow Emperor is Xuan Yuan 軒轅.

92. Ji 機, variant of Ji 璣, for Douji 斗璣 (Armillary Sphere of the Dipper) or Tianji 天璣 (Armillary Sphere of Heaven): Phecda (γ UMa), the third star of the Northern Dipper (Beidou), and by metonymy the whole parent constellation.

93. *Jūshū Isho shūsei*, 2:73, 4th dotted item. The correction is suggested by the common depiction of the *River Chart* and *Luo Writ* in other fragments and sources.

94. *Song shu*, 27.761; translation in Lippiello, *Auspicious Omens*, 269. For a typological analysis of the first such treatise in the corpus of dynastic histories (872 instances organized into 94 types), see Lippiello, *Auspicious Omens*, 122–49.

"seal characters" (*zhuanzi* 篆字).[95] In the *Accurate Observations* version, it is interesting to note that the attached (and anonymous) commentary suggests that the Yellow Emperor conformed his governance to stellar order. Contrary to this very Han-time political urge, my rendering assumes that the Yellow Emperor as depicted here takes up the construction of stellar order, which matches his cosmic function as the god of the center and of the planet Saturn (Zhen *xing* 鎮星).[96] In this regard, the locus classicus is Chapter 3, "On the Patterns of Heaven" ("Tianwen xun" 天文訓), of the *Huainanzi*.[97]

Germ of the Primordial Mandate gives a different version of the epiphany experienced by the Yellow Emperor. A first fragment recounts how a phoenix released a chart (*tu*) it carried in its mouth in front of the Yellow Emperor, who kowtowed twice before accepting it.[98] The contents of the revealed chart is divulged in a separate fragment:

> 黃帝受圖, 有五始. 元者, 氣之始. 春者, 四時之始. 王者, 受命之始. 正月者, 政教之始. 公卽位者, 一國之始.
>
> The Yellow Emperor received the chart, which contained the Five Beginnings. "The origin" is the beginning of pneuma.[99] "Spring" is the beginning of the four seasons. "The king" is the beginning of the reception of the [heavenly] mandate. "The normative (or first) month" is the

95. *Zhushu jinian* (*Sibu congkan* 四部叢刊 ed.), 1.2b, commentary; translation in David S. Nivison, *The Riddle of the Bamboo Annals* (Taipei: Airiti, 2009), 130. The received *Annals* include different strata of commentary, one of which is explicitly ascribed to none other than Shen Yue 沈約 (441–513), compiler of the treatise on "Auspicious Phenomena as Tokens" and editor of the received *Book of the Song*. The original *Annals* had reportedly suffered substantial degradation at the hands of tomb robbers. Since all extant editions date to the Ming 明 dynasty (1368–1644) at the earliest, they are sometimes regarded as the product of a late forgery postdating the loss of the original material; see David S. Nivison, "*Chu shu chi nien* 竹書紀年," in *Early Chinese Texts*, ed. Loewe, 39–47.

96. On the Yellow Emperor as ruler of the center, see Mark Edward Lewis, *Sanctioned Violence in Early China* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990), 188–92; Mark Csikszentmihalyi, "Reimagining the Yellow Emperor's Four Faces," in *Text and Ritual in Early China*, ed. Martin Kern (Seattle: University of Washington, 2005), 226–48.

97. *Huainan honglie jijie*, ed. Liu Wendian, 88: "中央, 土也. 其帝黃帝 … 其神爲鎮星"; translation in Major et al., *The Huainanzi*, 118: "The Center is Earth. Its God is the Yellow Emperor… . His spirit is Quelling Star [Saturn]".

98. *Jūshū Isho shūsei*, 4A:27, first dotted item: "風皇銜圖置帝前, 黃帝再拜受."

99. This may be read as a definition of *yuanqi* 元氣 ("primordial pneuma"), the *materia prima* in ancient Chinese cosmology and metaphysics.

beginning of governance and moral tuition. The "duke ascending the throne" is the beginning of a unified state (or dynasty).[100]

Again the revelation is of crucial import to the chosen recipient. The Five Beginnings it discloses concern, in this order, (1) cosmogony, (2) the yearly cycle, (3) royal sovereignty, (4) political action in accord with the calendar norm, and (5) territorial or dynastic unity—in other words, the paraphernalia of early Chinese rulers. A recurring theme in the exegesis of the opening entry of the *Spring and Autumn* chronicle of Lu,[101] these Five Beginnings owe perhaps something to the ideas ascribed to Dong Zhongshu.[102] But a fragment of another lost weft text, *Analects: Prophecies* (*Lunyu chen* 論語讖) [no. 8], also describes the fivefold contents of a revealed document explicitly called *River Chart*. In a variant of the fragment, Confucius ("Zhongni" 仲尼) in person tells the story, saying: "I heard that" (*wu wen* 吾聞)

> 堯率舜等, 遊於首山, 觀於黃河, 有五老遊於河渚. 一老曰: 河圖將來告帝期. 二老曰: 河圖將來告帝謀. 三老曰: 河圖將來告帝書. 四老曰: 河圖將來告帝圖. 五老曰: 河圖將來告帝符. (浮龍御於) [龍銜] 玉苞, 金泥玉檢 [封] 盛書. 五老飛爲流星, 上入昴.

> Yao, leading Shun and others, wandered to Mount Shou[103] and stared at the Yellow River, by whose side five old men wandered. The first old man said: "The *River Chart* will soon arrive to inform the emperor of [his] tenure." The second old man said: "The *River Chart* will soon arrive to inform the emperor of [his] policy." The third old man said: "The *River Chart* will soon arrive to inform the emperor of the writs." The fourth old man said: "The *River Chart* will soon arrive to inform the emperor of the charts." The fifth old man said: "The *River Chart* will soon arrive to inform the emperor of the tokens [of his sovereign legitimacy." Then appeared] a dragon holding in its mouth a jade envelope—a magnificent writ sealed by a jade label plastered with gold. The five old men flew off into shooting stars, ascended and entered the Solar Door (L18).[104]

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100. *Jūshū Isho shūsei*, 4A:41, 6th dotted item. Similar fragments with minor variants are attributed to a *Spring and Autumn Weft* (*Chun qiu wei* 春秋緯)—probably an unspecified weft of the *Chun qiu*—in *Jūshū Isho shūsei*, 4B:135 ("Shun jū" II), 2nd and 5th dotted items.

101. "元年, 春, 王正月, 公即位"; translated in James Legge, *The Chinese Classics, Vol. V–Part II: The Ch'un Ts'ew, With the Tso Chuen* (London: Trübner, 1872), 412: "In his first year, in spring, in the king's first month, the duke came to the [vacant] seat."

102. Huang Guozhen, *Dong Zhongshu* Chunqiu fanlu *yu weishu* Chun qiu wei, 65–66.

103. Shou shan 首山, in modern Shanxi.

104. *Jūshū Isho shūsei*, 5:130, 6th dotted item (7th dotted item for the variant). I amend misprinted characters in the Japanese edition following the reading of the

footnote continued on next page

In this latter fragment, the *River Chart* will (1) give the future emperor foreknowledge of the appointed time of his reign—or perhaps of the dates of all imperial reigns, including the last one of his dynasty—together with (2) his governmental roadmap, which increases our feeling that early Chinese cosmocrats were granted little freedom of action. Unless both characters actually refer to the *Luo Writ* and *River Chart*, the otherwise unspecified (3) writs and (4) charts must be documents of heavenly nature, which, just like (5) the tokens (*fu*), attest the conformity and timeliness of the transfer of sovereign legitimacy from Yao to Shun.[105] In the *Annals Written on Bamboo* as well as in the treatise on "Auspicious Phenomena as Tokens" of the *Book of the Song*, a commentary explains that the five old men "probably are the essences of the five planets" (*gai wuxing zhi jing ye* 蓋五星之精也); in other words, celestial messengers.[106]

Accurate Observations then introduces the fifth ruler mentioned in the opening chapter of the *Records of the Historian*,[107] Yao. A fragment explains that Emperor Yao (Di Yao 帝堯) ruled for seventy years, and that auspicious stars appeared in the Wing (L27).[108] Two further fragments add:

> 鳳凰止庭, 朱草生郊, 嘉禾孳連, 甘露潤液, 醴泉出山. 修壇河洛.
>
> Male and female phoenixes alit at the [sovereign's] court, vermilion grass sprouted in the suburbs, blessed grain proliferated continuously, sweet dew soaked [fields] with [its] moisture and luscious sources sprang in the mountains. [Yao] built an altar [next to the Yellow] River and the [river] Luo.[109]
>
> 榮光起河, 休氣四塞, 白雲起, 回風搖. 龍馬銜甲, 赤文綠色, 臨壇止霄, 吐甲圖而蹲.
>
> A bright light shone [on the Yellow] River, favorable pneumata blocked out the four directions, white clouds rose and a whirlwind shook [the waters].

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original quotation in Qutan Xida's 瞿曇悉達 [Gautama Siddha] *Kaiyuan zhanjing* 開元占經, circa 715–20 (*Siku quanshu* ed.), 72.10b–11a. In ancient times, the central lodge of the western quadrant, the Solar Door (L18) was probably on the path of the setting sun on the day of the autumnal equinox; see Schlegel, *Uranographie chinoise*, 351–56.

105. A variant of the fragment ends with Yao recognizing Shun as his successor. See Huang Fushan, *Han dai Shang shu chenwei xueshu*, 160, box no. 81.

106. *Zhushu jinian*, 1.6a, commentary (translation in Nivison, *Riddle*, 130); *Song shu*, 27.762 (translation in Lippiello, *Auspicious Omens*, 271).

107. *Shi ji*, 1.14–15; translation in *The Grand Scribe's Records*, ed. Nienhauser, 6.

108. *Jūshū Isho shūsei*, 2:76, 2nd dotted item: "帝堯即政七十載, 景星出翼." As we have learned from a *Chun qiu ganjing fu* fragment, Yao was correlated with the penultimate lodge of the southern quadrant.

109. *Jūshū Isho shūsei*, 2:76, 5th item. All five reported phenomena are auspicious signs.

> A dragon-horse holding in its mouth a shell, of emerald color [with] scarlet red signs, approached the altar and came to a quiet stop; its jaws released the shell-chart, then it left.[110]

Thus Yao, the celestial instances having signified their approval of his long rule by a series of rare and auspicious events, decided to erect, next to the Yellow River and the river Luo, or at their confluence point perhaps, an "altar," *tan* 壇, defined by Xu Shen 許慎 as a "sacrificial space," *ji chang* 祭場, in his *Shuowen jiezi* 說文解字 (c. 100 C.E.).[111] On this newly erected religious site, peculiar meteorological phenomena then introduced the appearing of a supernatural creature carrying in its mouth a solid, shell-shaped document. Other fragments give variant accounts of the event, including the following one, which discloses further information concerning the object thus brought to Yao:

> 堯時, 龍馬銜甲, 赤文綠色, 臨壇上. 甲似龜背, 廣袤九尺, 圓理平上. 五色文有列星之分, 斗正之度, 帝王錄紀, 興亡之數.

> In Yao's time, a dragon-horse holding in its mouth a shell, of emerald color [with] scarlet red signs, approached the top of the altar. The shell was similar to the carapace of a turtle, nine feet broad and long, round-shaped and flat-topped. In signs of five colors were [drawn] the demarcation of constellations, the intervals of the norm of the [Northern] Dipper,[112] the records and annals of the sovereigns [with] calculations [concerning their] rise and fall.[113]

The object granted Yao had the shape of a large back half of a turtle shell—reminiscent perhaps of the heat-fissured front half (plastron) used by diviners—covered with symbolically colored signs revealing crucial knowledge concerning astronomy, the calendar, historiography, and how to predict the fate of kings, in all likeliness including Yao's own.

In *Germ of the Primordial Mandate*, the story is told quite differently, though still in a fluvial context. It is preceded by another comparable fragment in the Japanese critical edition, recounting how, as Yao was sitting in a boat with his generalissimo, then Defender-in-Chief (*taiwei*

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110. *Jūshū Isho shūsei*, 2:76, 6th item. Compare *Zhushu jinian*, 1.6a, commentary (translation in Nivison, *Riddle*, 130) and *Song shu*, 27.762 (translation in Lippiello, *Auspicious Omens*, 271–72).

111. *Shuowen jiezi* (Beijing: Zhonghua, 1963), 289b. For the date of this text, see William G. Boltz, "*Shuo wen chieh tzu* 說文解字," in *Early Chinese Texts*, ed. Loewe, 429–42.

112. The key to interpreting the successive orientations of the Northern Dipper during the course of its apparent rotation.

113. *Jūshū Isho shūsei*, 2:75, first item.

太尉)[114] Shun, a phoenix (*fenghuang* 風皇) came by carrying a chart on its back.[115] Unfortunately, no surviving fragment documents the nature of the chart. The next fragment partly compensates for the loss, even though the change of divine emissary could indicate a distinct revelation:

> 唐帝遊河渚, 赤龍負圖以出. 圖赤色如錦狀, 赤玉爲匣, 白玉爲檢, 黃珠爲泥, (元) [玄] 玉爲鑑. 章曰: 天皇上帝合神制署天上帝孫伊 (克) [堯] 龍潤 (滑圓) [涓圖] 在唐典. (右) [太] 尉舜等百二十臣發視之, 藏之大麓.
>
> Emperor Tang[116] wandered by the side of the river, out of which came a scarlet red dragon carrying on its back a chart. The chart, of scarlet red color and the appearance of brocade, [was in] a coffer made of scarlet red jade [with] a label made of white jade, plastered with yellow pearls, [with] a mirror made of dark jade. An inscription read: "Pure chart bestowed by the dragon upon Yi Yao,[117] of heavenly imperial descent, signed by the Upper Emperor, Heavenly August One, in agreement with the divine decrees, placed in the archives of Tang." A hundred and twenty vassals—Defender-in-Chief[118] Shun and others—unfolded [the chart] to inspect it, [then] concealed it by the foot of a large hill.[119]

The epiphanic beast matches the draconic nature of Yao, whose mother, named Qing Du 慶都, is said to have conceived him after intercourse with a red dragon, in a long fragment of a weft text dealing with the legitimacy of the Han, *Spring and Autumn: Chart of Concord and Sincerity* (*Chun qiu hecheng tu* 春秋合誠圖) [no. 6].[120] In the same fragment, the dragon first appeared to Yao's mother bearing on its back a chart (*tu*) prophesizing the birth, with a graphic depiction (*tu*) of Yao's future bodily appearance.[121] The symbolic load of the object is patent,

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114. Hucker, *A Dictionary of Official Titles*, 485, no. 6260.

115. *Jūshū Isho shūsei*, 4A:28, 3rd dotted item: "堯坐中舟與太尉舜臨觀, 風皇負圖授."

116. Tang Di 唐帝. Yao's clan name is Tao Tang 陶唐.

117. Yao's full surname is Yi Qi 伊祁.

118. *You* 右 is probably a corrupted *tai* 太. There is no *youwei* 右尉 in Hucker's *Dictionary*.

119. *Jūshū Isho shūsei*, 4A:28, 4th dotted item. Four erroneous characters in the Japanese edition are corrected according to the original quotation in *Kaiyuan zhanjing*, 120.2a. My translation of the contents of the document attached to the coffer remains tentative.

120. For the meaning of this title, see Huang Guozhen, *Dong Zhongshu* Chunqiu fanlu *yu weishu* Chun qiu wei, 58.

121. *Jūshū Isho shūsei*, 4B:11, 2nd dotted item. Compare *Zhushu jinian*, 1.4b, commentary (translation in Nivison, *Riddle*, 130) and *Song shu*, 27.761 (translation in Lippiello, *Auspicious Omens*, 270).

although it lacks the color green to fully embody the Five Agents while scarlet red (*chi* 赤) appears no less than three times.

Traditional historiography regards Shun's successor, Yu or Yu the Great 大禹, as the first ruler of the Xia dynasty, which is regarded as marking the beginning of hereditary monarchy in China. According to the well-known account in the *Records of the Historian*, Yao had ordered Yu's father, Gun 鯀, to find a means to control the repeated flooding of the Yellow River. Gun had attempted for nine years to confine the waters within stone embankments but had eventually failed and been executed. Having succeeded Yao, Shun ordered Yu to resume his father's assignment. Yu agreed. However, rather than trying to block the waters as his father had unsuccessfully done, Yu designed a network of canals to be dug out at strategic positions so as to direct the overflow towards the sea. Work lasted thirteen years and proved successful.[122] After the death of Shun, whose son Shang Jun 商均 did not seem capable of ruling the empire, the feudatories turned to Yu instead, who had earned the gratitude of the relieved populations. Yu peacefully ascended the throne.[123]

Accurate Observations fragments recount a different version of the story. Initially, Yao, not Shun, charges Yu with the task of regulating waters. Yu at first refuses, arguing that the emperor may not assign a task of cosmic ("Heaven-and-Earth") magnitude to a human being. Yao retorts that the order does not come from him, but from Heaven. Yu then approaches the Yellow River and, as he stares at the water:

> 有白面長人, 魚身出曰: 吾河精也, 表曰: 文命治淫水. (臣) [授禹] 河圖, 去入淵.
>
> A white-faced, long person with the body of a fish emerged [from the water] and said: "I, the essence of the River, announce that Wen Ming[124] regulates the flooding." He conferred upon Yu the *River Chart* and departed, entering the deep waters.[125]

Yu's first-person variant of the anecdote ends with his accepting the assignment. Here again, a key figure in the construction of Chinese sovereignty needs an epiphanic injunction before taking the right and

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122. *Shi ji*, 2.49–51; translation in *The Grand Scribe's Records*, ed. Nienhauser, 21–22.

123. *Shi ji*, 1.44; translation in *The Grand Scribe's Records*, ed. Nienhauser, 16.

124. Yu's name is Wen Ming 文命 in *Shi ji*, 2.49; translation in *The Grand Scribe's Records*, ed. Nienhauser, 20.

125. *Jūshū Isho shūsei*, 2:79, 5th dotted item. My corrections are based on Yu's first-person narrative of the experience in another fragment of the same text, in *Jūshū Isho shūsei*, 2:80, 2nd item. That other fragment reads "a hundred faces" (*bai mian* 百面) rather than "white face" (*bai mian* 白面). In yet another fragment (*Jūshū Isho shūsei*, 2:80, 3rd item), the revelation takes places after Yu regulates the waters. Compare *Zhushu jinian*, 1.10a–b, commentary (translation in Nivison, *Riddle*, 134) and *Song shu*, 27.763 (translation in Lippiello, *Auspicious Omens*, 275).

expected course of action. Here as in other fragments, the fish is a mediator between the divine and human realms.[126]

But sovereignty sanctioned from above is a double-edged weapon, for Heaven may signify its taking back of the mandate as authoritatively as it had conferred it. The first example of such deprivation of divine right is the last ruler of the Xia dynasty, Jie 桀 (or Di Gui 帝癸).[127] In *Accurate Observations*, Jie's fate is foreboded by the appearance of a baleful comet by the name of Wry Arrow (Wangshi 枉矢).[128] Jie is remembered chiefly for his wickedness or immorality (*wudao* 無道). He "murdered Guan Longfeng 關龍逢 (a worthy official who dared to remonstrate with him), extinguished the dynasty, ruined the calendar and the annals, and devastated the world. Sages ran away from licentiousness and slackness, and the ancestral cult was unattended."[129] Expectedly, such a governmentally and morally deficient virtue soon provoked cosmic discontentment, which became manifest as "Earth poured out a yellow mist," "Heaven rained blood," and "mountains collapsed."[130] As we shall see further on, Jie was eventually removed and the heavenly mandate passed on to the house of Shang/Yin. But the royal virtue of the latter would also decline and become exhausted. Like Jie at the end of the Xia, the last Shang/Yin king Di Xin 帝辛 (r. 1086–1045 B.C.E.), called Zhou 紂 by his contemporaries, was a sort of Caligula or Nero. To the atrocities ascribed to him in the *Records of the Historian*,[131] *Accurate Observations* adds abnormal phenomena, which were interpreted as portents of divine displeasure and manifestations of a state of general cosmic dysfunction. During Di Xin's rule, "ten suns conflicted and earth rained on Bo 亳," the Shang/Yin capital.[132] Di Xin is said to

126. See Stéphane Daeyeol Kim, "Poisson et dragon: Symboles du véhicule entre l'ici-bas et l'au-delà," *Cahiers d'Extrême-Asie* 14 (2004), 269–343.

127. David S. Nivison, "The Key to the Chronology of the Three Dynasties: The 'Modern Text' *Bamboo Annals*," *Sino-Platonic Papers* 93 (1999), 1–68, argues that Jie is an invention of the early Warring States 戰國 period (5th cent.–221 B.C.E.). Whether there ever existed a historical Jie or not is of little relevance for our purpose.

128. *Jūshū Isho shūsei*, 2:80, last dotted item.

129. *Jūshū Isho shūsei*, 2:81, 3rd dotted item: "殺關龍逢, [絕] 滅皇圖, (壞) [壞] 亂 [歷] 紀 (綱), 殘賊天下. 賢人逃 (日傷) [遁, 淫色慢易, 不事祖宗]." My corrections follow a slightly longer variant of the fragment, ascribed to another weft of the *Classic of Documents*, the *Venerable Documents: Confirmation of the Imperial Mandate* (*Shang shu diming yan* 尚書帝命驗) [no. 2], in *Jūshū Isho shūsei*, 2:54, 6th dotted item.

130. *Jūshū Isho shūsei*, 2:81, first ("地吐黃霧"), 3rd ("天雨血"), and 4th ("山亡土崩") items.

131. *Shi ji*, 3.105–8; translation in *The Grand Scribe's Records*, ed. Nienhauser, 49–52.

132. For an interpretation of the ten suns as reflecting a lost Shang/Yin cosmogonic myth, see Sarah Allan, "Sons of Suns: Myth and Totemism in Early China," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 44.2 (1981), 290–326.

have finally committed suicide, "burning" while "[his] dynasty was annihilated."[133] According to another fragment, "it rained stones, all as big as jars," during the last years of his rule.[134] The dramatic emphasis is naturally proportional to the excessive deportment of the decadent prince.

After Di Xin, Heaven's mandate passed on to the house of Zhou. Ji Chang 姬昌 of Zhou is commonly referred to as King Wen 文王, although he did not officially hold supreme power but laid the ground for his descendants' effective kingship by expanding his territorial control at the expense of Shang/Yin suzerainty. A fragment from *Accurate Observations* deals with the notification he received from divine powers concerning the part he was expected to play in the forthcoming dynastic change:

> 周文王爲西伯, 季秋之月甲子, 赤雀啣丹書入豐鄗, 止于昌戶. 乃拜稽首受取, 曰: 姬昌, 蒼帝子; 亡殷者, 紂也.
>
> [When] King Wen of the Zhou was Count of the West,[135] on the last month of autumn, [on a] *Jiazi* [day], a scarlet red sparrow holding in its beak a cinnabar writ entered Fenghao[136] and alit by [Ji] Chang's household. [Ji Chang] then bowed, kowtowed, and accepted [the writ, which read]: "Ji Chang, son of the Verdant Emperor, he who brings about the fall of the Yin [dynasty] is Zhou (Di Xin)."[137]

This new epiphany was scheduled to occur on a *Jiazi* 甲子 (S1/B1) day, which, since it marks the beginning of a new sexagesimal cycle, also symbolizes cosmic regeneration. As to the color of the celestial writ brought to Ji Chang, it may remind us that, in 5 C.E., Wang Mang opportunely received a white stone retrieved from a well, round above (as Heaven) and square below (as Earth), bearing a composition in cinnabar-red writing (*danshu* 丹書) saying that he should become the new emperor.[138]

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133. *Jūshū Isho shūsei*, 2:82, last item, marginalium: "殷紂時十日鬬, 雨土於亳, 紂焚國滅." Zhou's palace had probably been set ablaze by King Wu's 武王 troops (on King Wu, see below); see *The Grand Scribe's Records*, ed. Nienhauser, 52n134.

134. *Jūshū Isho shūsei*, 2:83, first item: "紂末年雨石, 皆大如甕."

135. In *Shi ji*, 3.106, Di Xin briefly imprisons Ji Chang, then releases him and makes him Count of the West (*Xibo* 西伯); translation in *The Grand Scribe's Records*, ed. Nienhauser, 50.

136. Fenghao 豐鄗, the capital of the Zhou state, next to the river Feng 豐, in modern Henan.

137. *Jūshū Isho shūsei*, 2:83, 5th item. Compare *Zhushu jinian*, 2.1b–2a, commentary (translation in Nivison, *Riddle*, 150) and *Song shu*, 27.765 (translation in Lippiello, *Auspicious Omens*, 279).

138. *Han shu*, 99A.4078–79: "白石上圓下方, 有丹書著石, 文曰: 告安漢公莽爲皇帝." The compiler adds: "Hence did 'betokenings of the mandate' begin to rise" 符命之起,

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Meanwhile, another divine notification was sent to Jiang Ziya 姜子牙, an official who had left the tyrant's service and was awaiting a chance to partake in his overthrow. According to *Accurate Observations*, the Elder Duke (*taigong* 太公)—Jiang's later honorific title as a renowned strategist[139]—went fishing by the Pan stream 磻溪 (a tributary of the river Wei 渭 in modern Shaanxi). In a nightly dream, the god of the Northern Dipper (Beidou *shen* 北斗神) suggested to him the idea of attacking Di Xin.[140] Jiang's meeting with Ji Chang, whatever its historicity, must have taken place soon after the omen in our narratives. It is recounted as follows in a fragment from *Accurate Observations*:

> 王卽田雞水畔, 至磻溪之水. 呂尚釣于厓. 王下拜曰: 切望公七年, 乃今見光景於斯. 尚立變名, 答曰: 望釣得玉璜, 刻曰: 姬受命, 呂佐 (旌) [檢], 德合昌來提撰. 爾雒鈐, 報在齊.
>
> King [Wen] (Ji Chang) was near the bank of the river Tianji[141] and reached the waters of the Pan stream. Lü Shang[142] was on the shore, fishing. The king bowed deeply and said: "Sir, I have been expecting you eagerly for seven years, and now I see your shining countenance in this place." Shang, immediately changing his name,[143] replied: "While fishing, [I,] the Expected, caught a semi-circular piece of jade [with] an engraving saying: 'The Jis have received the mandate. The Lüs will assist them and pledge allegiance to [Ji] Chang when he comes to take [Shang]. This is the official seal of the [river] Luo. The recompense [of the Lüs] lies in [the fief of] Qi.' "[144]

Not only did King Wen receive a revelation, so did the worthy figure destined to become the most valuable ally of the early Zhou rulers.

自此始矣; compare Dubs, *The History of the Former Han Dynasty*, 3:218–19. Lillian L. Tseng, *Picturing Heaven in Early China*, Harvard East Asian Monographs no. 336 (Cambridge, Mass., and London, 2011), 54, suggests that the "combined circle and square … were meant to create the illusion of Heaven's mandate."

139. To whom a work on strategy is ascribed, the *Liutao* 六韜 or *Taigong liutao* 太公六韜, also known as the *Taigong bingfa* 太公兵法, in all likelihood a product of the late Warring States era; see Ralph D. Sawyer, *The Seven Military Classics of Ancient China* (New York: Basic Books, 2007), 35–37.

140. *Jūshū Isho shūsei*, 2:83, last item: "太公釣于磻溪, 夜夢北斗神告以伐紂之意."

141. *Tianji* 田雞, which I take to be a place name but fail to identify. Parallel quotations omit the opening phrase.

142. Jiang Ziya belonged to the Lü 呂 clan, and his name was Shang 尚.

143. To Wang 望, "the Expected."

144. *Jūshū Isho shūsei*, 2:83, 3rd item. The emendation follows a variant reading given in the marginalia. My translation of the contents of the engraving remains tentative. Jiang Ziya was made Duke of Qi (modern Shandong) by the first effective Zhou ruler, King Wu; *Shi ji*, 4.127, 128n12; translation in *The Grand Scribe's Records*, ed. Nienhauser, 63. Compare *Zhushu jinian*, 2.2a–b, commentary (translation in Nivison, *Riddle*, 150) and *Song shu*, 27.765 (translation in Lippiello, *Auspicious Omens*, 279).

An inscription on the revealed item transmits the orders from above. Interestingly, this revelation bestowed upon Jiang Ziya included the statement of his future reward—to be enfeoffed with the state of Qi—and Jiang explicitly put forth this claim when he met with King Wen. The worthy Jiang was doubtlessly ready to compromise himself in a political venture, but we are left to wonder if he would have joined King Wen's cause without this substantial compensation.

In *Germ of the Primordial Mandate*, an abridged rendition of Ji Chang's reception of the mandate retains only four elements: (a) the cinnabar writ (*danshu*); (b) the proclamation of Zhou kingship; (c) calendar reform; and (d) the execution of the perfidious Marquis (*hou* 侯)[145] of Chong 崇, named Hu 虎, whose defamation had caused Ji Chang to be briefly imprisoned by Di Xin.[146] But King Wen never ruled. He died while the Shang/Yin still clung to power, and the responsibility for dealing the final blow to Di Xin devolved upon his son Fa 發, the future King Wu 武王 (r. 1049/1045–1043 B.C.E.), the first effective ruler of the Zhou dynasty. Here is how a fragment of the *Accurate Observations* reports Fa's actions:

> 太子發, 以紂存三仁附, 卽位不稱王. 渡於孟津, 中流受文命, 待天謀. 白魚躍入王舟. 王俯取. 魚長三尺, 赤文有字, 題目下名 (= 銘): 授右 (= 佑). 有火自天出於王屋, 流爲赤烏. 五至, 以穀俱來. 赤烏成文, 雀書之福.
>
> As Zhou (Di Xin) [still] lived and the three humane ones[147] [still] adhered [to him], Heir Apparent[148] Fa had ascended the throne [but] had not proclaimed himself king. He crossed [the Yellow River] at the Meng ford.[149] Midstream he received [King] Wen's mandate and awaited Heaven's

145. Hucker, *A Dictionary of Official Titles*, 225, no. 2205.

146. *Jūshū Isho shūsei*, 4A:31, 3rd item: "西伯既得丹書, 於是稱王, 改正朔, 誅崇侯虎." Hu was a vassal of Di Xin and his main collaborator. Di Xin had made him Marquis (*Shi ji*, 4.116–18; translation in *The Grand Scribe's Records*, ed. Nienhauser, 57–58). Ji Chang later conquered his domain.

147. *San ren* 三仁, relatives of Di Xin who served in his administration and remonstrated in vain with him: Bi Gan 比干, who was eventually executed; Jizi 箕子, who was imprisoned; and Weizi 微子, who fled, before submitting to King Wu, who granted him pardon.

148. *Taizi* 太子 (Hucker, *A Dictionary of Official Titles*, 484, no. 6239). That King Wen made his son Heir Apparent is seen by Zheng Xuan as reflecting the secure establishment of Zhou kingship. Wen was certainly prompted to do so because the last of the Shang/Yin was then still undefeated.

149. Near Luoyang in modern Henan, where, according to different accounts of the story, Fa/King Wu passed his Rubicon—meeting with the feudatories, proclaiming himself king, and launching the attack on Di Xin; see the sources quoted in Li Fang 李昉 (925–96) et al., *Taiping yulan* 太平御覽 (977–84) (Shijiazhuang: Hebei Jiaoyu, 1994), 84.731–33.

> plans. A white fish sprang into the king's boat. The king bent down and took it. The fish was three feet long, with scarlet red signs forming characters [on its] forehead, under the eyes; the inscription [read]: "Transmitted to the protector." Then a fire from Heaven appeared at the king's house, moved and turned into a scarlet red crow. [When] the fifth [day or year?] arrived, [the crow] came, along with a stalk of grain.[150] The red crow formed patterns—a blessing from the writ of the sparrow.[151]

According to this account, even though the royal mandate had formally been passed on to him, Fa was careful not to take any action of his own will for some time. Only when pressed by all the feudatories did he eventually accept the title of king, but even then he waited for a clear manifestation of Heaven's will before deciding on a course of action. The expected epiphany turned out to be a fluvial revelation, which involved a fish bearing readable writings, followed by a a scarlet red crow made of heavenly fire. The final allusion to the "writ of the sparrow" (*queshu* 雀書) suggests that the whole experience was a reenactment, or a direct extension, of King Wen's past investiture. The designs of Heaven could hardly have been made clearer to the cautious or hesitating King Wu.

What remains of the whole process of political transition from Wen to Wu in *Germ of the Primordial Mandate* boils down to this single fragment:

> 火離爲鳳皇銜 [丹] 書, 游文王之都. 故武王受鳳書之紀.

> The [trigram] *Li* of Fire[152] became a phoenix, holding in its mouth a cinnabar writ, which traveled to the capital of King Wen. Therefore King Wu received the annals of the phoenix writ.[153]

At least for the author of the text the fragment derives from, the most important feature of the story is unquestionably the epiphanic transfer of a revealed document from one ruler to the next. Furthermore, the supernatural intercessor has become a phoenix (in lieu of the red sparrow or crow) in

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150. See how exegetes debated the significance of this sentence in *Chongkan Song ben shisan jing zhushu fu jiaokan ji* 重刊宋本十三經註疏附校勘記, ed. Ruan Yuan 阮元 (1764–1849) (1815; rpt. Shanghai: Shijie, 1935), 721b–22a. A longer and clearer account of the story in *Zhushu jinian*, 2.3a, commentary, suggests that 五 is a mistake for 烏 and adds that "the stalk of grain was a recognition of the virtue of [Zhou ancestor] Hou Ji [后稷]" (quoting Nivison's translation in *Riddle*, 152); compare *Song shu*, 27.765 (translation in Lippiello, *Auspicious Omens*, 280).

151. *Jūshū Isho shūsei*, 2:84, 4th and 5th items (amended punctuation).

152. *Li huo* 火離. The trigram *Li* is correlated with fire (the natural phenomenon, not the Agent) and, in the post-celestial order, the South, which naturally accounts for the cinnabar red color of the writ transmitted by its manifestation. For the correlations of the trigram *Li*, see Nielsen, *A Companion to* Yi Jing *Numerology and Cosmology*, 145.

153. *Jūshū Isho shūsei*, 4A:31, 4th item. The character insertion is suggested by a variant indicated in the marginal note.

this abridged rendition, the same beast which appeared in the narratives of the revelations bestowed upon the Yellow Emperor and Shun.

Accurate Observations fragments offer several variants of a story involving Duke Mu of Qin 秦穆公 (r. 659–621 B.C.E.), who ruled one of the most powerful political entities of the Spring and Autumn era and is included in the Five Hegemons (*wuba* 五霸) nomenclature. Here is one of these fragments:

> 秦穆公出狩, 至于咸陽, 日稷庚午, 天震大雷, 有火下, 化爲白雀銜籙丹書, 集于公車. 公俯取其書, 言 (繆) [穆] 公之霸也, 訖胡亥秦家世事.
>
> Duke Mu of Qin went on a hunting expedition. As he reached Xianyang,[154] on the afternoon of a *Gengwu* [day],[155] a great thunder shook the heavens. Fire appeared, which descended and transformed into a white sparrow holding in its beak a register[156] [with] a cinnabar writ. [The sparrow] perched on the Duke's chariot. The Duke bent down and took its writ. It told of the hegemony of Duke Mu[157] and, down to Hu Hai, of the worldly affairs of the Qin house.[158]

As in the case of King Wen of Zhou above, the heavenly messenger takes the guise of a sparrow, only it is now white, not red. Indeed, even though historical evidence from the *Records of the Historian* states that the Qin dynasty ruled by virtue of agent Water (color black),[159] during the Later Han 後漢 (25–220 C.E.) another theory, attested in weft remnants, regarded Qin's emblematic agent as having been Metal (color white). This theory considered that Fire (Han) had supplanted Metal (Qin) according to the mutual conquest (*xiangsheng* 相勝 or *xiangke* 相剋) succession order of the Five Agents sometimes ascribed to Zou Yan 鄒衍 (305–240 B.C.E.).[160] Although in this instance

154. Xianyang 咸陽, in present-day Shaanxi, would become the Qin capital in 350 B.C.E.

155. *Gengwu* 庚午 (S7/B7): the seventh day in the sexagesimal cycle, and an auspicious day.

156. *Lu* 籙: in the present occurrence as throughout the Han era, a political document revealed by Heaven to a founding emperor concerning his dynasty; later used in religious contexts to designate ritual registers; see Seidel, "Imperial Treasures," 301.

157. The variant reading 穆 for 繆 is given in one of the sources referred to in a marginalium of the Japanese edition. In primary sources, both words are used to transcribe Duke Mu's name.

158. *Jūshū Isho shūsei*, 2:88, 6th item (citing two different sources).

159. For instance, *Shi ji*, 6.237–38; translation in *The Grand Scribe's Records*, ed. Nienhauser, 136.

160. The locus classicus of the Qin/Metal-Han/Fire paradigm is the story of the future founder of the Han dynasty Liu Bang's 劉邦 (r. 202–195 B.C.E.) killing of a

footnote continued on next page

cinnabar red fails to correspond to the sparrow's color, the revealed register explicitly belongs to the "cinnabar writ" category, which we have met in relation to King Wen. Not only does this document announce its recipient's forthcoming hegemony, it also foretells the succession of all Qin rulers down to the Second Emperor of the dynasty bearing the same name. We may surmise that the document also discloses the future rise of the house of Qin from kingship to emperorship.

The last fragment of this section is ascribed to the *Spring and Autumn Weft* (*Chun qiu wei* 春秋緯) [no. 11], a phrase sometimes appearing by itself, sometimes followed by an additional book title, and which should perhaps be understood as a generic reference to unspecified *Spring and Autumn* weft companions rather than to a single text.[161] In this fragment, we meet Confucius and yet another cinnabar writ:

> 孔子坐 (元) [玄] 扈, 洛水之上. 赤雀銜丹書隨至.
>
> Master Kong was sitting in Xuanhu,[162] on the river Luo. Then arrived a scarlet red sparrow holding in its beak a cinnabar writ.[163]

Importantly, even though he never was a political ruler, Confucius himself was conferred a tangible revelation of sovereignty. But this is not surprising, considering he was the Uncrowned King (*suwang* 素王) or Dark Sage (*xuansheng* 玄聖) laying the ground for the advent of

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white snake, accounts of which appear in *Shi ji*, 8.347 and 28.1378, and *Han shu*, 1A.7 and 25A.1210 (translation of the first *Book of the Han* account in Dubs, *The History of the Former Han Dynasty*, 1:34–36). Pei Yin's 裴駰 (fl. 438 C.E.) fifth-century commentary on the first occurrence in the *Records of the Historian* quotes Ying Shao 應劭 (140–206 C.E.) as explaining that the earlier Qin/Water-Han/Soil paradigm was changed to Qin/Metal-Han/Fire under Emperor Guangwu (*Shi ji*, 8.347). This contrasts with the common assumption that the "mutual engendering" (*xiangsheng* 相生) theory had progressively supplanted the "mutual conquest" theory under the first Han and Wang Mang; hence the doubt cast upon the authenticity of the account, as reported on p. 65 of Michael Loewe, "Water, Earth and Fire—the Symbols of the Han Dynasty," *Nachrichten der Gesellschaft für Natur- und Völkerkunde Ostasiens* 125 (1979), 63–68. See also my concluding section.

161. Huang Guozhen, *Dong Zhongshu* Chunqiu fanlu *yu weishu* Chun qiu wei, 60.

162. Name of a mountain, or a cave, in modern Shaanxi, where the Yellow Emperor reportedly received revelations. Here as in further fragments, the substitution of *yuan* 元 for *xuan* 玄 reflects Song and Qing dynasty character avoidances; for the Song case, see Zhang Weixiang 張惟驤 (1883–1948), *Lidai huizi pu* 歷代諱字譜 (*Xiaoshuangji'an congshu* 小雙寂庵叢書 ed., 1932), 1.11b–12a; for the Qing case, see M.A. Vissière, "Traité des caractères chinois que l'on évite par respect," *Journal Asiatique* (9th series) 18 (1901), 320–73.

163. *Jūshū Isho shūsei*, 4B:136, 6th dotted item.

Han emperorship:[164] the color both of the epiphanic agent and of the writ matches that of Fire, which was the official Han emblematic agent since the Guangwu restoration.

Ritual Jade Disc Immersion

In the treatise on "Auspicious Phenomena as Tokens" of the *Book of the Song* as well as in the anonymous commentary on the *Annals Written on Bamboo*, the transfer of power from Yao to Shun is given a more detailed treatment combining the narratives from the fragments of *Germ of the Primordial Mandate* and *Accurate Observations* discussed in the preceding section. In the versions from Shen Yue's treatise and the *Annals Written on Bamboo*, Yao wishes to resign in favor of Shun.[165] Together with Shun and his ministers, he then returns to the riverside altar for a performance depicted as follows in *Accurate Observations*:

> 堯沈璧於雒, 玄龜負書出, 背甲赤文成字, 止壇.
>
> Yao sunk a jade disc[166] into the [river] Luo.[167] A dark turtle bearing a writ on its back appeared, scarlet red signs on its back shell forming characters, and stopped at the altar.[168]

By throwing a disc into the Luo, Yao, hoping to receive directions concerning his succession, intentionally provokes a new epiphany. The motif of the inscribed carapace returns, only now the item is not conveyed by a dragon-horse but by a turtle of dark color, *xuan* 玄, the color of the agent Water and of the northern sky, and the symbol of Heaven. The writ on the back of the beast enjoins Yao to abdicate in favor of Shun. Another *Accurate Observations* fragment ascribes the same performance to Shun, in a similar context of fin de règne and successional incertitude. Shun sinks a jade disc in the river, provoking a flash of bright light, then a yellow dragon comes out of the water, next to the altar (the parallel passage in the *Annals Written on Bamboo*

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164. A theme often discussed since the late imperial era; for a preliminary historiography, see Zhao Bo 趙博, "Chenwei zhong Kongzi wei Han zhifa zhi shuo de yanjiu yu tantao" 讖緯中孔子爲漢制法之說的研究與探討, *Nei Menggu nongye daxue xuebao* 內蒙古農業大學學報 11.43 (2009), 284–87.

165. *Zhushu jinian*, 1.5b–6b, commentary (translation in Nivison, *Riddle*, 130); *Song shu*, 27.761–62 (translation in Lippiello, *Auspicious Omens*, 271).

166. *Bi* 璧, a jade disc with a central hole, assumed to symbolize Heaven. For specimens of this artifact unearthed in archeological context and a discussion of their funerary functions, see Tseng, *Picturing Heaven in Early China*, 107–9, 187–91.

167. The graph "雒" suggests a Han date; see Zhang Weixiang, *Lidai huizi pu*, 2.49a.

168. *Jūshū Isho shūsei*, 2:78, first item. Compare *Zhushu jinian*, 1.6b, commentary (translation in Nivison, *Riddle*, 130) and *Song shu*, 27.762 (translation in Lippiello, *Auspicious Omens*, 272).

and the treatise on "Auspicious Phenomena as Tokens" explains that, beforehand, Shun sets up an altar similar to the one formerly built by Yao), bearing on its back a chart rolled up into a scroll. The revealed document bears an inscription made of "scarlet red signs and emerald characters" (*chiwen lüzi* 赤文綠字), a reiteration of the type of writings found on some of the tangible revelations encountered above.[169]

Later on, when it is clear that the tyrant Jie, last ruler of the Xia, must be removed, we are to understand that nobody would ever rebel against him without a proper commission from Heaven. The eventual celestial nominee is Tang 湯, lord of Shang, one of Xia's vassal states, who will found the Shang/Yin dynasty and be known as Tian Yi 天乙.[170] A few fragments from the *Accurate Observations* report how the awaited command from above is eventually transmitted to him:

> 天乙在亳, 諸鄰國襁負歸德. 東觀於洛, 習禮堯壇. 降三分沈璧退立. 榮光不起. 黃魚雙躍, 出濟于壇. 黑烏以雄, 隨魚亦止, 化爲黑玉, 赤勒曰: 玄精天乙受神福, 伐桀克, 三年天下悉合.
>
> Tianyi was at Bo (the Shang/Yin capital) and [emissaries from] all the neighboring states were offering tribute[171] and pledging allegiance. He stared at the [river] Luo in the East and [went to] practice the rite at Yao's altar. He dropped three jade discs, which sank in the water, [then] stepped back and stood. No bright light arose. A pair of yellow fishes leapt up, emerged and crossed the waters to the altar. A black crow with majesty came to a halt as the fishes had done, and transformed itself into a black jade [on which] a scarlet red glyptograph read: "Tianyi, essence of darkness, has received divine blessings. Attack Jie and defeat [him, and after] three years the whole world will be united."[172]

The future Tianyi, emulating his illustrious predecessors, performs what has now explicitly become a rite (*li* 禮) consisting in sinking a jade disc, or several, in the river Luo. This time, though, three such artifacts

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169. *Jūshū Isho shūsei*, 2:79, 5th and 6th items combined: "舜沈璧于河, 榮光休至, 黃龍負卷舒圖出水壇畔, 赤文綠字也." Compare *Zhushu jinian*, 1.9a, commentary (translation in Nivison, *Riddle*, 132) and *Song shu*, 27.763 (translation in Lippiello, *Auspicious Omens*, 274). In both instances, Shun is urged to abdicate in favor of Yu.

170. Generally identified with the Da Yi 大乙 mentioned in oracular inscriptions. However, the Shang/Yin chronology proposed in *The Cambridge History of Ancient China* begins with Wu Ding 武丁, who ruled until 1189 B.C.E.

171. *Qiangfu* 襁負, literally "carrying [goods] strapped on their back."

172. *Jūshū Isho shūsei*, 2:82, 2nd dotted item. The amended punctuation is mine. This is the most complete of eight fragments all derived from the same passage. Compare *Zhushu jinian*, 1.21b, commentary (translation in Nivison, *Riddle*, 142) and *Song shu*, 27.764 (translation in Lippiello, *Auspicious Omens*, 276); Seidel, "Imperial Treasures," 312.

(corresponding perhaps to three consecutive performances) are required for the supernatural experience to begin. Possibly to Tianyi's disappointment, the epiphany does not involve a dragon, a dragon-horse, a phoenix or a turtle, but fishes, then a bird, of the color of Earth (yellow) and Heaven (*xuan* 玄) respectively. But the divine order these beasts reveal certainly meets his expectation, for he knows by now that he will soon ascend the throne and found his own dynasty.

Remarkably, Tianyi is also the name of a star located next to the Northern Dipper and belonging to the tail of the western circumpolar constellation of *Draco*, the Dragon (10 *Dra*). Astronomers have noted that this star was the closest celestial body to the apparent northern pole during most of the third and the beginning of the second millennia B.C.E., possibly making it a Polar Star by default.[173] Just like the correlation between mythic rulers and constellations, Tang's title exemplifies not only the congruence between human society and stellar (heavenly) order, but also the transcendent nature of Chinese sovereignty.

Zhou rule being firmly established from King Wu onwards, one would expect celestial involvement in human affairs to recede until the next dynastic change. But the sphere of divine intervention seems to also include critical conjunctions, such as a king's minority. The Duke of Zhou 周公, younger brother of the deceased King Wu, had to assume the regency for seven years until the coming of age of his nephew, King Cheng 成王 (r. 1042/1035–1006 B.C.E.). Here is how the regency ended according to a fragment of *Accurate Observations*:

> 周公攝政七年, 制禮作樂. 成王觀于洛, 沈璧, 禮畢王退. 有玄龜, 青純蒼光, 背甲刻書, 上躋於壇. 赤文成字, 周公寫之.
>
> The Duke of Zhou acted as regent for seven years, establishing rites and playing music. [One day,] King Cheng stared at the [river] Luo and sunk a jade disc [in the water]. The rite being complete, the king withdrew. There was a dark turtle, [emitting] a green, unmixed verdant light, with a writ engraved on its back shell. It climbed up on the altar. The scarlet red signs [of the back-shell writ] formed characters, which the Duke of Zhou transcribed.[174]

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173. Dennis Rawlins and Keith Pickering, "Astronomical Orientation of the Pyramids," *Nature* 412 (2001), 699: "For more than a millennium after 2627 [B.C.E.], there was no star brighter than 10 Draconis nearer to the celestial pole." On the pair formed by this star and Taiyi 太乙, alias Thuban (11 *Dra*), see John C. Didier, "In and Outside the Square: The Sky and the Power of Belief in Ancient China and the World, c. 4500 BC–AD 200. Volume I: The Ancient Eurasian World and the Celestial Pivot," *Sino-Platonic Papers* 192 (2009), 1–301.

174. *Jūshū Isho shūsei*, 2:86, 5th dotted item.

An even more explicit account, ascribed to the same source, confirms that King Cheng is knowingly reenacting the epiphanic experience originally initiated by Yao and which, since the time of Tianyi, may have developed into a full liturgical office:

> 周成王擧堯舜禮, 沈璧河. 白雲起而青雲浮至, 乃有蒼龍, 負圖臨河也.
>
> King Cheng of the Zhou celebrated the rite of Yao and Shun. He sunk a jade disc in the [Yellow] River. White clouds rose and green clouds, drifting, arrived, then there was a verdant dragon, carrying on its back a chart, which approached the River.[175]

King Cheng performs Yao's rite next to both rivers, gaining revelation of the *Luo Writ* and of the *River Chart*. In variants of the fragment ascribed to the same text, both rites are conflated into a single one, King Cheng being granted revelation of a single document, named "Chart of the Dark Shell" (*Xuanjia zhi tu* (元) [玄] 甲之圖), by a dragon.[176] The "dark shell" is likely a reminiscence of the object conveyed to Yao. The efficient and loyal Duke of Zhou—whom Wang Mang would try to emulate when, himself regent, he carefully prepared his takeover—having returned effective power to its rightful holder King Cheng, the empire knows Great Peace (*taiping* 太平) and auspicious beasts such as phoenixes and the fabulous *luan* 鸞 bird are observed near the Palace.[177]

A last fragment, ascribed to *Venerable Documents: Investigating the Numinous Effulgent Ones* (*Shang shu kao lingyao* 尚書考靈曜)

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175. *Jūshū Isho shūsei*, 2:86, 3rd dotted item.

176. *Jūshū Isho shūsei*, 2:86, 2nd ("成王觀於河, 沈璧, 禮畢且退. 至于日旰, 榮光幕河, 青雲浮洛, 赤龍臨壇, 銜 (元) [玄] 甲之圖") and 3rd items ("成王觀于洛河, 沈璧. 禮畢, 王退俟, 至于日昧, 榮光併出幕河, 青雲浮洛, 青龍臨壇, 銜 (元) [玄] 甲之圖, 吐之而去"). The Song character avoidance already mentioned is confirmed by similar readings in *Zhushu jinian*, 2.6a, commentary (translation in Nivison, *Riddle*, 154) and *Song shu*, 27.765–66 (translation in Lippiello, *Auspicious Omens*, 281). The *Zhushu jinian* and *Song shu* versions clearly report two consecutive rites, one by the Yellow River and another one by the Luo. Both succeed in provoking the expected epiphany: a green dragon with a chart and a dark turtle with an engraved shell respectively. The signs on the turtle's shell vanish as the Duke of Zhou transcribes them and the beast leaves. The revelation concerns the tokens (*fu*) manifesting the rise and decline of all rulers down to the Qin and Han dynasties. Variants of the episode seem to ascribe the ritual performance to the Duke himself rather than to King Cheng; see *Jūshū Isho shūsei*, 2:86, last item, and 87, first item.

177. *Jūshū Isho shūsei*, 2:87, 3rd–6th items. The last item includes a four-verse song by King Cheng; compare *Zhushu jinian*, 2.6a–b, commentary (translation in Nivison, *Riddle*, 154) and *Song shu*, 27.766 (translation in Lippiello, *Auspicious Omens*, 280).

[no. 3],[178] reports the following story, which involves the founder of the Qin dynasty, the First Emperor:

> 趙王政以白璧沈河, 有黑公從河出, 謂政曰: 祖龍來, 天寶開, 中有尺二玉牘.
>
> King Zheng of Zhao[179] sunk a white jade disc in the [Yellow] River. There was a Black Duke, who emerged from the River and addressed Zheng, saying: "The ancestral dragon[180] has arrived and the heavenly treasure has opened, in the center of which there is a jade tablet [one] foot and two [inches long]."[181]

Weft literature also ascribes a performance of Yao's rite to the founder of the first Chinese empire. Although the scriptural contents of the jade tablet are missing, the narrative structure of the fragment is evidently based on the same pattern as those dealt with above. The mention of a supernatural beast does not apply here to a heavenly emissary conveying a revelation, but is probably a reminiscence of a black dragon (*heilong* 黑龍) the First Emperor claimed his ancestor Duke Wen of Qin 秦文公 (r. 765–716 B.C.E.) had captured on a hunting expedition.[182] The Black Duke, whom I cannot otherwise identify, is probably an embodiment of agent Water and the North. The era of the First Emperor is beyond the scope of the *Annals Written on Bamboo*. As for Shen Yue, he omits the episode in his treatise on "Auspicious Phenomena as Tokens" in the *Book of the Song*.

Implications and Hypotheses

It has been argued that dynastic legitimacy in ancient China was, under Zhou kingship, based on the direct observation of astronomical phenomena and on their interpretation as obeying a ternary cycle (Xia, Shang/Yin, Zhou), and that the quinary cycle based on the theory of the Five Agents which had supplanted it by Han times was an

178. For the meaning of this title, see Huang Fushan, *Han dai Shang shu chenwei xueshu*, 230–31. "Numinous effulgent ones" (*lingyao*) refer to astral bodies and, by extension, the heavens.

179. The *Records of the Historian* gives the First Emperor's name as Zheng 政 and his surname as Zhao 趙. Sima Qian and later exegetes explain that the future First Emperor was born in the state of Zhao, where his father, King of Qin, lived as a hostage, and that both states—Qin and Zhao—had a common ancestry; see *Shi ji*, 6.223–24; translation in *The Grand Scribe's Records*, ed. Nienhauser, 127. During the Later Han and the Three Kingdoms 三國 (220–80) eras, it seems to have been customary to avoid mentioning Qin whenever referring to the First Emperor.

180. Zulong 祖龍, which is Qin Shihuang's postmortem designation in *Shi ji*, 6.259; translation in *The Grand Scribe's Records*, ed. Nienhauser, 151.

181. *Jūshū Isho shūsei*, 2:44, last dotted item.

182. *Shi ji*, 28.1366.

arrangement of the former ternary pattern.[183] Weft fragments challenge the received understanding of these successive systems as being fixed and of occurrences not fitting in them as betraying later interpolations. Loewe's remarkable efforts at sketching out a clear chronology of emblematic agent changes during the Han era shows that debates on the matter took place quite often, and that scholarly consensus was hardly ever reached.[184] Importantly, dissenting theories did not simply vanish whenever an imperial edict announced the new official ruling agent. These theories and others, disregarded by later mainstream ideology, survived in particular in weft texts, which were based, among other materials, on pre-imperial and early Han works such as the *Chunqiu fanlu* 春秋繁露,[185] parts of which are ascribable to Dong Zhongshu,[186] the *Lüshi chunqiu* 呂氏春秋 (c. 239 B.C.E.),[187] and the *Huainanzi*—or at least shared sources with them.

Astronomical references as well as allusions to portents and the heavenly mandate may be found in such an influential early work of historiography as the *Records of the Historian*, but not detailed narratives of epiphanies and revelations comparable to those reviewed above. This, in part, must reflect the multifaceted specialization of Sima Qian, who held the office of Grand Astrologer (*taishiling* 太史令)[188] like his father before him and had been involved in the preparation of the "Great Inception" astronomical system (Taichu *li* 太初曆) reform, enacted in 104 B.C.E.[189]

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183. David W. Pankenier, "Astrological Origins of Chinese Dynastic Ideology," *Vistas in Astronomy* 39 (1995), 503–16, shows how the quinary cycle retained the celestial localization of two of the stellar phenomena—the planetary clusters of 1576 and 1059 B.C.E.—interpreted as marking the founding of the Shang/Yin and the Zhou. In the third case, the Xia—planetary cluster of 1953 B.C.E.—the original celestial localization (North, agent Water) was abandoned in order to conform to the mutual conquest theory (East, agent Wood).

184. Loewe, "Water, Earth and Fire—the Symbols of the Han Dynasty."

185. Jin Dejian 金德建, "Lun *Chunqiu fanlu* shi weishu de qiyuan" 論春秋繁露是緯書的起源, *Zhejiang xuekan* 浙江學刊 3 (1986), 90–93.

186. For the authorship and date of this partly Western Han source, see Sarah A. Queen, *From Chronicle to Canon: The hermeneutics of the* Spring and Autumn *according to Tung Chung-shu* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 69–112.

187. For the date of this composite source, see Michael Carson and Michael Loewe, "*Lü shih ch'un ch'iu* 呂氏春秋," in *Early Chinese Texts*, ed. Loewe, 324–30.

188. Hucker, *A Dictionary of Official Titles*, 482, no. 6218: "in very early Han apparently had some historiographic duties, but in general was in charge of observing celestial phenomena and irregularities in nature, interpreting portents, divining and weather forecasting as regards important state ceremonies, and preparing the official state calendar."

189. See Christopher Cullen, "Motivations for Scientific Change in Ancient China: Emperor Wu and the Grand Inception Astronomical Reforms of 104 B.C.," *Journal for the History of Astronomy* 24 (1993), 185–203.

Prophecy still belonged to the lore of the technicians in Sima Qian's time, and the climactic production of political predictions and "betokenings of the mandate" under Wang Mang and Guangwu was still to come. And yet, even though Sima Qian did not include detailed accounts of ancient traditions of esoteric experiences with direct political implications in the openings chapters of his work, such material existed in his time. Evidence for this is provided by the story of the First Emperor's sinking of the jade disc, which we have seen above in a fragment of *Investigating the Numinous Effulgent Ones*. A retrospective allusion to this episode appears in Sima Qian's work. In 211 B.C.E., the year before the First Emperor's death, a messenger brought him a jade disc obtained under strange circumstances. Upon closer examination at the Palace Wardrobe (*yufu* 御府),[190] the disc proved to be the very same one the First Emperor had cast into the river Jiang 江 only a few years ago, in 219 B.C.E., while he was touring the empire.[191] Indeed, an earlier passage in the *Records of the Historian* does report the First Emperor's fluvial trip on the Jiang that year, but not that a jade disc was immersed on that special occasion.[192] The historicity of the episode is strengthened by its internal and chronological coherence, beyond the known fact that Qin archives have been used to compile the *Records of the Historian*. It proves not only that weft narratives of sovereignty and legitimacy—including the epiphanic rite of jade disc immersion—already existed during the early years of the empire, but also that these narratives were more than literary motifs or discarded myths. Their ideological pregnancy was such as to compel the first ruler of unified China to reenact an archaic rite on their basis, certainly in the hope of experiencing some auspicious manifestation.

This still held true centuries later, during the Six Dynasties period, when ritual dynastic transition "was patterned on the peaceful yielding of the throne as dramatized in the early accounts of Yao and Shun."[193] The warlord Cao Cao 曹操 (165–220 C.E.) himself was so careful in laying

190. Hucker, *A Dictionary of Official Titles*, 589, no. 8129.

191. *Shi ji*, 6.259: "使御府視璧, 乃二十八年行渡江所沈璧也." This is the sole occurrence of *chen bi* 沈璧 in the whole work, commentaries included. *The Grand Scribe's Records*, ed. Nienhauser, 150–51, erroneously translates: "It turned out to be the [jade disc] which he dropped into the [river Jiang] as he was crossing it twenty-eight years before." There is no word for "before" in the Chinese text, which instead refers to the 28th regnal year of King Zheng of Qin 秦政王 (the First Emperor's title before he founded the empire), i.e., 219 B.C.E. Sima Qian's chronicle for that year confirms this reading (see next note for references).

192. *Shi ji*, 6.248; translation in *The Grand Scribe's Records*, ed. Nienhauser, 142.

193. Lewis, "The Mythology of Early China," 570.

out the conditions for such a "peaceful yielding" to his own profit that he delayed the factual termination of the agonizing Han rule to the point that he passed away before achieving his goal, leaving the throne of the Wei 魏 dynasty (220–65 C.E.) to his son Cao Pi 曹丕 (187–226 C.E.) who, as Emperor Wen 文帝 (r. 220–26 C.E.), became the first effective Wei ruler.[194] In 219, the year preceding his death, Cao Cao even premonitorily likened himself to King Wen of the Zhou, who—indeed just like him—never actually ruled but had made the accession of his son Fa (King Wu) possible.[195]

When Ban Biao composed his essay *On the Royal Mandate*, he was not creating *ex nihilo* a new theory of transcendent sovereignty but reformulating earlier ideas such as those found in weft fragments—including that "the sacred vessel of rule must be given from on high" and the need for omens to testify to one's having been chosen.[196] Dull, who surveyed some of these narratives, understood them primarily as illustrating Han views of the origins of weft literature, thus missing their ideological significance.[197] The wondrous animals coming mainly out of rivers function as celestial envoys descending and ascending between Heaven and mankind.[198] Auspicious appearances of such divine messengers were often reported to the throne,[199] and many regnal titles throughout the imperial era were chosen in direct reference to this epiphanic bestiary.[200]

The purpose of these epiphanic agents in the narrative format of weft fragments is always to deliver to the newly elected cosmocrat the transcendent credentials sanctioning his sovereign legitimacy. Contrary to

194. This long transition process is minutely analyzed in Howard L. Goodman, *Ts'ao P'i Transcendent: The Political Culture of Dynasty-Founding in China at the End of the Han* (Seattle: Scripta Serica, 1988).

195. Goodman, *Ts'ao P'i Transcendent*, 56.

196. Translation from *Sources of Chinese Tradition*, 195–96.

197. Dull, "A Historical Introduction," 466–74.

198. Max Kaltenmark, "Le dompteur des flots," *Han-Hiue: Bulletin du Centre d'Études Sinologiques de Pékin* 3.1–2 (1948), 1–112, calls "celestial" the dragon-horses (*longma* 龍馬) appearing in this context (p. 71).

199. Half of the 94 types of "auspicious phenomena" listed by Shen Yue in his treatise are beasts, either uncommon or wondrous, whose recorded appearances from Han to (Liu) Song amount to 396, including 200 for just the Song dynasty; white sparrows (*baique* 白雀) were the most frequently observed (66 occurrences). See Lippiello, *Auspicious Omens*, 146–49, Table II.

200. Examples include three Yellow Dragon 黃龍 eras (49 B.C.E.; 229–31; 761), and the eras Green Dragon 青龍 (233–37), Scarlet Red Crow 赤烏 (238–51), Black Dragon 黑龍 (374), White Sparrow 白雀 (384–86), Divine Turtle 神龜 (518–20), White Crow 白烏 (613), Divine Dragon 神龍 (705–7), Vermillion Sparrow 朱雀 (813–17), White Dragon 白龍 (925–28), and so forth. (Except for the first era mentioned, all dates in this footnote are C.E.)

Dull's assumption, weft literature itself is not the central topic of these narratives, but a concept of sovereignty having quite a lot in common with the ideology of Divine Right in Medieval Europe. Of course, one will not find in weft remnants—or in Ban Biao's essay for that matter—exactly the same propositions as those defined by John Neville Figgis (1866–1919) on the basis of the Salic Law in France (1561) and such manifestos as the *True Laws of Free Monarchies* in England (1598).[201] It is nevertheless clear that monarchy was a heavenly ordained institution in imperial China, just as it was "a divinely ordained institution" in Western Europe. Furthermore, if "hereditary right" was "indefeasible" in both France and England, in China the monarch could not freely transmit the Empire to a person of his own choice, for, as Mencius famously told Wan Zhang 萬章, it is Heaven, not men, who gives the Empire.[202] Has this definition of transcendent sovereignty ever been challenged during the imperial era—at least before the twilight of monarchy at the very end of the Qing 清 dynasty (1644–1912)? "The idea," wrote Vandermeersch, "that there may be a variety of forms of government never entered the mind of any Chinese author."[203] The basic definition of sovereignty in imperial China was theocratic, or more accurately cosmocratic, and therefore, calling any specific political entity in Chinese imperial history a "theocracy" is tautological.[204] A transcendent, hence unquestionable legitimacy was thus conferred upon the monarch, especially useful in contexts of instability and competition. Long before Ban Biao wrote his short essay *On the Mandate of Kings*, the ideas which later crystallized into the weft narratives of sovereignty contributed to the formation of a concept of political legitimacy as depending solely on cosmic mechanisms and therefore—at least in theory—unchallengeable by human designs. But this never implied, as Hegel mistakenly believed, that

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201. "(1) Monarchy is a divinely ordained institution"; "(2) Hereditary right is indefeasible"; "(3) Kings are accountable to God alone"; "(4) Non-resistance and passive obedience are enjoined by God"; see John Neville Figgis, *The Divine Right of Kings* (1896; rev. ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1914), 5–6.

202. *Mengzi*, "Wan Zhang" 萬章 (*Mengzi zhuzi suoyin* 孟子逐字索引, Institute for Chinese Studies Concordance [Hong Kong: Commercial Press, 1995], 9.5/48/7–13); translation in James Legge, *The Life and Works of Mencius* (London: Trübner, 1875), 279–80.

203. Quoting p. 15 of Léon Vandermeersch, "L'idée révolutionnaire, conception étrangère à la tradition chinoise: Le changement de mandat et la restauration de l'ordre cosmique," *Extrême-Orient Extrême-Occident* 2 (1983), 11–20.

204. For instance, Zhang Lu's 張魯 short-lived state in Hanzhong 漢中 (in modern Shaanxi), as argued on pp. 1070–71 of my study on "Latter Han Religious Mass Movements and the Early Daoist Church," in *Early Chinese Religion*, ed. Lagerwey and Kalinowski, 1061–1102.

China would drift through a perpetual state of historical infancy and that, during more than two millennia, Chinese society, politics, and government would never evolve from primitive despotism.

Interestingly, in this essay, Ban Biao traced the ancestry of the Han house back to Yao. This fact is probably not unrelated to Yao being ascribed the earliest performance of the epiphanic rite of jade disc immersion, repeatedly executed by later figures, either mythical or historical, always at critical junctures. There is no doubt that Yao's prestigious precedent authorized any imperial contender with the surname Liu 劉 (including Liu Xiu, the future Guangwu) to produce tangible revelations of claimed epiphanic provenance asserting the legitimacy of his claim. Excessive counterexamples of rulership such as Jie (Di Gui) and Zhou (Di Xin) could inspire imperial hopefuls and provide them with adequate propaganda tools to justify the cosmic need for a dynastic change. But only tangible revealed items—pragmatic vehicles of revelation, which could be displayed to sustain a claim and their contents, transcribed then circulated—could prove decisive in legitimating the termination of the current dynasty and the founding of a new one (Wang Mang), or the restoration of a former one (Guangwu). But epiphanic revelations, political predictions and weft narratives were at the same time becoming political tools potentially threatening any established dynasty, especially in times of trouble. Understandably, later emperors realized that these tools could easily be used against them to justify their overthrow.[205] Consequently, even though scholars had soon condemned their heterodoxy, it was naturally for political motives that weft texts came to be repeatedly prohibited.

Despite the bans, weft narratives resurfaced in later sources, including dynastic histories and the exegetical apparatus of the Classics—sometimes as literary or rhetoric motifs set in ideological context to exalt an idealized past, sometimes as primary material for monographic accounts—as well as in works of historiography sponsored by the emperor, such as the late third-century editing of the *Annals Written on Bamboo*.[206] As noted above, a cluster of weft fragments is almost identical to a commentarial stratum of the *Annals Written on Bamboo* and entire sections in the treatise on "Auspicious Phenomena as Tokens"

205. For the influence of political predictions on imperial mandate transfer throughout the medieval era, see Lu, *Power of the Words*, 83–110.

206. For a detailed account of the two consecutive editing phases, between 281 and 300 C.E., which involved different scholars, see Edward L. Shaughnessy, *Rewriting Early Chinese Texts* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2006), 138–53.

of the *Book of the Song*.[207] This points to the existence of an intertextual relationship between weft texts, this treatise, and the bamboo annals commentary—or at least that these three works derived their materials from common sources. That Shen Yue was involved with both latter texts cannot be mere coincidence.[208] His acquaintance with weft material is manifest throughout this treatise, in which he names only about a dozen sources, seven of which are weft texts.[209] Any attempt at a comparative study of these three materials will eventually have to face the issue of the sources used by the Western Jin 西晉 (265–320 C.E.) editors to compile their commentary on the original *Annals Written on Bamboo*.[210] In 268, a dozen years before the original bamboo strips were unearthed, "the study of stellar pneumata, predictions and weft" (*xingqi chenwei zhi xue* 星氣讖緯之學) had been prohibited,[211] and we may speculate how dangerous it would have been for scholars commissioned with an imperial assignment to refer explicitly to recently prohibited material in their work. By contrast, Shen Yue may have enjoyed full and open access to his weft sources, since he compiled his treatise under

207. To my knowledge, Pankenier is the sole contemporary scholar to note the intertextual connection existing between the *Annals Written on Bamboo* and weft fragments; see p. 281 of his "The 'Bamboo Annals' Revisited: Problems of Method in Using the Chronicle as a Source for the Chronology of Early Zhou, Part 1," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 55.2 (1992), 272–97. Wang Guowei 王國維 (1877–1927), one of the modern Chinese scholars who considered the current version (*jinben* 今本) of the *Annals Written on Bamboo* a fake, was well aware of this intertextuality, since weft material is among the sources he used to deconstruct the *Annals* in his *Jinben Zhushu jinian shuzheng* 今本竹書紀年疏證 (1917).

208. Shen Yue inserted in the edited version at least seven of his own notes, and is "suspected" (by Shaughnessy, *Rewriting Early Chinese Texts*, 207) of having borrowed from an earlier stratum of commentary to compile his treatise on "Auspicious Phenomena as Tokens."

209. *Spring and Autumn* predictions (27.775), three *Luo Writ* texts plus a weft of the *Classic of Filial Piety* (27.779), *River Chart* and *Luo Writ* predictions ascribed to Confucius (27.784), and a weft of the "(*Classic of*) *Rites*," *Li* 禮 (29.865); see Lippiello, *Auspicious Omens*, 151–52. Shen Yue does not acknowledge the *Annals Written on Bamboo* as one of the sources of his treatise.

210. This Western Jin commentary includes two strata of "large-character notes" written in separate columns plus a stratum of "small-character double-column notes" inserted within the body text, as described by Shaughnessy, *Rewriting Early Chinese Texts*, 205–7. Shen Yue's later commentary forms a third stratum of "large-character notes."

211. Fang Xuanling 房玄齡 (579–648) et al., *Jin shu* 晉書 (Beijing: Zhonghua, 1974), 3.56. The date is usually given as 267, but the prohibition was recorded under the 12th month of the 4th year of Taishi 泰始 regnal era, which corresponds to January 2–31, 268. The phrase "stellar pneumata" (*xingqi* 星氣) refers to a prognostication (*zhan* 占) technique coming under the broader category of astromancy.

the Qi 齊 dynasty (479–502 C.E.), which, unlike most other early medieval dynasties, did not prohibit weft texts.[212]

The ritual immersion of a jade disc doubtless prefigures a similar rite performed by the emperor during the *feng* and *shan* ceremony and may have inspired two later distinct rites: the casting of a fish, in the Great Clarity (Taiqing 太清) alchemical tradition as well as in early Upper Clarity (Shangqing 上清) texts, and the Casting of Dragons and Tablets (*tou longjian* 投龍簡), which perhaps coexisted at the beginning of a period extending from the fourth to the fourteenth century.[213] Rather than a jade disc sunk in the hope of provoking an epiphany, both Taoist rites were a form of divine petitioning probably connected with the ritual petition to the Three Offices (*sanguan* 三官) of Heaven, Earth, and Water of the Celestial Master (*tianshi* 天師) church.[214] Simply put, small golden figures of a fish and a man in the first case, of a dragon in the second case, which functioned as messengers dispatched to the divinities, were cast into designated watery places. Beyond evident differences in scope and nature, all these liturgical programs, by reenacting a pattern of ritual behavior anciently leading to the transcendent experience of epiphany, shared a common yearning for the activation or reactivation of mediated individual contacts with the divine realm.

Appendix: Notes on Early Occurrences and Editions of Weft Texts

Yasui assumed that the earliest weft texts must be those quoted in the *Comprehensive (Discussions) in the White Tiger [Hall], Baihu tong (yi)* 白虎通 (義), traditionally ascribed to Ban Gu.[215] Dull followed Yasui.[216]

212. The submission memorial of the *Book of the Song* is dated 488, but Shen Yue did not complete the last treatise before 502; see Richard B. Mather, *The Poet Shen Yüeh (441–513): The Reticent Marquis* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), 26–36.

213. Édouard Chavannes, "Le jet des dragons," *Mémoires Concernant l'Asie Orientale (Inde, Asie Centrale, Extrême-Orient) Publiés par l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres* 3 (1919), 53–220; Seidel, "Imperial Treasures," 313; T.H. Barrett, "Inner and Outer Ritual: Some Remarks on a Directive Concerning Daoist Dragon-Casting Ritual from Dunhuang," in *A Daoist Florilegium/Daoyuan binfen lu* 道苑繽紛錄, ed. Lee Cheuk Yin and Chan Man Sing (Hong Kong: Commercial Press, 2002), 315–34; Kim, "Poisson et dragon," 271–72.

214. On which, see Franciscus Verellen, "The Heavenly Master Liturgical Agenda According to Chisong zi's Petition Almanach," *Cahiers d'Extrême-Asie* 14 (2004), 291–343.

215. Yasui Kōzan, *Isho to Chūgoku no shinpi shisō* 緯書と中國の神秘思想 (Tokyo: Hirakawa, 1988), 237.

216. Dull, "A Historical Introduction," Table I, 480–82.

However, the extant edition of this source would date back to the first half of the third century at the earliest.[217] The following notes do not attempt to establish an absolute dating for the texts mentioned above, but solely indicate *(a)* their earliest datable occurrences and, whenever such data exist, *(b)* editions. The tentative chronological order is purely pragmatic.[218]

No. 1 ***(Chun qiu) Yuanming bao*** (春秋) 元命包 (*Baihu tong*, 9/23/6; 30/56/21: "元命苞")

(*a*) Quoted by Liu Cang 劉蒼 (d. 83 C.E.), Prince of Dongping 東平王, in his advice to the throne, dated 60 C.E., transcribed in the treatise on the "Sacrifice in the Suburb" ("Jiaosi" 郊祀) of the *Han Records from the Eastern Observatory*.[219]

(*b*) The Liang 梁 dynasty (502–57 C.E.) had a third-century *Classic of Filial Piety* (sic): *Germ of the Primordial Mandate* in one chapter, commented on by Song Jun.[220]

No. 2 ***(Shang shu) Diming yan*** (尚書) 帝命驗

(*a*) Quoted in an edict, dated 85 C.E., by Emperor Zhang 章帝 (r. 76–88 C.E.).[221]

(*b*) There was third-century edition in one chapter commented on by Song Jun.[222]

No. 3 ***(Shang shu) Kao lingyao*** (尚書) 考靈曜

(*a*) Mentioned six times and quoted once in Cai Yong's treatise on "Pitch Pipes and the Calendar" ("Lüli" 律曆) appended

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217. Michael Loewe, "*Pai hu t'ung* 白虎通," in *Early Chinese Texts*, ed. Loewe, 347–56. Zhou Deliang 周德良, *Baihu tong chenwei sixiang zhi lishi yanjiu* 白虎通讖緯思想之歷史研究 (Taipei: Hua-Mu-Lan, 2008), 94–95, gives a table summing up the quotations of weft texts in *Comprehensive Discussions*. The text cites the Classics 504 times and weft texts 30 times (about 5.6% of the total), according to Huang Fushan, *Dong Han chenwei xue xintan* 東漢讖緯學新探 (Taipei: Taiwan xuesheng, 2000), 161–62.

218. References to *Comprehensive Discussions* are to *Baihutong zhuzi suoyin* 白虎通逐字索引, Institute for Chinese Studies Concordance (Hong Kong: Commercial Press, 1995). All dates are C.E. in this Appendix.

219. *Dongguan Han ji*, 5.7b. The treatises were compiled between 172 and 177 by a group of scholars commissioned by the emperor, including Cai Yong 蔡邕 (133–92) and Yang Biao 楊彪 (142–225). See also *Hou Han shu*, *zhi*, 9.3196.

220. According to *Sui shu*, 32.940: "梁有孝經雜緯十卷, 宋均注: 孝經元命包一卷," etc.

221. Transcribed in *Hou Han shu*, 35.1202.

222. See Liu Jinzao 劉錦藻 (1862–1934), *Qing chao xu wenxian tongkao* 清朝續文獻通考 (1921; rpt. Hangzhou: Zhejiang guji, 1988), 270.10145b, 271.10156b.

to the *Book of the Later Han*, including in an essay by the astronomer Jia Kui 賈逵 (30–101 C.E.) dated 92.[223]

(*b*) The *Yiwen leiju* 藝文類聚 (624 C.E.) quotes a second-century edition commented on by Zheng Xuan.[224]

No. 4 ***(Chun qiu) Ganjing fu*** (春秋) 感精符 (*Baihu tong*, 35/62/19–20)

(*a*) Mentioned by Bian Shao 邊韶 in a memorandum dated 143 C.E., which Cai Yong included in his treatise on "Pitch Pipes and the Calendar."[225]

No. 5 ***(Yiwei) Qian zuodu*** (易緯) 乾鑿度

(*a*) Mentioned in Bian Shao's memorandum of 143 C.E.[226]

(*b*) A second-century edition commented on by Zheng Xuan is attested under the Sui.[227] The twelfth-century *Tong zhi* 通志 lists a two-chapter edition, also commented on by Zheng Xuan.[228] The extant edition has two chapters.

No. 6 ***(Chun qiu) Hecheng tu*** (春秋) 合誠圖

(*a*) Quoted by Cai Yong in a response to the throne dated 178 C.E.[229]

No. 7 ***(Yue) Ji yaojia*** (樂) 稽耀嘉 (*Baihu tong*, 16/37/21; 28/53/16)

(*a*) Quoted as "稽曜嘉" by Gao Tanglong 高堂隆 (d. 237 C.E.) in his advice on calendar reform to Emperor Ming 明帝 (r. 227–39 C.E.) of the Wei.[230]

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223. *Hou Han shu*, *zhi*, 2.3027–28 (2.3047 for the date of Jia Kui's essay); 3033; 3039, in an advice to the throne by Cai himself, dated 175; and 3042, in an answer of the astronomer Liu Hong 劉洪 (c. 135–210) to an imperial order dated 179.

224. Ouyang Xun 歐陽詢 (557–641) et al., *Yiwen leiju* (*Siku quanshu* ed.), 2.35a: "尚書考靈曜, 鄭玄注."

225. *Hou Han shu*, *zhi*, 2.3035. For the authorship of this treatise, see Mansvelt Beck, *The Treatises of Later Han*, 61–63.

226. *Hou Han shu*, *zhi*, 2.3035.

227. See Xiao Ji 蕭吉 (530/540–614), *Wuxing dayi jiaozhu (zengding ban)* 五行大義校註 (增訂版), ed. Nakamura Shōhachi (Tokyo: Kyūko shoin, 1998), 5.169: "鄭玄注乾鑿度." For the dates of Xiao Ji and his work (c. 594), see Marc Kalinowski, *Cosmologie et divination dans la Chine ancienne: Le Compendium des Cinq agents (Wuxing dayi, VIe siècle)* (Paris: École Française d'Extrême-Orient, 1991), 11–32.

228. Zheng Qiao 鄭樵 (1104–62), *Tong zhi* (Beijing: Zhonghua, 1987), 63.756c: "乾鑿度二卷, 鄭 (元) [玄] 注." Zheng Xuan's name was written "鄭元" due to the Song character avoidance already mentioned.

229. See *Hou Han shu*, *zhi*, 17.3352n1 (commentary).

230. *Song shu*, 14.329.

No. 8 ***Lunyu chen*** 論語讖 (*Baihu tong*, 15/35/26)

(*a*) Quoted in the *Classified Anthology of Classics and Literature* (624 C.E.).[231]

(*b*) The Liang had a third-century edition in 8 chapters, commented on by Song Jun.[232]

No. 9 ***Xiaojing wei*** 孝經緯 (*Baihu tong*, 11/30/27: "孝經讖")

(*a*) Mentioned in Zhang Yan's 張晏 (3rd cent.) commentary on the *Book of the Han*.[233]

(*b*) Both versions of the Tang dynastic bibliography have a third-century edition in 5 chapters, commented on by Song Jun.[234]

No. 10 ***Shang shu zhonghou*** 尚書中候 (*Baihu tong*, 1/1/7: "中候")

(*a*) Quoted in the treatise on "Propitious Phenomena" ("Xiangrui" 祥瑞) of the *Nan Qi shu* 南齊書 (537 C.E.),[235] and by the scholar and astronomer Li Yexing 李業興 (484–549 C.E.) during his interview with Emperor Wu 武帝 (r. 502–49 C.E.) of the Liang in 537.[236]

(*b*) The bibliography in the *Book of the Sui* has a second-century edition commented on by Zheng Xuan in 5 chapters, which had 8 chapters under the Liang.[237]

No. 11 ***Chun qiu wei*** 春秋緯 (*Baihu tong*, 11/30/13: "春秋讖")

(*a*) Quoted in the treatise on "Astronomy" of the *Book of the Southern Qi* (537 C.E.).[238]

(*b*) The Liang had a third-century edition in 30 chapters, commented on by Song Jun.[239]

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231. *Yiwen leiju*, 1.21a, 2.29b, 18.29b.
232. According to *Sui shu*, 32.940: "論語讖八卷, 宋均注."
233. Quoted in *Han shu*, 75.3179n4, commentary.
234. Liu Xu 劉昫 (887–946) et al., *Jiu Tang shu* 舊唐書 (Beijing: Zhonghua, 1975), 46.1982: "孝經緯五卷, 宋均注"; Ouyang Xiu 歐陽修 (1007–72) et al., *Xin Tang shu* 新唐書 (Beijing: Zhonghua, 1975), 57.1444–45: "宋均注 … 注孝經緯五卷."
235. Xiao Zixian 蕭子顯 (489–537), *Nan Qi shu* (Beijing: Zhonghua, 1972), 18.350.
236. Wei Shou 魏收 (506–72), *Wei shu* 魏書 (Beijing: Zhonghua, 1974), 84.1864.
237. *Sui shu*, 32.940: "尚書中候五卷, 鄭玄注. 梁有八卷, 今殘缺."
238. *Nan Qi shu*, 13.239.
239. According to *Sui shu*, 32.940: "春秋緯三十卷, 宋均注."

No. 12 *(Yiwei) Jilan tu* (易緯) 稽覽圖

(*a*) Quoted in a letter, dated 550, by Song Jingye 宋景業 to the future Emperor Wenxuan 文宣帝 (r. 550–59 C.E.) of the Northern Qi 北齊 (550–77 C.E.).[240]

(*b*) The twelfth-century *Comprehensive Treatises* list a second-century edition in 7 chapters, commented on by Zheng Xuan.[241] Later catalogues record editions in 3, 2, and 1 chapter.[242] The extant edition has 2 chapters.

緯書敘述式片段中所見的主權顯靈與「沈璧」儀式

郭艾思

摘要

本文探討現代學人所稱「緯書」或「讖緯」殘片中先秦晚期與秦漢魏晉南北朝的一些政治意識形態方面。其重點是層次與主權的超越，王朝正統的傳遞過程，以及「圖」、「書」、「丹書」等的有形啟示 (tangible revelation)。首先經過「緯」、「讖」、「讖書」等字，詞術語的簡約介紹，研究導向緯書中的社會和主權概念同質與宇宙的內在層次秩序。接著，就探討這些概念在一群集緯書敘述式片段中的作用。最後，研究焦點於「沈璧」儀式，架起了緯書敘述的“神話”領域和傳統歷史之間的橋樑，並且表示實際上一些緯書想法如何能影響政治行動。緯書敘述的內涵不僅助長了形成秦漢思想關於主權和正統的觀念，而且持久地影響了六朝時代的政治以及重演超越經驗的顯靈儀式。

Keywords: Weft, Apocrypha, Sovereignty, Epiphany, Rite
緯書, 讖緯, 主權, 沈璧, 顯靈

240. Transcribed in Li Delin 李德林 (530–90) and Li Boyao 李百藥 (565–648), *Bei Qi shu* 北齊書 (Beijing: Zhonghua, 1972), 49.675. For a full account of the anecdote, see Lu, *Power of the Words*, 94–98.

241. *Tong zhi*, 63.756c: “易緯稽覽圖七卷, 鄭 (元) [玄] 注.” Due to *qi* 七 and *er* 二 being frequently miswritten for one another, this number of chapters may well be erroneous.

242. See Ji Yun 紀昀 (1724–1805) et al., *Siku quanshu zongmu tiyao* 四庫全書總目提要 (1798; rpt. Taipei: Commercial Press, 1983), 6.55a–56b.