

Interpreting the Wenxian Covenant Texts:
Methodological Procedure and Selected Analysis

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Abstract

The thesis interprets a selection of phrases from the Wenxian covenant texts, using a methodological procedure presented and discussed prior to the analysis. This is the first detailed study of these texts and the first attempt to describe and demonstrate a procedural approach for the analysis of an excavated Chinese text.

These covenant texts, excavated in their thousands in 1980 – 81 from sixteen pits in Wenxian, Henan, were written on stone tablets using ink and brush. They have been dated to the early fifth century BC. A single covenant is repeated on many tablets, each individualized with the name of a covenantor. The covenants, which are highly formulaic, call on spirits to sanction various stipulations, mainly concerned with loyalty in serving the covenant lord and prohibitions on dealings with various named and un-named enemies. They are significant for our understanding of many aspects of early China, from script development to religious belief and political organization. In form and period they are very similar to the Houma covenant texts, excavated in 1965 at Houma, Shanxi.

Chapter Two of the thesis presents the methodological procedure I constructed to analyse the Wenxian texts. A number of key terms used in the palaeographic analysis and transcription of characters are first defined and discussed. The methodological procedure is then set out. In Chapter Three this procedure is applied to the analysis of eighteen characters and the seven phrases in which they are found in the Wenxian texts. In the final chapter I conclude that the methodological procedure facilitated this analysis and I discuss methodological issues raised by the study. I suggest that this procedure is transferable to the analysis of other Zhou-period texts and that an awareness of the steps of the process can aid the assessment of transcriptions and annotations of published excavated texts.

Table of Contents

Title page.....	1
Abstract	2
Table of Contents	3
Figures and Tables.....	7
Acknowledgements.....	9
Preface.....	14
Chapter One: Introduction	17
Part 1	
1.1 Thesis title, overview and outline	17
1.1.1 Thesis title.....	17
1.1.2 Overview.....	17
1.1.3 Outline.....	17
Part 2	
1.2 Methodology in the interpretation of excavated early-Chinese texts ...	20
1.2.1 Excavated early-Chinese texts and issues of interpretation	20
1.2.2 The interpretation and publication of excavated early-Chinese texts and the place of methodology in this process.....	23
1.2.2.1 The need for palaeographic analysis of excavated early-Chinese texts.....	23
1.2.2.2 The aim of palaeographic analysis of excavated early-Chinese texts.....	25
1.2.2.3 The publication of excavated early-Chinese texts	26
1.2.2.4 Methodology in the interpretation of excavated early-Chinese texts.....	32
Part 3	
1.3 The Houma and Wenxian covenant tablets	37
1.3.1 The Houma covenant tablets.....	37
1.3.2 The Wenxian covenant tablets	41
1.3.2.1 Excavation of the Wenxian covenant tablets	43
1.3.2.1.1 Location of the site	43
1.3.2.1.2 Discovery and excavation of the tablets	44
1.3.2.2 The material nature of the Wenxian covenant tablets	48
1.3.2.2.1 Material and form of the tablets.....	48
1.3.2.2.2 The ink.....	51
1.3.2.3 Preliminary findings on the contents of the Wenxian texts.....	52
1.3.3 The dating and historical background of the Houma and Wenxian texts.....	55
1.3.3.1 Dating the Houma and Wenxian texts.....	55
1.3.3.2 Historical background.....	60

Part 4	
1.4 Genre and the Wenxian texts: questions of terminology	76
1.4.1 “Covenant” and related terminology	77
1.4.2 Structural and functional similarities between the Houma and Wenxian texts and covenants of the ancient Near East.....	83
1.4.3 Early Chinese definitions of <i>méng</i> 盟.....	86
Chapter Two: Methodology	90
Part 1	
2.1 Definitions.....	91
2.1.1 Word and character	91
2.1.2 Character: related terms	93
2.1.2.1 Analogous character set	93
2.1.2.2 Standard character.....	94
2.1.2.3 Non-standard character	94
2.1.2.3.1 Variant character	95
2.1.2.3.2 Loangraph	95
2.1.2.4 Component, composite component and base component.....	97
2.1.2.5 Calligraphic and component-level variation.....	99
2.1.3. Transcription terminology.....	100
2.1.3.1 Transcription	100
2.1.3.2 Chinese terminology and English equivalents.....	100
2.1.3.2.1 Formal and direct transcription.....	102
2.1.3.2.1.1 Definitions and examples	103
2.1.3.2.1.2 Dealing with unidentified components in formal and direct transcriptions.....	107
2.1.3.2.2 Interpretative transcriptions	110
2.1.4 Editing.....	115
Part 2	
2.2 Proposed methodological procedure.....	116
2.2.1 The methodological procedure adopted in the analysis of the Wenxian graphs.....	116
Step 1: Identification of variant forms of a graph.....	116
Step 2: Breakdown of the variant forms into components.....	118
Step 3: Matching of components with attested components.....	118
Step 4: Reconstruction of the graph using <i>kǎishū</i> components	122
Step 5: Matching the transcribed graph with characters in dictionaries and/or collections of ancient forms	122
Step 6: Determining the word denoted by an attested character.....	123
Step 7: Identification of a loangraph.....	126
Step 8: Determining the word denoted by an unattested graph ...	130
Step 9: Discussion and explication of the phrase.....	138
2.2.2 Conclusion	143

Chapter Three: Sample Annotations	144
Part 1	
3.1 Common Phrases.....	150
3.1.1. Opening phrase	150
3.1.1.1 Palaeographic analysis.....	151
Graph 1: [圭]	151
3.1.1.2 Discussion and explication of the phrase.....	165
3.1.1.2.1 The term <i>gui</i>	165
3.1.1.2.2 The term <i>ming</i>	171
3.1.2 Name clause: period of effectiveness: date formula	179
3.1.2.1 Palaeographic analysis.....	180
Graph 1: [朔]	180
3.1.2.2 Discussion and explication of the phrase.....	186
3.1.3 Name clause: period of effectiveness: “from this day onward”. 202	
3.1.3.1 Palaeographic analysis.....	202
Graph 1: [自]	202
Graph 2: [今]	205
Graph 3: [昌]	208
Graph 4: [出]	213
3.1.3.2 Discussion and explication of the phrase	221
3.1.4 Imprecation clause	229
3.1.4.1 Palaeographic analysis.....	230
Graph 1: [卑]	230
Graph 2: [母]	234
Graph 3: [义]	244
Graph 4: [由]	247
Graph 5: [後]	253
3.1.4.2 Discussion and explication of the phrase.....	256
Part 2	
3.2 Specific Oath Types	261
3.2.1 Oath Types 7 and 3: stipulations II.A (part) and II.B.....	261
3.2.1.1 Palaeographic analysis.....	263
Graph 1: [各]	263
Graph 2: [怨]	269
Graph 3: [德]	296
Graph 4: [彘]	305
3.2.1.2 Discussion and explication of the phrase.....	314
3.2.1.2.1 恪慎其德 <i>kè shèn qí dé</i>	318
3.2.1.2.2 以徼主福 <i>yǐ jiǎo zhǔ fú</i>	329
3.2.1.2.3 勉彘而/其主之禱祠 <i>miǎn gōng ér/qí zhǔ zhī dǎocí</i>	337
3.2.1.2.4 Conclusion	365
3.2.2 Oath Type 2: stipulations II.A and II.B	373
3.2.2.1 Palaeographic analysis.....	375
Graph 1: [彘]	375

Graph 2: [𠄎 =]	386
Graph 3	392
3.2.2.2 Discussion and explication of the phrase.....	420
3.2.3 Oath Types 2, 3, and 7: concluding remarks	448
Chapter Four: Conclusion.....	450
4.1 The Significance of the Wenxian covenant texts	450
4.2 Methodological issues.....	452
4.3 Further applications of the methodology	459
4.3.1 Extension of the methodology to other excavated texts	459
4.3.2 Use of the methodology in the evaluation of published excavated texts.....	459
Appendices.....	461
Appendix 1: Methodology: Literature Survey	462
5.1 Literature survey: transcriptions	462
5.2 Literature survey: techniques of palaeographic analysis	467
5.2.1 The approach to palaeographic analysis of individual scholars	468
5.2.2 Specific methods of palaeographic analysis	476
5.2.3 Categorization of graphs based on the type of analysis used in their interpretation	489
5.3 Literature survey: historical phonology in palaeographic analysis.....	493
5.3.1 The unreliability of reconstructions for Han and pre-Han Chinese.....	494
5.3.2 The lack of understanding of the rules and conventions for selecting phonetic components and loangraphs.....	495
5.3.3 The effect of local variation in pronunciation on selection of phonetic components and loangraphs.....	497
5.3.4 Disagreement on criteria for judging loaning relationships	498
5.4 Literature survey: explication of the meaning of the text.....	512
5.5 Literature survey: concluding remarks	520
Appendix 2: Bibliography.....	522
Appendix 3: Text corpus	544
Appendix 4: Figures.....	553
Appendix 5: Figure credits.....	601

Figures and Tables

Figures

Figure 1: Houma Lineage Covenant Text 156:1, copy and transcription	554
Figure 2: Historical map of Spring and Autumn period showing positions of present-day Houma and Wenxian	555
Figure 3: Houma tablets: 67:1 and 194:2	556
Figure 4: Houma pit with jade object in wall niche	557
Figure 5: Distribution of pits on the terrace at Houma	558
Figure 6: Houma pits during excavation	559
Figure 7: Xintian site at Houma with covenant site indicated	560
Figure 8: Houma Lineage Covenant Text 156:1, photograph	561
Figure 9: Houma Lineage Covenant Text 156:20, photograph	562
Figure 10: Houma Lineage Covenant Text 156:20, copy	563
Figure 11: Houma Lineage Covenant Text 156:20, transcription	563
Figure 12: Wenxian covenant tablets from pit WT1K1: photographs from <i>Wenwu</i> 1983.3 article (page 1)	564
Figure 13: Wenxian covenant tablets from pit WT1K1: photographs from <i>Wenwu</i> 1983.3 article (page 2)	565
Figure 14: Wenxian covenant tablets from pit WT1K1: photographs from <i>Wenwu</i> 1983.3 article (page 3)	566
Figure 15: Wenxian covenant tablets from pit WT1K1: photographs from <i>Wenwu</i> 1983.3 article (page 4)	567
Figure 16: Wenxian covenant tablets from pit WT1K1: copies from <i>Wenwu</i> 1983.3 article (page 1)	568
Figure 17: Wenxian covenant tablets from pit WT1K1: copies from <i>Wenwu</i> 1983.3 article (page 2)	569
Figure 18: Wenxian covenant tablets from pit WT1K1: copies from <i>Wenwu</i> 1983.3 article (page 3)	570
Figure 19: Wenxian covenant tablets from pit WT1K1: copies from <i>Wenwu</i> 1983.3 article (page 4)	571
Figure 20: Wenxian covenant tablet WT1K1 – 3802: photograph and copy from <i>Wenwu</i> 1983.3 article	572
Figure 21: Position of the Wenxian site	573
Figure 22: Wenxian pit WT1K1: cross sections	574
Figure 23: Wenxian covenant tablets: examples of different tablet shapes and stone types	575
Figure 24: Historical map showing incidents believed to be related to the Houma covenant tablets	576
Figure 25: Methodological procedure for the Wenxian covenant texts: flow chart	577
Figure 26: Shang period (16 th – 11 th century BC) <i>ge</i> -halberd heads with jade blades and bronze <i>na</i>	588
Figure 27: Examples of Wenxian tablets with standard <i>gui</i> shapes, self-named as <i>gui</i>	589
Figure 28: Examples of Wenxian tablets with non-standard <i>gui</i> shapes, self-named as <i>gui</i>	590

Figure 29: *Ge*-halberd heads with a bird in their designs 591
 Figure 30: The development of the character *de*..... 592
 Figure 31: Forms of *zhi* and *de* from the Qin, Han and Wei-Jin periods 593
 Figure 32: Development of the characters *xiong* and *long* 594
 Figure 33: Forms of *du* from the Qin, Han and Wei-Jin periods 595
 Figure 34: Han-period representations of proclamation buildings 596
 Figure 35: The assumed position of Shao Qu in the Warring States period 597
 Figure 36: Towns attacked by Qin during the period 273 BC to 261 BC 598
 Figure 37: Edmund Ryden's edited version of the *Guodian Laozi*:
 sample page 599
 Figure 38: *Jia*: comparison of the object and early form of the graph..... 600

Tables

Table 1: Pits with tablets at the Wenxian site 47
 Table 2: Number of tablets with an enhanced image from each
 Wenxian pit..... 47
 Table 3: Wenxian covenant tablets: stone-type categories 49
 Table 4: Wenxian covenant tablets: tablet-shape categories 50
 Table 5: Wenxian covenant tablets: stone-colour categories..... 50
 Table 6: Wenxian covenant tablets: the number of tablets with enhanced images
 from each pit with the number of illegible and legible images and the
 oath types to which the tablets belong 53
 Table 7: Sources of the component [𠄎] 106
 Table 8: Assessing the phonetic similarity between two words..... 129
 Table 9: Characters and phrases from the Wenxian covenant texts discussed in
 Chapter Three 147
 Table 10: Frequency of the use of the characters [質] *zhì* and [慝] *shèn*
 in the Houma and Wenxian covenant texts 294
 Table 11: Transcriptions by Matthias Richter of [不] *bù* forms from the
 Guodian Laozi 464
 Table 12: Transcriptions by Iwamoto Atsushi and Mori Kazu of a section of
 the Baoshan slips 466

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Preface

My involvement with the Wenxian covenant tablets resulted from an original interest in the Houma covenant texts. This led me to contact Susan Roosevelt Weld who wrote her doctoral dissertation on the Houma and Wenxian tablets. After receiving her Ph.D in 1990, Weld made inquiries about the Wenxian tablets, which, at that time, were unpublished apart from fourteen that had been included in a short report about the site in *Wenwu* in 1983.¹ She learnt that the two major obstacles to further processing were: 1. the difficulty of producing copies of the texts, which are often almost impossible to make out due to the fact that they are written in black ink, often faded, on dark-coloured stone, and 2. the sheer size of the task, with thousands of tablets to be dealt with.

Weld wondered if recent experimentation she had been involved with at the Harvard Semitic Museum, using computer manipulation of digitalized images to improve the legibility of pottery inscriptions from the Middle East, might be applicable to the Wenxian tablets. She contacted the excavators of the tablets, Hao Benxing 郝本性 and Zhao Shigang 趙世綱 at the Henan Provincial Institute of Cultural Relics and Archaeology (*Hénán Shěng Wénwù yǔ Kǎogǔ Yánjiūsuo* 河南省文物與考古研究所) in Zhengzhou 鄭州, Henan. In 1993, Weld travelled to Zhengzhou at the invitation of Hao and Zhao, and with the help of funds from the Committee for Legal Education and Exchange with China and the East Asian Legal Studies department at Harvard Law School (where Weld was teaching). Carl Andrews, an expert in photography and computer graphics with whom Weld had worked at the Harvard Semitic Museum, travelled with her. With the assistance of Hao and Zhao, they experimented with a few of the already published tablets, using various combinations of films and lighting to take photographs, then scanned the negatives with a portable Nikon scanner and used a laptop computer with Adobe Photoshop software to enhance the digitized images. The results were impressive, producing convenient and generally legible

¹ Henan Sheng Wenwu Yanjiusuo, "Henan Wenxian Dong Zhou Mengshi Yizhi Yi Hao Kan Fajue Jianbao". For Weld's own account of the project, on which the following is partly based, see: Susan Roosevelt Weld, "Zhengli Wenxian Mengshu Sheying Chengxiang Xiangmu: Fangfa Gaishu".

images of the texts. Weld travelled again to Zhengzhou in 1995 and 1998 for further discussions about the possibility of using this method to process the rest of the Wenxian tablets. During this time, Weld applied for and received a small grant from the Henry Luce Foundation to assist with the project. Details of the project, named the “Technical Assistance Project for the Photography and Imaging, Processing and Research of the Wenxian Covenant Texts” (*Wēnxiàn méngshū shèyǐng chéngxiàng jǐ zhěnglǐ yǔ yánjiū jìshù yuánzhù xiàngmù* 濫縣盟書攝影成像及整理與研究技術援助項目), were officially agreed upon between the Harvard Law School and the Henan Provincial Institute of Cultural Relics and Archaeology. The project was supported by and administered through Harvard Law School. Susan Weld invited me to join the project and, in the autumn of 1999, Susan Weld, Carl Andrews and I went to Zhengzhou to begin work.

The Henan Provincial Institute of Cultural Relics and Archaeology, as well as giving full institutional support for the project, also provided a workroom at the institute and two assistants, Du Chengyan 杜成彥 and Zhao Li 趙莉. The processing began with Hao Benxing and Zhao Shigang selecting those tablets to be photographed after which they were brought to the workroom from the storage room. A number of physical attributes were recorded for each tablet, such as size of the tablet and number of characters, and these were later entered into a database. Each tablet was then photographed by Carl Andrews using a stand-mounted Nikon F3 with macro lens, regular Kodak 100 ASA film, and lighting provided by small halogen table lamps: it had been decided that, given the limited budget for the project, this was the best way to take the images. Full shots were taken as well as sectional close-ups to be joined after digitalization. In many cases the tablets were first sprayed with a fine mist of purified water to increase the contrast between the ink and the stone. Once dry the tablets were wrapped in paper or placed between foam and replaced in the small card boxes in which they are stored (the boxes kept in wooden or metal cabinets). The film was processed in Zhengzhou and the negatives scanned into two desktop computers using a Nikon LS-2000 scanner. These digital images were then enhanced using Adobe Photoshop.

Andrews taught the whole team how to take the photos, scan, enhance the images, add information to the database, and so on. As a result, we could continue work after he returned to the US. During that first trip, we photographed more than 3000 tablets and tablet-fragments. The photography continued at the institute after Weld, Andrews and I had left, and was completed in Spring 2000. The total number of tablets and fragments photographed was around 4000. Scanning of the negatives at the institute in Zhengzhou was finished later that year. The images were then manipulated on two computers: the sectional close-ups were joined and the images enhanced. This initial work was completed during 2001.

The excavators of the tablets, Hao Benxing and Zhao Shigang, have, since then, been working on the excavation report. The institute expects the report to be published within the next few years.

Chapter One: Introduction

Part 1

1.1 Thesis title, overview and outline

1.1.1 Thesis title

Interpreting the Wenxian covenant texts: methodological procedure and selected analysis

1.1.2 Overview

This thesis arranges a set of methodological tools for palaeographic analysis into a procedural framework, producing an analytical tool which is applied to the interpretation of a number of graphs¹ and phrases from the, largely unpublished, Wenxian covenant texts (*Wēnxiàn méngshū* 溫縣盟書).

The thesis makes a twofold contribution to the field of excavated Chinese texts and their analysis. Firstly, it provides a systematic methodological procedure for the analysis of Chinese palaeographic materials. Secondly, it discusses in detail several phrases from the Wenxian covenant texts that have previously only been briefly introduced in conference papers.²

1.1.3 Outline

Chapter One, the Introduction, has five parts. Part 1, the current section, gives the title, overview and outline of the thesis. Part 2 discusses palaeographic analysis in the production of annotated publications of excavated texts and the place of methodology in such analysis. Part 3 introduces the Houma and Wenxian covenant

¹ The words “graph” and “character” are both used in the thesis. The two words are sometimes used interchangeably but, where a distinction is made, “graph” is used to refer to the characters as they appear in their original form on excavated material while “character” is used to refer to transcribed or corresponding modern-form characters.

² The following publications and conference papers include material from the Wenxian covenant texts: Henan Sheng Wenwu Yanjiusuo, “Henan Wenxian Dong Zhou Mengshi Yizhi Yi Hao Kan Fajue Jianbao”; Zhao Shigang and Luo Taoxiang, “Lun Wenxian Mengshu Yu Houma Mengshu ...”; Hao Benxing, “Henan Wenxian Dongzhou Mengshi Yizhi Fajue Yu Zhengli Qingkuang Huibao”; Crispin Williams, “Shuo Wenxian Mengsshu De ‘Ke Shen Qi De’”; Hao Benxing, “‘Xuan Shu’ Jie”; Zhao Shigang, “Daoci Kao – Wenxian Mengshu T5K14 Meng Ci Shidu”.

tablets. The Houma covenant tablets (*Hóumǎ méngshū* 侯馬盟書) are closely related to the Wenxian texts. Excavated in 1965, they provide a very important resource for the interpretation of the Wenxian texts. The excavation of the Wenxian tablets is then described, after which the historical background and dating of both sets of tablets is discussed. Part 4 considers the nature of the covenant genre.

Chapter Two, Methodology, begins with definitions and discussion of a number of key terms used in the analysis of excavated texts. The literature survey which originally followed this has been moved to an appendix for word-limit reasons.³ The literature survey introduces both the contributions of twentieth-century scholars who discussed the methodology involved in the interpretation of excavated texts and the standard techniques of analysis they identified. In the final part of Chapter Two I place these standard techniques in a procedural framework, creating a methodical system of analysis. While a number of different techniques for palaeographic analysis for Chinese graphs have been described in print, they have never been systematized in this way. Sections of books and articles that discuss methodology generally follow a single format: a list and brief descriptions of generally recognized standard techniques, e.g. analysis of components, comparison with known graphs, conjecture based on semantic context, and so on, along with a number of examples of graphic interpretation, each one usually selected to highlight a particular technique. What is absent is an explanation of how these methods are combined in a logical, scientific approach to the identification of a graph. Only when this is done is it possible for one to make practical use of these tools in the analysis of graphs. I provide this methodical approach to the interpretation of a graph, from the basic identification, where possible, of its component parts, to the systematic application of methods which can lead to the identification of the word denoted by the graph.

Having described this procedural methodology in Chapter Two, it is adopted in Chapter Three in the analysis of a number of phrases and graphs from the

³ See Appendix 1.

Wenxian texts. This provides an opportunity to judge the effectiveness and limitations of this methodology on these excavated materials, parts of which have not been previously interpreted. The analysis of these phrases also allows a close look at the content of a selection of the Wenxian oaths. The chapter is divided into two parts, the first a selection from the Wenxian phrases common to most oath types, the second, a number of phrases specific to particular oath types. The selection thus gives a range of the different clauses found in the covenant texts, considers graphs for which there were a variety of problems in interpretation and allows discussion of some particularly interesting content seen in the oaths. Limiting the number of phrases and graphs discussed was necessary in order to keep Chapter Three to a reasonable length. One of the phrases has previously been seen in the Houma tablets, the others are only found in the Wenxian texts.

Chapter Four, the Conclusion, considers the significance of the Wenxian materials, appraises the effectiveness of the methodology as employed in the analysis of the Wenxian texts and considers more basic methodological issues brought to light by the study. Directions for further development and research are suggested. The potential for the methodology to be used on other excavated texts and as a tool to judge transcriptions and accompanying annotations of published excavated texts is also briefly considered.

Part 2

1.2 Methodology in the interpretation of excavated early-Chinese texts

The following section discusses the interpretation and publication of excavated early-Chinese texts, providing background to the discussion of methodology found in Chapter Two. A greater awareness of methodology in palaeographic analysis is identified as of potential benefit to the production and understanding of transcriptions and annotations to published excavated texts.

1.2.1 Excavated early-Chinese texts and issues of interpretation

The study of Han (206 BC – AD 220) and pre-Han China has undergone a huge transformation over the last one hundred years. Up until the end of the nineteenth century, for a period of almost two thousand years, scholarly understanding of early Chinese history and culture was based on a small number of transmitted texts and their various commentaries.⁴ The situation changed dramatically in the twentieth century with the introduction of archaeology and the excavation of material culture and palaeographic materials. Evidence hidden from view for more than two thousand years began to be uncovered in huge quantities all over China: tombs, palace foundations, city walls, pottery, bronzes, jades, lacquerware, coins, and, of course, materials with writing on them. It became possible to see for oneself sites where people had lived, tombs in which they had been buried, objects they had used, and, perhaps most importantly, words they had written down to record key parts of their lives: divination; appointment and other ceremonies; philosophy; laws; medical treatments; administration records; inventory lists of burial goods, and so on. The achievements of the Qing philologists in their critical studies of the classics provided the skills and knowledge essential to the interpretation of these new texts while the influence of

⁴ Excavated texts, including bamboo slips and bronze inscriptions, were seen during the imperial period, but are not generally suggested to have had any great influence on standard interpretations of the classics. Such texts are briefly introduced in: Edward L. Shaughnessy ed., *New Sources of Early Chinese History*, pp.1 – 4.

the “doubting antiquity” school fuelled interest in these ancient works, untouched since their burial.⁵

The pace of discovery of excavated texts has not diminished, in fact in recent years it seems to have increased, with frequent announcements of startling new finds. Although pre-planned scientific excavation accounts for some of these discoveries, the majority are the result of salvage archaeology on the construction sites which have multiplied as China modernizes, while many of the items now appearing on the antiquities market are from plundered tombs. Texts unearthed over the last century date from the late Shang (1300 – 1046 BC) to the Han and later. They include between 100,000 and 200,000 fragments of inscribed oracle-bones, and thousands of bronze inscriptions, stone tablets, bamboo slips, coins, and other palaeographic materials.⁶

Newly excavated texts have revolutionized our picture of early China, but there is still much scope for further work on these materials. A very basic issue is the unavailability of those excavated documents which have not yet been fully published, some of which were excavated many years ago. These include a number of the Mawangdui texts, many of the more recently unearthed bamboo slips, and, of course, the materials considered in this work, the Wenxian covenant tablets.

Of those texts already published, many are not fully understood. Those on subjects common in transmitted texts, such as philosophy, tend to be more accessible, but other genres can be very challenging. The language of oracle bones

⁵ Works discussing Qing philology and the “doubting antiquity” school include: Benjamin A. Elman, *From Philosophy to Philology*; Arthur W. Hummel, *The Autobiography of a Chinese Historian*; Li Xueqin, *Zouchu Yi Gu Shidai*.

⁶ The *Jiaguwen Heji* reproduces over 40,000 oracle-bone fragments: Guo Moruo ed., *Jiaguwen Heji*. The *Jiaguwen Heji Bu Bian* has an additional 13,500 fragments: Zhongguo Shehui Kexue Yuan Lishi Yanjiusuo ed., *Jiaguwen Heji Bu Bian*. David Keightley gives the total number of oracle-bone fragments so far unearthed at around 200,000: David N. Keightley, “The Shang”, p.235. The index of bronze inscription characters, the *Yin Zhou Jinwen Jicheng Yinde*, uses a corpus of about 12,000 bronze inscriptions. Enno Giele’s “Database of Early Chinese Manuscripts” records texts on bamboo, silk, stone, etc. (but not bronzes), found in about 130 Late Spring and Autumn to Han excavations: Enno Giele, *The Database of Early Chinese Manuscripts* [online], available from <http://humanities.uchicago.edu/depts/easian/earlychina/research_resources/databases/early_chinese_manuscripts/index.htm> There are also huge numbers of recently excavated texts from the post-Han period, for example the approximately 100,000 bamboo slips from Zoumalou 走馬樓, dated to the third century AD.

is not clearly understood and many oracle-bone graphs have not been confidently deciphered and, while it is true that the majority of these undeciphered graphs are proper names, a significant number are not.⁷ Many bronze inscriptions have no generally accepted interpretation, while later texts on topics rarely seen in transmitted literature, such as certain aspects of law and administration, are very obscure. Among the Houma covenant texts, which, as mentioned above, are closely related to the Wenxian covenant texts, there are characters and several phrases which, almost forty years after excavation, are still not fully understood. So long as the basic meaning of the whole or part of a text is unclear, that text cannot be confidently relied on as a source for scholars in their reconstruction of the history, society and culture of early China.

Published excavated texts also suffer from the variable quality of their transcriptions and annotations. These mainly result from problems in interpretation and lack of consistency in the application of conventions for transcriptions and the writing of annotations. Problems in transcriptions and annotations can mislead the scholar interested in the text as source material for their research. Further confusion may result from subsequent articles giving new, conflicting, interpretations, some of which will be based on erroneous analysis of graphs.

This thesis proposes that a key to improvement in these areas and in the general comprehension of excavated texts is the development of an effective and efficient methodological approach to their interpretation. While a number of basic analytical tools of interpretation are recognized by palaeographers and have been briefly described in print, procedural details of palaeographic analysis have not been discussed and new approaches are rarely considered. I believe that this is one of the main reasons for the variable quality of annotations and transcriptions of excavated texts and the misguided analysis found in some articles.

A small number of recent studies suggest that there has recently been increased interest in problems of methodology in palaeographic analysis of

⁷ Chen Jian, "Yinxu Buci De Fenqi Fenlei Dui Jiaguwenzi Kaoshi De Zhongyaoxing", p. 1.

excavated Chinese texts.⁸ By presenting, in Chapter Two, a methodical approach to such analysis and, in Chapter Three, demonstrating its use on sections from the Wenxian covenant texts, this thesis raises a number of issues for discussion in further debate on the topic. Such a debate, one hopes, will result in an improvement in the general understanding of such analysis, more methodical application of methodology, new approaches to analysis and a greater appreciation of the process by the non-specialist.

1.2.2 The interpretation and publication of excavated early-Chinese texts and the place of methodology in this process

The following section places methodology in the context of palaeographic analysis and the preparation of excavated texts for publication in China. I first consider why palaeographic analysis of these texts is necessary, the aims of this analysis, the various different paths such texts take to publication and the methodological approach adopted by those engaged in such analysis. The section is divided into the following topics: The need for palaeographic analysis of excavated early-Chinese texts; The aim of palaeographic analysis of excavated early-Chinese texts; The publication of excavated early-Chinese texts; and, Methodology in the interpretation of excavated early-Chinese texts.

1.2.2.1 The need for palaeographic analysis of excavated early-Chinese texts

Palaeographic analysis of excavated early-Chinese texts is necessary because these texts are written in forms of the Chinese script which are no longer recognizable and must be transcribed by a palaeographer in order that a wider audience may understand and make use of the materials.

The script used for modern Chinese is the result of centuries of increasingly greater standardization which began in the Qin dynasty (221 – 206 BC), made great strides in the Tang (AD 618 – 907) and Song (AD 960 – 1279) dynasties and

⁸ See Appendix 1.

continues to this day.⁹ The initial Qin standardization took the “small-seal script” (*xiǎozhuàn* 小篆) of the Qin state and imposed it on the rest of the empire. The so called “clerical script” (*lishū* 隸書), less formal than the small-seal, is thought to have originated from a “popular script” also in use in Qin, and became the writing style adopted for general use in the Han period (206 BC – AD 220).¹⁰ After the Han, a different style, the “standard script” (*kǎishū* 楷書), grew in popularity and became the normally used style by around the fifth century AD. The *kǎishū* script is the script in general use today.¹¹ The clerical script and *kǎishū* script are, in fact, very similar to each other which allows us to make the general statement that the character *forms* (i.e. each graph’s constituent components and structure) used in today’s Chinese script are based on the standard forms of Qin small-seal script, but that the *calligraphic style* of today’s script is based on a calligraphic form which originated from the “popular script” of the Qin period, and dominated from the Han (as clerical script) and onwards (as *kǎishū*).

Excavated texts from the Qin and earlier periods are not written in the standardized clerical or *kǎishū* script and thus have a noticeably different calligraphic style as well as differences in formal structure compared to the *kǎishū* script. As a result they are difficult to recognize. If graphs in an excavated text are written in the Qin small-seal script, then their forms will generally be close to those of the corresponding *kǎishū* characters, although as mentioned above, standardization of the forms of characters continued for centuries after the Qin so there will be exceptions. But, even with this formal similarity, the small-seal calligraphic style is too far removed from that of the *kǎishū* script to allow these characters to be immediately recognized without a period of familiarization.

Graphs from pre-unification Warring States Qin (pre-221 BC), should still be formally, i.e. at the component level, close to *kǎishū* -script characters since the Qin small-seal standard forms had developed in the Qin state during the Warring States period. As one goes further back in time before the Qin-Han period and, in

⁹ Qiu Xigui (transl. Gilbert L. Mattos and Jerry Norman), *Chinese Writing*, pp.403 – 407.

¹⁰ Qiu Xigui (transl. Gilbert L. Mattos and Jerry Norman), *Chinese Writing*, pp.98 – 112. The term “popular script” is that given by Gilbert Mattos and Jerry Norman for the Chinese term *tōngsú wénzì* 通俗文字.

¹¹ Qiu Xigui (transl. Gilbert L. Mattos and Jerry Norman), *Chinese Writing*, p.113.

the case of late Spring and Autumn and Warring States texts, to scripts of other states, so the script becomes less and less familiar. Thus many graphs on oracle bones, written around a thousand years before the Qin, bear little obvious resemblance or structural similarity to Qin and Han forms, while non-Qin Warring States scripts have many forms greatly variant from those in use in Qin.¹² The unpredictable use of graphs as phonetic loans for writing different words, and the existence of variant forms for a single character are further complicating factors.

Palaeographers' published transcriptions of excavated texts into the modern *kǎishū* script allow the wider scholarly community access to these materials. Scholars from other disciplines may then evaluate their historical importance and determine how the texts add to, differ from, or confirm our knowledge of the period as gained from other texts and archaeological finds. Thus, although the original texts are themselves of lasting interest to the palaeographer, once the initial work of interpretation is done, the texts assume a new role as source material for the historian to better understand the society, politics and belief system of the group of people who produced and used them.

1.2.2.2 The aim of palaeographic analysis of excavated early-Chinese texts

The palaeographer has two main aims when faced with new palaeographic material:

- a. To interpret the meaning of the graphs in the context in which they occur and thus transcribe the original text into the *kǎishū* characters which denote the original *words* of that text.
- b. To use the palaeographic material provided by the text to further our understanding of the development of the Chinese script.

For the palaeographer, the first aim, although of great importance, is not the end of the analysis but the preliminary stage which allows work towards the second aim to begin. In contrast, it is the palaeographers' completion of the first aim which is

¹² For discussion of the scripts of Qin and those of other states during the late Spring and Autumn and Warring States period see: Qiu Xigui (transl. Gilbert L. Mattos and Jerry Norman), *Chinese Writing*, pp.78 – 112.

of key interest to most other scholars. Scholars of history, philosophy, anthropology, law, and other disciplines, wish to know what the texts said. They have no specialist interest in why a particular graph was used to denote a particular word, so long as they can be confident that the transcription of that word, using its modern character form, is accurate.

This thesis is primarily concerned with the process by which the graphs of an excavated text are interpreted and transcribed into a form accessible to a general scholarly audience, i.e. the results of the first aim given above. I am less concerned with the second aim, that is how the palaeographic evidence is used to contribute to the palaeographers' understanding of the development of the script. However, as will become apparent in the analysis of phrases from the Wenxian texts in Chapter Three, in order to produce a convincing transcription of a graph, it is often necessary, during the analysis, to consider the place of the graph within the context of script development.

1.2.2.3 The publication of excavated early-Chinese texts

Two main categories of excavated texts need to be distinguished: those that are unearthed from their original site under controlled, scientific conditions and those that have been plundered, from wherever they were originally interred, to be sold illegally. The responsibility for the publication of a text from a controlled excavation is largely in the hands of the excavators of the site. A robbed text, if sold, will end up in the hands of a buyer who may or may not publish.

Controlled excavations are carried out by archaeological teams generally belonging to, or associated with and supervised by, provincial- or city-level archaeological institutes or museums, which, in turn, answer to the Cultural Relics Bureau (*wénwù jú* 文物局) at their particular administrative level. The provincial level archaeology institutes are overseen by both the provincial Department of Culture (*wénhuà tīng* 文化廳) and the State Cultural Relics Bureau (*Guójiā*

Wénwù Jú 國家文物局) in Beijing.¹³ When a team wants to excavate they must obtain permission from the State Cultural Relics Bureau via their provincial-level Cultural Relics Bureau.

An excavated text is considered part of the total find from a particular excavation. It will usually be stored, along with the other artifacts from the site, at one of the institutions within the province in which it was excavated, for example the provincial archaeology institute. Some parts of the text may be loaned to museums. In some cases, as a result of different types of discovery and excavation (e.g. collected materials being handed in to a local body by local people rather than being collected during the scientific excavation), lower-level institutions, for example a county-level Cultural Centre (*wénhuàguǎn* 文化館), or an even more local Office for the Protection and Administration of Cultural Relics (*wénwù bǎohù guǎnlǐ suǒ* 文物保護管理所), may also hold part of the excavated material.¹⁴

There are various stages in the reporting of a controlled excavation. Important finds are often announced in the newspaper *Zhongguo Wenwu Bao* 中國文物報. If considered particularly newsworthy they will appear in the national media. After this initial announcement, responsibility for the publication of an excavation report is given, in most cases, to the primary excavators. Within a few years of the dig, the excavators will usually produce a “short report” (*jiǎnbào* 簡報) giving details of the discovery, published in an archaeological journal, e.g. *Wenwu* 文物 or *Kaogu* 考古. If the find is relatively small this will constitute the full excavation report. In the case of a large-scale find the short report will give preliminary information only, the full excavation report to be produced at a later date after completion of processing. If the find contains excavated texts, these will be described in the short report. If there are only a few, short texts (e.g. a few

¹³ The Archaeology Institute in Beijing (*Kǎogǔ Yánjiūsuǒ* 考古研究所) is part of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (*Zhōngguó Shèhuì Kēxué Yuàn* 中國社會科學院), not the State Cultural Relics Bureau. The Archaeology Institute has archaeological “work stations” (*gōngzuò zhàn* 工作站) at various locations around the county and organizes digs.

¹⁴ Cultural Centres administer cultural sites and issues within their jurisdiction, e.g. a county. Offices for the Protection and Administration of Cultural Relics are set up to manage specific cultural sites.

characters on some of the excavated vessels), these may be included in the report. If there is a large amount of palaeographic material, pictures of a small part of this material may be included (e.g. several bamboo slips), or a part of the content may be discussed. In some cases a separate article, published alongside the excavation report, will provide a complete report on the texts with pictures and a transcription. In other cases it may be many years before a transcription and photographs of the full set of materials is published. A transcription without photographs is sometimes published in a journal before a finalized transcription, with the full set of photographs, appears as a separate volume.

If a site contains important palaeographic materials, the general expectation is that those materials will be published with a transcription, annotations and discussion. The excavators, in consultation with their institute, will decide either to work on the texts themselves, to get assistance from archaeologists within the institute with training or experience in palaeography, or to request expert advice from outside the institute. Various factors will influence this decision, including the excavators' judgement as to the difficulty of the text and their ability to interpret it, the length of the text, the views of their institute, the view, in some cases, of the State Cultural Relics Bureau, and outside pressure for publication.

Regardless of who does the work, the reliability of the transcription and annotations will, naturally, depend on their level of palaeographic expertise. In this respect, it is helpful to bear in mind that the main responsibility of the archaeologists who man archaeological teams is excavation, processing of data and artifacts, and the writing of excavation reports. Comparatively speaking, it is very rare to find significant amounts of palaeographic material at a site and thus most archaeologists do not have to spend a large amount of their time concerned with palaeographic problems. For the most part they will only have to deal with the occasional very short inscription (a few words or formulaic phrases) on pottery, weapons, bronzes, coins, etc., and, in such cases, tend to have a different focus to a palaeographer, being particularly interested in place names, names of people, and any other clues that might help understand the site from which the object was

unearthed. Thus, to have to deal with a large palaeographic find, such as bundles of bamboo slips with significant content, is the exception.

While most archaeologists will have received some training in those aspects of palaeography that relate to archaeology, the majority of their working experience will not be with excavated texts. Nor do archaeological institutes have full-time palaeographers in their employ. A small number of their archaeologists may have more specialized training in palaeography (e.g. an MA in palaeography from an archaeology department), others will have gained experience as a result of having to frequently deal with large palaeographic finds. However, even archaeologists with training and experience in palaeography are expected to spend the majority of their time in field archaeology and related duties.

It is, then, fair to say that finds with significant amounts of palaeographic material present a particular challenge to excavators. Those with no experience in palaeography may well simply hand over responsibility for analysis of the texts to a colleague or external expert. However, those with some experience may wish to personally deal with the materials or at least be involved in the process if assistance is arranged.

If excavators receive assistance with the interpretation of palaeographic materials from colleagues within their home institution, the fact remains that their colleagues will be archaeologists first, palaeographers second, and thus have had widely varying levels of training or experience with texts. Furthermore, these colleagues may have several projects they are concurrently engaged in, not allowing them the necessary time for a thorough analysis of the materials. If it does prove impossible to complete a full analysis, the material may be published, but without full transcriptions and annotations, or put aside, with the intention to finish the work at a later date, and so remain unpublished for the duration of that time.

There are often also practical problems with work on texts. Outside major cities there may be a lack of local access to essential reference works, books and journals. The excavated texts may not be easily legible, requiring special treatment

and/or photography before they can be read. There may be too many texts to analyse fully in the time allotted. The project must receive sufficient funding. Other archaeological finds or responsibilities may arise demanding the attention of those working on the texts. A suitable publisher must be found and any subvention secured. Such problems may be overcome but they can also lead to a situation in which the work is left unpublished.

If professional palaeographers, generally based at universities or other academic institutes, are called on, the nature of their relationship with the excavators can take various forms. The institute where the excavators are based can formally request expert assistance in which case the expert or experts will produce a transcription and annotation which will be published in the excavation report, or separately, under their name or with acknowledgements. In other cases, those archaeologists with palaeographic experience may prepare the transcriptions after which the external palaeographer will act as a reader and advisor. It may also happen that informal advice is sought in personal communication. In any cooperation, issues may arise concerning the degree of access to the materials, agreements concerning attribution in the publication for work done, and so on. Disputes which may arise over such matters can hold up, or halt, publication.

In cases where texts are found in very large numbers or are considered to be particularly important, the State Cultural Relics Bureau may become involved in decisions about how to deal with the materials and may help organize a team to work on the find. There is, for example, a specialist body in Beijing, supervised by the State Cultural Relics Bureau, called the Cultural Relics Research Institute (*Wénwù Yánjiūsuǒ* 文物研究所), which does such work.¹⁵ The State Cultural Relics Bureau will initially send a team of experts to appraise a find. If an external team is set up to work on a text, the excavators may join that team and take part in the work.

¹⁵ This body superseded the Office of Research on Ancient Texts (*Gǔ Wénxiàn Yánjiūshì* 古文獻研究室) and includes a conservation department.

If expert professional palaeographers produce, or are closely involved in, the transcription and annotations for a text, their expertise should result in fewer avoidable mistakes than might occur in work done by someone with less experience or less time to work on the materials. However, the challenge of excavated texts should not be underestimated: even the most experienced, most renowned palaeographers frequently come to incorrect conclusions which must be later revised.

Texts from uncontrolled excavation, e.g. plundered from sites and taken to Hong Kong or elsewhere and put on the market, are purchased by individuals or museums, companies, or other organizations. Those purchased by individuals are unlikely to be reported, let alone published. Museums and other organizations may publish texts they purchase. Museums may have palaeographers in their employ, others may request outside help, some may have their own palaeographers but also arrange outside help. The quality of the work in such publications will reflect the expertise and experience of the palaeographers as well as the time they have to work on the materials.

There are, then, many routes that excavated texts can take to publication and many potential hurdles along the way. When texts are published, the reliability of the transcriptions and annotations will vary depending on the skill of those involved in their production.

In the case of the Wenxian texts, several obstacles led to the delay in starting work on the full excavation report after publication of the initial short report. The main problems were: how to deal with the illegibility of the texts, how to reproduce the texts in a form convenient for analysis and publication, and the great number of tablets that had to be dealt with. The two main excavators had many other excavations and work-related duties to deal with, giving them little opportunity to consider how best to overcome these problems.

1.2.2.4 Methodology in the interpretation of excavated early-Chinese texts

The previous section has described how the interpretation and transcription of excavated texts in preparation for publication is carried out by scholars with a variety of backgrounds and different levels of training and experience. Their goal is, nevertheless, the same: to interpret the texts and produce a transcription, with annotations, that will allow the materials to be used by the non-specialist. In this section I ask what methods are employed to reach this goal.

An attempt to answer this question leads to the conclusion that there is no generally accepted, commonly adopted, methodology of palaeographic analysis. One will find that a variety of different approaches are used, some of which are more scientific than others. And, although problematic arguments by one scholar may be pointed out by another scholar, this will rarely be done with a specific criticism of why the methodology employed is at fault. There is no book-length treatment on the topic of methodology in palaeographic analysis.

This lack of specific discussion about methodology in palaeographic analysis seems to be due to the fact that palaeography is taught like an apprenticeship, without a recognized theoretical framework. The assumption appears to be that the student will learn to interpret unknown graphs by example, trial and error, and the guidance of his or her supervisor, through tutorials and criticism of written work. There is very little instruction in the method and practice of interpretation. The level of expertise of the supervisor and degree of supervision therefore becomes crucial for the student's development. After years of study and guidance, the student, if successful, will become highly proficient in the interpretation of graphs, but may not consciously separate the methodology he or she employs from the practice of analysis. As a result, methodology will rarely be discussed or reflected on in general terms.

As a result of the scarcity of discussion of methodology in Chinese palaeography, articles and books on the topic are rare. The lack of debate on the issue must, I submit, hinder both the development of a standard accepted methodology and the identification and rejection of spurious methodology, while

also suppressing any potential improvement of known methods, or the consideration of alternative techniques. For the non-specialist or novice, one result of this situation is a dearth of introductory works on the process of palaeographic analysis.

A couple of examples will illustrate the type of problems that result from this lack of discussion of methodology. Firstly, the question of transcriptions, and, secondly, use of historical phonology in palaeographic analysis.

Various types of transcription are used when analyzing and reproducing palaeographic materials, for example, “formal transcription” (*kuānshì lǐdìng* 寬式隸定) and “interpretative transcription” (*shìwén* 釋文).¹⁶ While experienced palaeographers are fully aware of the difference between different types of transcription and the way they should be employed, less experienced palaeographers and non-specialists can get quite confused about their use in palaeographic analysis. The mixed-style transcriptions favoured in publications, consisting of a formal transcription with interpretative transcription in brackets for certain graphs, can be particularly confusing to non-specialists, even when a key is provided. And, it has to be said, less experienced palaeographers may not always adhere to their stated conventions when they produce transcriptions for publication.

Let us consider an example relevant to this thesis: the transcriptions of the Houma covenant tablets given in the *Houma Mengshu*. Consider the first few phrases in tablet 156:1, an example from the category called Lineage Covenant texts (*zōng méng lèi* 宗盟類).¹⁷ The *Houma Mengshu* gives a copy of the original graphs (labelled as a “copy” *móběn* 摹本) alongside what is labelled as an “interpretative transcription” (*shìwén* 釋文) (see Figure 1¹⁸). In the interpretative transcription we expect to find the *kǎishū* forms of the words denoted by the original graphs.

¹⁶ These are defined and discussed in Chapter Two, section 2.1.3.

¹⁷ *Houma Mengshu*, pp.35 – 36.

¹⁸ All figures are given in Appendix 4.

The convention followed in this transcription is, however, not immediately clear and a key is not provided. It seems that variant forms of characters are represented with the corresponding modern character while loangraphs are transcribed but corresponding interpretative transcriptions not, in fact, given. So, for example, the fourth character from the end of the first line is given as *cóng* 從, following the apparent convention of giving the modern character for variant forms: in this case the original graph omits the *chì* 彳 component. The last character in the same line, *míng* 明, is a loan for the word *méng* 盟 “covenant”, but the character is given, rather than the word, complying to the suggested convention. However, if this is the convention, it does not seem to be strictly adhered to. Take the fourth character in the first line, given as 關. This is a formal transcription, in which the components of the graph have been identified and reproduced in their *kǎishū* form. It is not an attested character. Although this does not comply with the convention I have suggested is employed in this transcription, its use may imply that the graph has not been interpreted, in which case it would be reasonable to just provide the formal transcription in this way. However, the annotation to the graph does give an interpretation, it says that the meaning of the graph is: “the same as *pàn* 判, *pōu* 剖, *bù* 布”. But this does not solve the problem. The precise relationship between the character on the tablet and these words is not explained by this statement. Does the character denote one of these words? It surely cannot denote all of them? Is this a new word, previously unattested but one which is thought to be a synonym with the given words (or is the suggestion that these words are all cognate?)? Is the character a loangraph or a variant form? The annotation does not say.¹⁹ Thus the transcription and annotations both cause some confusion.

Transcription and annotation issues such as these are rarely discussed in print and there is no standard work which explains the different categories of transcription and how they are best employed in publications of texts.

¹⁹ I take the graph to be denoting the word *pàn* 判 “to split open” and therefore the interpretative transcription would use the character 判 *pàn*.


The second issue I will briefly consider is the use of historical phonology in palaeographic analysis, one of the most contentious topics in the field. Identification of a character with a particular word frequently requires a comparison of the reconstructed Old Chinese pronunciation of two words, or of a phonetic component and a word. This comparison is often the key piece of evidence in the interpretation of the graph. However, correct use of this tool can be challenging. Problems include the questionable reliability of reconstructions of Old Chinese and what criteria to use to judge how close two syllables must be in order to be considered phonetically similar enough for one to loan for, or represent the sound of, another. An example of questionable use of this tool is discussed below when looking at the theory that the Wenxian covenant lord is Han Buxin 韓不信 and that the graph used for his personal name is [竣] *jùn* acting as a phonetic loan for *xìn* {信}.²⁰ The main vowels of the Old Chinese reconstructions for the words *jùn* {竣} and *xìn* {信} are not the same nor do there appear to be examples of any attested loaning between these words or between *xìn* {信} and any other words denoted with a graph using the same phonetic component as *jùn* {竣}, i.e. [夔] *qūn*.²¹ Thus there does not appear to be any strong evidence to support this match.

Criticism of misuse of historical phonology is seen, but discussion of its proper use and standards that should be applied are very rare.²² The topic is looked at again in Chapter Two but it is beyond the scope of this work to consider historical phonology in great detail.

²⁰ Note that in this thesis, when it is necessary to distinguish between characters and words, a character is placed in square brackets, [], with its *pinyin* pronunciation following and a word is placed in curly brackets, { }, with its *pinyin* pronunciation preceding. Use of brackets in this way follows the Chinese edition of Qiu Xigui's *Chinese Writing*, see: Qiu Xigui (transl. Gilbert L. Mattos and Jerry Norman), *Chinese Writing*. For definitions of "character" and "word", see Chapter Two, section 2.1.1.

²¹ The Old Chinese reconstructions are: {竣} *jùn* < *tshwinH* < **tshjuns* (清文) (reconstruction: Wolfgang Behr, personal communication, March 31st, 2004) and {信} *xìn* < *sinH* < **snjins* (心真) (*A Handbook of Old Chinese Phonology*, p.799). See also: *Guzi Tongjia Huidian*, pp.135 – 136. For an explanation of the use of reconstructions in the thesis see Chapter Two, section 2.2.1, step 7, "Judging the phonetic similarity between two words".

²² For further examples of incorrect usage of this tool see: Qiu Xigui (transl. Gilbert L. Mattos and Jerry Norman), *Chinese Writing*, pp.293 – 296.

The lack of discussion about palaeographic methodology leads to various misconceptions. The idea that palaeographers follow no apparent method but get results leaves some people awed and uncritically accepting while others, assuming the process is more or less guesswork, are unfairly dismissive. The former group risk accepting an erroneous, but convincing sounding analysis from a renowned expert, while the latter are liable to reject interpretations accepted by all palaeographers. A potential example of the latter case, seen in the Houma texts, is the complicated and unusual looking graph, , which has the formal transcription [婚] *hūn* yet usually denotes the word *wén* {聞} “to hear”.²³ There is absolutely no question that this interpretation is correct and the graph occurs in many excavated texts with this meaning, but the reader without a background in palaeography, who distrusts its methods, may wonder how this odd-looking graph can first be transcribed as the common character [婚] *hūn* and then interpreted as a word usually denoted by a completely different character, [聞] *wén*.²⁴

A further problem arises when those who believe there is no right way to do palaeographic analysis decide that this makes them as qualified as anyone else to interpret graphs. A common example is when an expert in another field determines that interpreting a certain graph as a particular word would make perfect sense in the context in which it occurs and then produces a misguided analysis of the graph to support this interpretation.²⁵

The lack of a discussion about palaeographic methodology hinders the field in many ways. Chapter Two further discusses these questions and constructs a procedural framework for the commonly used techniques of palaeographic analysis.

²³ *Houma Mengshu*, p.329.

²⁴ *Jiaguwenzi Gulin*, pp.665 – 671.

²⁵ However, since context is crucial in palaeographic analysis, such suggestions from experts in other fields are not always without merit and can sometimes be very helpful to palaeographers. For such an example, see Appendix 1, Methodology: Literature Survey, section 5.2.2, technique 5.

Part 3

1.3 The Houma and Wenxian covenant tablets

The methodological procedure described in Chapter Two of the thesis is tested, in Chapter Three, on characters and phrases from the Wenxian covenant tablets. The following section introduces the Wenxian tablets along with the Houma covenants, which, as mentioned above, are closely related to the Wenxian texts and an important resource for their interpretation. The Houma tablets are considered first. The Wenxian site and tablets are then introduced. This is followed by a discussion of previous research on the dating and historical background to both sets of tablets.

1.3.1 The Houma covenant tablets

The Houma covenants are texts written on several thousand stone tablets and fragments of tablets, excavated in 1965 in modern-day Houma 侯馬 in southern Shanxi 山西 province (see Figure 2).²⁶ The texts that were still legible had been written in red ink, with brush, on the surface of the tablets (see example, Figure 3). A small number of tablets are in black ink. The tablets had been buried in pits, usually accompanied by a sacrificial animal, in most cases a sheep. A small number had a jade object which had been placed in a wall niche in the north wall (see Figure 4). The number of tablets reported found in a single pit varied from a small handful to over 100. The pits with tablets were concentrated in the north-west of what had been a raised platform into which many sacrificial pits had been dug (see Figures 5 and 6). The terrace was 70 metres east to west, 55 metres north to south. Tablets were found in 43 of the 326 excavated pits. The pits were aligned on a north-south axis and were between 0.4 to 6 metres deep, larger pits were 1.3 – 1.5 metres in length by 0.5 metres wide, smaller pits were about 0.25 to 0.5 metres. Most of the pits without covenant tablets contained the bones of a sacrificial animal and a jade object.

²⁶ The following description is based on the excavation report for the Houma site: *Houma Mengshu*.

The terrace is part of a complex of sites considered to be contemporary with the city site at Houma, situated just north of the River Kuai 澮河 (see Figure 7). The city is generally accepted to be the remains of Xintian 新田, the capital of the Jin 晉 state from 585 to 369 BC. It has been suggested that the terrace was a sacrificial site connected with Xintian.²⁷

Each Houma tablet is individualized with a single covenant text and the name of a single covenantor. There are, however, a limited number of different covenant texts; many tablets have the same text with only the covenantor's name varying. The texts were identified by Chinese scholars as examples of the *méngshū* 盟書 (“covenant texts”) frequently referred to in early transmitted texts, particularly common in the *Zuo Zhuan*. The authors of the excavation report identified six basic categories of text. Some pits had just one category of text buried in them, others had two (up to three if sub-categories are included). In some cases, examples of a single category were found buried in several different pits.

The excavation report for the site, entitled the *Houma Mengshu*, was published in 1976 and contained brush-written copies of 656 tablets and photographs of about 200 of these. The major work in English on the texts is a doctoral dissertation by Susan Roosevelt Weld, “Covenant in Jin’s Walled Cities: The Discoveries at Houma and Wenxian”, submitted in 1990. There are several other thesis-length works and about 40 articles on the tablets.²⁸ In recent years, however, very little has been published on these materials.

Comparison of writing styles on the tablets suggests that a single scribe wrote more than one tablet and, therefore, that the covenantors did not write their own covenant.²⁹ Zeng Zhixiong 曾志雄 made a rough survey of a selection of the Houma tablets and concluded that about 27 different hands had produced those

²⁷ Emura Haruki, “Houma Guchengqun He Mengshi Yizhi De Guanxi”.

²⁸ See bibliographies in: Zeng Zhixiong, “Houma Mengshu Yanjiu”; Susan Roosevelt Weld, “Covenant in Jin’s Walled Cities: The Discoveries at Houma and Wenxian”. Also see the relevant sections of the bibliography given in the revised edition (2003) of He Linyi’s *Zhangguo Wenzhi Tonglun*: pp.366 – 369, p.408, pp.411 – 423.

²⁹ An unlikely scenario as this would have required every covenantor to have been literate.

texts.³⁰ In both the Houma and Wenxian tablets we see many character variants and some loan usage, as well as minor variations in wording, e.g. omission of function words. It can be conjectured that the scribes were not working from a written copy of the text but were given the content orally, after which they wrote from memory.

The Houma texts are a series of covenants between the head of the Zhao 趙 lineage and members of his and other clans. Each tablet is a single covenant, individualized with the name of the covenantor. The six basic categories of tablet identified by the authors of the *Houma Mengshu* are: Lineage Covenant Texts (*zōng méng lèi* 宗盟類), Pledge Texts (*wěizhì lèi* 委質類), Confiscation Texts (*nà shì lèi* 納室類), Curse Texts (*zǔzhòu lèi* 詛咒類), Divination Texts (*bǔshì lèi* 卜筮類), and Other Texts (*qítā* 其他).³¹ The first four types share the same basic formula and contain stipulations which demand loyalty to the lord and other prohibitions or requirements, many relating to enemies who are named in the tablets. Susan Weld analysed the basic formula shared by the Houma covenant texts as consisting of four clauses: name; stipulations; submission; imprecation (self-curse). Let us look at a couple of examples of the Houma texts. The text is laid out following Weld's scheme with minor adjustments.³² The Roman numerals indicate the clause, so, for example, the first clause (the name clause) is indicated by "I" while the fourth clause (the imprecation) is indicated by "IV". An interpretative transcription is given with an English translation.³³ For a picture, copy and transcription of the original tablet see Figures 8 and 1.

³⁰ Zeng Zhixiong, "Houma Mengshu Yanjiu," pp.35 – 36. No attempt has, as yet, been made to identify the number of different scribes that worked to produce the Wenxian tablets.

³¹ The category names from the *Houma Mengshu* will be used in this thesis. However, these are not all accurate, and different names have been suggested, see, for example: Susan Roosevelt Weld, "Covenant in Jin's Walled Cities: The Discoveries at Houma and Wenxian", pp.351 – 352.

³² The main change is in clause IV: I treat the phrase *qí míng jī shì zhī* 其明亟視之 "may you, all seeing, immediately detect him," as part of the imprecation while Weld places it in the submission clause.

³³ For a definition of the term "interpretative transcription" see Chapter Two, section 2.1.3.2.2. The symbol "□" indicates a graph that has not been interpreted or a lacuna. Concerning the translations given here: with the final interpretations of the Wenxian texts not yet completed, it has not been possible to determine what light they shed on problems in the Houma texts. These translations are, therefore, based on previous scholarship on the Houma tablets. Clarification and additional words needed to give a smooth translation are added in square brackets.

Lineage Covenant Texts³⁴**Tablet 156:1**

- I. 趙
 II.A 敢不判其腹心以事其主，
 II.B 而敢不盡從嘉之盟、定宮平時之命，
 II.C 而敢或變改□及□俾不守二宮者，
 II.D 而敢有志復趙[弧]³⁵及其子孫、[list of enemy names] 于晉邦之地者及群罇盟者，
 III. 吾君，
 IV. 其明亟視之，靡夷彼氏。

- I. [If] Chuo
 II.A dare to not split open his guts and heart [i.e. display true loyalty] in serving his lord,
 II.B and, [if] he dare to not fully abide by Jia's covenant, and the decrees [given at] the Ding Temple and Ping Altar,³⁶
 II.C and, [if] he, instead, dare to cause [name] and [name] to change, causing them to not guard the two temples,
 II.D and, [if] he dare have the intention of returning Zhao ___ and his sons and grandsons, [and] [list of enemy names], along with [any one of] those who broke or break the covenant, to the lands of the Jin state,
 III. my [former ?] ruler/s,
 IV. may he/they, all seeing, immediately detect him, and destroy that [i.e. his] clan.

In the Pledge Texts the basic formula is repeated several times, the repetitions are alphabetized in the following example. For a picture, copy and transcription of the original tablet see Figures 9, 10 and 11.

Pledge Texts**Houma Tablet 156:20**

- A.
 I. □□自質于君所，
 II.A 所敢踰³⁷出入于趙[弧]之所及子孫、[list of enemy names] 及群罇盟者，

³⁴ The Lineage Covenant Texts are divided into six sub-categories. Sub-category 1 contains a single tablet with a unique text, sub-categories 2 to 5 are classified on the basis of the number of members of the enemy camp mentioned in the text. Sub-category 6 contains fragments which do not fit clearly into sub-categories 2 to 5. The example here is from sub-category 4.

³⁵ Graphs which can be formally transcribed (see Chapter Two for definitions of transcription terms) but have not been identified as denoting a particular word are indicated with a square border.

³⁶ The interpretation of these place names is disputed. Some scholars, for example, take the second to be a Zhou 州 state town which had this name, Pingzhi 平時, see: *Houma Mengshu*, pp.69 – 79.

³⁷ For this interpretation see: Susan Roosevelt Weld, "Covenant in Jin's Walled Cities: The Discoveries at Houma and Wenxian", pp.397 – 398.

- II.B □□沒嘉之身及子孫，或復入之于晉邦之中者，
 IV. 則永亟視之，靡夷彼氏。
 B.
 I. 既質之後，
 II. 而敢不巫覲祝史薦說繹之皇君之所，
 IV. 則永亟視之靡夷彼氏。
 C.
 II. [enemy name] 之孫子遇之行道弗殺，
 III. 君
 IV. 其視之。
- A.
 I. [covenantor's name] pledges himself [i.e. his life] at the place of the [former ?] ruler/s,
 II.A if [he] dare overstep [the stipulations of the covenant], [and] come and go from the place of Zhao ___ and his sons and grandsons, and [the place of] [list of enemies] and [the place of any one of] those who broke or break the covenant;
 II.B. or if [covenantor's name], to the end of the lives of Jia himself and that of his sons and grandsons, dare return them [i.e. the enemies] to the Jin state,
 IV. then [may the overseeing spirits³⁸], for evermore, immediately detect him, and destroy that [i.e. his] clan.
- B.
 I. After having pledged,
 II. [if he] furthermore, dare not [have] shamans, [ritual] pronouncers and scribes make offerings and report this [i.e. the pledge] at the place of the mighty [former ?] ruler/s,
 IV. then [may the overseeing spirits], for evermore, immediately detect him, and destroy that [i.e. his] clan.
- C.
 II. If he meets [enemy name] on the road and does not kill him,
 III. [former ?] ruler/s,
 IV. may he/they detect him.

1.3.2 The Wenxian covenant tablets

The Wenxian covenants were excavated by Hao Benxing 郝本性 and Zhao Shigang 趙世綱 between 1980 and 1981 in the north of Henan 河南 province, in Wen county (Wēnxiàn 濩縣), about 150 kilometres, as the crow flies, south-east of the Houma site (Figure 2). Tablets from this site had actually been unearthed long

³⁸ It is tempting to assume that the spirits that, by implication, are called on in parts A and B to sanction this covenant are the “[former?] ruler/s” that have this role in the Lineage Covenant Text example (clause III) and are also invoked in part C of this covenant. However, this cannot be confirmed so the more general “overseeing spirits” is given here.

before the Houma find but at that time their provenance was not precisely known, nor were they recognized as covenants. The only well documented group of such tablets became known, after the Houma tablets were excavated and identified, as the Qinyang covenant texts (*Qīnyáng zǎishū* 沁陽載書).³⁹ These are a group of eleven tablets and fragments, eight with texts, which had been examined by Dong Zuobin 董作賓 (1895 – 1963) in 1942 – 43, and were said to have been dug up during road works from what, at the time, was Qinyang 沁陽 county in northern Henan.⁴⁰ These passed through various hands and are now stored in the Institute of Archaeology (*Kǎogǔ Yánjiūsuǒ* 考古研究所) in Beijing. After the Wenxian tablets were excavated, it became clear that the Wenxian site had been the source of the Qinyang examples: Wudezhen 武德鎮, the site of the Wenxian find, had previously been part of Qinyang county.⁴¹ The content of the Qinyang texts can be matched with the Wenxian covenant categories.⁴²

When the Wenxian covenant tablets were excavated it was quickly apparent that they were very similar to the Houma texts. The short report published in 1983 gave photographs and copies of fourteen tablets from a single pit (see Figures 12 to 19). Only one category of text was found among these tablets (corresponding to my Oath Type 1 category). Here is the text of one of the examples used in that original report (Figure 20):

³⁹ Susan Roosevelt Weld, “Covenant in Jin’s Walled Cities: The Discoveries at Houma and Wenxian”, pp.28 – 31 and pp.419 – 420.

⁴⁰ Dong Zuobin, “Qinyang Yu Jian”, pp.7 – 8. Chen Mengjia noted their similarity to the Houma texts, see: Chen Mengjia, “Dong Zhou Mengshi Yu Chutu Zaishu”, pp.279 – 281. On their relationship to the Houma text see also: Zhang Han, “‘Houma Mengshu’ Congkao Xu”, pp.100 – 105 and p.110.

⁴¹ Henan Sheng Wenwu Yanjiusuo, “Henan Wenxian Dong Zhou Mengshi Yizhi Yi Hao Kan Fajue Jianbao”, p.77, note 1.

⁴² The majority of the Qinyang examples appear to match what I categorize as the Oath type 1 texts from Wenxian, but there is also one example which corresponds to my Type 5 category. Another group of ten previously-collected tablets from Wenxian has been discussed in a number of articles, some of which contain a reproduction of a copy of the text of four of the tablets, but the present whereabouts of these tablets is unknown. Comparing these copies with the Wenxian texts now available, it is clear that the copy is not very accurate, perhaps due to the condition of the original tablets. It is possible to identify a number of the characters but not enough to be able to confirm whether or not these tablets match any of the currently known oath types or whether they represent an unknown oath type from a pit that was destroyed before the scientific dig began. See: Li Xueqin, “Zhanguo Timing Gaishu (Zhong)”, pp.62 – 63; Chen Mengjia, “Dong Zhou Mengshi Yu Chutu Zaishu”, p.281; Zhang Han, “‘Houma Mengshu’ Congkao Xu”, p.109; Susan Roosevelt Weld, “Covenant in Jin’s Walled Cities: The Discoveries at Houma and Wenxian”, pp.31 – 35 and figure 2.

Wenxian covenant texts: Oath Type 1: Pit WT1K1

Tablet 1:3802

- I 十五年十二月乙未朔辛酉。自今以往，喬
 II.A. 敢不口焉中心事其主
 II.B. 而敢與賊為徒者，
 III. 丕顯口公大塚
 諦亟視汝，靡夷彼氏。

- I. Fifteenth year, twelfth month, *yǐwèi* was the first day of the month, *xīnyǒu* day [i.e. 27th day of that month]. From this day onward, [if] Qiao
 II.A. dares not ___ly [?] and loyally serve his ruler,
 II.B. and dares to join with the enemy as a follower,
 III. the great, resplendent Duke⁴³ _____, [in his] great tomb [?],
 IV. [may he] observe and immediately detect you, and wipe out the that [i.e. your] clan.

Comparing this example to those from Houma given above, the similarity is clear: they share identical formulaic structures and, as can be seen from the pictures of the original tablets, the script styles are the same. The two sets of tablets also appear to have the same ritual context: the Wenxian tablets were also buried in pits, on a terrace, east of an ancient-city site and close to a river, in this case south of the Qin river 沁河. In each case a lord is covenanting with groups of people who swear loyalty to him and agree to abide by the stipulations in the text.

1.3.2.1 Excavation of the Wenxian covenant tablets**1.3.2.1.1 Location of the site**

Wen county is in the north of present-day Henan province, on the north-bank of the Yellow River, north-west of the provincial capital, Zhengzhou 鄭州 (see Figure 2). The covenant tablets were excavated from a site on the northern edge of a small village called Xizhangji 西張計, itself north-east of the village of Wudezhen, located in the north-east corner of Wen county (Figure 21). The dyke of the south-bank of the Qin river is about 200 metres north of the site. The area from which the tablets were excavated was originally a raised earthen platform.

⁴³ The translation here and those below will give “duke” in the singular in this phrase but note that it could be plural, “dukes”.

1.3.2.1.2 Discovery and excavation of the tablets

The following account is based on the short-report published in *Wenwu* in 1983 (which only discusses one of the pits, WT1K1, in detail), as well as more recent conference articles and personal communication with the main excavators of the site, Hao Benxing and Zhao Shigang.⁴⁴

The formal excavation of the site was carried out by archaeologists from the Henan Provincial Institute of Cultural Relics and Archaeology between March 1980 and April 1981.⁴⁵ Planning for the excavation began after the institute was notified in March 1979 that villagers from Xizhangji had unearthed a pit of tapered stone tablets on the twelfth day of that month when planting trees. The excavators later discovered that a number of the villagers could recall such tablets having been found during other digging work in 1930, 1935, 1942 and 1958. The tablets excavated in 1930 are said to have been written in red ink while all the rest used black ink, an interesting point since all the scientifically excavated tablets from Wenxian are in black ink but the great majority of the Houma tablets use red ink, only a handful are in black.⁴⁶ It appears that the majority of those previously unearthed tablets were either discarded or used, along with earth from the terrace, as fill-in material for the Qin River dyke. A number were collected but, apart from the so called Qinyang covenant tablets discussed above, their whereabouts is unknown.

The excavation began under the direction of Hao Benxing who led the dig for several months beginning in March 1980, after which he was called away to accompany an exhibition of Chinese bronzes touring the USA. From September 1980 to the end of the excavation, Zhao Shigang managed the dig which was conducted in two stages with a cessation of digging during the winter months.

⁴⁴ Henan Sheng Wenwu Yanjiusuo, "Henan Wenxian Dong Zhou Mengshi Yizhi Yi Hao Kan Fajue Jianbao"; Hao Benxing, "Henan Wenxian Dongzhou Mengshi Yizhi Fajue Yu Zhengli Qingkuang Huibao"; Zhao Shigang, "Lun Wenxian Mengshu Yu Houma Mengshu Zhi Guanxi".

⁴⁵ The short report published in 1983 (Henan Sheng Wenwu Yanjiusuo, "Henan Wenxian Dong Zhou Mengshi Yizhi Yi Hao Kan Fajue Jianbao") erroneously gives the final date of excavation as June 1982.

⁴⁶ Henan Sheng Wenwu Yanjiusuo, "Henan Wenxian Dong Zhou Mengshi Yizhi Yi Hao Kan Fajue Jianbao", see p.77, note 1.

Other excavators included Li Jingchang 李敬昌, Huang Keyang 黄克央 and Xie Wei 谢巍.

As mentioned above, the land from which the tablets were excavated was originally a raised earthen platform but this had been gradually levelled as the earth was used to build and repair the dyke of the Qin river. Older villagers remembered the terrace as having been two metres in height. Test drilling by the excavators found that the terrace had been 135 metres north to south by 50 metres west to east. The east part of the terrace area had already been dug out forming a large pit making test drilling impossible.

Twelve test squares were dug, ten in the north-west corner of the terrace, the other two in the southern part of the terrace. Test square 1 was excavated around the pit disturbed during the tree digging, and the disturbed pit itself was numbered pit number 1. Nine more test squares were then opened in the adjacent area. Each test square was about 6 metres square. The excavation of test square 1 was supervised by Hao Benxing, the others by Zhao Shigang. The total area actually excavated was 594 square metres.

In total 124 pits were discovered, mostly rectangular in shape, a few oval. The majority were aligned approximately north to south on their long axis. The size of the pits varied, the only one we have published measurements for is pit 1 in test square 1 for which the figures given are: 2.04 – 2.08 metres long, 0.96 – 0.98 metres wide and 1.26 – 1.3 metres deep. Note that, since in all cases the pit mouth had been destroyed by earlier digging, it was impossible to accurately assess the original depth of the pits. Sixteen pits contained covenant tablets, some pits had a single jade object which was generally located in a floor-level niche in the north wall of the pit, 35 pits contained the skeleton of a sheep. The jade included disks (*bì* 璧), jade-dragon forms, and jade pendants (*huáng* 璜). Apart from the more than 12,000 covenant tablets, more than 100 jade, pottery and stone artifacts were found but details of these, and the sheep skeletons, have not been published, nor has a diagram of the layout of the pits and distribution of objects among those pits.

As pointed out above, the excavation began as a salvage operation. The pit first excavated was the pit that had been disturbed by the tree planting; it had been disturbed to about two-thirds of its depth, only the lower layers of tablets were in their original positions and could be scientifically excavated. About 2700 tablets were found from the scientific excavation. Those tablets from the upper layers had been scattered by the villagers' digging and about 500 had been collected by villagers and were given to the excavators while about 1400 were collected directly from the disturbed soil (see Figure 22).⁴⁷ Taking into account those tablets lost and damaged in the initial disturbance of the pit, the excavators estimated that this single pit must originally have contained more than 5000 tablets.

After this initial salvage work the rest of the site could be scientifically excavated. For all but one of the pits, the tablets were removed on site. The exception was pit 14 in test square 1 which had so many tablets that it was considered best to dig around the pit, crate the whole thing and transport it back to the provincial institute where the individual tablets could be removed slowly and carefully.

Pits with tablets were found in four of the test squares, numbers 1, 3, 4 and 5. Within each test square, pits were numbered from 1. The notation I use to indicate a pit is that adopted during the digitalization project: the number of the test square is given first, after the letters "WT" which stand for Wenxian *tàn fāng* 濫縣探方 ("Wenxian test square"). Then the number of the pit is given after the letter "K" which stands for *kǎn* 坎 "pit".⁴⁸ Thus "WT1K1" denotes pit 1 from test square 1, while "WT4K10" denotes pit 10 from test square 4. The sixteen pits in which tablets were found are:

⁴⁷ Henan Sheng Wenwu Yanjiusuo, "Henan Wenxian Dong Zhou Mengshi Yizhi Yi Hao Kan Fajue Jianbao", p.79.

⁴⁸ The more common archaeological term for such a pit is *kēng* 坑 "pit" but the Henan excavators use *kǎn* 坎 "pit".

Table 1: Pits with tablets at the Wenxian site

Test square	Pit number					
WT1	K1	K2	K3	K4	K14	K17
WT3	K6					
WT4	K2	K5	K6	K9	K10	K11
WT5	K1	K14	K21			

Tablets were found in varying degrees of completeness, from tiny pieces of crushed stone to complete examples. The total number, including damaged and complete tablets (ignoring tiny fragments), excavated from the site is given as more than 12000.⁴⁹ As yet there are no published figures for the number of tablets excavated from each pit, the short excavation report in the 1983 *Wenwu* only discusses one pit, WT1K1. However, below are the figures, precise in most cases, for the numbers of tablets selected to be photographed and then enhanced for the digitalization project. For example, of the approximately 4600 tablets excavated from pit WT1K1, about 1900 were selected to be photographed.

Table 2: Number of tablets with an enhanced image from each Wenxian pit

Test square 1 pits	Total number of tablets with enhanced image	Test square 3 pits	Total number of tablets with enhanced image	Test square 4 pits	Total number of tablets with enhanced image	Test square 5 pits	Total number of tablets with enhanced image
WT1K1	c.1900	WT3K6	12	WT4K2	6	WT5K1	31
WT1K2	83			WT4K5	26	WT5K14	37
WT1K3	13			WT4K6	140	WT5K21	66
WT1K4	3			WT4K9	160		
WT1K14	c.1400			WT4K10	26		
WT1K17	68			WT4K11	58		

This gives a very general idea of the relative number of tablets excavated from each of these pits. We immediately see that the majority of the Wenxian tablets were found in just two pits, WT1K1 and WT1K14. The total number of tablets and fragments excavated from these two pits alone was around 10,000.

⁴⁹ Zhao Shigang, "Lun Wenxian Mengshu Yu Houma Mengshu Zhi Guanxi", p.2.

The 1983 *Wenwu* article notes that the undisturbed tablets in WT1K1 appear to have been placed in the pit in groups (see Figure 22).⁵⁰ Tablets in close proximity with their points facing the same direction were considered to be one group. Fourteen such groups were counted, thirteen made up of *guī* 圭-shaped tablets, one with *guī* -shaped tablets, *jiǎn* 簡-shaped tablets and *zhāng* 璋-shaped tablets. Hao Benxing, in a later conference paper, said that 19 *jiǎn*-shaped tablets of a jade-type stone were found at the lowest level of this pit. Hao believes that the type of tablet and their position in the pit reflect differences in rank among the covenantors, thus the 19 *jiǎn*-shaped tablets of a jade-type stone placed first in the pit would have been those of higher-ranking covenantors.⁵¹

After excavation each tablet or fragment was given a number and certain physical features, such as stone type, colour, etc., were recorded. Very small fragments with no legible graphs were not recorded separately. The tablets were then stored. Complete tablets and larger fragments were placed in small, thin boxes between pieces of foam or wrapped in paper, sometimes several tablets to a box. Small fragments were gathered up and wrapped in cloth in small bundles. The boxes and bundles were then put in metal or wooden cabinets in a storeroom in the provincial institute.

1.3.2.2 The material nature of the Wenxian covenant tablets

1.3.2.2.1 Material and form of the tablets

The tablets themselves are made of various different types of stone. The stone was cut to form several different shapes of tablet, on which text was written using brush and ink. In general, complete tablets are from approximately 10cm to 25cm in height, although shorter and taller examples are found. Width varies, depending on the tablet type, from about 1cm to 5cm, and they are generally no more than a few millimetres thick.

⁵⁰ Henan Sheng *Wenwu Yanjiusuo*, “Henan Wenxian Dong Zhou Mengshi Yizhi Yi Hao Kan Fajue Jianbao”, p.79.

⁵¹ Hao Benxing, “Henan Wenxian Dongzhou Mengshi Yizhi Fajue Yu Zhengli Qingkuang Huibao”, p.4.

The *Wenwu* 1983 article categorizes the tablets from pit WT1K1 into two main types, *guī* 圭 and *jiǎn* 簡 and describes the *guī* tablets as being formed from the stone phyllite (*qiānméiyán* 千枚岩) – described as a type of slate (*bǎnyán* 板岩) – and the *jiǎn* as “similar to” nephrite (*ruǎnyù* 軟玉). The slate material was described, in the 1983 report, as being of several different colours: dark grey (*hēihuīsè* 黑灰色), greyish white (*huībáisè* 灰白色) and yellowish brown (*tǔhuángsè* 土黃色). The article further divides the *guī* tablets into three sub-categories based on the shape of the sides of the tablet: tablets with sides which curve to a point (*húxíng* 弧形); tablets with straight sides which taper slightly and then have a point with either convex or pinched, concave sides (*píngzhí* 平直); and tablets with straight sides tapering to a point, forming an isosceles triangle (*děngyāo* 等腰).

When photography of the tablets began for the digitalization project, a database was constructed which recognized several other categories of shape, stone type and colour. Since then, several of these have been revised and renamed. The current categories are given below, with English translations. The stone types were revised after scientific testing was carried out on a very small sample of tablets:⁵²

Table 3: Wenxian covenant tablets: stone-type categories

English term	Chinese term
Phyllite slate ⁵³	<i>qiānméibǎnyán</i> 千枚板岩
Quartz sandstone	<i>shíyīngshāyán</i> 石英砂岩
Calcite carbonatite	<i>fāngjiětànsuānyán</i> 方解碳酸岩
Dolomite carbonatite	<i>báiyúntànsuānyán</i> 白雲碳酸岩
Chlorite schist	<i>lǜníshípiàn</i> 綠泥石片

⁵² The analysis was carried out in January 2003 by the Jewelry and Jade Appraisal Centre (Zhūbǎo Yùqì Jiāncè Zhōngxīn 珠寶玉器檢測中心) at the Zhengzhou Institute for Research into the Comprehensive Utilization of Minerals (Zhèngzhōu Kuàngchǎn Zōnghéliyòng Yánjiūsuǒ 鄭州礦產綜合利用研究所).

⁵³ Many thanks to Zhang Zhaoxun 張朝暉 of the Department of Earth, Atmospheric, and Planetary Sciences at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology for the English translations of these stone types.



The results of the testing of the stone support the identification of the most common stone type as phyllite slate. The quartz sandstone was not separately identified in the 1983 report. Three samples of tablets made of stone previously described as “similar to nephrite” were identified as the last three stone types given in the table.

In considering terms used to describe the different shapes of the tablets, it should be noted that the categories *guī* 圭, *jiǎn* 簡, and *zhāng* 璋 were primarily selected to indicate the standard shapes associated with these names, and not to imply that these objects would, necessarily, have been thus designated at the time they were produced.⁵⁴

Table 4: Wenxian covenant tablets: tablet-shape categories

English term	Chinese term
Straight-edge <i>gui</i>	<i>pingzhiguī</i> 平直圭
Curved-edge <i>gui</i>	<i>húxíngguī</i> 弧形圭
Isosceles <i>gui</i>	<i>děngyāoguī</i> 等腰圭
<i>Zhang</i>	<i>Zhāng</i> 璋
Slip	<i>Jiǎn</i> 簡

Table 5: Wenxian covenant tablets: stone-colour categories

English term	Chinese term
Grey White	<i>huībái</i> 灰白
Light Grey	<i>qiǎnhuī</i> 淺灰
Dark Grey	<i>huīhēi</i> 灰黑
Grey Green	<i>huīlǜ</i> 灰綠
Grey Yellow	<i>huīhuáng</i> 灰黃

A variety of Wenxian tablets can be seen in Figure 23.

⁵⁴ As I will discuss in Chapter Three, section 3.1.1.2.1, there is good evidence to suggest that *all* the tablets were, regardless of shape, considered to be *guī* 圭.

1.3.2.2.2 The ink.

One of the most significant features of the Wenxian and Houma covenant tablets is that they are written in ink with a brush. Although there are examples of characters written in ink with brush from the late Shang dynasty (13th - 11th centuries BC), the Wenxian and Houma tablets are the earliest find of brush-written materials in substantial quantities.⁵⁵ Both of the most commonly given suggestions for the date of the Houma materials, 495 BC or 424 BC, along with the favoured Wenxian date of 497 BC, put these tablets in the fifth century, making them significantly earlier than other large collections of brush-written materials. The Guodian bamboo slips, for example, are thought to date from the late fourth century BC, i.e. at least one hundred years after the later Houma date of 424 BC and closer to two hundred years if we accept the dates of 497 BC for the Wenxian tablets and 495 BC for the Houma tablets.⁵⁶

Although thousands of the Wenxian tablets had texts written on them, many tablets were blank. The 1983 short report on the tablets from the large pit, WT1K1, assumes that all the tablets had originally had texts on them but that the ink had faded on many due to the long period since their original burial.⁵⁷ Presumably the assumption is that the buried tablets all had the same function and therefore each one must have had a covenant recorded on its surface.

The Wenxian tablets are written on in black ink, although, as has been mentioned above, there are reports that one of the groups of tablets unearthed in the first half of the twentieth century used red ink, the colour used for the great majority of the Houma tablets.⁵⁸

⁵⁵ An example of Shang dynasty ink-and-brush-written graphs is discussed in Chapter Three, section 3.1.1.

⁵⁶ For the date of the Guodian slips see: Sarah Allan and Crispin Williams ed., *The Guodian Laozi*, pp.118 – 120.

⁵⁷ Henan Sheng Wenwu Yanjiusuo, “Henan Wenxian Dong Zhou Mengshi Yizhi Yi Hao Kan Fajue Jianbao”, p.79.

⁵⁸ No red-ink texts were found during the 1980 – 81 excavation suggesting, if there were indeed red-ink tablets at Wenxian, that other covenant pits had existed at Wenxian but had been completely destroyed before that dig, or overlooked during the dig. The former possibility seems more likely since, as mentioned above, the top two-metres of the terrace had been removed and the east part of the terrace had been completely dug out, long before the 1980 excavation.

The composition of the Wenxian ink is unknown, the ink has not, as yet, been analysed. From observation during the photography process, the ink appears to be firmly fixed to the stone, it does not flake easily. In the first stage of processing, straight after excavation, dirt had been removed from the tablets by shaking them in water. The ink did not seem to have been seriously affected by the initial washing of the tablets. However, the ink does gradually fade but it is not clear what factors affect this. The legibility of ink on the tablets varies greatly and one tablet can have a section of legible characters and a section of faded characters. Something about the situation of the tablets in the pits must be responsible for this effect, perhaps the degree of contact with air. Certainly, after excavation, long term exposure to the air does seem to cause fading. This is evident from the “Qinyang covenant tablets” which, unearthed sometime before 1942, as discussed above, have been out of the ground for at least sixty years. They have been copied several times over the years and each time fewer characters were found to be visible.⁵⁹

While not confirmed by testing, the obvious candidate for the black pigment in the Wenxian ink would be carbon; the ink may be carbon mixed with water and stabilizing agents. Chemical analysis could verify this and determine what stabilizing agents were used. A better understanding of the composition of the ink would be interesting not only from a historical point of view but also to determine the best way to conserve the original texts.

1.3.2.3 Preliminary findings on the contents of the Wenxian texts

I have identified seven categories of covenant amongst the Wenxian tablets for which there are examples of a complete text or for which a complete text can be reconstructed. I refer to these as “oath types”. There are another approximately ten oath types each with just a very few examples containing incomplete texts that have not been thoroughly analysed yet. There are also a number of tablets which have not yet been closely examined. The chart below gives a summary of the number of computer-enhanced images of tablets that exist for each pit, how many of these, even after this enhancement, remain illegible, how many are legible enough to be used in the analysis, and the oath types, so far identified, that are

⁵⁹ Zhang Han, “‘Houma Mengshu’ Congkao Xu”, pp.100 – 101.

found in each pit. There are tablets which clearly have a different oath type but have not been fully analysed and others which have various problems hindering the analysis: these have all been marked “other or analysis not complete”. The table includes the approximate number of total images for the two big pits.⁶⁰ A key to the oath types is given after the table:

Table 6: Wenxian covenant tablets: the number of tablets with enhanced images from each pit with the number of illegible and legible images and the oath types to which the tablets belong

Pit Name	Enhanced images of tablets			Oath types found in this pit and number of tablets belonging to that oath type.
	Total number	Illegible	Legible	
WT1K1	c.1900	N/A	N/A	Type 1 (?) ⁶¹
WT1K2	83	28	55	Type 2 (55)
WT1K3	13	3	10	Other or analysis not complete: 10
WT1K4	3	0	3	Other or analysis not complete: 3
WT1K14	c.1400	NA	NA	Type 1 (?) ⁶²
WT1K17	68	14	54	Type 3 (47) Other or analysis not complete: 7
WT3K6	12	3	9	Other or analysis not complete: 9
WT4K2	6	1	5	Type 5 (4) Other or analysis not complete: 1
WT4K5	26	1	25	Type 4 (25)
WT4K6	140	17	123	Type 5 (123)
WT4K9	160	24	136	Type 1 (118) Other or analysis not complete: 18
WT4K10	26	3	23	Type 1 (14) Type 5 (1) Other or analysis not complete: 8
WT4K11	58	12	46	Type 6 (46)
WT5K1	31	10	21	Type 7 (17) Other or analysis not complete: 5
WT5K14	37	2	35	Type 7 (35)
WT5K21	66 ⁶³	19	47	Type 1 (46) Other or analysis not complete: 1
Totals	c.4000	N/A	N/A	
Totals (ignoring WT1K1 and WT1K14)	729	137	592	

⁶⁰ Note that the terms “larger”, “smaller”, “big”, and “small”, etc. as used to refer to the pits are indicative of the number of tablets rather than the actual physical size of the pit, i.e. the “big pits” are WT1K1 and WT1K14 which each had thousands of tablets while all the others are considered to be “small”.

⁶¹ I have not closely examined all the images of these tablets but they appear to all be Type 1 examples.

⁶² I have not closely examined all the images of these tablets but they appear to all be Type 1 examples.

⁶³ Includes six that have photographs only, the images have not been digitalized and enhanced.

Key to Oath Types:

Type 1	Oath to not join the enemy
Type 2	Oath to “post no bills” in Shaoqu
Type 3	Oath to seek blessings for the lord
Type 4	Oath to not spy for named enemies
Type 5	Oath to attack named enemies
Type 6	Oath to not join with the enemy to harm the lord
Type 7	Oath relating to the lord’s sacrifices and prayers

Of the 729 photographed and enhanced tablets from the fourteen small pits, only 592 turned out to be legible enough to use for analysis. Among the small pits, the number of legible tablets per pit varies considerably, from less than ten to more than one hundred.

As I have noted above, the huge majority of the excavated and photographed tablets, about 3300 examples, were from the two large pits WT1K1 and WT1K14. I have not examined all examples of the tablets from these pits but all examples I have looked at do belong to the Type 1 category. This oath type is also found in three of the smaller pits. The other categories follow the same basic formula with the major variation being in the content of the stipulations. The names given to the oath types reflect the content of the stipulations.

In general the Wenxian texts are more uniform in structure than the Houma texts. They are relatively short, from around 35 to 60 characters in length. The Houma Pledge texts, in contrast, are about 200 characters long. None of the Wenxian texts uses the basic formula several times within one covenant as is seen in the Houma Pledge texts.⁶⁴ In the Wenxian texts, as with the Houma texts, apart from the variation in the name on each tablet within a single oath type, one also finds variation in graphs, as well as occasional minor variation in the wording of the text.

⁶⁴ See the translation given above, section 1.3.1.

1.3.3 The dating and historical background of the Houma and Wenxian texts

1.3.3.1 Dating the Houma and Wenxian texts

Here I will consider the dates found on the Houma and Wenxian tablets. Only one date is found in each set of covenants. In the case of the Houma tablets the date is only seen on one tablet, tablet 16:3, which has a unique text and is separately classified as sub-category 1 of the Lineage Covenant Texts.⁶⁵ In the Wenxian texts a date occurs on many of the tablets with the most common covenant type, Type 1, an example of which was given above. Not all the tablets with this oath type have the date and some have a shortened date with just the day name. All but one of the dated tablets from Wenxian were from the big pit WT1K1; the exception was from a small pit, WT4K9. The Houma and Wenxian dates are as follows:

Wenxian tablets (this date found in many Oath Type1 tablets)

Fifteenth year, twelfth month, *yǐwèi* was the first day of the month, *xīnyǒu* day [i.e. the 27th day of that month]. (十五年十二月乙未朔辛酉)

Houma tablet 16:3

... eleventh month, *jiǎyín* day was the first day of the month, *yǐchǒu* day [i.e. the 12th day of the month]. (...十又一月甲寅朔乙丑)

The Wenxian date follows the formula: reign year; month; first day of the month (using the *gānzhī* sixty-day cycle); actual day (using the *gānzhī* sixty-day cycle).

The Houma tablet appears to use the same formula but starts with the month, however, the tablet is damaged and may have originally included the reign year.⁶⁶

The character [朔] *shuò* “first day of the month” in the Houma date was

⁶⁵ *Houma Mengshu*, pp.33 – 34.

⁶⁶ Although it is unclear from the photographs of this tablet, it appears that the authors of the *Houma Mengshu* did not think the tablet had been damaged. For example, when quoting the first two lines of the tablet on p.74 of the *Houma Mengshu* they make no allowance for lacunae caused by a damaged tablet. If there was no damage to this part of the tablet, then the Houma dating formula does not include the reign year seen in the Wenxian formula.

originally interpreted as [朏] *fěi* which denotes the second or third day of the month. This affected the calculation of the date. It is now generally accepted that the graph is [朔] *shuò* “first day of the month”.⁶⁷

Li Xueqin 李學勤 discussed these dates in a 1998 article.⁶⁸ Li agreed with the calculation for the Wenxian date given in the 1983 short report on the tablets. On the basis of Li’s conclusions and using the reconstructed calendar in Zhang Peiyu 張培瑜’s *Sanqian Wubai Nian Liri Tianxiang* 三千五百年曆日天象, these dates can be matched with the following dates in our current calendar. I also give the corresponding dates in the Lu 魯 state calendar (i.e. that used in the *Chunqiu* annals) and the Jin 晉 state calendar:

Wenxian tablets (this date found in many Oath Type1 tablets)

Fifteenth year, twelfth month, *yǐwèi* was the first day of the month, *xīnyǒu* day [i.e. the 27th day of that month]. (十五年十二月乙未朔辛酉)

15th January, 497 BC ⁶⁹

Lu 魯 state calendar: 13th year of the reign of Duke Ding of Lu 魯定公, first month, *yǐwèi* was the first day of the month, *xīnyǒu* [27th day of the month]. (Lu used the Zhou calendar 周曆. The previous year, 12th year of Duke Ding of Lu, had an intercalary month)

Jin 晉 state calendar: 15th year of the reign of Duke Ding of Jin 晉定公, twelfth month, *yǐwèi* was the first day of the month, *xīnyǒu* [27th day of the month]. (Jin used the Xia calendar 夏曆)

Houma tablet 16:3

... eleventh month, *jiǎyīn* day was the first day of the month, *yǐchǒu* day [i.e. the 12th day of the month]. (... 十又一月甲寅朔乙丑)

⁶⁷ This graph is discussed in detail in Chapter Three, section 3.1.2.1.

⁶⁸ Li Xueqin, “Houma, Wenxian Mengshu Li Shuo De Zai Kaocha”.

⁶⁹ The 1983 *Wenwu* short report gives this date as the 16th January, 497 BC, I get the 15th January. See: Henan Sheng Wenwu Yanjiusuo, “Henan Wenxian Dong Zhou Mengshi Yizhi Yi Hao Kan Fajue Jianbao”, p.89.

8th January, 495 BC

Lu 魯 state calendar: 15th year of the reign of Duke Ding of Lu 魯定公, first month, *jiǎyīn* was the first day of the month, *yǐchǒu* [12th day of the month] (Lu used the Zhou calendar 周曆)

Jin 晉 state calendar: 17th year of the reign of Duke Ding of Jin 晉定公, eleventh month, *jiǎyīn* was the first day of the month, *yǐchǒu* [12th day of the month]. (Jin used the Xia calendar 夏曆)

The many variables associated with such dating mean there is serious potential for erroneous conclusions.⁷⁰ In the case of these two dates the occurrence of the reign year in the Wenxian texts provides a better basis for the dating than the Houma date for which one can only work with the month and *gānzhī* day name for its first day.

It is not unreasonable to assume, as the authors of the 1983 short report did when they first set out to date the Wenxian tablets, that the reign year given in the date is that of a Jin lord: Wenxian is within what was Jin state territory (Jin is named in the Houma tablets). This allowed them to narrow their search by looking for Jin lords whose 15th year had a matching month number and *gānzhī* day. Using the calendric tables for early China available to them at the time of writing (in the early 1980's) they suggested that the year was the 15th year of the reign of Lord Ding of Jin (corresponding mainly to 498 BC, partly overlapping 497 BC). This gave a precise match for the *gānzhī* for the first day of the month. However, it relied on the assumption of an intercalary month in the previous year for the Zhou calendar in order to obtain the matching month, but this intercalary month was only suggested by one of the four reconstructed calendric tables they referred to.⁷¹

⁷⁰ On the early Chinese calendar, see: Chen Zungui, *Zhongguo Tianwenxue Shi*. For a discussion of some of the challenges of ancient Chinese calendrics see: Lothar von Falkenhausen, "Issues in Western Zhou Studies: A Review Article", pp.172 – 192.

⁷¹ Henan Sheng Wenwu Yanjiusuo, "Henan Wenxian Dong Zhou Mengshi Yizhi Yi Hao Kan Fajue Jianbao", p.82 and table p.87. The Zhou and the Xia calendars are usually out by two months: normally the first month of the Zhou calendar corresponds to the eleventh month of the Xia calendar. In order for the first month of the Zhou calendar to correspond to the twelfth month of the Xia calendar, the Zhou calendar must have repeated the twelfth month of the previous year and the Xia calendar cannot have added an intercalary month that year up to that point, i.e. it must also have added the intercalary month at the end of the year. See further discussion of this point in the main text.

As it turned out, this assumption was later supported when, in 1987, Zhang Peiyu published his *Zhongguo Xian Qin Shi Libiao* 中國先秦史曆表, which also gives an intercalary month for that year.⁷² However, we should note, and this again shows the difficulty of such calculations, that Zhang Peiyu's table gives the intercalary month for the corresponding Xia-calendar year as an additional third month but, in order for the Wenxian date to match the 15th year of Duke Ding of Jin's reign, the Xia calendar must also repeat the twelfth month: if the third month is repeated then the first month of the following Zhou calendar year will match the eleventh month of the previous Xia year. The authors of the 1983 report, aware of this problem, argue that our understanding of the regulations governing the addition of intercalary months for the Spring and Autumn period is not complete and one cannot assume that the system which came into place in the Han dynasty, and on which calculations of the position of intercalary months in reconstructed tables is based, was followed at this earlier period. They suggest that the intercalary month that must have been added to the Xia calendar, to correspond to that in the Zhou calendar, could have been added at the end of the year, following the custom for the Zhou calendar.⁷³ In that case, the 12th year of the reign of Duke Ding of Lu (Zhou calendar) would have had two twelfth months, corresponding to the tenth *and* eleventh months of the 15th year of Duke Ding of Jin's reign (Xia calendar). The first month of Duke Ding of Lu's 13th year would then have corresponded to the twelfth month of Duke Ding of Jin's 15th year. Jin would then have had a further twelfth month to match the Zhou calendar's intercalary twelfth month.

Li Xueqin further observed that reconstructed calendric tables and the calendar of the Lu state (considered to run in parallel with that of other states including Jin) appear to match precisely for the year 498 BC, as evident from the recording of a solar eclipse for which the *Chunqiu* date corresponds to the

⁷² Zhang Peiyu, *Zhongguo Xian Qin Shi Libiao*, p.164 The year in which the intercalary month is added is the 12th year of the reign of Duke Ding of Lu. See also: Li Xueqin, "Houma, Wenxian Mengshu Li Shuo De Zai Kaocha", p.165.

⁷³ Henan Sheng Wenwu Yanjiusuo, "Henan Wenxian Dong Zhou Mengshi Yizhi Yi Hao Kan Fajue Jianbao", p.82.

reconstructed calendar based on scientifically determined dates for eclipses.⁷⁴ This lends further credence to the calculation of the Wenxian date.

The conclusion that the 15th year in the Wenxian date refers to the 15th year of Duke Ding of Jin's reign and that this reign year corresponds, on the basis of matching *gānzhī* days, to the 12th year of the reign of Duke Ding of Lu (the actual date is in the first month of his 13th year due to the use of different calendars), is of some significance as it contradicts the *Shier Zhuhou Nianbiao* 十二諸侯年表 in the *Shi Ji* which gives the 12th year of Duke Ding of Lu's reign as equivalent to the 14th year of Duke Ding of Jin's reign. This table is known to have problems, once again demonstrating the obstacles one is faced with when attempting to make sense of early dates, both in excavated and received texts.⁷⁵

The date on the Houma tablets has no reign year, increasing the possible number of matching dates. On the basis of just the month number and the *gānzhī* day name for the first day of the lunar month, Li uses Zhang Peiyu's 1987 table to match the date with the eleventh month of the 17th year of the reign of Duke Ding of Jin, corresponding to 495 BC. In this case, however, the table does not match perfectly and Li has to assume that the Jin and Lu calendars were a day out with their recording of the first day of the month.⁷⁶ Li notes that this date could also fit the year 424 BC demonstrating that, in this case, the tables cannot be relied upon to provide a single matching date.⁷⁷ The 424 BC date is significant here because it has been suggested that the Houma tablets relate to an event which is recorded as having taken place in this year, when, according to the "Zhao Shi Jia 趙世家" in the *Shi Ji*, Zhao Huanzi 趙桓子 usurped control of the Zhao lineage for one year. However Li argues that the historical evidence from transmitted texts, as well as names found in the Houma tablets, favours the earlier date and that those passages

⁷⁴ Li Xueqin, "Houma, Wenxian Mengshu Li Shuo De Zai Kaocha", pp.165.

⁷⁵ Zhao Shigang and Luo Taoxiang, "Lun Wenxian Mengshu Yu Houma Mengshu ...", p.159.

⁷⁶ Li Xueqin, "Houma, Wenxian Mengshu Li Shuo De Zai Kaocha", p.165. The relationship between the date and the calendric tables can be more clearly seen using Zhang Peiyu's more recent work, the *Sanqian Wubai Nian Liri Tianxiang*: on p.25 the required intercalary tenth month for the Xia calendar can be seen under year 495, that makes the next month the eleventh month which accords with the Houma tablets. The first day of that month is given in the table as *guǎchǒu* 癸丑, the day before *jiǎyīn*, the *gānzhī* term found in the Houma date.

⁷⁷ Li Xueqin, "Houma, Wenxian Mengshu Li Shuo De Zai Kaocha", p.166. There are almost certainly other years which would also match these dates, for example, 491 BC also seems to match.

in received texts that concern Zhao Huanzi's usurption are unreliable, suggesting the traditional dating of this incident may be incorrect.⁷⁸

As I will point out in the next section, the attempted matching of historical characters and events with the Houma tablets does not produce a conclusive result and this weakens the strength of such evidence to support the dating of these tablets. I will also note that the date of the historical events linked to the Wenxian tablets and the date given above appear to conflict. Nevertheless, for the purpose of this thesis I will adopt these two dates. Although ideally one would like to have precise dates for the tablets, this is not, in fact, critical for this study. In order to periodize the texts and script, it is sufficient to know that the tablets date from the late Spring and Autumn, early Warring States period (625 – 350 BC). This is supported at the Houma site by the apparent link with the adjacent city site of Xintian which was used from 585 to 369 BC. Pottery fragments from Houma also match those from the Xintian site.⁷⁹ The similarity of script style, shared formulae and use of the same name for the spirit called on in the submission clause, are persuasive evidence that the Wenxian tablets date from the same period as the Houma texts.⁸⁰

1.3.3.2 Historical background

Several theories have been put forward in attempts to place the Houma and Wenxian tablets in historical context.⁸¹ The theory most favoured by scholars writing recently on the topic, including the excavators of the Wenxian tablets, is that the covenants were the result of feuding that took place within and between the Jin state's ministerial families during the early fifth century BC. The Jin state had six large ministerial families, not directly related by blood to the Jin lineage. Members of these lineages held high official and military positions under the Jin

⁷⁸ Li Xueqin, "Houma, Wenxian Mengshu Li Shuo De Zai Kaocha", pp.166 – 167.

⁷⁹ *Houma Mengshu*, p.2 and p.384. See also: Zeng Zhixiong, "Houma Mengshu Yanjiu", p.209.

⁸⁰ The final excavation report of the Wenxian site will contain analysis of other artifacts from this site, e.g. jades, which will provide further evidence for dating.

⁸¹ The main suggestions are discussed in: *Houma Mengshu*, pp.1 – 10; Huang Shengzhang, "Guanyu Houma Mengshu De Zhuyao Wenti"; Emura Haruki, "Houma Guchengqun He Mengshi Yizhi De Guanxi"; Emura Haruki, "Kōma Meisho Kō"; Tang Lan, "Houma Chutu Jinguo Zhao Jia Zhi Mengzaishu Xin Shi"; Gao Ming, "Houma Zaishu Mengzhu Kao"; Li Yumin, "Wo Dui Houma Mengshu De Kanfa"; Susan Roosevelt Weld, "Covenant in Jin's Walled Cities: The Discoveries at Houma and Wenxian", p.432.

lord.⁸² The families were: Han 韓, Zhao 趙, Wei 魏, Zhonghang 中行, Fan 范 and Zhi 智. During the Spring and Autumn period these families had gradually gained in power and influence. The rich tomb of a Zhao minister (thought to be Zhao Yang 趙鞅), excavated near Taiyuan 太原, Shanxi 山西, is evidence of the wealth and power of one of these families.⁸³

The transmitted histories record a falling out, at the beginning of the fifth century BC, between the main branch of the Zhao lineage, headed by Zhao Yang 趙鞅 and based in Jinyang 晉陽 (near present day Taiyuan, Shanxi), and a branch lineage based in Handan 邯鄲 (see map, Figure 24) over a disagreement concerning the control of a group of 500 families (hostages from the state of Wei 衛) held by the head of that branch, Zhao Wu 趙午.⁸⁴ In 497 BC (this date is based on the *Zuo Zhuan* record of these events), Zhao Yang killed Zhao Wu after which Zhao Wu's son, Zhao Ji 趙稷, revolted in Handan. Zhao Yang called on the ministerial families to lay siege to Handan, but the Zhonghang lineage, led by Zhonghang Yin 中行寅, had ties with Zhao Wu and they, along with their ally, the Fan lineage, led by Fan Jishe 范吉射, refused to attack Handan. Not only did they refuse, they joined with Zhao Ji to attack Zhao Yang who was forced to flee to Jinyang. Duke Ding of Jin 晉定公 was then persuaded, by Xun Li 荀躒, an ally of Zhao Yang, to support Zhao Yang. The duke ordered Xun Li, Han Buxin 韓不信, and Wei Chi 魏侈 to attack Fan and Zhonghang, but they were not victorious. Fan and Zhonghang counterattacked but this time were defeated and the heads of the two lineages fled to Zhaoge 朝歌 where they attempted to win the support of other states, including Zheng 鄭, Qi 齊, Xianyu 鮮虞 and even the Zhou royal house, for a further counterattack. Meanwhile, Zhao Yang returned to Xintian, the Jin capital, and covenanted at the palace of the Jin ruler. Scholars linking these events to the

⁸² This unusual state of affairs, with lineages not directly related to the Jin house holding high ministerial positions, came about after Duke Xian of Jin 晉獻公 (676 – 651 BC) murdered all the ducal princes in an attempt to eliminate their potential threat to his rule. See: Li Yuanqing, *San Jin Gu Wenhua Yuanliu*, pp.183 – 185.

⁸³ Tao Zhenggang, Hou Yi and Qu Chuanfu, *Taiyuan Jin Guo Zhao Qing Mu*.

⁸⁴ For a convenient collection of passages from texts which relate to this incident see: *Houma Mengshu*, pp.421 – 429. See also: Li Yuanqing, *San Jin Gu Wenhua Yuanliu*, pp.236 – 237.

Houma tablets argue that, after this, the Zhao clan organized a series of covenants, of which the Houma texts are examples.

There is limited direct evidence in the Houma tablets to support a connection with these events. A name, Zhonghang Yin 中行寅, is legible on one out of thirteen mostly illegible tablets found in pit 105 at Houma: Zhonghang Yin, as mentioned above, is the name of the leader of the Zhonghang lineage who allied with the Fan to attack Zhao Yang. The context in which the name appears on the Houma text suggests that the aim of the covenant is to prohibit the covenantor from having any contact with Zhonghang Yin.⁸⁵ The place name of Handan 邯鄲 occurs on another Houma fragment, in the phrase "... do not covenant in Handan ...".⁸⁶ Handan was the base of the branch lineage led by Zhao Wu, the man killed by Zhao Yang. The name Handan also occurs as part of an enemy name in a list of enemies in the Houma Pledge Texts.⁸⁷ These examples fit neatly into the above historical context: both forbid contact with those who were, from Zhao Yang's point of view, the enemy. However, among the many many names on the Houma tablets, these are the only two which can be directly matched with known historical figures.⁸⁸

The rest of the evidence for the link with the Zhao Yang events is circumstantial. There is no doubt that the Houma covenants are connected to the Zhao lineage: the "lord" *zhǔ* 主 of the tablets is referred to as Zhao in several examples and Zhao names also appear on lists of enemies, suggesting an internal problem within the lineage. However, there is no hard evidence to support the theory that the covenant lord is Zhao Yang. In fact, there is evidence which suggests the name of another lord: the Houma covenant lord is frequently referred to using the single character *jiā* 嘉, which was one of the names of Zhao Huanzi 趙

⁸⁵ The phrase is in the Houma fragment 105.2 (*Houma Mengshu*, p.286): "[come and] go from the place of Zhonghang Yin and ..." (...入于中行寅及口...之所...) On the basis of similar language in the Houma and Wenxian texts, this is almost certainly a prohibition on contact with Zhonghang Yin and his followers.

⁸⁶ Tablet 探 8②:3. The original text is: "不盟于邯鄲" (*Houma Mengshu*, p.290).

⁸⁷ *Houma Mengshu*, pp.37 – 39.

⁸⁸ There is also a Wu Xu 無卹 mentioned in tablet 105.2 (*Houma Mengshu*, p.286). Wu Xu was the personal name of Zhao Xiangzi 趙襄子, the son and successor of Zhao Yang. The character before the name is damaged but does not look like the "Zhao 趙" we would expect if this was Zhao Xiangzi.

桓子 who was either Zhao Yang's son or grandson (the received texts are contradictory on this point).⁸⁹ In 424 BC Zhao Huanzi seized the leadership of the lineage from Zhao Huan 趙浣, the son of Zhao Xiangzi 趙襄子 (Zhao Yang's son). Some scholars have argued that this is the historical event related to the Houma covenants.⁹⁰ Those scholars who favour the Zhao Yang theory, argue that the *jiā* 嘉, which as an adjective means “beautiful”, “good”, is not a name in the Houma texts, but an honorific that could be used for a leader; in this case, they argue, for Zhao Yang. They also dispute that a personal name could be used in a text without a clan name.⁹¹ Li Xueqin suggests that the *jiā* 嘉 does indeed refer to Zhao Huanzi (Zhao Jia) but that the texts are, nevertheless, a product of the 497 BC Zhao Yang incident. He argues that Zhao Huanzi was a child at the time but represented Zhao Yang as covenant lord in the Houma covenants in place of Zhao Yang who had returned to Jinyang.⁹²

Turning to the Wenxian covenant tablets, they have been associated with both the 497 BC Zhao Yang incident and the 424 BC Zhao Huanzi incident. The argument linking the Wenxian tablets to the 424 BC date is, however, untenable: it was based on the theory that the covenant lord of the Wenxian tablets was Zhao Huanzi 趙桓子 (Zhao Jia 趙嘉)'s enemy, Zhao Huan 趙浣.⁹³ However, tablets not published in the 1983 short report and presented at a conference in 1994, give the clan name of the covenant lord as Han 韓, so this theory can be dismissed.⁹⁴

As discussed in the previous section, the short report on the Wenxian site, published in *Wenwu* in 1983, dated the tablets to 497 BC based on the date found on many of the texts from the one pit discussed in that article. The authors suggested that the city site just west of the covenant site was ancient Zhou 州,

⁸⁹ The *Shi Ji* says he was his son, while the *Suo Yin* 索隱 commentary quotes the *Shi Ben* 世本 as saying he was the son of Zhao Yang's son Zhao Xiang Xi 趙襄子. See: Li Xueqin, “Houma, Wenxian Mengshu Li Shuo De Zai Kaocha”, p.166.

⁹⁰ Tang Lan, “Houma Chutu Jinguo Zhao Jia Zhi Mengzaishu Xin Shi” and: Gao Ming, “Houma Zaishu Mengzhu Kao”.

⁹¹ See, for example: *Houma Mengshu* p.65, and: Zeng Zhixiong, “Houma Mengshu Yanjiu”, pp.68 – 69.

⁹² Li Xueqin, “Houma, Wenxian Mengshu Li Shuo De Zai Kaocha”, p.167.

⁹³ Feng Shi, “Houma Mengshu Yu Wenxian Mengshu”.

⁹⁴ Zhao Shigang and Luo Taoxiang, “Lun Wenxian Mengshu Yu Houma Mengshu ...”.

mentioned in transmitted texts as a city under Han control during that period. The covenant lord must, they argue, have been the head of the Han lineage. The head of the Han lineage in 497 BC was Han Jianzi 韓簡子, also known as Han Buxin 韓不信.

In an paper given at a conference in Taiyuan in 1994, Zhao Shigang and Luo Taoxiang 羅桃香 presented the contents of tablets from two more of the Wenxian pits. These gave the clan name of the covenant lord, which was, as predicted, Han 韓.⁹⁵ In some of the texts a personal name is also given after the Han 韓 clan name. Zhao Shigang argues that this single character can be interpreted as *xìn* 信, equivalent to Buxin 不信, an alternative name for Han Jianzi 韓簡子. Zhao believes that the Wenxian covenants were a result of Han Buxin's participation in the Jin ministerial family feuding. Han Buxin was, as explained above, head of the Han lineage when it was ordered by the Jin duke to attack the Fan and Zhonghang lineages.

To support his argument connecting the Wenxian tablets to the lineage power struggles in Jin, Zhao further notes that the list of enemy names found in one category of the Wenxian tablets include the names Zhao Chao 趙朝, Chang Xu 郟戌 and Chang Cao [?] 郟瘵. The name Zhao Chao can be matched with a historical figure mentioned in the *Zuo Zhuan* as a contemporary of Zhao Yang and Han Buxin. On the basis of evidence from commentaries, Zhao Shigang identifies Zhao Chao as a member of the same branch lineage as Zhao Wu 趙午, the man Zhao Yang had killed. Thus, Zhao Chao's being named as an enemy in this covenant category supports the theory that the tablets were produced by Zhao Yang's ally, Han Buxin, as a reaction to the struggle with Zhao Wu's lineage in Handan. Zhao Shigang suggests that the reason Zhao Chao is not mentioned in the Houma covenants, as one might have expected, is because his area of activity was very close to Han territory and he was treated, instead, as a Han enemy.

⁹⁵ Zhao Shigang and Luo Taoxiang, "Lun Wenxian Mengshu Yu Houma Mengshu ...".

The names Chang Xu and Chang Cao [?], which appear together in one of the Wenxian oath types, are matched by Zhao Shigang with the Chang 莠 clan that is referred to in historical texts. Zhao quotes a passage from the *Zuo Zhuan* which describes how, in 492 BC, Zhao Yang set out to have a certain Chang Hong 莠弘 punished because he had been instrumental in bringing the Fan clan closer to the Zhou 周 royal house.⁹⁶ As a result, Chang Hong was eventually murdered by the Zhou king. Zhao Shigang notes that commentaries to the *Zuo Zhuan* suggest that Zhao Yang's anger was due to Chang Hong's support of the Fan and the Zhonghang lineages in the power struggles in Jin. Zhao argues that the Chang Xu and Chang Cao [?] mentioned in the Wenxian tablets were members of Chang Hong's lineage and, therefore, listed as enemies. He does not explain why these names do not appear in the Houma texts, or, for that matter, why Chang Hong is not named personally.

Zhao believes that the factional feuding in Jin had resulted in deep divisions between ministers and within lineages. Thus, just as it is suggested that the Houma tablets are the result of the Zhao clan's reorganizing of its internal affairs after this feuding, so the Wenxian tablets are products of Han Buxin's reconsolidation of power. Zhao believes that the leaders of Han, Zhao and Wei returned to their own power bases and carried out their own internal reorganization. Thus, Han Buxin returned to his fief of Zhou, identified with the city site next to the Wenxian tablet site, and carried out a series of covenants. The enemies listed who have Han clan names are, he suggests, people who had sided with the Fan and Zhonghang clans. Zhao conjectures that the reason for the absence of the names Fan and Zhonghang in the lists of enemies in the Houma and Wenxian texts is because these covenants took place within the clan, not between the ministerial families; the focus was on enemies within or closely related to the clan, rather than external enemies.⁹⁷

The theory that the Wenxian and Houma covenant texts are a result of the Zhao Yang incident in 497 BC is attractive in that it appears to link the covenant

⁹⁶ *Chunqiu Zuo Zhuan Zhu*, Ai 哀 3.3, p.1622.

⁹⁷ These conclusions were reiterated by Zhao Shigang at a conference held in 2001, see: Zhao Shigang, "Lun Wenxian Mengshu Yu Houma Mengshu Zhi Guanxi".

tablets to a major historical event. The precise matches of a number of names found in the tablets with historical figures and the circumstantial evidence are tantalizing and, if more evidence becomes available, perhaps it will turn out that some version of the theory is indeed correct. Nevertheless it is worth bearing in mind that there are major unresolved problems with this hypothesis. These include the following issues.

1. The date calculated for the Wenxian tablets does not appear to fit the suggested historical context.

The date determined for the Wenxian tablets, based on the date found on the tablets themselves, is, as discussed in the last section, the 15th of January 497 BC, the first month of the 13th year of the reign of Duke Ding of Lu 魯定公. According to the *Chunqiu* and the *Zuo Zhuan*, the struggles between Zhao Yang and the Fan and Zhonghang lineages, from the time Zhao killed Zhao Wu to the time he returned to the Jin capital and covenanted, took place during the *second half* of the 13th year of the reign of Duke Ding of Lu, equivalent to the latter part of 497 BC. Zhao Shigang argued that the Wenxian covenants occurred after the covenant in the Jin capital, but the above date, 15th January 497 BC, puts them several months *before* this incident had even begun: something is clearly wrong.

In his article written with Luo Taoxiang in 1994, Zhao Shigang argues that the Zhao Yang incident actually took place in 498 BC, before the date of January 497 BC calculated for the Wenxian tablets.⁹⁸ His main evidence is the record of the Zhao Yang incident in the *Shi Ji's Zhao Shi Jia* 趙世家 section, which does give a match with the year 498 BC.⁹⁹ If this is correct, then the *Zuo Zhuan* record of these events has been placed in the wrong year of the annals, they should be under Duke Ding of Lu's 12th year, not his 13th. Hirase Takeo's revised *Shier Zhuhou Nianbiao*, on the other hand, moves Duke Ding of Lu's reign dates back one year, so that Duke Ding of Lu's 13th year corresponds to 498 BC, not 497 BC.¹⁰⁰ This too would

⁹⁸ Zhao Shigang and Luo Taoxiang, "Lun Wenxian Mengshu Yu Houma Mengshu ...", pp.158 – 160. Note that in this article it is suggested that the date of 16th January, 497 BC is equivalent to 27th December, 498 BC "on the basis of the Xia calendar". This is surely a mistake: the January date does assume the Wenxian date uses the Xia calendar.

⁹⁹ Zhao Shigang and Luo Taoxiang, "Lun Wenxian Mengshu Yu Houma Mengshu ...", p.159.

¹⁰⁰ Hirase Takao, *Shinpen Shiki Tōshū Nenpyō*, p.554.

place the Zhao Yang incident in 498 BC, before the suggested date for the Wenxian tablets of January 497 BC. Alternatively, we can argue that the dates based on the *Zuo Zhuan* are correct, the *Zhao Shi Jia* and Takeo are wrong, and the dated Wenxian tablets were not a response to the Zhao Yang incident of 497 BC but relate to earlier events.

The date calculated for the Houma texts fits the historical events as recorded in the *Zuo Zhuan* a little better. It places them more than a year after the covenant in the Jin capital held in November, 497 BC. It records that the Jin ruler continued to battle with Fan and Zhonghang for the year following that event, eventually defeating them in the twelfth month of the 14th year of the reign of Duke Ding of Lu, that is November, 496 BC.¹⁰¹ The Houma covenants would then have taken place about two months later, at the beginning of the following year, January 495 BC.¹⁰²

A further question raised by this explanation of the events behind the covenant tablets is why the Zhao and Han covenant ceremonies took place, on the basis of the dating suggested here, a year apart. The suggestion is that they were both a reaction to the same incident in which case one would think they would have occurred more or less concurrently.

2. The names of the covenant lords have not been convincingly identified.

As discussed above, there is no incontrovertible evidence supporting the claim that the Houma covenant lord is Zhao Yang. The naming formulae used for the covenant lord in the Wenxian texts provide no further support for this theory and may, in fact, provide conflicting evidence. In the Wenxian covenant texts introduced in Zhao Shigang's 1994 conference paper, the Wenxian covenant lord is referred to using both with his clan name and a personal name together as well as with that personal name alone: tablets from pit WT4K5 have the phrase “serve your lord Han ____ [unidentified personal name]” (*shì ér zhǔ Hán* ____ 事而主韓

¹⁰¹ *Chunqiu Zuo Zhuan Zhu*, Ding 定 14, pp.1595 – 1598. Corresponding month determined using: Zhang Peiyu, *Sanqian Wubai Nian Liri Tianxiang*, p.25.

¹⁰² Two months because there was an intercalary month this year, see: Zhang Peiyu, *Sanqian Wubai Nian Liri Tianxiang*, p.25.

□) while tablets from pit WT4K6 have the phrase: “serve your lord _____ [unidentified personal name]” (*shì ér zhǔ* _____ 事而主□). This proves that the personal name of the covenant lord could be used without his clan name in covenant texts, a point that had been disputed by those arguing that the *jiā* 嘉 in the Houma tablets must be an honorific and could not be a name. If the Houma character *jiā* 嘉 is a name, then the Wenxian phrase “serve your lord _____ [unidentified personal name]” (*shì ér zhǔ* _____ 事而主□) is similar to a variant wording found on a small number of Houma Lineage Covenant tablets where the phrase “serve his lord” (*shì qí zhǔ* 事其主) is replaced with “serve *jiā*” (*shì jiā* 事嘉).¹⁰³ This would support the theory that *jiā* is a name. Note, however, that the Wenxian and Houma phrases are not identical, the Houma phrase “serve *jiā*” does not include the term “his lord” (*qí zhǔ* 其主) that is part of the Wenxian phrase, “serve your lord _____ [unidentified personal name]” (*shì ér zhǔ* _____ 事而主□). Thus one could counter that, even if the personal name can be used, it must be preceded with the title “lord” which is not seen in the Houma variant and, therefore, *jiā* 嘉 can still be considered an honorific. However, if this is the case, one wonders why *jiā* 嘉 has not been seen in the Wenxian tablets with this honorific usage.

Turning to the identity of the Wenxian covenant lord, the identification of the single graph which denotes his personal name as Xin 信, equivalent to Buxin 不信, is highly problematic. Zhao Shigang first matches the graph with the character [竣] *jùn*, then argues that this is a phonetic loan for *xìn* {信} and finally that the Bu 不 in Buxin 不信 is actually equivalent to *pī* {丕} which could have been omitted, concluding that the graph is equivalent to Buxin 不信. Unfortunately, there are several problems with this argument. Firstly, having examined the graphs in question, I do not believe they are a convincing match for the character [竣] *jùn*. Secondly, the words *jùn* {竣} and *xìn* {信} are not phonetically similar.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰³ Houma tablets 1.40, 1.41 and 1.42 have this variant, see: *Houma Mengshu*, pp.171 – 172.

¹⁰⁴ The Old Chinese reconstructions are: {竣} *jùn* < *tshwinH* < **tshjuns* (清文) (reconstruction: Wolfgang Behr, personal communication, March 31st, 2004) and {信} *xìn* < *sinH* < **snjins* (心真) (*A Handbook of Old Chinese Phonology*, p.799).

Thirdly, Zhao gives no examples from other texts where the name Buxin 不信 is written as Pixin 丕信 or the Bu 不 omitted altogether. Furthermore, the suggestion that the Bu 不 here is equivalent to Pi 丕 is not supported by, for example, phonetic glosses in the *Jingdian Shiwen*.¹⁰⁵ It is certainly not impossible that this graph is a personal name of Han Buxin 不信, but the suggestion that it is directly equivalent to the name Buxin 不信 is not convincing.

A further problem with identifying names on excavated materials is that a single member of the ancient Chinese nobility had several different names and titles and could be referred to in many different ways. Moreover, a single name was often denoted with several different loan graphs. Sometimes a name on an excavated text matches none of the names in received texts for the corresponding historical figure.¹⁰⁶ Furthermore, even a perfectly matching name cannot always be assumed to indicate one and the same person: different people can have the same name.

In sum, the identification of the Houma and Wenxian covenant lords is by no means settled.

3. Absence of the names of the Fan and Zhonghang lineages in the Houma and Wenxian enemy lists.

The theory discussed above links the Houma and Wenxian tablets with the feud between the Zhao, Han and Wei clans and the Fan and Zhonghang lineages. The phrase in the Houma fragment 105:2, “[come and] go from the place of Zhonghang Yin and ...”, is, on the basis of similar language in the Houma and Wenxian texts, a prohibition on contact with Zhonghang Yin and his followers. This is the strongest evidence for a link between this tablet and the feud between Zhao Yang and Zhonghang Yin. However, this is the only example where the Zhonghang clan is mentioned. The name of the Fan lineage is not seen at all. It

¹⁰⁵ *Jingdian Shiwen*

¹⁰⁶ Such examples are found in the graphs used for the names of the Western Zhou lords of Jin, found on bronze inscriptions from their tombs in Shanxi, see: Qiu Xigui, “Guanyu Jinhou Mu Tongqi Mingwen De Ji Ge Wenti”. See also: Jaehoon Shim, “The ‘Jinhou Su *Bianzhong*’ Inscription and its Significance”, p.62 – 63 and p.63, note 40.

seems odd that we do not see the Zhonghang or Fan clan names among enemies listed in the Houma and Wenxian texts. Zhao Shigang explains this by arguing that the Houma and Wenxian covenants are dealing with internal clan problems and local enemies, so the names of the two larger enemy clans, Zhonghang and Fan, are not included. However, the occurrence of the name Zhonghang Yin just mentioned as well as the phrase “do not covenant in Handan” seen in another Houma fragment (tablet label: 探 8②:3) are evidence to the contrary, showing that the covenants do sometimes touch upon non-local issues and name this enemy clan. Furthermore, the tablets include several clan names apart from Han and Zhao, so were not only dealing with people directly related to these two lineages: other clans were also involved, but not the Zhonghang and Fan clans.¹⁰⁷

Overall, the theory that links the tablets to this particular episode of Jin ministerial-family feuding still lacks a convincing explanation as to why the covenants do not include more names of clans and individuals associated with those events.

4. Problems with the interpretation of key names

I mentioned above the problems with identifying the personal name of the Han covenant lord in the Wenxian texts as “Buxin”. There are several other key names in the tablets which have not been identified. The identification of the name of the sanctioning agent, presumed to be a spirit of some kind, and seen in both the Houma and Wenxian texts, is still disputed. The name appears as: “Duke/s _____ [unidentified graph]” (_____ *gōng* □公). If the problem graph was the name of the most recently deceased Jin duke at the time of the covenants, as suggested by some scholars, then identifying the duke in question would help solve the dating question. Scholars have matched the name with Duke You 幽公 (433 – 416 BC), Duke Chu 出公 (474 – 452 BC) and Duke Qing 頃公 (525 – 512 BC).¹⁰⁸ Other

¹⁰⁷ As I will discuss in the next section, some of the scholars advocating the feud with the Fan and Zhonghang clans as the background to these covenants argue that one of the most common enemy clan names does, in fact, refer to the Fan clan. If that is correct, then one would need to explain why the Fan clan appears in the enemy lists but the Zhonghang clan does not.

¹⁰⁸ See, respectively: Guo Moruo, “Houma Mengshu Shitan”, p.4; Gao Ming, “Houma Zaishu Mengzhu Kao”, pp.108 – 110; Wu Zhenwu, “Shi Houma Mengshu He Wenxian Mengshu Zhong De ‘Qing Gong’ (Zhaiyao)”.

scholars take the character to be [晉] *jìn*, giving “The Jin dukes” (*jìn gōng* 晉公).¹⁰⁹ Which, if any, of these is correct is still debated.

Many of the enemies listed in the Houma materials share an unidentified clan name. The most common form of the graph is: 𣎵.¹¹⁰ Suggested interpretations for a matching clan name include: Xian 先, Bi 比, Fan 范 and Cong 從.¹¹¹ None of these is generally accepted as being correct. A convincing identification of this name would either provide further evidence to support a match with a particular historical incident, or, if no such match was found, suggest that the events reflected in the tablets are not, in fact, recorded in the histories. The graph has not, incidentally, been noticed in enemy lists in the Wenxian tablets.

The first enemy named in the enemy lists from the Houma texts is assumed to be the leader of the enemy camp, but the name has not been convincingly matched with that of any historical figure. The name, which can be formally transcribed as Zhao Hu 趙弧, appears at the head of lists of enemies in both the Lineage Covenant Text category and the Pledge Text category.¹¹² The second graph of the name was initially misinterpreted. Many suggestions were given, the most generally cited being [尼] *ní*.¹¹³ The correct analysis is now accepted to be [弧] *hú*.¹¹⁴ Since no Zhao Hu 趙弧 appears in the historical texts, the question is whether a convincing argument can be made by treating the [弧] *hú* as a phonetic loan and matching it with a known name. Gao Ming argued that it can loan for *huàn* {浣}, giving Zhao Huan, the man expelled by Zhao Huanzi (Zhao Jia), but

¹⁰⁹ For example: Tang Lan, “Houma Chutu Jinguo Zhao Jia Zhi Mengzaishu Xin Shi”, p.31; Zhang Han, “‘Houma Mengshu’ Congkao Xu”, pp. 93 – 97.

¹¹⁰ *Houma Mengshu*, p.338.

¹¹¹ For the Xian 先 interpretation see: Chen Mengjia, “Dong Zhou Mengshi Yu Chutu Zaishu”, p.275; also: *Houma Mengshu*, p.71; for the Bi 比 interpretation see: Tao Zhenggang and Wang Kelin, “Houma Dongzhou Mengshi Yizhi”, p.30; Zeng Zhixiong, “Houma Mengshu Yanjiu”, pp.97 – 98; for the Fan 范 interpretation see: Hirase Takao, “Kōma meisho [𣎵]・[𣎵] no Jishaku to Sono Kanren Mondai”; for the Cong 從 interpretation see: *Zhanguo Guwen Zidian*, p.430.

¹¹² Examples of which were given above, section 1.3.1.

¹¹³ See a summary of interpretations in: Zhang Han, “‘Houma Mengshu’ Congkao Xu”, pp.91 – 92. See also: Zeng Zhixiong, “Houma Mengshu Yanjiu”, pp.91 – 94.

¹¹⁴ Gao Ming, “Houma Zaishu Mengzhu Kao”, p.114.

this is not a close phonetic match.¹¹⁵ I know of no attempt to match the character [弧] *hú* with the *jì* 稷 of Zhao Ji, the son of the murdered Zhao Wu, but, an initial glance at the Old Chinese reconstructions suggests this would be impossible.¹¹⁶

5. The different covenants at Houma and Wenxian may not all be related to a single historical incident and these incidents may not all have corresponding records in the traditional histories.

By insisting on matching the Houma and Wenxian texts with known historical events one may overlook the content of categories which do not easily fit into one's envisioned scenario.

As discussed earlier, there are six categories of texts among the Houma tablets: Lineage Covenant Texts; Pledge Texts; Confiscation Texts; Curse Texts; Divination Texts and Other Texts. The first of these groups, Lineage Covenant Texts, is further divided into six sub-categories.¹¹⁷ The Lineage Covenant Texts and Pledge Texts are often found together in a single pit; we can assume that, in such cases, they were buried during a single ceremony. This may also imply that both covenant types may be related to a single issue, although they are different in content and no covenantor name is found repeated on both categories within a single pit.¹¹⁸ There is only one Houma text with a date, tablet 16:3, discussed above. The text on this tablet is unique and there are various theories about how its content (sections of which are illegible) should be described, but most scholars assume that it is closely related to the other tablets.¹¹⁹ Lineage Covenant Texts of sub-category 4 were also found in pit 16 along with tablet 16:3 so we can assume

¹¹⁵ Gao Ming, "Houma Zaishu Mengzhu Kao", p.114. The Old Chinese reconstructions are: 弧 *hú* < *hu* < **gwa* (匣魚) and 澆 *huan* < *hwanX* < **N-kon*' (匣元) (reconstructions: Wolfgang Behr, personal communication, March 31st, 2004).

¹¹⁶ The reconstructions are: 弧 *hú* < *hu* < **gwa* (匣魚) and 稷 *jì* < *tsik* < **tsj+k* (精職) (*A Handbook of Old Chinese Phonology*, p.766). Hirase Takao did not take the graph as 弧 *hú* but matched it with 稷 *jì* via a problematic analysis of its graphic form, see: Hirase Takao, "Kōma Meisho 「𠄎」・「𠄎」 no Jishaku to Sono Kanren Mondai". It is interesting to note that the name of Zhao Ji's father, Zhao Wu, appears to be a close match for the [弧] *hú*: 弧 *hú* < *hu* < **gwa* (匣魚) and 午 *wú* < *nguX* < **nga*' (疑魚) (*A Handbook of Old Chinese Phonology*, p.795).

¹¹⁷ For details, see the footnote with the example of the Lineage Covenant text given in section 1.3.1.

¹¹⁸ *Houma Mengshu*, pp. 72 – 73 and pp.401 – 420 (tables of pit contents); Susan Roosevelt Weld, "Covenant in Jin's Walled Cities: The Discoveries at Houma and Wenxian", pp.394 – 395; Zhu Fenghan, "Houma Mengshu Zhi Neirong Yu Niandai Kaolue".

¹¹⁹ Susan Roosevelt Weld, "Covenant in Jin's Walled Cities: The Discoveries at Houma and Wenxian", p.413.

they were buried at the same time. The Lineage Covenant Texts, as a group, are assumed to form a series of related covenants, although they cannot all have been buried on a single day since, in some cases, they are found in pits which overlap each other, i.e. where an earlier pit had been dug into when a later pit was prepared.¹²⁰

It seems reasonable, then, to consider the Lineage Covenant Texts, including the dated tablet 16:3, and the Pledge Texts, to be part of a single series of covenants, most probably all dealing with a single issue. It does not, however, automatically follow that the other categories of Houma text are part of this covenant series or related to the same event. All 58 Confiscation Texts were found in a single pit (pit 67), and they have no date and mention no enemy names. A small number of the covenantor names (single-character personal names) on these tablets match those on other tablets suggesting that some of the same people may have been covenanting. Their content is generally taken to be a prohibition on the seizing of property and people.¹²¹ There is no direct evidence that these tablets are directly related to the events reflected in Lineage Covenant and Pledge texts or that they were buried at the same time.

The Houma Curse Texts comprise of three damaged tablets, written in black ink, from pit 105. It is on one of these fragments that we find the name Zhonghang Yin, one of the key pieces of evidence used to link the tablets to the 497 BC Zhao Yang incident. However, there is no evidence that these tablets are directly related to the events reflected in the other Houma tablets. The authors of the *Houma Mengshu* argue that since pit 105 is very close to other covenant pits, but does not cut into them, this suggests it was contemporary with these other pits and their covenants, but this is hardly conclusive evidence and it does not follow that the content of these covenants and the other covenants must be related, even if their dates are. It may be that the black-ink tablets from pit 105 are related to the Zhao Yang incident but this does not prove that all the other tablets are also related to

¹²⁰ *Houma Mengshu*, p.18; Zhu Fenghan, "Houma Mengshu Zhi Neirong Yu Niandai Kaolüe".

¹²¹ Susan Roosevelt Weld, "Covenant in Jin's Walled Cities: The Discoveries at Houma and Wenxian", pp.401 – 406; Zeng Zhixiong, "Houma Mengshu Yanjiu", pp.200 – 201; Qiu Xigui, "Cong Ji Jian Zhou Dai Tongqi Mingwen Kan Zongfa Zhidu Xia De Suoyouzhi".

those events.¹²² The apparent contradiction between the occurrence of the name Zhonghang Yin in these tablets and what appears to be a reference to Zhao Huanzi (Zhao Jia), in those tablets which refer to the covenant lord as *jiā* 嘉, is what led Li Xueqin to his argument, introduced above, that while the tablets do relate to the 497 BC incident, a young Zhao Huanzi was, nevertheless, the covenant lord, but acting as proxy for Zhao Yang who was not present at the time.

Overall, there is reasonably persuasive evidence to see the Lineage Covenant texts and the Pledge texts as part of a single series of covenants, but there is no direct evidence to link them with the other categories of texts from Houma. It is clearly possible that the terrace was used on different occasions, over many years, for covenants dealing with unconnected events.

The Wenxian tablets show more variety in their content than the Houma tablets. Several of the Wenxian pits, however, do share Oath Type 1 texts, an example of which was given above. The majority of the Wenxian texts, several thousand tablets, are of this type. Oath Type 1 is a straightforward oath of loyalty, promising death to anyone defecting to the enemy camp. Some of the other Wenxian categories give lists of enemies, similar to the lists found in the Houma tablets.¹²³ Zhao Shigang, as discussed above, believes that both the Houma and Wenxian tablets are related to the same inter-ministerial feud. However, as we will see in Chapter Three, there are other Wenxian categories on topics which have no obvious connection to such a feud. These include texts which aim to prohibit the posting of notices in a town called Shaoqu 少曲, and others which demand the covenantor fulfil duties related to sacrifice. Such examples suggest the covenants could be employed to deal with very local and very specific issues, many of which may have had little wider historical import. We should not assume we will find corresponding records in the transmitted texts for such examples. The received histories are selective and incomplete, as archaeological finds have proved, and it is quite possible that even an event like the huge gathering suggested by the

¹²² Gao Ming has made this point: Gao Ming, "Houma Zaishu Mengzhu Kao", pp.112 – 113.

¹²³ One name, Dong Zheng 董(董)政, appears in both the Houma and Wenxian enemy lists. See: Zhao Shigang and Luo Taoxiang, "Lun Wenxian Mengshu Yu Houma Mengshu ...", p.160.

thousands of Type 1 tablets at Wenxian, may not have been recorded in the histories. Susan Weld, in her dissertation on the covenant tablets, comments on this issue:

In most cases, this provincial level of the Jin nobility is largely invisible in the historical sources, which tend to focus on the court, the capital and external affairs. Because the Nanyang towns had strong ties to the Zhou, and, even earlier, to the Yin dynastic centers, however, the sources allow brief glimpses of an entrenched local nobility that the Jin rulers had to win over before they could translate nominal into true control. It is likely, albeit difficult to prove, that some of the covenantors of Houma and Wenxian represented these “invisible” local elites, whose support the major lineages had to win to consolidate power and establish unified areas of suzerainty. The possibility that the events at Houma and Wenxian involved otherwise undocumented local elites might explain, on one hand, why scholars have experienced such difficulty identifying the many names on the texts with historical characters, and suggest, on the other, that reliance on archaeological, rather than historical, materials may be the most fruitful way to approach the texts.¹²⁴

The five points raised in this section are some of the main objections that can be levelled against those who have attempted to match the Houma and Wenxian texts with particular historical incidents recorded in transmitted texts.

This concludes the introduction to the Houma and Wenxian tablets, in the next section I will consider the genre to which these texts belong.

¹²⁴ Susan Roosevelt Weld, “Covenant in Jin’s Walled Cities: The Discoveries at Houma and Wenxian”, p.432.

Part 4

1.4 Genre and the Wenxian texts: questions of terminology

While most scholars agree that the Houma and Wenxian texts should be identified as covenants (*méngshū* 盟書), they were not recognized as such when they were first excavated.¹²⁵ The first article to describe the tablets as covenants was by Guo Moruo.¹²⁶ Even now, there are still those who argue that this is not the correct designation. Qi Guiyan 戚桂宴, for example, argues that the form of the Houma texts, each text having the name of an individual covenantor, means that they are *shì* 誓 (“oaths”).¹²⁷ We also find a number of different terms used in English to describe the texts, for example “covenant texts” and “collective sacrificial oaths”.¹²⁸ There are also several terms in the Houma and Wenxian tablets themselves which refer to the texts and the event of which they are a part.

It is necessary, then, to consider the genre to which these texts belong and discuss and clarify relevant terminology. In this section I will first consider the English term “covenant” and related words. I will then compare the Houma and Wenxian texts, at the level of structure and general content, to covenants of the ancient Near East. Finally I will consider early Chinese definitions of *méng* 盟 “covenant”. From this, I conclude that both the terms “covenant” and “oath” may be used to describe the Houma and Wenxian texts. “Covenant” on the basis that the texts and ceremony of which they were part conform to the definition of “covenant” as used in works in English on this institution as practised in ancient cultures, as well as to the early Chinese concept of *méng* 盟, for which the standard translation is “covenant”. “Oath” because a covenant is almost always based on an oath, and this is true of the Houma and Wenxian texts: the majority of the texts may be described as “loyalty oaths” as well as “covenants”.

¹²⁵ Zhang Han, “Houma Dong Zhou Yizhi Faxian Jin Guo Zhushu Wenzhi”.

¹²⁶ Guo Moruo, “Houma Mengshu Shitan”.

¹²⁷ Qi Guiyan, “Houma Shi Jian Yanjiu”, pp.73 – 74.

¹²⁸ Susan Weld refers to the tablets as covenants, Mark Lewis uses the term “collective sacrificial oath” as well as “covenant.” See: Susan Roosevelt Weld, “Covenant in Jin’s Walled Cities: The Discoveries at Houma and Wenxian”; Mark Edward Lewis, “Warring States Political History”, pp.599 – 600.

1.4.1 “Covenant” and related terminology

I will first clarify the use of the English terminology needed for discussing these texts. The four relevant English terms are: “pledge”, “curse”, “oath” and “covenant”.

A “pledge” is a reasonably simple concept, the following definition, one of several given for this word in the *Oxford English Dictionary*, is most relevant to the Houma and Wenxian texts:

Anything handed over to or put in the possession of another, as security for the performance of a contract or the payment of a debt, or as a guarantee of good faith, etc., and liable to forfeiture in case of failure.¹²⁹

The following definition, from *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, defines pledge in its relation to oath:

The things one swears by are pledges, and the promises to which one binds oneself in swearing by things are oaths.¹³⁰

Thus, if one swears by one’s life, then one’s life is the pledge and it becomes forfeit if the oath is broken. Before looking at the term “oath” itself, let us first deal with the related word, “curse”. The *Oxford English Dictionary* gives the following definition (only the more relevant section of the definition is quoted):

An utterance consigning, or supposed or intended to consign, (a person or thing) to spiritual and temporal evil, the vengeance of the deity, the blasting of malignant fate, etc.¹³¹

A more concise definition is given in the *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics* (the entry is on “cursing and blessing”):

A curse or blessing is a wish, expressed in words, that evil or good may befall a certain person.¹³²

¹²⁹ *Oxford English Dictionary*, 2nd ed., 1989 [online] available from <http://dictionary.oed.com/entrance.dtl>

¹³⁰ Mircea Eliade ed., *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, s.v. “Vows and Oaths”, Vol.15, p.302.

¹³¹ *Oxford English Dictionary*, 2nd ed., 1989 [online] available from <http://dictionary.oed.com/entrance.dtl>

¹³² James Hastings ed., *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, s.v. “Cursing and Blessing”, Vol.4, p.367.

The *Zu Chu Wen* 詛楚文 is an example of a curse. It was used by the Qin state in the third century BC to entreat the gods to punish the state of Chu who, in attacking Qin, had, in Qin's view, broken covenants made between the two states.¹³³ It is an example in which the utterer of the curse hopes it will be immediately effective. However, in the context of oath and covenant, it is important to understand that a curse may be, using Eliade's term, "provisional", that is to say, a curse can be uttered with a condition attached, such that it will be triggered only in the case of that condition being fulfilled. Eliade gives the example: "If anyone should disturb this tomb, may he suffer such-and-such."¹³⁴ An important characteristic of a curse, with respect to oath and covenant, is that it can be directed at the speaker, i.e. it can be a self-curse, a self-imprecation. With these two points in mind, consider the following definition of "oath" (the term "conditional" here is equivalent to the "provisional" used by Eliade):

An oath may be regarded as 'essentially a conditional self-imprecation, a curse by which a person calls down upon himself some evil in the event of what he says not being true.'¹³⁵

An example is: "If I turn traitor, may I be eaten up by this dagger or spear!"¹³⁶

Above I quoted a definition of oath which related oath to the pledge: "The things one swears by are pledges, and the promises to which one binds oneself in swearing by things are oaths." The pledge is that which is forfeited in the case of violation of the oath, thus, in the example of oath just given, the individual is pledging his life. It is the self-imprecation which identifies the pledge. The pledge is not always the life of the swearer, but can be an object or person cherished by him or her.

We have defined oath as characterized by a conditional self-imprecation and a pledge, but, in many examples, there are two further aspects to an oath. These are,

¹³³ *Shiguwen Yanjiu Zu Chu Wen Kaoshi*.

¹³⁴ Mircea Eliade ed., *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, s.v. "Cursing", Vol.4, p.184.

¹³⁵ James Hastings ed., *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, s.v. "Cursing and Blessing", Vol.4, p.373.

¹³⁶ A Malay oath, see: James Hastings ed., *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, s.v. "Cursing and Blessing", Vol.4, p.373.

in the words of Walter Burkert: “the use of witnesses to guarantee a shared mental world, and the use of ritual to create realistic signs, to affix an ineradicable seal by the imprinting function of awe. ... Unseen partners share the knowledge, and nonobvious causality wields coercive power.”¹³⁷ Witnesses are not human, they are easily identifiable objects, either man-made or natural, or gods, afforded the power to keep constant watch over the swearer of the oath, ready to trigger the curse if the oath is broken. A common example, seen in oaths from many different parts of the ancient world, is the sun, which, from its elevated position, observes everything.¹³⁸

The other aspect Burkert identifies as commonly accompanying oaths is ritual. Ritual provides a spectacle and experience which aims to deeply affect the swearer of the oath, etching the experience in his or her mind. To this end ritual is conducted with solemnity, ceremony and often aims at sensory overload, in order to “give validity to the assertions, imprecations, and curses, and to demonstrate irreversibility.”¹³⁹ Ritual takes many forms, a common example is the use of animal sacrifice, often used to symbolically represent the fate of the swearer should he break the oath. A less dramatic form is the throwing away of an object to symbolize the death of the swearer or the irreversibility of the oath.

Burkert stresses the importance of oath in the ancient world:

‘Oaths are encountered among all peoples and in all cultures. They are a primal symbol of religion.’ Oaths were indispensable in social interactions at all levels, economic and juridical, private and public, intra-tribal and international. No contract, no treaty, no administration of justice proceeds without an oath. This was the one place where religion, morality, and law definitely met.¹⁴⁰

Furthermore, unlike modern oath, which assumes a spoken form only, ancient oath was frequently written down.¹⁴¹

¹³⁷ Walter Burkert, *Creation of the Sacred*, p.171.

¹³⁸ Walter Burkert, *Creation of the Sacred*, p.171.

¹³⁹ Walter Burkert, *Creation of the Sacred*, p.173.

¹⁴⁰ Walter Burkert, *Creation of the Sacred*, p.169.

¹⁴¹ Walter Burkert, *Creation of the Sacred*, p.175.

An oath, then, is a conditional self-imprecation in which something is pledged, and the taking of the oath is frequently accompanied by non-human witnesses and ritual and, at least in ancient times, the oath could be written down.

Oaths are essential to covenants. The English term “covenant” derives from the Latin *convenire* “to come together”, “to agree.” Definitions which seek to describe their function are, however, somewhat complicated. Firstly, a distinction must be made between modern usage of the term and ancient covenant. In modern law “covenant” is used as a specialized term and is irrelevant to our discussion. As a political term a modern definition is:

A covenant is a morally informed agreement or pact between people or parties having an independent and sufficiently equal status: it is based on voluntary consent and established by mutual oaths or promises witnessed by the relevant transcendent authority. A covenant provides for joint obligation and action to achieve defined ends (limited or comprehensive) under conditions of mutual respect that protect the individual integrities of all the parties to it. Every covenant involves consent. Most are meant to be of unlimited duration, if not perpetual. Covenants can bind any number of partners for a variety of purposes, but in essence they are political in that their bonds are used principally to create relationships best understood in political terms.¹⁴²

This definition observes, as we have said, that oaths are used in covenants: covenant is, “established by mutual oaths or promises witnessed by the relevant transcendent authority.” The political nature of covenant is stressed and this corresponds to the desired function of the Houma and Wenxian texts. However, the characterization of covenant as mutual in all aspects does not conform to covenant in the ancient world. Ancient covenant did not have to be mutual, nor did there have to be mutual consent, nor did the parties have to be of a “sufficiently equal status”, nor did individual integrity need to be protected. The *New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge*, in its entry on covenant, points out that, while the English term “generally applies to a contract between two parties acting freely, ... both the Hebrew and the Greek words may be used of anything binding upon the two parties to any transaction, whether the terms are accepted voluntarily

¹⁴² Robert Wuthnow ed., *The Encyclopedia of Politics and Religion*, s.v. “Covenant”, p.194.

or imposed by one of the parties or by another.”¹⁴³ In such covenants only one party may be under obligation, for example *The Encyclopedia of Religion* describes one category of covenant between the deity and Israel: “The deity undertook no specific obligation, but the human partners swore to abide by certain stipulations, the penalty for disobedience being calamitous curse on the community and ultimately its exile.”¹⁴⁴ The entry refers to this as a “covenant of obligation” (as oppose to the “covenant of grant” in which the deity grants something, e.g. land). In the Houma and Wenxian covenants a similar relationship is established between a human ruler, i.e. the covenant lord, and groups of people under his authority. A concise definition of covenant which includes the possibility for unilateral (i.e. one way) covenant is given in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*:

A ‘covenant’ is an agreement enacted between two parties in which one or both make promises under oath to perform or refrain from certain actions stipulated in advance.¹⁴⁵

Thus, covenant is a broad category which encompasses ancient treaty, oaths between people and deities, and oaths among people, such as a loyalty oath to a ruler. The same entry in the *The Anchor Bible Dictionary* gives a more involved definition under a section on the “nature of ancient covenant”:

By their very nature, covenants are complex *enactments*. As complex acts they combine: (1) historical events that create relationships, usually (though not necessarily) between unequal partners; (2) customary ways of thinking characteristic of both parties, especially common religious ideas associated with deities; (3) descriptions of norms for future behavior (which are often confused with ‘laws’); (4) literary or oral forms in which the agreement is couched; and (5) almost always some ritual act that is regarded as essential to the ratification of the binding promise. It follows that a covenant cannot be understood merely by regarding it as a rigid literary form, nor can it be understood by reducing it to a literary law code, a ritual act, or a theological or political idea or concept.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴³ Samuel Macaulay Jackson ed., *The New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge*, s.v. “Covenant”, Vol.3, p.287.

¹⁴⁴ Mircea Eliade ed., *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, s.v. “Covenant”, Vol.4, p.134.

¹⁴⁵ David Noel Freedman ed., *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, s.v. “Covenant”, Vol.1, p.1179.

¹⁴⁶ David Noel Freedman ed., *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, s.v. “Covenant”, Vol.1, p.1180.

In light of these definitions, there is no doubt that the Houma and Wenxian texts can be categorized as covenants. They bring together a covenant lord, who is the head of a lineage, and members of his clan and, what appear to be other clans which were also under his authority or which were, at that time, coming under his authority. The relationship is clearly unequal: the clan members are swearing an oath to fulfil certain obligations stipulated by the covenant lord. The oath is sanctioned by a spirit generally thought to be an ancestor, or ancestors, of the ruling family of the Jin state in which all these clans are based. The language used is highly formulaic and specialized. The agreement was clearly accompanied by a ritual ceremony involving sacrifice and offerings.

Understanding the aim of covenant in ancient culture also helps better define the term. Covenant is frequently used as a tool of political control. As the definition of the modern covenant given above said: "in essence they are political in that their bonds are used principally to create relationships best understood in political terms." Of ancient covenant, the *Encyclopedia Britannica* says:

Covenants in the ancient world were solemn agreements by which societies attempted to regularize the behaviour of both individuals and social organizations, particularly in those contexts in which social control was either inadequate or nonexistent.¹⁴⁷

And later on in the same article:

Covenant historically has been a means by which new communities are formed, particularly in times of rapid change, social dislocation, or political breakdown. Covenants have rarely been the actual instruments by which societies actually functioned for long, but they are extremely frequent as ideological foundations for sociopolitical legitimacy.¹⁴⁸

The content of the majority of Houma and Wenxian covenants suggests they were created by the heads of the Zhao and Han lineages in order to reconsolidate their

¹⁴⁷ *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 2003, [online] [accessed June 6, 2003] s.v. "Covenant", available from <http://www.search.eb.com/eb/article?eu=117214>

¹⁴⁸ *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 2003, [online] [accessed June 6, 2003] s.v. "Covenant", available from <http://www.search.eb.com/eb/article?eu=117214>

authority over their respective clans, and realign the internal structure of those under their authority in order to reflect new and broken loyalties. Such a situation closely corresponds to the purpose of covenant described in these definitions. If we accept the theory that the Houma and Wenxian covenants were a result of the ministerial-family struggles in the Jin state at the start of the fifth century BC, a period in which the traditional Zhou political structure, based on the so called *zōngfǎ* 宗法 kinship system, had broken down, then the correspondence with the above definitions becomes even closer.

1.4.2 Structural and functional similarities between the Houma and Wenxian texts and covenants of the ancient Near East

An instructive comparison may be made between the Houma and Wenxian texts and covenants from the ancient Near East which take the form of treaties and loyalty oaths: the structure and intention of the Houma and Wenxian texts are very similar to these covenants.¹⁴⁹ Hittite treaties had the following basic structure:

- 1) a preamble giving the title of the great king who is granting the treaty;
- 2) a historical prologue, describing past relations between the greater and the lesser kings, emphasizing the kindness of the great king and intended to lay the basis for obedience to the terms of the pact;
- 3) the stipulations, obligations on the vassal;
- 4) provision for deposit of the treaty in the temple and periodic public reading;
- 5) a list of the gods who witness the treaty and who will enforce it;
- 6) blessings for obedience and curses for disobedience.¹⁵⁰

In her dissertation on the Houma and Wenxian tablets, Susan Weld pointed that such treaties “were concerned with some of the same issues as the covenants of the *Zuo Zhuan* (loyalty, mutual protection, tribute, military support and return of fugitives) and included some of the same formal elements as the texts of Houma

¹⁴⁹ This similarity has previously been noted by Susan R. Weld: Susan Roosevelt Weld, “Covenant in Jin’s Walled Cities: The Discoveries at Houma and Wenxian”, p.46, note 1. For discussion of ancient Near East treaties and loyalty oaths, see: Dennis J. McCarthy, *Treaty and Covenant*, p.118; Simo Parpola and Kazuko Watanabe, *Neo-Assyrian Treaties and Loyalty Oaths*, pp.XV – XXXIV.

¹⁵⁰ Taken from: Mircea Eliade ed., *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, s.v. “Covenant”, Vol.4, p.135, with the addition of clause (4) from a similar description in: *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 2003, [online] [accessed June 6, 2003] s.v. “Covenant”, available from <http://www.search.eb.com/cb/article?eu=117214>

and Wenxian (name clause, list of stipulations about future behavior, submission to gods called upon to witness the agreement, and imprecation).”¹⁵¹

Unlike the Hittite “preamble,” the Houma and Wenxian “name clause” gives the name of the covenantor rather than the covenant lord, whose name or title usually appears in the first stipulation which demands that the covenantor display loyalty to him. The “opening phrase” found in some of the Wenxian texts declares: “The Decree on the *gui* [says]”. This plays a similar role of introducing the text as phrases such as “These are the words of [king’s name, title, etc.]” found on the Near East examples. Clause (4) of the Near East treaties, “Provision for the deposit of the treaty in the temple” is not standard in the Houma and Wenxian text but what appears to be a similar idea is seen in the Houma Pledge Text: “After having pledged, [if he] furthermore, dare not [have] shamans, [ritual] pronouncers and scribes make offerings and report this [i.e. the pledge] at the place of the mighty [former] ruler/s [i.e. a temple],... .”

The only clause from the Near Eastern treaties that has no parallel in the Houma and Wenxian texts is the second, the historical prologue. But, interestingly, this clause is omitted in later Near Eastern treaties which thus appear even closer in basic structure to the Houma and Wenxian texts. *The Anchor Bible Dictionary* gives the basic form of late Assyrian (around the seventh century BC) texts that it categorizes as “loyalty oaths”:

- 1) the preamble, giving the name and titles of the Assyrian king, and the name of the vassal who is placed under oath, together with his descendants and the population of his realm;
- 2) the designation of the Assyrian ruler or successor to whom loyalty is due;
- 3) the invocation of the deities in whose presence the vassal swears;
- 4) the definition of the acts of commission and omission that subject the vassal to the curses;
- 5) the curses, or evils, brought upon the disobedient vassal by each deity,¹⁵²

¹⁵¹ Susan Roosevelt Weld, “Covenant in Jin’s Walled Cities: The Discoveries at Houma and Wenxian”, p.46, note 1.

¹⁵² David Noel Freedman ed., *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, s.v. “Covenant”, Vol.1, p.1182.

The basic elements of the Houma and Wenxian texts are all here, the preamble names the vassal who is placed under oath just as the Houma and Wenxian name clause names the covenantor. Although the Houma and Wenxian texts do not have a separate clause for the name of the covenant lord, they do often name him and demand loyalty be shown to him in the first stipulation. In the Assyrian oath the demands of the oath come after the invocation of the deities while in the Houma and Wenxian texts the submission clause, invoking the spirit, comes after the stipulations. In both cases the imprecation is the last item.

The *Anchor Bible Dictionary* notes the common absence, in these later Near Eastern oaths, of the historical preamble that had stressed the benefits to the vassal of the arrangement and concludes:

The ideological matrix of these loyalty oaths suggests that the only motivation for obedience was simply the *self-interested desire* to avoid the fate so graphically illustrated in the Assyrian texts and reliefs, in sharp contrast to the *gratitude* that was supposed to be the foundation of obedience in the Late Bronze Hittite treaties.¹⁵³

This again, reminds us of the Houma and Wenxian texts in which the covenant lord clearly feels no compulsion to mention in the texts any benefit the covenantors have received, or will receive, through their relationship with him.

The content and nature of these and later loyalty oaths from the ancient Near East and Greece have further similarities to the Houma and Wenxian texts. Moshe Weinfield identifies the basic content of the ancient Near East and West oaths as: “(a) loyalty to the king and his dynasty; (b) obligation to act against rebels; (c) curses for treaty breakers.”¹⁵⁴ The majority of the Houma and Wenxian texts match these descriptions: a stipulation requiring loyalty to the covenant lord, followed by a stipulation concerning enemies, either prohibiting the covenantor from joining them or contacting them, or requiring that they be apprehended or killed, and the final clause is a curse.

¹⁵³ David Noel Freedman ed., *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, s.v. “Covenant”, Vol.1, p.1182.

¹⁵⁴ Moshe Weinfield, “The Loyalty Oath in the Ancient Near East”, p.380.

Weinfeld also observes that ancient Near East and Greek loyalty oaths involved a mass gathering: “In the Assyrian as well as Biblical covenants we hear of the gathering together of all segments of the population to participate in the covenantal oath.” The same is true for Hittite treaty ceremonies and Greek public oaths.¹⁵⁵ The numbers of tablets found at the Houma and Wenxian sites are evidence of gatherings involving tens, hundreds, sometimes thousands of people during the covenant ceremony.

These ancient Near East texts are broadly referred to as covenants and the similarity of their structure and content to the Houma and Wenxian texts, as described here, supports the use of the same term for these materials. We can also consider the majority of the Houma and Wenxian texts as loyalty oaths .

1.4.3 Early Chinese definitions of *méng* 盟

Looking briefly now at classical definitions of the Chinese word usually translated as covenant, i.e. *méng* 盟, we see that the basic features of covenant mentioned above were also considered defining characteristics of the institution of *méng* in early China . Take this example from the *Zuo Zhuan*:

Zuo Zhuan Ai 哀 12.3 (text: 5th to 4th century BC) (event: 483 BC)¹⁵⁶

公會吳于橐皋，吳子使大宰嚭請尋盟。公不欲，使子貢對曰：“盟，所以周信也，故心以制之，玉帛以奉之，言以結之，明神以要之。

The Duke [of Lu 魯] met with [Viscount] Wu at Tuogao, Viscount Wu sent the Grand Intendant Pi to request a reaffirmation of the covenant. The Duke was not willing and sent Zi Gong to reply, saying: “Covenant is that by which we make trust all round, so it is with the heart/mind that it is created, jades and silks are used to present it [to the spirits], words are used to seal it, the bright spirits sanction it.”

The *méng* is seen to be a tool to bring trust to a relationship and thus it should be a reflection of one’s true thoughts and feelings. It involves ritual, such as offerings of jades and silks, it is verbalized and it is sanctioned by spirits. Note that this

¹⁵⁵ Moshe Weinfeld, “The Loyalty Oath in the Ancient Near East”, pp.392 – 393.

¹⁵⁶ *Chunqiu Zuo Zhuan Zhu*, p.1671.

definition, given in the context of interstate politics, implies mutual consent and mutual benefit, unlike the one-sided covenants we have concentrated on above. Both mutual and unilateral covenants feature in the *Zhou Li*'s description of the duties of the "Supervisor of Covenants" (*sì méng* 司盟):¹⁵⁷

Zhou Li "Qiu Guan 秋官 Si Meng 司盟" (2nd century BC)¹⁵⁸

司盟掌盟載之灋。凡邦國有疑會同，則掌其盟約之載及其禮儀，北面詔明神。既盟，則貳之。盟萬民之犯命者，詛其不信者亦如之。凡民之有約劑者，其貳在司盟。有獄訟者，則使之盟詛。凡盟詛，各以其地域之眾庶共其牲而致焉。既盟，則為司盟共祈酒脯。

[The translation is divided into sections to facilitate discussion:]

- (a) The Supervisor of Covenants is in charge of the rules concerning the writing of the words of covenants. Whenever there is disharmony among the states and they meet, [he] is in charge of the writing of the covenant agreement and the ceremony, facing north [he] proclaims [the words of the covenant] to the bright spirits. Having covenanted, [he] makes copies of it [i.e. the covenant].
- (b) [When] covenanting because there are those among the common people who violate the decrees, and when cursing those who are not faithful, it is also like this [i.e. he has the same role].
- (c) In all cases in which the people have a contract, its copy is [kept] in [the office of] the Supervisor of Covenants.
- (d) [If] there is someone who brings a lawsuit, then make that person covenant.
- (e) In all cases of covenant each [Supervisor of Covenants] relies on the people of his territory to contribute their sacrificial animals and bring them to him. Once the covenant is over, [the people] then supply alcohol and dried meat for the Supervisor of Covenants to use in prayer [related to the covenant].

This demonstrates that in early China, as in the ancient Near East, covenant had various forms and applications. Apart from its use as a tool of interstate diplomacy, mentioned in part (a), part (b) describes the use of covenant for the internal control of those disobeying decrees, a unilateral covenant somewhat similar to those discussed above and to the Houma and Wenxian texts. Part (a) also refers to the

¹⁵⁷ The *Zhou Li* is generally considered to be an idealized description of the offices of the Zhou royal court and the duties of its officials. The text is not known before the Western Han, however, and its descriptions may partly reflect offices and official duties of periods after the Western Zhou.

¹⁵⁸ *Zhou Li Zheng Yi*, pp.2852 – 2857.

ritual involved in covenant, from the writing of the formulaic text to the invoking of the spirits. Part (d) shows another use of covenant, this time in court. The ritual aspect of covenant is again evident in (e): sacrifices and offerings for official covenants were to be provided through contributions by the people. The Houma and Wenxian tablets were accompanied by sacrificed sheep, jades, and one of the Houma jades had the imprint of what is believed to have been silk cloth.¹⁵⁹ One of the Wenxian texts discussed in Chapter Three is concerned with precisely the issue of the supply of goods for ceremonial use.¹⁶⁰

The following definition, from the *Li Ji*, links *shì* 誓, the Chinese term considered equivalent to “oath”, with *méng* 盟 “covenant”. The first part of the passage gives the context, a discussion of definitions related to interstate diplomacy:

Li Ji “Qu Li Xia 曲禮下” (text compiled: 1st century AD)¹⁶¹

諸侯未及期相見，曰遇。相見於卻地，曰會。諸侯使大夫問於諸侯，曰聘。約信，曰誓；涖牲，曰盟。

When lords meet when it is not yet a pre-arranged time, it is called *yù* (“an unarranged meeting”). Meeting in the lands between [states], is called *huì* (“a meeting”). When the lords send ministers to pay respects to other lords, it is called *pìn* (“paying respects”). Binding good faith is called *shì* (“oath”); when a sacrificed animal is used, it is called *méng* (“covenant”).

The context implies that the author considered oath and covenant to be tools of interstate diplomacy. The last two phrases suggest that a covenant (*méng* 盟) is an oath (*shì* 誓) which involves a ceremony in which an animal is sacrificed. The Zheng Xuan (鄭玄 AD 127 – 200) commentary supports this reading.¹⁶² In other words, a *méng* 盟 “covenant” is a *shì* 誓 “oath” accompanied by a ceremonial sacrifice. The discussion above also concluded that oath is part of covenant but did not consider the distinction between the two to be the use of a sacrificial animal, since oath can also include sacrifice. The definition does not appear to hold for

¹⁵⁹ *Houma Mengshu*, p.381, photograph on p.397.

¹⁶⁰ See Chapter Three, section 3.2.1.

¹⁶¹ *Li Ji Shi Jie*, p.48.

¹⁶² *Shisan Jing Zhushu*, p.1266.

early Chinese covenant and oath either. There are examples of *méng* in which no sacrifice is mentioned and *shì* which appear to involve sacrifice.¹⁶³

These early Chinese descriptions of *méng* largely correspond to the definitions of “covenant” discussed earlier. The Chinese passages quoted tend to stress the use of covenant in interstate diplomacy although several other uses are mentioned in the *Zhou Li* passage quoted above. The *Zuo Zhuan* has examples of *méng* employed for a wide variety of agreements between a wide variety of different people and groups, including examples between rulers and clans, similar to the Wenxian and Houma texts.¹⁶⁴ Susan Weld argues that similarities between the archaeological sites at Wenxian and Houma and the description of covenant in classical texts and commentaries also supports the identification of the texts as covenants.¹⁶⁵ One of the Houma and Wenxian texts refers to itself as a *méngzhì* 盟質, a synonym for covenant; the word *méng* itself occurs on the tablets, as do other terms which appear to refer to covenant.¹⁶⁶

Overall, I conclude that the Houma and Wenxian texts are covenants which include oaths and that many of them take the form of loyalty oaths. In the following chapters both “covenant” and “oath” will be used to refer to the texts.

¹⁶³ The following examples suggest the use of sacrifice may not have been the distinguishing factor in a covenant: In the *Gong Yang Zhuan* (Xiang 襄 27), a Gongzi Tuan 公了鯁 covenants with his wife and child but no sacrifice is mentioned, see: *Shisan Jing*, p.2312. In contrast, in the *Zuo Zhuan* (Ding 定 3.4) a Marquis of Cai 蔡 makes what is clearly an oath (although it is not named as a *shì* 誓) but offers a jade to a river which is a type of sacrifice, see: *Chunqiu Zuo Zhuan Zhu*, p.1532. It is possible, however, that the word *méng* 盟 is itself related to blood sacrifice: Qiu Xigui has suggested that this word may be cognate with the word *huāng* 盪 “blood”. The word *huāng* 盪 is found in oracle bones meaning both “blood” and also in front of the words *niú* 牛 “ox” and *yáng* 羊 “sheep”, where it probably denotes a sacrifice, possibly a blood sacrifice if this usage is derived from its original meaning. If this is correct, then perhaps there is something to the definition in the *Li Ji* linking *méng* to blood sacrifice. See: Qiu Xigui, “Shi Yinxu Buci Zhong De ‘盪’ ‘盟’ Deng Zi”.

¹⁶⁴ See, for example: *Chunqiu Zuo Zhuan Zhu* (Xi 僖 28.5), p.469; *Chunqiu Zuo Zhuan Zhu* (Xiang 襄 23.5), pp.1082 – 1083. Other examples are mentioned in: W.A.C.H. Dobson, “Some Legal Instruments of Ancient China: The *Ming* and the *Meng*”.

¹⁶⁵ Susan Roosevelt Weld, “Covenant in Jin’s Walled Citics: The Discoveries at Houma and Wenxian”, p.325, note 5.

¹⁶⁶ See Chapter Three, section 3.1.1.2.2 and the discussion of the character *zhì* 質 in Chapter Three, section 3.2.1.1, graph 2.

Chapter 2: Methodology

The following chapter discusses techniques employed in the analysis of excavated Chinese texts and presents the formalized methodological procedure constructed in order to analyse the Wenxian covenant texts. The chapter focuses on the methodology relevant to the Wenxian covenant tablets; no attempt has been made to cover all methods used in the analysis of every variety of excavated texts.¹

The chapter is divided into two parts: Part 1, “Definitions”, introduces a number of terms of which a clear understanding is essential when discussing the palaeographic analysis of Chinese texts. Part 2, “Proposed Methodological Procedure”, presents the methodological procedure constructed for the analysis of the Wenxian texts. The “Literature Survey” which was originally included in this chapter has been moved to the Appendices in order to comply with word-limit requirements.² It introduces, in the form of a literature survey, the use of the following procedures in the analysis of excavated texts: transcription; palaeographic analysis; application of historical phonology in the identification of words; and explication of the meaning of the text.

¹ For example, bamboo slips are usually disordered and often fragmentary, so that a large part of their interpretation involves ordering the slips, a major undertaking. Another issue we do not face with the Wenxian texts is that of having other extant versions of the same text from different excavations and/or in a received version.

² See Appendix 1.

Part 1

2.1 Definitions

In this section a number of key terms are defined and discussed. A great deal of avoidable confusion is caused as a result of the misunderstanding and misuse of such words. Definitions are given here for the following terms:

- “word” and “character”
- Terms related to “character”:
 - “analogous character set”
 - “standard character”
 - “non-standard character”, “variant character” and “loangraph”
 - “component”, “composite component” and “base component”
 - “calligraphic variation” and “component-level variation”
- Transcription terminology:
 - “transcription”
 - “*lìdìng* 隸定” and “*shìwén* 釋文”
 - “formal transcription” and “direct transcription”
 - “Interpretative transcription”, “broad-style interpretative transcription” and “strict-style interpretative transcription”
- “editing”

2.1.1 Word and character

The distinction between “word” (*cí* 詞) and “character” (*zì* 字) is of fundamental importance in Chinese palaeography. If this distinction is not completely clear in our minds when we deal with excavated texts, and early texts in general, then confusion will ensue.

A “word” is a sound that, in a particular language, at a particular period of time, is recognized as being the spoken symbol used to denote a particular object, action, attribute, etc.

At the time a written symbol is created to represent a particular word, that written symbol then denotes the sound and meaning of that word. In Chinese the written symbols used to denote words are called “characters”. In the early language the great majority of Chinese words, it is generally thought, were

monosyllabic, thus a monosyllabic word was represented with a single character. In the case of binomes, two characters were used, one to represent each syllable.³

It is essential to be aware that the process of creating a character or borrowing a pre-existing character to represent a word could occur more than once for the same word. Thus, one word might be denoted by different characters in different periods and/or regions. Such a process results in a single word denoted by several formally different characters.

It must also be understood that, once a character was created, it immediately become liable to be employed as a phonetic loan. That is to say, it could be used, not only to denote the original word it was created to represent, but also phonetically, making use of its phonetic value only, to represent other words with the same, or very similar, pronunciation.⁴

A single word, it follows, may be denoted by several different characters while a single character may denote more than one word. Due to the adoption of a single Chinese dialect as standard and the standardization of the Chinese script in which it is written, the modern learner of Chinese is not frequently made aware of such possibilities. However, at an earlier stage in the development of the script, links between words and characters were less constrained by a rigid orthography and more liable to change and evolve. This is particularly true for the pre-Qin era, before the empire-wide standardization of writing, when there was a period of more than one thousand years of gradual but continuous development of the script, influenced by language change as well as political events, such as the loss of influence of the Zhou court over the feudal lords

³ Note, however, the suggestion of Qiu Xigui that, in the early stages of the Chinese script, single characters were probably sometimes also used to denote two words by placing two characters together as one, similar to the *héwén* 合文 (“compound characters”) seen in the later script, but not indicated with an added symbol as *héwén* usually are. Qiu gives the example: 𠄎, probably read, at an early stage of the oracle-bone script, as {𠄎} (*dēng chāng* 登鬯) “make an offering of fragrant wine”. See Qiu Xigui (transl. Gilbert L. Mattos and Jerry Norman), *Chinese Writing*, p.11. This practice is still seen in a number of non-standard modern characters, e.g. 涇 *hǎilǐ*, see p.26 of the above cited work.

⁴ This is referred to as the “rebus method”. An equivalent and familiar example in English is the use, in games or puzzles, of a pictographic symbol of one word used to represent a homophone of that word, e.g. a symbol like “≡” is drawn to represent “sea” and can be used to denote “see”. See: William G. Boltz, *The Origin and Early Development of the Chinese Writing System*, pp.60 – 61.

leading to regional development of the script in many different states. The fluid relationship between word and character must be taken into account in the analysis of excavated texts.

2.1.2 Character: related terms

2.1.2.1 Analogous character set

I use the term “analogous character set” to describe those characters created, or developed, to represent a single word. For example, the characters, [愆] and [慎] were both created to represent the word *shèn* {慎} “to be careful/cautious, to be scrupulous and conscientious”.⁵ Thus we can say that [愆] and [慎] are members of the same analogous character set. Loangraphs (defined below) are not members of the analogous character set. Members of the set are, however, all variant characters (defined below). If we wish to use one character to represent the analogous set, we take the currently used standard character (defined below); so we would say that [愆] and [慎] are members of the *shèn* [慎] analogous character set.

Use of this term can sometimes help clarify discussion of variant characters. In Chinese palaeographic scholarship the term *zì* 字 is used to refer to both an individual character and the analogous character set. Thus one finds statements like: “Character A and character B are the same character”, which means: “Character A and character B both belong to the same analogous character set.” Or the statement: “These two characters are, in fact, the same character”, meaning: “These two characters both belong to the same analogous character set.” Since the basic meaning of the term “character” refers to its specific graphic form, such statements, saying that two characters with clearly different forms, are “the same character”, may confuse. I will use “character” to refer to a single character with a distinct form and “analogous character set” for the set of variant forms created or developed to denote a single word.

⁵ The first variant form is discussed in detail in Chapter Three, section 3.2.1.1, graph 2.

2.1.2.2 Standard character

When the term “standard character” is used, it is with respect to the word commonly denoted by that character. The “standard character” is the character that, at a particular time and place, is the standard character used to denote a particular word. For example, the standard character for the word *tí* {題} “topic” is [題] *tí*.⁶ In China, an abbreviated form, that I have seen used by students when taking notes, is [𠄎], i.e. the right-hand component [頁] *yè* has been replaced by the English letter [T]: the [T] acts as a phonetic, its pronunciation being similar to that of *tí* {題}, and, with only two strokes, it is quicker to write than the [頁] *yè* (or [页] *yè*) component it replaces. The form [𠄎] is, then, a non-standard character (in this case a variant character) for the word *tí* {題}, contrasting with the standard character [題] *tí*.

It is important to realize that what was a standard character at one time may now be considered a non-standard character. For example, the standard character for the word *wǎng* {往} “to go toward” in the Wenxian texts is [𠄎] *wǎng*, while the standard character for this word is now [往] *wǎng*, a form which did not exist at the time the Wenxian tablets were written. Now we would say that [往] *wǎng* is the standard character for *wǎng* {往} and [𠄎] *wǎng* is a variant character in the [往] *wǎng* analogous character set.

2.1.2.3 Non-standard character

A non-standard character is a character used to denote a word which is more commonly denoted with another character (i.e. the standard character). As with the term “standard character”, the term is time and place specific. For example, the [𠄎] *wǎng* form, discussed above, was standard for *wǎng* {往} in the Jin script at the beginning of the fifth century BC, now it is non-standard and [往] *wǎng* is standard.

⁶ The simplified form [題] is a formalized “calligraphic variation” of the traditional form, they are the same character. See below for definition of “calligraphic variation”.

There are two types of non-standard character: variant characters and loangraphs. These are defined here:

2.1.2.3.1 Variant character

“Variant characters” are the characters which make up the analogous character set, i.e. they are different characters created or developed to denote a single word. A variant character varies at the component level (defined below) and the replaced or additional component adds semantic or phonetic value to the character.

For example, [往] *wǎng* and [𠄎] *wǎng* are variant characters belonging to the [往] *wǎng* analogous character set. In this particular case, [往] *wǎng* is a development of the earlier form, the [𠄎] *wǎng*. The character [往] *wǎng* results from corruption of the original character into the form [主] *zhǔ*, and the addition of the [彳] *chì* component.

In the discussion of variants one will often hear statements like: “Character A is a variant of character B.” This is acceptable so long one does not assume that character A developed *from* character B: the nature of the connection between the two characters, A and B, is determined by their developmental relationship. For example, the statement: “The character [𠄎] *wǎng* is a variant of the character [往] *wǎng*”, means that [𠄎] *wǎng* is a graphic form that was once used to denote the word that is now denoted by [往] *wǎng*. It must not be understood to mean that [𠄎] *wǎng* developed from [往] *wǎng*; this is, as just discussed, the precise opposite of what actually happened.

2.3.2.3.2 Loangraph

A “loangraph” is a character which is used for its phonetic value only, to denote a word which has the same, or very similar pronunciation to the word

usually or originally denoted by that graph.⁷ When a character is used to denote the word it was created to represent, it has both semantic and phonetic value. If the character is then borrowed as a loangraph it uses only its phonetic value, its original semantic value becomes irrelevant.⁸ For example, in the Wenxian texts the character [各] *gè*, which was originally created to denote the word *gé* {格} “to arrive at”, is used as a loangraph for the word *kè* {恪} “to be prudent, to be respectful, to be reverent”. It is possible that, at this stage, there was no character which had specifically been created to denote the spoken word *kè* {恪}: the character [各] *gè* was borrowed to denote this word in writing. It is helpful, then, to remember that characters are loaned for words, not for other characters.

Note that loangraphs are not the same as variant characters in an analogous character set, which were all created or developed to represent the same word: loangraphs do not belong in the analogous character set for a particular word.

We can observe that in the analysis of palaeographic materials it is uncommon, less well attested, and temporary loangraph usage that tends to cause problems in interpretation. Loangraphs that have become standard characters, such as [我] *wǒ*, denoting *wǒ* {我}, the first-person pronoun, or well attested loangraph usage, such as the use of [女] *nǚ* to denote *rǚ* {汝}, the second person pronoun, will rarely present major obstacles to the analysis. Examples of the type of loans which do cause difficulties are found in the imprecation phrase, common in both the Houma and the Wenxian tablets. Many attempts have been made to match the characters found in this phrase with a suitable set of corresponding

⁷ The relationship between a character, the original word it was created to represent, and the word it loans for, can be complicated. See: Qiu Xigui (trans. Gilbert L. Mattos and Jerry Norman), *Chinese Writing*, Chapter 9.

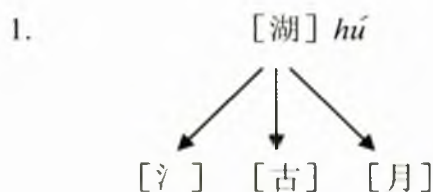
⁸ There are exceptions where the standard meaning of the loangraph is similar to that of the word it is loaned to represent. In many cases this was coincidental, but in some examples the two words are cognate and the link was probably intentional, see: Qiu Xigui (trans. Gilbert L. Mattos and Jerry Norman), *Chinese Writing*, pp.273 – 277. There are also cases like the use of [好] *hǎo* to denote the two words: *hǎo* {好} “good” and *hào* {好} “to like”. In this case the words are clearly cognate, one is derived from the other. In such an example it is possible that the graph [好] *hǎo* was created to represent both these words with the assumption that context would make the required pronunciation clear. If this was the case then we do not have a loaning relationship. If the graph was created with just one of these words in mind and then loaned for the other, then we simply have an intentional loan based on the cognate relationship between the words. On loangraphs and word derivation see: Edwin G. Pulleyblank, “*Jiajie and Xiesheng*”.

words. The characters that make up this phrase are, in most examples: 麻裛非是 *má yí fēi shì*. The interpretation I adopt is *mí yí bī shì* 靡夷彼氏 (“Wipe out that clan”), in which the first, third and fourth characters are all treated as loangraphs (the second character is a variant form).⁹

2.1.2.4 Component, composite component and base component

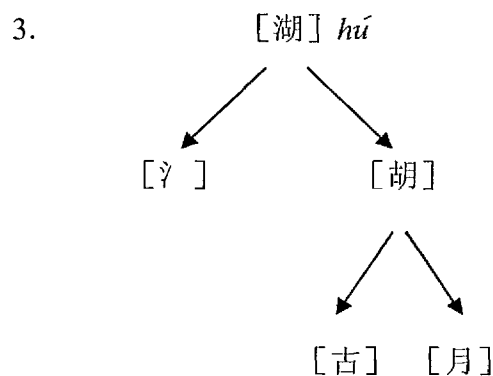
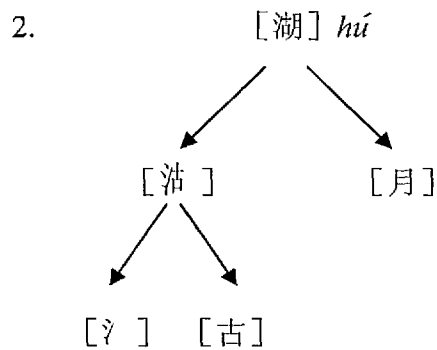
The word “component” is used to refer to the basic units of the Chinese writing system, from which characters are composed. In this regard, two types of Chinese character need to be distinguished: those which cannot be broken down into constituent components, called “non-composite characters”, and those which can be analysed as being formed of separate components, called “composite characters”.¹⁰ For example, [肉] *ròu* is a non-composite character while [胡] *hú* is a composite character composed of [月] (= [肉]) *ròu* (originally indicating semantic category) and [古] *gǔ* (originally indicating phonetic value). Note that when characters are themselves used in composite characters, as [古] *gǔ* and [月] *ròu* are in [胡] *hú*, they are described as “components”.

Some composite characters have more than two components and when analysing the structure of a composite graph we need to be aware of the relationship between the components in that graph. For example, take the character [湖] *hú*, standard for the word *hú* {湖} “lake”. This character is made up of three components: [水] *shuǐ* (= [氵]), [月] *ròu* and [古] *gǔ*. There are, then, three different analyses possible for the structure of this graph:



⁹ For this interpretation see: Zhu Dexi, “Zhanguo Wenzhi Yanjiu (Liu Zhong)”, pp.31 – 32.

¹⁰ This terminology is adopted from: Qiu Xigui (trans. Gilbert L. Mattos and Jerry Norman), *Chinese Writing*, pp.13 – 14.



Since we are interested in how the components signify phonetic and semantic value for the word the character denotes, it is the third option we consider to be an accurate analysis of the structure of the graph: the character [湖] *hú* is composed of the components [氵] *shuǐ* “water”, used as a semantic signifier (“water” is semantically related to “lake”) and [胡] *hú* as the phonetic signifier.¹¹

In order to distinguish between a component which itself has more than one component, e.g. the [胡] *hú* in [湖] *hú*, and a non-composite component, such as [氵] *shuǐ*, we can refer to the former as a “composite component” and the latter as a “base component”.

A “base component” cannot be further divided into meaningful elements, only into strokes which have no phonetic or semantic meaning.¹² Thus “base

¹¹ For further discussion of the division of Chinese characters into components see: Wang Ning, *Hanzi Gouxingxue Jiangzuo*, Chapters Four, Five and *passim*.

¹² However, note that a single stroke is sometimes added to a component to distinguish it from a graphically similar component. This is seen, for example, in Warring States forms of [肉] *ròu* and [月] *yuè*, see: He Linyi, *Zhanguo Wenzhi Tonglun*, p.227.

components” are the lowest level of meaningful unit in the Chinese writing system. Apart from during the initial period of development of the writing system, and perhaps during short periods of upheaval in the script at later periods, we would, at other times, expect to find a limited number of relatively stable base components with which all the characters of the script were composed. Thus, for any particular stage of the script, for example the Jin script of the Wenxian texts, we would expect, given sufficient materials, to be able to isolate the full set of base components.

When considering palaeographic problems, it can help to remember that components indicate sound at the syllable level and that there have, it seems clear, always been many homophonous, or near homophonous, words in Chinese. Thus, when creating a character to represent a word, the phonetic value of that word can, potentially, be represented by any component or character with the same, or similar, phonetic value. This is why variant forms of a single analogous character set often vary in their use of phonetic component. In the same way, some components have similar semantic meanings and this allows for selection and variation of the semantic signifier during character creation (in cases where a semantic component is used).

2.1.2.5 Calligraphic and component-level variation

Variant characters should be distinguished from variation that is the result of different calligraphic styles, and which I refer to as “calligraphic variation”. Variant characters show variation at the level of their constituent components, while calligraphic variation is, generally, variation in the style of stroke, or simplification or complication of a component. Calligraphic variation is either due to corruption of a form or purposefully done for aesthetic or practical reasons.

An example of calligraphic variation is the use of the form [问] *wèn* for [問] *wèn*, now standardized in the simplified script. The two characters, [問] *wèn* and [问] *wèn*, are not variant characters since the [阂] *mén* is just a formalized

calligraphic variation of the [門] *mén*: they are the same component. Thus we can say that [問] *wèn* and [問] *wèn* are the same character but that [問] *wèn* is a calligraphic variation of [問] *wèn* (now formalized in the set of simplified characters).

It is important to distinguish between variant characters and calligraphic variation since calligraphic variation does not affect the component-level structure of a character while a variant character must have some variation at the component level.¹³

2.1.3. Transcription terminology

The following section first considers the English term “transcription”. It then looks at Chinese terms used for transcriptions and gives equivalent English terms: “formal transcription”; “direct transcription” and “interpretative transcription”.

2.1.3.1 Transcription

The relevant definition of the verb “to transcribe” in the *Oxford English Dictionary* is: “To write out in other characters, ...”.¹⁴ The English term is loosely used, when discussing excavated Chinese texts, to include a variety of different types of transcription. There are no generally accepted, clearly defined, English terms for these different types of transcription which, no doubt, leads to some of the confusion over the nature and aims of published transcriptions of excavated texts. I will discuss the Chinese terms, give definitions and suggest English equivalents here.

2.1.3.2 Chinese terminology and English equivalents


Chinese scholars distinguish several types of transcription, the two main


¹³ In some cases, however, a calligraphic variation can develop into a component-level variation, for example the top-left part of the character [𠄎] *gōng* transforms into the component [言] *yán* in some Warring States examples of the graph, see Chapter Three, section 3.2.1.1, graph 4.

¹⁴ *Oxford English Dictionary*, 2nd ed. 1989 [online], available from: <
<http://dictionary.oed.com/entrance.dtl>>

categories being *lìdìng* 隸定 and *shìwén* 釋文:

1. *lìdìng* 隸定

The term *lìdìng* is an abbreviation of the phrase *lìgǔdìng* 隸古定 found in the spurious Kong Anguo 孔安國 introduction to the spurious “ancient script (*gǔwén* 古文)” *Shang Shu*, in reference to the process by which the “ancient script (*gǔwén* 古文)” *Shang Shu*, that is the copy of the *Shang Shu* written in the “ancient script (*gǔwén* 古文)” and supposedly found in the wall of Confucius’s ancestral home, was re-written in the standard script of the time, that is the *lìshū* 隸書 “clerical script”. The term *lìdìng* is used by modern Chinese scholars to refer to the transcription of the form of a graph written in an early script into an equivalent form using the *kǎishū* script. That is to say, the components in the original graph are replaced with the equivalent components of the *kǎishū* script, producing a graph which, even if not attested in lexicons, has recognizable components written in *kǎishū* calligraphic style. For example, in the Wenxian tablets we find the following graph (two examples given):  (WT1K17 – 142)

 (WT1K17 – 152). The graph is made up of the two components, [示] *shì* and [交] *jiāo*, so we can produce a *lìdìng*-type transcription: [校], a graph which is not found in lexicons.

2. *shìwén* 釋文

The term *shìwén*, is used in Chinese palaeography for a transcription which identifies the words represented by the graphs in the original text and gives the standard characters now used to denote those words. In traditional Chinese philology the term *shì* 釋 refers to the explanation of the meaning of individual words and/or their pronunciation. The *wén* 文 of *shìwén* 釋文 means “[Chinese] characters”, so the whole phrase means “explanation of characters”. As employed by modern scholars of Chinese palaeography in China, the term is generally used as a noun to describe a transcription in which words that are denoted in the excavated text using non-standard characters are given using the standard

character now used to denote that word. For example, the graph [𠄎] is frequently used in excavated texts to denote the pronoun *qí* { 其 }, so in a *shìwén* these graphs would be written with the character [其] *qí*. In the same way, the graph discussed above, for which the *lìdìng* was [校], is interpreted in the Wenxian tablets as being used to denote the word *jiǎo* { 徼 } “to seek”, which in the standard script is denoted with the character [徼] *jiǎo*.¹⁵ So, in a *shìwén*-type transcription this graph would be written as [徼] *jiǎo*.

These are the basic definitions of the terms *lìdìng* and *shìwén*. However, Chinese scholars further sub-divide both these categories using the qualifying terms *kuānshì* 寬式 “broad style” and *yánshì* 嚴式 “strict style”. The full terms are given here with the English translation I will adopt for them:

- a. Formal transcription: *kuānshì lìdìng* 寬式隸定
- b. Direct transcription: *yánshì lìdìng* 嚴式隸定
- c. Interpretative transcription: *shìwén* 釋文:
 - i. Broad-style interpretative transcription: *kuānshì shìwén* 寬式釋文
(also described as a transcription using “current characters”, that is: *jīn zì* 今字 or *tōngxíng zì* 通行字)
 - ii. Strict-style interpretative transcription: *yánshì shìwén* 嚴式釋文




These will now be discussed in detail:


2.1.3.2.1 Formal and direct transcription

Here I define the terms “formal transcription” and “direct transcription” and then consider how to deal with unidentified components in such transcriptions.

¹⁵ For a discussion of this interpretation, see section 3.2.1.2.2

2.1.3.2.1.1 Definitions and examples

The definition above for *liding* said that, “the components in the original graph are replaced with the equivalent components of the *kǎishū* script”. It follows, then, that transcription into the *kǎishū* script can only be done when the components from which the ancient graph is composed can be identified. I gave the example of the  (WT1K17 – 142), transcribed as [校], above. Another example is the Houma graph : the components of this form can be recognized and transcribed as the attested character [羣] *qún*.¹⁶ A Wenxian example is  (WT4K6 – 149): the components can be recognized and the form transcribed to give [膚], a form unattested in the *kǎishū* script.¹⁷



One aspect of *liding* transcriptions that arouses debate amongst palaeographers is the treatment of composite components, which, as discussed above, are those components which function as a single unit in a graph, e.g. as a phonetic signifier, but are themselves composed of more than one base component. For example, the Houma graph , has two base components on the right.¹⁸ The top one is [之] *zhī*, the bottom component is [寸] *cùn*. However, they are clearly acting together here as the composite component for which the *kǎishū* form is [寺] *sì* and functioning as a phonetic signifier. Therefore, we have two possible *liding* transcriptions for the right-hand side of this graph: [寺] and [寺] *sì*. In Chinese terminology these two transcriptions would be distinguished using the terms mentioned above, *yánshì* 嚴式 “strict style” and *kuānshì* 寬式 “broad style”. A transcription which gives the *kǎishū* form for composite components, e.g. [寺] *sì*, is a “broad-style *liding* transcription” (*kuānshì liding* 寬式隸定); a transcription which treats each base component separately, e.g. [寺], is a “strict-style *liding* transcription” (*yánshì liding* 嚴式隸定). I will use the



¹⁶ *Houma Mengshu*, p.341, 3:2

¹⁷ The character is being used in the Wenxian text to denote the word *jiē* {皆} “all”.

¹⁸ *Houma Mengshu*, p.322, 156:1.

term “formal transcription” for “broad-style *liding* transcription” and the term “direct transcription” for “strict-style *liding* transcription”.¹⁹

The difference between formal and direct transcriptions can be further illustrated with a related example. In the Houma texts we find the following variant form: , of the graph discussed above, the .²⁰ Here, the right-hand composite component is still clearly [寺] *sì*, but its lower base component is not [寸] *cùn* but [又] *yòu*. These could interchange when used as components in graphs so the formal transcription, i.e. the corresponding *kǎishū* form of the composite component, is still [寺] *sì*. A direct transcription, on the other hand, would give: [爻] .

During the initial stages of analysis of a graph, it is important to consider both its formal and direct transcriptions, treating base components separately as well as together, where possible, as composite components. For example, we often see ancient graphs with the component [彳] *chì* to the right of the form and [止] *zhǐ* at the base of the form. These components frequently occur together acting as a semantic signifier for words related to walking and movement. In most cases the *kǎishū* form of such graphs fuses these components into the form [辵] *chuò*. In a formal transcription we might, then, tend to give [辵] *chuò* whenever we see the two components [彳] *chì* and [止] *zhǐ* in the same graph. However, in some cases this could lead to confusion. Consider the Houma graphs  and .²¹ If we assume that the [彳] *chì* and [止] *zhǐ* are a composite component we would give formal transcriptions of [辵] and [辵] . But, the two graphs are, of course, [從] *cóng* and [徒] *tú* for which the *kǎishū* forms do not fuse the [彳] *chì* and [止] *zhǐ*. Thus it would have been helpful, in these cases,

¹⁹ “Direct transcription” is used by various other scholars but not always with the same definition, see: Appendix 1, Literature Survey, section 5.1.

²⁰ *Houma Mengshu*, p.322, 3:2.

²¹ *Houma Mengshu*, p.329, 3:2 and p.323 1:84.

to make a direct transcription of the forms, e.g. [從] for 從: this would have made the connection with the standard form [從] *cóng* immediately apparent.

Discussion of these examples and their components [寺] *sì* and [辵] *chuò* allows the following observation to be made: formal transcriptions will tend to aid the identification of composite components functioning as phonetic signifiers while direct transcriptions will alert one to the possibility that base components are functioning independently. The formal transcription of [寺] *sì* allows the component to be seen as a likely candidate for the phonetic in the graph

discussed above, the 𠄎, (particularly given the [𠄎] *fù* component which usually functions as a semantic signifier); the direct transcription of [寺] *sì*, i.e.

[寺], would create an obstacle to this train of thought. Note that a direct transcription of the whole graph would give the even more unfamiliar [𠄎]: such a transcription is valid during the very first stages of an analysis, but in other contexts is more likely to cause confusion than elucidation. In the case of the 從 and 徒, the direct transcriptions, separating the [彳] *chì* and [止] *zhǐ*, assist in the analysis, making clear the connection to the standard *kǎishū* characters, [從] *cóng* and [徒] *tú*.

Direct transcriptions also allow us to differentiate between the structures of what were originally different combinations of base components but which developed into a single *kǎishū*-script component. A formal transcription, because it uses the *kǎishū* equivalent of such structures, may not give a clear reflection of the original form of a graph. Thus, in some cases, the formal transcription may distort and mask that original form. Take, for example, the component [夊]: although the standard-script forms of the characters [秦] *qín*, [奉] *fèng*, [奏] *zòu*, [泰] *tài*, and [春] *chūn*, all have this component, in earlier forms the corresponding part of the graph is, in fact, different.²²


²² For this example see: Qiu Xigui (transl. Gilbert L. Mattos and Jerry Norman), *Chinese Writing*, p.130.

Table 7: Sources of the component [夊]. After Qiu Xigui (transl. Gilbert L. Mattos and Jerry Norman), *Chinese Writing*, p.130.

夊	夊	from which “秦” and “春” were derived:		—	
	夊	from which “奉” was derived:		—	
	夊	from which “奏” was derived:		—	
	夊	from which “泰” was derived:		—	
	夊	from which “春” was derived:		—	

A formal transcription would not make the distinctions, all the different types would be transcribed with a [夊].


Direct transcriptions are, then, often vital during the very first stages of analysis in order to determine the graph's original structure and consider possible functions for each base component. In publications, a direct transcription is often used for a previously unidentified graph or to draw the reader's attention to a particularity in a graph's structure. For example, the Wenxian covenant tablets



have interesting variant forms of the character [復] *fù*, such as  (WT4K5 – 63). A discussion of this variation would require a direct transcription: [復].

Calligraphic variants can cause problems when producing transcriptions since they may hinder identification of components or even be mistaken for a component themselves. For example, the form [口] *kǒu* is sometimes added to a graph as a decorative addition with no meaning. This is a calligraphic variant and can be omitted in a direct transcription. One must be extremely careful however when making such decisions. What appears to be a calligraphic variation may turn out to be functioning to distinguish the graph from a formally similar character.²³ Such judgements are best made by comparing the original forms of the graphs in the different contexts in which they appear to determine whether such a symbol is being used.

²³ We gave the example above of an additional stroke used to differentiate [肉] *ròu* and [月] *yuè*, see the notes to section 2.1.2.4.

2.1.3.2.1.2 Dealing with unidentified components in formal and direct transcriptions

We often meet graphs in an excavated text in which one or more of the components cannot be confidently identified, making it impossible to match it with the corresponding *kǎishū* form. For example, in both the Houma and Wenxian covenant tablets we find a graph denoting, it appears, the name of a spirit called upon to sanction the covenant. This name is found in the submission clause and consists of two graphs. The second of these graphs is clearly a [公] *gōng*, but the first has, as yet, no generally accepted interpretation. There is not even agreement as to the correct direct or formal transcription for the graph. The most common form of the graph as it occurs in the tablets is: .²⁴ Several direct transcriptions have been suggested for the graph, for example: [羹]; [晉]; [出]; and [𠄎].²⁵ However, there is no common consensus among scholars as to which of these transcriptions, if any, is correct.²⁶


This example of the Houma and Wenxian graph , highlights a point mentioned earlier: formal and direct transcriptions can only be done meaningfully at the level of the components which make up graphs, for it is the components that signify phonetic and semantic meaning related to the word the graph denotes. Transcription at the level below that, i.e. individual strokes, is, in almost all cases, meaningless. This Houma and Wenxian graph, , appears to be composed of two components, one top, one bottom, and, in making a formal transcription, the challenge is to match these with known *kǎishū* components. We gain nothing from simply squaring off the strokes to get something that superficially resembles a *kǎishū* character, for example [𠄎] for the graph in question. The interpretation of a graph depends on successful interpretation at the

²⁴ *Houma Mengshu*, p.324, 67:4.


²⁵ For [羹] see: Chen Mengjia, “Dong Zhou Mengshi Yu Chutu Zaishu”, p.277; for [晉] see: Tang Lan, “Houma Chutu Jinguo Zhao Jia Zhi Mengzaishu Xin Shi”, p.31; for [出] see: Gao Ming, “Houma Zaishu Mengzhu Kao”, pp.108 – 111; for [𠄎] see: Wu Zhenwu, “Shi Houma Mengshu He Wenxian Mengshu Zhong De ‘Qing Gong’ (Zhaiyao)”.

²⁶ Recent articles demonstrate this: Li Xueqin, for example, believes Wu Zhenwu’s transcription of [𠄎], interpreted as *qīng* {頃}, is correct, while Hao Benxing uses the reading *jīn* {晉} based on the transcription [晉]. See: Li Xueqin, “Houma, Wenxian Mengshu Li Shuo De Zai Kaocha”, p. 166; Hao Benxing, “Henan Wenxian Dongzhou Mengshi Yizhi Fajue Yu Zhengli Qingkuang Huibao”.

component level, since these are the basic meaningful elements of Chinese characters.

Annotators use different methods to indicate, reproduce, or transcribe problematic graphs, such as , in their transcriptions. Some transcriptions use a symbol, such as “ □ ”, to indicate that there is a graph in this position but that no confident transcription is possible. An alternative is to make a copy of the graph, by hand (a *móběn* 摹本 “copy” or *tàběn* 拓本 “rubbing”) or with a scanned photograph, and place it directly in the transcription. This has the benefit of allowing the reader to see the original form of the graph. If the annotator is confident about a particular interpretation, even one disputed by other scholars, he or she may simply give the direct or formal transcriptions and/or an interpretative transcription conforming to his or her interpretation and provide the argument for this analysis in an annotation. Whatever the method, it is essential that a copy of the original graph should be provided so that the reader can consider his or her own analysis.

In some instances, we will come across a graph in which there are components that can be matched with *kāishū* components but also one or more components that cannot be identified. This may occur simply because the correct match has not yet been made, or because, the Chinese script, as mentioned above, had slightly differing sets of base components at different stages of its development, some of which do not have a matching component in the *kāishū* script. In such a case it is not possible to give a precisely corresponding *kāishū* form of this component because it does not exist.

Let us look at a graph found in the Wenxian and Houma tablets with one unidentified component. The graph  (WT5K1 – 23) appears to be made up of three base components: two of the components can be recognized: [𠄎] *jīn* and [心] *xīn*, but the top-left component, [𠄎] , is not found in Xu Shen’s 540

components (*bùshǒu* 部首) in the *Shuo Wen Jie Zi*, nor as a component in the *kǎishū* script. The question, then, is how to make a transcription of this graph.

In such cases, it is legitimate to transcribe the recognizable components and directly copy the unknown component/s. Thus, for this graph, the transcription becomes: [愆]. The form [𠂇] may have been a recognized base component of the Jin script or the top two components of the graph, i.e. [𠂇], may have been a recognized composite component. Whatever the case, we cannot immediately match the component with a component in the *kǎishū* script so we initially give the direct transcription as [愆].

This graph has, in fact, been identified as a variant form of [慎] *shèn*.²⁷ This interpretation argues that the top composite component, i.e. the [𠂇], is a composite component and comes to be represented by the component [𠂇] *zhì* in the small-seal and later scripts. On this basis, a formal transcription of the graph is [愆].

It is important to note that equating [𠂇] and the *kǎishū* [𠂇] *zhì* does not necessarily imply that the form [𠂇] developed directly into [𠂇] *zhì*. In fact, it appears that the composite component that became [𠂇] *zhì* in the *kǎishū* script followed two lines of development, after a split in its original form resulting from corruptions in its left-hand component. One of these two branches eventually died out and the Wenxian form [𠂇] was a stage on that branch. The other line eventually evolved, by way of further corruption of its form, into the [𠂇] *zhì* found in the *kǎishū* script. This being the case, it follows that we can also not treat the base component [𠂇] as an early form of [斤] *jīn*.

This illustrates that the formal transcription of a composite component may not be a *direct* descendant of the composite component being transcribed but is the form used in the *kǎishū* scripts to represent the same composite component.

²⁷ See: Chen Jian, “Shuo Shen”. I discuss this graph in detail in Chapter Three, section 3.2.1.1, graph 2.

Thus when we transcribe [𠄎] as [𠄎] *zhì* we are not saying that the former developed into the latter, only that [𠄎] *zhì* became the standard form for the component that at earlier stages was represented by several different forms, one of which was [𠄎].²⁸

I will conclude this section on formal and direct transcriptions with the following summaries of the definitions discussed here:

A “formal transcription” is the representation of an ancient graph in the *kǎishū* script, created by replacing the base and composite components of the ancient graph with the corresponding base and composite components of the *kǎishū* script. It is important to note that a corresponding component in the *kǎishū* script may, due to changes that took place during the development of the script, be formally different to the equivalent component, or components, in the ancient graph, for example, the [𠄎] and [𠄎] *zhì* discussed above and the [𠄎] mentioned earlier.

A “direct transcription” is a representation, in the *kǎishū* script, of the structure of the ancient graph at the level of base components, created by matching base components of the ancient graph with base components of the *kǎishū* script. In cases where a component cannot be matched it may be directly copied.

If no component in a graph can be matched, no formal or direct transcription is possible, the graph should be reproduced as a copy of its original form.

2.1.3.2 Interpretative transcriptions

Whilst the formal transcription aims only to represent the graphic form of an ancient graph in an equivalent form in the *kǎishū* script, the “interpretative





²⁸ Note that although the [𠄎] has been matched with [𠄎] *zhì*, we do not know what the [𠄎] part of the composite component originally depicted: it is clearly a corruption of its original form but what base component it originally corresponded to has not been determined. If that component were known, we could make a direct transcription in which we would identify every component but, until then, the only direct transcription possible is the hybrid style in which this part of the graph is a direct copy, i.e. [𠄎].

transcription” (*shìwén* 釋文) aims to present the word that the character denotes. In other words, the formal transcription deals with characters, the interpretative transcription with words. The aim, in an interpretative transcription, is to give, for each character, the word which it is denoting, using the standard character now used to denote that word.

For some graphs the formal transcription itself will be an attested character denoting a word which fits the context in which the graph is found. The interpretative transcription will then use the same character as the formal. In other cases the formal transcription may give an attested variant form of a character, in which case the interpretative transcription would use the standard character rather than the variant. In other cases the formal transcription of a graph may be an attested character but the word this character commonly denotes will not fit the context of the transcription, in which case it is most likely that it is being used as a loangraph and the interpretative transcription will give the standard character for the word it is loaning for. The formal or direct transcriptions of other graphs will give characters that are not attested in lexicons, in which case analysis will be done to determine what word they do denote, and the standard character for that word will be given in the interpretative transcription. Below are examples, all found in the Wenxian covenants, to illustrate the different types of relationship between formal and interpretative transcriptions. The original graph is given, followed by the formal transcription and then the interpretative transcription.

1.  (WT5K14-11) → 自 → 自

This is an example where the formal transcription gives an attested character [自] *zì* which is the standard character for the word *zì* {自} “from” which fits the context perfectly. So, this is a case where the interpretative transcription will be the same as the formal transcription.

2.  (WT4K9-48) → 𠄎 → 往
-  (WT4K6-178) → 𠄎 → 往
-  (WT4K9-570) → 徃 → 往
-  (WT4K9-92) → 𠄎 → 往

These four variant characters interchange at a single position in the text. Analysis reveals that they belong to the same analogous character set and all denote the word *wǎng* {往} “to go forward”, for which the standard character is [往] *wǎng*. Thus, the interpretative transcription will give the standard character [往] *wǎng*.

3.  (HM 195:7)²⁹ → 室 → 主

In this case, the formal transcription is an attested graph, [室] *zhǔ*, the standard graph for the word *zhǔ* {室}, denoting the stone casket, in an ancestral temple, in which the memorial tablet of a dead lord would be kept. In the Wenxian covenant tablets the context in which the graph is used indicates that it should be interpreted as denoting the word *zhǔ* {主} “lord”. The Old Chinese pronunciations of the two words *zhǔ* {室} and *zhǔ* {主} were identical, the character [室] *zhǔ* is being used as a loangraph for the word *zhǔ* {主}. Thus, in the interpretative transcription the character given would be the standard character for this word, i.e. [主] *zhǔ*.

²⁹ Scan from: *Houma Mengshu*, p.314.

4.  (WT1K17 – 142) → 校 → 徼

The graph that the formal transcription gives is unattested. Analysis suggests that the graph denotes the word *jiǎo* {徼} “to seek”. The form [校] is, it is conjectured, a variant character created to denote this word: the [交] *jiāo* component acts as the phonetic component, the [示] *shì* as the semantic component. Since the word it denotes is *jiǎo* {徼}, the standard character for this word, that is [徼] *jiǎo*, is given in the interpretative transcription.

These are examples of the main types of character-to-word relationship one sees when going from a formal transcription to an interpretative transcription. There will also be characters for which we can provide a formal or direct transcription, but we cannot determine which word they originally represented. In such a case, a convention on how to present such characters is needed. In my interpretative transcriptions, for characters like this, I have retained the formal or direct transcription but given it a square border to distinguish it from the other characters. For example, if the graph discussed above, formally transcribed as [校], had not been interpreted, it would be given as 校 in an interpretative transcription of the text.

In the same way that a broad-style and strict-style of *lǐdīng* transcription are recognized, so a “broad-style interpretative transcription” (*kuānshì shìwén* 寬式釋文) and “strict-style interpretative transcription” (*yánsù shìwén* 嚴式釋文) are also distinguished. The terms can be used to differentiate between transcriptions which include both formal and interpretative transcriptions together and those which use an interpretative transcription throughout. A broad-style interpretative transcription is one in which every word that has been identified is represented with the standard character used to denote it and without any other form of transcription. A strict-style interpretative transcription is one in which the interpretative transcription is given in brackets after the formal (or direct) transcription in cases where these two forms are different. For example, if an

ancient text uses [女] *nǚ* to denote the word *rǔ* {汝} “you”, a broad-style interpretative transcription would give only “汝” while the strict-style interpretative transcription would give “女(汝)” – the interpretative transcription placed in brackets after the formal.

In practice, the term *shìwén* “interpretative transcription” is often used alone to refer to a strict-style interpretative transcription. The broad-style interpretative transcription is sometimes described by saying the transcription will use “current characters” (*jīn zì* 今字 or *tōngxíng zì* 通行字). In any interpretative transcription, unidentified graphs will have to be reproduced either as formal or direct transcriptions, copies or scans, or omitted and replaced with a symbol (with the nature of the omission it indicates given in a key).

Some excavated texts have what appear to be punctuation marks of various types. There are very few such marks in the Wenxian covenants but in the Guodian bamboo slips, for example, they are common.³⁰ In a formal transcription one should include all such marks as they may turn out to provide important clues as to the way in which the text was originally divided or read. In the interpretative transcription these are often omitted and modern punctuation added to indicate how the annotator believes the text should be read.

In summary, the interpretative transcription aims to be a representation, in standard characters, of the words that the original scribe wrote down. If the interpretations are correct and it were possible to read the transcription to the scribe who wrote or copied the text (reading in his or her pronunciation), then the scribe would recognize what was said as that which he or she had written down. Note that this would include any mistakes the scribe had made in the writing process as well as any lacunae in our text; producing an interpretative transcription does not usually include significant editing of the text with emendations, additions and so on. Editing is discussed below.

³⁰ Sarah Allan and Crispin Williams ed., *The Guodian Laozi*, pp.34 – 36; pp.134 – 137.

2.1.4 Editing

Editing of an excavated text is concerned with the presentation of the text for publication, the format used, the type of critical apparatus provided and the degree to which problematic passages, e.g. those with corruptions and lacunae, are emended for the sake of readability. For example, in the Wenxian texts, an interpretative transcription of an individual tablet will reflect only what is legible on that tablet. However, if that tablet had illegible graphs but I conjecture as to the words that had been there and add these to my presentation of the text, without indicating in the main body of the text that these are emendations, then this becomes an edited text.

During the analysis of an excavated text, a full interpretative transcription should be produced prior to any attempt to create an edited version. In the publication of the text, particularly the first publication, if an edited version is to be given, it is essential that interpretative and formal transcriptions are also given in some form, so that the reader can see what effect the editing process has had on the original.

Part 2

2.2 Proposed methodological procedure

A procedural methodology for the analysis of the Wenxian materials is described in this section. Examples are not generally given since the use of the procedure is demonstrated in Chapter Three.

2.2.1 The methodological procedure adopted in the analysis of the Wenxian graphs

The flow chart, Figure 25, presents the procedure in diagrammatic form. The steps of the process are discussed in more detail here.

Step 1: Identification of variant forms of a graph (flow chart: cells 1 and 2)

The Wenxian materials repeat a small number of covenants on many different tablets. As a result, we have many different examples of the graphs commonly used in the covenants, thousands in some cases. Due to the repetition of the content and formulaic nature of the covenants, we can be confident that graphs found in the same position in a repeated text are always, apart from a few examples of synonyms and mistakes, denoting exactly the same word. Furthermore, as explained in Chapter One, we are dealing with examples of characters from a single, regional, script tradition, all written over a relatively short period of time. Thus we can be confident that the Wenxian tablets show us a snapshot of the local script, that is the Jin state script, at a discrete period in time.

Although the Wenxian covenant tablets are all written in the same script, we do, nevertheless, see a significant amount of component-level graphic variation among the graphs. That is to say, variants in which individual components are added, omitted, interchanged or corrupted, as oppose to calligraphic variation in which the variation is related to the style of the strokes and adds no information that relates to the word denoted. It thus follows that these component-level variants, as well as the loangraphs we see commonly used in the texts, were

considered legitimate in the script at this time, or at least when used in the writing of covenant tablets.

Component-level variants are extremely helpful in the analysis of these graphs for they can give important clues to the identity of a graph. For example, a variant in which a phonetic component is added to a semantograph would give us a phonetic value for the graph, greatly narrowing the number of words that could be considered a match for the graph.

So, the first stage in the analysis of a particular Wenxian graph was to sort through and categorize all examples with variation at the component-level. This was done by simply looking through the images of the tablets to examine the form of the graph used in each occurrence of the word being dealt with. The images used were black-and-white print-outs of the scanned and enhanced photographs, arranged, by pit and tablet number, in ring binders. I had produced basic transcriptions of the oath type, or types, from each pit, using the more complete and legible tablets. These allowed me to identify all the oath types with examples of the particular graph being examined. I would then look through tablet images and, each time an example of the graph was found and was legible (remember that many tablets were just fragments and many others illegible or only partly legible), I would note whether, compared to the examples already examined, it was a variant. If so, I would make a hand copy of the form. Several examples would be copied for each variant, and notes made on legibility, for use when selecting representative examples to be scanned and included in the written analysis.

Having done this, I would finalize the categorization of the variant forms and select representative examples of each variant. Categorization was based on component-level features, so graphs with a different combination of components would be in separate categories. Before analysis, it was not always clear whether a variant was a true component-level variation or, in fact, a semantically and phonetically meaningless calligraphic variation. At this initial stage ambiguous examples like this were categorized separately.

Variant forms denoting a single word were analysed as a group. Variants can, as stated above, aid the analysis. A convincing interpretation must be able to explain all the variant forms.

Step 2: Breakdown of the variant forms into components (flow chart: cell 3)

A Chinese character is composed of one or more components. The successful interpretation of a graph hinges on accurate identification of these components. Thus the first stage in the analysis of a graph is to determine how many components it is composed of and, if the number is more than one, to separate the graph into individual components. This is done by looking at the image of the graph, or one's copy of it, and then making separate hand copies of those individual components. Deciding on which parts of the graph are individual components can be problematic since a single component may be composed of two separate forms while two separate components can sometimes be in such close proximity that they appear to be one component. In such cases one can only copy out the range of possibilities and test each one using the steps below. At this stage, one should produce both direct and formal transcriptions to give a full range of possibilities when considering the function of each component in the graph.

These first two steps are more or less equivalent to the technique of "Analysis of components" discussed in the literature survey section.

Step 3: Matching of components with attested components (flow chart: cell 4 to 6 and 8 to 13)

The next task is to determine the identity of each component. This is done by comparing the separated components with tables of ancient-form components. This is similar to looking up an unknown character in modern Chinese: one selects a component and looks it up in a radical list in a dictionary.

Tables of components do not exist for each of the early scripts. However, a number of useful materials are available:

1. The *Shuo Wen Jie Zi* 說文解字's table of 540 components (*bùshǒu* 部首).³¹
2. The *Han Jian* 汗簡's component list.
3. The component charts in Gao Ming's *Zhongguo Guwenzixue Tonglun* 中國古文字學通論.
4. The component chart in Chen Chusheng 陳初生's *Jinwen Changyong Zidian* 金文常用字典.

These are lists of components written in small-seal or earlier styles of script, each component matched with its *kǎishū* equivalent. The forms one is trying to identify are compared with the components in these tables in order to identify the equivalent *kǎishū* components.

If one is able to identify all the components in a graph using these lists then one can go on to step 4 below, the reconstruction of the graph using *kǎishū* components. If not, then one has several options. If the graph being analysed has more than one component and at least one of these components can be identified, then one can look up the ancient forms of graphs which have this component and, if the graph being analysed has been previously identified, the form should be found (flow chart cell 6). A list of dictionaries which give ancient forms is given in step 5 below. Note that with only one component identified, some of these works are difficult to consult; even those with graphs categorized under single components will only be useful if the single component one has identified is also the component under which the graph in question is classified in these dictionaries.

To identify a component not found in the component tables given above, one turns to modern collections of excavated examples of ancient graphs. Ideally one should look for the component in graphs of the same, or a closely related, script. So, for the Wenxian graphs, if a component could not be identified from the above tables, one would turn to the character table in the *Houma Mengshu* volume since the Houma and Wenxian tablets use the same script. The script of the Zhongshan 中山 bronze inscriptions is also quite similar to the Wenxian and Houma script and a character table, *Zhongshan Wang Cuo Qi Wenzi Bian* 中山

³¹ Note that if no footnote is given for a title this means the work is listed under its title in the bibliography.

王罍器文字編 is available for these inscriptions.³² In order to look for a matching component among the Houma or Zhongshan graphs, one can page through these tables examining all the examples. One needs to be careful not to be misled by what appears to be a matching component but which is, in fact, part of a more complicated component and not an independently occurring form.

If a matching component is seen in a graph in such tables, the transcription supplied will usually identify that component. However, these tables do not always give direct transcriptions and a formal or interpretative transcription might not include all the components. In this case, one has to investigate the relationship between the ancient form of the graph and its transcribed form in order to identify the relevant component. The annotation for the graph in question should give this information. Otherwise one should consult reference books which discuss the development of graphs. For example, simple summaries of graph development are given in the *Jinwen Changyong Zidian* 金文常用字典 and *Zhanguo Guwen Zidian* 戰國古文字典, and there are detailed discussions in the *Jinwen Gulin* 金文詁林.

If searching for the form among graphs from similar scripts fails to produce matching components, one can search larger collections of graphs, e.g. the *Zhanguo Guwen Zidian* and *Jinwen Bian* 金文編.

Sometimes, what appears to be a matching component may only be formally similar and not, in fact, the same component. This type of confusion occurs less as one becomes more familiar with the script being dealt with.

When analysing components, one must be aware of the large number of calligraphic variants found in Warring States graphs since these can potentially obscure the basic form of a component and make identification difficult. Calligraphic variants affect only the graphic form of a component, not the component's function. They include simplification and complication of forms,

³² Zhang Shouzhong, *Zhongshan Wang Cuo Qi Wenzi Bian*.

changes in certain strokes and so on. An awareness of the range of possible variations is essential when identifying components. A survey of these variants is given by He Linyi in his *Zhanguo Wenzhi Tonglun*.³³

In some cases, one's identification of a particular component may be accurate but the use of that component in the graph one is analysing may be the result of a corruption of the original component. This can easily lead to misinterpretation of the graph. If one has several examples of the same graph one may find the corruption is less complete in certain forms, alerting one to the possibility that corruption is occurring.

Identifying components is part of the technique discussed in the "Analysis of components" section of the Literature Survey (Appendix 1), but, as we have seen, it often involves comparing components with those of other scripts, corresponding to the method called "Comparison". The overlap of these two methods is the reason He Linyi considers "Analysis of components" to be part of "Comparison" and treats them both under one title: "Historical comparison".

In the Literature Survey I also discuss He Linyi's four main steps in graphic analysis. His second step, "For those graphs which are unknown, separate the graph into several different components and compare those components with components in previously identified graphs", covers the process described in my steps 2 and 3.

If it turns out to be impossible to identify all the components in a graph, one's only remaining option is to search for the character itself by paging through collections of graphs, for example the *Jinwen Bian*. If the graph is attested one may find it this way; if it is not attested one may come across forms that will aid the analysis.

³³ He Linyi, *Zhanguo Wenzhi Tonglun*, pp.184 – 242.

Step 4: Reconstruction of the graph using *kǎishū* components (flow chart: cell 7)

Once the components of a graph have been identified, the graph is reconstructed using the *kǎishū* forms of these components, giving a direct transcription of the graph.

If there are base components which may be forming a composite component, a formal transcription is also given with these elements depicted in their composite-component form. One must be flexible with the layout of the components in the reconstruction, considering possible re-arrangements of the components based on one's understanding of how component position was somewhat fluid before standardization. The initial transcription may, in this way, lead to a number of different transcriptions to be considered in the following steps.

The third stage in He Linyi's four main stages of graphic analysis is equivalent to my Step 4, he describes it as: "Reconstruct the graph using the components or form arrived at through analysis and comparison".

Step 5: Matching the transcribed graph with characters in dictionaries and/or collections of ancient forms (flow chart: cell 14 to 18)

By this stage, one has a reconstructed graph composed of *kǎishū* components. The next step is to discover whether or not this reconstructed graph is an attested character. To do this one looks up the form in dictionaries and other collections of graphs. Dictionaries are used which include a large number of early and variant forms, given in either *kǎishū* equivalents or ancient forms or both. Such works include:

1. *Shuo Wen Jie Zi*. 說文解字
2. *Han Jian* 汗簡
3. *Guwen Sisheng Yun* 古文四聲韻
4. *Shike Zhuanwen Bian* 石刻篆文編 (includes the *San Ti Shijing* 三體石經)
5. *Yu Pian* 玉篇
6. *Jinwen Bian* 金文編

7. *Jinwen Xu Bian* 金文續編
8. *Guwenzi Lei Bian* 古文字類編
9. *Zhanguo Guwen Zidian* 戰國古文字典
10. *Jinwen Changyong Zidian* 金文常用字典
11. *Hanyu Da Zidian* 漢語大字典
12. *Qin Han Wei Jin Zhuan-Li Zixing Biao* 秦漢魏晉篆隸字形表

If the graph is found, one then considers its standard uses, step 6 below. If it is found in the *Shuo Wen Jie Zi*, the *Shuo Wen Jie Zi Gulin* 說文解字詁林 should be consulted to determine if there are any known problems with the form given by the *Shuo Wen Jie Zi*. This will avoid the danger of basing an identification on an erroneous form.

If the graph is not found, one should consider whether it could be an unattested stage in the development of an attested form. During the search through dictionaries and collections of ancient forms, attention is paid to any forms, particularly ancient forms, that may be related to the graph being analysed. Aware of the way characters develop, one considers if the graph could be an earlier or later stage of any of these attested forms. One may, in this way, be able to link the graph with an attested character or ancient form, even if their forms are not identical. Such a link would need to be supported by evidence that such development could occur. If, after such consideration, the graph is still not found, one goes to step 8 below which deals with unattested graphs.

Looking for a match for the transcribed form can be considered part of the traditional method of “Comparison”. Considering whether the graph could be an unattested link in the development of a certain character requires the method referred to as “Understanding the principles of the evolution of character form”.

Step 6: Determining the word denoted by an attested character (flow chart: cells 19 and 20)

If the graph does have a matching attested character, the next step is to find out what word or words it is usually used to denote in early Chinese and whether any of these definitions fit the context in which the graph is found.

Standard dictionaries of classical Chinese, as well as dictionaries of palaeographic materials and dictionaries that include classical definitions should be used, these include:

1. *Ci Yuan* 辭源
2. *Hanyu Da Cidian* 漢語大詞典
3. *Dai Kan-Wa Jiten* 大漢和辭典
4. *Zhongwen Da Cidian* 中文大辭典
5. *Zhanguo Guwen Zidian* 戰國古文字典
6. *Jinwen Changyong Zidian* 金文常用字典
2. *Jianming Jinwen Cidian* 簡明金文詞典
3. *Jinwen Xing Yi Tong Jie (Kinbun Keigi Tsūkai)* 金文形義通解
4. *Gudai Hanyu Cidian* 古代漢語詞典
5. *Hanyu Da Zidian* 漢語大字典
6. *Zhonghua Gu Hanyu Zidian* 中華古漢語字典
7. *Wang Li Gu Hanyu Zidian* 王力古漢語字典
12. *Gu Hanyu Changyongzi Zidian* 古漢語常用字字典
13. *Jianming Gu Hanyu Zidian* 簡明古漢語字典
14. *Jingji Zuan Gu* 經籍叢詁
15. *Ci Hai* 辭海
16. *Dictionnaire Classique de la Langue Chinoise*
17. *A Dictionary of Early Zhou Chinese*
18. *Mathews' Chinese-English Dictionary*

Note that the *Shuo Wen Jie Zi* is not included among these dictionaries: the *Shuo Wen Jie Zi* is a dictionary of character etymology and Xu Shen gives what he believed to be the original meaning of the character, not its standard usage.³⁴

Consulting such lexicons, one determines whether the character is recorded as denoting a word that would fit the context in which the graph is found in the excavated material. This, however, assumes that the general context is already clear. When this is not the case, several alternate readings may have to be considered for the passage.

³⁴ As Christoph Harbsmeier says: "...it would be totally misguided to treat the definitions of the *Shuo Wen Chieh Tzu* as a reflection of Han dynasty usage or even of the usage in the Classical literature Hsü Shen was familiar with. Hsü Shen was only interested in such usages in so far as these serve his purpose, which is that of explaining graphs." See: Christoph Harbsmeier, *Science and Civilization in China: Volume 7 Part 1: Language and Logic*, pp.72 – 73.

When consulting dictionaries, a basic principle to adhere to is that suitable usages found in works written much later than the excavated text should not be considered unless there is further good evidence to suggest the usage was already found at that time, e.g. from examples in other dictionaries, or through a concordance search.³⁵

If one finds a suitable word, particularly one for which there are recorded usages similar and contemporary with that found in the excavated text, then one can be reasonably confident that this is the word denoted by the graph. If there are no such examples of similar and contemporary usage, but the word makes good sense in the context, then one should consider other possible interpretations before coming to a final conclusion.

It may be that, when looking in these dictionaries, one finds that the usage that fits the context of the excavated text is a phonetic loan usage of the character. In this case, one should confirm that this phonetic loan usage is found in texts of a similar period to that of the excavated text. If not, one must assess the phonetic similarity of the two words to determine whether the loan was possible in Old Chinese (see step 7 below).

If the attested character that matches the form of the graph being analysed is a character not recorded until a later period, and the word or words it denotes does not fit the context of the excavated text, then, in rare cases, the attested character may be a homograph with the excavated form, that is they share exactly the same form but were created to denote completely different words. If such a case is suspected, then the excavated form must be analysed as if it had no attested form, step 8 below.

If no suitable word is found, then there are two possible explanations: 1. that one's transcription of the graph was wrong and the identification of components should be reconsidered, or 2. that the graph is acting as a loangraph, i.e. the

³⁵ One needs to know the dates of the works quoted in dictionaries to be able to make this judgement. Post-Han works should be easily identifiable as they will tend to be given with the author's name. The dating of pre-Qin texts is problematic, see step 9 below.

identification for the character is correct but it is being used to denote a word related to this character only by virtue of their identical, or close, pronunciation. The next step considers identification of loangraphs.

Step 7: Identification of a loangraph (flow chart: cells 21 to 28)

If an attested character does not appear to fit the context in which it is found, it may well be acting as a loangraph. This section deals with identifying the word a loangraph is denoting. This makes use of historical phonology, one of the seven standard methods of analysis discussed in the Literature Survey.

Firstly, reference works are consulted to see if a suitable loan usage is already known for this character, standard works are:

1. *Guzi Tongjia Huidian* 古字通假會典
2. *Shuo Wen Tong Xun Ding Sheng* 說文通訓定聲

If a suitable word is found, concordances are checked for further evidence of the same loan usage. If one is satisfied, then analysis is complete.

If no suitable loangraph usage is attested, one considers other words the graph could denote. The most likely candidates, that is words in the same *xiéshēng* series as the character, are considered first. These are listed in:

3. *Grammata Serica Recensa*

If this is not successful, then one can consider words whose characters have phonetic components which are known to interchange with the phonetic component in the character one is dealing with: some components frequently interchange with each other as phonetic signifiers. To find out if this is the case for a character, and to identify the commonly interchanged components, one looks up this character, and others with the same phonetic component, in the

Guzi Tongjia Huidian listed above.³⁶ The aim is to see if these characters often interchange as loans with characters which share a particular phonetic component. Then one consults the *xiéshēng* series for these components in the *Grammata Serica Recensa*, considering if any of their definitions fit the context in which the graph was found.

If this fails, then one considers other phonetically close words. This can be done by using those reference works which classify under rhyme groups, so that all the phonetically similar characters are placed together. Works in this category include:

4. *Guzi Tongjia Huidian* 古字通假會典
5. *Shuo Wen Tong Shun Ding Sheng* 說文通訓定聲
6. *Zhanguo Guwen Zidian* 戰國古文字典
7. *Shanggu Yinyun Biao Gao* 上古音韻表稿
8. *Zhou Fagao Shanggu Yinyun Biao* 周法高上古音韻表

One looks up the character in these to see if any of the other graphs collected under the same rhyme group denote a word suitable for the context in which the character is found in the excavated text. If a suitable word is found, one considers how close the phonetic similarity is, using the guidelines given below under “Judging the phonetic similarity between two words”. If the match is good, one considers the words usage in more detail and decides whether it makes good sense in this context. If so, then one has a good candidate for the word loaned for by the graph.

If the semantic context in which the graph appears suggests that it is denoting a particular word, one must assess what evidence there is to support the use of this character as a loangraph for this word by using the guidelines given in the following section.

³⁶ If the character is not a phonogram then one looks up the whole graph for usages where it functions as a composite component in other characters.

Judging the phonetic similarity between two words

The table below gives factors which should be considered when assessing whether a word could loan for another word. Some of these factors are more significant than others. Given the unreliability of Old Chinese reconstructions and lack of understanding of the level of phonetic similarity that was expected when making phonetic loans, as discussed in the Literature Survey, it is difficult to judge precisely the relative importance of each of the factors listed. However, in an initial attempt to give some guidance in this respect, a scale of zero to four (indicated by asterisks), signifying relative importance, has been included for each factor. These are based on the assumption that the ideal for a phonetic loan was homophony, as argued by Serruys.³⁷

The reconstructions used in the thesis are those of William Baxter as described in his *A Handbook of Old Chinese Phonology*.³⁸ This work only gives Old Chinese reconstructions for a limited number of graphs: those for the *Shi Jing* rhyme words are given in alphabetical order (arranged under their *pinyin* readings) in an appendix and a number of others are given in the text of the work. Wolfgang Behr very kindly provided reconstructions for words not included in the handbook. When giving reconstructions the following format is used: the character is given with its modern *pinyin* reading; this is followed by the reconstruction of its Middle Chinese pronunciation and then its Old Chinese pronunciation. For reference, I then give, in brackets, the initial and rhyme group for each word based on Wang Li's reconstruction system.³⁹

³⁷ See the Literature Survey, Appendix 1, section 5.3.4. Standards for comparison would have to be more clearly defined in the table if one was to accept theories of the type given by Pulleyblank for "partial identity" between loanwords based on the difference in pronunciation found between cognate words produced by morphological derivation. This theory is discussed briefly in the section of the Literature Survey just cited.

³⁸ Baxter's *An Etymological Dictionary of Common Chinese Characters* was used in some instances for reconstructions of Middle Chinese.

³⁹ Reconstructions using this system are found in: Guo Xiliang, *Hanzi Guyin Shouce*.

Table 8: Assessing the phonetic similarity between two words**The two words to be compared**

Word	Reconstruction (Baxter)						Traditional analysis		
	Pre-initial	Initial	Medial	Main vowel	Coda	Post coda	Initial group	Rhyme group	<i>Hékǒu</i> or <i>kāikǒu</i>

Assessment of the evidence for phonetic similarity

			Relative importance:
Syllable	initial	Same	***
		Same place of articulation, no nasal/obstruent clash	***
		Same place of articulation, nasal/obstruent clash	**
		Different place of articulation	
	Medial	Both closed (<i>hékǒu</i>) or both open (<i>kāikǒu</i>)	*
		One closed, one open	
	Rhyme group	Same main vowel and coda	***
		Same main vowel, different coda (<i>duìzhuǎn</i>)	**
		Main vowels different (coda same) but these two rhyme groups considered to be close (e.g. rhymes seen in <i>Shi Jing</i> and/or textual evidence for phonetic interchange)	**
		Main vowels different but close (coda same). But little or no evidence for close relationship between these rhyme groups	*
Main vowel and coda both different.			
Textual evidence	The two words are commonly seen to loan for one another.		****
	The two words are occasionally seen to loan for one another		***
	Words with the same phonetic components are commonly seen loaning for one another.		**
	Words from these two rhyme groups are seen loaning for one another		**
	No textual evidence at all for phonetic similarity		
Issues of period and/or provenance	Period	There is evidence that at the time of this suggested loan, these words were phonetically closer than the reconstructions suggest	**
	Place	There is evidence that, due to dialect differences, these words may have been phonetically closer than the reconstructions suggest.	**

Having compared two words in this way a judgement can be made as to the degree of their phonetic similarity and the possibility that one could have loaned for the other.

In general, when considering possible loangraph usage, one should be conservative and aim to have very convincing supporting evidence, ideally textual evidence as well as close phonetic similarity based on the reconstructions. In the annotation for an interpretation suggesting loangraph usage, the strength of the evidence must be clearly stated.

If no convincing loangraph is identified in this way, the graph must be reanalysed or put aside.

Step 8: Determining the word denoted by an unattested graph (flow chart: cells 29 – 45)

This step is needed when the direct or formal transcription produced in step 4 and searched for in step 5 is not found to be an attested character, or a link in the historical development of an attested character. In such a case the form of the graph should be analysed to discover what attested word it denotes. We can only assume that the graph is denoting an attested word: if the word is unattested there is obviously no hope that we will discover that word unless the excavated text itself defines it, or we conjecture the meaning of the word from its context and on the pronunciation from the assumed phonetic component, if there is one.

This analysis of a graph requires an understanding of how Chinese characters denote sound and meaning. At the level of the relationship between a character and the word it is used to denote, the character can be one of two things: 1. an orthograph, or descendant of the orthograph, of the word it denotes (or at least an orthograph for the etymon of the word), i.e. the graph was created specifically to denote the word (or its etymon); 2. a loangraph for the word it denotes. Analysis of a graph may not allow one to conclusively decide which of these categories it belongs to but may, nevertheless, lead to identification of the word it is denoting, which is our main concern.

In terms of structure, since we are dealing with Warring States graphs they are, statistically speaking, more likely to be phonograms than semantographs.⁴⁰ A phonogram is a character made up of two or more components, at least one of which gives some indication of the phonetic value of the word, while another gives some indication of the meaning of the word the character is used to denote. If the graph is not a phonogram then it is a semantograph of some kind (e.g. a pictorial graph or syssemantograph) and has no phonetic component. If the graph clearly consists of only a single component then it must be a semantograph (but note that it could still be being used as a loan) and we should have been able to identify it in the previous step since such graphs are reasonably rare.⁴¹

Assuming a graph has two or more components, one first conjectures, on the basis of the statistical evidence mentioned above, that it is a phonogram. However, in some cases the graphic relationship between the components may suggest a syssemantograph, for example two components may be attached suggesting they are to be considered together as depicting the meaning of the word denoted. In such a case, one would first analyse the graph as a semantograph. Below we will look first at the procedure to follow for analysis of a suspected phonogram, and then look at analysis for semantographs.

A. Analysis of suspected phonograms (flow chart: cells 29 – 35)

The phonetic component is the best key to the identification of the word the graph denotes since it functions to signify the sound of that word. An informed guess is made as to which component is the phonetic. If there are other variant forms of the graph, they are checked to see if any of them has what might be a different phonetic component. Variant phonetic components in graphs denoting the same word should have the same, or very similar, Old Chinese pronunciations.

⁴⁰ Qiu Xigui discusses how the proportion of phonograms to semantographs changed as characters developed, he says that: "It is possible that in the Spring and Autumn period the number of phonograms already exceeded that of semantographs." He goes on to cite the Qing scholar, Zhu Junsheng 朱駿聲, who calculated that phonograms make up 82% of the 9300 small-seal script characters in the *Shuo Wen Jie Zi*. See: Qiu Xigui (transl. Gilbert L. Mattos and Jerry Norman), *Chinese Writing*, p.52.

⁴¹ Graphs which truly have just one component need to be distinguished from a graph which has two or more components very closely linked or intertwined, potentially giving the impression they are a single component.

Having selected a candidate for the phonetic component, one considers what attested words have the same, or very similar, phonetic value in Old Chinese reconstructions. The aim is to determine which words have a phonetic value which could be denoted by this component. To do this one needs to know which words had the same or very similar pronunciation to the component. The reference works mentioned above as useful when identifying loangraphs (step 7) can also be used in this situation. They are, along with a few other titles:

1. *Grammata Serica Recensa*
2. *Shuo Wen Tong Shun Ding Sheng* 說文通訓定聲
3. *Zhanguo Guwen Zidian* 戰國古文字典
4. *Guzi Tongjia Huidian* 古字通假會典
5. *Shanggu Yinyun Biao Gao* 上古音韻表稿
6. *Zhou Fagao Shanggu Yinyun Biao* 周法高上古音韻表
7. Tables classifying characters or components together by rhyme group, e.g.:
 - a. *Xiesheng Biao* 諧聲表
 - b. “Xiesheng Biao” 諧聲表 in: *Shi Jing Yundou* 詩經韻讀⁴²
 - c. “Shuo Wen Jie Zi’ Bushou Guyun Gui Bu Biao” 《說文解字》部首古韻歸部表⁴³

These works are also used in a similar way to that introduced in step 7. They are consulted using the component one has identified as the probable phonetic. Its *xiéshēng* series should be examined first for suitable words. If none is found, then one looks at the *xiéshēng* series of components that are frequently seen to interchange with this phonetic in variant character forms. If this is unsuccessful, characters with similar phonetic values that might fit the context in which the graph occurs are considered.

To assess the degree of phonetic similarity between a component and a word, the table given in step 7 can be used. However, be aware that the standards for phonetic similarity between a phonetic component and the word denoted by the character in which it occurs, and that between a loangraph and the word loaned for, may not be the same. There is Warring States evidence that suggests that the phonetic dissimilarity between the phonetic component and the word denoted

⁴² Wang Li, *Shi Jing Yundou*, pp.21 – 30.

⁴³ Zou Xiaoli, *Jichu Hanzi Xing Yi Shi Yuan*, Appendix 4.

could be quite large.⁴⁴ However, one also needs to consider the extent to which this phenomenon reflects problems with the reconstruction system rather than a loose set of standards for the selection of phonetic components at that time.

During the identification of words that may be denoted by the unknown graph, one should keep the other components of the graph in mind. If the graph is indeed a phonogram then the other component (or one of the other components) must be the semantic, signifying some meaning related to the original word denoted by the graph. The semantic range of that component should be considered to see how it matches with words that may fit the context. Definitions of the individual components and tables categorizing the components under general semantic categories are useful for this purpose, for example:

8. “On the System of the Pu Shou (部首) in the *Shuo-wen chieh-tzu* (說文解字)”⁴⁵
9. “‘Shuo Wen Jie Zi’ Bushou Guilei Mulu” 《說文解字》部首歸類目錄⁴⁶

Once one or more candidates for the word denoted by the unattested graph have been identified, the next step is to decide which of these is the most suitable choice (or, if only one word was identified, to confirm that it is the right choice). The best evidence to support the selection of a particular word is examples of similar usage in received texts from the same period as the excavated text. To search for such examples the dictionaries listed in step 6 above and concordances are used. The use of concordances is discussed in step 9 below.

One must bear in mind that the corpus of Han and pre-Han received texts is limited and excavated texts may include language rarely seen in the works that make up that corpus. This is especially true of genres uncommon among received texts, e.g. administrative, legal and medical works. So, when dealing with such texts, comparison with other excavated texts of the same or a related genre may be useful. When using definitions of words from excavated texts, one

⁴⁴ See examples in: He Linyi. *Zhanguo Wenzi Tonglun*, pp.200 – 203 and pp.210 – 213.

⁴⁵ Paul L-M. Serruys, “On the System of the Pu Shou (部首) in the *Shuo-wen chieh-tzu* (說文解字)”.

⁴⁶ Zou Xiaoli, *Jichu Hanzi Xing Yi Shi Yuan*, Appendix 1.

should be aware that the interpretations of the graphs in those texts may themselves be problematic so care needs to be exercised.

Ideally, there will be one word among the candidates that is strongly supported both by its phonetic similarity to the assumed phonetic of the graph being interpreted, its semantic similarity to the semantic component of that graph, and very similar usage in received (and/or excavated) texts from the same period. This would be considered strong evidence to support interpreting the unknown graph as denoting this word and would be the end of the analysis stage for this graph. One should note that if the semantic component does not accord with the meaning of the word, it may be that the graph is functioning as a loangraph, so this is not a reason to completely reject the analysis.

It may, however, turn out that there is more than one suitable word that the unknown graph could be denoting. In such a case, one can simply give both words in the annotation and note that future excavations or research may allow a final decision to be made. One should also consider whether or not the two or more words that appear to fit the context could be etymologically related, or, indeed, the same word but occurring with more than one graphic form. Identical or very close Old Chinese pronunciations (or “partial identity” if we follow Pulleyblank) and very close meaning and usage would suggest a genetic relationship. To see if such a relationship has already been suggested between two or more words one can refer to works such as:

10. *Tongyuan Zidian* 同源字典 ⁴⁷
13. *Tong Yuan Zidian Bu* 同源字典補 ⁴⁸
14. *The Roots of Old Chinese* ⁴⁹
15. *Hanyu Biandiao Gouci Yanjiu* 漢語變調構詞研究 ⁵⁰
16. *Hanyu Cizu Cong Kao* 漢語詞組叢考 and *Hanyu Cizu Xu Kao* 漢語詞組續考 ⁵¹

⁴⁷ Wang Li, *Tongyuan Zidian*.

⁴⁸ Liu Junjie, *Tongyuan Zidian Bu*.

⁴⁹ Laurent Sagart, *The Roots of Old Chinese*.

⁵⁰ Sun Yuwen, *Hanyu Biandiao Gouci Yanjiu*.

⁵¹ Zhang Xifeng, *Hanyu Cizu Congkao* and Zhang Xifeng, *Hanyu Cizu Xu Kao*.

If these, or other works, suggest that there was an etymological relationship between the words this can be noted in the annotations.

If one does not find similar usage in received and excavated texts for any of the words selected, it could be that one of the words is correct but the usage in the received texts is not seen in extant texts. This should be considered and noted but one should also look back over the analysis of the graph to see if there are paths of inquiry that were overlooked. For example, is there another component that could be acting as the phonetic? Or is it possible that the graph does not have a phonetic component and is a semantograph of some kind? If a semantograph is suspected the analysis in the next section is used.

If reanalysis is unsuccessful then the graph is put aside. It may be that this is an unattested word or the components were not successfully identified. Successful analysis of other graphs in the text may also give clues as to the meaning of this graph.

B. Analysis of suspected semantographs (flow chart: cells 36 to 45)

Semantographs do not have a component which functions to indicate the phonetic value of the graph.⁵² They graphically depict the meaning of the word denoted by the graph. Without any indication of the phonetic value of the word being denoted by the graph, the analysis of unknown graphs of this type attempts to match an interpretation of the meaning of the graph form with known words. The context in which the graph is found may assist the analysis by indicating the general meaning of the graph. However, there is also the possibility that the semantograph is being used as a loangraph, in which case the meaning depicted by the graph will be irrelevant to the meaning of the word it is being used to denote in this context. This would further complicate the analysis since one would first need to identify the word being denoted by the graph and then identify the word loaned for in this particular context.

⁵² For a detailed discussion on semantographs see: Qiu Xigui (transl. Gilbert L. Mattos and Jerry Norman), *Chinese Writing*, pp.174 – 220.

The procedure for the analysis of a suspected semantograph is as follows:

a. The object or meaning depicted by each component is identified

Reference works that include discussion of what components originally depicted and what they came to mean include:

1. *Shuo Wen Jie Zi*
2. *Shuo Wen Jie Zi Zhu* ⁵³
3. *Shuo Wen Jie Zi Gulin*
4. "On the System of the Pu Shou (部首) in the *Shuo-wen chieh-tzu* (說文解字)" ⁵⁴
5. *Jiaguwenzi Gulin*
6. *Jinwen Gulin*
7. *Jinwen Gulin Fulu*
8. *Jinwen Gulin Bu*
9. *Jichu Hanzi Xing Yi Shi Yuan* ⁵⁵

b. One conjectures on what the full graph depicts.

When a semantograph was originally created, the two or more components that make up the graph were arranged to depict the meaning of the word to be denoted by the graph.⁵⁶ In this stage, one uses the understanding of the meaning of the individual components, gained in (a), to conjecture as to what meaning they originally represented in the particular arrangement found in this graph. The context in which the graph appears is used for further clues as to the possible meaning represented by the graph (aware that if it is a loangraph no correspondence would exist).

c. Once the meaning depicted by the graph has been determined, one considers what known words have this or a related meaning, or what characters have a similar construction

To get a range of words, synonym dictionaries, of which there are many, can be used, for example:

1. *Gu Ci Bian* 古辭編

⁵³ Duan Yucai, *Shuo Wen Jie Zi Zhu*.

⁵⁴ Paul L-M. Serruys, "On the System of the Pu Shou (部首) in the *Shuo-wen chieh-tzu* (說文解字)".

⁵⁵ Zou Xiaoli, *Jichu Hanzi Xing Yi Shi Yuan*.

⁵⁶ It seems unlikely that one would come across many newly created non-composite semantographs.

2. *Gudai Wenhua Ci Yi Ji Lei Bian Kao* 古代文化詞義集類辨考⁵⁷

One should also consider whether there are graphs which have a similar construction and what words they denote.

d. The selected words are found in dictionaries and concordances to see if any is a particularly good match for the context in which the graph is found in the excavated text

If concordances give examples of one of these words used in an identical or very similar phrase to that in the excavated material, this is good evidence that the graph should be identified with this word. That would be the end of the analysis. If there is no good match, one may have to settle for several words that the graph could be denoting and list them all in the annotation.

e. In the case that the suggested meanings of the graph clearly have nothing to do with the context in which it is found, then one assumes it is being used as a phonetic loan

In this case one must first attempt to determine the word the graph originally denoted, and then use the Old Chinese reconstruction of that word to search for phonetically close words that fit the context in which the graph is found. If the context clearly suggests a word, this analysis has a much greater chance of success. Otherwise, the large number of variables in this process make the task difficult.

f. If the above process is unsuccessful, a concordance search is made for phrases identical or similar to the relevant phrase in the excavated text

If the phrase is found this will give a word, or words, corresponding to the unknown graph. The analysis can then be reconsidered to see if the word, or one of the words, might be denoted by the graph.

g. If the above procedure fails to identify a suitable word for the unknown graph the analysis is abandoned

⁵⁷ Huang Jingui, *Gudai Wenhua Ciyi Ji Lei Bian Kao*.

Material excavated at a later date may provide new evidence or other scholars may be more successful in their analysis.

Step 9: Discussion and explication of the phrase (flow chart: cells 46 to 52)

Once the basic analysis of the graphs making up a particular phrase is complete, one can begin a more involved examination into the meaning of the phrase as a whole.

The Wenxian texts, belonging to the specialized genre of covenant texts, are short and formulaic. The language is not always easy to understand. The interpretation of any text, particularly a difficult text, is greatly facilitated by examples of similar language from other texts. To make reliable use of such materials anachronism must be avoided. However, in the case of the formulaic covenant texts it was also important to look at examples of similar language from other periods, in an attempt to trace the development of such language. The following steps allow one to identify and make use of relevant comparative materials.

a. Initial reading

The phrase is read using the interpretative transcription resulting from the palaeographic analysis. By this stage of the analysis, one will have at least a tentative understanding of the passage. However, there will be cases where one is not confident of the interpretative transcription initially decided upon during the palaeographic analysis.

b. Comparison with similar phrases in other texts

The next stage is to place the phrase in the context of similar passages from Han and pre-Han materials, both received and excavated. This is done using concordances, as introduced here:

i. Concordance search

For the analysis of the Wenxian texts I aimed to search through all texts, received and excavated, from the Han and pre-Han period, that might reasonably

be expected to contain material similar to that found in the covenant texts. Sixty-seven received texts were selected. The excavated texts searched included oracle bones, bronzes and Warring States and Han materials. See Appendix 3 for full details.

The following online searchable-corpora were used:⁵⁸

1. “Shanggu Hanyu Yuliaoku – Zhai Yao 上古漢語語料庫-摘要”
2. “Ren Wen Ziliaoku Shi Sheng Ban 1.1 人文資料庫師生版 1.1”
3. “Gu Gong ‘Han Quan’ Gudian Wenxian Quanwen Jiansuo Ziliaoku 故宮【寒泉】古典文獻全文檢索資料庫”
4. “Jian Bo Jin Shi Ziliaoku 簡帛金石資料庫” (for excavated texts)

It was also necessary to create a searchable corpus for a number of received texts not available at the above sites. A few received texts had to be searched using paper concordances. Paper concordances from the following series were used:

5. “The Institute of Chinese Studies Ancient Chinese Texts Concordance Series”⁵⁹

Oracle bones and bronze inscriptions were searched using the following paper concordances:

6. *Yinxu Jiagu Keci Lei Zuan* 殷墟甲骨刻辭類纂.
7. *Yin Zhou Jinwen Jicheng Yinde* 殷周金文集成引得
8. *Qingtongqi Mingwen Jiansuo* 青銅器銘文檢索

These concordances are searched for the character in question. For the Wenxian texts each of the key words in a particular phrase was searched for in turn. When using electronic concordances, search criteria can include several characters and be refined with Boolean operators (“or”, “and”, etc.), to look, for example, for a passage where two or more characters appear in close proximity to each other.⁶⁰

⁵⁸ Full bibliographic details are given in the Bibliography in section 4: “Electronic concordances and reference works”.

⁵⁹ See “Note on Concordances” in the Bibliography.

⁶⁰ Web-based electronic concordances usually have a page which explains how to use the basic Boolean terms, e.g. “and”, “or”, “and not” etc. Specialist websties on the topic explain the Boolean operators in greater detail.

Any possibly useful results from the search are recorded. Difficult, but possibly relevant, passages should be copied to be looked over carefully at a later stage.

ii. The passages identified by the concordance search are found in published editions of the original texts.

Having selected examples from concordances, one can begin the process of analysis and translation. This requires a reliable annotated edition of each text. The editions of received texts used in this work are given in the bibliography.

Oracle-bone inscriptions are found using the *Yinxu Jiagu Keci Lei Zuan*. This work gives the catalogue number for the oracle-bone piece as used in the book of the collection in which that piece is found. To see the original piece one can go to that particular collection. To see a hand-copy and transcription of the piece one can use the *Yinxu Jiagu Keci Mo Shi Zongji* 殷墟甲骨刻辭摹釋總集 in which they are arranged by collection and numerical order.

For bronze inscriptions two concordances were used. The *Qingtongqi Mingwen Jiansuo* is designed to be used in conjunction with the collection of bronze inscriptions entitled *Jinwen Zongji* 金文總集, a work which does not include transcriptions or annotations. A more recently published concordance is the *Yin Zhou Jinwen Jicheng Yinde*. This is designed to be used with the *Yin Zhou Jinwen Jicheng Shiwen* 殷周金文集成釋文, which has reproductions of rubbings of all the bronzes it includes as well as transcriptions (without annotations). The *Yin Zhou Jinwen Jicheng Shiwen* is based on the *Yin Zhou Jinwen Jicheng* 殷周金文集成. Note that the *Yin Zhou Jinwen Jicheng* was published in 1984 so more recently published bronzes are not included in this set of books. The *Qingtongqi Mingwen Jiansuo* was published in 1995 so includes some more recent examples. To find annotations for these bronzes, one can use the *Jinwen Zhulu Jian Mu* 金文著錄簡目, in which references are given for published discussions of bronzes. However, this book, published in 1981, is now

out of date.⁶¹ A Taiwan-based website, “Digital Archives of Bronze Images and Inscriptions”, has more up-to-date references for a number of bronzes but key sections of the site are not publicly accessible at present.⁶²

Bamboo and silk excavated texts have the advantage that the slips and lines of text were usually numbered at the time of initial publication and these numbers continue to be used, facilitating a search for a specific strip in different editions.

For received texts, one practical problem with using concordances is finding the example in an edition of the text other than that used by the concordance itself. This can be particularly problematic with electronic concordances which, in some cases, supply only very limited information about the whereabouts of displayed sections of text, e.g. just the chapter (*juàn* 卷) name. In such cases paper concordances, which include the full text, can provide a clearer idea of the whereabouts of a specific passage, making it easier to then find the passage in an edition.

Once the comparative materials have been located in reliable editions they should be analysed and translated making full use of annotated editions and commentaries. Passages that turn out to be irrelevant to the analysis can then be rejected.

iii. Chronological arrangement of comparative material

Once one has selected and translated the comparative material to be used, the excavated and received materials are separated and the passages in each group are dated and arranged in chronological order. As discussed in the Literature Survey, when analysing an excavated text, it is essential to consider the language of the text in its temporal context.

⁶¹ Sun Zhichu, *Jinwen Zhulu Jian Mu*.

⁶² See: <http://db1.sinica.edu.tw/~textdb/bronzePage/>

The dating of texts, both excavated and received, is complex and it is far beyond the scope of this work to re-consider the dates of every text cited. I have used conventional dates for texts. For bronze inscriptions I use the dates given in the *Yin Zhou Jinwen Jicheng*. For other excavated texts, I usually use the dates suggested in the excavation reports. For received works, I generally use dates given in *Early Chinese Texts*, although it does not contain all texts.⁶³ For received texts which are in fact compilations of smaller texts, e.g. the *Shang Shu*, *Shi Jing*, *Yi Zhou Shu* and so on, it is necessary to consider the dates of individual sections. In some cases *Early Chinese Texts* gives this information but otherwise individual editions of the texts or specialized works on this question were consulted.

Texts of a historical nature record events which happened before, sometimes hundreds of years before, the text itself was compiled or written. One should take into account the possibility that material in such texts was based on sources earlier than the date of the compilation of the text itself. To do this, one can give the historical date, if possible, of the event described in the text. So, for example, although the *Zuo Zhuan* was probably not compiled until the fourth century BC or later, it quotes covenants from throughout the historical period it covers, i.e. the end of the eighth to the fifth century BC.⁶⁴ Dating the year of the event allows one to consider whether a comparative passage could be based on materials earlier than the text in which it occurs, and thus perhaps closer in time to the Wenxian materials.

As well as awareness of the dating of the comparative materials, one must bear in mind possible regional factors that might affect one's understanding of the phrase under analysis. This is easier to do with scientifically excavated texts for which provenance is clear.

⁶³ Michael Loewe ed., *Early Chinese Texts*.

⁶⁴ For a summary of theories about the date of the *Zuo Zhuan* see: Michael Loewe ed., *Early Chinese Texts*, pp.70 – 71.

iv. Interpretation of the phrase

The phrase is interpreted in the light of the comparative materials. These materials may support one's initial understanding of the phrase or suggest a different interpretation. They may lead to a reinterpretation of graphs within the phrase. In the context of the chronologically-organized comparative materials the use of formulaic or archaic language may become apparent.

When making use of comparative examples found through the concordance search, one should consider not only the support they give to one's basic interpretation of the phrase under analysis, but whether or not their content provides other context, e.g. historical, social, political, that leads to a greater understanding of the texts being analysed.

For a deeper understanding of a text it is necessary to be aware of its historical and cultural context. It will often be necessary to consult other primary sources and secondary works on relevant topics. In the case of the Wenxian covenants, these included works on archaeology, history, law and thought, amongst others. They allowed a basic understanding of the probable nature of the situation to which the oaths were addressed.

2.2.2 Conclusion

In this chapter, key terminology for use in palaeographic analysis has been discussed. The standard techniques used in the analysis of excavated texts have been introduced and placed in a procedural framework. In Chapter Three this methodological procedure is employed in the analysis of a selection of graphs and phrases from the Wenxian covenant texts.

Chapter Three: Sample Annotations

In this chapter I present my analysis of a selection of phrases found in the Wenxian covenant tablets. This serves to demonstrate the application of the methodological procedure, proposed in the previous chapter, to previously uninterpreted materials, thus providing an opportunity to judge the effectiveness and limitations of this methodology. The interpretation of these phrases affords an opportunity to look closely at the content of a number of the Wenxian covenants.

This chapter focuses on individual graphs and phrases rather than the full text of individual oath-types. When considering individual phrases, however, one needs to be aware of their context within the covenant. The basic four-clause formulaic structure of the covenants was introduced in Chapter One, that is: name, stipulation, submission and imprecation. The following example was given and will be described here in more detail:

Wenxian covenant texts: Oath type 1: Pit WT1K1

Tablet 1:3802

- I. 十五年十二月乙未朔辛酉。自今以往，喬
 II.A. 敢不口焉中心事其主
 II.B. 而敢與賊為徒者，
 III. 丕顯口公大塚
 IV. 諦垂視汝，靡夷彼氏。

- I. Fifteenth year, twelfth month, *yǐwèi* was the first day of the month, *xīnyǒu* day [i.e. 27th day of that month]. From this day onward, [if] Qiao
 II.A. dares not ___ly [?] and loyally serve his ruler,
 II.B. and dares to join with the enemy as a follower,
 III. the great, resplendent Duke ____, [in his] great tomb [?],
 IV. [may he] observe and immediately detect you, and wipe out that [i.e. your] clan.

Clause I: The Name Clause

Clause I, the Name Clause, contains a number of different elements:

Period of effectiveness: Consisting of the phrase “from this day onward” (*zì jīn yǐ wǎng* 自今以往) and sometimes a date, as in the above example. Only this one date is found although sometimes the formula is shortened to just the *gānzhī* - cycle day name.

Name: the name of the covenantor.

Opening phrase: Some examples begin with a phrase naming the object on which the covenant is written, the *gui* (*guī* 圭), and the type of text that follows, referred to as a *mìng* 命 “mandated covenant”, for example, “the mandated covenant on the *gui* tablet” (*guīmìng* 圭命), or “the mandated covenant on the *gui* tablet says” (*guīmìng yuē* 圭命曰).¹

Not all tablets contain all these elements and the order of the elements is not fixed. The name of the covenantor is, however, always found. The period of effectiveness phrase, “from this day onward”, is seen in most of the oath types in both the Houma and Wenxian texts. In the Wenxian tablets the date is only found on Oath Type 1 texts.

Clause II: The Stipulations

Clause II contains the stipulations of the oath. In all the Wenxian oath types for which there is enough legible text for us to make a judgement, clause II can be considered to include two stipulations. In all but one oath type the first stipulation, II.A, makes demands of loyalty on the covenantor. In the above example the phrase is “dares not ___ly [?] and loyally serve his ruler”. The loyalty stipulations found in the Wenxian texts share identical or very similar phrases. The second stipulation, II.B, is where the greatest variation between oath types is found. This stipulation usually describes a specific action or behavior, which the covenantor is either expected to perform or refrain from. The

¹ This definition of *mìng* 命 is discussed below in section 3.1.1.2.2.

example above is the latter, a prohibition, the covenantor must not: “join with the renegades as a follower”.

Clause III: The Submission

In the Submission Clause the sanctioning spirit is called on. Weld includes the four characters *dī jí shì rǔ* 諦亟視汝 “[May he] observe and immediately detect you [?]”, in this clause, while I place them in the next clause, considering them to be part of the imprecation. There is little variation in this clause between oath types and the phrase is also found, again with minor variations, in the Houma texts.

Clause IV: The Imprecation

In the Imprecation Clause we find the conditional curse, to be triggered if the oath is violated. There is little variation between the Wenxian oath types although a number include a phrase not seen in this example or previously in the Houma texts: “Cause [the covenantor] to not have descendants” (*bǐ wú yǒu zhòuhòu* 俾毋有冑後).

With minor variations, the above structure is followed for all the covenants in the Wenxian and Houma tablets. I refer to those phrases that occur in many of the different oath types as “common phrases”, those that are specific to one oath type are called “phrases from specific oaths”. Part 1 of this chapter, “Sample annotations from common phrases”, analyses four common phrases: the Opening Phrase; the two Period of Effectiveness phrases; and the Imprecation phrase that is not seen in the Houma materials. Note that, in selecting variant characters and variant wordings for the analysis of these common phrases, only tablets from the small pits (i.e. pits other than WT1K1 and WT1K14) were examined. Part 2, “Sample annotation from specific oaths”, considers a section from the stipulations in Oath Types 7 and 3 and both stipulations from Oath Type 2. A full list of the characters and phrases to be discussed in this chapter is given below:

Table 9: Characters and phrases from the Wenxian covenant texts discussed in Chapter Three

Part 1: Sample annotations from common phrases:

Clause of oath in which phrase occurs	Phrase	Palaeographic analysis given for:
Opening phrase	“The mandated covenant on the <i>gui</i> ” “圭命”	“ <i>gui</i> [a ritual object]” [圭]: {圭} <i>guī</i>
Period of effectiveness	“Fifteenth year, twelfth month, <i>yǐwèi</i> was the first day of the month, <i>xīnyǒu</i> day” “十五年十二月乙未朔辛酉”	“ <i>shuò</i> [the first day of the month]” [朔]: {朔} <i>shuò</i>
Period of effectiveness	“From this day onward” “自今以往”	“from” [自]: {自} <i>zì</i> “today” [今]: {今} <i>jīn</i> function word [以]: {以} <i>yǐ</i> “to go forward” [往]: {往} <i>wǎng</i>
Imprecation	“Cause [you] to not have descendants” “俾毋有胄後”	“to cause to” [俾]: {俾} <i>bǐ</i> function word [毋]: {毋} <i>wú</i> “to have” [又]: {有} <i>yǒu</i> “descendant/s” [由]: {胄} <i>zhòu</i> “descendant/s” [後]: {後} <i>hòu</i>

Part 2: Sample annotations from specific oaths:

Oath type	Clause of oath in which phrase occurs:	Phrase	Palaeographic analysis given for:
7	Stipulations	“[If the covenantor dare not] pay due reverence and attention to his <i>de</i> and do his utmost to supply the prayers and sacrifices of his lord, ...” “恪慎其德勉供其主之禱祠”	“to be prudent, to be respectful” [各]: {恪} <i>kè</i> “to be careful/cautious, to be scrupulous and conscientious” [愆]: {慎} <i>shèn</i> <i>de</i> [直]: {德} <i>dé</i> “to supply, to contribute” [奠]: {供} <i>gōng</i>
3	Stipulations	“[If the covenantor dare not] pay due reverence and attention to his <i>de</i> and thereby seek blessings for the lord, ...” “恪慎其德以徼主福”	
2	Stipulations	“If [covenantor’s name] dare falsify publicly-posted notices in Shaoqu, ___ [covenantor’s name] dare know of the falsifying of notices and does not report this, ...” “所[name]敢偽懸書于少曲者 所/口[name]敢知偽書而不之言者”	“to hang, to suspend” [懸]: {懸} <i>xuán</i> Shaoqu [place name] [少曲]: {少曲} <i>Shǎoqū</i> “___ [?]” [毒]: {或} <i>huò</i> ? / [姓]: {矧} <i>shěn</i> ? / [毒]: {___}?

Of these, only the second Period of Effectiveness phrase also occurs in the Houma tablets. The other phrases are only seen in the Wenxian texts and have only previously been briefly introduced and discussed in a number of articles and conference papers.²

The methodological procedure followed in this chapter is that described in the Methodology chapter. The format for these annotations will be as follows: Each phrase is briefly introduced. Selected graphs from the phrase are analysed. For each graph, transcriptions are given with the English translation and the analysis category, based on the categories proposed by Qiu Xigui discussed in the Literature Survey.³ Examples of variant forms of the graph are given. Note that the categorization of variant forms for each particular graph was done in whatever way appeared to best aid the analysis; a single set of classification criteria was not used for all examples. The palaeographic analysis of individual graphs is followed by discussion and explication of the complete phrase. Examples of similar usage in received texts and other excavated materials are cited in so far as they assist in understanding the phrase as it appears in the Wenxian tablets.

The analysis in Chapter Three, it should be stressed, aims to illustrate the application of the methodological approach presented in Chapter Two. As a result, it includes stages in the analysis that were later rejected and analysis which did not fully succeed in its aim. Therefore, while it is a suggestion for a methodological approach, the following chapter is not intended to be a model for a standard *presentation* of the analysis of graphs and phrases in excavated materials. In annotations accompanying a published transcription, the highly detailed description of process found in Chapter Three would be unnecessary; only the results and main evidence for the identification would be required. Note

² The “Opening Phrase” and “Date” are both found in the WT1K1 tablets introduced in the 1983 *Wenwu* article: Henan Sheng Wenwu Yanjiusuo, “Henan Wenxian Dong Zhou Mengshi Yizhi Yi Hao Kan Fajue Jianbao”. Zhao Shigang discusses what I refer to as Oath Type 7 in: Zhao Shigang, “Daoci Kao – Wenxian Mengshu T5K14 Meng Ci Shidu”. Hao Benxing introduced what I call Oath Type 3 in: Hao Benxing, “Henan Wenxian Dongzhou Mengshi Yizhi Fajue Yu Zhengli Qingkuang Huibao”. Hao discussed Oath Type 2, which includes the imprecation clause discussed in the “Common Phrases” section as well as the stipulations discussed in the “Specific Oath Types” section, in: Hao Benxing, “‘Xuan Shu’ Jie”.

³ See: Appendix 1, section 5.2.3.

that a number of the graphs considered were previously attested: testing the methodology on such graphs allowed validation of the outcome of the procedure and comparison with previous published analysis.

Part 1

3.1 Common Phrases

3.1.1. Opening phrase

The opening phrase is seen in five oath types (types 1, 3, 5, 6 and 7) from seven of the fourteen small pits (pits WT1K17, WT4K6, WT4K9, WT4K10, WT4K11, WT5K14, WT5K21) as well as on tablets from both the big pits (WT1K1 and WT1K14). When the phrase occurs (it is not always used), it is found at the beginning of the text, for example:

Type 1 tablet: WT4K9 - 161

- I. 圭命曰：自今以往，□
 II.A 敢不□焉中心事其主
 II.B □¹敢與賊為徒，
 III. □公大塚
 IV. 諦亟視之。

- I. **The mandated covenant on the *gui* says:** From this day onward, [if] ___ [covenantor's name]
 II.A dares not ___ly [?] and loyally serve his ruler,
 II.B. [and] dares to join with the enemy as a follower,
 III. Duke ___, [in his] great tomb [?],
 IV. [may he] observe and immediately detect him.

There are several different versions of the opening phrase:

- a. 圭命 “The mandated covenant on the *gui*”
 b. 圭命之言 “The words of the *gui*’s mandated covenant”
 c. 圭命曰 “The mandated covenant on the *gui* says”
 d. 圭言 “The words on the *gui*”

The first phrase listed, “The mandated covenant on the *gui*” (*guì mìng* 圭命), is the most common among the small pits, The others are less common, type d, “The words on the *gui*” (*guì yán* 圭言) was, for example, only noted on one tablet, WT4K9 – 509.

¹ The graph here is not very legible but looks like it could be [不] *bù* instead of the [而] *ér* we expect to find here. If the graph is [不] *bù* we can assume it is a scribal error for [而] *ér*.

The phrase, when used, almost always occurs at the beginning of the text before any other element. There are just a few examples where the covenantor's name appears to come before the opening phrase.² The phrase is almost invariably, at least in the small-pit tablets that have been examined, followed by the period-of-effectiveness clause, “from this day onward” (*zì jīn yǐ wǎng* 自今以往). In a few cases there is a graph between the opening phrase and this phrase; in one such example, tablet WT4K9 – 142, this graph is clearly the covenantor's name and this is likely to be the case in other such examples.³

The opening phrase functions to formally identify the nature of the text which follows, and the medium through which that text is presented. The phrase tells us that the object on which the text is written is a *guī* 圭 and that the text itself is a *mìng* 命. Both these points are highly significant. The precise nature of the *gui* ritual tablet has been debated since the Han dynasty so these self-named examples bring important new evidence to the debate. The word *mìng* 命 is generally understood to mean “decree”, “charge”, “mandate” but the Wenxian texts are covenant texts (*méngshū* 盟書) as demonstrated in Chapter One, so the use of the term *mìng* 命 must be examined. These issues will be further discussed below, following the palaeographic analysis of the graph [圭] *guī*.

3.1.1.1 Palaeographic analysis

Graph 1: [圭]

Direct transcription: [圭]

Formal transcription: [圭]

Interpretative transcription: *guī* {圭}

English translation: *gui* [the term is not translated]

Analysis category: A. Direct textual evidence supports the interpretation.

² Tablets WT4K6 – 140 and 144.

³ From the small-pit tablets the examples with a graph in this position are WT4K9 – 4, WT4K9 – 142, and WT4K10 – 8. WT4K9 – 605 has a lacuna after “圭命” but it is almost certainly a name since there is no name elsewhere in the name clause.

Variant forms

1.



WT1K17 – 110

2.



WT5K14 – 38



WT5K21 – 33



WT1K17 – 118



WT4K9 – 72

3.



WT4K9 – 4



WT4K9 – 449

Type 1 is the form most commonly seen among the Wenxian tablets. In the type 2 examples the vertical stroke of each component does not cross the upper horizontal stroke as it does in the standard form. In the type 3 examples one of the doubled components is omitted.⁴



Analysis

The type 1 and 2 examples are clearly made up of two identical components, one above the other. The *Shuo Wen Jie Zi* component tablet has a matching component, 土, [土] *tǔ* “earth”. If we look up characters collected under this

⁴ There is just enough space above the type 3 graphs in these examples for the addition of a second component, however there is no sign that the component was originally there. Furthermore, this single component variation is also seen in tablets from WT1K14.

component in the *Shuo Wen Jie Zi* we find a match for the type 1 Wenxian graphs: the small-seal form is 圭.⁵ The standard use for the graph is to denote *guī* {圭}, a type of tablet, usually of jade, used for ritual purposes. The shape traditionally associated with *guī*-tablets is flat-bottomed with tapering sides and a pointed top. Since the Wenxian tablets are all made of stone and mostly conform to this design, the obvious assumption is that the word is referring to the tablets themselves. This is discussed further below.

Returning to the type 1 graph, we should point out here that, although the matching of the components in this form with the *Shuo Wen Jie Zi* component 土, [土] *tǔ* “earth” does lead us to the graph [圭] *guī*, the components in this graph are not in fact [土] *tǔ* and Xu Shen’s analysis is incorrect.⁶ By the time Xu Shen was writing, these forms were indistinguishable from [土] *tǔ*, which led to the confusion.

In the Wenxian variant form 2,  (WT5K14 – 38), the vertical stroke in each component stops at the top horizontal stroke rather than passing through to the lower horizontal. This variant form is also seen on the Chu lacquer painting of the twenty-eight lunar lodges (*èrshíbā xiù* 二十八宿): .⁷ It is also seen in the [圭] *guī* component of the following graph from the head of a *ge*-halberd from the state of Yue:





⁵ *Shuo Wen Jie Zi*, p.289 (13b 土部: 13b)

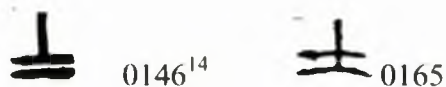
⁶ Several scholars have pointed out that Xu Shen’s classification of [圭] *guī* under [土] *tǔ* is wrong: in oracle bones and Zhou inscriptions, forms of the character and component [土] *tǔ* are clearly different from the repeated component seen in [圭] *guī*, and only during the Warring States period did the two come to be indistinguishable in form. See, for example: Lin Yiguang 林義光 in his *Wen Yuan* 文源, quoted in *Jinwen Gulin* Vol.13, p.215.

⁷ *Zeng Hou Yi Mu*, Vol.2, plate 121.

⁸ *Wu Yue Xu Shu Jinwen Ji Shi*, p.223.

Writing an incomplete brush stroke in this way is a calligraphic variant seen in other Warring States graphs and referred to as a “broken-up stroke” variation (*fēngē bīhuà* 分割筆畫).⁹

The type 3 variation,  (WT4K9 – 4) and  (WT4K9 – 449), with the single component, is not found as a variant for [圭] *guī* in other excavated materials.¹⁰ However, omission of a repeated component is a common variation in Warring States graphs, referred to as “omission of a repeated form” (*shānjiǎn tóngxíng* 刪簡同形).¹¹ We might note, though, that in all the examples He Linyi gives of this type of variation in his *Zhangguo Wenzi Tonglun*, the graph has another component apart from the repeated form: omission of one of the repeated components does not affect the separate component and the graph is still recognizable.¹² In the case of the [圭] *guī* there are no other components, thus omission of one of the repeated forms leaves only half the original graph and could have caused confusion since half of the standard [圭] *guī* form leaves one with a form identical to that of [士] *shì* “low-ranking noble”.¹³ Compare these Jin state examples of [士] *shì*:



Note that the first example has the ‘broken-up stroke’ variation seen in both the type 3 forms. The graph [士] *shì* has not been seen in the Houma or Wenxian tablets but we can be confident that it was similar to examples from other Jin materials, in which case the type 3 forms of the [圭] *guī* would have been indistinguishable from the graph [士] *shì*. Why would the scribe use a potentially confusing simplification? Perhaps he or she thought that the context

⁹ He Linyi, *Zhangguo Wenzi Tonglun*, pp.213 – 214.

¹⁰ This conclusion based on searches in: *Jinwen Bian*, *Zhangguo Guwen Zidian*, *Guodian Chu Jian Yanjiu: Vol.1 Wenzi Bian*.

¹¹ He Linyi, *Zhangguo Wenzi Tonglun*, pp.189 – 190.

¹² He Linyi, *Zhangguo Wenzi Tonglun*, pp.189 – 190.

¹³ As we have already mentioned, the half-*gui* form was not similar to [士] *shì*. This is still the case in the Wenxian tablets, thus confusion with [士] *shì* would have been unlikely.

¹⁴ Both scans from: *Gu Xi Huibian*, p.2 (0146) and p.5 (0165).

avoided the possibility of a misunderstanding. Or perhaps this is not, in fact, a simplification, in which case how do we explain this form?

One possibility is that the single component seen in the type 3 examples is an earlier form of the graph [圭] *guī* and the scribe, aware of this, was making use of this old form. Wang Hui 王輝 has suggested that the single component [土] is indeed the protoform of [圭] *guī*.¹⁵ Wang discusses this in articles on a graph he transcribes as [戎] and interprets as [圭] *guī*, found on several Shang period tablets, described as “jade *zhang*” (*yù zhāng* 玉璋).¹⁶ The tablets were discovered in 1985 in Shang tombs at Liujiazhuang 劉家莊 at Yinxu 殷墟, Henan.¹⁷

Although described as *zhang* 璋, these Shang jades are formally very similar to the Houma and Wenxian tablets. Although fragmented, they appear to have originally been *gui*-shaped and, furthermore, were written on in brush, using red ink. Their content, discussed below, and function, are different to the Houma and Wenxian tablets but they demonstrate, nevertheless, that the writing of texts in ink on *gui*-shaped tablets was already practiced 600 years before the Houma and Wenxian texts were produced.¹⁸

Wang’s paper analyzes the following graph found on these Shang tablets:



Wang believes that this graph, [戎], is an early form of [圭] *guī*. He argues that the bottom-left component in this graph, the 土 (no.8), transcribed below as

¹⁵ Note that the single component from [圭] *guī* will be transcribed as [土] but the component should be distinguished from [土] *nǚ*, to which, as just discussed, it is unrelated.

¹⁶ Wang Hui, “Yinxu Yu Zhang Zhushu ‘Gui’ Zi Jie”; Wang Hui, “Yinxu Yu Zhang Zhushu Wenzhi Licie”.

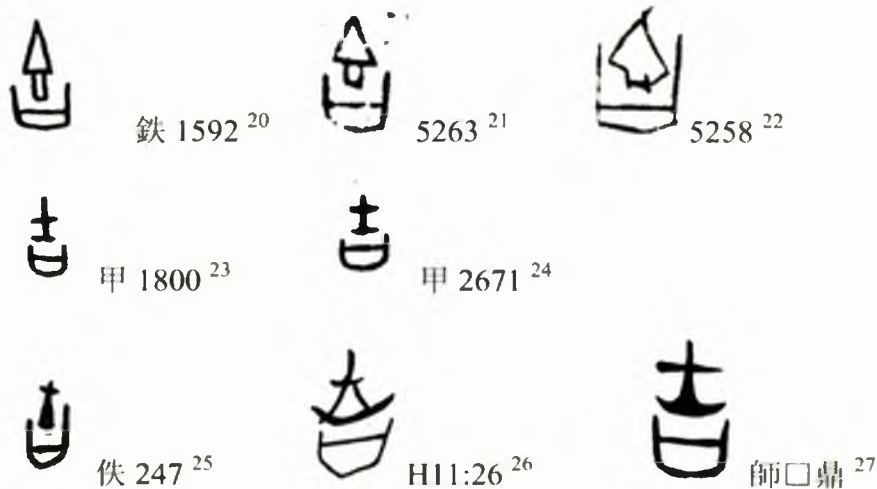
¹⁷ Wang Hui, “Yinxu Yu Zhang Zhushu ‘Gui’ Zi Jie”, pp.64 – 67. See also: Meng Xianwu and Li Guichang, “Yinxu Chutu De Yu Zhang Zhushu Wenzhi”, pp.72 – 77.







¹⁸ For dating see: Meng Xianwu and Li Guichang, “Yinxu Chutu De Yu Zhang Zhushu Wenzhi”, pp.72 – 77.

¹⁹ These examples scanned from: Wang Hui, “Yinxu Yu Zhang Zhushu ‘Gui’ Zi Jie”, p.64.

[土], is a pictorial semantograph and the protoform for [圭] *guī* and that the top-right component, [戈] *gē*, is an additional semantic component.

In support of his interpretation of the [土] form, Wang turns to the character [吉] *jí*. He notes that this graph has the following forms in the Shang and Zhou periods:



Wang argues that, since the various different top components, i.e.  (5263),  (甲 2671), and  (H11:26), can interchange in the graph [吉] *jí*, they must all represent a single object. He argues that the form  (5263) depicts a *gui*, and, therefore, the other forms must also represent *gui*. He goes on to argue that the bottom component,  (no.8), in the graph [戎] from the *zhang*, is equivalent to the top component,  (H11:26), from the pre-dynastic Zhou example of [吉] *jí* (H11:26). Therefore, it too depicts a *gui* and is the protoform for

²⁰ Scanned from: *Guwenzi Lei Bian*, p.121.

²¹ Guo Moruo ed., *Jiaguwen Heji*, Vol.3, p.769.

²² Guo Moruo ed., *Jiaguwen Heji*, Vol.3, p.769.

²³ *Jiaguwen Bian*, p.43.

²⁴ *Jiaguwen Bian*, p.43.

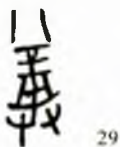
²⁵ *Jiaguwen Bian*, p.42.

²⁶ *Zhouyuan Yu Zhou Wenhua*, p.84 of prints.

²⁷ *Jinwen Bian*, p.68.

[圭] *guī*. The graph [玦] found on the Shang *zhang* is a variant form, the [戈] *gē* being an additional semantic component.

This interpretation of the graph [玦] as denoting the word *guī* {圭} is supported by the context in which it appears on these Shang tablets. The tablets, although fragmented, appear to have been *gui*-shaped themselves.²⁸ The phrase in which the graph appears is: “[unidentified verb] 于[ancestor name] 玦一”: the unidentified verb is written as follows:






The graph has [升] *gōng* as its lower component, a depiction of two hands offering something up, suggesting the meaning of this verb is some kind of offering. If this is correct, and if the graph [玦] denotes *guī* {圭} as Wang Hui suggests, then the phrases in these tablets, “[unidentified verb ≈ “to make an offering”] 于[ancestor name] 玦 (圭)一”, means something like: “Make an offering to [ancestor name], one *gui*.”³⁰ This suggests that it is the *gui*-shaped tablet itself that is being offered. We can conjecture that these *gui* were buried in the tombs in which they were found, as an offering to the ancestors, a common use of *gui* tablets, as I will discuss below.





Wang’s conclusion, that the graph [玦] denotes *guī* {圭}, is persuasive, especially given the textual context in which it occurs, but his analysis of the graph is, I feel, confused, particularly in his comparison of the component 土











²⁸ For drawings of the fragments see: Meng Xianwu and Li Guichang, “Yinxu Chutu De Yu Zhang Zhushu Wenzhi”, p.74. The authors of this article believe the pieces are *zhang* 璋. However, it is difficult to be sure what such a piece would have been called at the time it was produced, it is quite possible that the objects could have been described as *gui*. On questions of definitions of jade *guī* 圭, *zhāng* 璋 and *gē* 戈 see: Sun Qingwei, “‘Kao Gong Ji, Yu Ren’ De Kaoguxue Yanjiu”.

²⁹ Wang Hui, “Yinxu Yu Zhang Zhushu ‘Gui’ Zi Jie”, p.64.

³⁰ Wang Hui suggests the verb is *rǎng* {禳}, a ritual offering which, he believes, involved jade. See: Wang Hui, “Yinxu Yu Zhang Zhushu Wenzhi Lice”, pp.3 – 8.

(no.8) in [玃] to the various top components found in [吉] *jí*, e.g.,  (5263),  (H11:26), and  (甲 2671).

Looking again at the different variants of [吉] *jí* that were shown above, the top component  (H11:26) is clearly equivalent to early forms of the graph [王] *wáng*, which most scholars believe originally depicted the head of an axe.³¹ Thus, it is not a *gui* and, therefore, not equivalent to the  (5263) component. If we accept this, then Wang's argument that the  (no.8) component in [玃] is equivalent to  (H11:26) and that they both represent *gui* becomes untenable.

It is, however, possible to resolve this problem while acknowledging that the form  (H11:26) is the character [王] *wáng*, depicting an axe head and not a *gui*. We can argue that the component  (no.8) in the graph [玃] is equivalent to the very similar form found as the top component in many examples of the graph [吉] *jí*, e.g.  (甲 2671), and that this form is a simplification, not of the [王] *wáng* component, but of the  (5263) component: the simplified form keeps the two horizontal lines of the original form, omits all the vertical and diagonal strokes and replaces them with one central vertical stroke, giving the form  (甲 2671). In support of this conjecture, we can observe that the use of the  (H11:26) component in [吉] *jí* is very rare in oracle bones – we would expect it to be more common if  (甲 2671) were its simplified form. Two of the examples above,  (H11:26) and  (師□鼎), are Zhou period examples; the other example,  (佚 247), is the only one of this type from Shang oracle

³¹ *Jiaguwenzi Gulin*, pp.3270 – 3278.

bones given in the *Jiaguwen Bian*.³² We would expect such examples to be more common in the Shang script if the common 𠄎 (甲 2671) form, as in 𠄎 (甲 2671), was its simplified version.

As for Wang's identification of the component 𠄎 (5263) as it occurs in [吉] *jí*, I would argue that it does not depict a *gui*, but the head of a *ge*-halberd (戈 *gē*). Consider the following Shang examples of the character [戈] *gē*, denoting *gē* {戈} “*ge*-halberd”:








These clearly depict a halberd-type weapon formed of a vertical shaft, the weapon head attached at the top of the staff, its blade pointing to the left, its base

³² We might conjecture that the rarity of the [吉] *jí* variant with the [王] *wáng* component, e.g. 𠄎 (佚 247), suggests that the use of the [王] *wáng* component developed as a corruption of the form 𠄎 (甲 2671). The [吉] *jí* derived from [王] *wáng* is more common in the Zhou script which, following this hypothesis, would suggest that this corruption was adopted as a standard form by the Zhou scribes. The Zhou scribes may have associated the 𠄎 (甲 2671)-type forms with [王] *wáng* and not with the 𠄎 (5263) that we suggest they were originally a simplification of. They then may have adopted this as the standard form for [吉] *jí*, rejecting the variant 𠄎 (鉄 1592), which we do not see in the Zhou script. Whether a result of conscious variation or a corruption then adopted as standard, the use of the component [王] *wáng* in [吉] *jí* accords with the original intention of the graphic form: the character [吉] *jí* was created to depict a word meaning “solid”, “firm”; the top component of the graph is semantic, representing the concept of “hardness” and “strength” by depicting the head of a weapon (weapon heads are hard and strong). In the case of the 𠄎 (鉄 1592) form, the weapon in question is, we argue in the main text, the head of a *ge*-halberd (*gē* 戈). However, the component [王] *wáng* also depicts a weapon head, an axe head, and thus could function in precisely the same way to indicate the characteristic “hardness” and “strength” in the graph [吉] *jí*. Thus, although the use of the [王] *wáng* is rare in oracle-bone examples of [吉] *jí*, it could have been used as an alternative to the *ge*-halberd head form, 𠄎 (5263), or, as just hypothesized, it could have developed from a corruption, which became standard due to the suitability of [王] *wáng* as a semantic for the graph. On the graph [吉] *jí* see: Qiu Xigui, “Shuo Zi Xiao Ji”, pp.643 – 646. [Further evidence to support the theory that *jí* {吉} originally meant “solid, firm, substantial” is provided by Laurant Sagart whose work suggests that this word may be cognate with *shí* {實} “solid”: compare their Old Chinese reconstructions: *shí* {實} < *zyit* < **mejit* and *jí* {吉} < *kjit* < **kejit*. See: Laurent Sagart, *The Roots of Old Chinese*, p.103. (Thanks to William Baxter for pointing out the link between these two words to me, personal communication, August 2001. Reconstructions: Wolfgang Behr, personal communication, March 31st, 2004.)]

³³ *Yin Zhou Jinwen Jicheng* Vol.6, no. 3171.


³⁴ *Xiaotunnandi Jiagu*, Vol.1, p.350.

section (the “*na*” {*nà* 内}), protruding from the right.³⁵ The depiction of the head of the halberd appears to be identical, apart from its orientation, to the  (5263) component in the [吉] *jí* variant form:  (鉄 1592). This strongly supports the suggestion that this component depicts the head of a *ge*-halberd and not a *gui*. However, many scholars believe that the head of the *ge*-halberd is closely related to the ritual object *gui* and this allows us to explain why the simplified version,  (甲 2671), of a component depicting a *ge*-halberd head,  (5263), is found in a graph, [戒], which appears to be denoting the word *guī* {圭}.

To explain why the form  (no.8) can denote the word *guī* {圭} but originally depicted the head of a *ge*-halberd, it is necessary to turn to relevant archaeological scholarship on these objects, an example of the method of analysis referred to in the Literature Survey as “Use of non-textual evidence”.

We find that many researchers argue that the *gui* is closely related to the ritual jade *ge*-halberd head (referred to in Chinese as *yù gē* 玉戈).³⁶ This is particularly noticeable if we look at examples in which the blade of the *ge*-halberd head is jade while the *na* is bronze (Figure 26). The shape of the blade section alone is very close to the standard *gui* shape.




In fact, there is no agreement on the dividing line between the jade *ge*-halberd head and the *gui*: an object that one scholar refers to as a jade *ge*-halberd head will be referred to by another as a *gui*, while some consider the two terms to be synonymous.³⁷ Regardless of the precise relationship between the jade *ge*-halberd head and the ritual object *gui*, for the purpose of our analysis it is


³⁵ We should note that in oracle bones the character [戈] *gē* is usually written with the form  (*Guwenzi Lei Bian*, p.347, 乙 7108), a stylized version of the more pictographic forms given here. The examples above from the oracle bone 屯南 2194 are the only examples of the pictographic style found on oracle bones, all the other examples of the pictographic style are found on Shang bronzes where they are used in names.

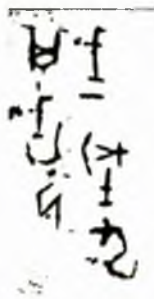
³⁶ For example: Hayashi Minao (transl. Yang Meili), *Zhongguo Gu Yu Yanjiu*, Chapter 1; Sun Qingwei, “Kao Gong Ji, Yu Ren’ De Kaoguxue Yanjiu”; Hao Benxing and Zhang Wenbin, “Yu Zhang Yongtu Kao”; Tao Zhenggang, “Houma Mengshi Yizhi Chutu Yu Bi De Yanjiu”.

³⁷ For example, Xia Nai takes issue with the identification of various objects as *gui* in: Xia Nai, “Shang Dai Yuqi De Fenlei, Dingming He Yongtu”, pp.4 – 5. For the suggestion that *gui* and jade *ge*-halberd heads are one and the same see: Sun Qingwei, “Kao Gong Ji, Yu Ren’ De Kaoguxue Yanjiu”, p.117.

sufficient to know that many scholars believe the ritual jade *ge*-halberd head had a strong influence on the development of the *gui* ritual object.

This non-textual evidence is significant for our analysis of the graph [玃]. If we accept the conclusion of those scholars who believe the jade *gui* and the jade *ge*-halberd head were considered to be a single category, then it follows that the word *guī* {圭} referred to both these objects. Even if we adopt the theory that the two objects were very closely related, but should not be considered a single category, we can still conjecture that whatever word denoted the jade *ge*-halberd head was cognate with the word *guī* {圭}. In either case, palaeographically speaking, this connection between the two objects makes it possible to appreciate how the form  (5263), which we believe depicts the head of a *ge*-halberd, could be the full form of a simplified variant,  (no.8), which, it is conjectured, is the protoform of [圭] *guī*. The composition of the graph [玃] also becomes understandable: the graph denotes *guī* {圭} and is formed from the component  (no.8), representing the jade *ge*-head/*gui*, and the component [戈] *gē* “*ge*-halberd” indicating the semantic connection between *gui* and the *ge*-halberd

Further relevant evidence concerning this component,  (no.8), is provided by an oracle-bone graph found in the following transcription. The relevant graph is second to last, reading the columns from left to right:³⁸



Heji 29783 (Period 3: 12th century BC)³⁹

³⁸ Many thanks to Qiu Xigui for drawing this inscription to my attention. Personal communication, October 27th, 2002.

³⁹ *Jiaguwen Heji*, Vol.10, p.3641.

Guo Moruo gives the following transcription:

其翹戈一壑九。⁴⁰

The second graph has been interpreted as a protoform for *xiàn* {獻} “to offer”.⁴¹ The fifth graph, which I transcribe here as [壑], is the graph relevant to the current discussion.⁴² It has previously been interpreted as a protoform for the word *fǔ* {斧} “axe” but Qiu Xigui has noted its similarity with the graph [戎] discussed above.⁴³ The bottom component of the [壑] is identical to the component [土] seen in the graph [戎], while its top component, which for convenience sake I transcribe as [戔] *yue*, depicts the head of a *yue*-axe (*yue* 戔), its blade facing to the left. Thus the graph [壑] can be analyzed as being composed of the heads of two weapons: a *ge*-halberd head and a *yue*-axe head. Given the context of this inscription, which reads “Offer one *ge*-halberd and nine 壑”, I would suggest that this graph either denotes an unknown word meaning “weapon head” or is, in fact, a variant of the [土] and represent the word *guī* {圭}, used here to denote ritual jade *ge*-halberd heads. In the latter interpretation, the added *yue*-axe head component would indicate the word’s connection to weapon heads in the same way the added [戈] *gē* component does in the graph [戎]. Thus this inscription refers to the offering of one fully equipped *ge*-halberd and, depending on the suggestion adopted, either nine separate weapon heads (material and form unknown), or nine *gui*, i.e. ritual jade *ge*-halberd heads. Given the ritual context, we can conjecture that the fully equipped *ge*-halberd offered in the inscription might well have had a jade head.⁴⁴

⁴⁰ *Yin Qi Cui Bian*, p.603. Guo added two characters to the transcription but these do not follow directly on from this section in the original inscription and should be read separately.


⁴¹ *Jiaguwenzi Gulin*, pp.424 – 425. See also: Liu Zonghan, “Shuo ‘Xian Jian’ – ‘Xian’ Lei Zi Yanjiu Zhi Yi”.

⁴² This transcription is not completely accurate since the top component, [戔] *yue*, is originally a depiction of a *yue*-axe head along with the staff of the axe while the form in this graph does not have the staff, only the head of the axe, there is, however, no corresponding *kāishū*-script component with which to represent this so we will use the closest form, the [戔] *yue*.


⁴³ For the interpretation as a protoform for *fǔ* {斧} “axe”, see: *Jiaguwenzi Gulin*, pp.3466 – 3467. Qiu Xigui’s suggestion: personal discussion, October 27, 2002.


⁴⁴ There is evidence that jade *ge*-halberd heads were sometimes attached to a shaft to form a complete halberd; the “Lu Fang” jade *ge*-halberd head (盧方玉戈) is thought to be such an example: it has marks suggesting it was attached to a shaft, see: Yang Meili, “Shi, Yu Ge De Yanjiu (Xia)”, p.181.

We now have three apparently related graphs: [土], [堊] and [戎]. We conjecture that the form [土] originally depicted the head of a *ge*-halberd and was the protoform of the word *guī* {圭}, a word which, due to the close relationship between the ritual jade *ge*-halberd head and the jade ritual-object *gui*, was used to denote both these objects. The connection between the form [土] and *guī* {圭} is supported by its use in the Wenxian covenant tablets to denote *guī* {圭}. The oracle-bone graph [堊] denotes a word meaning “weapon head” or is a variant of [土] (denoting *guī* {圭} “ritual jade *ge*-halberd head”) in which the [戔] *yue* component indicates the word’s connection to weapon heads. The graph on the *zhang*, i.e. [戎], is a variant denoting *guī* {圭}, the [戈] *gē* component reflecting the link between *gui* and ceremonial jade *ge*-halberd heads.

By this account, the forms [土], [戎] and [圭] are all variants created to denote *guī* {圭}. The form [堊], I suggest, denotes a type of, or general term for, weapon heads, or is another variant for *guī* {圭}. The form mentioned earlier, the  [戎], from a Yue-state *ge*-halberd, can be considered to be another variant denoting *guī* {圭}.⁴⁵

I suggest the following development path for these variant forms in the analogous character set for [圭] (omitting, for now, the [堊]):

 → [土] → [戎] → [戔] → [圭]

In this scheme, the pictographic protoform,  (5263), was first simplified to [土], after which the [戈] *gē* was added as an additional semantic component, possibly to distinguish it from graphs which could have been confused with the [土], e.g. [土] *shì*. The form [戎] then developed into

⁴⁵ The graph is used as a loan for {癸} *guī* in this Yue *ge*-halberd, see: *Zhanguo Guwen Zidian* p.739.

the [戠] through a doubling of the [土] component.⁴⁶ The [戈] *gē* component was then omitted to give [圭]. One problem with this final step is that we see the [圭] form in Western Zhou bronzes well before the single Warring States example of the [戠] form, while the development path described requires the [戠] form to have come into use before the [圭]. While this could have been the case, and we just lack the early examples, an alternative development path would be that the [圭] variant and the [戠] variant both arose from the [戠] form, the [戠] variant in the way just described, the [圭] variant as a result of a corruption of the [戈] *gē* component in the [戠] form, which would have morphed into a second [土]; the following example from the *zhang* tablets suggests how this could have happened:

(no.7)

Note how minor an adjustment of the top [戈] *gē* would be needed to turn it into a [土] component. Although corruption in such a common form as [戈] *gē* is unlikely (because the scribes should not have mistaken it for any other form), the neatness of the resulting graph, the [圭] could perhaps have encouraged such a development.

In conclusion, while the majority of the examples of this graph found in the

Wenxian text are written with the type 1, (WT1K17 – 110) or type 2 (WT5K14 – 38) forms, the type 3 variation, (WT4K9 – 4) and (WT4K9 – 449), may be the intentional use of a very early variant, the protoform of [圭] *guī*.

⁴⁶ Wang Hui suggests this, see: Wang Hui, “Yinxu Yu Zhang Zhushu ‘Gui’ Zi Jie”, p.66.

3.1.1.2 Discussion and explication of the phrase

The variations in wording found in the opening phrase are, once again:

- | | |
|---------|--|
| a. 圭命 | “The mandated covenant on the <i>gui</i> ” |
| b. 圭命之言 | “The words of the <i>gui</i> ’s mandated covenant” |
| c. 圭命曰 | “The mandated covenant on the <i>gui</i> says” |
| d. 圭言 | “The words on the <i>gui</i> ” |

The significance of the terms *guī* {圭} and *mìng* {命}, as used in this phrase, will be discussed in the following section.

3.1.1.2.1 The term *gui*

The use of the term *guī* {圭} in the opening phrase is clear evidence that those who produced these texts considered the tablets on which they were written to be *gui*. This is significant since excavated objects previously identified as *gui* have not been self-named; their identification has been based on definitions and diagrams of *gui* in transmitted texts. The analysis above also identifies the graph [珪] as denoting *guī* {圭}, found on Shang period tablets apparently also referring to the object on which they are written, giving, if correct, an earlier example of self-named *gui*.

Descriptions of the *gui* ritual object are found in a wide variety of texts, an early example is that in the *Zhou Li*, dating from the Warring States period.⁴⁷ Different texts give different descriptions of the shape of *gui* tablets. More recently, archaeologists have joined the debate with differing opinions about which excavated artifacts should be named *gui*.⁴⁸

A definition of *gui* that is frequently quoted is that of Xu Shen, in the *Shuo Wen Jie Zi*, where he says of *gui*: “the top is round, the bottom is square”.⁴⁹ However, Xu Shen’s definition was almost certainly influenced by the *yinyang*

⁴⁷ For this dating see: Michael Loewe ed., *Early Chinese Texts*, pp.24 – 32.

⁴⁸ Sun Qingwei, “Research on Western Zhou Dynasty Jade *Gui* and Related Issues”, pp.31 – 32.

⁴⁹ *Shuo Wen Jie Zi*, p.289 (13b 土部: 13b): “圭，上圓下方”.

and *wu-xing* (*yīnyáng* 陰陽, *wǔ-xíng* 五行) cosmological theories of the time: a correlation made between the shape of the *gui* and the concept of the sky being round, the earth square. This may have compromised the preciseness of the description since one can question whether Xu Shen was truly concerned with an accurate record of the physical appearance of *gui*. The archaeologist Xia Nai 夏鼐 (1910 - 1985) rejected Xu Shen's definition and argued that *gui* are flat and long with a flat base and a triangular top.⁵⁰ This is the shape generally associated with *gui*.⁵¹ However, Wu Dacheng 吳大澂 (1835 – 1902) in the Qing dynasty and Hayashi Minao, in the twentieth century, both matched a variety of different jade objects with descriptions in the *Zhou Li* of various different types of *gui*. These objects have a wide variety of shapes including rounded ends, flat ends, axe-head forms, *ge*-halberd-head forms and so on.⁵²

The majority of the Wenxian covenant tablets do conform to the standard *gui* shape: Figure 27 gives examples of tablets self-named as *gui*. However, what is significant is that we also find Wenxian tablets which are self-named as *gui* but which do not conform to the standard *gui* shape (Figure 28). The clear implication is that, at least among those people overseeing the production of the Wenxian covenant texts, these tablets were all considered to be *gui*. This suggests that the shape of the *gui* was not always the defining characteristic of objects so named. Weld observes:

Since at least the Han period, texts and commentators have disagreed on the standard shape of a *gui* tablet: should it have a pointed top and straight sides? Or a rounded top? Interestingly, some of the Wenxian tablets that name themselves *gui* and Shang stone fragments that are labeled *zhang* fit none of those definitions. The phrase *guiming*, or “as mandated by/on/in the *gui*”, which begins the oath on many Wenxian tablets of various shapes, suggests that the *gui* was perhaps more a concept or a metaphor than a geometric shape.⁵³

⁵⁰ Xia Nai, “Shang Dai Yuqi De Fenlei, Dingming He Yongtu”, p.458.

⁵¹ Hayashi Minao (transl. Yang Meili), *Zhongguo Gu Yu Yanjiu*, pp.49 – 53.

⁵² For reproductions of jade shapes from Wu Dacheng's *Gu Yu Tu Kao* 《古玉圖考》 and other sources see: Sun Qingwei, “Research on Western Zhou Dynasty Jade *Gui* and Related Issues”, p.32. For Hayashi Minao's descriptions see: Hayashi Minao (transl. Yang Meili), *Zhongguo Gu Yu Yanjiu*, Chapter 1.

⁵³ Susan Roosevelt Weld, “New Light on Ancient Philosophy and Politics”, p.2.

If shape was not the single defining feature of the *gui*, then one can ask whether there were other characteristics also associated with this ritual object. The variation allowed in the shape highlights a separate feature which we can conjecture may also have been significant: that *gui* be made of stone, jade or other hard material; we do not see *gui* made of soft materials like wood or bamboo. Perhaps the quality of hardness, seen in stone and jade, was considered an important feature of the *gui*. The hardness, the immutability and permanence of jade and stone had positive connotations including strength, protection and longevity.⁵⁴ Jade was considered to be greatly auspicious and jade ritual-objects are common in early Chinese burials.

The opening phrase formally declares that the object on which the covenant was written was a *gui*. This would have alerted the covenantors to the use of this auspicious object, to remind them that their oath was expected to match the permanence and immutability of the *gui*, eternal and unchanging. We should also consider what other uses and associations the *gui* ritual-object would have had in the minds of the covenantors.

Gui were common burial goods at this time. At the Eastern Zhou Shangma 上馬 tombs at Houma, about 150 km from Wenxian, many of the tombs included three to five *gui*.⁵⁵ Weld suggests that they indicated the elite status of the tomb

⁵⁴ The use of jade placed on the body in burial, finally developing into full jade burial suits, is one indication of such beliefs. The idea that these qualities are themselves positive is reflected in Chinese words such as *shi* {實} “solid” which has the extended meaning of “honest” (the same connotation exists with English “solid”). In the discussion on the graph [吉] *ji* above (see note 32) we mentioned the suggestion that the character originally denoted a word meaning “solid, substantial”. It is possible that the use of the graph to denote the word “auspicious” *ji* {吉} was due to an extension of the word meaning “solid, substantial” to a meaning of “auspicious” due to the positive connotation of the idea “solid”. We could also conjecture that the graph [吉] *ji* was created after the word had this connotation and that the selection of the semantic component depicting a *ge*-halberd head for the top of the graph was not only due to its hardness but to the positive and auspicious connotation of the jade *ge*-halberd head used for ritual purposes.

⁵⁵ Shanxi Sheng Kaogu Yanjiusuo ed., *Shangma Mudi*, pp.151 – 155. Sun Qingwei identifies two main usages of *gui* in Western Zhou tombs. The first is a single large *gui* placed lengthways on the coffin or on the body of the occupant. These were “auspicious objects during life and served as a private token for the occupants of these tombs....”. The second type of *gui* are small examples found in large numbers (tens to hundreds) “scattered around the body of the tomb occupant, or on or around the cover of the wooden chamber.” Sun believes, on the basis of descriptions in received texts, that these small *gui*, specially made for the burial, were both included among jades that were threaded together to place on the body, and also hung on a coffin ornament called a *shà* 𦉰. He argues that the *qì* 氣 of the *gui* was believed to protect the body of the occupant. See: Sun Qingwei, “Research on Western Zhou Dynasty Jade *Gui* and Related Issues”, pp.34 – 35. Sun Hua 孫華 has conjectured that up-pointed *gui* were placed in a frame around the coffin and functioned to repel evil; he links this usage to the *gui*’s close relationship to *gē* 戈 (lecture, Peking University, spring 1995).

occupant as well as having symbolic function which she links to their use in the covenant ceremony:

Graves, like pit sacrifices, are located at the boundary between the human and the spirit worlds, and the stone *gui* in both must have functioned as vehicles for communication across that boundary. Just as the spirit of the grave's occupant faced north, *gui* at hand, to approach his ancestors, so perhaps the spirits of the animals slain at Houma and Wenxian faced north to present the message of the covenant text to the dead rulers: enforcers of the spirit world.⁵⁶

Hao Benxing also suggests that the type of tablet used by the covenantors was related to their rank.⁵⁷ Hao notes that in the bottom of pit WT1K1 at the Wenxian site, there were more than a dozen of the slip-type tablets which are made of a finer, smoother stone than the more common slate and sandstone tablets. Hao argues that these finer tablets belonged to higher ranking covenantors who had precedence in the covenant ceremony, with the result that their tablets were the first to be placed in the pit.

Received texts suggest that the other main use of *gui* at this time was as a ceremonial object used in appointment ceremonies and official meetings between nobles. Historical texts suggest that *gui* were presented to the feudal lords and by feudal lords to their ministers when enfeoffments, decrees and commands were being issued in appointment ceremonies.⁵⁸ However, *gui* are rarely mentioned in bronze inscriptions among the items conferred during such ceremonies, suggesting that they were not essential or that their role could be played by other objects.⁵⁹ Scholars have also suggested that the command itself was written on the *gui* presented in the ceremony. While this would allow us to suggest a close connection, at least formally, between these *gui* and the *gui* of the Houma and Wenxian ceremonies, this theory appears to rest on a single quotation, from the

⁵⁶ Susan Roosevelt Weld, "Covenant in Jin's Walled Cities: The Discoveries at Houma and Wenxian", pp.231 – 232.

⁵⁷ Hao Benxing, "Henan Wenxian Dongzhou Mengshi Yizhi Fajue Yu Zhengli Qingkuang Huibao", p.4.

⁵⁸ Xu Zhuoyun, *Xi Zhou Shi*, p.169.

⁵⁹ For example, *ge*-halberds are mentioned and we may conjecture that they would have been of the ceremonial type, perhaps made of jade, see: Qi Sihe, "Zhou dai Ci Ming Li Kao"; Virginia C. Kane, "Aspects of Western Chou Appointment Inscriptions ...".

Guo Yu and, as such, is not fully convincing.⁶⁰ Nevertheless, it is interesting to note that there is an example of a jade *ge*-halberd head, the “Tai Bao Yu Ge 太保玉戈” with an engraved inscription recording a command given by the Zhou king to the *Tai Bao* official: we do not know, however, whether this was written after the fact, to commemorate the event, or presented along with the order.⁶¹

Once the appointment was received, the *gui* acted, according to historical texts, as a symbol of the authority given to the holder of the *gui* by his superior. Some scholars argue that it was then used as a symbol of rank and authority in official meetings. When a minister appeared at court in front of his superior he would present his *gui* to the superior who would then return it after the meeting.⁶² This would have provided the superior figure with evidence of the status and authority of the subordinate. Yang Kuan 楊寬 argues that when a lord sent a subordinate on a mission he would also present the subordinate with a *gui*.⁶³ In these cases, Yang sees the *gui* as an object of authentication, proof of the validity of the decree or order.⁶⁴

In the *gui*'s alleged use in both the appointment ceremony and in official meetings, it is passed between superior and subordinate, subordinate and superior: a symbol of the communication of the appointment between the parties. An appointment can also be considered a form of covenant: an agreement is made between superior and subordinate by which the superior bestows rank, land, ceremonial objects, etc., and in return the subordinate gives loyalty and carries out commands. The use of *gui* in covenant ceremonies may well be related to these practices, *gui* are “vehicles for communication” as Weld put it in the quote given above. The *gui* in the Wenxian and Houma ceremonies communicated to the covenantors the stipulation they must abide by and communicated the same oath to the enforcing spirits.

⁶⁰ The argument is made by Xu Zhouyun: Xu Zhuoyun, *Xi Zhou Shi*, p.169 and also in: Hao Benxing and Zhang Wenbin, “Yu Zhang Yongtu Kao” (cited in: Susan Roosevelt Weld, “New Light on Ancient Philosophy and Politics”, p.2).

⁶¹ Yang Meili, “Shi, Yu Ge De Yanjiu (Xia)”, p.182.

⁶² Hsu Cho-yun and Katheryn M. Linduff, *Western Chou Civilization*, pp.182 – 183. See also: Hayashi Minao (transl. Yang Meili), *Zhongguo Gu Yu Yanjiu*, p.79.

⁶³ Yang Kuan, *Xi Zhou Shi*, pp.805 – 810.

⁶⁴ Yang Kuan, *Xi Zhou Shi*, p.810.

The *gui*'s function as a symbol of communication may have been related to associations of the *gui* as an object which itself could travel between two points. Yang Meili draws attention to a number of excavated artifacts in which *ge*-halberd heads, most of which could equally well be identified as *gui*, occur with figures of birds included in the design (see Figure 29).⁶⁵ Sun Hua 孫華 has suggested that such depictions may indicate a belief that the birds delivered the *gui* up to Tian 天: the *gui* are literally, in that case, "vehicles of communication".⁶⁶ The standard *gui* shape is reminiscent of a projectile head and this may also have produced an association with its role of a carrier of messages.

Received texts record instances where *gui* are used as an offering when pronouncing an oath. The *Zuo Zhuan* records how two individuals swore an oath and then threw two jade *gui* into a river "as security".⁶⁷ Hayashi Minao argues that the aim of this practice was to call down the spirits in order to, for example, protect those who had made the offering.⁶⁸ Here again, then, the *gui* act as a means for communication with the spirits. Another aspect of such acts is that giving up a valuable object, like a *gui*, can be considered a form of sacrifice, forfeiting a cherished object to symbolize that, if the oath is broken, one will forfeit the even more valuable object pledged in the oath (one's life, for example).⁶⁹

This brief summary of the uses of *gui* suggests that this ritual object was associated with communication, not only in the world of men, but also between the world of men and that of the spirits. As such, it was ideal as a medium with which to communicate the contents of the covenant to the spirits. Its other associations, as a status symbol, as an offering and as a token of sincerity, would also have been significant for the covenantors.⁷⁰

⁶⁵ Yang Meili, "Shi, Yu Ge De Yanjiu (Xia)", pp.202 – 204.

⁶⁶ Sun Hua 孫華, personal communication, Peking University, November 26th, 2002.

⁶⁷ Sun Qingwei, "Research on Western Zhou Dynasty Jade *Gui* and Related Issues", p.34.

⁶⁸ Hayashi Minao (transl. Yang Meili), *Zhongguo Gu Yu Yanjiu*, p.77.

⁶⁹ Walter Burkert, *Creation of the Sacred*, Chapter 2.

⁷⁰ A psychoanalytical approach might take into account the phallic shape of the *gui* and its possible unconscious effect on the covenantors. The scholar Na Zhiliang 那志良 argues that the *gui* originated from so called *shi zhu* 石主 which were symbols of genitalia and related to the worship of ancestors. Na argues that, in the Western Zhou period, such *shi zhu* 石主 were replaced in ancestral temples by *gui*. He also notes, in support of the identification with the male sexual organ, that *gui* placed on the corpse in a tomb were

As for the question of the shape associated with the term *gui*, the Wenxian tablets show that, at least by this stage in their development, a variety of tablet shapes could be used to make *gui*. I have also suggested that one important characteristic of a *gui* was its hardness and that this aspect may have been associated with some of the ritual significance of the *gui*.

The announcement in the opening phrase, identifying the tablet as a *gui*, aimed to trigger the associations discussed above in the minds of the covenantors, encouraging a reverential attitude towards the ceremony and their oath.

3.1.1.2.2 The term *ming*

Having alerted the covenantors to the fact that these texts are written on *gui*, the opening phrase then announces that the texts themselves are *mìng* { 命 } . However, the texts on the Wenxian tablets do not correspond to the standard definitions of the word *mìng*, i.e. “mandate”, “decree”, “command”, “order”. They are covenants, as demonstrated in Chapter One.

Not only do the tablets formally and functionally fit definitions of covenant, but one category of the Houma texts, with which the Wenxian texts are structurally identical, actually refers to itself as a covenant. The Houma Confiscation Texts include the following line:

1. ... 敢不率從此盟質之言, ... (Confiscation Texts)

[If the covenantor] dare to not abide by the words of this **covenant**, ...

The term *méngzhì* { 盟質 } means “covenant”.⁷¹ Here the term clearly seems to refer to the text of which it is a part, proving that the composers of the Houma texts considered them to be covenants.⁷² The word *méng* { 盟 } “covenant” is

restricted to male corpses and are not found in graves of females. Na Zhiliang, *Gu Yu Jiancai*, pp.65 – 66.

⁷¹ For a detailed discussion of this term see below, section 3.2.1.1, graph 2.

⁷² It is just possible that another covenant is referred to, one that was carried out at the same time, or just previous to this one, and that this set of texts is adding an additional requirement (its content is concerned with prohibiting the seizing of property from other clansmen). This seems unlikely given the term “this covenant” and the lack of any other date or place name that would suggest a separate covenant, but, even if it were true, this scenario would imply that the previous covenant was part of a series with the text under discussion and, therefore, of the same form, again suggesting these texts were all understood to be covenants.

used in the Houma tablets to refer to what must have been earlier covenants:

2. ... 敢不盡從嘉之盟, ... (Lineage Covenant Texts)
 [If the covenantor] dare to not fully abide by Jia's **covenant**, ...
3. ... 及群鱗盟 (Lineage Covenant Texts and Pledge Texts)
 ... and all those who broke or break the **covenant**, ...

In a fragment we find a prohibition on future covenanting:

4. 𠄎永不盟于邯鄲, 不盟于𠄎 (Houma Other Texts, tablet: 探 8②:3)
 ... never **covenant** in Handan, never **covenant** in ...

The importance and prevalence of covenant is clear from these quotes and the Houma and Wenxian tablets were products of this institution. This being the case, how do we explain the use of the term *mìng* in the opening phrase of many of the Wenxian texts?

The Houma texts also use the term *mìng*, but in a different context. The Lineage Covenant Texts have the following sentence (leaving the *mìng* untranslated):

5. ... 敢不盡從嘉之盟, 定宮平時之命, ... (Lineage Covenant Texts)
 [If the covenantor] dare to not fully abide by Jia's covenant and the *mìng* 命 [given at] the Ding Temple and the Ping Altar, ...

The word *mìng* could be taken to mean “decree”, “charge” or “command” here, the authors of the *Houma Mengshu* take it this way.⁷³ However, some scholars believe it refers here to a covenant, paralleling the “Jia’s covenant” (*Jiā zhī méng* 嘉之盟) of the previous clause. Zeng Zhixiong argues that this *mìng* is a covenant carried out between a lord and his ministers; he suggests it may specifically refer to covenants carried out between the Jin state lord and his

⁷³ *Houma Mengshu*, pp.69 – 71.

ministerial families.⁷⁴ Zeng gives various examples of what he sees as a similar usage of *mìng* in received texts, some of which he believes are actually referring to the “*mìng* [given at] the Ding Temple and the Ping Altar”, mentioned in the Houma tablets. Let us look at these and other relevant examples. The term *mìng* has been left untranslated where its meaning is not immediately obvious. The earliest example is one not included by Zeng:

1. *Zuo Zhuan* Xi 僖 26.3 (text: 5th – 4th century BC) (event: 634 BC)⁷⁵

恃先王之命。昔周公、大公股肱周室，夾輔成王。成王勞之，而賜之盟，曰：“世世子孫無相害也！”載在盟府，大師職之。桓公是以糾合諸侯，而謀其不協，彌縫其闕，而匡救其災，昭舊職也。及君即位，諸侯之望曰：“其率桓之功！”我敝邑用不敢保聚，曰：“豈其嗣世九年，而弃命廢職？其若先君何？君必不然。”恃此以不恐。

[The duke of Qi has asked Zhan Xi, an envoy from Lu, what basis Lu has to not be scared of an attack by Qi. Zhan Xi replies:] We depend on the *mìng* of the former kings. In days gone by, Duke Zhou [ancestor of the royal house of Lu] and Duke Tai [ancestor of the royal house of Qi] supported the Zhou house, helping King Cheng. King Cheng feasted them in recognition of their services and presented them a **covenant** which said: “Successive generations of sons and grandsons [of Duke Zhou and Duke Tai] will not harm each other!” The record [of this covenant] is in the **covenant archives**, the Tai Shi official oversees it. Because of this, Lord Huan [previous Lord of Qi, and hegemon], brought together the feudal lords and considered [how to solve] their discord, patched together their differences, salvaged [them from] their disasters, and thus manifested the old responsibilities [of the covenant]. When you took the throne, the hope of the feudal lords was: “May he continue the meritorious service of [Duke] Huan!” Because of this my humble town did not dare [to assume the need] to protect [itself] and gather up [its people], saying: “Could it be that after nine years of the succession he would abandon the *mìng* and reject these responsibilities? What about the former rulers? Your lordship would certainly not act in this way.” We rely on this and thus are not afraid.

Here, the covenant arranged by King Cheng between the founders of the Lu and Qi royal houses is referred to as both a *mìng* and a covenant (*méng* 盟). The key stipulation, “Successive generations of sons and grandsons will not harm each other”, is first referred to as the words of the covenant, but further on these

⁷⁴ Zeng Zhixiong, “Houma Mengshu Yanjiu”, pp.73 – 74.

⁷⁵ *Chunqiu Zuo Zhuan Zhu*, pp.439 – 440.

requirements are called *mìng*. We can observe that this covenant was established between the founding ancestors of Lu and Qi by King Cheng, that is, it can be considered to have been King Cheng's decree. The main stipulation, quoted in the text, is not in the form of a conditional structure, as we see in the Houma and Wenxian texts, but is a command. We may conjecture that *mìng* is used to describe a mandated covenant. We could also consider whether it specifically indicated the command-style stipulation, rather than the whole covenant.

The earliest example given by Zeng is as follows:

2. *Zuo Zhuan* Xiang 襄 11.3 (text: 5th – 4th century BC) (event: 562 BC)⁷⁶

。。。乃盟。載書曰：“凡我同盟，毋蕪年，毋壅利，毋保姦，毋留慝，救災患，恤禍亂，同好惡，獎王室。或問茲命，司慎、司盟，名山、名川，羣神、羣祀，先王、先公，七姓、十二國之祖，明神殛之，俾失其民，隊命亡氏，踣其國家。”

... [the feudal lords] then covenanted. The covenant said: All of us who covenant together, do not horde [one's] harvest, do not monopolize the benefits [that nature supplies], do not harbour the deceitful, do not retain the iniquitous, save [each other] from disaster, assist [each other] in times of chaos, share in prosperity and adversity, support the Royal House. If anyone breaks **this *mìng***, the spirits who oversee that one is reverent, the spirits that oversee covenants, the famed mountains and rivers, the many spirits, the many deities, former kings, former lords, the ancestors of the twelve states of seven surnames, the bright spirits will kill him, cause him to lose his people, to bring down his mandate, wipe out his clan, and topple his state.

Zeng Zhixiong observes that the *Jingdian Shiwen* gives the variation *zī méng* “茲盟” in place of this *zī mìng* “茲命” and argues that this is not coincidental, even though Lu Deming considers it to be a mistake.⁷⁷ Note that in this example the *mìng* {命} could be taken to just refer to the stipulations of the covenant, and they are, as above, commands. This corresponds to the conjecture given above that, *mìng* {命} refers to command-style stipulations in covenants.

⁷⁶ *Chunqiu Zuo Zhuan Zhu*, pp.989 – 990.

⁷⁷ Zeng Zhixiong, “Houma Mengshu Yanjiu”, p.121, note 28.

Zeng also gives the following example:

3. *Zuo Zhuan* Zhao 昭 25.6 (text: 5th – 4th century BC) (event: 517 BC)⁷⁸

臧昭伯率從者將盟，載書曰：“戮力壹心，好惡同之。信罪之有無，繼繼從公，無通外內！”以公命示子家子。子家子曰：“如此，吾不可以盟。”

Zang Zhaobo led the followers [of Duke Zhao 昭公], and was about to covenant [with them]. The covenant said: “Unite in force, be of one heart, share in prosperity and adversity, be honest about whether or not crimes have been committed, resolutely follow the lord, do not have [illicit] contact with those outside!” He showed the lord’s *mìng* to Zi Jia Zi. Zi Jia Zi said: “If it is like this, I cannot use [these words] to covenant.”

Once again, we have a covenant in which the stipulations are listed and they are in the form of a command. The term *mìng* is then used to describe these stipulations. This again suggests that *mìng* is used for command-style stipulations of covenants.

The following example is not included by Zeng, but here too a covenant is referred to as a *mìng*:

4. *Zuo Zhuan* Ding 定 1.1 (text: 5th – 4th century BC) (event: 509 BC)⁷⁹

孟懿子會城成周。庚寅，栽。宋仲幾不受功，曰：“滕、薛、郟，吾役也。”薛宰曰：“宋為無道，絕我小國於周，以我適楚，故我常從宋。晉文公為踐土之盟，曰：‘凡我同盟，各復舊職。’若從踐土，若從宋，亦唯命。”

Meng Yi Zi [a Lu minister] met up [with the other feudal lords in order] to build a city wall for [the city of] Chengzhou. On *gēngyín* day, they set up the wooden boards [between which earth would be pounded]. Song Zhongji [a Song minister] did not accept the work [allocated to Song], saying: “Teng, Xue and Ni are my vassals [i.e. they should do the work for Song].” The *Zai* minister of Xue said: “Song is being unreasonable. [Song] broke our small state’s allegiance with Zhou and took us over to Chu [to ally with them]. So, we have always followed Song. [But] Duke Wen of Jin made the **covenant** at Jiantu saying: ‘All

⁷⁸ *Chunqiu Zuo Zhuan Zhu*, pp.1465 – 1466.

⁷⁹ *Chunqiu Zuo Zhuan Zhu*, p.1523.

of us who make **covenant** together, each [state should] retain its old duties.’ Whether we [Xue] follow [the covenant of] Jiantu, or follow Song, these are both **commands** [i.e. there is some ambiguity about which covenant Xue should be obeying].

The one-sided nature of these covenants is clear, the small state, Xue, had joined covenants led by both Chu and Jin and treats them both as orders to be obeyed. The stipulation of the Jiantu covenant quoted here is, once again, a command.

Zeng’s latest examples are both from a single passage:

5. *Zuo Zhuan* Ding 定 13.2 (text: 5th – 4th century BC) (event: 497 BC)⁸⁰

趙孟曰：“晉國有命，始禍者死，…。”

Zhao Meng said: “The state of Jin has a *mìng*, [which says] one who initiates disaster will die, …

Later on in the same passage:

荀躒言於晉侯曰：“君命大臣，始禍者死，載書在河。今三臣始禍，而獨逐鞅，刑已不鈞矣。請皆逐之。”

Xun Yue explained to the Duke of Jin saying: “You **ordered** the great ministers, [saying] one who initiates disaster will die. The covenant texts [recording this] are in the Yellow River. Now three ministers have initiated disaster yet you only pursue [Zhao] Yang: the punishment is most uneven. I request that you pursue all of them.”⁸¹

Now, in these examples two examples, the term *mìng* would seem to refer to the whole covenant and not just the stipulations. Zeng argues that this *mìng* (the same one is referred to in both the quoted sections) is a covenant, made between the ruler of Jin and his ministers: the second passage clearly implies that the text of this *mìng* was written on *zǎishū* 載書, “covenant texts” which were then deposited in the Yellow River, standard practice in covenant ceremonies

⁸⁰ *Chunqiu Zuo Zhuan Zhu*, p.1590.

⁸¹ Incidentally, note that in the passage from the *Zuo Zhuan*, the punishment threatened in the covenant is being implemented not by a spirit but by the Jin lord himself. This is significant as we expect covenants to be sanctioned by spirits but this example suggests that, at least by this stage, rulers were not going to rely on the spirits alone to carry out the punishments given in covenants.

recorded in early texts. Thus there can be little doubt that the term *mìng* here is used to refer to a covenant. The phrase “one who initiates disaster will die”, clearly gives the words of the *mìng* (even though Yang Bojun does not use quotation marks), but is also very much the language of covenant: it is an oath, a conditional curse. So, in this case, the stipulation is not a command but the Jin lord’s establishment of the covenant with the ministers is described as a *mìng*.

The above examples strongly support the theory that covenants imposed on the parties to the agreement by a higher authority could be called *mìng* because they were mandated by this authority and their stipulations were frequently in the form of commands. Note that such covenants were not necessarily unfavourable to the subordinate parties: the first passage given above, for example, produced a peaceful alliance between two states. The aim of all the above examples was political organization and order.

If we now consider the Houma and Wenxian covenants, we will recognize that they are similar to the above examples: imposed by a higher authority, the covenant lord, and aiming at political order and organization. Their stipulations are in a conditional form rather than imperative, something we also saw in example 5 above, suggesting the imperative form was not required for a covenant to be referred to as a *mìng*. The Houma and Wenxian examples are particularly similar to examples 3 and 5 above in which a lord is calling for loyalty from his subordinates. In fact, Zeng Zhixiong believes that the *mìng* referred to in example 5 is the same *mìng* referred to in the Houma tablets, the “*mìng* [given at] the Ding Temple and the Ping Altar, ... ” (*Dìng Gōng Ping Zhì zhī mìng* 定宮平時之命).⁸² Whether or not this is the case, it is an example of a similar style covenant carried out in the state of Jin, at the same period as the Houma and Wenxian covenants and also described as a *mìng*.

In conclusion, these examples demonstrate the use of covenant by those in authority as a tool of command, to be used for the purpose of political order and control, a recognized usage of ancient covenant that was discussed in Chapter

⁸² Zeng Zhixiong, “Houma Mengshu Yanjiu”, p. 74.

One. It is for this reason that this type of covenant could be referred to as *mìng* “command”, “decree”. In order to reflect the particular usage of the term to describe this type of covenant, we can translate this use of *mìng* as “mandated covenant”.

3.1.2 Name clause: period of effectiveness: date formula

Only one of the small-pit tablets, tablet WT4K9 – 2, has the date formula. This is an Oath Type 1 tablet with the same date as Oath Type 1 tablets from pit WT1K1. The majority of the enhanced and legible tablets found in WT4K9 are also Type 1 texts but without this date.¹ The date is not seen in tablets from other small pits and does not appear to be seen in the other large pit, WT1K14.² The full text of WT4K9 – 2 is given here with the missing sections emended, in triangular brackets 〈 〉, on the basis of the standard Type 1 content:³

Tablet WT4K9 – 2

- I. 十五年十二月乙未朔辛酉。□
 II.A. 而敢不□〈焉中心事其主〉
 II.B. 〈而敢與〉賊為徒者，
 III. 丕顯□公大塚
 IV. 諦〈亟視汝靡夷彼氏。〉

- I. Fifteenth year, twelfth month, *yǐwèi* was the first day of the month, *xīnyǒu* day [i.e. 27th day of that month]. [If] 〈[covenantor's name]〉
 II.A dares not ___ly [?] 〈and loyally serve his ruler,〉
 II.B. 〈and dares to join with〉 the enemy as a follower,
 III. the great, resplendent Duke ___, [in his] great tomb [?],
 IV. [may he] observe 〈and immediately detect you, and wipe out that [i.e. your] clan.〉

The date is a significant part of the formula as it gives the specific day from which the covenant is effective, the day from which the covenantors were bound by their oaths.

Attempts to match the this date with a date in our current reckoning were discussed in Chapter One. Here I will consider the style of the dating formula used in the texts in the context of the development of Chinese dating formulae.

¹ Remembering that pit WT1K1 had been disturbed by digging before the scientific excavation took place, there is a possibility that tablet WT4K9 – 2 was from WT1K1 but became displaced and mistakenly taken to be from this other pit. Tests on the stone or ink from both these pits might confirm its original provenance.

² I have not checked all the tablets in this pit but a random sample of about 100 tablets included no tablet with a date.

³ Note that this use of triangular brackets is not the usage common in published transcriptions of excavated texts where they indicate corrections to scribal errors.

One character found in the formula, the [朔] *shuo*⁴, is of particular interest as it supplies evidence which has a bearing on a disputed graph in the single date found in the Houma covenant tablets. This is the single graph in this formula for which the palaeographic analysis is given.

3.1.2.1 Palaeographic analysis

Graph 1: [朔]

Direct transcription: [朔]

Formal transcription: [朔]

Interpretative transcription: *shuo*⁴ {朔}

English translation: “the first day of the month”

Analysis category: A. Direct textual evidence supports the interpretation.

Variant forms

Two variant forms were selected from the WT1K1 pit tablets in order to provide some comparison with the single example from the small pits (tablet WT4K9 – 2). Note that, since the great majority of the WT1K1 tablets were not examined, this is not a complete selection of variant forms.

1.



WT4K9 – 2

2.



WT1K1 – 3586




3.





WT1K1 – 3705

Two components can be distinguished, one on the right, one on the left. The arms of the right component partly encircle the left-hand component. The right-hand component usually has two parallel strokes within the form. The left-hand component shows some variation, in type 3 a horizontal line cuts through the figure; this is not seen in the type 2 example.


Analysis

The *Shuo Wen Jie Zi* component table has two forms similar in shape to the right-hand component: one is , [月] *yuè*; the other is , [肉] *ròu*. Looking up characters gathered under the [月] *yuè* component in the *Shuo Wen Jie Zi*, one immediately finds a matching graph: , [朔] *shuò*.⁴ The Type 3 (WT1K1 – 3705) form is very close to the *Shuo Wen Jie Zi* character, the only difference being that the arms of the [月] *yuè* component surround the left hand component in the Wenxian forms and the diagonal side-strokes of the left-hand component curve in the *Shuo Wen Jie Zi* form. The character denotes *shuò* {朔} “the first day of the month”, which clearly fits the context of a dating formula.

We see variation in the right-hand component, [𠄎] *nì*. The type 2 form,  (WT1K1 – 3586), is not seen in examples of ancient-form [朔] *shuò* found in the received lexicons. However, this form is, in fact, the same as that of the earliest known examples of this component. This form of the [𠄎] *nì* we see in type 2,  (WT1K1 – 3586), is seen in examples of the graph [逆] *nì* in oracle bones and some bronze inscriptions. An oracle bone example is:




乙 2707⁵

The type 3 form,  (WT1K1 – 3705), has an added central horizontal line: this is a common Warring States calligraphic variant, called a “single-stroke

⁴ *Shuo Wen Jie Zi*, p.141 (7a 月部: 8b)

⁵ *Guwenzi Lei Bian*, p.29.

decorative symbol” (*dānbǐ zhuāngshì fùhào* 單筆裝飾符號).⁶ We can observe that the *Shuo Wen Jie Zi* character, , has taken this later form. Xu Shen’s erroneous gloss for [莠] *nì* suggests he did not know of the earlier forms.⁷ Without a complete survey of the tablets from pit WT1K1 it is not possible to say which of these forms is most commonly used in the Wenxian tablets.

We can be confident that the interpretation of this graph as the character [朔] *shuò*, denoting *shuò* {朔} “the first day of the month”, is correct. The graphic evidence is strong as is the contextual evidence. With this in mind, we can now compare the graph with the disputed graph from the Houma tablets that I mentioned above.

The Houma graph appears on tablet HM 16:3, this being the only tablet discovered at Houma with a date. There are two photographs of this tablet in the *Houma Mengshu* but the character is not legible in either of these.⁸ The hand copy given of the graph in the character table of the book is:

HM 16:3⁹

The authors of the *Houma Mengshu* interpreted the graph as [朙] *fēi*, derived from [月] *yuè* “moon”, and [出] *chū* “come out, emerge”, denoting *fēi* {朙} “first appearance of the new moon”.¹⁰ If this hand-copy of this graph is accurate then the interpretation as [朙] *fēi* is not unreasonable: compare the Houma form for [出] *chū*:

HM 156:19¹¹

HM 16:3

⁶ He Linyi, *Zhanguo Wenzhi Tonglun*, p.229.


⁷ *Shuo Wen Jie Zi*, p.50 (3a 干部 2a): Xu Shen explains [莠] *nì* as: “derived from 干 *gān* with 屮 *cǎo* (‘vegetation’) underneath, it means: ‘to go counter to’ (从干下屮莠之也)”, whereas it is, in fact, a depiction of an inverted human figure.

⁸ *Houma Mengshu*, colour print I and the black-and-white image on p.83.

⁹ *Houma Mengshu*, p.319.

¹⁰ *Houma Mengshu*, p.34 and pp.74 – 77.

¹¹ First graph: *Houma Mengshu*, p.303; second graph: *Houma Mengshu*, p.319.

The left-hand component of the Houma hand-copy of the graph is very similar to the [出] *chū*, , found in the Houma tablets, the only difference being that the top left-hand stroke is higher in the [朏] *fěi* form.

If the *Houma Mengshu* character is indeed [朏] *fěi*, denoting *fěi* {朏} “the first appearance of the new moon”, then the Houma and the Wenxian tablets are using different dating formulae. The Wenxian tablets use *shuò* {朔} “the first day of the month”, while the Houma tablet uses *fěi* {朏} “the first appearance of the new moon”. Since the Houma and Wenxian covenant tablets are clearly products of the same local culture, using the same formulaic language, the same script and produced at a similar time it does, however, seem odd that different dating formulae would be used.

In fact, even before the first publication giving the dating formula used in the Wenxian covenant tablets, scholars had suggested that the Houma graph is not [朏] *fěi* but [朔] *shuò*. In a 1981 article, Huang Shengzhang 黃盛璋 made the argument that using *fěi* {朏} for dates is impractical as it can refer to either the second or third day of the month, and that received texts and bronze inscriptions use *shuò* {朔} for dates, not *fěi* {朏}.¹² He observes the similarity of the components [出] *chū* and [𠄎] *nì* and the possibility that the difficulty in reading the graphs could have led to a miscopying and misidentification of this graph. In an afterword to a 1994 article, the scholar who copied the texts of the Houma tablets for the book *Houma Mengshu*, Zhang Shouzhong 張守中, while stressing that he made a careful examination of the graph when it was copied, agrees that the two graphs, [朏] *fěi* and [朔] *shuò*, are formally very similar and notes the use of [朔] *shuò* in the Wenxian texts and the absence of any examples of [朏] *fěi* in those texts.¹³ He also reports that in 1975, in Beijing, Qiu Xigui had examined this character and also interpreted it as [朔] *shuò*. He goes on to say

¹² Huang Shengzhang, “Guanyu Houma Mengshu De Zhuyao Wenti”, p.30.

¹³ Zhang Shouzhong, “Lun Mengshu Shufa Yishu”, p.6.

that in 1992 he re-examined the original tablet but the ink was already too faded to confirm the form of the graph.

Let us look in more detail at the point Huang Shengzhang raises concerning the use of *fěi* {朏} in dating formula. There is some debate about the exact meaning of the word *fěi* {朏}. Its basic meaning is generally accepted to be the “first appearance of the new moon” (the graph is a syssamantograph made up of [月] *yuè* “the moon” and [出] *chū* “to come out, emerge”). However, this presents problems if it is used for dating: the new moon can appear on either the second or the third day of the month.¹⁴ Thus while that day would have been easy to observe, using it for dating would be impractical since one would have no way of knowing whether the second or third day of the month was indicated. The Wenxian date is not ambiguous because it gives the first day of the month, {朔} *shuò*, and the actual day indicated, both using the *gānzhī* sixty-day cycle. This allows one to calculate the exact day referred to.

If the Houma graph is indeed [朏] *fěi*, then one possible explanation for this would be that the word *fěi* {朏} had come to refer to a fixed day, not just the first sighting of the new moon. This is, in fact, what did apparently happen at some point before the Han dynasty: the *Han Shu* quotes a work called the *Yue Cai* 月采 which says that “the third day is called *fěi*” (*sān rì yuē fěi* 三日曰朏).¹⁵ The scholar Li Zhongzao 李仲操 argues that *fěi* {朏} was in fact used to refer to the first day of the month before *shuò* {朔} came to be used for this purpose.¹⁶ But if this was the case, the Wenxian and Houma tablets would be using two different words to denote the same thing, which seems unlikely when one is dealing with something as formulaic as a date. Alternatively, one could argue that this is evidence that Li Zhongzao was correct and we are witnessing the change from the usage of *fěi* {朏} to *shuò* {朔} to refer to the first day of the month. However, the Wenxian tablets have been dated to before the Houma tablets, which, if

¹⁴ See discussion in *Houma Mengshu*, p.75.

¹⁵ Zeng Zhixiong, “Houma Mengshu Yanjiu”, p.45.

¹⁶ Zeng Zhixiong, “Houma Mengshu Yanjiu”, p.118, note 12.

correct, puts the *shuo* {朔} in use before the *fēi* {朏}. Alternatively, it could be argued that we are witnessing the change from a dating formula which recorded *fēi* {朏} as a celestial event (the first appearance of the moon) and not as a fixed day, so that the dates were in fact imprecise, to the adoption of *shuo* {朔} to mark the first day of the month, an event without a clear celestial marker, but one giving a more precise dating system.¹⁷

Significantly, however, as I will discuss in detail in the interpretation section below, the graph [朏] *fēi* does not occur in excavated texts and is very rare in received texts. The [朔] *shuo*, on the other hand, although rare in bronzes, is very common in Han bamboo slips and received texts.

As for the graphs themselves, compare the Houma graph with one Wenxian form:

HM 16 – 3¹⁸

WT1K1 – 3586

The difference between the graphs is the extended central stroke in the left-hand component in the Houma graph and the left-hand side stroke in the same component is lower than that in the Wenxian form. These are significant differences but, as mentioned above, the copyist, Zhang Shouzhong, agreed that the two graphs are similar formally, so we cannot rule out a copying error. The gradual deterioration of the original Houma graph may mean that it will never be possible to confirm its exact form.

In conclusion, there is strong evidence to suggest that the Houma graph is in fact [朔] *shuo* rather than [朏] *fēi*. Both Huang Shengzhang and Qiu Xigui, suggested that the graph was probably [朔] *shuo*, before its use in the Wenxian tablets was known. The Wenxian tablets, which share the script and, perhaps more significantly for this issue, exactly the same basic covenant formula and

¹⁷ Zeng Zhixiong, "Houma Mengshu Yanjiu", p.45.

¹⁸ *Houma Mengshu*, p.319.

many of the same formulaic phrases, use [朔] *shuò*. Furthermore, received texts and bronze inscriptions generally use [朔] *shuò* in dating formulae (this is further discussed below). And [朏] *fěi*, due to the possibility of its occurring on either the second or third day of the month, is impractical for a dating formula unless it had come to be used to indicate a specific day.

When the digitalized Wenxian tablets from pit WT1K1 are all published and the character tables completed, it will be possible to see the full range of variation found for the Wenxian graph [朔] *shuò*. This will allow a more informed judgement as to the similarity between the [朏] *nì* component in this graph and examples of the character [出] *chū* seen in the Wenxian and Houma tablets and, therefore, how likely it is that a [朏] *nì* component could have been misread and miscopied as [出] *chū* by the copier of the Houma tablets.

3.1.2.2 Discussion and explication of the phrase

The only example of this phrase found in the small pits at the Wenxian site is that on tablet WT4K9 – 2. The same date occurs on many of the WT1K1 pit tablets but these have not yet been examined for variant wordings.

In this section I will consider the Wenxian dating formula in the context of the general development of dating formulae in early Chinese texts.

The date on tablet WT4K9 – 2 is:

十五年十二月乙未朔辛酉

Fifteenth year, twelfth month, *yǐwèi* was the first day of the month, *xīnyǒu* day [i.e. 27th day of that month].

The formula is:

Reign year	Lunar month	First day of the month	Day sign
十五年	十二月	乙未朔	辛酉

The first phrase, “fifteenth year” (*shíwǔ nián* 十五年), refers to the fifteenth year of the reign of the lord, or possibly king, to whom the writers of the covenant considered themselves subordinate. This follows the standard method for denoting the year in early China. It is generally assumed, as we saw in Chapter One, that, in the Wenxian tablets, this refers to the reign year of one of the Jin lords although which one, exactly, is debated.

The phrase “twelfth moon [i.e. month]” (*shíèr yuè* 十二月) indicates the twelfth lunar cycle of the year. In order to match this to the corresponding month in our current reckoning we need to know which lunar cycle was taken as the first of the year by the writers of the covenant texts. In the Spring and Autumn and the Warring States period, three different calendars were in common use: the so called “Zhou calendar” (*Zhōu lì* 周曆) used the lunar cycle in which the winter solstice occurred as the first month of the year; the “Yin calendar” (*Yīn lì* 殷曆) used the lunar cycle following that in which the winter solstice occurred as the first month; the “Xia calendar” (*Xià lì* 夏曆) used the second lunar cycle after the winter solstice as the first month. The Jin state used the Xia calendar.¹⁹

The next phrase in this dating formula is: “*yǐwèi* was the first day of the month” (*yǐwèi shuò* 乙未朔). This phrase is used to indicate which day the first day of the month occurred on. The terms *yǐ* 乙 and *wèi* 未 are, respectively, the second of the ten “heavenly stems” (*tiāngān* 天干), and the eighth of the twelve “earthly branches” (*dìzhī* 地支). The ten-member and twelve-member series were combined to produce a sixty-member series, the *gānzhī* 干支 cycle, which was used to count days. The combination *yǐwèi* 乙未 is the thirty-second day of the cycle. The word *shuò* {朔} “the first day of the month” was one of several terms used to indicate certain days within a month. The phrase, *yǐwèi shuò*, means that *shuò*, the first day of this month, coincided with the thirty-second day

¹⁹ Henan Sheng Wenwu Yanjiusuo, “Henan Wenxian Dong Zhou Mengshi Yizhi Yi Hao Kan Fajue Jianbao”, p.82.

of the *gānzhī* cycle.

The last phrase, *xīnyǒu* 辛酉, gives the actual day indicated by this dating formula. The combination *xīnyǒu* is the fifty-eighth day in the *gānzhī* cycle. By giving the *gānzhī* for the first day of the month, followed by the *gānzhī* for the actual day being indicated, this formula allows one to calculate the actual day of the month: in this case we have the 32nd *gānzhī* to the 58th *gānzhī*, giving the twenty-seventh day of the month.

Putting these phrases together gives us the complete dating formula: “Fifteenth year, twelfth month, *yǐwèi* was the first day of the month, *xīnyǒu* day [i.e. 27th day of that month]”. Thus the day recorded here was the 27th day of the 12th month of the 15th year of the reign of, it is assumed, a lord of Jin. As discussed in Chapter One, this date has been calculated as equivalent to the 15th January, 497 BC.

Let us compare this dating formula with examples from excavated and received texts. This will allow us to place the Wenxian date in the overall development of dating formulae.

Constance Cook traces the development of dating formulae in pre-Qin bronze inscriptions. Her findings provides a convenient starting point for our analysis. Cook identifies three main stages in this development: the Shang period formula, the Western Zhou period formula and then the Eastern Zhou period in which different states adopted their own dating styles.²⁰ We can summarize the different formulae, on the basis of her study, as follows.²¹

1. Shang period

The basic dating formula used in the Shang is as follows (the same style is found on both bronzes and oracle-bone inscriptions):

²⁰ Constance A. Cook, “Auspicious Metals and Southern Spirits”, pp.53 – 93.

²¹ Note that the terminology used follows Cook. Only the standard formulae given by Cook are discussed here, not the variations she also includes in her work.

Day sign	Text of inscription	Lunar month	Ritual year and ritual day
[<i>gānzhī</i> 干支]	[text]	在 [number] 月	隹 王/子 [number] 祀 多/荔/翌 日

The marker for the day used the sixty-element *gānzhī* cycle and was placed at the beginning of the text. At the end of the text the lunar month was given, followed by the ritual year and ritual day formula, for which Cook, following David Keightley, gives the following translation: “it was the king’s (or royal son’s) X-number ritual year, a *yong* (*xie* or *yi*) ritual day”.²²

2. Western Zhou period

The following table is based on Cook’s “standardized” Zhou-style dating formula:²³

“It was”	Reign year	Lunar month	Moon phase	Day sign
隹	王 [number] 年	[number] 月	初吉/ 既生霸/ 既望/ 既死霸	辰在 [<i>gānzhī</i> 干支]

The date is placed at the beginning of the bronze inscription. The word *nián* 年, which Cook translates as “harvest year”, replaces the Shang term *sì* 祀 “ritual year” and marks the reign year of the Zhou king. An important addition to the formula is the “moon phase”: after the month many inscriptions add a phrase which, it is generally agreed, refers in some way to the moon phase at the time of the date. Cook translates these phrases as: *chūjī* 初吉 “Early Auspicious”; *jìshēngbà* 既生霸 “Already Born *Pak”; *jìwàng* 既望 “Already viewed”; and *jìsǐbà* 既死霸 “Already Dead *Pak”.²⁴ There is an ongoing debate as to the specific meaning of these terms, the basic question being whether they refer to periods of several days or single days within the lunar month, and which exact days these are.²⁵ A further addition in this formula is the phrase *chénzài* 辰在

²² Constance A. Cook, “Auspicious Metals and Southern Spirits”, p.54.

²³ Constance A. Cook, “Auspicious Metals and Southern Spirits”, p.57 and p.62.

²⁴ Constance A. Cook, “Auspicious Metals and Southern Spirits”, p.57.

²⁵ Constance A. Cook, “Auspicious Metals and Southern Spirits”, pp.57 – 58 and p.89, note 5. See also: Edward L. Shaughnessy, *Sources of Western Zhou History*, pp.136 – 143. For a recent summary of opinions see: Liu Yu, “Jinwen Yanjiu Zhong De San Ge Nanti”, pp.75 – 77.

before the *gānzhī* marking the actual day. The meaning of *chénzài* is also debated. Cook follows Joseph Needham, concluding that it refers to some sort of “celestial mark-point”. She gives the following full definition for the phrase *chénzài* [*gānzhī*] : “the celestial mark-point is located at [the point associated with] (such-and-such) *gānzhī* day (of the sixty day ritual cycle)”.²⁶ Edward Shaughnessy notes that the traditional explanation for *chén*, that is “the conjunction of the sun and moon” does not accord with its use on bronze inscriptions. He also cites a suggestion of Wu Qichang 吳其昌 (1904 – 1944), that *chén* refers to the planet Mercury which, since it travels through the sky at a degree a day, could have been used as a day marker; the phrase *chénzài* [*gānzhī*] then being equivalent to: “the day was at [*gānzhī*]”.²⁷

3. Eastern Zhou period

Cook describes how, as the Zhou court lost authority during the Spring and Autumn and Warring States period, states began to develop their own variants of the Zhou-style dating formula. As a result, there was no standard. Cook believes that changes in dating formulae during this period can be seen as an expression of political independence from the Zhou court, the degree of “loyalty” to the traditional formula being symbolic of the degree of loyalty felt towards the traditional political order and thus the supremacy of the Zhou. She argues that the continued use of the term “king” (*wáng* 王) and “harvest year” (*nián* 年) in a dating formula was a sign of “loyalty” to the tradition. Many Eastern Zhou inscriptions do not have either phrase. She assumes that if “king” (*wáng* 王) is used it refers to the Zhou king rather than the local ruler’s appropriation of the term for himself.

Cook makes the important observation that many of the dates on bronzes from the Eastern Zhou period were almost certainly used because they were considered auspicious rather than actually being the day on which the bronze was cast. During the Western Zhou, for example, the *gānzhī* most commonly

²⁶ Constance A. Cook, “Auspicious Metals and Southern Spirits”, pp.58 – 61.

²⁷ Edward L. Shaughnessy, *Sources of Western Zhou History*, p.194, note 5.

mentioned is *dīnghài* 丁亥 (day 24). Cook observes:

By the end of the Western Zhou period, the frequency of Ding-Hai days for casting inscriptions was so high that it is clear that its use was no longer tied to a systematic calendar, but added by scribes simply for symbolic purposes and to increase the auspicious nature of the dating formula. A similar situation is apparent for the choice of moon phase. By the end of the Western Zhou period, *chujī* “beginning Auspicious,” like Ding-Hai, had become a standard component of the dating formula.²⁸

This habit continued in the Eastern Zhou, with the first month, *zhēngyuè* 正月 added to the auspicious formula. As Cook says:

This implies that either most inscriptions (with dating formula) were cast on exactly the same day, in the same moon phase, in the first month, or it implies that the date had no connection to reality. It is possible there was some connection of casting inscriptions to the celebration of a Lunar New Year, but, in any case, I suspect that dating formula, like much of the content in most Eastern Zhou inscriptional texts, became trite statements of auspicious goodwill (to and from the spirits).²⁹

Although her study deals mainly with the southern states, Cook does mention northern states, including Jin. She notes that in many northern-state bronzes of the late Spring and Autumn and Warring States, the only date is a reign year in the style “[number] *nián* 年”. Cook does not mention the use of either *shuò* 朔 or *fěi* 朏 in the bronze inscriptions: as we will see below, these terms were very rare in such texts.

Let us now look at examples of dating formulae in Jin bronze inscriptions from the late Spring and Autumn and Warring States periods and then go on to

²⁸ Constance A. Cook, “Auspicious Metals and Southern Spirits”, p.70.

²⁹ Constance A. Cook, “Auspicious Metals and Southern Spirits”, p.71. Such use of dates has clear ramifications for attempts to date historical events: a given date may not correspond to the actual day of the recorded event. Take, for example, one of the most important dates in Chinese history, the day the Zhou conquered the Shang. The day is *jiǎzǐ* 甲子 which just happens to be the first day of the sixty-day *gānzī* cycle. Sarah Allan has pointed out that the use of this date may not have been happy coincidence: it is surely more likely that the Zhou wished to have the official commencement of their dynasty start on the first day of the sixty-day cycle and thus used this day in their record of the event. Sarah Allan, personal communication, January 2002.

look for examples of the use of *shuò* 朔 and *fěi* 朏 in other excavated and received texts. Firstly, examples of dates from a number of Spring and Autumn period bronze inscriptions from the Jin region:³⁰

1. Si Zi Hu 嗣子壺 (Late Western Zhou 877 – 771 BC)³¹

惟十年四月吉日。

It was the tenth year, the fourth month, auspicious day.³²

2. Jin Jiang Ding 晉姜鼎 (Early Spring and Autumn 770 – 625 BC)³³

惟王九月乙亥。

It was the ninth month of the royal calendar, *yìhài*.

3. Jin Gong Pen 晉公盆 (Spring and Autumn 770 – 476 BC)³⁴

惟王正月初吉丁亥。

It was the first month of the royal calendar, beginning auspicious, *dīnghài*.

4. Luan Shu Fou 欒書缶 (Spring and Autumn 770 – 476 BC)³⁵

正月季春元日己丑。

First month, the third month of spring³⁶, first day³⁷, *jǐchǒu*.

Note: Li Jiahao believes this is a Chu state inscription.³⁸

³⁰ These examples of Jin bronze inscriptions are all taken from: Hong Engeng, “Chunqiu Jin-Xi-Qi Kaoshi”. Note that translations of dating terminology within the inscriptions will generally follow that used by Constance Cook, as introduced above.

³¹ *Yin Zhou Jinwen Jicheng*, Vol.15, no.9719 – 9720.

³² What day the term “auspicious day” refers to is not agreed on. See, for example: *Jianming Jinwen Cidian*, p.118.

³³ *Yin Zhou Jinwen Jicheng*, Vol.5, no.2826.

³⁴ *Yin Zhou Jinwen Jicheng*, Vol.16, no.10342.

³⁵ *Yin Zhou Jinwen Jicheng*, Vol.16, no.10008.

³⁶ *Zhēngyuè* is the first month of the year but *jìchūn* 季春 is the third month of spring. Hong Engeng (“Chunqiu Jin-Xi-Qi Kaoshi”, p.143) gives the standard explanation for this, saying that the inscription mixes the Xia and Zhou calendars: the *zhēngyuè* is that of the Xia calendar while the month name, *jìchūn*, uses the Zhou calendar.

³⁷ The meaning of *yuán rì* 元日 is debated. For example, Hong Engeng takes it as equivalent to *jí rì* 吉日, an auspicious day, but it is also seen indicating the first day of the month, see: Hong Engeng, “Chunqiu Jin-Xi-Qi Kaoshi”, p.144.

³⁸ Lecture, Peking University, spring, 1996.

5. Lü Zhong 郟鐘 (Late Spring and Autumn 625 – 476 BC)³⁹
 惟王正月初吉丁亥。
 It was the first month of the royal calendar, beginning auspicious, *dīnghài*.
6. Ji Ri Jian 吉日劍 (Late Spring and Autumn 625 – 476 BC)⁴⁰
 吉日壬午。
 Auspicious day, *rénwǔ*.
7. Zhang Zi Mo Chen Fu 長子沫臣簠 (Late Spring and Autumn 625 – 476 BC)⁴¹
 惟正月初吉丁亥。
 It was the first month, beginning auspicious, *dīnghài*.
8. Biao Qiang Zhong 虜羌鐘 (Early Warring States 475 – 350 BC)⁴²
 惟二十有再祀。
 It was the 22nd year.⁴³
9. Wu Nian Si Ma Cheng Gong Quan 五年司馬成公權 (Warring States 475 – 222 BC)⁴⁴
 五年。
 Fifth year.

We see several different formulae here. The favoured auspicious date noted by Cook, that is: first month (*zhēngyuè` 正月*), beginning auspicious (*chūjí 初吉*), *dīnghài* (丁亥) is common (examples 3, 5 and 7). Most do not give a reign year (only seen in 1, 8 and 9) but 8 and 9 give only a reign year. The use of *zài* 再 and *sì* 祀 in 8 is peculiar and probably an archaism (compare the use of *sì* 祀 in the Shang formula given above). All those that give a month, six of the nine examples, also give the day. Four of the months are the auspicious first month

³⁹ *Yin Zhou Jinwen Jicheng*, Vol.1, no.225 – 237.

⁴⁰ *Yin Zhou Jinwen Jicheng*, Vol.18, no.11696 – 11697.

⁴¹ *Yin Zhou Jinwen Jicheng*, Vol.9, no.4625

⁴² *Yin Zhou Jinwen Jicheng*, Vol.2, no.157 – 161.

⁴³ This reading follows Hong Engeng, “Chunqiu Jin-Xi-Qi Kaoshi”, p.113.

⁴⁴ *Yin Zhou Jinwen Jicheng*, Vol.16, no.10385.

(*zhēngyuè*), the other two give the fourth and ninth months. The only one of the moon phase terms recorded is “beginning auspicious” *chūjí* 初吉 and we also see the terms *jírì* 吉日 or *yuánrì* 元日. There is no general agreement as to which day or days of the month any of these represent or, in fact, whether they directly relate to the phase of the moon at all.⁴⁵

These examples suggest that Jin did not have a standard dating formula in use in the Spring and Autumn period. However, we should distinguish between those bronzes which are products of the court of the lord of Jin and those which are products of the powerful ministerial families. Both the examples of Jin court bronzes given here, 2 and 3, use a formula similar to the Western Zhou standard formula given by Cook, although 2 gives no reign year and no moon phase. Both use “king” (*wáng* 王) to indicate that the Zhou calendar is being followed and are thus examples of the “loyalty” to the traditions of the Zhou court that Cook discusses. There may have been a greater tendency for loyalty to the formula in inscriptions made for the Jin court, less among those made for the ministerial families.

During the Warring States period, Jin split into the three independent states of Han 韓, Zhao 趙, and Wei 魏. Dates on bronzes from these states generally only have the reign year in the formula “[number] *nián* 年”. Some Wei pieces have the character [梁] *liáng* before the date, this being an alternative name for the state of Wei and indicating that these use the reign year of the Wei king.

None of the dates from these examples of Jin-region bronzes from the Spring and Autumn and Warring States period matches the Wenxian date: the majority do not give a reign year; most examples begin with *wéi* {惟} “It is”, which is not seen in the Wenxian formula; the Wenxian formula has no moon-phase term and, most notably, none of these examples use the *shuò* 朔 that we see in the

⁴⁵ For a brief summary of the debate concerning *chūjí* and argument for one particular theory, see: Liu Yu, “Jinwen Yanjiu Zhong De San Ge Nanti”, pp.75 – 77.

Wenxian covenants, nor do we see *fěi* 𦉑, the character some argue is used in the Houma date.

Let us now consider examples of both [𦉑] *fěi* and [朔] *shuò* in other texts. Neither character is recorded as occurring in oracle bones.⁴⁶ The character [朔] *shuò* is only seen in the dating formula of excavated texts from later periods, for example:

10. Qin wooden slip (309 BC)⁴⁷

二年十一月己酉朔朔日。

Second year, eleventh month, *jǐyǒu* was the first day of the month, first day of the month.

The phrase *shuò rì* 朔日 indicates that the recorded day is the first day of the month.

11. Gong Chu Zuo Guan Ding 公朱(廚)左官(官)鼎 (Late Warring States 350 – 222 BC)⁴⁸

十一年十一月乙己朔。

Eleventh year, eleventh month, *yǐjǐ* was the first day of the month.

12. Shuihudi 睡虎地 bamboo slips: “Wei Li Zhi Dao 為吏之道” slip 16, section 5 and slip 22, section 5 (252 BC)⁴⁹

廿五年閏再十二月丙午朔辛亥。

Twenty fifth year, intercalary second twelfth month, *bǐngwǔ* was the first day of the month, *xīnhài*.

Note that this is thought to be a text of the Wei 魏 state.

13. Zhangjiashan bamboo slips “Zou Yan Shu 奏讞書” slip 121 (case 17) (date of slips: late 3rd century – early 2nd century BC) (date on slips: 245 BC)⁵⁰

⁴⁶ *Jiagu Wenzi Gulin*.

⁴⁷ Sichuan Sheng Bowuguan and Qingchuanxian Wenhuaquan, “Qingchuanxian Chutu Qin Geng Xiu Tian Lu Mudu”, p.11.

⁴⁸ *Yin Zhou Jinwen Jicheng*, Vol.5, no.2701.

⁴⁹ *Shuihudi Qin Mu Zhujian*, pp.174 – 175. The same date is repeated on both slips. For the date see p.174, note 1.

⁵⁰ *Zhangjiashan Han Mu Zhujian*, plates p.62 and transcriptions p.221. For the second date see p.222, note 1.

二年十月癸酉朔戊寅。

Second year, tenth month, *guǐyǒu* was the first day of the month, *wùyn*.

This is the earliest of the dated *Zou Yan Shu* cases.

These are the oldest examples I find of *shuò* used in dating formula in excavated texts. The earliest is late fourth century BC, the rest are all from the third century BC. All are from areas under Qin rule at the time of their production. Unlike the Jin bronzes cited above, these later Qin examples use the same dating formula as the Wenxian tablets, that is: year, month, first day of the month (*shuò*), and the *gānzhī* day for the actual day indicated.

The character [朔] *shuò* is very rare among known bronzes. Only two occurrences of the character are recorded in the *Qingtongqi Mingwen Jiansuo*, and only the late Warring States example from Qin (given above, no. 11) is used in a dating formula.⁵¹ The term is found on some bronzes from the, much later, Wang Mang interregnum:

14. Xin Liang Dou 新量斗 (AD 9)⁵²

始建國元年正月癸酉朔日。

Shi Jian Guo [reign period], first year, first month, *guǐyǒu* was the first day of the month.

The name of the reign period is given and a *rì* 日 is added after the *shuò* 朔 but the basic formula is otherwise the same as the earlier bronze.

The Han slips from Juyan 居延 and Dunhuang 敦煌 have many examples using this formula. The majority of these slips date from the later Western Han to mid Eastern Han (around 100 BC to AD 100).⁵³ Here is one example:

⁵¹ The other example appears to use *shuò*'s meaning of "north". The search for examples of this character's use in bronze inscriptions demonstrates the benefits of using a variety of reference works: the *Yin Zhou Jinwen Jicheng Yinde*, under its entry for *shuò*, does not have the example with the date, but the *Qingtongqi Mingwen Jiansuo* does. The bronze was originally published in *Wenwu* 1965.7 p.54, plates 5 and 6.

⁵² *Qin Han Jinwen Lu*, Vol.3, no.224.

⁵³ Michael Loewe, "Wood and Bamboo Administrative Documents of the Han Period", p.164.

15. Juyan 居延 bamboo slips (31 BC)⁵⁴

建始二年十二月甲寅朔甲寅。

Jian Shi [reign period], second year, twelfth month, *jiǎyīn* was the first day of the month, *jiǎyīn*.

Note that the date indicated is the first day of the month and, unlike in similar examples given above, the *gānzhī* for the day is repeated. This dating formula continues to be common in later Eastern Han materials, for example:

16. Gan Gu 甘谷 Han bamboo slip (AD 159)⁵⁵

延熹元年十二月壬申朔十二日甲申。

Yan Xi [reign period], first year, twelfth month, *rénshēn* was the first day of the month, twelfth day *jiǎshēn*.

17. Stone inscription (AD 158 – 166 [?])⁵⁶

延熹十一年八月甲子朔廿日。

Yan Xi [reign period] eleventh year, eighth month, *jiǎzǐ* was the first day of the month, twentieth day.

Note that both these give the number of the day of the month indicated, 16 also gives the *gānzhī* for that day, 17 omits it.

From the evidence in excavated texts given above, it would appear that the use of *shuò* in the dating formula was very rare in bronze inscriptions, only found in one late Warring States examples, but that, from the third century BC on, it became common in bamboo and wood slips produced in areas under Qin rule, and throughout the country after unification under the Qin and then continued to be used during the Han.

This makes the finding of this formula on the Wenxian slips particularly significant. If the dating of the tablets is correct, they are evidence that this

⁵⁴ “Jian Bo Jin Shi Ziliaoku” [online], available from <<http://saturn.ihp.sinica.edu.tw/~wenwu/search.htm>>. The database gives the following reference for this slip: 居延新简: E.P.T51:264.

⁵⁵ *Sanjian Jiandu Heji*, p.5, slip 28.

⁵⁶ Wang Yong and Li Miao, *Zhongguo Gudai Zhuan Wen*, p.102. These dates may be wrong: this is the only reign period I find with this name but the inscription gives the eleventh year and this reign period only had nine years.

formula was used in the north-west region almost 200 years earlier than the earliest previously known example, the Qin wooden slip from 309 BC given above (10). There is little excavated palaeographic material from this area that dates to the intervening years, i.e. from the fifth and fourth centuries, but since we find the formula used at the beginning of the fifth century in Wenxian and then at the end of the fourth century in Qin we can conjecture that it continued to be used during this period in this north-west area. Examples from received texts may shed some light on those intervening years:

18. *Shi Jing* “Xiao Ya 小雅 : Shi Yue Zhi Jiao 十月之交” (text: 1000 – 600 BC) (event: 776 BC)⁵⁷

十月之交，朔月辛卯，日有食之，...

At the crossing into the tenth month⁵⁸, the first day of the month was *xīnmǎo*, there was an eclipse of the sun, ...

Note the term used is *shuò yuè* 朔月, this is considered to be equivalent to *yuè shuò* 月朔. The *Zhushu Jinian* refers to the same event:

19. *Zhushu Jinian* “You Wang 幽王” (text: c.299 BC [recompiled 3rd – 4th century AD]) (event: 776 BC)⁵⁹

冬十月辛卯朔，日有食之。

Winter, tenth month, *xīnmǎo* was the first day of the month, there was an eclipse of the sun.

The date is the same but a different formula is used: the *Zhushu Jinian*, the annals of the north-western state of Wei 魏, follows the formula that appears to have been common to this area, i.e., the month followed by the *gānzhī* for the first day of the month and then the word *shuò*.

20. *Yi Zhou Shu* “Feng Bao Jie 酆保解” (text: 4th – 3rd century BC) (event: 11th century BC)⁶⁰

惟二十三祀庚子朔。

⁵⁷ *Shi Jing Tong Gu*, p.531. For dating see: *Shi Jing Yi Zhu*, pp.299 – 303.

⁵⁸ There is a suggestion that the date here should be the seventh month: see: Edward L. Shaughnessy, *Before Confucius*, pp.233 – 233.

⁵⁹ *Zhushu Jinian*, 2nd fascicle, p.11. For dating see: Michael Loewe ed., *Early Chinese Texts*, pp.39 – 43.

⁶⁰ *Yi Zhou Shu Hui Jiao Jizhu*, pp. 205 – 206. It is thought that the date given in the text is erroneous so only the general time period for the event is given here.

It was the twenty third year, *gēngzǐ* was the first day of the month.

21. *Yi Zhou Shu* “Bao Dian Jie 寶典解” (text: 4th – 3rd century BC) (event: 11th century BC)⁶¹

惟王三祀二月丙辰朔。

It was the king’s third year, second month, *bǐngchén* was the first day of the month.

Note that these both use the archaic *sì* 祀 for the year.

There are many dates which use a *shuò* in the *Chunqiu Zuo Zhuan*, both in the *Chunqiu* section and the Zuo commentary. Here is an early example from the *Chunqiu*:

22. *Chunqiu* Huan 桓 3.4 (text: 5th – 4th century) (event: 709 BC)⁶²

秋七月壬辰朔。

Autumn, seventh month, *rénchén* was the first day of the month.

In the *Chunqiu* and *Zuo Zhuan*, the date with *shuò* appears to be used solely to mark the first day of the month itself (the examples are almost all dates of solar eclipses). It is not found with a following *gānzhī* as is common in the examples from excavated texts. If we are willing to accept the *Chunqiu* and *Zuo Zhuan* as compilations of earlier records, then this example is evidence of this dating formula being used as early as the eighth century BC. However, we should bear in mind that the original dating formulae could have been revised in a later period during compilation of these texts.

The *Shi Ji* and *Han Shu* include only a few examples of *shuò* used in a dating formula. There are more in the *Hou Han Shu* but mainly, as in the *Chunqiu Zuo Zhuan*, used only when the first day of the month itself is indicated (usually, again, for solar eclipses).

⁶¹ *Yi Zhou Shu Hui Jiao Jizhu*, p. 295 – 296. The date in the text is thought to be incorrect, the general period of the event is given here.

⁶² *Chunqiu Zuo Zhuan Zhu*, p.96.

There is an example from the *Chunqiu Fan Lu* in which we see the same style of formula as in the excavated texts:

23. *Chunqiu Fan Lu* “Zhi Yu 止雨 (75)” (text: 2nd century BC) (event: 119 BC)⁶³

二十一年八月甲申朔丙午。

Twenty first year, eight month, *jiǎshēn* was the first day of the month, *bǐngwǔ*.

The sections of the *Shang Shu* considered to be authentic do not have examples of *shuò* used in dating formulae. There are two examples of its use in the spurious chapters:

24. *Shang Shu* “Shun Dian 舜典” (text: 4th century AD) (event: 3rd millennium BC)

十有一月朔。

Eleventh month, first day of the month.

25. *Shang Shu* “Tai Jia Zhong 太甲中” (text: 4th century AD) (event: 3rd millennium BC)

惟三祀十有二月朔。

It was the third year, twelfth month, first day of the month.

Again, it seems that examples from received texts almost all use *shuò* in dating formulae only to indicate the first day of the month itself, not to indicate a later date in that month in the way we see the formula used in excavated texts.

Overall, the above evidence, both from the received and excavated texts, suggests that the earliest, currently known, use of the dating formula with a *gānzhī* used after the *shuò* to indicate a day within a month, is to be found in the Wenxian covenant tablets. On the basis of this evidence, and within the context of Cook’s study on dating formula, the Wenxian style of dating formula may have been a late Spring and Autumn development of the earlier Zhou style, an example of the adoption of a local variation, in this case in the north-west region. The formula appears to have continued to be used in this region: we saw an

⁶³ *Chunqiu Fan Lu Yi Zheng*, p.438.

example above from the *Wei Li Zhi Dao* 為吏之道 thought to be a Wei 魏 text, and it was clearly adopted by the Qin state, also based in this area.⁶⁴ One hopes that palaeographic material from the fifth and fourth centuries BC from this region will be excavated with dates that provide evidence to complete the picture for the period between the Wenxian tablets and the later Qin examples.

Returning briefly to the debate as to whether the character in the Houma date is [朙] *fěi* or [朔] *shuò*, we do not find a single example of [朙] *fěi* used in a dating formula in the *Qingtongqi Mingwen Jiansuo* or in the electronic concordance for excavated-texts.⁶⁵ It is also very rare in received texts. One example which may be significant is found in the *Shang Shu*:

26. *Shang Shu* “Shao Gao 召誥” (text: late 11th century BC) (event: 1036 BC)⁶⁶

三月惟丙午朙。

Third month, it was *bǐngwǔ* when the moon was first seen.

This section of the *Shang Shu* is considered to be authentic, suggesting that *fěi* 朙 may indeed have been used in dates during the Western Zhou. However, this is the only example of *fěi* used in a dating formula that I find in the received texts. The only example of its purported use in a dating formula in excavated texts is the Houma example. Such paucity of examples, added to the similarity of the [朙] *nì* and [出] *chū* components in the Houma and Wenxian script, the possibility that the graph was miscopied, along with the use of *shuò* in the Wenxian texts and many other texts, all strongly support the conjecture that the Houma graph is in fact [朔] *shuò*, not [朙] *fěi*.

⁶⁴ The Juyan and Dunhuang Han-period slips in which it is also very common are also from the north-west region.

⁶⁵ “Jian Bo Jin Shi Ziliaoku” [online], available from <<http://saturn.ihp.sinica.edu.tw/~wenwu/search.htm>>.

⁶⁶ *Shisan Jing Zhushu*, p.211. For this date see: Xia Shang Zhou Duandai Gongcheng Zhuanjia Zu ed., *Xia Shang Zhou Duandai Gongcheng* ..., p.30.

3.1.3 Name clause: period of effectiveness: “from this day onward”

The phrase “from this day onward” (*zì jīn yǐ wǎng* 自今以往) is seen in the Name Clause of all the currently identified Wenxian oath types mentioned in Chapter One except Type 2. The Type 1 examples given in the introduction to this chapter and in the section on the Opening Phrase both include this phrase.¹

The phrase announces the beginning of the period of effectiveness of the covenant. As was discussed in the previous section, in many Type 1 tablets from pit WT1K1, as well as one from WT4K9, the actual date of this day is also given.

Palaeographic analysis is given for all the graphs in this phrase: [自] (*zì* {自}); [今] (*jīn* {今}); [以] (*yǐ* {以}); [往] (*wǎng* {往}).

3.1.3.1 Palaeographic analysis

Graph 1: [自]

Direct transcription: [自]

Formal transcription: [自]

Interpretative transcription: *zì* {自}

English translation: “from”

Analysis category: A. Direct textual evidence supports the interpretation.

Variant forms

1. a.



WT1K17 – 129

b.



WT5K21 – 34

c.



WT5K21 – 7

2.



WT4K6 – 160



WT5K14 – 11

¹ See the introduction to this chapter and section 3.1.1.

3.



WT4K9 – 72






WT5K1 – 17

The most obvious variation is seen in the type 3 forms which omit one of the two middle horizontal strokes seen in the type 1 and 2 forms. Apart from this, minor variation is seen in the lower curve and the top strokes. The lower curve is made up of two strokes; this is clear in the type 1.b and 1.c examples. These two strokes can be joined to form an uninterrupted curve, e.g. type 1.a (WT1K17 – 129), or the lines cross, type 1.b (WT5K21 – 34), or they do not meet, type 1.c (WT5K21 – 7). In 1.a and 1.b the left-hand stroke is longer and forms the lower section of the curve; the right-hand stroke is straighter and shorter.

The top of the graph is formed with two strokes, the left one generally longer, extending above the right-hand stroke, for example type 1.a (WT1K17 – 129). But note that the two strokes can also meet in a point, as in 1.c (WT5K21 – 7). Although both these top strokes are usually diagonal, in some cases the left stroke is begun as a vertical line and then flares out at the bottom, as in type 2 (WT4K6 – 160 and WT5K14 – 11) and the second of the type 3 examples (WT5K1 – 17).

Analysis

The *Shuo Wen Jie Zi* component table has the following matching forms:  [自] zì matches the type 1 and 2 forms, while:  [自] zì, which the *Shuo Wen Jie Zi* takes as a variant for  [自] zì, matches the type 3 form.² Clearly the graphs can be identified as [自] zì. The character [自] zì is used to denote the word zì {自} “from” which fits the context here.

² *Shuo Wen Jie Zi*, p.74 (4a 白部: 8b) and p.74 (4a 白部: 8b).

As mentioned in the methodology chapter, if in any doubt, *Shuo Wen Jie Zi* forms should be double-checked in other reference works such as the *Shuo Wen Jie Zi Gulin*. In this case, the entry 𠄎 [白] zì arouses suspicions given that the form is identical to that of [白] bái. The *Shuo Wen Jie Zi* gives this form, 𠄎, as a variation of [自] zì with the gloss: “This is also the character 自 zì, a simplification of 自 zì.”³ This perfectly describes the form we find in the Wenxian tablets with the omitted middle line. We might take this as evidence that Xu Shen had seen variant forms of [自] zì just like those we see in the type 3 examples of the Wenxian forms. While this is possible, his identification of this component as the component in the graphs he includes under this entry is problematic. These include: [皆] jiē, [魯] lǔ, [者] zhě, [百] bǎi, etc. Several entries in the *Shuo Wen Jie Zi Gulin* point out that these characters have nothing to do with [自] zì.⁴ Thus this radical, 𠄎 [白] zì, and its associated entries, are problematic and we should not rely on them in our interpretation. It may be coincidence that Xu Shen’s analysis of 𠄎 [白] zì is an accurate description of the type 3 form of the Wenxian graphs, for example 𠄎 (WT5K1 – 17). Nevertheless, this form is clearly a variant for the character [自] zì: such simplification, by the omission of a single stroke (*dānbǐ jiǎnhuà* 單筆簡化), is common in Warring States graphs.⁵

Comparing the Wenxian forms with the Houma forms, we find the same variations:





The forms are identical to the Wenxian forms except for the HM 156 – 26 example, with the additional short stroke at the top of the form, which I have not come across in the Wenxian small-pit materials.

³ *Shuo Wen Jie Zi*, p.74 (4a 白部: 8b): “此亦白字也。省白者。”

⁴ *Shuo Wen Jie Zi Gulin*, pp.3922 – 3944.

⁵ He Linyi, *Zhanguo Wenzhi Tonglun*, p.185.

If we compare these graphs with other Spring and Autumn and Warring States forms for this character, the only variations that do not appear to be seen elsewhere are those with the single-stroke simplification, such as  (WT4K9 – 72), and the Houma form  (HM 156-26).⁶

Graph 2: [今]

Direct transcription: [今]

Formal transcription: [今]

Interpretative transcription: *jīn* {今}

English translation: “today”

Analysis category: A. Direct textual evidence supports the interpretation.

Variant forms

1. a.



WT4K6 – 315

b.



WT5K21 – 9

2. a.



WT4K10 – 1



WT4K9 – 441



WT4K10 – 7



WT4K6 – 177

b.



WT4K2 – 16

⁶ See examples in: *Guwenzi Lei Bian*, p.133 and *Zhanguo Guwen Zidian*, pp.1271 – 1272.

The type 1 forms are by far the most common. The graph consists of two diagonal top strokes: the left-hand stroke is short and straight, the right longer and slightly curved or angled. Below this, two short parallel strokes are placed horizontally right of centre touching the right-hand stroke of the graph. In type 1.b the top left-hand stroke extends above the right-hand stroke, in type 1.a the two strokes meet at a point. The type 2 form is rare (in the small pit materials); it has an added component placed to the left, and slightly below, the two horizontal strokes of the standard form. In the type 2.b example the added component touches the two short horizontal strokes.

Analysis

The *Shuo Wen Jie Zi* component table has no good match for the type 1 form. The closest forms are 冂, [冂] *mào*, and 厶, [厶] *jī*. The added component in the type 2 forms is 凵, [凵] *kǒu*.

Looking through the characters derived from these components as collected in the *Shuo Wen Jie Zi*, we find the closest form for the type 1 examples to be 𠄎, [今] *jīn*.⁷ This character denotes *jīn* {今} “now”, “today” which clearly fits the context. The *Han Jian* form of [今] *jīn* is closer to the Wenxian form:

𠄎.⁸ We can conclude that this identification is correct.

On the basis of this identification, we can then transcribe the type 2 form as [𠄎] which is an attested graph, [𠄎] *yīn*, the standard usage of which is to denote *yīn* {𠄎} “moan”, which is clearly not suitable in this context and we must assume that the graph is also denoting the word *jīn* {今} “today” and explain how the form [𠄎] is functioning here.⁹

⁷ *Shuo Wen Jie Zi*, p.108 (5b 厶部: 6b).

⁸ *Han Jian*, p.41 (82b).

⁹ The graph could be transcribed as [𠄎] *hán* and treated as a phonetic loan for *jīn* {今} ([今] *jīn* is phonetic in [𠄎] *hán*) but [𠄎] *hán* is considered to be a graph which appeared late so this is unlikely. See: Qiu Xigui (transl. Gilbert L. Mattos and Jerry Norman), *Chinese Writing*, pp.218 – 219.

There are two possible ways to account for the use of the variant form [𠄎] to denote *jīn* {今} “today”. One is that the addition of the [口] *kǒu* “mouth” component is a calligraphic variant without any semantic or phonetic significance: this is common in Warring States’ calligraphy and called “addition of a meaningless component” (*zēng fán wúyì piānpáng* 增繁無義偏旁).¹⁰ We see this phenomenon elsewhere in the Wenxian materials, for example in the forms used to denote *yǐ* {以}. If we adopt this analysis, we would describe the type 2 forms, [𠄎], as calligraphic variants of the more common type 1 form, [今] *jīn*.

The other explanation is that the scribe was using the graph [𠄎], usually used to denote the word *yín* {吟} “moan”, as a phonetic loan for the word {今} *jīn* “now”, “today”. Phonetically the two words are very close, {吟} *yín* takes [今] *jīn* as its phonetic and words in the same *xiéshēng* series are, as discussed in the Literature Survey, generally assumed to be able to loan for each other.¹¹

One further point of interest is that Qiu Xigui suggests that the graph [今] *jīn* was originally the protoform of the graph [𠄎] *yín* in its use to denote the original meaning of *yín* {吟}, that is, “close the mouth and remain silent”.¹² The use of the graph [今] to denote *jīn* {今} “now” “today” is thus, originally, itself a phonetic loan. The [口] *kǒu* “mouth” was later added to [今], as a semantic component, to produce a phonogram, [𠄎], explicitly to denote *yín* {吟} “to close the mouth and remain silent” and differentiate it from its protoform [今] which had become more common in its loangraph usage, expressing *jīn* {今} “today”, “now”. If the form [𠄎] in the Wenxian tablets is

¹⁰ He Linyi, *Zhanguo Wenzi Tonglun*, pp.196 – 198.

¹¹ The Old Chinese reconstructions are 今 *jīn* < *kim* < **k(r)j+m* (見侵) (*A Handbook of Old Chinese Phonology*, p.768) and 吟 *yín* < *ngim* / *ngimH* < **Nk(r)j+m(s)* (疑侵) (reconstruction: Wolfgang Behr, personal communication, March 31st, 2004).

¹² Qiu Xigui (transl. Gilbert L. Mattos and Jerry Norman), *Chinese Writing*, p. 207. Qiu Xigui argues that the character [今] *jīn* was created by inverting the character [𠄎] *yuē* “to speak”, the inversion thus signifying the opposite of “to speak”, i.e. “to remain silent”.

indeed being used as a phonetic loan for *jīn* {今}, we have the slightly ironic situation in which a phonogram created to denote the original meaning of a graph which had become closely associated with its loan-use meaning, has then itself been adopted for the same loan usage.

Whichever of these explanations is correct, we can be confident that this form, [𠄎] *yīn*, is used here to denote *jīn* {今} "now", "today", corresponding to the form more commonly found in this position, the [今] *jīn*.

We can briefly note that the Houma forms for [今] *jīn* do not have the variation with the added [口] *kǒu* component.¹³ The form does occur in other Warring States excavated texts, where it is also used to denote *jīn* {今}.¹⁴

Graph 3: [𠄎]

Direct transcription: [𠄎]

Formal transcription: [𠄎]

Interpretative Transcription: *yǐ* {以}

English translation: A function word: Anaphoric, marks the point of departure for a temporal phrase.¹⁵

Analysis category:

[𠄎] : A. Direct textual evidence supports the interpretation.

[𠄎] : B. Indirect textual evidence supports the interpretation.

Variant forms

I. a.



WT1K17 – 129

b.

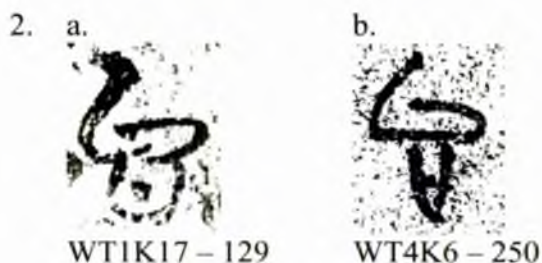


WT1K17 – 131

¹³ *Houma Mengshu*, p.301.



¹⁴ He Linyi, in his *Zhanguo Guwen Zidian*, p.1389, transcribes all such examples as [含] *hán* but I see no reason not to treat them in the same way as the Houma graphs, either as calligraphic variants of [今] *jīn* or loans of [吟] *yīn*. As we noted above, [含] *hán* is considered to be a late form.

¹⁵ Definition from: Edwin G. Pulleyblank, *Outline of Classical Chinese Grammar*, p.49.

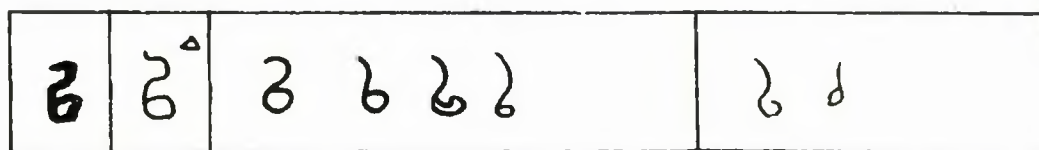



Type 1 forms are most common. The form is a curved line starting at top-left, curving down, to the right and then back in on itself. The line is made up either of a single stroke, as in 1.a, or two strokes, as in 1.b. In the type 2 variant form a [口] *kōu* “mouth” component is added beneath this form.

Analysis

The *Shuo Wen Jie Zi* component table has one small-seal form similar to the type 1 form,  (WT1K17 – 129): the form , [厶] *sī*. The *Gudai Hanyu Cidian* explains that this is the ancient character for [私] *sī*. The character [私] *sī* is commonly used to denote *sī* {私} “personal”. In the context in which we find the graph this is clearly not a suitable definition, nor are any of the other definitions given for [私] *sī*.

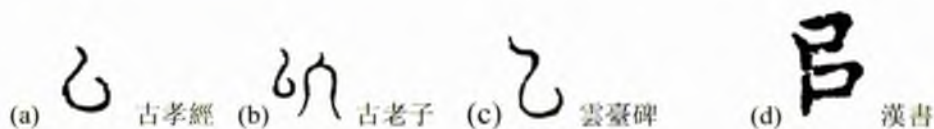
The *Han Jian* component table is of no assistance, but we do find a match in the *Jinwen Changyong Zidian* component table:¹⁶



These forms are a reasonably good match for the Wenxian form although the upward stroke is longer in these examples. They are almost identical in form to the *Shuo Wen Jie Zi* component , [厶] *sī*, that we considered above but this component table identifies them with the component [𠂇] *yǐ*. The *Yu Pian* entry

¹⁶ *Jinwen Changyong Zidian*, component table, p.26. The triangle in the second box indicates that this form is not found in the *Shuo Wen Jie Zi*'s component table.

for [𠄎] *yǐ* tells us that “The contemporary variant is *yǐ* 以”.¹⁷ So, [𠄎] *yǐ* is a variant of the character [以] *yǐ*. The *Guwen Sisheng Yun* entry for [以] *yǐ* cites the following forms:¹⁸



The Wenxian form is closest to (a), the ‘ancient’ *Xiao Jing* 古孝經 form. Form (d), the *Han Shu*, uses the form [𠄎] *yǐ* seen in the *Shuo Wen Jie Zi*.

Interpreting the Wenxian graph as [以] *yǐ*, denoting the function word *yǐ* {以}, gives us the following phrase for the Wenxian tablets: 自今以往 *zì jīn yǐ wǎng* “from this day onward”. This is clearly an appropriate interpretation. The phrase *yǐ wǎng* 以往 is commonly seen in early texts meaning “after [a point in time]”. In the *Zuo Zhuan* we find the identical phrase:

1. *Zuo Zhuan* Xiang 襄 25.7 (text: 5th – 4th century BC) (event: 548 BC)¹⁹

自今以往，兵其少弭矣。

From this day onward, there may be a little less fighting.

Also from the *Zuo Zhuan* there is an almost identical phrase, particularly relevant since it appears in a direct quote from a covenant:

2. *Zuo Zhuan* Xi 僖 28.5 (text: 5th – 4th century BC) (event: 632 BC)²⁰

自今日以往，既盟之後，行者無保其力，居者無懼其罪。


From this day onward, after having covenanted, those who travelled [with the lord] will not take advantage of their achievements, those who stayed will not be afraid that they will be accused of being at fault.




¹⁷ *Yu Pian*, p.134: “今作以”.



¹⁸ *Guwen Sisheng Yun*, p.38 (3:7b).

¹⁹ *Chunqiu Zuo Zhuan Zhu*, p.1103.

²⁰ *Chunqiu Zuo Zhuan Zhu*, p.469.

Thus, the evidence of similar graph forms in early lexicons along with the semantic context in which the graph is found, strongly support the interpretation of the Wenxian graph  (WT1K17 – 129) as the character [𠄎] *yǐ*, denoting the function word *yǐ* {以}. This interpretation is further supported by a great number of examples from excavated texts.²¹ The [𠄎] form used in the *Shuo Wen Jie Zi*, *Han Shu*, and other early texts, is the result of the straightening out of the curved lines of the earlier forms, a change that occurred when the script developed from the small-seal form to the clerical-script form.²²


Now let us look at the type 2 form,  (WT4K6 – 250), which is also found in this position. Clearly we would expect this graph to also be denoting *yǐ* {以}, conforming with the interpretation of the type 1 form  (WT1K17 – 129), and we notice that the top component of  (WT4K6 – 250) is the same form as that of the graph just discussed. So, we need to explain the presence of the [口] *kǒu* “mouth” component in this form.

Based on the identification of the type 1 form,  (WT1K17 – 129), as [𠄎] *yǐ*, the direct transcription of the type 2 form,  (WT4K6 – 250), gives [𠄎] . This graph is not attested. If, however, we took the top component as equivalent to the [厶] *sī* component, which we also noted as a possible match for this form, then we get a direct inscription of [台] . This is an attested graph for which the *Shuo Wen Jie Zi* gives the following gloss: “台 *yí* means ‘happy’. It is derived from 口 *kǒu*, 𠄎 *yǐ* is the sound.”²³ Note that this gloss identifies the top component of this graph as [𠄎] *yǐ*, not as [厶] *sī* even though the *kǎishū* form is given as [台] . In other words, the gloss suggests the transcription [𠄎] , which we suggested above, but instead we find [台] . This suggests

²¹ See, for example, *Zhanguo Guwen Zidian*, pp.55 – 56.

²² For further details of this process see: Qiu Xigui (transl. Gilbert L. Mattos and Jerry Norman), *Chinese Writing*, pp.126 – 130.

²³ *Shuo Wen Jie Zi*, p.32 (2a 口部:10b): “台, 說 [yuē] 也。从口, 𠄎聲。”

that both the small-seal forms 𠄎, [𠄎] *yǐ*, and 𠄏, [𠄏] *sī*, could be represented in *kǎishū* with the form [𠄏]. This is supported by examples such as the character [能] *néng* which uses [𠄎] *yǐ* as a phonetic but uses [𠄏] for this component in the *kǎishū* form. Thus the *kǎishū* equivalent of the type 2 graphs  (WT4K6 – 250) is not [𠄎] but [台]. If we look up the form [台] in dictionaries of palaeographic materials we find that it is recorded as frequently being used to denote *yǐ* {以}.²⁴ There are numerous examples of this form being used in this way in other palaeographic materials, supporting this interpretation of the Wenxian type 2 forms.²⁵ He Linyi notes that in the Shang and Zhou periods the form [𠄎] was used to denote {以} *yǐ*, then, in the late Zhou, people scribes started adding a [口] *kǒu* component giving the variant form [台].²⁶ The addition of the [口] *kǒu* appears to be for aesthetic reasons, adding no semantic or phonetic information to the graph; it is a calligraphic variant of the type we mentioned in our discussion of the previous graph, the [今] *jīn* and its variant [吟] *yín*, and called the “addition of a meaningless component” (*zēng fán wúyì piānpáng* 增繁無義偏旁).

The above analysis confirms that the graph [𠄎] *yǐ*, and its calligraphic variant, [台] *yǐ*, are both early forms of the standard-script character [以] *yǐ*. Of these two forms, [𠄎] *yǐ* is the more ancient; [台] *yǐ* is a later variant. In the Wenxian texts both forms are to be read as the function word *yǐ* {以}.

Finally, let us just note that both the Wenxian and Houma tablets have examples like 1.b and 2.b in which the [𠄎] *yǐ* form is written with two, rather than one, stroke:

²⁴ For example: *Jinwen Changyong Cidian*, pp.109 – 112.

²⁵ See the entries in the *Jinwen Bian*, pp.64 – 65 and *Zhanguo Guwen Zidian*, pp.56 – 57. On the basis of the materials gathered in these books and a comparison with collections of graphic forms on Chu and Qin bamboo slips, it appears that the use of the form [台] *yǐ* to denote *yǐ* {以} is generally limited to bronze inscriptions, and, of course, the covenant tablets.

²⁶ *Zhanguo Guwen Zidian*, p.57.



WT1K17 – 131



WT1K17 – 129

This too is a calligraphic variant, without semantic or phonetic significance. Such variation is called “breaking up a form” (*jiěsàn xíngtǐ* 解散形體) and is seen in other palaeographic materials.²⁷

Graph 4: [往]

Direct transcription: [往]²⁸

Formal transcription: [往]

Interpretative transcription: *wǎng* {往}

English translation: “to go toward”

Analysis category:

There are several component-level variant forms, the analysis categories vary:

[往] : B. Indirect textual evidence supports the interpretation.

[往] : A. Direct textual evidence supports the interpretation.

[往] : A. Direct textual evidence supports the interpretation.

[往] : B. Indirect textual evidence supports the interpretation.

Variant forms

1. a.



WT4K9 – 236

b.



WT4K9 – 78

c.



WT4K9 – 148

d.



WT4K10 – 9

2.



WT4K9 – 570

²⁷ He Linyi, *Zhanguo Wenzhi Tonglun*, p.219.

²⁸ Note that this is the direct transcription of the graph as it was understood by the Wenxian scribes; earlier forms of the graph, e.g. oracle-bone examples, are generally considered to be derived from [止] *zhǐ* and [王] *wáng*.

3.



WT4K9 – 92

4.



WT4K6 – 178


5.






WT4K9 – 212








The type 1.a forms are most common. We can see that this form is also the basic element of all the variants, except type 5 which is a solitary occurrence among the small-pit tablets and almost certainly a scribal error. The forms 1.b, 1.c and 1.d exhibit variations to the lower section of the basic form, the upper section is not affected. This suggests that the scribes considered this basic form to consist of two base components, the upper section and the lower section. Type 2 forms add a component on the right; type 3 forms add a component beneath the basic form; type 4 examples add both these components. Type 5 corresponds to the top section of the 1.a form that we suggested the scribes considered to be an independent base component: the occurrence of this variant supports this view. It may be that the scribe was writing the basic form but left off for some reason, having only completed the top section.





Analysis



We wish to find matches for the key components identified in the variant forms, i.e.: the top base-component of the basic form, e.g.  (WT4K9 – 148)

and  (WT4K9 – 92); the type 2 additional component, e.g.  (WT4K9 – 570); and the added component in the type 3 forms, e.g.  (WT4K9 – 92).

The *Shuo Wen Jie Zi* component table has the following matching forms.

For the  (WT4K9 – 148) and  (WT4K9 – 92) forms, the component , [之] *zhī*, is a reasonable match. The  (WT4K9 – 570) component is a good match for the *kāishū* form of , [彳] *chì*. For the  (WT4K9 – 92) component the closest match is , [止] *zhǐ*.


Looking through the *Shuo Wen Jie Zi* at the characters derived from these components, the most promising lead is found under the [彳] *chì* component. Here we find the graph 往 [往] *wǎng* with the gloss: “往 *wǎng* means ‘to go to’.” It is derived from 彳 *chì*, 辵 *huāng* is the sound. 𠄎 is the ancient script form, derived from 辵 *chuò*.²⁹ The small-seal script for this graph, 往, matches the type 2 form,  (WT4K9 – 570), from the Wenxian tablets and, furthermore, the “ancient script (*gǔwén* 古文)” form given in this gloss, 𠄎, is equivalent to the type 4 variant, the  (WT4K6 – 178). This allows us to transcribe the type 2 form,  (WT4K9 – 570), as [往] and the type 4 form,  (WT4K6 – 178), as [𠄎]. The *kāishū* character given as headword for this entry is [往] *wǎng*, the character used to denote *wǎng* {往} “to go toward”.

In the Wenxian tablets the phrase in which we find these graphs is *zì jīn yǐ* 自今以  (自今以 ).³⁰ Reading the graph here as {往} *wǎng* giving, 自今以往 *zì jīn yǐ wǎng*, “from this day onward”, fits the context perfectly. Furthermore, as we mentioned in our discussion on [以] *yǐ*, there is strong supporting evidence

²⁹ *Shuo Wen Jie Zi*, p.43 (2b 彳 部:9a): “往, 之也。从彳 辵聲。𠄎, 古文从辵。”

³⁰ The symbol “△” is used here, and throughout, to represent the graph under discussion.

for this reading in the *Zuo Zhuan*. Thus, both the *Shuo Wen Jie Zi* and evidence from the *Zuo Zhuan* support reading the Wenxian type 2, [往] , and type 4, [進] , forms as *wǎng* {往} “to go toward”.

This being the case, the other variant forms almost certainly also denote the word *wǎng* {往} “to go toward”. From the *Shuo Wen Jie Zi* gloss for [往] *wǎng*, given above, we see that Xu Shen takes the right-hand component, [皇] *huáng*, as the phonetic in this word. This form is equivalent to the type 1.a Wenxian graphs. Looking up this form in the *Shuo Wen Jie Zi*, we find the following gloss: “皇 *huáng* is vegetation growing unrestrainedly. It is derived from 之 on top of 土. Its pronunciation is like that of 皇 *huáng*.”³¹ Xu Shen breaks the graph down into [之] *zhī* and [土] *tǔ*, which is also a fitting description of the Wenxian type 1.a form, corresponding to the theory that the scribes were looking at the graph in just this way: treating the top part, e.g.  (WT4K9 – 148), as the component [之] *zhī* and the part below it, i.e. the [土] *tǔ* form, as another component. However Xu Shen’s gloss for this graph and the graph [往] *wǎng* suggests he did not see a semantic connection between the two forms. Xu’s gloss for [皇] *huáng* was clearly influenced by his understanding of the [之] *zhī* form as: “a depiction of plants outgrowing [their] shoots, branches and stems getting bigger and bigger; there is a place to which they advance.”³² Thus, the *Shuo Wen Jie Zi* cannot directly help us explain the use of [往] *wǎng* and [皇] *huáng* as alternate forms in the Wenxian texts.

Turning to evidence from other excavated materials, in the section for [往] *wǎng* in the *Guwenzi Lei Bian* we find that the type 1.a form, the [皇] *huáng*, is, in fact, the basic form for the character [往] *wǎng*, the work gives several examples of the graph [皇] *huáng* from the Shang, Spring and Autumn,

³¹ *Shuo Wen Jie Zi*, p.127 (6b 之部: 1a): “皇，艸木妄生也。从之在土上。讀若皇。”



³² *Shuo Wen Jie Zi*, p.127 (6b 之部: 1a): “像艸過中，枝莖益大，有所之。”

and Warring States periods:³³



Scholars generally agree that, in the Shang oracle bones, the graph does denote *wǎng* {往} “to go toward” and that the top part of the graph (*not* including the horizontal stroke) is [止] *zhǐ* “foot”,³⁴ acting as a semantic component, and the bottom is [王] *wáng* “king”, acting as the phonetic.³⁵ The graph is a phonogram, and we can transcribe it as [𠄎]; it is the orthograph of [往] *wǎng*.³⁶ By the Spring and Autumn and Warring States period this form had become corrupted, scribes treating it as composed of a [之] *zhī* “to go to” on the top, and a [土] *tǔ* “earth” below it. This is, as we discussed above, also the way that Xu Shen breaks down the graph, [𠄎] *huáng*, in the *Shuo Wen Jie Zi*: “It is derived from 之 on top of 土.” But Xu Shen did not realize the semantic connection with the form [往] *wǎng*, clear to us from the oracle bone evidence, and his gloss, based on his misunderstanding of the component [之] *zhī* is erroneous.

³³ *Guwenzi Lei Bian*, p.114.

³⁴ Note that the *kǎishū* form for the character [止] *zhǐ* “foot” is almost identical to the Zhou-period form of the graph [之] *zhī* “to go to”. These two forms need to be clearly distinguished: early examples of the [止] *zhǐ* “foot” form do not have a straight horizontal base but consist of only three strokes, the lower one of which curves up to the left; early forms of [之] *zhī* “to go to”, on the other hand, do have the horizontal base and are made up of four strokes. For example, in the type 3 form of the graph being discussed here, the top component is written with a [之] *zhī* “to go to”,  (from WT4K9 – 92) while the component at the bottom of the graph is a [止] *zhǐ* “foot”, the  (from WT4K9 – 92). What is particularly confusing in the case of this graph, i.e. the [往] *wǎng*, is that its earliest forms are written with the [止] *zhǐ* “foot” component at the top but, as explained in the main text, the form becomes corrupted and starts to be written with the [之] *zhī* “to go to” form at the top, and this is how Xu Shen analysed the form.

³⁵ The Old Chinese reconstructions are: 王 *wǎng* < *hwang* < **wjang* (匣陽) and 往 *wǎng* < *hwangX* < **wjang* (匣陽). (*A Handbook of Old Chinese Phonology* p.794).

The evidence from the Shang oracle bones and the later examples of the graph found in other excavated materials, support the reading of the type 1.a form [𠄎] as *wǎng* {往} “to go toward”. The [𠄎] form is also the earliest form of the graph; the type 2, [徃], and type 4, [逯], variants are the result of later additions of semantic components, [彳] *chì* (a simplification of the graph [行] *xíng* “walk”) and [止] *zhǐ* “foot”, both indicating “walking”, a meaning related to the graphs use to denote a word meaning “to go toward”. The type 3 form, [𠄎], is based on the same principal, adding the [止] *zhǐ* “foot” component alone, also indicating “walking”.

In the Wenxian covenant tablets the form [𠄎] appears to be far more common than the other component-level variants, i.e., [徃], [𠄎], and [逯], implying that the [𠄎] form was the standard graph used in the Jin script at this time to denote the word {往} *wǎng*, while the other forms were variants of this standard graph. The Jin scribes were, then, using a corrupted version of the earliest form of this character for their standard form.³⁷

We can now turn to the calligraphic variants of this character in the Wenxian tablets, that is, the examples 1.b, 1.c, and 1.d. These are given here again:




WT4K9 – 78






WT4K9 – 148



WT4K10 – 9

None of these forms adds any semantic or phonetic clarification to the original graph. In fact they tend to do the opposite and obscure the original structure of this graph. Type 1.b  (WT4K9 – 78) adds a short diagonal stroke to the vertical stroke of the [土] *tǔ* component, where it contacts the bottom of the [之] *zhī*

³⁷ *Jiaguwenzi Gulin* pp.831 – 834.


component. Additional strokes are a common form of calligraphic variation in Warring States scripts. Our understanding of this phenomenon allows us to disregard such calligraphic variation when analysing the structure of the graph. However, in this case, the addition of the extra stroke made the affected component look like another component and resulted in reanalysis of the graph. Early lexicographers, included such forms in their collections of old-form graphs. The *Shuo Wen Jie Zi* of Xu Kai 徐鍇 (920 – 974) has this form, , identified as the “ancient form (*gǔwén* 古文)” for [皇] *huáng*. The *Han Jian* has the same form, , under the *zhī* 之 radical, the transcription given is [皇] with the sound gloss *hù guāng qiē* (户光切) (giving Middle Chinese *hwang*).³⁸ Placing this form under the *zhī* 之 radical, with this sound gloss, indicates that the *Han Jian* is identifying this form with the *Shuo Wen Jie Zi* [皇] *huáng*. Both the “ancient form (古文)” from Xu Kai’s *Shuo Wen Jie Zi* and the *Han Jian* graph look very like the Wenxian example above and we can deduce that similar graphs must have been the source of these examples. In both these cases the bottom component of the graph is taken to be [王] *tǐng*: compare the *Shuo Wen Jie Zi* small-seal-script form for [王] *tǐng*, .³⁹ This is also reflected in the *Han Jian*’s transcription, [皇]. This re-analysis of the component came about when scribes reinterpreted the additional stroke as an integral part of the bottom component, transforming the [土] *tǔ* into [王] *tǐng* (the [土] *tǔ* itself an earlier corruption of the original [王] *wáng*). It is also possible that the variation consciously aimed at making the [土] *tǔ* form into [王] *tǐng*; this is the way He Linyi interprets such examples, calling this type of variation “interchange of components with similar forms” (*xíngjìn hùzuò* 形近互作).⁴⁰



³⁷ Although we are following the standard theory that the oracle bone form of [往] *wǎng* is derived from [止] *zhǐ* “foot” and [王] *wáng* “king”, there seems no reason not to consider whether it might have been derived from [之] *zhī* “to go to” and [王] *wáng* “king”, the top line of the [王] *wáng* being shared with the bottom line of the [之] *zhī* in which case the use of [之] *zhī* in later forms would not be a corruption.

³⁸ *Han Jian*, p.16 (31a). Middle Chinese reconstruction based on characters with the same sound gloss in William H. Baxter, *An Etymological Dictionary of Common Chinese Characters*, pp.52 – 53, e.g. *huáng* 皇.


³⁹ *Shuo Wen Jie Zi*, p.169 (8a 王部: 17a).

⁴⁰ He Linyi, *Zhanguo Wenzi Tonglun*, pp.207 – 210.

Type 1.c,  (WT4K9 – 148), omits the horizontal stroke in the middle of the [土] *tǔ*. This type of calligraphic variant, common in Warring States’ scripts, simplifies the original graph by omitting a single stroke and is called “single stroke simplification” (*dānbǐ jiǎnhuà* 單筆簡化).⁴¹




Type 1.d,  (WT4K10 – 9), is interesting. The bottom section appears to be composed of a [人] *rén* and a [止] *zhǐ*. This suggests that the scribe had in mind the first calligraphic variant discussed above, i.e. the  (WT4K9 – 78) with the [壬] *tǐng* form, and here treats the vertical stroke and the small diagonal stroke as linked, thus giving the form for [人] *rén*, and then makes the bottom of the component into a [止] *zhǐ*, which is not only similar in form to the original [土] *tǔ* but could be considered to be acting as a semantic component ([止] *zhǐ* “foot”). The scribe may have been aware that [壬] *tǐng* was itself originally formed of a [土] *tǔ* and [人] *rén*: he or she could have been making a variation of this form by keeping the [人] *rén* component but changing the [土] *tǔ* into a [止] *zhǐ*.

On a more general note, the calligraphic variation seen in this example suggests that the scribes had some abstract understanding of the way in which the characters were constructed and sometimes applied this to produce minor variations. Of course misunderstandings would also have been common, such as the treating of the form resulting from the calligraphic variant seen in 1.b as the component [壬] *tǐng*. This also demonstrates that, even at the time they were commonly employed in the script, calligraphic variations, such as that additional small diagonal stroke in 1.b, could lead to further corruption (or perhaps intentional, playful, variation), e.g. that resulting in the 1.d form.

We should finally mention the type 5 example,  (WT4K9 – 212). This is the graph [之] *zhī*, used as the top component in the [坐] form. We can

⁴¹ He Linyi, *Zhanguo Wenzhi Tonglun*, p.185.

assume that such examples, and they are very rare, are scribal errors since reading the graph as *zhī* {之} “to go to” does not make sense in this context, and this graph cannot function as a phonetic loan for {往}. We can conjecture that the scribe intended to write [𠄎], or one of the other variants, but for some reason only wrote the top component, the [之] *zhī*.

We can conclude from the above analysis that the basic graph [𠄎], its component-level variants, [徃], [𠄎], and [𠄎], and calligraphic variants, , , and , are all used in this phrase in the Wenxian covenant tablets to denote the word *wǎng* {往} “to go toward”. The use of [之] *zhī* here is a scribal error.

3.1.3.2 Discussion and explication of the phrase

The standard wording for this phrase is *zì jīn yǐ wǎng* 自今以往 “from this day onward”. The following variations in wording are seen among the small pit materials (the tablets in which the variation occurs are given in brackets):

- a. “自以往” (WT5K21 – 20; WT5K21 – 83; WT4K9 – 78⁴²)
- b. “自今往” (WT4K6 – 151)

The first example misses the *jīn* 今, the second omits the *yǐ* 以. As the huge majority of examples use the standard wording, we can be confident that these omissions are scribal errors.

The phrase “from this day onward” (*zì jīn yǐ wǎng* 自今以往) is seen in the Houma covenant tablets and received texts, as I will illustrate below. I will also look briefly at similar phrases used in the same type of context in texts from

⁴² In this tablet there is an illegible graph just to the left of the space where the “今” should be: it could be a “今” added later to correct the omission.

different periods in order to examine the place of the Wenxian phrase in the development of this formula.

The phrase *zì jīn yǐ wǎng* 自今以往 is not seen in the oracle bones or bronze inscriptions. However, in bronze inscriptions we find *zì jīn* 自今 or *zì jīn rì* 自今日 used in very similar contexts, for example:

1. Xuan Ji Gui 縣妃簋 (Mid Western Zhou 976 – 878 BC)⁴³

肆敢口(施)⁴⁴于彝曰：“其自今日，孫孫子子毋敢忘伯休。”

Thus I dare set it out on the sacrificial vessel: “**From today**, may my sons and grandsons not dare to forget the goodness of Bo.”

2. Yin Yi 饒匜 (Late Western Zhou 877 – 771 BC)⁴⁵

伯揚父迺又使牧牛誓曰：“自今余敢擾乃小大事，” “乃師又以汝告，則致乃鞭千𠂔毆毆。”⁴⁶

Bo Yang Fu then again made Mu Niu swear an oath saying: “**From today**, if I dare to disturb any of your affairs,” [Bo Ying Fu continues:], “[and] your superior again reports you, then you will receive your thousand lashes and tattooing punishment.”

Note, in this last example, that the phrase is used in a direct quote from an oath (*shì* 誓), a genre which, as discussed in Chapter One, is closely related to covenant.

3. Mao Gong Ding 毛公鼎 (Late Western Zhou 877 – 771 BC)⁴⁷

王曰：“... 麻自今出入敷命于外，厥非先告父曆，父曆舍命，毋有敢意敷命于外。”

The King said: “... **from today**, [when] coming and going [as one] disseminates decrees to the outside, unless [the decree has] first been reported to Fu Yin, and Fu Yin has endorsed the decree, let there be no cases of daring to _____ [意?] disseminate decrees to the outside.”

⁴³ *Yin Zhou Jinwen Jicheng*, Vol. 8, no.4269.

⁴⁴ For this reading see: Zhang Zhenglang, “Zhou Li Wang Hu Gui Shiwen”.

⁴⁵ *Yin Zhou Jinwen Jicheng*, Vol.16, no.10285.

⁴⁶ For this interpretation, see: Li Xueqin, *Xin Chu Qingtongqi Yanjiu*, pp.110 – 114.

⁴⁷ *Yin Zhou Jinwen Jicheng*, Vol.5, no.2841.

In the Houma covenant tablets the phrase occurs in the following context:

4. Houma Covenant Tablets: Confiscation Texts (early 5th century BC)⁴⁸

[covenantor's name] 自今以往，敢不率從此盟質之言...

[Covenantor's name] **from today onward**, [if he] dare to not abide by the words of this covenant, ...

We do not find the phrase *zì jīn yǐ wǎng* 自今以往 in other Han or pre-Han excavated materials, although we do find expressions with the same function, in similar contexts, here is one example:

5. Shuihudi 睡虎地 bamboo slips: “Wei Li Zhi Dao 為吏之道” slip 18, section 5 and slip 19, section 5 (252 BC)⁴⁹

自今以來，賈門逆旅，贅壻後父，勿令為戶，勿予田宇。

From today onward, the houses of traders as well as hostels, husbands who live with their wife's family, and second husbands who live with their wife, will not be permitted to set up a household, and will not be allotted land.

Turning now to received texts, we do find examples of the Wenxian phrase, *zì jīn yǐ wǎng* 自今以往. I have already quoted the following *Zuo Zhuan* example in the previous section:

6. Zuo Zhuan Xiang 襄 25.7 (text: 5th – 4th century BC) (event: 548 BC)⁵⁰

自今以往，兵其少弭矣。

From this day onward, there may be a little less fighting.

And I also noted the almost identical phrase, *zì jīn rì yǐ wǎng* 自今日以往, from the words of a covenant recorded in the *Zuo Zhuan*:

⁴⁸ *Houma Mengshu*, pp.39 – 40.

⁴⁹ *Shuihudi Qin Mu Zhujian*, plates p.83 and transcriptions p.174. For the date see: *Shuihudi Qin Mu Zhujian*, p.174, note 1. According to this note, this is a law from the state of Wei 魏.

⁵⁰ *Chunqiu Zuo Zhuan Zhu*, p.1103.

7. *Zuo Zhuan* Xi 僖 28.5 (text: 5th – 4th century BC) (event: 632 BC)⁵¹

自今日以往，既盟之後，行者無保其力，居者無懼其罪。

From this day onward, after having covenanted, those who travelled [with the lord] will not take advantage of their achievements, those who stayed will not be afraid that they will be accused of being at fault.

The phrase *zì jīn yǐ wǎng* 自今以往 also occurs in the *Guo Yu* in an exclamatory, prayer-like entreaty: in this example, Zhan 詹, a minister of Zheng 鄭, is about to be boiled alive by Duke Wen 文公 of Jin 晉, but Duke Wen is so moved by Zhan's final words, which display his great loyalty to Zheng, that he leans on the handles of the cauldron (in which the unfortunate Zhan is about to be boiled) and shouts out:

8. *Guo Yu* "Jin Yu 晉語 4" (text: late 5th – 4th century BC) (event: reign of Duke Wen 文 of Jin r.636 – 628 BC)⁵²

自今以往，知忠以事君者，與詹同。

From today onward, [may] those who serve their lord with an understanding of loyalty be like Zhan.

After which Zhan is released and returned, with great ceremony, to Zheng.

There are also examples of this phrase in, for example, the *Lü Shi Chunqiu*, *Zhan Guo Ce*, *Wu Yue Chunqiu*, and *Hou Han Shu*. In almost all examples the context in which the phrase occurs is some kind of decree.

An example in the *Wu Yue Chunqiu* uses two different wordings for this phrase when more or less the same command is given to two different sets of people by the same person in the space of a few lines. The *Guo Yu*, "Wu Yu 吳語", recounting exactly the same event, uses a single, slightly different phrase in both cases:

⁵¹ *Chunqiu Zuo Zhuan Zhu*, p.469.

⁵² *Guo Yu*, p.380.

9. *Wu Yue Chunqiu* (text: Eastern Han 1st – 2nd century AD) (event: reign of King Fu Chai 夫差 of Wu r.495 – 473 BC)⁵³

王曰：“自今日之後，內政無出，外正無入。……
王乃令大夫曰：“…。自今以往，內政無出，外正無入，吾固誠子。”

The king said [to his consort/s]: **From after this day**, internal affairs (i.e. affairs of the palace) will not leave [the palace, i.e. internal affairs will not interfere with external affairs]; external affairs will not enter [the palace]. ……

The King then ordered the ministers saying: “… . **From this day onward**, internal affairs (i.e. affairs of the palace) will not leave [the palace, i.e. internal affairs will not interfere with external affairs]; external affairs will not enter [the palace], I firmly alert you [to this].”

10. *Guo Yu* “Wu Yu 吳語” (text: late 5th – 4th century BC) (event: reign of King Fu Chai 夫差 of Wu r.495 – 473 BC)⁵⁴

王曰：“自今日以後，內政無出，外正無入。……
王命大夫曰：“…。自今日以後，內政無出，外正無入，吾見子於此止矣。”

The King said [to his consort/s]: “**From after this day**, internal affairs (i.e. affairs of the palace) will not leave [the palace, i.e. interfere with external affairs]; external affairs will not enter [the palace]. ……

The King ordered the ministers saying: “… . **From after this day**, internal affairs (i.e. affairs of the palace) will not leave [the palace, i.e. interfere with external affairs]; external affairs will not enter [the palace], My meeting with you will be restricted to this place.”

The phrases *zì jīn rì zhī hòu* 自今日之後, *zì jīn yǐ wǎng* 自今以往 and *zì jīn rì yǐ hòu* 自今日以後 are equivalent.⁵⁵

We find phrases similar to *zì jīn yǐ wǎng* 自今以往 in decrees, oaths, covenants and the like, in many received texts from the earliest down to Qin, Han, and beyond. For example:

⁵³ *Wu Yue Chunqiu Ji Jiao Hui Kao*, p.164.

⁵⁴ *Guo Yu*, p.623.

⁵⁵ The similarity of the language used suggests the two passages have a common source, or that one was adapted from the other.

11. *Shang Shu* “Pan Geng 盤庚” (text: 14th – 11th century BC) (event: c.1300 BC)⁵⁶

凡爾眾，其惟致告：“自今至于後日，各恭爾事，齊乃位，度乃口。罰及爾身，弗可悔。”

Each and every one of you, receive this announcement: “**From this day until later days**, each of you will act in accordance with your official tasks, set-straight your post, speak with propriety. Once punishment is upon you, it will be too late for regrets.”

12. *Lü Shi Chunqiu* “Li Su 離俗: Shang De 上德” (text: c.239 BC) (event: mid 7th century BC)⁵⁷

被瞻據鑊而呼曰：“三軍之士皆聽瞻也，自今以來，無有忠於其君，忠於其君者將烹。”

Pi Zhan grasped the cauldron and shouted, “All the soldiers of the three armies listen to Zhan [Pi Zhan]: **From this day onward**, let there be no one loyal to his ruler, if you are loyal to your ruler, you will be boiled alive.”

13. *Zuo Zhuan* Xiang 襄 9.5 (text: 5th – 4th century BC) (event: 564 BC)⁵⁸

晉士莊子為載書，曰：“自今日既盟之後，鄭國而不唯晉命是，而有異志者，。。。”

Shi Zhuang Zi of Jin made the covenant, which said: “**From today**, after having covenanted, if the state of Zheng does not obey Jin’s command, or ever has different intentions, ...”

The phrase used in this last example, “From today, after having covenanted, ...” (*zì jīn rì jì měng zhī hòu* 自今日既盟之後) is very similar to a phrase used in the Houma covenant tablets: the Pledge Texts (委質類) have the phrase, “After the pledge” (*jì zhì zhī hòu* 既質之後). As I discuss in a later section, the words {質} *zhì* “pledge” and {盟} *méng* “covenant”, can be used as synonyms, thus the phrase from the *Zuo Zhuan*, “after having covenanted,..” (*jì měng zhī hòu* 既盟之後) and that from the Houma Pledge texts, “after the pledge” (*jì zhì zhī hòu*

⁵⁶ *Shisan Jing Zhushu*, p.170.

⁵⁷ *Lü Shi Chunqiu Xin Jiao Shi*, p.1265.

⁵⁸ *Chunqiu Zuo Zhuan Zhu*, p.969.

既質之後) are basically identical in meaning, and may have been part of the standard vocabulary of covenants in the late Spring and Autumn, early Warring States period.

From the above examples we can see that the phrase "from this day onward" (*zì jīn yǐ wǎng* 自今以往) and phrases similar to it, such as *zì jīn* 自今, *zì jīn rì* 自今日, *zì jīn rì yǐ wǎng* 自今日以往, *zì jīn zhì yú hòu rì* 自今至于後日, *zì jīn yǐ lái* 自今以來, and *zì jīn rì yǐ hòu* 自今日以後, are common throughout Han and Pre-Han texts, in decrees, oaths, covenants, and prayers: all texts which call for something to come to be in the future, after the pronouncement has been made. It also appears that we can identify certain phrases with certain periods, for example, by the Han period the phrase *zì jīn yǐ lái* 自今以來 appears to be the most common form, while it does not occur in the earlier texts cited.

These phrases all have the same function: to mark the period of effectiveness of the entreaty of which they are a part. This supports the idea that texts containing this phrases are of a similar type and perhaps can be treated as a genre with a shared basic structure and vocabulary. Such texts require a phrase marking their period of effectiveness, and what we see is that the phrases used for this purpose do not vary a great deal over the period of more than a thousand years covered by the Han and pre-Han texts quoted above. It is quite possible that such a genre was recognized, and composers of such texts had a knowledge of the style of earlier examples of the form, and adopted these, perhaps consciously aiming to produce an archaic style.

In terms of the function of these phrases, one can ask at what point, in the overall process of making such texts, the period of effectiveness was actually considered to start. So, for example, in the Wenxian and Houma texts we would generally assume that the period of effectiveness started on the day the tablets were buried in the ground. But, alternatively, it is possible that the interring was the culmination of a longer process and the pledge had already come into effect, before the actual burial.

A further problem is that many of the Houma and Wenxian oath types have no date, only the phrase "from this day onward". The variety of content of the covenants, the large number of separate pits, and the phenomenon of overlapping pits, suggest that the covenants at each site were not all made and buried at the same time. This raises the question of why it was felt necessary to record the specific date on some of the oath types but not on others.

3.1.4 Imprecation clause

The phrase to be discussed here, “Cause [you] to not have descendants” (*bī wú yǒu zhòuhòu* 俾毋有冑後), is one of three phrases used in the imprecation clause. The phrase is only found in Type 2 and Type 4 oaths. An example of the Type 2 oath is given here:

Tablet WT1K2 – 159

- I. 所□
 II.A. 敢偽懸書于少曲者，
 II.B 所□敢知偽書不之言者，
 III. 皇君□公
 IV. 其諦亟視之，亡夷彼氏，俾毋有冑後。

- I. If [covenantor’s name]
 II.A dare falsify publicly-posted notices in Shaoqu,
 II.B if [covenantor’s name] dare know of the falsifying of notices and does not report this,
 III. mighty ruler, Duke _____ [?],
 IV. may he observe and immediately detect him, wipe out that [i.e. his] clan, **and cause [him] to not have descendants.**

This imprecation clause, “cause [you] to not have descendants”, does not occur in the Houma tablets. Like the phrase more frequently found in the Houma and Wenxian imprecation clauses, “wipe out that [i.e. his/your] clan”, the theme is the common curse that one will have no descendants to perpetuate one’s lineage and carry out sacrificial duties to its ancestors.

Analysis is given for all the graphs in this phrase: [卑] (*bī* {俾} “to cause to”); [毋] (*wú* {毋} a function word); [又] (*yǒu* {有} “to have”); [冑] (*zhòu* {冑} “descendant/s”); [後] (*hòu* {後} “descendant/s”).

3.1.4.1 Palaeographic analysis

Graph 1: [卑]

Direct transcription: N/A ¹

Formal transcription: [卑]

Interpretative transcription: *bī* {俾}

English translation: “to cause to”

Analysis category: A. Direct textual evidence supports the interpretation.

Variant forms

This graph also occurs in a phrase in the second stipulation of Oath Type 6 (WT4K11) tablets. The phrase is: 俾不利于[covenant lord's name]之躬身宗家 (*bī bù lì yú* [covenant lord's name] *zhī gōngshēn zōngjiā* “cause harm to [covenant lord's name]'s person, and lineage clan”). All examples of the graph were examined for the palaeographic analysis. There are few clear examples of this form. The following variants were identified:

1. a.



WT1K2 – 159

b.



WT4K5 – 13

2.



WT4K11 – 599.5

Types 1.a and 1.b are basically identical but the central diagonal stroke in the bottom component is in a different position: in 1.b it cuts through the three-

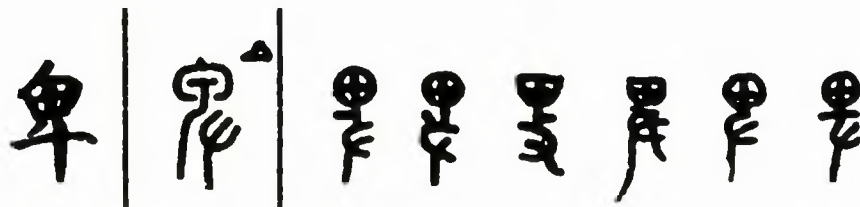
¹ The Wenxian graph is made up of [ナ] *zūo* and [田] *tián* but there is also a diagonal stroke that is attached to, or crosses, the [ナ] *zūo* component making a direct transcription difficult to produce and unhelpful to the analysis. This is a case where it is better to be aware of the components we can recognize and deal with the original image of the graph rather than produce a potentially confusing direct transcription.

prongs of the bottom component while in 1.a it projects from the point at which those prongs meet the vertical stroke.² In type 2, that stroke appears to be omitted.³ In the top component of the type 2 form, the two central strokes do not cross as they do in the type 1 forms.

Analysis

The graphs can clearly be separated into two components: a top component formed of an enclosed figure with a cross inside it and a lower component, the pronged form. The diagonal line in the bottom components of the type 1 examples can, as evident in the type 2 example, be omitted.

Looking through the component tables, the *Shuo Wen Jie Zi* has: 田, [田] *tián*, which matches the top component. The component 目, [目] *mù*, roughly matches the top component of example 2. The component 𠂇, [𠂇] *zǎo*, matches the lower part of example 2 if we ignore the diagonal stroke seen in the type 1 forms. However, the characters collected under these components do not match the Wenxian graph. The *Han Jian* component table is no help, nor is Gao Ming's table in *Zhongguo Guwenzi Xue Tonglun*. However, the component table in *Jinwen Changyong Zidian* has the following line of graphs:⁴



These clearly match the Wenxian form and give us the character [卑] *bēi*, the *Shuo Wen Jie Zi* small-seal form (second from the left) is a reasonably close match.⁵

² What appears to be a vertical stroke to the right of the form in 1.b is not part of this graph.

³ A faint line can be made out which may be part of the form, in which case this lower component would match that in the type 1.a example. The original tablet needs to be reexamined to confirm whether this is part of the graph.

⁴ *Jinwen Changyong Zidian* component table, p.5.

⁵ *Shuo Wen Jie Zi*, p.65 (3b 𠂇部: 10a).

Turning to the Houma tablets, we find the same graph, the most common variant forms being:

HM 156:1⁶

HM 1:37



HM 85:2

The first two examples are very similar to the 1.b example from Wenxian, particularly the HM 1:37 form. The third example, HM 85:2, is a good match for example 1.a above. The Houma tablets have a greater number of legible examples of this graph than the Wenxian tablets and more variant forms have been noted. The following variant has a lower component matching the Wenxian type 2 example:

HM 1:41⁷

The Houma graphs all use the [田] *tián* type form for the top component; none have the variation seen in the Wenxian type 2 with the uncrossed lines.

In the Houma tablets this graph is interpreted as *bǐ* {俾} “to cause to”.⁸ It appears in the following phrase:

1. Houma covenant tablets “Lineage Covenant Texts”

而敢或變改口及口俾不守二宮者

And dare to [cause] [name] and [name] to change, **causing** [them] to not guard the two temples.

The first clause of the phrase is difficult but the last clause “causing [them] to not guard the two temples” (俾不守二宮 *bǐ bù shǒu èr gōng*) is not a problem: the *bǐ* {俾} “to cause to” makes perfect sense here. This interpretation of the graph also works for the Wenxian phrase, 俾毋有冑後 (*bǐ wú yǒu zhòuhòu* “cause [you]

⁶ These three examples are all from: *Houma Mengshu*, p.312.


⁷ *Houma Mengshu*, p.312.

⁸ *Houma Mengshu*, p.36.

to not have descendants”) and also in the phrase from Oath Type 6: 俾不利于 [covenant lord’s name]之躬身宗家 (*bǐ bù lì yú* [covenant lord’s name] *zhī gōngshēn zōngjiā* “Cause harm to [covenant lord’s name]’s person, and lineage clan.”).

The graph [卑] *bēi* came to function as the standard character used to denote *bēi* {卑} “low”, “inferior”. However, where the character is seen in bronze inscriptions and excavated Warring States’ texts, it is commonly used to denote *bǐ* {俾} “to cause to”, as we see in the covenant tablets. In Warring States materials, it is also used for several other words which, at a later stage, came to be written with [卑] *bēi* and an added semantic component, for example: *pí* {裨} “to assist”, now written [裨] *pí*.⁹ There does not appear to be a consensus on the original meaning of the graph [卑] *bēi*, but in the excavated evidence it is more commonly used to denote *bǐ* {俾} “to cause to” than *bēi* {卑} “low”, “inferior.” It seems, then, that the Houma and Wenxian form was the standard graph during the Zhou period for denoting the word *bǐ* {俾} “to cause to”. The character now used for this word, [俾] *bǐ*, does not occur in bronze inscriptions, but it is seen in the *Zu Chu Wen* where it is used to denote *bēi* {卑} “low”, “inferior”.¹⁰ It seems, then, that the use of [俾] *bǐ* as the standard character for *bǐ* {俾} “to cause to” was a later development.



The top component in the type 2 form from the Wenxian texts, , (WT4K11 – 599.5), is reasonably similar in form to the component [目] *mù*, which would make this an example of the variation “interchange of components with similar forms” (*xíngjìn hùzuò* 形近互作). Interchange between the components [田] *tián* and [目] *mù* is seen in other Warring States graphs.¹¹

⁹ See *Jinwen Changyong Zidian*, pp.335 – 336 and *Zhanguo Guwen Zidian*, p.771.

¹⁰ *Zhanguo Guwen Zidian*, p.772.

¹¹ *Zhanguo Wenzhi Tonglun*, pp.207 – 210.

Graph 2: [母]Direct transcription: [母]Formal transcription: [母]Interpretative transcription: *wú* {毋}English translation: function word: a negating adverb indicating prohibition.Analysis category: A: Direct textual evidence supports the interpretation.**Variant forms**

1.



WT1K2 – 9.5



WT1K2 – 159

2.



WT1K2 – 124



WT4K5 – 62

3.



WT1K22 – 145

4.



WT1K2 – 126

Note that the type 4 example is composed of two graphs: the graph under discussion and the graph which follows it, written so closely together that they appear to be a single graph.

The graph is a non-composite form. The type 1 form appears to be most common. The type 2 form is identical to the type 1 form except that the two dots are omitted from two middle sections of the graph. The type 3 example also omits the dots but adds a short-horizontal stroke to the bottom vertical stroke. Example 4 is of interest because the graph is placed very closely together with the following graph (the [又] *yòu*), so close that, were it not for the other examples, one might think they were a single graph. In this example, the two strokes that usually descend from the main body of the graph, one stroke in the centre, one on the left, are omitted and, instead, the following character is placed directly under that main section of the graph.

Analysis


The *Shuo Wen Jie Zi* component table does not give an obvious match with these forms. One might note the reasonably good match with the *Han Jian* component table forms: 𡚦, [女] *nǚ*, which is relatively close to the type 2 examples, the difference being that, in the *Han Jian* example, the left-hand stroke is detached and rises higher above the body of the graph. This identification is confirmed by examples of [女] *nǚ* in Gao Ming's table for this component.¹² The table includes the following Warring States forms along with the small-seal and clerical script forms:

偏旁						
字例						
	如 信阳简	婁 望山简	媧 琿印	妾 琿印	姓 说文	姚 隶辨

¹² *Zhongguo Guwenzixue Tonglun*, p.61

Having matched the type 2 examples with [女] *nǚ*, we can analyse the type 1 examples as [女] *nǚ* forms with two dots added. This should be recognizable as [母] *mǔ*, the standard character for *mǔ* {母} “mother”: the characters are identical except for the two dots added to the [女] *nǚ* form, considered by most scholars to represent breasts, added in order to differentiate the graph from [女] *nǚ* in its use to depict *mǔ* {母} “mother”. If one was not aware of the connection between the graphs [女] *nǚ* and [母] *mǔ*, the type 1 forms might be difficult to identify since a close matching form does not occur in the component tables we are using, or in the Houma tablets.

Neither of the words *mǔ* {母} “mother” or *nǚ* {女} “female”, “girl”, fit the context in which the graphs are found: 俾△有胄後 (*bǐ ___ yǒu zhòuhòu*). The character [女] *nǚ* is commonly used in early texts to denote *rǔ* {汝}, the second person pronoun, “you”. However, that would give: “Cause you to have descendants” (俾汝有胄後 *bǐ rǔ yǒu zhòuhòu*), which, although grammatically possible, sounds more like a blessing than the blood-chilling curse we expect at the end of a covenant. Looking up the graph [母] *mǔ* in the *Zhanguo Guwen Zidian* provides the solution. As He Linyi explains, the character [母] *mǔ* is usually used in Warring States’ texts to denote *wú* {毋}, a negative adverb. Clearly, this fits the context, giving: “Cause [you] to not have descendants” (俾毋有胄後 *bǐ wú yǒu zhòuhòu*), which is rather more fitting for a curse and also logical after the phrase “Wipe out that [i.e. the covenantor’s] clan” (亡夷彼氏 *wáng yí bǐ shì*), which often precedes it: wiping out one’s clan will ensure that one will not have descendants.

While the interpretation as *wú* {毋} is clearly correct, we must explain the type 2 forms which are not the character [母] *mǔ* but [女] *nǚ*, for example  (WT1K2 – 124). These graphs are indistinguishable from the Wenxian form used to denote {汝} *rǔ*, the second person pronoun. Although this is potentially confusing, we do, nevertheless, find examples in excavated texts of the graph

[女] *nǚ* used to denote the words *mǔ* {母} and *wú* {毋}. Scholars believe that the character [女] *nǚ* was originally used to denote two different words: *nǚ* {女} “female, woman” and *mǔ* {母} “mother”. The character [母] *mǔ* was developed from the [女] *nǚ*, by adding the two dots, in order to distinguish the two usages. Thus the use of [女] *nǚ* to denote *mǔ* {母} is common in oracle bones, but also seen in bronzes and later texts.¹³ The word *mǔ* {母}, in turn, could loan for the word *wú* {毋} and just as [女] *nǚ* could be used to denote *mǔ* {母} “mother”, it could also be used to denote *wú* {毋}. This usage of [女] *nǚ* is seen in oracle bones and later texts.¹⁴ An example from a later text is He Linyi’s interpretation of the graphs [𠄎女], on a Jin seal, as a double-character surname, *Qiwú* {綦毋}.¹⁵

The alternative explanation for the use of [女] *nǚ* to denote *wú* {毋} is that the [女] *nǚ* form was a phonetic loan for *wú* {毋}. Some reconstructions place the two words in the same rhyme group, for example, the Wang Li system reconstructions (that I give along with William Baxter’s) puts both words in the *yú* 魚 group. However, many scholars of historical phonology do not agree that the two words, {女} *nǚ* and *wú* {毋}, are phonetically close. Baxter gives the following reconstructions:

女 *nǚ* < *nrjoX* < **nrja*’¹⁶

毋 *wú* < *mju* < **m(r)jo*¹⁷

Both the main vowels and initials are different in Baxter’s reconstruction. If [女] *nǚ* cannot be considered a phonetic loan here, then the reader of the Wenxian imprecation phrase would have had to rely on context, and familiarity with this use of [女] *nǚ*, to realize that the [女] *nǚ* here is acting in the way

¹³ For bronze examples and a comment on the graph’s use in oracle bones, see: *Jinwen Xing Yi Tong Jie* (*Kinbun Keigi Tsūkai*), pp. 2814 – 2819. For oracle bones, also see: *Jiaguwenzi Gulin*, p.446.

¹⁴ For oracle bone examples see: *Jiaguwenzi Gulin*, pp.444 – 446.

¹⁵ *Zhanguo Guwen Zidian*, p.558.

¹⁶ *A Handbook of Old Chinese Phonology*, p.779.

¹⁷ *A Handbook of Old Chinese Phonology*, p.468.

discussed above, to denote *wú* {毋}, rather than being used as a loan for *rǔ* {汝} “you”, its more common usage and one which is, as noted, grammatically possible in this context.

An apparent problem with the reading of the graphs [母] *mǔ* and [女] *nǚ* as the negative *wú* {毋} is that this word is usually understood to function as the negative imperative, “don’t”. If we assume that the word functions in the same way as the English negative imperative, then it is awkward after the verb *bǐ* {俾} “to cause”, the phrase 俾毋有胄後 *bǐ wú yǒu zhòuhòu* translates something like: “cause [you], don’t have descendants”.

A commonly offered solution to such a problem would be to interpret the graph as denoting, not *wú* {毋}, but the existential negative *wú* {無} “there is not, have not”, on the basis that they are phonetically identical and interchangeable in usage in pre-Han texts.¹⁸ That would give a more acceptable English translation, “Cause [you] to not have descendants” (俾無有胄後 *bǐ wú yǒu zhòuhòu*).¹⁹

There is, however, good evidence that the graph here cannot be read as *wú* {無} “there is not, have not” and that *wú* {毋} is, in fact, grammatically perfectly acceptable. As just mentioned, the words *wú* {毋} and *wú* {無} are generally considered to be phonetically identical, both are traditionally placed in the 明 *míng* initial group and the 魚 *yú* rhyme group, suggesting they are very close phonetically and thus interchangeable in usage. However, although this may have become true at some later stage in the development of the language, it is contradicted by the graphic evidence. The word *wú* {毋} was originally denoted by using the graph [母] *mǔ* as a phonetic loan.²⁰ This is clearly demonstrated in the Wenxian examples (they mainly use the graph [母] *mǔ*)

¹⁸ Lü Shuxiang 呂淑湘 demonstrates this in: Lü Shuxiang, “Lun Wu Yu Wu”, see pp.99 – 100, note 1.

¹⁹ The combination “無有” is not unusual, for example: “四國皆有分，我獨無有。” (“The four states all have a share, only I do not.”) *Zuo Zhuan Zhao* 昭 12.11. This example used in: Lü Shuxiang, “Lun Wu Yu Wu”, p.94.

²⁰ Or, as we discussed above, using the graph [女] *nǚ* in its usage to denote the word *mǔ* {毋}.

and is seen from oracle bones onwards.²¹ The character [毋] *wú* is itself just a development of the form [母] *mǔ*, produced by replacing the two dots of [母] *mǔ* with a single stroke, giving [毋], thus distinguishing the two words originally denoted by the single graph.²² This is further evidence that the pronunciations of *mǔ* {母} and *wú* {毋} were identical or very close. It is thus logical that the Old Chinese reconstruction for *wú* {毋} should be very close to that of *mǔ* {母}. This is the line of argument William Baxter takes. He reconstructs *wú* {毋} as **m(r)jo* and *mǔ* {母} as **m(r)o'*: the pronunciation of the words is almost identical.²³ The negative *wú* {無}, on the other hand, has a different main vowel; Baxter's reconstruction is **m(r)ja*.²⁴ Thus, the three reconstructions are, side by side:

母 <i>mǔ</i>	<	<i>muwX</i>	<	<i>*m(r)o'</i>	²⁵	(明之)
毋 <i>wú</i>	<	<i>mju</i>	<	<i>*m(r)jo</i>	²⁶	(明魚)
無 <i>wú</i>	<	<i>mju</i>	<	<i>*m(r)ja</i>	²⁷	(明魚)

On this basis, it seems unlikely that the graphs in the Wenxian texts could have been denoting *wú* {無} rather than *wú* {毋}.²⁸ We can also observe that the Houma tablets do have the graph [無] *wú*, used to denote the existential negative *wú* {無}, in the name Wu Xu 無屻 (literally “without worries”).²⁹ The

²¹ *Jiaguwenzi Gulin*, pp.446 – 450. For Warring States examples see: *Zhanguo Guwen Zidian*, p. 128.

²² See: Qiu Xigui (transl. Gilbert L. Mattos and Jerry Norman), *Chinese Writing*, pp.325 – 326.

²³ *A Handbook of Old Chinese Phonology*, p.468. Note that for *mǔ* 母 Baxter gives alternative reconstructions: **m(r)o'* and **m+*. He believes that the sound **P(r)o* merged with **P(r)+* (*P* = labial initial) in some dialects. I am suggesting that, in the Jin area at the time the Wenxian tablets were produced, this had not occurred: [母] *mǔ* was pronounced **m(r)o'* rather than **m+* and, therefore, could be used to denote the word *wú* {毋} < **m(r)jo*. There appears to be some supporting evidence for this argument in the interpretation of another Wenxian graph: I suggest that the graph 付 *fù* < *pjuH* < **p(r)jos* (幫侯) is denoting the word 剖 *pōu* < *phuwX* < **ph(r)o'* (滂之) (analysis of this graph is not included in the thesis). The word *pōu* 剖, like *mǔ* 母, is one in which **P(r)o* appears to have merged with **P(r)+*, but if it could be denoted by 付 *fù* < **p(r)jos* in the Wenxian tablets, then this suggests that in the Jin area at this time, it still had the **o* vowel (the **o* vowel of *fù* 付 did not merge with **+*). See: *Handbook of Old Chinese Phonology*, p.464 – 469.

²⁴ *A Handbook of Old Chinese Phonology*, p.468.

²⁵ *A Handbook of Old Chinese Phonology*, p.468, p.778.

²⁶ *A Handbook of Old Chinese Phonology*, p.467.

²⁷ *A Handbook of Old Chinese Phonology*, p.468.

²⁸ The [母] *mǔ* form seems to be most common; it is unlikely that the [女] *nǚ* was used as a loangraph for *wú* {無} which might be conjectured since their main vowels are the same.

²⁹ *Houma Mengshu*, p.334.

Wenxian scribes, using the same script, should have had the option of using the graph [無] *wú* had they wished to indicate the existential negative *wú* {無} here. Furthermore, if *wú* {無} and *wú* {毋} were indeed interchangeable, why do the Wenxian scribes, usually free with their use of variant forms, not use both graphs, [毋] *mǔ* and [無] *wú*, in this instance?

I conclude that the graphic evidence strongly supports interpreting the graphs as denoting *wú* {毋} and not *wú* {無}. The belief that these two words were interchangeable throughout the pre-Han period is disputed by several scholars and the Wenxian evidence supports this doubt.³⁰

There is, furthermore, ample evidence to explain the use of the negative “imperative” *wú* {毋} in the Wenxian phrase. Lü Shuxiang has observed that {毋} *wú* does not have the same restricted usage as the negative imperative in English and can be used after verbs such as *bǐ* 俾 and *shǐ* 使, both meaning “to cause”.³¹ Christoph Harbsmeier summarizes Lü’s work on this point: “Lü 1941 has given abundant evidence that the ‘prohibitive’ negatives regularly occur in the sentential complements of verbs like *shǐ* 使, *lìng* 令, and *yù* 欲.”³²

Harbsmeier gives an illustrative example from the *Guan Zi*:

1. 使民毋怠

He saw to it that the people were not lazy.³³

³⁰ Baxter and Pulleyblank both feel that the interchangeable use of [無] *wú* and [毋] *wú* was a later development. See: *A Handbook of Old Chinese Phonology*, p.468 and: Edwin G. Pulleyblank, *Outline of Classical Chinese Grammar*, p. 107. This is an important question worthy of further examination, especially now we have so many example of these graphs in excavated texts. For example, a cursory glance at the [毋] *wú* section in the *Yin Zhou Jinwen Jicheng Yinde* (pp.301 – 302) will show that there is not one single example, in the bronze inscriptions on which this work is based, of this graph interchanging with [無] *wú* in the extremely common phrase *wú jiāng* 無疆 “without limit”, supporting the theory that, at this stage in the language’s development, these words could not interchange.

³¹ Lü Shuxiang, “Lun Wu Yu Wu”, pp.87 – 88. Note that Lü regards [毋] *wú* as the negative imperative and takes [無] *wú* as interchangeable with [毋] *wú* in this usage, thus many of the examples he gives use [無] *wú*. This corresponds to the suggestion that, in received texts, [毋] *wú* and [無] *wú* were often interchangeable, even though we are suggesting that they originally denoted two different and non-interchangeable function words.

³² Christoph Harbsmeier, *Aspects of Classical Chinese Syntax*, p.31.

³³ Harbsmeier’s translation: Christoph Harbsmeier, *Aspects of Classical Chinese Syntax*, p.31.

The following example is from the imprecation clause of a covenant quoted in the *Zuo Zhuan* and is almost identical to the Wenxian phrase:

2. *Zuo Zhuan* Xi 僖 28.3 (text: 5th – 4th century BC) (event: 632 BC)³⁴

... 俾隊其師，無克祚國，及而玄孫，無有老幼。

... cause his armies to fall, [cause him] to not be able to sacrifice for his state, and, to your most distant grandson, [cause you] to not have any aged or young [relatives].

The initial *bǐ* 俾 governs each of the clauses that follow it, including the last, 無有老幼 *wú yǒu lǎo yòu*, giving 俾...無有老幼 *bǐ ...wú yǒu lǎo yòu*. The *wú* 無 here is an example of the interchange between [無] *wú* and [毋] *wú* that is seen in received texts but that, as I have suggested above, was a later development that should not lead to the assumption that *wú* {毋} and *wú* {無} had always been interchangeable. In this example the character should be understood as denoting the prohibitive negative *wú* {毋}. Thus the phrase, “Cause [you] to not have any aged or young [relatives]” (俾...無有老幼 *bǐ ...wú yǒu lǎo yòu*), is syntactically and semantically almost identical to the Wenxian phrase, “Cause [you] to not have any descendants”. (俾無有冑後 *bǐ wú yǒu zhòuhòu*). Similar examples of the prohibitive negative used after verbs like *bǐ* 俾 include:

3. *Zhan Guo Ce* “Han Ce 3 韓策三” “Duan Chan Wei Xin Cheng Jun 段產謂新城君” (text: late 1st century BC) (event: mid 3rd century BC)³⁵

... 而不能令人母議臣於君。

... but I cannot **order people to not** criticize me before your honour.³⁶

³⁴ *Chunqiu Zuo Zhuan Zhu*, p.466.

³⁵ *Zhan Guo Ce Zhushi*, p.1078. Dating based on the mention of Xin Cheng Jun 新城君 in the “Qin Ce 4 秦策四”, section 10, pp.181 – 182.

³⁶ Example taken, with translation slightly modified, from: Anne O. Yue, “The So-called Pivotal Construction in Pre-Qin Chinese”, p.348.

Note that, as in the Wenxian examples, this text uses [毋] *mǔ* to denote *wú* {毋} .

4. *Zhan Guo Ce* “Yan Ce 1 燕策一” “Su Dai Wei Yan Zhao Wang 蘇代謂燕昭王” (text: late 1st century BC) (event: early 3rd century BC)³⁷

曩者使燕母去周室之上， ...

In the past, if Yan had **been made to not** leave the House of Zhou, ...³⁸

Once again, [毋] *mǔ* is used to denote *wú* {毋} .

Lü describes these types of sentences as indirect prohibitive sentences (*jiànjiē jìnzhǐ jù* 間接禁止句) because they are prohibitive but indirect and can refer to the first and third person as well as the second person.³⁹

Anne Yue has argued that, at an early stage, all such constructions were “imperative-complement” constructions, in which the complement used a prohibitive negative.⁴⁰ Thus all the complements of the verbs in such constructions are constructed as if addressed to the second person, even if the object of the first verb is third person. Using the example above, 使民毋怠 *shǐ mǐn wú dài*, this analysis would give the literal grammatical equivalent: “He impelled the people: Do not be lazy.” In other words, the complement uses the same form as if it were direct speech. This analysis allows the *wú* {毋} to be understood as a “negative imperative” and explains how it can be used in these complement structures.

However we analyse such structures, they clearly match the type of construction we have in the Wenxian phrase: 俾毋有冑後 *bǐ wú yǒu zhòuhòu*. The *bǐ* 俾 “to cause to” of the Wenxian sentence functions like *shǐ* 使 and *bǐ* 俾




³⁷ *Zhan Guo Ce Zhushi*, p.1122. For dating, see p.1123, note 1.

³⁸ Commentators are divided on the meaning of *zhōu shì* 周室; this is one interpretation: *Zhan Guo Ce Zhushi*, p.1122. Example taken, with translation revised, from: Anne O. Yue, “The So-called Pivotal Construction in Pre-Qin Chinese”, p.349.

³⁹ Lü Shuxiang, “Lun Wu Yu Wu”, p.88.

⁴⁰ Anne O. Yue, “The So-called Pivotal Construction in Pre-Qin Chinese”.

in the examples above. The object of the *bǐ* 俾 is not stated but is clearly the covenantor. The prohibitive negative *wú* 毋 is followed by the verb *yǒu* 有 “to have” and the object, *zhòuhòu* 冑後, “descendants”. The whole phrase can be translated: “cause [you] to not have descendants”.

Returning to the character forms, I assumed above that the type 2 forms,  (WT1K2 – 124), which use [女] *nǚ* rather than [母] *mǔ*, are best understood as a graphic variant for [母] *mǔ*. The type 3 variant, , (WT1K2 – 145), has as additional short horizontal stroke across the lower part of the central vertical stroke; this is also seen on other examples of [母] *mǔ* from Warring States materials.⁴¹ It is an example of a “single-stroke decorative symbol” (*dānbǐ zhuāngshì fúhào* 單筆裝飾符號).⁴² The type 4 example,  (WT1K2 – 126), has a [女] *nǚ* form conjoined with the following graph, [又] *yòu* (actually using the variant [寸] *cùn* here), as if they were a single graph. In fact, this form is identical to Warring States’ examples of the graph [奴] *nú*; compare the following example from a bronze weapon:



The graph usually denotes the word *nú* {奴} “slave” and is common in place names in Warring States materials. From the point of view of methodology, we can note that, if there were no other examples of this Wenxian graph, this particular form could be the cause of some confusion. Clearly, however, with the many examples we do have, we can be confident that this form is not denoting *nú* {奴} “slave” but *wú yǒu* {毋有}. What the scribe had in mind when writing these graphs together like this is not clear. The obvious explanation is that this is

⁴¹ *Zhanguo Guwen Zidian*, p. 128.

⁴² *Zhanguo Wenzhi Tonglun*, p.229.

⁴³ *Yin Zhou Jinwen Jicheng* Vol.17, no.11341.

a compound character (*héwén* 合文) but the graphs are not very legible and it is impossible to see if the standard compound-character symbol (two short horizontal strokes) is written below them. Even without this symbol, the graphs would have, given the context, been read separately as *wú* {毋} and *yǒu* {有}. There are similar examples from the Houma and Wenxian stipulation clauses where the graphs [中] *zhōng* and [心] *xīn* are sometimes written together without a compound-character symbol but are read separately (not as *zhōng* 忠), given that in the huge majority of examples the graphs are placed apart.

Graph 3: [又]

Direct transcription: [又]

Formal transcription: [又]

Interpretative transcription: *yǒu* {有}

English translation: “to have”

Analysis category: A. Direct textual evidence supports the interpretation.

Variant forms

1. a.



WT1K2 – 145

b.



WT4K5 – 21

c.



WT1K2 – 61



WT1K2 – 120

2. a.



WT4K5 – 63

b.





WT1K2 – 83




The main variation is the addition of a short slanting stroke under the main part of the form, seen in type 2 examples. The type 1.b and type 2.b examples display

more curvature in the strokes than the other forms. The top section of the type 1.c example faces up, rather than to the left of centre as it does in the other examples.

Analysis

The two basic forms, type 1 and type 2, are easily matched in the *Shuo Wen Jie Zi* component table. The type 1 forms, especially the type 1.b example, matches the small-seal script form , [又] *yòu*. The type 2 form matches the  [寸] *cùn*.

Looking up these characters in dictionaries, the only suitable definition in this context is *yǒu* {有} “to have”, a loan usage of the character [又] *yòu*. The character [寸] *cùn* denotes *cùn* {寸}, a unit of length, which makes no sense here. Interpreting the graph as *yǒu* {有} “to have” gives us 俾毋有胃後 *bǐ wú yǒu zhòuhòu*: “cause [you] to not have descendants”.

The graph [又] *yòu*, small-seal form , is considered to originally have been a depiction of the right hand (compare the small-seal form , [左] *zuǒ*, which depicts the left hand).⁴⁴ In oracle bones the words *yǒu* {有} “to have”, *yòu* {祐} “blessings”, *yòu* {侑}, the name of a sacrifice, and *yòu* {右} “right [hand]”, were all denoted with the graph [又] *yòu*.⁴⁵ The character [有] *yǒu* is a later form created specifically to denote *yǒu* {有} “to have”. However, even after the creation of [有] *yǒu*, [又] *yòu* could still be used to denote this meaning. It was only later, probably after the Western Han, that the two forms were given “clearly defined lexical loads”.⁴⁶ We can note, for example, that the Houma tablets have a name which uses the [有] *yǒu* as a component,  [侑] *yòu*, indicating that the graph should have been available but was not used by the Wenxian scribes to denote *yǒu* {有} “to have” in this phrase.⁴⁷

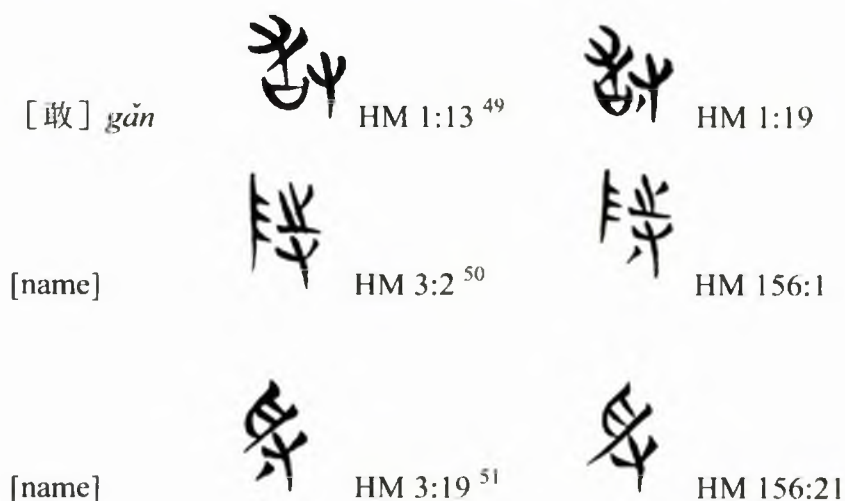
⁴⁴ The form is based on one's own view of one's forearm and hand.

⁴⁵ *Jiaguwenzi Gulin*, pp.876 – 882, see pp.881 – 882.

⁴⁶ Qiu Xigui (transl. Gilbert L. Mattos and Jerry Norman), *Chinese Writing*, pp.346 – 347.

⁴⁷ *Houma Mengshu*, p.315.

The type 2 forms need to be explained since they appear to match the *Shuo Wen Jie Zi* form [寸] *cùn* which is the character use for *cùn* {寸}, a unit of length. In fact, the Wenxian type 2 forms should be interpreted as variants of [又] *yòu*. The entry for [又] *yòu* in the *Zhanguo Guwen Zidian* gives many examples of this variation. It seems to have been a characteristic particular to certain areas: the majority of the *Zhanguo Guwen Zidian*'s examples from the Jin script have this form, as do those from the Yan state but none of the Chu state examples do.⁴⁸ He Linyi treats the additional stroke as a decorative stroke. As components in other graphs from the Houma and Wenxian tablets, the two forms [寸] and [又] are often interchanged, for example:



The interchange of [又] *yòu* and [寸] *cùn* was clearly common and not a source of confusion. In fact, the evidence in excavated texts suggests that the use of the [寸] *cùn* form to denote *cùn* {寸}, a unit of measure, was a later development. In excavated texts, examples of the form [寸] *cùn* being used to denote the word *cùn* {寸}, a unit of measure, are very rare and appear to be late. The two examples in the *Zhanguo Guwen Zidian* are both from Qin, one from the *Shuihudi* bamboo slips.⁵² This would explain why there was no possibility of confusion when using the [寸] *cùn* form as a variant for [又] *yòu* in the


⁴⁸ *Zhanguo Guwen Zidian*, pp.7 – 8.

⁴⁹ Both examples: *Houma Mengshu*, p.335.

⁵⁰ Both examples: *Houma Mengshu*, p.322.

⁵¹ Both examples: *Houma Mengshu*, p.310.

⁵² *Zhanguo Guwen Zidian*, p.1347.

Houma and Wenxian texts. In conclusion, the evidence supports taking the type 2 form, e.g.  (WT4K5 – 63), as equivalent to [又] *yòu* in the Houma and Wenxian script.

Graph 4: [由]

Direct transcription: [由]

Formal transcription: [由]

Interpretative transcription: *zhòu* {胃}

English translation: “descendant/s”

Analysis category: B. Indirect textual evidence supports the interpretation.

Variant forms

1. a.



WT1K2 – 107



WT1K2 – 112

b.



WT1K2 – 61



WT1K2 – 159



WT1K2 – 114

c.



WT1K2 – 83



WT1K2 – 9.5

2.



WT1K2 – 123.5



3.








WT1K2 – 167

The basic component is that seen in the type 1 forms, type 2 and 3 forms add an additional component. The basic component has a lower section formed of a semi-circular base line, a horizontal line closing the form just inside the up-curving sides of the bottom stroke and a further horizontal stroke within the form. This lower section of this component is relatively stable; we find more variation in the vertical stroke. In some examples, this stroke extends into the lower form (e.g. 1.c, example WT1K2 – 9.5), sometimes only to the top of the lower form (e.g. 1.b, example WT1K2 – 61). In type 1.a no further stroke is added to the vertical, although note that the top horizontal stroke of the lower section is thickened in these examples, as if the scribe applied further ink to this area. In this type, the side strokes of the lower section do not extend as high above this line as they do in the 1.b and 1.c examples. In type 1.b, the vertical stroke has a dot of ink added about half way up the stroke. In the 1.b, WT1K2 – 114 example, there appear to be two dots, one on each side of the vertical. In type 1.c, a short horizontal stroke is added to the vertical stroke somewhere about its middle point. The type 2 form adds a component below the basic component; type 3 adds a component to the left of the basic component.

Analysis

The type 1 examples can be treated as non-composite forms, type 2 and 3 clearly add components forming composite forms. In consulting the component tablets we are looking for matches for: the basic type 1 component; the lower component of the type 2 form, i.e.  (WT1K2 – 123.5); and the left side of the type 3 form, i.e.  (WT1K2 – 167).

The bottom component from type 2 has a match in the *Shuo Wen Jie Zi* small-seal form , [止] *zhǐ*. The left side in type 3 has a match in , [彳] *chì*. There is no good match for the main component; the closest examples are: , [白] *zì* (variant of [自] *zì*) and , [古] *gǔ*.

Among the characters collected under these components in the *Shuo Wen Jie Zi*, there is one possible match under the [彳] *chì* component: [徯] *dī*.⁵³ This character only occurs in the *Shuo Wen Jie Zi* and the *Yu Pian*. In the *Yu Pian* it is glossed as a variant form for the character [宙] *zhòu*, the character that denotes *zhòu* {宙} “eternity”.⁵⁴ Obviously this does not fit the context here. However we can consider whether the component seen in both these forms, and therefore presumably the phonetic, that is [由] *yóu*, is the component we see in the Wenxian graph. This component, [由] *yóu*, is not listed in the *Shuo Wen Jie Zi* component table. Duan Yucai adds it as a variant form for [繇] *yáo*.⁵⁵ As [由] *yóu* is not listed as a component, characters in which it is an element are not collected together, making it difficult to look them up in the *Shuo Wen Jie Zi*. One example of [由] *yóu* is found in the *Guwen Sisheng Yun* but it is not a good match: .⁵⁶ The form is also not included in Gao Ming’s tables or the *Jinwen Changyong Zidian* component table. There are, however, examples in the *Zhanguo Guwen Zidian*.⁵⁷ The examples this dictionary has of [由] *yóu* as an

⁵³ *Shuo Wen Jie Zi*, p.42 (2a 彳部: 10a).

⁵⁴ *Hanyu Da Zidian*, p.343.

⁵⁵ Duan Yucai, *Shuo Wen Jie Zi Zhu*, p.643.

⁵⁶ *Guwen Sisheng Yun*, p.31 (2:23a).

⁵⁷ *Zhanguo Guwen Zidian*, p.209.

independent graph are not very good matches to the Wenxian component, but as a component in other graphs the similarity is apparent, for example:

(a)  HM 86:1 [迪] ⁵⁸

(b)  鄂君啟舟節 [油] ⁵⁹

(c)  中山王方壺 [胃] ⁶⁰

These examples do support identifying the Wenxian component as [由] *yóu*. The component in (a), the Houma example, is a good match for the 1.a examples from Wenxian. The same component in example (b) is a good match for the Wenxian type 1.b graphs. We might also note that example (a) has components which match the components seen in the type 2 and type 3 forms: [彳] *chì* on the left, and [止] *zhǐ* at the base. We may remember that we saw these components in combination in the analysis of the graph [往] *wǎng*, above, and saw how the two components occur together like this forming the component [辵] *chuò* (which becomes [辵] *chuò*). The Houma graph is thus [迪] *dí*. In the Houma tablets it is used as a name but it is also an attested graph used to denote *dí* {迪} “road”, “way”. Since, as we saw with the [往] *wǎng* analysis, the components [辵] *chuò*, [彳] *chì* and [止] *zhǐ* can interchange as semantic signifiers, we can conjecture that the type 2 and type 3 Wenxian example are variants of the [迪] *dí* form. However, the meaning *dí* {迪} “road”, “way”, does not fit in the context we have: 俾毋有△後 *bǐ wú yǒu* ____ *hòu*, “cause [you] to not have ____”.

The majority of the Wenxian examples of this graph have no additional components, just the single form [由] *yóu*. This character denotes a variety of

⁵⁸ Houma Mengshu, p.365. Transcription in *Zhangguo Guwen Zidian*, p.209.

⁵⁹ Yin Zhou Jinwen Jicheng Vol 18, no.12113.

⁶⁰ Zhang Shouzhong, *Zhongshan Wang Cuo Qi Wenzi Bian*, p.45.

words with the general meaning of “follow along”, “go along with” as well as a coverb meaning “from”, but, again, none of these definitions work in the context of the Wenxian phrase.⁶¹ Thus, we have to assume that the character is being used as a loan for another word. Considering words which are phonetically identical or very similar to the pronunciation of this graph, [由] *yóu*, we begin with those in its *xiéshēng* series. Consulting the *Grammata Serica Recensa*, we quickly find a suitable candidate, *zhòu* {胃} “descendants”.⁶² Interpreting the [由] *yóu* as *zhòu* {胃} “descendants” makes complete sense in the context, giving: “Cause [you] to not have descendants” (俾毋有胃後 *bǐ wú yǒu zhòuhòu*).

This usage of the character [由] *yóu*, as a loan for the word *zhòu* {胃} “descendants”, is not seen in received or other excavated texts but it is phonetically clearly not a problem since [由] *yóu* is the phonetic component used for {胃} *zhòu*:

由 *yóu* < *yuw* < **lju*⁶³ (余幽)

胃 *zhòu* < *drjuw* < **lrju*⁶⁴ (定幽)

The word {胃} *zhòu* “descendants” is also seen written with the form [侑] *zhòu*, again with [由] *yóu* as the phonetic.⁶⁵ Thus we can be confident that this is the correct interpretation for the graph [由] *yóu* in this context.⁶⁶

The graph [由] *yóu* may, in fact, be more than just a loan here. The *Shuo Wen Tong Xun Ding Sheng* suggests that [由] *yóu* is the orthograph of [𠂔]

⁶¹ Edwin G. Pulleyblank, *Outline of Classical Chinese Grammar*, p.52.

⁶² *Grammata Serica Recensa*, p.279.

⁶³ Reconstruction: Wolfgang Behr, personal communication, March 31st, 2004.

⁶⁴ Reconstruction: Wolfgang Behr, personal communication, March 31st, 2004.

⁶⁵ *Hanyu Da Zidian*, p.56.

⁶⁶ The *Houma Mengshu* has the graph: 𠂔 [胃] *zhòu*. This is not the same graph: the bottom component is derived from [冎] *mào* and depicts a helmeted head, the graph originally denotes *zhòu* {胃} “helmet”. The graph [胃] *zhòu*, on the other hand, is derived from [肉] *ròu*. In modern script the two are often both written as [胃] *zhòu* but the original difference should be noted. Both graphs do, however, use [由] *yóu* as the phonetic as can be seen in the Houma graph and the examples discussed here.

yóu denoting “growth of new shoots on a tree”.⁶⁷ The character [由] *yóu* itself is attested with this meaning in the *Shang Shu*:

1. *Shang Shu* “Pan Geng Shang 盤庚上” (text: 14th – 11th century BC) (event: c.1300 BC)⁶⁸

若顛木之有由藥，天其永我命於茲新邑

Like new **shoots** on a fallen branch, may Tian cause my mandate over this new city to be eternal.

We can conjecture that the word *zhòu* { 冑 } “descendant” is cognate with *yóu* { 由 } “growth of new shoots on a tree”: descendants are those who grow from one, just as new shoots grow from a tree (compare the English word “scion” meaning “a shoot of a plant” but also “a descendant; a younger member of {esp. noble} family”⁶⁹). If this is correct, then [由] *yóu* is denoting a word cognate with its original meaning, i.e. *zhòu* { 冑 } “descendants”, and is not a loangraph. At a later stage, phonograms were created to distinguish and specifically denote this meaning: [侏] *zhòu*, by adding a semantic component [人] *rén* “person” to the [由] *yóu*, and [胄] *zhòu* by adding [肉] *ròu* “flesh” (the [肉] *ròu* could also have had a phonetic function).⁷⁰

The type 2 and type 3 variants add the [彳] *chì* and [止] *zhǐ* forms as noted above. The scribes may have been writing the graph [徂] *dī* that we noted above, seen in the *Shuo Wen Jie Zi* and glossed in the *Yu Pian* as a variant form for the character [宙] *zhòu*. Or they could have been thinking of the [迪] *dī* form we see in the Houma tablets. These would both be cases of loangraph usage.

⁶⁷ *Shuo Wen Tong Xun Ding Sheng*, p.239.

⁶⁸ *Shisan Jing Zhushu*, p.168.

⁶⁹ *The Concise Oxford Dictionary*, p.1237.

⁷⁰ On this type of graph construction, see: Qiu Xigui (transl. Gilbert L. Mattos and Jerry Norman), *Chinese Writing*, pp.225 – 229. Note that, in this section of *Chinese Writing*, the word “phonetic” is used several times where “semantic” is meant.

Examples of the use of the word *zhòu* { 胄 } “descendants” in other texts are given in the analysis of the next graph and in the interpretation section below.

Graph 5: [後]

Direct transcription: [後]

Formal transcription: [透]

Interpretative transcription: *hòu* { 後 }

English translation: “descendant/s”

Analysis category: A. Direct textual evidence supports the interpretation.

Variant forms

1.



WT1K2 – 120



WT1K2 – 112









WT1K2 – 107

2.






WT4K5 – 63



The type 1 forms are composed of three, perhaps four, base components. To the left, the component:  (WT1K2 – 112); at the base, the form:  (WT1K2 – 112); and then above that, the form:  (WT1K2 – 112). This last form can itself be broken into two parts: the  (WT1K2 – 112) which is made up of three strokes forming a plait-like figure; below this, the  (WT1K2 – 120), formed of a slightly angled top stroke, a stroke curving down from the right end of that stroke and then becoming parallel with it, forming a left-facing opening, and then a stroke cutting at right-angles from the middle of the top stroke down through the lower stroke. The type 2 form appears to omit the component seen at the base

of the type 1 forms, the  (WT1K2 – 112), although there seem to be one or two extra strokes at the base, but they are not clear enough to allow us to make out a distinct form.

Analysis

The left-hand and lower components should be immediately recognizable as the components seen in the type 2 and type 3 forms of the previous graph [胃] *zhòu*: the left hand component is [彳] *chì*, the lower component is [止] *zhǐ*.

The component  (from WT1K2 – 120) is a good match for the *Shuo Wen Jie Zi* component table's 攴, [攴] *zhǐ*. The remaining component does not find a perfect match in the *Shuo Wen Jie Zi* component table, but the form  [幺] *yāo*, is reasonably close, as is the  [呂] *lǚ*.

Attempting direct transcriptions using different combinations of these components (i.e. [彳] *chì*, [止] *zhǐ*, [攴] *zhǐ*, [幺] *yāo*, [呂] *lǚ*) leads us to the familiar graph [後] *hòu* for the type 2 form, which allows us to transcribe [後] for the type 1 form, or in a formal transcription, [遯]. Looking up this latter form in the *Hanyu Da Zidian*, we find it recorded as an “ancient script (*gǔwén* 古文)” form for [後] *hòu* in the *Shuo Wen Jie Zi*.⁷¹ The form is given in the *Shuo Wen Jie Zi* under the entry for [後] *hòu*: the standard small-seal form is: , the “ancient script (*gǔwén* 古文)” form given is: .

The Wenxian graphs are clearly a perfect match for the attested character [後] *hòu*. The same forms are also seen in the Houma tablets:



HM 203:11⁷³



HM 3:20

⁷¹ *Hanyu Da Zidian*, p.1596.

⁷² *Shuo Wen Jie Zi*, p.43 (2b 彳 部: 10a).

⁷³ Both examples: *Houma Mengshu*, p.322.

In the Houma tablets, the graph occurs in the phrase: 既質之後 *jì zhì zhī hòu* “after having pledged”, with the meaning *hòu* { 後 } “after”. The definition “after” does not make sense for the Wenxian example, where the phrase is 俾毋有冑△ *bǐ wú yǒu zhòu* _____. The character [後] *hòu* is the standard character for the word *hòu* { 後 }, which has a range of meanings related to following or coming after in time or space, e.g., “behind [in space]”, “later [in time]” and also “descendants”. After the previous graph, *zhòu* { 冑 } “descendants”, the last of these meanings obviously fits the context best here, giving the combination *zhòuhòu* 冑後 “descendants”. This combination is not seen in lexicons but similar combinations of paired synonyms with this meaning are found, for example, *zhòuyì* 冑裔:

1. *Zuo Zhuan* Zhao 昭 30.2 (text: 5th – 4th century BC) (event: 512 BC)⁷⁴

吳，周之冑裔也，而棄在海濱，不與姬通。

The ruler of Wu is a **descendant** of the Zhou [family], yet he is cast out to the land by the sea and does not have contact with [other rulers with] the surname Ji.

The combination *yìzhòu* 裔冑 is also found:

2. *Zuo Zhuan* Xiang 襄 14.1 (text: 5th – 4th century BC) (event: 559 BC)⁷⁵

惠公燭其大德，謂我諸戎，是四嶽之裔冑也，毋是翦棄。

Duke Hui illuminated his great *de*, called us the *rong* peoples, these are the **descendants** of Si Yue, do not cast us aside.

The phrase *hòuyì* 後裔 is also seen:

3. *Shang Shu* “Wei Zi Zhi Ming 微子之命” (text: 4th century AD) (event: 11th century BC)⁷⁶

⁷⁴ *Chunqiu Zuo Zhuan Zhu*, p.1508.

⁷⁵ *Chunqiu Zuo Zhuan Zhu*, p.1006.

⁷⁶ *Shisan Jing Zhushu*, p.200.

功加於時，德垂後裔，

There was great merit at this time, [Cheng Tang 成湯] bestowed *de* on his **descendants**,...

The words *hòu* 後, *zhòu* 冑 and *yì* 裔 all occur alone, denoting “descendants”; in the above examples they are paired to form compound words. Thus it is not surprising to find the combination *zhòuhòu* 冑後 in the Wenxian tablets with the meaning “descendants”.

3.1.4.2 Discussion and explication of the phrase

On the basis of the above analysis, the standard phrase found in this position should be interpreted as “cause [you] to not have descendants” (俾毋有冑後” *bǐ wú yǒu zhòuhòu*).

Two variant wordings have been noted::

- a. “□ 母由後” (WT1K2 – 112)
- b. “卑又由後” (WT1K2 – 120)

The lacuna in (a) is probably *bǐ* 俾. The *yǒu* 有 is missing. This could be a scribal error or could suggest that the *yǒu* 有 can be omitted here. On the basis of its usage in bronze inscriptions, *wú* 毋 is pre-verbal in which case it cannot appear directly before a noun as would be the case here. This, along with the fact that there are no other examples of this variant in the Wenxian texts, suggests that this is an error. That serious scribal errors were not uncommon is well illustrated by the second variant wording, (b), which gives us “Cause [you] to have descendants”, which reads as a blessing and the exact opposite of the standard imprecation.

This phrase only appears in two oath types, Type 2 and Type 4. The full imprecation found in these oath types is:

a. 其諦亟視之，亡夷彼氏，俾毋有冑後。 (Type 2: WT1K2)

May he observe and immediately detect him, wipe out that [i.e. his] clan, [and] cause [him] to not have descendants.

b. 其永亟視汝，俾毋有冑後。 (Type 4: WT4K5)

May he, at all times, immediately detect him, [and] cause [him] to not have descendants.

All the other oath types, including those from the Houma site, use various variations on “May he observe and immediately detect him, wipe out that [i.e. his] clan” (其諦亟視之，亡夷彼氏 *qí dì jí shǐ zhī, wáng yí bǐ shì*) but do not include the phrase “Cause [you] to not have descendants” (俾毋有冑後” *bǐ wú yǒu zhòuhòu*).

The analysis of the graphs in this phrase and its overall interpretation as given above has no obvious weaknesses; it is almost certainly correct. The phrase interpreted as “Wipe out that [i.e. the covenantor’s] clan” (亡夷彼氏 *wáng yí bǐ shì*⁷⁷), however, has been the source of some debate and many interpretation have been suggested. The discovery of this additional phrase, the “Cause [you] to not have descendants” (俾毋有冑後” *bǐ wú yǒu zhòuhòu*), supports the reading I have adopted: clearly if one’s clan is wiped out it will cause one to have no descendants.⁷⁸

The curse of cutting off one’s lineage has been one of the most common imprecations in Chinese culture for centuries. A version in current use is “break [the line of] sons and grandsons” (緞子絕孫 *duàn zǐ jué sūn*), i.e. “may you have no descendants”. The use of an equivalent curse in the Houma and Wenxian tablets gives it a history of at least two-and-a-half thousand years. The central

⁷⁷ More commonly occurring with the first graph as [麻] *má*, denoting *mí* {靡} “divide, scatter”, “break, harm”.

⁷⁸ The interpretation of the first phrase is also problematic but this is not discussed in the current work.

importance in Chinese culture of the continuity of the male line, the target of this curse, can be traced back to the ancestor worship of the Shang period and into the Western Zhou where one of the most common formulaic phrases in bronze inscriptions calls for the vessel to be used by all succeeding generations: “May all [his] descendants, for evermore, treasure and use [this vessel]” (*zǐzǐsūnsūn yǒng bǎo yòng* 子子孫孫永寶用). The complementary curse probably came into existence not long after the focus on the lineage itself began.

We do not find similar curses in bronze inscriptions which are, on the whole, records of positive events, but we can note that the character [後] *hòu* does occur with the meaning “descendants” in bronze inscriptions:

1. Shi Wang Ding 師望鼎 (Mid Western Zhou 976 – 878 BC)⁷⁹

王用弗忘聖人之後，。。。

Because the king does not forget the **descendant** of the sage, ...

Among other excavated texts, one would expect the Qin state’s “Curse on Chu”, the *Zu Chu Wen*, to have similar language, but it largely consists of a long list of grievances against Chu, in an appeal to the spirits to recognize Chu’s violation of ancient covenants and aid Qin in defeating Chu’s armies; there is no curse on Chu’s descendants.⁸⁰

We find language closer to that of the Wenxian tablets in received texts, specifically in three covenants recorded in the *Zuo Zhuan*:

2. Zuo Zhuan Xi 僖 28.3 (text: 5th – 4th century BC) (event: 632BC)⁸¹

癸亥，王子虎盟諸侯于王庭，要言曰：“皆獎王室，無相害也！有渝此盟，明神殛之，俾隊其師，無克祚國，及而玄孫，無有老幼。

⁷⁹ *Yin Zhou Jinwen Jicheng*, Vol.5, no.2812.

⁸⁰ *Shiguwen Yanjiu Zu Chu Wen Kaoshi*.

⁸¹ *Chunqiu Zuo Zhuan Zhu*, p.466.

[The day was] *guǐ hài* . Prince Hu covenanted with the lords at the royal court. The stipulation said: “All those who support the Royal House, do not harm each other, **If anyone violates this covenant, the bright spirits will kill him, cause his armies to fall, [cause him] to not be able to sacrifice for his state, and, to your most distant grandson, [cause you] to not have any aged or young [relatives].**”⁸²

3. *Zuo Zhuan* Cheng 成 12.2 (text: 5th – 4th century BC) (event: 579BC)⁸³

癸亥，盟于宋西門之外，曰：凡晉、楚無相加戎，好惡同之。同恤菑危，備救凶患。若有害楚，則晉伐之；在晉，楚亦如之。交贊往來，道路無壅；謀其不協，而討不庭。有渝此盟，明神殛之，俾隊其師，無克胙國。

[The day was] *guǐ hài* . [Jin and Chu] covenanted outside the west gate of Song, [the covenant] said: “Neither Jin nor Chu will take up arms against each other. They will share both prosperity and adversity, will aid each other during times of disaster, save each other from calamity. If there is anyone that harms Chu, Jin will attack them, in the case of Jin [‘s being attacked], Chu will also do the same. In the giving and receiving of official gifts [in diplomatic exchange] the roads will not be blocked; those who do not cooperate will be investigated; those [states] that do not appear at court will be punitively attacked. **If anyone violates this covenant, the bright spirits will kill him, cause his armies to fall, [cause him to] not be able to sacrifice for his state.**”

4. *Zuo Zhuan* Xiang 襄 11.3 (text: 5th – 4th century BC) (event: 562 BC)⁸⁴

... 乃盟。載書曰：“凡我同盟，毋蕪年，毋壅利，毋保姦，毋留慝，救災患，恤禍亂，同好惡，獎王室。或問茲命，司慎、司盟，名山、名川，羣神、羣祀，先王、先公，七姓、十二國之祖，明神殛之，俾失其民，隊命亡氏，踏其國家。”

... [the feudal lords] then covenanted. The covenant said: “All of us who covenant together, do not horde [one’s] harvest, do not monopolize the benefits [that nature supplies], do not harbour the deceitful, do not retain the iniquitous, save [each other] from disaster, assist [each other] in times of chaos, share in prosperity and adversity, support the Royal House. If anyone breaks this mandated covenant, the spirits who oversee that one is reverent, the spirits that oversee covenants, the famed mountains and rivers, the many spirits, the many deities, former kings, former lords, the ancestors of the twelve states of seven surnames,

⁸² Regarding the change in pronoun from third person to second, the Yuan 元 edition actually has *qi* 其 instead of *er* 爾 but Yang Bojun, on the basis of various other editions, argues that this is a mistake and uses *er* 爾. This results in a similar situation to the one we find in the Houma and Wenxian tablets of a mix of personal pronouns all referring to a single covenantor.

⁸³ *Chunqiu Zuo Zhuan Zhu*, p.856.

⁸⁴ *Chunqiu Zuo Zhuan Zhu*, pp.989 – 990.

the bright spirits will kill him, cause him to lose his people, to bring down his mandate, wipe out his clan, and topple his state.”

These are covenants between states, so the loss of armies and the state itself is mentioned, but note that in the first example the curse includes the death of all the rulers' relatives to his “most distant grandson”, i.e. the elimination of his clan, the same threat we see in the Houma and Wenxian texts. In the third example we find the threat to *wáng shì* 亡氏 “wipe out [your] clan” which is very similar to the *wáng yí bǐ shì* 亡夷彼氏 “Wipe out that clan” of the Wenxian and Houma tablets.

Part 2

3.2 Specific Oath Types

3.2.1 Oath Types 7 and 3: stipulations II.A (part) and II.B

Oath Type 7 is made up of tablets from two pits: pit WT5K1 and pit WT5K14. Pit WT5K1 also includes tablets belonging to other oath types, while all the legible tablets from pit WT5K14 are Oath Type 7. I consider that the texts on these tablets can be considered as a single oath type since, apart from minor variation in function words, their main stipulation, II.B, is identical. Their stipulations II.A also share a key phrase. Examples of a full text from both pits follows:

Oath Type 7: example from pit WT5K1: tablet WT5K1 – 23/23.5

- I. □自今以往
 II.A 而敢不□焉恪慎其德，
 II.B 勉供而主禱祠者，
 III. 丕〈顯□公大塚〉
 IV. 諦亟視之，靡夷〈彼〉氏。

- I. [Covenantor's name], from this day onward,
 II.A if [he] dare not ___ ly [?] pay due reverence and attention to his *de*,
 II.B do his utmost to supply the prayers and sacrifices of the lord,
 III. great, 〈resplendent Duke ___ in his great tomb [?],〉
 IV. [may he] observe and immediately detect him, [and] wipe out 〈that [i.e. his]〉 clan.

Oath Type 7: example from pit WT5K14: tablet WT5K14 – 18

- I. 圭命曰：自今以往□
 II.A 事其主，所敢不□焉〈中〉心恪慎其德
 II.B 以勉供其主之禱祠者，
 III. □〈公〉大塚
 IV. 諦亟視〈之，靡夷彼氏。〉

- I. The decree on the *gui* says: From this day onward, [covenantor's name],
 II.A in serving his lord, if he dare not ___ ly [?] and loyally pay due reverence and attention to his *de*

- II.B and do his utmost to supply the prayers and sacrifices of the lord,
 III. <Duke> ____ [?] in his great tomb [?],
 IV. [may he] observe and immediately detect <him, [and] wipe out that
 [i.e. his] clan.>

The section I will be looking at in detail includes the main phrase from stipulation II.A and the whole of stipulation II.B:

Oath Type 7:

WT5K1:23/23.5: 恪慎其德勉弊而主禱祠
 pay due reverence and attention to his *de*, do his
 utmost to supply the prayers and sacrifices of the lord,

Oath Type 7:

WT5K14:18 恪慎其德以勉弊其主之禱祠
 pay due reverence and attention to his *de* and do his
 utmost to supply the prayers and sacrifices of the lord,

The only significant difference between the WT5K14 and WT5K1 versions of these phrases is that the WT5K14 tablets add a function word, the conjunction *yǐ* 以, between the two stipulations, i.e. between the 恪慎其德 *kè shèn qí dé* and the 勉弊其主之禱祠 *miǎn gōng qí zhǔ zhī dǎocí*. A minor difference is that the WT5K14 tablets all use “his lord” (*qí zhǔ* 其主) while the WT5K1 tablets have examples of both “his lord” (*qí zhǔ* 其主) and “your lord” (*ěr zhǔ* 而主).

Oath Type 3, made up of tablets from pit WT1K17, has similar language in its stipulations and will also be considered in this section. An examples of this oath type is given here.

Oath Type 3: tablet WT1K17 – 129

- I: 自今以往□
 II.A 事其主，敢不□焉判其腹心恪慎其德
 II.B 以徼主福者，
 III. □公大塚
 IV. 諦亟視之，靡夷彼氏。
- I. From today onward, [if] [covenantor's name],
 II.A in serving his lord, [if] he dare not ____ ly [?] split open his gut and heart [i.e. display true loyalty] and pay due reverence and attention to his *de*

- II.B in order to seek blessings for the lord,
 III. Duke _____, [in his] great tomb [?]
 IV. [may he] observe and immediately detect him, [and] wipe out that [i.e. his] clan.

The section I am interested in here is the phrase in the first stipulation, which is also seen in the Type 7 oaths, the 恪慎其德 *kè shèn qí dé*, and the whole of stipulation II.B:

Oath Type 3:

WT1K17:129: 恪慎其德以徼主福
 pay due reverence and attention to his *de* in order to seek blessings for the lord,

As I will discuss below, both Oath Type 3 and 7 make demands relating to the ritual duties of the covenantors. None of these phrases are seen in the Houma covenant texts.

Analysis is given for the following graphs only: [各] (*kè* {恪}) “to be prudent, to be respectful, to be reverent”); [愼] (*shèn* {慎}) “to be careful/cautious, to be scrupulous and conscientious”); [直] (*dé* {德} *de* [not translated]); [龠] (*gōng* {供}) “to supply, to contribute”).

3.2.1.1 Palaeographic analysis

Graph 1: [各]

Direct transcription: [各]

Formal transcription: [各]

Interpretative transcription: *kè* {恪}

English translation: “to be prudent, to be respectful, to be reverent”

Analysis category: B. Indirect textual evidence supports the interpretation.

Variant forms

There is no significant variation:



WT5K14 – 17



WT1K17 – 128



WT5K1 – 17



WT1K17 – 100




WT1K17 – 129

The graphs are composed of a lower and upper component. The only difference between the forms is slight variation in individual strokes. For example, the top right-hand stroke bulges out to the bottom-right in WT5K1 – 17 and WT1K17 – 100, while it is squarer in WT5K14 – 17 and WT1K17 – 128. In WT1K17 – 129, the same stroke narrows to make a point with the upper diagonal stroke. Also note that the top right-hand stroke does not always extend above the top stroke, for example WT1K17 – 100.

Analysis

The lower component is recognizable as [口] *kǒu* “mouth” and the top component matches the *Shuo Wen Jie Zi* component 攴, [攴] *zhǐ*, which we saw in the analysis for [後] *hòu* in the previous section. This allows us to transcribe the graph as [各], a common character used to denote the function word *gè* {各} “each”. We also find this form among the characters collected under [口] *kǒu* in

the *Shuo Wen Jie Zi*:  ! We can, then, be confident that this graph is equivalent to the standard character [各] *gè*.

The character's standard reading, *gè* {各} "each", is grammatically possible in the phrase it appears in, giving: "each revere his *de*" (各慎其德 *gè shèn qí dé*). There are similar examples in Han texts, e.g.:

1. *Shi Ji* "Qin Shi Huang Ben Ji 秦始皇本記" (text: 2nd century BC) (event: c.209 BC)²

使天下之人皆得自新，更節修行，各慎其身，...

Let all the people under Heaven obtain a fresh start, turn a new leaf, cultivate virtue, and **each take heed of himself**, ...

However, in the context of the covenant tablets, this interpretation seems less satisfactory. The phrase "each pay heed to his *de*" works only if the subject referred to is a group of people. However, even though each oath type is repeated in many separate tablets, each tablet is individualized with the name of a single covenantor. The covenant text addresses the covenantor as an individual, therefore we would not expect to see the word "each" here which would imply that a group of people is addressed. Furthermore, grammatically, *gè* {各} "each" is usually used after a clearly indicated plural subject. In the above example, the subject was "the people under heaven" (*tiānxià zhī rén* 天下之人) and the plural was also indicated by the following *jiē* 皆 "all". The subject of the covenant tablet is the individual covenantor. For these reasons, we should consider whether the character, [各] *gè*, could have another reading, apart from the obvious one of *gè* {各} "each".

In oracle bones, bronze inscriptions and bamboo-slip texts, the character [各] *gè* often denotes the word *gè* {格} "to arrive". Such an interpretation,

¹ *Shuo Wen Jie Zi*, p.34 (2a 口部: 14a).

² *Shi Ji*, Vol.1, p.284.

however, makes no sense in the context of the Wenxian texts. In the bronze inscriptions, when [各] *gè* is used in this sense of *gé* {格} “to arrive”, it almost always precedes a noun indicating the place at which one is arriving at. Occasionally it is used causatively, before the person, spirit, etc. that is “caused to arrive”, i.e., “summoned”.³ In the Wenxian phrase, △慎其德 ___ *shèn qí dé*, the following word is a verb, *shèn* 慎, and we would not expect to find *gé* {格} “to arrive” coming before it. We also do not find {格} *gé* collocating with *shèn* {慎} “to be cautious, heedful” or *dé* {德} *de*, in this way in other texts.⁴

Attempting to find a more appropriate word that the [各] *gè* could be denoting here, we can consider words with an identical or very close pronunciation that the character could be loaning for. We begin with those in the *xiéshēng* series for [各] *gè* in the *Grammata Serica Recensa*.⁵ Here, we find the character [恪] *kè* which denotes *kè* {恪}, for which Karlgren gives the definition “respect, reverent”. This seems more appropriate in the context of the Wenxian phrase than the previous suggestions. The word appears to be even more suitable when we consider that some Chinese dictionaries gloss the word as “to be prudent, to be respectful” (謹慎 *jǐnshèn*, 恭敬 *gōngjìng*).⁶ With the inclusion of the idea of prudence and caution, the similarity to the following word, *shèn* {慎}, becomes obvious. A standard definition for *shèn* {慎} is: “to be careful/cautious, to be scrupulous and conscientious” (“小心謹慎 *xiǎoxīn jǐnshèn*, 慎重 *shènzhòng*”).⁷ Thus the words *shèn* {慎} and *kè* {恪} are close in meaning, suggesting this may be a case of two verbs used in combination, a phenomenon common in early Chinese.⁸

³ See *Qingtongqi Mingwen Suoyin*, pp.200 – 203.

⁴ This conclusion based on a search for the terms in Han and pre-Han texts in: “Ren Wen Ziliaoku Shi Sheng Ban 1.1” [online], available from <<http://www.sinica.edu.tw/ftms-bin/ftmsw3>>.

⁵ *Grammata Serica Recensa*, pp.202 – 203.

⁶ For example: *Gudai Hanyu Cidian*, p.880.

⁷ *Gudai Hanyu Cidian*, p.1391.

⁸ For example we see the same thing in the imprecation clause 靡夷彼氏 *mí yí bǐ shì* “wipe out that clan” which has *mí* 靡 “divide, scatter”, “break, harm”, and *yí* 夷 “to kill, to exterminate”, in combination.

There is a certain amount of evidence in received texts to support interpreting this word as *kè* {恪}. We find a similar usage of *kè* {恪} in the “Pan Geng 盤庚” section of the *Shang Shu*:

2. *Shang Shu* “Pan Geng 盤庚” (text: 14th – 11th century BC) (event: c.1300 BC)⁹

先王有服。恪謹天命。

The former kings had undertakings, [and] **paid due reverence and attention to Tian’s mandate**.

The phrase 恪謹天命 *kè jīn tiānmìng* “paid due reverence and attention to Tian’s mandate”, is not only syntactically almost identical, but also conceptually very similar to the phrase in the Wenxian tables, 恪慎其德 *kè shèn qí dé* “pay due reverence and attention to his *de*”. The word *jīn* 謹 is a synonym for *shèn* {慎} and *tiānmìng* 天命 and *dé* 德 are conceptually similar, as will be discussed in greater detail later in this section.

The combination *kè shèn* 恪慎 is seen in the forged “ancient script (*gǔwén* 古文)” *Shang Shu*. Although the forged “ancient script” *Shang Shu* is a late work, generally considered to have been compiled in the fourth century AD, it is quite possible that the author of the text made use of earlier, authentic, materials when he created the work, so it is still worth noting the passage:

3. *Shang Shu* “Wei Zi Zhi Ming 微子之命” (text: 4th century AD) (event: 11th century BC)¹⁰

德垂後裔。爾惟踐修厥猷。舊有令聞。恪慎克孝。肅恭神人。予嘉乃德，曰篤不忘。

[Cheng Tang 成湯] bestowed *de* on his descendants. You [Wei Zi] will continue with and work on this enterprise. Long have [you] had a fine reputation. **Paying due reverence and attention** [to the *de* of your ancestors], you will be able to be filial, gravely respecting the

⁹ *Shisan Jing Zhushu*, p.168.

¹⁰ *Shisan Jing Zhushu*, p.200.

spirits. I admire your *de*, and say it will accumulate and not be forgotten.

There is, then, better evidence for interpreting the Wenxian graph [各] *gè* as *kè* {恪} “to be prudent, to be respectful, to be reverent” than for any of the interpretations suggested above.

In attempting to determine whether the word *kè* {恪} “to be prudent, to be respectful, to be reverent” appears in other excavated texts, we meet a methodological problem. This is that most palaeographic reference works do not include a word index, only a character index. That is to say, consulting a reference work using such an index, one will, in general, only be able to find examples of those graphs which are transcribed with a character equivalent to the standard modern character for that word: loangraphs used to denote this word, and, in some cases, variant forms, will not be found. So, in the case of the word *kè* {恪}, when one searches for this word, using its standard character [恪] *kè*, one will find no examples in, for example, the *Yin Zhou Jinwen Jicheng Yinde*, *Qingtongqi Mingwen Jiansuo* or the *Jinwen Xing Yi Tong Jie*. One might well assume that the word does not occur on existing excavated texts. In fact, there is a graph, [𠄎], found in bronze inscription, which some scholars consider to be denoting *kè* {恪}, and it is included with such an interpretation in both the *Yin Zhou Jinwen Jicheng Yinde* and *Qingtongqi Mingwen Jiansuo* but classified, in both cases, under the character [𠄎], which, of course, one would not consider if one did not know of the suggested interpretation of this character as *kè* {恪}.

Returning to the graph we are currently analyzing, the use of [𠄎] to denote *kè* {恪} is disputed and will not be considered further.¹¹ The earliest, undisputed, example I find of the word *kè* {恪} used in an excavated text, apart from the Wenxian example we are now considering, is from the Han period.¹² Thus, it

¹¹ See: Chen Bingxin, “Shi ‘You’ Ji Xiangguan Zi Ci”. The *Hanyu Da Zidian* includes a graph from a bronze inscription under the character [𠄎] *kè*, an attested variant for [恪] *kè*, but the graph is not a good match: the *Yin Zhou Jinwen Jicheng Shiwen* transcribes this graph differently and interprets it as *kè* {容}. See *Hanyu Da Zidian*, p.973 and *Yin Zhou Jinwen Jicheng Shiwen*, Vol.7, no. 4097.

¹² See: *Qin Han Wei Jin Zhuan-Li Zixing Biao*, p.752.

would appear that the Wenxian examples are the earliest, currently known instances that we can be reasonably confident of, of the use of the word *kè* {恪} "to be prudent, to be respectful, to be reverent" in excavated texts.

Graph 2: [愆]

Direct transcription: [愆]

Formal transcription: [愆]

Interpretative transcription: *shèn* {慎}

English translation: "to be careful/cautious, to be scrupulous and conscientious"¹³

Analysis category: C. Graphic analysis supports an interpretation based on semantic context.

Variant forms

1. a.



WT5K1 – 23



WT5K14 – 35



WT1K17 – 7¹⁴



WT1K17 – 128



WT5K1 – 3



WT5K14 – 17

b.



WT1K17 – 54



WT5K1 – 70



WT1K17 – 52



WT5K14 – 18



WT5K1 – 31

¹³ This is a basic definition for the word. The precise meaning of the term and a variety of English translations are further discussed below.

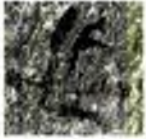
¹⁴ There is a problem with the numbering of this tablet: it is also recorded as tablet WT1K17 – 150.

2.



WT1K17 – 151

3.



WT1K17 – 44

4.



WT1K17 – 49

5.



WT1K17 – 131



WT1K17 – 129














WT1K17 – 100


The great majority of the graphs are of the type 1 form. This graph can be separated into three components: one on the right, one at top-left, and one at bottom-left. However, the type 5 examples suggest that the top-left and the right-hand components are to be considered a composite component, since in these forms the lower component is replaced but the top two components remain. We can see that this composite component is common to all forms. Its left part is composed of two slanting parallel strokes, the right is composed of two vertical or slightly curved strokes, the right-hand one of which has a short downward stroke at the top. Types 3 and 4 suggest the left-hand section of the top component can, in fact, be omitted but these examples are not legible enough to confirm this, so I prefer to follow the clear majority of examples which suggest that the two sections must both be present. The 1.b forms have a minor variation in which the top of the right-hand stroke of the left-hand section of the top





component is bent so that it matches the angled left-hand stroke. The variant in type 2 is a component-level variant: the lower-left component has been repeated under the standard graph with the result that the form now has two of these components. Form 3 appears to omit the two strokes usually found at top left, and note also that the left-hand part of the top component has the short horizontal stroke extending out from the middle of the vertical rather than the top as in almost all other examples. The type 4 example is peculiar but it is hard to be confident of the original form since the right hand side may have been affected by the calcification on the tablet. It is impossible to know whether the two top left-hand strokes were omitted. The top-right part of the graph is also unlike the common form, the left-hand vertical stroke appears to hook to the left at the top and right-hand stroke has a slight S-shaped curve and the horizontal extends out from the middle of the vertical and hooks at the end. The type 5 forms have a component-level variation in which the standard lower component is replaced with a different component.

Analysis

We can identify four different components used in these forms, two of which, as we observed above, act together as a composite component. At top left we have  (WT5K14 – 17), which, together with the right-hand  (WT1K17 – 52), forms the composite component:  (WT1K17 – 52). The lower component is, in the great majority of cases, the form  (WT5K14 – 17), very rarely this is replaced with a different form,  (WT1K17 – 129).

Going to the *Shuo Wen Jie Zi*, we are able to match the two lower components: the  (WT5K14 – 17) is a reasonably good match for: , [心] *xīn*, and  (WT1K17 – 129) is a good match for: , [貝] *bèi*. The top-right component,  (WT1K17 – 52) is closest to the *Shuo Wen Jie Zi* , [斤] *jīn*.

However, there is no match among the *Shuo Wen Jie Zi* radicals for the top-left component,  (WT5K14 – 17).

Among characters collected in the *Shuo Wen Jie Zi* derived from the three component identified above, none matches the Wenxian form. The closest matches are: , [忻] *xīn*; , [愬] *zhé*; , [質] *zhì*.¹⁵ The [忻] *xīn* form does, in fact, match the type 3 Wenxian form, if we are willing to accept that the position of the [心] *xīn* component is not significant here (the Wenxian has it on the bottom, the *Shuo Wen Jie Zi* [忻] has it on the left side). However, basing an identification on a form that, among the Wenxian graphs, is clearly exceptional, would be going against the weight of evidence that suggests that the standard form of this graph had the top-left component present in the vast majority of examples. Furthermore, the standard use of the character [忻] *xīn* is to denote the word *xīn* {忻} “to inspire” or “happy”, and neither definition fits the context of the Wenxian tablets. The [質] *zhì* and [愬] *zhé* forms are similar to the Wenxian graphs only to the extent that the bottom and top-right components match, but their top-left components do not match the  (WT5K14 – 17) found in the Wenxian graph in this position. However, we can observe that the *Shuo Wen Jie Zi*'s gloss for [愬] *zhé* is “to respect” (敬也 *jìng yě*), which fits the context of the Wenxian phrase if we consider that the graph before it has been identified above as *kè* {恪} “to be prudent, to be respectful, to be reverent”, the two perhaps to be considered together as compound verbs, the phrase then reading “respect his *de*” (恪愬其德 *kè zhé qí dé*). However, when we look up the character [愬] *zhé* in standard dictionaries of classical Chinese, aware that the *Shuo Wen Jie Zi* is an etymological dictionary and does not always give the standard reading of a character, we find that this character is never used with the meaning “to respect” in received texts, and only occurs, in fact, in the *Hou Han Shu* as a variant for [哲] *zhé* (meaning *zhé* {哲} “wise”).¹⁶ In fact the form, [愬] *zhé*, as it appears

¹⁵ *Shuo Wen Jie Zi*, p.217 (10b 心部: 11a); *Shuo Wen Jie Zi*, p.217 (10b 心部: 11b); *Shuo Wen Jie Zi*, p.130 (6b 貝部: 8b).

¹⁶ This point made in: Chen Jian, “Shuo Shen” [The copy used was a photocopy of the final manuscript draft so no page numbers will be given when referring to this article here or below.].

in the *Shuo Wen Jie Zi*, has long been considered a corruption of the graph [愆] *xī*.¹⁷ Thus this *Shuo Wen Jie Zi* character, [愆] *zhē*, is actually irrelevant to our search.

The other character noted was [質] *zhì*, but even if we could resolve the mismatch of the top-left component, neither of the two words commonly denoted by this graph, that is *zhì* {質} “substance, material” and *zhì* {質} “to pledge”, fit the context of the Wenxian tablets.

So, the Wenxian graph cannot be identified using the *Shuo Wen Jie Zi*. The *Han Jian* also has no matching forms under the components [心] *xīn*, [貝] *bèi*, or [斤] *jīn*. We can, however, produce direct transcriptions for the Wenxian graphs (using a direct copy of the top-left unidentified component):



(WT5K1 – 23): [愆]



(WT1K17 – 129): [質]

Widening our search to include examples of other palaeographic materials, we first consider the Houma tablets to see if there are any similar forms. And we find that the Houma tablets do indeed have both forms, [愆] and [質], for example:¹⁸

[質]:  HM 156:24

[愆]:  HM 185:3

The frequency of use of the occurrence of each form is given in the *Houma Mengshu* character table and this tells us that in the Houma tablets the form [質] is much more common than the form [愆], the opposite situation to the Wenxian tablets where examples of [愆] are far more numerous than [質].

The authors of the *Houma Mengshu* identified these graphs as variants of [質] *zhì*, denoting the word *zhì* {質} “to pledge”, an interpretation which makes

¹⁷ Chen Jian, “Shuo Shen”. Note that the character [愆] *xī* is itself only seen in lexicons.

¹⁸ *Houma Mengshu*, p.348.

sense in the Houma texts, as will be further discussed below. Let us first look at the evidence supporting the linking of these forms to the character [質] *zhì*.

In our initial analysis above, we considered whether the *Shuo Wen Jie Zi*'s [質] *zhì* could be a match for the Wenxian graph [質], but rejected this theory due to the mismatch of the top-left components, and because the standard readings for [質] *zhì* do not fit the context of the Wenxian text. On what basis, then, do the authors of the *Houma Mengshu* believe that the forms we have transcribed as [愆] and [質] are equivalent to the standard form [質] *zhì*? And why is it that in the Houma texts the graph can be interpreted as *zhì* {質} “to pledge”, and make sense, but in the Wenxian texts no standard interpretation of the graph fits the context?

The authors of the *Houma Mengshu* do not explain how this graph was identified. Among published articles on the Houma tablets, the first to discuss the particular Houma tablets in which this graph is found was a short piece by Guo Moruo 郭沫若 (1892 – 1978), published in 1972 in *Wenwu*'s third issue of that year.¹⁹ In that article, the graph is identified as [質] *zhì* and Guo argues that it is a synonym for the word *méng* {盟} “covenant”. He does not explain the basis on which the graph is interpreted as [質] *zhì*. In the following issue of *Wenwu*, the fourth issue of 1972, there is a short excavation report for the Houma tablets, by Tao Zhenggang 陶正剛 and Wang Kelin 王克林.²⁰ In this article the identification of the graph with [質] *zhì* is supported with the example of an identical form on a seal:



Gu Xi Hubian 1044 ²¹

¹⁹ Guo Moruo, “Chutu Wenwu Er-San Shi”.

²⁰ Tao Zhenggang and Wang Kelin, “Houma Dongzhou Mengshi Yizhi”.

²¹ *Gu Xi Huibian*, p.121 and *Gu Xi Wen Bian*, p.138. The copy of the seal graph given by Tao Zhenggang and Wang Kelin is identical to this form and I assume this is the same graph. They cite a work called the *Gu Xi Wenzhi Zheng* 古璽文字徵 which I have not seen.

A fuller discussion on the link between these Houma graphs and the character [質] *zhì* is given by Zeng Zhixiong in his dissertation on the Houma tablets.²² He cites the work of Zhang Guiguang 張桂光 who argues, in a 1982 article, that the form [質] is a development of a form seen in the “Jing Ren Ning Zhong 井人安鐘” bronze inscription, which he copies as follows:



We should note that there are two examples of this graph in this inscription. The one Zhang copies is almost illegible in the rubbing reproduced in the *Yin Zhou Jinwen Jicheng*.²⁴ The other example of this character in this set of bells is much clearer:



Zhang only appears to have considered the first form in his article; it may have been that the other form was not available to him. I will give the second form in brackets after the first form when referring to it in the following discussion of his work. Zhang believes that this form was the orthograph of [質] *zhì*. Zhang goes on to suggest that the Houma form [質] was later corrupted into the form [質] *zhì*. Zhang argues that the top component of the Houma graph [質] is a form of [折] *zhē*. He suggests that the two short strokes, [𠂇], were a symbol of the omission, in the Houma form, of the top-left component seen in the 質 (質) form but that they were later misunderstood to be indicating a repetition of the top-right component, the [斤] *jīn* form, and thus the graph came to be written with the components doubled: [質] *zhì*. I will argue below that Zhang was correct in identifying these graphs as variants of the same analogous character set and

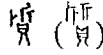
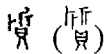
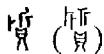
²² Zeng Zhixiong, “Houma Mengshu Yanjiu”, pp.151 – 154.

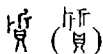
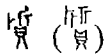
²³ Zhang Guiguang “Guwenzi Kaoshi Si Ze”. His copy of the form would give a transcription of [質]. Zhang gives the name of the bell as the “井人鐘 Jing Ren Zhong” but I am following the name given in the *Yin Zhou Jinwen Jicheng*.

²⁴ *Yin Zhou Jinwen Jicheng*, Vol.1, no.111.1-9.

²⁵ *Yin Zhou Jinwen Jicheng*, Vol.1, no.109.1.

interpreting them as the character [質] *zhì*, but that the identification of the top component with [折] *zhé* and his explanation of the development of that component are incorrect.

Zhang Guiguang was also concerned about the identification of the  (質) form from the “Jing Ren Ning Zhong” with the character [哲] *zhé*, which, at the time he was writing, was the standard interpretation of this graph. Zhang noted that, in bronze inscriptions, there are several examples of graphs which had previously been transcribed as [愬] *zhé*, and, based on the *Shuo Wen Jie Zi* gloss for this form, taken to be a variant form of [哲] *zhé*, denoting *zhé* {哲} “wise”. This was the interpretation we discussed above in the first part of the analysis of this graph. The form  (質) from the “Jing Ren Ning Zhong” occurs in exactly the same context as these other graphs and was also considered to be a variant of [哲] *zhé*. Zhang made the point that, although the interchange of [口] *kǒu* and [心] *xīn* as semantic components is common in early characters (which explains the [愬] *zhé* variant for [哲] *zhé*), the interchange of the component [貝] *bèi* with [口] *kǒu* or [心] *xīn* is rare: the meaning suggested by the component [貝] *bèi*, i.e. objects of value, is quite different from that of [口] *kǒu* “mouth” and [心] *xīn* “heart/mind”, making it unlikely that they could interchange as semantic components. Thus, the form  (質), derived from [貝] *bèi*, is not an obvious variant for [哲] *zhé*. This is a valid and important point as we will see below.

Although Zhang Guiguang’s observations led him to conclude that the form  (質) from the “Jing Ren Ning Zhong” (and the form [質] in the Houma covenant tablets) are both early examples of what became the form [質] *zhì*. He felt, nevertheless, that in the “Jing Ren Ning Zhong” example, interpreting these graphs using the standard words denoted by [質] *zhì*, e.g. *zhì* {質} “substance, material” or “to pledge” made no sense. He concluded that the ,

although equivalent to [質] *zhì*, was in fact being used as a phonetic loan for the word {哲} *zhé* “wise”. Thus the final result of his analysis gives the same final interpretation for the graph as previous analyses which had argued that the 𠄎 (𠄎) was just a variant form for the graph [哲] *zhé*. Zhang, it seems, was, like many other scholars, misled by the *Shuo Wen Jie Zi* form [愬] *zhé*, which, as explained above, is in fact erroneous.

Zhang Guiguang made the following two important observations: firstly, the connection between the forms 𠄎 (𠄎), from the “Jing Ren Ning Zhong”, with [質] from the Houma texts, and with [質] *zhì* and, secondly, the point that the component [貝] *bèi*, connoting objects of value, should not be able to interchange as a semantic component with [心] *xīn* “heart” or [口] *kǒu* “mouth”. However, he did not question the standard, but erroneous, interpretation of the graphs with which the 𠄎 (𠄎) is equated, i.e. those forms that were generally transcribed as [愬] *zhé* and taken as variants of [哲] *zhé*, with the meaning *zhé* {哲} “wise” (or *zhé* {愬} “to respect” following the *Shuo Wen Jie Zi* gloss for [愬] *zhé*).





A new interpretation of the two forms [質] and [愬] has been provided by Chen Jian 陳劍.²⁶ Chen, like Zhang Guiguang, makes the connection between the top component in these forms, i.e. [𠄎], and the [𠄎] *zhì* component in the graph [質] *zhì*, considering [𠄎] to be an earlier variant form of [𠄎] *zhì*. He argues that [𠄎] *zhì* is phonetic in [質] *zhì* and also phonetic in the excavated graphs [質] and [愬]. Thus the graph seen in bronzes and seals (and now found in large numbers in the Wenxian tablets), that I directly transcribe as [愬], has a formal transcription of [愬].

²⁶ Chen Jian, “Shuo Shen”. Note that another paper: Chen Weiwu, “Jiu Shi ‘Zhe’ Ji Cong ‘Zhe’ Zhi Zi Pingyi”, makes several of the same points that Chen Jian does. However, their conclusions differ and Chen Jian’s are, I feel, more convincing. Furthermore, Chen Jian’s essay has a clearer and more complete argument in support of his hypothesis. For these reasons I have mainly relied on his, rather than Chen Weiwu’s, article in my present analysis.

Chen Jian noticed the graphic similarity between examples of the graphs [質] and [愆] seen in bronzes and other excavated texts, and graphs in the Guodian bamboo slips which we can be certain, based on comparison with received or other excavated counterparts of some of the Guodian texts in which the graph appears, are denoting the word *shèn* {慎} “to be careful/cautious, to be scrupulous and conscientious”. Chen realized that the examples in bronzes and seals make sense in the context they appear in if they are also interpreted as *shèn* {慎}. Furthermore, there are examples of similar usage in received texts which support this interpretation. This interpretation, it turns out, also fits in the context of the Wenxian texts: the covenantor is expected to “pay due reverence and attention to his *de*” (恪慎其德 *kè shèn qí dé*).

Chen’s article is of great significance to our analysis of the Wenxian graph [愆] as well as to that of the Houma graph identified as [質] *zhì*. I will summarize Chen’s work below and discuss how it relates to the present analysis as well as to the Houma graph.

The graphs in the Guodian bamboo slips which denote the word *shèn* {慎} have the following variant forms (following the categorization given by Chen):²⁷

1. a.  《語叢四》4
- b.  《老子》甲本 11、《緇衣》30、32、33
- c.  《緇衣》15
2.  《老子》丙本 12、《成之聞之》3、19、40、
《性自命出》27、49（兩見）




²⁷ The graphs are scanned from: Zhang Shouzhong, Hao Jianwen and Zhang Xiaocang, *Guodian Chu Jian Wenzhi Bian*, p.40 and p.43.

3.  《五行》 16

4.  《五行》 17





The Guodian *Lao Zi* 老子 materials and *Zi Yi* 緇衣 can be collated with received versions of the *Lao Zi* and *Zi Yi*. The *Wu Xing* 五行 can be collated with the *Wu Xing* from the excavated Mawangdui materials. From this evidence, and from the semantic context of the examples without corresponding received texts, it is clear that these characters must be read as *shèn* {慎} “to be careful/cautious, to be scrupulous and conscientious”. Chen compares the graphic forms of the Guodian graphs which are read as *shèn* {慎}, with graphs from bronze inscriptions and seals that have previously been read as *zhē* {愆} “to respect” or *zhē*{哲} “wise”, and concludes that these should, in fact, all be read as *shèn*{慎}. Below are examples of these graphs from bronze inscriptions and seals along with the phrases in which they appear, given with Chen’s suggested interpretation for the graphs as *shèn* {慎}:²⁸

Examples from bronze inscriptions:





- i.  師望鼎: “慎厥德” (“Pay due attention to his *de*”)
- ii.  克鼎: “淑慎厥德” (“Properly pay due attention to his *de*”)
- iii.  汾其鐘:²⁹ “克慎厥德” (“Able to pay due attention to his *de*”)

²⁸ Unless otherwise noted, the bronze-inscription graphs are scanned from the *Jinwen Bian*, pp.57 – 58. The graphs from seals are scanned from the *Gu Xi Wen Bian*, p.261.

²⁹ Graph scanned from: *Yin Zhou Jinwen Jicheng*, Vol. 1, no. 192.

- iv.  泌其鐘:³⁰ “克慎厥德” (“Able to pay due attention to his *de*”)
- v.  井人妥鐘: “克慎厥德” (“Able to pay due attention to his *de*”)
- vi.  番生簋: “克慎厥德” (“Able to pay due attention to his *de*”)
- vii.  叔家父匜: “慎德不亡” (“Pay due attention to *de*, not losing [it]”)

Examples from seals:

- viii.  4286: “慎言” (“Be prudent in speaking”)
- ix.  4292: “慎事” (“Be prudent in one’s affairs”)
- x.  4300: “慎官” (“Be prudent of one’s office”)
- xi.  4325: “慎錄” (“Seal of prudence [?]”)

Interpreted in this way, these phrases in excavated texts are found to match identical or similar phrases in received texts.³¹ In contrast, if the graphs are interpreted as they previously were, as *zhè* { 愼 } “to respect” or *zhé* { 哲 } “wise”, we find no corresponding examples in received early texts: further evidence that that interpretation was incorrect.

³⁰ Graph scanned from: *Yin Zhou Jinwen Jicheng*, Vol. 1, no. 189.1.

³¹ Chen gives many examples in his article: Chen Jian, “Shuo Shen”.

Chen Jian argues that the top component of these graphs is equivalent to [所] *zhì*. Thus the ^𠄎 from the “Jin Ren Ning Zhong” inscription, derived from [貝] *bèi*, is the character [質] *zhì*. This top component, [所] *zhì*, is almost certainly the phonetic component in [質] *zhì*, and, therefore, the Old Chinese pronunciation of [所] *zhì* and [質] *zhì* must have been the same or very similar. Chen argues that, since the Old Chinese pronunciations of [質] *zhì* and [慎] *shèn* were close, the bronze-inscription graphs cited above, which can be transcribed as: [質], [愆] and [誓], could have been used to denote the word *shèn* {慎}.³² The Old Chinese reconstructions for these words are:

慎 *shèn* < *dzynH* < **djins*³³ (禪真)
 質 *zhì* (“pledge, hostage”) < *trijH* < **trjits*³⁴ (端質)³⁵

The match is reasonably close: the initials have the same place of articulation (dentals), the finals share the same vowel and both words are *kāikǒu* (開口). As Chen points out, further evidence to indicate the phonetic similarity between *shèn* {慎} and *zhì* {質} is provided by another variant form, [脊], used for *shèn* {慎} in late Spring and Autumn period bronzes and the Warring States period Guodian bamboo slips.³⁶ The phonetic of this graph is [𠄎] *rì*, for which the Old Chinese reconstruction is even closer to that of *zhì* {質} :

³² Among the bronze-inscription graphs which Chen argues should be read as *shèn* {慎} there is one example which is derived from [言] *yán* and another derived from [貝] *bèi*. Chen argues that the graph derived from [言] *yán* is a variant form also denoting *shèn* {慎}. I discuss the form derived from [貝] *bèi* below.

³³ Reconstructions: Wolfgang Behr, personal communication, March 31st, 2004.

³⁴ Reconstructions: Wolfgang Behr, personal communication, March 31st, 2004.

³⁵ The graph [質] *zhì* is used to denote two different words, each with a slightly different pronunciation: 1. “substance, material” {質} *zhì* < *tsyit* < **tjit* (章質) and 2. “hostage, pledge” {質} *zhì* < *trijH* < **trjits* (端質). Chen uses the reconstruction of the former word. I will use the latter, since this is the word we see in the Houma texts written, in the majority of cases, with the graph [質] (i.e. [質] *zhì*), and it is this graph that shares its phonetic with the Wenxian graph [愆] (i.e. [愆]). (Reconstructions: Wolfgang Behr, personal communication, March 31st, 2004.)

³⁶ Chen Jian, “Shuo Shen”. This character is also recorded in the *Shuo Wen Jie Zi* as the ancient script form for [慎] *shèn*: *Shuo Wen Jie Zi*, p.217 (10b 心部: 10b).

質 *zhì* (“pledge, hostage”) < *trijH* < **trjits* (端質)
 日 *rì* < *nyit* < **njit*³⁷ (日質)

In this case, the place of articulation and rhyme groups are identical. This example, of a character with the phonetic component [日] *rì* used to denote the word *shèn* {慎} in the late Spring and Autumn and Warring States periods, provides supporting evidence for the argument that the word *zhì* {質}, which has a pronunciation very close to that of [日] *rì*, could also have been used to denote the word *shèn* {慎} in the Wenxian covenant texts, which themselves date to the late Spring and Autumn, early Warring States period.

This phonetic evidence, together with the strong textual parallels supporting the reading of these graphs as *shèn* {慎}, supports the theory that the component [所] *zhì* (the phonetic component of [質] *zhì*) could have been used as the phonetic component in a character, i.e. [慝], denoting *shèn* {慎}.

On the basis of his identification of the top component as [所] *zhì* in the graphs previously read as {慝} *zhé* “to respect” or {哲} *zhé* “wise”, Chen traces the development of the form of the [所] *zhì* component. The right part of the component, the [斤] *jīn*, is quite stable but the left part shows great variation. We can use a diagram (see the following page) to show how, according to Chen’s analysis, the form of this part of the graph developed:

³⁷ *A Handbook of Old Chinese Phonology*, p.785.



This diagram demonstrates how the left-hand part of the [所] *zhì* component developed along two different paths. The path to the left of the diagram shows how this form grew to resemble [斤] *jīn*, so much so that it was finally corrupted and transformed into [斤] *jīn*. The other branch led to the form [夂], as we see in the graphs [愆] and [質] in the Houma and Wenxian tablets and the seal inscriptions.

³⁸ Scanned from: *Yin Zhou Jinwen Jicheng* Vol. 5, no. 2841. Note that the graph in the “Mao Gong Ding 毛公鼎” is [所]; Chen Jian interprets this graph as *zhì* {窒} “block, obstruct”.

³⁹ Scanned from: *Shiguwen Yanjiu Zu Chu Wen Kaoshi*, p.322.

⁴⁰ Scanned from: Zhang Shouzhong, *Shuihudi Qin Jian Wenzhi Bian*, p.96.

⁴¹ Scanned from: *Qin Han Wei Jin Zhuan-Li Zixing Biao*, p.419.

Chen believes that the [𠄎] component found in some of the graphs denoting *shèn* {慎} in the Guodian slips (types 2 and 3 in the table above) may have developed from the [𠄎] form. The origin of the form [𠄎] found in the Guodian graph types 1.a – c is not clear. Perhaps we can link it to the form [𠄎], found in the “Mao Gong Ding 毛公鼎”: if one of the repeated parts in this form is omitted, we have [𠄎], which is very similar to the [𠄎] of the Guodian form.⁴² The forms [𠄎], [𠄎], and [𠄎] eventually died out, leaving only the form that had corrupted into [斤] *jīn*. As for the original significance of the form of the graph [𠄎] *zhì*, Chen Jian does not have any conclusive explanation. However, judging from the variety of different forms seen in the complicated development of its left-hand part, it appears that the precise significance of the graphic form of this character became unknown to scribes at a very early date.

Chen Jian makes the point that, on the basis of his analysis, the Houma graph [質] must be the character [質] *zhì*. Previously, scholars were divided between those who took the Houma graph to be [質] *zhì*, denoting *zhì* {質} “to pledge”, and those that transcribed the graph as [誓], and took it to denote {誓} *shì* “to swear an oath”.⁴³ The latter argument was based on the identification of the top of the graph as the component [折] *zhé*, influenced by traditional interpretation of the [愆] form, in seals and bronzes, as [愆] *zhé*. It was this

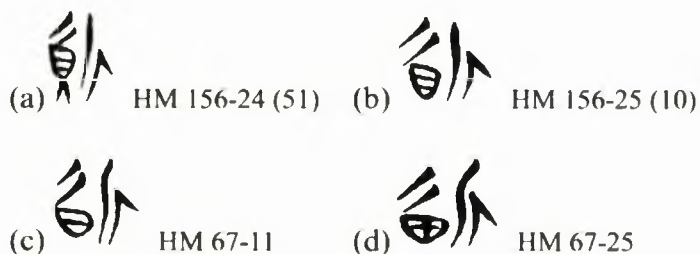
⁴² Among early Chinese characters it is not unusual to find variant forms of characters in which a component made up of two identical parts is simplified by omitting one of those parts. For example, the character [從] *cóng* in the Houma tablets is sometimes written with only one [人] *rén* (see *Houma Mengshu* p.329). Qiu Xigui points out: “Both oracle-bone inscriptions and bronze inscriptions have graphs derived from [𠄎] and [斤] *jīn*: the form [𠄎] may have developed from such graphs. If so, then the component [𠄎] from which the graph [愆] in the “Shu Jia Fu Yi 叔家父愆”, cited above, is derived from, may be a corruption of this form” (personal communication, December 2000). If this is the case, the table above should be adjusted so that the “Shu Jia Fu Yi 叔家父愆” example is moved to the left of the

“Fan Sheng Gui 番生簋” example, with a left-pointing arrow between them, i.e.: (叔家父愆) ← (番生簋).

⁴³ Those who took the graph to be *zhì* {質} “to pledge” include: Guo Moruo, “Chutu Wenwu Er-San Shi”; Tao Zhenggang and Wang Keli, “Houma Dongzhou Mengshi Yizhi”; Zhang Han, “Houma Mengshu Congkao”. Those who interpreted the graph as *shì* {誓} “to swear an oath” include: Tang Lan, “Houma Chutu Jinguo Zhao Jia Zhi Mengzaishu Xin Shi”; Huang Shengzhang, “Guanyu Houma Mengshu De Zhuyao Wenti”.

interpretation that was adopted by a majority of scholars.⁴⁴ Chen's analysis, however, lends strong support to the alternative interpretation of the graph as [質] *zhì* denoting *zhì* {質} "to pledge". Interpreting this graph with the meaning "to pledge" also makes sense in the context in which it appears in the Houma covenant texts. Since this is of great importance to a correct understanding of the Houma and Wenxian covenant tablets, I will now look at this question in greater detail.

In the Houma covenant tablets, the graph in question appears with the following forms. The total number of examples of each form found in the Houma tablets, if more than one, is given in brackets, as it is recorded in the *Houma Mengshu* character table:⁴⁵



The components in forms (b), (c) and (d), i.e. [𠄎], [𠄎], and [𠄎], are most probably simplified forms of the more common [貝] *bèi*, the component in form (a). Based on the discussion above, these graphs can, then, all be formally transcribed as [質] *zhì*. There are also a small number of Houma tablets in which another form is found in the same position, clearly denoting the same word:



This is the graph we transcribe as [愼], common in the bronze and seal inscriptions and in the Wenxian tablets, where it is interpreted as *shèn* {愼}. In the Houma tablets it occurs much less frequently than the [質] *zhì*. In the

⁴⁴ For a survey of the use of this reading in several recent works by Chinese scholars see: Chen Jian, "Shuo Shen". Not all scholars adopted this reading, a number continued to argue for the *zhì* {質} reading, see, for example: Susan Roosevelt Weld, "Covenant in Jin's Walled Cities: The Discoveries at Houma and Wenxian", pp.389 – 394 and: Kim Migyong, "Houma Mengshu De Yuyan Yanjiu", pp. 20 – 23.

⁴⁵ The graphs were scanned from *Houma Mengshu*, p. 348.

following discussion, when talking about the Houma tablets, in cases where it is unnecessary to distinguish between these forms, I will use [質] *zhì* to represent both [質] *zhì* and [慝] .

In the Houma covenant texts, the character [質] *zhì* occurs in three different contexts:

1. [covenantor's name] 自質于君所 (Pledge Texts)
 [covenantor's name] **pledges** himself [i.e. his life] at the place of the [former ?] ruler/s, ...
2. 既質之後 (Pledge Texts)
 After having **pledged**, ...
3. 敢不率從此盟質之言 (Confiscation Texts)
 ... dare to not abide by the words of this **covenant**, ...

Let us consider the textual evidence in support of the interpretation of [質] *zhì* as “to pledge” and, as a compound word *měngzhì* 盟質, “covenant”. Kim Migyong 金美京 cited the following three passages to support her argument that the Houma graphs should be interpreted as *zhì* {質} and not *shì* {誓} :⁴⁶

1. *Guo Yu* “Jin Yu 4 晉語四” (text: late 5th – 4th century BC) (event: mid 7th century BC)⁴⁷

晉、鄭兄弟也，吾先君武公與晉文侯戮力一心，股肱周室，夾輔平王，平王勞而德之，而賜之盟質，曰：“世相起也。”

[The states of] Jin and Zheng are brothers. My former lord, Duke Wu, together with Marquis Wen of Jin, exerted their strength [as one]; united their hearts; upheld the Zhou house; and supported King Ping. King Ping, feasting them in recognition of their services, considered them virtuous, and presented them with a **covenant**, saying: “May successive generations support each other.”

⁴⁶ Kim Migyong. “Houma Mengshu De Yuyan Yanjiu”, pp. 20 – 23.

⁴⁷ *Guo Yu*, p.350.

2. *Guo Yu* “Jin Yu 4 晉語四” (text: late 5th – 4th century BC) (event: 636 BC)⁴⁸

十二月，秦伯納公子。及河，子犯授公子載璧，曰：“臣從軍還軫，巡於天下，怨其多矣！臣猶知之，而況君乎？不忍其死，請由此亡。”公子曰：“所不與舅氏同心者，有如河水！”沉璧以質。

It was the twelfth month, the Earl of Qin returned the prince [Chong Er 重耳] [to his throne in Jin]. On reaching the Yellow River, Zi Fan returned the Prince's sacrificial jade, saying: "Your servant has accompanied you, going from place to place by carriage, touring the world, as for complaints [about me], there are many! Even your servant knows this, how much more must this be so of the Lord! Unable to bear death, I request to escape from here [into exile]." The Prince said: "If I am not of the same heart as you, _____ [?]", [he] sunk the jade [into the river] to pledge to this.

3. *Guo Yu* “Lu Yu Shang 魯語上” (text: late 5th – 4th century BC) (event: 634 BC)⁴⁹

昔者成王命我先君周公及齊先君太公曰：“女股肱周室，以夾輔先君，賜女土地。”質之以犧牲：“世世子孫無相害也。”

In days gone by, King Cheng made a decree to our former lord, Duke Zhou and the former lord of Qi, Duke Tai, saying, "You upheld the Zhou household, and supported the former king [King Wu 武王]. [I] bestow [on you] territory." [They] **pledged** to this using sacrificial animals, [the pledge said:] "[May] successive generations of [your] sons and grandsons not harm each other."

The “pledge”, *zhì* {質}, recorded in this last passage is also described in the *Zuo Zhuan* but there it is called a *méng* 盟.⁵⁰ Guo Moruo, in his 1972 article in *Wenwu* discussing the Houma covenant tablets, cited the following passage to prove that *zhì* {質} and *méng* {盟} are synonyms:⁵¹

⁴⁸ *Guo Yu*, p.365.

⁴⁹ *Guo Yu*, p.160. N.B. I have re-punctuated the last part of this passage, the punctuation in this edition was originally: 太公曰：“女股肱周室，以夾輔先君，賜女土地，質之以犧牲，世世子孫無相害也。”

⁵⁰ This passage was quoted in full above, see section 3.1.1.2.2, the first quoted passage.

⁵¹ Guo Moruo, “Chutu Wenwu Er-San Shi”.

4. *Zuo Zhuan* Ai 哀 20.3 (text: 5th – 4th century BC) (event: 476 BC)⁵²

趙孟曰“黃池之役，先主與吳王有質，曰：‘好惡同之。’。” ……
 [楚隆]告于吳王曰：“寡君之老無恤使陪臣隆，敢展謝其不共：黃池之役，君之先臣志父得承齊盟，曰：‘好惡同之。’。”

Zhaomeng said: “During the events at Huangchi, the former lord had a **covenant** (質) with King Wu, saying, ‘Share both prosperity and adversity.’” …… [Chu Long] reported to King Wu, saying: “Our lord’s revered minister, Wu Xu, has sent his servant, Long, to make bold to apologize for his being disrespectful: [at] the events of Huangchi, your former servant, Zhi Fu, renewed the **covenant** (盟) which says, ‘Share both prosperity and adversity.’”

Here a covenant is referred to as both *zhì* {質} and *méng* {盟}. Zeng Zhixiong, in his Ph.D. dissertation, cites the following passage.⁵³

5. *Zuo Zhuan* Zhao 昭 16.3 (text: 5th – 4th century BC) (event: 526 BC)⁵⁴

子產曰：“昔我先君桓公與商人皆出自周，。。。[與商人]世有盟誓，以相信也，曰：‘爾無我叛，我無強賈，毋或勾奪。爾有利市寶賄，我勿與知。’恃此質誓，故能相保以至于今。今吾子以好來辱，而謂敝邑強奪商人，是教敝邑背盟誓也，毋乃不可乎！”

Zi Chan said: “In the past, our former lord, Duke Huan, together with the merchants, all left from Zhou, … over the generations there has been a **covenant** (盟誓) [with the merchants], in order that we might trust each other, [the covenant] says: ‘You will not rebel against me, I will not force you to sell [i.e. on my terms], neither will I demand and seize [your goods]. If you have profitable markets, valuable goods, I will not interfere to get knowledge of them.’ Relying on this **covenant** (質誓), thus we have been able to be assured of each other up until today. Now you [Han Xuan Zi] come here as a friend, doing us this honour, and ask that we forcibly seize [the jade from] the merchants; this would cause us to violate the **covenant** (盟誓), I fear it is not possible!

Susan R. Weld, in her Ph.D. dissertation, gives the following example, from the *Zu Chu Wen* 詛楚文, when discussing the meaning of [質] *zhì* (characters in

⁵² *Chunqiu Zuo Zhuan Zhu*, p.1716.

⁵³ Zeng Zhixiong, “Houma Mengshu Yanjiu”, p.152. The words in brackets (in the Chinese) were added by Zeng.

⁵⁴ *Chunqiu Zuo Zhuan Zhu*, pp.1379 – 1380.

brackets are interpretative transcriptions I have adopted here for the previous graph).⁵⁵

6. *Zu Chu Wen* “Da Chen Jue Qiu Wen 大沉厥湫文” (312 BC)⁵⁶

昔我先君穆公及楚成王是僇力同心兩邦若壹。紿（縫）以婚姻，衿以齋盟。曰：“棠（世）萬子孫毋相為不利。”親印（仰）大沉厥湫而質焉。（《巫咸文》作“親印（仰）不（丕）顯大神巫咸而質。”）

In the past, our former lord, Duke Mu, and King Cheng of Chu exerted their strength [as one]; were of the same heart; the two countries were as if they were a single state: linked by marriage, joined by **covenant**. [The covenant] said: “May generations of ten thousand sons and grandsons not act harmfully towards each other.” They raised up their heads to Da Chen Jue Qiu and **pledged** to this. (The “Wu Xian Wen” here reads: “They raised up their heads to the resplendent great spirit Wu Xian and **pledged**.”)

We can cite a further example, similar to passage 2 above:

7. *Zuo Zhuan* Xiang 襄 30.10 (text: 5th – 4th century BC) (event: 543 BC)⁵⁷

於是游吉如晉還，聞難，不入。復命于介。八月甲子，奔晉。駟帶追之，及酸棗。與子上盟，用兩珪質于河。

Thereupon You Ji, who was returning [to Zheng] after having gone to Jin, heard of the troubles and did not enter [Zheng]. He reported the outcome of his mission to an intermediary. In the eighth month on *jiǎzǐ* day he fled to Jin. Si Dai pursued him all the way to Suanzao. [You Ji] covenanted with Zi Shang [Si Dai], using two *gui* tablets to **pledge** to the Yellow River.

Early commentaries usually gloss the [質] *zhì* in these passages as *xìn* 信 which is suitable in its definition as “token, pledge”. One of the basic definitions of

[質] *zhì* is to use some object as a pledge. The *Shuo Wen Jie Zi* defines [質] *zhì* as: “*zhì* 質 is to use an object to pledge with someone (*zhì, yǐ wù xiāng zhù* 質，以物相質)”. The character *zhù* 質, used in this definition, means “to pledge

⁵⁵ Susan Roosevelt Weld, “Covenant in Jin’s Walled Cities: The Discoveries at Houma and Wenxian”, p.389.

⁵⁶ *Shiguwen Yanjiu Zu Chu Wen Kaoshi*, p.296. For the dating see: pp.285 – 295.

⁵⁷ *Chunqiu Zuo Zhuan Zhu*, p.1177.

something”.⁵⁸ A number of scholars believe that the meaning of the character [質] *zhì* in the Houma covenant tablets is very close to this definition of using some object as a pledge. Zhang Han, for example, discussing the phrase 自質于君所 (*zì zhì yú jūn suǒ*) from the Houma tablets, says: “The character *zhì* 質 in the phrase 自質于君所, as with its basic meaning, indicates the various tokens pledged to the spirits by covenantors during a covenant ceremony.”⁵⁹ Kim Migyong defines *zhì* {質} as: “to use a specific object to bring about trust”.⁶⁰ In other words, when one swears an oath or makes a covenant, one offers an object of value as a guarantee, to demonstrate one’s sincerity. Several of the passages above are examples of this: example 2, “[he] sunk the jade [into the river] to pledge to this”; example 3, “[He] made them pledge using sacrificial animals,...”; and 7, “using two *gui* tablets to pledge to the Yellow River”. The *Zu Chu Wen* example, “They raised up their heads to Da Chen Jue Qiu and pledged to this”, does not mention any specific object to be used to pledge and could refer more generally to the covenant ceremony, but, in light of the other examples, we could also understand it to refer to a ceremony in which an object was, indeed, offered as a pledge.

The *Zu Chu Wen* example just quoted, “They (themselves) raised up their heads to Da Chen Jue Qiu and pledged to this”, uses the word *qīn* 親 meaning “oneself” (or “themselves” as translated here). The Houma sentence 自質于君所 (*zì zhì yú jūn suǒ*) uses the word *zì* 自 in what could be understood as a similar sentence, giving: “[covenantor’s name] himself, pledges at the place of the lord”. Alternatively, the *zì zhì* 自質 in the Houma tablets may have a different meaning: “to pledge oneself”. Zhang Han reads it this way. He says: “The 質 *zhì* in the covenant tablets means to ‘pledge’ (*wěi zhì* 委質) oneself at the ‘place of the lord’ (*jūn suǒ* 君所), to show that one will never betray [the lord].”⁶¹

Pledging oneself means to use one’s life as the pledge; in the Houma

⁵⁸ Both definitions: *Shuo Wen Jie Zi*, p.130 (6b 見部: 8b).

⁵⁹ Zhang Han, “‘Houma Mengshu’ Congkao”, p.17.

⁶⁰ Kim Migyong, “Houma Mengshu De Yuyan Yanjiu”, p.22: “以具體的事物致信”.

⁶¹ Zhang Han, “‘Houma Mengshu’ Congkao”, p.17.

covenant tablets the consequences of violating the covenant are clearly spelt out: one's clan will be exterminated. In that instance, one's life, pledged against such an occurrence, will be forfeited.

This phrase “[covenantor's name] pledges himself [i.e. his life] at the place of the ruler, ...” (*zì zhì yú jūn suǒ* 自質于君所), begins the Houma Pledge texts. A later section of the same oath begins with the phrase: “After having pledged, ...” (*jì zhì zhī hòu* 既質之後). It follows that the *zhì* 質 in this phrase is referring to the ceremonial act of *zì zhì* 自質 “pledging oneself”(or “making a pledge oneself”) from the first phrase.

Since a pledge is also a part of a covenant, as discussed in Chapter One, we can appreciate how the word *zhì* 質 “pledge” can also be used as a synonym for “covenant”. There are several examples of this in the passages quoted above. We noted that example 3 refers to the use of sacrificial animals in a “pledge” *zhì* 質, while the event of which this was a part is described as a “covenant” *méng* 盟 in the *Zuo Zhuan*. In example 4, a prior covenant is referred to first as a *zhì* 質 and then as a *méng* 盟. In example 5, the terms *méngshì* 盟誓 and *zhìshì* 質誓 are used interchangeably. We can see that when used nominally, *zhì* 質 and *méng* 盟 are synonyms for “covenant”. So, the term *méngzhì* 盟質 which we find in the Houma tablets in the Confiscation texts, is a compound noun formed of two semantically similar words, the phrase is: “... dare to not abide by the words of this covenant, ...” (*gǎn bù shuàicóng cǐ méngzhì zhī yán* 敢不率從此盟質之言).

The above analysis strongly supports the interpretation of the Houma graph [質] as *zhì* {質} “to pledge” “covenant”.

We can now consider the graph [愆] and the less common variant [質], found in the Wenxian oath types 3 and 7 in the phrase: 恪△其德 *kè* __ *qí dé*. In these texts, the graphs should be interpreted in the same way as the graphs [愆]

([愆]), [質] ([質]) and [誓] ([誓]), from bronze inscriptions and seals, that is as *shèn* { 慎 } “to be careful/cautious, to be scrupulous and conscientious”. The question of how to best understand the word in the Wenxian phrase will be discussed in the interpretation section below. The collocation of *shèn* 慎 and *dé* 德 is common in early texts. Chen Jian gives many examples in his paper, the earliest being from the “Wen Hou Zhi Ming 文侯之命” section of the *Shang Shu*, dating from the early Spring and Autumn period:

8. *Shang Shu* “Wen Hou Zhi Ming 文侯之命” (text: 770 – 625 BC) (event: mid-7th century BC)⁶²

丕顯文武，克慎明德。

Resplendent Wen and Wu, [they] were able to pay due attention to bright *de*.


Similar examples are found in early texts all the way down to the Warring States and Han periods.⁶³

To conclude, the Wenxian graphs I am discussing in this section should be interpreted as denoting the word *shèn* { 慎 } “to be careful/cautious, to be scrupulous and conscientious”. The majority of these Wenxian graphs have the form [愆] (which can be formally transcribed as [愆]); only a handful have the form [質], i.e. [質]. In the Houma tablets, where the majority of examples have the form [質], i.e. [質] *zhì*, the correct interpretation is *zhì* { 質 } “to pledge”, “pledge”, “covenant”.

What is the relationship between the two characters, [質] and [愆], in the Wenxian and Houma covenant tablets? In the Houma texts, both these characters are used to denote the word *zhì* { 質 } “to pledge”, but in the Wenxian texts they both denote the word *shèn* { 慎 } “to be careful/cautious, to be scrupulous and

⁶² *Shisan Jing Zhushu*, p.253. For the dating see: Michael Loewe ed., *Early Chinese Texts*, p.380.

⁶³ We will look at several more examples in the interpretation section below.

conscientious”. This might suggest that the semantic components [貝] *bèi* and [心] *xīn* are interchangeable, for we know that semantic components were often interchanged in the Warring States scripts.⁶⁴ However, as Zhang Guiguang argued in his discussion of the form  (質) in the “Jing Ren Ning Zhong”, [貝] *bèi* and [心] *xīn* have quite different meanings and should not be able to interchange as semantic components. Interchange between semantic components which have similar connotations is common and we also find interchange between components with similar graphic forms, but [貝] *bèi* and [心] *xīn*, as a pair, do not fall into either category.⁶⁵ Zhang’s argument, that the two should not be treated as interchangeable semantic components, is supported by the relative frequency of the occurrence of the two forms, [質] and [愆], in the two set of materials, from Wenxian and Houma.

According to the character table in the *Houma Mengshu*, there are 68 examples of the word *zhì* {質} in the Houma covenant tablets. All 68 examples have the phonetic component [所] *zhì*. 51 of these have a [貝] *bèi* component, 10 have a [目] *mù*, one has a [冂] *rì*, and one a [田] *tián*, all three of which we can assume to be simplified forms of [貝] *bèi*; only five examples have the [心] *xīn* component. For the Wenxian tablets, 44 have the word *shèn* {慎}. Of these, 42 have the phonetic [所] *zhì*, while two examples appear to have only a [斤] *jīn* without the [攴] component; this is probably due to fading of the ink or calcification but I will omit these two from the calculation in case they are some kind of variation. Of the 42 remaining examples, 33 have the [心] *xīn* component (this includes the example in which the [心] *xīn* is repeated), while only four use [貝] *bèi* (five of the examples are not clear enough to confidently identify the bottom component). In percentage terms, in the Houma covenant tablets 75% of the examples are derived from [貝] *bèi* and, if we take the [目] *mù*, [冂] *rì* and [田] *tián* as simplified or corrupted forms of [貝] *bèi*, then the figure rises to 93%. In contrast, of the 37 fully legible examples from the Wenxian covenant

⁶⁴ *Zhongguo Guwenzixue Tonglun*, pp.129 – 159.

tablets, 11% are derived from [貝] *bèi*, 89% from [心] *xīn*: almost the exact opposite of the Houma examples. This can be indicated in a table (taking the Houma variants derived from [目] *mù*, [日] *rì* and [田] *tián* as equivalent to [貝] *bèi*):

Table 10: Frequency of the use of the characters [質] *zhì* and [愆] *shèn* in the Houma and Wenxian covenant texts

Graph	Houma Tablets		Wenxian Tablets	
	Number of examples	Percentage of total	Number of examples	Percentage of total
愆	5	7%	33	89%
質	63	93%	4	11%

I believe that this difference in the ratio of use of the components [貝] *bèi* and [心] *xīn* in the Wenxian and Houma graphs is not random. In the bronze and seal inscriptions the characters which denote the word *shèn* {慎} are almost all derived from [心] *xīn* and only exceptionally derived from [貝] *bèi*.⁶⁶ In the Guodian slips, the characters which denote the word *shèn* {慎} are almost all derived from [言] *yán* (bronze inscriptions also have one example from [言] *yán*); a small number have both a [言] *yán* and [心] *xīn* component.⁶⁷ This evidence corresponds to Chen Jian's view that:

From a palaeographic point of view, the graph 愆, with semantic component *xīn* 心, and the graph 質, with semantic component *yán* 言, were both originally used to denote the word *shèn* 慎, and later on, for the great majority of the time, they continued to be used to denote

⁶⁵ He Linyi, *Zhanguo Wenzi Tonglun*, pp.205 – 210.

⁶⁶ *Jinwen Bian*, pp.57 – 58; *Zhanguo Guwen Zidian*, see the graphs collected under the entries [愆] and [質], pp.928 – 929.

⁶⁷ See the reproductions of these graphs above.

shèn 慎; it is most likely that they are, in fact, the ancient form (*gǔ zì* 古字) of *shèn* 慎.⁶⁸

The Wenxian examples of this graph, which Chen Jian had not seen when he wrote his article, support this assessment: the word *shèn* {慎}, in the great majority of the Wenxian examples, is denoted with the graph [愆] ([愆]).

As for the character [質] *zhì*, apart from its common occurrence in the Houma covenant tablets, it is rarely found in palaeographic materials. The “Jin Ren Ning Zhong” has this character, ^𠄎質, as discussed above, but it is clearly denoting *shèn* {慎} “to be careful/cautious, to be scrupulous and conscientious”. It is only when we get to the Houma covenant tablets and the *Zu Chu Wen* that the character is found clearly denoting the word *zhì* {慎} “to pledge”. Due to this lack of evidence, it is difficult to determine what the original relationship was between this character, related words, and the character [愆] ([愆]). However, the ratio of usage of the two graphs in the Houma and Wenxian covenant tablets, as illustrated above, suggests that in the Jin script, at this time, they were two independent characters, [質] *zhì* and [愆] (慎) *shèn*, distinguished by their different semantic components, [心] *xīn* and [貝] *bèi*.

This supports the point made by Zhang Guiguang that I discussed above: these two components, [心] *xīn* and [貝] *bèi*, should not be able to interchange as semantic components; they do not connote the same set of ideas. If the graph [愆] *shèn* is a protoform for the word *shèn* {慎} “to be careful/cautious, to be scrupulous and conscientious”, then we can argue that the [心] *xīn* “heart” (or “heart/mind”) component signifies the word’s association with the emotions and the mind. If we conjecture that the graph [質] *zhì* was the protoform for the word {質} *zhì* “to pledge”, or some closely related etymon, then we can suggest that [貝] *bèi*, connoting objects of value, is used as the semantic component because one pledges something of value. In this case, [愆] *shèn* and [質] *zhì*

⁶⁸ Chen Jian, “Shuo Shen”.

cannot be considered graphic variants of a single character. Thus the few examples in the Houma tablets where the character [愆] (愆) *shèn* denotes *zhì* {質} “to pledge”, and the few examples in the Wenxian tablets of [質] *zhì* used to denote *shèn* {愆} “to be careful/cautious, to be scrupulous and conscientious” (as well as the example of this in the “Jin Ren Ning Zhong”), should be interpreted as phonetic loans, possible because their pronunciations were close (they share the same phonetic component), and not as variant forms of a single character.

This example highlights the value of the repetition of identical texts in the Houma and Wenxian tablets: without such a large number of examples, this distinction between [質] *zhì* and [愆] (愆) *shèn* may have been obscured.

Graph 3: 德

Direct transcription: [𠄎]

Formal transcription: [直]

Interpretative transcription: *dé* {德}

English translation: *dé* [not translated]

Analysis category: A. Direct textual evidence supports the interpretation.

Variant forms

1. a.



WT5K1 – 8

b.



WT5K1 – 20



WT5K1 – 3

c.



WT5K1 – 23



WT5K1 – 70



WT1K17 – 131



WT1K17 – 129

2.



WT5K14 – 23

3.



WT5K14 – 36



WT1K17 – 49



WT5K14 – 32

b.



WT1K17 – 5



WT1K17 – 52

4.





WT5K14 – 18




WT5K14 – 3



WT5K14 – 40






Common to all these forms is the component:  (WT5K1 – 8). In most examples, there is a stroke extending above this form, e.g.  (WT1K17 – 49), and it is often, as in this example, the initial segment of the stroke which goes on to form the left-side of the body of this component. In other examples, this stroke is written separately, in which case it extends from the middle of the top component and tends to be closer to vertical, e.g. the type 2 form. The protruding upper-stroke is sometimes crossed with a short horizontal stroke, for example types 1.b, 2 and 3.b.⁶⁹



Apart from the core component,  (WT5K1 – 8), almost all the graphs also have a curved stroke on the left; only types 2 and 4 omit this. In some

⁶⁹ It appears that in cases where the top stroke is written separately from the lower part of this component, it always has the small horizontal stroke added.

examples, the curved stroke is separate from the main component, e.g. type 1.a, but in others it is linked to the base of that component, e.g. the type 1.c example, WT1K17 – 129. The type 3 forms have a component-level variation, adding a component below the type 1 form. Type 4 is also a component-level variation, with a component added on the left. These Type 4 examples are not very legible, but it seems that the right side of the form includes the basic component seen in all the other forms but does not include the separate left-side curving stroke seen in all but the type 2 examples.

Analysis

Among the *Shuo Wen Jie Zi* components, the only obvious matches with the elements making up these graphs are , [心] *xīn*, for the bottom component in the type 3 examples and , [乚] *yǐn*, for the additional left-side stroke. The radical , [目] *mù*, would be a reasonable match for the core component,  (WT5K1 – 8), but only if rotated through ninety degrees. The closest form to the left-hand component of the type 4 forms is the radical , [食] *shí*, although the match is not perfect: there is a single horizontal stroke below the two top diagonal-strokes in the *Shuo Wen Jie Zi* form but the Wenxian graphs have two strokes here; and the two lowest strokes are linked at the top in the *Shuo Wen Jie Zi* form but meet at their lower ends in the Wenxian graph.

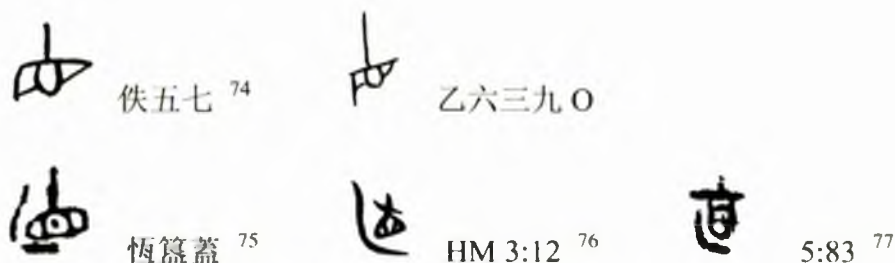
Among the characters collected under these components in the *Shuo Wen Jie Zi*, we find the form , [直] *zhí*.⁷⁰ This would be a very good match for those examples with the short horizontal top stroke, e.g. type 1.c graphs, if we allowed for the rotation of their core component. Under [心] *xīn*, we find the form , [息] *xī*, which matches the type 3.b forms with the short horizontal cross, allowing, once again, for the different orientation of the core component.⁷¹

⁷⁰ *Shuo Wen Jie Zi*, p.267 (12a 乚部: 19a).

⁷¹ *Shuo Wen Jie Zi*, p.217 (10b 心部: 10b).

The first of these two characters, [直] *zhí*, is used to denote the word *zhí* {直} “straight” which does not fit the context of the Wenxian texts. The other form may not be immediately recognizable and the *Shuo Wen Jie Zi* gloss leaves one none the wiser, but a dictionary will tell us that [息] *dé* is an “ancient script (*gǔwén* 古文)” form for [德] *dé*.⁷² The standard word denoted by [德] *dé* is *dé* {德} (traditionally translated as “virtue”, “power”, etc.) which fits the context well, giving: “pay due reverence and attention to his *dé*” (*kè shèn qí dé* 恪慎其德).

Let us look at excavated forms of the character [德] *dé* to see whether the Wenxian forms are a good match. For an overview of the development of the character [德] *dé*, see the *Guwenzi Lei Bian* chart for this character and the variant [息], given in Figure 30.⁷³ As an independent character, [直] *zhí* has the following forms:



The only difference between the earliest known forms of [德] *dé* and [直] *zhí* is the addition, in the [德] *dé* graph, of [行] *xíng* or its abbreviated form, [彳] *chì*, suggesting that the [直] *zhí* is phonetic in [德] *dé*. Compare their Old Chinese reconstructions:

⁷² For example: *Ci Yuan*, p.1141.

⁷³ *Guwenzi Lei Bian*, p.118. The *Guwenzi Lei Bian* treats the oracle bone graphs given in the table as early forms of the graph [德] *dé* but note that they should not be considered to denote the word *dé* {德}, which is not attested in Shang period texts. I would like to thank Qiu Xigui with whom I discussed a first draft of the following section on the development of the character [德] *dé*. Personal communication, Beijing, October 27th, 2002.

⁷⁴ Both these oracle bone forms from: *Guwenzi Lei Bian*, p.130.

⁷⁵ *Yin Zhou Jinwen Jicheng*, Vol.8, no.4199.

⁷⁶ *Houma Mengshu*, p.347.

⁷⁷ *Gu Taowen Huibian*, p.422.

德 $dé$ < tok < $*t+k$ ⁷⁸ (端職)

直 $zhí$ < $drik$ < $*drj+k$ ⁷⁹ (定職)

If [直] $zhí$ is phonetic, then, in these early oracle-bone examples of [德] $dé$, the [行] $xíng$, or its abbreviated form, [彳] $chì$, are probably semantic. The oracle-bone form, [𠄎], is not thought to denote the word $dé$ {德}.⁸⁰ In the Zhou period, the form [𠄎] may have been borrowed as a loangraph for $dé$ {德}. The addition of the [心] $xīn$ component may have then functioned to produce a specialized graph for this usage, differentiating it from the loangraph form [𠄎]. Alternatively a phonogram may have been created to denote the word $dé$ {德}, using [𠄎] as a phonetic signifier and [心] $xīn$ as a semantic signifier.

This overview of the forms of the characters [德] $dé$ and [愬] $dé$ allows us to make several observations concerning the Wenxian examples of this graph. For example, none of the Wenxian forms include the component [彳] $chì$, common in other excavated examples of the character. The Wenxian type 1 forms match excavated examples of [直] $zhí$, not [德] $dé$. However, since [直] $zhí$ is phonetic in [德] $dé$, we can assume that it is being used as a phonetic loan for the word $dé$ {德} in these examples.


The type 2 form omits the separate stroke that curves around the left side and base of the core component in most Wenxian examples of the graph. From the *Guwenzi Lei Bian* table for [德] $dé$ and [愬] $dé$ and from the examples of [直] $zhí$ given above, we can see that this stroke was a later addition to the [直] $zhí$ form and that it is not specifically associated with the character [德] $dé$. Thus, in [德] $dé$, it should be considered as part of the [直] $zhí$ component. There is, incidentally, no satisfactory explanation for the addition of this stroke. The type 3

⁷⁸ *A Handbook of Old Chinese Phonology*, p.753.

⁷⁹ *A Handbook of Old Chinese Phonology*, p.809.

⁸⁰ *Jiaguwenzi Gulin*, pp.2250 – 2256. See also: Vassili Kryukov, “Symbols of Power and Communication in Pre-Confucian China ...” pp.322 – 326.

forms match the character [息] *dē*, the attested early variant for [德] *dē*.

The type 4 examples are quite unusual. I suggested above that, among the *Shuo Wen Jie Zi* components, the form , [食] *shí*, is the best match for the right-hand component seen in these graphs. Looking at excavated examples of forms with this component, this seems to be an accurate match:

[飲] *sì*:  鄆子行盆⁸¹  □桐孟  中山王響壺

 蔡侯□固  □君固



Wenxian covenant texts WT4K9 – 273

 Baoshan slip 208⁸²  Baoshan slip 221⁸³

a name:  HM 156:1⁸⁴  HM 156:20  HM 85:33

 HM 198:19  HM 49:1

a name:  HM 152:4⁸⁵

⁸¹ The first five examples are from the *Jinwen Bian*, pp. 359 – 360.


⁸² *Baoshan Chu Jian*, p.140.

⁸³ *Baoshan Chu Jian*, p.41.

⁸⁴ These five examples from: *Houma Mengshu*, p.330.


⁸⁵ *Houma Mengshu*, p.347.

Note that there are two, apparently interchangeable, basic styles for the section of the [食] *shí* component just under its top two strokes: either a single horizontal

line, e.g. the HM 156:1 , or two diagonals which then cross and go on to

form the middle section of the component, e.g. the Baoshan example, .⁸⁶

The Houma characters with this component use the horizontal stroke, as in the HM 156:1 example just given, while the Wenxian components in these variants

of [德] *dé* use the diagonal strokes, e.g.:  (WT5K14 – 3). The Wenxian character [飮] *sì*, on the other hand, may use the horizontal style; the graph is not very legible so it is hard to be certain. Note also that the middle stroke of the middle section of this component in the Wenxian type 4 variants is slanted, something rare in other examples. These are minor calligraphic variants.

Overall, the left-hand component in the type 4 variant of [德] *dé* is a close match for [食] *shí*, allowing us to transcribe the Wenxian graphs directly as [餽], and formally as [饋]. These forms do not occur in lexicons. If we initially suppose that the graph is a variant in the analogous character set for [德] *dé*, then we would expect the [直] *zhí* component to be the phonetic signifier, since we determined above that this is its function in other variant forms used to denote the word *dé* { 德 }. We might, then, expect that the [食] *shí* is acting as a semantic component, creating a phonogram. As a semantic component, [食] *shí* gives connotations related to food, its basic meaning. We do not usually associate the concept *dé* with “food” although one’s *dé* was maintained by making offerings of food to the ancestors, the ancestors, in return, nourishing the *dé* of their living descendants. So, treating [食] *shí* as a semantic component may be possible. We should, however, also consider whether it could be acting as an added phonetic. It is not uncommon, in Warring States graphs, for an extra phonetic component to be added to a graph which is itself composed of a single component acting as a phonetic; He Linyi describes this as a “doubled phonetic” (*shuāngchóng biāoyīn*

⁸⁶ He Linyi makes the same observation in his entry for [食] *shí* in the *Zhanguo Guwen Zidian*, p.65.

雙重標音).⁸⁷ The Old Chinese reconstructions for [食] *shí*, [直] *zhí* and [德] *dé* are:

食 <i>shí</i>	<	<i>zyik</i>	<	* <i>Lj+k</i> ⁸⁸	(船職)
直 <i>zhí</i>	<	<i>drik</i>	<	* <i>drj+k</i> ⁸⁹	(定職)
德 <i>dé</i>	<	<i>tok</i>	<	* <i>t+k</i> ⁹⁰	(端職)

The rhyme groups are identical but the place of articulation of the initials is different so the match is not ideal, although perhaps such leeway was acceptable when using a component as a “doubled phonetic”. And, perhaps the component was also selected with its semantic value in mind, as suggested above.⁹¹

A further possibility is that the graph [𠄎] is not a variant, but denotes a completely different word and is being used as a phonetic loan here. However, as noted above, this form is not seen in lexicons so, in considering such a hypothesis, we could only conjecture as to what word might have originally been denoted by this graph.

We can conclude that, in the Wenxian texts, the variant forms [直], [𠄎] and [德] are all used to denote the word *dé* {德}.

One further point to be made here relates to the issue of transcriptions of ancient forms. This point concerns the rotation of the [目] *mù* component in the character [直] *zhí* and in the component [直] *zhí* as it occurs as a phonetic in [德] *dé* and its variant [𠄎] *dé*. In the *Shuo Wen Jie Zi*, the [目] *mù* component is vertical in the small-seal forms of both [𠄎] *dé* and [直] *zhí*, and this was

⁸⁷ *Zhanguo Wenzi Tonglun*, pp.202 – 203.

⁸⁸ *A Handbook of Old Chinese Phonology*, p.787.

⁸⁹ *A Handbook of Old Chinese Phonology*, p.809.

⁹⁰ *A Handbook of Old Chinese Phonology*, p.753.

⁹¹ For a discussion of phonetic components which also act semantically, see: Qiu Xigui (transl. Gilbert L. Mattos and Jerry Norman), *Chinese Writing*, pp.255 – 257.

maintained in the *kǎishū* script. This rotation did not occur, however, in the *Shuo Wen Jie Zi*'s small-seal form of [德] *dé*, or, indeed, in the *kǎishū* [德] *dé*.⁹²

The rotation of the [目] *mù* component to vertical is occasionally seen in early forms of [直] *zhí*, [惠] *dé* and [德] *dé*, for example:



Examples of [直] *zhí* in the *Qin Han Wei Jin Zhuan-Li Zixing Biao* suggest that during and after the Qin period, this character was always written with the rotated [目] *mù* (see Figure 31). However, it is interesting to see that, during the same periods, the [惠] *dé* and [德] *dé* forms very rarely rotate the [目] *mù* (see the two right-hand sections of Figure 31). The *Shuo Wen Jie Zi*'s use of the independent character [惠] *dé* with the vertical [目] *mù*, rather than what appears to have been the more common form with the horizontal [目] *mù*, suggests that Xu Shen wished to indicate the link between this form and the character [直] *zhí*, its phonetic component, which, by this stage, was always written with the vertical [目] .

From the point of view of transcription methodology, the benefits that sometimes arise from direct transcriptions are evident if we consider the Wenxian type 3 forms, e.g., (WT1K17 – 52). If we only recognized the lower

⁹² *Shuo Wen Jie Zi*, p.43 (2b 彳 部: 9a).

⁹³ These three examples from *Jinwen Bian*, pp.110 – 111.

⁹⁴ *Gu Taowen Huibian*, p.422.

⁹⁵ *Zhanguo Guwen Zidian*, p.67.

component of this form, the [心] *xīn*, we could still produce a direct transcription of this form as [懃] and this is recognizable as the right-hand component of the common character [德] *dé*. This would direct us to the character [德] *dé*, and a little more research would confirm the accuracy of this identification. This demonstrates that, on occasion, a direct transcription can be closer to the *kāishū* form than the formal transcription.

The meaning of the word *dé* {德} will be discussed further in the interpretation section below. Where it occurs in translations of Wenxian texts and cited passages, I give it as “*dé*”.

Graph 4: 𢇛

Direct transcription: [𢇛]

Formal transcription: [𢇛]

Interpretative transcription: *gōng* {供}

English translation: “supply” “contribute” “furnish”

Analysis category: B. Indirect textual evidence supports the interpretation.

Variant forms

1. a.



WT5K1 – 72



WT5K14 – 37

b.



WT5K1 – 69



WT5K1 – 17

c.



WT5K1 – 23



WT5K14 – 2

d.





WT5K14 – 18

e.






WT5K14 – 32

These forms are all very similar: they have a top section made up of two components, one on the right, one on the left, and a bottom-half composed of two identical forms. The greatest variation occurs in the bottom part of the top-left component and the examples above are categorized on this basis. In 1.a the

top-left component is  (WT5K14 – 37) and the bottom part of this is  ; this form is open at its base and there are two short strokes within the form.


These two strokes are usually parallel but note that in the WT5K1 – 72 example the strokes seem to be different lengths; they are angled and they protrude from the right side of the form, not the left as in WT5K14 – 37. The WT5K14 – 37



example,  , has a slight hook at the lower-end of the left-hand stroke. In the 1.b form this stroke is curved and extends down and in, to partly close the mouth of the form, e.g.  (WT5K1 – 69). In 1.c the opening appears to have been

fully closed:  (WT5K1 – 23). This part is not very clear in example 1.d but appears to only have one inner stroke, rather than the two in the above examples:










 (WT5K14 – 18). In the 1.e example the side strokes of this form are similar

in execution to those in the 1.a forms and the inner strokes are similar to the 1.a example WT5K1 – 72, but in 1.e the lower of these two inner-strokes almost


closes off the mouth of this form:  (WT5K14 – 32). As a result this form is somewhat similar to the 1.d example, looking rather like an enclosed form with a single inner stroke.

The bottom component has no significant variation, one example is:  (WT5K1 – 72). There is also little variation in the top-right component, an example is:  (WT5K14 – 37).




Analysis

Looking up these components in the *Shuo Wen Jie Zi* component table, we find the following similar forms. For the top-left component of the type 1.a examples, e.g. the  (WT5K14 – 37), the left-hand side of the *Shuo Wen Jie Zi* component , [龍] *lóng*, is a good match. It is also a reasonable match for this component in the 1.b and 1.c forms, if we allow for the minor variation in the lower side strokes. However, the right side of  [龍] *lóng* is not similar to the top-right component in the Wenxian graph, and the left-hand component of  [龍] *lóng*, i.e. , is not given as an independent component in the *Shuo Wen Jie Zi*. For the top-left component in the 1.d and 1.e examples, the *Shuo Wen Jie Zi* component , [音] *yīn*, is a reasonable match. For the top-right component, the *Shuo Wen Jie Zi* component , [兕] *xìōng* is a good match. For the bottom half of the graph, the *Shuo Wen Jie Zi* component , [艸] *cǎo*, appears to be a good match, but a quick glance at the characters classified under this component shows that it almost always occurs as the top component of a character, not the bottom component. With this in mind, a better match is , [升] *gōng*, a

depiction of two hands holding something up: this usually occurs as a lower component in graphs.

Looking among the characters collected under these components in the *Shuo Wen Jie Zi*, there is no good match for the Wenxian graph. The closest form seems to be , [𠄎] *gōng* but the top-right components do not match.⁹⁶

If we produce direct transcriptions for these forms, we get [𠄎] for the type 1.a forms, and the same for the 1.b and 1.c forms, if we assume the differences in these examples are only minor calligraphic variation. Calligraphic variation almost certainly also explains the 1.d and 1.e forms but if we did not have the other examples to compare with we might transcribe these two with the [音] *yīn* component, giving a direct transcription of [𠄎]. Neither of these forms, [𠄎] or [𠄎], is attested.

Looking for similar forms in the *Han Jian* and *Guwen Sisheng Yun*, under the components so far identified, we do not find any obvious matches. However, in the *Guwen Sisheng Yun*, next to the entry for [龍] *lóng*, we find the form , under [恭] *gōng*.⁹⁷ The right side of this component is similar to the top-right component seen in the Wenxian forms, that we have identified with [兕] *xiōng*. The left side of this component is clearly also similar to the top-left component in the Wenxian forms, only the middle component does not match the Wenxian graph. In the same section of the *Guwen Sisheng Yun*, we find a form under [龔] *gōng*: .⁹⁸ This looks like it could be a corruption of a graph with the same forms as the Wenxian examples: the bottom-right crossed stroke is, for example, probably the right hand of the , [井] *gōng* component identified in the Wenxian graph; the left hand has been omitted, probably confused with the lower part of the top-left form, notice the long stroke in the lower section of that form,

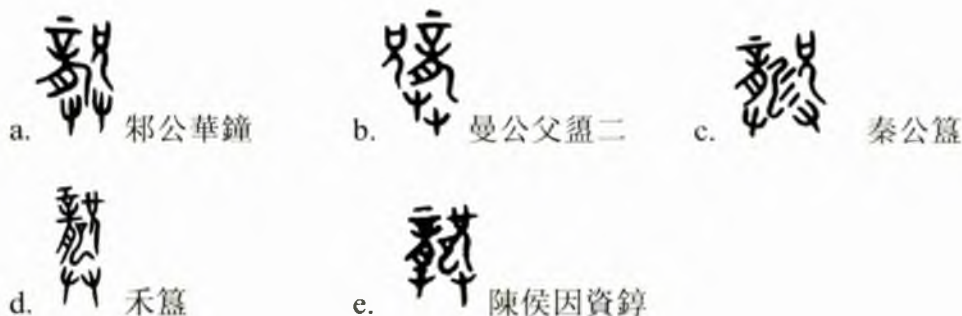
⁹⁶ *Shuo Wen Jie Zi*, p.59 (3a 井部: 21a).

⁹⁷ *Guwen Sisheng Yun*, p. 6 (1:12b).

⁹⁸ *Guwen Sisheng Yun*, p. 6 (1:12b).

probably, in fact, originally part of the left hand of the 𠄎, [升] *gōng*. This suggests that the Wenxian graph may in fact be equivalent to [龔] *gōng*, a variant of the [龔] *gōng* we had rejected as a bad match in the *Shuo Wen Jie Zi*. If this is correct, then the other form we noticed in the *Guwen Sisheng Yun*, the 𠄎 given for *gōng* {恭}, seems to correspond formally to the [龍] *lóng* component of the [龔] *gōng* form, in which case its use to denote *gōng* {恭} is a phonetic loan.

Thus, there is evidence for links between the Wenxian forms and the attested characters [龍] *lóng*, [龔] *gōng*, [恭] *gōng* and [龔] *gōng*. Examples of these characters from other excavated texts provide further relevant material. In the *Jinwen Bian* we find some very close matches under the character [龔] *gōng*:⁹⁹



These are very close to the Wenxian examples. The only difference we see is an additional component in the middle of the c, d and e forms and the long “tail” on the top-left component that we see in examples a and b.

In the *Zhanguo Guwen Zidian*, we find similar examples as well as the following variant form for [龍] *lóng*, from a seal:



This is very similar to the top half of the Wenxian forms, particularly close to the

⁹⁹ *Jinwen Bian*, pp.161 – 162.

¹⁰⁰ *Zhanguo Guwen Zidian*, p.427; *Gu Xi Wen Bian*, p.279.

1.c examples. In the Guodian slips we find the following variant for [龔] *gōng*:



尊德義 slip 34¹⁰¹

Here the top-left component has corrupted into [言] *yán*, a natural progression from the Wenxian 1.d and 1.e forms which, as noted above, are similar to the *Shuo Wen Jie Zi* component [音] *yīn*, which, in turn, only differs from [言] *yán* by a single stroke in the seal-script and other early forms. The top-right component in the Guodian graph, the [巳] *sì*, is not a development of the [兕] *xiōng* we see in the Wenxian forms, but is an earlier corruption we also see in two of the examples from bronzes given above, for example, the centre component in bronze inscription graph (d) given above, from the “He Gui 禾簋”:



. This component is itself a corruption of the “tail” section of the original form.

These examples from excavated materials give very strong support to the identification of the Wenxian form with the character [龔] *gōng*. And they prove that the identification of the top-right hand component as [兕] *xiōng* was correct: compare independent forms of this character in Figure 32.

Looking at the development of the character [龍] *lóng*, as illustrated in the table from the *Guwenzi Lei Bian* (Figure 32), it is clear that the form underwent major corruption during its development. The original graph appears to depict a serpentine form with head and open mouth facing down, and some kind of crest or head piece crowning the form.¹⁰² In the Zhou period the “mouth” section becomes corrupted into a form resembling a [肉] *ròu* component, which continues to develop until, in some examples, this right-side of the graph transmogrifies into the component [言] *yán*. The “serpentine body” and “head”, meanwhile, become detached in some examples and the head transforms into the

¹⁰¹ *Guodian Chu Mu Zhujian*, p.57.

¹⁰² Some argue that this is a phonetic, for example: Peter A. Boodberg, “Some Proleptical Remarks on the Evolution of Archaic Chinese”, p.352.

[巳] *sì*-type form that was noted in examples of [鼻] *gōng*, given above, from bronzes, e.g., (d) (“He Gui 禾簋”) and (e) (“Chen Hou Yin Zi Chun 陳侯因資罍”), and from the Guodian slips.

We can conjecture that the function of the [兄] *xiōng* component found in examples of [龍] *lóng*, and frequently in examples where [龍] *lóng* is used as a phonetic in [鼻] *gōng*,¹⁰³ is as a phonetic signifier, added because no phonetic component is clear in the form [龍] *lóng*. The Old Chinese reconstructions are:

兄 <i>xiōng</i>	<	<i>xjwaeng</i>	<	* <i>hwrjang</i> ¹⁰⁴	(曉陽)
龍 <i>lóng</i>	<	<i>ljowng</i>	<	* <i>C-rjong</i> ¹⁰⁵	(來東)
(c.f.: 龔 <i>gōng</i>	<	<i>kjowng</i>	<	* <i>krjong</i> ¹⁰⁶	(見東))

The main vowels are different and the initials do not share the same place of articulation, the match is not convincing. However, there are examples of contacts between these rhyme groups. For example, in the “Zhongshan Wang Fang Hu 中山王方壺” bronze, we find the characters [工] *gōng* (denoting *gōng* { 功 }), Old Chinese **kong* (*dōng* 東 rhyme group), in a rhyme series with characters in the Old Chinese **ang* (*yáng* 陽) rhyme group, e.g., [尚] *shàng*, [王] *wáng* and [荒] *huāng*.¹⁰⁷ In a corpus of 197 bronze inscriptions, Wolfgang Behr recorded 31 contacts between the *dōng* 東 and *yáng* 陽 rhyme groups in Western Zhou examples and 21 in Eastern Zhou inscriptions. He also notes that the contact is common in Zhongshan, a state in the same region as Jin.¹⁰⁸ Thus, in terms of its rhyme group, [兄] *xiōng* may be suitable as an added phonetic in [龍] *lóng*.¹⁰⁹ However, the non-matching initials are still a problem, unless we

¹⁰³ See *Jinwen Bian*, pp.161 – 162.

¹⁰⁴ *A Handbook of Old Chinese Phonology*, p.798.

¹⁰⁵ *A Handbook of Old Chinese Phonology*, p.774.

¹⁰⁶ *A Handbook of Old Chinese Phonology*, p.270

¹⁰⁷ Chen Shihui, “Jinwen Yun Du Xuji”, p.184.

¹⁰⁸ Wolfgang Behr, personal communication, March 31st, 2004. See: Wolfgang Behr, “Reimende Bronzeinschriften und die Entstehung der chinesischen Endreimdichtung”.

¹⁰⁹ If we disregard the non-matching initials, we can note that the use of 兄 *xiōng* as a phonetic in the initial *l*-word 龍 *lóng* would support Baxter’s reconstruction of medial **r* in division III finals. *A Handbook of Old Chinese Phonology*, pp.258 – 282.

assume that these could be overlooked in the selection of a phonetic component to be added to an already established character.¹¹⁰ He Linyi, on the other hand, suggests that the [兄] *xiōng* is added to [龍] *lóng* as a semantic component, with its meaning “big”, indicating the position of the dragon as first among animals.¹¹¹ Perhaps it has both phonetic and semantic functions in its use here.

Having identified the Wenxian graph with the attested character [龠] *gōng*, we can consider what word it is denoting here. Duan Yucai glosses [龠] *gōng* as a variant character for the word usually denoted with [恭] *gōng*, that is, *gōng* {恭}.¹¹² The word {恭} *gōng* has several definitions: “respectful, courteous”; “respectfully obedient”; “to carry out one’s duties in the required manner” (that is “to act in accordance to one’s duties”).¹¹³ In the context of this Wenxian stipulation, the last definition is the most appropriate:

... 恪慎其德勉恭而/其¹¹⁴主之禱祠 ...

[If the covenantor dare not] pay due reverence and attention to his *de*,
[and] do his utmost to **act in accordance with** the prayers and
sacrifices of the lord, ...

Such an interpretation suggests that the covenantors had some duty to participate in the prayers and sacrifices of the covenant lord. The *Jinwen Changyong Zidian* cites an inscription using [龠] *gōng* in a similar phrase:¹¹⁵

1. Qin Gong Gui 秦公簋 (Early Spring and Autumn 770 – 625 BC)¹¹⁶

嚴龠寅天命。

[Tai Wu 太戊 (Qin ancestor)] treated [Tian’s mandate] with
solemnity, acted in accordance with [Tian’s mandate] and respected
Tian’s mandate.

¹¹⁰ He Linyi argues that in the interchange of phonetic components seen in variant forms of Warring States graphs the phonetic match is often only partial, see his examples: He Linyi, *Zhanguo Wenzhi Tonglun*, pp.210 – 212.

¹¹¹ *Zhanguo Guwen Zidian*, p.427.

¹¹² Duan Yucai, *Shuo Wen Jie Zi Zhu*, p.104.

¹¹³ *Ci Yuan*, p.1121.

¹¹⁴ The stroke between these two characters and line underneath them is used to indicate that this is a lexical variation, the two words interchange in this position.

¹¹⁵ *Jinwen Changyong Zidian*, pp.282 – 283.

¹¹⁶ *Yin Zhou Jinwen Jicheng*, Vol.8, no.4315.

As the *Jinwen Changyong Zidian* points out, the interpretation of this [𠄎] *gōng* as *gōng* { 恭 } is supported by an almost identical phrase in the *Shang Shu*:

2. *Shang Shu* “Wu Yi 無逸 section” (text: Early Western Zhou 1046 – 977 BC)¹¹⁷

嚴恭寅畏天命。

[The Yin king Zhong Zong 中宗] treated [Tian’s mandate] with solemnity, acted in accordance with [Tian’s mandate], respected and revered Tian’s mandate.

Qiu Xigui has suggested that *gōng* { 恭 } in such contexts is equivalent in meaning to { 奉 } *fèng* “to act in accordance with the requirements of...”.¹¹⁸ In these examples, this would mean to act in accordance with Tian’s mandate, to conduct ceremony and government according to its requirements. The Wenxian stipulation requires covenantors to “do your/his utmost to act in accordance with the requirements of the prayers and sacrifices of your/his lord”. Again, this suggests that there were certain duties related to these ceremonies that were to be performed by the covenantors.

So, interpreting the Wenxian [𠄎] *gōng* as *gōng* { 恭 } with the meaning “to act in accordance with the requirements of...” seems fitting. This was my initial conclusion. However, as I considered what specific duties might have been required of the covenantors in relation to the prayers and sacrifices of the covenant lord, another possible interpretation became apparent. This will be discussed in the following section.

¹¹⁷ *Shisan Jing Zhushu*, p.221. For dating see: Michael Loewe ed., *Early Chinese Texts*, p.379. Note that several modern editions annotations of the *Shang Shu* punctuate before the “天命”, for example the *Shang Shu Zhengdu* 尚書正讀. I am following the punctuation in the *Shisan Jing Zhushu*, p. 221.

¹¹⁸ Lecture, autumn 1997, Peking University.

3.2.1.2 Discussion and explication of the phrase

Based on the above analysis, the standard wording of the section of text discussed above from Oath type 7 tablets is as follows:

Oath Type 7: stipulation II.B

恪慎其德勉~~而~~其主之禱祠 (WT5K1)
 恪慎其德以勉其主之禱祠 (WT5K14)

[If the covenantor dare not] pay due reverence and attention to his *de*, and do his utmost to act in accordance with the requirements of your/his lord's prayers and sacrifices, ...

In the following section, I consider how the use of similar language in other texts supports or raises doubts about this interpretation and how those texts lead us to a deeper understanding of these brief stipulations. The result of this research will suggest a slightly different interpretation of this text.

Before considering similar passages from other texts, I will consider variations in wording found in this phrases among the Wenxian tablets belonging to oath type 7.

Oath Type 7: Variations in wording

1. Interchange between pronouns *qí* 其 and *ér* 而.

Amongst the WT5K1 tablets, the only common variation in wording we see is the interchange between “your lord” (*ér zhǔ* 而主) and “his lord” (*qí zhǔ* 其主). This reflects the rather fluid usage in the covenant tablets of pronouns referring to the covenantor. In the Houma and Wenxian covenants, the covenantor is commonly referred to either in the third person or the second: we see the third person object pronoun *zhī* 之 “him” and we see *qí* 其 functioning as a third person possessive pronoun, “his”, but we also see *rǔ* 汝 (written with [女] *nǚ*),

second person pronoun (used as object pronoun), “you”, and *ér 而*, functioning as a second person possessive pronoun, “your”. There are even examples of the first person pronoun *chén 臣*, found in the phrase: 諦亟視臣 *dì jí shì chén* (“observe and immediately detect me”). That gives us a full set of singular pronouns, first, second and third, all used to describe the covenantor. Furthermore, different pronouns can occur within a single tablet, this was the case in the example of a WT5K1 oath type 7 text I gave at the beginning of this section, tablet WT5K1 – 23/23.5: it uses “his *de*” (*qí dé 其德*), “your lord” (*er zhǔ 而主*) and “observe and immediately detect him” (*dì jí shì zhī*).

The selection of the pronouns does not follow any obvious pattern. Its arbitrary nature may suggest that it reflects an oral dimension to the covenant ceremony in which different people may have been reading out the contents of the covenant at different times or different sections may have been read out by different people, or read out, for example, by an official of the covenant lord, then repeated by the covenantor. Each speaker may have adjusted the pronoun as appropriate. The scribes may thus have felt they could be free with pronoun usage in the texts.

One interesting point in this particular phrase is that in the WT5K1 examples the interchange between “其” and “而” is only seen with the phrase “而/其主” and never with the “his *de*” (*qí dé 其德*). This point is further discussed below.

2. Omission of *zhī 之* in the phrase 主之禱祠 *zhǔ zhī dǎocí*

In tablet WT5K1 – 23/23.5, the full text of which I gave at the beginning of this section, the *zhī 之* normally seen in the phrase “the lord’s prayers and sacrifices” is omitted, giving 主禱祠 *zhǔ dǎocí*. The *zhī 之* functions to indicate subordination between nouns and is commonly omitted.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁹ Edwin G. Pulleyblank, *Outline of Classical Chinese Grammar*, p.61.

3. Addition of *bù* 不

In tablet WT5K1 – 20 a *bù* 不 is added at the beginning of the second stipulation, II.B. The first stipulation appears to omit *gǎn* 敢:

- I. □□以往□
 II.A 不□焉恪慎其德
 II.B 不□□□□□
 III. □公大塚
 IV. 諦亟視之靡夷彼氏

Assuming the lacunae following the *bù* in stipulation II.B are the standard formula, then the extra *bù* repeats the *bù* which begins the first stipulation and which, in the standard wording, functions to negate both stipulations. The overall meaning of the stipulations is not affected.

4. Omission of *miǎn* 勉 “to do one’s utmost”

Tablets WT5K14 – 9 and WT5K14 – 23 omit the *miǎn* 勉, giving: 恪慎其德以辨其主之禱祠. The *miǎn* 勉 is adverbial “do one’s utmost to”, the sentence works perfectly well without it.

5. Omission of *yǐ miǎn* 以勉 and *cí* 祠

Tablet WT5K14 – 2 omits both *yǐ miǎn* 以勉 “and do one’s utmost to” and *cí* 祠 “sacrifices”: 恪慎其德辨其主之禱. The *yǐ* 以 is not seen in the type 7 oaths from WT5K1 so it is clearly not considered essential. The *miǎn* we have just discussed. The omission of *cí* 祠 “sacrifices” leaves *dǎo* 禱 “prayers”. As we discuss below, *dǎo* 禱 “prayers” often incorporate a sacrificial element so the single word gives a similar meaning to the phrase *dǎoci* 禱祠. Its omission could also be scribal error.

6. Omission of *qí* 其 and *zhī* 之 in 其主之禱祠 *qí zhǔ zhī dǎoci*

Tablet WT5K14 – 32 omits the *qí* 其 and *zhī* 之 in 其主之禱祠 *qí zhǔ zhī dǎoci*. The omission of subordinating *zhī* 之 was discussed in 2 above. The

omission of the pronoun *qí* 其 just changes the phrase from “his lord” to “the lord”.

7. Omission of *qí* 其 in 恪慎其德 *kè shèn qí dé*

Tablet WT5K14 – 40 omits the *qí* 其 in 恪慎其德 *kè shèn qí dé*. It seems likely that this is a scribal error since we only see this one example. If not, this would be significant since it would give us: “Pay due reverence and attention to *de*” as opposed to the standard “Pay due reverence and attention to his *de*”. The *de*, which I have understood to be the personal *de* of the covenantor, bestowed on him by his ancestors and specific to his clan, would become non-specific, a general *de*. However, since this phrase is formulaic and almost always does have the *qí*, we can be reasonably confident that this is a scribal error.

We should mention that there is a badly damaged tablet from another pit, pit WT3K6, which appears to have a second stipulation similar to that of the Type 7 oath. The tablet is WT3K6 – 16 and an interpretative transcription, with no punctuation, gives:

☐☐☐自☐☐往☐敢☐☐☐☐
☐其德☐☐☐主禱☐☐☐

The legible graphs in the second line of the text correspond to the section of text we have been looking at here from Oath Type 7. Filling in the lacunae on this basis gives: 〈恪慎〉其德 〈勉龔而〉主禱 〈祠〉. If this is an Oath Type 7 tablet, this category of texts is seen in three different pits.

I will now look in detail at the meaning of this section of the text. In the following discussion I will consider not only the Type 7 oaths but also Type 3 oaths (found in pit WT1K17) since they appear to be making similar demands on the covenantor and share the phrase “pay due reverence and attention to his *de*” (恪慎其德 *kè shèn qí dé*). The relevant section in Oath Type 3 is:

Oath Type 3: stipulation II.B

恪慎其德以徼主福

[If the covenantor dare not] pay due reverence and attention to his *de* in order to seek blessings for the lord.

It seems that the purpose of both Oath Types 3 and 7 is to make the covenantors play their part to ensure that the covenant lord receives blessings from the spirits. The Type 3 oath demands that the covenantor “seeks blessings for the lord” and “blessings” are bestowed by the spirits. The Type 7 oath requires that the covenantors do their utmost to assist the “prayers and sacrifices” of the lord. The recipients of prayer and sacrifice are the spirits and the spirits respond with “blessings”. Thus the basic aim of the two oaths appears to be the same: to keep the spirits content so that they will bless the covenant lord. What this meant in practice will be further discussed below.

I will look at each of the three clauses used in the sections of text I am concerned with from these two oath types:

1. 恪慎其德 *kè shèn qí dé*: occurs in stipulation II.A in Oath Types 7 and 3.
2. 以徼主福 *yǐ jiǎo zhǔ fú*: stipulation II.B of Oath Type 3.
3. 勉彛而/其主之禱祠 *miǎn gōng ér/qí zhǔ zhī dǎocí*: stipulation II.B in Oath Type 7.

3.2.1.2.1 恪慎其德 *kè shèn qí dé* (Type 7 and Type 3, from stipulation II.A)

In the analysis section for *kè* {恪} I gave Karlgren’s gloss for this word, “respect, reverent”, and noted that, while most dictionaries define the word as “to be respectful” (*gōngjìng* 恭敬), some include with this the further definition “to be prudent” (*jǐnshèn* 謹慎). I have been translating the word as it occurs in this phrase as “to pay due reverence [... to his *de*]”. The word “to revere” implies a respect resulting from awe, from fear, and gives the sense of respect with

prudence suggested by the Chinese definition which includes both ideas. Let us look at the use of the word in other early texts.

As discussed in the analysis section, I do not find any conclusive evidence for the use of the word *ke* { 恪 } in any excavated text apart from the Wenxian tablets. In received texts, however, we find the following relevant examples:

1. *Guo Yu* “Jin Yu 5 晉語五” (text: late 5th – 4th century BC) (event: late 7th century BC)¹²⁰

公曰：“子何以知其賢也？”對曰：“臣見其不忘敬也。夫敬，德之恪也。恪于德以臨事，其何不濟！”

The lord said: “How do you know of his virtue and talent?” [his interlocutor] replied: “I have seen that he does not forget respect. This respect is the **reverence** associated with *de*. [Since he] **pays due reverence** towards *de* in overseeing matters, in what will he not succeed?”

Note the collocation of *ke* { 恪 } “reverence” with *de* { 德 } here. Being reverent towards *de* is considered to be the essence of respect and, furthermore, it is an attitude which, if adopted, will bring one success in one’s undertakings. This helps us understand the use of the phrase 恪慎其德 *ke shèn qí dé* in the Wenxian texts: the covenant lord is demanding that the covenantors have this respectful, conscientious attitude to the carrying out of the requirements he gives in the second clause in these stipulations, e.g. the performing of ritual duties related to his (the lord’s) sacrifices.

The following example defines *ke* 恪, so we will not translate the term:

2. *Guo Yu* “Zhou Yu Zhong 周語中” (text: late 5th – 4th century BC) (event: 599 BC)¹²¹

恪所以守業也，。。。以恪守業則不解，。。。。

¹²⁰ *Guo Yu*, p.393. The dating of the event is based on the reign of Duke Wen (Wén Gōng 文公) who is talking in this section, he ruled 626 – 619 BC.

¹²¹ *Guo Yu*, p.76. The date of the event based on a date in the passage for Duke Ding (Dìng Gōng 定公)’s eighth year.

kè 恪 is the means by which one perseveres with one's task, ... if one perseveres with one's task with *kè* 恪, then one will not slacken, ...

This defines *kè* {恪} as that which allows one to persist with a task; it is that which brings steadfastness. This sounds like a definition of conscientiousness, of paying attention to carrying out one's duties. This is the kind of usage of the word which perhaps explains why some dictionaries include the idea of "to be prudent, careful" in their definition of the word. This example contrasts *kè* {恪} with *jiě* 解 "to be slack, loose": *kè* {恪}, in contrast, is constant vigilance.

These passages are from texts compiled in the Warring States period and purporting to record events taking place in the late Spring and Autumn period, so this puts them broadly in the same period as the Wenxian tablets. In these passages the term *kè* {恪} is a reverent attitude. It is conscientiousness, diligence, vigilance, and is associated with carrying out one's duties. It is the correct attitude to adopt when working on a task. Its opposite is negligence, inattention, laxness.

Considering the Wenxian phrase in light of these passages, allows us to better understand the relationship between *kè* {恪} and *dé* {德}. *De* is not only something which needs to be treated with awe and reverence, it also needs to be constantly tended to and nurtured: if one slackens, *de* can be lost. This attitude towards *de* is the key to successfully carrying out one's duties. The full first stipulation in Oath Type 3 is:

事其主，敢不口焉判其腹心恪慎其德

In serving his lord, [if] he dare not ____ ly [?] split open his gut and heart [i.e. display true loyalty] and pay due reverence and attention to his *de*

This demands that the covenantor carry out his responsibilities to the lord loyally and conscientiously. The specific duties required in the oath are then spelt out in the second stipulation.

The word *shèn* {慎} follows *kè* {恪} in this phrase, 恪慎其德 *kè shèn qí dé*. In the palaeographic analysis section for *kè* {恪}, I noted some similarity in the definitions of these two words: *kè* {恪} “to be prudent, to be respectful, to be reverent” and *shèn* {慎} “to be careful/cautious, to be scrupulous and conscientious”. Our revised understanding of *kè* {恪}, with its connotations of conscientiousness, diligence and vigilance, further support this observation and the suggestion that they may have been placed together to reinforce each other and form a compound phrase. Before coming to a conclusion on this point, let us look at the use of *shèn* {慎}, especially its use in the phrase *shèn dé* 慎德, in early excavated and received texts. In these examples I will continue to translate the term as “to pay heed to” or “to pay attention to”.

The collocation of *shèn* 慎 and *dé* 德 is common in bronze inscriptions and received texts. Chen Jian, in his paper on *shèn* 慎, gives many examples. Below are a selection of these, with English translation added, along with several additional passages:

3. Shi Wang Ding 師望鼎 (Mid Western Zhou 976 – 878 BC)¹²²

大師小子師望曰：“丕顯皇考亮公穆穆克明厥心，慎厥德，用辟于先王，晷屯亡敗。”

Grand Commander, branch lineage head, Shi Wang, said: “Resplendent, mighty father, Duke ____, sublimely [he] was able to make clear his heart, **paying due attention to his *de***, in this way serving the former king, ____ [晷屯] without anxiety.”

4. Ke Ding 克鼎 (Late Western Zhou 877 – 771 BC)¹²³

克曰：“穆穆朕文祖師華父恩(聽)口(讓(?))厥心，寔靜于猷，淑慎厥德，肆克彛保厥辟恭王。”

Ke said: “Sublime [was] my cultured ancestor, Shi Hua Fu, opening and yielding his heart/mind, placid and quiet in his enterprise, properly

¹²² *Yin Zhou Jinwen Jicheng*, Vol.5, no.2812.

¹²³ *Yin Zhou Jinwen Jicheng*, Vol. 5, no. 2836.

paying due attention to his *de*, thus able to respectfully protect his lord, King Gong.”

5. Liang Qi Zhong 梁其鐘 (Late Western Zhou 877 – 771 BC)¹²⁴

梁其曰：“丕顯皇祖考穆穆異異，克慎厥德，農臣先王，曷屯敗。”

Liang Qi said: “Resplendent, mighty grandfather and father, sublime, respectful, able to **pay due attention to their *de***, diligently acting as servants to the former kings, _____ [曷屯] without anxiety.”

6. Jing Ren Ning Zhong 井人安鐘 (Late Western Zhou 877 – 771 BC)¹²⁵

井人安曰：“口淑文祖皇考，克慎厥德，曷屯用魯，永終于吉。”

Jing Ren Ning said: “Resplendent [口], beautiful, cultured grandfather and mighty father, able to **pay due attention to their *de***, ... [曷屯] thus good, forever ending in auspiciousness.

7. Pan Sheng Gui 番生簋 (Late Western Zhou 877 – 771 BC)¹²⁶

丕顯皇祖考穆穆，克慎厥德。

Resplendent, mighty grandfather and father, sublime, **able to pay due attention to their *de***.

8. Shu Jia Fu Yi 叔家父匜 (Early Spring and Autumn 770 – 625 BC)¹²⁷

用祈眉考無疆，慎德不亡。

Use [this vessel] to pray for long life without limit, **pay due attention to *de***, not losing [it].

9. Shang Shu “Wen Hou Zhi Ming 文侯之命” (text: 770 – 625 BC) (event: mid-7th century BC)¹²⁸

丕顯文武，克慎明德。

Resplendent Wen and Wu, [they] were able to **pay due attention to bright *de***.

¹²⁴ *Yin Zhou Jinwen Jicheng*, Vol. 1, no.192.

¹²⁵ *Yin Zhou Jinwen Jicheng*, Vol. 1, no.109.1.

¹²⁶ *Yin Zhou Jinwen Jicheng*, Vol. 8, no.4326.

¹²⁷ *Yin Zhou Jinwen Jicheng*, Vol. 9, no.4615.

¹²⁸ *Shisan Jing Zhushu*, p.253. For dating see: Michael Loewe ed., *Early Chinese Texts*, p.380.

10. *Mo Zi* “Fei Ming Xia 非命下” (text: late 5th – 2nd century BC)
(quoted text: Western Zhou, 1046 - 771)¹²⁹

禹之《總德》有之，曰：“允不著，惟天民不而葆。既防凶心，天加之咎。不慎厥德，天命焉葆？”

The *Zong De* of Yu has this, it says: “If honesty is not adhered to, Tian’s people cannot be protected. Guarding against an evil heart, Tian will send down misfortune. If one does not **pay attention to one’s de**, how can Tian’s mandate be preserved?

11. *Yi Zhou Shu* “Cheng Dian 程典” (text: 4th – 3rd century BC) (quoted text: mid 11th century BC)¹³⁰

慎德德開，開乃無患。慎德必躬恕，恕以明德。

Paying due attention to de, *de* will be unobstructed; once unobstructed, there will be no distress. **Paying due attention to de** one will inevitably be benevolent; being benevolent will illuminate *de*.

12. *Yi Li* “Shi Guan Li 士冠里” (text: 2nd century BC)¹³¹

敬爾威儀，淑慎爾德，眉壽萬年，永受胡福。

Respect your solemn majesty, conscientiously **pay due attention to your de**, live for ten thousand years, forever receive great blessings.

13. *Zhou Li* “Di Guan 地官, Da Si Tu 大司徒” (text: 2nd century BC)¹³²

十有一曰以賢制爵，則民慎德。

The eleventh [lesson] is: If you establish the aristocratic system based on virtue and talent, then the people will **pay due attention to de**.

14. *Li Ji* “Da Xue 大學” (1st century AD)¹³³

是故君子先慎乎德。

This is why the gentleman first **pays due attention to de**.

¹²⁹ *Mo Zi Jiangu*, pp.280 – 281. For the dating of the text see: Michael Loewe ed., *Early Chinese Texts*, pp.336 – 338. Chen Jian suggests the quoted text would have been of Western Zhou origins, see: Chen Jian, “Shuo Shen”.

¹³⁰ *Yi Zhou Shu Hui Jiao Jizhu*, p.180. For dating of the *Yi Zhou Shu*, see: Michael Loewe ed., *Early Chinese Texts*, pp.230 – 231. For dating of this passage see: *Yi Zhou Shu Hui Jiao Jizhu*, p.176.

¹³¹ *Shisan Jing Zhushu*, p.957. For the dating see: Michael Loewe ed., *Early Chinese Texts*, pp.237 – 238. Note that the *Yi Li* almost certainly contains pre-Han materials, this may be such an example.

¹³² *Zhou Li Zheng Yi*, p.705. For dating see: Michael Loewe ed., *Early Chinese Texts*, pp.25 – 29.

¹³³ *Li Ji Yi Jie*, p.905. For dating see Michael Loewe ed., *Early Chinese Texts*, pp.293 – 295.

15. *Fa Yan* “Fa Yan Yi Shu 5 法言義疏五” (text: AD 9)¹³⁴

君子微慎厥德，悔吝不至，何元傲之有？

If the gentleman pays little **attention to his *de***, if he does not come to regret this, what great evil is there?

16. *Kong Zi Jia Yu* “Guan Zhou 觀周” (text: 3rd century AD)¹³⁵

濫恭慎德，使人慕之。

Mild and respectful, **paying due attention and reverence to *de***, [this] caused people to admire him.

Note how, in many of these inscriptions, the nobles, for whom the bronzes were made, are praising their ancestors, recording how each of the ancestors “paid due attention to his *de*” and was thus better able to serve his king. This is true also of the *Shang Shu* passage, example 9. Example 8 tells us that *de* may be lost if due attention is not paid to it (*shèn dé bù wáng* 慎德不亡). The *Mo Zi* example, 10, which quotes from a lost work, possibly a Western Zhou text, warns that if one does not pay due attention to *de*, one risks losing the mandate of Tian to rule. These examples illustrate that *de* was something which spanned the human and spirit world and that Tian and the ancestors expected the living to pay heed to their *de*. If they did not, they faced the possibility that they who had bestowed *de* would take it away. If *de* is properly nurtured however, one receives blessings; this is suggested by the *Yi Li* example in which “attending to one’s *de*” is mentioned alongside “forever receive great blessings”. *De*, spirits and blessings were a set of related concepts.

In the later examples, however, i.e. those from the *Zhou Li* (13), *Li Ji* (14) (from the “Da Xue 大學”), the *Fa Yan* (15) and the *Kong Zi Jia Yu* (16), there is a clear change in the concept of *de* reflecting the evolution, discussed in the Literature Survey, from what Waley calls the “auguristic-sacrificial” period to the moral stage of society. In these examples *de* has become a characteristic of one’s

¹³⁴ *Fa Yan Yi Shu*, p.107. For dating see: Michael Loewe ed., *Early Chinese Texts*, p.101.

¹³⁵ *Kong Zi Jia Yu Jun*, p.552.

personal morals: the connection to ancestors, serving a lord, spirits and blessings, is gone.

The Wenxian Oath Types 3 and 7 are clearly products of the “auguristic-sacrificial” society, not the moral stage which followed. As with the bronze inscriptions, in the Wenxian tablets it is also the case that “paying due attention to one’s *de*” (*shèn qí dé* 慎其德) is essential in the serving of one’s lord. Other phrases found in the first stipulation of the Type 3 and Type 7 oaths require the covenantor to “serve his lord” (*shì qí zhǔ* 事其主), and “split open his gut and heart [i.e. display true loyalty]” (*pàn qí fùxīn* 判其腹心). The second stipulations give specific tasks of service, in the case of the Type 3 oaths this is, “to seek blessings for the lord, ...” and in the case of Type 7 oaths, “to act in accordance with the requirements of his/your lord’s prayers and sacrifices, ...”. As in the bronze inscriptions, the concepts of *de*, service to one’s lord, sacrifice and blessings, are brought together in both of these Wenxian covenants.

Let us now return to the question of how we are to interpret the two words, *kè* 恪 and *shèn* 慎, as they are paired in the Wenxian tablets. In the analysis section above, I observed that the combination *kè shèn* 恪慎 is rare: I found only one example and that was in the forged “ancient script” *Shang Shu*. I also gave an example of a very similar phrase, *kè jǐn* :

17. *Shang Shu* “Pan Geng 盤庚” (text: 14th – 11th century BC) (event: c.1300 BC)¹³⁶

先王有服。恪謹天命。

The former kings had undertakings, [and] **paid due reverence and attention to Tian’s mandate.**

This phrase, 恪謹天命 *kè jǐn tiānmìng* (“paid due reverence and attention to Tian’s mandate”), is very similar to the Wenxian phrase 恪慎其德 *kè shèn qí dé*. The words *jǐn* 謹 and *shèn* 慎 are very close in meaning. The *Shuo Wen Jie Zi*

¹³⁶ *Shisan Jing Zhushu*, p.168.

glosses each as the other: “謹，慎也。”; “慎，謹也。”¹³⁷ In the poem “Yi 抑”, from the “Da Ya 大雅” section of the *Shi Jing*, we find the line *jǐn ěr hóu dù* 謹爾侯度 (“Take heed of the rule of your lords”); both the *Zuo Zhuan* and the *Jin Shu* 晉書 quote the line using *shèn* 慎 in place of *jǐn* 謹.¹³⁸ The concepts of “Tian’s mandate” 天命 and *de* 德 are also closely linked. As Vassili Kryukov has shown, Tian’s mandate is a gift of awesome power which links Shang Di 上帝 (or Tian 天) and the ruler; *de* 德 is an awesome power linking a clan’s dead ancestors to their living descendants.¹³⁹ Both Tian’s mandate and *de* need constant nurturing or they will be lost: this is what is being referred to in the phrases “pay due reverence and attention to Tian’s mandate” and “pay due reverence and attention to *de*”. The “Pan Geng” section of the *Shang Shu*, from which the quote above is taken, is considered to be a work of the early Western Zhou, or before, so this concept clearly has a very early origin. The terms *kè jǐn* 恪謹 and *kè shèn* 恪慎 are identical in meaning.

Syntactically speaking, in the Wenxian texts, we can either treat both words, *kè* 恪 and *shèn* 慎, as verbs or treat the *kè* 恪 as adverbial. From the above examples, it seems that *kè* 恪 is syntactically flexible, acting nominally, verbally and as an adjective. It is used adverbially in phrases like *kèshǒu* 恪守 “to reverently observe [rules, etc.]”. We do not seem to find it directly taking an object. For example, we do not see *kè dé* 恪德, although we do see *kè yú dé* 恪于德. Earlier, I noted that *kè* 恪 is glossed as “to be respectful, to be reverent”, as well as “to be prudent” and thus is at least partly synonymous with *shèn* 慎 with its meaning of “to be careful/cautious, to be scrupulous and conscientious”. Collocated with *de*, they express the idea that *de* must be treated as something that can be lost, that can slip away, but also something that demands awe and

¹³⁷ *Shuo Wen Jie Zi*, p.52 (3a 言部: 6b) and p.217 (10b 心部:10b).

¹³⁸ *Guzi Tongjia Huidian*, p.91.

¹³⁹ Vassili Kryukov, “Symbols of Power and Communication in Pre-Confucian China ...”. Kryukov writes: “The dynamism of *de* reveals the hierarchical structure of the universe and thus signifies a communicative medium which ensures the integrity of the social system and makes possible communications within it. ... The category *tian ming* 天命 should be interpreted in the same way. Its frequent translation as ‘the mandate of Heaven’ tends to superfluous objectification of this concept. Its implication, however, is not a transmission or a removal of something, but the possibility or impossibility of sacred communion with Heaven” (p.330). The concept of *de* is further discussed below, section 3.2.1.2.4.

reverence, a great power graciously bestowed by one's ancestors. An English translation needs to capture this meaning. If we take the *kè* 恪 adverbially we can translate *kèshèn* 恪慎 as “reverently pay due attention to”, if verbally then, as I have been doing above, as “pay due reverence and attention to”.

The *dé* 德 that ends the Wenxian phrase, 恪慎其德 *kè shèn qí dé*, is discussed further below, but the *qí* 其 that comes before it should be briefly mentioned. The standard use of the word *qí* 其 is as the third-person possessive pronoun, “his/hers/its/their”. Thus, the obvious interpretation of this word in the Wenxian phrase is “his/her”, referring back to the covenantor named at the beginning of the oath. This would then be functioning in the same way as the *qí* 其 that is found in the following clauses in the Type 7 and Type 3 oaths, in the term *qí zhǔ* 其主 “his lord”. However, as I mentioned earlier, we sometimes find *qí zhǔ* 其主 replaced with *ér zhǔ* 而主 “your lord”, but we never find the *qí dé* 其德 with the variation *ér dé* 而德. What does this tell us about the *qí* 其 of *qí dé* 其德?

One explanation is that *kè shèn qí dé* 恪慎其德 was a stock formulaic phrase and thus less open to lexical variation. This theory is supported by its usage in two different oath types, Type 3 and Type 7, as well as its similarity to the phrase *shèn jué dé* 慎厥德, commonly found in bronze inscriptions.

Another possibility, to explain the lack of any variant using *ér* 而 in place of *qí* 其, is that *qí* 其 is not functioning as a third-person possessive pronoun in this phrase but as a demonstrative. Pulleyblank notes such usage in Warring States texts and describes it as “more or less equivalent to the definite article”.¹⁴⁰ If we read the Wenxian phrase *qí dé* 其德 in this way, that would give us “the *de*”. The contrast between “his *de*” and “the *de*” would be worth considering carefully since it could affect our understanding of the nature of *de*: if *de* is a power linking the living with their ancestors, then the term “his *de*” suggests that

¹⁴⁰ Edwin G. Pulleyblank, *Outline of Classical Chinese Grammar*, p.80.

each person has a share of this *de*, somehow associated with him or her as an individual. The term “the *de*” suggests there is no personal aspect to *de*, that *de* is a singular, uniform power, linked to the clan as a whole, a force to which the individual can only cling for fear of losing contact with the clan and its ancestors.

A factor which appears, however, to oppose taking this *qí* 其 as demonstrative, is the rarity of this usage in texts we would consider contemporary with the Wenxian tablets. Cui Yongdong 崔永東’s book on function words in Zhou bronzes does not give this usage, nor does an article by Zhu Qizhi 朱其智 on the use of *qí* 其 in bronze inscriptions.¹⁴¹ There are two bronze-inscription examples of this usage in the *Jinwen Xing Yi Tong Jie* but they are late.¹⁴² Examples of this usage in received texts, found in other works on function words, tend to be from Warring States or later works.¹⁴³ Thus, in the context of the archaic, formulaic language of the Wenxian texts, such an interpretation seems unlikely. Note, also, that if the Wenxian phrase is a reworking of the earlier *shèn jué dé* 慎厥德, then the *qí* 其 is equivalent to *jué* 厥 which, in the context in which the phrase is found in the bronze inscriptions, also seems to make best sense taken as the third-person possessive pronoun, “his”.¹⁴⁴

In conclusion, the comparative evidence tends to support the interpretation of the *qí* 其 in this Wenxian phrase as the third-person possessive pronoun “his/her”, in which case the absence of lexical variation in the pronoun, common elsewhere in the texts, is best explained by the formulaic nature of the phrase.

Our final translation of the phrase, *kè shèn qí dé* 恪慎其德, is “pay due reverence and attention to his *de*”.

¹⁴¹ Cui Yongdong, *Liang Zhou Jinwen Xuci Ji Shi*, pp.31 – 35 and pp.135 – 138; Zhu Qizhi, “Xi Zhou Jinwen ‘Qi’ De Gewei Yanjiu”.

¹⁴² *Jinwen Xing Yi Tong Jie*, p.1078.

¹⁴³ For example: He Leshi et.al., *Gudai Hanyu Xuci Tong Shi*, p.415.

¹⁴⁴ *Jinwen Xing Yi Tong Jie*, pp.2927 – 2928.

3.2.1.2.2 以徼主福 *yǐ jiǎo zhǔ fú*
(Type 3, stipulation II.B)

The word *jiǎo* {徼} “to seek” is not found in oracle bones or bronze inscriptions. In bronze inscriptions other verbs collocate with *fú* {福} “blessings” to express the seeking and receiving of blessings. These verbs include: *tǎo* {妥} “to let down”; *jiàng* {降} “to descend”; *shòu* {受} “to receive”; *gài* {匄} “to seek”; *qǐ* {祈} “to request [of the spirits]”.¹⁴⁵ For example:

18. Jing Ren Ning Zhong 井人晏鐘 (Late Western Zhou 877 – 771 BC)¹⁴⁶

前文人其嚴在上，𦉳𦉳𦉳𦉳降余厚多福無疆。

Former cultured ancestors, august on high, ___ [sound of resounding bells] **bestow on me great blessings** without limit.

19. Xing Zhong 𦉳鐘 (Late Western Zhou 877 – 771 BC)¹⁴⁷

𦉳𦉳𦉳𦉳融妥厚多福，廣啟𦉳身，□于永命，𦉳受余爾(爾)□福。

___ [sound of resounding bells] ___ [融] **let down great blessings**, greatly inspire Xing, ___ [□] in eternal life, **bestow on me abundant and ___ [□] blessings.**

20. Qin Gong Bo 秦公罍 (Spring and Autumn 770 – 746 BC)¹⁴⁸

曰：“余惟小子，穆穆帥秉明德，𦉳敷明型，虔敬朕祀，以受多福。”

[The Duke of Qin] said: “I am insignificant, [I] sublimely abide by and grasp bright *de*, wisely spread [the ancestors’] shining example, sincerely respect my sacrifices, in order to **receive great blessings.**”

This last example demonstrates that receiving blessings is a direct result of attending to one’s sacrifices. It mentions two further duties, “abiding by and grasping *de*” and spreading the example of the ancestors, that must also be

¹⁴⁵ *Qingtongqi Mingwen Jiansuo*, pp.25 – 27.

¹⁴⁶ *Yin Zhou Jinwen Jicheng*, Vol. 1, no.109.1.

¹⁴⁷ *Yin Zhou Jinwen Jicheng*, Vol. 1, no.246.

¹⁴⁸ *Yin Zhou Jinwen Jicheng*, Vol. 1, no. 270.1.

successfully carried out in order to attract those blessings. Notice how the term “grasp *de*” implies again that, if not attended to, *de* may slip away. Perhaps the connection to one’s ancestors through the *de* they bestowed on one was what allowed one to act as they had done and thus emulate their success and spread their good example.

21. Qi You 敝卣 (Early Western Zhou 1046 – 977 BC)¹⁴⁹

作祖丁寶旅尊彝用勺魯福。

[I] make this *lu zun* vessel for ancestor Ding to use **to seek great blessings**.

The vessel is to be used for sacrifice to the ancestors in the hope they will bless one in return.

These examples from bronzes illustrate the preoccupation with the wish for blessings and some of the means by which one attracted blessings. These include keeping a tight hold on one’s *de* and presenting sacrificial offerings to the ancestors. We see the same ideas in the Type 3 and Type 7 Wenxian covenants, the main topics of which are attending to one’s *de*, and sacrifice in pursuit of blessings. However, there are fundamental differences between the bronze inscriptions and the tablets. In the bronzes, the maker of the vessel is proudly referring to his own dutiful behavior and that of his ancestors, his aim to secure blessings for himself. In contrast, in the covenants, the covenantors are compelled to act in order that the covenant lord might be blessed.

The *jiǎo* { 徼 } “to seek” and the *fú* { 福 } “blessings” are not found together in later excavated texts either. In received texts, however, especially the *Zuo Zhuan*, the two are often seen in combination, for example:

22. Zuo Zhuan Xi 僖 4.1 (text: 5th – 4th century BC) (event: 656 BC)¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁹ *Yin Zhou Jinwen Jicheng*, Vol. 10, no.5410.

¹⁵⁰ *Chunqiu Zuo Zhuan Zhu*, p.292.

齊侯曰：“豈不穀是為？先君之好是繼，與不穀同好如何？”對曰：“君惠徼福於敝邑之社稷，辱收寡君，寡君之願也。”

The lord of Qi said: “Is it that this [display of troops] is because of me? What about allying with each other, continuing the good relations between the former lords? [Qu Wan 屈完] replied: “You graciously **sought blessings from the Earth and Grain Altar of my humble town.** [You] graciously recognized me. This is what I wished for.”

Apart from noting the use of the phrase *jiǎo fú* 徼福 here, observe that offering sacrifice at the Earth and Grain Altar of another town appears to have been a sign of recognition of the legitimacy of the ruler of that town.

23. *Zuo Zhuan* Wen 文 12.5 (text: 5th – 4th century BC) (event: 615 BC)¹⁵¹

秦伯使西乞術來聘，且言將伐晉。... 賓[西乞術]答曰：“寡君願徼福于周公、魯公以事君，...”

The Earl of Qin sent Xi Qi Shu to come [to Lu 魯] to pay his respects at court, and to explain that they were going to attack Jin. ... The guest [Xi Qi Shu] replied: “My lord wishes **to seek blessings** from the Duke of Zhou and Duke of Lu in order to serve you, ...”

Here a Qin envoy wishes to seek blessings, presumably by making offerings, from the founding ancestors of the Lu state.

24. *Zuo Zhuan* Cheng 成 2.3 (text: 5th – 4th century BC) (event: 589 BC)¹⁵²

“子以君師辱於敝邑，不腆敝賦，以犒從者。畏君之震，師徒橈敗。吾子惠徼齊國之福，不泯其社稷，使繼舊好，。。。”

[Qi envoy speaking to Jin lord:] “You bring humiliation on my city with your army. We use our meagre stores to feast your troops. I am in awe of your majesty. The soldiers are overcome and defeated. [If] you graciously **seek blessings from the state of Qi**, [and] do not destroy the Earth and Grain altars, allowing the continuation of our former good relations, ...”

Here again, the phrase is used in a situation concerning the recognition of one

¹⁵¹ *Chunqiu Zuo Zhuan Zhu*, p.588.

¹⁵² *Chunqiu Zuo Zhuan Zhu*, p.799.

state by another: Qi is pleading with Jin for them to pray and make offerings at the Qi Earth and Grain altar and thus receive the blessings of the gods of Qi. The alternative is clearly stated in this case: if Jin does not pray at the altars it will destroy them as symbols of the state and thus indicate its wish to destroy Qi.

25. *Zuo Zhuan* Zhao 昭 32.3 (text: 5th – 4th century BC) (event: 510 BC)¹⁵³

秋八月，王使富辛與石張如晉，請城成周。天子曰：“天降禍于周，俾我兄弟並有亂心，以為伯父憂。我一二親呢甥舅不皇啟處，於今十年。勤戍五年。余一人無日忘之，閔閔焉如農夫之望歲，懼以待時。伯父若肆大惠，復二文之業，弛周室之憂，徼文、武之福，以固盟主，宣昭令名，則余一人有大願矣。昔成王合諸侯城成周，以為東都，崇文德焉。今我欲徼福假靈于成王，脩成周之城，俾戍人無勤，...”

Autumn, the eighth month. The [Zhou] King sent Fu Xin and Shi Zhang to Jin to request [that Jin] repair the city wall at Chengzhou. The Son of Tian said: “Tian has brought down disaster on Zhou, caused my brothers to have revolt in their hearts. [I] take this as a worry for you [the Jin lord]. My several close nephews and uncles [on mother’s side], have not had leisure or settled lives for the last ten years. [Your troops have] toiled to defend the state for five years. I do not forget this for a single day, anxious, like a farmer waiting for the harvest, awaiting the season in trepidation. If you can display great kindness, resume the task of the two Wens [King Wen and Duke Wen of Jin], rid the Zhou House of its worries, **seek blessing from King Wen and King Wu**, and thus consolidate [your position as] the covenant lord, promote Jin’s fine reputation, then I will have had my great wish. In former times King Cheng gathered together the feudal lords to wall Chengzhou and make the eastern capital, respecting cultured *de* there. **Now I wish to seek blessings from and avail myself of the spirit of King Cheng**, to repair the wall of Chengzhou and allow the defending soldiers to be relieved of their hard toil,

The Zhou house is inviting Jin to make offerings to the Zhou ancestors (both states had the same surname), an act which, the Zhou king suggests, will give the Jin hegemony legitimacy in the eyes of the other lords. The second use of the term refers to the Zhou king preparing to seek blessings from his own ancestor.

¹⁵³ *Chunqiu Zuo Zhuan Zhu*, p.1517.

These *Zuo Zhuan* examples are significant because they demonstrate that it was considered possible to receive blessings from spirits other than one's direct ancestors and the spirits associated with one's own state.

26. *Mo Zi* “Ming Gui Xia 明鬼下” (text: late 5th – 2nd century BC) (event: late 5th century BC)¹⁵⁴

是故子墨子曰：今吾為祭祀也，非直注之汙壑而棄之也，上以交鬼之福，下以合驩聚眾，取親乎鄉里。”

This is why Zi Mo Zi says: “Now, as for my carrying out sacrifice, it is not a case of pouring [the offerings] into a pit of stagnant water and abandoning them there. **Above, I seek the spirits' blessings**; below, I join to celebrate with the gathered crowd, and gain affection in the villages and towns.”

Note that, in this example from the *Mo Zi*, [交] *jiāo* is a loan for *jiǎo* {徼} “to seek”.¹⁵⁵ The character [交] *jiāo* is used as the phonetic component in the Wenxian graph I take to be denoting *jiǎo* {徼} “to seek” and this passage is one of the main pieces of evidence supporting this interpretation of the Wenxian graph. Finally, here are two much later examples:

27. *Hou Han Shu* “Juan 75 卷 75” “Liu Yan Yuan Shu Lü Bu Lie Zhuan 劉焉袁術呂布列傳” “Yuan Shu 袁術” (text: 5th century AD)¹⁵⁶

術問曰：“西周室陵遲，則有桓文之霸；秦失其政，漢接而用之。今孤以土地之廣，士人之眾，欲徼福于齊桓，擬迹於高祖，可乎？”

Shu Wen said: “When the house of the Western Zhou declined, there were the hegemonies of Huan and Wen; Qin lost its rule and Han continued it. Now with only the breadth of my lands, [and] a multitude of knights, I wish to seek blessings from [Duke] Huan of Qi, emulate the High Ancestor, may I do so?”

¹⁵⁴ *Mo Zi Jiangu*, p.250.

¹⁵⁵ *Hanyu Da Cidian*, Vol.2, p.327. Note that the *Hanyu Da Cidian* suggests that the [徼] *jiǎo* should be taken as a loan for *yāo* {邀} “to invite, to seek”, but the character [徼] *jiǎo* itself denotes a word *jiǎo* {徼} meaning “to seek [to get]” which works perfectly well in this context, particularly with the *fú* {福} “blessings” with which it collocates so frequently in the *Zuo Zhuan*.

¹⁵⁶ *Hou Han Shu*, Vol.9, pp.2439 – 2440.

28. *Hou Han Shu* “Juan 24 卷 24” “Ma Yuan Lie Zhuan 馬援列傳” “Ma Yuan 馬援” (text: 5th century AD) (event: early 1st century AD)¹⁵⁷

寧自知當要七郡之使，徼封侯之福邪？

Do I not myself know that I ought to invite the envoys of the seven provinces, and **seek the blessings of the feudal lords**?

This last example is interesting as it seems to be saying that blessings can be sought from living lords, rather than from ancestors and spirits as in the previous examples. However, note that it is a very late example, the earlier passages suggest that blessings could only be sought from spirits.

From these examples, we can see that the collocation of *jiǎo* 徼 and *fú* 福 is common in received texts dating, or narrating events from, the late Spring and Autumn period, and is also seen in the much later *Hou Han Shu*. Thus we find a good match between the use of these words in received texts and that in the Wenxian covenants. However, there is one important difference. Notice that in almost all the received examples given here, the structure used is either: “verb + a single object”, i.e. “*jiǎo* 徼 + *X zhī zhī fú* 福”, meaning, “seek X’s blessings”; or, “verb + object + complement”, i.e. “*jiǎo* 徼 + *fú* 福 + *yú* 于/於 *X*”, meaning, “seek blessings from X”. In all but the last example (28), “X” is clearly a spirit of some kind. Furthermore, the subject of these sentences is always the person who is to receive the blessings. If we interpret the Wenxian phrase in the same way, which is grammatically not a problem, we get: “[if the covenantor dares not] pay due reverence and attention to his *de* in order to seek the lord’s blessings, ...”.¹⁵⁸ That is to say, *zhǔ* 主 is taken to be modifying *fú* 福, to give *zhǔ fú* 主福 “the lord’s blessings”, and the term taken as the object of *jiǎo* 徼 “to seek”.

This may be possible grammatically, but in this context such an interpretation makes no sense. It would mean that the purpose of the covenant was to ensure that the covenantors received blessings from the living covenant

¹⁵⁷ *Hou Han Shu*, Vol.3, p.847.

¹⁵⁸ “恪慎其德以徼主福”

lord. There are two major problems with this. Firstly, none of the texts of the Houma and Wenxian covenants contains stipulations which clearly state any benefit for the covenantor: the covenant is always in the interest of the covenant lord alone. Thus the idea that the result of the covenant would be blessings for the covenantors contradicts the purpose of these texts. Furthermore, “blessings” (*fú* 福) are associated with spirits and are not to be obtained from living people. This is clear from the above quoted bronze inscriptions and almost all the received texts quoted. The words “pay due reverence and attention to *de*” in the previous phrase in the Wenxian texts makes this spiritual dimension very clear: *de* is a power connecting the living with their ancestors. The covenant lord could not have been considered a source of “blessings” (*fú* 福).

With these points in mind, the Wenxian phrase must be interpreted not as “to seek the lord’s blessings”, but as, “to seek blessings for the lord”. Grammatically this means that, rather than taking the *zhǔ fú* 主福 as a single object, “the lord’s blessings”, we take the “lord” (*zhǔ* 主) as the indirect object and the *fú* 福 “blessings” as the direct object, thus: “seek blessings for the lord”. This interpretation gains further support from the observation that none of the variant wordings in the Wenxian tablets add the subordinating conjunction *zhī* 之 between *zhǔ* 主 and *fú* 福, to give *zhǔ zhī fú* 主之福, which we might expect if the *zhǔ* 主 was, in fact, modifying the *fú* 福. Note that all the examples of this type quoted above, where there is a single object, *zhī* 之 is used, e.g. *guǐ zhī fú* 鬼之福 “the spirits’ blessings”, in the *Mo Zi* example.

In later excavated texts, instead of *jiǎo* 徼, we find other verbs used in combination with *fú* 福 to mean “seek” or “receive” blessings. The next passage, for example, uses the verb *qiú* 求 “to seek”:

29. Ma Wang Dui silk manuscripts “Yao 要” line 18 (text buried: 168 BC)¹⁵⁹

君子德行焉求福，故祭祀而寡也；仁義焉求吉，故卜筮而希也。

¹⁵⁹ Transcription from: *Daojia Wenhua Yanjiu* Vol.3, p.435.

As for the gentleman, he practises *de* and in this way **seeks blessings**; so he performs sacrifices but only a small number. He is humane and righteous and in this way seeks good fortune; so he divines but infrequently.

The following example uses *shòu* 受 “to receive”, which we also saw in the bronze inscriptions:

30. Han dynasty bronze (Han 206 BC – AD 220)¹⁶⁰

新銅冷鏡。子孫息。多賀君家受大福。

A mirror cast with bright metal. Sons and grandsons numerous. Greatly wishing that your home will **receive great blessings**.

All these examples illustrate the connection between sacrifice and blessings. The assumption that sacrifice is essential if one is to receive blessings only begins to be challenged in later texts and accords with the development from the auguristic-sacrificial world view to the moral society. This is well illustrated by the Mawangdui example above, 29, which advocates a moral *de* which, if practised, will attract blessings and, as a result, lessen the need for sacrifice.

These passages from early texts help us understand stipulation II.B in the Type 3 oath, which demands that the covenantor “seek blessings for the lord” (*jiǎo zhǔ fú* 徼主福). They suggest how the covenantors might have been expected to seek blessings for the lord. Blessings are sought through sacrifice so we can conclude the Wenxian stipulation is related to sacrificial duties. These stipulations require that the covenantor, in serving his lord, must “split open his gut and heart [i.e. display true loyalty] and pay due reverence and attention to his *de* in order to seek blessings for the lord”. We have seen that *de* is nurtured by respecting one’s ancestors and offering them sacrifice. Thus the tablet seems to suggest that the covenantors must seek blessings for the covenant lord through their own sacrificial activity. We might expect such activity to be restricted to direct relatives of the covenant lord since they would share the same ancestors. On the other hand the *Zuo Zhuan* passages show us that blessings could, in some

¹⁶⁰ “Yangzhou Chutu De Handai Mingwen Tongjing”, p.95.

cases, be sought from spirits other than one's direct ancestors and one's own local spirits. Thus, regardless of the clan affiliation of the covenantors, we could conjecture that the Wenxian covenantors are expected to join in the sacrifices of the covenant lord, or perhaps to remember the covenant lord in their own sacrifices. This point, and the question of clan affiliation, will be further discussed below.

3.2.1.2.3 勉葬而/其主之禱祠 *miǎn gōng ér/qí zhǔ zhī dǎocí*¹⁶¹
(Type 7, stipulation II.B)

In the Type 7 oaths, the second stipulation is *miǎn gōng ér/qí zhǔ zhī dǎocí* 勉葬而/其主之禱祠, which, based on the palaeographic analysis, was interpreted to mean: “do your/his utmost to act in accordance with the requirements of the prayers and sacrifices of your/his lord”.

The word *miǎn* {勉} means “exert oneself to the utmost [in pursuit of some task]”. A brief survey of reference works suggests that previously the graph has only been seen in bronzes and Warring States texts as a personal name.¹⁶² The usage in the Wenxian texts is, however, common in received texts, for example:

31. *Guan Zi* “Xiao Kuang 小匡” (text: 4th – 1st century BC)¹⁶³

是故民皆勉為善。

This is why the people all strove to be good.

The interpretation of the verb *gōng* 葬 is less straightforward. In the palaeographic analysis for the graph [葬] *gōng*, I concluded that the best interpretation was *gōng* {恭} “to act in accordance with the requirements of...”.

¹⁶¹ Here the second graph, [葬] *gōng*, is given with the formal transcription that resulted from the initial palaeographic analysis, not the interpretative transcription suggested at that time, i.e., *gōng* {恭}. This character is further discussed in this section and an alternative interpretative transcription suggested.

¹⁶² See: *Yin Zhou Jinwen Jicheng Yinde*, p.257 and *Zhanguo Guwen Zidian* p.1078.

¹⁶³ Example given in *Ci Yuan*, p.377.

Nevertheless, when we look at examples of this character in other texts, we find that it is used to denote several different, although probably related, words. We also find other characters with which it can apparently interchange. It is necessary to understand how these various characters are related to each other and to the words they denote, in order to decide on the most accurate interpretation of the graph in the Wenxian covenant tablets.

The character [𠄎] *gōng* is not seen in oracle bones but is common in bronze inscriptions where, apart from its use as a personal name, it is usually interpreted to mean *gōng* {恭} “respect”. I have already determined that this definition is not ideal for the Wenxian tablets, giving: “to do one’s utmost to respect the prayers and sacrifices of the lord”, a requirement too abstract for the second stipulation which tends, in the covenants, to be of a practical nature. I preferred another definition of *gōng* {恭}, “to act in accordance with the requirements of...”, giving a more specific demand made of the covenantors. In bronze inscriptions [𠄎] *gōng* can be interpreted with both these definitions. The following examples are translated with either “respect” or “to act in accordance with the requirements of ...”, as appropriate. Note that, to avoid confusion about the original form of the graph, [𠄎] *gōng* is not replaced with the interpretative transcription *gōng* {恭}.

32. He Zun 何尊 (Early Western Zhou 1046 – 977 BC)¹⁶⁴

□王𠄎德 ...

The king **respects** *de* ...

33. Mai Fang Zun 麥方尊 (Early Western Zhou 1046 – 977 BC)¹⁶⁵

唯歸，將天子休，告亡尤，用𠄎義(儀)寧侯，覲孝于邢侯， ...

[He] returned, bringing the good will of the son of Tian. [He] reported [to his ancestors] that there had been no misfortune. He used **respect**

¹⁶⁴ *Yin Zhou Jinwen Jicheng* Vol.11, no.6014.

¹⁶⁵ *Yin Zhou Jinwen Jicheng* Vol.11, no.6015.

and dignity to keep the lord free from worry, ___ [甗] modelled himself after Lord Xing, ...

34. Bi Di Zhong 鞞狄鐘 (Mid to late Western Zhou 976 – 771 BC)¹⁶⁶

侃先王，先王其嚴在帝左右，鞞(蹕)狄(逖)不彝，鼗鼗鼗鼗降□

The righteous former kings, the former kings, august at the sides of the high ancestor, driving away the **disrespectful**, [sound of resounding bells] let down

35. Rong Sheng Zhong 戎生鐘 (Late Western Zhou 877 – 771 BC)¹⁶⁷

至於台皇考昭伯，爰爰(?)穆穆，懿口不僭，召匹晉侯，用彝王命。

When it came to my mighty father, Earl Zhao, [he was] elegant, sublime, good and sincere, assisting the Duke of Jin, thus **acting in accord** with the order of the King.

36. Ke Ding 克鼎 (Late Western Zhou 877 – 771 BC)¹⁶⁸

克曰：“穆穆朕文祖師華父悤(聰)口(讓(?))厥心，盍靜于猷，淑慎厥德，肆克彝保厥辟恭王。”

Ke said: “Sublime [was] my cultured ancestor, Shi Hua Fu, opening and yielding his heart/mind, placid and quiet in his enterprise, properly paying due attention and reverence to his *de*, thus able to **respectfully** protect his lord, King Gong.”

37. Qin Gong Gui 秦公簋 (Early Spring and Autumn 770 – 625 BC)¹⁶⁹

秦公曰：“丕顯朕皇祖受天命，謚宅禹蹟，十又二公在帝之坏，嚴彝黃天命，保業厥秦。。。”

The Duke of Qin said: “Resplendent, my mighty ancestor, receiving Tian’s mandate, settling in the lands of Yu, twelve dukes in attendance to the supreme ancestor, treating [Tian’s mandate] with solemnity, **acting in accord** with and respecting Tian’s mandate, protecting and bringing success to Qin, ...”

¹⁶⁶ *Yin Zhou Jinwen Jicheng* Vol.1, no.49.

¹⁶⁷ *Bao Li Cang Jin*, pp. 117 – 128, and pp.361 – 386.

¹⁶⁸ *Yin Zhou Jinwen Jicheng* Vol.5, no.2836.

¹⁶⁹ *Yin Zhou Jinwen Jicheng* Vol.8, no.4315.

38. Peng Zhi Zai Sheng 匜之鬲斝 (Mid to late Spring and Autumn 675 – 476 BC)¹⁷⁰

王子午擇其吉金，自作鬲斝鬲鼎，用享，以孝于我皇祖文考，用祈眉壽，□(濫)彝馱(舒)犀(遲)，畏忌翼翼，敬厥盟(明)祀，永受其福。

Prince Wu selected this auspicious metal, personally made this vessel to use to sacrifice, in order to emulate my mighty grandfather and cultured father, to use to pray for a long life, mild, **respectful**, refined, reverent, respect their bright sacrifices, forever receive blessings.

39. Jin Gong Pen 晉公益 (Spring and Autumn 770 – 476 BC)¹⁷¹

□□□□虔彝盟(明)□□畚□ ...

... .. sincerely **respect** the bright [sacrifices?], ... sacrifice [?]....

Note that for the last example some transcriptions give a *sì* 祀 after the *míng* 盟 (明).¹⁷² The rubbing given in the *Yin Zhou Jinwen Jicheng* is not clear enough to make a judgement about this character but *sì* 祀 would make good sense: we see the phrase *míng sì* 盟(明)祀 in the previous example, 39: “respect their bright sacrifices” (*jìng jué míng sì* 敬厥盟{明}祀). The “Jin Gong Pen” would then be very similar to this: “sincerely respect the bright sacrifices” (*qián gōng míng sì* 虔彝盟{明}祀).

40. Chen Fang Gui Gai 陳昉簋蓋 (Early Warring States 475 – 350 BC)¹⁷³

昉曰：余，陳仲初孫，釐叔和子，彝寅鬼神，畢(毖)彝畏忌，選擇吉金。

Fang said: “I, grandson of Chen Zhong Chu, son of Li Shu He, **respectful** of the spirits, prudent, **respectful**, reverent, awed, [I] select the auspicious metal.

The above examples, 32 to 40, demonstrate that the character [彝] *gōng*, as seen in bronze inscriptions, can be interpreted as *gōng* { 恭 } using its two definitions

¹⁷⁰ *Yin Zhou Jinwen Jicheng* Vol.5, no. 2811.

¹⁷¹ *Yin Zhou Jinwen Jicheng* Vol.16, no. 10342.

¹⁷² For example the *Qingtongqi Mingwen Jiansuo*, p.1043.

¹⁷³ *Yin Zhou Jinwen Jicheng* Vol.8, no.4190.

“respect” and “to act in accordance with the requirements of ...”. In fact, in English “respect” can connote “to act in accordance with the requirements of ...” as in the phrase “respect his orders”, and, if understood in this way, all the above examples could be translated simply as “respect”.

There are examples of very similar phrases in bronze inscriptions which use the graph [共] *gōng*, rather than [龠] *gōng*. This graph, [共] *gōng*, is considered to originally depict two hands holding something up and to be related to the word *gǒng* {拱} “to cup one’s hands at one’s chest in an expression of respect”. Dictionaries define [共] *gōng*’s usage in bronze inscriptions as “to respectfully maintain, support” (*jìng chí* 敬持). It is also understood to denote *gōng* {恭} “respect” or “to act in accordance with the requirements of, ...”, and *gōng* {供} “supply, contribute, furnish” (or *gòng* {供} “to offer in worship”).¹⁷⁴ Below are passages where the usage seems to be very similar to that of the graph [龠] *gōng* in the bronze inscriptions above. Here the word is translated as “uphold”, which accords with the definition “to respectfully maintain, support”, but also reminds us of the suggested etymological origin of the word.

41. Shan Ding 善鼎 (Middle Western Zhou 976 – 878 BC)¹⁷⁵

作宗室寶尊，唯用妥福，號(效)前文人，秉德共純，

Make this treasured vessel for the lineage temple, to use to receive blessings. Model oneself after the former cultured ancestors. Grasp *de* and **uphold** goodness.

Note how the graph [共] *gōng* complements the [秉] *bǐng* “to grasp”, both originally depictions of a hand or hands holding something.¹⁷⁶ The next example also pairs the two words:

¹⁷⁴ *Jinwen Xing Yi Tong Jie* (Kinbun Keigi Tsūkai), pp.565 – 568. *Jinwen Changyong Zidian*, pp.285 – 286.

¹⁷⁵ *Yin Zhou Jinwen Jicheng* Vol.5, no.2820.

¹⁷⁶ This point made in: *Jinwen Xing Yi Tong Jie* (Kinbun Keigi Tsūkai), pp.565 – 568.

42. Shu Xiang Fu Yu Gui 叔向父禹篋 (Late Western Zhou 877 – 771 BC)¹⁷⁷

叔向父禹曰：余小子司(嗣)朕皇考，肇帥型先文祖，共明德秉威儀

Shu Xiang Fu Yu said: “I, the insignificant one, succeed my mighty father, abide by and model myself after my cultured grandfather, **uphold** bright *de*, grasp august solemnity”

43. Yu Ding 禹鼎 (Late Western Zhou 877 – 771 BC)¹⁷⁸

肆禹亦弗敢怠愆，共朕辟之命

Thus Yu will also not dare to be foolish and careless, [but will] **uphold** the command of my ruler...

The translation here “uphold” is consistent with the previous examples but here the implication is “to act in accordance with the requirements of...” or simply “to obey”.

44. Shu Shi Zhong 叔尸鐘 (Late Spring and Autumn, Duke Ling of Qi 齊靈公, 581 – 554 BC)¹⁷⁹

公曰：“尸，汝敬共辭(台)命。”

The duke said: “Shi, you will respect and **uphold** my orders”

This is the same usage as the previous example, as is the following example:

45. Cai Hou Zun 蔡侯尊 (Late Spring and Autumn, Lord Zhao of Cai 蔡昭侯, 518 – 491 BC)¹⁸⁰

蔡侯申虔共大命

The Marquis of Cai, Shen, sincerely **upholds** the great command.

We can see, in the above examples, cases of what can be considered identical

¹⁷⁷ *Yin Zhou Jinwen Jicheng* Vol.8, no.4242.

¹⁷⁸ *Yin Zhou Jinwen Jicheng* Vol.5, no.2833.

¹⁷⁹ *Yin Zhou Jinwen Jicheng* Vol.1, no.272-8 (no.273).

¹⁸⁰ *Yin Zhou Jinwen Jicheng* Vol.11, no.6010 (exactly the same line is found on the Cai Hou Pan 蔡侯盤 *Yin Zhou Jinwen Jicheng* Vol. 16, no.10171.)

usage of the graphs [𡗗] *gōng* and [共] *gōng*, for example:

共明德 “**uphold** bright *de*” (“Shu Xiang Fu Yu Gui 叔向父禹篋”)

𡗗德 “**respect** *de*” (“He Ding 何尊”)

共朕辟之命 “**uphold (= carries out)** the command of my ruler”

(“Yu Ding 禹鼎”)

共大命 “**upholds (= carries out)** the great command”

(“Cai Hou Zun 蔡侯尊”)

𡗗王命 “**acting in accordance with** the order of the King”

(Rong Sheng Zhong 戎生鐘)

𡗗夔天命 “**acting in accordance with** and respecting Tian’s mandate”

(“Qin Gong Gui 秦公簋”)

We should note that the close similarity in the Modern Standard Chinese pronunciations of [𡗗] *gōng* and [共] *gōng* is shared by their Old Chinese pronunciations, which were almost identical.¹⁸¹ We can conjecture that both the graphs [𡗗] *gōng* and [共] *gōng* were able to denote the same word during the Zhou period. That word meant “to uphold” and, by extension, “to respect”, “to carry out [orders]” (i.e.: “to act in accordance with the requirements of”). This word is now denoted with the graph [恭] *gōng*.

In excavated texts from the Warring States period (apart from the bronzes from this period, which have already been discussed), we also find [𡗗] *gōng* used to denote *gōng* {恭} “respect”.¹⁸² The graph [共] *gōng* is found but, apart from in the Chu bronzes, not with the uses we have seen above.¹⁸³ Examples of this use of [𡗗] *gōng* from the Warring States period include:

¹⁸¹ The Old Chinese reconstructions are: {恭} *gōng* < *kjowng* < **krjong* (見東); {共} *gōng* < *kjowng* < **k(r)jong* (群東). See: *A Handbook of Chinese Phonology*, p.759.

¹⁸² A graph formally equivalent to [恭] *gōng* is also found but it does not denote *gōng* {恭} “respect” or any related word. He Linyi’s analysis gives its use as a name and to denote *kōng* {恐} “frightened”. See: *Zhanguo Guwen Zidian* p.417.

¹⁸³ *Zhanguo Guwen Zidian*, pp.416 – 417.

46. Xinyang bamboo slips slip 1.042 (Early Warring States 475 – 350 BC)¹⁸⁴

☐☐慎彝高☐

... pay due attention and **respect** to the sacrifices...

This is an interesting example, the *shèn* 慎 also reminding us of the Wenxian tablets. The lack of context makes it difficult to be certain of the meaning.

47. Shuihudi bamboo strips “Wei Li Zhi Dao 為吏之道” slip 6, section 2 and slip 11, section 2 (Late Warring States to Qin, late 2nd century BC)¹⁸⁵

吏有五善：。。。五曰彝敬多讓。

An officer has five good characteristics: ...the fifth is **respect** and much yielding [to superiors].

Turning to received texts, we find that the character [彝] *gōng* is usually written with a variant form which replaces the [升] *gōng* component at the bottom of the form with [共] *gōng*, giving [龔] *gōng*. The character is, however, rare, except as a name. One example with the usage we are discussing here is the commonly seen phrase *gōng xíng tiān fǎ* 龔行天罰 (“act in accordance with the requirements of, and carry out, Tian’s punishments”), for example:

48. Hou Han Shu “Juan 40 Xia 卷 40 下” “Ban Biao Lie Zhuan 班彪列傳” (text: 5th century AD) (biography of Ban Biao, lived: AD 3 – 54)¹⁸⁶

龔行天罰

Act in accordance with the requirements of, and carry out, Tian’s punishments.

The original source of the quote is considered to be the “Gan Shi 甘誓” section of the *Shang Shu*:

¹⁸⁴ *Xinyang Chu Mu*, plates p.116, text p.126. For date see pp.120 – 121.

¹⁸⁵ *Shuihudi Qin Mu Zhujian*, plates, p.81, transcriptions, p.168. For dating see pp.1 – 2.

¹⁸⁶ *Hou Han Shu* Vol.5, p.1361.

49. *Shang Shu* “Gan Shi 甘誓” (text: 5th – 3rd centuries BC) (event: 2nd millenium BC)¹⁸⁷

今予惟恭行天之罰。

Now **I act in accordance with the requirements of**, and carry out, Tian’s punishments.

Note that in this text the character used is [恭] *gōng*. In the *Mo Zi*, the same phrase occurs, this time with the character [共] *gōng*:

50. *Mo Zi* “Ming Gui Xia 明鬼下” (text: late 5th – 2nd century BC)¹⁸⁸

予共行天之罰也。

I act in accordance with, and carry out, Tian’s punishments.

Thus we have the characters [龔] *gōng*, [恭] *gōng* and [共] *gōng* all denoting the same word in the same phrase. The spurious Kong Anguo commentary for the *Shang Shu* gives the gloss: “*gōng* 恭 is ‘to serve’ (*fèng* 奉)” (“恭 *gōng*, 奉也 *fèng yě*”), which corresponds to our interpretation.

The use of these three different graphs used in different texts to denote the same word demonstrates a lack of “clearly defined lexical loads” between the graphs at this early stage. We find that distinctions between words and the characters they denote are not precise. For example, the character [恭] *gōng* is used for the word *gōng* {恭} in the *Shang Shu* but, as noted above, this character is not found denoting *gōng* {恭} in excavated texts. It is then interesting to see that Sun Yirang, in his commentary on the *Mo Zi* passage above, quotes the *Shang Shu Jin-Gu-Wen Zhushu* 尚書今古文注疏 which says that, in the original *Shang Shu*, this character would, in fact, have been [龔] *gōng*, i.e. the form we see in the Wenxian tablets and other excavated texts.¹⁸⁹

¹⁸⁷ *Shisan Jing Zhushu*, p.155.

¹⁸⁸ *Mo Zi Jiangu*, p.241.

¹⁸⁹ *Mo Zi Jiangu*, p.241.

There are further examples in received texts of [恭] *gōng* and [共] *gōng* used with this meaning. For example, in the *Mo Zi*, in the section just cited, there is the following quote from the *Shang Shu*:

51. *Mo Zi* “Ming Gui Xia 明鬼下” (text: late 5th – 2nd century BC)¹⁹⁰

若不共命。

You do not **act in accordance with the requirements of** the mandate.

The Sun Yirang commentary for this line says that the *Shang Shu* gives “汝不恭命” for this phrase, the same interchange of [恭] *gōng* and [共] *gōng* we saw above. Further examples include:

52. *Yi Zhou Shu* “Shi Fa Jie 謚法解” (text: Western Zhou 1046 – 771 BC ?)¹⁹¹

夙夜警戒曰敬，夙夜恭事曰敬，...

“Respect” is [a posthumous name for one who was] on his guard night and day; “respect” is [a posthumous name for one who] **acted in accordance with the requirements of his duties** night and day, ...

This example uses [恭] *gōng*, while the following, in a semantically similar phrase, uses [共] *gōng*:

53. *Shi Jing* “Xiao Ya 小雅” “Xiao Ming 小明” (text: 1000 – 600 BC)¹⁹²

靖共爾位，好是正直。神之聽之，介爾景福。

Calmly **act in accordance with the requirements of** your position. Be fond of that which is just and upright. The spirits will hear of this, and give you great blessings.

The *Han Shi Wai Zhuan* gives [恭] *gōng* instead of [共] *gōng* for this line.¹⁹³

The *Gudai Hanyu Cidian*, in its entry for [恭] *gōng*, quotes a similar phrase from

¹⁹⁰ *Mo Zi Jiangu*, p.242.

¹⁹¹ *Yi Zhou Shu Hui Jiao Jizhu*, pp.716 – 717.

¹⁹² *Shi Jing Tong Gu*, p.599.

¹⁹³ *Shi Jing Tong Gu*, p.599.

the *Hou Han Shu*:

54. *Hou Han Shu* (text: 5th century AD) (event: AD 150)¹⁹⁴

群公卿士，虔恭爾位

The lord, ministers and knights all sincerely **act in accordance with the requirements of** their positions.

The dictionary defines this usage as: “to act in accordance to and abide by one’s position/duties”.¹⁹⁵ This is the definition I have been using for the [𡗗] *gōng* in the Wenxian texts and some of the examples in the bronze inscriptions.

It appears, then, that received texts have examples of all three characters, [恭] *gōng*, [共] *gōng* and [龔] *gōng* used to denote this word, *gōng* {恭} “act in accordance with the requirements of”, “respect”. This compares to the situation in excavated texts where we found that this meaning was more frequently denoted with [𡗗] *gōng* and occasionally with [共] *gōng*. The excavated evidence suggests that [恭] *gōng* is a later form. At a later period, however, this graph, [恭] *gōng*, becomes the standard character for this meaning, as is evident in dictionary entries for these characters.¹⁹⁶

I mentioned above that the graph [共] *gōng* is also used in bronze inscriptions to denote *gōng* {供} “supply, contribute, furnish” (or {供} *gòng* “to offer in worship”). Since both [𡗗] *gōng* and [共] *gōng* are interchanged in the usage discussed above, we can consider whether [𡗗] *gōng* might also have been able to denote *gōng* {供} “supply, contribute, furnish” and whether this interpretation makes sense in the Wenxian tablets. We see the following examples in bronze inscriptions of [共] *gōng* being used in this way:

¹⁹⁴ *Hou Han Shu*, Vol.2, p.295.

¹⁹⁵ *Gudai Hanyu Cidian*, p.473: “奉行，謹守其職”.

¹⁹⁶ Dictionary entries can be misleading: the *Gudai Hanyu Cidian* gives this use of *gōng* 龔 (龔) as a loangraph usage for *gōng* 恭 but this is hard to ascertain since we do not know what word *gōng* 龔 (龔) was originally created to denote. Perhaps, in fact, *gōng* 龔 is the orthograph for this meaning and the later use of *gōng* 恭 is as a loangraph. Duan Yucai, as we mentioned above, took *gōng* 龔 as an early form for *gōng* 恭 in which case the relationship would be one of variant character rather than loangraph usage.

55. Chu Wang Xiong Qian Ding 楚王禽(熊)前鼎 (Late Warring States 350 – 222 BC)¹⁹⁷

楚王禽(熊)前作鑄鑄鼎以共歲嘗

The Chu King, Xiong Qian, makes this *qiao ding* vessel **to supply** for use in the harvest sacrifice.

The vessel has been made to be supplied for use in the autumn harvest offering (the “歲嘗” *suìcháng*). The graph [共] *gōng* is used to denote *gōng* {供} “to supply”.

Following Qiu Xigui’s interpretation of the next inscription provides an example of the graph [𢇛] *gōng* used to denote *gōng* {供} “to supply”:

56. Lu Bo Yu Xu 魯伯兪盥 (Spring and Autumn 770 – 476 BC)¹⁹⁸

魯伯兪用公𢇛，其肇作其皇考皇母旅盥簋，兪□□用追孝，用祈多福，兪其萬年眉壽，永寶用享。

Lu Bo Yu used **lineage supplied resources**¹⁹⁹, he [used them to]make a *Lu Xu Gui* vessel, [Lu Bo] Yu ___ [□□] to use to remember [the ancestors’] good example, to use to pray for great blessings, may Yu live for ten thousand years, forever treasuring [it] and using it for sacrifice.

In this bronze inscription the maker of the bronze is using a resource (presumably metal or money) supplied by his lineage to make the bronze: the [𢇛] *gōng* is used to denote *gōng* {供} “to supply”.

Interpreting the Wenxian graph [𢇛] *gōng* as *gōng* {供} “to supply” would work very well in the Wenxian tablets, giving: “do your/his utmost to supply the prayers and sacrifices of your/his lord.” (*miǎn gōng ér/qi zhǔ zhī dǎocí* 勉供而/

¹⁹⁷ *Yin Zhou Jinwen Jicheng* Vol.5, no.2623.

¹⁹⁸ *Yin Zhou Jinwen Jicheng* Vol.9, no.4458.

¹⁹⁹ Qiu suggests interpreting the *gōng* {公} with its sense of “public”, here referring to the lineage group and its resources. Personal communication, Beijing, October 27, 2002. For an article discussing issues related to such an interpretation see: Qiu Xigui, “Cong Ji Jian Zhou Dai Tongqi Mingwen Kan Zongfa Zhidu Xia De Suoyouzhi”.

其主之禱祠): a specific demand on the covenantors to provide supplies needed for offerings made by the covenant lord, for example sacrificial animals, crops and alcohol. On the other hand, there is little evidence for this use of the graph [𦉳] *gōng*, only the one example in the inscription just given and no other obvious examples seen in other excavated texts.²⁰⁰ Nor do we find the character [供] *gōng* itself used in this way in excavated texts. Nevertheless, there are many passages in received texts which use this word, *gōng* { 供 } “to supply”, in contexts which appear reminiscent of that suggested by the covenant tablets. Let us now consider these passages. The first is an early example of a minister (Duke Zhou 周公) presenting a tribute to a king (King Cheng 成王) for use in sacrifice:

57. *Shang Shu* “Shao Gao 召誥” (text: Early Western Zhou 1046 – 977 BC) (event: reign of King Cheng, 1042 – 1021 BC)²⁰¹

拜手稽首曰：“予小臣，敢以王之讎民百君子越友民，保受王威命明德。王末有成命，王亦顯。我非敢勤，惟恭奉幣，用供王，能祈天永命。

Bringing his hands together he kowtowed and said: “I, your humble servant, dare, along with the ministers and people [of the conquered Shang], and the the people [of Zhou and its allies], to preserve and receive the king’s awesome mandate and bright *de*. Finally, the king will secure the mandate, and the King will also be resplendent. It is not that I dare to [claim] diligence, I but respectfully offer tribute **to supply** the King, that he may be able to pray to Tian for an eternal mandate.

The following example illustrates the importance of having sufficient land with which to produce goods for sacrifice:

58. *Guo Yu* “Zhou Yu Zhong 周語中” (text: late 5th – 4th century BC) (event: c.630 BC)²⁰²

²⁰⁰ One could conjecture that the phrase in the Xinyang bamboo slips, quoted above (46): “𦉳𦉳慎𦉳高𦉳”, could also be read in this way, with the [𦉳] *gōng* taken to be denoting *gōng* { 供 } “to supply”, giving: “... conscientiously supply [goods for use in] the sacrifices ...”.

²⁰¹ *Shisan Jing Zhushu*, p.213.

²⁰² *Guo Yu*, p.54.

王不許，曰：“昔我先王之有天下也，規方千里以為甸服，以供上帝山川百神之祀，以備百姓兆民之用，以待不庭不虞之患。

The king did not allow it, saying: “In former times, when our former kings were in possession of all under the sky, they marked off an area one thousand *li* in circumference to be the first precinct of the Royal domain, **to supply** the sacrifices to the supreme ancestor, to the mountains, the rivers and the one hundred spirits, to provide for the needs of the officials and commoners, to defend against the distress of revolt and unexpected incidents.

This next example shows that goods for use in sacrifice could be supplied from an external source. They do not, for example, have to be produced on one's own land:

59. *Meng Zi* “Teng Wen Gong Xia 滕文公下” (text: 4th century BC) (events narrated: 16th century BC)²⁰³

孟子曰：“湯居亳，與葛為鄰，葛伯放而不祀。湯使人問之曰：‘何為不祀？’曰：‘無以供犧牲也。’湯使遺之牛羊。葛伯食之，又不以祀。湯又使人問之曰：‘何為不祀？’曰：‘無以供粢盛也。’湯使亳眾往為之耕，老弱饋食。葛伯率其民，要其有酒食黍稻者奪之，不授者殺之。有童子以黍肉餉，殺而奪之。”

Mencius said: “Tang resided in Bo with the Ge state as neighbour, the Earl of Ge, being uncultured, did not make sacrificial offerings. Tang sent someone to ask of this, saying: “Why do you not make offerings?” [The Earl of Ge] said: “It is because I have no means to **supply** sacrificial animals.” Tang ordered oxen and goats to be sent to him, [but] the Earl of Ge ate them, still not using them for sacrifice. Tang again sent someone to ask him, saying: “Why is it that you do not make sacrificial offerings?” [The Earl of Ge] said: “It is because I have no means to **supply** grains to fill the sacrificial vessels.” Tang sent his people to go and till the fields for him [Ge]. The old and the weak took food to give [those working on the land] [but] the Earl of Ge led his people, held up those carrying alcohol, food, grain and rice and seized [the food] from them. If there were children bringing grain and meat [for the workers] to eat, he killed them and seized the food.

The following three examples describe huge operations, reaching to all areas of the country, to provide the Zhou Royal House with the offerings needed for its many sacrifices:

²⁰³ *Meng Zi Yi Zhu*, pp.147 – 148.

60. *Lü Shi Chunqiu* “Ji Dong 季冬” (text: 239 BC)²⁰⁴

乃命四監，收秩薪柴，以供寢廟及百祀之薪燎。... 乃命太史，次諸侯之列，賦之犧牲，以供皇天上帝社稷之享。乃命同姓之國，供寢廟之芻豢。令宰歷卿大夫至于庶民土田之數，而賦之犧牲，以供山林名川之祀。凡在天下九州之民者，無不咸獻其力，以供皇天上帝社稷寢廟山林名川之祀。

Then he [the Son of Tian] orders the four supervisory officials, to collect and organize firewood, in order **to supply** the sacrificial fires of the ancestral temple and the many sacrifices. ... Then [the Son of Tian] orders the Grand Scribe to rank the feudal lords, to levy from them sacrificial animals **to supply** the offerings for mighty Tian, the supreme ancestor and the earth and grain altar. Then [he] orders the states with [rulers] of the same surname, **to supply** [sacrificial] animals for the ancestral temple. [He] orders the prime minister to rank, in order of number, the lands of the *Qing* ministers [and those of all ranks down] to the commoners, and levy from them sacrificial animals, to use **to supply** the sacrifices to the mountains, forests and famed rivers. Of every person under the sky and within the nine lands, there is not one who does not contribute his strength in order **to supply** the sacrifices to mighty Tian, to the supreme ancestor, to the earth and grain altar, the ancestral temple, the mountains, forests and famed rivers.

61. *Huan Nan Zi* “Shi Ze Shun 時則順” (text: 139 BC)²⁰⁵

命四監大夫，令百縣之秩芻，以養犧牲，以共皇天上帝、名山大川、四方之神、宗廟社稷，為民祈福行惠。

[The Son of Tian] orders the four supervisory ministers to gather up the fodder of all the counties and use it to raise sacrificial animals, in order **to supply** [the sacrifices of] mighty Tian and the supreme ancestor, the famed mountains and great rivers, the spirits of the four quarters, the ancestral temple and earth and grain altars, to pray for blessings and bring benefits for the people.

Note that in some versions of this last passage [共] *gōng* is used, in others, [供] *gōng*.

²⁰⁴ *Lü Shi Chunqiu Xin Jiao Shi*, pp.622 – 23.

²⁰⁵ *Huai Nan Zi Jiao Shi*, p.563.

62. *Huan Nan Zi* “Shi Ze Shun 時則順” (text: 139 BC)²⁰⁶

乃命太史，次諸侯之列，賦之犧牲，以供皇天上帝社稷之芻享。乃命同姓之國，供寢廟之芻豢；卿士大夫至于庶民，供山林名川之祀。

Then [the Son of Tian] orders the *Tai Shi* official, to rank the feudal lords, and to levy from them sacrificial animals **to supply** the animal offerings for mighty Tian, the supreme ancestor and the earth and grain altar. Then [he] orders the states [with rulers] of the same surname, **to supply** [sacrificial] animals for the ancestral temple; [those ranking from] the ministers to the common people, [were **to**] **supply** [offerings] for the sacrifices to the mountains, forests and famed rivers.

63. *Xin Yu* “Wu Wei 無爲” (text: 2nd century BC – 6th century AD)²⁰⁷

周公制作禮樂，郊天地，望山川，師旅不設，刑格法懸，而四海之內，奉供來臻，...

Duke Zhou established the rituals and the music, made sacrifices at the outskirts of the city to Tian and the earth, sacrificed to the mountains and rivers, did not create an army, put aside punishments, hung up [i.e. displayed] the laws, and [all those] within the four seas came **with tributes**, ...

The suggestion, in these last example, is that, in an ideal state, the people will come of their own accord bearing goods needed for the ruler to make sacrifice.

These passages suggest that there was an expectation on the part of the ruler that one's subjects would supply one's court with a wide variety of goods needed to carry out sacrifice, including firewood, grains and animals. The Houma and Wenxian covenant sites provide clear evidence that sacrifice was carried out as part of the covenant ceremony. We can conjecture that the Houma and Wenxian lords expected the goods for these and other sacrifices to be supplied by those under their rule. This, then, corresponds to the passage from the *Zhou Li* quoted in Chapter One: “In all cases of covenant each [Supervisor of Covenants] relies on the people of his territory to contribute their sacrificial animals and bring them

²⁰⁶ *Huan Nan Zi Jiao Shi*, p.610.

²⁰⁷ *Xin Yu Jiao Zhu*, p.59.

to him. Having covenanted, [they] then supply alcohol and dried meat for the Supervisor of Covenants to use in prayer [related to the covenant].”²⁰⁸

The passages above all use the word *gōng* {供} “to supply” to describe the contribution of such offerings. These texts range in date from the early Zhou to the Han, suggesting this was, throughout this period, the standard term for this act. We have seen [共] *gōng* and [𡗗] *gōng* used to denote *gōng* {供} “to supply” in bronze inscriptions, dating from the Spring and Autumn and Warring States periods. Thus there is evidence to support the suggestion that the Wenxian graph, [𡗗] *gōng*, should be interpreted as denoting *gōng* {供} “to supply” giving: “do your/his utmost to supply the prayers and sacrifices of your/his lord.” (*miǎn gōng ér/qí zhǔ zhī dǎocí* 勉供而/其主之禱祠).

I have, in conclusion, suggested two interpretations of the character [𡗗] *gōng* in the clause: 勉𡗗而/其主之禱祠 (*miǎn gōng ér/qí zhǔ zhī dǎocí*). Firstly, as *gōng* {恭} with its definition “to act in accordance with the requirements of ...” and, secondly, based on the evidence just seen, as: *gōng* {供} “to supply”.

In the above survey of excavated texts, I determined that both the graphs [𡗗] *gōng* and *gōng* [共] *gōng* are used to denote the words *gōng* {恭} “to respect”, “to act in accordance with the requirements of”, and *gōng* {供} “to supply, contribute, furnish”. The graphs [恭] *gōng* and [供] *gōng* were later creations.

The precise relationship between [𡗗] *gōng* and [共] *gōng* is not clear. They are both derived from the component [収] *gǒng*, depicting two hands, and both appear to depict these two hands holding something up. In the case of the [𡗗] *gōng* that something is a [龍] *lóng* “dragon” which is clearly acting as a phonetic

²⁰⁸ See Chapter One, section 1.4.3.

component.²⁰⁹ It is possible that the two characters were created to denote a single word and are thus variant forms. It is also possible that they were created at different times to denote two different but cognate words. For example, [共] *gōng* may have been, as is sometimes suggested, the protoform for [拱] *gǒng*, while [𡗗] *gōng* may have been the protoform for [恭] *gōng*, but *gōng* {恭} “to respect” may be cognate with *gǒng* {拱} “to hold one’s hands together before one’s chest in an expression of respect”. Alternatively, the two graphs [𡗗] *gōng* and [共] *gōng* may have been created to denote two unrelated words, but their almost identical pronunciation and shared component ([𡗗] *gǒng*) may have encouraged their interchange as phonetic loans for one another.

I now turn to the last two characters in the phrase “do your/his utmost to supply the prayers and sacrifices of your/his lord.” (*miǎn gōng ér/qí zhǔ zhī dǎoci* 勉供而/其主之禱祠), that is *dǎoci* 禱祠 “prayers and sacrifices”. Let us first consider related phrases in other texts.

Neither of these characters, *dǎo* 禱 or *cí* 祠, is seen in oracle bones. In known bronze inscriptions *dǎo* 禱 is not found and *cí* 祠 occurs only in the following two inscriptions:

64. Zhao Meng Jie Hu 趙孟介壺 (Late Spring and Autumn 625 – 476 BC) (event: c. 482 BC)²¹⁰

遇邾王于黃池。為趙孟介。邾王之賜金以為祠器

[We {Jin 晉}] met with the King of Wu 吳 [邾王] at Huangchi. [I] acted as Zhao Meng’s envoy. [I] made this **sacrificial vessel** with the metal presented to me by the King of Wu.

He Linyi interprets the term *cíqì* 祠器 to mean “vessel for use in offering

²⁰⁹ It has also been suggested that the [龍] *lóng* “dragon” component was originally also semantic and related to totemic worship of the dragon. See: Li Zongtong, *Zhongguo Gudai Shehui Xin Yan*, p.36.

²¹⁰ *Yin Zhou Jinwen Jicheng* Vol.15, no. 9678.

sacrifice” (*jìqì* 祭器), implying that the *cí* 祠 is a general term for offering sacrifice.²¹¹

65. Qie Ci Hu 𤔁盜壺 (Late Warring States 350 – 222 BC)²¹²

先王之德弗可復得，霖(潛)霖(潛)流口(涕)，不敢寧處，敬命新地，
雨(永)祠先王，世世毋蹇(乏)，以追庸先王之工(功)刺(烈)。

The *de* of the former king cannot be regained, tears flow; [I] dare not be at ease. [I] respectfully order the new lands to eternally **carry out sacrifices to the former king**, generation after generation, never abandoning them, in order to remember and admire the glory of the former king.

Note that both these vessels are close in time and location to the Wenxian tablets. The first is a Zhao clan vessel, the same clan of which the covenant lord of the Houma tablets is thought to be head. The content of the inscription records a meeting at Huangchi, thought to correspond to a historical meeting between Jin, Wu and other lords, in 482 BC, i.e., about fifteen years after the dates I have adopted for the Houma and Wenxian tablets. Thus the linguistic context of this inscription should be very close to that of the Houma and Wenxian covenants. The second example is a bronze from state of Zhongshan, geographically close to Jin and considered to have been strongly influenced by the state of Wei 魏, one of the three states that Jin broke into during the Warring States period.²¹³ The first inscription is clearly part of the same linguistic milieu as the Houma and Wenxian tablets and the second example may be a development of the same tradition of inscriptions. We might infer from this, and the lack of examples from other areas, that the term *cí* 祠 came into common usage in the late Spring and Autumn period in the Jin region. Or, alternatively, we might conjecture that [祠] *cí* was a local character variant, although no suitable word it would be denoting comes to mind; the word *sì* {祀} “sacrifice” is almost identical phonetically but, since it appears in the “Qie Ci Hu 𤔁盜壺” along with the [祠] *cí*, it seems

²¹¹ *Zhanguo Guwen Zidian*, pp.111 – 112.

²¹² *Yin Zhou Jinwen Jicheng* Vol.15, no.9734.

²¹³ Li Xueqin, *Dong Zhou Yu Qin Dai Wenming*, pp.83 – 84.

unlikely that they denote the same word, although one might consider whether or not they could be cognate with each other.

The word *cí* 祠, is also uncommon in later excavated texts, although it does appear in the *Zu Chu Wen*:

66. *Zu Chu Wen* (312 BC)²¹⁴

[楚]率諸侯之兵以臨加我，欲剗伐我社稷，伐威我百姓，求蔑廢皇天上帝及大神厥湫之卹祠、圭玉、犧(犧)牲、。。

[Chu] led the armies of the feudal lords to oppress us, wishing to destroy our Earth and Grain Altars, wipe out our people, seeking to put an end to **sacrifices** to mighty Tian, the supreme ancestor and the great spirit Jue Qiu, to put an end to the *gui* and the jades, the sacrificial animals,....

The *Zu Chu Wen* was a product of the Qin state, also in the northwest region, adjacent to the Jin area, where the previous examples were from, and its date is similar to the Zhongshan example, supporting the theory that this term was common in this area during the Spring and Autumn and Warring States periods.

We also find Han examples of *cí* 祠:

67. *Han stone stele at XiYue Hua Shan temple* 西嶽華山廟 (165 AD)²¹⁵

太宗承循，各詔有司，其山川在諸侯者，以時祠之。。。。仲宗之世，重使使者持(節祀)焉，歲一禱三祠，後不承前，。。。。。但使二千石以歲時往(祠)，其有風旱，禱請祈求，靡不報應，。。。

Emperor Wen of Han continued to respect [the sacrifices], in each case ordering the officials to make seasonal **sacrifices** to the mountains and rivers located in the lands of the feudal lords. ... At the time of Emperor Xuan of Han, he once again sent envoys carrying the imperial banner to sacrifice at these places, each year performing one prayer [*dǎo*] and three **sacrifices** [*cí*]. After [this time] they did not continue this practice, ... [In a later period] they only sent an official at the turn of the year to make the **sacrifice** [*cí*]. If there was wind and drought, they would pray [*dǎo*] to seek help; there was never not a response, ...

²¹⁴ *Shiguwen Yanjiu Zu Chu Wen Kaoshi*, p.297. For dating see pp.285 – 295.

²¹⁵ *Han Bei Ji Shi*, pp. 268 – 283.

In the earlier examples, the *cí* 祠 appears to be a general term used to refer to the offering of sacrifice. In the Han example it still seems to refer to sacrificial offering but is paired with the term *dǎo* 禱 which, at least in its second appearance in this passage (in the last line), refers to a prayer.

The word *dǎo* 禱, is not, as I mentioned above, seen in oracle bones or bronze inscriptions. However, it is common in later excavated texts, for example:

68. Baoshan bamboo slips slip 206 (323 – 316 BC)²¹⁶

□禱於文坪夜君、郢公子春、司馬子音、蔡公子家各特豢，饋之。
昭吉為位，既禱至福。

Performed **the *dao* ritual** to Wen, the ruler of Pingye, to Chun, prince of Wu, to Zi Yin, the Sima official, to Jia, prince of Cai, to each one a single sacrificial animal was offered in sacrifice. Zhao Ji set up the altars, and, once the *dao* sacrifice was completed, handed out the sacrificial meat.

This shows us that the *dao* was made to ancestors and involved sacrifice.

69. Baoshan bamboo slips slip 240 (323 – 316 BC)²¹⁷

□禱五山各一牂：...

Performed **the *dao* ritual** to the five mountains, one female sheep for each; ...

Here, in contrast, the *dao* sacrifice is made to a natural object, mountains. Once again an animal sacrifice is used.

70. Wangshan bamboo slips tomb 1, slip 28 (late 4th century BC)²¹⁸

□禱宮行一白牛酒食。

Performed **the *dao* ritual** to the palace roads with a white ox, alcohol and food.

²¹⁶ *Baoshan Chu Mu*, Vol.1, p.365 and Vol.2, plates, p.182. For dating, see Vol.1, pp.533 – 545.

²¹⁷ *Baoshan Chu Mu*, Vol.1, p.368 and Vol.2, plates, p.195. For dating, see Vol.1, pp.533 – 545.

²¹⁸ *Wangshan Chu Jian*, p.25 and p.70. For dating, see p.136.

Here the *dao* sacrifice is made to man-made objects, the roads, and uses an animal, alcohol and other food.

71. Wangshan bamboo slips tomb 1, slip 54 (late 4th century BC)²¹⁹

□禱□佩玉一環，...

Performed **the *dao* ritual** to ... with one *huan* pendant jade,

In this example it is a piece of jade that is used as the offering.

72. Wangshan bamboo slips tomb 1, slip 108 (late 4th century BC)²²⁰

賽禱於東大【王】。

Performed a reciprocal sacrifice for **the *dao* ritual** to great King Jian.

73. Wangshan bamboo slips tomb 1, slip 135 (late 4th century BC)²²¹

☑公既禱未賽。

Lord ... had performed **the *dao* ritual** and had not yet made a reciprocal sacrifice.

74. Mawangdui silk manuscripts “Wu Shi Er Bing Fang 五十二病方” line 231 (text buried: 168BC)²²²

□懸茅比所，且塞禱，...

...hang the *mao* grass densely close by, and make a reciprocating sacrifice for **the *dao* ritual**, ...

These last three examples show us another aspect of the *dǎo* sacrifice: a reciprocal sacrifice, called *sài* 賽²²³, was made. This was a further sacrifice to thank the spirits for blessings received after the original *dǎo* sacrifice.²²⁴ We

²¹⁹ *Wangshan Chu Jian*, p.30 and p.72 – 73. For dating, see p.136.

²²⁰ *Wangshan Chu Jian*, p.37 and p.77. Note that the 【王】 is a conjectural addition made by the editors.

For dating, see p.136.

²²¹ *Wangshan Chu Jian*, p.44 and p.79. For dating, see p.136.

²²² *Mawangdui Han Mu Boshu* Vol.4, plate p.25 and transcription, p.52.

²²³ The graph [塞] *sài* is used in the Mawangdui example, 74.

²²⁴ *Zhanguo Guwen Zidian*, p.115.

might deduce from this that specific requests were made to the spirits in the *dǎo* sacrifice and that the *sài* sacrifice was held to display gratitude for a positive response to the initial request.

The Chu bamboo slips from Baoshan and the Qin bamboo slips from Shuihudi both contain examples of the actual words of a *dǎo* 禱. Although these texts are about 200 years later than the Wenxian covenants, they may help us to better understand the meaning of *dǎo* 禱. Here is an example from the Shuihudi slips:

75. Shuihudi bamboo slips “Ri Shu Type 1 日書甲種” slips 13 back and 14 back (late 2nd century BC)²²⁵

人有惡夢，覺，乃釋髮西北面坐，禱之曰：「皋！敢告爾矜竒。某有惡夢，走歸矜竒之所。矜竒強飲強食，賜某大富，非錢乃布，非繭乃絮。」則止矣。

If you have a nightmare, wake up, let down your hair, sit facing north-west, and **pray** about it saying: “Ahh! I dare report to you, ____ [name of the spirit], I had a nightmare, [let the nightmare] hasten back to you [lit: to the place of ____ [name of the spirit]]. ____ [name of the spirit] [, may you] eat and drink voraciously. Give me great riches, either money or cloth, either unspun silk or rough silk.”; then it will stop.

Although no sacrifice is specifically mentioned here, Qiu Xigui suggests that the plea to the spirit to “eat and drink voraciously” implies that sacrificial food was offered to please the spirit and encourage it to rid the speaker of the nightmare.²²⁶

Consider now several examples from received texts. The first two passages record *dǎo* from a similar period to the Wenxian and Houma tablets:

76. Zuo Zhuan Xiang 襄 18.3 (text: 5th – 4th century BC) (event: 555 BC)²²⁷

晉侯伐齊，將濟河，獻子以朱絲繫玉二穀而禱曰：“齊環怙恃其險，負其衆庶，棄好背盟，陵虐神主。曾臣彪將率諸侯以討焉，其官臣

²²⁵ *Shuihudi Qin Mu Zhujian*, plates p.104 and transcriptions p.210. For dating, see pp.1 – 2.

²²⁶ Qiu Xigui, personal communication, December 2003.

²²⁷ *Chunqiu Zuo Zhuan Zhu*, pp.1036 – 37.

偃實先後之。苟捷有功，無作神羞，官臣偃無敢復濟。唯爾有神裁之。沈玉而濟。

The lord of Jin attacked Qi. They [Jin] were about to cross the river. Xian Zi tied two paired sets of jade together with red silk and **prayed**: “Huan of Qi [Duke Ling of Qi] relies on his mountainous terrain [and] depends on his large population. [He] abandons friends, betrays covenants [and] abuses the people. Your servant Biao [Duke Ping of Jin] leads the feudal lords to punish him. His minister Yan [Xian Zi] will assist him. If [we] are victorious and have merit, and do not shame the spirits, Yan [Xian Zi] will not dare cross the river again. May you, spirits, decide [the case].” Sinking the jade [in the river he] crossed.

In this case the *dǎo* is in the form of an oath, note that it includes an offering of jade. An offering is also made in the following example:

77. *Zuo Zhuan* Ai 哀 2.3 (text: 5th – 4th century) (event: 493 BC)²²⁸

衛太子禱曰：“曾孫蒯聩敢昭告皇祖文王、烈祖康叔、文祖襄公：鄭勝亂從，晉午在難，不能治亂，使鞅討之。蒯聩不敢自佚，備持矛焉。敢告無絕筋，無折骨，無面傷，以集大事，無作三祖羞。大命不敢請，佩玉不敢愛。”

The heir of Wei **prayed**: “Descendant Kuai Kui [the heir of Wei] dares to call on and make request of the mighty ancestor King Wen, illustrious ancestor Kang Shu, and cultured ancestor Duke Xiang. Zheng Sheng [Duke of Zheng] has brought chaos. Wu of Jin [Duke of Jin] is in difficult straits and cannot bring order to the chaos; [he] sends Yang [Zhao Yang 趙鞅] to punish him [Zheng]. Kuai Kui is not undisciplined, he is here armed with a spear. He [just] dares to ask that [he suffers] no ripped muscles, no broken bones, no wound to his face and that he be successful in this great task and not humiliate the three ancestors. I dare not request a long life, I dare not begrudge these jade pendants [i.e. he offers jade pendants].”

Note that there is no self-imprecation here, making it more of a prayer, but an offering is made.

78. *Xun Zi* “Da Lue 大略” (text: 3rd to 1st century BC) (event: 16th century BC)²²⁹

²²⁸ *Chunqiu Zuo Zhuan Zhu*, pp.1616 – 1617.

²²⁹ *Xun Zi Ji Jie*, p.504.

湯旱而禱曰：“政不節與？使民疾與？何以不雨至斯極也！宮室榮與？婦謁盛與？何以不雨至斯之極也！苞苴行與？讒夫興與？何以不雨至斯極也！”

Tang, suffering from drought, **prayed**: “Is it that my government is not well regulated? Is it that my demands on the people are excessive? Why has the lack of rain come to this extreme! Is it that the palaces are gaudy, too much attention paid to the opinions of wives? Why has the lack of rain come to this extreme! Is it that there is corruption? Are slanderers on the rise? Why has the lack of rain come to this extreme!”

This is more of a plea, questioning the spirits as to why the rain does not come and why they are displeased.

In these examples, the *dǎo* is a spoken entreaty which, in some cases, was accompanied by a sacrificial offering. The prayer and sacrifice were made to spirits, both those of the ancestors and nature spirits, to seek their blessings. In the excavated texts (and this is also seen in some received texts) we saw that there is another sacrifice associated with the *dǎo*, the *sài* 賽, a further offering made to thank the spirits for blessings received in response to the *dǎo*.

The traditional understanding of the terms *dǎo* 禱 and *cí* 祠, as seen in dictionaries, and based on received texts and their commentaries, is as follows. The term *dǎo* refers to oral requests to the spirits for their blessing, i.e. prayer: no mention of an accompanying sacrificial offering is made in standard definitions. The term *cí* is given several definitions: it is the term used for a sacrifice which takes place in the spring as well as being used as a general term for sacrifice.²³⁰ However, when it appears in association with *dǎo*, the word *cí* 祠 is understood to refer to sacrifice performed to reciprocate for blessings received as a result of the prayers, i.e. the *dǎo* previously made.²³¹ Zheng Xuan (鄭玄 127 – 200 BC)’s gloss for the term *dǎocí* 禱祠 in the *Zhou Li* “Chun Guan 春官, Da Zhu 大祝” section is: “When the prayer [*dǎo*] is finished, then make a sacrificial offering [*cí*] to [the spirits] to reciprocate to them.”²³² The commentary of Jia Gongyan

²³⁰ *Hanyu Da Cidian*, Vol.7, pp.904 – 905.

²³¹ *Hanyu Da Cidian*, Vol.7, p.967.

²³² *Shisan Jing Zhushu*, p.811: “禱既則祠之以報焉。”

賈公彥 (fl. AD 650) glosses the term as used in the “Chun Guan 春官, Sang Zhu 喪祝” section of the *Zhou Li* as: “Praying for blessings is called *dǎo*, having received blessings and then reciprocating with a sacrificial offering [*sài* 賽] is called *cí*.”²³³ Note that the Chu slips, quoted above, refer to the reciprocal offering, *sài* 賽, performed to reciprocate for blessings received from the *dǎo*. However, the slips do not use the word *cí* to describe this. This usage of *cí* is, however, seen in received texts:

79. *Han Shi Waizhuan* “Juan 8, chapter 15 卷 8 第 15 章” (text: c.150 BC)²³⁴

鬼神禱而不祠， …

Pray to the spirits but do not make a reciprocal sacrificial offering, …

We can observe, then, that when *cí* 祠 is used in conjunction with *dǎo* 禱 to mean “make a reciprocal sacrificial offering” its meaning is very similar to the word *sài* 賽.

In the Wenxian tablets the two words, *dǎo* 禱 and *cí* 祠, occur side by side as *dǎoci* 禱祠. This compound is common in received texts where it is understood to mean either the combination of the dictionary definitions of both words, as given above, i.e. prayer followed by a reciprocal sacrificial offering, or as a general term for the making of sacrificial offerings (the gloss used in dictionaries is *jìsì* 祭祀).²³⁵ In excavated texts, however, the phrase *dǎoci* 禱祠 is very uncommon. Apart from the usage in the Wenxian tablets, I found only one further example:

80. *Shuihudi bamboo slips* “*Ri Shu* Type 1 日書甲種” slips 100 front and 101 front (text: late 2nd century BC)²³⁶

殺日，勿以殺六畜，不可以取婦、嫁女、禱祠、出貨。

²³³ *Shisan Jing Zhushu*, p.815: “求福曰禱，德福報賽曰祠。”

²³⁴ *Han Shi Waizhuan Ji Jie*, p.287.

²³⁵ *Hanyu Da Cidian*, Vol.7, p.967.

²³⁶ *Shuihudi Qin Mu Zhujian*, plates p.97 and transcriptions p.195. For dating see pp.1 – 2.

On *sha* day [an inauspicious day], do not use this day to slaughter any of the six domestic animals, it is not permissible to use this day to take a wife, marry off a daughter, **carry out prayers and sacrifices** [or] send out goods.

As one of several two-character compounds expressing a single act here, e.g. *jià nǚ* 嫁女 (“marry off your daughter”), the phrase *dǎoci* 禱祠 is probably a general term for making sacrificial offerings.

The phrase *dǎoci* 禱祠 is common, as we said, in received texts, for example:

81. *Zhou Li* “Chun Guan 春官, Jia Zong Ren 家宗人” (text: 2nd century BC) ²³⁷

國有大故，則令禱祠，反命。

If the state has major misfortune, then [the King will] order **prayer and sacrifice**, [once this is completed,] report back [to the King].

82. *Lie Nü Zhuan* “Qi Shang Huai Nü 齊傷槐女” 6.4 (text: 1st century BC) (event: late 5th/early 4th century BC) ²³⁸

見陰陽不調，風雨不時，五穀不滋之故，禱祠於名山神水，...

If one meets with the misfortune that *yin* and *yang* are not in harmony, the wind and rain not in season, the five grains not flourishing, then **pray and sacrifice** to the famed mountains and sacred waters, ...

Note that in both these cases the *dǎoci* is a response to natural disaster. In the second example the ruler must carry out the *dǎoci* to the mountain and river spirits, in the first example the recipient is Tian.

83. *Shi Ji* “Li Si Lie Zhuan 李斯列傳” (text: 2nd – 1st centuries BC) (event: late 3rd century BC) ²³⁹

朕巡天下，禱祠名山諸神以延壽命。

²³⁷ *Zhou Li Zheng Yi*, pp.2227 – 8.

²³⁸ *Lie Nü Zhuan*, Juan 卷 6, part 4, p.4a.

²³⁹ *Shi Ji*, Vol.8, p.2551.

I travel through the land, **praying and sacrificing** to the famed mountains and the multitude of spirits, in order to extend my life

Here the *dǎoci* 禱祠” is directed at all spirits in the land, the aim to extend the life of the First Emperor.

84. *Han Shu* “Wu Xing Zhi: Di Qi Shang 五行志 第七上” (text: 1st century AD) ²⁴⁰

傳曰：“簡宗廟，不禱祠，廢祭祀，逆天時，則水不潤下。”

The text says: “If [one] disregards temples, does not **pray and sacrifice**, abandons making offerings [*jìsì* 祭祀], goes against the seasons, then water will no longer flow downwards.”

Here we have both *dǎoci* and *jìsì* 祭祀 used in the same passage which suggests that, while both terms could be used to denote general sacrificial offerings, they could also be distinguished: here it may be that the term *dǎoci* is used to mean prayer and reciprocating sacrifice rather than sacrifice in general. This may also be the implication in those examples in which the ritual is aimed at solving particular problems, such as natural disaster (passage 82) or mortality (passage 83). Alternatively, the *ci* could simply refer to sacrifice accompanying the initial prayer, rather than a reciprocal offering, in which case the term is general. This appears to be the case in the Shuihudi example (passage 80), where *dǎoci* seems to be used for general prayer and sacrifice.

Overall, these examples support the dictionary definition of *dǎo* as an oral entreaty, a prayer to the spirits, but they also show that a *dǎo* often included a sacrifice, a point dictionary definitions do not mention. Since the *dǎo* asks something specific of the spirits, if the spirits respond favourably, a sacrifice would be made to reciprocate. In excavated texts and some received texts this reciprocal sacrifice is called *sài* 賽. When *dǎo* is paired with *ci*, glosses consider that the *ci* refers to this reciprocal sacrifice or that the phrase *dǎoci* refers generally to making offerings. The one example of *dǎoci* found in an excavated text, the second century BC Shuihudi slips, seems to have the latter, more general

meaning. Examples in received texts tend to be ambiguous: the term could mean prayer with reciprocal sacrifice or just general prayer and sacrifice. We should note that in the early excavated and received texts we have looked at, the word *cí* used alone does not mean reciprocating sacrifice but just sacrifice. This is true of the two bronzes noted as being part of the Jin-state inscriptional tradition. Furthermore, in excavated texts the word *sài* is used to mean “reciprocal offering”, not *cí*. Thus, as a general definition for *dǎocí*, “prayers and sacrifices” is suitable, the “sacrifices” referring to offerings accompanying prayers as well as other sacrifices, possibly including those offered in reciprocation. This general definition seems most appropriate for the phrase as it is used in the Wenxian tablets. The covenant lord was demanding the contribution of sacrificial goods, presumably meat, grain and alcohol, to supply these sacrifices.

As we saw above, the *dǎo* and *cí* refer to sacrifices made to a wide range of spirits. We can conjecture, then, that the supplies demanded from the covenantors in the Wenxian Oath Type 7 would have been used for in sacrifices carried out by the covenant lord to a variety of spirits.

3.2.1.2.4 Conclusion

Of the three phrases discussed above, the most specific demands are made in stipulation II.B of the Type 7 oaths: “[if the covenantor dare not] ... do his utmost to supply the prayers and sacrifices of his lord, ...”. The received texts cited above suggest that the main requirement in this regard would have been to provide offerings to be used in the sacrifices carried out by the covenant lord. This is also the specific kind of demand that we expect to see in the second stipulation of these covenants.

The basic meaning of stipulation II.A of the Type 3 stipulation, that is “to seek blessings for the lord” (*jiǎo zhǔ fú* 徽主福) is straightforward but one can ask how the covenantor was expected to carry out this task. Blessings are bestowed by spirits satiated with offerings from man. If the covenantor is to seek

²⁴⁰ *Han Shu*, Vol.5, p.1342.

blessings for the covenant lord, the implication is that he must make offerings for the sake of the lord. To do this, the covenantor would have to make offerings to the appropriate spirits. The question then becomes the identity of the appropriate spirits and whether the covenantors had the status to make offerings to those spirits.

For this covenant lord, whom we believe was the head of the Han ministerial family in the state of Jin, the most important spirits in regard to his position as head of the clan would have been the Han clan's ancestral spirits. In the Spring and Autumn period, ancestral sacrifices were essential as a means to engender solidarity and loyalty among clan members.²⁴¹ By the end of the Spring and Autumn period all members of a clan would have participated in clan ancestral sacrifice.²⁴² The suggestion, then, is that only clan members could join in sacrifices made to the clan's ancestral spirits.²⁴³ If this is correct, then we would have to conjecture that the covenantors who took part in the Wenxian Type 3 oaths were all members of the same clan as the covenant lord. The names of the covenantors on these tablets have not been carefully studied but we know that in the Houma tablets not all the covenantors have the same clan name as the covenant lord (i.e. Zhao 趙).²⁴⁴ However, the Type 3 oaths are few in number and it is possible that all the covenantors were members of the Han 韓 clan.

If it turns out that there are a mixture of clan names on the Type 3 tablets, we could conjecture that the covenantors were being asked to take part in sacrifices which would bring blessings on the lord but not those that were directed at the clan's ancestors. For example, sacrifices to the earth altars (*she* 社) were also very important. In the Spring and Autumn period, apart from the main earth altars of the state, lower ranking nobles also set up their own earth altars which acted as symbols of their local authority.²⁴⁵ Thus it is quite likely that the Wenxian covenant lord would have had such an altar and that all those under his

²⁴¹ Chao Fulin, *Xian Qin Minsu Shi*, pp.328 – 341.

²⁴² Chao Fulin, *Xian Qin Minsu Shi*, p.339.

²⁴³ Chao Fulin, *Xian Qin Minsu Shi*, p.332. There is some evidence that this was not always the case, see: Susan Roosevelt Weld, "Covenant in Jin's Walled Cities: The Discoveries at Houma and Wenxian", p.355.

²⁴⁴ *Houma Mengshu*, pp.53 – 62.

²⁴⁵ Chao Fulin, *Xian Qin Minsu Shi*, p.318.

authority would have been expected to join in sacrifices to the earth altar to pray for protection and blessings for him, his subjects and the land under his control. That the earth altar was more of a public altar than the ancestral temples is clear from records of large-scale rituals being carried out at these sites.²⁴⁶ Such ritual would have been joined by large numbers of people, almost certainly including individuals with different clan names.

This brief look at sacrificial ritual in the Spring and Autumn period suggests that, whether or not the covenantors participating in the Wenxian Type 3 oaths were directly related to the covenant lord, there would have been sacrifices at which they would have been expected to make offerings to spirits who would then bless the covenant lord. The Type 3 oath aims to ensure that the covenantors do carry out these sacrifices. Apart from the religious aspect of such activity, these sacrifices would have had the political function of requiring the active expression of loyalty to the covenant lord.

With this initial understanding of the second stipulations of the Type 3 and Type 7 oaths, the next problem is how to relate these to the phrase found in both their first stipulations: “pay due reverence and attention to his *de*” (*kè shèn qí dé* 恪慎其德). One basic grammatical issue is whether the *yǐ* 以, which occurs between the first and second stipulations in the Type 3, and some of the Type 7 examples, indicates a means-and-end relationship, i.e. “in order to”, or is simply a weak conjunction which can be translated as “and”. Even if its meaning is the weaker “and”-type conjunction, its use does, nevertheless, suggest that these actions were considered to have some relationship to each other.

In order to determine the connection between “paying due reverence and attention to one’s *de*” and seeking blessings for one’s lord, or providing assistance with his sacrifices and prayers, we must first consider the meaning of *de* at the time of the covenants. As I discussed earlier, the covenant tablets are

²⁴⁶ Chao Fulin 晁福林 gives examples of a covenant ceremony in Lu 魯 in 504 BC between the lord and the city dwellers (*guó rén* 國人), at the earth altars of Bo 亳 city and also various examples of pre-battle sacrifices made by armies at earth altars. Chao Fulin, *Xian Qin Minsu Shi*, pp.316 – 320.

products of what Waley calls the “auguristic-sacrificial” period of early society. During this period, *de* is not the *de* of the moral stage of society, that is, it is not the *de* often translated as “virtue” and associated with *dao* 道 “the way”. The meaning of *de* during the auguristic-sacrificial period has been discussed by many scholars, including Li Zongtong 李宗侗 (Xuanbo 玄伯) (1895 – 1974), Arthur Waley, Vassili Kryukov, Constance Cook and Sarah Allan.²⁴⁷ Kryukov argues that *de* is an awesome power linking a clan’s dead ancestors to their living descendants, he writes:

People and spirits possess *de*, but they are not its owners. *De* is an object and a gift, but it is an “object” which pertains to the whole universe of people and gods. The dynamism of *de* reveals the hierarchical structure of the universe and thus signifies a communicative medium which ensures the integrity of the social system and makes possible communications within it.

Communication happens not because there is somebody who can give or take, but because there is a common communicative space which mediates relations between rulers and subordinates, people and spirits, Heaven and rulers. Yet, it is only a condition, not a guarantee of communication and hence it requires an active influence – “enlightenment” or “purification”; the “noticeability” of *de* is just a sign of the mirror-like transparency of communication.²⁴⁸

But *de* requires constant nurturing or it will be lost:

De is not the private property of individuals, it belongs to the clan and can be transmitted to posterity. At the same time grace is not attained automatically through simple clanship succession. It must be pleaded for through prayers and sacrifices dedicated to ancestors: ...²⁴⁹

Key here is the concept, also stressed by Li Zongtong, that *de* is clan-based.²⁵⁰

The Wenxian phrase calls on the covenantors to revere their *de*, *de* which Kryukov argues must be the *de* of their clan. So, this brings us back to the question of the clan affiliation of the covenantors that was also an issue with the

²⁴⁷ Li Zongtong, *Zhongguo Gudai Shehui Shi*, pp.37 – 40; Arthur Waley, *The Way and its Power*, pp.31 – 32; Vassili Kryukov, “Symbols of Power and Communication in Pre-Confucian China ...”; Constance A. Cook, “Scribes, Cooks and Artisans; Breaking the Zhou Tradition”; Sarah Allan, *The Way of Water*, pp.101 – 107.

²⁴⁸ Vassili Kryukov, “Symbols of Power and Communication in Pre-Confucian China ...”, p.330.

²⁴⁹ Vassili Kryukov, “Symbols of Power and Communication in Pre-Confucian China ...”, p.315.

²⁵⁰ Li Zongtong, *Zhongguo Gudai Shehui Shi*, pp. 39 – 40.

second clause of the Type 3 oath. Appealing to the covenantors' concerns about their *de* would suggest that this *de* is also the *de* of the covenant lord, i.e. they belong to the same clan. Whether or not all the covenantors who participated in the Type 3 and Type 7 oaths were of the Han clan may become clear once the legible names on these tablets have been analyzed in full.²⁵¹

If all the covenantors are members of the Han 韓 clan, the *de* to which they are required to pay due reverence and attention is that of the Han clan and, therefore, of the covenant lord, the living head of the Han lineage. This would correspond well to the requirements given in the following clauses: to seek blessings for the covenant lord through sacrifice and to supply offerings for the lord's sacrifices. It would also suggest that the sacrifices being referred to, directly or indirectly in the tablet, are the clan's ancestral sacrifices, at which only clan members could be present. To ensure that the ancestors continue to bestow *de* on one (and one's clan), one must pray and sacrifice to those ancestors and the act of "paying due reverence and attention to one's *de*" would include attending to such sacrifices.

Such an interpretation suggests the two stipulations in the Type 3 stipulation do have a means-and-end relationship and the *yǐ* 以 should be taken as "in order to": "[if the covenantor dare not] pay due reverence and attention to his *de* and thereby seek blessings for his lord" (*kè shèn qí dé yǐ jiǎo zhǔ fú* 恪慎其德以徼主福). The stipulation requires that the covenantor makes the necessary sacrifices to his clan ancestors, probably including participation in collective sacrifice led by the covenant lord, and thus ensures that the ancestors on the one hand bestow *de* on the whole clan, including the covenantor, but also bless the head of the clan, the covenant lord.

²⁵¹ Many names on the tablets do not include a clan name, only the personal name. Some scholars suggest that only the first name is given because these covenantors are all members of the same clan as the covenant lord. However, others argue that it is because this genre of text did not require the clan name to be given. If the latter is correct then it will be impossible to determine from the names whether all the covenantors in these two pits belonged to a single clan. See: Susan Roosevelt Weld, "Covenant in Jin's Walled Cities: The Discoveries at Houma and Wenxian", pp.363 – 364.

Interpreting the Type 7 oaths in this way highlights the practical aspects of attending to one's *de*, the stipulation demands that the covenantor: "pay due reverence and attention to his *de* and do his utmost to supply the prayers and sacrifices of his lord" (*kè shèn qí dé miǎn gōng qí zhǔ zhī dǎocǐ* 恪慎其德以勉供其主之禱祠). This requires the covenantor to attend to his and the clan's *de* in a very functional manner, by supplying what is needed for the sacrifices to the clan ancestors carried out by the covenant lord, and thus ensure the clan continues to be graced with the *de* of the ancestors. In both cases then, the *de* is the *de* of the covenantor but also the shared *de* of the covenant lord and the clan in general.

This analysis appears persuasive but begs a further question: if all the covenantors were of the same clan, related to the covenant lord by blood, why was it felt necessary to carry out an elaborate ceremony to make them swear their allegiance to the covenant lord and their support in matters of prayer and sacrifice? This should have been forthcoming without the need for such threatening oaths. That this had to be done reflects a situation in which the traditional kinship system, the *zōngfǎ* system, was in the process of disintegration; that previous assumptions of loyalty and participation in sacrificial activity for the good of the clan could no longer be assumed but had to be demanded of clan members.²⁵²

The concepts of property that had previously ensured a supply of produce to the lineage head for use in sacrifice were changing along with the changes in the *zōngfǎ* system. In the Zhou period it appears that branch lineage groups (*xiǎo zōng* 小宗) had little say over allocation and control of land, agricultural produce and property in general: control was held by the head (*zōng zǐ* 宗子) of the main lineage (*dà zōng* 大宗) at each level of the system.²⁵³ The expectation was that the head of the main lineage made use of the produce of members of the

²⁵² On the *zōngfǎ* system see: Hsu Cho-yun and Katheryn M. Linduff, *Western Chou Civilization*, pp.163 – 171. On its collapse see: Hsu Cho-yun. "The Spring and Autumn Period", pp.566 – 578 and *passim*.

²⁵³ On ownership under the *zōngfǎ* system, see: Qiu Xigui, "Cong Ji Jian Zhou Dai Tongqi Mingwen Kan Zongfa Zhidu Xia De Suoyouzhì".

main lineage and branch lineages as he wished. By the end of the Spring and Autumn period, however, such authority was undermined by the break down of the *zōngfǎ* system, clearly illustrated by the increase in power of nominally subordinate lineages, for example, the growing power of the Jin ministerial families in contrast to the waning power of the Jin royal house. Main lineages could also no longer assume obedience from branch lineages, as is clear from the example of the inter-lineage dispute, supposedly related to the Houma covenant tablets, in which Zhao Yang 趙鞅 murdered the head of a branch lineage, Zhao Wu 趙午, due to his insubordination. The Houma Confiscation Texts relate directly to the question of control over property: they are an attempt by the Houma covenant lord to stop members of his branch lineages from seizing the property of nobles who had lost power.²⁵⁴ It seems that the concept of accumulation of private property was becoming common and the assumption that all property should be considered as firstly belonging to the lineage head was ignored in practice. In such a context it is reasonable to conjecture that the Wenxian covenant lord, whom we assume was the head of the Han 韓 lineage, was not receiving the expected contributions of produce, e.g. livestock, grain and alcohol, from his branch lineages for use in his sacrificial activities, and that this was the motivation for the Type 7 covenant.

If, on the other hand, the covenantors in the Type 3 and Type 7 oaths were not, in fact, all members of the same clan, we can understand these covenants as examples of a tool used to subordinate and control unrelated groups of people at a time when the lineage-based system of social organization was breaking down. The Houma and Wenxian covenant oath types in which we do see covenantors with different clan names are proof that this was occurring: they are examples of the use of oath to bring people not related by blood into a shared relationship of subordination and loyalty to a single lord. The model of the clans was used for this new social grouping. The use of animal blood in the covenant ritual, suggested by the sacrificial animals found at the Houma and Wenxian sites and recorded in received texts, may have symbolized a blood relationship between

²⁵⁴ Qiu Xigui, "Cong Ji Jian Zhou Dai Tongqi Mingwen Kan Zongfa Zhidu Xia De Suoyouzhi", pp.197 – 198.

unrelated members of the group, both among themselves and with the covenant lord. In this case the appeal to revere one's *de* may also have been borrowing from the traditional concept of a clan-based *de*. If the new group is seen as a clan then it may also have been seen to have its own collective *de*. We can, however, conjecture that the breakdown of the *zōngfǎ* system would eventually have eroded the concept of *de* as clan-based, paving the way for its development into a universal moral concept.

Alternatively, perhaps the phrase “pay due reverence and attention to his *de*” (*kè shèn qí dé* 恪慎其德) is not to be understood so specifically, but just as a formulaic phrase based on an ancient phrase (common, as we have seen, on bronze inscriptions) and by the time of the Wenxian covenants having just a general meaning of behaving with propriety. If so, then it is less significant in our consideration of the specific demands of these two stipulations.

At this initial stage of interpretation I favour the theory that the covenantors were members of the Han clan and that the demands on them were the specific ones discussed. The phrase “pay due reverence and attention to his *de*” is clearly formulaic but late Spring and Autumn society is still very much clan based and concerned with ancestral and other sacrifice: it is hard to imagine that this phrase would have completely lost its original significance. The next step in any further research on these particular tablets would be to make a study of the names of the covenantors on the Type 3 and Type 7 tablets, looking at what clan or clans they belong to.

To conclude, the final interpretations for these phrases are:

- Type 7: 恪慎其德勉供而/其主之禱祠 (WT5K1)
 恪慎其德以勉供其主之禱祠 (WT5K14)
 [if the covenantor dare not] pay due reverence and attention to his *de* and do his utmost to supply the prayers and sacrifices of his lord, ...
- Type 3: 恪慎其德以徼主福 (WT1K17)
 [if the covenantor dare not] pay due reverence and attention to his *de* and thereby seek blessings for the lord, ...

3.2.2 Oath Type 2: stipulations II.A and II.B

The Type 2 texts are from pit WT1K2. The content of this oath type is quite particular: some of the formulaic content commonly seen in the other Wenxian oaths is omitted and its stipulations are extremely specific, referring to a certain action carried out at a named town, the only place name seen in the stipulations of the Wenxian tablets. Let us look at an example of a full oath and then briefly discuss its features and content.

Oath Type 2: tablet WT1K2 – 159

- I. 所□
- II.A. 敢偽懸書于少曲者，
- II.B 所□敢知偽書不之言者，
- III. 皇君□公
- IV. 其諦亟視之，亡夷彼氏，俾毋有冑後。

- I. If [covenantor's name]
- II.A dare falsify publicly-posted notices in Shaoqu,
- II.B if [covenantor's name] dare know of the falsifying of notices and does not report this,
- III. mighty ruler, Duke _____ [?],
- IV. may you observe and immediately detect him, wipe out that [i.e. his] clan, and cause [him] to not have descendants.

Although this oath type basically follows the standard formula, there are a number of differences. Firstly we find the function word *suǒ* 所 placed at the very beginning of the text, before the name of the covenantor. The *suǒ* 所 functions to mark the first stipulation as a conditional clause. Unlike the standard formula, the name thus occurs within the first stipulation and there is no “period of effectiveness” and no “opening phrase”.¹ The name is also often repeated at the beginning of the second stipulation, something we do not see in other Wenxian oaths. Thus, although we can set off the name, as we have above, to

¹ One wonders whether this lack of the “period of effectiveness” clause meant that the covenant was considered to apply retroactively, thus requiring anyone with information about cases of the prohibited act (assuming it had been occurring before the covenant was made) to come forward, as required by the second stipulation.

indicate that the basic structure is similar to the standard formula, there is, nevertheless, no Name Clause comparable to those in the other oaths.

The first stipulation of this oath type is also quite different from that found in the other Wenxian oaths so far examined. In the other Wenxian oath types the first stipulation is made up of common phrases requiring loyalty to the covenant lord; only in the second stipulation are more specific demands made. In Oath Type 2, there is no call for loyalty to the lord, in fact he is not even mentioned. The first and second stipulation are both extremely specific and both relate to a single proscribed act, the first a prohibition on that action and the second a demand to report anyone seen to be engaged in the outlawed activity. While we can describe the majority of the Wenxian oath types as loyalty oaths, this type makes no specific demand for loyalty to the covenant lord.

The two stipulations in this oath type are clearly distinguished by the repetition of the function words *suǒ* 所 and *zhě* 者 which are used in both stipulations to indicate that these are conditional clauses.² This contrasts to the other Wenxian oath types in which the *zhě* 者 appears only at the end of the second stipulation. This suggests that, in such oath types, the first stipulation, that promising loyalty to the lord, is considered subordinate to the second stipulation: a general demand for loyalty is made in the first stipulation, but the second gives the specific way in which this is to be displayed. Oath Type 2, on the other hand, is concerned with halting a particular action and is not directly related to the covenantor's relationship with the covenant lord. Each stipulation covers one aspect related to this single matter and they are grammatically co-ordinate, non-compliance with either one will trigger the curse.

The specific nature of the proscribed action in this oath type suggests that this covenant may have been produced to counter a problem that was already occurring. If so, then the covenant genre appears, in this instance, to have been

² An unidentified graph is sometimes found used in place of *suǒ* 所 in the second clause; this is discussed in detail below.

used to make ad hoc reactive laws, perhaps in the absence of a separate legal code.

The remainder of the oath follows the standard formula of submission clause and imprecation clause, although we can note that the phrase *huángjūn* 皇君 “mighty ruler” in the submission clause is only found in this oath type in the Wenxian tablets, and in the imprecation phrase this oath type has [亡] *wáng*, denoting *wáng* {亡} “to eliminate, wipe out” where the majority of oath types have [麻] *má* denoting *mí* {靡} “divide, scatter”, “break, harm”.

In the following analysis, we will consider both the stipulations from the Type 2 oath. Analysis is given for the following graphs: [懸] (*xuán* {懸} “to hang”); [𠂔 =] (*Shǎoqū* {少曲} Shaoqu [place name]). The graph that is sometimes seen in place of the *suǒ* 所 in the second clause is also discussed but no conclusion as to its correct interpretation is reached; three suggestions are given: [莠] *ǎi* (*huò* {或} “or”); [毒] *dú*; and [姓] *xìng* (*shě*n {矧}, a function word indicating an increase in degree compared to a preceding clause).

3.2.2.1 Palaeographic analysis

Graph 1: [懸]

Direct transcription: [懸]

Formal transcription: [玄林]

Word denoted: *xuán* {懸}

English translation: “to hang” (transitive verb)

Analysis category: C. Graphic analysis supports an interpretation based on semantic context.

Variant forms

1. a.



WT1K2 - 165



WT1K2 - 112

b.



WT1K2 - 115

c.



WT1K2 - 159

d.



WT1K2 - 137

e.



WT1K2 - 123

f.



WT1K2 - 166

2.



WT1K2 – 120

3.



WT1K2 – 1



WT1K2 – 111

The forms are composed of two linked components, placed side by side and linked at the top of the graph. The only variation seen in the right-hand component is that in which the vertical stroke does not extend down past the crossed strokes that make up the middle of the form; an example is the second form in 1.a (WT1K2 – 112). The left-hand side of the graph is composed of curved strokes forming two enclosed link-type sections. In this component we see a greater degree of calligraphic variation. The bottom of the form is sometimes rounded, using what appears to be an unbroken stroke (e.g. 1.a WT1K2 – 112), but sometimes the strokes meet or cross at this point (e.g. type 2). There are also minor variations in which a stroke extends up or down from the top or bottom of the form, e.g. 1.b, c, and d. In form 1.e the left side appears to only have one link where the other examples have two, and the stroke forming that section seems to also have been used to form the vertical stroke of the right-hand component. However, the graph is not very legible and there are some ink marks above the left-side of the form; these may be the other link, in which case the stroke joining the two components was attached to the left-hand component in the middle of the form, as in the type 3 example, WT1K2 – 1. In 1.f, the bottom strokes of the form cross over each other. In the type 2 graph, it seems that the left- and right-hand components are not joined. However, there is the suggestion of a very thin stroke coming down from the top of the left-hand component, so there may originally have been a full stroke here. In the right-hand component of the type 3 forms, the lower section of the central

vertical stroke curves out to the right; it is straight in most other examples. Note that the large ink-dot on the right in the WT1K2 – 1 example is part of the diagonal stroke, not a separate stroke.

Analysis

The *Shuo Wen Jie Zi* component table has several matching components: both 𣎵, [幺] yāo, and 糸, [糸] mì, for the left-hand component. For the right-hand component: 木, [木] mù and 禾, [禾] hé. We can also note that the *Shuo Wen Jie Zi* gives an “ancient script (gǔwén 古文)” form, 𣎵, for the [糸] mì component. This is very similar to the left-hand component of the Wenxian graph.³ This supports identifying the left-hand component as [糸] mì. The right-hand component is closest in form to the [禾] hé if we allow for the extended top stroke of the small-seal form to bend to the left, rather than the right, and link with the left-hand component. This linking of the components, however, should make us wary of adopting the [禾] hé: in examples of graphs with the component [禾] hé, the top bent-over stroke of the form does not normally connect with another component in the graph.⁴ An exception is [穆] mù, e.g., 𣎵, where there is a link to a left-hand component.⁵ This is understood to be a semantograph of ears of grain hanging down, the [禾] hé itself a depiction of standing grain. Thus we might consider whether the Wenxian graph could also be a syssemantograph, made up of the component [糸] mì, taken to represent a skein of silk, attached to either [禾] hé, “standing grain”, or [木] mù, “tree” or “wood”.

Among the *Shuo Wen Jie Zi* graphs collected under [糸] mì, we find an “ancient script (gǔwén 古文)” form 𣎵, for the character [綱] gāng.⁶ This graph is derived from 木 [木] mù and the “ancient script (gǔwén 古文)” form

³ *Shuo Wen Jie Zi*, p.271 (13a 糸部: 1a).

⁴ See, for example, forms derived from [禾] hé in the *Jinwen Bian*, pp.500 – 508.

⁵ This example from the “罍鼎 Yao Ding”, *Jinwen Bian*, p.500.

⁶ *Shuo Wen Jie Zi*, p.275 (13a 糸部: 9b).

that the *Shuo Wen Jie Zi* gives for [糸] *mì*, i.e. 𦉳: it can be transcribed as [絛]. Looking in the *Han Jian* under the [糸] *mì* component we find the equivalent form, 𦉳, also given as corresponding to the graph [綱] *gāng*.⁷ This example is even closer to the Wenxian graph since the components are in identical positions, not switched as in the *Shuo Wen Jie Zi* example. The *Han Jian* graph can be transcribed as [絛].

The character [綱] *gāng* denotes *gāng* {綱}, the basic meaning of which is the main rope of a fishing net. The graph [綱] *gāng* is a phonogram with [糸] *mì*, a skein of silk, i.e. something rope-like, as the semantic component and [岡] *gāng* as the phonetic component. The “ancient script (gǔwén 古文)” forms found in the *Shuo Wen Jie Zi* and the *Han Jian*, i.e. 𦉳 and 𦉳, can only be understood as syssemantographs: neither of these components would make a suitable phonetic for the word *gāng* {綱}. The “*Ju Du* 句瀆” entry in the *Shuo Wen Gulin* analyses the *Shuo Wen Jie Zi* “ancient script (gǔwén 古文)” form, i.e. 𦉳, as derived from [糸] *mì* indicating the main rope, and [木] *mù* indicating pieces of wood attached to the end of the main line of the net.⁸ We could conjecture that the Wenxian graphs are examples of the same graph in which the two components have been joined to clearly indicate the attachment of the wood to the rope.

The “*Kao Gong Ji* 考工記 *Zi Ren* 梓人” has the character [綱] *gāng* in the line: “The top rope (“rope” = *gāng* 綱), together with the bottom rope (“rope” = *gāng* 綱), extend out a *xun* [unit of length]; the fastener is a *cun* [unit of length] at this point.”⁹ The Zheng Xuan gloss for this passage says *gāng* {綱} was “the means by which an archery target was attached to a branch.”¹⁰ The word is also

⁷ *Han Jian*, p.35 (70b).

⁸ *Shuo Wen Jie Zi Gulin*, p.12722: “從木從古文糸。此則底綱也。大綱以木為押。兩端有渠。以縑縛網于綱則合三為一。”

⁹ *Shisan Jing Zhushu*, p. 926: “上綱與下綱出舌尋，緝寸焉。”

¹⁰ *Shisan Jing Zhushu*, p. 926: “綱，所以繫侯於植者也。”

used verbally to mean “to fasten” “to restrain”.¹¹ For example the *Zhou Li* “Xia Guan 夏官 Ma Zhi 馬質” has the phrase “restrain a fierce horse” (*gāng è mǎ* 綱惡馬); the Zheng Xuan commentary glosses *gāng* 綱 here as “to use a rope to restrain and tame it”.¹²

In the Wenxian Type 2 oath, the phrase in which the graph is found is “dare to produce ___ documents at Shaoqu” (*gǎn wéi ___ shū yú Shǎoqū* 敢為△書于少曲).¹³ Taking this character as the word *gāng* {綱}, and on the basis of the definitions given above, it might be possible to understand the resulting phrase, *gāng shū* 綱書, as a document which is fastened up with rope; the covenantor is being prohibited from producing such documents in Shaoqu. Alternatively, *gāng* {綱} is defined as “laws and discipline”, in which case we could understand *gāng shū* 綱書 to be some sort of legal-type document that the covenantors are being prohibited from producing in Shaoqu. A problem with both these suggestions is that the term *gāng shū* 綱書 is not seen in received texts. While this does not rule out this interpretation, we should consider whether there are more persuasive alternatives.

Palaeographically there is also a problem with the interpretation of the graph as [綱] *gāng*: In the “ancient script (gǔwén 古文)” forms of [綱] *gāng* in the *Shuo Wen Jie Zi* and *Han Jian*, the two components [糸] *mì* and [木] *mù* are not linked, while the components of the Wenxian graphs are, thus the match is not perfect. We might suggest that this is a case where we would be justified in “bending” the form of the graphs a little and arguing that they are equivalent, thus allowing us to interpret them as *gāng* {綱} “to fasten”. Before doing so, however, let us consider whether the graph can be interpreted in any other way.

¹¹ *Ci Yuan*, p.2443.

¹² *Shisan Jing Zhushu*, p. 842: “綱，以縻索維綱押習之。”

¹³ Note that the interpretation of the [為] *wéi* as *wěi* {偽} “falsify” “false” given in the translation of the sample tablet above was the result of later analysis, discussed in full below. At this stage of the original analysis this graph was interpreted as *wéi* {為} “to make, to produce”.

The analysis mentioned above takes the “ancient script (gǔwén 古文)” form of [綱] *gāng* as a syssemantograph: [糸] *mì* for the idea of rope, linked to [木] *mù* “wood” to depict wood attached to the main line of a fishing net. The identification of the graph as a syssemantograph is supported by the linking of its two components: if the graph was a phonogram made up of these components we would not expect them to be joined. Nevertheless, we should also be aware that, during the development of some syssemantographs, part of the graph may be replaced with a phonetic component close in form to the replaced element.¹⁴

The analysis, quoted above, of the “ancient script (gǔwén 古文)” forms of [綱] *gāng*, takes the graph as depicting wood tied to a rope. The Wenxian graph could be depicting wood tied to a rope, but it could also depict rope tied to a tree. Given a reasonable degree of familiarity with commonly cited early forms, this will remind us of the character [懸] *xián*, protoform of the character [懸] *xuán*, used to denote *xuán* {懸} “to hang”. Consider the following early forms of this character:

縣妃簋¹⁵

仲義公匜



邵鐘

邵公鐘¹⁶叔尸鐘 (273.2)¹⁷叔尸鐘 (285.3)¹⁸Baoshan 227¹⁹Zeng Hou Yi Mu²⁰

¹⁴ Qiu Xigui (transl. Gilbert L. Mattos and Jerry Norman), *Chinese Writing*, pp.223 – 225.

¹⁵ First three examples all from *Jinwen Bian*, p.634.

¹⁶ *Yin Zhou Jinwen Jicheng*, Vol.1, no.235.


¹⁷ *Yin Zhou Jinwen Jicheng*, Vol.1, no.273.2.



¹⁸ *Yin Zhou Jinwen Jicheng*, Vol.1, no.285.3.

¹⁹ *Baoshan Chu Jian*, plates p.150, slip 227.

²⁰ Teng Rensheng, *Chu Xi Jian Bo Wenzi Bian*, p.715.

These graphs depict a head hung from a tree with a rope, the graph created to denote the word *xuān* {懸} “to hang”.

Could the Wenxian graph be a variation of [縣] *xiàn* (denoting *xuān* {懸} “to hang”) in which the [首] *shǒu* “head” component is omitted? This variation has not been recorded in other excavated texts. However, note that the “Shu Shi Zhong 叔尸鐘” example has the “head” component separated from the “rope” component: . This is a Song dynasty copy of the graph (the original vessel is lost) so we cannot be completely confident of its accuracy, but if the original graph did have this form we could conjecture that such forms further developed by omitting the “head” completely; notice how similar the top part of this example is to the Wenxian graph.

He Linyi suggests that the “rope” component in early examples of the graph [縣] *xiàn* (denoting *xuān* {懸}) is [系] *xì* “to attach”.²¹ The graph [系] *xì* was originally written with a form understood to depict a hand and two skeins of silk, e.g., .²² In the Warring States period, the graph is simplified to one skein of silk, e.g.: .²³ Comparing this to the “rope” component in the early examples of [縣] *xiàn* above, some of the later examples, e.g. the Zeng Hou Yi Mu graph, do appear to use this [系] *xì* form, and, of course, this was later adopted in the small-seal and *kǎishū* forms. The “rope” component in the earlier forms of [縣] *xiàn* are not, however, an obvious match for [系] *xì* and one could argue that the scribes could equally well have had [系] *mì* in mind when writing this form. However, He Linyi also argues that the [系] *xì* component helps phonetically in [縣] *xiàn* because they share the same initial: *g (traditional 匣).²⁴

²¹ *Zhanguo Guwen Zidian*, p.987.

²² For this oracle bone graph, see: *Guwenzi Lei Bian*, p.235, example: 铁 22.

²³ *Gu Taowen Huibian* p.570, 6 – 79.

²⁴ *Zhanguo Guwen Zidian*, p.987.

Following a similar approach, but coming to a different conclusion, we can conjecture that the “rope” component in the Wenxian graphs is not [系] *xì*, but [玄] *xuán*, which would work semantically as it also depicts a skein of twisted silk, as well as phonetically:

懸 *xuán* < *hwen* < **gwen*²⁵ (匣元)

玄 *xuán* < *hwen* < **gwin*²⁶ (匣真)

Although the main vowel does not appear to match, there is strong text-based evidence for interchange between [縣] *xiàn* and [玄] *xuán* as well as between [懸] *xuán* and [玄] *xuán*. For example, the *Shan Hai Jing* has the name 玄圃 Xuanpu, while in the *Mu Tian Zi Zhuan* the same name is written 縣圃 Xuanpu.²⁷ In the “Dong Jing Fu 東京賦” from the *Wen Xuan* the name appears as 玄圃 Xuanpu, and the commentary of Li Shan (李善 d.689) compares this with the name as it appears in the *Huai Nan Zi*, where it is written 懸圃 Xuanpu:

Xuanpu 懸圃 is within the Changhe [gate] of the Kunlun mountains. The ancient characters *xuán* 玄 and *xuán* 懸 could interchange [as phonetic loans].²⁸

Early forms of [玄] *xuán* are very similar to the “rope” component in the [縣] *xiàn* found on bronze inscriptions as well as to the left-hand component of the Wenxian graph:

[玄] *xuán*:  同簋²⁹  頌鼎  頌壺

²⁵ Reconstruction: Wolfgang Behr, personal communication, March 31st, 2004.

²⁶ *A Handbook of Old Chinese Phonology*, p.799.

²⁷ *Guzi Tongjia Huidian*, p.75.

²⁸ *Wen Xuan*, Vol.1, pp.125 – 126: “懸圃在崑崙閭闔之中。玄與懸古字通。”

²⁹ These first three examples from *Jinwen Bian*, pp.268 – 268.

[玄] *xuán*:貨系 318 布空³⁰

古幣 54

I am, then, suggesting that the left-hand component in the Wenxian graph is [玄] *xuán* and that it is acting as a phonetic as well as a semantic component. Either this component in the graph [縣] *xiàn* was originally intended to be [玄] *xuán* and act in this way, or the original graph used [系] *mì* or, perhaps, [系] *xì* as suggested by He Linyi, and at a later time it was replaced with [玄] *xuán* in order to indicate the phonetic of what was originally a syssemantograph.³¹ Strong evidence that such a process could have occurred is provided by another character, [弦] *xián*. This character was originally composed of [弓] *gōng* and [系] *mì*, but in the clerical and *kāishū* scripts the [系] *mì* is replaced with the graphically similar [玄] *xuán* acting as a phonetic.³²

In terms of the the context in which the graph is found, interpreting the graph as denoting the word *xuán* {懸} “to hang” is supported by textual evidence. The phrase in question is: “dare to produce ___ documents at Shaoqu” (*gǎn wéi ___ shū yú Shǎoqū* 敢為△書于少曲). If we take △ as *xuán* {懸} “to hang” we get *xuán shū* 懸書, a phrase found in dictionaries, glossed as both “to post up notices” (*zhāngtiē wénshū* 張貼文書) and, also, as equivalent to the phrase *xuán fǎ* 懸法, meaning “to promulgate laws” (*gōngbù fǎlìng* 公佈法令).³³ *Ci Yuan* gives the following examples:³⁴

1. *Lü Shi Chunqiu* “Jie Li 介立” (text: c.239 BC)³⁵

懸書公門而伏於山下

³⁰ These two examples from: *Zhanguo Guwen Zidian*, p.1108.

³¹ Or, following He Linyi’s argument, improving on the [系] *xì* which only indicated the initial.

³² Qiu Xigui (transl. Gilbert L. Mattos and Jerry Norman), *Chinese Writing*, p.224.

³³ *Ci Yuan*, p.1178.

³⁴ *Ci Yuan*, p.1178.

³⁵ *Lü Shi Chunqiu Xin Jiao Shi*, p.634.

[He] **posted the document** on the palace gates and retired to the foot of the mountain.

2. *Wen Xuan* “Shi Que Ming 石闕銘” by Lu Chui 陸倕 (text: 6th century AD) ³⁶

懸書有附，委篋知歸。

The **posted laws** had their place; the archived documents, it was known where to return them to.

Note that in the second example the term *xuánshū* is used as a noun. The Li Shan commentary, for this line from the *Wen Xuan*, quotes the following section from the *Zhou Li*:

3. *Zhou Li* (text: 2nd century BC) ³⁷

正月，乃懸治象之法於象魏，使萬民觀治象，浹日而斂之。

In the first month, **post** the written laws on the proclamation building, allowing all the people to see the words, after ten days take them down.

The current version of the *Zhou Li* has this text, with additional words and variant characters, in the “Tian Guan 天官 Da Zai 大宰” section:

4. *Zhou Li* “Tian Guan 天官 Da Zai 大宰” (text: 2nd century BC) ³⁸

正月之吉始，和布治于邦國都鄙，乃懸治象之灋於象魏，使萬民觀治象，浹日而斂之。

On the auspicious day of the first month, announce governing policies to the states and cities, **post** the written laws on the proclamation building, allowing all the people to see the words, after ten days take them down.

In the Wenxian type 2 examples, if we take the term *xuánshū* 懸書 as a noun phrase, a usage seen in the *Wen Xuan* example above, meaning “publicly-posted notices” (it is impossible to know whether their content was legal or of some

³⁶ *Wen Xuan*, 56th fascicle, “Ming 銘”: Vol.6, pp.2412 – 2425, see pp.2421 – 22.

³⁷ As quoted in: *Wen Xuan*, Vol.6, p.2422.

³⁸ *Zhou Li Zheng Yi*, p.117.

other nature), then the whole phrase would read: “dare to produce publicly-posted notices at Shaoqu” (*gǎn wéi xuánshū yú Shǎoqū* 敢為懸書于少曲). Thus the oath is prohibiting covenantors from producing some kind of public notice in Shaoqu, a notice which would have somehow harmed the interests of the covenant lord.

In conclusion, we do not find a precise match for this graph but the two possibilities suggested, *gāng* {綱} “tie up” and *xuán* {懸} “to hang”, both fit the context. However, the use of *xuán* {懸} “to hang” in received texts in the phrase *xuánshū* 懸書, matching the phrase found on the covenant tablets, gives greater support to this latter reading. We will adopt the reading *xuán* {懸} “to hang” for the graph, with the hope that further evidence will become available to prove that it is indeed a variant form, in which the [首] *shǒu* “head” component is omitted.

Graph 2: [𠄎 =]

Direct transcription: [𠄎 =]

Formal transcription: [𠄎 =]

Interpretative transcription: *Shǎoqū* {少曲}

English translation: Shaoqu [place name]

Analysis category: C. Graphic analysis supports an interpretation based on semantic context.

Variant forms

1. a.



WT1K2 – 78

b.



WT1K2 – 128

2.



WT1K2 – 119



WT1K2 – 61

3.



WT1K2 – 111



WT1K2 – 156



WT1K2 – 165

4.



WT1K2 – 166



WT1K2 – 112

This range of variant forms allows us to see that the single graph of two components, seen in type 1, 2, and 3, is also written as two separate graphs, as seen in the type 4 examples. This tells us that the single graph is in fact a compound graph (*héwén* 合文) made up of two separate graphs written so close to each other as to make them appear to be two components of a single character. The compound graph is marked as such in some examples with the two short parallel horizontal lines placed at the bottom right corner of the form, e.g. in types 1 and 3. Note, however, that this symbol is not always given, e.g. the type 2 forms. The positioning of the two forms in relationship to each other is uniform, only in 1.b (WT1K2 – 128) do we see the top form written further to the left of the bottom form than in other examples. The only other significant variation are the forms in 3 in which there seems to be an additional dot of ink placed in the top right corner of the inner part of the lower form. In fact, this may just be a wide, heavy, start to the top horizontal stroke and not an additional mark.

Analysis

Looking in the *Shuo Wen Jie Zi* component table for these two separate forms, we find 𠂔, [小] *xiǎo* as a match for the first graph. For the second graph, both the following two components are similar: 𠂔, [𠂔] *xì*, and 𠂔, [𠂔] *fāng*. The latter component also has a “Zhou script (*zhòuwén* 籀文)” form, 𠂔.³⁹

It would appear that the character [𠂔] *xì* is only found in lexicons; there are no examples from texts.⁴⁰ The [𠂔] *fāng* occurs in oracle bones as the name of a sacrifice and is seen on bronzes. On bronzes it appears as:



乃孫作且己鼎⁴¹



𠂔鼎

We might also note on the same page of the *Jinwen Bian* that the graph [𠂔] *kuāng*, which is considered to be derived from this component, is generally written as 𠂔, but that there is also an example where this component is simplified to give: 𠂔.⁴² The [𠂔] *fāng* component in this graph is a perfect match for the Wenxian graph, supporting the interpretation of the form as [𠂔] *fāng*. In Warring States examples of [𠂔] *kuāng*, and other graphs derived from this component, the [𠂔] *fāng* component is also written in this way, e.g.:



古璽文編 4061⁴³



古璽文編 0719

This would seem to support the interpretation of the graph as [𠂔] *fāng* giving us Xiaofang 小𠂔 as the name of the place mentioned in this oath. Such a place

³⁹ *Shuo Wen Jie Zi*, p.268 (12b 𠂔部: 20a).

⁴⁰ *Hanyu Da Zidian*, p.34.

⁴¹ Both examples from: *Jinwen Bian*, p.843.


⁴² *Jinwen Bian*, p.843. First example from the “Shi Ma Yi 師麻固”, second from the “Yu Ding 禹鼎”.

⁴³ Both examples from: *Gu Xi Wen Bian*, p.298.

name is not attested but we do find a Xiaohuang 小黃, a Warring States period town located in modern day Henan, east of Kaifeng 開封.⁴⁴ The pronunciation of [𠄎] *fāng* and [黃] *huáng* is quite similar, they share the same rhyme group (*yáng* 陽), so we might suggest that the [𠄎] *fāng* is being used as a loan to denote *huáng*{黃}. Historical maps place Xiaohuang 小黃 about 120 kilometres from the Wenxian site so, geographically, it seems that this could fit the context of the Wenxian oaths.

In fact, the above analysis is almost certainly incorrect: Li Xueqin has interpreted this graph, as it appears in place names on coins, as [曲] *qū*.⁴⁵ The place name on the Wenxian tablets then becomes Shaoqu 少曲, an attested Warring States town thought to have been located about 40 kilometres from the Wenxian site.

Two problems are illustrated by this misidentification. Firstly, it illustrates the limitations of the *Shuo Wen Jie Zi* component table: the table was produced at the end of the first century AD and based on the Qin small-seal script of the late third century BC. However, we are dealing with the Jin script of the early fifth century, almost three hundred years before the Qin reunification, six hundred years before Xu Shen's time: we cannot expect the *Shuo Wen Jie Zi* component table to be an accurate reflection of the component system of the Wenxian script. There are, however, no charts giving the component system of the Jin script so we have no choice but to use the *Shuo Wen Jie Zi*'s table.

The second problem is the question of identifying previously interpreted graphs: there is no convenient way to do this using the original form of a graph or its components, making it difficult or impossible to find the graph in the relevant reference books. For example, given only the original form of the graph in question, e.g.  (WT1K2 – 112), it is not possible to use this form to consult

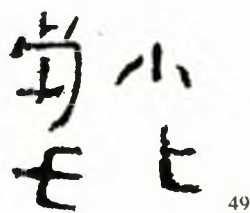
⁴⁴ Tan Qixiang ed., *Zhongguo Lishi Ditu Ji*, p.36.

⁴⁵ Li Xueqin has not himself published an article on how he interpreted this graph. See: Li Ling, "Zhanguo Niao Shu Zhenming Daigou Kaoshi", p.62, note 3.

a reference work (e.g. the *Zhanguo Guwen Zidian*) in which one will find this graph identified as [曲] *qū* because character indices in such works are usually based on standard *kǎishū* forms, i.e. one would have to know it was [曲] *qū* before being able to look it up.

The place name Shaoqu 少曲 is found in several different inscriptions on coins of the square-shouldered hollow-socketed *bu* (*píngjiān kōngshǒu bù* 平肩空首布)-type, dating from the late Spring and Autumn to the early Warring States period (625 – 350 BC).⁴⁶ Most examples were not scientifically excavated, although some were found in Luoyang in 1974 at what is considered to be the site of the Eastern Zhou period Zhou 周 state capital, Wangcheng 王城.⁴⁷ Examples of the inscriptions are given below with interpretative transcriptions:⁴⁸

1. a.



1.a 少曲市中⁵⁰

“Shaoqu’s trade area, central sector”

⁴⁶ For dating of hollow-socketed coins (*kōng shǒu bù* 空首部) see: Li Xueqin, *Dong Zhou Yu Qin Dai Wenming*, pp.306 – 307.

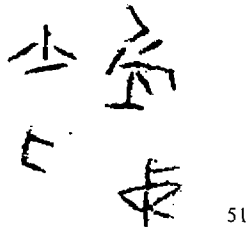
⁴⁷ Li Xueqin, *Dong Zhou Yu Qin Dai Wenming*, pp.306 – 307. They were found in the Luoyang Xigong 洛陽西宮 (工) area of the site. For a discussion on the identification of this site with the Eastern Zhou royal capital see the same work, pp.14 – 19.

⁴⁸ *Zhongguo Qianbi Da Cidian: Xianqin Bian*, pp.95 – 102.

⁴⁹ *Zhongguo Qianbi Da Cidian: Xianqin Bian*, p.96, from examples 2.

⁵⁰ Note that this is interpreted as “少曲市左” in the *Zhongguo Qianbi Da Cidian: Xianqin Bian*, p.96. but the graph interpreted as [左] *zuǒ* is probably a variant form for [中] *zhōng*. There are Wenxian examples of [中] *zhōng* with this form. It would also be odd to have a “少曲市左” while all the other examples that indicate position use the cardinal points and centre: *zhōng* 中, *nán* 南, *xī* 西.

b.

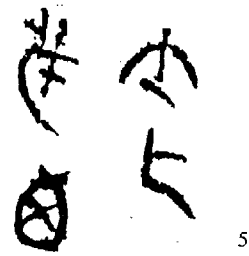


51

1.b 少曲市中

“Shaoqu’s trade area, central sector”

2.

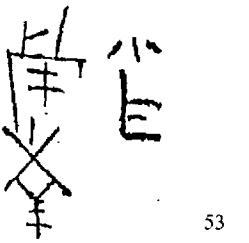


52

2. 少曲市西

“Shaoqu’s trade area, western sector”

3.

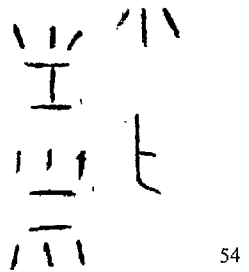


53

3. 少曲市南

“Shaoqu’s trade area, southern sector”

4.



54

4. 少曲□□

“Shaoqu _____”

⁵¹ *Zhongguo Qianbi Da Cidian: Xianqin Bian*, p.97, from examples 2.

⁵² *Zhongguo Qianbi Da Cidian: Xianqin Bian*, p.98, from examples 2.

⁵³ *Zhongguo Qianbi Da Cidian: Xianqin Bian*, p.99, from examples 4.

⁵⁴ *Zhongguo Qianbi Da Cidian: Xianqin Bian*, p.101, from examples 2.

5.



55

5. 少曲□□

“Shaoqu _____”

The graphs interpreted as Shaoqu 少曲 on these coins are clearly a match for those on the Wenxian tablets. Note that we do not see the graphs written as a compound form (*héwén* 合文) in the coins. Furthermore, the coins use both the characters [少] *shǎo* and [小] *xiǎo* while the Wenxian examples use only the [小] *xiǎo*, unless we conjecture that the top stroke of the [曲] *qū* form is being shared and should also be considered to be the lower stroke of a [少] *shǎo* form above it. Both the characters [少] *shǎo* and [小] *xiǎo* developed from the same original form.⁵⁶ Their mixed usage here suggests the forms had not been fully differentiated yet. The character is taken to be *shǎo* {少} here because of the identification of this name with the place name Shaoqu 少曲 found in received texts.⁵⁷

This completes the palaeographic analysis for this compound graph. The town of Shaoqu will be further discussed in the interpretation section below.

Graph 3

The graph to be analysed in the following section is found in a variant wording of the standard Type 2 formula. The graph appears to replace the character [所] *suǒ* at the beginning of the second stipulation in these oaths. There are no examples in which it replaces the [所] *suǒ* found at the beginning of the

⁵⁵ *Zhongguo Qianbi Da Cidian: Xianqin Bian*, p.102.

⁵⁶ Qiu Xigui (transl. Gilbert L. Mattos and Jerry Norman), *Chinese Writing*, p.175.

⁵⁷ *Zhangguo Guwen Zidian*, p.324.

first stipulation. For example (the graph in question is marked with a “△” and “𠄎” marks graphs used in the covenantor’s name):

Example with [所] *suǒ* in both clauses:

所𠄎敢為懸書于少曲者，所𠄎敢知為書不之言者，... (WT1K2 – 159)

Example with “△”:

所𠄎口為懸書于少曲者，△𠄎敢知為書而不言者，... (WT1K2 – 156)

Out of the seventeen tablets that had a legible graph in this position, eleven examples had this variant wording, while the others have *suo* 所. The tablets which have the variant are: 1; 92; 95; 112; 114; 123; 137; 152; 156; 157; 167.

A satisfactory conclusion for the interpretation of this graph has not been reached. The palaeographic analysis led to three suggestions:

Suggestion 1: [毒]

Direct transcription: [毒]

Formal transcription: [毒]

Interpretative transcription: *huò* {或}

English translation: function word, used in complex sentences to indicate an alternative to the preceding clause.

Analysis category: C. Graphic analysis supports an interpretation based on semantic context.

Suggestion 2: [姜]

Direct transcription: [姜]

Formal transcription: [姓]

Interpretative transcription: *shēn* {矧}

English translation: function word, used in complex sentences to indicate an increase in degree compared to a preceding clause.

Analysis category: C. Graphic analysis supports an interpretation based on semantic context.

Suggestion 3: [毒]

Direct transcription: [毒]

Formal transcription: [毒]

Interpretative transcription: [not offered]

English translation: N/A

Analysis category: N/A

Variant forms

1. a.



WT1K2 - 156



WT1K2 - 157

b.



WT1K2 - 1



WT1K2 - 152

2.



WT1K2 - 167



WT1K2 - 137



WT1K2 - 95



WT1K2 - 123

3.



WT1K2 - 112

4.



WT1K2 - 114

5.



WT1K2 - 92

There is significant variation seen among these forms. The two most common variants are the type 1 and type 2 forms. The type 1 forms are composed of a single stroke at the top of the graph, then three strokes below that stroke, a vertical stroke with a stroke either side, slightly angled down and in towards the base of the vertical stroke. Beneath this, there is a component made up of a stroke which makes a horizontal line running left to right, and then turns sharply back and down; another stroke descends from the left-end of the horizontal stroke, slightly curved, and a central vertical descends through the middle of the form. Note also that in the 1.a forms the stroke at the top of the graph is angled slightly down to the left, while in the 1.b forms his stroke is angled down to the right.



The other major variant form is shown in the type 2 examples. Here we recognize components from the type 1 examples but in a different configuration. The three middle strokes in the type 1 forms are also here but smaller and placed to the left of the form; the rest of the form appears to be equivalent to the lower part of the type 1 forms except that the central stroke now extends, projecting out from the top and curving to the right. Unlike the type 1 forms, there is no top stroke in these examples.

The type 3 form is difficult to make out but seems to again be a configuration of the same components seen in the type 1 and type 2 forms but now separated into a left-hand and right-hand component. The left-hand component is similar to the top of the type 1 forms but the central stroke extends down. The right-hand component is equivalent to the bottom component seen in types 1 and 2 but the central stroke extends up and to the right, not to the left as in type 2 forms. There also appear to be ink marks between the upper sections of these two components but they are impossible to make out.

The type 4 form clearly has the same bottom component as the other graphs but with a dot added in each of the inner sections. The top of this form appears to be different to the other examples but is too faint to see clearly.



Type 5 is very faint, it is not clear which of the above categories it fits into.

Analysis

I conclude, from examining these variants, that the graphs are made up of two basic components and that these are the two legible components seen in the type 3 form: the left-hand component, , let us call it “component A”; and the right-hand side, , let us call it “component B”. In the type 1 and 2 variants, the two components are melded into one form with shared strokes. In most of the examples of these type 1 and type 2 variants, the long central stroke of component A, seen in the type 3 example, is shortened and becomes the same length as the two side strokes. Only in example 1.a (WT1K2 – 156) is that central stroke longer. And this example shows how the central stroke is shared with a stroke from component B: in the type 1 forms this central stroke is shared with the central stroke of component B, but in all examples except 1.a the two strokes do not actually join. In type 2 forms, component A is placed at the left of component B, sharing its central stroke with the left-hand stroke of component B: in these examples these two strokes are never seen to be connected. Sharing of

strokes, it that is indeed what we have here, is common in Warring States graphs and is called a “shared-stroke simplification” (*jièyòng bǐhuà* 借用筆畫).⁵⁸

Note also that the top, slightly angled, line added to component A in the type 1 and type 3 examples, is omitted in the type 2 examples. Also, note again that in type 4 the lower component has two dots in the enclosed sections of the graph, one each side of the central vertical stroke.

If the shared-stroke simplification is indeed present here, and we remove component A from the type 2 forms, then we are left with component B,  (WT1K2 – 137, three top-left strokes removed), equivalent to the right-side of the type 3 graph,  (the right side component of WT1K2 – 112). Note that the top strokes are angled differently but this may simply be because the addition of component A to component B in type 2 leaves no room to angle this stroke to the left; the scribe thus angles it to the right.

These component B forms should be recognizable from our previous work on [女] *nǚ* and [母] *mǔ*, used to denote *wú* {毋}, in the phrase “Cause [you] to not have descendants” (*bǐ wú yǒu zhòuhòu* 俾毋有冑後) from the Imprecation clause. Examples of that graph are:



WT1K2 – 9.5







WT1K2 – 124

These are good matches for component B. The WT1K2 – 124 example, the graph [女] *nǚ*, is close to the component B forms in types 1, 2 and 3 while the WT1K2 – 9.5 example, the graph [毋] *mǔ*, is a good match for component B in type 4. In the imprecation clause, both the graphs [女] *nǚ* and [毋] *mǔ* are used to denote {毋} *wú*. Since the Old Chinese reconstructions for {女} *nǚ* and {毋} *mǔ* are not close, I concluded that the [女] *nǚ* form was a variant form for the

⁵⁸ *Zhanguo Wenzhi Tonglun*, p.190.

[母] *mǔ*. In the case of component B this could also be the case, although there seem to be more examples where the two dots are omitted, in which case the [母] *mǔ* form could be considered a variant for [女] *nǚ*. If component B is acting as a semantic component, then the forms [女] *nǚ* and [母] *mǔ* can be considered interchangeable, both components indicating the category “female”.

Having identified component B as [女] *nǚ*, sometimes [母] *mǔ*, we turn to component A. This is more problematic. If we assume component A has a full form like that seen in type 3 graphs, , then we find no match in the *Shuo Wen Jie Zi* component table. If we consider the same form without the top stroke, as in the type 2 examples, then we have , [中] *chē* as a match.

Among characters collected under the components [女] *nǚ* and [中] *chē* in the *Shuo Wen Jie Zi*⁵⁹, the only possible match is , [每] *měi*.⁶⁰ Commonly used to denote *měi* {每} “every”, this does not fit the semantic context in which the graph is found. Furthermore, it seems that most of the Wenxian examples use the component [女] *nǚ*, rather than [母] *mǔ*: only the type 4 form clearly uses [母] *mǔ*. Examples of [每] *měi* used as a component in several characters in the *Guwen Sisheng Yun* are all derived from [母] *mǔ*, e.g. , and do not show any variations which would suggest strong links to the Wenxian graph.⁶¹ More significantly, there are two names in the Houma texts which are identified as having the component [每] *měi* and these are clearly different from the Wenxian graph we are looking at:

HM 200:56⁶²HM 35:3⁶³

⁵⁹ *Shuo Wen Jie Zi* does not treat [母] *mǔ* as a separate component, it is included as a character under [女] *nǚ*. However, [毋] *wú* is treated as a component.


⁶⁰ *Shuo Wen Jie Zi*, p.15 (1b 中部: 1a).

⁶¹ *Guwen Sisheng Yun*, p.41 (3:13a).

⁶² *Houma Mengshu*, p.308.

⁶³ *Houma Mengshu*, p.325.

The first form is [每] *měi*: the bottom section is equivalent to forms of [女] *nǚ* we saw in the analysis of *wú* {毋}, with the lower short horizontal stroke. The second form is [每] *měi* with [心] *xīn* below it. Here the two dots are clear in the lower section, giving [母] *mǔ*. These [女] *nǚ* and [母] *mǔ* components match the Wenxian graph's component B but the top sections are clearly not equivalent to the component A forms: the Wenxian graph cannot be interpreted as [每] *měi*.

Among the components under [女] *nǚ* in the *Shuo Wen Jie Zi*, we might notice the graph  [奴] *nú*, and the slight similarity between component A of the Wenxian graph and the component [又] *yòu* in [奴] *nú*.⁶⁴ However, none of the known examples of [奴] *nú* from Warring States materials are similar to the Wenxian form, for example:



These are, furthermore, all categorized in the *Zhanguo Guwen Zidian* as Jin-script forms, thus we would expect the Wenxian form to be similar to these if it was indeed the same graph. The [又] *yòu* component is always placed under the [女] *nǚ* component while the Wenxian graph component A is always above the [女] *nǚ*. Note also how the [又] *yòu* shares its central stroke with the central stroke of the [女] *nǚ* component in the last two forms. This is what I am suggesting is happening with component A in the Wenxian graph: it is sharing strokes with the [女] *nǚ* component. This [奴] *nú* is, however, not a good match for the Wenxian graph.

Searching through Gao Ming's tables in his *Zhongguo Guwenzixue Tonglun* and the *Jinwen Changyong Zidian* component table does not give us any further

⁶⁴ *Shuo Wen Jie Zi*, p.260 (12b 女部: 4a).

⁶⁵ *Yin Zhou Jinwen Jicheng* Vol.17, no.11341.

⁶⁶ *Zhongguo Qianbi Da Cidian: Xianqin Bian*, p.255. Excavated from Hebei, Yixian 易縣.

⁶⁷ *Zhanguo Guwen Zidian*, p. 559.

clues. Turning to the Houma texts, there are several similar looking components. For example, the character [父] *fù* is usually written with the graph 𠂇 (HM 156:19) but four examples (out of a total of 46 examples) are written as: 𠂇 (HM 156:21), which appears to be identical to the left hand component of our type 3 graph.⁶⁸ However, we are wary of identifying this component as [父] *fù* because this variant of the [父] *fù* form is clearly rare (less than 10% occurrence in the Houma examples) and, conversely, none of the Wenxian graphs use a form for this component equivalent to the standard Houma [父] *fù*, that is 𠂇 (HM 156:19).⁶⁹ Furthermore, there is no attested character made up of a [父] *fù* and a [女] *nǚ*.

We can also search the Wenxian tablets for related forms. Here we are more successful. The following forms appear in Oath Type 5 tablets from pit WT4K6 where they are used to denote the personal name of an enemy. We can identify the following categories of variation:

1.



WT4K6 – 315



WT4K6 – 214



WT4K6 – 212



WT4K6 – 178

2.



WT4K6 – 151



WT4K6 – 206



WT4K6 – 139

⁶⁸ *Houma Mengshu*, p.300.

⁶⁹ *Houma Mengshu*, p.300.

3.



WT4K6 – 136



WT4K6 – 210

4.



WT4K6 – 137



WT4K6 – 208

5.




WT4K6 – 154

The top three strokes in types 1 and 2 appear to be a match for the top of the component A form in the type 2 examples of the Wenxian graph \triangle . Notice also how, in the type 1 forms of the above graph, there are three strokes in the lower section while there are only two in the lower section of types 2, 3, 4 and 5. This lower component is [目] *mu* which could have either two or three strokes in the lower section.⁷⁰ In the type 1 examples, with three strokes, it may be that the central stroke is considered to be shared with the central stroke of the top component. We can see from the type 5 example that this top component could include a lower vertical stroke. If this stroke is shared with the lower component in the type 1 examples, then we have another example of the shared stroke phenomenon suggested for the type 1 and 2 forms of the \triangle graph.

⁷⁰ See examples in *Zhanguo Guwen Zidian*, p.265.

The type 3 examples of this name appear to have an added top stroke similar to that seen in the type 1 and type 3 examples of \triangle . However, on closer inspection it turns out that these top strokes are part of a separate component to the top right of the form. This component is closest in form to [月] *yue*.

The form of the top component in the type 4 examples of the above graph is not seen in component A of the \triangle graph: in the type 4 forms of the above graph, a horizontal base line has been added beneath the three top strokes. For the Wenxian \triangle form, we could suggest that this line is present in the Wenxian type 1 forms but is always shared with the top line of the [女] *nǚ* form: example WT1K2 – 152 is particularly suggestive of this. The same could also be said for the type 2 forms; WT1K2 – 95 is a good example.

The match between this top component of the Wenxian name and component A of the Wenxian graph \triangle is persuasive. If they are the same component, then we can note that this component can also be written with the form seen in the type 4 examples of the name, the  (WT4K6 – 137 top component).

The type 3 forms of this name are key to its identification. Without the type 3 examples we would be inclined to identify the graphs as [管] *shǎng*, derived from [目] *mù* on the bottom and [生] *shēng*, on top, acting as the phonetic component. The type 4 examples are particularly persuasive in this respect. However, the type 3 form appears to be derived from this form and another component, [月] *yue*. The same graph has been seen in other excavated materials and can be transcribed as [𠄎].⁷¹ The graph is seen on a Zhao *ge*-halberd head:⁷²



趙世戈


⁷¹ Zhu Dexi, "Guwenzi Kaoshi Si Pian", pp.152 – 153.

⁷² Tao Zhenggang, "Zhao Shi Ge Ming Kaoshi". Scan from p.65. The graph is misinterpreted in this article.

The graph is also seen on Jin seals:⁷³

1312⁷⁴

4034

Note that these are all Jin-region Warring-States examples and that the graph is a personal name in all these cases, as are the examples of the graph found in the Wenxian tablets. The left-hand component has been identified as the “ancient script (*gǔwén* 古文)” form of [睦] *mù*, as given in the *Shuo Wen Jie Zi*: , equivalent to a *kāishū* form [𡗗].⁷⁵ This is the phonetic component in [賣] *yù*, which, in turn, is phonetic in various graphs, e.g. [續] *xù*, [續] *dú*, etc.⁷⁶ As it occurs in the Wenxian tablets in this name, this component, [𡗗] *mù*, has become corrupted and some of its variant forms are, in fact, very similar to [甞] *shěng*. Compare these examples of the character [甞] *shěng*:

天亡簋⁷⁷

臣口簋

石鼓⁷⁸Guodian 14.8⁷⁹

Guodian 14.1



Guodian 3.5



Guodian 9.26

The first two examples, from bronzes, are very close to the type 1 and 2 Wenxian forms of the Wenxian Type 5 name. The *Shigu* example and Guodian 14.8 and

⁷³ *Zhanguo Guwen Zidian*, p.402.

⁷⁴ Both scans from *Gu Xi Wen Bian*, p.472.

⁷⁵ *Shuo Wen Jie Zi*, p.72 (4a 目部: 4b).


⁷⁶ This component is not to be confused with *mài* 賣: the *kāishū* forms are the same but the two graphs were originally different.


⁷⁷ Both these examples from *Jinwen Bian*, p.242.

⁷⁸ *Shiguwen Yanjiu Zu Chu Wen Kaoshi*, p.176.

⁷⁹ These four examples from: *Guodian Chu Jian Yanjiu: Vol. 1 Wenzhi Bian*, p.302.

14.1 examples are very similar to the type 4 examples of this graph. However, we do not see Wenxian examples of this name with the diagonal top stroke as we do in the Guodian 3.5 and 9.26 examples. But, we should note, we do see these diagonal top strokes in the type 1 and type 3 examples of the unidentified component in the graph Δ .

If we consider the top part of these Wenxian examples of [𠄎] *mù* to be a match for component A in the graph we are currently analysing, then what component is this? On the basis of the *Shuo Wen Jie Zi*'s "ancient script (*gǔwén* 古文)" form for [睦] *mù*, i.e. , the top component is [尢] *lù*. The *Shuo Wen Jie Zi* gives this as the phonetic signifier in [壘] *lù*.⁸⁰ If this is correct, then component A must also be [尢] *lù*. However, some of the examples of the top component of the graph [甞] *shēng*, i.e. [生] *shēng*, are also very close to component A's form, as shown above. On this basis we can consider both [尢] *lù* and [生] *shēng* as possible candidates for the unidentified component A in the graph Δ .

Considering the [生] *shēng* first, a problem with this suggestion is the type 3 variant of the Wenxian graph Δ , with the separated component A:  (WT1K2 – 112 left-hand component). [生] *shēng* is never written like this, either as a separate character or a separate component in a composite graph. As a separate component, all known examples have a base formed of a horizontal stroke and never add the slanting stroke seen at the top of the Wenxian component. The following personal name from the Houma tablets is identified as [生] *shēng* :



HM 92:10⁸¹

⁸⁰ *Shuo Wen Jie Zi*, p.286 (13b 土部: 7b).

⁸¹ *Houma Mengshu*, p.303.

Below are further examples of [生] *shēng*, all from Warring States Jin texts:



中山方壺⁸²

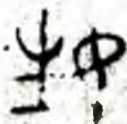


4925⁸³



4698⁸⁴

And an example of its use as a component in a composite graph:



Zu Chu Wen⁸⁵

Thus the Wenxian type 3 example of Δ is problematic: there is no obvious explanation for the form used in its component A. However, for now we will assume that there is an explanation that does not lead to the rejection of [生] *shēng* as a possible candidate for the component in this graph.

The majority of the examples of the graph Δ have [女] *nǚ* as the bottom component, but we can also consider taking the component as [母] *mǔ* since we see this form used in the type 4 example and [女] *nǚ* and [母] *mǔ* can exchange as semantic components and we saw [女] *nǚ* used as a variant for [母] *mǔ* in our analysis of [毋] *wú*. Let us briefly consider the result of taking this graph as derived from [生] *shēng* and [母] *mǔ*.

A direct transcription, using these components, of the more common forms of Δ , i.e. types 1 and 2, in which the components are placed one above the other, gives: [毒]. This form might be considered a corruption of the character [毒] *dú*.⁸⁶ Compare the early forms of this graph given in Figure 33. The example from the “Wushier Bing Fang 五十二病方” clearly shows the [生] *shēng* above

⁸² Zhang Shouzhong, *Zhongshan Wang Cuo Qi Wenzi Bian*, p.18.

⁸³ *Gu Xi Huibian*, p.447.

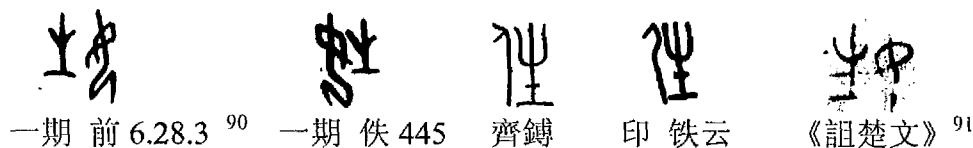
⁸⁴ *Gu Xi Huibian*, p.135.

⁸⁵ *Shiguwen Yanjiu Zu Chu Wen Kaoshi*, p.318.

⁸⁶ *Hanyu Da Zidian*, p.1078. If, as we are about to argue, the top component of [毒] *dú* was originally [生] *shēng*, then it would be more accurate to say that the form [毒] *dú* is a corruption of the form [毒].

[母] *mǔ*. In all the examples in Figure 33 the component has the horizontal base stroke, there is no suggestion of sharing of strokes as we suggest we see in the Wenxian forms. These are the earliest known examples from excavated texts of [毒] *dú*: we have nothing before the Qin and so nothing contemporary with the Wenxian tablets. These later examples are not a very convincing match with the Wenxian forms but let us assume for now that this can be explained by processes of character development and consider whether the identification with [毒] *dú* makes sense in the context of the Wenxian text. The character [毒] *dú* is used to denote the word *dú* {毒} “poison” which does not fit the context of the Wenxian type 2 oath. We must therefore consider what word the character could be loaning for here but the *Guzi Tongjia Huidian* does not suggest any obvious candidates.⁸⁷ On this basis, and due to the fact that by far the majority of Wenxian examples of this graph are derived from [女] *nǚ*, not [母] *mǔ*, we will leave this avenue of investigation for now and consider whether treating the graph as derived from [女] *nǚ* gets more conclusive results.

Analysing the graph as composed from [生] *shēng* and [女] *nǚ*, the type 1 and type 2 examples give a formal transcription of: [婁] . The positioning of components in graphs was relatively fluid before the Qin and Han periods, thus we can rearrange the components in this graph to give us the common character [姓] *xìng*, used to denote *xìng* {姓}, the name of one’s clan, or “surname”.⁸⁸ Other pre-Qin excavated examples of this form include:⁸⁹



What we notice here is that all of these forms have the components placed side


⁸⁷ *Guzi Tongjia Huidian*, p.743 and p.781.


⁸⁸ On the positioning of components with respect to one another in a graph see: Qiu Xigui (transl. Gilbert L. Mattos and Jerry Norman), *Chinese Writing*, pp.102 – 103, pp.242 – 244.

⁸⁹ The [女] *nǚ* is exchanged with [人] *rén* in two of these examples.

⁹⁰ The first four examples are from the *Guwenzi Lei Bian*, p.36

⁹¹ *Shiguwen Yanjiu Zu Chu Wen Kaoshi*, p.318.

by side: none move the [生] *shēng* component above the [女] *nǚ* (or [人] *rén*). Furthermore, the [生] *shēng* forms here do not match the left-hand component of the Wenxian type 3 example,  (WT1K2 – 112). Thus these excavated examples of [姓] *xìng* do not lend great support to our analysis. However, the similarity between the the top component in the Wenxian graph Δ and the top component in excavated examples of [省] *shěng* is undeniable and does suggest one possible identification of the component is [生] *shēng*. It could be that the Wenxian forms are simply variant forms of [姓] *xìng*, but let us first consider whether there are other possible interpretations taking these components as [生] *shēng* and [女] *nǚ*.

Looking through the *Shuo Wen Jie Zi*, we find a form, used as a component (but not included in the component table) that perfectly matches the direct transcription we gave above for the [生] *shēng* component above the [女] *nǚ*, i.e., [婁]. The *Shuo Wen Jie Zi* has this form as part of the graph, , [媿] *fàn*, the standard character of which is [媿] *fàn*.⁹² The *Shuo Wen Jie Zi* gives the meaning of this graph as “bearing many equally healthy sons”. However, the Xu Kai version for this entry gives a different analysis for the structure of this graph and, in the standard character, [媿] *fàn*, the [生] *shēng* and [女] *nǚ* components are not linked. Commentaries of the *Shuo Wen Jie Zi* also suggest there are problems with this entry and there are no excavated examples of the graph to consult.⁹³ With such unreliable evidence it is safer to put this *Shuo Wen Jie Zi* form, [婁], to one side.

Up to this point, we have two suggestions for the identity of the Wenxian graph: [毒] *dú* and [姓] *xìng*, neither of which appears to be a perfect match. Let us now consider the suggestion that the top component is [尪] *lù*. Direct transcriptions based on [尪] *lù* above [女] *nǚ* or [母] *mǔ* give [婁] and [毒]

⁹² *Shuo Wen Jie Zi*, 12b, 女部, p.259. See also *Hanyu Da Zidian*, p.456 and p.455.

⁹³ *Shuo Wen Jie Zi Gulin*, pp.12052 – 12054.

neither of which is attested. However, if we consider that in the *kǎishū* form [𠄎] *mù*, the component [尗] *lù* is written as [士] *shì*, and conjecture that the same development could have occurred in other graphs with [尗] *lù*, we get a formal transcription of [毒] for the variant form derived from [母] *mǔ*. Looking up this graph in the *Hanyu Da Zidian*, we find the character [毒] *ǎi*, which is identical except that the bottom component is [毋] *wú*, which, as we saw in an earlier section, developed from the graph [母] *mǔ*. This character is found in the *Shuo Wen Jie Zi*, although the accompanying etymological analysis does not suggest the top component is related to [尗] *lù*, as I have conjectured. It analyses the graph as derived from [士] *shì* and [毋] *wú*.⁹⁴ The character is found only in a name in early texts and is glossed as meaning “ill-behaved”.⁹⁵ The *Yu Pian* considers it to be an ancient form for [娛] *xī* (a variant of [嬉] *xī* “play, sport”), the *Shuo Wen Jie Zi* uses [娛] *xī* to indicate the pronunciation of [毒] *ǎi*. There are no known excavated examples of the character [毒] *ǎi*. If we assume that the *Shuo Wen Jie Zi* etymology is incorrect and that the character was analysed incorrectly by Xu Shen, then we can conjecture that this graph developed from the Wenxian graph △.

We now have three suggestions for the identity of this graph: [毒] *dú*, [姓] *xìng* and [毒] *ǎi*. If one of these graphs is correct, then the graph is being used as a loan since the words denoted by these characters do not fit the context in which the graph occurs in the Wenxian texts. To determine whether any one of these graphs could be acting as a loangraph here, we need to consider what type of word we are looking for in the context of the Wenxian oath. The eleven legible examples of the graph are all from Oath Type 2 tablets and all occur in the same position. Here are these eleven examples with the text of each tablet given up to the end of the second stipulation, the graph is again denoted with a “△”:

⁹⁴ *Shuo Wen Jie Zi*, p.265 (12a 毋部: 14b).

⁹⁵ *Shuo Wen Jie Zi Gulin*, pp.12279 – 12282. *Gudai Hanyu Cidian*, p.6.

- “所囙□為懸書于少曲者△囙敢知為書而不言者” (WT1K2 – 156)
- “□□□敢為懸書于少曲者△□□敢知為書者而不言者” (WT1K2 – 1)
- “所囙□為懸書于少曲者△囙敢□為懸□而不言者” (WT1K2 – 92)
- “所囙敢為懸書于少曲者△囙敢知為書不言者” (WT1K2 – 95)
- “□敢為懸書于少曲者△某□ □之言者” (WT1K2 – 112)
- “所囙敢為懸書于少曲者△某敢知□□□□之言者” (WT1K2 – 114)
- “所囙敢懸書少曲者△敢為知為書不言者” (WT1K2 – 123)
- “所囙敢懸書少曲者△敢□□□□□□□□” (WT1K2 – 137)
- “□□囙敢為□書□□□△囙敢知為□不□者” (WT1K2 – 152)
- “所囙囙□懸書于少曲□△□□□□為書而不□□□” (WT1K2 – 157)
- “所囙敢□□書于少曲者△囙敢為知為書不言者” (WT1K2 – 167)

When there is a name, indicated by “囙”, it appears that, in most cases, the same name occurs in the first and second clause. Only in tablet 92 do the two graphs not look similar, but they are not very legible so it is impossible to confirm this. Examples of this oath type without the graph we are now analyzing include:

- “所囙敢為懸書于□□者所囙敢知為書不之言者” (WT1K2 – 142)
- “所囙敢為懸書于少曲者所囙敢知為書不言者” (WT1K2 – 159)

This suggests that the graph Δ occurs as an alternative to the [所] *suǒ* in the second stipulation. The [所] *suǒ*, as we noted above, is a function word marking the conditional clause of this conditional structure. If, however, the Δ functions in an identical manner to [所] *suǒ*, we would expect to see it alternating with the [所] *suǒ* that heads the first stipulation, but this is never seen. The graph is also never found as an alternative to [所] *suǒ* in the other Wenxian oath types. This suggests that Δ denotes is a function word which occurs at the head of the second clause in a complex sentence.⁹⁶

Let us consider the meaning of the two stipulations: the first is aimed at the activity of “posting bills” in the town of Shaoqu while the second is aimed at those who know of this activity and do not report it. So, each clause is concerned with a different aspect of the same activity and, although the second stipulation may appear to be a lesser crime (i.e. concealing knowledge of the act rather than actually acting oneself), the oath provides the same punishment for either transgression.

On the basis of such an analysis, it seems that a suitable word for the unidentified graph would mean something to the effect of “or” or “furthermore” or “even if it is only that”. The Houma Confiscation Texts include a similar structure (in bold):

國自今以往，
敢不帥從此盟質之言，
而尚敢或納室者，
而或聞宗人兄弟納室者，
而弗執弗獻，
丕顯口公大塚，
明亟視之，靡夷彼氏。

⁹⁶ This consideration resulted in the early rejection of *rú* (如) “if” and *ruò* (若) “if” as possible interpretations for the graph. If it was not for this apparent syntactical restriction it would be reasonable to consider whether the graph could be a loan for one of these words, the [女] *nǚ* component acting as the phonetic.

If [covenantor's name], from today onwards,
 dare not to abide by the words of this covenant,
 and, furthermore, **dares to confiscate property,
 or knows of clansmen who have confiscated property and does
 not apprehend them and turn them in,**
 the great resplendent Lord [name],
 clearly seeing, will immediately detect him,
 and wipe out that [i.e. his] clan.

This is exactly the same type of alternative we have in the Wenxian Oath Type 2. In the Houma covenant, the covenantor is swearing not to “confiscate property” but also to apprehend and hand in anyone he knows of that has committed this act; in the Wenxian oath the covenantor is swearing not to produce and post bills in Shaoqu but also to report anyone he knows to be engaging in such activity.

The Houma oath has the function word *huò* { 或 } “or” at the beginning of the first and second stipulation:

... 敢或納室者，而或聞宗人兄弟納室者，而弗執弗獻， ...

... dares **either** confiscate property, **or** knows of clansmen who have confiscated property and does not apprehend them and turn them in, ...

This gives the structure “或 ... 或 ...”, “either ... or ...”. The first [或] *huò* is, however, omitted in some examples. The Wenxian graph Δ would make sense if it denoted *huò* { 或 } “or”. As we just mentioned, not all the Houma examples have the { 或 } *huò* in the first clause, demonstrating that it can function in the same way with just the single appearance in the second clause, as would be the case for the Wenxian texts.

Of the three graphs so far considered, [毒] *dú*, [姓] *xìng* and [莠] *ǎi*, the [莠] *ǎi* is phonetically close to *huò* { 或 }, the Old Chinese reconstructions are:

毒 *ǎi* < *'ojX* < *'+⁹⁷ (影之)

或 *huò* < *hwok* < **w+k*⁹⁸ (匣職)

The main vowel is the same and rhymes of *'+ and *+k are common but the initials are a problem. Let us, nevertheless, tentatively assume that there is some explanation for this and consider further the suggestion that [毒] *ǎi* might denote *huò* {或}.

Using tablet WT1K2 – 95 from above as an example, and interpreting the graph as *huò* {或} “or”, gives:

所國敢為懸書于少曲者或國敢知為書不言者

If [covenantor's name] dare to produce publicly-posted notices in Shaoqu, **or** [covenantor's name] dare know of the producing of notices and not report it, ...

This is syntactically similar, though not identical, to the Houma example:

敢或納室者，而或聞宗人兄弟納室者，而弗執弗獻，...

... dares **either** confiscate property, **or** knows of clansmen who have confiscated property and does not apprehend them and turn them in, ...

As we noted above, some of the Houma examples omit the first *huò* {或} making such examples closer still in structure to the Wenxian texts. However, if the Wenxian graph is indeed denoting *huò* {或}, why does it not also appear in the first clause of the Wenxian text as is common in the Houma passage? This may be to do with the fact that these two Wenxian clauses are more independent than the parallel Houma ones, with the subject (the covenantor's name) and the *gǎn* 敢 “to dare” repeated at the beginning of the second clause. In the Houma text, the covenantor's name comes at the beginning of the text and the *gǎn* 敢 “to dare” governs all three clauses following. The Wenxian examples also do not use

⁹⁷ Reconstruction: Wolfgang Behr, personal communication, March 31st, 2004.

⁹⁸ Reconstruction: Wolfgang Behr, personal communication, March 31st, 2004.

the conjunction *ér* 而 between clauses as in the Houma text, again suggesting more separation between clauses.

We do find some examples in received and excavated texts of similar usage of *huò* { 或 }, for example:

1. *Xi Jia Pan* 兮甲盤 (Late Western Zhou 877 – 771 BC) ⁹⁹

其唯我諸侯百姓，厥貯毋不即市，毋敢或入蠻宄貯，則亦刑。

As for my lords and commoners, their traders must not not go to the [official] market to trade, **nor** dare to enter the foreign lands to illegally trade, [if they do so], then they will also be punished. ¹⁰⁰

2. *Zuo Zhuan* Xiang 襄 9.5 (text: 5th – 4th century BC) (event: 564 BC) ¹⁰¹

晉士莊子為載書，曰：“自今日既盟之後，鄭國而不唯晉命是聽，而或有異志者，有如此盟！”

Shi Zhuang Zi of Jin produced the covenant, which said: “From today, after having covenanted, if the state of Zheng does not obey Jin’s command, **or** ever has different intentions, then _____ [imprecation].”

This example is the text of a covenant.

3. *Zuo Zhuan* Zhao 昭 16.3 (text: 5th – 4th century BC) (event: 526 BC) ¹⁰²

子產曰：“昔我先君桓公與商人皆出自周，。。。[與商人]世有盟誓，以相信也，曰：‘爾無我叛，我無強賈，毋或勺奪。’

Zi Chan said: “In the past our former lord, Duke Huan, together with the merchants, all left from Zhou, ... over the generations there has been a covenant [with the merchants], in order that we might trust each other, [the covenant] says: ‘You will not rebel against me, I will not force you to sell [i.e. on my terms], **neither** will I demand and seize [your goods].’

In this example the *huò* { 或 } is again used in a covenant.

⁹⁹ *Yin Zhou Jinwen Jicheng*, Vol.16, no.10174.

¹⁰⁰ For a slightly different interpretation see: Li Xueqin, *Xin Chu Qingtongqi Yanjiu*, pp.138 – 144.

¹⁰¹ *Chunqiu Zuo Zhuan Zhu*, pp.968 – 969.

¹⁰² *Chunqiu Zuo Zhuan Zhu*, pp.1379 – 1380.

4. Guan Zi “Guan Xiu 權修” (text: 4th – 1st century BC) ¹⁰³

凡牧民者。以其所積者食之。不可不審也。其積多者其食多，其積寡者其食寡，無積者不食。或有積而不食者，則民離上；有積多而食寡者，則民不力；...

It is the case with all those who shepherd [i.e. govern] the people, they feed the people with that which they have stored up. This must be carefully considered. If a lot [of food] is stored up, then a lot [of food] will be distributed; if there is only a little [food] stored up, then only a little [food] will be distributed; if no [food] is stored up, they will not eat. **If, on the other hand**, there are stores [of food] but they are not distributed, then the people will turn against those in authority; if much [food] is stored up but little is distributed, then the people will not work hard; ...

5. Liu Tao 六韜 (text: 4th – 3rd century BC) ¹⁰⁴

太公曰：“大水、廣壑、深坑，敵人所不守；或能守之，其卒必寡。”

The *Tai Gong* official said: “Great bodies of water, wide gullies, deep depressions, these are that which the enemy does not defend, and **even if** they were able to defend them, their troops would inevitably be few.”

6. Wei Liao Zi 尉繚子 “Zhi Tan 制談” (text: 4th – 3rd century BC) ¹⁰⁵

征役分軍而逃歸，或臨戰自北，則逃傷甚焉，世將不能禁。

If conscripts, having been assigned to a section, try and escape back home, **or** meeting battle turn away, then many will flee and many be injured; generals of every era could not stop this.

7. Shuihudi Qin state bamboo slips “Fa Lu Da Wen 法律答問” slips 33 and 34 (text: late 2nd century BC) ¹⁰⁶

吏為失刑罪，或端為，為不直。

The official should be sentenced with the crime of “giving an unsuitable sentence”; **if, on the other hand**, it was done on purpose, then this is the crime of “being unjust”.

¹⁰³ *Guan Zi Jin Zhu Jinyi*, p.36.

¹⁰⁴ *Wu Jing Qi Shu Zhu Yi*, p.371.

¹⁰⁵ *Wu Jing Qi Shu Zhu Yi*, p.152.

¹⁰⁶ *Shuihudi Qin Mu Zhujian*, plates p.51 and transcriptions p.101. For dating see p.1 – 2 and p.93.

In this last example and in 4 above, *huò* { 或 } seems to have the additional function of marking the conditional. The Wenxian graph, if it is *huò* { 或 }, could also be analysed as functioning in this way.

These examples show how *huò* { 或 } could be used alone in a clause or sentence to qualify the preceding sentence, indicating a contrasting aspect of the same topic, translated, in the above examples, as “or”, “nor”, “neither”, “if, on the other hand”, and “even if”. In terms of its function, the word is well suited to the context of the Wenxian text. However, in other texts *huò* { 或 } does not occur before the subject of the sentence as the graph, △, does in the Wenxian text. In the above examples from received and excavated texts, it is always found before a verb. Thus, syntactically, the interpretation of the graph as *huò* { 或 } is not ideal.

A further problem with *huò* { 或 } is that the Houma covenant texts have many examples of the standard graph for *huò* { 或 }, e.g. 或 (HM 1:7). If this graph was standard in the script of the Houma and Wenxian tablets, we would expect the Wenxian scribes to use it here, if they did indeed wish to denote *huò* { 或 }.¹⁰⁷ On the other hand, I have not noticed this standard form for *huò* { 或 } occurring anywhere in the Wenxian tablets so we have no evidence that the Wenxian scribes did use this form: the graph △ may have been a local variant.¹⁰⁸

To conclude, taking the Wenxian graph △ as [毒] *ǎi*, denoting *huò* { 或 } “or”, is semantically appropriate. However, phonetically, reconciling the initials is a problem and, syntactically, its position before a noun would be very unusual. There is also the question of why the Wenxian scribes did not use the standard graph for this word, which we find in the Houma texts.

Let us now turn to the other suggested interpretation for this graph, i.e. [姓] *xìng*, and consider words that could be denoted by this character and would fit

¹⁰⁷ Graph scanned from: *Houma Mengshu*, p.316.

¹⁰⁸ One would ideally find evidence for such local variation in another graph used in the Houma and Wenxian texts in order to support this suggestion.

this context. One possible candidate appears to be the function word *shěn* {矧}, found in received texts and bronze inscriptions. Before looking at how this word functions, let us see how close a match it is phonetically with {姓} *xìng*. The Old Chinese reconstructions for *xìng* {姓} and *shěn* {矧} are:

姓 *xìng* < *sjengH* < **sjengs*¹⁰⁹ (心耕)

矧 *shěn* < *syinX* < **hljin'*¹¹⁰ (書真)

Neither the initials or rhyme groups are a good match. However, there are examples of words denoted by characters with [生] *shēng* as phonetic (*gēng* 耕 rhyme group) that are also found denoted by characters with a phonetic from the *zhēn* 真 rhyme group, in which *shěn* {矧} is found, suggesting there was contact between these rhyme groups. One example is a place name denoted both by a character with [生] *shēng* as its phonetic component and a character with [辛] *xīn* as phonetic: [辛] *xīn* is in the same rhyme group as *shěn* {矧}. This example is found in the “Qi Tai Gong Si Jia 齊太公世家” section of the *Shi Ji*; the place name is Shengdu 笙瀆. In the Zou Dansheng 鄒誕生 version the name is written Shendu 莘瀆.¹¹¹ The Old Chinese reconstructions for the first characters in these two names are:

莘 *shēn* < *srin* < **srjin*¹¹² (山真)

笙 *shēng* < *srjaeng* < **srjeng*¹¹³ (山耕)

This is evidence, albeit from a source several hundred years later than the Wenxian tablets, of contact between the two rhyme groups, *zhēn* 真 and *gēng*

¹⁰⁹ *A Handbook of Old Chinese Phonology*, p.798.

¹¹⁰ Reconstruction: Wolfgang Behr, personal communication, March 31st, 2004.

¹¹¹ *Guzi Tongjia Huidian*, p.65.

¹¹² *A Handbook of Old Chinese Phonology*, p.786.

¹¹³ *A Handbook of Old Chinese Phonology*, p.786.

耕. There are earlier examples in bronze inscriptions: Wolfgang Behr found 19 examples of contact between these rhyme groups in his study of 197 Zhou bronze inscriptions.¹¹⁴ This provides some support for phonetic similarity between the rhyme groups of *xìng* 姓 and *shěng* 矧 but the initials are still a problem. Thus the phonetic evidence gives little support to the conjecture that [姓] *xìng* is denoting *shěng* {矧} in the Wenxian texts. Let us, nevertheless, tentatively assume that the match may have been possible and look at how the word is used and whether or not it makes sense in the context of the Wenxian phrase

The word {矧} *shěng* is used as a function word in complex sentences to indicate an increase in degree compared to a preceding clause. It can be used either in a declarative sentence, of the type “A is so and B even more so” or a rhetorical comparison of the type “If A is so, then how much more so is B?”¹¹⁵ In the former sense, it is glossed as *yì* {益} “all the more”, *yě* {也} “also”, *yì* {亦} “also”, and *yòu* {又} “moreover”. As a rhetorical comparison, it is glossed as *kuàng* {況} “how much more so”. Examples of its usage in received texts and bronzes include:

8. *Shang Shu* “Kang Gao 康告” (text: 1046 – 977 BC)¹¹⁶

元惡大憝，矧惟不孝不友。

Those who are evil are greatly hated, **how much more** those who are unfilial and unbrotherly.

9. *Shang Shu* “Kang Gao 康告” (text: 1046 – 977 BC)¹¹⁷

不率大戛，矧惟外庶子訓人，...

Those [common people] who do not obey the laws [will be punished], **how much more** so is this true for those who govern the people, ...

¹¹⁴ Wolfgang Behr, personal communication, March 31st, 2004.

¹¹⁵ This description is based on the discussion in: Qiu Xigui, “Shuo Jinwen ‘Yin’ Zi De Xuci Yongfa”. “Rhetorical comparison” is the phrase Pulleyblank uses for sentences with *kuàng* {況}, see: Edwin G. Pulleyblank, *Outline of Classical Chinese Grammar*, p.146.

¹¹⁶ *Shisan Jing Zhushu*, p.204.

¹¹⁷ *Shisan Jing Zhushu*, p.204.

10. *Shang Shu* “Jiu Gao 酒告” (text: 1046 – 977 BC) ¹¹⁸

予惟曰：汝劼毖殷獻臣，侯甸男衛，矧太史友，內史友，越獻臣百宗工，矧惟爾事服休服采，矧惟若時圻父薄違農父若保宏父定辟，矧汝剛制於酒。

I say: You must take care to warn the virtuous ministers of Yin, the nobles of the *hou*, *dian*, *nan*, and *wei* areas, **also** the Tai Shi officials, Nei Shi officials down to the virtuous ministers and all the respected officials, **also** your attending officials, the Fu Xiu and Fu Cai officials, **also** your three supervisory officials, the Si Ma official, reducing wrong-doing, the Si Tu official, smoothly protecting, the Si Kong official, formulating the laws, **even** you yourself, [should] rigidly restrain when it comes to alcohol.

11. *Shi Jing* “Xiao Ya 小雅” “Fa Mu 伐木” (text: 1000 – 600 BC) ¹¹⁹

相彼鳥矣，猶求友聲。矧伊人矣，不求友生！

Look at that bird, it still calls out in search of its friends. **How much more so** [should this be true] for a man, does he [too] not seek out his friends?

12. *Yan Tie Lun* “Juan 3 Wei Tong Di 15 卷三未通第十五” (1st century BC) ¹²⁰

周公抱成王聽天下，恩塞海內，澤被四表，矧惟人面，含仁保德，靡不得其所。

The Duke of Zhou assisted King Cheng in governing the country; his goodness filled the land, stretching to the outermost areas, **even** to the people, filled with benevolence and virtue; there was no one who did not achieve his [appropriate] place.

The context in which *shěn* {矧} is used in these examples is unlike that of the Wenxian Type 2 stipulations. If we use *shěn* {矧} in the Wenxian example, the two stipulations read:

所囿□為懸書于少曲者
矧囿敢知為書而不言者 (WT1K2 – 156)

¹¹⁸ *Shisan Jing Zhushu*, p.207.

¹¹⁹ *Shi Jing Tong Gu*, p.441.

¹²⁰ *Yan Tie Lun Jiao Zhu*, p.193.

If [covenantor's name] <dare> to produce publicly-posted notices in Shaoqu,
Even if [covenantor's name] dare to know of the producing of notices and does not report it, ...

Semantically, this reading is awkward and unlike any of the examples from texts given above. However, syntactically the received text examples show that *shě'n* {矧} is able to come right at the beginning of a clause like this, for example in the “Jiu Gao 酒誥” quoted above: 矧汝剛制於酒 (“Even you should rigidly restrain when it comes to alcohol.”).

The other character we considered as a possible match for the Wenxian graph was [毒] *dú*, but there does not appear to be a suitable function word with a pronunciation similar to [毒] *dú*.

In conclusion, neither of the two suggestions we have made for the interpretation of the graph Δ , i.e. the character [姓] *xìng* used to denote *shě'n* {矧} and the character [毒] *ǎi* to denote *huò* {或}, are fully convincing, and no obvious loan suggests itself for the other suggestion, the [毒] *dú*. There are problems with all these suggestions. Firstly, there is no direct textual evidence, received or excavated, for identifying the graph, Δ , as either [姓] *xìng*, [毒] *ǎi* or [毒] *dú*. Secondly, the phonetic similarity between these graphs and the words we have suggested they may be loaning for here, [毒] *ǎi* and *huò* {或} and [姓] *xìng* and *shě'n* {矧} is not particularly close. Thirdly, neither function word, *huò* {或} or *shě'n* {矧} feels completely natural in this position in the Wenxian text, the *shě'n* {矧} is particularly awkward, the *huò* {或} works semantically but syntactically its position is odd.

On a methodological note, the above analysis is an example of one in which the methodology is carried out without conclusive results. The only benefit of the procedure in such a case, is the knowledge that standard interpretative approaches have been tried and have failed and that one may need to consider a different approach. This could include, at a basic level, the direct approach of

looking through collections of ancient graphs for similar forms in the hope these may lead to an identification.¹²¹ Or, at a more involved level, an attempt to classify the components of the Jin script, based on a careful study of all available material, in the hope that this might lead to a more convincing identification of component A in this graph.

3.2.2.2 Discussion and explication of the phrase

My initial analysis of the two stipulations produced the following interpretation:

所[covenantor's name]敢為懸書于少曲者
 □[covenantor's name]敢知為書而不之言者


If [covenantor's name] dare produce publicly-posted notices in Shaoqu,
 ___ [covenantor's name] dare know of the producing of notices
 and ___ does not report this,

This is the standard format for these stipulations, based on a survey of all the extant examples. The □ is the unidentified function word just discussed. There are a number of variations in wording. For example, this □ is often replaced with *suǒ* 所, matching that used in the first clause. Further variations can be categorized as follows:

1. Omission of one or more function words: “于”; “之”; “而”.

Many examples omit one or more of the function words *yú* 于, *zhī* 之 and *ér* 而. Tablet 123, for example, omits them all (it also has several other variations that are discussed below):

a. “所囿敢懸書少曲者□敢為知為書不言者” (WT1K2 – 123)

¹²¹ Note, for example, an unidentified graph found in bronze inscriptions, an example of which is:  (“Shao Zun 召尊” from the *Jinwen Bian*, p.1253).

These are function words which could be omitted without affecting the meaning.

2. Omission of *wéi* 為 in the first stipulation.

A small number of tablets omit the *wéi* 為 in the first stipulation, including the example just given, tablet 123. Another example is tablet 119:

b. “所囙囙敢懸書少曲者□□囙敢知為書□不言者” (WT1K2 – 119)

In this case we can consider the *xuán* 懸 to be a verb, “to hang”, giving “dare to hang notices in Shaoqu”.

3. Addition of *wéi* 為 before *zhī* 知 in the second stipulation.

A number of tablets add a *wéi* 為 before the *zhī* 知 in the second stipulation, for example tablet 123 given above. Another example is tablet 167:

c. “所囙敢□□書于少曲者□囙敢為知為書不言者” (WT1K2 – 167)

There are several examples with this added *wéi* 為 suggesting it may not be a simple scribal error. It is hard to see how the sentence could make sense with this character here unless we treat it as *wéi* { 為 } “to be” with the following phrase nominalized so that the whole second stipulation reads “if [covenantor’s name] dare to be one who knows of the producing of notices and does not report this”. This may be the reason for the character’s use here, or it may just be scribal error.

4. Addition “懸” before “書” in the second stipulation.

One tablet, tablet 92, adds *xuán* 懸 before *shū* 書 in the second stipulation:

d. “所囙敢為懸書于少曲者□囙敢知為懸書而不言者” (WT1K2 – 92)

This variation simply makes this phrase match the corresponding phrase in the first clause, the “produce publicly-posted notices” (*wéi xuán shū* 為懸書).

5. Repetition of a graph.

In two examples a single graph is written twice: tablet 151 has two “yú yú 于于” in the first stipulation and tablet 160 has “wéi wéi 為為” in the second stipulation:

e. “□□□□為□書于于少曲者 ... 不之言者” (WT1K2 – 151)

f. “所囙敢懸 ... 敢知為為書而□□□ ... ” (WT1K2 – 160)

The first of these is clearly a mistake. That such an obvious mistake was not corrected suggests that many of the tablets were not checked for errors. The second example of a repeated graph, the repeated *wéi* 為, does make sense if we regard the first *wéi* 為 as the verb “to make, to produce”, the second as denoting *wěi* 偽 “false”, giving “produce false notices”. This is further discussed below.

6. Addition of an unidentified graph.

There are two cases in which an unidentified graph is added to a tablet (a different graph in each case). They are tablet 115 and tablet 166 (the unidentified graph denoted with “□”):

g. “所囙囙囙敢為懸書□于少曲者所囙囙敢知為書而不之言者”
(WT1K2 – 115)

h. “所囙敢為懸書于少曲□者所囙敢知為書不之言者” (WT1K2 – 166)

These two graphs are very hard to make out so it is difficult to be confident of their structure. Examination of the original tablet would be necessary in order to get a better idea of their form.

7. The second stipulation omits *suǒ* 所 or the unidentified function word (the “△” discussed in the palaeographic section above.)

In one tablet, 120, the function word normally placed at the beginning of the second stipulation, is omitted:

- i. “所囙敢為懸書于少曲者囙敢□□□□不言者” (WT1K2 – 120)

That we only find the function word omitted in one example demonstrates that it was considered more or less essential in this position. Clearly the *suǒ* 所 that heads the first clause is considered to govern only the first stipulation, the *zhě* 者, working with it to indicate this conditional structure. The second stipulation is an equivalent unit, with a *suǒ* 所 or the unidentified function word, and then the *zhě* 者, again, at the end of the stipulation.

8. The covenantor’s name is shortened when it occurs in the second stipulation.

In one tablet, 115, the covenantor’s name uses three characters in the first stipulation and then only the second two of those three characters in the second stipulation. In the following transcription, two of the three characters in the name have been transcribed; the other is not legible (the names are underlined):

- k. “所兄囙為敢為懸書□于少曲者所囙為敢知為書而不之言者”
(WT1K2 – 115)

The first character in the name, Xiong 兄, is omitted in the second clause. The most obvious explanation is that the first name includes the clan name, the second omits it as unnecessary as the identity of the covenantor is already clear.

9. The graph [某] *mǒu* is used in place of the name in the second stipulation.

In two tablets we find the graph [某] *mǒu* in the second stipulation where we expect to find the name repeated from the first stipulation. These tablets are 112 and 114:

- l. “□敢為懸書于少曲者□某□ 。 。 。 □之言者” (WT1K2 – 112)
- m. “所囙敢為懸書于少曲者□某敢知□□□□之言者” (WT1K2 – 114)

In both examples the “□” before the *mǒu* 某 is the unidentified function word. The function word *mǒu* 某 is an indefinite pronoun and can be used to refer to a specific or unspecific person. It can also be used to refer to oneself.¹²² In this example it is specific, indicating the covenantor named in the first clause.

This concludes the list of variant wordings found in the Type 2 stipulations. Before continuing with a general discussion of the meaning of these stipulations, we should comment on the use of the negative *bù* 不 in the second stipulation and compare it to the negative structure used in the syntactically very similar phrase in the Houma Confiscation Texts. We mentioned this Houma passage earlier, in the analysis on the problematic function word. Here is the passage again:

... 敢或納室者，而或聞宗人兄弟納室者，而弗執弗獻， ...

... dares confiscate property, or knows of clansmen who have confiscated property and **does not apprehend them and turn them in**,...

Compare this to the Wenxian Type 2 stipulation II.B:

□[covenantor's name]敢知為書而不之言者

__ [covenantor's name] dare know of the producing of notices and **does not report this**,

And we also see a very common variant in which the *zhī* 之 before the *bù* 不 is omitted, e.g.:

□[covenantor's name]敢知為書〈而〉不言者 (WT1K2 – 119)

__ [covenantor's name] dare know of the producing of notices 〈and〉 **does not report [this]**,

Among the Type 2 tablets in which the relevant graphs are legible, eleven

examples use *bù zhī* 不之 and eleven use the *bù* 不 alone. The use of *zhī* 之 in the phrase *bù zhī yán* 不之言 “not report it”, is as an inverted pronoun-object following the negative, *bù* 不, and before the verb, *yán* 言.

The Wenxian phrase is *bù zhī yán* 不之言 “not report this” or *bù yán* 不言 “not report [this]”; the Houma text has *fú zhī fú xiàn* 弗執弗獻 “not apprehend them and not turn them in” using the negative *fú* 弗. There is interchange in the Wenxian examples between *bù zhī* 不之 and *bù* 不 but no Wenxian examples which use *fú* 弗 and no Houma examples of this particular phrase using *bù zhī* 不之 or *bù* 不. However, we do see the interchange of these negatives in the Houma Pledge texts, in the phrase:

[enemy name] 遇之行道弗殺者

If [the covenantor] meets with [enemy name] on the road and **does not kill him,**

The majority of examples use *fú* 弗 here but some use *bù* 不, giving *bù shā* 不殺, and a few use *bù zhī* 不之, giving: *bù zhī shā* 不之殺.¹²³ These examples from the Pledge Texts suggest that for the Jin scribes at this period, *fú* 弗, *bù* 不 and *bù zhī* 不之 were interchangeable in such a structure (i.e. a negated transitive verb with object pronoun *zhī* 之 preposed or understood). However, comparing these Wenxian and Houma examples, it is interesting to see that the Houma tablets use *fú* 弗 in a majority of cases while the Wenxian tablets use *bù zhī* 不之 and *bù* 不 with equal frequency but there are no examples with *fú* 弗. There is no obvious explanation for the difference. One might consider questions of prosody related to the number of characters in a phrase, but even if this was a consideration, it would not rule out the use of *fú* 弗 in the Wenxian tablets in place of the common use of the single character *bù* 不. Once the Wenxian tablets

¹²² Edwin G. Pulleyblank, *Outline of Classical Chinese Grammar*, p.97.

¹²³ Zeng Zhixiong, “Houma Mengshu Yanjiu”, pp.194 – 195. Zeng says that eleven examples of this phrase use the *fú* 弗, four use *bù* 不 and two use *bù zhī* 不之.

are published, it will be possible to carry out a careful comparison of the Wenxian and Houma texts to determine whether their language and script is identical, as assumed, or does, in fact, exhibit certain different characteristics.

Let us now consider the overall meaning of these stipulations. As we showed in the analysis for the graph denoting *xuán* {懸} “to hang”, there are records in received texts of the posting of official notices on buildings with the aim of disseminating information to the public. In the above analysis we interpreted the character [為] *wéi* directly as *wéi* {為} “to make, to produce” but, as we will discuss below, further investigation led to a reinterpretation of the character as denoting *wěi* {偽} “falsify”. Although the Wenxian oath gives few details, it appears that people had been falsifying notices and then posting them in the town of Shaoqu. This covenant aims to stop such actions and also requires that anyone knowing of such action report it.

In this section, I will look at the language and content of these stipulations and compare them to similar usage and content in other texts, excavated and received. We will demonstrate that this manner of disseminating information was common, as was the falsifying of documents. We will then look at what we know about the town of Shaoqu, where the notices were being hung.

Language and content similar to that in these stipulations are not found in oracle bones. Nor do we see such phrases on bronze inscriptions. However, we do see some use of individual words, for example, *shū* {書} “notices”, *xuán* {懸} “to hang” and *wéi* {為} “to make, to produce” in bronze inscriptions which may help us understand their meaning in the Wenxian text.

The word *wéi* {為} “to make, to produce” is very common in bronzes, often used in phrases of the type: “[name of noble] produced this [name of vessel]”.¹²⁴ In later excavated texts and received texts the verb is also found with *shū* {書}

¹²⁴ *Yin Zhou Jinwen Jicheng Yinde*, pp.446 – 449.

“written materials”, “notices”, giving *wéi shū* 為書 “to produce written documents” “to write documents”. So, there is no problem with understanding the *wéi* { 為 } in the Wenxian texts to refer to the production of notices. Nevertheless, as we just mentioned, further analysis suggested another interpretation which will be discussed below.

The word *xuán* { 懸 } “to hang”, “to suspend”, is found in an inscription on a set of bronze bells:

1. Lü Zhong 郕鐘 (Late Spring and Autumn 625 – 476 BC) ¹²⁵

大鐘既懸，玉□□鼓。

The great bells have been **suspended**. [There are] jade chimes and crocodile-skin drums.

Such bells were hung from wooden frames.

The word *shū* { 書 } is seen in a small number of bronze inscriptions referring to official documents. It is most commonly seen in the term *mìng shū* 命書, used to denote a document containing a royal decree. ¹²⁶ For example:

2. 趨鼎 X [趨] ¹²⁷ Ding (Late Western Zhou 877 – 771 BC) ¹²⁸

王在周康劬宮，格于大室，即位，宰訊右趨入門，立中廷，北嚮。
史留(籀?)受(授)王命書，王呼內史口冊，賜趨玄衣、。。。。

The king was at Zhou in the Kang palace’s Shao palace. He arrived at the Great Hall, and took his position. The Zai Xun official led X [趨] in [and] he stood in the Central Court, facing north. The Shi official, Zhou [?], presented the **decree documents** to the King. The King called the Nei Shi official to enfeof X [趨] and present [him] with dark robes, ...

¹²⁵ *Yin Zhou Jinwen Jicheng*, Vol.1, no.225 – 237.

¹²⁶ *Yin Zhou Jinwen Jicheng Yinde*, p.1304, the entry for *shū* 書.

¹²⁷ It is difficult to predict with any confidence the correct pronunciation of this character, so an “X” will be used to indicate this name in the English translation.

¹²⁸ *Yin Zhou Jinwen Jicheng* Vol.5, no.2815.

In the “Peng Sheng Gui 棚生簋” (also known as the “Ge Bo Gui 格伯簋”, late 10th century BC) we find an official whose title is “Shu Shi 書史”. This inscription records the obtaining of land by a certain Peng Sheng 棚生 from a Ge Bo 格伯, in exchange for some horses. The Shu Shi 書史 official appears to have taken some part in the exchange between the two parties although scholars disagree on his exact role.¹²⁹ However, the use of the word *shū* {書} in his title suggests his duties may have included recording some aspect of the deal, perhaps drawing up a written contract. Thus, we see the word *shū* {書} used at an early stage in the context of official documents and contract-type agreements. Turning to later excavated texts, the word *shū* {書} is found, significantly, in the Houma covenant tablet 16:3 in the phrase “*bù shuàicóng ___ shū zhī yán* 不帥從□書之言”, “do not abide by the words on the ___ document”.¹³⁰ The graph preceding the *shū* 書 has not been identified but, given the context, the combination ___ *shū* □書 probably refers to a written covenant.

In a later set of excavated texts, we find the phrase *wéi shū* 為書, “to produce documents”. This phrase occurs several times in the *Zou Yan Shu* 奏讞書, a set of excavated texts from Zhangjiashan 張家山, Jiangling 江陵, Hubei, excavated between 1983 to 1984.¹³¹ Significantly, the phrase used in these texts is not just *wéi shū* 為書 “to produce documents”, but, *wéi wěi shū* 為偽書, “to produce false documents”, i.e. the activity that appears to be referred to in the Wenxian Type 2 oaths. The *Zou Yan Shu* text is made up of descriptions of legal cases and there are four cases in which this term occurs:¹³²

¹²⁹ Ma Chengyuan ed., *Shang Zhou Qingtongqi Mingwen Xuan*, Vol 3, pp.143 – 144. Also: Zhang Yachu and Liu Yu, *Xi Zhou Jinwen Guanzhi Yanjiu*, p.32.

¹³⁰ *Houma Mengshu*, p.33.

¹³¹ *Zhangjiashan Han Mu Zhujian*. Also: Peng Hao, “Tan *Zou Yan Shu* Zhong De Xi Han Anli”.

¹³² Many thanks to Susan Roosevelt Weld for her advice on the interpretation of these passages.

3. Zhangjiashan bamboo slips “Zou Yan Shu 奏讞書” slips 54 – 55 (case 9) (late 3rd century – early 2nd century BC) ¹³³

• • 蜀守讞：佐啟、主徒令史冰私使城旦環，為家作，告啟，啟詐簿曰治官府，疑罪。廷•報：啟為偽書。

The Governor of Shu prefecture presented the following case for judgement: Assistant Official Qi and the Scribe of the District Head of the Conscript, Bing, privately made use of the [convict] labourer Huan to work in their own household/s. [Someone] accused Qi. Qi falsified the [work] registration, saying [they were] constructing official buildings. I am in doubt as to the crime. The court responded: Qi [is guilty of the crime of] **producing false documents**.

4. Zhangjiashan bamboo slips “Zou Yan Shu 奏讞書” slips 56 – 57 (case 10) (late 3rd century – early 2nd century BC) ¹³⁴

• • 蜀守讞：采鐵長山私使城旦田、舂女為饘，令內作，解書廷，佐□等詐簿為徒養，疑罪。廷報：□為偽書也。

The governor of Shu presented the following case for judgement: The head [?] of the iron-ore collectors, Shan, privately used the labourer Tian and a female grain pounder to make thick porridge, ordered them to do private work, _____ [?], the Assistant Official [?] X and others [?] falsely registered them as cooks for conscripts. I am in doubt as to the crime. The court responded: X is [guilty of the crime of] **producing false documents**.

5. Zhangjiashan bamboo slips “Zou Yan Shu 奏讞書” slips 58 – 59 (case 11) (late 3rd century – early 2nd century BC) ¹³⁵

• • 蜀守讞：大夫犬乘私馬一匹，毋傳，謀令大夫武寄舍上造熊馬傳，著其馬識物，弗身更，疑罪。• 廷報：犬與武共為偽書也。

The Governor of Shu presented the following case for judgement: Minister Quan had a private horse but did not have registration. He conspired and ordered Minister Wu to break in and steal the registration of the *Shang Zao* official, Xiong, and write his horse's characteristics [on the registration], [but] he didn't personally change it. I am in doubt as to the crime. The court responded: Both Quan and Wu [are guilty of the crime of] **producing false documents**.

¹³³ *Zhangjiashan Han Mu Zhujian*, p.217. Punctuation follows that in this edition.

¹³⁴ *Zhangjiashan Han Mu Zhujian*, p.217.

¹³⁵ *Zhangjiashan Han Mu Zhujian*, p.218.

6. Zhangjiashan bamboo slips “Zou Yan Shu 奏讞書” slip 60 (case 12) (late 3rd century – early 2nd century BC) ¹³⁶

• • 河東守讞：郵人官大夫內留書八日，詐更其檄書避留，疑罪。•
廷報：內當以爲偽書論。

The Governor of Hedong presented the following case for judgement: Minister of the Office of Document Deliverers [?], Nei, held up documents for eight days. He falsely changed his records to avoid [being charged with] the crime of “causing delay”. I am in doubt as to the crime. The court responded: Nei should be charged with [the crime of] **producing false documents**.

All the above cases are examples of the crime of “producing false documents”, i.e. forgery. This crime is also mentioned in the Han laws found in the same Han tomb as these *Zou Yan Shu* texts:

7. Zhangjiashan bamboo slips “Er Nian Lü Ling 二年律令” slip 13 (186 BC) ¹³⁷

為偽書者，黥為城旦舂。

[the punishment for the crime of] **producing false documents** is to be tattooed and made into a labourer [for men] or grain pounder [for women].

These are Han legal documents. We find very similar laws, concerning the falsification of documents, on the Qin legal documents from Shuihudi. One specifically mentions “false documents” (*wēi shū* 偽書):

8. Shuihudi bamboo slips “Fa Lü Da Wen 法律答問” slip 57 (late Warring States to Qin, late 3rd century BC) ¹³⁸

「發偽書，弗知，費二甲。」今咸陽發偽傳，弗知，即復封傳它縣。。

[The law states:] “If one opens a **false document** and does not realize [it is false], the fine is two *jia*.” Now, in Xianyang [the relevant official] opened a **false travel document** and did not realize [it was false], so resealed it and sent it on to other counties, ...

¹³⁶ *Zhangjiashan Han Mu Zhujian*, p.218.

¹³⁷ *Zhangjiashan Han Mu Zhujian*, p.134. For the date, see p.133.

¹³⁸ *Shuihudi Qin Mu Zhujian*, plates p.53 and transcriptions, p.107. For dating see pp.1 – 2 and p.93.

This following example concerns the falsifying of seals:

9. Shuihudi bamboo slips “Fa Lü Da Wen 法律答問” slip 55 (late Warring States to Qin, late 3rd century BC) ¹³⁹

「矯丞令」何也？為有秩偽寫其印為大嗇夫。

What is “Falsely calling oneself an assistant senior official”? This is when a lower ranking official **falsifies his seal** as [that of] a higher ranking official.

Very similar laws concerning the falsifying of seals are seen in the Han law from Zhangjiashan, for example:

10. Zhangjiashan bamboo slips “Er Nian Lü Ling 二年律令” slip 9 (186 BC) ¹⁴⁰

偽寫皇帝信璽、皇帝行璽、腰斬以徇。

[The punishment for the crime of] **falsely imitating** the Emperor’s *xin* seal or the Emperor’s *xing* seal, is to be split in two at the waist and [have one’s corpse] publicly displayed.

Note that, in a number of these last examples, the *wěi shū* 偽書” is a noun: “false documents”.

On the basis of this evidence, one can consider whether the [為] *wéi* in the Wenxian type 2 oath should be interpreted as *wěi* {偽} “falsify”. That would give the following interpretation:

所[covenantor’s name]敢偽懸書于少曲者
 □[covenantor’s name]敢知偽書而不之言者

If [covenantor’s name] dare falsify publicly-posted notices in Shaoqu,
 ___ [covenantor’s name] dare know of the falsifying of notices and does not report this,

¹³⁹ *Shuihudi Qin Mu Zhujian*, plates p.53 and transcriptions, p.106. For dating see pp.1 – 2 and p.93.

¹⁴⁰ *Zhangjiashan Han Mu Zhujian*, p.134. For dating see p.133.

This interpretation appears to be more logical than reading the word as *wéi* { 為 } “to make, to produce”, in that it highlights the fraudulent nature of this unofficial activity. The graph [為] *wéi* is often found denoting *wěi* { 偽 } “false, falsify” in early texts so there is phonetically no problem with this interpretation.¹⁴¹

In essence, this Wenxian oath type, like the Qin and Han laws quoted above, is trying to prohibit the act of falsifying documents. However, the Wenxian covenant and these later laws are different in key respects. Firstly, the Wenxian text aims to stop specific acts of falsification of documents, at a specific place and time and, we conjecture, it is a reaction to cases of this action having already occurred. Furthermore, the prohibition is limited to those who join the covenant. In contrast, the Qin and Han laws are not case specific, allowing each law to be applied to a variety of acts which fall in the same general category; we saw this above in the *Zou Yan Shu* cases in which very different acts were all judged to be examples of a single crime, “falsifying documents”. And, furthermore, these laws are applied to the population as a whole rather than limited to a group of named individuals, as is the case for the Wenxian texts. The second essential difference is that the covenant tablets are sanctioned by spirits, their effectiveness relies on the assumption that the covenantor believes that spirits could kill him and wipe out his clan. Transgressors may also have faced secular punishment, but this is not a threat given in the covenants themselves. In contrast, the Qin and Han laws rely not on spirits, but on the threat of punishments, such as tattooing, hard labour, or death, at the hands of the authorities.

Although there are clear differences exist between the covenants and the Qin and Han legal codes, given the basic aim of the Wenxian covenants to prohibit or require certain actions, it is understandable why some scholars theorize that such covenants were the forerunner of codified law with secular punishment.¹⁴² However, one should also note the contrast between a centralized, organized government, such as that of the Qin and Han, and a small, relatively poorly organized, local lineage-based group, like that behind the covenant tablets. It

¹⁴¹ *Guzi Tongjia Huidian*, p.662.

¹⁴² See, for example: Valerie Hansen, *Negotiating Daily Life in Traditional China*, p.7.

may simply have been that in the latter case, in a time of upheaval, an ad hoc covenant was considered the most practical way to achieve order.¹⁴³

Let us now look at how language similar to that of Oath Type 2 is used in received texts. Firstly, the phrase *xuán shū* 懸書, “hanging up notices” or “publicly-posted notices”, as we have translated the phrase above. We gave some pertinent examples of similar language in received texts when analysing the graph identified as [懸] *xuán*; it may be helpful to repeat those here before looking at further passages:

11. *Zhou Li* “Tian Guan 天官 Da Zai 大宰” (text: 2nd century BC)¹⁴⁴

正月之吉始，和布治于邦國都鄙，乃縣治象之灑於象魏，使萬民觀治象，浹日而斂之。

On the auspicious day of the first month, announce governing policies to the states and cities, **post** the written laws on the proclamation building, allowing all the people to see the words, after ten days take them down.

Note that there is no prepositional *yú* 于 or *yú* 於 before the place word denoting where the laws are posted: this matches the several examples in the Wenxian Type 2 oaths where the *yú* 于 is omitted before the place name Shaoqu 少曲. The “proclamation building” (*xiàngwèi* 象魏) is the term for a building specifically designed for the posting of official announcements. The structure, said to have consisted of a pair of towers, was also known as *què* 闕, *guān* 觀 and *wèiquè* 魏闕.¹⁴⁵ Pictures of Han-period examples of such structures exist on Han steles, see Figure 34.

¹⁴³ Susan R. Weld makes this point: “The social-political phenomenon of oath and covenant in the Spring and Autumn period was the product of an era with relatively chaotic, decentralized institutions. Under these conditions, in a time when there was almost no legitimate central governmental power, agreements between persons had to rely on their own internal self-enforcing mechanisms for implementation. The three institutions of covenant, oath and pledge all use this kind of self-enforcing legal device.” See: Susan Roosevelt Weld, “On the Interpretation of the Wenxian Covenant Tablets from Pit WT1K17”, p. 14.

¹⁴⁴ *Zhou Li Zheng Yi*, p. 117.

¹⁴⁵ *Gudai Hanyu Cidian*, p. 1716.

The Sun Yirang commentary to this section of the *Zhou Li* cites a Tang commentary to the *Zuo Zhuan* which quotes similar usage of [縣] *xiàn*, to denote *xuán* {懸} “hang”, “post [a document]”, in other sections of the *Zhou Li*:¹⁴⁶

12. *Zhou Li* “Di Guan 地官”

布教，縣教象。

Promulgate regulations, **hang** the regulations on the proclamation building.

13. *Zhou Li* “Xia Guan 夏官”

布政，縣政象。

Promulgate governing decrees, **hang** the governing decrees on the proclamation building.

14. *Zhou Li* “Qiu Guan 秋官”

布刑，縣刑象。

Promulgate punishments, **hang** the punishments on the proclamation building.

In these *Zhou Li* examples, the posted documents are all of a legal nature. In the following example, in contrast, the document is a poem:

15. *Lü Shi Chunqiu* “Jie Li 介立” (text: c.239 BC) ¹⁴⁷

懸書公門而伏於山下

[He] **posted the document** on the palace gates and retired to the foot of the mountain.

In this example, a Jin minister, Jie Zi 介子, ashamed to meet the returning Duke Wen of Jin, wrote a poem and posted it on the gates to the palace where the duke would see it. Thus it was not just official notices, laws such as those mentioned in the previous example, that were posted in public places. There is also the famous story of Lü Buwei 呂不韋 (d.235 BC) posting up the whole of his *Lü*

¹⁴⁶ *Zhou Li Zheng Yi*, Vol.1, p.118.

¹⁴⁷ *Lü Shi Chunqiu Xin Jiao Shi*, p.634.

Shi Chunqiu on the market gates in Xianyang 咸陽, with 1000 gold coins hanging (the word *xuán* 懸 is used) above it, reward for anyone who could find a sentence that needed a character added or removed.¹⁴⁸ Just these few examples give us laws, a brief poem and a very long text as types of materials that were posted up for public viewing. Further examples of such usage include:

16. *Wen Xuan* “Shi Que Ming 石闕銘” by Lu Chui 陸倕 (text: 6th century AD)¹⁴⁹

懸法無聞，藏書弗紀。... 懸書有附，委篋知歸。

The **posted laws** were not known of; the archived documents were not ordered. ... The **posted laws** had their place; the archived documents, it was known where to return them to.

This whole section of the *Wen Xuan*, called the “Inscription on the Stone *Que*” (“Shi Que Ming 石闕銘”), is about the structure on which laws were supposedly posted, the *que* 闕. The quoted sentences contrast the situation when there is no *que* and that when there is one and the laws can be posted.

17. *Lü Shi Chunqiu* “Li Wei 離謂” (text: c.239 BC) (event: late 6th century BC)¹⁵⁰

鄭國多相縣以書者。子產令無縣書，鄧析致之。

In the state of Zheng many people were **posting public notices**. Zi Chan ordered no **posting of notices**, [so] Deng Xi delivered them [instead].

18. *Yan Zi Chunqiu* “Nei Pian Za Shang 5 內篇雜上第五” (text: 5th – 3rd century BC)¹⁵¹

墨子對曰：“有以亡也。嬰聞之，君子有道，懸之間。紀有此言，注之壺，不亡何待乎！”

Yanzi replied saying: “There is a reason why [the state of Ji 紀] was wiped out. I have heard that when the gentleman has the way he **posts**

¹⁴⁸ *Lü Shi Chunqiu Xin Jiao Shi*, p.2.

¹⁴⁹ *Wen Xuan*, 56th fascicle, “Ming 銘”: Vol.6, pp.2412 – 2425, see pp.2421 – 22.

¹⁵⁰ *Lü Shi Chunqiu Xin Jiao Shi*, p.1187.

¹⁵¹ *Yan Zi Chunqiu Quan Yi*, p.255.

it on the doors. Ji had these words but threw them into a jar: what could they expect but to be wiped out?”

We will now consider the phrases *wéi shū* 為書 “producing documents” and *wěi shū* 偽書 “false documents” or “falsifying documents” and similar phrases in received texts:

19. *Shang Jun Shu* “Ding Fen Di Ershiliu 定分第二十六” (text: 4th – 3rd centuries BC) ¹⁵²

今先聖人為書傳之後世，...

Now, the former sages **produced texts** and passed them on to future generations,....

The following is an example of the use of the same term, but the document made is false, and used to frame someone:

20. *Han Fei Zi* “Nei Chu Shuo 內儲說” (text: 3rd century BC) ¹⁵³

叔向之讒襄弘也，為書曰：“襄弘謂叔向曰：子為我謂晉君，所與君期者，時可矣，何不亟以兵來？”因佯遺其書周君之庭而急去行，周以襄弘為賣周也，乃誅襄弘而殺之。

As for Shu Xiang’s slandering of Chang Hong, [what happened was] **he produced a document** which said: “Chang Hong said to Shu Xiang: ‘Tell the Jin lord, on my behalf, it is the right time for that which was planned. Why does he not come in haste with troops?’” Then he pretended to deliver the letter to the court of the Zhou ruler and hurried off. The Zhou king thought that Chang Hong was betraying Zhou, so he executed him.

This is an interesting, not only for its use of the phrase *wéi shū* 為書 “producing documents”, but also because the document made is a false one, used to frame someone. Thus we could also argue that the[為] *wéi* here should be interpreted as a loan for *wěi* { 偽 }, giving *wěi shū* 偽書 “falsifying documents”. The following examples use this exact term:

¹⁵² *Shang Jun Shu Zhuizhi*, p.145.

¹⁵³ *Han Fei Zi Xin Jiao Zhu*, p.652.

21. *Huai Nan Zi* “Juan Di Ershi, Tai Zu Shun 卷第二十 秦族訓” (text: 139 BC) ¹⁵⁴

倉頡之初作書，以辯治百官，領理萬事，愚者得以不忘，智者得以志遠；至其衰也，為姦刻偽書，以解有罪，以殺不辜。

When Cang Jie first invented writing, it was used to order the many offices of government, to deal with a myriad matters. For the ignorant, they used it as an aid to memory, for the wise, they used it to record all manner of events. [But] when it became corrupted, it was used to illegally inscribe [seals] and **falsify documents**, in order to free the guilty and kill the innocent.

This passage suggests that falsification of documents was commonplace certainly at the time this was written in the Western Han. The following example is in the same vein:

22. *Shi Ji* “Huo Zhi Lie Zhuan 貨殖列傳” (text: 2nd – 1st centuries BC) ¹⁵⁵

吏士舞文弄法，刻章偽書，...

The officials make a plaything of the law, inscribe [fake] seals and **produce false documents**, ...

That such acts were common long before the time of the Wenxian texts can be seen in records in historical texts. The *Zuo Zhuan*, in a pertinent example, records the falsification of a covenant:

23. *Zuo Zhuan* Xi 僖 25.3 (text: 5th – 4th century BC) (event: 635 BC) ¹⁵⁶

秋，秦、晉伐鄆。楚鬬克、屈禦寇以申、息之師戍商密。秦人過析，隈入而係輿人，以圍商密，昏而傅焉。宵，坎血加書，偽與子儀、子邊盟者。商密人懼，曰：“秦取析矣！戍人反矣！”乃降秦師。

In the autumn, Qin and Jin made a punitive expedition against Ruo. Dou Ke and Qu Yu Kou of Chu defended Shangmi [the capital city of Ruo] with the armies of Shen and Xi [regions of Chu]. The Qin [army] passed by [the Ruo city of] Xi. Entering [the area] from the curve in the river, they fettered [their own] soldiers together and surrounded

¹⁵⁴ *Huai Nan Zi Jiao Shi*, p.2059.

¹⁵⁵ *Shi Ji*, Vol.10, p.3271

¹⁵⁶ *Chunqiu Zuo Zhuan Zhu*, pp.434 – 435.

Shangmi. At dusk they advanced up to the moat [of Shangmi]. In the night **they dug a pit of blood [and] put in covenant tablets, falsifying a covenant with Zi Yi [Dou Ke] and Zi Bian [Qu Yu Kou].** The people of Shangmi were afraid, saying: “Qin has taken Xi! The defenders have betrayed us!” and they surrendered to the Qin army.

The Qin army fettered their own soldiers in order to trick the people of Shangmi into thinking they were prisoners taken at the defeat of the Ruo city of Xi. They then produced a fake covenant between themselves and the leaders of the Chu armies defending Shangmi, convincing the Shangmi people that their defenders had betrayed them and allied with Qin. Thinking all was lost, the city of Shangmi surrendered. This is an event purported to have taken place more than one hundred years before the Wenxian covenants.¹⁵⁷ Notice that the word *wěi* {偽} “to falsify” is used to describe the production of the false covenant in this example.

To conclude this discussion on language similar to the Wenxian phrase *wéi xuán shū yú Shǎoqū* 為懸書于少曲 and the *wéi shū* 為書 in the second stipulation, it is clear that there is ample evidence, in both excavated and received texts, to support our interpretation of the phrase *xuán shū* 懸書 and good evidence to support our reinterpretation of the character [為] *wéi* as *wěi* {偽} “to falsify”. The quoted passages provide evidence for the pervasiveness of both the falsifying of documents and the posting of documents in public places in early China. The final reading I will give for these phrases adopts the interpretation for the graph [為] *wéi* as *wěi* {偽} “to falsify”, giving:

所[covenantor’s name]敢偽懸書于少曲者
 □[covenantor’s name]敢知偽書而不之言者

If [covenantor’s name] dare falsify publicly-posted notices in Shaoqu,
 ___ [covenantor’s name] dare know of the falsifying of notices and does not report this,

¹⁵⁷ Other examples of the falsification of covenants in the *Zuo Zhuan* can be found at: *Zuo Zhuan* at Xiang 襄 26.8, *Chunqiu Zuo Zhuan Zhu*, p.1118; Zhao 昭 6.5, *Chunqiu Zuo Zhuan Zhu*, p.1277.

We may now turn to consider the place where these false notices were being hung, that is Shaoqu 少曲. Such consideration will also serve to illustrate the importance of historical geography to the analysis of excavated texts.

The interpretation of the place name, Shaoqu, as discussed in the analysis section above, was based on its occurrence on coins. The dating of these coins to the late Spring and Autumn to early Warring States period (625 – 350 BC) matches the dating suggested for the Wenxian covenant tablets. The discovery of examples of these coins at Luoyang also give them a provenance close to the Wenxian site. Thus we can be reasonably confident that the Shaoqu 少曲 of the coins is the same Shaoqu 少曲 that appears on the covenant tablets.

No archaeological city-site has been identified as Shaoqu 少曲.¹⁵⁸ The name is found in received texts but has not been matched to a specific modern-day location. The *Zhongguo Lishi Ditu Ji*, for example, just gives the general area in which the city is thought to have been located during the Warring States period (Figure 35).

Let us look at the evidence concerning this town available from excavated texts. Both Li Xueqin and Li Jiahao believe the coins on which this name is found were produced by (or, at least, for) the Zhou 周 court.¹⁵⁹ This is supported by the discovery, mentioned above, of such coins at the site of the Eastern Zhou period Zhou state capital, Wangcheng 王城. The area Shaoqu 少曲 is traditionally thought to be located in is north of Luoyang, about 50 km as the crow flies (see Figure 35). The production of coins in Shaoqu for the Zhou state here might suggest that it was under Zhou control at least during the period in which these coins were produced. Alternatively, we could conjecture that Shaoqu

¹⁵⁸ See, for example, the list of city sites given in : Xu Hong, *Xian Qin Chengshi Kaoguxue Yanjiu*, pp.146 – 159.

¹⁵⁹ Li Xueqin, *Dong Zhou Yu Qin Dai Wenming*, p.308. Li Jiahao is mentioned by Qiu Xigui as identifying Shaoqu 少曲 as a place name from the Han 韓 region and the *Zhongguo Qianbi Da Cidian: Xianqin Bian* suggests the coins were circulating in Han 韓. However in a 1996 lecture, Li Jiahao identified examples of these coins as Zhou coins. See: Qiu Xigui, “Zhanguo Wenzi Zhong De ‘Shi’”, p.467; *Zhongguo Qianbi Da Cidian: Xianqin Bian*, pp.95 – 102; Li Jiahao, lecture, Peking University, spring 1996.

was under the control of a different state but manufactured coins for the Zhou court.

The Wenxian tablets, judging from the clan name shared by the covenant lord and many of the covenantors, were produced by the Han 韓 ministerial family which later became the royal house of the Han 韓 state. The site at which the Wenxian tablets were excavated is approximately 40 kilometres southeast of the area traditionally identified with Shaoqu 少曲 (the area is marked as Zhouxian 州县 on the map in Figure 35). That an activity harmful to the Han covenant lord was, or might be, carried out in this town by covenantors must have been nominally under his authority, suggests the town had a very close relationship with the Han clan: either it was under Han control, or was under the control of a Han enemy with whom some covenantors had close relations. Another possible scenario is that the town was controlled by another state, for example Zhou, but Han affiliated men had been posting notices and offending that state, which had then demanded that Han put a stop to such activity.

Apart from the question of state affiliation, we can consider what the coins reveal about the town itself. The term *shì* {市} “market”, in the inscription, refers to the trading area at Shaoqu 少曲. It is evident from archaeological and palaeographic evidence that official market areas in Warring States, Qin, and Han towns, referred to as *shì* {市}, included manufacturing areas, producing, for example, pottery, lacquer, as well as coins, such as the ones we are discussing, and weapons.¹⁶⁰ In the coins above I have translated *shì* {市} as “trade area” in order to allow for the meaning of a place used for the manufacturing, as well as the selling, of goods. The words *zhōng* {中}, *xī* {西} and *nán* {南} in these particular inscriptions are thought to refer to different sections of a single large

¹⁶⁰ See: Qiu Xigui, “Zhanguo Wenzi Zhong De ‘Shi’”, p.464. Also: Wang Tao, “A City with Many Faces: Urban Development in pre-Modern China”, p.119; Yu Weichao, “Zhongguo Gudai Ducheng Guihua De Fazhan Jieduanxing”, pp.38 – 43; Yu Weichao, “Qin Han De ‘Ting’, ‘Shi’ Taowen”.

trading area in Shaoqu.¹⁶¹ Thus the phrase *Shǎoqū shì nán* 少曲市西, for example, means: “Shaoqu’s trade area, western sector”. Placing the name on the coin must indicate the area where the coin was manufactured. Thus all the coins with the above inscriptions were manufactured in Shaoqu 少曲. We can, then, ascertain that the town of Shaoqu 少曲 was big enough to contain a trading area which was divided into several different sectors and that there were workshops producing coins in at least the three sectors referred to in the inscriptions. This suggests that the town was of some economic importance.

The name Shaoqu 少曲 is also found in the following Warring States bronze inscriptions. The first examples are weapons considered to be from the state of Han.¹⁶²

24. Han 韓 state ge 戈 halberd head (Late 4th – early 3rd century BC)¹⁶³

十二年，少曲[?]令邯鄲□，右庫工師嬰習，冶會造

Twelfth year, [this weapon was made under the supervision of] Governor of Shaoqu [?], Handan □. [The head craftsman was] Master Craftsman of the Right Arsenal, □□. [The weapon was] made by Smelter Hui [?].

The *Yin Zhou Jinwen Jicheng Shiwen* transcribes the fourth graph in this inscription as Zhao 趙, not Shaoqu 少曲. The graph is not fully legible, particularly in the rubbing. The original picture in the *Yan Ku Jijin Tulu* is clearer, given here with an enhanced version of the same image:

¹⁶¹ Qiu Xigui, “Zhanguo Wenzhi Zhong De ‘Shi’”, p.464. Qiu suggests an alternative interpretation, that the cardinal points simply mean that the workshop in question was in this position with regard to the market, e.g. “south of the market”. However the example with *shì zhōng* 市中, at least, must refer to a workshop within the market.

¹⁶² Many thanks to Dong Shan 董珊 for advice with this section. Personal communication, Beijing, November 2002. Dong’s Ph.D. dissertation deals with many such inscriptions and related issues: Dong Shan, “Zhanguo Timing Yu Gong Guan Zhidu”.

¹⁶³ *Yan Ku Jijin Tulu*, Vol.2, plate 56; *Yin Zhou Jinwen Jicheng*, Vol.17, no.11355.



It is hard to be sure which marks are the original strokes of the graph and which are scratches and other damage. What appear to be two strokes in the lower component of the form do suggest 肖 (Zhao 趙) but, on the other hand, in other examples of this graph we do not see the left-end closed as we do here.¹⁶⁴ It should also be noted that the *Yin Zhou Jinwen Jicheng Shiwen* considers that this inscription may be a fake. Although this example is problematic, it is important for our discussion because there is a very similar unpublished inscription on another *ge*-halberd head and in that example the graph is clearly Shaoqu 少曲. The inscription is on a *ge*-halberd head excavated from Li county 禮縣 in Gansu 甘肅. The formula is identical to that in the above example and includes the title *Shǎoqū lìng* 少曲令 “Governor of Shaoqu”.¹⁶⁵

The following inscription also includes the name Shaoqu:

25. Han 韓 state *ge* 戈 halberd head (Late 4th – early 3rd century BC) ¹⁶⁶

十一年，皋落守令少曲啓，工師舒憲，冶午。

Eleventh year, [this weapon was made under the supervision of] Governor of Gaoluo, Shaoqu Ye. [The head craftsman was] Master Craftsman Shu Xi. [The weapon was made by] Smelter Wu.

Here “Shaoqu” is the clan name of the governor of the town, Gaoluo.

Originally the name of the town we have been discussing, at this point it has also

¹⁶⁴ *Zhanguo Guwen Zidian*, pp.321 – 322.

¹⁶⁵ Thanks to Hao Benxing for bringing this inscription to my attention. Personal communication, Zhengzhou, summer 2000.

¹⁶⁶ See: Cai Yunzhang and Yang Haiqin, “Shiyi Nian Gaoluo Ge Ji Qi Xiangguan Wenti”; Li Jiahao, “Shiyi Nian Gaoluo Ge Mingwen Zhiwen Shangque”.

become used as a clan name.¹⁶⁷ This bronze was excavated in Yichuan county 伊川縣, Henan province.

26. Small bronze object [chariot piece?] (Warring States 475 – 222 BC)¹⁶⁸

□少曲𦉑

A _____ [𦉑: name of this object] of Shaoqu.

It is not clear what this object is. Presumably the Shaoqu in this inscription indicates where the piece was produced.

These inscriptions date from a period of around 150 years after the Wenxian tablets. The weapons are identified as products of the Han 韓 state, the reign year in the first two examples is that of a Han 韓 king.¹⁶⁹ Assuming the Shaoqu 少曲 of these weapons is the same as that on the earlier coins and covenant tablets, then, by this stage, it is clearly under control of Han 韓 and contains foundries producing weapons and other objects.

The name Shaoqu also occurs in the excavated Qin bamboo-slip annals from Shuihudi. These list the reign years from the ascension of King Zhao 昭 of Qin in 306 BC to the thirtieth year of the reign of the First Emperor, 217 BC. Following the reign year, there is, in most instances, the record of a single important event which took place during that year. Under the reign of King Zhao, for the forty-second year of his reign (265 BC), we find the record: “attacked Shaoqu” (*gōng Shǎoqū* 攻少曲). This tells us that, in 265 BC, Shaoqu 少曲 came under Qin control. More significantly, for our purposes, and assuming, once again, that this is the same Shaoqu 少曲 that is seen in the above texts, then the records of the towns attacked just before and after this year may help us identify the location of Shaoqu. Here are the relevant years of the annals:

¹⁶⁷ Li Jiahao, “Shiyi Nian Gaoluo Ge Mingwen Zhiwen Shangque”, p.758.

¹⁶⁸ *Yinzhou Jinwen Jicheng* Vol.16, no.10431.

¹⁶⁹ For identification of the manufacturing state and dating of example 25 see: Cai Yunzhang and Yang Haiqin, “Shiyi Nian Gaoluo Ge Ji Qi Xiangguan Wenti”.

27. Shuihudi bamboo slips “Bian Nian Ji 編年記” slips 34 to 47 (late 2nd century BC) ¹⁷⁰

三十四年：攻華陽	Year 34 (273 BC): Attacked Huayang
三十五年：	Year 35 (272 BC):
三十六年：	Year 36 (271 BC):
三十七年：□寇剛	Year 37 (270 BC): ___ attacked Gang
三十八年：闕輿	Year 38 (269 BC): Yanyu ¹⁷¹
三十九年：攻懷	Year 39 (268 BC): Attacked Huai
四十年	Year 40 (267 BC)
四十一年：攻邢丘	Year 41 (266 BC): Attacked Xingqiu
四十二年：攻少曲	Year 42 (265 BC): Attacked Shaoqu
〈四十三年：〉	[lacuna]
四十四年：攻太行。□攻	Year 44 (264 BC): Attacked Taihang. ...
四十五年：攻大野王。... .	Year 45 (263 BC): Attacked Dayewang
四十六年：攻□亭	Year 46 (262 BC): Attacked □ Ting
四十七年：攻長平。... .	Year 47 (261 BC): Attacked Changping

Most of these named towns are known from historical records and some have been identified with archaeological sites.¹⁷² Figure 36 gives the position of these towns on a map from the *Zhongguo Lishi Ditu Ji*, and the year given in the annals above. For the years 34, 37, 38 and 39, the recorded towns are between 150 and 200 kilometres apart showing that Qin operations covered a wide area and that its army could campaign over long distances in a relatively short time (although different sections of its army may also have been dealing with separate parts of the campaign simultaneously). Such observation suggests that relying on the relative position of the towns mentioned in the annals before and after Shaoqu, in order to try and pinpoint its position, may be unreliable. However, for the years 39 to 45, the action is concentrated around a much smaller area just in the location we are interested in. If we assume that this does allow us to trace the path of a single army, then that army attacked Huai in year 39, went southwest and attacked Xingqiu in 41 and, based on the area suggested for Shaoqu on the historical map, then went northwest to attack Shaoqu in 42. If “Taihang” refers to

¹⁷⁰ *Shuihudi Qin Mu Zhujian*, plates pp.5 – 6 and transcriptions pp.5 – 6. For dating, see pp.1 – 2 and p.3 of the transcriptions section.

¹⁷¹ Place name in Zhao 趙 territory. The *Shi Ji* records that Qin suffered a defeat here at the hands of Zhao. *Shuihudi Qin Mu Zhujian*, p.9, note 25.

¹⁷² Those identified with archaeological sites include: Huayang 華陽, Huai 懷, Xingqiu 邢丘, and Changping 長平, see table in: Xu Hong, *Xian Qin Chengshi Kaoguxue Yanjiu*, pp.146 – 159.

the area of the Taihang mountains, they would have then turned east to attack this area in 44 and gone south or southwest to attack Yewang in 45. If, however, we tried to locate Shaoqu by assuming that the attack moved from one town to its closest strategically important neighbour, then we would conjecture that Shaoqu's position was between Xingqiu and the Taihang mountains, which would give the area where the Wenxian tablets were excavated. Given this and the use of the name in the Wenxian tablets, one might suggest that the city site next to the covenant site is Shaoqu, not Zhou, although this does not match historical records that give the position of Shaoqu and Zhou.

The *Shi Ji* and *Zhan Guo Ce* both have two passages which mention Shaoqu 少曲 in the context of Qin's campaigns in this area. The passages in the *Shi Ji* and *Zhan Guo Ce* are almost identical so only the two from the *Shi Ji* are given here:

28. *Shi Ji* "Su Qin Lie Zhuan 蘇秦列傳" (text: 2nd – 1st centuries BC)
(event: 3rd century BC) ¹⁷³

秦正告韓曰：“我起乎少曲，一日而斷太行。我起乎宜陽而觸平陽，二日而莫不盡繇。我離兩周而觸鄭，五日而國舉。”韓氏以為然，故事秦。

The king of Qin warned [the ruler of] Han saying: “Starting from **Shaoqu**, I will cut through the Taihang [mountains] in one day. Starting from Yiyang, I will attack Pingyang, by the second day there will be no one not shaking [in fear]. Passing the two Zhous, I will attack Zheng, on the fifth day the state will be taken.” Han saw that this would be so, and therefore [capitulated and] served Qin.

Qin describes how, in five days, his forces will overrun and occupy Han. He mentions major towns and the capital, Zheng, suggesting Shaoqu was also an important Han centre in the third century BC. In a later section of the *Shi Ji* Qin's taking of Shaoqu is described:

¹⁷³ *Shi Ji* Vol.7, pp.2272 – 2275.

29. *Shi Ji* “Fan Sui Cai Ze Lie Zhuan 范睢蔡澤列傳” (text: 2nd – 1st centuries BC) (event: 265 BC) ¹⁷⁴

秦昭王之四十二年，東伐韓少曲、高平，拔之。

In King Zhao of Qin’s 42nd year, [Qin] made an attack east against the Han towns of **Shaoqu** and Gaoping, and captured them.

Firstly, we can note that the excavated annals agrees with the received text on the date of this event although the annals do not mention Gaoping, only Shaoqu. Of interest also are the two Tang commentaries to this passage since both give a contemporary location for Shaoqu. The *Suo Yin* 索隱 commentary of Sima Zhen (司馬貞 early 8th century AD) bases its suggestion on the passage previously quoted, 28, and says Shaoqu is to the “southwest of the Taihang mountains” (*zài Tàiháng xī nán* 在太行西南) which is a little vague but, more or less, gives the area marked as Shaoqu in the *Zhongguo Lishi Ditu Ji* in Figure 35. The *Zheng Yi* 正義 commentary of Zhang Shoujie (張守節 fl. 737 AD) bases its argument on the position of Gaoping 高平, the other town mentioned in the *Shi Ji* as captured along with Shaoqu. It places Gaoping to the northwest of Heyang county (河陽縣) in Huaizhou (懷州). Gaoping can be seen in Figure 35 (in brackets after Xiang 向). It is some distance from the area for Shaoqu given in the *Zhongguo Lishi Ditu Ji* and also quite far from the Wenxian site.

Overall, we cannot confidently give a precise location for Shaoqu. There does not seem to be much textual support for the suggestion given above that the town might be the city site adjacent to the Wenxian covenant site. The received texts and commentaries give us the traditional view that place it within about fifty kilometres, west or north west, of the Wenxian site. Future archaeological excavation may resolve these questions.

The examples from received and excavated texts presented above demonstrate that Shaoqu became an important Han city in the Warring States period and that it had a large manufacturing centre during that period and perhaps

¹⁷⁴ *Shi Ji* Vol.7, p.2415.

also earlier, from the late Spring and Autumn period. The precise relationship between the town and the Wenxian covenant lord is not clear. However, the evidence suggests an economic centre through which people from the surrounding areas would have frequently passed: clearly news would have disseminated widely and quickly from such a town. One can appreciate that the Han covenant lord would have been particularly concerned to stop the posting there of falsified notices, presumably harmful to him in some way. None of the above evidence suggests what topic, or topics, these notices might have addressed.

We can observe that this particular Wenxian covenant concerns activities in a town located within 50 kilometres from Wenxian, that is to say it is a local issue. This supports Weld's argument, discussed in Chapter One, that we should not expect all the Houma and Wenxian covenants to relate to major events recorded in the received histories.¹⁷⁵

To conclude, here, once again, are the final interpretative transcriptions and translations for these Type 2 stipulations:

所[covenantor's name]敢偽懸書于少曲者
 □[covenantor's name]敢知偽書而不之言者

If [covenantor's name] dare falsify publicly-posted notices in Shaoqu,
 __ [covenantor's name] dare know of the falsifying of notices and does
 not report this,

¹⁷⁵ See Chapter One, section 1.3.3.2, last section of part 5.

3.2.3 Oath Types 2, 3, and 7: concluding remarks

These three oaths are concerned with local issues facing the Han covenant lord. Types 3 and 7 are concerned with matters of ritual; Type 2 with cases of forgery of publicly posted notices, the content of which was presumably harmful in some way to the lord. Thus we see the use of the covenant to address both sacral and secular concerns. All three oaths, however, reflect an apparent loss of authority that the covenant lord was attempting to regain through the use of covenant. Oath Type 3 aims to get the members of his, and perhaps other clans, to seek blessings for him in their sacrifices; Oath Type 7 requires them to provide offerings to supply his sacrifices; and the goal of Oath Type 2 is to stop the display of forged notices produced against the covenant lord's will.

In what specific way these stipulations are related to the inter-lineage feuding and decline in power of the Jin house taking place in Jin during this period is not immediately clear. Nevertheless, it is possible, as Zhao Shigang suggests, that this feuding had caused divided loyalties within the ministerial families and the Houma and Wenxian covenants were part of an internal reconsolidation of each lineage carried out by its lord. We know from the histories and archaeological evidence that whatever was threatening the authority of the lord, the Han clan did not collapse but went on to lead one of the three states into which Jin was divided. We can, then, conjecture that the series of covenants discovered at Wenxian were instrumental in the regaining of authority by the Han lord and the stabilization of the clan.

If the covenants were indeed a successful tool of social control, it suggests that their combination of bloody ritual and threat of supernatural retribution must have effectively deterred the majority of covenantors from breaking their oaths. A complimentary facet of this belief system is clearly evident in the Type 3 and 7 oaths, in which the significance to the Han covenant lord of sacrifice and the seeking of blessings demonstrates the continued attention paid to the spirit world.

Only in the two oaths specifically concerned with sacrifice, Types 3 and 7, do we find the phrase “pay due reverence and attention to his *de*” (*kè shèn qí dé* 恪慎其德), supporting the view that the *de* referred to here is that of the auguritic-sacrificial society, the *de* of the clan, connecting one with one’s ancestors, maintained and nurtured through sacrifice. Not until a later stage does the most significant attribute of *de* come to be its association with inner virtue, and its maintenance not understood to be solely reliant on the favour of one’s ancestors in response to sacrifice, but nurtured, instead, by the virtuous conduct of the individual. This change in the concept of *de* paralleled, or perhaps can even be considered one result of, the breakdown of the *zōngfǎ* system and the reduced authority of lineage heads and their power over clan members. The Wenxian texts are a direct reaction to this threat to the authority of the lineage head and, thus, naturally champion the central role of the clan and the traditional view of *de*.

We can speculate that the language of the covenants may have influenced the language used in codified laws developed over the following centuries, as the old order was replaced. For example, we may notice the similarity of the phrase *wěi shū* (偽書) “falsify notices”, used in the Type 2 oath, with the term for the crime of forgery in the Qin laws, *wéi wěi shū* (為偽書) “make false documents”.

Chapter Four: Conclusion

In this thesis, a procedural methodology for the analysis of the Wenxian covenant texts was constructed and applied to a selection of graphs and phrases from those texts. The analysis was generally successful, providing persuasive interpretations of the chosen phrases. Here I will consider the significance of the Wenxian covenant tablets, raise a number of methodological issues highlighted by the study and suggest further applications for the methodology.

4.1 The significance of the Wenxian covenant texts

This dissertation has concentrated on the initial interpretation of a small number of phrases from the Wenxian covenant tablets. Once fully published, these texts will provide material significant to many fields of study.

The Wenxian covenant texts will greatly add to the knowledge already gained about early Chinese covenant from the Houma tablets. While clearly of the same genre, same script style and the same period, the Wenxian texts are from a different location, were produced by a different clan with different groups of people covenanting, have formulaic language not seen in the Houma texts and share none of the same stipulations. Further understanding of the ritual aspect of covenant may also come from a comparison of the shared characteristics of the Houma and Wenxian sites.

For palaeographers and calligraphers, the Wenxian tablets provide a great deal of new material. The Wenxian and Houma tablets, dated to the early fifth century BC, are the earliest examples of brush-written palaeographic materials excavated in significant quantity. With a few exceptions, extant palaeographic materials from before the Warring States period are all cast (i.e. bronzes) or incised (oracle bones and some bronzes). The covenant texts allow new insight into what was surely the most common method of writing, i.e., ink applied with a brush. The Wenxian covenant tablets provide thousands more examples of the brush work of many different scribes from the late Spring and Autumn period.

The formulaic nature of the texts and their repetition on many tablets means a single word is repeated hundreds, sometime thousands of times, providing a valuable resource for the study of graphic variation and the development of the Chinese script during that period.

The Houma and Wenxian texts are the first excavated examples of original covenant texts from early China. Transmitted historical texts, such as the *Zuo Zhuan* and *Guo Yu*, suggest that covenants were extremely common during this period and were used between states, smaller groups, and individuals. The *Zuo Zhuan*, in particular, has several dozen direct, but generally short, quotations from covenants and oaths. The Houma texts were the first excavated materials to be recognized as original covenants from the pre-Han period. The Wenxian texts provide further examples, in a clear archaeological context. They should enable a fuller description of this genre to be produced than is possible with the Houma texts alone. This, in turn, will allow comparison with covenants in other ancient cultures, a topic touched on in Chapter One.

From the linguistic aspect, covenants tend to use a highly formulaic, somewhat archaic style. The Houma excavated texts gave non-transmitted examples of covenants, allowing study of the particular features of this genre and the opportunity to reconsider the sometimes abstruse use of similar language in transmitted texts. The Wenxian tablets provide further examples of the genre, and include formulaic phrases not seen in the Houma texts. Comparison of the language of the excavated texts with quotations from covenants in the transmitted histories may also lead to a better understanding of how transmitted texts were originally compiled.

For historians, the Wenxian texts can shed new light on the Han 韓 ministerial family and its concerns during the pivotal period between the Spring and Autumn and Warring States. The find provides a new set of materials for legal historians interested in how such texts relate to the early development of

Chinese law.¹ The evidence in the Wenxian texts for covenant ceremonies involving thousands of people is of significance to political historians concerned with the use of these texts as tools for political control and organization. That each of these thousands of tablets is individualized with the name of the covenantor provides important new materials for scholars concerned with demographics, clan and lineage groups and naming conventions.² The use of specially prepared stone tablets for the texts, the invocation of a spirit to sanction the covenant and the ceremonial burying of the tablets, accompanied by blood sacrifice, is of significance to the scholar of early belief and ritual.

Thus, for scholars in many different disciplines, the Wenxian covenant texts promise to provide an important source of new materials.

4.2 Methodological issues

The standard techniques currently employed in palaeographic analysis of early Chinese texts are those described in the first half of the twentieth century. At that time, scholars were dealing mainly with oracle-bone and bronze inscriptions. Early work on palaeographic methodology had little concern with the relatively small amount of Warring States materials available at that time.

It was in the second half of the twentieth century that greater attention began to be paid to Warring States materials. For example, Li Xueqin's important article, "A Summary of Warring States Inscriptions", which paved the way for a new categorization of Warring States scripts, was published in 1959.³ Significant new finds from the Warring States period were made in the following decades, including the Houma and Wenxian tablets and the Baoshan bamboo slips. More recently, the Guodian slips were published, and several volumes of the bamboo slips purchased by the Shanghai Museum are now available.

¹ Liu Yongping discusses the published Houma and Wenxian texts in this regard, see: Liu Yongping, *Origins of Chinese Law*, Chapter 3 and *passim*.

² For an example of how the Houma texts were used in such research see: Zhu Fenghan, "Houma Mengshu Zhi Neirong Yu Niandai Kaolüe".

³ Li Xueqin, "Zhanguo Tingming Gaishu".

The significant effect that Warring States materials and their interpretation is having on the traditional methods of palaeographic analysis and our understanding of the development of the Chinese script and language, is gradually becoming apparent.

Warring States materials have proved that many of the “ancient script (*gǔwén* 古文)” forms in the *Shuo Wen Jie Zi*, *Han Jian* and *Guwen Sisheng Yun* are based on authentic Warring States graphs.⁴ For many centuries this had not been clear. Some Qing scholars, for example, believed that the “ancient script” forms in the *Shuo Wen Jie Zi* were based on a far earlier script: that of the purported inventor of writing, Cang Jie 倉頡.⁵ Wang Guowei, in the 1920’s, recognized that the *Shuo Wen Jie Zi* “ancient script” forms were, in fact, based on graphs of the Warring States period.⁶ The *Han Jian* and *Guwen Sisheng Yun* had long been considered to be largely composed of forged or unreliable materials with little or no scholarly value. Tang Lan still held this view in the 1930’s as is apparent from his *Guwenzixue Daolun*.⁷ However, since it has been possible to compare the forms in these works with the increasing amount of authentic Warring States materials, it has become clear that, while there are forged or problematic examples, many are reliable. These graphs, with their accompanying glosses, along with the *Shuo Wen Jie Zi*’s “ancient script” forms and those in materials like the *San Ti Shijing* 三體石經, provide a valuable repository of knowledge about Warring States scripts. They often provide the key to the interpretation of excavated graphs which would otherwise be undecipherable, or supply strong evidence to back a conjectured identification. Several of the interpretations of graphs in this thesis, for example, that of [𠄎] *gōng*, were based on, or supported by, “ancient script” graphs.⁸ Studies of these collections can provide valuable reference sources for the analysis of the Warring States script.⁹

⁴ Li Xueqin has argued that these forms are based on the Chu script. See: Sarah Allan and Crispin Williams ed., *The Guodian Laozi*, pp.130 – 131.

⁵ *Zhanguo Wenzi Tonglun* [2003 edition], p.56.


⁶ *Zhanguo Wenzi Tonglun* [2003 edition], p.56.

⁷ *Zhanguo Wenzi Tonglun* [2003 edition], pp.69 – 70.

⁸ Chapter Three, section 3.2.1.1, graph 4. For an informative example of a Guodian slip graph, 𠄎 (*Yu Cong San* 語叢三, slip 40), deciphered using ancient-script forms see: Chen Wei, “Guodian Chu Jian Bie Shi”.

⁹ An example of such a work is: Huang Xiquan, *Han Jian Zhushi*.


The *Shuo Wen Jie Zi* not only includes “ancient script” forms but provides the earliest extant, systematic attempt to analyse the Chinese script. It examines the small-seal script of the Qin period, giving the etymology of characters and categorizing them under separate components, the *bùshǒu* 部首. The value of the *Shuo Wen Jie Zi* lies in Xu Shen’s relative proximity to the pre-Han period of whose script we are interested in. Xu Shen clearly had materials unavailable to us now and, although he did not always analyse these correctly, the *Shuo Wen Jie Zi* provides essential clues to the identity of many excavated graphs. Nevertheless, while accepting its great importance, its limitations must also be recognized if it is to be used effectively.

In the methodology for palaeographic analysis adopted in this thesis, once the components of a graph have been separated, the next step is to consult the *Shuo Wen Jie Zi*’s component table in an attempt to identify individual components, transcribe the graph, and determine whether or not it is attested. But the *Shuo Wen Jie Zi* is an analysis of the Qin script of the late third century BC, as it was understood by Xu Shen working in the first century AD. Thus, when we use its component table to analyse graphs of an earlier period and/or from different states, there are bound to be inconsistencies and these can lead to misidentification. This was the case with the graph  (WT1K2 – 112) from the Type 2 covenant, mistakenly matched with the component [𠄎] *fāng*.¹⁰ The component table in the *Han Jian* sometimes gives a more accurate match, but not in all cases. Another problem with the component table in the *Shuo Wen Jie Zi* is that some components are not included, for example the [𠄎] *yōu* that appears in the Wenxian texts and was interpreted as *zhòu* {胃} “descendant/s”.¹¹

With the great increase in the amount of excavated Warring States palaeographic material available, it should be possible to carry out a systematic analysis of the scripts of each state for which we have a relatively large amount of excavated palaeographic material. The aim would be to describe the

¹⁰ Chapter Three, section 3.2.2.1, graph 2.

¹¹ Chapter Three, section 3.1.4.1, graph 4.

component system of each script, e.g. the Chu script or the Jin script, and categorize the graphs of the script under those components, using their original forms. A similar approach has been suggested by Tang Lan and Lin Yun, as discussed in the Literature Survey, but such tables have not been published.¹² Taken further, such research could be expected to lead to a better understanding of how the scribes themselves understood and used the script. This type of research on the various scripts of the Warring States period might provide new approaches to the analysis of individual graphs. For example, the unidentified component in the graph in Type 2 that I failed to persuasively interpret (the , WT1K2 – 156) might be identified if seen in the context of a full description of the Jin script's component system, with a clear understanding of how Jin scribes made use of components.¹³

Further problems with the *Shuo Wen Jie Zi* include mistakes made by Xu Shen and errors that occurred during its transmission. An example of the latter is the character [愨] *zhè*, which is considered to be a corrupted form but has, for many years, been used in the interpretation of graphs which have now been identified as *shèn* {愨} “to be careful/cautious, to be scrupulous and conscientious”.¹⁴ One answer to such problems would be a new reference work on the *Shuo Wen Jie Zi*, one that would update the two-hundred year old *Shuo Wen Jie Zi Zhu* of Duan Yucai, giving known problems with each character, relevant material from excavated texts, and so on.

Apart from the potential value of Warring States materials to the study of the script, they also hold a huge amount of information about the sound system of that period. Warring States variant forms in which phonetic components are interchanged, newly created phonograms, phonetic loans and rhyming texts, all provide authentic evidence reflecting the sound system of the Warring States period in several different regions. I have discussed the problems with the reconstruction of Old Chinese and the difficulty of knowing the degree of

¹² Appendix 1, section 5.2.2, technique 2.

¹³ Chapter Three, section 3.2.2.1, graph 3.

¹⁴ Chapter Three, section 3.2.1.1, graph 2.

phonetic similarity that was expected between phonetic loans and phonetic components. Excavated texts provide a mass of new material relevant to such questions. In the thesis, for example, I briefly discussed evidence that supports the suggestion that [無] *wú* and [毋] *wú* could not, at least at an early stage, interchange with each other, and should be reconstructed with different vowels.¹⁵ The importance of these new materials to the field of historical phonology has been pointed out, for example by He Linyi, and a number of scholars have begun to exploit them to this end.¹⁶ A better understanding of the use of loangraphs and phonetic components by Warring States scribes, along with a more reliable reconstruction of the Chinese they spoke, would provide a powerful tool for the analysis of graphs from the period.

In the section on methodological procedure in Chapter Two, I gave a table of factors to be used when judging whether a character could be loaning for a word. I weighted each factor to indicate its relative significance. For example, while matching vowels and codas were heavily weighted, evidence for the proposed loan found in received texts was considered even more significant. So, for instance, in Chapter Three we saw such a situation with the comparison of [玄] *xuán* and [懸] *xuán* in which the main vowel, although close, was different, but evidence for this loan in other texts overrode this objection.¹⁷ Such a table is one approach that might be considered in an attempt to provide palaeographers with a formal, methodical tool to aid the application of historical phonology to palaeographic analysis and perhaps discourage misuse of the technique. Many refinements to the table are no doubt possible. A more quantifiable method might be constructed by allotting actual scores to each factor. Recognized loaning pairs might be inputted to provide standards against which to measure unknown pairs. In conjunction with further work on the reconstructions of Warring States Chinese and more research on the question of the dissimilarity allowed between

¹⁵ Chapter Three, section 3.1.4.1, graph 2.

¹⁶ Examples of such work done on bronze inscriptions include: Wolfgang Behr, "Reimende Bronzeinschriften und die Entstehung der chinesischen Endreimdichtung"; Chun Kwang-Jin, *Liang Zhou Jinwen Tongjia Zi Yanjiu*. For a study of Qin and Han materials see: Li Yu, *Qin Han Jiandu Boshu Yinyun Yanjiu*.

¹⁷ Chapter Three, section 3.2.2.1, graph 1.

loaning words, such an approach might increase the accuracy, and reduce the misuse of, this important tool of analysis.

The analysis of the character [毋] *wú*, mentioned above, relied, not only on considerations of phonology, but also of the grammar of this negative imperative. Research on the grammar of excavated texts would also benefit the interpretation of texts excavated in the future. I noted that discrepancies exist between grammars based on received texts and the evidence in excavated texts. Thus, while finding no evidence of the interchange of [無] *wú* and [毋] *wú* in the Wenxian texts, I noted the interchange of *fú* 弗, *bù* 不 and *bù zhī* 不之 in different examples of the same phrase in the Houma texts.¹⁸ Research into the grammar of excavated texts will result in a better understanding of the development of the language and clearer periodization of language for the pre-Han period. This, in turn, would help the dating of received texts and our understanding of their compilation and revision.

The analysis of Wenxian phrases in Chapter Three illustrated the great importance of context in the identification of individual graphs. While the danger of over reliance on context for identification of graphs has been properly condemned, Warring States materials, do, nevertheless, clearly demonstrate that, without context, many graphs would be undecipherable. The context in which a graph is found limits the possible meanings of the word denoted by that graph. Context often allows comparison with similar language in other texts and this can lead to conjectures for the identity of a graph or support for previously suggested interpretations. This was the case for several of the Wenxian graphs analysed in Chapter Three, including the interpretation of the character [𣎵] *gōng* as *gōng* {供} “to supply, to contribute”; that of [出] *yóu* as *zhòu* {胄} “descendant/s”; and that of the unattested form [𣎵] as *xuán* {懸} “to hang, to suspend”.¹⁹ The example of the interpretation of the Guodian-slip graph 𣎵, given in the

¹⁸ Chapter Three, section 3.2.2.2, directly after the section on variant wordings.

¹⁹ Chapter Three: section 3.2.1.2.3; section 3.1.4.1, graph 4; section 3.2.2.1, graph 1.

Literature Survey, is a case in which consideration of context led to a reanalysis of what had at first appeared to be a convincing identification.²⁰

The interpretations in Chapter Three also demonstrated the benefits of the chronological arrangement of passages from other texts used for comparison during the analysis of a phrase. This highlighted, for example, the fact that the use of *shuò* 朔 in the Houma and Wenxian dating formula appears to be the earliest instance of such usage seen on excavated texts, almost 200 years prior to the next known example.²¹ It put the phrase “from this day onward” (*zì jīn yǐ wǎng* 自今以往) in context among similar formulae, demonstrating their use in contract-type language from a very early period and placing this particular version in the pre-Han stage of the phrase’s development.²² It facilitated an analysis of the complex relationship between [葬] *gōng* and related characters and words.²³ However, to arrange texts chronologically one needs accurate information about their dates. Determining the dates of texts, particularly received texts, is difficult in many cases, particularly for those composed of different sections, each of which must be considered separately when dating. It would be helpful to have a single work providing a straightforward summary of the dating debate for each received text, each section of compiled texts, and each excavated text.

One methodological issue which, at the time of writing, is the topic of some debate, is transcriptions. As discussed in the Literature Survey, the debate currently centres on the number of different stages of transcription necessary for analysis and the type of transcriptions that should be presented in published texts. This is an example of a key issue in methodology for which an agreed set of published terms and definitions would be of help to all those in the field. The definitions given in this dissertation may contribute to this debate.²⁴

²⁰ Appendix 1, section 5.2.2, technique 5.

²¹ Chapter Three, section 3.1.2.2.

²² Chapter Three, section 3.1.3.2.

²³ Chapter Three, section 3.2.1.2.3.

²⁴ Chapter Two, section 2.1.3.

4.3 Further applications of the methodology

4.3.1 Extension of the methodology to other excavated texts

The methodological procedure described in Chapter Two should, allowing for necessary revisions, be transferable for use in other excavated texts. What revisions would be required would depend on the nature of the text to be dealt with. The Wenxian texts, for example, were particular in having many variant forms of characters that one could be certain were denoting the same word and the methodology made full use of this feature. Although such repetition is rare in other texts, variant forms of what appear to be the same characters should always be compared to determine what light they shed on component-level structure and on any idiosyncrasies of the script or scribe. In some cases, comparison of matching components may also help in this regard.

4.3.2 Use of the methodology in the evaluation of published excavated texts

An understanding of the methodological procedure proposed in this work allows one to make an informed assessment of the transcriptions and annotations given for graphs in publications of excavated texts. As Donald Wagner has said:

One cannot in general rely uncritically on the conclusions of epigraphers; it is necessary to study carefully the possible alternate interpretations and the grounds on which these have been rejected.²⁵

This is only possible with a firm grasp of palaeographic and other related methodology, particularly given the usual brevity of such annotations. The necessity for such an approach is particularly clear for texts with several different published interpretations: if one cannot understand how each scholar reached his or her conclusion, it is impossible to judge which interpretation is more valid.²⁶

²⁵ Donald B. Wagner, Review of: Gilbert L. Mattos, *The Stone Drums of Ch'in*, p.11 (of web version).

²⁶ For a recent example of a single text with several interpretations see the initial report on the "X Gong Xu □公盨" bronze inscription; four separate articles are presented, each with a different transcription and annotations. See: *Zhongguo Lishi Wenwu* 中國歷史文物, 2002.6, pp.4 – 45.



Interpreting the Wenxian Covenant Texts:
Methodological Procedure and Selected Analysis

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Appendices

Appendix 1

Methodology: Literature Survey

The following section was originally part of Chapter Two, Methodology, but was removed to comply with word-limit requirements.

This section considers literature that discusses the methodology of analysing excavated Chinese texts. The following areas are considered: Transcriptions; Techniques of Palaeographical Analysis; Historical Phonology in Chinese Palaeography; Explication of the meaning of the text.

5.1 Literature survey: transcriptions

There is little literature on the methodology of transcribing excavated Chinese texts. Publications of excavated texts, as well as articles about such texts, use various styles of transcription. Publications of texts usually provide a key explaining the type of transcription used, although there are cases where the tenets of the key are ignored in the transcription or where apparent conventions, though not clearly indicated in the key, are applied inconsistently in the transcription itself.¹ When palaeographers present or quote excavated texts in articles, the standard format is the strict-style interpretative transcription discussed above,² i.e. the formal transcription given with interpretative transcriptions in brackets where needed. In other cases, formal transcriptions or a broad-style interpretative transcription will be used throughout, in which case the style of transcription is often noted by the author. Nevertheless, as mentioned above, problems of consistency do arise and issues of transcription methodology are rarely discussed in print.

¹ William G. Boltz gives an example in: "The Study of Early Chinese Manuscripts: Methodological Preliminaries", pp.40 – 41.

² The use of "above" here, and similar terms throughout this section, reflect its original location as part of Chapter Two.

William Boltz does raise a number of issues in an article entitled, “The Study of Early Chinese Manuscripts: Methodological Preliminaries”.³ He posits two rules to be followed when producing transcriptions:

Rule 1: Characters that are wholly visible and legible must be transcribed exactly as written, without either abbreviation or elaboration of their constituent graphic structure.

Rule 2: The transcription must rigorously distinguish what the manuscript writes from what the editor adds, subtracts, or emends by way of conjecture.⁴

Elaborating on the first rule, he explains:

The principle upon which this rule rests is that the *structural constituency* of the graph must be preserved in the transcription exactly as it exists in the manuscript, and transcriptions therefore should not deviate from the actual structural form of the graph in the manuscript. Transcriptions that differ only in adventitious calligraphic respects are not precluded by this rule, as long as the transcriptional variation does not obscure the graph’s constituent structure as it is originally written.⁵

On the basis of my discussion on transcription above (in the terminology section of Chapter Two), Boltz is advocating the use of *direct* transcriptions for all graphs, that is to say, all base components should be directly transcribed, his concern being that the transcription should precisely correspond to the structure of the original graph. Any other interpretation of the graph should, he argues: “be recorded as part of the critical apparatus either in notes separate from the transcription itself or inserted within the transcription, clearly indicated by the proper kind of bracket or other diacritic mark.”⁶

Noel Barnard has given a definition for “direct transcription” which appears to be equivalent to that I gave in the discussion on terminology:

Direct transcription (DT) ... is essentially a “modernized” element-by-element rendering of the original combinations of

³ William G. Boltz, “The Study of Early Chinese Manuscripts: Methodological Preliminaries”.

⁴ William G. Boltz, “The Study of Early Chinese Manuscripts: Methodological Preliminaries”, pp.40 – 41.





⁵ William G. Boltz, “The Study of Early Chinese Manuscripts: Methodological Preliminaries”, p.40.

⁶ William G. Boltz, “The Study of Early Chinese Manuscripts: Methodological Preliminaries”, p.40.

elements in the archaic graphs. This disciplinary practice keeps us in direct contact with the archaic character structure, and is a necessary exercise to avoid the unwitting use of erroneous or unacceptable transcriptions of problematic graphs which occurs rather too frequently throughout Chinese commentaries.⁷

Matthias Richter argues, in the same vein, that: “a direct structural transcription should be given before noting the reading of the word”.⁸ However, Richter feels that *all* “stylistic and structural variants” should be “included in the direct transcription”.⁹ That is to say, he would transcribe not at the level of component (or “element” in Barnard’s terminology) but at the level of individual strokes. He gives the following examples of his “direct transcriptions” of variants of [不] *bù* from the Guodian *Laozi*:¹⁰

Table 11: Transcriptions by Matthias Richter of [不] *bù* forms from the Guodian *Laozi*

Original character	Direct transcription	Analogy	Reading (pronunciation)
 / 	不	不	不 (<i>bù</i>)
	不	不	不 (<i>bù</i>)
	不	不	不 (<i>bù</i>)

In contrast, I have argued that a direct transcription should take place at the component level because it is components which have phonetic and semantic value, calligraphic variations do not. Thus, I would transcribe all the above examples as [不]. If one is concerned that what appears to be calligraphic variation is actually providing information pertaining to the understanding of the graph, then I would argue that this is more easily determined by comparison of the original graphs in their original context.

The decision not to give direct transcriptions (either at the component or stroke level) for every graph in most published transcriptions, as advocated by

⁷ Noel Barnard, *The Shan-fu Liang Ch’i Kuei and Associated Inscribed Vessels*, p.xx. Quoted in K. Takashima, “Towards a More Rigorous Methodology of Deciphering Oracle-Bone Inscriptions”, p.371.

⁸ Matthias Richter, “Suggestions Concerning the Transcription of Chinese Manuscript Texts ...”, p.3.

⁹ Matthias Richter, “Suggestions Concerning the Transcription of Chinese Manuscript Texts ...”, p.3.

¹⁰ Characters under “Analogy” are: “The modern character form with the closest resemblance to the original character ...”, see p.4 of this article.

Boltz, Barnard and Richter, is due to practical concerns, such as the potentially complicated and unwieldy transcription that would arise from a text with a large number of variant graphs if they were all presented with direct and interpretative transcriptions (or direct, formal and interpretative transcriptions). I illustrated this above with the example of the direct transcription [𠄎] for the graph [𠄎]. In the Guodian bamboo-slips publication the key to the transcription specifically states that a “strict”, i.e. direct, transcription will not be used, giving the example of the several variant graphs used in the original for [智] *zhì*, e.g. [𠄎], which are, instead, all transcribed as [智].¹¹ The Houma and Wenxian covenant texts include large numbers of component-level variants for which it is unlikely that a publication would attempt to provide direct transcriptions.

One could suggest ways to deal with the practical problems of multi-layered transcriptions, for example, by separating different transcription styles and laying them out side by side, e.g. in the case of a bamboo slip the original picture of the slip would be placed to the right, a direct transcription would be placed directly to the left of each graph, then, continuing to the left, the formal transcription and finally the interpretative transcription. An example of a project which takes a similar approach is an electronic version of the Baoshan bamboo slip texts produced by a Japanese team (see sample below, Table 12). They line up, side by side: a picture of the slip (not included in the sample below); copies of the original forms of the graphs (marked as “ト レ — ス” “trace”); direct transcriptions (“D.T.”) of the graphs; followed by what they call a “Modern Character Transcription” (“M.C.T.”) which, on the basis of their description, is the equivalent of my “interpretative transcription”.¹²

¹¹ *Guodian Chu Mu Zhujian*, p.1.

¹² Iwamoto Atsushi and Mori Kazu, “Baoshan Chu Jian, Chu Xi Wenzi Yanjiu Zhong De Diannao Yunyong”. Note that they do not seem to be following their own guidelines with the direct transcription (D.T.) of [以], where one would expect [𠄎].

Table 12: Transcriptions by Iwamoto Atsushi and Mori Kazu of a section of the Baoshan slips

トレ一ス 魯易公以楚币後鞋奠之
 D.T. 魯易公以楚币後鞋奠之
 M.C.T. 魯陽公以楚師後鞋奠之

Such formats, if accurate, would, be of use to those interested in palaeographical questions, but would probably be considered cumbersome by scholars in other fields.

Edmund Ryden has pioneered a highly readable style of presentation for edited Chinese excavated texts. He gives a fully edited version of the text supported with a full critical apparatus, below the text, which includes formal transcriptions of the original graph where necessary, all interpretations suggested for the graph, as well as the original state of the text in cases where words have been added or emended in the edited text (see example, Figure 37). This type of presentation is particularly suitable for scholars whose main concern is the content of the materials, since all palaeographic questions are separated from the edited text.

Published transcriptions of texts are usually complemented by character tables in which all examples of each character (or at least one example of each variant form) are collected together. These tables are essential for palaeographers, allowing an overall assessment of all the variant forms, unavailable through transcriptions alone.

On the basis of the literature on transcriptions introduced here, it is clear that no one format is generally accepted as ideal by all scholars. Practical issues also affect the type of transcription employed as discussed in the section on definitions above. Different types of transcription have different uses and benefits.

One point that it is necessary to bear in mind is the lack of consistency in the use of transcription terminology. So, for example, “direct transcription” is used by different scholars to mean different types of transcription, as discussed above. Until scholars in the field agree on a set of precise terms and definitions, one must pay particularly close attention to the use of such terminology.

5.2 Literature survey: techniques of palaeographic analysis

There is no standard work which concerns itself solely with the methodology of palaeographic analysis of excavated Chinese texts. There are several books which discuss Chinese palaeography in general and it is in these, as well as in a number of journal articles, that we find the available literature on this topic. In books on Chinese palaeography, sections on methodology tend to be short and limited to an introduction of several generally recognized approaches, usually accompanied by a number of illustrative examples. A small number of articles also look at particular aspects of methodology in greater detail. What we do not find is a detailed description of procedure that would allow the student to conveniently employ these techniques in his or her own research.

Most of the basic methods of palaeographic analysis described in the twentieth century were already being used by Han dynasty scholars such as Xu Shen 許慎 (58 ? – 147 ?). After the Han, works of traditional antiquarianism and epigraphy (*jīnshíxué* 金石学), popular in the Song and Qing, continued the development of this field and erudite Qing scholars made important advances and discoveries.¹³ However, in the early twentieth century, scholars did not appear to feel it necessary to set down a methodology to accompany their analysis of the large number of unidentified graphs on the many newly discovered palaeographic materials. In the 1930’s Tang Lan 唐蘭 (1901 – 1979) made the following comment about the state of the field:

¹³ For a brief introduction to the work of late Qing scholars in this field, see: Qiu Xigui, “Guwenzixue Jianshi”, pp.145 – 150 and: Chen Bingxin and Huang Dekuan, *Hanyu Wenzixue Shi*, pp.165 – 179. For an example of Qing research using excavated materials see: Qiu Xigui, “Tan Tan Qing Mo Xuezhhe ...”.

With this atmosphere of guessing at riddles rife, some people, believing there is no correct approach, are becoming disillusioned with this type of study, while others set up a facade of understanding but talk dross. The end result is a state of complete confusion: a student starting out has no path to follow, and progress in the field is held up.¹⁴

Qiu Xigui 裘錫圭 describes the situation at that time as follows:

Since the Qing dynasty, although [Chinese] palaeography had developed rapidly, no one had yet made a thorough inquiry into palaeographic methodology. Some people who studied ancient characters lacked training in linguistics, and relied mainly on their imagination to analyse and interpret ancient graphs, to the extent that some even compared their analysis of characters to “a guessing game”.¹⁵

After this period, however, several scholars did write specifically on methodological issues and their work will be considered below. This section is divided into three subdivisions: firstly, I will look at the more significant twentieth-century scholars who have discussed methodology in their work; secondly, the different techniques they have described will be introduced; thirdly, schemes given by two scholars for the categorization of graphs, based on the type of analysis used in their interpretation, will be introduced.

5.2.1 The approach to palaeographic analysis of individual scholars

The scholars who considered methodology in their writings in the early- and mid-twentieth century are: Wang Guowei 王國維 (1878 – 1927); Tang Lan 唐蘭 (1901 – 1979); Yang Shuda 楊樹達 (1885 – 1956); and Yu Xingwu 于省吾 (1896 – 1984). We will first briefly introduce their contributions to this field.

¹⁴ Tang Lan, *Guwenzixue Daolun*, pp.271 – 272.

¹⁵ Qiu Xigui, “Guwenzixue Jianshi,” p 152. The scholar infamous for comparing palaeographic analysis to “a guessing game (*shēfù* 射覆)” is Ye Yusen 葉玉森 (1880 - 1933), see: Chen Weizhan and Tang Yuming, *Guwenzixue Gangyao*, p.34.

Wang Guowei 王國維 (1878 – 1927)

Wang Guowei discussed a combined approach to the analysis of graphs in the introduction to his analysis of the “Mao Gong Ding 毛公鼎”.¹⁶ Here, explaining his approach to the text of this bronze, he stresses the following points:

1. Consider the historical and material context of the excavated text.
2. Use one’s knowledge of received texts to understand the excavated text.
3. Use historical phonology in order to identify phonetic loans.
4. Consult and compare with other excavated texts to understand the development of the graphs of the text.
5. Do not guess the meaning of graphs one cannot interpret but leave them for scholars to deal with in the future.

So, early on in the twentieth century, Wang had already identified and described most of the methodological approaches which became recognized as standard.¹⁷

Tang Lan 唐蘭 (1901 – 1979)

Tang Lan is considered by many to be the first scholar to make a conscious attempt to bring a more objective, scientific, approach to Chinese paleography. Tang Lan emphasized the need for clear theory and methodology, and the importance of carrying out an intellectual debate, in writing, on the topic. He himself began such a debate in his *Guwenzixue Daolun* 古文字學導論, written in 1934.¹⁸ For example, he rejected the six-principles (*liùshū* 六書) classification of Chinese characters and suggested his own classification.¹⁹ He also included a chapter in the work entitled “How to recognize ancient characters”, with the following sections:

1. How to make out the form of ancient characters
2. Comparison
3. Conjecture based on semantic context

¹⁶ Wang Guowei, *Guan Tang Ji Lin*, pp.293 – 294. Quoted and discussed in: Chen Bingxin and Huang Dekuan, *Hanyu Wenzixue Shi*, p.190.

¹⁷ The introduction to the 1959 edition of the *Guan Tang Ji Lin* tells us that Wang gathered the papers that make up the collection in 1921 so the Mao Gong Ding 毛公鼎 introduction must have been written before that year.

¹⁸ Tang Lan, *Guwenzixue Daolun*.

¹⁹ See discussion in: Qiu Xigui (transl. Gilbert L. Mattos and Jerry Norman), *Chinese Writing*, pp.163 – 168.

4. Analysis of components
5. Historical analysis of character development
6. Explanation of a character's original meaning
7. Investigation of a character's pronunciation²⁰

Tang Lan's points 2 to 5 are a more clearly stated, formalized version of several of those of Wang Guowei's. As for his points 6 and 7, "Explanation of a character's original meaning" and "Investigation of a character's pronunciation", they are, as Tang describes them, chiefly concerned with determining the earliest meaning and pronunciation of a graph, rather than looking at the meaning and pronunciation of the graph in the context of the excavated text. Thus, in terms of the interpretation of the excavated text, these are secondary issues.

Tang does not, here, explain the importance of historical phonology in the interpretation of graphs and identification of phonetic loans. Wang Guowei does make this point and it seems odd that Tang does not give it any prominence here. Tang also fails to mention the importance of the wider, non-textual, context of the texts, Wang's first point. Wang, on the other hand, did not discuss Tang's first point, the need for accuracy when making out the form of the graph on the excavated material in order to avoid being misled by a misunderstanding of the graph's structure, or confused by unrelated marks on the material. Wang also does not specifically mention analysis of components, although this is covered by his general point about understanding character development.

In the introduction to his *Yinxu Wenzhi Ji* 殷墟文字記, Tang mentions some of the points he fails to include here. He refers to the use, in palaeographic analysis, of phonology, traditional text-exegesis (*xùngǔ* 訓詁), archaeological and historical context, as well as the use of relevant legend and anthropological studies.²¹

²⁰ Tang Lan, *Guwenzixue Daolun*, pp.155 – 269. The Chinese chapter title is: 怎樣去認識古文字. The Chinese title sections are: 1.怎麼去辨明古文字的形體; 2.對照法—或比較法; 3.推勘法; 4.偏旁的分析; 5.歷史考證法; 6.字義的解釋; 7.字音的探索.

²¹ Tang Lan, *Yinxu Wenzhi Ji*, introduction. See also: Chen Bingxin and Huang Dekuan, *Hanyu Wenzixue Shi*, p.222.

Yang Shuda 楊樹達 (1885 – 1956)

Yang Shuda, in an introductory section, dated 1951, to his *Ji Wei Ju Jinwen Shuo* 積微居金文說, summed up his approach to the analysis of graphs in bronze inscriptions with fourteen points.²² In fact, only the first seven of these points are methods of analysis, the last seven give characteristics of ancient graphic forms which need to be understood in order to successfully analyse such graphs. Only the first seven are relevant to our discussion here so the other seven will not be considered.²³ In most cases, Yang gives no further explanation after the basic title for each point but, instead, gives one or more examples of characters analysed using this method. The points are as follows:

1. Analysis of graphs based on the *Shuo Wen Jie Zi*

Here Yang is referring to the comparison of graphs on excavated materials with graphic forms found in the *Shuo Wen Jie Zi* in order to analyse their forms.

2. Analysis of graphs based on the oracle bones

This refers to using graphs found on oracle bones to compare with, and thus interpret, graphs on other palaeographic materials (e.g. bronze inscriptions).

3. Identifying graphic components on the basis of oracle bone graphs and thereby analysing graphs

This is the identification of a component in an excavated graph with its corresponding non-composite graph in oracle bones, in order to give an accurate analysis of the graph's structure.

4. Analysis of graphs based on bronze inscriptions

Analysis based on comparison with graphs found in bronze inscriptions.

²² Yang Shuda, *Ji Wei Ju Jinwen Shuo*, pp.1 – 15.

²³ These last seven are (with their original numbers): 8. A semantic component taking the place of another semantic component with a similar meaning (義近形旁任作); 9. A phonetic component taking the place of another phonetic component with a similar sound (音近形旁任作); 10. Complication in ancient-script forms (古文形繁); 11. Simplification in ancient-script forms (古文形簡); 12. Addition of a phonetic component to an ancient-script pictograph or syssemantograph (古文象形會意字加聲旁); 13. Different arrangement of components in the ancient-script form and seal-script form (古文位置與篆文不同); 14. Confusion of two characters with similar forms (二字形近混用).

5. Analysis based on graphic form

Analysis of the form of a graph. For example, identifying a graph's components and determining their function – semantic or phonetic – in order to decipher the graph.

6. Analysis based on semantic context

Use of the semantic context in which a graph is found in order to conjecture as to the word it is most likely to be denoting and then seeing if the analysis of the graphic form can allow such a reading.

7. Analysis based on ancient ritual and customs

Use of knowledge of ancient ritual and customs (from his example it appears Yang had in mind Chinese ritual and custom as understood from received texts) in order to aid in the analysis of a graph. In Yang's one example he argues that the use of the component [采] *cǎi* (= *cài* {菜} “greens, vegetables”) in a graph he interprets to be [羹] *gēng*, supports interpreting the graph as a type of stew (*gēng* 羹), described in the *Li Ji*, that included vegetables.²⁴

Yang does not give any original methodology here. His first four points can be subsumed under a single heading: the comparison of the form of a graph with the forms of other ancient graphs, what Tang Lan called “Comparison”. Yang's fifth point, “Analysis based on graphic form”, is equivalent to Tang Lan's “Analysis of components”, his sixth, “Analysis based on semantic context”, is equivalent to Tang Lan's “Conjecture based on semantic context”, and the seventh, “Analysis based on ancient ritual and customs”, was also a recognized method, used by other scholars including Tang Lan and Yu Xingwu.

Yu Xingwu 于省吾 (1896 – 1984)

Yu Xingwu also discussed palaeographic methodology but did not write a general textbook on Chinese palaeography and his comments on method are

²⁴ The Chinese titles for these seven points are: 1. 據《說文》釋字; 2. 據甲文釋字; 3. 據甲文定偏旁釋字; 4. 據銘文釋字; 5. 據形體釋字; 6. 據文義釋字; 7. 據古禮俗釋字.

interspersed among other works.²⁵ Yu stressed the need to rely on the graph itself as the basis for analysis, as opposed to using the semantic context of the graph to conjecture as to its meaning and letting that influence the analysis of the graphic form of the graph. He emphasized the importance of considering all aspects of a graph, its form (*xíng* 形), sound (*yīn* 音) and meaning (*yì* 義), and believed that the skills necessary to do this were, respectively, palaeography, historical phonology and traditional-text exegesis (*xùnguǔ* 訓詁). He noted, however, that, of these three aspects, it is only the form of a graph that is fully apparent in an excavated text, making this the most important basis for analysis: there is no such concrete record of a graph's sound and meaning. He also made the important point that the new evidence provided by excavated texts allows advances to be made in the traditional fields of historical phonology and traditional text exegesis. Yu also took the non-textual context of a graph, such as archaeological evidence and anthropological studies into account in his work.

Since the scholars introduced above laid out these basic techniques, there has been little further discussion of these methods or consideration of new approaches to methodological questions. Several reasons can be suggested to explain this. Apart from non-academic factors that affected the work of Chinese scholars in the twentieth century, such as the disruption of war and political upheaval, there are also problems specific to the field. For example, Chinese palaeography is apparently reluctant to distance itself, where appropriate, from the methods and terminology of traditional Chinese philology (*xiǎoxué* 小學) and embrace modern linguistics and a rigorous scientific approach.²⁶ This can be seen, for example, in the continued use by many scholars of the “six-principles” (*liùshū* 六書) terminology, even though it is unable to successfully classify many graphs, there is no general agreement of the meaning of one of its basic terms, *zhuǎnzhu* 轉注, and Tang Lan, Chen Mengjia 陳夢家 (1911 – 1966)

²⁵ The summary of his approach given here is based on: Chen Bingxin and Huang Dekuan, *Hanyu Wenzixue Shi*, pp. 197 – 203; and Yu Xingwu, *Jiaguwenzi Shilin*, pp.1 – 11.

²⁶ This point has been made by several scholars, see, for example: Qiu Xigui, “Guwenzixue Jianshi”, p.152; Chen Bingxin and Huang Dekuan, *Hanyu Wenzixue Shi*, p.185.

and, more recently, Qiu Xigui, have all produced modern revisions of the classification system.²⁷ The weight of the tradition, as well as the apprentice-type training discussed in Chapter One, may also make students uncomfortable with departing too far from the theories and practices espoused by their own teacher. The field is, furthermore, still somewhat overshadowed by the towering figures of Qing scholarship, which perhaps encourages students to attempt to emulate their style of learning rather than look for new approaches and methodologies.

A further obstacle to progress in the methodology of palaeographic analysis is reference books: much analysis still relies on works that, while still essential, are in great need of updating to take account of relevant findings from newly excavated texts. The field would benefit, for example, from a modern version of Duan Yucai 段玉裁 (1735 – 1815)'s *Shuo Wen Jie Zi Zhu* 說文解字注 making full use of new discoveries and advances in the field in the almost 200 years since this work was completed.²⁸

Among the current generation of established scholars of palaeography, the majority have not produced significant works specifically on palaeographic methodology. Qiu Xigui and Li Xueqin, for example, have both written introductions on the study of Chinese palaeography aimed at the student wishing to enter the field and while they give important advice about the subjects that must be studied in this regard, and list key texts and reference works that can aid one in this endeavour, they do not specifically discuss the methodology of palaeographic analysis.²⁹

One modern scholar who has written specifically on methodology is He

²⁷ These three systems are all discussed in: Qiu Xigui (transl. Gilbert L. Mattos and Jerry Norman), *Chinese Writing*, pp.151 – 163.

²⁸ The *Shuo Wen Jie Zi Zhu* was completed in 1807, see: Duan Yucai, *Shuo Wen Jie Zi Zhu*, p.2. Qiu Xigui makes a similar point, he bemoans the lack of a comprehensive, high-quality work consolidating all the recent studies relating to both the *Shuo Wen Jie Zi*'s seal-script graphs and Xu Shen's mistakes in his analysis of graphic form and original meaning, see: Qiu Xigui, "Guwenzixue Jianshi", p.157.

²⁹ Qiu Xigui, "Tan Tan Xuexi Guwenzi De Fangfa"; Li Xueqin, *Guwenzixue Chujie*; Li Xueqin, "Tan Zixue Guwenzi". An important article in which Qiu Xigui categorizes graphs on the basis of the type of analysis used in their interpretation is discussed in the third part of this section.

Linyi 何琳儀 (b.1943) in a section on methodology in his *Zhanguo Wenzhi Tonglun* 戰國文字通論.³⁰ His work is particularly relevant for my purposes since it is concerned with Warring States scripts, a category in which the Houma and Wenxian graphs are usually included.³¹ His work will now be introduced.

He Linyi 何琳儀 (b.1943)

He Linyi points out that the previous generation of scholars, such as Tang Lan and Yu Xingwu, were mainly dealing with Shang, Western Zhou, or Han materials, and rarely with Warring States material, since less had been excavated at the time they were writing. This situation changed in the 1950's as more materials were discovered and Warring States palaeography began to be recognized as a separate division of Chinese palaeography. An article often associated with this development is Li Xueqin's "A Summary of Warring States Inscriptions" published in 1959, in which the author provided a framework on which further studies could be based.³² In the article, Li classifies Warring States graphs into five categories based on their state affiliation whereas, previous to this time, scholars had generally recognized only two categories, those of the Qin script and then scripts of all other states treated as a single category. Warring States graphs have particular problems not seen in earlier graphs, mainly related to the independent development of the script in the different states during that period, which led to great variation in graphic form and use of loangraphs between states, and even, as we see with the Houma and Wenxian tablets, within a state.

He Linyi takes into account the particular features of Warring States scripts in his methodological approach, emphasizing comparison of a character's differing forms across states and making use of the availability of received collections of Warring States forms such as the *Han Jian* 汗簡 and *Guwen Sisheng Yun* 古文四聲韻. He gives eight specific methods of analysis for Warring States graphs: the first four methods are concerned with graphic form,

³⁰ He Linyi, *Zhanguo Wenzhi Tonglun*, pp.243 – 289.

³¹ The favoured dates of 497 BC and 495 BC for the Houma and Wenxian tablets technically put them in the late Spring and Autumn period.

the last four deal with phonetic and semantic questions and can only be employed after the components of an unidentified graph have been identified.

The eight techniques are:

1. Historical comparison
2. Inter-region comparison
3. Intra-region comparison
4. Comparison with “ancient-script” forms
5. Analysis of phonetic components
6. Analysis of phonetic loans
7. Conjecture based on semantic context
8. Grammatical analysis³³

He Linyi explains that the first four techniques are based on Tang Lan’s “Comparison” and “Analysis of Components” methods. He does not treat these two separately, arguing that “analysis of components” is an extension of “comparison”: one breaks down an unidentified graph into components and then compares them to known components. He also stresses that these eight techniques are closely related and employed together in the analysis of a graph. Each of his illustrative examples, however, highlights one or two of the methods rather than showing their systematic application.

5.2.2 Specific methods of palaeographic analysis

Here I will look at the various basic techniques of palaeographic analysis which have been described by the above scholars and are listed in all introductions to palaeographic methodology. These techniques do not have a standard order they are listed in, reflecting the fact that such works do not treat them as a system of analysis but a selection of tools. The methods can be referred to as follow:³⁴

³² Li Xueqin, “Zhanguo Tijing Gaishu”.

³³ He Linyi, *Zhanguo Wenzhi Tonglun*, p.246. The Chinese titles are: 1.歷史比較; 2.異域比較; 3.同域比較; 4.古文比較; 5.諧聲分析; 6.音義相諧” (lit. “Harmonizing sound and meaning”); 7.辭例推勘; 8.語法分析.

³⁴ The names by which these methods are referred to vary and some scholars group two or more techniques into a single category. For example, number 3, “Understanding the principles of the evolution of character form” (字形演變規律) is equivalent to Tang Lan’s “Historical analysis” (歷史考證法).

1. Analysis of components
2. Comparison
3. Understanding the principles of the evolution of character form
4. Historical phonology in the analysis of loangraphs and phonetic components
5. Conjecture based on semantic context
6. Traditional text-exegesis
7. Use of non-textual evidence ³⁵

Let us look at these individually.

Technique 1: Analysis of components

This refers to analysing graphs by examining the separate components from which they are composed. Identification of components allows one to consider how they may be functioning to signify the phonetic and semantic value of the word denoted by the graph.

Sun Yirang 孫詒讓 (1848 – 1908) makes specific mention of this as a method of analysis, although, of course, Xu Shen was using the same basic approach in the *Shuo Wen Jie Zi* and previous Qing scholars, such as Xu Tongbo 徐同柏 (1776 – 1854), Xu Han 許瀚 (1797 - 1866), Fang Junyi 方浚益 (d.1900), and Wu Dazheng 吳大澂 (1835 – 1902) had done the same.³⁶ Sun, however, is particularly noted for his ability to analyse the phonetic and semantic components of an unattested graph in order to match it with an attested character composed of different components.³⁷

In the twentieth century, Tang Lan emphasized the importance of the analysis of components in his *Guwenzixue Daolun* 古文字學導論.³⁸ He observes that, once a previously unidentified component has been recognized and understood in one graph, this greatly facilitates the analysis of other graphs in which the same component occurs.

³⁵ Chinese equivalents often used for these terms include: Analysis of components, 偏旁分析法; Comparison, 比較法; Understanding the principles of the evolution of character form, 字形演變規律; Conjecture based on semantic context, 推勘法; Traditional text-exegesis, 訓詁.

³⁶ Chen Bingxin and Huang Dekuan, *Hanyu Wenzixue Shi*, pp.169 – 176.

³⁷ *Zhongguo Guwenzixue Tonglun*, p.170.

³⁸ Tang Lan, *Guwenzixue Daolun*, pp.175 – 193.

Li Xueqin argues that this method of analysis should be called “Analysis of form” (*xíngtǐ fēnxī* 形體分析) since non-composite characters cannot be broken down into separate components but their form can still be analysed.³⁹

Technique 2: Comparison

This refers to the comparison of equivalent graphs from different materials, e.g. comparing a form on bronzes of an earlier period with the equivalent small-seal form, or comparing Warring States forms with small-seal and clerical script forms. Sun Yirang gives this as a method of analysis and Tang Lan discusses it in some detail.⁴⁰ The earlier scholars were mainly concerned with comparing graphs from different periods (“diachronic” comparison), but as the amount of excavated materials has increased it has also become possible to compare graphs from the same period (“synchronic” comparison). This is particularly important for the Warring States, when scripts of different states showed great variation in form.

He Linyi’s four types of comparison, listed above, include both the synchronic and diachronic types: historical comparison; inter-region comparison; intra-region comparison; comparison with “ancient-script” forms. Historical comparison looks for, and compares, earlier and later forms of the graph being analysed. Inter-region comparison compares graphs from the same period, but different regions. Intra-region comparison compares graphs from the same period and the same region. These last two approaches are important because different regions had different graphic styles during the Warring States period and it is necessary to understand and distinguish each region’s particular style and peculiarities. Comparison with “ancient-script” forms refers to the use of received collections of ancient graphs, such as the *Han Jian* and the “ancient-script” (*gǔwén* 古文) forms in the *Shuo Wen Jie Zi*, to identify graphs. He Linyi points out that many of the graphs collected in such works are Warring

³⁹ Li Xueqin, *Guwenzixue Chujie*, p.67.

⁴⁰ Tang Lan, *Guwenzixue Daolun*, pp. 163 – 170. See also: Chen Bingxin and Huang Dekuan, *Hanyu Wenzixue Shi*, p.175.

States forms, making them extremely valuable sources in such analysis.

As mentioned above, He Linyi combines the previous category, i.e., “Analysis of components” with “Comparison”, arguing that, when making a comparison, it is at the component level and in order to identify an unknown component one compares it with known components.⁴¹

The standard set of components, with which unknown components are compared in order to identify them, is that in the *Shuo Wen Jie Zi*, the 540 *bùshǒu* 部首. Most scholars advocate first consulting this collection of components when faced with an unidentified graph.⁴² While this table can often provide clues that lead to the successful interpretation of graphs, several scholars have pointed out its shortcomings. Already in the 1930’s, Tang Lan criticized the use of arranging newly discovered ancient graphs according to the *Shuo Wen Jie Zi*’s classification, pointing out that not only is the *Shuo Wen Jie Zi*’s list of 540 components illogical in many ways, but many of the newly discovered graphs simply do not fit into this classification system.⁴³ Several key components are not included in the *Shuo Wen Jie Zi*’s table, for example the absence of [由] *yóu* hampers the analysis of the Wenxian graph which denotes *zhòu* {胃} “descendant/s”.⁴⁴ Xu Shen’s system is based on the Qin small-seal script, leading to problems when it is used as the basis for the analysis of scripts from different periods and localities.

Instead of relying on the unsatisfactory set of components from the *Shuo Wen Jie Zi*, Tang Lan advocated the creation of a completely new classification system for ancient graphs, constructed using the basic pictographic components as classifiers and arranging all graphs which include each particular component under the corresponding classifier in various sub-categories.⁴⁵ This has still not

⁴¹ He Linyi, *Zhanguo Wenzhi Tonglun*, p.246.

⁴² For example: *Zhongguo Guwenzixue Tonglun*, p.168; Li Xueqin, *Guwenzixue Chujie*, p.67.

⁴³ Tang Lan, *Guwenzixue Daolun*, pp.275 – 287.

⁴⁴ This graph is discussed in Chapter Three, section 3.1.4.1, graph 4. For further examples of components omitted in Xu Shen’s table, see: Chen Shihui and Tang Yuhui, *Guwenzixue Gaoyao*, pp.59 – 61.

⁴⁵ Tang Lan, *Guwenzixue Daolun*, pp.275 – 287.

been done. However, in the 1960's, Shima Kunio 島邦男 (1907 – 1977) did produce a component-based classification system for oracle bones based on the oracle-bone graphs themselves.⁴⁶ This is recognized as a breakthrough in the study of the oracle bone script.⁴⁷

Lin Yun 林澐 advises the student of palaeography to make a detailed study of the forms of graphic components of ancient graphs at different historical periods, not only to learn how they have developed, but also to provide material with which to compare unknown graphs.⁴⁸ He points out that one should make comparisons with components from the same time period as the excavated material one is dealing with. For example, if working on a graph from a Chu bamboo slip, one would consult one's table of components of Chu script. While this is the correct approach to analysis, it makes unreasonable demands on the student of Chinese palaeography, requiring each individual to produce a full set of tables for every different type of script; a little like asking the student who has just started learning modern Chinese to produce their own radical classification system for all the characters in modern usage. The task would be better performed by established palaeographers and the results published.

Technique 3: Understanding the principles of the evolution of character form

This technique is based on the recognition that the form of characters evolved for many centuries, particularly before standardization began, and that this evolution can be observed by comparing the same character as it is written in scripts from different periods, for example in oracle bones, bronze inscriptions, the small-seal script and *kǎishū* script. This methodology was described by Sun Yirang although, again, Xu Shen had already matched old forms, such as his “ancient script (*gǔwén* 古文)” forms with contemporary characters in the *Shuo Wen Jie Zi*.⁴⁹ Luo Zhenyu 羅振玉 (1866 – 1940) summarized his own method

⁴⁶ Shima Kunio, *Inkyo Bokuji Sōrui*.

⁴⁷ For discussion on the problems of using the *Shuo Wen Jie Zi* components to classify oracle bone graphs and the importance of Shima's work see: Yao Xiaosui, “*Yinxu Buci Zonglei Jian Ping*” and: Chen Weizhan, *Jiaguwen Jianlun*, pp.31 – 32.

⁴⁸ Lin Yun, *Guwenzi Yanjiu Jianlun*, pp.64 – 67.

⁴⁹ Chen Bingxin and Huang Dekuan, *Hanyu Wenzixue Shi*, p.176.

of analysis for oracle bone graphs as firstly comparing the graph with the *Shuo Wen Jie Zi* forms, tracing those forms back to bronze inscriptions and then further back to the oracle bone graphs.⁵⁰

Since tracing the evolution of a character is based on comparison with other forms of the same character, this method is based on the “Comparison” technique just discussed, but, in this case, one must be aware of the differences that have occurred through the evolution of a characters and realize that dissimilar forms may be different stages of the development of a single character.

With the greater amount of excavated palaeographic material now available, comparison can be made across a range of periods, materials, and, for the Spring and Autumn and Warring States, across states. Such comparison allows one to trace how a character, or component, developed from an early to a later form. Being able to track these changes is crucial when attempting to demonstrate a genetic relationship between graphs.

Tang Lan believed that understanding the principles of the evolution of character form was one of the two most important techniques in the analysis of graphs, the other being analysis of components.⁵¹ He called the method “Historical analysis” (*lishǐ kǎozhèng fǎ* 歷史考證法), stressing the need to trace the development path of each character in order to understand how and why its form had changed. An understanding of how graphs developed, he argued, is also essential to avoid naivety in analysis of components, the danger being the identification of a component purely on grounds of similarity in form to a known component without considering whether the similarity is coincidental.

Tang Lan argued that there are regular principles of character development applicable to groups of related graphs and graphs with similar characteristics. In his *Guwenzixue Daolun* 古文字學導論 he gives examples of such principles, for example: simplification of forms; complication of forms; interchange of

⁵⁰ Chen Bingxin and Huang Dekuan, *Hanyu Wenzixue Shi*, p.188.

⁵¹ Tang Lan, *Guwenzixue Daolun*, pp.193 – 202.

semantically or phonetically equivalent components; corruption of forms over time and so on.⁵² A fuller, more detailed, account of the historical development of Chinese characters is given in Qiu Xigui's *Chinese Writing*. Chapters Four and Five of that book deal with "The Evolution of the Shapes and Styles of Chinese Characters", and the following chapters classify and discuss the different structural forms of Chinese graphs and the various ways in which these developed over time.⁵³ Such work is significant because theories of graph development can be tested on new materials and used to make conjectures about development paths for graphs for which comparative material is not complete.

Technique 4: Historical phonology in the analysis of loangraphs and phonetic components

Historical phonology is used in the interpretation of many early graphs in the analysis of their use of phonetic components or their use as a phonetic loan. Qing scholars made great advances in the area of historical phonology and were keenly aware of the occurrence of phonetic loans in received texts. Thus, these scholars naturally adopted the techniques of phonological analysis when faced with graphs from excavated texts. The Qing scholars already mentioned, Xu Tongbo, Xu Han, Fang Junyi, Wu Dazheng, and Sun Yirang, all made use of historical phonology in their analysis of early graphs.⁵⁴ Since then scholars have continued to use reconstructions of Old Chinese in palaeographic analysis but, as mentioned above, there is little current debate about the specific criteria for its use in palaeographic analysis. A separate section below discusses the literature on this topic in greater detail.

Technique 5: Conjecture based on semantic context

This refers to making a conjecture about the possible meaning, or the specific identity, of the word denoted by a character based on the semantic context in which it occurs. It is, therefore, not strictly a method of graphic analysis, but a means by which to produce a hypothesis as to the likely meaning of a graph, after which one can carry out graphic analysis to see if the hypothesis

⁵² Tang Lan, *Guwenzixue Daolun*, pp.193 – 202, pp.202 – 259.

⁵³ Qiu Xigui (transl. Gilbert L. Mattos and Jerry Norman), *Chinese Writing*.

⁵⁴ Chen Bingxin and Huang Dekuan, *Hanyu Wenzixue Shi*, pp. 171 – 179.

is supported. Such conjecture is an automatic response when one comes across an unknown word when reading in any language. It can be very useful for the study of ancient Chinese graphs but is also potentially misleading. The danger being that, if a particular word seems to clearly fit the context, one may allow this to shape the analysis. The imprecise tool of historical phonology is often misused to argue that the graph in question is acting as a phonetic loan for one's chosen word. Thus conjectures based on semantic context need to be thoroughly tested to see if the graphic evidence supports them.

The danger of forcing a particular word onto a graph without sufficient supporting evidence has resulted in a tendency for Chinese palaeographers to argue for the interpretation of graphs to be based firmly on analysis of the form of the graph and for this to take precedence over all other techniques, including semantic conjecture. Yu Xingwu, for example, said that: "...character form is the only basis we have with which to realistically carry out analysis".⁵⁵ In the same passage he criticizes misuse of semantic context and specifically attacks a quote of Yang Shuda. Yang Shuda believed that conjecture based on semantic context was more important in palaeographic analysis than sticking rigidly to the form of the graph. In his 1951 piece listing methods of analysis he says:

The ancients did not have definite character forms, but texts had definite meaning. My attitude to this is that one should use what is definite to make decisions about what is not. In other words, one should use the meaning of the text in judging the character form, and should not abuse the text by obstinately following the character form. If the meaning of the text makes sense when one reads the characters as they are then that is fine, but if it does not make sense then one should have the courage to change the way they are to be read. It seems that modern interpreters of bronze inscriptions have not yet understood this...⁵⁶

He also said the following, and this is the quote Yu Xingwu attacks:

In the analysis and interpretation of characters, if one abandons meaning in order to accord to the form of a character, one will

⁵⁵ Yu Xingwu, *Jiaguwenzi Shilin*, p.3.

⁵⁶ Yang Shuda, *Ji Wei Ju Jinwen Shuo*, p.15.

frequently get stuck, but if one bends the form in order to accord to the meaning, one often gets a suitable explanation.⁵⁷

It should be said that Yang Shuda had a deep knowledge of received and excavated texts which gave him a feel for the classical language that allowed him to frequently make accurate conjectures about the word a graph was denoting. However, one has to be very wary of the extent to which one is willing to opt for an interpretation based on context which requires one to “bend” the graphic evidence. Any such “bending” cannot be arbitrary, there must be evidence to support such an interpretation of the graph. For example, if a corrupted form is believed to be the problem, evidence of the same corruption occurring elsewhere should be sought. An example where Yang Shuda disregarded the need for such evidence is his interpretation of 𪛗, in the “Yu You 孟卣 inscription”.⁵⁸ Based on his reading of the context, he took the graph to be *guī* 龜 “turtle”, rather than its generally accepted interpretation as *shù* 束, a measure word for arrows, silk, etc., in spite of the fact that there is no evidence that *guī* 龜 can be written like this (despite its coincidental similarity to an aerial view of the creature) but much evidence that *shù* 束 can.⁵⁹

Yang’s point, however, that the ancients did not follow strict rules and standards in orthography, but did have specific ideas and concepts they were writing down, is not an unreasonable observation. A recent example of a case where a reading based on context turned out to be better than one based on a strict interpretation of graphic form illustrates the importance of taking into account the semantic context in which a graph is found. The example is Qiu Xigui’s interpretation of the graph 𪛗 from the Guodian *Laozi*.⁶⁰ On the basis of its form, Qiu Xigui argued that the phonetic component was [𪛗] *cuó* and that the graph denoted the word *zhà*{ 詐 } “deceit”. Many scholars, notably scholars of


⁵⁷ Quoted, with original source not given, in: Chen Bingxin and Huang Dekuan, *Hanyu Wenzixue Shi*, p.248.

⁵⁸ *Yinzhou Jinwen Jicheng*, Vol.10, no.5399.

⁵⁹ For the original analysis see: Yang Shuda, *Ji Wei Ju Jinwen Shuo*, p.8. For criticism of this interpretation see: Lin Yun, *Guwenzi Yanjiu Jianlun*, pp.42 – 44.

⁶⁰ For Qiu’s original analysis see: Qiu Xigui, “On the Analysis and Transcription of Early Chinese Characters ...”, pp.60 – 61. The graph is scanned from: *Guodian Chu Jian Yanjiu: Vol.1 Wenzhi Bian*, p.360.

philosophy rather than palaeography, argued that this word makes no sense in the context in which it is found: the word denoted is something to be “abandoned” (qì 棄), and, in light of the contra-intuitive philosophy expressed in this passage and in the *Laozi* in general, the idea of “abandoning deceit” is out of place here. In a later article, Qiu Xigui changed his opinion in favour of Xu Kangsheng 許抗生’s interpretation of the graph as 慮 {慮} “think”, “consider”.⁶¹ Qiu argued, however, that, from a strictly formal point of view, there is strong evidence, from other Chu-script examples, that the component in question is, as he originally suggested, [慮] *cuó* and not [慮], which is the component one would expect if the character is [慮] 慮. Therefore, in order to interpret the graph as [慮] 慮, one has to argue that the scribe miswrote the [慮] 慮 with the component [慮] *cuó* instead of the component [慮]. This is a legitimate argument because there are other examples in Chu script of confusion between these two components. What is significant for our discussion here is that the semantic context is overriding the obvious interpretation of graphic form; the form has to be “bent” to fit the semantic context. As Qiu says:

... even if we confirm that  is a character derived from [慮], since its graphic form is very similar to [慮], we cannot dismiss the possibility that in the original version of the *Lao Zi* the character was written [慮] but the scribe miscopied it with the [慮] component. So, in order to come to a decision on the interpretation of this character it is necessary to consider fully the semantic context.⁶²

Qiu does this and concludes that, if the phonetic is taken as [慮] *cuó*, none of the resulting interpretations fit the semantic context and that the graph must, therefore, be a form of the character [慮] 慮, or a miswriting of this character.

This example illustrates the need to take both graphic form and semantic context into account when analysing a graph. It shows that, when the evidence

⁶¹ Qiu Xigui, “Jiuzheng Wo Zai Guodian *Laozi* Jian Shidu Zhong De Yi Ge Cuowu.” For Xu Kangsheng’s analysis see: Sarah Allan and Crispin Williams ed., *The Guodian Laozi*, p.236 and, in Chinese: Xu Kangsheng, “Chu Du Guodian Zhujian *Laozi*”, p.99 and p.102.

⁶² Qiu Xigui, “Jiuzheng Wo Zai Guodian *Laozi* Jian Shidu Zhong De Yi Ge Cuowu”, p.26.

supplied by the semantic context argues very persuasively against the results arrived at through analysis based on the graphic form alone, it is legitimate to consider what “bending” of the graphic form would be necessary to give a more fitting word and whether there is persuasive evidence to support the resulting interpretation.

Technique 6: Traditional text-exegesis

“Traditional text-exegesis” is used here for the Chinese term *xùngǔ* 訓詁. The traditional pursuit of *xùngǔ* involved close analysis of the language of the classics with the aim of producing accurate interpretations of these works in the form of glosses and commentaries. *Xùngǔxué* 訓詁學 is the modern discipline that developed from this earlier exegesis.⁶³ *Xùngǔxué* is understood to be equivalent to a combination of several areas of modern linguistics including semantics, lexicology and semiotics. Its primary purpose is, however, the interpretation of the classics and study of their commentaries.⁶⁴

Scholars of the late Qing and early twentieth century who studied excavated texts were trained in *xùngǔxué*. They made a close study of the language of the classics and their glosses and commentaries, using methods such as the analysis of loan graphs, analysis of old form and new form characters, and historical phonology. These scholars would also have gone through the imperial examination system, the basis of which was memorization of the classics, giving them extraordinary familiarity with the language of the texts.

This training in *xùngǔxué* methods, and mastery of the classics, were directly applicable when it came to the interpretation of excavated texts, allowing these scholars to often make very apt intuitive conjectures about the likely meaning of phrases and graphs in excavated texts. Sun Yirang and Yang Shuda are particularly well known in this regard.

⁶³ A standard work is: Hong Cheng, *Xunguxue*. For an approach which takes account of modern linguistics, see: Wang Ning, *Xunguxue Yuanli*.

⁶⁴ Wang Ning, *Xunguxue Yuanli*, pp.3 – 4; Bernhard Fuehrer, *Sinological Methodology*, pp.192 – 193.

Traditional text-exegesis is included in standard lists of techniques of palaeographic analysis because it provides the deep knowledge of the language of the classics and other received texts that is needed when interpreting palaeographic materials. The accessibility of newly excavated texts relies on our familiarity with the traditional corpus of texts and their commentaries.

Technique 7: Use of non-textual evidence

This refers to the use of knowledge about the culture and society in which the texts were written to assist the interpretation of the graphs of which the texts are composed. Relevant material may be found in archaeological evidence, historical accounts, anthropological comparison, and so on. Such evidence is also, of course, essential in the interpretation of the texts but can also be helpful in analysing particular graphs. Luo Zhenyu, for example, noted the connection between the form of graphs for *jiǎ* 𠄎 in oracle bone and bronze inscriptions and the shape of excavated examples of the vessel with this name (Figure 38).⁶⁵

The above seven techniques are those usually given in discussions on methodology for the analysis of Chinese palaeographic material. Occasionally one will see other methods mentioned, for example the comparison of early Chinese graphs with graphs of other writing systems found in the China region, such as the Naxi 納西 script.⁶⁶

Combining these methods in palaeographic analysis

Most scholars, having described the techniques given above, do make the point that they must be used in concert when analysing graphs. However, they do not describe, in any detail, a procedure with which to methodically apply these techniques to a graph. He Linyi, however, does identify four main steps in the

⁶⁵ Chen Bingxin and Huang Dekuan, *Hanyu Wenzixue Shi* p.189.

⁶⁶ Chen Shihui and Tang Yuhui, *Guwenzixue Gaoyao*, pp.159 – 160. A number of other methods are included in the Introduction to Zhang Yachu's *Yin Zhou Jinwen Jicheng Yinde* (pp.1 – 12) where he gives a list of twelve techniques he uses in analysing bronze-inscription graphs. These include non-standard methods such as the consideration of how aesthetic concerns may have influenced the structure of graphs used in bronze inscriptions. For a critical review of some of the techniques he suggests, see: Shi Yumei, "Zhang Yachu Jinwen Kaoshi Fangfa Shangque".

analysis of a graph:

1. Compare the graph to other graphs, observing where they are the same or similar.
2. For those graphs which are unknown, separate the graph into several different components and compare them with previously identified components.
3. Re-construct the graph using the components or form arrived at through analysis and comparison.
4. Draw conclusions, summarize, name. ⁶⁷

The first step refers to the initial attempt to identify a graph based on its similarity to graphs one already knows (as standard forms or ancient forms). If the graph cannot be identified, then the second stage is to break it down into separate components which are then analysed individually. Steps 2 and 3 give the two separate stages that must be performed when using the standard “analysis of components” method: first break down the unidentified graph into separate components and analyse those components individually in order to match them with known components; then rebuild the graph using the known components. This process will result in a direct transcription of the graph (or a formal transcription if composite components are treated as single units). He Linyi’s fourth stage is vague but logically must cover all further analysis of the graph needed in order to identify the word it denotes. The process he describes can be summarized as follows: if the graph cannot be readily identified with a known character, break it into separate components and identify each component; reconstruct the graph with these known components; then, using this reconstructed form, continue the analysis until the graph is identified.

After He Linyi has given examples of the use of his eight techniques of analysis (listed above, section 5.2.1), he once again notes that they must be used in combination and presents what he considers to be the three key steps to analysis:

1. When analysing the composition of the complete form of an unknown graph or changes in its components, look for the points [in its structure] that

⁶⁷ He Linyi, *Zhanguo Wenzhi Tonglun*, p.245.

correspond to attested characters, and through comparison determine its form. During the comparison and analysis remember:

- a. One must be absolutely certain that what appears to be an attested character form is, without doubt, [the same form as] the previously interpreted character [it is matched with]. If not, one will be using one unknown to prove another, and end up with an erroneous analysis.
 - b. Avoid the mistake of using the form of a graph to explain its meaning [e.g. treating the forms pictorially] and persist with the principle of using the form to prove [one's explanation for] the form.
2. Based on the usage of the identified character in received or excavated texts verify the accuracy of the identification. When citing examples, remember:
- a. Do not, in general, use examples from texts later than the Wei-Jin period (AD 220 – 420), otherwise one will be comparing Ancient Chinese with Middle Chinese and the analysis will lack accuracy.
 - b. If the usage in the text is identical to that in the excavated material then the analysis can be taken as conclusive, if the usage is only close, then [the analysis] can only serve as a suggestion.
3. If the character's form has been confirmed but there is a feeling that it does not fit well with the context in which it is found, one can try to use phonetic loans to solve the contradiction between its form and meaning. In the end a loan usage must also be verified on the basis of the semantic context in which the graph is found. When considering phonetic loans, two extreme positions should be avoided:
- a. The belief that, in order to be prudent and rigorous, one should determine the meaning of the character based on the form it has and not consider the possibility of phonetic loaning. This disregards the objective existence of this phenomenon in Warring States graphs.
 - b. If, at the other extreme, one indiscriminately uses phonetic loans without an understanding of ancient pronunciation and does not consider supporting evidence important, this not only deceives others but deceives oneself. One is advised to be sparing with claims of loans between words which do not share the same main vowel when there is no textual evidence to support this, otherwise it can only create muddled interpretations.⁶⁸

Thus, while He Linyi gives much constructive advice, he does not get beyond these general steps to a specific procedure.

5.2.3 Categorization of graphs based on the type of analysis used in their interpretation

The basic types of analysis by which graphs are identified are indirectly described in an article by Qiu Xigui called "On the Analysis and Transcription of

⁶⁸ He Linyi, *Zhanguo Wenzhi Tonglun*, p.283.

Early Chinese Characters: Examples from the Guodian *Laozi*".⁶⁹ In this paper, Qiu classifies graphs from the Guodian *Laozi* on the basis of the type of analysis employed in their interpretation. With slight revisions the categories can be used to classify all successfully interpreted ancient graphs:

A. Direct textual evidence supports the interpretation

A graph for which the graphic form of the excavated example exists in received texts (including transmitted lexical works which include early Chinese character forms, such as the *Shuo Wen Jie Zi*, *Han Jian* 汗簡, *Guwen Sisheng Yun* 古文四聲韻, etc.), and this character can also be found in early received texts denoting a word which clearly fits the context of the excavated example.

B. Indirect textual evidence supports the interpretation

A graph for which the graphic form and its use to denote the word it appears to denote can both be explained with the help of materials in received texts (including transmitted lexical works), although they do not contain explicit evidence for this particular graphic form being interpreted, directly, in this way. Thus, some further explanation of the form or its interpretation is required.⁷⁰

C. Graphic analysis supports an interpretation based on semantic context

A graph, the form of which is not attested, but analysis of its structure (i.e. its semantic and/or phonetic components) can convincingly explain how it denotes a word which fits the context in which it is found.

D. Interpretation based on semantic context only: graphic form cannot be explained

A graph for which a reading can be confidently conjectured on the basis of semantic context, and the graph itself may be able to be transcribed, but we cannot explain how this graphic form denotes this word.

⁶⁹ Qiu Xigui, "On the Analysis and Transcription of Early Chinese Characters ..."

⁷⁰ This category would include a graph not seen in early collections of ancient forms (such as the *Shuo Wen Jie Zi*, *Han Jian*, etc.) but whose form can be explained indirectly using evidence from such works. It would also include a graph which is attested but not denoting the word it appears to denote in the excavated text and further explanation is needed to support the interpretation, most probably using indirect evidence from received texts.

This classification demonstrates that different graphs require different types of analysis. While some can be identified via equivalent forms in ancient collections of early graphs, such as the *Han Jian* or *Guwen Sisheng Yun*, others will require direct analysis of their forms.

Ken'ichi Takashima has categorized oracle-bone graphs on the basis of criteria to be used to assess differing interpretations for a specific graph.⁷¹ While Qiu's classification is designed to be applied after the successful interpretation of a graph, Takashima's categories are based on the nature of the transcribed graph at the initial stage of interpretation and how this should guide decisions about appropriate analysis for the graph. His criteria are as follows (quoting directly):

Criterion/Analysis 1: When the modern character transcribing a palaeograph is a historically continuous character (HCC), all other things being equal, that character must take precedence over other candidates, provided that its reading has been properly assigned.

Criterion/Analysis 2: When the transcribed modern character of a palaeograph is a historically discontinuous character (HDC), one must first determine the sound value of the character, and thereby the word represented by it.

Criterion/Analysis 3: When the transcribed modern character of a palaeograph is an HDC (sometimes even when it is an HCC) whose sound value is difficult to establish, one may proceed with an analysis based on the syntactic function and the semantic range of a putative word represented by the palaeograph. However, at this level analysis will not lead to complete decipherment, as it is no longer dealing with language in the fullest sense.

[A related convention is added later in the article:] When two or more readings can be posited for an HDC due to its different constituents, each with a different pronunciation, the overall weight of the phonetic and semantic role played by the modern-character equivalent of each constituent should be decisive in making a choice.

Criterion/Analysis 4: When a palaeograph cannot be transcribed, or gives no hint of the sound value even when it could be transcribed stroke by stroke into an HDC, it is possible to attempt analysis based on the syntactic function and, if applicable, the rough semantic range suggested by the palaeograph. Again, such analysis will stop far short of decipherment in the full sense.⁷²

⁷¹ Ken'ichi Takashima, "Towards a More Rigorous Methodology of Deciphering Oracle-Bone Inscriptions".

⁷² Ken'ichi Takashima, "Towards a More Rigorous Methodology of Deciphering Oracle-Bone Inscriptions", pp.371 – 372 and p.389.

Criterion 1 requires that, when the direct transcription of a graph produces a recognizable character, one that has corresponding forms in the later periods of the script, the interpretation of the graph must be based on this form, be it as a direct reading of the standard word denoted by the form, or as a phonetic loan. Criterion 2 refers to a graph whose direct transcription does not produce an attested character. In this case analysis should initially attempt to identify the phonetic value of the graph by hypothesizing which component indicates the phonetic and matching the graph in this way with a known word. Criterion 3 covers those graphs which could have had several different pronunciations, making it difficult to match them with particular words. When, in such cases, this choice of interpretations is due to a number of different components in a graph, each of which could be functioning as the phonetic, then, as the additional convention states, one should take into account which of these components is more commonly used as a phonetic and make one's decision on this basis. The fourth criterion is for those graphs for which the direct transcription is not reliable and it is not clear which, if any, of the components is phonetic. In such cases it is only possible to suggest the syntactic function of the graph and very general semantic category, based on the context in which the graph is found: the key point here is to avoid guessing at the word denoted by the graph on the basis of the semantic meaning, or supposed meaning of the components in the graph, "speculative etymology" as Takashima calls it (the most common danger would be that the graph is being used as a loan in which case determining the meaning graphically represented by the graph will not lead directly to the word denoted).

Overall, in this survey of literature related to techniques of palaeographic analysis, we have seen that a number of standard techniques are generally recognized, as is the need for these methods to be used in combination. The basic stages in such analysis are referred to very generally in some works but precise guidance on the combined application of the techniques is not given. Qiu's and Takashima's categorizations of ancient graphs, on the basis of the type of analysis they are accessible to, allow some further insight into the relationship between analysis techniques and their methodical application to the interpretation of a graph.

5.3 Literature survey: historical phonology in palaeographic analysis

Historical phonology attempts to construct a descriptive model of the sound system of Old Chinese and use the elements of this model to reconstruct the pronunciation of Old Chinese words. This work provides one of the most important tools for the interpretation of ancient Chinese graphs.

Reconstructions are essential in the following two cases: 1. When the standard word denoted by an attested character does not correspond to the semantic context in which the character is found, it is then assumed that the character is being used as a loangraph: the reconstructed pronunciation of the word denoted by the character is used to look for words, with the same or similar pronunciation, that would fit the context in which the graph appears. 2. In a situation where the formal transcription of a graph gives an unattested character that must be matched with a known word; if the graph has a component which may be acting as a phonetic signifier, then the reconstructed phonetic value of that component is used to identify known words with the same, or similar, reconstructed phonetic value.

There are, however, various difficulties with the use of historical phonology in Chinese palaeography. Several key problems can be identified:

1. The reconstruction of the phonetic values of words found in Han and pre-Han texts (received and excavated) is not reliable.
2. We do not understand the rules and conventions, if there were any, which guided the selection of components to be used as phonetic components and the characters to be used as loangraphs.
3. For Warring States scripts, use of components in newly created graphs, as well as selection of characters to use as loangraphs, was almost certainly influenced by local pronunciation but we know almost nothing about how pronunciation varied between states at that time. This problem also adds to the unreliability of reconstructions mentioned in the first point.

4. The criteria on which the phonetic similarity between two syllables was judged, for the purpose of determining whether or not one could have loaned for the other or been used as phonetic component for the other, are not clearly understood.

These points will now be considered individually.

5.3.1 The unreliability of reconstructions for Han and pre-Han Chinese

To be able to make confident use of historical phonology in the analysis of a specific set of palaeographic materials, it would be necessary to have accurate reconstructions of the Chinese of the period and place from which those texts hailed. So, for the Wenxian covenants that would be the early fifth century BC in the state of Jin. However, current reconstructions are far from being this specific or accurate.

The reconstruction of Chinese is considered to be reasonably reliable for the period beginning around the seventh century AD onwards, thanks largely to the existence of rhyme tables on which to base the reconstruction.⁷³ However, for periods before that time, reconstructions are harder to produce due to the lack of rhyme tables and the questionable reliability of the materials that do exist. For pre-Qin Chinese, the *Shi Jing* 詩經 is the main source of rhymes on which reconstructions are based, while *xiéshēng* 諧聲 series (sets of characters which share the same phonetic component) are used to categorize characters which do not appear in rhymes. However, as Edwin Pulleyblank says, these sources are not wholly reliable:

Unfortunately, poetic rhyming in an anthology [the *Shi Jing*], which probably contains materials originating in different places over a considerable period of time and in which the rhyme schemes are by no means regular and can only be inferred inductively, is a much less secure guide than a rhyme dictionary consciously produced by a single individual or committee at a definite point in time. For the initials no closed system of distinctions coeval with the *Shijing* was available at all.

⁷³ See, for example: *A Handbook of Old Chinese Phonology*, pp.32 – 42; Edwin G. Pulleyblank, “*Qieyun* and *Yunjing* ...”; Jerry Norman, *Chinese*, pp.24 – 28.

Xiasheng groups, that is, sets of words that use the same phonetic spellers in their graphs, bring together words that one assumes once had similar but not identical initials, but the criteria for what counted as phonetic likeness are not known independently and can only be guessed at and the assumption that such features of the initials were contemporary with the rhymes of the Odes has no independent course of verification.⁷⁴

Nevertheless, since the Qing period, many scholars have attempted to produce reconstructions of Old Chinese.⁷⁵ The poems of the *Shi Jing* are generally believed to date from between the tenth and seventh centuries BC. The reconstruction based on these poems is for the Chinese of that period and is referred to as Old, or Archaic, Chinese. This immediately raises the issues that, however accurate such a reconstruction might be, a problem clearly arises when using it to judge phonetic similarity of syllables in later (or, for that matter, earlier) periods, e.g. for the Wenxian covenant texts dated to the early fifth century.

Regardless of such shortcomings, reconstructions of Old Chinese are considered essential when attempting to determine whether a character could be a loan for a word, or a component in a character be the phonetic signifier for a word. However, bearing in mind that the reconstructions are not fully reliable, a phonetic match, or lack of such a match, cannot be taken as conclusive. Most scholars would agree that it is necessary to have examples of the same, or closely related, usage in texts in order to support the conjectured loan or phonetic component. This point is further discussed in section 5.3.4 below.

5.3.2 The lack of understanding of the rules and conventions for selecting phonetic components and loangraphs

Our lack of understanding of rules or conventions by which scribes selected a phonetic component when creating a character, or chose a character to use as a loangraph, means that we cannot know the extent to which criteria other than

⁷⁴ Edwin G. Pulleyblank, "The Ganzhi as Phonograms and their Application to the Calendar", p.41.

⁷⁵ *A Handbook of Old Chinese Phonology*, pp.150 – 174 and p.813, note 4.

phonetic similarity played a role in these choices.

It is reasonable to assume that, in general, a scribe would be selecting a temporary loangraph only when writing without an original document to copy from, i.e. when writing from memory, from a dictation or when producing an original document.⁷⁶ A loangraph would have been used when the scribe had forgotten, or did not know, the standard character for a word. We would also expect that homophonous characters would sometimes have been unintentionally used in place of standard characters. One can further conjecture that, even if the standard character was known by a scribe, another graph may have sometimes been used as a loan. This could occur, for example, when a scribe was taking notes from someone talking at speed; he or she may have occasionally used a simpler character as a loan for a more complex one in order to save time. If these conjectures are correct, loans should be more frequently seen replacing rarer words and more complicated characters while the loangraphs themselves should mainly be common, simpler characters. Alternatively, we can conjecture that scribes may have sometimes used more complicated characters as loangraphs for aesthetic effect or to demonstrate skill.⁷⁷

As for the selection of phonetic components (including composite components) when creating a character, it is not known what, if any, criteria were systematically followed, apart from the basic one of phonetic identity. For example, how was selection made when there was the choice of two or more possible phonetic components? Qiu Xigui suggests simpler components would have been preferred.⁷⁸ Selection criteria may also have included aesthetic considerations. The semantic value of components may sometimes have affected the decision.⁷⁹ Wang Li argues that the choice of phonetic and semantic

⁷⁶ If copying from a written document, loangraphs in the original would be retained in the copy, although it is possible that the scribe might decide to make revisions, for example by replacing an unusual loangraph with a standard character for a particular word.

⁷⁷ For a discussion on variant graphs, including loangraphs, and the process of manuscript production see: Martin Kern, "Methodological Reflections on the Analysis of Textual Variants and the Modes of Manuscript Production in Early China".

⁷⁸ Qiu Xigui (transl. Gilbert L. Mattos and Jerry Norman), *Chinese Writing*, pp.249 – 250.

⁷⁹ This would have mainly been true for graphs denoting cognate words, see: Qiu Xigui (transl. Gilbert L. Mattos and Jerry Norman), *Chinese Writing*, pp.255 – 260.

components was based on habit rather than any set of standards, but he does not describe what these habits were or how they formed.⁸⁰

There are various other, as yet unanswered questions, relating to the selection of loangraphs. For example, it is not clear why there are cases where a character A is used to loan for a word for which the standard character is character B, but character B is never used to loan for the word usually denoted by character A.

Further research on such problems might allow greater understanding of how loangraphs and phonetic components were selected which, in turn, would help restrict the choice of suitable candidates when faced with a number of words that could have been phonetically represented by a particular character or component.

5.3.3 The effect of local variation in pronunciation on selection of phonetic components and loangraphs

Local pronunciation may well have influenced both a scribe's choice of loangraph and the selection of a phonetic component when composing a new graph. This is particularly likely to have been the case in the politically fragmented period of the Spring and Autumn and Warring States periods. We do not know how great variations in pronunciation between different areas of ancient China were, but scholars of historical phonology and dialectology generally believe that dialectal variation did exist. This is supported by allusions in texts to different dialects, in the *Mencius* 孟子 and *Zuo Zhuan* 左傳 for example, as well as by the Han period dialect dictionary, *Fang Yan* 方言, which is thought to also include materials from the Spring and Autumn and Warring States period.⁸¹ On the other hand, there clearly seems to have been a common literary language in use, the so called *yǎyán* 雅言.⁸² Moreover, the fact that there are only minor differences in the rhymes used in the *Shi Jing*, a work collecting verse from all over the country, and those employed in the *Chu Ci* 楚

⁸⁰ Wang Li, *Hanyu Yufa Gangyao*, p.169.

⁸¹ Yuan Jiahua et al., *Hanyu Fangyan Gaiyao*, pp.17 – 18.

⁸² Wang Li, *Hanyu Shi Gao*, p.49.

辭, a later work associated with the southern state of Chu, suggests that the pronunciation of the common literary language was similar throughout the different states.⁸³ The Wenxian and Houma tablets are products of the Jin state, prepared for a local audience. Nevertheless, although parts of the covenant texts are obscure, they are clearly using the common written language.

The coexistence of different dialects and a common literary language does, however, allow for the possibility that this written language was pronounced at least somewhat differently in different areas. This could have influenced the choice of components in the creation of new graphic forms, as well as the selection of loangraphs for phonetic loans. This question of dialect adds a further dimension to the problems faced when considering phonetic issues in palaeographic analysis.

5.3.4 Disagreement on criteria for judging loaning relationships

When judging whether or not a character or component could have been used to denote the sound of a particular word, how close do the reconstructed pronunciations have to be to conclude that the match is possible? The assumed ideal is perfect homophony but, in practice, this is rarely the case. The question often becomes, rather: How dissimilar can the reconstructed pronunciation of two syllables be before we concede that a character or component could *not* have been used to denote the sound of a certain word?

Scholars of Chinese historical phonology have different opinions as to how phonetically similar two syllables had to be in the selection of loangraphs (they rarely specifically discuss the selection of phonetic components). It is assumed that full homophony was always acceptable, as Bernhard Karlgren (1889 – 1978) said: “A proposed loan between words with full homophony (apart from tones which are immaterial in the loan practice)... can be accepted without hesitation.”⁸⁴ So, the more pertinent question is how different the pronunciation of two syllables could be while still being close enough to loan. Karlgren wrote:

⁸³ Yuan Jiahua et al., *Hanyu Fangyan Gaiyao*, pp.17 – 18.

⁸⁴ Bernhard Karlgren, “Loan Characters in Pre-Han Texts” (BMFEA 35), p.4.

The salient question is here [sic] this: what degree of phonetic similarity must we demand if we are to accept a proposed Kt [*jiǎjiè* = loaning relationship] as plausible? How far can the two members diverge in sound before we conclude that a Kt is improbable or even out of the question?⁸⁵

Karlgren based his argument regarding the requirements for phonetic similarity between a word and its loan on the assumption that the characters within a *xiéshēng* series were originally just a series of loans for phonetically similar words all using a single graph, and that it was only later that the semantic components were added to differentiate them. As a result, he argues, any character in a *xiéshēng* series could, potentially, be used as a phonetic loan for any other in the series.⁸⁶ Karlgren believed that the finals of all characters in a *xiéshēng* series were, with rare exception, in the same rhyme group, i.e. share identical or “homorganic” codas (i.e. sharing the same place of articulation) and identical or “cognate” main vowels.⁸⁷ In other parts of the syllable there are, however, differences. Karlgren argued that, while there were phonetic differences between the graphs in a *xiéshēng* series, they could still, at least potentially, all loan for one another, therefore this degree of phonetic dissimilarity between them must have been acceptable. He deduced from this that, by analogy, the same degree of dissimilarity would have been permissible between any loangraph and the word it denoted.⁸⁸

Based on this assumption and his analysis of the *xiéshēng* characters, Karlgren made the following observations concerning differences in pronunciation between characters in a *xiéshēng* series:

1. In a *xiéshēng* series the place of articulation of the initials is almost always the same, e.g. they are all dentals, or all labials, etc. , exceptions

⁸⁵ Bernhard Karlgren, “Loan Characters in Pre-Han Texts” (BMFEA 35), p.4.

⁸⁶ Bernhard Karlgren, “Loan Characters in Pre-Han Texts” (BMFEA 35), p.5.

⁸⁷ On the term “cognate vowels”, Pulleyblank observes: “What he [Karlgren] meant by cognate vowels is less clear. In practice, it seems to mean roughly that vowels in the same rhyme class should be transcribed with variations of the same symbol”, Edwin G. Pulleyblank, “*Jiajie and Xiesheng*,” p.147. See also: Bernhard Karlgren, *Compendium of Phonetics in Ancient and Archaic Chinese*, p.61.

⁸⁸ Bernhard Karlgren, “Loan Characters in Pre-Han Texts” (BMFEA 35), pp.4 – 6.

are rare.⁸⁹

2. In general *hékǒu* 合口 and *kāikǒu* 開口 words⁹⁰ do not mix in a *xiéshēng* series, exceptions are only 2% of the total.

3. Certain final consonants do not mix in a *xiéshēng* series while certain main vowel and final consonant combinations can interchange. Words he reconstructs with final consonants *-n, -t, -d, -r* do not mix in a *xiéshēng* series with final consonants *-m, -p, -b* or with *-ng, -k, -g*. And these last two groups, *-m, -p, -b*, and *-ng, -k, -g* cannot interchange with each other. Interchange is possible between: *án* and *ən*, *ám* and *əm*. There is no interchange between: *áng* and *əng*; *en* and *án*; *en* and *ən*.

Based on Karlgren's theory, the same amount of latitude between phonetic loans and the words they are used to denote would be acceptable.

Karlgren's use of the *xiéshēng* series as the standard by which to judge phonetic loans can be challenged on various counts. While it is agreed that phonetic homophony is the ideal for phonetic loans, it is clear that this was almost certainly not expected of characters in a *xiéshēng* series. This is evident from the fact that such characters would frequently denote cognate words, derived from a single etymon, but phonetically distinguished. Thus, from a very early period, the literate person would be alert for *differences* between the

⁸⁹ He produced the following groups of initials which can interchange (i.e., initials in group A interchange with each other in *xiéshēng* series but initials from A do not interchange with initials from group B or C, etc.):

- A. *k, k', g, g', ng, x, '.*
- B. *ī, ī', ā, ā', d, l, l', d, d'.*
- C. *ts, ts', dz, dz', z, s, ts', ts', g.*
- D. *n, n.*
- E. *l.*
- F. *p, p', b'.*
- G. *m.*

See: Bernhard Karlgren, "Loan Characters in Pre-Han Texts" (BMFEA 35), p.10. Pulleyblank summarizes Karlgren's requirements for initial consonants in phonetic loans: "In his system of reconstruction, ... initial consonants must be made at the same place of articulation, but it also involves manner features. That is, nasals are not normally allowed to interchange with stops, fricatives are not normally allowed to interchange with affricates, and affricates are not allowed to interchange with stops at the same place of articulation." Edwin G. Pulleyblank, "*Jiajie and Xiesheng*", p.147.

⁹⁰ William Baxter explains the meaning of these terms (as they are used in the *Yunjing* 韻鏡 rhyme tables): "... *kāikǒu* 開口 'open mouth' and *hékǒu* 合口 'closed mouth' ... are used to indicate the presence or absence of medial *-w-* before the main vowel: *hékǒu* indicates a medial *-w-*, *kāikǒu* indicates the absence of *-w-*." *A Handbook of Old Chinese Phonology*, p.42. Note that the *kāikǒu* and *hékǒu* distinction is recorded in Middle Chinese materials and that Baxter's medial *-w-* is his Middle Chinese reconstruction: this Middle Chinese *-w-* is not reflected in his Old Chinese reconstruction by a *-w-* medial but other distinctions. See the same work, p.235 and *passim*.

pronunciation of words written with the same phonetic component (quite possibly without a separate distinguishing component), not for similarities: characters in a *xiéshēng* series would not have been associated with strict homophony.

A further issue is the question of the time and place at which the members of a *xiéshēng* series were produced. Characters in a *xiéshēng* series were not all created in a single place at a single time. Before standardization of the script, new characters were frequently created, while others were replaced by new or altered forms, often in order to better reflect the character's changed pronunciation. Since the phonetic value of components and graphs changes over time, a component selected to represent word A in 1400 BC might not have the same pronunciation in 400 BC and might be selected for a word B with a very different pronunciation to word A's 400 BC pronunciation. Nevertheless, they all end up in the same *xiéshēng* series. Paul Serruys criticizes Karlgren on this point:

Karlgrén thinks there was a shifting and enlarging process in the range of applicability of the phonetic element, attributed only to difference of time in the character formation, and called "the sound sphere of the phonetic element" in the Hsh [*xiéshēng*] series. But he does not give any principle to establish the limits of the sound sphere or the direction of the process of the sound range.⁹¹

And:

To apply any one analysis to character of widely different periods such as Shang or Han, or any Hsh analysis without starting with uniform material, is dangerous.⁹²

Serruys also points out that characters in a *xiéshēng* series could have been created at different places and thus affected by different dialects. Of the Spring and Autumn and Warring States period, he says:

The disintegration and decentralization of the empire coincides with great literary activity This situation of disintegration lasted for

⁹¹ Paul L-M. Serruys, *The Chinese Dialects of Han Time According to Fang Yen*, p.25.

⁹² Paul L-M. Serruys, *The Chinese Dialects of Han Time According to Fang Yen*, pp.26 – 27.

centuries – that is, long enough to expect the script to become different in the various cultural centers.⁹³

Excavated texts, unearthed since this was written, have confirmed that this was the case. Criticizing Karlgren, Serruys observes that: “The regional factor as a cause of the differences in the *Hsh* principles and their application, . . . , was disregarded by Karlgren.”⁹⁴ These factors of time and place will, Serruys goes on to say, be reflected in the *xiéshēng* series: “the phonetic sphere of similarity of sound in a *Hsh* series results from the telescoping of various periods and areas into one system.”⁹⁵

Even if analysis was restricted to those graphs in a *xiéshēng* series that were created during the early formation of the script, and which we would therefore expect to have a high degree of phonetic similarity, it is still possible that, by the time of the *Shi Jing*, on which those reconstructions are based, the pronunciation of these characters could have undergone significant change, due to the passing of time and, one can conjecture, in the process of the adoption of the script by the Zhou people from the Shang.

Taken together, these points suggest that the basic premise of Karlgren’s argument – that the degree of phonetic similarity between characters in a *xiéshēng* series can be adopted as the allowable degree between phonetic loans – is problematic.

William Baxter discusses *xiéshēng* series and their influence on the selection of phonetic components.⁹⁶ He suggests that the standards for similarity in pronunciation between a component and the word it denoted changed and became less strict, the result of the existence of *xiéshēng* series:

... the standards for *xiéshēng* similarity were probably relaxed somewhat as sound changes disturbed the relations of similarity among *xiéshēng* characters already in use. A vowel change, for example, could bring it

⁹³ Paul L-M. Serruys, *The Chinese Dialects of Han Time According to Fang Yen*, p.27.

⁹⁴ Paul L-M. Serruys, *The Chinese Dialects of Han Time According to Fang Yen*, p.27.

⁹⁵ Paul L-M. Serruys, *The Chinese Dialects of Han Time According to Fang Yen*, p.28.

⁹⁶ *A Handbook of Old Chinese Phonology*, pp.343 – 355.

about that a character already in use had a different main vowel from its phonetic element. By analogy, the same differences were probably tolerated in newly created characters.⁹⁷

For example, if sound change led to two different codas being seen in a *xiéshēng* series, the phonetic component for that series might then be considered a possible phonetic for use in the creation or alteration of a word with either coda. Wang Li notes that analysis of the *Shi Jing* rhymes leads to characters from a single *xiéshēng* series being reconstructed with different codas. He argues that this is due to sound change and is perfectly acceptable. When graphs in a single *xiéshēng* series have different codas it is called *duìzhuǎn* 對轉.⁹⁸ In the rare cases that sound change has brought about two different vowel sounds in a single *xiéshēng* series, the relationship between two such characters is called *pángzhuǎn* 旁轉.

While such latitude may be allowable when selecting a phonetic component, it does not imply that the same latitude was acceptable for phonetic loans. The ideal for selection of a phonetic loan is, as stated above, homophony. As Pulleyblank says: “The principle of the phoneme tells us that for native speakers of a language speech sounds are basically either the same or different.” It seems most unlikely that this standard could change. However, it appears that the phonetic dissimilarities Baxter suggests became acceptable between characters in a *xiéshēng* series, have been taken on board by many palaeographers as equally acceptable for phonetic loans. Use of *duìzhuǎn* and *pángzhuǎn* relationships in the identification of phonetic loans is common in palaeographic analysis.

Pulleyblank has also considered this question of the degree of similarity needed for words to be able to loan for one another. He, too, believes that *xiéshēng* series are key evidence in answering this question. However, he disagrees with Karlgren’s argument that, “the principle that the basis for phonetic loans was that vowels and initial [sic] as well as final consonants had to be, as he

⁹⁷ *A Handbook of Old Chinese Phonology*, p.349.

⁹⁸ Wang Li, *Hanyu Yinyun*, p.168.

put it, ‘cognate’ or more explicitly, ‘homorganic’.”⁹⁹ Pulleyblank believes “the concept of homorganicity seems excessively abstract ...”, on the basis that, as I just quoted above, “for native speakers of a language speech sounds are basically either the same or different.”¹⁰⁰ He argues that Karlgren’s thesis does not explain why only certain similar sounding syllables can loan while others cannot:

What is not obvious, however, is why pairs like, say [pan] and [ban], or [dek] and [tek] should have been thought so much alike that one member of the pair could be written for the other when they meant entirely different things, while [pan] and [paŋ] or [det] and [dek] were kept strictly apart.¹⁰¹

Pulleyblank suggests an alternative hypothesis:

What I want to propose is that it was partial *identity* of sound rather than some ill-defined *similarity* that was the basis for phonetic loans and that the partial identities that counted for this purpose were governed by the structure of the Chinese language at the relevant period.¹⁰²

Pulleyblank’s argument is that many characters in a *xiéshēng* series were cognates, derived from one another by morphological processes, particularly affixation, and originally written using a single character (in the same way that [好] *hǎo* denotes both the words *hǎo* {好} “good” and *hào* {好} “to like”).¹⁰³ In many cases the graphs would only have been distinguished at a later stage by, for example, the addition of a semantic component. It is the degree of dissimilarity between such words that Pulleyblank believes was, by analogy, then allowed between phonetic loans. Thus he argues that loanwords should show “partial identity”:

What this means is that cognate words that were written with the same graph were not merely similar to each other in sound in some ill-defined way but rather were partly identical, differing only in the presence or absence of affixes. This principle of partial identity could then be extended to other cases where the words in question were not

⁹⁹ Edwin G. Pulleyblank, “*Jiajie and Xiesheng*”, p.147.

¹⁰⁰ Edwin G. Pulleyblank, “*Jiajie and Xiesheng*”, p.147.

¹⁰¹ Edwin G. Pulleyblank, “*Jiajie and Xiesheng*”, p.147.

¹⁰² Edwin G. Pulleyblank, “*Jiajie and Xiesheng*”, p.147.

¹⁰³ On word derivation see, for example: Sun Yuwen, *Hanyu Biandiao Gouci Yanjiu*; Laurent Sagart, *The Roots of Old Chinese*.

etymologically related. Derivation from a common root will not account for all cases of *jiǎjiè* that did not involve exact homophones but we may suppose that the practice of writing words with and without prefixes and suffixes with the same graph was carried over as a means of writing words that were difficult to represent iconically but had most of its phonemes in common with a word that could be so represented.¹⁰⁴

In other words, we should expect a core part of both syllables in a loaning relationship to be identical, but phonemes in initial and final positions may vary to the same degree as is seen in pronunciation differences between a root and words derived from it by way of affixes.¹⁰⁵

We should note that Serruys, when criticizing Karlgren's lack of any principle delineating the differences found in the pronunciations of characters in a *xiéshēng* series, made a suggestion as to how to define such a sphere based on word derivations:

We may venture a theoretical explanation: although it is, for the time being, impossible to set up exact formulas of derivation of the cognates or to determine the productivity of the procedures of derivation, these derivations could result in a set of variations that were after a time, considered as the “phonetic sphere” of all Hsh derivates. It is natural to consider the cognate derivates – first expressed by the same graph but different reading, the later graphically differentiated by addition of a semantic indicator – as the origin of the Hsh formation of all graphs. Thus initially morphological derivation could result in a phonetic sphere applied to all Hsh characters.¹⁰⁶

Pulleyblank's hypothesis can be seen as an extension of this theory.¹⁰⁷

Serruys did not believe analysis of *xiéshēng* series would allow the standards of loangraph selection to be discovered. He argued that the standard for selection was very simple: when selecting a word to act as a phonetic loan, a scribe would aim to use a phonetically identical word to avoid the possibility of confusion:

¹⁰⁴ Edwin G. Pulleyblank, “*Jiǎjiè* and *Xiéshēng*”, p.149.

¹⁰⁵ Pulleyblank also argues in this article that characters in a *xiéshēng* series do not always belong to the same *Shi Jing* rhyme group. He notes connections between the *zhī* 之 and *hóu* 侯 and between the *gēng* 耕 *zhēn* 真 groups. See: Edwin G. Pulleyblank, “*Jiǎjiè* and *Xiéshēng*”, pp.152 – 153.

¹⁰⁶ Paul L-M. Serruys, *The Chinese Dialects of Han Time According to Fang Yen*, p.25.

¹⁰⁷ On this topic see also: Pan Wuyun, *Hanyu Lishi Yinyunxue*, Chapter 8; Laurent Sagart, *The Roots of Old Chinese*.

Since, for a graph representing a word other than the one it originally stands for, there was only a phonetic (not graphic or semantic) requirement, it was easy for a scribe to find among a great number of similarly read graphs, one which was completely identical in sound with the word intended. Moreover, the only possibility of recognizing the word was the phonetic identity of the borrowed graph with that word. In the case of the Hsh it has been explained how graphs made at different times and regions, and falling in the same phonetic series, resulted in the elaboration of a range of sound similarity and acceptable dissimilarity for the Hsh principle and its application. Such an explanation cannot be given for the Chch [*jiǎjiè* = loaning relationship], for the Chch do not exist in groups of graphs, but are always phonetic equations of one word to another.¹⁰⁸

The phonetic similarity of graphs in a *xiéshēng* series changes over time, but there is no reason to insist that sound differences in a *xiéshēng* series would influence a scribe whose concern was to find as perfect as possible a phonetic match in a loangraph in order that a reader would be able to identify the denoted word. In other words, the assumption that we can use *xiéshēng* series to produce a standard for the dissimilarity acceptable between a loangraph and the word denoted is, Serruys believes, simply wrong.

Serruys makes a further pertinent observation:

When there is no early explicit statement on the Chch usage of a character, only strict phonetic identity and at the same time a similar meaning in the text can make a Chch acceptable. Yet it does not mean that a Chch * *twən* : * *tôk* is impossible. Our knowledge of ArC [Archaic Chinese] is not sure enough to say that our ArC possibilities are the only ones. The Hsh already show some quite exceptional pronunciations. If an early commentary clearly states a Chch case, our present knowledge of ArC cannot destroy the fact that for that period two characters were phonetically close enough to be used for each other.¹⁰⁹

In other words, the confident prediction of phonetic identity in cases where a loangraph usage is not stated in reliable early glosses, or the loan usage clearly evident in early texts, is impossible. While strict phonetic identity is required,

¹⁰⁸ Paul L-M. Serruys, *The Chinese Dialects of Han Time According to Fang Yen*, p.55. See also: Gilbert L. Mattos, *The Stone Drums of Ch'in*, p.129.

¹⁰⁹ Paul L-M. Serruys, *The Chinese Dialects of Han Time According to Fang Yen*, p.58.

one cannot judge whether this exists because the current reconstructions of Archaic Chinese (Old Chinese) are too unreliable to allow a judgement to be made. Greater weight should be given to evidence of examples of loan use in texts.

Textual evidence is, therefore, crucial when making decisions about phonetic relationships between ancient characters and words. Even when a reconstruction gives a perfect match, it is considered much more convincing if supported by examples of the same match in received texts. And, in contrast, if there is substantial evidence in texts for a match which looks unlikely in the reconstructions, the textual evidence may well convince the scholar that the match is legitimate and the problem is with the reconstruction.

On the basis of the above discussion, it should be clear that the commonly used formula of “initial has same place of articulation and shared main vowel” as the minimum requirement for two syllables to loan for each other is simply not acceptable. The fact that this “minimum requirement” is relaxed by some scholars to allow for *duìzhuǎn* and *pángzhuǎn*, even when there is no textual evidence to support the loan, further exacerbates the unreliability of such analysis. The stipulation that textual evidence is produced to support a match is also frequently ignored.

Note that, the standards for selection of phonetic component may, as suggested above, have been different and need to be considered separately from standards for loangraph usage.

Let us now look at a specific approach to the use of historical phonology in palaeographic analysis of Warring States graphs. This is given by He Linyi, who discusses the use of both reconstructions and supporting examples from texts in judging possible loan usage.¹¹⁰ He begins with the phonetic similarity between a phonetic component and the word it denotes:¹¹¹

¹¹⁰ He Linyi, *Zhanguo Wenzhi Tonglun*, pp.265 – 271.

¹¹¹ While following He Linyi’s original text closely, I have summarized some sections for the sake of conciseness.

- A. Points to bear in mind when analysing the phonetic relationship between a word denoted by a phonogram (a character with a semantic and phonetic component) and the phonetic component of the character.
1. Clearly distinguish between the phonetic component and the semantic component.
 2. The phonetic component and the word denoted by the phonogram in which it occurs do not have to be phonetically identical but must either share the same initial (*shuāngshēng* 雙聲 “paired initials”) or the same rhyme group (*diéyùn* 疊韻 “repeated rhyme”). However, usually one should not make use of cases where the rhyme groups show a great disparity even if the initials are the same.
 3. Consider the possibility that an additional phonetic component has been added to a character which already has one (*diējīyīnfú* 疊加音符 “further addition of a phonetic signifier”) or that, in a graph with two components, both components are functioning as phonetic signifiers (*shuāngchóngyīnfú* 雙重音符 “double phonetic signifiers”).
 4. When analysing the relationship between the phonetic value of a word denoted by a phonogram and that of the phonetic component used in that phonogram, it is not necessary to have an example of this variant form in received texts or other supporting materials.

The suggestion in point 2 that only the initial need be equivalent between a phonetic component and the word for which it functions as a phonetic, is contentious and generally unacceptable without strong text-based evidence to support the claim.¹¹² The theory of phonetic loaning based on shared initials, known as “paired-initial phonetic borrowing” (*shuāngshēng jiǎjiè* 雙聲假借), was advocated by the Qing scholar Qian Daxin 錢大昕 (1728 – 1804) but is not accepted by most scholars of Chinese phonology.¹¹³ If we do allow such examples, with no text-based evidence to support them, then the degree of permissible dissimilarity between phonetic component and word denoted allows matching between syllables of any two rhyme groups. Examples that He Linyi gives of such matches elsewhere in the book have strong supporting evidence from texts.¹¹⁴ Such examples may be indicative of problems with the

¹¹² It appears from examples elsewhere in the book that He Linyi, in practice, only demands that the initials have the same place of articulation.

¹¹³ Feng Chuntian ed., *Wang Li Yuyanxue Cidian*, p.529.

¹¹⁴ See, for example, the Houma graphs he discusses: He Linyi, *Zhanguo Wenzi Tonglun*, p.212 and p.241, notes 96 and 98.

reconstructions rather than proving that such latitude in selection of phonetic component was considered acceptable by the scribes at that time. He Linyi continues with the question of loangraphs:

B. Characteristics of Warring States loangraphs

1. Use of loangraphs is much more common in this period than in the preceding Shang and Zhou periods.
2. Loangraphs occur that are not seen in Shang and Zhou excavated texts or in any received texts.
3. There was great flexibility in loan usage: for example, within the same set of texts, a single character could be used to loan for two different words, or two different characters could be used to loan for a single word.
4. Loan usage has distinctive regional variation.

The increase, not only in loangraph use as mentioned in point 1, but also in variant characters in the Spring and Autumn and Warring States periods, is evidence that, as the states became more independent of Zhou authority their writing systems also started to take on local characteristics. The standard Zhou forms for characters may have been less closely adhered to and local dialect may have affected selection of loangraphs when standard forms were forgotten. Words of the local dialect may have been used more commonly in writing and have had new characters created for them.

He Linyi then looks at criteria to be used to judge whether a graph could be loaning for a particular word. He treats loans between characters with the same phonetic component (i.e. in the same *xiéshēng* series) differently from loans between characters with different phonetic components:

C. Methods of determining whether two characters have a loaning relationship

1. The two characters have the same phonetic component (i.e. they are in the same *xiéshēng* series)

In such cases there should not be any problem with the conjectured loan and one does not need supporting evidence from texts to prove the loan was possible (although if it exists, so much the better). The semantic context in which the graph appears should be used to determine what word is denoted.

2. The two characters do not have the same phonetic component.

If the characters do not share the same phonetic component, the situation is more complicated. In this case one must first determine whether the two characters had the same sound, or a similar sound, using their “pre-Qin pronunciations”.¹¹⁵ Secondly one must have supporting evidence from received and/or excavated texts to prove the loan could occur. The specific criteria are:

a. The pre-Qin pronunciation of the two characters must have been the same or similar.

In cases where the reconstructed pronunciations are not particularly close, He Linyi gives the following requirements:

- i. If the rhyme groups share the same main vowel but different codas (*duìzhuǎn* 對轉), then, generally, the initials need to be the same.¹¹⁶
- ii. If the codas are the same but the main vowels of the rhyme groups are only close (*pángzhuǎn* 旁轉), then the initials *must* be the same.¹¹⁷

b. There must be supporting evidence in received and/or excavated texts.

If a pair of characters with different phonetic components satisfy the above requirements it only tells one that they had the potential to loan for one another but does not prove that the loan one is conjecturing is correct. To confirm the loan one must have evidence of the same loan being used in received or excavated texts.

Note here the importance given to textual evidence, a point Serruys made above. He Linyi does not go into details about what textual evidence is acceptable. The best text-based evidence is that the character one is dealing with is commonly seen in received and excavated texts loaning for the word one has identified it with. If such examples are not found, various other evidence can be considered. For example, the loan may not be seen in received texts but appear in an excavated text with a transmitted counterpart giving the loaned word. Alternatively, there may be excavated evidence where the loan usage is strongly supported by context. If no example occurs of the character in question being used to loan in the way conjectured, one can look for examples of its phonetic

¹¹⁵ He Linyi uses the phrase “*Xian Qin guyin* 先秦古音” but he appears to be using a standard reconstruction which, as we discussed above, will be based on the *Shi Jing* and therefore specific to early- to mid-Zhou rather than the whole pre-Qin period.

¹¹⁶ As mentioned above, on the basis of his discussions and examples, he would accept initials with the same place of articulation as well as identical initials.

¹¹⁷ Again, examples he gives elsewhere suggest he also allows initials with the same place of articulation.

component (if there is one) being used in loangraphs for words whose standard characters have the same phonetic component as that of the word one is conjecturing is being loaned for.

He Linyi gives two further rules, the first of which is:

D. Avoid non-sequiturs

The following type of indirect argument is not acceptable when using historical phonology in palaeographic analysis (“=” means “can loan for”):

Since $A = B$ and $B = C$, therefore $A = C$.

The reason for this is that on the basis of current reconstructions, the ideal of perfect identity is actually very rare: $A = B$ almost never means that the Old Chinese reconstruction of A is identical to that of B, in some cases the two words do not even share the same rhyme group. Thus, we could have a case where A, B and C all have different rhyme groups: using the above argument, one would be matching words A and C, although they are from two rhyme groups phonetically even further apart than A is from B or B from C. One will even find the argument: $A = B$, $B = C$, $C = D$, therefore $A = D$. He Linyi argues that such flawed logic should never be used in this type of analysis. The second rule is:

E. The loaned word must fit the context in which it is found

Once a graph is identified as loaning for a word, that word must fit the context in which it is found in the excavated text, otherwise the identification must be reconsidered. Good evidence that the word is correct would be that the phrase or sentence in which it occurs in the excavated text is also seen in a received text.

This completes He Linyi's suggestions for the use of historical phonology in analysis of graphs. Apart from specific problems already mentioned, and with the general caveats expressed above about this type of analysis, we can accept these as a helpful set of guidelines for the use of historical phonology in palaeographic analysis of Warring States graphs. In the section on methodological procedure in Chapter Two, a suggestion is given for a method by which to quantify the possibility that a loangraph is denoting a particular word or a component being used as a semantic for a word.

5.4 Literature survey: explication of the meaning of the text

Explication refers to the interpretation of the meaning of the text or phrases in a text. Interpretation of the text takes place at all stages of the analysis, since understanding the context in which a graph is found is usually essential to its analysis. After the graphs have been tentatively identified, interpretation continues in order to determine whether the preliminary analysis stands up to greater scrutiny, whether similar language is seen in other texts and so on.

Excavated texts are accessible because they use language familiar to us from the corpus of Han and pre-Han received texts. Thus, the key to reading excavated texts is a knowledge of the language of the received texts. Qiu Xigui argues that a firm grasp of this language is essential to the study of Chinese palaeography:

Ancient [Chinese] characters record ancient Chinese. If one is not familiar with ancient Chinese, it is impossible to successfully study ancient [Chinese] characters.¹¹⁸

Ancient Chinese underwent significant development from the period of the oracle bones to the Han dynasty. Qiu goes on to quote Li Xueqin's point that, when studying excavated texts, one should read received texts of the same period.¹¹⁹ We may add that one should also read texts of the same genre if possible. Thus, reading the covenants and oaths recorded in the *Zuo Zhuan* was very helpful when it came to interpreting the Wenxian covenants.

Various different periodizations for the early Chinese language have been proposed. Chen Yongzheng 陳永正, in an article on the topic, cites the following three schemes. Wang Li described pre-third century AD as the period of Old Chinese (*shànggǔ qī* 上古期). Peking University's *Hanyu Fazhan Shi* 漢語發展史 gives two periods for early Chinese: 1. the Shang period and 2. the Zhou-Qin-Western Han period. Pan Yunzhong 潘允中 gives three early periods:

¹¹⁸ Qiu Xigui, "Tan Tan Xuexi Guwenzi De Fangfa", p.652.

¹¹⁹ Qiu Xigui, "Tan Tan Xuexi Guwenzi De Fangfa", p.652. Original article: Li Xueqin, "Tan Zixue Guwenzi", p.6.

1. Early Old-Chinese (*shànggǔ qiánqī* 上古前期), corresponding to the period Shang to Western Zhou; 2. Middle Old-Chinese (*shànggǔ zhōngqī* 上古中期) for the Spring and Autumn and Warring States to Qin; and 3. Late Old-Chinese (*shànggǔ hòuqī* 上古後期), the Western Han period.¹²⁰

James H-Y. Tai and Majorie K.M.Chan compare several periodizations, considering phonological, grammatical and lexical periodization.¹²¹ I have discussed issues with phonological periodization above. For lexical periodization for the early period, Tai and Chan give a Pre-Qin period and a Late Han to early Tang period for native (i.e. not borrowed) vocabulary. Nevertheless, they note that “no systematic study has been conducted” on “decay and vocabulary loss” or “semantic shift of lexical items” for Chinese.¹²² I discuss, below, the suggestion that there are examples of the latter process, i.e. change in word meaning, during the pre-Qin period, that can significantly affect our understanding of a text.

For grammatical periodization, Tai and Chen give the schemes of Wang Li and Pan Yunzhong that I just mentioned, as well as that of Jerry Norman who, for the early period, gives: 1. the Preclassical Period for pre-fifth century BC, based on the written language of the bronzes, oracle bones and pre-Confucian texts; and 2. Classical Chinese, the fifth century BC to 200 AD, for texts ranging from the *Lunyu* to the *Shiji*. They also give Alain Peyraube’s periods: Archaic Chinese, fourteenth century to third century BC; and Pre-Medieval Chinese (or Han Chinese), second century BC to third Century AD. Chen and Tai argue that, in terms of “fundamental changes in grammatical structures”, the first period posited should be the “Classical Chinese period, from the Spring and Autumn to the end of the Han dynasty”.¹²³

¹²⁰ Chen Yongzheng, “Shanggu Hanyu Shang Huashidai De Biaozhi – Chunqiu Zaishu”, see p.338.

¹²¹ James H-Y. Tai and Marjorie K.M. Chan, “Some Reflections on the Periodization of the Chinese Language”.

¹²² James H-Y. Tai and Marjorie K.M. Chan, “Some Reflections on the Periodization of the Chinese Language”, p.234.

¹²³ James H-Y. Tai and Marjorie K.M. Chan, “Some Reflections on the Periodization of the Chinese Language”, p.232.

William Dobson gave the following periods for the early language: Early Archaic Chinese for the language of the eleventh and tenth centuries BC; Middle Archaic Chinese, for the language of the *Chunqiu*; Late Archaic Chinese, for the language of literature of the fourth and third century from the north of China (i.e. *Mengzi*, *Mozi*, *Zhuangzi* and *Zuo Zhuan*); and Late Han Chinese.¹²⁴

There appears, then, to be general agreement that the period after the end of the Han dynasty should be treated as the dividing line after which we see the development of pre-modern Chinese (also referred to as Middle Chinese *zhōnggǔ hànǔ* 中古漢語). This is the basis for the general rule that one should, in principle, avoid using texts dated after this period for comparison when analysing the language of excavated texts. A number of the scholars mentioned above further divide the earlier period into several subdivisions but, in this case, there is no general consensus. There clearly are changes in the language during the pre-Han period, for example in the use of function words (*xūcí* 虛詞), and a description and periodization of such change would be valuable in the analysis of excavated texts.

Chen Yongzheng, in the article mentioned above, argues that excavated texts should be used to solve the periodization problem for this early stage, based on a study of their use of function words and their grammar.¹²⁵ In the past, research of this type has relied mainly on the language of the received texts but this is hindered by the difficulty of dating the composition of these texts, or, in many cases, the varying dates of original composition of their constituent sections. Even if a text can be dated, it is impossible to know to what extent and in what precise manner it was revised by later hands. One example of such a problem is highlighted by the different usage of negative function words seen in different versions of the *Laozi* materials, a point raised by Rudolf Wagner at the Dartmouth conference on the Guodian *Laozi*:

¹²⁴ Bernhard Fuehrer, *Sinological Methodology*, p.274.

¹²⁵ Chen Yongzheng, “Shanggu Hanyu Shang Huashidai De Biaozhi – Chunqiu Zaishu”, see p.338.

The use of negatives in the Mawangdui silk-manuscript copies also differs from that of the received text, but the Guodian pattern is often different from both the Mawangdui copies and the received text. Here, Rudolf Wagner observed that all the careful attention modern-day grammatical studies give to the different forms of negation and their very particular meanings falls shy of what the writers and scribes had in mind. Such studies describe what, in effect, is the result of a hardening of meaning and grammatical function of specific characters that came with the transfer of the old texts into the later standard script. Our grammatical analysis thus analyses the interpretation given to the old texts by the people who managed this transfer, not what the old texts themselves might have wanted to suggest.¹²⁶

Although the dating of excavated texts can be problematic, one can at least be sure that, once buried, they were untouched until excavation: the text is an authentic representation of the language from the period of burial or some period before that.

Chen Yongzheng's article is of particular significance as it argues that the Houma and Wenxian covenant tablets mark the linguistic divide between the language of Western Zhou and Spring and Autumn bronze inscriptions and that of Warring States texts. Chen argues that the use in the Houma and Wenxian tablets of function words that are absent or very rare in Western Zhou and Spring and Autumn bronze inscriptions is evidence for the changes in the written language going on at this time. He discusses the use of several function words seen in the Houma and Wenxian tablets but not in Western Zhou bronzes: *zhě* 者; the conjunction *ér* 而 in complex sentences of various types; and the use of *suǒ* 所 to indicate the conditional. He also notes that these are all sometimes omitted in the covenant texts, supporting his view that this was an early stage of their development during which their use was not fixed. He argues that in bronze inscriptions these grammatical relationships would have been indicated by context rather than function words, the introduction of these function words helped to clarify such relationships. He further notes the use of *yǔ* 與 in the construction “與 A 為 B” (the Wenxian sentence is *yǔ zéi wéi tú* 與賊為徒 “join

¹²⁶ Sarah Allan and Crispin Williams ed., *The Guodian Laozi*, p.130.

with the renegades as a follower”¹²⁷), and that this construction became common in the Warring States period. He also observes that *yān* 焉 is not seen at all in Western Zhou and Spring and Autumn bronze inscriptions, its use in the Wenxian texts is thus the earliest known use in excavated texts.

Chen also points out a very unusual use of *ér* 而 in the Houma tablets. Many of the Houma Pledge Texts have *ér* 而 in the following context (given in bold):

- B.
 I. 既質之後，
 II. 而敢不而巫覡祝史薦說繹之皇君之所，
 IV. 則永亟視之靡夷彼氏。

The example of this covenant given in Chapter One did not have this *ér* 而 and I translated this section as follows:

- B.
 I. After having pledged,
 II. [if he] furthermore, dare not [have] shamans, [ritual] pronouncers and scribes make offerings and report this [i.e. the pledge] at the place of the mighty [former ?] ruler/s,
 IV. Then [may the overseeing spirits], for evermore, immediately detect him, and destroy that [i.e. his] clan.

We should note that, even without the *ér* 而, this clause is grammatically very problematic: *ér* 而 is not expected after *gǎnbù* 敢不, but nor are nouns, i.e. “shamans, [ritual] pronouncers and scribes” (*wū xī zhù shǐ* 巫覡祝史), expected after the verbal negative *bù* 不. I have assumed an implied causative in the translation but this would be very unusual – one would expect a verb such as *shǐ* 使 “cause to” here if that was the intended meaning. And the *ér* 而 which is sometimes added before the nouns does nothing to support this interpretation. The *ér* 而 is also not uncommon enough to be convincingly explained away as a scribal error. It may be that this sentence would be better understood if

¹²⁷ I translate this as “join with the enemy as a follower” which takes the *yǔ* in its verbal usage rather than as the function word generally translated as “together with”, but clearly the use of *yǔ* in this way developed from this verbal use.

reconsidered in the context of Chen's suggestion that the language was undergoing major changes at this time: comparison with similar but better understood structures from earlier and later periods might lead to a convincing explanation for this sentence.

At the explication stage of analysis, the meanings and connotations of particular words is another time-specific factor that must be considered. This relates to the question of Lexical Periodization mentioned above. An awareness that the meaning of a word can undergo major changes, especially a culturally significant word, is essential if one is to avoid anachronistic interpretation.¹²⁸ Arthur Waley illustrates this point in a discussion of "moral" terms, saying that, in all known societies:

All the "moral" words (virtue, righteousness, kindness, nobility), unless they are recent formations, had quite other meanings earlier in their history. "Moral" itself of course simply meant "customary", as did also the Greek *dikaïos* (righteous). *Virtus* originally meant the inherent power in a person or thing; which is very different from what we mean by virtue. *Nobilis* meant belonging to a particular class of society. *Gentilis* did not mean "gentle", but belonging to a certain group of families.¹²⁹

He refers to this earlier period as "auguristic-sacrificial", since "its tendency is to make thought centre largely around the twin occupations of augury and sacrifice".¹³⁰ Waley argues that in China in "[a]bout 400 BC or perhaps earlier a changed attitude towards sacrifice and divination begins to appear;...".¹³¹ This is the transition to the "moral" stage during which words took on new meanings. Waley gives an example: "... *i* [yì 義], which at first meant little more than sensible, reasonable conduct, came in the end to mean something very like 'conscience'".¹³²

¹²⁸ A classic work on such words in English is: Raymond Williams, *Keywords*.

¹²⁹ Arthur Waley, *The Way and its Power*, p.20.

¹³⁰ Arthur Waley, *The Way and its Power*, p.21.

¹³¹ Arthur Waley, *The Way and its Power*, p.24.

¹³² Arthur Waley, *The Way and its Power*, p.33.

The Houma and Wenxian covenant tablets are dated to the early fifth century BC, just before the transitional period Waley is talking about. Part of a ritual ceremony involving sacrifice, the texts appear to be very much products of the “auguristical-sacrificial” period. Two of the Wenxian oath types, types 3 and 7, are concerned with the involvement of the covenantors in the prayers and sacrifices of their lord.¹³³ Thus, in interpreting the texts we need to be aware of this semantic context, particularly when dealing with words that were particularly affected in the transition to the “moral” stage. For example, I argue that the term *dé* 德 has its earlier “auguristical-sacrificial” meaning in the Wenxian texts and refers to a type of awesome power linked to one’s clan and ancestors and does not have its later philosophical meaning or connotations. Susan Roosevelt Weld, referring to the phrase in which *dé* 德 occurs, says:

Having examined the formulaic context of the phrase in question, and considering the sacrificial pits in the covenant field in which these tablets were buried, it is clear that it must be understood against the background of the fierce, bloody ritual of covenant, in which the deities are summoned, and the ancestors’ spirits enlisted to supervise, and instantly avenge, any breach. It would be anachronistic to read the phrase instead in the abstract, contemplative and secular mood of the philosophical classics.¹³⁴

In the same way, when discussing the Houma and Wenxian phrase *zhōngxīn* 中心, Weld argues that it is incorrect to interpret the first character as *zhōng* 忠 “loyalty”. The phrase also occurs as *pàn qí zhōng xīn* 判其中心 “split open his heart” clearly showing that the metaphor is a visceral one.¹³⁵

A possibility that should be considered in the case of these covenant tablets is that, even when created, they were not written in the standard literary language. That this might be the case is suggested by the highly formulaic nature of the texts. All but a handful of the Houma and Wenxian tablets follow an identical formula and almost all the elements in the formula are themselves identical

¹³³ Chapter Three, section 3.2.1.

¹³⁴ Susan Roosevelt Weld, “On the Interpretation of the Wenxian WT1K17 tablets”, p.3.

¹³⁵ Susan Roosevelt Weld, “On the Interpretation of the Wenxian WT1K17 tablets”, p.10; Susan Roosevelt Weld, “Covenant in Jin’s Walled Cities: The Discoveries at Houma and Wenxian”, pp.380 – 382.

formulaic phrases. As Christoph Harbsmeier points out, in an article on the use of *suǒ* 所 as a subordinating particle:

It is a well known fact that prayers, oaths, liturgies and the like often preserve old linguistic forms. My suspicion is that the use of *suǒ* as a subordinating particle may have been more common at earlier stages of the language than it is in AC.¹³⁶

Harbsmeier uses the term “AC” to refer to “the literary language current (and evolving) in China around 500 – 200 BC”.¹³⁷ His comment is particularly pertinent since he is discussing a use of *suǒ* 所 found in the Houma and Wenxian tablets. Thus the Houma and Wenxian texts are dated to the earlier part of Harbsmeier’s AC period, i.e. early fifth century, and use a particle in a way which Harbsmeier feels may be archaic. Nevertheless, we should observe that Chen Yongzheng, in the article discussed above, suggested that the *suǒ* 所 was an innovation at this period, not an archaism.

Constance Cook remarks on the use of earlier formulaic language seen in certain Chu bronze inscriptions.¹³⁸ In describing an inscription on a fifth century Chu bell, made for a Zizhang, she says:

Zizhang’s scribe employed a combination of archaic and new rhetorical forms. The inscription begins with a dating formula going back to the late Shang–early Western Zhou period. . . . The use of a Shang-style dating formula either represents a purposeful archaism or ignorance on the part of the scribe. It also suggests that this scribe did belong to the Zhou tradition and symbolizes the beginning of an era when, the Zhou mandate having clearly slipped, kings began to rely on other, perhaps local, traditions to preserve their legitimacy. These local traditions may have preserved conventions dating back to the Shang and early Western Zhou periods. We see, for example, that after stating the year, the scribe noted that the Chu king was “returning from Xiyang.” Noting the king’s movements goes back to the era when the state was maintained through traveling and

¹³⁶ Christoph Harbsmeier, *Aspects of Classical Chinese Syntax*, p.219.

¹³⁷ Christoph Harbsmeier, *Aspects of Classical Chinese Syntax*, p.1.

¹³⁸ Constance A. Cook, “The Ideology of the Chu Ruling Class”, pp.74 – 75. Note that such usage is not standard in all Chu bronze inscriptions. Cook refers to the “piecemeal nature of the language of Warring States period inscriptions” (p.74). For example, the “calligraphy and rhetoric” of third century BC Chu ritual vessel inscriptions was “similar to that found on Warring States bamboo texts” (p.75).

gift-giving feasts performed in situ for chiefs initiated into the early Zhou order.¹³⁹

Cook gives another example, this time of an inscription on a weapon:

Whereas weapon inscriptions are normally perfunctory statements of manufacture, the Chu inscription borrows from the rhetoric of legitimation seen earlier in the inscriptions of sixth-century ritual bells and food vessels: “Chu king Yin Shang, stern, reverent, and respectful, made a chariot lance dagger-axe, a dagger to be used in order to glorify and extol Wen and Wu.” The concept of extolling one’s ancestors (*zhaoyang*) through the military expansion of the empire preserved the spirit of the Zhou conquest.¹⁴⁰

Apart from the use of archaic language we also need to be aware of texts which may use a specialist terminology, such as medical and legal works. Thus, when dealing with the covenant texts, we must consider whether any of the vocabulary may have had a specialist definition in the context of oath.¹⁴¹

We can conclude that it is essential to interpret an excavated text in the context of the language of the time and place in which it was produced. Relevant features of its genre should also be considered; in the case of the Houma and Wenxian texts these would include possible archaism and specialist legal or ritual terminology.¹⁴²

5.5 Literature survey: concluding remarks

This survey of the literature on methodology for palaeographic analysis of ancient Chinese graphs demonstrates that, while methods of analysis are

¹³⁹ Constance A. Cook, “The Ideology of the Chu Ruling Class”, p.74.

¹⁴⁰ Constance A. Cook, “The Ideology of the Chu Ruling Class”, p.74.

¹⁴¹ Ulrich Lau has made several detailed studies on legal terminology in excavated early Chinese texts and is preparing a dictionary of early Chinese legal terms. His previous studies include: Ulrich Lau, “Vom Schaf zur Gerechtigkeit – Der sakrale Hintergrund einiger frühchinesischer Rechtstermini”; Ulrich Lau, *Quellenstudien zur Landvergabe und Bodenübertragung in der westlichen Zhou-Dynastie (1045?-771 v. Chr.)*; Ulrich Lau, “Criminal Procedure in the Early Han Period as Reflected in the Recently Discovered Bamboo Tablets of Zhangjiashan”; Ulrich Lau, “Die Rekonstruktion des Strafprozesses und die Prinzipien der Strafzumessung zu Beginn der Han-Zeit im Lichte des *Zouyanshu*”.

¹⁴² When examining whether the Houma and Wenxian texts use archaic language, one would be particularly interested in determining whether the specific stipulations, that is the demand that the covenantor needs to understand and act on, also use an archaic style, or whether they are written in the contemporary style for ease of comprehension.

identified and certain other issues discussed in this literature, an essential element of the methodology, that is, how these techniques are combined in a procedure which can be methodically applied to unidentified graphs, is not explained in any detail. In practice, it is only with such a procedural methodology that a student could adopt these methods in a coherent approach to the analysis of palaeographic materials. It was the lack of such a tool that led me to construct a procedural methodology for the analysis of the Wenxian materials: this is described in Chapter Two.

Appendix 2 Bibliography

Sections:

1. Reference works (cited in main text by title)
2. Received texts (cited in main text by title of edition)
3. Excavated texts (cited in main text by title of edition)
4. Electronic concordances and reference works
5. Secondary sources

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Appendix 3 Text corpus

Received texts

Text	Concordance used:					
	Academia Sinica “人文” ¹	Academia Sinica “上古” ²	故宮 “寒泉” ³	Own file ⁴	Paper concordance ⁵	No concordance available
史記	✓					
漢書	✓					
後漢書	✓					
周易	✓					
尚書	✓					
毛詩	✓					
周禮	✓					
儀禮	✓					
禮記	✓					
春秋左傳	✓					
春秋公羊傳	✓					
春秋穀梁傳	✓					
論語	✓					
孝經	✓					
爾雅	✓					
孟子	✓					
抱朴子內篇	✓					
莊子	✓					
國語	✓					
古本竹書紀年	✓					
墨子	✓					
列子	✓					
晏子春秋	✓					
戰國策	✓					

¹ “Ren Wen Ziliaoku Shi Sheng Ban 1.1” [online], available from <http://www.sinica.edu.tw/ftms-bin/ftmsw3>.

² “Shanggu Hanyu Yuliaoku – Zhai Yao” [online], available from <http://www.sinica.edu.tw/ftms-bin/ftmsw3>.

³ “Gu Gong ‘Han Quan’ Gudian Wenxian Quanwen Jiansuo Ziliao Ku [online], available from <http://libnt.npm.gov.tw/s25/>.

⁴ Uses texts from: Zhonghua Wenhua Wang [online], available from <http://www.geocities.com/Area51/Hollow/3198/>. These texts were searched using the program “Search and Replace”, see: <http://www.funduc.com/wearch-replace.htm>.

⁵ See Bibliography.

Text	Concordance used:					
	Academia Sinica “人文”	Academia Sinica “上古”	故宮 “寒泉”	Own file	Paper concordance	No concordance available
老子	✓					
山海經	✓					
鬼谷子	✓					
孔子家語	✓					
吳越春秋	✓					
楚辭	✓					
荀子		✓				
韓非子		✓				
呂氏春秋		✓				
商君書		✓				
管子		✓				
孫子		✓				
吳子			✓			
慎子			✓			
資治通鑑：周紀			✓			
資治通鑑：秦紀			✓			
資治通鑑：漢紀			✓			
逸周書				✓		
大戴禮記				✓		
穆天子傳				✓		
淮南子				✓		
鶡冠子				✓		
尉繚子				✓		
越絕書				✓		
韓詩外傳				✓		
皇帝內經（素問 and 靈樞經）				✓		
太公六韜				✓		
司馬法				✓		
公孫龍子				✓		
孔叢子				✓		
文子				✓		
法言				✓		
釋名				✓		
列女傳				✓		

Text	Concordance used:					
	Academia Sinica “人文”	Academia Sinica “上古”	故宮 “寒泉”	Own file	Paper concordance	No concordance available
鹽鐵論				✓		
說苑				✓		
春秋繁露				✓		
新序				✓		
新語				✓		
關尹子				✓		
方言				✓		
申子					✓	
白虎通					✓	
獨斷						✓
說文解字						✓

Excavated texts

Note: The majority of excavated texts were searched using the Academia Sinica Institute of History and Philology’s searchable database of excavated texts materials.⁶ The database is called the “Jian Bo Jin Shi Ziliaoku – Quanwen 簡帛金石資料庫—全文”. One cannot search individual texts using this concordance, all texts are searched with each query. The database gives a catalogue of the works used to provide the materials it includes.⁷ The following list gives the names of these works. Full publication details, as supplied on the database website, are given after this list.

⁶ “Jian Bo Jin Shi Ziliaoku” [online], available from <<http://saturn.ihp.sinica.edu.tw/~wenwu/search.htm>>.

⁷ <<http://saturn.ihp.sinica.edu.tw/~wenwu/bib.htm>>. Note that texts are gradually being added to this database; the list given here was made on March 2nd, 2002.

Text	Concordance used:		
	Academia Sinica “簡帛” ⁸	Paper concordance ⁹	No concordance available
Oracle-bone inscriptions		✓	
Bronze inscriptions		✓	
詛楚文			✓
中山懷王墓文字釋文	✓		
包山二號楚墓	✓		
曾侯乙墓	✓		
雲夢龍崗 6 號秦簡釋文	✓		
天水放馬灘秦簡甲種 《日書》釋文	✓		
睡虎地秦墓竹簡	✓		
居延新簡	✓		
居延漢簡甲乙簡	✓		
居延漢簡釋文合校	✓		
疏勒河流域出土漢簡	✓		
敦煌漢簡	✓		
敦煌漢簡校文	✓		
敦煌漢簡釋文	✓		
散見簡牘合輯	✓		
漢簡《奏讞書》釋文 (一)(二)	✓		
秦漢金文錄	✓		
馬王堆(1)老子甲本 等	✓		
馬王堆(3)春秋事語 等	✓		
馬王堆帛書：二三子 問	✓		
馬王堆帛書：刑德	✓		
帛書《刑德》乙本釋 文校讀	✓		
馬王堆帛書：周易繫 辭	✓		
馬王堆帛書：易之義	✓		
馬王堆帛書：昭力	✓		

⁸ “Jian Bo Jin Shi Ziliaoku” [online], available from <<http://saturn.ihp.sinica.edu.tw/~wenwu/search.htm>>.

⁹ See Bibliography.

Text	Concordance used:		
	Academia Sinica “簡帛”	Paper concordance	No concordance available
馬王堆帛書：要	✓		
馬王堆帛書：繆和	✓		
銀雀山漢墓竹簡(壹) 孫子兵法	✓		
馬王堆漢墓帛書 (肆)52病方等	✓		
武威漢代醫簡	✓		
張家山漢簡《引書》 釋文	✓		
脈書	✓		
兩漢鏡銘集錄	✓		
中國古代碑文	✓		
墓券	✓		
漢代石刻集成	✓		
秦印資料庫	✓		
秦漢南北朝官印徵存	✓		
漢印文字徵及補遺	✓		
漢碑集釋	✓		
江蘇東海縣尹灣漢墓 簡牘釋文選	✓		
國家圖書館藏居延漢 簡	✓		
羅布淖爾漢簡釋文	✓		
未央宮簡	✓		
未央宮骨簽	✓		
郭店楚墓老子釋文	✓		
郭店楚墓太一生水釋 文	✓		
郭店楚墓緇衣釋文	✓		
郭店楚墓窮達以時釋 文	✓		
郭店楚墓五行釋文	✓		
郭店楚墓唐虞之道釋 文	✓		
郭店楚墓成之聞之釋 文	✓		
郭店楚墓尊德義釋文	✓		
郭店楚墓性自命出釋 文	✓		
郭店楚墓六德釋文	✓		
郭店楚墓語叢釋文	✓		
尹灣漢墓簡牘釋文	✓		
敦煌懸泉漢簡釋文選	✓		

Text	Concordance used:		
	Academia Sinica “簡帛”	Paper concordance	No concordance available
馬王堆帛書《式法》 釋文摘要	✓		
江陵張家山漢簡《算 數書》釋文	✓		
周家臺三〇號秦墓簡 牘	✓		
蕭家草場二六號漢墓 竹簡(遣策)	✓		
龍崗秦簡	✓		
敦煌懸泉漢簡釋粹	✓		
定州西漢中山懷王墓 竹簡《六韜》釋文及 校注	✓		

Full publication details of the works used in the Academia Sinica, Institute of History and Philology's database: “Jian Bo Jin Shi Ziliaoku – Quanwen 簡帛金石資料庫－全文” are given here, as they appear on that website:¹⁰

- 1 中山懷王墓文字釋文 6,205 字
- 2 包山二號楚墓
湖北省荊沙鐵路考古隊,《包山楚墓》,北京,文物,1991 19,966 字
- 3 曾侯乙墓
湖北博物館,《曾侯乙墓》,文物,1989 11,046 字
- 4 雲夢龍崗 6 號秦簡釋文
《考古學集刊》8,1994,99-104 4,562 字
- 5 天水放馬灘秦簡甲種《日書》釋文
甘肅省文物考古研究所,秦簡整理小組,收《秦漢簡牘論文集》頁 1-6,甘肅人民出版社,1989 3,207 字
- 6 睡虎地秦墓竹簡
睡虎地秦墓竹簡整理小組,北京,文物,1990 87,069 字
- 7 居延新簡
甘肅省文物考古研究所、甘肅博物館、文化部古文獻研究室、中國科學院歷史研究所,北京,文物,1990 246,421 字
- 8 居延漢簡甲乙篇
中國社會科學院考古研究所編,上海,中華,1980 306,376 字
- 9 居延漢簡釋文合校
謝桂華、李均明,朱國炤合編,北京,文物出版社,1987 246,078 字
- 10 疏勒河流域出土漢簡
林梅村、李均明編,北京,文物,1984 56,699 字
- 11 敦煌漢簡
甘肅省文物考古研究所編,北京,中華書局,1991 154,030 字
- 12 敦煌漢簡校文
勞榘,《居延漢簡考釋之部》,頁 205-240 所附,台北,中央研究院歷史語言研究所,1960 386,745 字

¹⁰ <<http://saturn.ihp.sinica.edu.tw/~wenwu/bib.htm>>

- 13 敦煌漢簡釋文
甘肅人民出版社，1991 104,524 字
- 14 散見簡牘合輯
李均明、何雙全，北京，文物，1990 60,006 字
- 15 漢簡《奏讞書》釋文（一）（二）
江陵張家山漢簡整理小組，《文物》1993.8，1995.3 9,758 字
- 16 秦漢金文錄
容庚，北平，中央研究院史語所，1931 57,946 字
- 17 馬王堆(1)老子甲本等
國家文物局考古文獻研究室，《馬王堆漢墓帛書》(壹)，文物，1980 67,872 字
- 18 馬王堆(3)春秋事語等
國家文物局考古文獻研究室，《馬王堆漢墓帛書》(參)，文物，1983 23,530 字
- 19 馬王堆帛書：二三子問
《道家文化研究》第三輯 3,857 字
- 20 馬王堆帛書：刑德
傅舉有、陳松長編，《馬王堆漢墓文物》，湖南出版社，1992 2,319 字
- 21 帛書《刑德》乙本釋文校讀
傅舉有、陳松長編，《馬王堆漢墓文物》，湖南出版社，1992 4,944 字
- 22 馬王堆帛書：周易繫辭
《道家文化研究》第三輯 5,620 字
- 23 馬王堆帛書：易之義
《道家文化研究》第三輯 4,474 字
- 24 馬王堆帛書：昭力
《道家文化研究》第三輯 1,478 字
- 25 馬王堆帛書：要
《道家文化研究》第三輯 1,677 字
- 26 馬王堆帛書：繆和
《道家文化研究》第三輯 7,215 字
- 27 銀雀山漢墓竹簡(壹)孫子兵法等
北京，文物，1985 47,024 字
- 28 馬王堆漢墓帛書(肆)52病方等
北京，文物，1985 7,441 字
- 29 武威漢代醫簡
甘肅省博物館、武威縣文化館合編，文物，1975 16,507 字
- 30 張家山漢簡《引書》釋文
張家山漢簡整理組，《文物》1990.10
- 31 脈書
《文物》1989.7
- 32 兩漢鏡銘集錄
林素清教授集錄並提供，共收漢代 1745 鏡銘文 115,197 字
- 33 中國古代磚文
王鏞、李淼編撰，北京，知識出版社，1990 19,929 字
- 34 墓券
池田溫，〈中國歷代墓券略考〉，《創立四十周年紀念論集》，東京大學東洋文化研究所，1981 34,673 字
- 35 漢代石刻集成
永田英正編，《漢代石刻集成□圖版、釋文編》，京都，同朋舍，1994 51,769 字
- 36 秦印資料庫
感謝本所同仁陳昭容女士提供秦印資料庫，其資料來源見說明 1867 筆
- 37 秦漢南北朝官印徵存

- 羅福頤主編，北京，文物出版社，1987 111,961 字
- 38 漢印文字徵及補遺
羅福頤，《漢印文字徵》、《漢印文字徵補遺》，文物出版社，1978、1980 120,204 字
- 39 漢碑集釋
高文編，河南大學出版社，1985 51,340 字
- 40 江蘇東海縣尹灣漢墓簡牘釋文選
《文物》，1996 年 8 期 7850 字
- 41 國家圖書館藏居延漢簡
史語所簡牘小組釋文 942 字
- 42 羅布淖爾漢簡釋文
史語所簡牘小組釋文 1328 字
- 43 未央宮簡
1724 字
- 44 未央宮骨簽
10219 字
- 45 郭店楚墓老子釋文
《郭店楚墓竹簡》，北京，文物，1998 3823 字
- 46 郭店楚墓太一生水釋文
《郭店楚墓竹簡》，北京，文物，1998 680 字
- 47 郭店楚墓緇衣釋文
《郭店楚墓竹簡》，北京，文物，1998 2737 字
- 48 郭店楚墓窮達以時釋文
《郭店楚墓竹簡》，北京，文物，1998 672 字
- 49 郭店楚墓五行釋文
《郭店楚墓竹簡》，北京，文物，1998 2719 字
- 50 郭店楚墓唐虞之道釋文
《郭店楚墓竹簡》，北京，文物，1998 1497 字
- 51 郭店楚墓成之聞之釋文
《郭店楚墓竹簡》，北京，文物，1998 1806 字
- 52 郭店楚墓尊德義釋文
《郭店楚墓竹簡》，北京，文物，1998 1852 字
- 53 郭店楚墓性自命出釋文
《郭店楚墓竹簡》北京，文物，1998 2085 字
- 54 郭店楚墓六德釋文
《郭店楚墓竹簡》，北京，文物，1998 1383 字
- 55 郭店楚墓語叢釋文
《郭店楚墓竹簡》，北京，文物，1998 3063 字
- 56 尹灣漢墓簡牘釋文
7058 字
- 57 敦煌懸泉漢簡釋文選
《文物》，2000:5 ; 2000:12 8561 字
- 58 馬王堆帛書《式法》釋文摘要
《文物》，2000:7 4301 字
- 59 江陵張家山漢簡《算數書》釋文
《文物》，2000:9 8543 字
- 60 周家臺三〇號秦墓簡牘
《關沮秦漢墓簡牘》，湖北省荊州市周梁玉橋遺址博物館，北京，2001 8387 字
- 61 蕭家草場二六號漢墓竹簡(遺策)
《關沮秦漢墓簡牘》，湖北省荊州市周梁玉橋遺址博物館，北京，2001 260 字

- 62 龍崗秦簡
中國文物研究所、湖北省文物考古研究所，北京，2001 4294 字
- 63 敦煌懸泉漢簡釋粹
中國文物研究所、甘肅省文物考古研究所，上海，2001 20095 字
- 64 定州西漢中山懷王墓竹簡《六韜》釋文及校注
《文物》，2001:5 5527 字

Appendix 4

Figures

摹本

薛武不隳不夏也。公與公命不盡不盡也。曾止回
念念乎時止命不盡或等或等及及不不而二會皆不
此少也。遷越在及不也。杜維之。杜維之。及不也。維

薛武不隳不夏也。公與公命不盡不盡也。曾止回
念念乎時止命不盡或等或等及及不不而二會皆不
此少也。遷越在及不也。杜維之。杜維之。及不也。維

釋文

趙敢不閉其腹心以事其宗而敢不盡從嘉之明
定宮平時之命而敢或鼓改助及內卑不守二宮者而
敢又志復趙尼及其孫。執虎之孫。執直及其孫。趙

錕之孫。史醜及其孫。于晉邦之地者及群。序明者。慮
君其明。亟規之。厥。秦。非。是。

Figure 1: Houma Lineage Covenant Text 156:1, copy and transcription

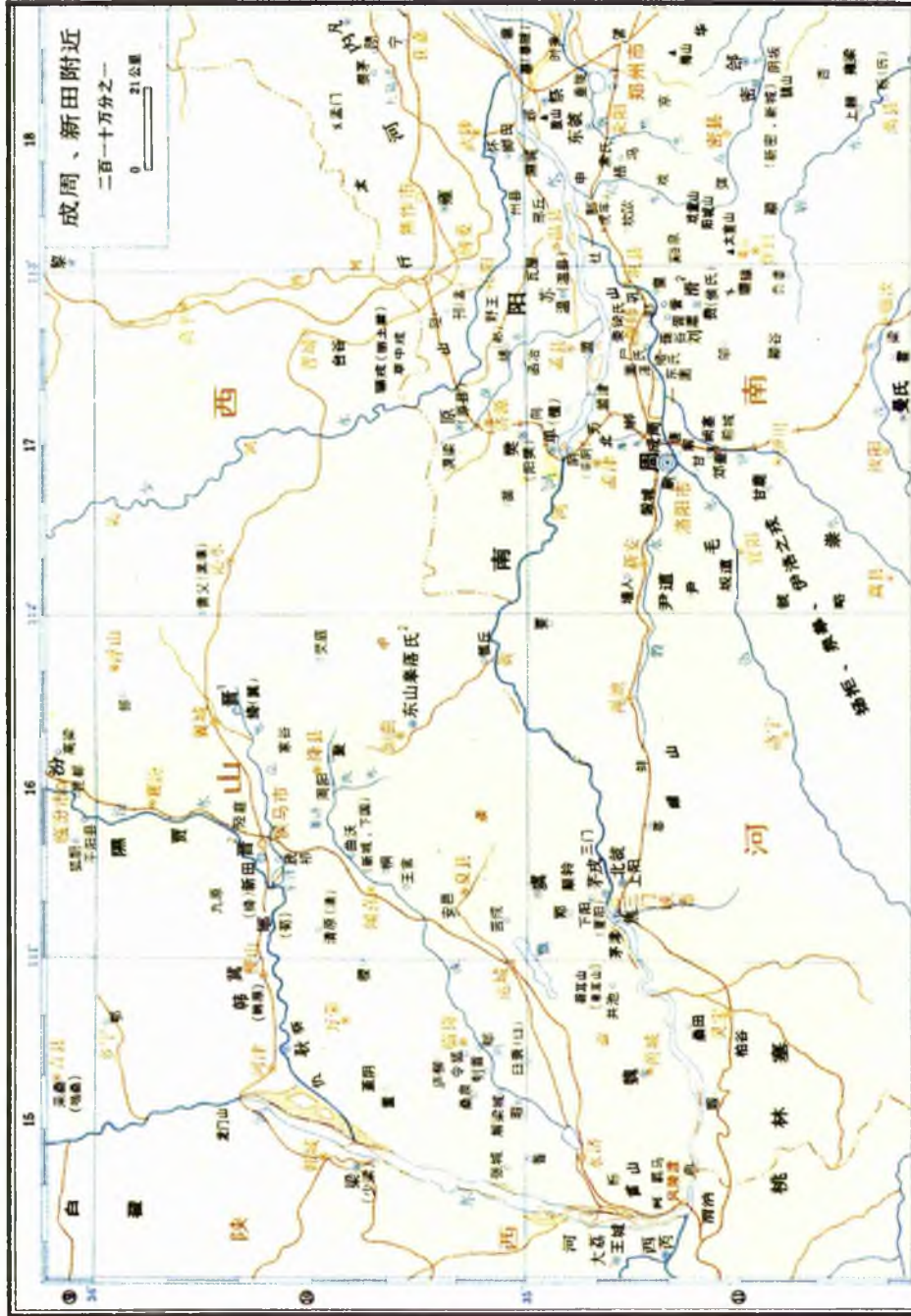


Figure 2: Historical map of Spring and Autumn period showing positions of present-day Houma and Wenxian



Figure 3: Houma tablets: 67:1 (left) and 194:2 (right: front and back)

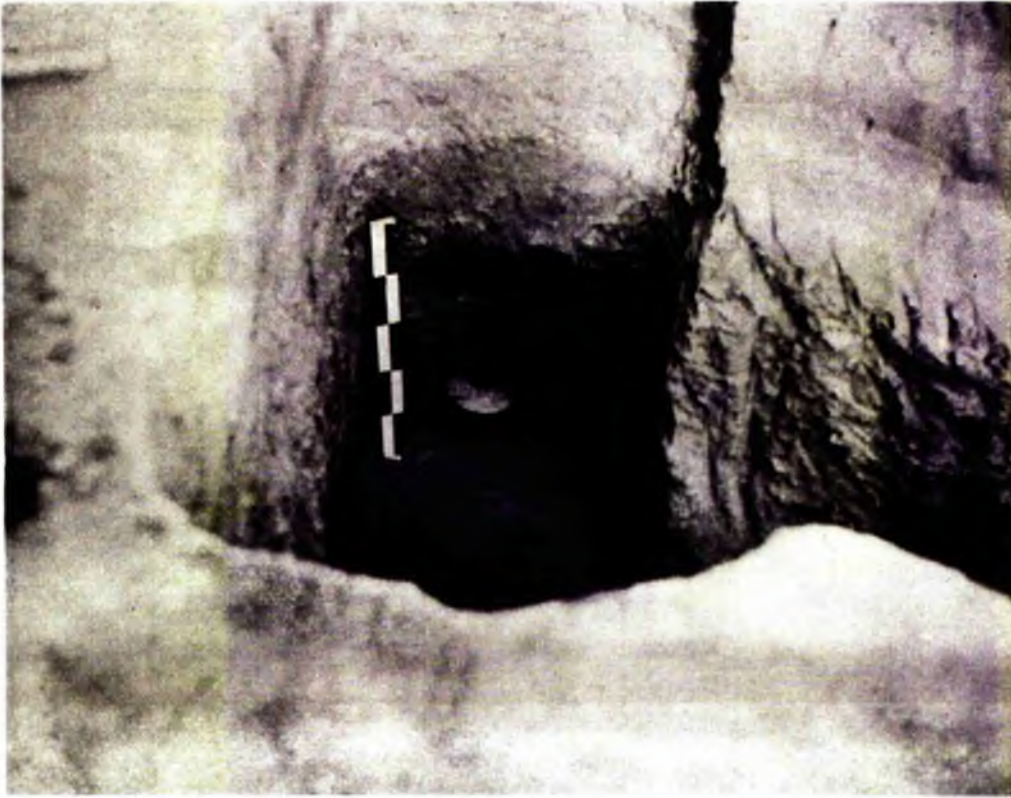
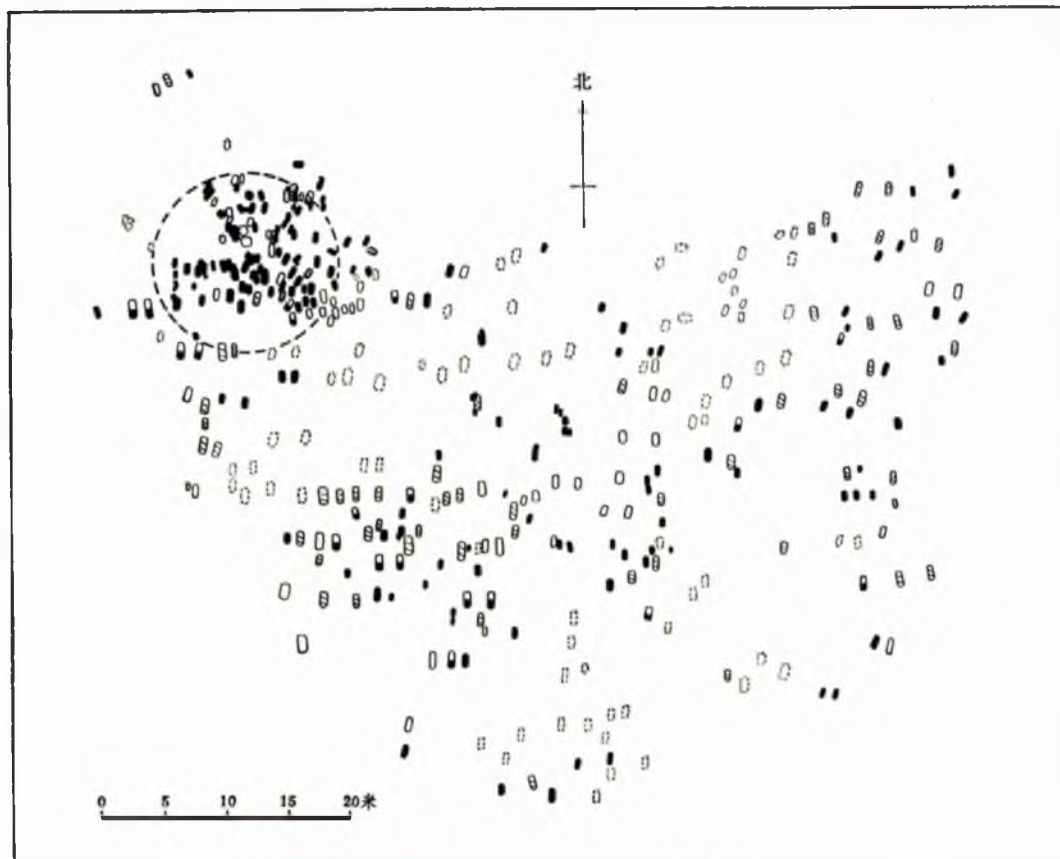


Figure 4: Houma pit with jade object in wall niche



图例：●羊坑 ○牛坑 ○马坑 ○已发掘无兽骨 ○已钻探未发掘
 说明：左上方虚线标示圆圈为盟书出土范围

Figure 5: Distribution of pits on the terrace at Houma (the area where covenant pits were found is indicated by the broken-line circle)



Figure 6: Houma pits during excavation

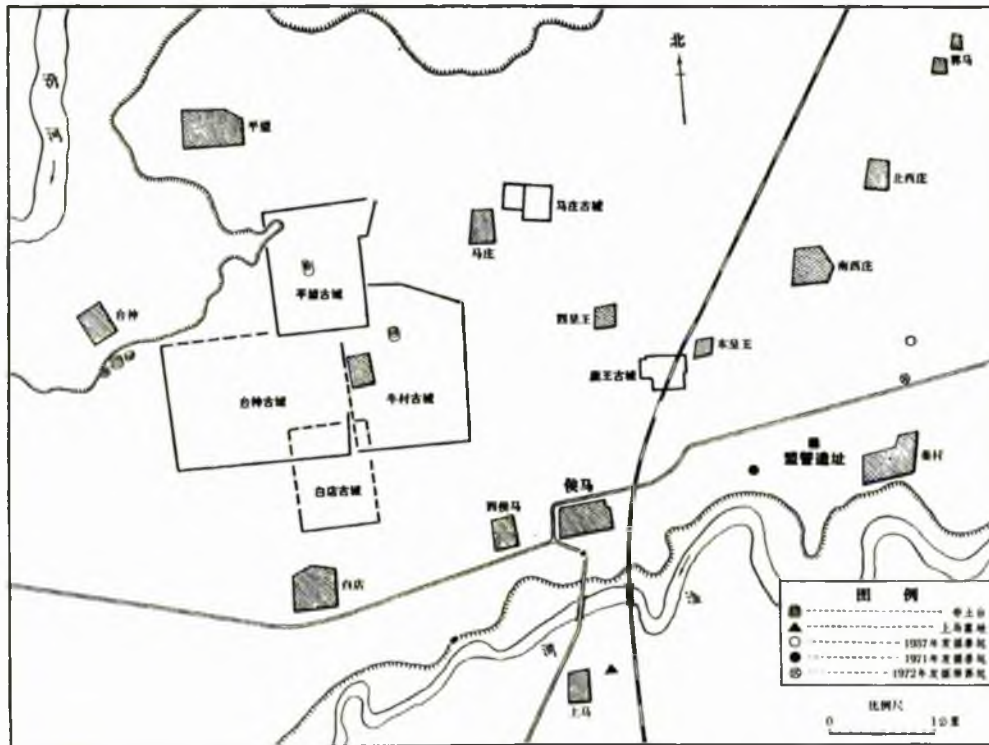


Figure 7: Xintian site at Houma with covenant site indicated (marked with black square)



Figure 8: Houma Lineage Covenant Text 156:1, photograph



一五六：二〇

Figure 9: Houma Lineage Covenant Text 156:20, photograph

或復入之于晉邦之中者則永至規之麻臺非是既質之後而敢不巫現
 獻統繹之皇君之所則永至規之麻臺非是閔登之孫寓之行道弗殺君其規之

金盃章自質于君所敢命出入于趙尼之所及孫魏及其子乙及其白父叔父弟孫
 魏直及其孫魏整魏等之孫魏晉魏魏之孫中郝魏程之孫魏木之孫政及新君弟孫隆及新君
 弟孫趙朱及其孫趙喬及其孫柳政之孫柳郵政之孫閔令之孫趙館之孫史魏及其孫郵癩
 及孫邵城及其孫司寇蕭之孫司寇結之孫及群序明者章顯嘉之身及孫

或復入之于晉邦之中者則永至規之麻臺非是既質之後而敢不巫現 史
 獻統繹之皇君之所則永至規之麻臺非是閔登之孫寓之行道弗殺君其規之

金盃章自質于君所敢命出入于趙尼之所及孫魏及其子乙及其白父叔父弟孫
 魏直及其孫魏整魏等之孫魏晉魏魏之孫中郝魏程之孫魏木之孫政及新君弟孫隆及新君
 弟孫趙朱及其孫趙喬及其孫柳政之孫柳郵政之孫閔令之孫趙館之孫史魏及其孫郵癩
 及孫邵城及其孫司寇蕭之孫司寇結之孫及群序明者章顯嘉之身及孫

Figure 10: Houma Lineage Covenant Text 156:20, copy

Figure 11: Houma Lineage Covenant Text 156:20, transcription



Figure 12: Wenxian covenant tablets from pit WT1K1: photographs from *Wenwu* 1983.3 article (page 1)



Figure 13: Wenxian covenant tablets from pit WT1K1: photographs from *Wenwu* 1983.3 article (page 2)



Figure 14: Wenxian covenant tablets from pit WT1K1: photographs from *Wenwu* 1983.3 article (page 3)

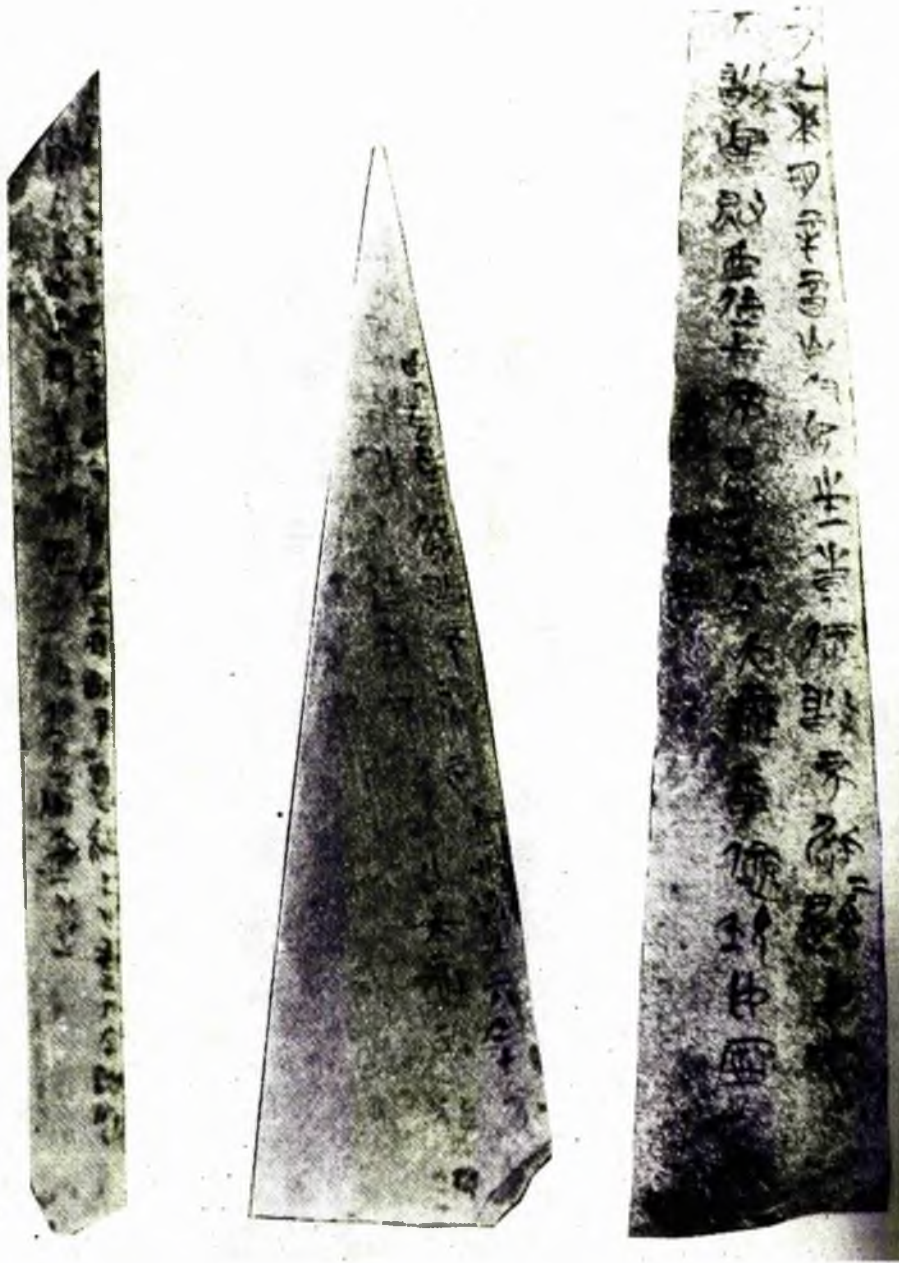


Figure 15: Wenxian covenant tablets from pit WT1K1: photographs from *Wenwu* 1983.3 article (page 4)



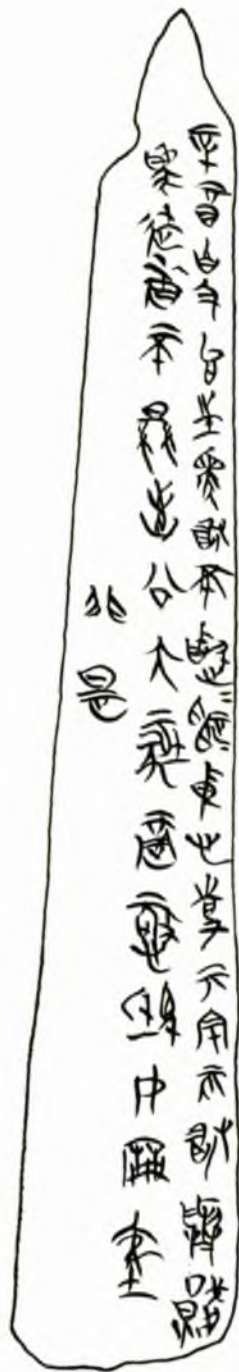
图三 T1坎1:1845

图四 T1坎1:1845

图五 T1坎1:3863

图六 T1坎1:3780

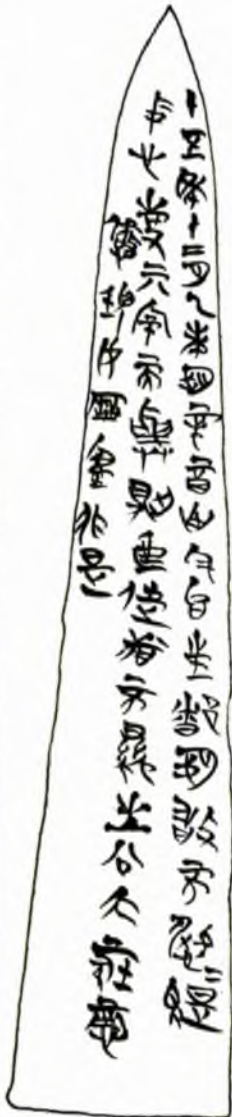
Figure 16: Wenxian covenant tablets from pit WT1K1: copies from *Wenwu* 1983.3 article (page 1)



图七 T1坑1:3211



图八 T1坑1:3216



图九 T1坑1:2182

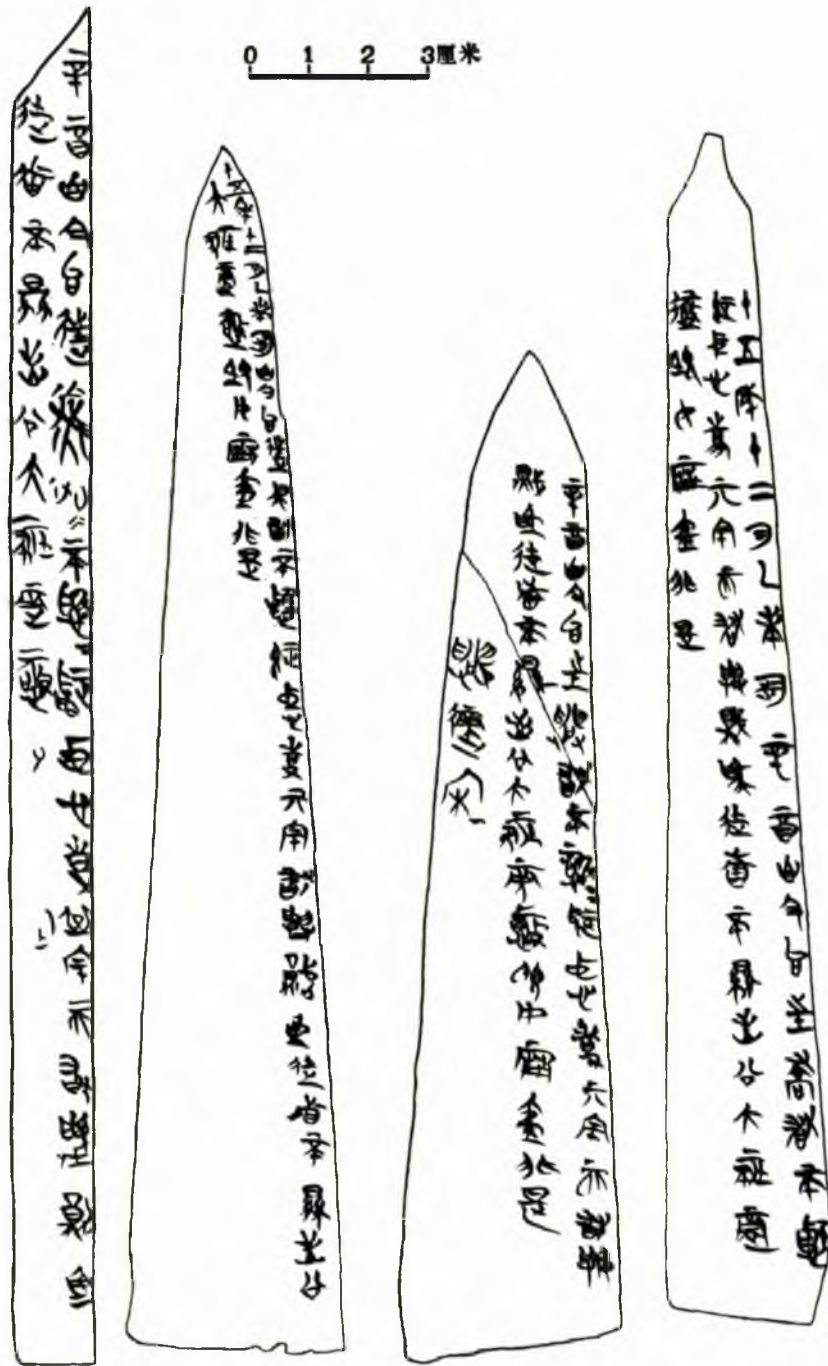


图一〇 T1坑1:2857



图一一 T1坑1:2857

Figure 17: Wenxian covenant tablets from pit WT1K1: copies from *Wenwu* 1983.3 article (page 2)



图一二 T1坎1:4585

图一三 T1坎1:1961

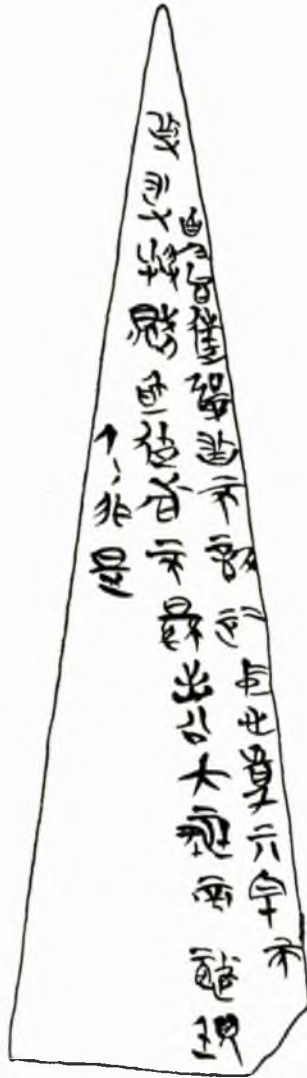
图一四 T1坎1:3797

图一五 T1坎1:3802

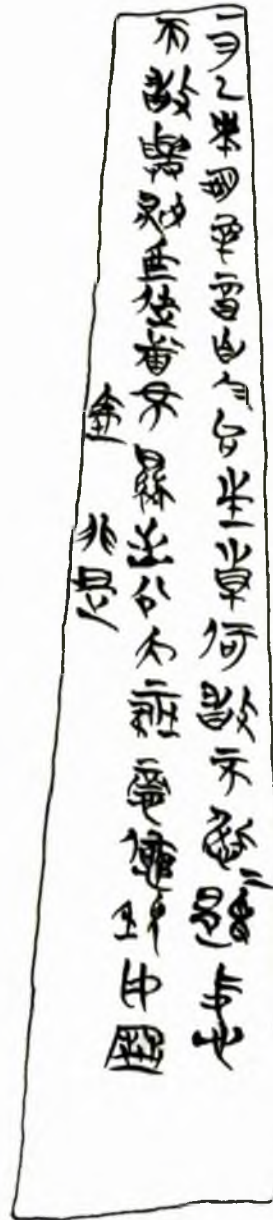
Figure 18: Wenxian covenant tablets from pit WT1K1: copies from *Wenwu* 1983.3 article (page 3)



图一六 T1坎1:4499



图一七 T1坎1:137

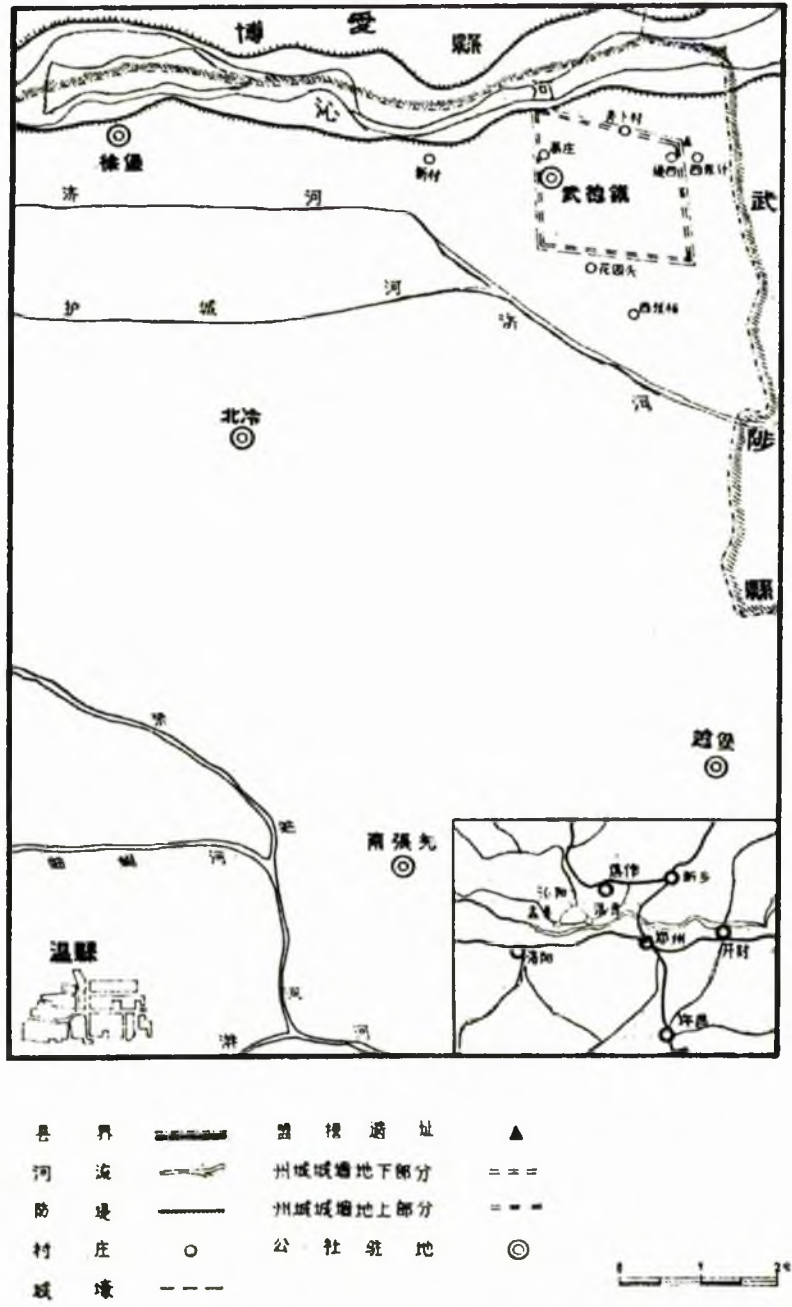


图一八 T1坎1:2279

Figure 19: Wenxian covenant tablets from pit WT1K1: copies from *Wenwu* 1983.3 article (page 4)

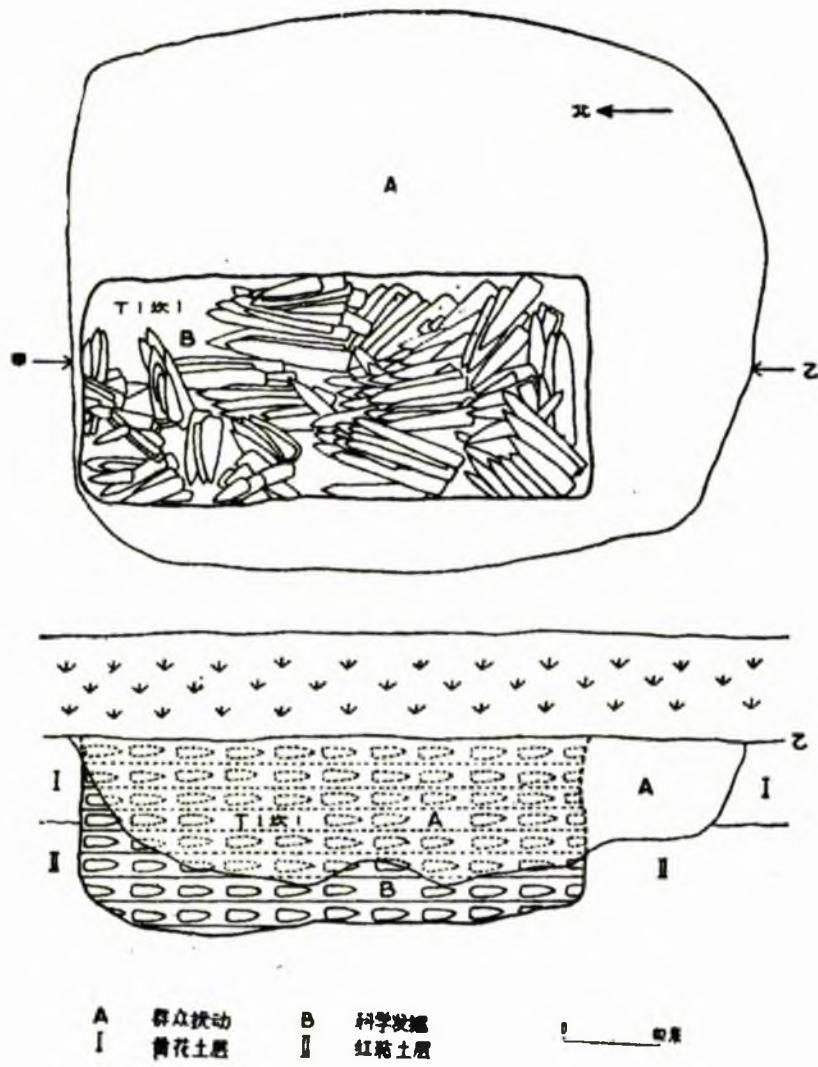


Figure 20: Wenxian covenant tablet WT1K1 - 3802: photograph and copy from Wenwu 1983.3 article



图一 温县盟誓遗址与州城遗址位置图

Figure 21: Position of the Wenxian site (marked with black triangle)



图二 T1坎1平、剖面图

Figure 22: Wenxian pit WT1K1: cross sections

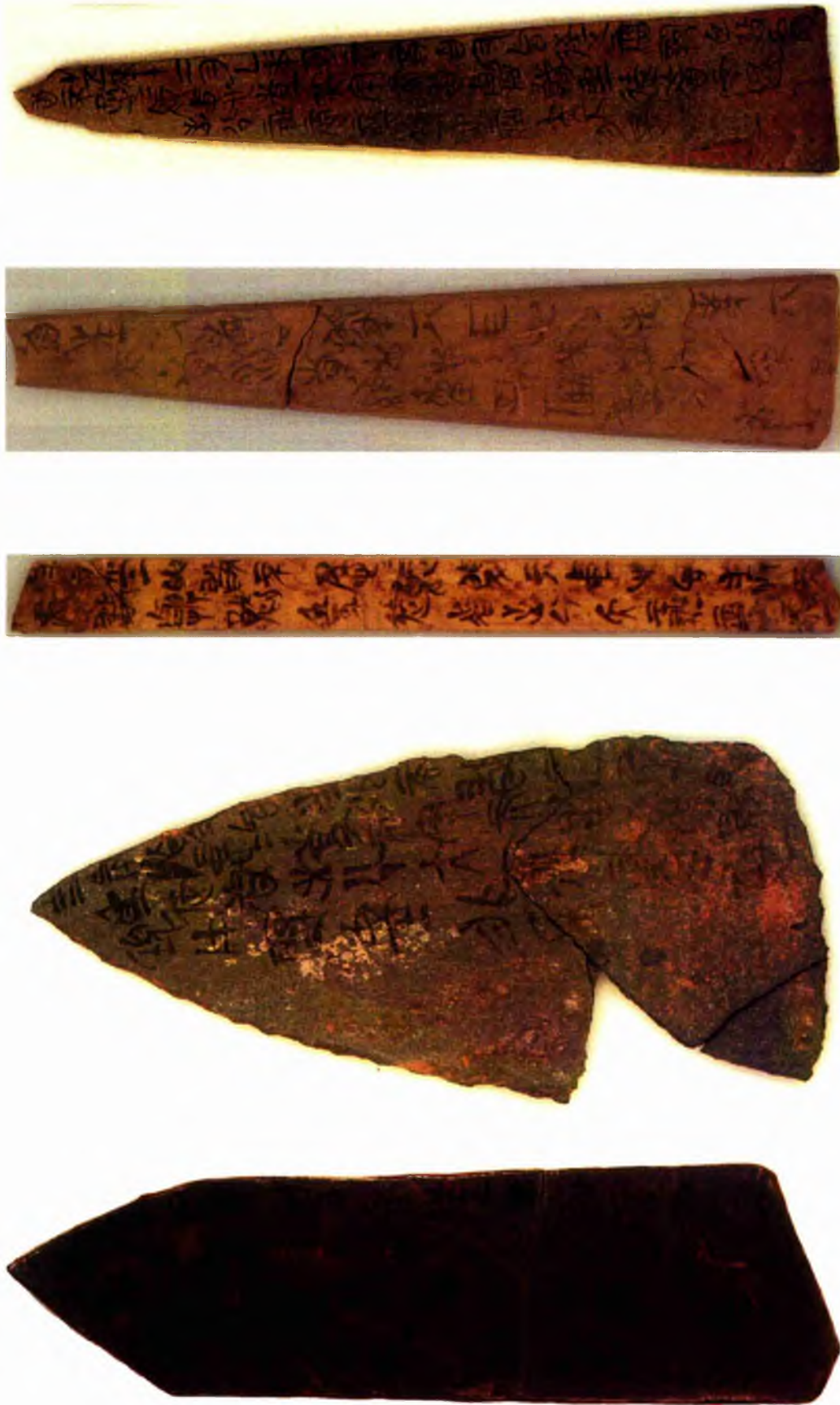
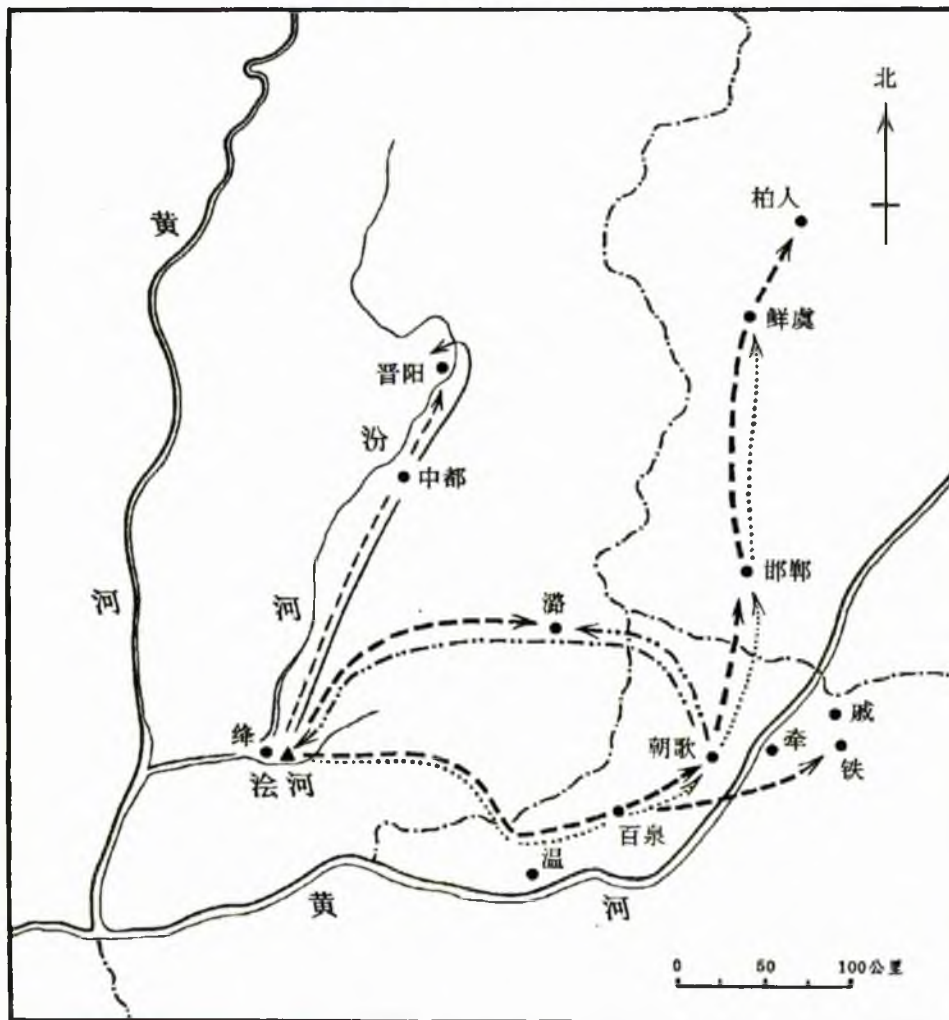


Figure 23: Wenxian covenant tablets: examples of different tablet shapes and stone types (not to scale)

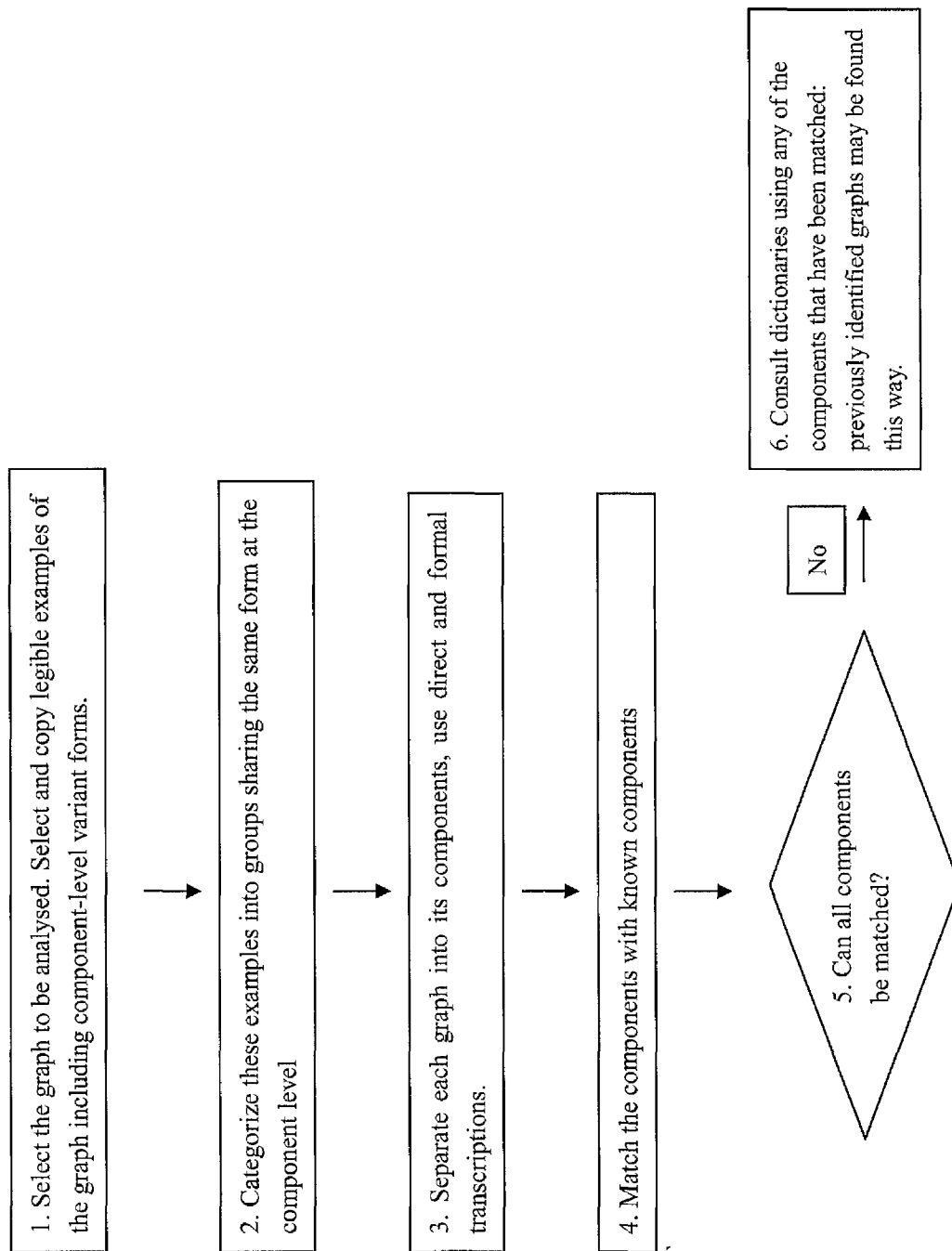
有关历史事件地理示意图

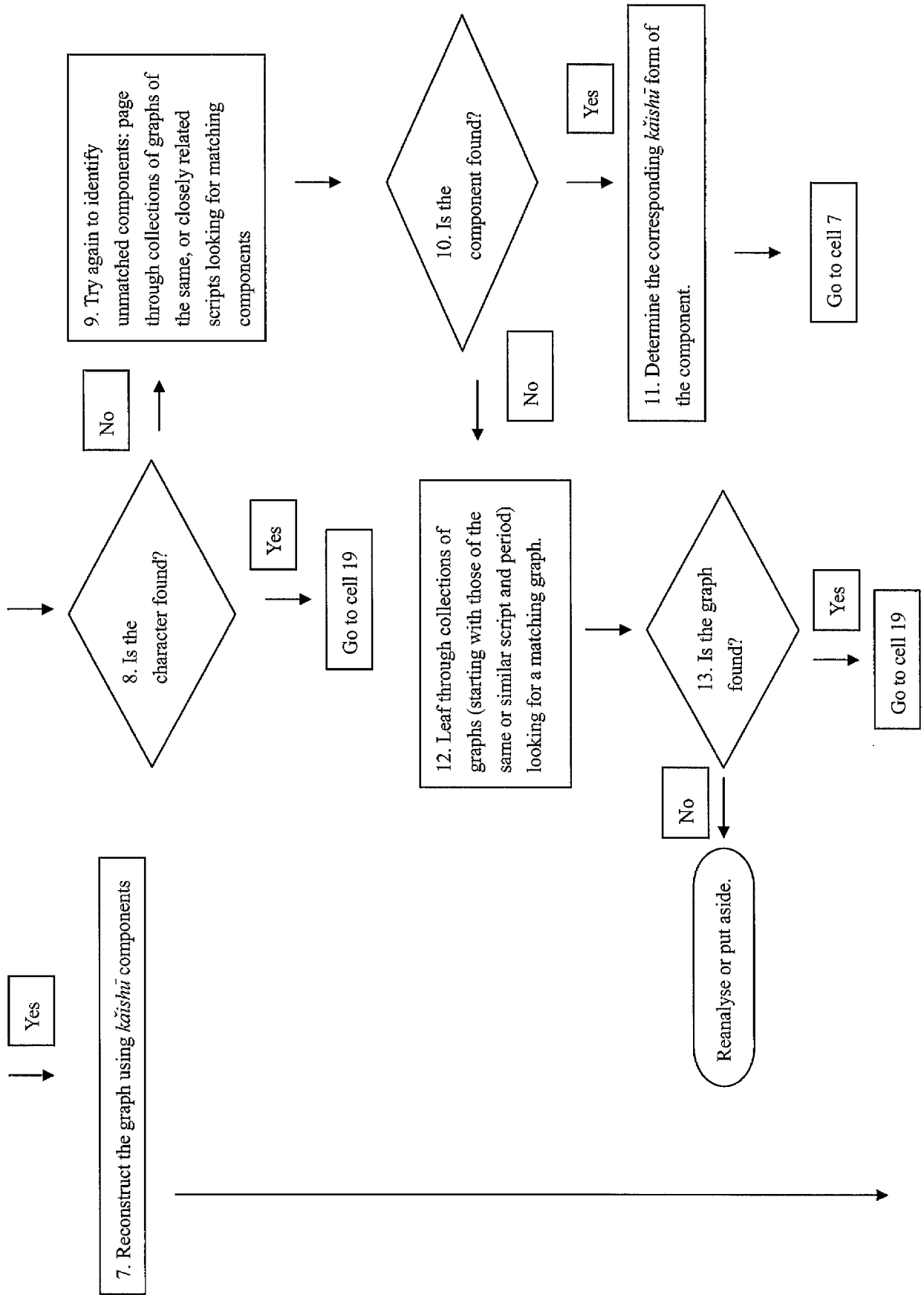


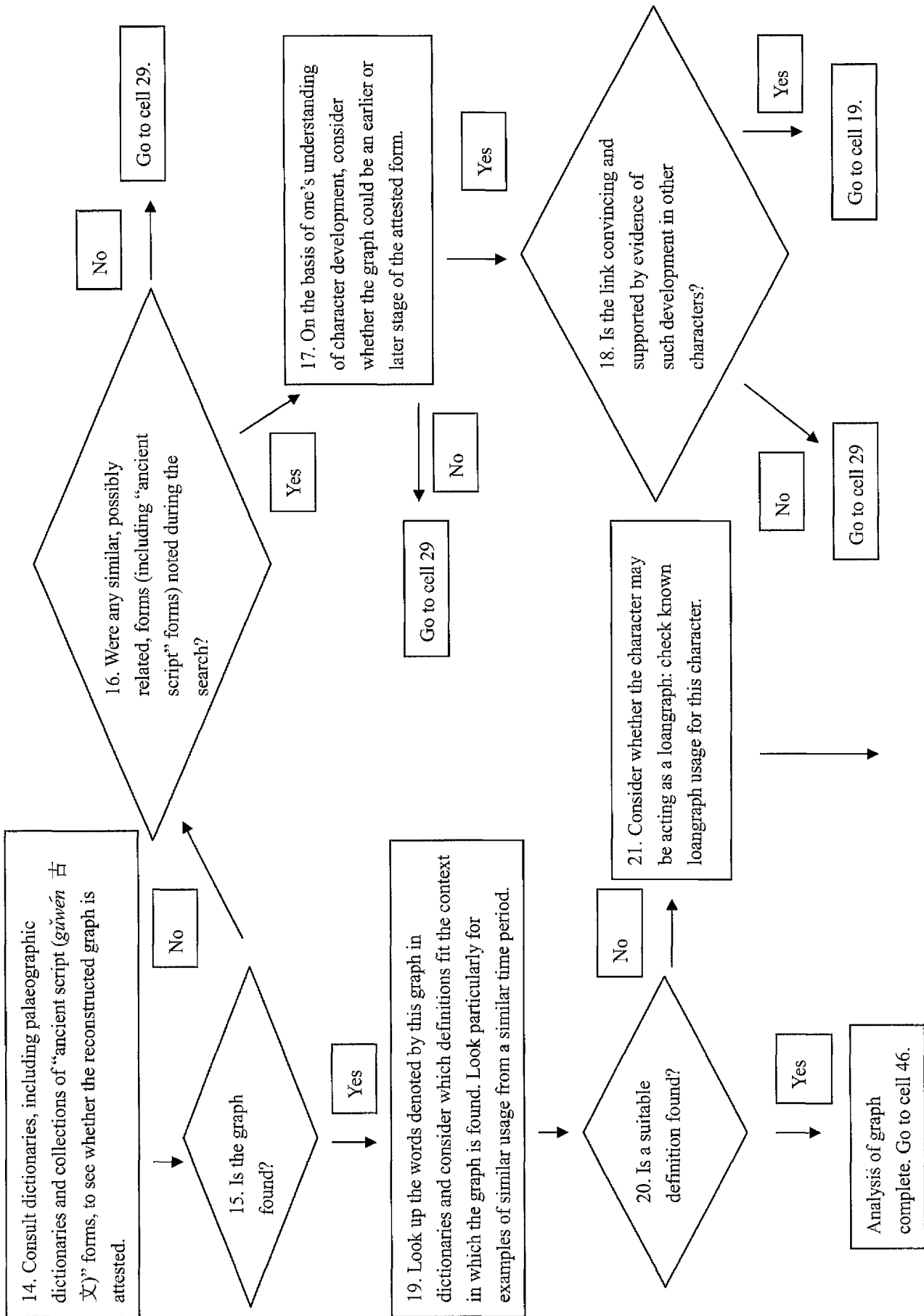
- | 图 例 | | | |
|--------|--------------------|-----|---------------------|
| ——> | 公元前 497 年赵鞅出奔路线 | ——> | 公元前 496 年以后赵鞅历次进攻路线 |
| ——> | 公元前 497 年晋人围攻路线 | —— | 今省界 |
|> | 公元前 497 年范、中行氏出奔路线 | ● | 古地名 |
| ——> | 公元前 496 年范、中行氏袭晋路线 | ▲ | 盟书出土地点 |

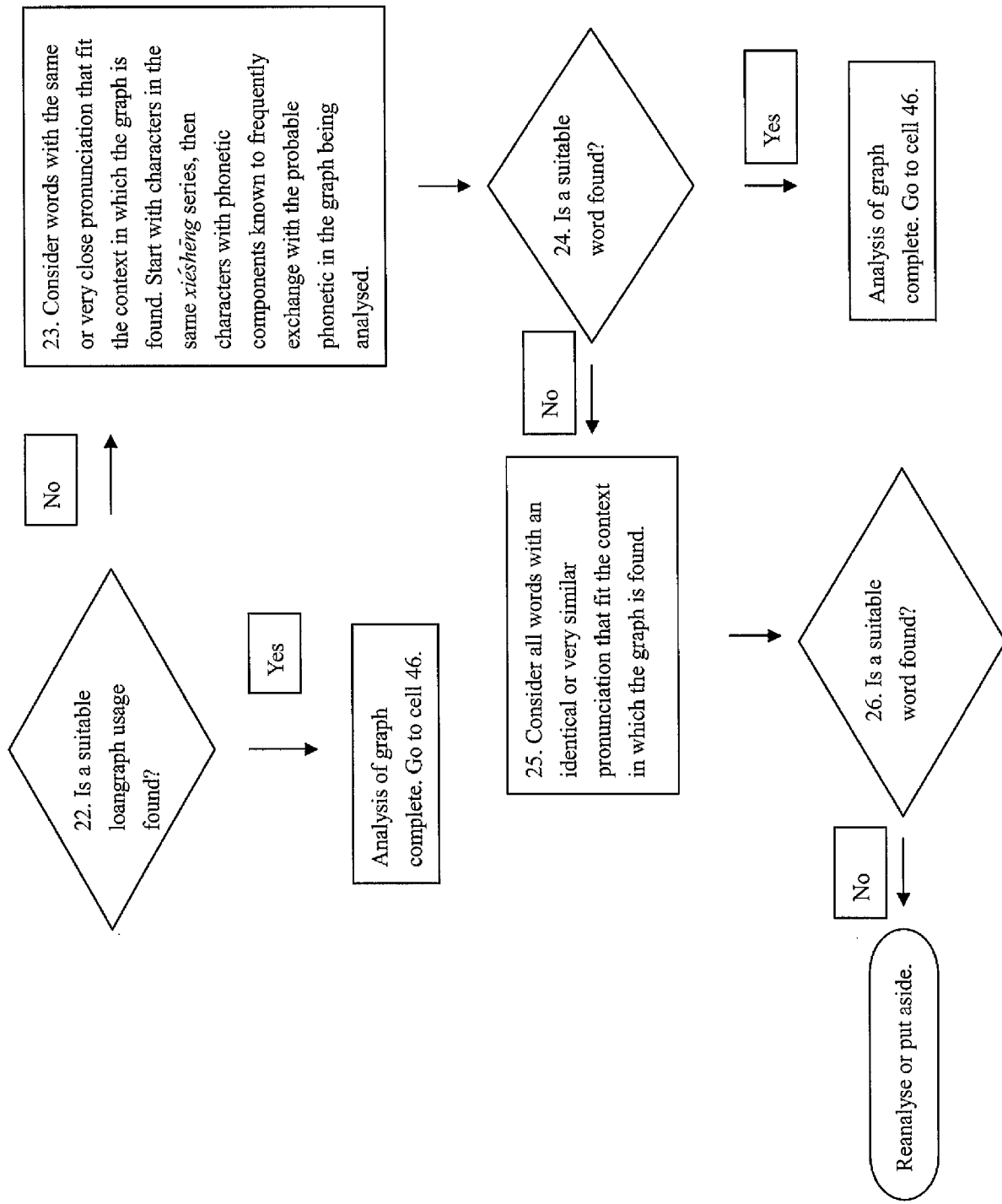
Figure 24: Historical map showing incidents believed to be related to the Houma covenant tablets

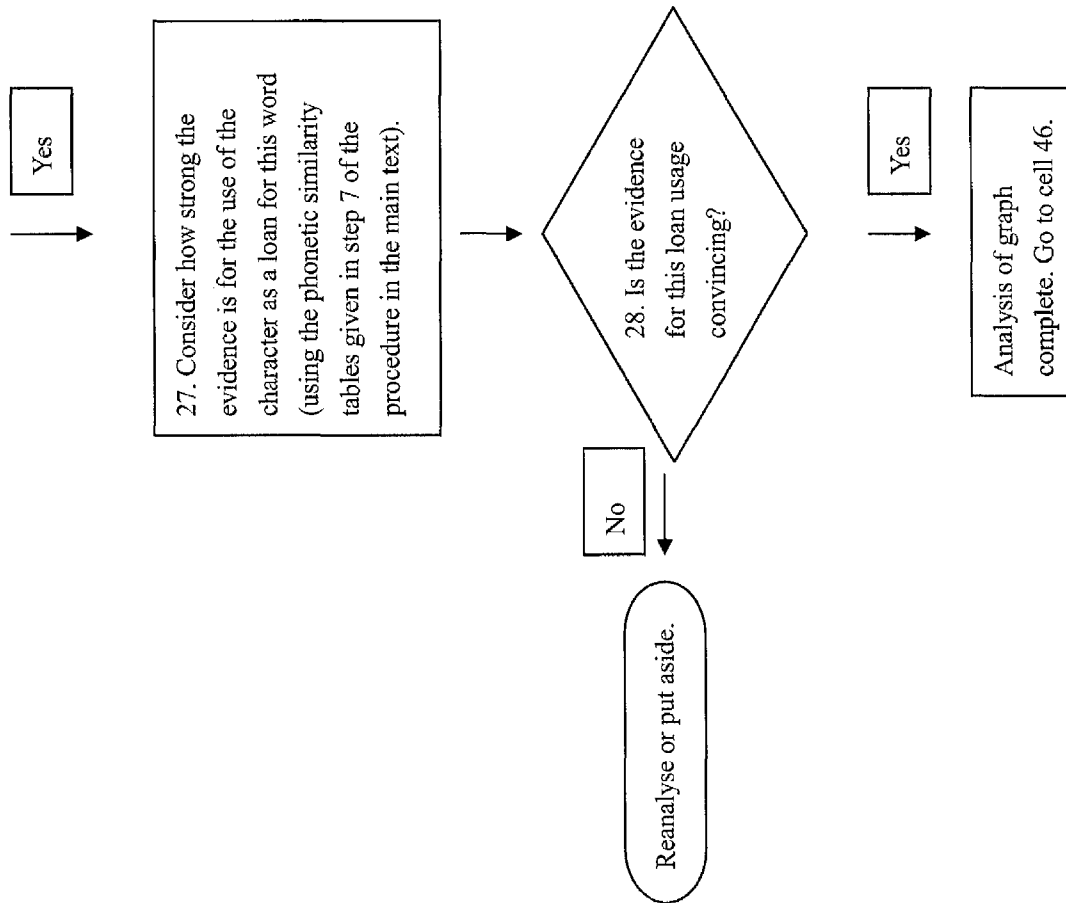
Figure 25: Methodological procedure for the Wenxian covenant texts: flow chart











29. Conclude that the graph is unattested. One must now analyse the structure in order to determine what attested word the graph is denoting. Unless the form suggests a *syssemantograph*, assume initially that the graph is a phonogram (the graph should be a composite – a non-composite graph would have been recognized during transcription).



30. Make a conjecture as to which one of the components (or composite components) is the phonetic component and which the semantic. Do the same for any component-level variant forms one has of the graph.



31. Look at graphs in the same *xiéshèng* series and consider the general meaning for the graph as suggested by its semantic component. Does this graph look like it might be a variant form for any of the characters in its *xiéshèng* series?

Yes



Go to cell 19

No



32. Consider graphs with phonetic components that frequently exchange with this phonetic component, bearing in mind the general semantic category suggested by the semantic component. Does this graph look like it might be a variant form for any of these graphs?

Yes



Go to cell 19

No

33. Consider all words with an identical or very similar pronunciation to the phonetic component, bearing in mind the semantic category suggested by the semantic component. Could this graph be a variant form of any of these characters?

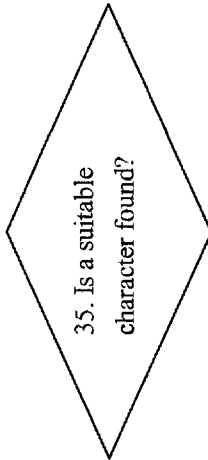
Yes

Go to cell 19

No

34. Assume that the identification of the phonetic and semantic components was wrong. Go back to 27 and reanalyse the graph and repeat the sequence 28 to 30.

↓



Yes

Go to cell 19

No

36. Assume the graph is not a phonogram but a sysemantograph.



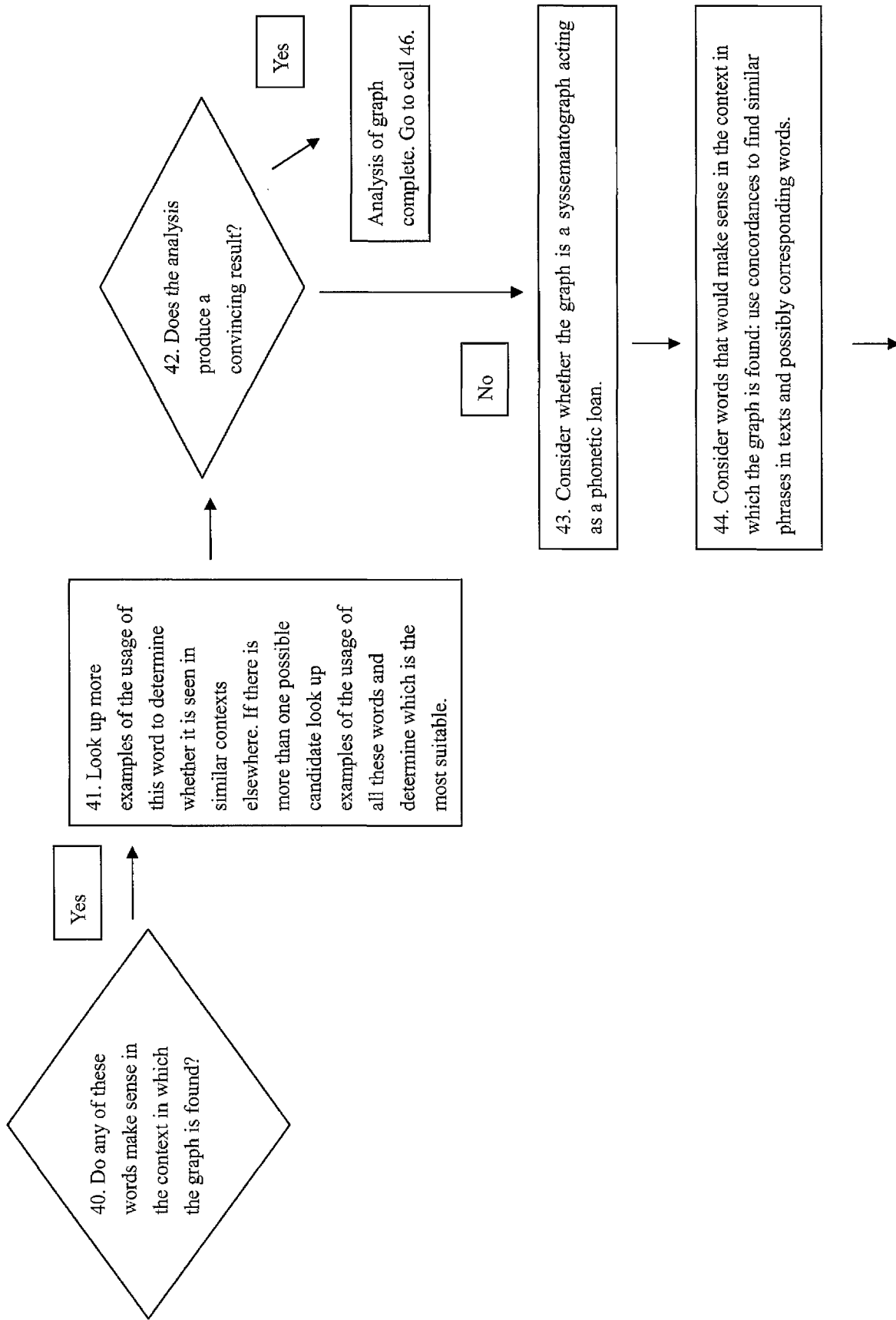
37. Identify what each component depicts.



38. Conjecture on the meaning the components depict in combination.



39. Identify known words with this meaning.



45. Are any of these words phonetically identical or very similar to words suggested by the form of the graph (identified in cell 38 above)? Use the phonetic similarity table give in step 7 in the main text.

No

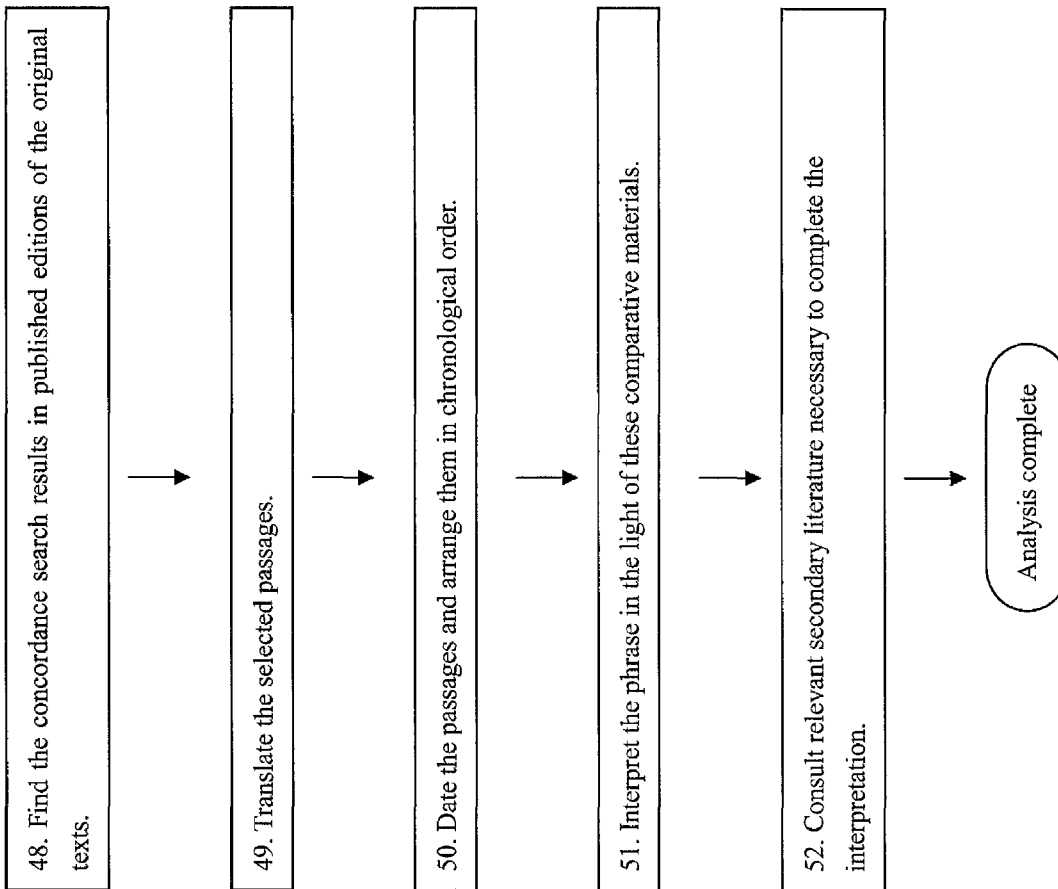
Reanalyse or put aside.

Yes

Consider the persuasiveness of the evidence and either adopt this interpretation (in which case go to cell 46), reanalyse or put the graph aside.

46. Make an initial reading of the phrase in which the analysed graphs appear.

47. Carry out a concordance search for selected characters.





Avery Brundage Collection. Length: 25.7cm.



Excavated at Huixian County, Henan. Xinxiang Municipal Museum. Length: 26cm. Width: 9.3cm.



Excavated from Fu Hao tomb, Anyang, Henan.

Figure 26: Shang period (16th - 11th century BC) *ge*-halberd heads with jade blades and bronze *na*



Isosceles *gui*
WT1K17 - 49



Straight-edge *gui*
WT1K17 - 39



Curved-edge *gui*
WT1K17 - 30

Figure 27: Examples of Wenxian tablets with standard *gui* shapes, self-named as *gui* (images not to scale)



Slip (fragment)
WT5K21 - 25



Zhang (fragment)
WT5K21 - 33



Zhang (fragment)
WT5K21 - 84



Zhang
WT5K21 - 76



Slip
WT5K21 - 83



Slip
WT1K17 - 7

Figure 28: Examples of Wenxian tablets with non-standard *gui* shapes, self-named as *gui* (images not to scale)



Excavated from tomb 63, cemetery of Marquis of Jin, Qucun, Shanxi. Late Western Zhou (9th - 8th century BC). Length: 15.9 cm.



Excavated from Sanxingdui Pit 1, Sichuan. 13th or 12th century BC. Length: 38.2 cm.

Figure 29: *Ge*-halberd heads with a bird in their designs

<p>  一期 <small>神三〇</small>  一期 <small>截三九七</small> </p>	<p>  四期 <small>神三〇</small> </p>
<p>  周早 <small>孟鼎</small>  周中 <small>史頌鼎</small> </p>	<p>  周晚 <small>毛公鼎</small>  春秋 <small>王孙钟</small> </p>
<p>  战国 <small>墨书九三四</small> </p>	<p>  战国 <small>鄂君启节</small>  战国 <small>盟书三七</small>  战国 <small>简信阳</small> </p>
<p>德</p>	<p>德</p>

Figure 30: The development of the character *de*

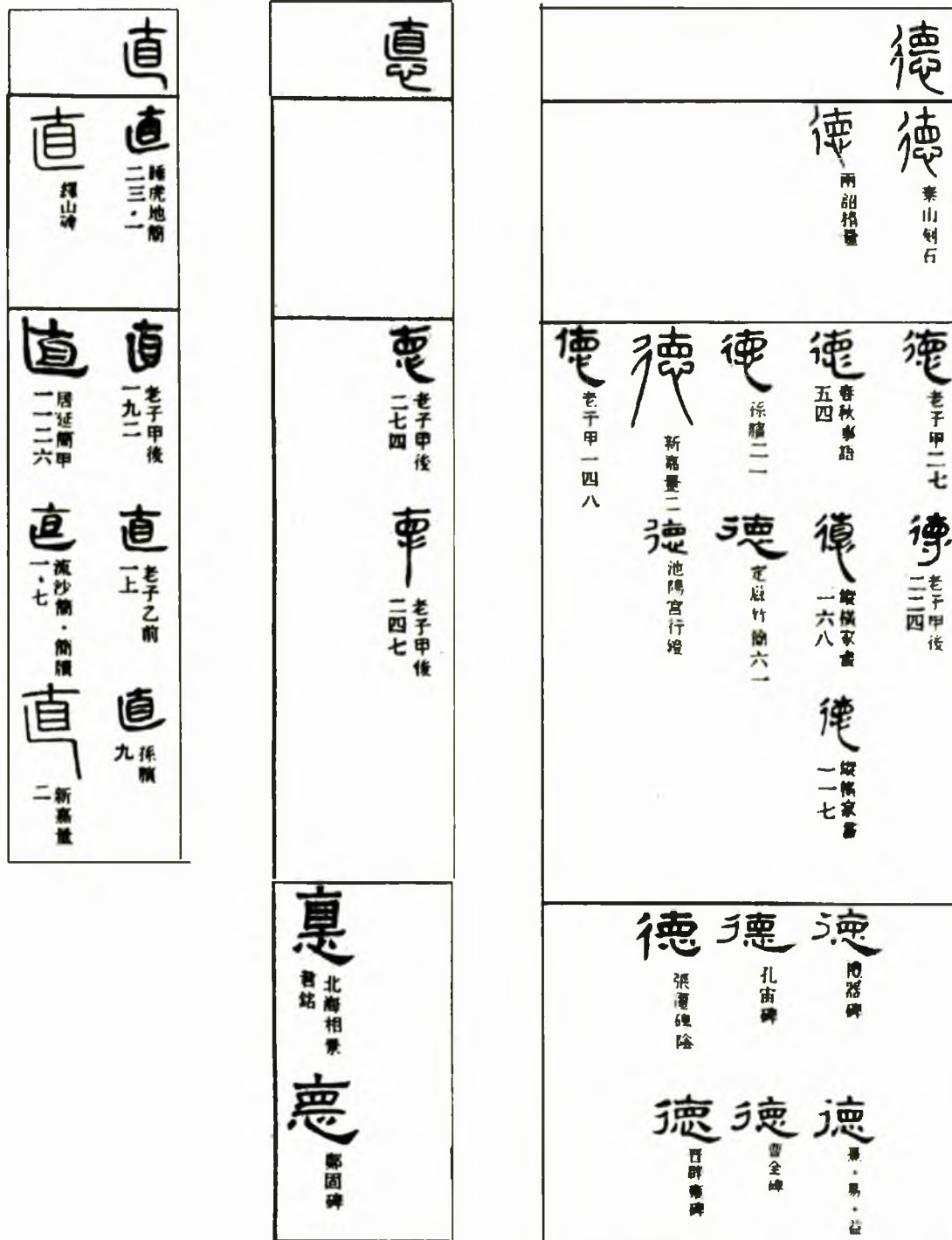


Figure 31: Forms of zhi and de from the Qin, Han and Wei-Jin periods



Figure 32: Development of the characters *xiong* and *long*

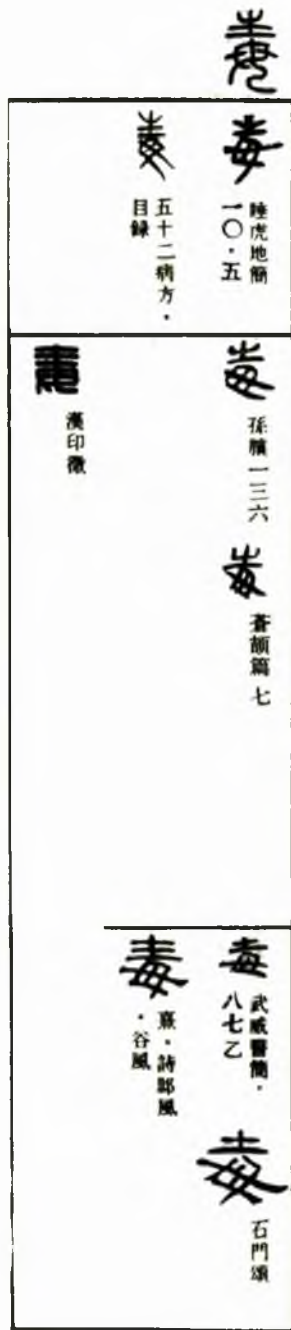
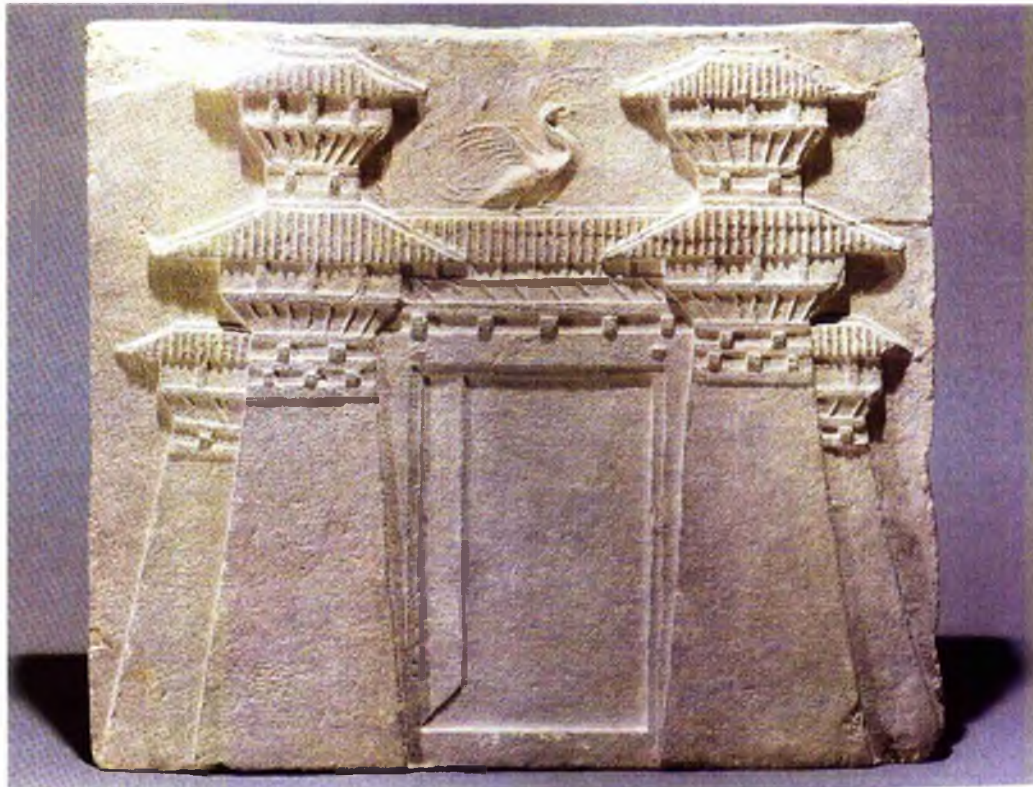


Figure 33: Forms of *du* from the Qin, Han and Wei-Jin period



Side of a carved stone coffin. Dujiangyan City, Sichuan. 1st or 2nd century AD.



Decorated brick. Excavated at Dayi Anrenxiang, Sichuan. 2nd century AD. Height: 38 cm.

Figure 34: Han-period representations of proclamation buildings



Figure 35: The assumed position of Shao Qu in the Warring States period

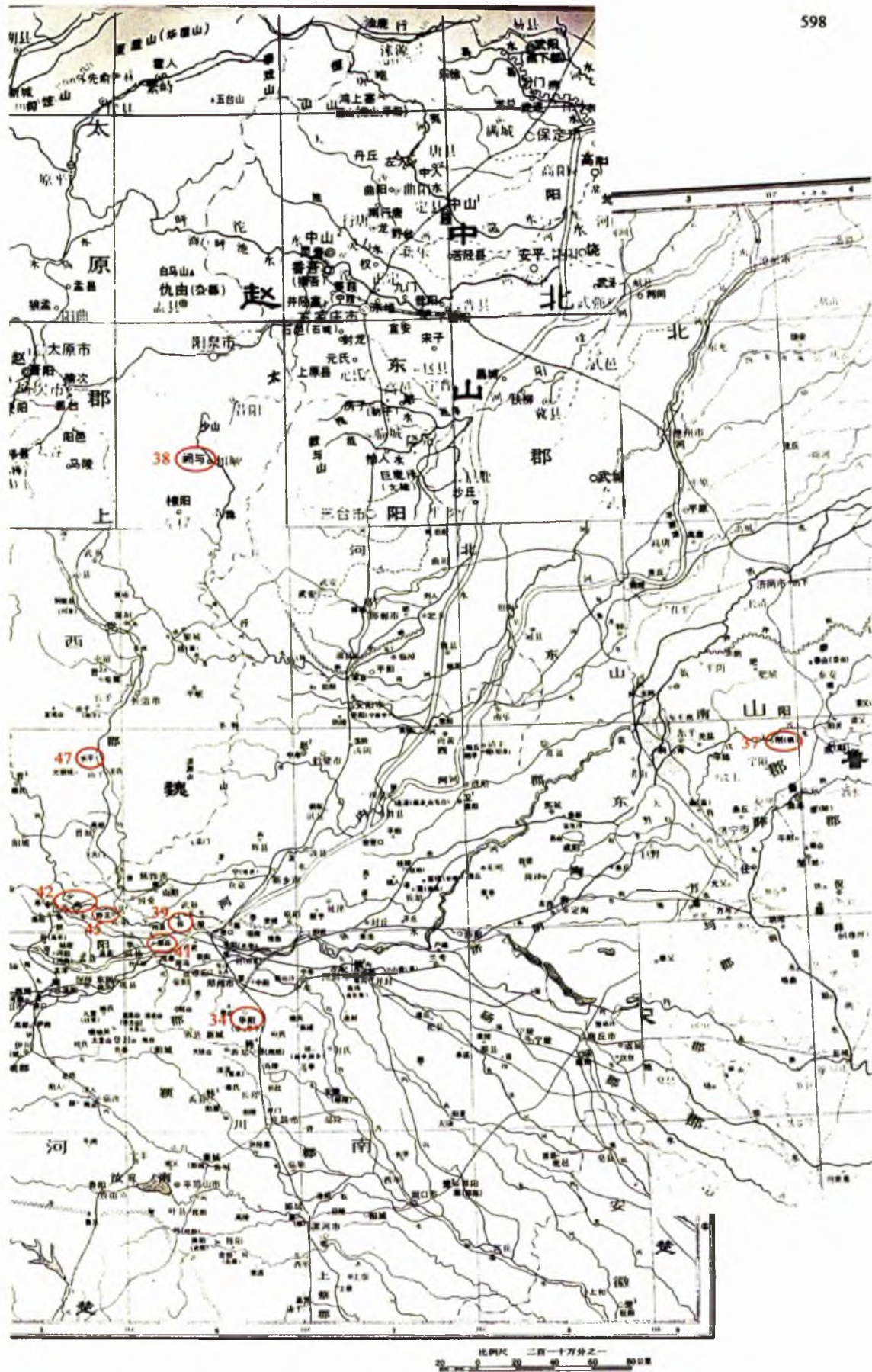


Figure 36: Towns attacked by Qin during the period 273 BC to 261 BC
(number indicates Qin reign year in which attack took place)

B 4:8 to 5:11

THE GUODIAN LAOZI 郭店《老子》

B III [Chapter 20a/MWD 64]

¹⁰
 14 絕學亡憂，
 ¹⁵
 唯與呵，相去幾何？
 ²⁰ ²⁵
 美與惡，相去何若？
 5 ^{5:1} ⁵ ¹⁰
 人之所畏，亦不可以不畏人。 一

48 絕: 幽; 11 憂: 惠: 憂 as 擾 CGY; 14 呵: 可: 可 CD: 訶 IT; 18, 24 何: 可;
 19 美: 崑; 21 惡: 亞
 54, 10 畏: 根; 11 人 一: 一 人 [WW places this graph at the head of B IV]

Figure 37: Edmund Ryden's edited version of the Guodian *Laozi*: sample page



Qiong Wen *Jia*. Excavated at Panlongcheng, Hubei. Early Shang (16th - 13th century BC). Height: 30 cm.



Shang-period example of the character *jia*.

Figure 38: *Jia*: comparison of the object and early form of the graph

Appendix 5

Figure credits

- Figure 1: *Houma Mengshu*, p.35.
- Figure 2: Tan Qixiang ed., *Zhongguo Lishi Ditu Ji*, Vol.1, pp.22 – 23.
- Figure 3: *Houma Mengshu*, colour plate 2.
- Figure 4: *Houma Mengshu*, p.31.
- Figure 5: *Houma Mengshu*, p.16.
- Figure 6: *Houma Mengshu*, p.25.
- Figure 7: *Houma Mengshu*, p.14.
- Figure 8: *Houma Mengshu*, p.123.
- Figure 9: *Houma Mengshu*, p.141.
- Figure 10: *Houma Mengshu*, p.37.
- Figure 11: *Houma Mengshu*, p.38.
- Figure 12: Henan Sheng Wenwu Yanjiusuo, “Henan Wenxian Dong Zhou Mengshi Yizhi Yi Hao Kan Fajue Jianbao”, plate 5.
- Figure 13: Henan Sheng Wenwu Yanjiusuo, “Henan Wenxian Dong Zhou Mengshi Yizhi Yi Hao Kan Fajue Jianbao”, plate 6.
- Figure 14: Henan Sheng Wenwu Yanjiusuo, “Henan Wenxian Dong Zhou Mengshi Yizhi Yi Hao Kan Fajue Jianbao”, plate 7.
- Figure 15: Henan Sheng Wenwu Yanjiusuo, “Henan Wenxian Dong Zhou Mengshi Yizhi Yi Hao Kan Fajue Jianbao”, plate 8.
- Figure 16: Henan Sheng Wenwu Yanjiusuo, “Henan Wenxian Dong Zhou Mengshi Yizhi Yi Hao Kan Fajue Jianbao”, p.83.
- Figure 17: Henan Sheng Wenwu Yanjiusuo, “Henan Wenxian Dong Zhou Mengshi Yizhi Yi Hao Kan Fajue Jianbao”, p.84.
- Figure 18: Henan Sheng Wenwu Yanjiusuo, “Henan Wenxian Dong Zhou Mengshi Yizhi Yi Hao Kan Fajue Jianbao”, p.85.
- Figure 19: Henan Sheng Wenwu Yanjiusuo, “Henan Wenxian Dong Zhou Mengshi Yizhi Yi Hao Kan Fajue Jianbao”, p.86.
- Figure 20: Henan Sheng Wenwu Yanjiusuo, “Henan Wenxian Dong Zhou Mengshi Yizhi Yi Hao Kan Fajue Jianbao”, plate 7 and p.85.
- Figure 21: Henan Sheng Wenwu Yanjiusuo, “Henan Wenxian Dong Zhou Mengshi Yizhi Yi Hao Kan Fajue Jianbao”, p.78.
- Figure 22: Henan Sheng Wenwu Yanjiusuo, “Henan Wenxian Dong Zhou Mengshi Yizhi Yi Hao Kan Fajue Jianbao”, p.79.
- Figure 23: Hao Benxing and Zhao Shigang (Henan Provincial Institute of Cultural Relics and Archaeology)
- Figure 24: *Houma Mengshu*, p.3.
- Figure 25: N/A
- Figure 26: Left-hand image: René-Yvon Lefebvre d’Argencé, *Chinese Jades in the Avery Brundage Collection*, p. 20; centre image: Henan Sheng Wenwu Guanliju, *Henan Wenwu Jinghua*, p.160; right-hand image: National Museum of Chinese History ed., *A Journey into China’s Antiquity* Vol.1, p.125.
- Figure 27: Hao Benxing and Zhao Shigang (Henan Provincial Institute of Cultural Relics and Archaeology)

- Figure 28: Hao Benxing and Zhao Shigang (Henan Provincial Institute of Cultural Relics and Archaeology)
- Figure 29: Left-hand image: Shanghai Bowuguan ed., *Jin Guo Qizhen*, p.173; right-hand image: Robert Bagley, *Ancient Sichuan*, p.169.
- Figure 30: *Guwenzi Lei Bian*, p.118.
- Figure 31: *Qin Han Wei Jin Zhuan-Li Zixing Biao*, p.902, p.743, p.120.
- Figure 32: *Guwenzi Lei Bian*, p.24 and p.217.
- Figure 33: *Qin Han Wei Jin Zhuan-Li Zixing Biao*, p.29.
- Figure 34: Top image: Robert Bagley, *Ancient Sichuan*, p.278; bottom image: Robert Bagley, *Ancient Sichuan*, p.279.
- Figure 35: Tan Qixiang ed., *Zhongguo Lishi Ditu Ji*, Vol.1, pp.35 – 36.
- Figure 36: Tan Qixiang ed., *Zhongguo Lishi Ditu Ji*, Vol.1, pp.35 – 36, pp.37 – 38, pp.39 – 40 [composite using these pages].
- Figure 37: Sarah Allan and Crispin Williams ed., *The Guodian Laozi*, p.217.
- Figure 38: Top image: Guojia Wenwu Ju, *Zhongguo Wenwu Jinghua Da Cidian: Qingtong Juan*, p.51; bottom image: *Jiaguwen Bian*, p.530.

