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SCRIBAL VARIATION AND THE MEANING OF THE HOUMA AND WENXIAN COVENANT TEXTS' IMPRECATION *MA YI FEI SHI* 麻夷非是

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Abstract

The article presents the findings of a survey of the imprecation phrase *ma yi fei shi* 麻夷非是 and its variations, as written (using brush and ink) on several thousand excavated covenant texts (*mengshu* 盟書) from Houma 侯馬 and Wenxian 溫縣. I argue that the findings support Zhu Dexi 朱德熙 and Qiu Xigui 裘錫圭's analysis of the phrase as *mi yi bi shi* 靡夷彼氏 "Wipe out that *shi*" (*shi*, I suggest, referring to the covenantor and his direct male descendants). Through comparison of scribal hands, I demonstrate that those variations which do not fit

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this analysis were produced by a small number of scribes and, in almost all cases, can be shown to be errors. I conclude that such variations are generally unreliable and do not require us to reject Zhu and Qiu's analysis. These examples suggest that formulaic, possibly archaic, stock phrases, such as this imprecation, were liable to be misinterpreted, even during the period in which they were in use. Identification of scribal hands and scribal errors was essential to this analysis, demonstrating not only the importance of this methodology in such research, but also the potential value of these particular materials for furthering our understanding of scribal habits and text reproduction in early China.

The Houma 侯馬 and Wenxian 溫縣 covenant texts (*mengshu* 盟書) are excavated examples of a genre that the transmitted histories suggest was vital to political activity in early China. The genre of covenant and oath was used to bind individuals and groups together, demanding loyalty along with other specified actions or prohibitions. A requirement of this genre is a self-imprecation, to be triggered if the oath is broken. Almost all the different covenant types from Houma and Wenxian use the same imprecation, most commonly written with the characters *ma yi fei shi* 麻  非是.[1] Close to fifty years since the excavation of the Houma covenants, there is still no general agreement as to how this phrase should be understood. Based on a survey of this phrase and its variations in about 4,500 tablets from Houma and Wenxian, I argue that Zhu Dexi 朱德熙 and Qiu Xigui 裘錫圭's analysis of the phrase as *mi yi bi shi* 靡夷彼氏 "Wipe out that *shi*" is correct.[2] The term *shi* 氏 "lineage," I believe, refers here to the covenantor and his direct male descendants, i.e. sons, grandsons, and so on.[3] This imprecation confirms that the elite producing these texts felt that the most coercive threat available to them was the breaking of an individual's patriline.

1. The terms "character" and "graph" are used interchangeably herein but, where a distinction is made, characters as they appear on excavated materials are referred to as "graphs."

2. Zhu Dexi 朱德熙 and Qiu Xigui 裘錫圭, "Zhanguo wenzi yanjiu (liu zhong)" 戰國文字研究(六種), *Zhu Dexi guwenzi lunji* 朱德熙古文字論集 (Beijing: Zhonghua, 1995), 31–53, see 31–32 (originally published in *Kaogu xuebao* 1972.2). Zhu and Qiu's analysis was a revision of an earlier analysis by Chen Mengjia 陳夢家: Chen Mengjia 陳夢家, "Dong Zhou mengshi yu chutu zaishu" 東周盟誓與出土載書, *Kaogu* 1966.5, 271–81, see 275–76. See below for a detailed presentation of this analysis.

3. Crispin Williams, "Early References to Collective Punishment in an Excavated Chinese Text: Analysis and Discussion of an Imprecation from the Wenxian Covenants," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 74.3 (2011), 437–67.

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I surveyed examples of this imprecation in the Houma texts and the largely unpublished Wenxian covenants, with the aim of determining how variations in this phrase could throw light on its meaning. These variations include both the use of alternative characters to denote the same word, as well as variations in wording. I conclude that the majority of variants support Zhu and Qiu's analysis. I demonstrate that those variations which do not support this analysis can be explained as error or idiosyncrasy on the part of individual scribes in their reproduction of what was a formulaic phrase. This aspect of the analysis illustrates the need to be aware of individual scribal habits and formulaic language when analyzing excavated texts.

Introduction

Covenant and oath occur in all cultures and are particularly common during periods of social and political upheaval. When speaking of early societies, the term covenant refers to an agreement between two parties which are often unequal in status and power. In such cases, the obligations of the agreement may fall wholly on the weaker party. Covenant in ancient society is best understood not as a purely literary form, but a ritual event, involving ceremony and usually sacrifice, with the aim of solemnizing the oath being sworn and etching the experience and the oath into the minds of the participants.[4]

During the Eastern Zhou period, covenants and oaths played an essential role in the frequent realignment of loyalties between and within states and other political groupings.[5] The transmitted histories frequently mention covenants (*meng* 盟) and oaths (*shi* 誓). Liu Boji 劉伯驥 calculates, for example, that 128 covenants are recorded for the 242 years of the Spring and Autumn period.[6] However, direct quotation of the oath being sworn is uncommon in the transmitted histories, and, when it does occur, the quote is usually partial, limited to one or two phrases. The Houma and Wenxian

4. For a brief introduction to the genre of oath and covenant, see Crispin Williams, "Interpreting the Wenxian Covenant Texts: Methodological Procedure and Selected Analysis," Ph.D. dissertation (University of London, 2005), 76–89.

5. See, for example, Mark E. Lewis, *Sanctioned Violence in Early China* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990), 43–52 and *passim*.

6. Liu Boji 劉伯驥, *Chunqiu huimeng zhengzhi* 春秋會盟政治 (Taibei: Zhonghua congshu bianshen weiyuanhui 中華叢書編審委員會, 1962), 1, 216, n.2. Given that the *Chun qiu* 春秋, the *Zuo zhuan* 左傳 and other historical texts are by no means comprehensive in their coverage of events, we can be certain that the total number of covenants far exceeded this figure. There is, for example, no mention in the historical records of any of the covenants excavated at Houma and Wenxian.

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materials have allowed us, for the first time, to see examples of the full texts of ancient Chinese covenants, in the actual form in which they were created for the ritual enactment of the covenant ceremony.

The Houma covenant texts were excavated in 1965 in the city of Houma, in southern Shanxi province.[7] The Wenxian covenant texts were excavated in 1980–81 from Wenxian (Wen County) in northern Henan.[8] The covenants took place at different times during the fifth and early fourth centuries B.C.E.[9] They were organized by two of the ministerial families of the Jin 晉 state: the Zhao 趙 lineage in the case of the Houma site, and the Han 韓 lineage at the Wenxian site. At both sites, the covenant texts were written using brush and ink on stone tablets, which were then buried in pits dug into a raised earthen terrace located outside a walled-settlement. At Houma, the settlement is identified as Xintian 新田, the Jin capital from the early sixth to early fourth centuries B.C.E.[10] The walled site at Wenxian has not been excavated but is thought to be that of a settlement named in historical texts as Zhou 州.[11] The raised earthen terraces had been used for ritual activity over extended periods and contained many sacrificial pits. At Houma, this platform was 70 meters east to west, by 55 meters north to south. Archaeologists excavated 326 sacrificial pits on the terrace, mostly containing the bones of a sacrificial animal and a jade object. Among these, 43 pits also contained covenant tablets.[12] At Wenxian the terrace was 50 meters east to west by 135 meters north to south, 124 pits were discovered of which sixteen contained

7. Shanxi sheng wenwu gongzuo weiyuanhui, *Houma mengshu* 侯馬盟書 (Beijing: Wenwu, 1976).

8. Henan sheng wenwu yanjiusuo, "Henan Wenxian Dong Zhou mengshi yizhi yi-hao kan fajue jianbao" 河南溫縣東周盟誓遺址一號坎發掘簡報, *Wenwu* 1983.3, 78–89, but see also 77. The full excavation report is in preparation: *Henan Wenxian Dong Zhou mengshi yizhi* 河南溫縣東周盟誓遺址 (Beijing, Wenwu, forthcoming).

9. See Crispin Williams, "Dating the Houma Covenant Texts: The significance of recent findings from the Wenxian Covenant Texts," *Early China* 35 (2012–13), 247–75; Wei Kebin 魏克彬 (Crispin Williams), "Wenxian mengshu T4K5, T4K6, T4K11 mengci shidu" 溫縣盟書 T4K5、T4K6、T4K11 盟辭釋讀, *Chutu wenxian yu guwenzi yanjiu* 出土文獻與古文字研究 5 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji, 2013), 280–363, see 293–96.

10. For an overview of the site, see Lothar von Falkenhausen, "The Waning of the Bronze Age: Material Culture and Social Developments, 770–481 B.C." in *The Cambridge History of Ancient China*, ed. Michael Loewe and Edward L. Shaughnessy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 450–544, see 457–59.

11. Henan sheng wenwu yanjiusuo, "Henan Wenxian Dong Zhou mengshi yizhi yi-hao kan fajue jianbao," 89.

12. For a table giving details for each pit, see Shanxi sheng wenwu gongzuo weiyuanhui, *Houma mengshu*, 401–20.

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covenants on which writing was still legible.[13] The number of tablets within a pit varies from dozens to thousands.[14] The burial of the covenant tablets in a terrace dedicated to sacrifice, and the accompanying sacrifices and/or offerings often found with the tablets, strongly suggest the aim was to present the texts to the sanctioning spirit called on to oversee the oath being sworn in the covenant ceremony.[15]

A number of different covenant types can be identified, the text of each type repeated on separate tablets, each tablet individualized with the name of a covenantor. The majority of these texts are oaths of allegiance. They include demands of loyalty to the head of the lineage, along with specific requirements and prohibitions, the majority aimed at the consolidation of the group centered on the lineage and the identification and rejection of named and unnamed enemies. The number of covenantors participating in each oath ranged from dozens to thousands. The fifth century B.C.E. was the period in which Jin was gradually torn apart by the lineages of Zhao, Han and Wei 魏, which, by the end of that century, had divided the state into three independent polities. I believe the excavated covenants reflect the process of group consolidation centered on the Zhao and Han lineages, which culminated in their independence.

One of the most striking aspects of the Houma and Wenxian covenant texts is their individualization. A single covenant type is repeated on many tablets, each one naming a different covenantor. This has important implications for our understanding of political and social organization at this time.[16] Its significance for the present study is that scribes

13. Henan sheng wenwu yanjiusuo, "Henan Wenxian Dong Zhou mengshi yizhi yi-hao kan fajue jianbao," 78.

14. For the Houma covenants, see Shanxi sheng wenwu gongzuo weiyuanhui, *Houma mengshu*, 401–20. Final figures for the Wenxian site are not yet published, but an indication of the numbers can be gained from Williams, "Interpreting the Wenxian Covenant Texts," 47.

15. I identify the named sanctioning spirit in the excavated covenants as Lord Yue 岳公, a mountain deity. In a number of covenant types the spirit is referred to simply as "My superior" *wujun* 吾君, which may refer to this spirit, or perhaps to the former lords of Jin. See Wei Kebin 魏克彬 (Crispin Williams), "Houma yu Wenxian mengshu zhong de 'Yue gong'" 侯馬與溫縣盟書中的'岳公,' *Wenwu* 2010.10, 76–83, 98. For an English summary of this identification, see Williams, "Dating the Houma Covenant Texts." For a discussion of the significance of burying the tablets in pits, see Susan Roosevelt Weld, "Covenant in Jin's Walled Cities: The Discoveries at Houma and Wenxian," Ph.D. dissertation (Harvard University, 1990), 332–38.

16. The key point being that it demonstrates the assumption among elites that individuals could act independently when it came to participating in political groupings, regardless of their lineage affiliation. See Crispin Williams, "Ten Thousand Names:

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created copies of the same text on many separate tablets. Given the highly formulaic language employed in the covenant texts, certain phrases are found hundreds, sometimes thousands of times. Formulaic language is seen in divination records on oracle bones and bamboo slips, and in bronze inscriptions. However, the mass production for a single event of great numbers of what are essentially identical texts is particular to the excavated covenants.

The rigid formulaic structure of the excavated covenant texts has been described by Susan Roosevelt Weld.[17] Weld observes that the written oath of each covenant type conforms to a basic four-clause structure of: name, stipulations, submission, and imprecation. The name clause includes the name of the covenantor and sometimes other phrases, most commonly one indicating the beginning of the period of effectiveness of the oath. The stipulations describe the specific requirements or prohibitions to which the covenantor is swearing to adhere. The first stipulation is usually a demand for loyalty to the leader of the covenanting group, and the following stipulation or stipulations require or prohibit specific actions. In the submission clause the spirit sanctioning the covenant is invoked to oversee the covenantor's adherence to the oath. The imprecation clause spells out the punishment to be inflicted on the covenantor by the sanctioning spirit if the oath is violated. This is the basic four-clause structure identifiable in all the main covenant types from Houma and Wenxian.[18] Of these clauses, it is the specific stipulations that vary most significantly between covenant types. All the other clauses tend to use stock formulaic phrases.

Rank and Lineage Affiliation in the Wenxian Covenant Texts," *Asiatische Studien* LXIII.4 (2009), 959–89; Williams, "Early References to Collective Punishment in an Excavated Chinese Text." It also reflects the wish of elites to extend political control to individuals and individual households, see Mark Edward Lewis's discussion of the "administrative individual" in his *Writing and Authority in Early China* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1999), 20 and *passim*.

17. Weld: "Covenant in Jin's Walled Cities: The Discoveries at Houma and Wenxian," 353–54.

18. Each covenant type found at Wenxian generally includes just one set of these four-clauses, with two different stipulations. At Houma the so called "Lineage Covenant Texts" (*zongmeng lei* 宗盟類) and "Pledge Texts" (*weizhilei* 委質類) are longer and repeat sets of clauses more than once. For examples, see Susan Roosevelt Weld, "The Covenant Texts from Houma and Wenxian," in *New Sources of Chinese History*, ed. Edward L. Shaughnessy (Berkeley: The Society for the Study of Early China and The Institute of East Asian Studies, University of California, Berkeley, 1997), 125–60; Williams, "Interpreting the Wenxian Covenant Texts," 40–41. As Weld notes, this formulaic structure for oaths is not particular to early China, but is found in oaths of other early cultures, e.g. those of the ancient Near East and Greece. See Weld, "Covenant in Jin's Walled Cities: The Discoveries at Houma and Wenxian," 46, n. 1; Williams "Interpreting the Wenxian Covenant Texts," 83–86.

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The repetition of these highly formulaic, brush-written texts makes them particularly suitable for the study of character and lexical variation.[19] Since copies of a single covenant type were intended to be identical in content (apart from the name of the covenantor), they provide an opportunity to observe the range of lexical variation found among "identical" texts. The formulaic nature of the texts means that certain stock phrases are used in several different covenant types, thus greatly increasing the frequency of their repetition. When considering lexical variations, formulaic phrases are of particular interest because they tend to be more open to misinterpretation, particularly as time passes and their original meaning becomes obscure and their language abstruse.

A further significant feature of these materials is that single scribes were responsible for writing the covenant text onto more than one tablet. This provides the opportunity to examine repeated copies of a single text made by one individual. As will be demonstrated, identification of individual scribal hands was essential for the present study as it revealed that certain variations were specific to individual scribes, allowing a more informed decision as to the significance of those variations. In particular, if a problematic variation occurs frequently but is in fact only produced by one or two scribes, it may be conjectured that the variation was not in fact a valid alternative, but due to an error or misunderstanding.

A number of studies have been based in whole or part on the analysis of individual scribal hands and variation between hands.[20] A pertinent

19. I use "character variation" here broadly, to refer to variation at both the component- and calligraphic-level (also referred to as structural- and stylistic-variation). For discussion of these terms, see Crispin Williams, "A Methodological Procedure for the Analysis of the Wenxian Covenant Texts," *Asiatische Studien* LIX.1 (2005), 61–114, see 70–72; Matthias L. Richter, "The Fickle Brush: Chinese Orthography in the Age of Manuscripts: A Review of Imre Galambos's *Orthography of Early Chinese Writing: Evidence from Newly Excavated Manuscripts*," *Early China* 31 (2007), 171–92, see 181. Chapter 6 of the work reviewed by Richter, Galambos's *Orthography of Early Chinese Writing*, provides a good example of the use of the Houma covenant materials in a study of character variation, see Imre Galambos, *Orthography of Early Chinese Writing: Evidence from Newly Excavated Manuscripts* (Budapest: Department of East Asian Studies, Eötvös Loránd University, 2006), 127–42.

20. Examples other than those mentioned in the main text include: Matthias Richter, "Towards a Profile of Graphic Variation," *Asiatische Studien* LIX.1 (2005), 169–207; Enno Giele, "Signatures of 'Scribes' in Early Imperial China," *Asiatische Studien* LIX.1 (2005), 353–87; Matthias Richter, "Tentative Criteria for Discerning Individual Hands in the Guodian Manuscripts," in *Rethinking Confucianism: Selected Papers from the Third International Conference on Excavated Chinese Manuscripts, Mount Holyoke College, April 2004*, ed. Xing Wen, *International Research on Bamboo and Silk Documents: Newsletter* 5.2 (San Antonio, Trinity University, 2006), 132–47; Adam Smith, "Writing at Anyang," Ph.D. dissertation (University of California, 2008),

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example is Li Feng's 1997 article "Ancient Reproductions and Calligraphic Variations: Studies of Western Zhou Bronzes with 'Identical' Inscriptions."[21] By identifying scribal hands, Li demonstrates that several individuals were responsible for preparing copies of a single text for casting on sets of bronze vessels. The copying of an identical text by different scribes is precisely the situation we have with the covenant tablets, although on a far greater scale. Methodologically, copies of a single text allow a straightforward comparison of matching graphs.[22] On this basis, calligraphic style and other features can be compared with the aim of identifying individual hands.

Li Songru 李松儒 provides a methodology for the analysis of scribal hands in brush-written texts, particularly bamboo-slip texts from the Chu region.[23] In her MA thesis she presents criteria to be considered

247–53, 303–62; Matthias Richter, "Faithful Transmission or Creative Change: Tracing Modes of Manuscript Production from the Material Evidence," *Asiatische Studien* LXIII.4 (2009), 889–908; Olivier Venture, "Looking for Chu People's Writing Habits," *Asiatische Studien* LXIII.4 (2009), 943–57; Daniel Morgan, "A Positive Case for the Visuality of Text in Warring States Manuscript Culture," paper for "The Creel-Luce Paleography Forum University of Chicago, 24–25 April 2010," accessed online: http://cccp.uchicago.edu/archive/2010Creel-LucePaleographyWorkshop/ (Last accessed June 4, 2012); Matthias Richter, *The Embodied Text* (Leiden, Brill, 2013). See also the essays in "Part II: Scribal Training and Practice" of the book *Writing and Literacy in Early China*, ed. Li Feng and David Prager Branner (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2011), 141–236. Those essays are: Ken-ichi Takashima, "Literacy to the South and East of Anyang in Shang China: Zhengshou and Daxinzhuang"; Adam Smith, "The Evidence for Scribal Training at Anyang"; and Matthias Richter, "Textual Identity and the Role of Literacy in the Transmission of Early Chinese Literature." In the same volume, see also: Anthony J. Barbieri-Low, "Craftsman's Literacy: Uses of Writing by Male and Female Artisans in Qin and Han China," 370–99. For an overview and discussion of the identification of different scribal hands in the Guodian bamboo-slip texts see Scott Cook, *The Bamboo Texts of Guodian: A Study and Complete Translation* (Ithaca: Cornell East Asia Series 164–65, 2012), 47–54. For a survey of the literature in Chinese see Li Songru 李松儒, "Zhanguo jianbo ziji yanjiu" 戰國簡帛字跡研究, Ph.D. dissertation (Jilin University, 2012), 7–20.

21. Li Feng, "Ancient Reproductions and Calligraphic Variations: Studies of Western Zhou Bronzes with 'Identical' Inscriptions," *Early China* 22 (1997), 1–41. As Li points out, Matsumura Michio 松丸道雄 had already considered such questions in a 1977 article: "Sei-shū seidōki seisaku no haikei" 西周青銅器製作の背景, *Tōkyō daigaku tōyō bunka kenkyūjo kiyō* 東京大學東洋文化研究所紀要 72 (1977), 1–128.

22. As Richter points out, the distinction of scribal hands "demands the observation of a large number of recurrent graphic elements" and, for Chinese texts, that means a focus on commonly occurring characters and character components (Richter, "Tentative Criteria for Discerning Individual Hands in the Guodian Manuscripts," 137–38). Repeated texts are the ideal materials for such analysis.

23. Both her MA and Ph.D. theses are on this topic: Li Songru 李松儒, "Guodian Chumu zhujian ziji yanjiu" 郭店楚墓字跡研究, MA thesis (Jilin University, 2006); Li

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when appraising and comparing scribal hands.[24] These include: 1. Proficiency of the hand, including: the smoothness and control of brushstrokes; the balance of the internal structure of characters (e.g. well proportioned); the arrangement of the text (e.g. even spacing between characters, consistency in character size); 2. Calligraphic style, referring to general tendencies including: style of the start and end point of individual strokes (e.g. to form wedge-style strokes, or horizontal strokes with downward-curving ends); cursive strokes (resulting from the increased speed of consecutive brushstrokes); the relative length (and width) of strokes; the relative spacing of different strokes within a character; the positioning of strokes where they meet or intersect with other strokes; the general arrangement of components within characters (e.g. relative positioning and distance, tight or loose); 3. Character formation, including: use of particular variant forms for specific graphs (both component-level variations as well as calligraphic variations); use of consistent forms for particular components; 4. Embellishments: i.e. the addition of ornamental strokes to characters (e.g. dots, short lines); 5. Layout of characters on the media, including character size and their general arrangement and spacing, and any tendency to slant characters into oblique forms. Li also raises important qualifying factors, for example the possibility that a scribe could have written in more than one style, or that the scribe's style might have changed over time, and that a scribe who was copying a text might have been influenced by the style of the original text.[25] All these criteria can be applied to the brush-written script of the excavated covenants when identifying individual scribes.

The identification of different hands is carried out on the basic principle that no two people write in exactly the same style. Identification of an individual scribal hand involves identifying a set of recognizable "features" of the hand, based on the criteria listed above. A further basic principle qualifies the first, and is that an individual does not write in exactly the same way twice, and that, within the recognizable

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Songru, "Zhanguo jianbo ziji yanjiu." An example of a published work in which she applies this methodology is "You 'Junrenzhe he bi an zai' jia yi ben ziji kan xianqin wenxian de chuanchao" 由《君人者何必安哉》甲乙本字迹看先秦文獻的傳抄, *Chutu wenxian yu guwenzi yanjiu* 出土文獻與古文字研究 4 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji, 2011), 259–69.

24. Li Songru, "Guodian Chumu zhujian ziji yanjiu," 9–16. For a more recent exposition of this methodology, see Li's Ph.D. thesis: Li Songru, "Zhanguo jianbo ziji yanjiu," 74–108.

25. Richter also discusses these and related issues, see Richter, "Tentative Criteria for Discerning Individual Hands in the Guodian Manuscripts," 134–36, 142.

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set of features specific to an individual, one must expect a degree of "normal variation" between samples.[26]

In the following, I firstly present the imprecation phrase *ma yi fei shi* 麻叟非是 and the analysis of its meaning adopted here. I then introduce and discuss variations of this phrase, arguing that the majority of variations support this analysis. By identifying individual scribal hands, I show that variations which do not match this analysis can be attributed to the errors or idiosyncrasies of individual scribes.

The meaning of the imprecation phrase *ma yi fei shi* 麻叟非是

Below is an example of the most common covenant type found at Wenxian, punctuated and laid out according to the four-clause structure discussed above. The transcription is interpretative, apart from the imprecation phrase which is left as a formal transcription.[27]

Tablet WT1K1-3802[28]

I. 十五年十二月乙未朔辛酉 。自今以往，喬

II.A 敢不繩繩[29]焉中心事其主

II.B 而敢與賊為徒者，

26. These principles, and the terms "features" and "normal variation" are taken from Ron N. Morris, *Forensic Handwriting Identification: Fundamental Concepts and Principles* (San Diego: Academic Press, 2000), 63–65, 131–35. "Normal variation" refers to minor variations due to factors such as whether the writing is done carefully or carelessly, whether the writer is focused or tired, the nature of the writing implement, etc. It is also referred to as "natural variation," see Roy A. Huber and A.M. Headrick, *Handwriting Identification: Facts and Fundamentals* (Boca Raton: CRC Press, 1999), 132–34. For a discussion of such use of the methodology of forensic handwriting identification in the palaeographic identification of scribal hands, see Tom Davis, "The Practice of Handwriting Identification," *The Library* 8.3 (2007), 251–76.

27. In an interpretative transcription the standard characters are given for the words I believe are denoted by the original graphs. A formal transcription is one in which components of the ancient graph are represented using the corresponding components of the *kaishu* 楷書 script (with composite components transcribed using the corresponding composite component, not their separate base components). For this terminology, see Williams, "A Methodological Procedure for the Analysis of the Wenxian Covenant Texts," 73–83.

28. For a copy and image of this tablet, see Henan sheng wenwu yanjiusuo, "Henan Wenxian Dong Zhou mengshi yizhi yi-hao kan fajue jianbao," 85 and plate 7. Each individual tablet from Wenxian is identified by its test-square number (prefixed by the letters "WT"), its pit number (prefixed by the letter "K"), and its individual number. The letters are sometimes omitted, e.g. WT1K1-1 becomes 1-1-1. Tablets from Houma are prefixed with "HM," followed by pit number, colon, tablet number, e.g. HM 1:1.

29. For this identification see He Linyi 何琳儀 and Wu Hongsong 吳紅松, "Shengsheng shi xun" 繩繩釋訓, *Zhongyuan wenwu* 2006.1, 62–64. For further evidence supporting this analysis, see Wei Kebin (Crispin Williams), "Wenxian mengshu T4K5, T4K6, T4K11 mengci shidu," 341–42.

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III. 丕顯岳公大冢，諦極[30]視汝，
IV. 麻⿱夷土非是。

I. Fifteenth year, twelfth month, *yiwei* was the first day of the month, [today is] *xinyou* [the 27th day of the month]. From this day onward, [if] Qiao
II.A dares not vigilantly and loyally serve his ruler,
II.B and dares to join with the enemy as a follower,
III. resplendent Lord Yue, Great Mountain, attentively and tirelessly watching you [i.e. the covenantor, Qiao],[31]
IV. 麻⿱夷土非是。

Having identified the Houma and Wenxian texts as oaths, we can be confident that the phrase *ma yi fei shi* 麻⿱夷土非是 is the self-imprecation, to be triggered if the oath is broken. This has been the assumption of all scholars working on these materials. This is corroborated by the only other phrase that occurs in this clause among the excavated covenants. That phrase is found in two covenant types from Wenxian, one in which it follows a variation of the standard *ma yi fei shi*, one in which it occurs alone. I analyze the phrase as denoting the words *bi wu you zhouhou* 俾毋有胄後 "Cause [you] to have no descendants," which is undoubtedly an imprecation.[32]

While there is full agreement that *ma yi fei shi* is an imprecation, there is no general agreement as to what the phrase means. A direct reading of the characters as the words they most commonly denote in received early texts produces a nonsensical phrase.[33] At least some of the characters must, then, be denoting different words, and the challenge is to identify those words.

At least eight analyses have been suggested to explain the phrase *ma yi fei shi* and I believe that of Zhu Dexi and Qiu Xigui to be the

30. I adopt an identification of the word here as *ji* 極 that was suggested by Chen Jian (Personal communication, February 22, 2009).

31. A single text can mix the pronouns that refer to the covenantor: in this text *qi* 其 "his, her" is used as well as *ru* 汝 "you". This arbitrary use of singular personal pronouns by the scribes who prepared the tablets may reflect an oral dimension to the covenant ceremony. It suggests different parts of the covenant were spoken by different people, or sections read by an official to be repeated by the covenantor and the pronoun adjusted accordingly.

32. Williams, "Early References to Collective Punishment in an Excavated Chinese Text."

33. The words commonly denoted by these characters are: *ma* 麻 "hemp," ⿱夷土, if taken to be a variant for *yi* 夷 means "to make level," *fei* 非 "to be not," "be wrong," *shi* 是 "this," "be right."

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most convincing.[34] Zhu and Qiu's analysis is a revision of one presented by Chen Mengjia 陳夢家, who analyzed the phrase as meaning "Wipe out my lineage" *mo yi wo shi* 摩夷我氏.[35] I will introduce the analysis here, with further examples and explanation provided as necessary.

Graph 1: *ma* 麻

Chen Mengjia links the first graph of the phrase, *ma* 麻, to *mo* 摩 which has a *Fangyan* 方言 gloss of "to destroy, to extinguish" *mie* 滅 ("摩，滅也").[36] Zhu and Qiu note that two other characters with the phonetic *ma* 麻, i.e. *mi* 靡 (read second tone) and *mi* 糜, are also found with this meaning in transmitted texts.[37] In fact, in some editions of the *Fangyan*, the gloss cited by Chen Mengjia uses *mi* 靡 rather than *mo* 摩, i.e.: "靡，滅也."[38] The

34. The analyses include (full references are given below): "[May the covenantor be] without peace and not happy" *mi yi fei ti* 靡夷匪禔 (Guo Moruo 郭沫若, 1966); "Wipe out my lineage" *mo yi wo shi* 摩夷我氏 (Chen Mengjia 陳夢家, 1966); "Wuyi [name of the river spirit He Bo 河伯] will punish violation of the covenant" *Wu Yi fei shi* 無夷非是 (Qi Guiyan 戚桂宴, 1979); "Destroy [and seize your] land and smash [your] lineage" *mie di po shi* 滅地破氏 (Peng Jingzhong 彭靜中, 1979); "Kill [the covenantor] and exterminate [his] lineage" *ma yi [zhi] fei shi* 麻夷[之]非氏 (Li Yumin 李裕民, 1983); "with no [degree of] destruction being inappropriate" or "it would not be right if destruction did not [befall him]" *mi yi fei shi* 靡夷非是 (Imre Galambos, 2005). For the above analyses, see: Guo Moruo, "Houma mengshu shitan" 侯馬盟書試探, *Wenwu* 1966.2, 4–6; Chen Mengjia, "Dong Zhou mengshi yu chutu zaishu," 275–76, Qi Guiyan, "'Ma yi fei shi' jie" '麻夷非是'解, *Kaogu* 1979.3, 272, 230; Peng Jingzhong, "Guwenzi kaoshi er ze" 古文字考釋二則, *Sichuan daxue xuebao* (*zhexue shehui kexue ban*) 四川大學學報 (哲學社會科學版), 1979.2, 102–4; Li Yumin "Gu zi xin kao" 古字新考, *Guwenzi yanjiu* 古文字研究 10 (1983), 117–21; Imre Galambos, "A Corpus-Based Approach to Palaeography: The Case of the Houma Covenant Texts," *Asiatische Studien* LIX.1 (2005), 115–30. A further suggestion is given by Du Zhengsheng 杜正勝 in his *Bian hu qi min* 編戶齊民 (Taibei: Lian jing 聯經, 1990), 442–48. Zhu Dexi and Qiu Xigui's analysis is found here: Zhu Dexi and Qiu Xigui, "Zhanguo wenzi yanjiu (liu zhong)," 31–32. For an article supporting Zhu and Qiu's reading and refuting that of Qi Guiyan, see Tang Yuming 唐鈺明, "Chonglun 'ma yi fei shi'" 重論 '麻夷非是,' in *Zhuming zhongnian yuyan xuejia zixuanji: Tang Yuming juan* 著名中年語言學家自選集:唐鈺明卷 (Hefei: Anhui jiaoyu, 2002), 101–10 (originally published in: *Guangzhou shiyuan xuebao* 廣州師院學報, 1989.2). For summaries and discussions of several of the suggested readings for this phrase, see Tsang Chi-hung 曾志雄, "A Study of Alliance Pacts Unearthed at Houma," Houma mengshu yanjiu 侯馬盟書研究, Ph.D. dissertation (University of Hong Kong, 1993), 111–12 and n. 43; and also Galambos, "A Corpus-Based Approach to Palaeography: The Case of the Houma Covenant Texts," 121–23.

35. See previous note.

36. Chen Mengjia, "Dong Zhou mengshi yu chutu zaishu," 276. For copies of the graph, see Shanxi sheng wenwu gongzuo weiyuanhui, *Houma mengshu*, 325.

37. Zhu Dexi and Qiu Xigui, "Zhanguo wenzi yanjiu (liu zhong)," 50, n. 4.

38. *Fangyan jiaojian* 方言校箋, ed. Zhou Zumo 周祖謨 (Beijing: Zhonghua, 1993), 13.86. Also *Yang Xiong Fangyan jiaoshi huizheng* 楊雄方言校釋匯證, ed. Hua Xuecheng 華學誠 (Beijing, Zhonghua, 2006), 13.691–92.

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following passages include such usage of the characters *mi* 靡 and *mi* 糜:[39]

Guo yu 國語 "Yue yu xia 越语下" (late fifth–fourth centuries B.C.E.[40])

王若行之，將妨於國家，靡王躬身。
If the king implements this, it will harm the state and **destroy** the king himself.[41]

Meng zi 孟子 "Jin xin xia 盡心下" (fourth century B.C.E.)

梁惠王以土地之故，糜爛其民而戰之，
King Hui of Liang for the sake of land, **crushed** his people and forced them to fight, …[42]

Han shu 漢書 "Jia Zou Mei Lu zhuan 賈鄒枚路傳" (first century C.E.)

萬鈞之所壓，無不糜滅者。
Nothing pressed upon by ten thousand *jun* (a unit of weight) is not **crushed** and destroyed.[43]

Such usage is not commonly associated with the characters *mo* 摩, *mi* 靡, or *mi* 糜, which primarily denote the words: *mo* 摩 "to rub, to polish"; *mi* 靡 "not, there is not"; and *mi* 糜 "gruel, congee." The semantic components of these characters suggest they were created with these usages in mind: *shou* 手 "hand" in *mo* 摩 "to rub, to polish"; *fei* 非, the negative copula, in the

39. Other examples are discussed here: *Yang Xiong Fangyan jiaoshi huizheng*, 13.691–92, n. 1; *Mengzi zhengyi* 孟子正義, ed. Jiao Xun 焦循 (Beijing: Zhonghua, 1987), 14.954.

40. Dates supplied with quotes from early texts are those most frequently given for compilation or initial authorship of the full text. These are provided to facilitate comparison when considering the usages discussed. It should be borne in mind that the dates are, in many cases, the subject of debate. It should also be noted that, for transmitted texts, the received versions have passed through many stages of copying and editing since they were first written down. When considering individual characters, in cases where a word did not have a dedicated graph commonly associated with it, the likelihood of significant variation in later reproductions is particularly high. This appears to be the situation we have with the word denoted by the *ma* 麻 graph under discussion here. For dating of transmitted texts, see the individual entries in *Early Chinese Texts: A Bibliographical Guide*, ed. Michael Loewe (Berkeley: The Society for the Study of Early China and The Institute of East Asian Studies, University of California, 1993). For discussion of the effects of transmission on early texts, see, for example, Richter, *The Embodied Text*, 1–9; William H. Baxter, "Zhou and Han Phonology in the *Shijing*," in *Studies in the Historical Phonology of Asian Languages*, Current Issues in Linguistic Theory 77, ed. William G. Boltz and Michael C. Shapiro (Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 1991), 1–34.

41. *Guo yu* 國語 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji, 1995), 21.641.

42. *Mengzi zhengyi*, 14.953.

43. *Han shu* 漢書, Ban Gu 班固 [Han] and Yan Shi 顏師 [Tang] (Beijing: Zhonghua, [1962] 1992), 51.2330.

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negative function word *mi* 靡; and *mi* 米 "rice" in *mi* 糜 "gruel, congee." None of these characters was produced to explicitly represent the word denoted in the above examples. We can conjecture, then, that these characters are being used interchangeably, to denote a phonetically-close word meaning "crush," "destroy," for which there was no common dedicated character. In two texts dating after the Western Han we find two further variants that may have been produced to specifically denote this word. The *Shuowen jiezi* 說文解字 has a character *mi* 糜, otherwise unattested in early texts but glossed as *sui* 碎 "to smash to pieces," which may well correspond to this word.[44] In the *Hou Han shu* 後漢書, we find the phrase "東擦烏桓" "In the east [they] destroyed the Wuhuan [peoples]." Here the word is written with the character 擦, i.e. *mi* 靡 with the *shou* 扌 "hand" radical added, which is presumably a variant intended to indicate this specific usage.[45] On this basis, we can conjecture that *ma* 麻, the phonetic signifier in all these characters, is used in the excavated covenants to denote the same word, meaning "to destroy." It seems likely that this word was in fact an extension, possibly a derivation, of the word *mo* 摩 "to rub, to polish," which can also mean "to grind," a usage sometimes distinguished by use of the character *mo* 磨. The word found in the above examples and in the covenants would, then, be an intensification of this meaning, giving "to crush, to obliterate, to pulverize," glossed as "to destroy."[46] Below, when referring to this usage, the character *mi* 靡 will be used.[47]

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44. *Shuowen jiezi*, Xu Shen 許慎 [Han] (Beijing: Zhonghua, 1963), 148 (7a米部22a).

45. *Hou Han shu* 後漢書, Fan Ye 范曄 [Liu Song] (Beijing, Zhonghua, [1965] 1995), 80.2600.

46. The reconstruction for the Old Chinese pronunciation of *mo* 摩 is: *mo* 摩 < *ma* < **m^ʕaj*, while that for *ma* 麻 is: *ma* 麻 < *mae* < **m^ʕraj*. Thus 麻 *ma* could be used to write either **m^ʕaj* or **m^ʕraj*, i.e. the syllable with or without the medial **-r-*. I use the Old Chinese reconstruction system of William H. Baxter and Laurent Sagart, see their *Old Chinese: A New Reconstruction* (Oxford University Press, 2014). When giving reconstructions, the transcription for the Middle Chinese pronunciation appears first, followed by the Old Chinese reconstruction. Baxter and Sagart propose that Old Chinese shows the vestiges of an earlier derivational morphology based on affixation. For example, they suggest a derivational usage of an **-r-* infix to indicate distributed action in verbs of action, and intensification in stative verbs. Thus, in the case under discussion, we might conjecture that we have a root 摩 **m^ʕaj*, "to rub," "to grind," and a derivation with infix **-r-* that indicates repeated action, and thus intensification of the action, giving the meaning "to crush, to obliterate, to pulverize," leading to the gloss "to destroy." Other examples of derivation from the root *mo* 摩/磨 include the derived noun *mo* 磨 "grindstone," in which the suffix **-s* nominalizes the root to give: *mo* 磨 < *maH* < **m^ʕaj-s*. The same process may also be responsible for the noun *mo* 塺 "dust": *mo* 塺 < *maH* < **m^ʕaj-s*.

47. I do wonder whether the word denoted by these various characters is not in fact *hui* 毀 "to destroy." Interchange between this character and those just discussed is not seen in early texts, but phonetically the match is close: *hui* 毀 < *xjweX* < **[n̥]⟨r⟩aj?* and *ma* 麻 < *mae*

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Graph 2: *yi* [illegible]

Chen Mengjia takes the second graph, [illegible], to be a variant form of *yi* 夷, and gives the gloss from the *Guangya* 廣雅 of *mie* 滅 "to destroy" ("夷，滅也").[48] Zhu Dexi and Qiu Xigui follow this analysis. The word *yi* 夷 and related words have a root meaning of "level," and the

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< **mˤraj*. Given these reconstructions, *ma* 麻 (and the characters with *ma* 麻 as phonetic discussed above) would certainly have been a suitable candidate to represent the word *hui* 毀. There is no consensus on how to analyze the character *hui* 毀 but one common explanation would suggest that the word's basic meaning was close to that of *mo* 摩 "to rub, to grind," the root from which we have suggested the intensified word meaning "to crush, to obliterate, to pulverize" is derived. The graph *hui* 毀 is composed of the components *jiu* 臼 "mortar," *tu* 土 "earth," and *shu* 殳 "to beat" and Karlgren suggests this represents the action "to 殳 beat to 土 powder (mostly corrupted: 工) in 臼 a mortar" (Bernhard Karlgren, *Analytic Dictionary of Chinese and Sino-Japanese* (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., [1974] 1991), 65). The *Shuowen jiezi* glosses *hui* 毀 as *que* 缺 "broken, damaged," which is not its usual usage, and analyzes it as being derived from the character *hui* 毇 as abbreviated phonetic (*sheng sheng* 省聲) (*Shuowen jiezi*, 289 (13b土部12a)). The word *hui* 毇 means "to pound [rice/grain] (in order to dehusk it)" and the graph could obviously be analyzed along the same lines as *hui* 毀, i.e. as depicting rice (*mi* 米) being pounded in a mortar (*Shuowen jiezi*, 148 (7a毇部23a)). The characters are given identical sound glosses, suggesting they are in fact just variant forms reflecting extended usages of a single word, i.e., "to pound (rice)" (*hui* 毇) and "to destroy" (*hui* 毀). Given their similarity in pronunciation and meaning, it seems possible that the graph *hui* 毀 denotes the same word as the proposed intensified derivative of *mo* 摩 that means "to crush, to obliterate, to pulverize" (commonly glossed as "to destroy"). The word *hui* 毀 occurs in early texts in the context of destruction of homes, lineages, and states, for example: *Wu Yue chunqiu* 吳越春秋 "Fu Chai neizhuan 5 夫差內傳第五:" "而吳伐二國，辱君臣，毀社稷，..." "[If] Wu attacked the two states, humiliated their rulers and ministers, and destroyed their Earth and Grain altars, …" (*Wu Yue chunqiu jijiao huikao* 吳越春秋輯校彙考, ed. Zhou Shengchun 周生春 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji, 1997), 5.95). Baxter has conjectured that *hui* 燬, which is a variant form of *hui* 毀, may be cognate with *huo* 火, which would imply that at its root *hui* 毀 means "destroy by fire," an analysis which would not accord with that suggested above (William H. Baxter, *A Handbook of Old Chinese Phonology* (Trends in Linguistics. Studies and Monographs 64) (Berlin; New York: Mouton de Gruyter, 1992), 417). However, early usage of *hui* 毀 is not limited to destruction by fire, and includes, for example, the meaning "slander" (i.e. "destruction by words," also written with the variant *hui* 譭). So it may be the case that the character *hui* 燬 reflects an extended meaning of the word rather than its root meaning. In Axel Schuessler's reconstructions of Old Chinese, *ma* 麻 (**mâi*) is close to *hui* 隳/隳 (**hmai*) "to destroy (by pulling down)," which would suggest another possible candidate for the word denoted by the graphs discussed above (Axel Schuessler, personal communication, February 3, 2013). Baxter, however, argues that *hui* 隳/隳 must have final **oj* which would then make a connection with characters with the *ma* 麻 phonetic unlikely (Baxter, *A Handbook of Old Chinese Phonology*, 422 and 857, n. 312).

48. Chen Mengjia, "Dong Zhou mengshi yu chutu zaishu," 276. For copies of the graph, see Shanxi sheng wenwu gongzuo weiyuanhui, *Houma mengshu*, 321. For the *Guangya* gloss, see *Guangya shuzheng* 廣雅疏證, ed. Wang Niansun 王念孫 [Qing] (Shanghai: Shanghai guji, 1983), 4b.483.

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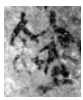
verbal meaning "to make level." The word can refer to the leveling of ground and buildings, leading to the gloss of "to destroy." For example: *Guo yu* "Zhou yu xia 周語下:"是以人夷其宗廟, 而火焚其彝器. "Therefore [other] peoples destroyed their lineage temples and committed to flames their ritual vessels."[49] The addition of the *tu* 土 "earth" in the variant graph found in the covenants, i.e. 墄, is a semantic component and accords with such usage. The verb *yi* 夷 can also take people as its object, to mean "to wipe out, raze, exterminate," and this is the specific usage found in the covenants, the object of the verb being the *shi* 氏, referring to the covenantor and his direct male descendants.

Examples of the graph 墄 from the Houma and Wenxian texts include the following component-level variations:


HM 200:11


1-1-2887

There are five examples of the first variant among the Houma texts. This variant adds the component *e* 步, which is frequently found as a semantic signifier in characters that denote words related to death (including *si* 死 "to die" itself). Its addition here accords with the identification of the word denoted here as *yi* 夷, meaning "to wipe out, raze, exterminate."[50]

In the second variant, from Wenxian, the additional component is *wu* 烏, and a formal transcription of the graph is thus 鼾 (*wu* 烏 and *niao* 鳥 being equivalent as semantic signifiers). This graph is also found in the Shanghai slip text *Bao Shuya yu Xi Peng zhi jian* 鮑叔牙與隰朋之諫, where it denotes the word *zhi* 雉 "pheasant."[51] The *wu* 烏 is a semantic signifier for what is clearly the graph's primary use to denote a type of bird. The use of this graph in the imprecation to write the word *yi* 夷 "to wipe out, raze, exterminate" is a case of erroneous use of a near-homophone by the scribe.[52]

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49. *Guo yu*, 3.111.

50. This point is also made by Li Yumin, "Gu zi xin kao," 119–20; and Galambos, "A Corpus-Based Approach to Palaeography: The Case of the Houma Covenant Texts," 128.

51. Ma Chengyuan 馬承源, ed. *Shanghai bowuguan cang zhanguo Chu zhushu*, vol. 5 上海博物館藏戰國楚竹書(五) (Shanghai: Shanghai guji, 2005). In this volume, the graph is found on slip 2 of the text *Jing Jian nei zhi* 競建內之 (168–69). Since that publication, however, it has been convincingly argued that this text should be merged with the text *Bao Shuya yu Xi Peng zhi jian*, see Chen Jian 陳劍, "Tantan 'Shangbo (wu)' de zhujian fen pian, pinhe yu bianlian wenti" 談談《上博(五)》的竹簡分篇，拼合與編聯問題, accessed online: http://www.bsm.org.cn/show_article.php?id=204 (Last accessed April 16, 2014).

52. As will be discussed further below, it may be significant that a graph denoting a word with a dental initial in Middle Chinese (*zhi* 雉 < *drijX*) is being used here in place of *yi* 夷 with its Middle Chinese palatal initial (*yi* 夷 < *yij*). The *Shuowen jiezi* has the graph 鶨, which is structurally equivalent to the Wenxian and *Bao Shuya yu Xi Peng*

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Based on the above analysis, the verbs *mi yi* 靡夷 combine in the imprecation phrase to give a meaning of "to crush and flatten," used metaphorically to refer to the wiping out of the covenantor's male line.

Graph 3: *fei* 非

Zhu and Qiu objected to Chen Mengjia's analysis of the third character as *wo* 我, noting that the graph is identical to examples of *fei* 非 on bronze inscriptions.[53] They point out that the character *fei* 匪, which has the phonetic *fei* 非, often interchanges with *fei* 非 in early texts (to denote the negative *fei* 非), and that *fei* 匪, in turn, is phonetically close to *bi* 彼 and is commonly glossed (*xun* 訓) as *bi* 彼 "that" in received texts. It follows, they argue, that the *fei* 非 of the imprecation phrase can also be glossed as *bi* 彼 "that." Their use of the term *xun* 訓 "gloss" (rather than *du wei* 讀為 "read as") indicates that Zhu and Qiu are not assuming that *fei* 非 is being used to directly denote the word *bi* 彼, leaving open the possibility that there existed two separate demonstrative pronouns that had similar pronunciations, the standard character for one of them (i.e. *fei* 匪) sometimes used to denote the other (i.e. *bi* 彼). I would suggest that these graphs were all being used to denote a single demonstrative pronoun. While the Old Chinese reconstructions of *fei* 非 and *fei* 匪 differ only in the addition of the post-coda **-ʔ* in *fei* 匪, it is the case that their main vowel differs from that of *bi* 彼: *fei* 非 < *pj* + *j* < **pəj* and *bi* 彼 < *pjeX* < **pajʔ*. However, Baxter notes that: "It is … likely that original **-aj* and **-əj* merged in some dialects, at least in some environments."[54] We do not see *fei* 非 or *fei* 匪 functioning as a demonstrative pronoun in oracle bones or bronze inscriptions. I would conjecture then that cases of *fei* 匪 (or *fei* 非) acting as a demonstrative pronoun originate from regions where this merger had taken place and the graphs are simply being used to write the word *bi* 彼.

Graph 4: *shi* 是

Chen argued that the graph *shi* 是 is a loan for *shi* 氏 "lineage," citing commentaries to the *Yi li* 儀禮 and *Li ji* 禮記 which gloss examples of

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zhi jian graph (sharing the same phonetic and semantic components) and is glossed as *yihu* 鵜胡 "pelican" (now commonly written with the graphs *tihu* 鵜鶘), with the further comment that the graph is sometimes derived from *di* 弟 in place of the *yi* 夷 component (*Shuowen jiezi*, 81 (4a鳥部23a)), and thus giving another example of contact between *yi* 夷 and a dental initial.

53. Zhu Dexi and Qiu Xigui, "Zhanguo wenzi yanjiu (liu zhong)," 32. Examples of the graph from Wenxian are given below. An example of the graph is also given in Shanxi sheng wenwu gongzuo weiyuanhui, *Houma mengshu*, 315.

54. Baxter, *A Handbook of Old Chinese Phonology*, 417.

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shi 是 in these texts as *shi* 氏.[55] This usage is also very common in Warring States excavated texts.[56] The analysis is further supported by the many examples from both Houma and Wenxian, mostly published after Chen was writing, in which the character *shi* 氏 is used in place of *shi* 是 in this position.[57]

On the basis of this analysis of these four graphs, the phrase *ma yi fei shi* 麻𡍮非是 is understood to denote the words *mi yi bi shi* 靡夷彼氏, literally meaning "Crush and flatten that *shi*," that is to say "Wipe out that *shi*," the term *shi* 氏 "lineage" referring, I suggest, to the covenantor, his sons, grandsons and any further direct male descendants.

Two main objections to this analysis have been raised. Firstly, Qi Guiyan 戚桂宴, Li Yumin 李裕民 and Imre Galambos all take issue with the identification of *fei* 非 as *bi* 彼 "that."[58] It is pointed out that this usage is not seen in other excavated texts, the only examples being in received texts, and that the word here is always written with *fei* 非, without a single variant that might support the *bi* 彼 reading. Secondly, Li Yumin calls attention to lexical variations in this phrase in the Houma texts that appear to contradict the above analysis: *ma yi zhi fei shi* 麻𡍮之非是 (HM 1:41 and HM 1:42) and … *fei yi* 非𡍮 ... (HM 79:8).[59] These issues, however, can be resolved without rejecting the above analysis.

Firstly, since these objections were made, a number of occurrences of *fei* 非 in subsequently excavated texts have been identified as representing the word *bi* 彼. Of these, the most convincing is the following example from the Shanghai Museum text *Yongyue* 用曰:

Yongyue 用曰 (fourth–third centuries B.C.E.)
唇亡齒寒。凡恭人，非(彼)人是恭，厥身是衛。

55. Chen Mengjia, "Dong Zhou mengshi yu chutu zaishu," 276. For copies of the graph, see Shanxi sheng wenwu gongzuo weiyuanhui, *Houma mengshu*, 318.

56. See examples in He Linyi 何琳儀, *Zhanguo guwen zidian* 戰國古文字典 (Beijing: Zhonghua, 1998), 750–51; Bai Yulan 白於藍, *Jiandu boshu tongjiazi zidian* 簡牘帛書通假字字典 (Fuzhou: Fujian renmin, 2008), 123–24.

57. Chen had only seen a limited number of excavated covenant texts when he published his article. These included the so-called Qinyang covenant texts (*Qinyang zaishu* 沁陽載書) in which there is an example that uses *shi* 氏 in place of *shi* 是, and he notes this as proof of his analysis. The "Qinyang covenant texts" is the name given to a small group of tablets that originated from non-scientific excavation at the Wenxian site in the mid-twentieth century, see Chen Mengjia, "Dong Zhou mengshi yu chutu zaishu," 279–81; see also: Williams, "Interpreting the Wenxian Covenant Texts," 42.

58. Qi Guiyan, "'Ma yi fei shi' jie"; Li Yumin, "Gu zi xin kao," 117–21; Galambos, "A Corpus-Based Approach to Palaeography: The Case of the Houma Covenant Texts," 123–24.

59. Li Yumin, "Gu zi xin kao," 120.

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"If the lips are gone, the teeth get cold." Whenever showing respect to another person, it is [to] that person [that one] shows respect, [but] it is one's self [that one] protects.[60]

The opening idiom is used to refer to two separate persons or groups in some sort of dependent or interdependent relationship, and here it is followed by an illustrative example: when showing respect to another, one must also protect oneself. The 非(彼)人是恭 and 厥身是衛 phrases are syntactically identical, with their objects, both made up of a pronoun and noun, preposed and followed by the resumptive pronoun *shi* 是 before the verb. The use of the pronouns *fei* (*bi*) 非(彼) "that" and *jue* 厥 "my," "one's" indicates a contrast between the other party and one's self.[61] This is, then, an extremely persuasive case of the graph *fei* 非 denoting the word *bi* 彼 "that."[62]

The use of a single graph to denote two common but semantically unrelated words, in this case *fei* 非 representing the negative copula *fei* 非 and the demonstrative pronoun *bi* 彼, is not at all unusual in early Chinese texts. In the covenant tablets, for example, *er* 而 also denotes two distinct words, the conjunction *er* 而 and the pronoun "your." The relatively small number of examples of *fei* 非 (and *fei* 匪) denoting *bi* 彼 in excavated and received texts is explained by its being a regional feature. As noted above, *fei* 非 (and *fei* 匪) would

60. Ma Chengyuan 馬承源, ed. *Shanghai bowuguan cang zhanguo Chu zhushu*, vol. 6 上海博物館藏戰國楚竹書(六) (Shanghai: Shanghai guji, 2007), 292. For the identification of *fei* 非 as *bi* 彼 see He Youzu 何有祖, "Chu jian san zha liu ze" 楚簡散札六則, accessed online: http://www.bsm.org.cn/show_article.php?id=646 (Last accessed December 3, 2012).

61. He Youzu seems to understand the pronouns as both referring to the person to whom respect is being shown (see previous note), but this does not accord with this pairing of pronouns or the context here which, given the use of the idiom, is clearly talking about two parties. Scott Cook makes a similar point, see Scott Cook (Gu Shikao 顧史考), "Shangbo Chu jian *Yongyue* zhang jie" 上博楚簡《用曰》章解, conference paper: 2007 nian Zhongguo jianboxue guoji luntan 2007 年中國簡帛學國際論壇 (Taiwan University, November 10, 2007).

62. Another Shanghai-museum text, *Cao Mo zhi chen* 曹沫之陳 has the phrase 非山非澤，亡有不民, in which the two *fei* 非 should perhaps also be read as *bi* 彼 (see Liu Hongtao 劉洪濤, "Shuo 'fei shan fei ze, wu you bu min'" 說'非山非澤, 亡有不民,' accessed online: http://www.bsm.org.cn/show_article.php?id=539 (Last accessed December 3, 2012)). However, the problematic term *bu min* 不民 means it is not possible to make a conclusive judgment as to the meaning of the two *fei* 非 here. In the *Chu Silk Manuscript* (*Chu boshu* 楚帛書) *fei* 非 occurs before the term "nine skies" *jiu tian* 九天. Li Xueqin suggests this *fei* 非 should be read *bi* 彼, see Li Xueqin, "*Chu boshu* zhong de gu shi yu yuzhouguan" 楚帛書中的古史與宇宙觀, in *Chu shi luncong* 楚史論叢, ed. Zhang Zhengming 張正明 (Hubei renmin, 1984), 145–54. As with much of the *Chu Silk Manuscript*, this section has various problematic graphs as well as difficulties of interpretation, so the identification of the *fei* 非 here as *bi* 彼 is not conclusive.

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only have been suitable characters to write *bi* 彼 in regions where **-aj* and **-əj* had merged, thus limiting this phenomenon to texts from those areas.

The lack of a single example of the graph *bi* 彼 used in place of *fei* 非 in this position in the Houma and Wenxian materials so far surveyed is, nonetheless, deserving of consideration. We have already seen in the case of *shi* 是 and *shi* 氏 that a graph (in that case *shi* 是) can almost completely replace the graph previously more commonly used (in that case *shi* 氏) to denote a particular word. But, in that particular case we still, nevertheless, find examples of *shi* 氏 being used. The demonstrative pronoun *bi* 彼 occurs in the late fourth-century Zhongshan bronzes written using the character *pi* 皮, and there is another possible example of this usage on a bell-type instrument from Jiangxi 江西 dating to the Spring and Autumn period.[63] It seems likely, then, that the scribes at Houma and Wenxian had the option to use the graph *pi* 皮 "hide, animal skin" to write *bi* 彼 in the imprecation phrase. However, it is significant that the most commonly seen use of *pi* 皮 in excavated materials from the Jin region is to write the name of a lineage with the name Pi 皮. This lineage name is common on Warring States weapons and coinage from Wei 魏 and Han 韓.[64] Thus, during this period, the use of the graph *pi* 皮 preceding *shi* 氏, i.e. *pi shi* 皮氏, would have been ambiguous and probably first understood to refer to the Pi lineage, rather than the phrase *bi shi* 彼氏 "that lineage." The imprecation phrase would have appeared to read "Wipe out the Pi lineage," the Pi lineage becoming the sole target of the curse. This perhaps explains why the Wenxian and Houma scribes were particularly careful to avoid writing *pi* 皮 in the phrase, and to use the alternative graph *fei* 非 to denote the word *bi* 彼.

Both Qi Guiyan and Li Yumin object to identifying *fei* 非 as *bi* 彼 on the grounds that, if a pronoun was intended here before the word *shi* 氏, it would be *qi* 其 "his, her" or *er* 而 "your," as these are commonly used as possessive pronouns referring to the covenantor elsewhere in the texts. I would argue, however, that the use of *bi* 彼 "that" here is intentional because it functions to clearly distinguish the narrowly defined *shi* 氏 of the covenantor, comprising just himself and his direct male descendants, from the more broadly defined *shi* 氏, i.e. the main lineages of Zhao and Han. As just discussed, *bi* 彼 "that" refers to a person or object that is not close to the speaker, contrasting with *ci* 此 "this"

63. Zhang Shichao (Chō Sei Chou) 張世超 et al., *Jinwen xing yi tong jie (Kinbun Keigi Tsūkai)* 金文形義通解 (Kyoto: Chūbun Shuppansha 中文出版社, 1996), 709–10.

64. Tang Zhibiao 湯志彪, *San Jin wenzibian* 三晉文字編, Ph.D. dissertation (Jilin University, 2009), 182–83.

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or *ji* 己 "oneself" (or *jue* 厥, as in the *Yongyue* example above). The use of *bi* 彼 indicates that the target of the imprecation is restricted to each individual covenantor and his male offspring, and not the whole lineage. The significance of this choice of pronoun, along with the formulaic nature of the phrase, would have shielded it from replacement with the more commonly seen pronouns *qi* 其 "his, her" or *er* 而 "your." The insulation to variation of pronouns in set phrases is also seen in English, for example "fare thee well."

While Qi and Li both object to identifying *fei* 非 as *bi* 彼, neither provides a convincing alternative analysis. Li argues that not only are the graphs *ma* 麻 and *yi* 㚔 verbs meaning "to destroy," but so is *fei* 非. He suggests that the variation *ma yi zhi fei shi* 麻㚔之非是 (HM 1:41 and HM 1:42) is the full form of the phrase, in which a pronoun-object *zhi* 之 follows *yi* 㚔, so that the phrase should be understood as made up of two clauses: *ma yi zhi* 麻㚔之, meaning "Destroy him [the covenantor]" and *fei shi* 非氏 "Destroy [his] lineage." Li argues that this *zhi* 之 is usually omitted because a *zhi* 之 referring to the covenantor is already found in the preceding phrase, *di ji shi zhi* 諦極視之 (which I translate "attentively and tirelessly watching him"). This analysis then accounts for the variants *ma yi zhi fei shi* 麻㚔之非是 and "… *fei yi* 非㚔 ..." (HM 79:8). Both these arguments are problematic. The omission of the pronoun-object *zhi* 之 after the co-verb *yi* 以 and after transitive verbs in negative sentences is a well-recognized feature of classical Chinese grammar, but its omission in the middle of a series of three verbs (all synonyms) would be most unusual and could not be inferred. If the object-pronoun was exceptionally omitted, we would expect to see the full phrase, *ma yi zhi fei shi* 麻㚔之非是, commonly used, but it is found only twice, both examples written by a single scribe (as will be discussed in the next section). Furthermore, Li gives no evidence to support his suggestion that *fei* 非 can mean "to destroy" and I find no examples of such usage.[65] Thus, Li does not give a convincing alternative analysis of the phrase *ma yi fei shi* 麻㚔非是. Nevertheless, Li is correct to draw attention to the variants *ma yi zhi fei shi* 麻㚔之非是 and "… *fei yi* 非㚔 ... ." I will argue below that these, as well as several other variants, are due to scribal idiosyncrasies or errors and do not, in fact, disprove or weaken the proposed analysis.

65. Peng Jingzhong, in his analysis of the imprecation (see n. 34 above) suggests *fei* 非 denotes *po* 破 "to smash" (Peng Jingzhong, "Guwenzi kaoshi er ze"). The Old Chinese reconstruction for *po* 破 is *po* < *phaH* < **pʰˤaj-s*, while that for the *bi* 彼 is *bi* 彼 < *pjeX* < **paj?*, and *po* 破 and *bi* 彼 share the same phonetic, so phonetically this is a possible loan. Nevertheless, this is not an attested loangraph usage for *fei* 非.

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Variations of the phrase *ma yi fei shi* 麻褱非是

In order to better our understanding of the imprecation *ma yi fei shi*, I surveyed examples of this phrase and its variants as found in the Houma and Wenxian covenant tablets. For the Houma covenants, the data set was the collection of 656 brush-written copies of the texts given in the excavation report, the *Houma mengshu*.[66] For the Wenxian covenants, the survey was based on about 3,900 images of tablets that had been selected for photography by their excavators, Hao Benxing 郝本性 and Zhao Shigang 趙世綱, in preparation for their publication.[67] The following variations were recorded: the use of one or more different graph/s in place of the expected graph/s; the addition or omission of a graph from the phrase; the re-ordering of graphs in the phrase. Calligraphic and component-level variants clearly representing the same word as the more common forms were ignored. The tabulated results of the survey are presented in Appendix 1.

Overall, the phrase is most commonly written in the form *ma yi fei shi* 麻夷非是.[68] Among the images of the Wenxian tablets, of 2,155 examples which had all or part of the phrase legible, 1,126 had the *ma yi fei shi* 麻夷非是 fully legible, compared to 504 tablets for which a variant could be confirmed. For the Houma tablets, there were 376 examples with part or the entire imprecation clause legible, of which 181 had the common four characters fully legible and just 25 had confirmed variants. Among the two data sets, the number of variants for which all characters could be confidently identified was 26. There were also eleven variants which included one or two unidentified graphs, giving a possible total of 37 variations for the phrase. However, some of the eleven examples with unidentified graphs may not be distinct variants, which would lower the total variant count to something below this.

The variants are introduced and discussed below. The common variations, and many of the less common variations, support the proposed analysis of this phrase to mean *mi yi bi shi* 靡夷彼氏 "Wipe out that *shi*." These are introduced first. I then discuss those variations which appear

66. Shanxi sheng wenwu gongzuo weiyuanhui, *Houma mengshu*.

67. The images were taken and processed as part of the collaborative project mentioned above. The project is greatly indebted to Carl Andrews (Laboratory of Computer Science, Massachusetts General Hospital, Boston), who initially oversaw the photography, scanning, image enhancement, and database construction. The survey I conducted for this study was done before a further set of photographs was taken in the summer of 2009 of tablets not originally selected for photography. Texts on the tablets photographed in 2009 are not included in the survey presented here.

68. In the following discussion the character 褱, identified above as a variant form for *yi* 夷, is written directly as *yi* 夷, without the additional *tu* 土 component.

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to contradict the proposed analysis. I demonstrate that, by identifying the individual hands responsible for these variations, they can be explained as scribal errors or idiosyncrasies that do not, in fact, challenge the proposed analysis.

Variations

1. 麻夷非氏

In this, the most common variant found, the last character of the phrase is written with the character *shi* 氏 in place of *shi* 是. Taking into account all cases surveyed in which the last graph in the phrase is *shi* 氏 (regardless of other variations or lacunae) there are almost 400 examples. These two characters are also commonly found in both received and excavated texts (from the Warring States and on) interchanging to denote both *shi* 氏 "lineage" and the demonstrative pronoun *shi* 是.[69] This evidence clearly supports the argument that *shi* 是 is used in the imprecation to denote the word *shi* 氏 "lineage."[70]

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69. See examples in Gao Heng 高亨 (ed. Dong Zhi'an 董治安), *Guzi tongjia huidian* (Jinan: Qi Lu shushe [1989] 1997), 461; Bai Yulan, *Jiandu boshu tongjiazi zidian*, 123–24; Bai Yulan, *Zhanguo Qinhan jianbo gushu tongjiazi huizuan* 戰國秦漢簡帛古書通假字彙纂 (Fujian renmin, 2012), 281–84. The interchange does not appear to occur in Western Zhou bronzes, see Zhang Shichao (Chō Sei Chou) et al., *Jinwen xing yi tong jie (Kinbun Keigi Tsūkai)*, 67–71 and 2918–23.

70. The development that allowed interchange between *shi* 氏 and *shi* 是 was a sound change that the word *shi* 氏 underwent. Baxter and Sagart note that loanwords and *xiesheng* contacts indicate a velar preinitial for *shi* 氏 that subsequently drops leaving the dental (Baxter and Sagart, *Old Chinese: A New Reconstruction*, section 4.4.4). Only after this development does *shi* 是 become a suitable graph to write *shi* 氏. The reconstructions are: *shi* 氏: **k.de?* > **g.de?* > **de?* > *dzyeX* > *shi*, and for *shi* 是: **de?* > *dzyeX* > *shi*. Once the velar preinitial **g-* drops, the two words are pronounced identically (**de?*) providing the conditions for interchange of the graphs by scribes. Among the Houma and Wenxian materials the two graphs are both used to denote the word *shi* 氏, although *shi* 是 is more frequent. The use of a loangraph and orthograph being used contemporaneously in this way is seen in other cases, e.g.: *ce* 冊 and *ce* 策, *fei* 飛 and *fei* 蜚, *mei* 眉 and *mi* 麋 (see Qiu Xigui, *Chinese Writing*, trans. Gilbert L. Mattos and Jerry Norman (Berkeley: The Society for the Study of Early China and The Institute of East Asian Studies, University of California, 2000), 268). That the *shi* 是 is generally more frequently used than *shi* 氏 in the imprecation phrase should not be taken as evidence that the word denoted is in fact *shi* 是. Comparing frequency of usage in this way is not a reliable indicator of meaning as is clear if one compares the usage of these two graphs in the two large Wenxian pits WT1K1 and WT1K14. These pits each held thousands of examples of the same oath type, but in pit WT1K1 the variation with *shi* 氏 occurs in 0.4% of those cases in which the last graph is legible, compared to 56.3% of corresponding examples in pit WT1K14. Thus, although the word denoted is clearly the same in both pits, in pit

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2. 亡夷非是/氏

In this variation the character *wang* 亡 is used in place of the graph *ma* 麻.[71] The variant is found both at Houma, in two pits (pits 67 and 92), and Wenxian, in just one pit (WT1K2). In the Wenxian case, in legible examples of the phrase, *wang* 亡 is used exclusively. In Houma pit 67 both *wang* 亡 and *ma* 麻 are found with almost equal frequency, while in pit 92 only one tablet uses *wang* 亡. The use of *wang* 亡 in place of *ma* 麻 can be analyzed either as a lexical variation, taking the *wang* 亡 to mean "to destroy," or as evidence of a segmentation error.

Li Yumin reads this variant directly as *wang* 亡 "to destroy."[72] If this is correct, it would be an early example of a usage which is generally very rarely found prior to the Han period. The word *wang* 亡 is commonly used in early texts with the meaning "to lose," as in the phrase *wang guo* 亡國 "to lose one's state" (and attributively, i.e. "a lost state") and also with the intransitive sense "to be lost" with the connotation of something being destroyed or wiped out, as in the phrase *guo bi wang* 國必亡 "the state will certainly be lost/destroyed." The character is much less commonly found in pre-Han texts with the sense of "X destroys Y" which would be required in the Houma and Wenxian phrase, i.e. the sanctioning spirit will "destroy that lineage." In his article, Li Yumin quotes the text of a covenant, recorded in the *Zuo zhuan* 左傳, which does appear to use *wang* 亡 in this sense. The relevant section of the imprecation is given here (the appropriate translation is discussed in the main text):

Zuo zhuan Xiang 襄 11.3 (fifth–fourth centuries B.C.E.)
… 明神殛之，俾失其民，隊(墜)命亡氏，踣其國家。[73]

The use of the *wang* 亡 here, however, is somewhat ambiguous: it could be understood as "destroy [his] lineage", but we could also take the *bi* 俾 "to cause to" as governing the three verbs *shi* 失, *zhui* 墜, and *wang* 亡, all synonyms meaning "to lose", thus: "… the bright spirits will kill him,

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WT1K14 the use of *shi* 氏 is somewhat more common than that of *shi* 是, while in pit WT1K1 *shi* 是 is almost exclusively used. While it is tempting to conjecture that this discrepancy indicates that the pits date to different periods (i.e. WT1K14's more frequent use of *shi* 氏 reflecting a time at which this usage of *shi* 是 was not yet as prevalent), it could also simply reflect different habits among different groups of scribes, or different exemplars used during the writing process.

71. For examples of the *wang* 亡 graph, see Shanxi Sheng Wenwu Gongzuo Weiyuanhui, *Houma mengshu*, 325 (under the entry for *ma* 麻). Some of the Wenxian examples with this variation also have the alternative use of *shi* 氏 for *shi* 是.

72. Li Yumin, "Gu zi xin kao," 120.

73. *Chunqiu Zuo zhuan zhu* (rev.ed), ed. Yang Bojun 楊伯峻 (Beijing: Zhonghua, [1990] 2006), 989–90 ("Xiang" 襄 11.3).

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cause [him] to lose his people, [cause him] to lose his mandate, [cause him] to lose his lineage, and [let] fall his state."

There are, however, examples where the word could certainly be interpreted in the sense that would be required in the covenant texts, e.g.:

Zuo zhuan Zhuang 莊 6.3 (fifth–fourth centuries B.C.E.)

… 亡鄧國者，必此人也。
The one who **destroys** the state of Deng, will certainly be this man. (i.e. "This man will destroy Deng.")[74]

However, the great majority of such examples are in Han-period texts such as the *Shi ji* 史記 and *Zhanguo ce* 戰國策, e.g.:

Shi ji "Wei shi jia 魏世家" (second–first centuries B.C.E.)

知伯曰: "吾始不知水之可以亡人之國也，乃今知之。"
The Earl of Zhi said: "I did not originally understand water's being able to be used to **destroy** a people's state, but now I know it." [Commenting on the use of a diverted river in an attack on the settlement of Jinyang 晉陽.][75]

Zhanguo ce "Wei 魏 4" "Qin Wang shi ren wei Anling Jun 秦王使人谓安陵君" (late first century B.C.E.)

... 秦滅韓亡魏，...
… Qin wiped out Han and **destroyed** Wei, …[76]

In excavated texts, this usage is found in Han-period materials, for example in the Mawangdui silk manuscripts:

Zhanguo zonghengjia shu 戰國縱橫家書 "Qin keqing Zao wei Rang Hou 秦客卿造謂穰侯" (text buried: 168 B.C.E.)

吳不亡越，越故亡吳，齊不亡燕，燕故亡齊。吳亡於越，齊亡於燕，…
Wu did not **destroy** Yue, [so] Yue was bound to **destroy** Wu, Qi did not **destroy** Yan, [so] Yan was bound to **destroy** Qi. Wu was **destroyed** by Yue, Qi was **destroyed** by Yan, …[77]

---

74. *Chunqiu Zuo zhuan zhu*, 169 ("Zhuang" 莊 6.3). In fact, this example could also be read without taking *wang* 亡 to mean "to destroy," i.e.: "The loss of Deng will certainly be due to this man."

75. *Shi ji* 史記, Sima Qian 司馬遷 [Han], (Beijing: Zhonghua, [2nd ed. 1982] 1992), 44.1855.

76. *Zhanguo ce* 戰國策, Liu Xiang 劉向 [Han] (Shanghai: Shanghai guji, [2nd ed. 1985] 1995), 25.922. ("Qin Wang shi ren wei Anling Jun" 秦王使人谓安陵君).

77. *Zhanguo zonghengjia shu* 戰國縱橫家書, ed. Mawangdui Hanmu boshu zhengli xiaozu 馬王堆漢墓帛書整理小組 (Beijing: Wenwu, 1976), 81 ("Qin keqing Zao wei Rang Hou" 秦客卿造謂穰侯).

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In earlier excavated texts, *wang* 亡 has not been found with this meaning. In oracle bones the graph *wang* 亡 appears to be used only as a negative adverb. In bronze inscriptions *wang* 亡 is also found following a noun with the intransitive meaning of "to be lost," "to be destroyed." For example, in the "Ban *gui* 班簋" (tenth century B.C.E.) Duke Mao 毛 reports to Tian 天 on the campaign against the eastern states: 惟民亡遂在彝，昧天命，故亡, "It was that the people were not in accord with the norms, ignored Tian's mandate, and so [they] were **destroyed**."[78] The later "Zhongshan Wang Cuo *hu* 中山王𠂤壺" (late fourth century B.C.E.) has the phrase: 邦辻(亡)身死 "the state was **lost/destroyed**, he himself died."[79] The graph is also found with the transitive meaning "to lose [s.th.]," "to suffer the loss of s.th.," for example in the "Shu Jia Fu *fu* 叔家父簠" (eighth–seventh centuries B.C.E.): 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]."[80] And the "Zhongshan Wang Cuo *ding* 中山王𠂤鼎" (late fourth century B.C.E.) has the phrase 辻(亡)其邦 "[He] **suffered the loss** of his state."[81] In the Warring States and Han periods the graph is also commonly found denoting the existential negative *wu* 無, as well as being used nominally to mean "loss."

On the basis of this evidence, we may conclude that use of *wang* 亡 to denote "X destroys Y" has not yet conclusively been seen in pre-Han excavated texts and is very rare in transmitted pre-Han texts. The covenant texts date to the fifth and early fourth centuries B.C.E., so the use of *wang* 亡 with this meaning would be an exceptional early example of this usage.

An alternative explanation is that the use of *wang* 亡 originates from a segmentation error in which the boundary between the first two words of the phrase was misinterpreted.[82] The *ma* 麻 of the imprecation clause denotes, it is proposed, a word meaning "to destroy," represented in texts using a variety of characters with phonetic *ma* 麻, for example,

78. Zhongguo shehui kexue yuan kaogu yanjiusuo 中國社會科學院考古研究所 ed., *Yin Zhou jinwen jicheng* 殷周金文集成 (Beijing: Zhonghua, 1984), vol. 8, no. 4341.a–c. The transcription and interpretation follow Li Xueqin 李學勤, "Ban gui xu kao" 班簋續考, *Guwenzi yanjiu* 13 (1986), 181–88.

79. Zhongguo shehui kexue yuan kaogu yanjiusuo, *Yin Zhou jinwen jicheng*, vol. 15, no. 9735.1–4 (for this phrase, see 9735.3). It is interesting to see that the Zhongshan bronzes appear to distinguish this verbal use of *wang*亡 from its use to denote the existential negative *wu* 無 by adding the "walking" radical *chuo* 辶.

80. Zhongguo shehui kexue yuan kaogu yanjiusuo, *Yin Zhou jinwen jicheng*, vol. 9, no. 4615.

81. Zhongguo shehui kexue yuan kaogu yanjiusuo, *Yin Zhou jinwen jicheng*, vol. 5, no. 2840.

82. A commonly given English example of this phenomenon is hearing "kiss this guy" for "kiss the sky" in the Jimi Hendrix song "Purple Haze." The popular term "mondegreen" is sometimes used for these and other types of mishearing.

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mi 靡. The graph *wang* 亡 is not an appropriate loangraph for this word since their codas do not match: 靡 *mi* < *mje* < **m(r)aj*; 亡 *wang* < *mjang* < **maŋ*. However, *wang* 亡 is very frequently used in place of the negative *wu* 無 "not have" in transmitted and excavated texts.[83] Such usage is also attested in the Wenxian covenants in the covenantor name Wuzhi 亡智 (e.g. WT1K1-1223). Pulleyblank writes: "The two words are no doubt etymologically closely related. *Wang* 亡 is in fact the graphic form found on the oracle bones where *wu* 無 would appear in later texts."[84] If, as is generally assumed, *wang* 亡 was read as *wu* 無 in this usage, then the phonetic similarity with *mi* 靡 becomes closer: 亡/無 *wu* < *mju* < **ma*; and *mi* < *mje* < **m(r)aj*.[85] The lack of the **-j* coda in 無 *wu* may have been offset by the phonetically similar initial of the following word *yi* 夷. This would be evidence of a segmentation error in which there had been a reanalysis of the division of two adjacent syllables.[86] The reconstruction for the second word is: *yi* 夷 < *yij* < **l*ə*j*. If the **l*- initial of this word had already started its development to *y*-, then it would have been a phonetic match for the coda of the previous word, the **-j* of 靡 < *mje* < **m(r)aj*, providing conditions for a segmentation error in which the first syllable was divided before its coda.[87] In this case, *wu* 無 becomes an ideal first syllable in the phrase:

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83. For examples in transmitted texts, see Gao Heng, *Guzi tongjia huidian*, 316–17; for examples in excavated texts, see Bai Yulan, *Jiandu boshu tongjiazi zidian*, 262–63; Bai Yulan, *Zhanguo Qinhan jianbo gushu tongjiazi huizuan*, 662–64.

84. Edwin G. Pulleyblank, *Outline of Classical Chinese Grammar* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1995), 109. Schuessler suggests that this *wang* 亡 **maŋ* is derived from a root **ma* with suffix **-ŋ*, the character 無 **ma* reflecting the root. He suggests the negative *mi* 靡 **m(r)aj?* (Schuessler: **mai*), also used in place of *wu* 無 in transmitted texts, is also derived from this root. See Axel Schuessler, *ABC Etymological Dictionary of Old Chinese* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2006), 507, 518, 382. Baxter, on the other hand, suggests the possibility that the full form of the root was **maŋ* and the **ma* was an unstressed variant (that could only be used when another word followed). William Baxter, personal communication, May 19, 2014.

85. Pulleyblank argues that reading *wang* 亡 as *wu* is not supported by *Shijing* rhymes (Pulleyblank, *Outline of Classical Chinese Grammar*, 109) but this may be related to the particular nature of these examples (see, for example, Baxter's suggestion, in the previous footnote, that the word could not be read in its unstressed form at the end of a phrase).

86. For discussion and examples of this phenomenon, see: William H. Baxter, "Aspects of Old Chinese Morphology: Reading between the Characters in Early Chinese Texts," conference paper: 4th International Conference on Classical Chinese Grammar (Vancouver, 2001).

87. Even if the **l*- in *yi* 夷 < *yij* < **l*ə*j* had not yet started to develop to *y*-, the two are still both coronal consonants so **l*- could perhaps have had the same effect. Several scholars, e.g. Edwin Pulleyblank and Zhengzhang Shangfang (鄭張尚芳), do indeed reconstruct the final coda of the *ge* 哥 rhyme group, to which *mi* 靡 belongs, as **-l*, which would then match the initial of *yi* 夷.

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靡	夷
mje	yij
**maj*[88]	*jəj* < **ləj*
**ma* + [j]	+ *əj* < **ləj*
無	夷

The formulaic and possibly archaic imprecation phrase is just the type of language in which one would expect to find this phenomenon occurring (a further example from these texts is discussed below). Scribes may have been uncertain as to the identity of the first word, leading to the segmentation error.

The *wang yi fei shi* 亡夷非是/氏 variant is found almost exclusively on tablets from just two pits: Houma pit 67 and Wenxian pit WT1K2.[89] The covenant type found in each of these two pits is unique to that pit and found on all legible tablets from that pit.[90] Among legible examples from the Houma pit, nine use *wang* 亡 and ten use *ma* 麻, showing concurrent use of the two graphs among scribes preparing tablets for a single pit. The total number of tablets in this pit was 58 so we can assume a small number of scribes produced these tablets and, given that the imprecation was a stock formulaic phrase, we can conjecture that they, and whoever was overseeing their work, would have been aiming to write a single version of the phrase on all the tablets. This would preclude the use of two versions of the phrase with different words at the start of the phrase, supporting the theory that the use of *wang* 亡 was originally due to a segmentation error, albeit one that had become an acceptable variant for use in the phrase. In the Wenxian pit WT1K2, all 31 tablets with a legible graph in this position have *wang* 亡, suggesting that for these scribes the graph *wang* 亡 was the preferred and perhaps only option. Significantly, the two covenants from these two pits are of a very similar style, in which the usual loyalty oath to the covenant lord is omitted, and the stipulations share an almost identical structure of the

88. The usual reconstruction for *mi* 靡 is **m(r)aj*, the **(r)* indicating that the medial **r* is unconfirmed. Confusion of the word with *wu* 無, as conjectured here, would suggest *mi* 靡 did not have medial **r*, so it is reconstructed in this diagram as **maj*. See also n. 46 above.

89. The one example of this variant found in Houma pit 92, belongs to the Lineage Covenant Texts, Type 4 category, see Shanxi sheng wenwu gongzuo weiyuanhui, *Houma mengshu*, 115, 226 (tablet 92:5).

90. Houma pit 67 contains the covenant type known as the Confiscation Texts (*na shi lei* 納室類), see Shanxi sheng wenwu gongzuo weiyuanhui, *Houma mengshu*, 39–40, 73–74; and Weld, "The Covenant Texts from Houma and Wenxian," 148–50. An example of the covenant type from Wenxian pit WT1K2 is given in Williams, "Early References to Collective Punishment in an Excavated Chinese Text," 440–41, and discussed more fully in Williams, "Interpreting the Wenxian Covenant Texts," 373–447.

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form: "If the covenantor does X, or if he knows of someone doing X and does not report him, … ." These shared characteristics set these two covenants apart from the other covenant types. In content, they are both more like *ad hoc* regulations than oaths of allegiance, perhaps reflecting a period some time after the consolidation of power that was the purpose of the other covenants. The use of *wang* 亡 in these covenants may, then, reflect a change in the preferred choice of initial character in the imprecation phrase. The use of both *ma* 麻 and *wang* 亡 in Houma pit 67 may suggest *wang* 亡 was a recent innovation, the condition for which would have been the sound change in the initial of *yi* 夷 discussed above.[91] For the scribes writing the tablets for pit WT1K2 at Wenxian, this usage was already consolidated, and we only find *wang* 亡. This change might have been due to a reanalysis of the variation with the *wang* 亡, motivated by uncertainty about the meaning of what had become an archaic phrase. The *wang* 亡 may have come to be understood to be denoting the word *wang* 亡 "to destroy." Regardless of which of the proposed analyses is correct, we can conclude that the variant with *wang* 亡 does not suggest an alternative reading of the phrase that challenges the proposed reading.

3. 勿夷非氏

In this variant *ma* 麻 is replaced by *wu* 勿, and *shi* 是 by the variant *shi* 氏 discussed above. This variant with *wu* 勿 is seen only on a number of tablets from pit WT1K14 at Wenxian. Among legible examples from this one pit, we find 42 in which the phrase begins with the character *wu* 勿 as opposed to 678 which use *ma* 麻, a frequency of 5.8 percent.

The identification of the graph as *wu* 勿 is not problematic. A number of examples of the graph as it appears on the Wenxian tablets are given here:


1-14-1886.5


1-14-953.5


1-14-2944


1-14-4178

The *Shuowen jiezi* small seal form for *wu* 勿 is:  , which is a close match for these forms.[92] Excavated texts with transmitted counterparts verify

91. In tablet 4 from this pit the scribe uses the *wang* 亡 variant to write the phrase, but then writes *ma* 麻 after the phrase. This suggests some sort of confusion due to what appears to have been the option to use either variation. The scribe perhaps looked between two separate exemplars each of which used a different variant. Shanxi Sheng Wenwu Gongzuo Weiyuanhui, *Houma mengshu*, 150, 277.

92. *Shuowen jiezi*, 196 (9b 勿部 13b).

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that this identification is correct. For example, the Guodian *Laozi* materials frequently use the graph *wu* 勿 where the received version has *wu* 物, and the form, for example  (*Laozi* A, slip 31), matches that of the Wenxian texts.[93]

Unlike the variant *wang* 亡 discussed above, there is no possibility that *wu* 勿 is used here due to a phonetic similarity to the first word of the phrase since neither the main vowel nor the coda match: *wu* 勿 < *mjut* < **mut*; *ma* 麻 < *mae* < **m*ˁ*raj*. We may then conjecture that the character represents a lexical variation. Reading the character with its common use to denote the negative imperative *wu* 勿 does not fit the proposed analysis for this phrase, nor could it denote *wu* 物 "things" as is common in the Guodian texts and other excavated materials.[94] In fact, the word this graph *wu* 勿 was originally created to denote, that is *wen* 刎 "to cut apart, to cleave", fits the context here. As Qiu Xigui has shown, the graph *wu* 勿 is comprised of the character *dao* 刀 "blade" (small-seal form: ) with the addition of two shorter lines depicting something cut.[95] The word is later written with the character *wen* 刎 in which *dao* 刀 "blade" has been added as a semantic component to distinguish this usage from the loangraph use for the negative function word *wu* 勿. The word *wen* 刎 comes to be used specifically to denote the cutting of the throat, particularly in an act of suicide, and dictionary definitions generally reflect this. However, the original usage was broader, as is evident from examples in oracle bones and passages in transmitted texts. Qiu notes the following examples from transmitted texts:

Xunzi 荀子 "Qiang guo 彊國" (third–first centuries B.C.E.)

剝脫之，砥厲之，則劘槃盂、刎牛馬，忽然耳。
If one smooths and sharpens [the sword], then it will cut into [bronze] vessels, and **cleave cattle and horses**, in a trice.[96]

Li ji 禮記 "Tan gong xia 檀弓下" (first century C.E.)

虞人致百祀之木，可以為棺槨者斬之，不至者，廢其祀，刎其人。
The *Yuren* official delivers the "hundred sacrifices" wood [for the coffin for the Son of Tian 天子]: [the wood] which can be used to make the coffin, [the subordinate officials] cut it down [to be delivered]. If there

93. Zhang Guangyu 張光裕, *Guodian Chujian yanjiu* I – *wenzibian* 郭店楚簡研究: 第一卷 文字編 (Taibei: Yiwen, 1999), 88.

94. See Bai Yulan, *Zhanguo Qinhan jianbo gushu tongjiazi huizuan*, 547–50.

95. Qiu Xigui, "Shi 'wu' 'fa'" 釋'勿''發,' in *Guwenzi lunji* 古文字論集 (Beijing: Zhonghua, 1992), 70–84.

96. *Xunzi jiji* 荀子集解, ed. Wang Xianqian 王先謙 (Beijing: Zhonghua, [1988] 1997), 291 ("Qiang guo 彊國").

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is anywhere that [has such wood but] does not deliver [it], then put an end to its sacrifices, [and] **cut down its people**.[97]

Taking the *wu* 勿 to denote *wen* 刎 "to cut apart, to cleave," the variant phrase reads: 刎夷彼氏 "cut down and wipe out that *shi*," and accords with the suggested meaning of the standard phrase.[98]

4. 麻/亡夷我(?)氏/是

In this variation the character *fei* 非 is written in a form which is similar to that of the character *wo* 我.[99] The variation also occurs with examples in which the first character is written *wang* 亡 or the last character is written *shi* 氏. The character *fei* 非 is commonly written in the covenants with the following form:


HM 195:1


1-1-2001


1-1-4372

However, there are a small number of quite distinct variants:


1-14-1910


1-14-5205


1-14-1943


1-14-1946


1-14-5196

97. *Li ji zhengyi* 禮記正義 in *Shisan jing zhushu* 十三經注疏, ed. Ruan Yuan 阮元 [Qing] (Beijing: Zhonghua, [1980] 1991), 1314 ("Tangong xia" 檀弓下 10.86).

98. See also n. 151 below where it is noted that Lu Deming 陸德明 (556–627 C.E.) glosses the first character (written *mei* 昧) of what appears to be a later record of this imprecation in the *Gongyang zhuan* as having an old pronunciation equivalent to the character *wen* 刎. This may just be coincidence but one might speculate that it originates from the variant with *wu* 勿 discussed here. On a separate note, it will be observed that both variants used in place of *ma* 麻, i.e. *wang* 亡 and *wu* 勿, are graphs that scribes would have been familiar with as denoting negatives. The graph *ma* 麻 is also found in excavated texts denoting the existential negative *mi* 靡 (read third tone), e.g. in the Zhongshan 中山 texts. In the case of the *wang* 亡 variant, scribes may, then, have associated the graphs *ma* 麻 and *wang*亡 as phonetically very similar negatives, and this may partly explain the interchange between them we see in the imprecation phrase, particularly if there was already some confusion about the word actually denoted here. The negative *wu* 勿 was not only different in pronunciation to both *mi* 靡 and *wang* 亡, but has a different function, being a prohibitive negative rather than an existential negative. This belies the speculation that scribes wrote *wu* 勿 as an alternative to what they understood to be the existential negative *mi* 靡. This variant does not, then, constitute evidence that the original word of the phrase itself was a negative function word.

99. Since it is difficult to be sure that these are a valid variation and not just an unusual calligraphic variant, they are not included as a separate category in the appended tables.

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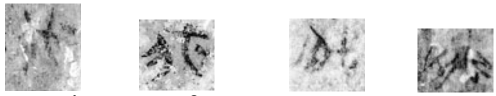

1-2-126 1-2-78.5 1-17-39 5-14-3.5

The third to fifth graphs (1-14-1943/1946/5196) were written by the same scribe. The examples from pit WT1K2 (1-2-126/78.5) may have been written by the same scribe but there are not enough legible characters on these tablets to compare and confirm this. In the majority of these examples, a stroke is added joining the two components. The resulting form is very similar to examples of *wo* 我 from palaeographic materials, for example:[100]

不𩡧簋 不𩡧簋二 復公仲簋 邾公釛鐘

命瓜君壺 貨系 448 貨系 450 貨系 451

The last four examples are Jin-region script. The Wenxian tablets include the personal name E 誐 in which *wo* 我 is a component:

1-1-1976

The Wenxian variant forms for *fei* 非 vary in their similarity to these examples of *wo* 我, examples like 1-14-5196, 1-2-126, and 1-17-39 being particularly close. Nevertheless, one will note that, at least in the Jin-script examples of *wo* 我, the lower diagonal stroke of the right-hand *ge* 戈 component always intersects the vertical stroke, but in the unusual *fei* 非 forms, the corresponding stroke does not appear to cross that line. If the scribes were indeed confusing the two forms, it may imply that they thought *wo* 我 was a suitable graph for this position, supporting the suggestion that the *fei* 非 should itself be understood as a pronoun (i.e. *bi* 彼 "that"). If the variants are treated as *wo* 我,

100. Examples from Zhang Shichao (Chō Sei Chou) et al., *Jinwen xing yi tong jie (Kinbun Keigi Tsūkai)*, 2980–81; Tang Zhibiao, *San Jin wenzibian*, 736–37.

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the phrase then reads: 靡夷我氏 "Wipe out my lineage," an unambiguous self-imprecation.[101]

5. Examples with a character omitted

There are a number of variants in which a character is omitted from the standard phrase. They are as follows (with total number of occurrences given):

(a) 麻非是	22	(b) 麻非氏	7	(c) 麻非 …	2	(d) 夷非是	5
(e) 夷非氏	1	(f) 麻夷是	4	(g) 麻夷氏	2		

These examples are relatively rare and may well be unintentional scribal omissions. However, they do all make sense using the suggested analysis for the words of the standard phrase, thus:

(a,b) 麻非是/氏: 靡彼氏 "Destroy that lineage"
(d,e) 夷非是/氏: 夷彼氏 "Wipe out that lineage"
(f,g) 麻夷是/氏: 靡夷氏 "Destroy and wipe out [that] lineage"

While there are thirty-one examples that omit the *yi* 夷, giving *ma fei shi* 麻非是/氏, there are only six which omit the *ma* 麻, to write *yi fei shi* 夷非是/氏. This suggests that scribes felt the first verb, identified as *mi* 靡 "to crush, to destroy," was the more significant action, the *yi* 夷 "to make level," "to wipe out," a secondary stage in the process of destruction. In support of this, we see only one example in which the two verbs are reversed: 夷麻非是 (WT1K1-1).

6. 麻女夷非氏 (WT1K14-3226) and 麻□夷非是 (WT1K17-96)

These two variants add a graph between the *ma* 麻 and *yi* 夷. The two additional graphs do not appear to match. Tablet WT1K14-3226 adds *nü* 女, which is common in the excavated covenants denoting *ru* 汝 "you." This gives the reading: 靡汝夷彼氏 "Destroy you [and] wipe out that lineage." This accords with the suggested analysis

101. On the basis of this variant, we might speculate that *bi* 彼 was used in the written form of the oath, but that during the covenant ceremony the covenantor would have been required to speak this self-imprecation using the pronoun *wo* 我 "my." This would correspond with the inconsistent use of pronouns referring to the covenantor elsewhere in the covenant texts (see n. 31 above). The infrequency of first-person pronouns in the written submission and imprecation clauses perhaps reflects an unwillingness on the part of the scribes to be repeatedly writing a self-curse.

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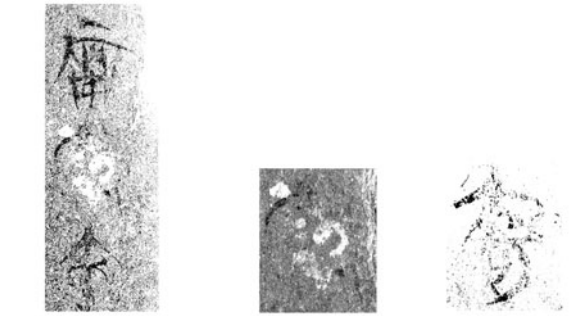

Figure 1. Tablet WT1K17-96

for the phrase, supporting the identification of *ma* 麻 and *yi* 夷 as verbs.

Tablet WT1K17-96 also has an additional graph between *ma* 麻 and *yi* 夷, but the graph is almost completely illegible. Figure 1 shows the graph, between the *ma* 麻, at the top, and the *yi* 夷 below it, along with an enhancement of the graph, and a close-up of the covenantor's name from the name clause of the same tablet. The few strokes one can make out do not suggest *nü* 女, the additional graph in the example just discussed. It does seem possible, however, that the graph is the name of the covenantor, which is seen on this tablet in the name clause.[102] The covenantor's name (Qi 奇?) is not completely legible, but the top component is clearly *da* 大 and the top-left stroke of the unidentified graph could be part of the same form. If the unidentified graph is the covenantor's name then we have the same "verb-object, verb-object" construction as the first example, i.e.: 靡奇(?)夷彼氏 "Destroy Qi (?) [and] wipe out that *shi*." Both examples would support the proposed analysis for the phrase but, given their infrequency, we cannot rule out the possibility that they are some sort of unintentional scribal error.

All the above examples can be explained as variations of the standard phrase *ma yi fei shi* 麻夷非是, according with the proposed analysis for this phrase. There remain, however, a number of problematic variations, some of which clearly do not fit the suggested analysis. In these cases, in order to judge their significance, it was necessary to consider to what extent a particular variation could be identified as the work of an individual scribe. These examples are discussed in the following section.

102. The covenantor's name is perhaps Qi 奇, but the central strokes of the lower component do not seem to be a perfect match for the *kou* 口 expected in *qi* 奇.

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Variations and individual scribes

Whether a repeated variation is the work of several scribes or a single scribe should clearly affect our consideration of its validity. This is based on the reasonable assumption that a variation repeated by only one scribe is more likely to be an error (or idiosyncratic understanding of the phrase) than a variation which is used independently by several different scribes. For variants that did not easily accord with the proposed analysis of the imprecation phrase, I considered whether they could be explained in this way. In most cases, the evidence supported this conjecture. This led me to conclude that these variations were errors or misunderstandings of the phrase and did not require rejection of the proposed analysis for this imprecation.

Since the following discussion rests partly on the assumption that scribes did at times make mistakes, let us first briefly consider the broader evidence for scribal error. Traditional textual criticism in China has paid close attention to the identification and categorization of copying errors in transmitted texts, and there are many reference works which provide extensive lists and examples of these errors.[103] Discoveries since the early twentieth century of brush-written manuscripts in significant numbers have provided scholars with the opportunity to observe early cases of scribal error in hand-written manuscripts. Several studies have been published identifying such errors, and demonstrating the need to be aware of this phenomenon when analyzing these manuscripts.[104]

In some cases, scribal error is very obvious. For example, on tablet WT1K1-3071 the scribe wrote the imprecation phrase as *ma ma yi fei shi* 麻麻夷非是, i.e. accidentally writing the first graph of the phrase twice (see Figure 2). The scribe writes the graph at the end of the second column, then moves to start the final column and repeats the graph. Similar unequivocal errors are not unusual in the covenant tablets, for

103. For example Yu Yue 俞樾 et al., *Gushu yiyi juli wu zhong* 古書疑義舉例五種 (Beijing: Zhonghua, [1956] 1983), and a further supplement to this (with English translation): Pei Xuehai 裴學海, trans. Achilles Fang, "Fourth Supplement to the Ku-Shu i-i chü-li" 古書疑義舉例四補, *Monumenta Serica*, vol. 50 (2002), 549–654; also Chen Yuan 陳垣, *Jiaokanxue shili* 校勘學釋例 (Beijing: Zhonghua, 1959).

104. For example Qiu Xigui 裘錫圭, "Tantan Shangbo jian he Guodian jian zhong de cuobiezi" 談談上博簡和郭店簡中的錯別字, Zhongguo guwenxian shijiang 中國出土古文獻十講 (Shanghai: Fudan daxue, 2004) 308–16 (originally published in *Huaxue* 華學 6, 2003). And see also the summary in Li Songru, "Zhanguo jianbo ziji yanjiu." 99–100. For an example where identification of scribal error explains an otherwise perplexing phrase, see Chen Jian 陳劍, "'Shangbo 6—Kongzi jian Li Huanzi' chong bian xin shi 《上博（六）•孔子見季桓子》重編新釋, accessed online: http://www.gwz.fudan.edu.cn/SrcShow.asp?Src_ID=383 (Last accessed March 26, 2014). See the discussion of the graph to be read *fu* 敷, in item 3 of section 3 "Analysis."

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Figure 2. WT1K1-3071 lower section of tablet

example character omission is quite common, sometimes with the omitted character written in later at the side of the column. Such examples are easily identified and clearly attributable to unintentional error.

Some variations, however, can be harder to classify conclusively as error, particularly when the meaning of the phrase in which they occur is debated, as is the case for the imprecation clause. In such cases analysis is aided by a familiarity with the types and variety of written error commonly found in received and excavated texts.[105] It is also helpful to bear in mind that variations and errors, particularly at the level of the individual graph, can generally be categorized as involving phonological, semantic or orthographic factors (or a combination of these), corresponding to a graph's representation of a word's sound and meaning using a particular graphic form (or forms).[106] And, in turn, an understanding of the way in which these factors are processed in the brain can suggest explanations for the production of certain variations and errors. David Moser demonstrates the potential for such an approach in a study of errors in modern Chinese speech and

105. See nn. 103 and 104 above.

106. Man-Tak Leung et al., "A Model of Writing Chinese Characters: Data from Acquired Dysgraphia and Writing Development," in *Writing: A Mosaic of New Perspectives*, ed. Elena L. Grigorenko et al. (Hoboken: Taylor and Francis, 2012), 357–68, see 361.

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writing.[107] Such an approach can also be productive in appraising variations and possible errors in early manuscripts and so here I will briefly summarize a model for the cognitive process of writing, before going on to look at specific variations in the Wenxian texts.

Cognitive models of writing distinguish separate components involved in the writing process, including a semantic system (the knowledge of words and their meanings), a phonological lexicon (the store of the sounds of known words), and an orthographic lexicon which stores written forms of words (and their subcomponents).[108] Different models are proposed for the process of writing a word, but a basic distinction is made between a lexical route for familiar words, corresponding to learned graphic forms, and a sub-lexical (or "non-lexical") route, which relies on phonological spelling (using the available orthographic lexicon), for unfamiliar words. In the lexical route, the semantic system normally activates the orthographic lexicon both directly, and also via the phonological lexicon. This combined input avoids the potential for the activation of incorrect forms or words. Thus, to avoid possible homophone production (e.g. "bare" for "bear") there must be simultaneous input from the semantic system to the orthographic lexicon when retrieving the appropriate graphic form. Similarly, without input from the phonological lexicon, there is the potential for semantically incorrect activation, for example, of a synonym (e.g. "road" for "street"). The sub-lexical route to writing is employed when the graphic form (or forms) associated with a particular word is not stored in the orthographic lexicon (i.e. has not been learned) and the word is spelled using a phonological-to-orthographic transcription (e.g. "nife" for /naɪf/, instead of "knife"). There is also evidence that the lexical and sub-lexical routes interact, as demonstrated, for example, in experiments showing that recently activated items in the orthographic lexicon may influence the results of spelling via the sub-lexical route, and this supports the view that the sub-lexical and lexical routes activate the same orthographic

107. David Moser, *Slips of the Tongue and Pen in Chinese*, Sino-Platonic Papers 22 (March, 1991). Adam Smith applies research into the cognitive processes involved in reading to the question of the emergence of literacy in China, see Adam Smith, "Writing at Anyang," 49–137. Parts of his discussion are applicable to an understanding of variation and error in early Chinese writing, for example 53–57, 80–82, 111–12.

108. Unless otherwise cited, the following is largely based on the article "Cognitive Model of Writing," *Encyclopedia of the Human Brain* (Oxford: Elsevier Science & Technology, 2002), accessed online: http://search.credoreference.com/content/entry/esthumanbrain/ii_cognitive_model_of_writing/0 (Last accessed March 14, 2014). I am grateful to my colleague Sanako Mitsugi 三ツ木紗奈子 for comments on an earlier draft of this paragraph.

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lexicon.[109] In Chinese, in which written forms denote syllabic units and components of graphs can be semantic or phonetic signifiers, we would, then, expect the sub-lexical route to result in the retrieval (from the orthographic lexicon) of a phonetically equivalent graph, or possibly a variant form constructed using both a phonetic and a semantic component.[110] Whatever route is used, the retrieved graphic form is temporarily activated in working memory as further processing takes place (e.g. conversion into specific letter forms). For Chinese it is argued that the basic processing unit in working memory does not necessarily correspond to a semantic or phonetic component, but rather to the lowest-level component that could be recognized as a potentially independent graph. For example, while we would generally analyze *hu* 湖 as comprising a semantic component *shui* 氵 and a phonetic component *hu* 胡, it is argued that in working memory the basic processing units would correspond to the elements 氵, 十, 口 and 月.[111]

This model is relevant because it helps us to predict the range and nature of errors that might be produced in the writing process, and thus better appraise variations as legitimate or erroneous. In applying this model to scribal copying, we additionally need to consider how the process is affected by the act of copying, either from an exemplar or from dictation (possibly self-dictation from a memorized text).

When approaching written variations and errors in early texts we can, then, apply a methodology that makes use not only of comparison to previously identified categories of error, but also appraises the nature of the variation in the light of an understanding of the cognitive process involved in writing. With this in mind, we will now consider whether we can suggest explanations for variants that do not accord with the proposed analysis for the imprecation.

1. Variations with the graph 睨

A number of variations are found with the graph 睨. In some of these cases, this graph is replaced by the following variant form:  (1-14-

109. Jocelyn R. Folk and Brenda Rapp, "Interaction of Lexical and Sublexical Information in Spelling: Evidence from Nonword Priming," *Applied Psycholinguistics* 25 (2004), 565–85; Katherine K. White et al., "Why Did I Right That? Factors That Influence the Production of Homophone Substitution Errors," *The Quarterly Journal of Experimental Psychology* 61, 7 (2008), 977–85.

110. The latter suggestion is based on the understanding that readers and writers of Chinese analyze characters at the component level, see Man-Tak Leung et al., "A Model of Writing Chinese Characters," 358–59.

111. Man-Tak Leung et al., "A Model of Writing Chinese Characters," 362. The authors refer to these units as "logographemes."

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3860). The following variations are found (the number of examples is given and the variant form of the graph is indicated using the symbol "△"):[112]

(i)	麻夷覞非氏	21	(iv)	麻覞非女	2
(ii)	麻覞非是/氏(or 麻△非是/氏)	32	(v)	麻覞女夷非氏	1
(iii)	麻覞是	1	(vi)	■夷覞?非氏	1

The graph 覞, common to these variations, also occurs in the excavated covenants in the submission clause that directly precedes the imprecation clause in almost all covenant types. It is analyzed in that phrase as a variant form of *shi* 視 "to look, to watch."[113] The submission-clause phrase, as I understand it, reads: *di ji shi ru/zhi* 諦極視汝/之 "attentively and tirelessly watching you/him/her," referring to the overseeing of the covenantor by the sanctioning spirit.[114]

In the above variants, *shi* 覞 (視) is added after or replaces the word *yi* 夷 "to wipe out, raze, exterminate" and thus cannot be understood to mean "to look, to watch" if we follow the proposed analysis in which a word synonymous with "destroy" is expected here. To better judge the significance of these variations, I identified their frequency among individual scribes.

Appendix 2, Table 1 lists the 58 tablets on which these variations occur, grouped by scribal hand. A selection of graphs from each tablet is given for comparison, in order to demonstrate the basis on which identification was made. Texts were identified as having been written by individual scribes based on consistency in the usage of a set of identifiable features, allowing for expected normal variation. Such consistency is particularly noticeable at the level of character formation, with scribes tending to use certain variant forms (at the component and calligraphic levels) for characters, and to use consistent forms for commonly seen components. Consistency in calligraphic style is also apparent in the repeated use of, for example, short wedge strokes, horizontal strokes thickening in the mid-section, horizontal strokes that curve down at the right-hand end, and so on. Use of embellishments is also generally consistent, for example a scribe will either add a short horizontal

112. The figures for frequency assume that lacunae in some examples match the corresponding graph for that particular variation.

113. Shanxi sheng wenwu gongzuo weiyuanhui, *Houma mengshu*, 34.

114. The pronoun object is usually written as *nü* 女 (*ru* 汝) "you" or *zhi* 之 "him, her," and the very first character of the phrase, usually a graph taken to be denoting *di* 諦, is sometimes replaced with a lexical variant, e.g. *yong* 永 "always, forevermore."

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stroke above long horizontal strokes or will not do so (e.g. in the graphs denoting *bu* 不 and *pi* 丕, *qi* 其, *er* 而, *zhu* 主). Individual scribes also show consistency in the size and layout of characters, although these features are not apparent from these tables. Appendix 2, Table 2 gives the variant wordings that include *shi* 覗 (視) and lists the tablets with these variations under the scribe which produced them. This allows one to see which scribes produced which variations and the frequency in each case.

The identification of scribal hands allows us to make the following observations. Fifteen separate hands were identified among the fifty-eight tablets. These fifty-eight tablets come from three different pits (WT1K1, WT1K14, and WT1K17) but no single scribe wrote tablets for more than one pit. The variation in which *shi* 覗 (視) is found in place of *yi* 夷, giving *ma shi fei shi* 麻視非是/氏, was written by at least eleven scribes and is found in all three pits. If lacunae are ignored for other examples, this figure rises to fourteen scribes. The variation in which *yi* 夷 is retained and *shi* 覗 (視) added, giving *ma yi shi fei shi* 麻夷視非氏 was, in contrast, produced by only two scribes, scribes A and B, both writing for pit WT1K14.[115] The examples in which the *shi* 覗 (視) graph is written with the variant form, e.g.  (1-14-3860), were all produced by a single scribe, scribe H. Among the scribes identified, scribe H is particularly prone to writing variations for this phrase: this scribe also writes the phrase using the graph *shi* 覗 (視), and is also solely responsible for three other variations: 麻覗非女, 麻△非女 and 麻覗是. I have also found two tablets written by this scribe in which the phrase is omitted completely (WT1K14-3764/3855).

These observations allow us to make the following conjectures. The variation in which *yi* 夷 is replaced by *shi* 覗 (視), to give *ma shi fei shi* 麻視非是/氏, occurs relatively frequently, suggesting it was either considered legitimate, or was an easily made mistake. The variation in which *yi* 夷 is retained and *shi* 覗 (視) added, giving *ma yi shi fei shi* 麻夷視非氏, can only be confirmed for two scribes and so is more likely to be due to idiosyncratic behavior on their part, particularly given that it does not suggest a persuasive alternative analysis for the meaning of the phrase. Scribe H is unpredictable and we may be duly wary of all the variations produced by this scribe. Our first task, then, is to explain why eleven or more scribes replaced the character *yi* 夷 with *shi* 覗 (視).

The use by at least eleven, and probably fourteen, scribes of *shi* 覗 (視) in place of *yi* 夷, to give *ma shi fei shi* 麻視非是/氏, suggests that, for these scribes, *shi* 覗 (視) was phonetically close to *yi* 夷 and, having

115. Two examples (rows c and d in Table 2) with lacunae that may be this variant cannot confidently be assigned to either scribe so it is possible one or two other scribes may have also used this variant.

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just written the character in the previous phrase, they used it again for the near-homophone in the imprecation phrase. In the Baxter/Sagart reconstruction system, *shi* 視 is reconstructed as *shi* 視 < *dzyijH*<**gij?-s*. However, the variant graph used in the excavated covenants, i.e. *shi* 眡, has *di* 氐 as its phonetic, for which the reconstruction is: *di* 氐 < *tejX* < **tᶜij?*. This implies that in fifth- to early fourth-century B.C.E. Jin, at the time the covenants were produced, the initial of the word *shi* 視 had already become dental, and we can reconstruct its pronunciation as 視 **dzij?*.[116] The word *yi* 夷 is "phonologically ambiguous" in that we cannot be sure whether it belongs to rhyme category **-ij* or **-əj*.[117] On the basis of *Shijing* rhyme evidence, the current Baxter/Sagart reconstruction for *yi* 夷 adopts the **-əj* rhyme category giving *yi* 夷 < *yij* < **ləj*, with a final which does not match that of *shi* 眡 (視) **dzij?*. Baxter notes, however, that **-ij* and **-əj* are often found in irregular rhymes which mix the two.[118] He gives the example of *di* 弟, which rhymes with **-əj* words in the earlier parts of the *Shijing* and with **-ij* words in the later sections, suggesting a development from **-əj* > **-ij*. We may posit a similar case for *yi* 夷, in which this development had already occurred in Jin at this time.[119] In this case, we can reconstruct the *yi* 夷 of the covenant tablets as 夷 **lij*. Turning to the initials of the two words, contacts between dental initials, such as the **dz-* of *shi* 眡 (視), and lateral initials, such as the **l-* of *yi* 夷 **lij*, are unusual. However, *yi* 夷's *xiesheng* 諧聲 series (i.e. the set of characters which share *yi* 夷 as their phonetic signifier) contains words with dental initials in Middle Chinese (e.g. *ti* 洟, *ti* 荑, *ti* 梯), and graphs with *yi* 夷 as the phonetic component often loan for words with Middle Chinese dental initials.[120] For example: *yi* 夷 is phonetic in *ti* 洟 < *thejH* < **l̥ᶜəj-s*; *yi* 夷 is used as phonetic in loangraphs for *chi* 遲 < *drij* < **lrəj*; in Mawangdui texts, *yi* 夷 is denoted by *di* 娣< *dejX* < **lᶜəj?*.[121] Furthermore, as noted earlier, the Wenxian texts include the graph 鼬 as a variant for *yi* 夷 in the imprecation phrase, and the same graph occurs in the Shanghai slip text *Bao Shuya yu Xi Peng zhi*

116. This is the regular sound change expected for **g-*, palatalizing before front vowel **-i*. See: Baxter, *A Handbook of Old Chinese Phonology*, 210–13.

117. Baxter, *A Handbook of Old Chinese Phonology*, 446–64, particularly 450.

118. Baxter, *A Handbook of Old Chinese Phonology*, 456–58.

119. This is the process known as *i*-fronting: "the fronting of original **ə* to *i* in syllables where both initial and coda were acute" (Baxter, *A Handbook of Old Chinese Phonology*, 577). Baxter notes that this process may have "applied differently, or at different times, in different Old Chinese dialects." (Baxter, *A Handbook of Old Chinese Phonology*, 456).

120. Gao Heng, *Guzi tongjia huidian*, 530–33.

121. Bai Yulan, *Jiandu boshu tongjiazi zidian*, 140; Wang Hui 王輝, *Guwenzi tongjia shili* 古文字通假釋例 (Taibei: Yiwen, 1993), 611.

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jian denoting the word *zhi* 雉 < *drijX* < **lrij?*. If the development to the dental initial had begun in some of these words, it is possible to conjecture that a reading error led to mispronunciation of the word with a dental initial. Indicating a non-specific dental initial using [T], this gives us a reconstruction of *yi* 夷 **[T]ij*, and the phonetic similarity to *shi* 覗 (視) **dzij?* becomes apparent. On the basis of the cognitive model of writing presented above, we can conjecture that, since the *shi* 覗 (視) had just been activated for use in the previous phrase, *di ji shi ru/zhi* 諦極視汝/之 "attentively and tirelessly watching you/him/her," this primed the near-homophone substitution for the misread *yi* 夷 in the following phrase.[122] One would expect a generally attentive scribe to not repeatedly make such an error, and indeed for the majority of scribes only one or two examples are seen. However, certain scribes do repeat the mistake: scribe E four times, and the unpredictable scribe H ten times.

We now turn to the variations produced by scribes A and B, in which the graph *shi* 覗 (視) is added to the imprecation after the *yi* 夷, giving: *ma yi shi fei shi* 麻夷視非氏.[123] Both scribes repeat the variant several times (nine times in Scribe A's case) suggesting this was not an unintentional mental lapse. Scribe A also writes the variant just discussed in which the *yi* 夷 is replaced by *shi* 覗 (視) to give *ma shi fei shi* 麻視非是, and so we may conjecture that the scribes were aware of both this and the standard form (*ma yi fei shi* 麻夷非是/氏) and conflated the two. Alternatively, the scribes may have been confused by a correction made to the variant *ma shi fei shi* 麻視非是, the intention of which had been to indicate that *yi* 夷 should be written instead of *shi* 視, and had instead understood both graphs to be needed.[124]

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122. This corresponds to David Moser's use of the concept of "spreading activation" to explain certain speech and writing errors in modern Chinese. For an example of this type of error in modern Chinese writing, see his *Slips of the Tongue and Pen in Chinese*, 27 (example 75). For comparable cases in received texts, see the examples of identical characters with different meanings in adjacent phrases (*shangxiawen tongzi yiyi* 上下文同字異義) in Yu Yue et al., *Gushu yiyi juli wu zhong*, 3–4.

123. Scribe A also wrote the variation ■夷覗□非氏 (WT1K14-2069). The tablet is broken before the *yi* 夷 but we can conjecture that the missing graph is the *ma* 麻 we would expect in this position. The "□" marks two lines:  . This form is a reasonable match for the character *er* 二 "two" as it appears in the date found on tablets from pit WT1K1 at Wenxian, e.g.:  (1-1-1991). No straightforward explanation would account for the addition of the word *er* 二 "two" here and I assume that this is a further sign of Scribe A's uncertainty as to how to write this phrase correctly.

124. In this case, the correction could have been given orally, or possibly written to the side of an incorrectly written example of the phrase on an already prepared tablet, which was then used as the model for further copying. For examples of such errors in received texts, see Chen Yuan, *Jiaokanxue shili*, 30–33.

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The conjecture that Scribes A and B were unsure of the meaning of certain formulaic phrases being used in the text is supported by a variant in the preceding phrase. Both scribes write the preceding formulaic phrase with a variation which can be explained as a segmentation error. The phrase is normally written *di ji shi ru/zhi* 諦極視汝/之 "attentively and tirelessly watching you/him/her." The first word of the phrase, *di* 諦 "attentively," is commonly written with the graph 𢜔 or 𥘅, or some other variant form that retains the phonetic *di* 帝. Scribes A and B, however, write instead the character *shi* 是. The words *shi* 是 and *di* 諦 are phonetically similar, but not identical: 諦 *di* < *tejH* < **tˁek-s*; 是 *shi* < *dzyeX* < **de?*. The initials are both dentals, the vowels are identical, but the **-k* coda in *di* 諦 is absent in the word *shi* 是. This suggests that the use of the *shi* 是 is almost certainly due to a segmentation error resulting from a reanalysis of the division between this syllable and the following word, *ji* 極, whose root has a velar initial, matching the velar coda of the preceding *di* 諦, i.e.: *ji* 極 < *gik* < **[g](r)ək*. Scribes A and B made a segmentation error and divided the first syllable before its coda, and used *shi* 是 to denote this syllable, thus:

諦		極
tejH		*Gik*
**tˁek*[125]		**gək*[126]
**de*	+ *[k]*	+ *ək*
是		極

We may infer from this that scribes A and B were not aware of the correct word choice for the first two words in the submission-clause's phrase *di ji shi ru/zhi* 諦極視汝/之. This provides circumstantial evidence to support the conjecture that their variation for the imprecation clause, *ma yi shi fei shi* 麻夷視非氏, is also due to a misunderstanding. It is intriguing that both scribes make the same two unusual variations and we may speculate that they were copying or being dictated to from the

125. The usual reconstruction for this would be **tˁek-s*, with the post-coda **-s* corresponding to the falling tone of the Middle Chinese reading. The conjecture of a segmentation error here would require that in the dialect of the scribes this **-s* had been dropped. There is evidence for such dialectical differences, for example Lu Fayan 陸法言 (born c. 562 C.E.)'s preface to the *Qieyun* specifically mentions areas in which the falling and entering tones are not distinguished (see translation and discussion in Göran Malmqvist, "Chou Tsu-Mo on the Ch'ieh-yün," *Bulletin of the Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities* 40 (1968), 33–78, see 35–37).

126. Baxter and Sagart currently reconstruct this as **[g](r)ək*. The square brackets indicate that the initial could be more complex, but the simple initial accords with the suggested segmentation error. The *"(r)"* is included because a medial **-r-* cannot be ruled out, but the conjectured error here would suggest it was not present.

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same model, or that one copied from the other, or they were working as a pair and jointly concluded these erroneous variants were correct.

We can now consider the unpredictable scribe H. Scribe H writes the common variation in which *shi* 眡 (視) replaces *yi* 夷, on the basis, we have suggested, of phonetic similarity. Scribe H also writes this variation without *fei* 非 in one instance, i.e. *ma shi shi* 麻視是. Taking *shi* 眡 (視) as a loan for *yi* 夷, this is equivalent to the variants *ma yi shi* 麻夷是/氏 discussed earlier. Scribe H is alone in writing the *ma shi fei shi* 麻視非是 variation with a variant form of the *shi* 眡 (視) graph: e.g.  (1-14-3860). This variant replaces the form this scribe usually writes for the graph, e.g.  (1-14-3939). The graphs share the same left-hand component, *di* 氐, but the right-hand component is replaced by one which is difficult to identify, resembling a *zhi* 豸 underneath a *mian* 宀. This form is close enough to the regular right-hand component to suggest it is a copying error.[127] This would necessarily imply that Scribe H was copying from a tablet with the variation in which *shi* 眡 (視) replaces *yi* 夷 (*ma shi fei shi* 麻視非是). We can conjecture that this is an example of a delayed copying error, in which the temporary activation of the graph in working memory was compromised and replacement components then retrieved when writing the graph. It should be further noted that in the cases in which scribe H uses this variant graph in the *ma shi fei shi* 麻視非是 phrase, the graph is generally not used for the *shi* 眡 (視) of the immediately preceding submission-clause phrase, *di ji shi ru* 諦極視汝.[128] This may suggest that the scribe was aware, although perhaps not consciously, that these were not in fact the same words, and that this was partly responsible for the compromised activation of the graph in working memory.

Scribe H is also responsible for the two variants 麻眡非女 and 麻△非女, in which the last character of the phrase is replaced by *nü* 女. On the basis of the proposed analysis, this would give the nonsensical phrase 靡夷彼汝, with the demonstrative pronoun *bi* 彼 "that" preceding the second-person pronoun *ru* 汝, giving an ungrammatical "that you." It seems likely that having just written *nü* 女 (*ru*汝) as the last word of the preceding phrase (*di ji shi ru* 諦極視汝 "attentively and tirelessly watching

127. Errors such as this that persist in received texts are those that produced a graphically similar attested character, for examples see Chen Yuan, *Jiaokanxue shili*, 20–23. In the case discussed here, the scribe writes the right-side of the graph with a combination of components giving a graphically similar form, but does not produce a different attested character. Such reanalysis of components was common during the development of the script, see, for example, Liu Zhao 劉釗, *Guwenzi gouxing xue* 古文字構形學 (Fuzhou: Fujian renmin, 2006), Chapter 6 and *passim*.

128. The *shi* 視 of the submission-clause phrase (諦極視汝) in tablet WT1K14-3763 is hard to make out, but may be the variant graph.

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you") the scribe unintentionally replaced the last word of the following phrase with the same graph. This suggests both inattention and also uncertainty as to the meaning of the phrase.[129] The two cases I have noted in which scribe H simply leaves out the imprecation phrase may also reflect lack of confidence about its meaning. Scribe H's many variations do not suggest a valid alternative analysis for the imprecation phrase, but rather uncertainty about its meaning and its standard written form.

The remaining variation that includes the graph *shi* 覗 (視) is 麻覗女夷非氏 (WT1K14-4423), the work of Scribe O.[130] In this tablet the scribe omits the preceding phrase *di ji shi ru* 諦極視汝 "attentively and tirelessly watching you." Furthermore, in two other tablets, this scribe uses a short version of the preceding phrase, writing just *shi ru* 視汝, omitting *di ji* 諦極. It seems likely, then, that this variation was due to a confusion in which the *shi ru* 視汝 was inserted into the *ma yi fei shi* 麻夷非氏.[131]

Two further variations in Scribe O's execution of the final phrase are worthy of attention. Firstly, the scribe writes the final graph of the imprecation phrase with *di* 氐, e.g.  (WT1K14-4423). This is clearly an error for the graphically similar *shi* 氏, e.g.  (WT1K14-4158). The graph *shi* 覗 (視) used in the previous phrase has *di* 氐 as its phonetic, and so we can conjecture that the recent activation of this form influenced the retrieval of this graph in place of the *shi* 氏. That Scribe O may have been unsure about this last word is suggested by a further variation: *ma yi fei shi di* 麻夷非是氐 (WT1K14-4418). Here the scribe not only uses the *shi* 是 commonly found in this position as a loan for *shi* 氏, but also writes *di* 氐, the error for *shi* 氏. This may be a case, similar to Scribes A and B's use of both *yi* 夷 and *shi* 覗 (視), where the scribe conflated two variations or was confused by a corrected version

129. We could conjecture that the error occurred during direct copying when the scribe's eye returned to a previously written tablet being used as a model, and unintentionally picked up the last character from the previous phrase (perhaps due to its being conspicuous at the end of a column of characters). Or, as seems likely, both phrases may have been memorized, but confusion as to the meaning of the second phrase contributed to errors in its reproduction. If we conjecture that the scribe, at some level, felt this variation was legitimate, the *fei* 非 would have to be taken as a verb, and this would accord with Li Yumin's analysis of the phrase, as discussed above.

130. Scribe O actually writes the last character not as *shi* 氏 but as the graphically similar *di* 氐. This is discussed in the next paragraph.

131. This suggests an unintentional muddling of the phrases as they were held in working memory, and the phonetic similarity between *shi* 視 and *yi* 夷 discussed above may have contributed to the error. That is to say, the scribe omitted the *shi ru* 視汝, but after writing *ma* 麻 the phonetic similarity of the following word *yi* 夷 to *shi* 視 triggered the writing of the omitted phrase, after which the original phrase was completed with the *yi fei shi* 夷非氏.

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of the phrase. Overall, Scribe O's variations suggest uncertainty about the meaning and standard written forms of the imprecation phrase.

2. 麻夷不氏 (WT1K14-1046) and 麻夷女非氏 (WT1K14-1229)

A single scribe wrote both these variants: 麻夷不氏 (WT1K14-1046) and 麻夷女非氏 (WT1K14-1229). Both variant wordings are unique among the legible examples of this phrase surveyed for this study. The variant 麻夷不氏 (WT1K14-1046), which makes no sense however one might analyze the phrase, can be explained as a substitution error attributable to the phonetic similarity of *fei* 非 and *bu* 不 (不 *bu* < *pjuw* < **pə* and 非 *fei* < *pjəj* <**pəj*), coupled with their association as negative function words.[132] In the variant 麻夷女非氏 (WT1K14-1229) *nü*女 (*ru* 汝) is added after the *ma yi* 麻夷 and before the *fei shi* 非氏. Significantly, in this tablet, the scribe appears to omit the pronoun object from the preceding submission-clause phrase, leaving just *di ji shi* 諦極視, without the expected *nü* 女 (*ru* 汝), suggesting unintentional transposing of the word order for the two phrases.[133] Other tablets written by this scribe demonstrate a tendency to carelessness. In tablet WT1K14-1047, the scribe writes the standard *ma yi fei shi* 麻夷非氏, but omits both the preceding submission-phrase clause *di ji shi ru* 諦極視汝, and the *da zhong* 大塚 of the phrase before that (*Yue gong da zhong* 岳公大塚). In the same tablet, the scribe omits the *yu* 與 from the phrase *yu zei wei tu* 與賊為徒 "join with the enemy as a follower." In tablet WT1K14-1141, this scribe leaves out the *tu* 徒 from this same phrase. In three tablets, WT1K14-1046, 1047, and 1235, the scribe leaves out the *bu* 不 from the first stipulation 敢不繩繩焉中心事其主 "dares not vigilantly and loyally serve his ruler," the resulting phrase being the direct opposite of the intended meaning, the oath now stating that the self-imprecation will be triggered if the covenantor is loyal to his lord. The scribe was clearly careless and we can be confident in the analysis of the two variations of the imprecation clause as errors and not valid alternatives to the standard wording.

3. 麻夷之非是 (HM 1:40 and HM 1:41)

There are two examples from Houma pit 1 in which a *zhi* 之 has been added between *ma yi* 麻夷 and *fei shi* 非是 (tablets HM 1:40 and HM

132. The loss of the coda **-j* from *fei* 非 gives the pronunciation of *bu* 不, and so this example can be analyzed as error due in part to "phonetic decay" during mental processing of the word, see Moser, *Slips of the Tongue and Pen in Chinese*, 24–27.

133. For similar examples in received texts, see Yu Yue et al., *Gushu yiyi juli wu zhong*, 119–25. The phonetic similarity of *yi* 夷 and *shi* 視 perhaps contributed to the insertion of the *nü* 女 (*ru* 汝) in this particular position.

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1:41). Both these tablets, and another tablet, HM 1:42, were written by a single scribe.[134] The phrase does not appear in tablet HM 1:42, and the copy of that tablet suggests the scribe ran out of space and omitted the phrase.[135] The two examples of this variant were, as discussed, one of the main reasons Li Yumin argued against the analysis of the phrase put forward by Chen Mengjia, Zhu Dexi, and Qiu Xigui. However, I would argue that this variant is almost certainly either a mistake or reflects an idiosyncratic understanding of the phrase by this individual scribe. We have already noted that Li Yumin's alternative analysis of this phrase is not convincing. If, as Li argues, this variant is actually the full form of the phrase, we would expect to see other examples, yet there is not a single further case, it is unique to this single scribe.[136]

Nevertheless, while in the cases discussed above there is persuasive evidence that scribes responsible for problematic variants were prone to carelessness or were uncertain as to the meaning of the imprecation phrase, this scribe is responsible for several valid variations which suggest a clear understanding of the content of the oath. Firstly, the language of the first stipulation is changed in two ways. The standard wording is:

[covenantor's name] 敢不判其腹心以事其主
[If] _____[covenantor's name] dare to not split open his guts and heart [i.e. display true loyalty] in serving his lord, …

This scribe changes this to:

[covenantor's name] 敢不剖判其腹心以事嘉 …
[If] _____[covenantor's name] dare to not cut and split open his guts and heart [i.e. display true loyalty] in serving Jia ...

The scribe adds the verb *pou* 剖 "to cut open" in front of the commonly found *pan* 判 "to split open," giving a compound of two synonyms: *pou pan* 剖判 "to cut and split open."[137] The scribe also replaces the term "his lord," referring to the leader of this covenant, to "Jia," which is the

134. For copies of these tablets, see Shanxi sheng wenwu gongzuo weiyuanhui, *Houma mengshu*, 171–72 and for photos of HM 1:40 and HM 1:41, see 89.

135. Shanxi sheng wenwu gongzuo weiyuanhui, *Houma mengshu*, 172.

136. The 麻夷女非氏 (WT1K14-1229) variant just discussed is structurally the same (taking *nü* 女 to be denoting the pronoun *ru* 汝), but that example was convincingly shown to be an error by a careless scribe.

137. The graph which I believe is denoting *pou* 剖 is derived from *fu* 付, which I take to be the phonetic component: *fu* 付 < *pjuH* < **p(r)o-s* and *pou* 剖 < *phuwX* < **p^{hʕ}(r)o?*. See Wei Kebin (Crispin Williams), "Wenxian mengshu T4K5, T4K6, T4K11 mengci shidu," 288–89.

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personal name of this individual.[138] These variations are unique to this one scribe, but they are legitimate variations.

This scribe also makes use of a unique graphic variant for the graph that denotes *bian* 變 "to change" in the Houma covenants. The common form for this graph in the Houma tablets is:  (HM 85:2) but there are many variants.[139] Common to almost all these variants, however, is the phonetic component  , an abbreviated form of the graph *bian* 𠬜(=弁).[140] The only exception is the one legible example of this graph written by the scribe discussed here, who reduces the graph to:  (HM 1:40).[141] This highly abbreviated form ignores the general principle observable in the Houma tablets that variations of a single graph retain the phonetic component.[142] Removed from its context, it is highly unlikely this graph would have been recognizable.

These legitimate lexical variations suggest this scribe understood the text and not only had the competence but also the confidence to make these changes. Nevertheless, the scribe could also be careless, as is evident from an omission of *bu* 不 in tablet HM 1:41 from the phrase 敢不盡從嘉之盟 "dare to not fully abide by Jia's covenant." The highly abbreviated form of the graph used to denote *bian* 變 could be taken as insensitivity to basic principles of orthography, but alternatively might be regarded as a sign of confidence in the writing of the script that led to extreme (perhaps playful) abbreviation. I conjecture that the scribe was competent but prone to idiosyncratic variation and that, if the variation in the imprecation phrase is not an error, it reflects a personal understanding of the phrase that does not accord with its standard meaning. Unlike the valid lexical variations made by this scribe, it is not clear what this variation could mean.[143] This point, along with the variation's unique association with an idiosyncratic scribe, lead me to conclude that it is not equivalent to the standard formula used in the

138. For a discussion of the meaning and identification of this graph, see Williams, "Dating the Houma Covenant Texts."

139. Shanxi sheng wenwu gongzuo weiyuanhui, *Houma mengshu*, 328. 33 variant forms are given.

140. See: Li Jiahao 李家浩, "Shi 'bian'" 釋"弁," *Guwenzi yanjiu* 古文字研究 I (1979), 391–95.

141. Shanxi sheng wenwu gongzuo weiyuanhui, *Houma mengshu*, 328.

142. See: Galambos, *Orthography of Early Chinese Writing: Evidence from Newly Excavated Manuscripts*, 127–42 (particularly 141), 145.

143. See n. 65 above for the possibility that the scribe was thinking of the verb *po* 破 "to smash."

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imprecation phrase. This variation does not, I conclude, present a challenge to the proposed analysis for this phrase.

4. 非夷■ (HM 79:8)

This variant occurs on a fragment from pit 79 at Houma. One side of the small fragment has two columns of characters (see Figure 3).[144] The left-hand column is ■之非夷■. The *zhi* 之 is assumed to be the last character in the submission-clause phrase which, for this category of tablet (the Pledge Texts), is *yong ji shi zhi* 永極視之 "forever tirelessly watching him." The imprecation phrase following would normally start with *ma yi* 麻夷, but here the scribe has written *fei yi* 非夷. This variant was cited by Li Yumin, along with the variation just discussed (*ma yi zhi fei shi* 麻夷之非是), to support his argument that the *fei* 非 should be regarded as a verb. However, this is more likely to be scribal error than a conscious lexical variation. Firstly, this is the only example of this variation among 1,750 tablets from Houma and Wenxian in which the imprecation phrase is fully legible, an occurrence of just 0.057%. Furthermore, even within this single tablet, this scribe did not consistently use this variation. This fragment's right-hand column has two graphs: ■之麻■. In the Pledge Texts, several oaths appear together on each tablet and, as a result, the submission and imprecation clauses are repeated twice. These two graphs belong to the first occurrence of these phrases in this tablet. The graphs' original context can be reconstructed as such: [永亟𡧓]之, 麻[夷非是]. Thus we can see that, in this case, the scribe starts the imprecation phrase with the expected *ma* 麻, and not the *fei* 非 of the variant wording. Given that only a single scribe writes this variation, and the scribe does not do so consistently even within a single tablet, we can be confident that this is much more likely to be a case of scribal error than a valid alternative to the standard phrase.

Figure 3. HM 79:8 (diagrammatic representation)

144. In the *Houma mengshu* a hand copy is given but not the original image, see Shanxi sheng wenwu gongzuo weiyuanhui, *Houma mengshu*, 264.

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In this section I have demonstrated that variations in the imprecation phrase that do not accord with the proposed reading can be attributed to specific scribes and the observed scribal habits of these individuals support the conjecture that these variations are errors or, in rare instances, may reflect an idiosyncratic understanding of the phrase.[145] I have shown that the majority of these variations conform to recognized categories of writing error common in hand-written Chinese text, and that in several cases these errors can be explained in terms of our understanding of the cognitive process involved in writing.

Discussion

This study of variations in the Houma and Wenxian covenant texts' imprecation *ma yi fei shi* 麻夷非是 supports Zhu and Qiu's analysis of the phrase as "Wipe out that *shi*" *mi yi bi shi* 靡夷彼氏. The study demonstrates that over 2,000 previously unseen examples of this phrase from the Wenxian covenant texts support this reading. While variations do exist that do not accord with the proposed analysis, I conclude that, based on the identification of individual scribal hands, these variations can be explained as errors or possibly, in a very few cases, idiosyncratic interpretations of the phrase by particular scribes.

These results confirm that the most common formula used in the imprecation clause in the excavated covenants is a threat to the covenantor's *shi* 氏, which I believe refers to the covenantor and his direct male descendants. The threat is not to the covenantor's wider lineage, but to his own patriline. This reflects the focus in these covenants on the individual, and the assumption that the individual could act independently of the wider lineage when it came to choices about political allegiance.[146]

145. A number of other apparent variations in the imprecation phrase are difficult to analyze because of problems with legibility and are not discussed. These include the following (□ indicates an additional or possibly variant graph): 麻□夷非是 (1-14-5087), 麻夷非□是 (1-14-2040), 麻夷非□ (4-9-4), □非氏 (1-2-95 and 1-2-167), 麻夷□□ (1-1-60), □是 (5-14-30). Tablet WT1K17-43 writes麻夷□是□, the additional graph is . I had wondered whether this was *shu* 庶 "children of secondary wives," which would have fitted the proposed analysis well (combining with the *shi* 氏, the male offspring of the primary wife). However, the match with *shu* 庶 is not fully convincing, and it turns out that this scribe is unpredictable. This tablet is one among three from this pit (tablets 43, 110 and 112) written by the same scribe, all of which do not use the standard covenant type for this pit but instead a very basic text just requiring loyalty, without any specific stipulations and, in each copy, the scribe varies the wording of the loyalty phrase. Furthermore, in tablet 43, the scribe appears to have left out the covenantor's name in the name clause and so it may be simpler to conjecture that the additional graph is the covenantor's name, which the scribe has appended at the end.

146. See n. 16 above.

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Attention to the writing habits of individual scribes was essential in making an informed appraisal of variations in this imprecation phrase. This required the identification of scribal hands using objective criteria to identify a set of features particular to a single hand. The finding that certain variations were associated with certain scribes avoided erroneous conclusions about their significance based purely on frequency of occurrence. It was established that relatively high-frequency variations could be the work of just one or two scribes, raising the possibility that these variations were not valid alternatives to the standard phrase. For these and other variations it was possible, in many cases, to demonstrate that the variations accord with categories of scribal errors well known from received texts and Chinese writing in general, supporting the theory that many scribes were producing variations that were unintentional errors or were based on a misunderstanding. This reminds us that an appreciation of scribal habits and common scribal errors allows a more informed analysis of excavated palaeographic materials.

This study's focus on repeated problematic variations by individual scribes should not be taken to suggest that a variation attributable to just one or two scribes is inevitably an error. We noted, for example, the Houma scribe of tablets HM 1:40/41/42 who made particular but valid variations to the loyalty stipulation. A variation made by a single scribe can, in some cases, provide a clue that solves a major problem of identification. For example, it was a single scribe's use of a variant character that led to the identification of the sanctioning spirit invoked in the covenants as Lord Yue 岳公.[147] Essentially, in that case, the single-scribe variation suggested an analysis which accounted for the associated evidence more satisfactorily than any previous proposal. However, in cases where a persuasive analysis already exists, an uncommon variation that does not fit the analysis, and does not suggest a more convincing analysis, should be treated cautiously.

The analysis brought to light interesting distribution patterns of variants among the pits at Wenxian. It was noted that the variation in which the *ma* 麻 is replaced by *wang* 亡 is almost exclusive to just two pits, one at Houma and one at Wenxian, both of which share a particular style of covenant formula. These shared features may suggest that both pits date to a period somewhat later than the majority of covenants from these two sites.

147. Wei Kebin (Crispin Williams), "Houma yu Wenxian mengshu zhong de 'Yue Gong'"; also Williams, "Dating the Houma Covenant Texts." In this case, a single scribe used the graph *yu* 獄 in place of the commonly found graph denoting this spirit's name. The graph *yu* 獄 could be analyzed as denoting *yue* 嶽, which is also commonly written with the character *yue* 岳. This led to the realization that the commonly found graphs used for the name could be analyzed as early forms of the character *yue* 岳.

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The dramatic difference between pits WT1K1 and WT1K14 in the ratio of frequency of use of *shi* 是 or *shi* 氏 for the last graph of the imprecation was also discussed as possibly reflecting different dates for these two very large covenant ceremonies, each of which involved thousands of participants.

The identification of scribal hands undertaken for this article suggests that individual scribes were generally consistent with respect to writing style and individual character formation. This is a preliminary finding given the limited size of the data set analyzed. Nevertheless, consistency in a set of recognizable features would be expected from an individual scribe (unless the scribe was consciously trying to write in different styles). The Houma and Wenxian covenant texts are well known for the great variation they show between graphs.[148] Based on this study, I would tentatively conjecture that such variation reflects the habits of different scribes, rather than individual scribes employing a wide variety of different variants and styles when writing.

An awareness of the highly formulaic nature of the covenants was a key factor in the analysis of the imprecation phrase. Many of the phrases used in the oaths were stock formulae. Some are straightforward and were no doubt in common usage, such as the phrase used in the covenants to indicate the period of effectiveness, i.e. "from today onwards" *zi jin yi wang* 自今以往. However, others, such as the imprecation phrase, may have had more restricted use, were possibly archaic, and were thus more liable to be misunderstood, increasing the chance of error when writing the phrase down.

The conclusion that the imprecation *ma yi fei shi* 麻夷非是 was a stock formula used in oaths lends credence to the insightful suggestion, proposed by Zhu and Qiu, that the same phrase is found, albeit in an almost completely unrecognizable form, in a covenant recorded in the *Gongyang zhuan* 公羊傳 (text: third century B.C.E.).[149] The words of the oath are: 苟有履衛地食衛粟者，昧雉彼視.[150] The stated condition is clear, "If any one of us steps on Wei land or eats Wei grain," but the phrase that follows, 昧雉彼視, which must be the imprecation, is opaque. The He Xiu 何休 (129–182 C.E.) commentary suggests it means that those swearing the oath watched (*shi* 視) a bird (*zhi* 雉) being killed (*wei* 昧) to let them know the fate of one betraying the oath. However, syntactically this is highly problematic. Zhu and Qiu suggest that the phrase is the same imprecation found in the covenant texts, written phonetically (apart from the *bi* 彼

148. Weld, "The Covenant Texts from Houma and Wenxian," 132; Galambos, *Orthography of Early Chinese Writing: Evidence from Newly Excavated Manuscripts*, 127–42.

149. Zhu Dexi and Qiu Xigui, "Zhanguo wenzi yanjiu (liu zhong)," 31–32.

150. *Chun qiu Gongyang zhuan zhushu* 春秋公羊傳注疏 in *Shisan jing zhushu* 十三經注疏, ed. Ruan Yuan 阮元 [Qing] (Beijing: Zhonghua, [1980] 1991), 2312 ("Xiang" 襄 27, 2).

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which uses the correct graph, although perhaps not intentionally). The phonetic argument is convincing.[151] This is evidence for a wider usage of the phrase, extending to areas outside Jin, and the recording of its use in written records. Yet the characters used suggest that the precise meaning

151. The Baxter/Sagart reconstruction for mei 昧 is: *mei* 昧 < *mwojH* < *$m^{ʕ}$[u][t]-*s*, but **-e-* is also an option for this vowel: compare their reconstruction for *mei* 妹, which shares the same phonetic component: *mei* 妹 < *mwojH* < **C.$m^{ʕ}$ə[t]-*s*. The final **-t* simplifies to **-j* through "final cluster simplification" and we can conjecture this had already happened when this graph was selected for use for this syllable. On this basis, the reconstruction becomes **$m^{ʕ}$əj-*s*. As discussed, the rhyme categories **-aj* and **-əj* merge in some dialects and the analysis of *fei* 非 < *pjəj* < **pəj* denoting bi 彼 < *pjeX* < **paj?* in the covenant texts requires this to have been the case in the Jin dialect of the covenants. The words *mei* 昧 **$m^{ʕ}$əj-*s* and *ma* 麻**$m^{ʕ}$raj would have been affected in the same way, making them phonetically very similar. Another approach for this character would be to consider its sound gloss in the *Jingdian shiwen* 經典釋文 which says: "The old pronunciation is [that of the character] *wen* 刎" (Lu Deming 陸德明 [Tang], *Jingdian shiwen* 經典釋文 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji, 1985), 1251). We suggested that the variant in which *ma* 麻 is replaced by *wu* 勿 is denoting *wen* 刎 "to cut apart, to cleave." Nevertheless, it seems unlikely that this relatively unusual variant is the model for the phrase as used in the *Gong yang zhuan*. Moving on to the second character, it was noted above that the Wenxian texts include a variant graph 鳥隻 in this position, which is also found in the Shanghai slip text *Bao Shuya yu Xi Peng zhi jian* denoting the word *zhi* 雉. The use of the graph *zhi* 雉 in the *Gongyang zhuan* in this phrase is thus the same variation with the use of a different variant graph. As discussed, the rhyme category of *yi* 夷 can be reconstructed as **-ij*, giving **lij*, a very close match to *zhi* 雉 **lrij?*. The third graph is *bi* 彼, the word that the adopted analysis argues is denoted by the *fei* 非 of the excavated covenants. If we accept that the *Gongyang zhuan* phrase is indeed the same imprecation, then its use of *bi* 彼 provides further support for this analysis of *fei* 非. The final graph is somewhat more problematic. The reconstruction for *shi* 視 is *shi* 視 < *dzyijH* < **gij?-s*, while that for *shi* 氏 is *shi* 氏 < *dzyeX* < **k.de?*. As noted, in the covenant texts *shi* 視 takes the phonetic *di* 氏 from which we can infer the initial had palatalized to give **dzij?*, resulting in a close match with the root of *shi* 氏, the **d-* (and the development to Middle Chinese *dzy-* may already have been underway). Zhu and Qiu note that there are examples in early texts of interchange between *shi* 是, the graph commonly found in the covenant texts to denote *shi* 氏, and *shi* 示, the phonetic component in *shi* 視, for example in the *Zhou li* the word *qi* 祇 "earth spirit" < *gjie* < **ge* (<**k.de*) is consistently written with the character 示 *shì* < *zyijH* < **s-gij-s* (Zhu Dexi and Qiu Xigui, "Zhanguo wenzi yanjiu (liu zhong)" 32). One can also not help noticing that, in bronze inscriptions, graphs that can be confidently taken to be early variant forms of *shi* 視 frequently have *shi* 氏 "lineage," rather than *di*氏 (or indeed *shi* 示) as an apparent phonetic. For example:  (Yuan *ding* 員鼎);  ,  ,  (Zhongshan Wang Cuo zhaoyu tu 中山王㗬兆域圖);  (Ping Yin *ding* 平陰鼎);  (Xin'an jun *ding* 信安君鼎);  (He *zun* 何尊). This of course would suggest *shi* 視was an ideal graph with which to denote *shi* 氏. There may, then, be more to be said about the reconstruction of *shi* 視's Old Chinese pronunciation. Nevertheless, the vowels **-i-* and **-e-* are already close, and the **-j* coda in **-ij* may have brought the **-i-* closer to the **-e-*. So, overall the use of *shi* 視 for *shi* 氏 seems plausible. The fact that those speaking and recording this phrase may have been uncertain as to the precise identity of the individual words of which it is composed may also have led to some confusion as to the correct pronunciation of its component syllables.

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of the phrase had been lost by the stage this example was written down. This is in contrast to the phrase as it is written in the excavated covenants, which employ what would have been graphs in common usage for the proposed readings.

The evidence presented in this study is relevant to a broader discussion of manuscript production and reproduction but an in-depth analysis of the issues would be premature prior to identification of all the scribal hands and the variations associated with each scribe. Below I will make just a few preliminary remarks on this topic.[152]

The excavated covenants from Houma and Wenxian were produced to function as a central part of a mechanism of political control and organization of subordinate groups by lineage elites in Jin during the fifth and early fourth centuries B.C.E. The thousands of individualized covenants tell us that elites were engaged in the production of texts that projected the authority of the written word over a very wide spectrum of groups and ranks.[153] They are relatively early examples of the spread of writing that takes place in the Warring States period, implying widespread functional literacy.[154]

In considering the production of these particular texts, we may first note that the genre of oath and covenant had a strong oral component.[155] As such, the basic structure and standard formulaic phrases used in oaths would have been widely known.[156] The *Zuo zhuan* is full of both oral and written examples of oaths, many made on the spur of the moment in response to particular events. Examples in which covenants are written down imply the presence of a scribe or other literate individual. For

152. For a summary and discussion of recent research on modes of textual transmission in early China, and particularly the debate about the degree of an oral component in text reproduction, see Scott Cook, *The Bamboo Texts of Guodian*, 76–82. See also Li Songru, "Zhanguo jianbo ziji yanjiu," 118–20.

153. For the use of writing in the projection of authority in early China see Lewis, *Writing and Authority in Early China*, particularly the Introduction and Chapter 1.

154. See, for example, Constance Cook, "Education and the Way of the Former Kings," in *Writing and Literacy in Early China*, ed. Li and Branner, 302–36, see 333–35; Robin Yates, "Soldiers, Scribes and Women: Literacy among the Lower Orders in Early China," in *Writing and Literacy in Early China*, ed. Li and Branner, 339–69, see 340–45.

155. The oaths of the excavated covenant texts were almost certainly read out during the covenant ceremonies, the covenantors themselves probably also being required to speak the oath (as is hinted at by the mixed use of pronouns within single texts). Mark Lewis discusses collective oaths sworn before hunts and battles, as well as the reading of covenants during the covenant ceremony, see Mark Edward Lewis, *Sanctioned Violence in Early China* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990), 18, 24–25, 46, 67–70.

156. Although primarily concerned with "texts with a transmission history," Martin Kern's "Methodological Reflections on the Analysis of Textual Variants and the Modes of Manuscript Production in Early China" (*Journal of East Asian Archaeology* 4.1–4 (2002), 143–81) includes discussion of different modes of "textual reproduction" and "manuscript production" that is relevant to this issue.

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example, there is a case in which the parties to a covenant argue about the content of the text at the time of covenanting, with one party making the demand, "Change the covenant text" (*gai zaishu* 改載書).[157] Another example describes the falsification of a written covenant.[158] In such episodes, the covenant is written or revised before its dispatch to the sanctioning spirit or spirits during the covenant ceremony (e.g. using burial or submersion). The *Zhouli* includes a Supervisor of Covenants (*simeng* 司盟) whose responsibilities include the writing of the covenants, proclaiming words of the covenant to the spirits during the covenant ceremony, making and keeping copies of covenants, and so on.[159] The *Zuo zhuan* provides evidence that, in addition to copies prepared for the overseeing spirits, the texts of at least some covenants were preserved by officials in the form of written records. There is mention of an archive dedicated to covenants, the *mengfu* 盟府, and cases in which ancestral covenants are quoted suggest records of them had been kept.[160]

On the basis of such historical records and the excavated covenants themselves, we can make a number of conjectures concerning the production of the Houma and Wenxian texts. The excavated covenants contain one or more highly specific stipulations that require or prohibit some particular behavior on the part of the covenantors. These stipulations were the motivation for the covenant and we can reasonably assume that their composition would have been initiated and finally approved by the head of the lineage, perhaps in consultation with other high-ranking members of the lineage-centered group. The formulaic non-specific sections of the oath could potentially have been left to the relevant official to complete, although the lineage elites would have almost certainly been familiar enough with the genre to provide precise language themselves if they so wished. Apart from the formulaic language and specific stipulations, the individual name of each participating covenantor would have had to be added separately for each tablet during the copying process. The complete text, then, contains three distinct elements: formulaic sections; at least one stipulation particular to the oath type; and an individual name which is specific to each copy.

The Houma and Wenxian oaths were to be copied on tablets for the covenant ceremony and almost certainly also archived in some form, so it is likely that a written version was made as soon as the specific

157. *Chunqiu Zuo zhuan zhu*, 969 ("Xiang" 襄 9.5).

158. *Chunqiu Zuo zhuan zhu*, 435 ("Xi" 僖 25.3).

159. Sun Yirang 孫詒讓, *Zhouli zhengyi* 周禮正義 (Beijing: Zhonghua, [1987] 2000), 2852–57. For a translation of this section see Williams, "Interpreting the Wenxian Covenant Texts," 87.

160. *Chunqiu Zuo zhuan zhu*, 440 ("Xi" 僖 26.3).

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content had been decided on, and exemplars provided to the official overseeing the copying process. Many of the scribes would have been familiar with the stock formulaic phrases common to the oaths. However, they would have had to learn the stipulations specific to the oath. For the Wenxian oaths these are generally very short and could have been quickly memorized, but some of the Houma examples contain multiple oaths with long lists of enemy names that would have taken more time to memorize. Regardless of the extent to which a scribe had memorized the content of the oath, every time a copy was made the scribe would have had to be provided with the name of the individual covenantor for whom the text was being prepared.[161]

There are two ways in which the name of each covenantor could have been provided to the scribe: either directly by the covenantor, or from a pre-existing list of names. If each covenantor needed to be present while a scribe wrote the full text of the individualized tablet, then for those covenants with thousands of participants this would have presented a significant logistical challenge and covenantors would have had to arrive well in advance of the ceremony itself to go through this process. It seems clear, based on records of covenants and oaths in early texts, that all covenantors would have been expected to be present for the actual ceremony. The covenantors would have gathered together in advance of the ceremony and their presence been confirmed in some way.[162] Thus it is certainly possible that the scribes worked during this period directly prior to the ceremony, seeing each covenantor in person. Nevertheless, working from pre-existing lists of names would have been logistically simpler and this possibility is worth considering. In this case, lists might have been partly based on existing written registers, but given that at least some of these covenants appear to be aimed at consolidating groups of people during times of upheaval, members of which may have previously been affiliated with different elites, we can also conjecture that lists of names would also have been drawn up specifically for these events.[163] Such lists might have been produced by heads of smaller

161. In general (there are exceptions) the tablets do not appear to have been written in advance leaving a gap where a name would be added later.

162. Both the expectation to attend, and verification of attendance is evident from the occasional tablet which adds a note at the end recording that the covenantor for whom the tablet was prepared was elsewhere (e.g. "X [the covenantor's name] has gone to Y [place name]"). This is clear evidence that when attendance was being verified the covenantor in question had departed, and might suggest that the tablet was also originally prepared *in absentia*.

163. The suggestion of pre-existing lists is pertinent to the question of the early development of individual and household registration. To date, the earliest excavated examples

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groups that were swearing allegiance to the Han or Zhao leader and then provided to representatives of those leaders for use in preparing the covenants.[164] There are cases among the Wenxian texts of sets of tablets that were prepared by a single scribe for a group sharing the same lineage name, and placed as a set in the pit.[165] This would accord with a single scribe working from a list of names organized by lineage affiliation.[166]

The scribes would have been faced with a document that had a standard structure and included several familiar phrases, although perhaps in some cases archaic stock phrases, but also one or more stipulations specific to the oath, and finally a requirement that every copy of the text be individualized with a personal name. The content of the oath must have been provided to the scribes either in written form, or possibly a written model was read out to them. Given that the texts were generally short (particularly those from Wenxian), included many stock formulae and were repeatedly copied, we can speculate that, once familiar with the text, the scribes may well have written fully or partly from memory (possibly vocalizing as they wrote). However, before starting on a new tablet, in order to be able to personalize the text, they would have needed the name of the covenantor, either from the covenantor in person, or by referring to a list of names.

On the basis of representations in painting and sculpture from the Han and later periods, Li Songru concludes that Warring States scribes wrote in a kneeling position and that the writing material was not separately placed on any sort of stand when writing but held up in one hand, the brush held in the other.[167] The shape and material of the covenant tablets make them well suited for being held in one hand to be written on in this way. A low stand is shown in some of the later representations

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of such registers are from the Qin period (see Yates, "Soldiers, Scribes and Women," 359). However, various types of register are mentioned in received texts as early as the sixth century B.C.E. in Chu and the fourth century B.C.E. in Qin (see Lewis, *Writing and Authority in Early China*, 26–27). Whether or not lists of the names of the covenantors existed prior to the covenants, they surely existed after the covenants. Each pit of tablets itself could be characterized as a registry of names prepared for the sanctioning spirit, and it is reasonable to assume that a list of those covenanting was recorded to be preserved above ground as a record, and possibly also for future administrative purposes.

164. For the requirement in late third century B.C.E. Qin statutes for village leaders to supply lists of adult males in their communities, see Yates, "Soldiers, Scribes and Women," 360.

165. Crispin Williams, "Ten Thousand Names," 977–78.

166. It could, of course, equally well reflect a group of relatives lined up in person in front of a single scribe, to whom they then individually gave their names as the scribe wrote the tablets. It seems unlikely that a written copy of the oath was sent out to a multitude of different groups (e.g. kin groups) who were expected to procure and prepare the tablets themselves and bring them along to the covenant ceremony for burial.

167. Li Songru, "Zhanguo jianbo ziji yanjiu," 71–73.

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for placing writing materials, ink and brushes, and so on, and we can conjecture something of this nature would have been used by the scribes preparing the covenant texts. They would also have needed space for the blank tablets and a further space to place the completed tablets (unless assistants delivered and collected each tablet). Li does not discuss where an exemplar would have been placed, but presumably this would have been on the low stand, or possibly held by an assistant.[168] Having to refer to an exemplar while both hands are occupied means no hand is free to keep one's place in the exemplar and one must rely solely on the eyes to find one's place, which can lead to various errors.[169] In the case of the covenants, the name of the individual covenantor also had to be taken, or found in a list each time a tablet was written, further complicating the writing task. Further distractions include the need to reload the brush with ink.[170] Overall, the reproduction of the texts, particularly if an exemplar was used, would have required attention to, and switching between, different tasks, increasing the likelihood of distraction leading to written errors. Dictation of the text would have reduced some of these distractions but opened the way for other types of written error. As to the environment in which the scribes were working, we can assume that levels of light and noise, heat and cold, would have varied, and that individual scribes may have had visual or hearing impairments, all factors that could have affected performance.[171]

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168. The possibility that two people were involved in the copying process is suggested in part by a Western Jin (281–316 C.E.) ceramic paired-figurine model that Li Songru discusses. The object represents two officials kneeling and facing each other, noses almost touching, one holding a square-shaped tablet of some kind in one hand and writing on it with the other, the other figure holding something (the catalogue description suggests they are bamboo slips) in both hands (Li Songru "Zhanguo jianbo ziji yanjiu," 73; the object is held by the Hunan Provincial Museum, for an online catalogue entry see: http://www.hnmuseum.com/hnmuseum/collection-info/collection-info!frontCollectionDetail.action?id=15cfcc9c295444f8a81f87541f29e845 (Last accessed April 3, 2014)). The catalogue entry suggests the object represents the act of collation (*jiaochou* 校讎) of a text, and quotes Liu Xiang 劉向 (79–78 B.C.E.), who described the process as involving two people. Scott Cook also refers to this Han source, suggesting the practice may have developed from an earlier method of textual copying involving two people, one reading the text to the other (Scott Cook, *The Bamboo Texts of Guodian*, 77).

169. This point is made by James Royse in his study of early Greek scribal habits. It seems that early Greek scribes wrote in the same way, holding the papyrus in one hand and pen in the other. See James R. Royse, *Scribal Habits in Early Greek New Testament Papyri* (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 98–100. Many of Royse's general points about scribal habits can be applied to the discussion of scribes and scribal error in early China.

170. Royse, *Scribal Habits in Early Greek New Testament Papyri*, 100, n. 116.

171. As for the identity of the scribes, and their status and training, the tablets do not provide relevant evidence. For a discussion of the training and career of scribes in the

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This reconstruction suggests external factors possibly significant in the production of the observed errors. For example, segmentation errors, in which word boundaries are misconstrued, were identified as the likely cause of one, possibly two variations, and such errors accord with the suggestion that there was an oral component to the copying process.[172] William Baxter in discussing the causes of such errors explains: "The scribe may have been writing from dictation by someone (perhaps himself) … without always understanding what it meant; thus sometimes he would write the wrong character because of inaccuracies in either pronunciation or hearing, or through inattention."[173] The fact that misunderstanding is a factor in segmentation errors supports the view that certain formulaic phrases, such as the imprecation, may have become archaic and not fully understood by some scribes. The imprecation's appearance in almost unrecognizable form in the *Gongyang zhuan* suggests it went on to be used and transmitted long after its precise meaning had ceased to be understood.

Dictation (possibly to oneself) would also explain the variation in which *shi* 睨 (視) replaces the phonetically similar but graphically dissimilar *yi* 夷. However, the subcategory of this variation in which *shi* 睨 (視) in this position is written by one scribe (Scribe H) with a different but graphically very similar graph, suggests the scribe was referring to a copy (quite possibly the scribe's own) with the variation just discussed, in which *shi* 睨 (視) replaces *yi* 夷. This example, as well as other cases of scribes who make a variety of errors, suggest these scribes were not paying close attention to a written exemplar. More generally, valid variations like the use of *shi* 是 for *shi* 氏, the common interchange of personal pronouns like *zhi* 之 and *ru* 汝, *er* 而 and *qi* 其, lexical variants, and the numerous calligraphic and component-level variations seen at the level of individual graphs, all indicate that scribes were not slavishly following a written exemplar, even if one was to hand.

We can, then, conjecture that while written exemplars were available, scribes were not always directly copying from such exemplars, that in some cases the text may have been dictated to them, or

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Qin and early Han periods, see Yates "Soldiers, Scribes and Women," 345–60. For related discussion and an analysis of references to scribes in the *Zhou li*, see Martin Kern, "Offices of Writing and Reading in the *Rituals of Zhou*," ed. Benjamin Elman and Martin Kern, *Statecraft and Classical Learning: The* Rituals of Zhou *in East Asian History* (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 65–93. For scribal training in the Shang period, see Adam Smith, "Writing at Anyang," 303–84.

172. See the sections above on the variant with 亡 and those with 睨.

173. William H. Baxter, "Aspects of Old Chinese Morphology," 6. Quoted with permission of the author (personal communication, May 19, 2014).

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memorized and vocalized when writing, or even copied from one of their own completed tablets. The apparent lack of concern for complete accuracy in the copies is also indicated by the relatively few cases where corrections were made to the texts. One does sometimes see omitted graphs added at the side of a column but errors are not consistently corrected. It appears that there was not a demand for complete accuracy in texts prepared for the sanctioning spirit, the inclusion of the name of each covenantor perhaps being considered the most essential piece of information. The scribes and the officials directing the work were aware that the tablets would soon be buried in the ground, unavailable for later scrutiny, and this may have meant there was less demand for precision.[174]

These preliminary observations, based on the limited analysis presented in this study, show the potential that a comprehensive analysis of the materials would have to provide a clearer picture of the range and nature of scribal variation, and a better understanding of the production and reproduction of these texts.

Appendix 1: A survey of the phrase *ma yi fei shi* and its variants in the Wenxian and Houma Covenant Texts—tabulated results

The results are given in three tables, one for the Wenxian texts and two for the Houma texts. The survey on which these tables are based looked at all tablets photographed during the first major round of photography in 1999–2000, but was completed prior to a further round of photography carried out in 2009 (see the main text for further details). The following key applies to all three tables.

Key:

- The variant wordings along with different combinations of legible and illegible graphs are given in the first column on the left. A number of different combinations of legible graphs that occur with illegible graphs and/or broken sections of tablet have been treated as one category when this does not obscure significant variation in wording. In such cases the symbol "…" indicates some combination of graphs and/or illegible or broken areas which have not been included. Thus,

174. The covenant texts prepared for burial may, then, be an exception to the observation that excavated texts with a specific administrative or practical function generally have fewer errors than literary texts (see, for example, Li Songru, "Zhanguo jianbo ziji yanjiu," 99).

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for example, the category "… 是" includes tablets with the wordings: □□非是; □夷□是; □□□是; ■非是; ■是.

- Lines between rows divide the rows into groups based on some obvious shared feature. For example, all the examples that begin with the graph *wang* 亡 are grouped together.
- Pit numbers are given at the top of each subsequent column. The number of examples of each different wording is given for each pit. If no number appears in the box, the number was zero.
- The total number of examples for each category of wording is given in the last column. Totals for each pit are given in the last row.
- When the number of examples of a particular wording from a pit was only one and this is considered to be an important example, the actual tablet number is given in the cell, for example 1-17-43 indicates tablet WT1K17-43.
- The following symbols are used: □ = A graph appears to be present but is too illegible to be confidently identified; ■ = break in the tablet—the number of graphs missing was not estimated so ■ indicates a space of one or more graphs; [?] = legible (or partly legible) but unidentified graph.
- The graph usually written in the texts as  is given in the table as 夷. The graph usually written as  in the texts is given here as 視.
- Wenxian pit WT4K5 has tablets belonging to a single category that does not use the *ma yi fei shi* phrase, so this pit is not included in the table. Wenxian pit WT1K3 has just a small number of tablets, most of which are largely illegible, and none of these has any sign of the *ma yi fei shi* phrase, so this pit is not included in the table. Wenxian pit WT1K4 has only three tablets with partly legible text, none of which has a legible imprecation clause, so this pit is not included in the table.
- In the Houma tablets, in the Pledge Text category, the phrase *ma yi fei shi* occurs twice and these are treated as separate occurrences.
- Where a wording has a number in brackets after it, this refers to a further note placed at the end of the table.

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Table 1.1: Wenxian Covenant Texts

Wording \ Pit	WT1 K1	WT1 K2	WT1 K14	WT1 K17	WT3 K6	WT4 K2	WT4 K6	WT4 K9	WT4 K10	WT4 K11	WT5 K1	WT5 K14	WT5 K21	Totals
麻夷非是	851		218	15	1		20		2	3	5	10	1	1126
麻夷非氏	2		255											257
勿夷非氏			30											30
勿 …			12											12
亡夷非是		4												4
亡夷非氏		11												11
亡 …		16												16
夷麻非是	1-1-1													1
麻非是	11		8	2									1	22
麻非氏			7											7
麻非 …	1		1											2
夷非是	4			1										5
夷非氏			1											1
麻夷是	2		2											4
麻夷氏	1		1											2
麻夷視非氏			16											16
□夷視非□			1											1

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麻■視非氏			1											1
麻□視□□			1											1
麻夷視(?)非氏			2											2
■夷視?非氏			1-14-2069											1
麻視非是	11		12	1										24
□視非是				1										1
■視非是										1				1
麻視非氏	1		3											4
麻視非□			1											1
麻視非■	1													1
麻視是			1											1
麻視非女			2											2
麻女夷非氏			1											1
麻視女夷非氏			1											1
麻 … 是	38		13	1			2						1	55
麻 … 氏			19											19
… 是	96		32		1		9			2	5	2	4	151
… 氏	1	2	33											36
麻 …	131		106	4	3	1	10	2		4	6		4	271
…夷非/夷/非 … (1)	12	1	26	1		1	2				1		4	48
麻夷□是?				1-17-43										1
麻?夷非是				1-17-96										1
麻?夷非是			1-14-5087											1

Continued

Table 1.1: Continued

Wording \ Pit	WT1 K1	WT1 K2	WT1 K14	WT1 K17	WT3 K6	WT4 K2	WT4 K6	WT4 K9	WT4 K10	WT4 K11	WT5 K1	WT5 K14	WT5 K21	Totals
麻夷非□是			1-14-2040											1
麻夷非□								4-9-4						1
□非氏		1-2-95												1
□非氏		1-2-167												1
麻夷□□	1-1-60													1
□是												5-14-30		1
麻夷非是氏			1-14-4418											1
麻麻夷非是	2													2
麻夷非			2											2
麻夷不氏			1-14-1046											1
麻夷女非氏			1-14-1229											1
ma yi fei shi omitted (2)								29	7					36
ma yi fei shi possibly omitted (2)			9					15	1					25
Broken (3)	141		40	3	8		69	58	2	22	5		28	376
Illegible (4)	392	39	397	38	2	2	21	59	15	26	13	23	14	1041

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Wording not confirmed (5)	137	13	122	5		1	4	1				1	3	287
No image (6)	90	6	61	2			6	5	1	2			12	185
Totals	1927	94	1443	76	15	5	143	170	28	60	35	37	72	4105

Notes to individual categories:
(1) The forward slash, " / ", indicates "or" here.
(2) In the category "*ma yi fei shi* omitted" I was confident that the *ma yi fei shi* had not been included in the text of the covenant. In the category "*ma yi fei shi* possibly omitted," this appeared to be the case, but it was not possible to be fully confident of this, e.g. this was a tablet with some illegible areas, and it was possible that the *ma yi fei shi* was just no longer visible.
(3) The tablet was a fragment missing the section where the *ma yi fei shi* would be expected to occur.
(4) The graphs in the area where the *ma yi fei shi* would be expected to be found were too illegible to confidently make out.
(5) The wording was partly legible and did not appear to show any significant variation, but to be fully confident of the wording the original tablet would need to be examined or re-photographed. Cases in which there did appear to be a significant variant were re-examined.
(6) In some cases a record in the database did not have an associated image of the tablet and these examples were not included in the survey.

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Table 1.2: Houma Covenant Texts, part 1

Wording \ Pit	1	3	16	17	18	35	36	49	50	67	75	77	79	85	86	88	91	92	93	96	98	105	106	149
麻夷非是 麻夷非氏	42	15	15					2		5	1	2		3		3	1	3	1	1	1			
亡夷非是 亡 … 亡夷非是麻										6 2 1								1						
麻非是 夷非是 麻夷是			1											1										
麻 … 是	6		2									1		1										
… 是	4	4	8		1	1	1			7	1	5	1	4		1		5			1			
… 氏			1											1				1		1				
麻 …	15	3	6		2		1			5	2	1	1	3	3	1		6		2				
…夷非/夷/非 …	2									2		1						1			2			
麻夷之非是	2																							
非夷■													1											
Broken	16	1			6	10	4			2	5	10	16	19	1	9	4	29	3	9	22		4	1
Illegible	18	15	5		1				1	28			2	3	2			1			3			
Totals	105	38	38	0	10	11	6	2	1	58	9	20	21	35	6	14	5	47	4	13	29	0	4	1

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Table 1.3: Houma Covenant Texts, part 2

Wording \ Pit	152	153	154	156	158	159	162	179	180	181	185	194	195	198	200	201	202	203	303	340	探八2	探十二3	Totals for Tables 1.2, 1.3
麻夷非是	4			20		1	2	2			3	8	6	2	37			1					181
麻夷非氏															3								3
亡夷非是																							7
亡 …																							2
亡夷非是麻																							1
麻非是											1												1
夷非是																							1
麻夷是																							1
麻 … 是															7			1					18
… 是			1	1				2			1	1		3	5						1	1	60
… 氏				1											1								6
麻 …	1	1		6							2	2		2	8	1	2						76
…夷非/夷/非 …								2					1	1	3			1					16
麻夷之非是																							2
非夷■																							1
Broken	2		2	9	2			20	1	1	9	5	2	15	5	1	2	7					254
Illegible				2			1	2							3						2		89
Totals	7	1	3	39	2	1	3	28	1	1	16	16	9	23	72	2	4	10	0	0	3	1	719

Table 1.4: Wenxian and Houma covenant texts—list of less common variant wordings with individual tablet names
The following categories are not included: 麻夷非是; 麻夷非氏; 麻 … 是; 麻 … 氏; … 是; … 氏; 麻 …; …夷非/夷/非 …; *ma yi fei shi* omitted; *ma yi fei shi* possibly omitted; Broken; Illegible; Wording not confirmed; No image.

Variant	Tablet names
勿夷非氏	WT1K14—933/952/1191/1378/1885.5/1886.5/1887.5/2890/2944/3041/3124/3214/3674/3676/3757/4178/4824/ 4980/5053.5/5065/5066/5067/5123/5292/5512/5584/6163/6187/6198
勿 …	WT1K14—5380/5298/721/5412/3756/953.5/1301/2181/2992/4184/4596
亡夷非是	WT1K2—9.5/92/111/156 HM 67:3/14/20/21/52/54
亡夷非氏	WT1K2—79/107.5/112/116/126/128/139/159/134/157/162
亡 …	WT1K2—25/166.5/165/117/131/144/153/51.5/106/61/78.5/83/123/124/132/160 HM 67:47/51
亡夷非是麻	HM 67:4
夷麻非是	WT1K1—1
麻非是	WT1K1—30.5/2170/2615/2791/3081/3357/3580/3697/3907/3925/4299 WT1K14—1011/1405/2613/2917.5/5127.5/5134/5475/5529 WT1K17—49/110 WT5K21—93 HM 185:3
麻非氏	WT1K14—879.5/2119/2376/3509/4159/5210/5569
麻非 …	WT1K1—4017 WT1K14—4650.5
夷非是	WT1K1—2011/3056/3157

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	WT1K17—39
	HM 85:16
夷非氏	WT1K14—3732
麻夷是	WT1K1—3195/3261
	WT1K14—5718/5787
	HM 16:2
麻夷氏	WT1K14—5835
麻夷視非氏	WT1K14—966/987.5/991.5/1959.5/1960/2500/2513/3313/3314/4353/4359.5/4392/4393/4439/6038/6085
□夷視非□	WT1K14—2993
麻■視非氏	WT1K14—981
麻□視□□	WT1K14—1000
麻夷視(?)非氏	WT1K14—2884/2886
■夷視□非氏	WT1K14—2069
麻視非是	WT1K1—1445/1446/1451/1861/1940/1983/2206/2294/2589/4296/4389
	WT1K14—3763/3783/3784/3859/3860/3861/3864/3934/3935/3939/3966/3969
	WT1K17—142
□視非是	WT1K17—92
■視非是	WT4K11—156
麻視非氏	WT1K1—67
	WT1K14—2268/2923/5906
麻視非□	WT1K14—1277
麻視非■	WT1K1—245
麻視是	WT1K14—3959
麻視非女	WT1K14—3936/3958

Continued

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Table 1.4: Continued

Variant	Tablet names
麻女夷非氏	WT1K14—3226
麻視女夷非氏	WT1K14—4423
麻夷□是□	WT1K17—43
麻□夷非是	WT1K17—96
麻□夷非是	WT5K14—32/32.5
麻□夷非是	WT1K14—5087
麻夷非□是	WT1K14—2040
麻夷非□	WT4K9—4
□非氏	WT1K2—95
□非氏	WT1K2—167
麻夷□□	WT1K1—60
□是	WT5K14—30
麻夷非是氏	WT1K14—4418
麻麻夷非是	WT1K1—1827/3071
麻夷非	WT1K14—1741/1742
麻夷不氏	WT1K14—1046
麻夷女非氏	WT1K14—1229
麻夷之非是	HM 1:40/41
非夷■	HM 79:8

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Appendix 2

Table 2.1: Categorization by scribe of tablets with the variation that includes *shi* 覗 (視), with a sample set of graphs to show the basis for identification

The table groups tablets by scribe. From the left, the first column identifies the scribe as A, B, etc. The second column gives the tablet number. The remaining column headings are a set of characters found in all or some of these tablets. The column headings give the standard modern form for the graph, or a formal transcription of the graph if no standard form is attested (*bu* 不 denotes both *bu* 不 and *pi* 丕; 忎 has several variant forms). For each tablet, an image of each of these graphs is given when available and legible. The graphs are not to scale. The images are grayscale and the contrast between the ink and stone has been digitally enhanced and the degree of contrast varies from image to image.

Graphs for comparison

Scribe	Tablet number	曰	自	往	敢	不	忎	中	其	主	而	為	徒	者	公	大	非	聞	校
A	1-14-966																		
A	1-14-987																		
A	1-14-991																		
A	1-14-1959																		
A	1-14-1960																		

Continued

Appendix 2
Table 2.1: Continued

Scribe	Tablet number	曰	自	往	敢	不	忎	中	其	主	而	為	徒	者	公	大	非	閘	祓
A	1-14-4353																		
A	1-14-4359																	
A	1-14-4392																	
A	1-14-4393																	
A	1-14-2993																		
A	1-14-2884																	
A	1-14-2886																	
A	1-14-2069																	
A	1-14-1277																	
B	1-14-2500																	
B	1-14-2513																	
B	1-14-3313																		

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B	1-14-3314																	
B	1-14-4439																	
B	1-14-6038																	
B	1-14-6085																	
C	1-1-1445																	
C	1-1-4389																	
C	1-1-245																	
D	1-1-1451																	
E	1-1-1940																	
E	1-1-1983																	
E	1-1-2294																	
E	1-1-2589																	
F	1-1-2206																	
G	1-1-4296																	

Continued

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Appendix 2
Table 2.1: Continued

Scribe	Tablet number	曰	自	往	敢	不	忎	中	其	主	而	為	徒	者	公	大	非	閘	祓
H	1-14-3783																			
H	1-14-3784																		
H	1-14-3864																		
H	1-14-3934																		
H	1-14-3935																			
H	1-14-3939																		
H	1-14-3966																		
H	1-14-3969																		
H	1-14-3763																		
H	1-14-3859																		
H	1-14-3860																		
H	1-14-3861																		

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H	1-14-3936	
H	1-14-3958	
H	1-14-3959	
I	1-17-142	
J	1-17-92	
K	4-11-156	
L	1-1-67	
M	1-14-2923	
N	1-14-2268	
O	1-14-4423	
P	1-14-5906	

Continued

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Appendix 2
Table 2.1: Continued

Scribe	Tablet number	曰	自	往	敢	不	忎	中	其	主	而	為	徒	者	公	大	非	閘	祓
?	1-1-1861																		
?	1-14-981																		
?	1-14-1000																		
?	1-1-1446																		

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Table 2.2: Variant wordings for the *ma yi fei shi* phrase that include the character *shi* 眡 (視)—categorized by scribe. The variant wordings are given in the second column from the left. The scribes are identified as A, B, etc. The tablet numbers for each tablet with the given variant are recorded for each individual scribe. The pit label is only given once, after which the individual tablet numbers are listed and separated by a forward slash. If there was some doubt about the identification of the scribe, a question mark is placed in brackets after the tablet number. In the case of a tablet for which the hand could not be confidently categorized, the tablet number is placed in the final right-hand column. The variants which use the variant graph for *shi* 視, e.g.  (1-14-3860), are given separately and the variant indicated by △.

	SCRIBE:	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	?
a	麻夷視非氏	1-14-966/ 987.5/ 991.5 (?)/ 1959.5/ 1960/ 4353/ 4359.5/ 4392/ 4393	1-14-2500/ 2513/ 3313/ 3314/ 4439/ 6038/ 6085															
b	□夷視非□	1-14-2993																
c	麻■視非氏																	1-14-981
d	麻□視□□																	1-14-1000
e	麻夷視(?)非氏	1-14-2884/ 2886																
f	■夷視[?]非氏	1-14-2069																
g	麻視女夷非氏															1-14-4423		

Continued

Table 2.2: Continued

	SCRIBE:	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	?
h	麻視非是			1-1-1445/4389 (?)	1-1-1451	1-1-1940/1983/2294/2589	1-1-2206	1-1-4296	1-14-3783/3784/3864/3934/3935/3939/3966/3969	1-17-142								1-1-1446/1861/
i	□視非是										1-17-92							
j	■視非是											4-11-156						
k	麻視非氏												1-1-67	1-14-2923	1-14-2268		1-14-5906	
l	麻視非□	1-14-1277																
m	麻視非■			1-1-245														
n	麻△非是								1-14-3763/3859/3860/3861									
o	麻視非女								1-14-3936									
p	麻△非女								1-14-3958									
q	麻視是								1-14-3959									
	SCRIBE:	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	?
	TOTALS:	14	7	3	1	4	1	1	15	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	4

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侯馬與溫縣盟書'麻夷非是'異文考

魏克彬

摘要

本文通過對侯馬與溫縣盟書所見"麻夷非是"及其異文的分析，主張朱德熙和裘錫圭"靡夷彼氏"的讀法是正確的，不符合朱裘之說的異文當視作少數書寫者的傳抄錯誤。據此可以推測當時已有書寫者無法完全把握"麻夷非是"等套語的具體意思和準確寫法。根據字跡特徵來區別不同的書寫者以及辨識比對不同的傳抄錯誤，不僅對本文的分析極為重要，亦將有助於我們進一步了解書手的書寫習慣和文本的傳抄過程。

Keywords: Houma, Wenxian, covenants, imprecation, scribal habits, scribal error
侯馬, 溫縣, 盟書, 麻夷非是

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