

## TO PUNISH THE PERSON: A READING NOTE REGARDING A PUNCTUATION MARK IN THE TSINGHUA MANUSCRIPT \*MING XUN

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### Abstract

The Tsinghua manuscript \**Ming xun* 命訓 contains a compound sentence that reads: 大命殛罰少命=身. In an earlier article, the author translated this sentence as “The great mandate for generations punishes; the minor mandates command the person,” understanding the “=” mark to indicate that the preceding character *ming* 命 was to be repeated. However, scholars in China have recently noted that the “=” mark can also indicate the repetition of characters that occur in the same context earlier in the text. This would suggest that the “=” mark here indicates the repetition of the word *fa* 罰 in the preceding clause, such that the sentence should read “The great mandate punishes the world; minor mandates punish the person,” which is the reading of the received text of the *Ming xun*. This scribal practice has important implications for the reading of other manuscripts as well.

In *Early China* 39 I published an article entitled “Varieties of Textual Variants: Evidence from the Tsinghua Bamboo-Strip \**Ming Xun* Manuscript,” in which in addition to discussing different types of variants seen in the Tsinghua manuscript \**Ming xun* 命訓 or *The instruction on commands* vis-à-vis the version of the text preserved in the *Yi Zhou shu* 逸周書 or *Leftover Zhou documents*, I also included complete translations of both the Tsinghua manuscript text and also the *Yi Zhou shu* version of the text.<sup>1</sup> This article has barely had time to attract the notice of readers, but I hasten now to offer the following brief note correcting what I think is an error in it. In the most recent issue of the journal *Jian bo* 簡帛, Meng Yuelong 孟躍龍 has published an article entitled “Qinghua jian *Ming xun* ‘Shao ming = shen’ de dufa: Jianlun gudai chaoben wenxian zhong chongwen fuhao de teshu yongfa” 清華簡《命訓》“少命=身”的讀法：兼論古代抄本文獻中重文符號的特殊用法 or “The reading of ‘Minor mandates = the person’ in the Tsinghua manuscript *Ming xun*: With a

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1. Edward L. Shaughnessy, “Varieties of Textual Variants: Evidence from the Tsinghua Bamboo-Strip \**Ming Xun* Manuscript,” *Early China* 39 (2016), 1–34. I am grateful to my colleagues Donald Harper and Jiang Wen 蔣文 for advice concerning this point.

discussion of a special use of the duplication mark in ancient copied documents” offering a new reading of one line in the Tsinghua manuscript (or perhaps an old reading, since he suggests that the reading in the received text is correct). More important than the correction of just this one line in the *\*Ming xun* text, Meng’s article makes reference to a series of other articles and on-line discussions published in China in the last several years concerning an important insight into ancient scribal practice.<sup>2</sup> It is because of this issue’s broader implications for the reading of ancient manuscripts that I take the opportunity of correcting a mistake of my own to call attention to it here.

On strip #10 of the *\*Ming xun* manuscript, there is a sentence that reads:

天古邵命以命力曰天古邵命以命力曰大命殛罰少命 = 身

I translated this as:

Heaven therefore made radiant the mandate in order to command them saying: The great mandate for generations punishes; the minor mandates command the person.

The corresponding sentence in the received text of “*Ming xun*” reads as follows:

明王是故昭命以命之曰：大命世罰，小命罰身。

I translated this passage as:

Enlightened kings therefore made radiant the mandate in order to command them saying: The great mandate for generations punishes; the minor mandates punish the person.

In the “Structured Translation of the Tsinghua University Manuscript *\*Ming Xun*” that I appended to the article, I simply repeated the translation I had offered of the manuscript text, implying that I understood the text in this way. Although I did discuss the variant seen between the manuscript’s *ming li* 命力 “to command force” and the received text’s *ming zhi* 命之 “to command them” in the first portion of this sentence, and suggested that the manuscript’s *li* 力 “force” was a simple scribal error, I did not comment at all on the more important variant at the end of the sentence between the manuscript’s *xiao ming = shen* 少命 = 身, which I translated as “the minor mandates command the person,” and the received text’s *xiao ming fa shen* 小命罰身 “the minor mandates

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2. Meng Yuelong 孟躍龍, “Qinghua jian *Ming xun* ‘Shao ming = shen’ de dufa: Jian-lun gudai chaoben wenxian zhong chongwen fuhao de teshu yongfa” 清華簡《命訓》“少命 = 身”的讀法：兼論古代抄本文獻中重文符號的特殊用法, *Jian bo* 簡帛 13 (2017), 71–77.

punish the person.” It is easy to see that in this translation, in which I simply followed the reading given by the Tsinghua editors, I understood the mark “=” after *ming* 命 “to command” to indicate that *ming* was to be repeated (i.e., *ming ming* 命命), which I rendered as literally as possible as “mandates command.” In offering such a “literal” translation, I rather blithely disregarded the logical incoherence this introduced into the text.

Meng Yuelong has read the sentence sensitive to its context, and suggests that the “duplication” mark here does not indicate that *ming* is to be repeated, but rather that the *fa* 罰 “punish” in the preceding clause is to be repeated; thus, “the great mandate punishes the world, the minor mandates punish the person.”<sup>3</sup> Shocking though this seems to be at first, Meng cites a series of recent studies pointing to this usage of the punctuation mark “=”. The first person to have called attention to this feature seems to have been Wei Yihui 魏宜輝, in an article entitled “Zailun Mawangdui boshu zhong de ‘shi =’ ju” or “Once again on the ‘shi =’ sentences in the Mawangdui silk manuscripts.”<sup>4</sup> In the Mawangdui manuscript *\*Tianwen qixiang za zhan* 天文氣象雜占 or *Miscellaneous prognostications of astronomy and meteorology*, there is the following series of sentences referring to the appearance of comets:

是胃稗彗兵起有年  
 是= 帚彗有內兵年大孰  
 是= 竹彗人主有死者  
 是= 蒿彗兵起軍幾  
 是= 苦彗天下兵起若在外歸  
 是= 苦芟彗兵起幾

This is called a straw comet: troops will arise; there will be a harvest.

This = a broom comet; there will be internal troops; the harvest will greatly ripen.

This = a bamboo comet; among the rulers of men there will be one who dies.

This = an artemisia comet; troops will arise; the army will starve.

This = a rush comet; under heaven troops will arise; if it is to the outside, they will return.

This = a rush thatch comet; troops will arise and starve.<sup>5</sup>

3. Writing in Chinese, Meng of course does not offer a translation, and so I can only guess that this is how he understands the sentence. It leaves unexplained why *shi* 世 “the world” should come before *fa* in the first clause.

4. Wei Yihui 魏宜輝, “Zailun Mawangdui boshu zhong de ‘shi =’ ju” 再論馬王堆帛書中的 “是=” 句, *Dongnan wenhua* 東南文化 2008.4, 56–57.

5. Qiu Xigui 裘錫圭 ed.-in-chief, Hunan sheng bowuguan and Fudan daxue Chutu wenxian yu guwenzi yanjiu zhongxin ed., *Changsha Mawangdui Han mu jianbo jicheng*

The first interpretations of the mark “=” were as a standard duplication mark, indicating that the *shi* 是 preceding it was to be read twice, that is: *shi shi* 是是. This in turn gave rise to the interpretation, apparently first suggested by Qiu Xigui 裘錫圭, that the first *shi* be read as the standard classical Chinese pronoun “this,” while the second *shi* be read as the colloquial Chinese copula “is.”<sup>6</sup> This attracted great attention because it would be more than five hundred years earlier than the earliest generally recognized occurrences of this usage, in the *Shi shuo xin yu* 世說新語 or *A new account of tales of the world*. Other scholars troubled by the grammatical anachronism this would entail suggested that the second “*shi*” might be read as the protograph of *shi* 寔, understood as a loan word for *shi* 實 “really.”<sup>7</sup>

Similar instances of “*shi* 是 =” subsequently appeared in the still earlier Daybooks (*rishu* 日書), especially at Fangmatan 放馬灘.

東門是=邦君子門賤人 ...

The eastern gate: this = the gate of the son of the country’s ruler; lowly men ...<sup>8</sup>

春己亥夏丁亥秋辛亥冬癸亥是=口日不可起土攻則死亡

In the spring on *jihai*, in the summer on *dinghai*, in the autumn on *xinhai*, and in the winter on *guihai*: this = ... day; you cannot raise earth; if you attack then you will die and be lost.<sup>9</sup>

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長沙馬王堆漢墓簡帛集成 (Shanghai: Shanghai Guji, 2015), vol. 4 p. 270–71. The Fudan editors supply in parentheses the reading *shi wei* 是謂 for “*shi* 是 =” and provide a note citing the research of Wei Yihui and Yang Xiquan 楊錫全 (cited below, n. 16); p. 273 n. 27. They also note that Qiu Xigui now accepts this reading, despite his earlier reading of “*shi* 是 =” as “*shi shi* 是是”; see, below, n. 6.

6. Qiu Xigui 裘錫圭, “Tantan guwenzi ziliao dui gu Hanyu yanjiu de zhongyaoxing” 談談古文字資料對古漢語研究的重要性, *Zhongguo yuwen* 中國語文 1979.6, 437–42; rpt. with an afterword in which Qiu accepts the reading “*shi wei* 是謂”; Qiu Xigui *xueshu wenji* 裘錫圭學術文集 (Shanghai: Fudan daxue, 2014), p. 46.

7. Liang Dongqing 梁冬青, “Chutu wenxian ‘shi shi’ ju xin jie” 出土文獻‘是是’句新解, *Zhongguo yuwen* 中國語文 2002.2, 131–36. Liang credits his teacher Tang Yuming 唐鈺明 with this insight.

8. Gansu sheng Wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo ed., *Tianshui Fangmatan Qin jian* 天水放馬灘秦簡 (Beijing: Zhonghua, 2009), “Rishu Yi zhong” 日書乙種, #18. See now Chen Wei 陳偉 ed.-in-chief, Wuhan daxue Jianbo yanjiu zhongxin, Hubei sheng bowuguan and Hubei sheng Wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo ed., *Qin jiandu heji* 秦簡牘合集 (Wuhan: Wuhan daxue, 2014), vol. 4, p. 40, where this is transcribed directly as “*shi wei* 是謂.”

9. *Tianshui Fangmatan Qin jian*, “Rishu Yi zhong” #131. See too *Qin jiandu heji*, vol. 4, p. 86.

These correspond to parallel passages in other Daybooks, which however read “*shi wai* 是胃 (i.e., 謂)” “this is called” instead of “*shi* 是 =” as in the following examples from the Shuihudi 睡虎地 Daybooks.

東門是胃邦君門賤人弗敢居居之凶

The eastern gate: this is called the gate of the country’s ruler; lowly men ought not dare to dwell there; if they dwell there, it will be ominous.<sup>10</sup>

春之己亥秋之辛亥冬之癸亥是胃牝日百事不吉以起土攻有女喪

On the spring’s *jihai*, autumn’s *xinhai*, and winter’s *guihai*: this is called a cow day; the hundred affairs will not be lucky; if you raise earth or attack there will be daughters who die.<sup>11</sup>

Despite these parallels, these instances of “*shi* 是 =” in the Daybooks were routinely read as “*shi shi* 是是,” whether in the sense of “this is” or “this really.”

However, in 2007 the Shanghai Museum manuscript *Jing Gong yao* 競公瘡 or “Duke Jing’s Fever” was published with the following perplexing couplet:

今內寵又會譴外 = 又梁丘據

The Shanghai Museum manuscript editor Pu Maozuo 濮茅左 commented, without further clarification, that the mark “=” here is a “duplication mark” (*chongwen hao* 重文號), indicating presumably that the entire character *wai* 外 is to be read twice; i.e., *wai wai* 外外;<sup>12</sup> he did not indicate what this might mean. Others suggested that only a portion of the character is to be read twice, a feature commonly seen. Thus, He Youzu 何有祖 suggested that it be read as *wai xi* 外夕, meaning *wai yi* 外亦 “outside also”; Chen Wei suggested *wai jian* 外間, the latter word a loan word for *jian* 奸 “traitorous”; while Zhang Chongli 張崇禮 suggested *wai bu* 外卜, read as *wai pu* 外僕 “external servants.”<sup>13</sup> It is

10. Shuihudi Qin mu zhujian zhengli xiaozu ed., *Shuihudi Qin jian* 睡虎地秦簡 (Beijing: Wenwu, 1990), “*Ri shu Jia zhong*” 日書甲種, #119正3. See too *Qin jian du heji*, vol. 1 *Shang* 上, p. 408.

11. *Shuihudi Qin jian* 睡虎地秦簡 (Beijing: Wenwu, 1990), “*Ri shu Jia zhong*” #136背. See too *Qin jian du heji*, vol. 1 *Shang* 上, p. 498.

12. Ma Chengyuan 馬承源 ed.-in-chief, *Shanghai bowuguan cang Chu zhushu (liu)* 上海博物館藏楚竹書 (六) (Shanghai: Shanghai Guji, 2007), p. 183.

13. He Youzu 何有祖, “*Du Shangbo liu zhaji*” 讀上博六札記, at [http://www.bsm.org.cn/show\\_article.php?id=601](http://www.bsm.org.cn/show_article.php?id=601), posted 9 July 2007; Chen Wei, “*Du Shangbo liu tiao ji zhi er*” 讀《上博六》條記之二, at [www.jianbo.org](http://www.jianbo.org), posted 10 July 2007; Zhang Chongli 張崇禮, “*Jing gong yao di jiu jian jiegu*” 競公瘡第九簡解詁, at [www.jianbo.org](http://www.jianbo.org),

obvious that all of these suggestions were nothing more than guesses, really just desperate attempts to use what we know (or what we thought we knew) of scribal conventions to produce some meaning for the text. Confronted with the same dilemma, Liu Xinfang 劉信芳 came up with “an idea that is still lacking in evidence,” that the “=” mark indicates that the *chong* 寵 “favorite” in the first clause is to be repeated in the second clause; thus “now the internal favorite is met with censure, while the external favorite is Liangqiu Ju.”<sup>14</sup> In support of this reading, Liu cited the following sentence in the *Yanzi chunqiu* 晏子春秋 or *Springs and autumns of Yanzi*:

內寵之妾，迫奪於國；外寵之臣，矯奪於鄙。

Consorts who are internal favorites compel the snatching of the state;  
ministers who are external favorites rectify the snatching of a hamlet.<sup>15</sup>

With this, Wei Yihui first published his study in 2008, arguing that the “*shi* 是 =” passages in the Mawangdui manuscript \**Tianwen qixiang za zhan* and in the Fangmatan “Daybook” should be understood not as “this is” or “this really,” but rather as “this is called,” the “=” mark referring to an earlier explicit usage of “*shi wei* 是謂.” Wei’s study was followed in the same year by Yang Xiquan 楊錫全 with a series of studies published on-line.<sup>16</sup> Yang adduced other evidence from Dunhuang 敦煌 manuscripts, some of which is suggestive of similar scribal practices, but which would seem to be too late to shed much light on Warring States, Qin and Han usage. However, his studies prompted considerable on-line discussion, with a consensus seeming to emerge that in addition to its well-known functions as a duplication mark and a ligature mark (*hewen hao* 合文號), this “=” mark could apparently also indicate the

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posted 28 July 2007; cited at Meng Yuelong, “Qinghua jian *Ming xun* ‘Shao ming = shen’ de dufa,” p. 72 n. 1; the Chen Wei and Zhang Chongli articles seem no longer to be available.

14. Liu Xinfang 劉信芳, *Shangbo cang liu shi jie zhi san* “上博藏六試解之三,” at [www.bsm.org.cn](http://www.bsm.org.cn), posted 9 August 2007, cited at Meng Yuelong, “Qinghua jian *Ming xun* ‘Shao ming = shen’ de dufa,” p. 72 n. 2.

15. *Yanzi chunqiu* 晏子春秋 (Sibu beiyao ed.), 1 (“Nei pian Jian shang” 內篇諫上), 5b.

16. Yang Xiquan 楊錫全, “Chutu wenxian ‘shi =’ ju qian xi” 出土文獻‘是 =’句淺析, at [http://www.gwz.fudan.edu.cn/old/SrcShow.asp?Src\\_ID=958](http://www.gwz.fudan.edu.cn/old/SrcShow.asp?Src_ID=958), posted 3 November 2009; “Chutu wenxian ‘shi =’ ju qian xi buzheng yi ze” 出土文獻‘是 =’句淺析”補證一則, at [http://www.gwz.fudan.edu.cn/old/SrcShow.asp?Src\\_ID=1004](http://www.gwz.fudan.edu.cn/old/SrcShow.asp?Src_ID=1004), posted 2 December 2009; “Chutu wenxian ‘shi =’ ju qian xi zai bu yi ze: Jianlun xici ‘shi’ lai yuan wenti” 出土文獻‘是 =’句淺析”再補一則: 兼論係詞“是”來源問題, at [http://www.gwz.fudan.edu.cn/old/SrcShow.asp?Src\\_ID=1028](http://www.gwz.fudan.edu.cn/old/SrcShow.asp?Src_ID=1028), posted 26 December 2009; “Chutu wenxian chongwen yongfa xin tan” 出土文獻重文用法新探, at [http://www.gwz.fudan.edu.cn/old/SrcShow.asp?Src\\_ID=1145](http://www.gwz.fudan.edu.cn/old/SrcShow.asp?Src_ID=1145), posted 10 May 2010.

repetition of an earlier word, or even the abbreviation of a word that could otherwise be understood from context.

Given all of this evidence concerning the function of the “=” mark, it seems to me that Meng Yuelong is correct in pointing out that the passage 大命殛罰少命=身 in the Tsinghua manuscript \**Ming xun* is best understood as “the great mandate punishes the world; minor mandates punish the person.” I offer this brief note not only to correct an error in my own previous article, but especially to call colleagues’ attention to yet another feature of early Chinese scribal practice.

罰身：簡論清華簡《命訓》標點符號用法

夏含夷

提要

清華簡本《命訓》載有“大命殛罰少命=身”的句子。在以前發表的文章，作者理解了“=”符號為重文號，表明前置的“命”字要重讀。然而，最近中國學者指出“=”符號也可以表明上文的某一個字要重讀，於此表明前句的“罰”字要重讀，句子即讀作“大命世罰，小命罰身”，與傳世本《命訓》一樣。這種抄寫習慣在其他寫本也出現，對寫本的理解可能有重要意義。

**Keywords:** Tsinghua manuscripts, *Yi Zhou shu*, paleography, punctuation, reading practices

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