

Not the *Lun yu*: The Chu script bamboo slip manuscript, *Zigao*, and the nature of early Confucianism

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Abstract

This article includes a line-by-line translation and textual analysis of the Warring States period Chu script bamboo slip manuscript, *Zigao* 子羔. It argues that the manuscript differs from the transmitted Confucian tradition, but would have been considered a *ru* 儒 (“Confucian”) text. Unusual features include: (1) The disciple is Zigao, who is described negatively in the *Lun yu*. (2) The term *tian zi* 天子, “son-of-sky/heaven” is used literally, to refer to the divinely conceived progenitors of the three royal lineages. (3) The term *san wang*, “three kings”, refers to these progenitors rather than the founding rulers. (4) Confucius advocates abdication. (5) The progenitors of the dynastic lineages, rather than the founding rulers, are juxtaposed to Shun 舜, who received the rule from Yao because of his merit. A Chinese edition, with direct transcriptions and alternative readings of the Chu script graphs, is appended.

Long ago, there were three brothers, who traveled to Qi and Lu and studied with the same teacher. Having learned the way, humaneness, and rightness, they returned. Their father said, “What is the way of humaneness and rightness?” The eldest brother said, “Humaneness and rightness cause me to care for my person and only after that for my reputation.” The middle one said, “Humaneness and rightness cause me to give my life in order to achieve reputation.” The youngest said, “Humaneness and rightness have me keep both my person and my reputation intact.” These three techniques [of pursuing humaneness and rightness] contradict one another, and yet they all come from the Confucians (*ru*), which is right and which is wrong?

“Shuo fu 說付”, *Liezi* 列子 (Attributed to Yang Zhu)

For more than two millennia, our knowledge of early Confucianism has been based primarily upon reading the *Lun yu* 論語 and the *Mencius*. Recent discoveries of bamboo slip manuscripts in the Chu script of the Warring States period (475–222 BC) provide a new perspective. In this paper, I will translate and discuss one of the manuscripts in the Shanghai Museum collection, the *Zigao* 子羔. These manuscripts were looted from a tomb and sold in Hong Kong,

so their provenance is uncertain. However, the script is very similar to that of the manuscripts found in Tomb Number One at Guodian, Jingmen, Hubei Province, and they are thought to have been buried at about the same time (c. 300 BC) and to be from the same vicinity.¹

The *Zigao* is published in the second volume of *Shanghai bowuguan cang Zhanguo Chu zhushu* 上海博物館藏戰國楚竹書.² The transcription therein was prepared by the editor, Ma Chengyuan 馬承源. “Zigao” is written on the back of one of the bamboo slips and this is taken as its title. It is a short text. As presently constituted, it includes fourteen bamboo slips in the Shanghai Museum collection and a slip fragment in the collection of the Chinese University of Hong Kong.³ Some of the bamboo slips are badly damaged and large sections of text are missing, but the calligraphy in the remaining sections is very clear after conservation and it includes enough readable text for the general sense to be comprehensible.

The date of composition of the *Zigao* is uncertain, but there are clues which allow us to place it within an historical context. According to the *Shi ji* 史記, Zigao was thirty years younger than Confucius (551–479 BC), so he was born around 521.⁴ We do not know when Zigao died, but he was active in the state of Wey 衛 around the time of Confucius’ death.⁵ The style of reference to Zigao suggests that the manuscript was probably composed by a disciple rather than Zigao himself, possibly after his own death. Assuming the manuscript was buried at about the same time as the Guodian manuscripts, we have a *terminus ante quem* of around 300 BC, or at latest 278 BC.⁶ The *Mencius* was compiled by his disciples after his death in around 305 BC.

- 1 Ma Chengyuan 馬承源 (ed.), *Shanghai Bowuguan cang Zhanguo Chu zhushu* 上海博物館藏戰國楚竹書 (Shanghai: Shanghai Guji, 2001), vol. 1, pp. 1–2. See also Ma Chengyuan, in Ai Lan 艾蘭 (Sarah Allan) and Xing Wen 邢文 (ed.), *Xin chu jianbo yanjiu: Xin chu jianbo guoji xueshu yantaohui wenji* 新出簡帛研究: 新出簡帛國際學術討論會文集 (Beijing: Wenwu, 2004), p. 1.
- 2 Ma Chengyuan (ed.), *Shanghai bowuguan cang Zhanguo Chu zhushu*, vol. 2, pp. 31–48 (colour photographs) and pp. 181–91 (transcriptions).
- 3 Chen Songchang 陳松長, *Xianggang Zhongwen Daxue Wenwuguan cang jianbu* 香港中文大學文物館藏簡牘, slip 3, as cited by Ma Chengyuan, *Shanghai Bowuguan cang Zhanguo Chu zhushu*, p. 194. Ma Chengyuan’s proposal that this fragment was originally from the same bamboo slip text has generally been accepted by other scholars, but the placement of the slip has been contested. My placement follows Chen Jian’s suggestion that it should be placed at the top of slip 12.
- 4 *Shi ji* 史記 (Beijing: Zhonghua, 1973), 67 “Zhongni dizi liezhuan 仲尼弟子列傳”, p. 2212. The dates of the philosophers given herein are those of Qian Mu 錢穆, *Xian Qin zhuzi xinian* 先秦諸子繫年 (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 1956).
- 5 *Chunqiu Zuo zhuan zhu* 春秋左傳注 (Beijing: Zhonghua, 1990), pp. 1694–96 (Ai Gong 哀公, 15th year). I have followed the convention of transcribing “衛” as Wey, to distinguish it from Wei 魏.
- 6 The probable source of the Shanghai materials will be discussed in greater detail in my forthcoming book, *Written on Bamboo: Advocating Abdication in Warring States Bamboo-Slip Manuscripts*. For the date of Guodian tomb Number One, see Li Xueqin, “The Confucian texts from Guodian Tomb Number One”, and Xing Wen, “Scholarship on the Guodian texts: a review article”, in Sarah Allan and Crispin Williams (ed.), *The Guodian Laozi: Proceedings of the International Conference, Dartmouth College, May, 1998* (Berkeley: The Institute of East Asian Studies, University of California, Berkeley, 2000), pp. 107–12 and 251–7. These dates have

Thus, the *Zigao* was probably composed after Confucius' death and before or around the same time as the final compilation of the *Mencius*.

One of the many surprises in the Guodian and Shanghai Chu bamboo slip manuscripts is the interest expressed in abdication as a political ideal. Like the Chu bamboo slip text from Guodian Tomb No. 1, *Tang Yu zhi dao* 唐虞之道 ("The way of Tang Yao and Yu Shun"), the *Zigao* takes Yao's abdication of the good to the good as the ideal form of political succession.⁷ Two other bamboo slip texts in the Shanghai collection, *Rongchengshi* 容成氏 and *Gui shen zhi ming* 鬼神之神明, also take abdication as a superior means of political succession.⁸ Although Gu Jiegang proposed early on that the abdication legends of Yao and Shun were Mohist in origin, of these four manuscripts that advocate abdication to the most meritorious as the ideal means of political succession, only *Gui shen zhi ming* could be described as Mohist.⁹ Indeed, the four manuscripts do not have a consistent philosophical outlook.

The *Zigao* is nominally a Confucian text in that it records a conversation between Confucius' disciple Zigao and Confucius. It was also bound together with two other bamboo slip manuscripts in which Confucius is the most important figure. However, its main topics are the divine insemination and miraculous birth of the progenitors of the three dynasties and Yao's abdication to Shun. This is not Confucianism as we know it from the *Lun yu* and the *Mencius*. According to the *Lun yu*, "the Master did not talk about uncanny events, feats of strength,

been disputed by Wang Baoxuan 王葆琰 in a number of articles. For an English translation of one of them, see "A discussion of the composition dates of the various Guodian Chu slip texts and their background", *Contemporary Chinese Thought* 2000 (Fall), pp. 18–42 (originally published in *Zhongguo zhaxue*, vol. 20). Others include "Guodian Chu jian de shidai ji qi yu Zisi xuepai de guanxi 郭店楚簡的時代及其與子思學派的關係", in Wuhan daxue Zhongguo wenhua yanjiuyuan 武漢大學中國文化研究院, *Guodian Chu jian guoji xueshu yantaohui lunwenji* 郭店楚簡國際學術研討會論文集 (Wuhan: Hubei Renmin Press, 2000), pp. 644–9. Wang rejects the entire corpus of archaeological literature on Chu tombs and calendrics, as well as the archaeologists' date of Guodian Tomb Number One. However, his arguments do not include an impartial analysis of archaeologically excavated materials and are intended to support a preconceived historical sequence based upon the received literary tradition.

- 7 Sarah Allan, "The way of Tang Yao and Yu Shun: appointment by merit as a theory of succession in a Warring States bamboo slip text", in Wen Xing (ed.), *Rethinking Confucianism: Selected Papers from the Third International Conference on Excavated Chinese Manuscripts, Mount Holyoke College, April 2004*, Special Issue of *International Research on Bamboo and Silk Documents: Newsletter*, vol. 5.2, 2006, pp. 22–4.
- 8 Ma Chengyuan 馬承源 (ed.), *Shanghai bowuguan cang*, vol. 2, pp. 91–146, 247–93 (Rongchengshi); vol. 6, pp. 151–9, 310–21. Yuri Pines, "Disputers of abdication: Zhangou egalitarianism and the sovereign's power", *T'oung Pao* 91/4–5, 2005, pp. 243–300, discusses three texts (*Tang Yu zhi dao*, *Rongchengshi* and the *Zigao*).
- 9 Gu Jiegang, "Shanrang chuanshuo qi yu Mojia kao 禪讓傳說起於墨家考", in *Gu shi bian*, vol. 7c, pp. 30–109. See also Yang Kuan's response to Gu, pp. 110–17 in the same volume. For a recent critique of this view, see Ruan Zhisheng 阮芝生, "Ping 'shanrang chuanshuo qi yu Mojia' shuo 評 '禪讓傳說起於墨家' 說", *Yanjing Xuebao* 燕京學報, new series, vol. 3, 1997, pp. 29–54.

disorders, or spirits”.¹⁰ Moreover, as I shall discuss below, abdication is not discussed in the *Lun yu* and the *Mencius* denies that it was possible for a king to abdicate the throne.

The *Zigao* has a number of other unusual features: (1) *Zigao*, who is described in uncomplimentary terms in the *Lun yu*, is the disciple asking questions of Confucius, to his apparent approval. (2) The term *tian zi* 天子, “son-of-sky/heaven”, a common euphemism for the king, is used literally, to refer to the divine conception of the progenitors of the royal lineage. (3) The term *san wang*, “three kings”, is used for the progenitors of the royal lineages, rather than for the founding kings of the dynasties or the pre-dynastic rulers. (4) Confucius advocates abdication and prefers the meritorious Shun over the dynastic founders. (5) The *progenitors* of the three dynastic lineages, rather than the founding kings, are juxtaposed to the pre-dynastic ruler Shun 舜, who received the rule from Yao because of his merit. The effect of this unusual juxtaposition is to present the three dynasties as having the right to rule because of their divine lineage rather than because their first kings received the celestial mandate.

Before turning to my analysis of the manuscript, I will briefly discuss the social changes which serve as its historical context and review what we know about *Zigao* from the transmitted tradition. I will then give a complete translation of the manuscript based upon the modern character edition that is appended at the end of this article, and explicate it, line by line. In the concluding section, I will place the manuscript within the early Confucian tradition. For alternative readings of particular graphs in the manuscript, see the Appendix.

The historical context

The Warring States period is well known as the axial age of Chinese philosophy, one in which “one hundred schools” competed with different political theories and visions of an orderly society, as the warring states gradually destroyed one another. It was also a period of dramatic social change in which the lineage system of the early Western Zhou period finally collapsed under the pressure of new social developments. Some fifty years ago, Hsü Cho-yun argued that a shift of power began in the seventh century BC, which finally saw the collapse of the old hereditary aristocracy in the Warring States. Concomitantly, this period saw the rise of the *shi* 士, a class of “gentlemen” who traced their descent to the noble lineages, but who had little if any land and achieved authority through technical skills, including both military arts and literary culture, and official office. The philosophers and their disciples were, by and large, drawn from this class.¹¹

Hsü’s argument for dramatic social change was based upon an analysis of the family backgrounds of named figures in the transmitted historical records. He states, “after 464 BC most historical figures were self-made men who rose

10 *Lun yu jishi* 論語集釋 (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 1990), 14 (“Shu er xia 述而下”), p. 480 (7.21).

11 Cho-yun Hsü, *Ancient China in Transition: An Analysis of Social Mobility, 722–222 B.C.* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1965).

from obscurity. This trend, together with the decline of the minister class in the late Chunqiu period, may indicate not only that there was more mobility between classes at the beginning of [Warring States] times, but that the former dominant class, the ministers, had already collapsed. The disappearance of old families may be a consequence of the conquest and annexation of many older, smaller states by a handful of newer states. An inspection of the backgrounds of the chancellors of various [Warring State period] states indicates that there were few if any such families. In brief, what happened during the Zhanguo period was the disappearance of the former social stratification, not merely freer mobility between strata.”¹²

Hsü’s hypothesis has been supported more recently by the gradual accumulation of evidence from mortuary archaeology. In his recent book, *Chinese Society in the Age of Confucius*, Lothar von Falkenhausen synthesizes a vast amount of evidence of Chinese mortuary practices from archaeological excavations. He argues that because of the prevalence of lineage segmentation, the social hierarchy of the Western Zhou period quickly began to break down and that there were two major attempts to re-align the sumptuary rules, in the late Western Zhou (c. 850 BC) and again in the middle of the Spring and Autumn period (722–481 BC); that is, the social changes noted by Hsü Cho-yun were marked somewhat earlier in the burial system.

Von Falkenhausen states, “In any segmentary lineage society, descent is the decisive criterion in negotiating social inequality Continuity of descent from as prestigious as possible an ancestral figure in the distant past – and seniority among those descended from that ancestor – entailed access to privilege and power. Nevertheless, the segmentation of the lineages gradually led to the destruction of their religious and ritual authority”. Although another “ritual restructuring” occurred in the middle of the Spring and Autumn period that attempted to bring the ritual in line with social realities, the character of the social distinctions had changed too dramatically. The new distinctions were no longer between ranked and unranked members of a lineage, but simply between rulers and the ruled.¹³

This conflict between the hereditary lineages and the rising *shi* class was expressed in historical legend. In *The Heir and the Sage: Dynastic Legend in Early China* (1981), I analysed the manner in which Chinese texts compiled from the fifth to first centuries BC describe transfers of rule from Yao to Shun to the foundation of the Zhou Dynasty.¹⁴ I argued therein that the primary theme of historical legends in Warring States texts is the contradiction between conflicting principles of heredity and virtue. At its most basic level, these principles represent the conflicting obligations to family and the larger social group, which are inherent in any human society. In a society in which ancestral lineages are both religious and social units, as in ancient China, however, such conflicts may become particularly acute.

12 Hsü, *Ancient China in Transition*, p. 38.

13 *Chinese Society in the Age of Confucius (1000–250 BC): The Archaeological Evidence* (Los Angeles: Cotsen Institute of Archaeology at UCLA, 2006), pp. 70, 395, etc.

14 Sarah Allan, *The Heir and the Sage: Dynastic Legend in Early China* (San Francisco: Chinese Materials Center, 1981).

The idea of a dynastic cycle embodies an inherent contradiction between the principles of rule by hereditary right (represented by dynastic continuation) and rule by virtue (represented by dynastic change). The theory of a changing mandate of sky/heaven attempted to explain this contradiction and to regulate its manifestations, but there was always the potential of conflict with the opposing principle. Any new ruler might be considered a usurper for having breached the hereditary right of the former ruler. Similarly, any hereditary ruler could be accused of having lost his moral authority.

In practical political terms, the hereditary ruler had to contend with the possibility that a rebel or usurper would claim that the mandate had been transferred. In historical legend, the conflicting principles were continually played out by different transformations of the legends according to the philosophical principles being espoused when “history” was discussed by individual philosophers. However, in the transmitted tradition, the legends of abdication of the pre-dynastic period serve to support the concept of dynastic change. No philosophical text, including the *Mozi*, proposes abdication to the most worthy as a political ideal for their own time.

As we shall see below, the primary issue in the *Zigao* is how to measure the progenitors of the three dynasties, who were divinely engendered, against the merit of the sage, Shun. Heredity is juxtaposed to virtue, but the historical paradigm becomes one in which the dynastic lineages were legitimate because of the divine birth of the progenitor, rather than because of the merit of the founding king who had received the mandate of sky/heaven. This configuration, in which dynastic legitimacy is attributed to heredity alone, makes abdication an alternative to hereditary rule, rather than a precedent for dynastic change.

Zigao

The earliest transmitted texts provide only sparse information about Zigao and most of it is uncomplimentary. Zigao, whose name was Gao Chai 高柴, is mentioned in two passages in the *Lun yu*. In one, he is described as “foolish” or “stupid” (*yu* 愚):

As for Chai, he is foolish. As for Can (Zengzi), he is dim. As for Shi (Zizhang), he is biased. As for You (Zilu), he is brash.¹⁵

In the *Lun yu*, this passage is not attributed to “the Master”, but it appears in the biography of the disciples of Confucius in the *Shi ji* as Confucius’ own opinion.¹⁶ Thus, whether or not it was an actual statement of Confucius, it had become accepted as Confucius’ opinion.

In the other, Zilu 子路 had obtained an appointment for Zigao in the state of Lu as a steward for the Ji family, who had usurped the ducal line of Lu. Zilu was one of Confucius’ more problematic disciples. In the *Lun yu*, his shortcomings

15 *Lun yu jishi*, *juan* 23 (“Xian jin xia 先進下”), p. 777 (11.18).

16 *Shi ji* 67 (“Zhongni dizi liezhuan 仲尼弟子列傳”), p. 2212.

and mistakes often serve as a foil to Confucius or another disciple. Here, both men are cast in a poor light:

Zilu had Zigao appointed as steward of Bi. The master said, “This is ruining someone else’s child.” Zilu said, “Common people are to be found there and there is an altar of grain. Why must one always read books and only then be taken as learned?” The master said, “This is the reason one despises people who are glib.”¹⁷

This passage is more about Zilu than about Zigao, but it suggests that Zigao did not even finish his studies with Confucius. That this passage mentions “reading books” (*du shu* 讀書) is also interesting. We do not know what these “books” would have been. The term *shu* commonly refers to historical documents like those collected in the *Shang shu* 尚書, “Ancient Documents” (later canonized as the *Shu jing* 書經, “Book of Documents”), but the term *shu* does not seem to be used so specifically here. Perhaps they were simply short texts, like the Chu bamboo slip manuscripts that Confucius used for teaching materials.

The description of Zigao in the *Shi ji* biography of the disciples is brief, but it retains this negative image. Besides the statement that Confucius considered Zigao foolish, it adds that his personal name was Gao Chai, that he was thirty years younger than Confucius, and that he was less than five “feet” (*chi* 尺) tall. Sima Qian does not give Zigao’s place of origin, but later commentators to the *Shi ji* give it as Qi 齊 or Wey.¹⁸ Besides this rudimentary information, the *Kongzi Jia yu* 孔子家語, which gives Qi as his place of origin, adds ugliness to his short stature.¹⁹ The *Li ji* also describes the customary mourning dress used by Zigao 子羔 garment by garment, and then adds that Zengzi 曾子, one of Confucius’ most respected disciples, compared it with that of a woman.²⁰

There is one narrative in the pre-Han transmitted texts in which Zigao plays an active role. It is first found in the *Zuo zhuan* 左傳, and is repeated in the *Shi ji*. As in the *Lun yu* passage quoted above, Zigao appears in the train of the better known but questionable Zilu. The main narrative is a complex and ignoble tale of the rulers of the state of Wey, involving murder, illicit sex, and a struggle over succession, worthy of a contemporary soap opera. Zilu was employed in the service of the Kong family in the state of Wey (not related to Kongzi) and Zigao was either in Zilu’s retinue or had his own appointment. Confucius had previously served in Wey. On one occasion, disgusted with Duke Ling 靈 (534–493 BC), because he drove a carriage accompanied by a woman, he declared that he had yet to find a ruler who was more attracted to benevolence than beauty and left the state. On another occasion, he left after being consulted about

17 *Lun yu jishi* 23 (“Xian jin, xia”), pp. 794–7 (11.23).

18 *Shi ji* 67, p. 2212. Zheng Xuan 鄭玄 identifies Zigao as from Wei 衛, but the *Suoyin* 索引 commentary cites the *Kongzi jia yu* 孔子家語 that he was from Qi 齊.

19 *Kongzi jia yu* 孔子家語 (Taipei: Shijie, Sibukanyao series, n.d.) 9 (“Qishi’er dizi 七十二弟子”), p. 88.

20 *Li ji jijie* 禮記集解 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1989) 40 (“Za ji xia 雜記下”), p. 1069.

military matters by the head of the Kong family. Finally, he gave up on the lords of Wey and returned to his native state of Lu, where he died in 479 BC.

When the story begins, Kuaikui 蒯聩 (蕢聩), the heir apparent of Duke Ling of Wey, had gone into exile after unsuccessfully plotting to kill his father's consort. Kuaikui's older sister had married a son of the powerful Kong family of Wey and she had given birth to Kong Li. After Duke Ling died, she formed an illicit relationship with a Kong family servant. Before his death Duke Ling had decided to appoint Ying 郢, the son of a consort, rather than Kuaikui, but after his death, Ying refused the throne in favour of Kuaikui's son. He was installed as Duke Chu 出.

Kuaikui attempted to return from his exile with the intention of ousting his son from the throne under the pretence of mourning his father, but was blocked. Then, in 481, the retainer who was having an illicit relationship with Kuaikui's older sister visited Kuaikui in order to plot his return. The two of them returned to Wey disguised as women. Once they had entered the Kong family estate, they attempted to force Kong Li to swear a covenant to join them in an insurrection. The turmoil alerted a house servant, who spirited Duke Chu out of the state in a carriage (together with his unfinished meat and wine), and sent a message to Zilu.

Zilu, having received the message, was on the verge of entering the gate to the walled Wey capital, when he ran into Zigao. Zigao was leaving and told him that the Duke had left and the gates were already closed. Zilu responded, "If one eats someone's grain (salary), one should not flee from his difficulties", and insisted on proceeding. Zigao, in contrast, warned him "not to step in other people's troubles". When Zilu arrived at the palace, he was again warned and he again stated that one owes loyalty to someone who has given grain. Having entered the palace, he taunted Kuaikui as cowardly and his covenant with Kong Li as useless. Kuaikui was frightened and sent two men to fight him. In the struggle, Zilu was fatally wounded and his cap string cut. Reciting the rule that "when a gentleman dies, he doesn't remove his cap", he retied his cap string and fell dead.

Confucius, hearing of the disorder in Wey, declared, "As for Chai [Zigao], he will be coming; as for You [Zilu], he has died". This judgement is usually taken as evidence of Confucius' perception of the difference in the characters of the two disciples.²¹

Considering the tawdriness of the tale, it is not surprising that Confucius had already decided that he could not convince the Dukes of Wey to practise the

21 *Chunqiu Zuo zhuan zhu*, pp. 1694–96 (Ai Gong, fifteenth year); *Shi ji* 47 ("Wei Kangshu shi jia 衛康叔世家"), pp. 1599–601; *Shi ji* 67, p. 2193. The *Shuoyuan* 說苑 adds a tale in which the crippled gate-keeper, whose leg Zigao has amputated, helps him, first suggesting a place where he can climb over the wall and then one in which he can crawl under. Both are refused by Zigao on the grounds that climbing over and crawling under are not behaviours suitable for a gentleman. The gate-keeper then hides him in a room. After he has been saved, Zigao asks him why he did so and the gate-keeper explains that the amputation only took place according to law after a fair assessment of his crime. See *Xin xu Shuoyuan* 新序說苑 (Taipei: Shijie, Sibuyao series, n.d., facsimile of Ming woodblock) *Shuoyuan* 14 ("Zhi Gong 至公"), p. 12a. This passage has a Legalist tone.

Way of the former kings. This battle over succession to rule the small state of Wey is one reflection of the breakdown of the lineage structure mentioned above. It also reflects the instability of hereditary succession as an institution. Sons of rulers often fled to other states, or were held hostage there. Assassinations of the rulers of the states were also common; for example, in the preceding decade, in the neighbouring, and more powerful, state of Qi, the head of the Tian lineage murdered the heir of the recently deceased lord in 485, and then in 481, a rival puppet set up by other lineages. In the following years, as the states began to war in earnest, social and political stability increasingly deteriorated.²²

Further evidence of this breakdown in the institution of hereditary succession is found in the Chu script bamboo slip manuscript, *Xizhe jun lao* 昔者君老. This manuscript is not concerned with abdication to the most worthy, but it suggests that in ancient times, when rulers had become old and their eyes and ears had grown feeble, they not only appointed an heir but turned the rule over to them.²³ Although placed in ancient times, the manuscript is clearly advocating that succession should take place before the death of the ruler. The effect of allowing the heir apparent to accede to his father's position before he died would have been to stabilize the institution of hereditary succession.

Zigao's close association in the transmitted record with Zilu is significant. Zilu, who is described as "brash" (or "boorish") in the passage from the *Lun yu* quoted above, was only nine years younger than Confucius and one of his most prominent disciples. Zilu's naive impetuosity and aggressive personality are balanced in the *Lun yu* and *Zuo zhuan* accounts by his unwavering sense of personal loyalty and commitment to the truth. This emphasis on well-meaning, but naive, enthusiasm, as well as his love of feats of courage, suggests that his social origins were relatively humble. Zilu's relatively low social status is confirmed by the *Shi ji* biography of the disciples, where he is described as having worn the cock cap of a fighter before he became a disciple of Confucius.²⁴ Similarly, the *Xunzi* describes Zilu as a rustic (*biren* 鄙人), who was transformed by literary education (*wenxue* 文學) and the practice of the rites and right principles.²⁵

Zigao seems to have been even lower in social status than Zilu, and the story that he was appointed in Bi without finishing his studies suggests that he never

22 *Chunqiu Zuo zhuan zhu*, pp. 1656–89 (Ai Gong, tenth–fourteenth year); *Shi ji* 32 ("Qi Taigong shijia 齊太公世家"), p. 1508, 46 ("Tian Jing Zhong Wan Shijia 田敬仲完世家"), pp. 1883–84. Mark Edward Lewis, "Warring States political history", in Michael Loewe and Edward L. Shaughnessy (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Ancient China* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 589, gives a succinct summary of these events. See also, Mark Edward Lewis, *Sanctioned Violence in Early China* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1990), chapters 1–2.

23 Ma Chengyuan (ed.), *Shanghai Bowuguan cang Zhanguo Chu zhushu*, vol. 2, pp. 85–90, 239–46. For discussion of this text and the system of hereditary transmission, see Peng Hao 彭浩, "Zizhe jun lao yu 'Shizi fa' 《昔者君老》與'世子法'", *Wenwu* 2004/5, pp. 86–8.

24 *Shi ji* 67, p. 2191.

25 *Xunzi Jianshi* 荀子簡釋 (Hong Kong: Zhonghua Shuju, 1974), *pian* 27 ("Da lue 大略"), p. 379.

achieved the education of a gentleman. This could account for his poor image in the transmitted tradition. It is also consonant with the interest in the *Zigao* in miraculous events and the stress of the excavated text on the insignificance of lineage in comparison with merit.

The bamboo slip manuscript

Shanghai bowuguan cang Zhanguo Chu zhushu provides extremely high quality photographs as well as excellent scholarly transcriptions and textual notes of the manuscripts. This work is the foundation of all research on the manuscripts. Nevertheless, no first attempt at producing a modern edition from fragmentary bamboo slips in a regional Warring States script could be definitive. The publication of each new volume of manuscripts has inevitably produced a flurry of responses, with suggestions for alternative readings of individual graphs and different sequences of the bamboo slips, as well as differing interpretations of the content and different ideas about the relationship of the texts to one another.

The *Zigao* was bound together with twenty-nine slips, published under the title, *Kongzi shilun* 孔子詩論, “Confucius’ explication of the *Songs*” and with six slips, designated *Lubang da han* 魯邦大漢, “Great drought in the land of Lu”, in *Shanghai bowuguan cang Zhanguo Chu zhushu*. Although Ma Chengyuan recognized that the slips were part of the same scroll and written by the same calligrapher, he took them as three different texts. *Kongzi shilun* was published in the first volume of that work and *Zigao* and *Lubang da han* in the second.²⁶ While some bamboo slip scrolls only include a single text, others have diverse material. In arranging the Guodian manuscripts for publication, the editors decided to separate the manuscripts into smaller units as an editorial principle, rather than assuming connections that were not indicated.²⁷ The editors of the Shanghai Museum collection have followed the same principle. This is certainly correct procedurally as it does not bias the initial reading, but the publication of the materials from this scroll in different volumes of *Shanghai bowuguan cang Zhanguo Chu zhushu* suggests that they are unrelated and this is not at all clear.

The rhetorical style and content of the three groups of slips are very different. *Kongzi shilun* is a discourse on various songs of the *Shi jing* 詩經 by Confucius. At the beginning of *Lubang da han*, Duke Ai 哀 of Lu 魯 asks Confucius what he should do about the drought in his land. Then, Confucius discusses his response with the disciple Zigong 子貢. He notes the importance of the principles of *de* 德 (“virtue” or “accretion”) and *xing* 刑 (“punishment” or “attrition”), and recommends sacrifices to the mountains and rivers. The *Zigao*, as I shall discuss below, is a series of six questions in which the disciple, Zigao, asks Confucius about the miraculous birth of the progenitors of the kings of the three dynasties and about the abdication of Yao to Shun.

In spite of these differences, some scholars have argued that they should be taken as three chapters of a single work. Li Ling, who was one of the team of scholars that prepared the Shanghai Museum collection for publication, was

26 Ma Chengyuan (ed.), *Shanghai Bowuguan cang Zhanguo Chu zhushu*, vol. 2, p. 183.

27 Allan and Williams, *The Guodian Laozi*, p. 122.

the first to take this stance. With this reading, the characters, “Zigao”, written on the back of one of the slips (no. 5 of the text designated *Zigao* in the Shanghai Museum publication) would be the title of the entire work.²⁸ The implications of taking *Zigao* as the title of the entire scroll have been further explored by other scholars. Liao Mingchun has argued that some of the statements in *Kongzi shilun* attributed to Confucius are actually those of a disciple. He further argues that the discussion of the *Songs* in *Kongzi shilun* is significantly different from the transmitted record, which is associated with Zixia, so the disciple could not be Zixia and should be Zigao. However, since there is no transmitted tradition about Zigao’s philosophy or thought, this is simply conjecture.²⁹ Gao Huaping has developed this line of thought even further, suggesting that Zigao was the author of *Kongzi shilun*, but his argument is subject to the same criticism.³⁰

The discovery that people circulated short manuscripts similar to the *zhang* 章 (“sections”) or *pian* 篇 (“chapters”) of longer works in the transmitted tradition does require us to rethink how the concept of a text developed. In my opinion, a group of such sections or chapters should not be considered a text unless there is evidence that the sections were repeatedly copied and transmitted together. In the case of the *Zigao*, we have no evidence upon which to make this assumption. Moreover, since the name “Zigao” is on the obverse of one of the slips from the *Zigao* section, there is no reason to extend it to the rest of the scroll. Nevertheless, even if they were not transmitted together elsewhere, these three sections may have been copied on the same scroll because they have a loose relationship – they all concern Confucius (“Kongzi”). The *Kongzi shilun* records Confucius’ interpretation of that quintessential Confucian text, the *Shi* (“Songs”). The *Zigao* discusses myths of miraculous conception, some of which are found in the transmitted *Shi jing* 詩經 (“Book of Songs”). *Lubang da han*, like the *Zigao*, is concerned with supernatural matters that are largely avoided by the *Lun yu*.

I will argue in the concluding section of this paper that the *Zigao* would have been taken as a *ru* 儒 (“Confucian”) text in the Warring States period. I think that this is also true of the texts with which it was bound. On a popular level, the *ru* would have been defined principally by their adherence to the figure of Confucius, rather than their ideas. All of Confucius’ students – and their own students – would have been *ru* by definition. They would have evinced an

28 Li Ling 李零, *Shangbo Chu jian san pian jiaoduji* 上博楚簡三篇校讀記 (Taipei: Wan-chüan-lou, 2002), pp. 13–15. Li Ling takes “San wang zhi zuo 三王之作” as the title of the fourteen slips designated *Zigao* by Ma Chengyuan. See also Lin Zhipeng 林志鵬, “Zhanguo Chu zhushu *Zigao pian fuyuan chuyi* 戰國楚竹書《子羔》篇復原芻議”, in Zhu Yuanqing 朱淵清 and Liao Mingchun 廖名春 (ed.), *Shangboguan cang Zhanguo Chu zhushu yanjiu xubian* 上博館藏戰國楚竹書研究續編 (Shanghai: Shanghai shudian, 2002), pp. 53–84.

29 Liao Mingchun 廖名春, “Shangbo Shilun jian de zuozhe he zuonian – Jianlun Zigao ye keneng chuan Shi 上博《詩論》簡的作者和作年—兼論子羔也可能傳《詩》”, *Qinghua jianbo yanjiu* 2, 2002. Reprinted in *Qi Lu xuekan* 齊魯學刊 2002/2, pp. 94–9. (See also Liao Mingchun 廖名春, “Shangbo Shilun jian de zuozhe he zuonian 上博《詩論》簡的作者和作年”, www.jianbo.org).

30 Gao Huaping, “Shangbo jian Kongzi lun shi de lun shi tese ji qi zuozhe wenti 上博簡《孔子論詩》的論詩特色及其作者問題”, *Jiangnan kaogu* 江漢考古 2005/1, pp. 87–91.

interest in the *Shi jing* and a set of ideas that included *ren* and *yi*, but their interpretations and opinions about what these ideas meant probably crossed a wide spectrum.

My translation of the *Zigao* below is based upon my readings of the Chu graphs after considering various alternatives offered by different scholars. These alternative readings are given in the apparatus attached to my modern character “edition” at the end of this article and they will not be discussed within the body of the article. However, the reader is cautioned that many of the transcriptions upon which my translation and interpretation are based are open to question. The Chu script presents many problems in interpretation and specialists have offered very different readings of the graphs in some of the lines. Moreover, the manuscript is fragmentary and there are no transmitted versions of this text to assist us in filling in the missing sections. All interpretations rely upon a certain amount of guesswork. As research on Chu bamboo slip manuscripts progresses, some of the uncertainties will undoubtedly be resolved, but a certain amount of conjecture will still be necessary.

The sequence of slips that I follow is different from that found in the *Shanghai bowuguan cang Zhanguo Chu zhushu*, though I continue to use their slip numbers for ease of cross reference. My edition is based upon the sequence proposed by Li Xueqin 李學勤, which is, in turn, based upon one by Chen Jian 陳劍.³¹ Whereas Chen Jian’s rearrangement of the slips solved some of the problems of continuity, Li’s refinement of the sequencing works on the hypothesis that we have a series of six questions by Zigao and six replies by Confucius. This requires positing a missing slip that includes, “Zigao said” (*Zigao yue* 子羔曰). As mentioned above, the title *Zigao* is based upon a notation on the back of one of the slips (slip 5 in the Shanghai Museum edition).³² The end is also marked by a square black mark, with the remaining portion of the slip left blank (slip 14).

Translation

9 Zigao questioned Confucius: “When the three kings arose, were they all sons of humans, whose fathers were humble and not worthy of being named? Or were they truly sons of sky/heaven? Confucius said, “That you ask about this is fine! It’s been a long time since anyone . . .”.

31 Chen Jian, see note 1. Li Xueqin 李學勤, “Chu jian *Zigao* yanjiu 楚簡《子羔》研究”, in Zhu Yuanqing 朱淵清 and Liao Mingchun 廖名春 (eds), *Shangboguan cang Zhanguo Chu zhushu yanjiu xubian* 上博館藏戰國楚竹書研究續編 (Shanghai: Shanghai shudian, 2002), pp. 12–17. See also Qiu Xigui 裘錫圭, “Tantan Shangbo jian *Zigao* pian de jianxu 談談上博簡《子羔》篇的簡序”, in the same volume, pp. 1–11. Qiu’s arrangement follows that of Chen Jian, but differs from Li Xueqin’s. He places slip 7 before slip 14.

32 As Li Ling has pointed out, the title should be near the beginning or end of the scroll. In Li Ling’s sequence, as found in *Shanghai Bowuguan cang Zhanguo Chu zhushu* and *Shangbo Chujian san pian jiaoduji*, it is on the back of the fifth slip, so the Zigao would have been the first in the scroll. In Li Xueqin’s sequence it is on the third slip from the end of Zigao, so the Zigao would have been last.

^{11top}[Yu's mother was a woman of the Youxin clan.³³] She saw a Job's Tears [plant] and picked [the seeds.] Having been pregnant for three ₁₀years, her back burst open, and she gave birth. Able to speak when born – that was Yu!

Xie's mother was a woman of the Yourong clan. She ^{11btm}strolled atop the Sun Tower. A swallow, holding an egg in its beak, placed it in front of her. She took it and swallowed it. Having been pregnant for _{CUHK3}three years, her breast burst open, and she gave birth. When he was born, he called out, ₁₂“metal” – that was Xie.

Hou Ji's mother was a woman of the Youtai clan. She wandered within the Dark Marshes. In winter, she saw thistles (growing), and presented them as an offering. Then, she saw a human footprint and trod in it to offer a prayer, “Di's footprint, it shall. . .₁₃. . . That was Hou Ji's mother. When the three kings arose, it was like this.³⁴

Zigao said, “That being so, then, of the three kings, which one.₇ . . .indeed records the Way of the former kings. If they did not meet a perspicacious king, did they indeed not accomplish great service?”³⁵

Confucius said, “Shun may be described as a common person who received a mandate. Shun, was the son of a man. . . ₁He was the son of the music master, Gu Sou, of the clan Youyu.

Zigao said, “Why was he able to become thearch?”

Confucius said, “Formerly, they did not pass (the rule) hereditarily. The good gave (the rule) to another good (person). Therefore they were able to bring order to all-under-sky/heaven, and make the myriad lands peaceful, ensuring that they all ₆ got altars of grain and had common people, and reverentially guarded them, regardless of whether they had possession [of

- 33 I have supplied the clan name of Yu's mother, following Yi Song-ryul (Li Chenglu 李承律), “Shanhaku sokan Sikou no kanseisetsu to nijō no jōmeiron 上博楚簡《子羔》の感生説と二重の受命論”, in *Xin chu Chu jian guoji xueshu yantao hui huiyi lunwenji* (*Shangbo jian juan*), 新出楚簡國際學術研討會會議論文集 (上博簡卷) Wuhan University, 2006, June 26–28, pp. 368–92 (374). While it may not be correct, there should be a clan name here and this is the only one given for Yu's mother in the early texts. The graph, *nü* 女, is also only partial, but the reference to her pregnancy confirms that a woman is intended here and this parallels the other two stories of divine conception.
- 34 Yi, “Shanhaku sokan Sikou”, discusses these myths and provides references to them in other texts.
- 35 My transcription and translation of this line are very problematic. Li Xueqin's reading of the line is entirely different: 亦改先王之攸道不奉, 廢王則, 亦不大變. “They changed the excellent way of the former kings and did not make presentations; throwing away the standards of the kings, was indeed a great change.” There has been much scholarly discussion of this line, but all of the suggested readings by various scholars depend on a considerable amount of guesswork. Moreover, none of the solutions provide lines which are a logical antecedent to Confucius' reply. It is possible that the preceding question on slip 3, “Zigao said, ‘That being so, then, of the three kings, which one. . .’” does not belong before slip 7 (even if the sequence is correct, one or more slips might be missing). However, this does not solve the problem of continuity on slip 7.

land] or not, were large or small, or rich or destitute. Yao saw that Shun's virtue was that of a worthy and therefore he ceded (the throne) to him.

Zigao said, "When Yao obtained Shun, was it that Shun's virtue was truly good... 2...? Or was it that Yi Yao's virtue was so very brilliant?"

Confucius said, "They were equal. When Shun was planting fields in a barren wasteland..."

[Zigao said]... 3... the ordinary people of the barren wasteland..."

Confucius said, "... 4... I have heard that when Shun was young, he was diligent in his studies and served his parents... 5...³⁶ When Yao selected Shun, he followed him into his thatched hut and discussed the rites with him. He was pleased... 8... and harmonious. Thus, Shun's virtue was truly that of a worthy. Having gone into the fields after him, (Yao) had him rule all-under-sky/heaven, and found him praiseworthy.

Zigao said, "If Shun lived in the present generation, then what would happen?"

Confucius said, "... 14... the three sons of sky/heaven would serve him".

The three kings

Although the *Lun yu* describes Zigao in negative terms, in the bamboo slip manuscript he appears simply as a disciple seeking knowledge from the master and Confucius compliments him on the topic of his enquiry: the miraculous conception of the progenitors of the three dynasties.

Zigao begins by asking whether the three kings (*san wang* 三王) were the sons of men (*ren zi* 人子) or truly sons of sky/heaven (*tian zi* 天子):

Zigao questioned Confucius: when the three kings (*san wang*) arose, were they all sons of men (*ren zi*), whose fathers were humble and not worthy of being named? Or were they truly sons of sky/heaven (*tian zi*)?

From Confucius' reply in the following line, we know that the three kings were the first progenitors of the ruling lineages of the three dynasties, Yu 禹 of the Xia, Xie 契 of the Shang, and Hou Ji 后稷 of the Zhou. What Zigao wants to know is whether the myths that their mothers were divinely impregnated were true.

In transmitted texts, the term "three kings" usually refers to the founders of the dynasties: Yu of the Xia, Tang 湯 of the Shang, and either Wen 文 or his son, Wu 武, of the Zhou. It may also refer to the three pre-dynastic rulers, Yao, Shun, and Yu. *Mozi*, for example, details the frugal circumstance of the burials of Yao, Shun and Yu, even though the "three kings were all respected

36 There are five graphs here which I have not been able to make sense of and have left untranslated.

as the sons-of-sky/heaven and had the wealth of possessing all under sky/heaven”.³⁷ In the *Zigao*, however, the “three kings” are the three progenitors of the royal lineages, not the three dynastic founders or the three pre-dynastic rulers. I have not found any other examples in which the term *san wang* is used for this set of figures.

Implicit in the use of the term “king” with respect to the progenitors of the three dynasties is the idea that they were rulers. The term *wang* as used by the Zhou – and all who accepted their ritual authority – refers to the king who ruled over “all under sky/heaven”. Thus, when the powerful Duke Hui 惠 of Wei 魏 took the title *wang* in 344 BC, it was a declaration that he rejected Zhou sovereignty and presumed to be the “son-of-sky/heaven” with “all under sky/heaven” as his domain. In the following decades, the rulers of Qi 齊, Qin 秦, and other states also took the title *wang* indicating their own aspirations to rule the world.

If Hou Ji and Xie were considered kings in this sense of ruler over all-under-sky/heaven, there is a chronological problem in the historical scheme – Xie and Hou Ji would have to be placed before Yao and Shun. However, “history” in Warring States period texts conventionally begins with Yao, as it does in the *Shang shu*, which begins with the “Yao dian 堯典”.³⁸ In the “Yao dian”, Yu attempted to cede the task of flood control to both Xie and Hou Ji, as well as to Gao Yao 皋陶, but Xie was ordered to take charge of the moral conduct of the ordinary people and Hou Ji to prevent starvation by sowing all the grains.³⁹ In the *Shi ji* version of this story, when Shun offers the rule to Yu, he declines in favour of Xie, Hou Ji and Gao Yao, before finally accepting. Thus, they play the role of “rule refusers” who, by declining the rule, point out the breach of heredity that occurred when a non-hereditary ruler assumes the throne. But they are ministers, not rulers, and they lived in the time of Yao and Shun.⁴⁰

Since, in Zhou ideology, the king was celestially appointed to rule all-under-sky/heaven, there could be only one king at any one time. For *Mencius*, this meant that even abdication presented a problem of definition because, if a living king abdicated to someone else, there would be two kings. If Yao had abdicated to Shun, who would have faced south as ruler, and who north as subject? Mencius resolved this problem by denying the possibility of abdication and stating that the ruler could only “recommend” (*jian* 薦) his successor to sky/heaven. Sky/heaven then demonstrated its will by the movement in the allegiance of the people from Yao’s son to Shun.⁴¹

37 *Mozi jiaozhu* 墨子校注 (Beijing: Zhonghua, 1993), 6 (“Jie zang xia 節葬下”), p. 267.

38 In my analysis of the parallels of historical figures in *The Heir and the Sage*, Yao and Shun were consistently the earliest figures mentioned. This was first recognized by Gu Jiegang 顧頡剛, “Yao Shun Yu de guanxi shi ruhe laide 堯舜禹的關係是如何來的” in *Gu shi bian* 古史辨 (Shanghai: Shanghai Guji, 1982 [first published 1926–41]), vol. 1, pp. 127–32.

39 Bernhard Karlgren (trans.), *The Book of Documents* (Stockholm: Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities, 1950), pp. 2–3.

40 *Shi ji* 1 (“Wu di benji 五帝本紀”), p. 38; 2 (“Xia benji 夏本紀”), p. 50. Sarah Allan, *The Heir and the Sage*, p. 61.

41 *Mengzi Yizhu* 孟子譯注 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1984), 9 (“Wanzhang shang 萬章上”), p. 215 (9.4).

Nevertheless, the term *wang* was not always used as strictly as Zhou ideology and the Mencian concept of a changing mandate of sky/heaven would dictate. In Shang Dynasty oracle bone inscriptions, as Qi Wenxin has clearly demonstrated, the term *wang* was not only used for the Shang king, but also by the Shang king for the leaders of some other peoples.⁴² Moreover, even in the Zhou, the rulers of some unassimilated peoples, such as Lü 呂, Xu 徐, Wu 吳, Yue 越, and possibly Chu, used the title *wang*,⁴³ and although Mencius used the term *wang* carefully in his philosophical discussion of kingship, he addressed the rulers who had usurped the Zhou title as “king”.

Although history conventionally began with Yao in Warring States texts, the *Zhuangzi* and *Hanfeizi* do have passages with references to rulers who are placed in a period of high antiquity before Yao. The *Zhuangzi* includes a list of twelve rulers in high antiquity, when “people still tied knots” as writing, beginning with Rongchengshi, but it does not include Xie or Hou Ji.⁴⁴ It also refers to Huang Di 黃帝, the “Yellow Emperor”, who is the first ruler and an ancestor of Yu in the “five emperor” scheme in the *Shi ji*.⁴⁵ Among excavated texts, the Chu script bamboo slip manuscript, *Rongchengshi* 容成氏 (in the Shanghai Museum collection), includes a list of rulers before Yao, all of whom, according to the text, abdicated to one another. Unfortunately, the beginning of the list is missing, so it is impossible to be certain, but neither Xie nor Hou Ji are included in the extant section. That the order of the rulers is different to that in the *Zhuangzi* suggests that there was no common agreement.⁴⁶

As Bernhard Karlgren argued, most of the rulers of high antiquity in later texts probably originated as ancestors of noble lineages or regional peoples.⁴⁷ Since an idea of high antiquity, in which people lived with utmost simplicity, was emerging in the Warring States period, the author of the *Zigao* may have placed Xie and Hou Ji in this period without any clear historical scheme of rulership in mind. Whether the title “king” was meant literally is not clear. As we

42 Qi Wenxin 齊文心, “Guanyu Shangdai chengwang de fengguo junzhang de tantao 關於商代稱王的封國君長的談討”, *Lishi yanjiu* 1985/2, pp. 63–78.

43 Lothar von Falkenhausen, “The waning of the bronze age”, in Loewe and Shaughnessy (eds), *The Cambridge History of Ancient China*, p. 516.

44 *Zhuangzi jishi* 莊子集釋, ed. Guo Qingfan 郭慶藩 (Taipei: Heluo, 1974), *pian* 10 “Qu qie 祛篋”, p. 357. For an attempt to identify the names in *Rongchengshi* with those in the *Zhuangzi*, see He Linyi 何琳儀, “Dier pi Hujian xuanshi” 第二批滬簡選釋, in *Shangboguan cang Zhanguo Chu zhushu yanjiu xubian*, pp. 444–55.

45 *Zhuangzi jishi*, *pian* 2 (“Qi wu lun 齊物論”), p. 99; *pian* 6 (“Da zong shi 大宗師”), pp. 247, 280, *pian* 11 (“Zai you 在宥”), pp. 373, 379–83, etc.; *Shi ji* 1 (“Wu di ben ji 五帝本紀”), p. 1, 2 (“Xia ben ji 夏本紀”), p. 49.

46 Ma Chengyuan (ed.), *Shanghai bowuguan cang Zhanguo Chu zhushu*, vol. 2, 2002, pp. 91–146 and 247–93. This text will be translated in full and discussed in my forthcoming book, *Written on Bamboo: Advocating Abdication in Warring States Period Chu Script Bamboo Slip Manuscripts*.

47 Bernhard Karlgren, “Legends and cults in Ancient China”, *Bulletin of the Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities*, no. 18, 1946, pp. 199–365. Karlgren assumes that these progenitors were real people who have been mythologized in Han texts. I see them as originally myth figures.

shall see below the first king of the Shang is called the “black king” (*xuan wang*) in the *Shi jing*. Moreover, in records of the myths of births of the Shang and Zhou progenitors, they are described as “kings” (*wang*), but this does not seem to mean that they ruled “all-under-sky/heaven”. Thus, this reference to Yu, Xie, and Hou Ji, as “three kings” may simply reflect vagueness about political succession in high antiquity in a period in which localized myths were being amalgamated.

Sons of sky/heaven (*tian zi*)

Zigao asks whether the three *wang* (“kings”) were *tian zi* (“sons of sky/heaven”). In Zhou texts and bronze inscriptions, *tian zi* is a common epithet for a ruler, equivalent to *wang*. Here, however, Zigao is not asking whether they were rulers, but whether they were literally, “sons of sky/heaven”; that is, whether their births were divine. This literal sense is made explicit in Zigao’s question, when he asks whether they were *ren zi* 人子, “sons of men”, or *tian zi*, and by the myths of divine conception and birth with which Confucius responds.

The term *tian* 天 is used from the beginning of the Zhou dynasty on as a euphemism for Shang Di 上帝, the “Supreme Thearch”, as well as in its literal sense of “sky” or “heaven” (in the sense of the place where the spirits abide).⁴⁸ In the *Zigao*, the miraculous births of the progenitors of the three royal lineages all resulted from an event in which their mother was divinely impregnated by “sky/heaven”; that is, they were all children of Shang Di. This sense is found in the “Shao Gao 召誥” chapter of the *Shang shu* 尚書 in which the Duke of Zhou explains the overthrow of the Shang by the Zhou, by declaring “The Supreme Thearch in the August Sky has changed his primary son” (皇天上帝改厥元子).⁴⁹ The analogy here is one of changing the heir apparent and it is evidence that both the Shang and Zhou kings were considered descendants of Shang Di. The “sons” of sky/heaven presumably include the grandsons and their descendants.

This belief in the divine descent of the rulers may have been the origin of the term *tian zi* as an epithet for the ruler. However, in Eastern Zhou texts, the term *tian zi* usually refers to a position of authority, the one who rules “all under sky/heaven” rather than divine birth. The expressions “established as son of sky/heaven” (立為天子), for the recipient of the mandate, and “respected as son of sky/heaven” (*gui wei tian zi* 貴為天子), for the one who acts as ruler, are used in a wide variety of early texts. The term *tian zi* is also used in this sense in the *Lun yu* and the *Mencius*. According to the *Lun yu*, “Confucius said, ‘if the world has the way, then the rites, music, and punitive attacks are all initiated by the son of

48 In Sarah Allan, “On the identity of Shang Di 上帝 and the origin of the concept of a celestial mandate (*tian ming* 天命)”, *Early China*, 31 (forthcoming), I argue against the commonly accepted view that *tian* was the high god of the Zhou and Shang Di the high god of the Zhou. I believe that *tian* was the place where Shang Di and the ancestral spirits under his aegis resided in the Shang and Zhou dynasties. Thus, it may be used as a reference to Shang Di.

49 Karlgren, *The Book of Documents*, pp. 47–9.

sky/heaven”⁵⁰ The comparison here is between kings and feudal lords, as it is when the *Mencius* states, “If the son of sky/heaven is not humane, he cannot protect (the land within) the four seas. If the feudal lords are not humane, they cannot protect the altar of grain”. Clearly, “son of sky/heaven” refers to political authority in these passages, rather than lineage. Rulers were also called *tian zi* because they ruled “all under sky/heaven”.

In a theory of dynastic cycle, the term *tian zi* is closely associated with the idea of the changing “mandate of sky/heaven” (*tian ming* 天命). This association is especially close in the *Mencius*, where the term *wang* was also closely associated with the idea of the mandate. In texts of this period, the rulers of the pre-dynastic period, Yao and Shun are called *di* 帝, “thearch” or “lord” and occasionally *wang*, as in the *Mozi* example cited above. The term *di*, which had been shared by the Shang ancestors in the main line of descent and Shang Di, the “supreme thearch” or “lord on High” in the Shang period, was used in the Warring States period as a title for pre-dynastic rulers and the Qin adopted it as a title, which replaced *wang*, “king”. The common translation, “thearch”, is meant to convey its quasi-religious, quasi-political implications.⁵¹

The difference between the use of the term *tian zi* in the *Zigao* and the *Mencius*, is clear in the following passage in which Mencius states that Shun became “son of sky/heaven”:

Mencius said, “When Shun’s food was dried rice and wild vegetables, it was as though he would end his life like this. When he became son of sky/heaven (*tian zi*) . . .⁵²

Tian zi here clearly refers to the position of authority, not descent. This usage, in which the same term is used for the pre-dynastic and dynastic rulers, supports Mencius’ position that the changes of mandate in the pre-dynastic and dynastic periods were all due to the changing mandate of sky/heaven.

The birth of Yu

As noted above, the three “sons of sky/heaven” in the *Zigao* are Yu, Xie and Hou Ji. According to the *Zigao*, Yu’s mother became pregnant after picking *yi yi* 薏苡, Coixseed or “Job’s tears”, a wild grass with edible barley-like seeds:

¹¹_{top}[Yu’s mother was a woman of the Youxin clan.] She saw a Job’s Tears [plant] and picked [the seeds].⁵³ Having been pregnant for three ₁₀years,

50 *Lun yu jishi* 33 (“Jishi 季氏”), p. 1141 (16.2). The only other example of the term *tian zi* in the *Lun yu* is a quote from the *Shi jing*, see *Lun yu jishi* 5 (“Ba seng shang 八僧上”), p. 140 (3.2).

51 I believe this term was coined by Edward Schafer, who taught me at Berkeley, but I have not been able to authenticate this.

52 *Mengzi yizhu* 14 (“Jin xin xia 盡心下”), p. 326 (14.6).

53 The modern character transcription *yi yi* 薏苡 is based on the assumption that the graphs *yu yi* 於伊 are phonetic loans. This reading was suggested by Yi Song-ryul and solves the grammatical problem of the function of the preposition *yu*. See appendix.

her back burst open, and she gave birth. Able to speak when born – that was Yu!⁵⁴

I have supplied the clan name of Yu's mother, Youxinshi 有莘氏, where there are missing graphs because the slip is incomplete, on the assumption that the line should be parallel with those describing the mothers of Xie and Hou Ji, but it may not be correct. The source is the *Wu Yue chunqiu*, which also refers to the myth of Yu's mother swallowing Job's Tear seeds.⁵⁵

Yu's role is pivotal because he is both the recipient of Shun's abdication and the first king of the Xia Dynasty. In transmitted texts, he may be classified as a thearch (*di*) – or as the founder of a new dynasty. However, he is not normally classified with the progenitors of those dynasties Hou Ji and Xie and they are not usually called “kings”. In the *Lun yu*, Confucius takes both Yu and Hou Ji as examples of people who “having planted crops, possessed all under sky/heaven” (禹稷躬稼而有天下).⁵⁶ This grouping of Yu and Hou Ji with the implication that they both ruled the world resembles the paradigm found in the *Zigao*.

In the *Wu Yue chunqiu*, *Da Dai Li ji* 大戴禮記, and *Di wang shi ji jicun* 帝王世紀輯存, Youxinshi is identified as the wife of Gun.⁵⁷ In the “Yao dian 堯典” chapter of the *Shang shu* 尚書, Yu's father, Gun, unsuccessfully attempted to allay the flood by damming up the waters, before the task was assigned to Yu. Henri Maspero and Wolfram Eberhard suggested that two different regional flood myths were amalgamated, and this seems likely.⁵⁸ Some early texts refer to a myth in which Yu was born miraculously from the body of his father, Gun, rather than as a result of his mother's miraculous pregnancy. According to the *Zuo zhuan*, “Long ago, when Yao executed Gun on Feather Mountain, his spirit was transformed into a yellow turtle, and thus he entered Feather Abyss”.⁵⁹ The

54 Liao Mingchun 廖名春, “*Zigao pian gansheng jianwen kaoshi* 《子羔》篇感生簡文考釋”, in Zhu Yuanqing and Liao Mingchun (eds), *Shangboguan cang Zhanguo Chu zhushu yanjiu xubian*, p. 20, notes that there are no other accounts of Yu being able to speak at birth, whereas Huang Di is given this attribute in several texts.

55 *Wu Yue chunqiu* 吳越春秋 6 “Yue Wang Wuyu waizhuan 越王無余外傳”, *The Institute of Chinese Studies Ancient Chinese Texts Concordance Series*, no. 5 (Hong Kong: The Commercial Press, 1993), p. 28, line 4. Yi, “Shanhaku sokan sikou”, pp. 374–5 lists the names of Yu's mother in early texts. She is usually called Xiu Ji 修己. In the *Wu Yue chunqiu*, her personal name is given as 女僖. This may be evidence of different myth traditions. Mark Lewis, *The Flood Myths of Early China*, pp. 137–40 and 207, notes 128–30 discusses variants of the myth of Yu's birth. In some myths, Yu's mother is said to have been impregnated by a meteor. Liao Mingchun, “*Zigao pian gansheng jianwen kaoshi*”, has related this version of the myth to the *Zigao*, see my edition for his alternative readings.

56 *Lun yu jishi* 28 (“Xian wen shang 憲問上”), p. 952 (14.3).

57 *Wu Yue chunqiu* 6 (“Yue Wang Wuyu waizhuan”), p. 28, line 4; *Da Dai Li ji* 大戴禮記 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1983), p. 130; *Di wang shi ji jicun* 帝王世紀輯存 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1964), p. 49.

58 See Allan, *The Heir and the Sage*, pp. 62–7.

59 *Chunqiu Zuo zhuan zhu*, p. 1290 (Zhao Gong 昭公 seventh year). The same account appears in the *Guo Yu* 國語 14 (“Jin yu 晉語” 8), p. 478. See also Sarah Allan, *The Shape of the Turtle: Myth, Art, and Cosmos in Early China* (State University of New York Press, Albany, 1991), p. 70; Mark Lewis, *The Flood Myths of Early China*, pp. 102–6.

Chu Ci 楚辭, “Tian Wen 天問” also states, “Lord Gun brought forth Yu from his belly, how was he transformed”.⁶⁰

I suspect that the designation of Gun as the husband of Yu’s mother is a further combination of different myth traditions. In any case, in the *Zigao*, Yu’s mother was divinely impregnated, as were the mothers of the progenitors of the Shang and the Zhou. Because descent was patrilineal, it was necessary for the father of Yu to be divine for him to be considered a “son of sky/heaven” in the literal sense of the term found in the *Zigao*. This would also have been true for Xie and Hou Ji.

Although the myth of Yu’s mother’s miraculous conception is not found in pre-Han texts, a reference to these three myths of divine birth of the progenitors of the dynastic lineages is found in the *Lun heng* 論衡, attributed to Wang Chong 王充 (c. AD 27–100):

The Confucians extol the births of sages that did not rely on the vital force of men, but garnered the essence from sky/heaven. Yu’s mother swallowed Job’s Tears and gave birth to Yu; therefore the Xia surname was Si. Xie’s mother swallowed the egg of a swallow and gave birth to Xie; therefore the Yin surname was Zi. Hou Ji’s mother trod on a giant’s footstep and gave birth to Hou Ji. Therefore the Zhou surname was Ji. . . .⁶¹

There are also references to this set of myths in the two apocryphal texts, *Li wei* 禮緯 and *Shang shu, Xing de fang* 尚書刑德放.⁶²

Xie, the divine progenitor of the Shang

The second myth of divine birth in the *Zigao* is that of Xie, traditionally regarded as the progenitor of the Shang Dynasty:

Xie’s mother was a woman of the Yourong clan. She strolled atop the Sun Tower.⁶³ A swallow, holding an egg in its beak, placed it in front of her. She took it and swallowed it. Having been pregnant for three

60 Sarah Allan, *Shape of the Turtle*, pp. 69–70.

61 *Lun heng* 論衡 (Shanghai: Shanghai Renmin, 1974), 3 (“Qi guai pian 奇怪篇”), pp. 50–51; *Lun heng* 19 (“Huiguo pian 恢國篇”), p. 301 has a longer list of divine births that also includes Yao, Tang 湯, Wen Wang 文王, and Wu Wang 武王. However, it does not attribute divine birth to Shun.

62 *Weishu jicheng* 緯書集成 (eds), Anju Xiangshan 安居香山 (Yasui Kozan), Zhongcun Zhangba 中村璋八 (Nakamura Shōhachi) (Shijiazhuang: Hebei Renmin, 1994), p. 531 (*Li Wei*, includes only Yu and Xie); p. 301 (includes the full set of 3 myths). These accounts are concerned with naming, as is the *Wu Yue Chunqiu* passage mentioned above.

63 I argue in *The Shape of the Turtle*, ch. 2, that the Shang myth that their first ancestor was born of a bird egg is related to their belief that their ancestors were associated with the ten suns. The name Yang Tai 陽臺, “Sun Tower”, given in the manuscript fits well with this theory, so I see no reason to read 陽 as a loan-graph.

years, her breast burst open, and she gave birth. When he was born, he called out, ¹²“Qin” – that was Xie.⁶⁴

Two “Hymns of the Shang” in the *Shi jing* celebrate the divine origin of the progenitor of the Shang people. In one, the Shang progenitor is called “Shang” and the bird is simply a “black bird” (*xuan niao*):

Sky/heaven commanded that black bird.
It descended and gave birth to Shang.⁶⁵

In the other, “sky/heaven” is called *di* 帝, “thearch”; that is, it was the Thearch on High himself who impregnated the ancestress of the Shang people:

Deep and wise was Shang,
And long-lived was its fortune.
The flooding water spread forth,
And Yu brought order to the lands below.
Both small and large states were delineated,
And the border was long.
When the lady of Yourong was nubile. . .
Di appointed his son and gave birth to the Shang.
The black king was militant and expansive.⁶⁶

While the *Zigao* is more specific than these *Shi jing* songs, the texts generally correspond. Yu’s role in this song is as a cosmogonic hero of the Shang rather than a dynastic progenitor of the Xia. This probably reflects the early date of the song, as discussed above.

Hou Ji: the divine progenitor of the Zhou

The third myth of divine birth is that of Hou Ji, the progenitor of the Zhou Dynasty. This story is also found in the *Shi jing*. The *Zigao* states:

Hou Ji’s mother was a woman of the Youtai clan. She wandered within the Dark Marshes. In winter, she saw thistles (growing), and picked them to present. Then, she saw a human footprint and treading in it, she made her offering and gave prayer, “Di’s footprint, it shall. . . .¹³ . . .” That was Hou Ji’s mother.⁶⁷

64 Yi, “Shanhaku soka Sikou”, pp. 377–9, includes a table of alternative versions of this myth.

65 *Maoshi buzheng* 毛詩補正 25 (“Shang song”), p. 1694 (“Xuan niao 玄鳥”, 303).

66 *Maoshi buzheng*, 25, pp. 1701–2 (“Chang fa 長發”, 304). The Mao commentary has *yuan wang* 元王 (“first king”) instead of *xuan wang*. One or the other must be a phonetic loan; both are possible semantically.

67 Yi, “Shanhaku soka Sikou”, pp. 382–3 includes a table with different versions of this myth and their sources.

Slips 12 and 13 are damaged, so there is a gap of an unknown number of graphs at the end of slip 12 and beginning of slip 13. The *Shi jing* eulogizes miraculous with the way in which Hou Ji was born (see below); if that is what is missing here, then Hou Ji's birth contrasts with the long and difficult births of Yu and Xie. This might explain why the passage ends with "that was Hou Ji's mother", rather than the more strictly parallel "that was Hou Ji".

The most extensive account of Hou Ji's birth in the *Shi jing* is in "Sheng Min 生民" from the *Da ya* 大雅 section:

The one who in the beginning gave birth to the people was Jiang Yuan. How was it she gave birth to the people? Having worshipped and made offerings, as she was without child, she stepped in Di's footprint and was suddenly elated. She was enlarged; she was blessed. How she quaked and how quickly! She was engendered and she bore child. This was Hou Ji. She fulfilled her months and her first child was born like the bursting through (of a spring). She did not tear; she did not rend. There was no injury, no harm, thus displaying its miraculous nature.⁶⁸

The story of Hou Ji's miraculous birth is also found in the hymns of the state of Lu (*Lu song*).⁶⁹

Shun, the son of the music master

As we have seen above, in the *Zigao*, the term *tian zi* is used literally and refers to the insemination of the mothers of progenitors of the three dynasties by sky/heaven. Thus, *tian zi* is the opposite of *ren zi*, "son of a man". That the term *ren zi* is similarly a literal reference to human paternity is clear from Confucius' reply to the second question:

Zigao said, "That being so, then, of the three kings, which one.7
. indeed records the Way advocated by the former kings. If they did not meet a perspicacious king, did they likewise not accomplish great service? Confucius said, "Shun may be described as a common person who received the mandate. Shun, was the son of a man (*ren zi*). . . 1He was the son of the music master, Gu Sou, of the clan Youyu.

The readings of the graphs in Zigao's question are very problematic and there are many missing, so the continuity is not clear. However, Confucius' reply that Shun was a commoner who had received a mandate and was the son of a man is clear. The story that Shun's father was the Blind Man, Gu Sou 瞽瞍, who tried to murder him three times in collaboration with his son, *Xiang* 象,

68 *Maoshi buzheng* 19 ("Da ya 大雅"), pp. 1311–12 ("Shengmin 生民", Mao 245). The Mao commentary takes Di as Gao Xin shi 高辛氏, i.e. Di Ku 帝嚳. However, Di 帝 used on its own in Zhou texts normally refers to Shang Di 上帝 and this is the gloss given by Zheng Xuan 鄭玄 (AD 127–200).

69 *Maoshi buzheng* 24 "Lu Song 魯頌", p. 1660 ("Bigong 闕宮", Mao 300).

is common in the early texts, including the *Mencius*.⁷⁰ There, Shun is described as a “common fellow” (*pi fu* 匹夫) befriended by Yao, who was “son of sky/heaven” (*tian zi*).⁷¹

Abdication

In response to Zigao’s third question about how Shun became a thearch (*di*), Confucius explains that in ancient times, good rulers did not pass the rule on hereditarily, but to another good person:

Confucius said, “Formerly, they did not pass (the rule) hereditarily. The good gave (the rule) to another good (person). Therefore they were able to bring order to all-under-sky/heaven, and make the myriad lands peaceful, ensuring that they all 6 got altars of grain and had common people, and reverentially guarded them, regardless of whether they had possession [of land] or not, were large or small, or rich or destitute. Yao saw that Shun’s virtue was that of a worthy and therefore he ceded (the throne) to him.

In the Warring States period philosophical texts, different philosophers describe the manner in which Yao passed the rule to Shun differently. The *Mozi* is the earliest text to discuss abdication and it describes the transfer of rule from Yao to Shun as abdication. In the *Mencius*, this transfer was not abdication: Yao simply commended Shun to sky/heaven, which demonstrated its will when the people changed their allegiance; and in the *Hanfeizi*, it was a usurpation.⁷²

Yao’s insight and Shun’s virtue

The appointment of a successor worthy of abdication in the pre-dynastic period – or of a founding minister who will aid a king to found his new dynasty in later periods – has two prerequisites: there must be a ruler with the insight necessary to recognize and appoint a good man and there must be someone in the empire worthy of receiving the rule.

In the fourth question, Zigao seeks to determine the relative importance of these two factors:

Zigao said, “When Yao obtained Shun, was it that Shun’s virtue (*de*) was truly good . . . 2 . . . ? Or was it that Yi Yao’s virtue was so very brilliant?”

70 A relatively detailed account is found in *Mengzi yizhu* 9 (“Wan zhang shang”), pp. 209–3 (9.2). For discussion of this legend, see Sarah Allan, *The Heir and the Sage*, pp. 37–9, 45. There is a debate about how to read the two graphs that I transcribe here as Gu Sou, following Li Xueqin (see the appended edition, notes to slip 1,8–9), but whatever the transcription, scholars agree that the reference is to the figure called Gu Sou in the received texts.

71 *Mengzi yizhu* 10 (“Wan zhang xia”), p. 237 (10.3). See Allan, *The Heir and the Sage*, pp. 45–6 for discussion of Gu Sou’s social status. The *Shi ji* 1 (“Wu di benji”), p. 31, gives him a noble ancestry but states that his family had been commoners for seven generations.

72 See Sarah Allan, *The Heir and the Sage*, especially, ch. 6.

Confucius said, “They were equal. When Shun was planting fields in a barren wasteland. . .”.

As pre-dynastic rulers who appointed their successors, Yao and Shun first raise up their successors, Shun and Yu, from humble positions. The texts frequently parallel these acts with the raising up and appointment of the founding ministers, Yi Yin 伊尹 and Taigong Wang 太公望 by Tang and Wen Wang in the Shang and Zhou, thus tying the pre-dynastic period together with the foundation of the Shang and Zhou dynasties.⁷³ For the Shang and Zhou, the would-be kings – rather than the enthroned rulers – demonstrate their perception by recognizing the virtue of a man in a low position and show their humility in their willingness to raise up and rely upon such a man, even though he is poor and unrecognized.

This is the theme we find here in which Yao visits Shun and shows his perception of Shun’s virtue even though he is farming in the fields. Shun’s discussion of the rites in the *Zigao* is similar to Yi Yin’s discussion of the five flavours when he served as a cook to the wife of the Shang Dynasty founder, Tang.⁷⁴ By their discovery of the minister, the rulers demonstrate their insight into human character. But, if there is no king with insight and humility like Yao; or a man, who preserves his integrity like Shun, the good cannot give to the good. In the received texts, it is primarily Shun’s filial piety that demonstrates his virtue. Since these slips are so badly damaged at this point, we do not know whether the *Zigao* originally included the story of Yao’s filial piety.

The *Mozi*, which stresses the importance of appointment and describes the Yao’s transfer of rule to Shun as an abdication, describes these figures in terms which suggest very low social status. In the *Mencius*, on the other hand, they are eremitic gentlemen, who have retired from the world rather than serve an unworthy ruler. The *Zigao* describes Yao’s perception and Shun’s merit as of equal importance. Shun’s father is described as the son of a music master, but the status of such musicians, who were often blind, like Shun’s father, is not clear and the text is too damaged to make any further assessment.

The importance of humility

The bamboo slips on which the fifth question is written are also badly damaged. This arrangement of the sequence assumes that the line, “ordinary people of the barren wasteland” is part of a question by *Zigao*, but the question itself is missing. The reading of the text on slip 4 is very problematic and many different interpretations have been offered. Since none of the interpretations of the first five graphs on slip 5 make sense to me and I am unsure what the transcription should be, I have omitted them in my transcription and translation. The theme of Yao visiting Shun in his thatched hut is well known and consistent with the

73 Sarah Allan, *The Heir and the Sage*, pp. 44–50.

74 Sarah Allan, *The Heir and the Sage*, pp. 29–31; 91–4.

“founding minister” motif, but the statement that they discussed the rites is not found elsewhere.

Confucius said, . . .⁴ . . . I have heard that when Shun was young, he was diligent in his studies and served his parents . . . ⁵ . . . [?]. When Yao selected Shun, he went with him into his thatched hut. He spoke of the rites with him, and was pleased with⁸ . . . and became harmonious. Thus, Shun’s virtue was truly that of a worthy. Having gone into the fields after him, (Yao) had him rule all-under-sky/heaven, and found him praise-worthy.

There are various versions of this story of Yao visiting Shun, but the poor condition of the manuscript makes it impossible to determine the details. In some texts, Shun not only farmed but also made pottery and fished.⁷⁵ The previous question stressed the equality of Yao’s perception and Shun’s merit. Here, Yao’s humility is demonstrated by his willingness to go to Shun, though he is but a poor farmer, and Shun’s virtue by his discussion of the rites.

Shun and the three sons of sky/heaven

The sixth question is also badly damaged, but its sense seems clear:

Zigao said, “If Shun lived in the present generation, then what would happen?”

Confucius said, “.¹⁴ the three sons of sky/heaven would serve him.”

In sum, the progenitors of the royal lineages were indeed divinely conceived, but even they were not as good as the human and meritorious Shun.

Conclusion

In received texts from the Warring States period, the pre-dynastic rulers Yao and Shun are sometimes juxtaposed to the founding kings of the Xia, Shang and Zhou dynasties – Yu (of the Xia), Tang (of the Shang) and Wen or Wu (of the Zhou). Whereas Yao and Shun passed the rule on to the most virtuous person in the world, the first kings of the three dynasties passed it on hereditarily. However, the precedents for the founding kings’ breach of heredity in overthrowing the previous dynasties are also found in the abdication legends of the pre-dynastic period, as the evil sons that were passed over by Yao and Shun are likened to the bad last kings of the Xia and Shang. Thus, in the received tradition, the pre-dynastic legends of abdication commonly serve as a precedent for – and justification of – the theory of dynastic cycle. In the *Mencius* especially, the change of rule in the pre-dynastic period is described

75 Sarah Allan, *The Heir and the Sage*, pp. 46–9.

as a change of the celestial mandate no different from the change of divine mandate in the dynastic period.

In the *Zigao*, Shun is juxtaposed to the progenitors of the dynastic lineages, rather than to the virtuous founders of the three dynasties. The effect of this contrast is to portray the dynastic rulers as legitimate primarily because of the divine birth of their progenitors, rather than because of the merit of the founding king who had received the divine mandate because of his superior virtue. This is not only surprising in a nominally Confucian text, it is surprising in the context of received Warring States literature as a whole. On the other hand, it is a stark reflection of the social conflict of the period, in which the old hereditary aristocratic lineages were being challenged, sometimes by people who could not legitimately claim any noble lineage.

If the names were changed, I suspect that few scholars would associate this manuscript with Confucianism. Nevertheless, *Zigao* was a follower of Confucius and I believe that the manuscript would have been understood as a *ru* document in its own time. There are two important issues in understanding the relationship of the *Zigao* to early Confucianism: (1) the importance which this text attributes to myths of divine birth; (2) its promotion of abdication.

The statement that Confucius did not discuss uncanny events in the *Lun yu* has been very important to our modern conception of Confucianism. While it is true in a general sense of what is recorded in the *Lun yu*, even there, Confucius does not entirely discount such events. For example, distressed at his lack of success, he cries out that the appropriate supernatural omens have not signalled the coming of a new dynasty, saying, “The phoenix has not arrived; the river has not given up a chart, I am finished”.⁷⁶ In any case, since the stories of the miraculous birth of Xie and Hou Ji are recorded in that quintessential Confucian text, *Shi jing*, such myths would have been part of Confucian lore.

As discussed above, the myth of Yu’s birth is not found in the *Shi jing*. I believe that this can be attributed to the historical evolution of the myths concerning the formation of the Xia Dynasty.⁷⁷ The grouping of Xie, Hou Ji and Yu as archetypally similar that is found in the *Zigao* is also extremely rare in early texts. However, Yu and Hou Ji are linked in the *Lun yu*, where Nangong Kuo, to Confucius’ delight, asks him about Yi and Ao who were good at archery and extraordinarily strong but met a violent death, whereas “Yu and Ji planted crops and yet possessed all-under-sky/heaven”.⁷⁸ What the historical scheme is here is not at all clear, as it suggests that Hou Ji was a ruler and, possibly, the recipient of abdication like Yu. It also ties the *Zigao* to the *Lun yu*. As many scholars have noted, the *Lun yu* is a multi-layered work. Clearly, the *Zigao* does not represent the mainstream of Confucian thought, but neither is it entirely outside the Confucian tradition.

76 *Lun yu jishi* 17 (“Zihan shang 子罕上”), p. 588 (Mao 9.9).

77 See Sarah Allan, *The Shape of the Turtle*, ch. 3.

78 *Lun yu jishi*, 28 (“Xian wen 憲問”), p. 952 (14.5).

The issue of abdication is more complex. Confucius expressed so little interest in the transfer of rule from Yao to Shun, that, as noted above, Gu Jiegang hypothesized that the legend of Yao's abdication to Shun was a later, Mohist invention.⁷⁹ The only clear reference to pre-dynastic abdication in the *Lun yu* is indirect. It begins:

Yao said, "Oh Shun, the celestial succession has fallen upon your person. Hold truly to the center. Should the [region within the] four seas be reduced to dire straits, what sky/heaven has bestowed will be forever ended".

Shun gave the same command to Yu.⁸⁰

The archaic language in this passage resembles that of the *Shang shu* and it does not mention Confucius or any of his disciples, so many commentators have suggested that it was an interpolation.⁸¹ In light of the discovery of the Chu script bamboo slip manuscripts, we can easily imagine this passage as having circulated separately as a manuscript like the Chu script texts found in Guodian Tomb Number One and in the Shanghai Museum collection before it was added to the *Lun yu*. Its original date – or when it was joined to the other material in the *Lun yu* – cannot be determined.

Historically, Mencius' rejection of abdication as a political theory may have been influenced by a real event, the "abdication" of King Kuai of Yan to Zizhi 子之. This story is recorded in the *Zhanguo ce* 戰國策 and the *Shi ji*.⁸² The context in these accounts is the persuasion of Su Dai 蘇代, who has replaced his father Su Qin 蘇秦 as a persuader acting on behalf of King Xuan of Qi. He convinced King Kuai to abdicate by suggesting that Zizhi would refuse, like the worthy, Xu You 許由, to whom Yao abdicated before he gave the rule to Shun. Unfortunately for King Kuai, Zizhi accepted. Soon after King Kuai died, however, the Crown Prince and his supporters revolted and attacked him unsuccessfully. With this civil war broke out, with tens of thousands of people killed in the fighting between the two parties.

At the time of King Kuai's abdication, Mencius was in Qi and these events are also recorded in the *Mencius*. Mencius states explicitly therein that the ruler

79 See note 9.

80 *Lun yu jishi*, 39 ("Yao yue 堯曰"), pp. 1345–49 (20.1).

81 E. Bruce Brooks and A. Taeko Brooks, *The Original Analects: Sayings of Confucius and His Followers* (New York: Columbia, 1998), p. 192, date it to c. 251 BC. I am uncertain of the reasons for their precision. I suspect it has an earlier date, fifth–fourth century BC, though when it was added to the *Lun yu* cannot be determined.

82 *Zhanguo ce zhengjie* 戰國策正解 (Taipei: Heluo, 1976) 9 ("Yan ce shang, Wang Kuai 燕策上, 王噲"), pp. 16–17; *Shi ji*, 34 ("Yan Shaogong shijia 燕召公世家"), pp. 1555–56, is very similar. *Zhanguo ce zhengjie* 4 ("Qi ce shang, Xuan Wang 齊策上, 宣王"), pp. 19–22 also includes background stories. The relationship of this incident to the Guodian manuscript, *Tang Yu zhi dao*, was first discussed by Li Xueqin 李學勤, "Xian Qin Rujia zhuzuo de zhongda faxian 先秦儒家著作的重大發現," *Renmin zheng-xie bao* 人民政協報, 8 June 1998. I have previously discussed it in "The Way of Tang Yao and Yu Shun: appointment by merit as a theory of succession in a Warring States bamboo slip text", as has Yuri Pines, in "Disputers of abdication".

cannot give the rule to a successor, because it is not within human power. He can only recommend him to sky/heaven, which can “give” (*yu* 與) the rule to someone, as demonstrated by the allegiance of the people who turn to the new ruler. The ruler may commend a worthy to sky/heaven, but he cannot abdicate because the power of determining the ruler is not his:

Wan Zhang said, “Yao gave all-under-the-sky to Shun. Is this right?” Mencius said, “The son-of-sky/heaven cannot give all-under-the-sky to someone”.

“If that’s so, then when Shun possessed all-under-the-sky, who gave it?” (Mencius) replied, “Sky/heaven gave it”... “Sky/heaven does not speak. It only demonstrates it by means of actions and deeds”... “The son-of-sky/heaven can commend someone to sky/heaven, but he cannot make sky/heaven give him all-under-the sky; a feudal lord can commend someone to the son-of-sky/heaven, but he cannot make the son-of sky/heaven bestow a fief upon him . . . Formerly, Yao recommended Shun to sky/heaven and sky/heaven accepted him; he presented him to the people and the people accepted him” . . . “He made him the principal officiant in the sacrifices and the hundred spirits enjoyed them; this was sky/heaven accepting him . . . Therefore, I say, “Sky/heaven cannot give all-under-the-sky to someone”.⁸³

Wan Zhang’s question is based upon an assumption that in the pre-dynastic era, the good gave the rule to the good, just as we find in the *Zigao*. The abdication of King Kuai of Yan is also evidence of the popularity of the idea of abdication in the fourth century BC. Thus, although Mencius rejected the possibility of abdication, this rejection probably reflects a backlash against the advocates of abdication in his own day.⁸⁴

In arguing that the abdication legends were a creation of the Mohists, Gu Jiegang associated the abdication legends with the Mohist advocacy of appointment by merit.⁸⁵ Moreover, in the received tradition, the only philosophical work that describes the transfer of rule from Yao to Shun straightforwardly as an “abdication” is the *Mozi*.⁸⁶ However, the received *Mozi* does not advocate abdication for its own time, but ties the legend of Yao’s abdication to Shun to the importance of merit in the establishment of a new dynasty. This is primarily demonstrated by the ruler’s willingness to raise up and appoint a poor but meritorious founding minister, in the same manner that Yao had appointed Shun, Tang had appointed Yi Yin 伊尹, and King Wen, Taigong Wang 太公望.

It is not possible to tie these legends specifically to the Mohists. As I noted at the beginning of this paper, four Chu script bamboo slip manuscripts discuss abdication and all present it in a favourable light. Only one, *Gui shen zhi ming*, can be considered Mohist. This suggests that the idea of abdication as a

83 *Mengzi yizhu* 9 (“Wan zhang shang”), p. 219 (9.5).

84 This point is well explored by Yuri Pines, “Disputers of abdication”, pp. 268 ff. See also Sarah Allan, “The Way of Tang Yao and Yu Shun”.

85 Gu Jiegang, “Shanrang chuanshuo qi yu Mojia”, in *Gu shi bian*, vol. 7c, pp. 50 ff.

86 Sarah Allan, *The Heir and the Sage*, pp. 125–40.

better means of political succession than hereditary transfer was popular among a range of early thinkers in the fourth century BC.⁸⁷ The rise of these legends reflects the political claims of a new class of officials with little status within the noble lineages.

Every Chinese philosopher after Confucius, including those who disagreed with him, was dominated by his presence. Mozi castigated him and Zhuangzi put unlikely words in his mouth, but no one could ignore him. These legends, when seen in light of the social transformation of the Warring States period, provide a clue to the question of why Confucius was so dominant in the imagination of the thinkers that followed him, even though he had not achieved any notable success in his life. Although he was a member of a hereditary lineage and taught the rites to his students, he had very little social status, and he transformed the rites into an ethical system, all the while stressing virtue and integrity. In this manner, he implicitly challenged the hereditary aristocracy. How the legends of abdication first arose is not clear, but we may conjecture that the personality of Confucius was an important inspiration for their development and the popularity of the idea that abdication to the most worthy would be a better and more effective means of government.

While Confucius was not yet the “unadorned king” (*su wang* 素王) of later tradition, the seeds of this role are already present in the *Zigao*.⁸⁸ That Confucius could have assisted one of the hereditary rulers to unite all under sky/heaven was clear to his followers, but would it not have been even better if he were the ruler of all-under-the-sky? That the Confucius of the *Lun yu* denied being a “sage” may be a statement of his humility, as commonly supposed, but it could also be interpreted as the denial of a claim to rule.⁸⁹ To the advocates of abdication in the period after his death, he must have been an obvious model of the type of sage who might receive the rule from a good king. In any case, one can easily imagine that readers would have thought of Confucius himself in the *Zigao*’s firm resolution that the divine progenitors of the three dynasties would have served Shun if they had lived at the same time.

Appendix

The text of the *Zigao* 子羔 is published in volume 2 of *Shanghai bowuguan cang Zhanguo Chu zhushu* 上海博物館藏戰國楚竹書. It includes fourteen bamboo slips in the Shanghai Museum collection. A fragment of a bamboo slip in the collection of the Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK3 in my abbreviation

87 This argument is also made in Yuri Pines, “Disputers of abdication”.

88 In later apocrypha, Confucius is given a miraculous conception and birth, like those of the three dynastic progenitors. This is discussed in Lionel M. Jenson, “The Genesis of Kongzi in Ancient narrative: the figurative as historical”, in Thomas A. Wilson (ed.), *On Sacred Grounds: Culture, Society, Politics, and the Formation of the Cult of Confucius* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2002), pp. 175–221 (206–14).

89 *Lun yu ji shi*, 14 (“Shu er xia 述而下”), p. 500 (7.34).

below) seems to come from this text.⁹⁰ As noted above, the edition below is based upon a sequence proposed by Chen Jian and further modified by Li Xueqin. In the following, the slip numbers, as published in *Shanghai bowuguan cang Zhanguo Chu zhushu*, and number of the graph on each slip are marked in subscript; e.g. the graph after the notation “_{9,1}” is the first graph on slip 9 in that work. Partial graphs are indicated by X and included in the numbering. Graphs with “二” on the slips (joined or duplicated graphs) are numbered as two graphs.

The longest slip in *Zigao* (1) measures 54.2 cm. It has 52 graphs, including the first partial graph. It is slightly damaged at the top. One of the graphs on this slip is a “joined graph” (*hewen* 和合), marked with the duplication mark, “=”, so my transcription below has 53 modern characters. The longest slip in *Kongzi shilun* 孔子詩論, with which the *Zigao* was bound, is only slightly damaged at the bottom and has 55 graphs; two of these have duplication marks, so the transcription has 57 modern characters. *Lubang da han* 魯邦大漢 in the same scroll has a complete slip with only 50 graphs. This suggests that the slips in *Zigao* originally had about 50 to 55 graphs, without accounting for joined or duplicated graphs. Although excavated bamboo slip texts do not have a consistent number of graphs per slip (because of punctuation and duplication marks, variation in the complexity of the graph, spacing, etc.), this estimate is a useful guide for understanding the amount of text missing from the damaged slips. In the reconstruction below, I posit the loss of one slip (following Li Xueqin).

The transcriptions in modern characters of each line of text represent my readings of each graph. In the notations below, this graph is followed by a direct transcription. For example, 9,3 問:昏 means that my reading is 問 and a direct transcription of the original graph is 昏. The colon “:” signifies a phonetic borrowing. The symbol “<” signifies that the reading has a graphic relationship to the direct transcription. I have included in this category graphs which share a phonetic, but have different semantic elements, although such graphs are usually understood as phonetic borrowings.

The transcriptions in *Shanghai bowuguan cang Zhanguo Chu zhushu* were prepared by Ma Chengyuan. Unless otherwise noted, these are the basis of the following transcription. Where there is a difference of opinion, these are designated by the abbreviation “MCy”. A key to the other abbreviations and their sources are given at the end.

{9,1} 子羔問於孔子曰：“三王者{9,11}之作也，皆人子也，而其父_{9,21}賤而不足稱也歟？抑亦誠_{9,31}天子也歟？”

Slip 9. Bottom end damaged. 44 graphs, including 2 joined characters.

9,3; 9,40 問 (*mjwən):昏 (*χmwən)

9,5–6; 7,17–18 孔子: 孔(𠄎). The “=” mark indicates duplication of the element 子.

9,8; 11上, 10; 14,2; 13,7; 13,19 三 (*səm):參 (*ts’əm) < 𠄎.

9,12; 13,11 作 (*tsâk) < 乍 (*dz’æg).

90 Chen Songchang 陳松長, *Xianggang Zhongwen Daxue Wenwuguan cang jiandu* 香港中文大學文物館藏簡牘, slip 3, as cited by Ma Chengyuan, *Shanghai bowuguan cang Zhanguo Chu zhushu*, 194.

9,14; 1,53 皆 (*kɛr) < 𦉰.

9,21 賤 (*dzʹjans) < 𦉰 (*dzʹân).

9,25, 8,24 稱 (*tʹjəŋ) < 𦉰. Following, CJ, QXg, LXq. MCy reads as 偶 (*tʹjəŋ), meaning 并舉.

9,27; 9,34 歟 (*zjo): 與 (*zjo).

9,28. 抑 (*jək): 毆 (*jər). Following CJ, QXg. LXq: 繫 (*iər) (particle). MCy transcribes as: 𦉰.

9,30; 6,32; 8,10 誠 (*đjēŋ) < 城 (*đjēŋ) / Following LXq. CJ, QXg read as 成 (*đjēŋ).

9 Zigao questioned Confucius: When the three kings arose, were they all sons of humans, whose fathers were humble and not worthy of being named? Or were they truly sons of sky/heaven?

孔子曰：“善，爾問^{9,41}之也。久矣其莫...

9,39 爾 (*ńjǎr): 而 (*ńjəŋ).

9,43 久 (*kǐŋ): 舊 (*gʹjôg) Following CJ, LXq.

Confucius said, “That you ask about this is fine! It’s been a long time since since anyone. . . .

^{11上}[禹之母，有莘氏之]（女）也，觀薏苡而得之，懷^{10,1}三年而剖於背而生，生而能^{10,11}言，是禹也。

Slip 11 上. Both ends damaged. 10 graphs.

“禹之母有莘氏之” supplied by LCl.

11上,1(女). Partial graph, supplied by LXq.

11上,4,5 薏苡 (*jəŋ *zjəŋ): 於 (*o) 伊 (*jɛr). Following LCl. LZp takes 伊 as place or river (伊), but the grammar is difficult to understand. LMc 伊: 裡 (*jɛn).

11上,7; 1,19; 6,1; 6,25 得 (*tək) < 𦉰.

11上,9; 11下,21 懷 (*gʹwɛr): 裏 (*ljəŋ) (𦉰). Following LXq, interpreted as 懷 (*gʹwɛr) 妊. JXs analyses as {宀 + 鬼}, also reads as 懷. CJ 𦉰, read as 娠 (*tjəŋ).

Slip 10. Both ends damaged. 10 graphs.

10,1, CUHK3,2. 年 (*nien): 仁 (*ńjēŋ). This graph is a common graphic variant of 仁 in Chu script and is usually transcribed as 𦉰. Following CJ, QXq, who read it as 𦉰. MCy, HLy: variant of 身 (*sjēŋ), read as 妊 (*ńjəm).

10,3 劃 < 畫 (*tsʹɛk).

10,5 背 (*pwəŋ): 𦉰 (*pʹjəŋ), read as 倍 (*bʹwəŋ).

10,7–8 生, 生 (*səŋ, *səŋ) < 𦉰.

10,13 禹 (*giwo) < 𦉰.

^{11top}[Yu’s mother was a woman of the Youxin clan.] She saw a Job’s Tears [plant] and picked [the seeds]. Having been pregnant for three ¹⁰years, her back burst open, and she gave birth. Able to speak when born – that was Yu!

契之母，有媵氏^{10,21}之女^{11下,1}也，遊於陽臺之上，有燕銜^{11下,11}卵而措諸其前，取而吞之，娠^{CUHK3,1}三年而剖於膺，生乃呼曰 ^{12,1}‘金’，是契也。

10,15; 12,3 契 (*k'iad) : 离. Interchangeable in ancient texts.⁹¹

10,18; 1,2; 1,47; 11,5; 12,9 有 (*giüg) < 又 (*giüg).

10,19 娥.仍 (*ñiəŋ) (迺). MCy transcribes as 酉. Following XZg, CJ, QXg.

10,20; 1,4; 12,11 氏 (*d̥iēg) : 是 (*d̥iēg).

Slip 11下. Broken at top, joined with 11上 in the MCy arrangement.

11下,4 陽 (*d̥iaŋ). HLy 央 (*iəŋ). MCy: 瑤 (*d̥ioŋ).

11下,9 燕 (*ian): 𪔑 (read as 晏 *ian).

11下,10 衡 (*g'am) : 監 (*klam).

11下,13 措 (*ts'âg) < 階. MCy: 錯 (*ts'âk).

11下,14; 5,12; 8,13 諸 (*t̥io) < 者 (*t̥iã).

11下,19 吞. 541E;. MCy 軟. SJz analyses as 舟 and 申 (𠂔).

Slip CUHK3. Broken at both ends. 10 graphs.

CUHK3,2 年 (*nien) : 仁 (*ñiēn) (𠂔). Following CJ, QXg, LXq. See also 10,1.

CUHK3,4 劃 < 晝 (*t̥iōg), taken as 晝 (*ts'ēk), stroke missing. Cf. 10,3.

CUHK3,6 膺 (*iəŋ) < 雇 (*g'o). MCy takes as 扈 (*g'o), identifies with 石紐山, birthplace of 禹.

CUHK3,9 呼 (*χo): 虜 (虎 *χo).

Slip 12. Top damaged. 41 graphs.

12,1 金 (*k̥iəm): 鉞 following QXg2. MCy 欽 (*k̥iəm).

Xie's mother was a woman of the Yourong clan. She ^{11btm}strolled atop the Sun Tower. A swallow, holding an egg in its beak, placed it in front of her. She took it and swallowed it. Having been pregnant for ^{CUHK3}three years, her breast burst open, and she gave birth. When he was born, he called out, ¹²“metal” – that was Xie.

后稷之母，有郃^{12,11}氏之女也，遊於玄澤之^{12,21}内也，冬見芙，攷而薦之，乃^{12,31}見人武，履以祈禱，曰：帝之^{12,41}武，尚使...¹³...是后稷之母也。三王者之^{13,11}作也如是。”

12,5; 13,2 后 (*g'u) < 句 (*ku).

12,6; 13,3; 6,4 稷 (*ts̥iək) < 稷.

12,10 郃 < 𠂔.

12,17 玄 (*g'iwen). Following LXq, ZFh. MCy: 串 (*kwan). LXh takes as 𠂔 (*kwân, from GSR 貫), which is interchangeable with 𠂔 (*m̥iwo), 母 (*mæg), 某 (*mæg). Reads as 媒 (*mwæg) ((媒) (*mwæg)).

12,18 澤 (*d'āk): 咎 (*g'iōg), following LXq. LXh takes as 皐 (*kōg, from GSR 皐) (as in Tang Yu zhi dao, 皐陶), reads as 高 (*kog), meaning 高媒.

12,23 冬 (*tōŋ). MCy: 終 (*t̥iōŋ).

12,26 攷. LXq reads as 乾 (*kân). ZFh 攀 (*k̥ian) (graphic variant). MCy, HLy 薊.

12,34 履 (*liər): 𠂔.

12,36 祈 (*g'iər) < 愆. HLy 忻 (reads with above, not graph below).

91 Gao Heng 高亨, *Guzi tongjia huidian* 古字通假會典 (Jinan: Qi Lu Daxue, 1989), p. 625.

12,43; 1,45; 1,52; 8,19 使 (*sljæg) < 吏 (*ljæg).

Slip 13. Broken at top and bottom 24 graphs.

13,13; 8,28 如 (*ñio) < 女 (*nio).

Hou Ji's mother was a woman of the Youtai clan. She wandered within the Dark Marshes. In winter, she saw thistles (growing), and presented them as an offering. Then, she saw a human footprint and trod in it to offer a prayer, "Di's footstep, it shall₁₃ . . . That was Hou Ji's mother. When the three kings arose, it was like this.

子羔曰：然則，三王_{13,21}者孰為 7 7,1 亦紀先王之游道。不逢明_{7,11}王，則亦不大事？

13,22 孰 (*d̥iōk): 筮, read as 竹 (*t̥jōk).

Slip 7. Broken at bottom. 32 graphs, including 1 joined character.

7,2 紀 (*k̥jæg): 紀. MCy punctuates after 7.2. QXg interprets as 記 (*k̥jæg) 載 (*tsæg). LXq: possibly 改 (*kæg), reads 7,1–2 with graphs below.

7,6 游 (d̥jōg). LXq: possibly 攸 (*d̥jōg).

7, 9 逢 (*b̥juŋ): 奉 (*b̥juŋ). Following WQp.

7,10 明 (*mjāŋ): 盟. Following QXq (graph is variant of 盟). MCy transcribes as 盟. LXq phonetic is 貝 (*pwād), reads as 廢 (*pjwād). WQp 敗 (*bwad). HLy graph is made up of 四 and 皿, reads as 駟 (*s̥jəd). HDk: 四 and 益.

7,16 事 (*dz̥jæg): 事. Following WQp, who analyses as {水 + 史}. MCy transcribes as 澆. LXq reads as 汙, loan for 變. LR水 + 弁, read as 辨.

Zigao said, "That being so, then, of the three kings, which one 7 . . . indeed records the Way of the former kings. If they did not meet a perspicacious king, did they indeed not accomplish great service?"

孔子曰：“舜_{7,21}其可謂受命之民矣。舜，人_{7,31}子也。 . . . 1,1 X有虞氏之樂正瞽瞍之_{1,11}子也。”

7,20; 7,28; 6,13; 6,26; 6,28; 2,15; 4,4; 5,9; 8,6; 8,29. 舜 (*s̥jwən): 舜 (*ts̥jwən) < 舜. (舜 = 俊 *ts̥jwən)

7,22 謂 (*g̥jwəd) < 胃 (*g̥jwəd).

Slip 1. Broken at top. 52 graphs, including 1 joined character.

1,1 Partial graph. MCy:以. CW:曰.

1,3 虞 (*ŋiwo): 吳 (*ŋo).

1,8 瞽 (*ko): 瞽. Following LXq. MCy transcribes as: 瞽, taking the centre as 占 but LXq parses it as 古 + 丁, and takes 古 (*ko) as the phonetic. (In 1,17 古 is written as 古). CJg, XJs read as 質 the name of Yao's music master in the *Lushi chunqiu* 呂氏春秋, "Gu yue 古樂."

1,9 夔. LXq: from 夔 (夔), i.e. 草 (*ts'ōg); not from 夔 (*vjwei), so this graph can be taken as a phonetic loan, 夔 (*s̥jōg), and read as 瞽. MCy 夔. MCy takes 1,8, 1,9 as two persons; CJ one person. CJg, XJs read as 夔, title for music official; 質夔, identified as 瞽瞍.

Confucius said, “Shun may be described as a common person who received the mandate. Shun, was the son of a man. . . He was the son of the music master, Gusou, of the clan Youyu.

子羔曰：“何故以得為_{1,21}帝。”

1,16; 8,35 何 (*g'â) < 可 (*k'â).

1,17; 6,17; 8,4 故 (*ko) < 古 (*ko).

Zigao said, “Why was he able to become thearch?”

孔子曰：“昔者而弗世也，_{1,31}善與善相授也，故能治天_{1,41}下，平萬邦。使無有大小肥_{1,51}瘠，使皆_{6,1}得其社稷百姓而奉守之。_{6,11}堯見舜之德賢，故讓之。”

1,29 世 (*šjad) < 殛.

1,39 治 (*d'jæg) < 給 (*dz'jæg).

1,42 平 (*b'jēŋ) < 坪. ZGg original graph has 旁, not 平.

1,45; 1,52 使 (*sljæg) < 吏 (*sljæg).

1,46 無 (*m̄jwo): 亡 (*m̄jwan). Following CJ. JXs 無有 interpreted as 無論.

1,48 小 (*šjog) < 少 (*šjog).

1,50 肥 (*b'jwər) < 忌 (忌). Following MCy, HLy. CJ, QXg. LXq analyses as 乙 over 心, reads as 柱 (*d'ju), meaning strong.

1,51 瘠 (*dz'jēk): 窳. Following CW, HLy. LXq reads as 脆 (*ts'jwad). MCy reads as 礪 (*k'og).

1,52 使 (*sljæg) < 吏 (*sljæg). ZGg reads as 遍 (*pian): 弁 (*b'jan). Cf. 1,45. Slip 6. Broken at bottom. 33 graphs.

6,6 姓 (*šjēŋ) < 眚 (*šjēŋ).

6,15; 6,30; 2,5; 8,8 德 (*tək) < 惠.

6,16; 8,11 賢 (*g'ien) < 賢.

Confucius said, “Formerly, they did not pass (the rule) hereditarily. The good gave (the rule) to another good (person). Therefore they were able to bring order to all-under-sky/heaven, and make the myriad lands peaceful, regardless of whether they were large or small, rich or lean; they ensured that all ₆ obtained their altars of grain and had common people, and reverentially guarded them. Yao saw that Shun’s virtue was that of a worthy and therefore he ceded (the throne) to him.

子_{6,21}羔曰：堯之得舜也，舜之德_{6,31}則誠

善..... 2..... 2,1 與？伊堯之德則甚明與？

6,32 誠 (*d'jēŋ) < 城 (*d'jēŋ)

Slip 2. Broken at top, 21 graphs, including 1 joined character.

2,1; 2,9 與 (*zjo) < 與.

2,2 伊 (*jer). LXq takes as place and clan name, citing the *Qianfulun* 潛伏論, “Wudezhi 五德志”: 後嗣慶都，與龍和婚，生伊堯. CJ, QXg: 抑 (*iək).

2,8 明 (*m̄jāŋ): 盟 (*m̄jāŋ) (盟). Following HLy, LXq. MCy 盪 (*wən), read as 盪 (*wən). ZGg reads as 壺 (*g'o).

Zigao said, “When Yao obtained Shun, was it that Shun’s virtue was truly good...? Or was it that Yi Yao’s virtue was so very brilliant?”

2,11 孔子曰：“均也，舜稽於童土之，田則.....”

2,14 均 (*k_iwĕn) < 鈞 (*k_iwĕn). Following HLY. LXq: 鈞 (*k_iwĕn). MCy: 鈞, read as 柴 (*dz’ār).

2,17 畷 (*s_iək) < 穡 (*s_iək). Following CBx. MCy 來 (*læg) < 畷 (畷).

Confucius said, “They were equal. When Shun was planting fields in a barren wasteland....”

[子羔曰:...] 3.....3,1之童土之黎民也。”

Slip 3. Broken at both ends. 9 graphs, including 1 joined character.

3,5 黎 (*l_iər): 莉.

[Zigao said]... 3.... the ordinary people of the barren wasteland....”

孔子曰:... 4 “... 4,1 吾聞夫舜其幼也，敏以[學]， 4,11 侍其親..... 5..... 5,1 或以文而遠。堯之取舜也， 5,11 從諸草茅之中。°與之言禮，悅..... 8..... 8,1 X 而和，故夫舜之德，其誠 8,11 賢矣。遂諸畝畝之中而使君 8,21 天下而稱。”

Slip 4. Broken at bottom. 13 graphs.

4,1 吾 (*ŋo): 虞.

4,2 問 (*m_iwən): 昏 (*χmwən).

4,8 敏 (*m_iwĕn) < 每 (*mwæg). Following HDk, Anhui (HLY).

4,10. 學. Partial graph. Following LR, HDk, Anhui (HLY). GYb 好. LLx 孝.

4,11 侍 (*d_iæg) < 寺 (*dz_iæg). Following LLx. HDk, GYb 詩 (*s_iæg). LXq 時 (*d_iæg). LR read as 慈 (*dz’jæg). Anhui (HLY) 持 (*d’jæg). Punctuation after 4,10 following Anhui (HLY).

4,13 Graph unclear (𠄎). 親 (*ts’jĕn) : 辛 (*s_iĕn). Following LLx. MCy, Anhui (HLY) 言 (*ŋjĕn).

Slip 5. Top and bottom ends damaged. 21 graphs. 2 graphs (子羔) on back.

5,3 文 (*m_iwən): 𠄎. Following LXq. MCy transcribes as: 𠄎. HLY should be transcribed as {𠄎over 目}, homophone for 閔 (*m_iwən); can read as 文 or 敏 (*m_iwən). My translation of 4,8-4,13 is very tentative.

5,1-5,5, no satisfactory transcription and interpretation.

5,13 草 (*ts’ôg) < 艸 (*ts’ôg) (𠄎). Following LXq. MCy: 卉 (*χjwei). Cf. 1,9.

5,20 禮 (*liər) < 豐 (*liər).

5,21 悅 (*d_iwat) < 𠄎.

Slip 8. Broken at top. 39 graphs, including 1 joined graph.

8,1 𠄎. Partial graph. Not interpreted by MCy or LXq.

8,12. 遂 (*dz_iwəd): 𠄎 (𠄎), read as 穗 (*dz_iwəd). Following CBx. XZg, HLY: 由 (*d_iôg) : 秀 (*s_iôg). MCy 番 (*p’jwān) < 采 (*ts’æg), read as 播 (*pwār) or 布 (*pwo).

8,14 畎 (*kiwən) < 畎.

8,15 畝 (*mæg) < 畝.

Confucius said, ...₄... I have heard that when Shun was young, he was diligent in his studies and served his parents...₅...?????. When Yao selected Shun, he followed him into his thatched hut and discussed the rites with him. He was pleased...₈... and harmonious. Thus, Shun's virtue was truly that of a worthy. Having gone into the fields after him, (Yao) had him rule all-under-sky/heaven, and found him praise-worthy.

子羔曰：“如舜在_{8,31}今之世，則何若？”

8,30 才 (*dz'əg) : 在 (*dz'əg).

8,31 今 (*kjam) < 含 (*g'am).

8,33 世 (*sjad) < 殛.

Zigao said, “If Shun lived in the present generation, then what would happen?”

孔子曰：“.....₁₄....._{14,1}X三天子事之。

Slip 14. Broken at top and bottom. 6 graphs. Black line after last graph.

14.1 illegible.

Confucius said, “.....₁₄..... the three sons of sky/heaven would serve him.

Abbreviations

MCy: *Shanghai bowuguan Zhanguo cang Chu zhushu* 上海博物館藏戰國楚竹書 ed. Ma Cheng yuan 馬承源 (Shanghai: Shanghai Guji, 2002), vol. 2, pp. 181-91. Original publication with transcriptions and notes by Ma Chengyuan. Scans of original graphs are taken from this work.

Anhui: Anhui Daxue Guwenzi Yanjiushi 安徽大學古文字研究室. “Shanghai Chu zhushu (er) yandu ji 上海楚竹書(二)研讀記”, in *Shangboguan cang Zhanguo Chu zhushu yanjiu xubian*, pp. 425-33.

CBx: Chen Bingxin 陳秉新. “Shanghai Bowuguan cang Zhanguo Chu zhushu (er) bushi 上海博物館藏戰國楚竹書(二)補釋”, *Jiangnan Kaogu* 2004/2 (issue 91), 89-91.

CJ: Chen Jian 陳劍. “Shangbo jian Zigao, Ts'ung-cheng pian te chu-jian p'in-ho yü pien-lien wen-t'i hsiao-i 上博簡《子羔》《從政》篇的竹簡拼合與編連問題小議”, *Wenwu* 2003/5, pp. 56-9, 64.

CJg: Cao Jianguo 曹建国, “Du Shangbo jian Zigao zhaji 讀上博簡《子羔》札記” (www.jianbo.org, posted 2003/01/12).

CW: Chen Wei 陳偉, “Shanghai bowuguan cang Zhanguo Chu zhushu (2) lingshi 《上海博物館藏戰國楚竹書(二)》零釋” at <http://www.jianbo.org/Wssf/2003/chenwei03.htm>.

GYb: Guo Yongbing 郭永秉. “Shuo Zigao jian 4 de ‘min yi hao shi’ 說《子羔》簡4的‘敏以好詩’”, in *Chutu Wenxian yu guwenzi yanjiu* 出土文獻與古文字研究, 2006/1, pp. 326-30.

HLy: He Linyi 何琳儀, “Di er pi Hu jian xuanshi 第二批滬簡選釋”, in *Shangboguan cang Zhanguo Chu zhushu yanjiu xubian*, pp. 444-55.

- HDk: Huang Dekuan 黃德寬, “Zhanguo Chu zhushu (er) shiwen buzheng 戰國楚竹書 (二) 釋文補正”, in *Shangboguan cang Zhanguo Chu zhushu yanjiu xubian*, pp. 434–43.
- JXs: Ji Xusheng 季旭昇 et al., *Shanghai bowuguan cang Zhanguo Chu zhushu (er) du-pen* 《上海博物館藏戰國楚竹書(二)》讀本. Chutu wenxian yizhu yanxi cong-shu P016. Taipei: Wanquanlou, 2003, pp. 25–39.
- LLx: Liu Lexian 劉樂賢, “Du Shangbo jian *Min zhi fu mu*’ di san pian zhaji 讀上博簡《民之父母》第三篇札記”, www.jianbo.org, posted 2003/1/10.
- LCl: Li Chenglu 李承律 (Yi Song-ryul), “Shanhaku sokan sikou no kanseisetsu to nijō no jōmeiron 上博楚簡《子羔》の感生説と二重の受命論”, in *Xin chu Chu jian guoji xueshu yantao hui huiyi lunwenji* (*Shangbo jian juan*) 新出楚簡國際學術研討會會議論文集 (上博簡卷) Wuhan University, 2006, June 26–28, pp. 368–92.
- LMc: Liao Mingchun 廖名春. “Shangbo jian *Zigao* pian gansheng shenhua shitan 上博簡《子羔》篇感生神話試探”, *Fujian Shifan Daxue xuebao* (*Zhexue shehui kexue ban*) 福建師範大學學報 (哲學社會科學版), 2003/6, pp. 65–72.
- LR: Li Rui 李銳, “Shangbo jian ‘Zigao’, ‘Jiaojiaomingniao’ zhaji er ce 上博簡《子羔》《交交鳴鳥》札記二則”, Wuhan Daxue Jianbo Yanjiu Zhongxin, www.bsm.org.cn, accessed 1 October 2006.
- LXh: Luo Xinhui 羅新慧, “Cong Shangbo jian *Zigao* he *Rongchengshi* kan gushi chuan-shuozhong de Hou Ji 從上博簡《子羔》和《容成氏》看古史傳說中的后稷”, *Shixue yuekan* 2005/2, pp. 14–20.
- LXq: Li Xueqin 李學勤, “Chu jian *Zigao* yanjiu 楚簡《子羔》研究.” In *Shangboguan cang Zhanguo Chu zhushu yanjiu*, ed. Zhu Yuanqing and Liao Mingchun, vol. 2, pp. 12–17.
- LZp: Lin Zhipeng 林志鵬, “Chu zhushu *Zigao* pian bushi si ce 楚竹書《子羔》篇補釋四則”, *Jiangnan Kaogu* 江漢考古 2005/1 (issue 94), pp. 87–91.
- QXg: Qiu Xigui 裘錫圭. “Tantan Shangbo jian *Zigao* pian te jian-hsu 談談上博簡《子羔》篇的簡序”, in *Shangboguan cang Zhanguo Chu zhushu yanjiu*, ed. Zhu Yuanqing and Liao Mingchun, vol. 2, pp. 1–11.
- QXg2: Qiu Xigui 裘錫圭. “Shi *Zigao* pian ‘se’ zi binglun Shang de jin de zhi shuo 釋《子羔》篇“鉞”字並論商的金德之說”, in *Zhongguo jianboxue guoji luntan*, pp. 244–55.
- SJz: Su Jianzhou 蘇建洲, “*Shangbo jian: Zigao jian* 11 ‘x’ zi zai yi 上博簡子羔》簡11 𠄎字再議” at <http://www.jianbo.org/Wssf/2003/sujianzhou10.htm>.
- WQp: Wei Qipeng 魏啓鵬, “Shuo ‘si fang you bai’ ji ‘xian wang zhi you’ – Du *Shangbo jian* (er) jianji zhi yi” 說“四方有敗”及“先王之游—讀上博簡(二)箋記之一”, pp. 224–9.
- XZg: Xu Zaiguo 徐在國, “Shangbo Chu jian *Zigao* suoji 上博竹簡《子羔》瑣記”, in *Shangboguan cang Zhanguo Chu zhushu yanjiu*, ed. Zhu Yuanqing and Liao Mingchun, vol. 2, pp. 42–5.
- ZFh: Zhang Fuhai 張富海, “Shangbo jian *Zigao* pian ‘Hou Ji zhi mu’ jie kaoshi 上博簡《子羔》篇‘后稷之母’節考釋”, in *Shangboguan cang Zhanguo Chu zhushu yanjiu* (eds), Zhu Yuanqing and Liao Mingchun, vol. 2, pp. 46–52.
- ZGg: Zhang Guangui 張桂光, “*Shangbo jian* (er) *Zigao* pian shidu zhaji 《上博簡》(二)《子羔》篇釋讀札記”, pp. 34–41.