
Religious Origin of the Terms Dao and De and Their Signification in the Laozi

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Abstract

This article applies a synthetic approach of philological, religious, philosophical, and cultural studies to explore the original meaning of the terms dao 道 and de 德, two primary concepts in traditional Chinese intellectual history. Through an etymological analysis of the characters dao and de, and supported by both received and discovered texts and materials, this article demonstrates that dao originally represented the spirit of the Pole Star/High God and the movement of Heaven, and de, in relation to dao, originally represented the impartial virtue and power of Heaven. In terms of this new interpretation, the article further discusses the signification of dao and de in the Laozi to uncover the mystic aspects of the text.

*Dao 道, the central concept in Chinese intellectual history, is frequently translated as ‘way’ and explained in terms of both a road to physically travel on and an abstract or mystical pathway. Some scholars have however, questioned this conventional translation and interpretation from an etymological perspective, and others have indicated *dao*’s relationship with the *Taiyi* 太一 (‘Great One’) cult in early Chinese sources. Recent archaeological discoveries, especially the *Taiyi sheng shui* 太一生水 (The ‘Great One’ Gives Birth to Water) text from *Guodian* 郭店, have further inspired scholars to reconsider the complicated implications of *dao*. This article applies a multi-disciplinary approach to explore the religious origin of *dao* and its signification in the *Laozi*, for the first time providing etymological, archaeological, and iconographic evidence to support the identification of *dao* with the Great One/deity of the Pole Star/High God/Heaven in Warring States to Han texts. The religious origin of *de* 德, another primary concept, is also re-examined.*

I. *Dao* and the Origin of the Great One Cult

As some scholars have demonstrated, in both received and archaeological sources of the Warring-States Period to Han dynasty, *Dao* is often identified with the ‘Great One’ or its

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synonyms *Da* 大 (Great), *Yi* 一 (One), and *Taiji* 太極 (Great Pole/Ultimate), and the ‘Great One’ is further defined as the deity of the Pole Star or High God (*Shangdi* 上帝 or *Tiandi* 天帝).¹

In the *Lüshi chunqiu* 呂氏春秋 (ca. 239 B.C.), *Dao* is directly identified with the ‘Great One’: “As for *Dao*, it is the quintessence. It cannot be given a shape, nor can it be given a name. Forced to give it a name, I call it ‘Great One’”; “The myriad things were produced from the Great One”. Gao You 高誘 glossed, “The Great One is *Dao*” 太一, 道也.² The authors of the *Taiyi sheng shui* also give the ‘Great One’ the style-name *Dao*.³

Both the Great and the One, abbreviated or even earlier forms of the ‘Great One’, are also used interchangeably with *Dao* in pre-Qin to Western Han writings. In the *Laozi*, *Dao* and *Da* are used as ‘style-name’ and name of the mother of the myriad things.⁴ In the same text and the *Lüshi chunqiu*, *Zhuangzi* 莊子, *Guanzi* 管子, *Heguanzi* 鶡冠子,⁵ and *Huainanzi* 淮南子, the close relationship between *Dao* and the One is also remarkable.⁶ The silk-manuscript *Jing* 經 unearthed from Mawangdui again testifies this identification.⁷

Dao is then again identified with *Taiji*, the Great Pole/Ultimate. Xu Shen 許慎 glossed the One as “the beginning, the Great Pole/Ultimate, *Dao* established from the One” 惟初太極, 道立於一.⁸ As the ‘Great One’ represented the deity of the Pole Star (see below), the Great Pole/Ultimate was originally a synonym for it. For example, the “Xici” 繫辭 commentary to the *Zhouyi* reads, “The Great Pole/Ultimate gives birth to the Two

¹ *Taiyi* is also written as *Taiyi* 泰一 and *Dayi* 大一, as the three characters *Tai* 太, *Tai* 泰, and *Da* 大 are used interchangeably in early writings. Major studies on this topic include: Jiang Xiangnan 蔣湘南, “*Taiyi shiyi*” 太一釋義, *Qijinglou wenchao* 七經樓文抄, in v. 1541 of *Xuxiu Siku quanshu* (Shanghai, Shanghai guji, 1995), 3.11a–13a; Qian Baocong 錢寶琮, “*Taiyi kao*” 太一考, *Yanjing xuebao* 燕京學報 12 (1932): pp. 2449–2478; Ge Zhaoguang 葛兆光, “Zhongmiao zhimen: Beiji yu Taiyi, Dao, Taiji” 眾妙之門: 北極與太一, 道, 太極, *Zhongguo wenhua* 中國文化 3 (1990), pp. 46–65; Li Ling, “An Archaeological Study of *Taiyi* 太一 (Grand One) Worship,” trans. Donald Harper, *Early Medieval China* 2 (1995–96), pp. 1–39; Donald Harper, “The Nature of *Taiyi* in the Guodian Manuscript *Taiyi sheng shui* – Abstract Cosmic Principle or Supreme Cosmic Deity?” *Chūgoku shutsudo shiryō kenkyū* 中國出土資料研究 5 (2001), pp. 1–23; Sarah Allan, “The Great One, Water, and the *Laozi*: New Light from Guodian,” *T’oung Pao* 89 (2003): pp. 237–285; and David W. Pankenier, “A Brief History of Beiji 北極 (Northern Culmen), With an Excursus on the Origin of the Character *di* 帝,” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 124.2 (2004) pp. 211–236.

² Chen Qiyou 陳奇猷, *Lüshi chunqiu jiaoshi* 呂氏春秋校釋 (Shanghai: Xuelin, 1984), “*Dayue*” 大樂, 5.255–256. See Qian Baocong, “*Taiyi kao*,” p. 2452; Ge Zhaoguang, “Zhongmiao zhimen: Beiji yu Taiyi, Dao, Taiji,” p. 46; Jingmenshi Bowuguan 荆門市博物館, *Guodian Chumu zhujian* 郭店楚墓竹簡 (Beijing, Wenwu chubanshe, 1998), p. 125; Pankenier, “A Brief History of Beiji,” p. 218.

³ *Guodian Chumu zhujian*, p. 125.

⁴ *Laozi*, Chap. 25. See Li Ling, “An Archaeological Study of *Taiyi* Worship,” p. 21.

⁵ Some scholars have suspected that the *Heguanzi* were forged after the Han dynasty. However, recent studies and unearthed texts have testified that at least some parts of the *Heguanzi* material existed in pre-Qin to Han period. See Wu Guang 吳光, *Huang Lao zhi xue tonglun* 黃老之學通論 (Hangzhou, Zhejiang renmin, 1985), pp. 151–158; Li Xueqin 李學勤, “Mawangdui Hanmu boshu yu *Heguanzi* 馬王堆帛書與鶡冠子,” *Jiang Han kaogu* 江漢考古 7 (1987), pp. 51–56; David Knechtges, “Ho kuan tzu,” in *Early Chinese Texts: A Bibliographical Guide*, ed. Michael Loewe (Berkeley, 1993), pp. 136–137.

⁶ See Qian Baocong, “*Taiyi kao*,” pp. 2450–2454; Joseph Needham, *Science and Civilization in China*, Vol. 2, *History of Scientific Thought* (Cambridge, 1959), pp. 46–48; A. C. Graham, “The Way and the One in *Ho-kuan-tzu*,” in Hans Lenk and Gregor Paul, eds., *Epistemological Issues in Classical Chinese Philosophy* (Albany of New York Press, 1997), pp. 31–43; and Harold D. Roth, *Original Tao: Inward Training and the Foundation of Taoist Mysticism* (New York, 1999), pp. 115–118.

⁷ Guojia wenwuju guwenxian yanjiusuo 國家文物局古文獻研究所, *Mawangdui Hanmu boshu* 馬王堆漢墓帛書 (Beijing, 1980), p. 24. According to Robin D. S. Yates’s study, this text, along with other three texts copied in front of the *Laozi* (A), was written in the late Warring States period. See his *Five Lost Classics: Tao, Huang-Lao, and Yin-Yang in Han China* (New York, 1997), pp. 195–202.

⁸ Jiang Renjie 蔣人傑, ed., *Shuowen jiezi jizhu* 說文解字集注 (Shanghai, Shanghai guji, 1996), p. 1.

Principles” 太極生兩儀,⁹ while the *Lüshi chunqiu* reads, “The Great One gives birth to the Two Principles” 太—生兩儀.¹⁰ The “Xici” again reads, “The Yi (Change) possesses the Great Pole/Ultimate” 易有太極. Ma Rong 馬融 glossed the Great Pole/Ultimate as the Pole Star, while Kong Yingda glossed it as the ‘Great One’.¹¹

In numerous Han-dynasty texts, the ‘Great One’ is further defined as the deity of the Pole Star or High God. For example, the *Shiji* reads, “One of the bright stars in the heavenly pole constellation of the central palace is the regular dwelling of the ‘Great One’. . . . This is called the Purple Palace”.¹² The *Huainanzi* reads, “The Purple Palace is the dwelling of the ‘Great One’”.¹³ Zheng Xuan 鄭玄 said, “The ‘Great One’ is the name of the deity of the North Star”.¹⁴ Miu Ji 謬忌, a Han Taoist specialist, told Emperor Wudi, “The most honored celestial deity is the ‘Great One’, and the Five Gods are the Great One’s assistants”.¹⁵ The Han apocrypha *Chunqiu yuanming bao* 春秋元命苞 states, “The star of the Great One dwells high and hides deep, so it is called the North Pole”.¹⁶ Another Han apocrypha *Chunqiu hecheng tu* 春秋合誠圖 reads, “The Pole Star is the Great God of Celestial August”.¹⁷

The Great One’s identity as the deity of the Pole Star or High God has long been noted by Qing-dynasty to modern scholars. The Qing scholar Jiang Xiangnan’s 蔣湘南 defines the ‘Great One’ as High God and the deity of the Big Dipper, which he believed to have been the Pole Star. He also indicated that the ‘Great One’ possessed the power of manipulating *yin-yang*, the four seasons, and the production and destruction of the myriad beings.¹⁸ Qian Baocong’s “Taiyi kao” published in the 1930s is a comprehensive study of the ‘Great One’ cult.¹⁹ Qian cites plentiful sources to verify the Great One’s identity as the deity of the Pole Star and the most honoured High God. He further describes the ‘Great One’ worship in the Han dynasty and its relationship with the divination device *shi* 式, a cosmic-board with a round sky mounted on a square earth rotating around a central pivot which represents the Pole or Pole Star. Although some Warring-States texts mention the ‘Great One’, most of the texts describing the cult are Han works. This reason, plus his affiliation with the academic circle of “Questioning Antiquity”, makes Qian believe that the Great One cult was the invention of the Han people, and that the ‘Great One’ was originally an abstract concept

⁹Wang Bi 王弼 and Kong Yingda 孔穎達, *Zhouyi zhengyi* 周易正義 (Beijing, Beijing daxue, 2000), 7.340a. It is generally agreed that the *Zhouyi* is a genuine Western Zhou text. The “Xici” commentary is seen in the Mawangdui *Zhouyi*, so this portion, as well as most of the other canonical commentaries of *Zhouyi*, may have attained its present form in the mid-third to early second century. See Edward L. Shaughnessy, “I Ching,” in *Early Chinese Texts*, p. 221.

¹⁰*Lüshi chunqiu jiaoshi*, “Dayue,” 5.255.

¹¹*Zhouyi zhengyi*, 7.340a. For a detailed discussion of the identification, see Pankenier, “A Brief History of *Beiji*,” pp. 212–218.

¹²Sima Qian 司馬遷 (145 or 135 B.C.–ca. 86 B.C.), *Shiji* (Beijing, Zhonghua, 1959), “Tianguan shu” 天官書, 27.1289.

¹³Zhang Shuangdi 張雙棧, ed., *Huainanzi jiaoshi* 淮南子校釋 (Beijing, Beijing daxue, 1997), “Tianwen xun” 天文訓, 3.264.

¹⁴*Yiwei qianzuodu* 易緯乾鑿度, in *Weishu jicheng* 緯書集成, ed. Yasui Kozan 安居香山 and Nakamura Shohachi 中村璋八 (Shijiazhuang, Hebei renmin, 1994), Vol. 1, p. 32.

¹⁵Ban Gu 班固 (32–92), *Hanshu* 漢書, *Siku quanshu*, 25.25a.

¹⁶*Chunqiu yuanmingbao*, *Weishu jicheng*, Vol. 2, p. 649.

¹⁷*Chunqiu hechengtu*, *Weishu jicheng*, Vol. 2, p. 767.

¹⁸Jiang Xiangnan, “Taiyi shiyi”, 3.11a–13a.

¹⁹Qian Baocong, “Taiyi kao”, pp. 2449–2478. See also Gu Jiegang 顧頌剛 and Yang Xiangkui 楊向奎, “Sanhuang kao” 三皇考, in Vol. 3 of *Gu Jiegang gushi lunwen ji* 顧頌剛古史論文集 (Beijing, Zhonghua shuju, 1996), pp. 1–253.

which was not identified with the cult associated with the Pole Star and its deity before the Han.

More than half a century has passed since Qian's study, and many new archaeological discoveries have greatly enhanced our understanding of the 'Great One' cult. Li Ling cites the "Bing bi Taisui" 兵避太歲 (*Weapon to repel Grand Year*) dagger-axe from Jingmen 荊門 and the bamboo-slip divination texts from Baoshan 包山 to clarify convincingly that during the Warring States period the 'Great One' was already a term that implies the sense of astral body, deity, ultimate thing, and its cult in the state of Chu.²⁰ Donald Harper further cites evidence beyond the confines of Chu to argue that the 'Great One' cult was not limited to Chu but a popular cult from the Warring States to Han period.²¹

The excavation of the *Taiyi sheng shui* text from the Warring-States Chu tomb in *Guodian* in 1993 further testifies to the early appearance of the 'Great One' cult. The text illustrates a cosmology with the 'Great One' as the progenitor of the universe: the Great One gives birth to water, and water goes back to assist the 'Great One' to give birth to sky; then sky goes back to assist the 'Great One' to give birth to earth.²² This cosmology has since become a focus of academic interest. Scholars have dug out scattered cosmological accounts which are conceptually similar to the 'Great One' cosmology from both received literature and other unearthed texts,²³ and indicated its close relationship with the 'Great One' cult, the supreme cosmic deities, early astrology, and astrological divination devices.²⁴ Some scholars even suggest that the rise of the use of the *shi*-board as a divination device during the Warring States period influenced the manner in which the cosmos was visualised, and the 'Great One' cosmology and cult arose in association with it.²⁵ However, if the Great One represented the deity of the Pole Star, the origin of the 'Great One' cosmology and cult must have been closely related to ancient Chinese people's observation and understanding of the Pole Star. The *shi*-board, the astrological device with the Pole Star as its pivot, should also have been based on the same observation and knowledge, and was unlikely to be the origin of the 'Great One' cosmology.

It has been established that ancient Chinese astronomy was of polar and equatorial orientation. Because of their particular geographical location, the ancient Chinese concentrated their attention on the Pole Star and the circumpolar stars:

By day they observed the length of the sun's shadow at noon, and by night they investigated the North Star, so that they might set in order mornings and evenings. 晝參諸日中之景，夜考之極星，以正朝夕。²⁶

²⁰ Li Ling, "An Archaeological Study of Taiyi Worship", pp. 1–39.

²¹ Donald Harper, "The Nature of Taiyi in the Guodian Manuscript *Taiyi sheng shui*", pp. 1–2; "The Taiyi Cult as an Example of Early Chinese Common Religion", cited by Sarah Allan, "The Great One, Water, and the *Laozi*: New Light from Guodian", *T'oung Pao* 89 (2003), p. 272.

²² *Guodian Chumu zhujian*, p. 125.

²³ For example, see Qiang Yu 強昱, "Taiyi shengshui yu gudai de Taiyi guan" 太一生水與古代的太一觀, *Daojia wenhua yanjiu* 道家文化研究 17 (1999), pp. 353–379.

²⁴ See, for example, Li Xueqin 李學勤, "Taiyi sheng shui de shushu jieshi" 太一生水的術數解釋, in *Daojia wenhua yanjiu* 17 (1999), pp. 297–305; Donald Harper, "The Nature of Taiyi", p. 2.

²⁵ See Sarah Allan, "The Great One, Water, and the *Laozi*", pp. 246–253, 283.

²⁶ Zheng Xuan 鄭玄 (127–200) and Jia Gongyan 賈公彥 (fl. 650–655), *Zhouli zhushu* 周禮注疏, in Vol. 8 of *Shisanjing zhushu zhengliben* 十三經注疏整理本, ed. *Shisanjing zhushu zhengli weiyuanhui* 十三經注疏整理委員會 (Beijing, Beijing daxue chubanshe, 2001), "Kaogong ji" 考工記, 41.1345. See Léopold de Saussure, "Prolégomènes

Due to the effect of the precession of the equinoxes, various stars have been identified as Pole Stars in the course of time. Some stars which have preserved their Chinese names indicate that they were at various times Pole Stars, but later ceased to be so. In about 4000–3000 BCE the Big Dipper was very close to the North Pole. The first star of the Dipper is called Tianshu 天樞 (Heavenly Pivot; α Dubhe), the same name as the Pole Star (4339 Camelopardi) during the Han dynasty. Therefore, it might have been considered as the Pole Star. Ancient Chinese people observed the directions of the Dipper handle to determine the months and seasons, as recorded in the *Xia xiaozheng* 夏小正,²⁷ *Heguanzi*, and *Shiji*.²⁸ Based on these, Feng Shi identifies the Pole Star cult as the Big Dipper cult.²⁹ In earlier and later parts of the 2nd millennium BCE two circumpolar stars named Tianyi 天一 (Celestial One; ι Draconis) and Taiyi (Great One; 4 Draconis or 3539 Boss) might have been considered Pole Stars respectively, and in about 1000 BCE another circumpolar star named Di 帝 (High God; β Ursa Minor) also seems to have been used as the Pole Star.³⁰ According to oracle bone inscriptions, the Shang rulers frequently made sacrifices to the deity of the Big Dipper.³¹ Even though the Dipper might no longer serve as the Pole Star in the Shang

d'Astronomie Primitive Comparée," *Archives des Sciences physiques et naturelles* 4.23 (1907), pp. 112–537; Joseph Needham, *Science and Civilization in China*, Vol. 3, *Mathematics and the Sciences of the Heavens and the Earth* (Cambridge, 1954), pp. 229–259. About the dating and authenticity of *Zhouli*, earlier studies had in general agreed that the *Zhouli* was a product of the Warring States period. Recently, however, based on comparative studies of bronze inscriptions and archeological materials, Zhang Yachu 張亞初, Liu Yu 劉雨, and Liu Qiyu 劉起鈺 have showed that the main body of the *Zhouli* is consistent with or close to the Western Zhou governmental organisation, though materials of the Warring States and even Han were added to it later. See Zhang and Liu, *Xi Zhou jinwen guanzhi yanjiu* 西周金文官制研究 (Beijing, 1986), 3; Liu Qiyu, "Zhouli zhenwei zhi zhen ji qishu xiecheng de zhenshi yijiu" 周禮真偽之爭及其書寫成的真實依據, in *Gushi xubian* 古史續辨 (Beijing, Zhongguo shehui kexue chubanshe, 1991), pp. 619–653. However, when the *Zhouli* first became known in Western Han, the original sixth section had already been lost, and the "Kaogong ji" was substituted in its place. According to the Qing scholar Jiang Yong 江永, "Kaogong ji" was a work of the late Warring States period. See William G. Boltz, "Chou li," in *Early Chinese Texts: A Bibliographical Guide*, p. 25.

²⁷ This text is included in the *Da Da Liji* 大戴禮記, which is a compilation of pre-Qin to Han materials. See Jeffrey K. Riegel, "Ta Tai Li chi," *Early Chinese Texts*, pp. 456–459.

²⁸ Zhongguo tianwenxue shi zhengli yanjiu xiaozu 中國天文學史整理研究小組, *Zhongguo tianwenxue shi* 中國天文學史 (Beijing, Kexue chubanshe, 1981), 8; Feng Shi 馮時, *Zhongguo tianwen kaoguxue* 中國天文考古學 (Beijing, Shehui kexue wenxian, 2001) pp. 89–98.

²⁹ Feng Shi, *Zhongguo tianwen kaogu xue*, pp. 98–128. He further surmises that the cult emerged in about 6000 BCE and interprets some decors and images of archaeological objects as evidence for the cult, including the image of seven stars over the head of a shaman from the cliff painting discovered in Shizitan 柿子灘, the seven-hole stone knives unearthed in Xuejiagang 薛家崗, Bei yinyang ying 北陰陽營, and Lushanmao 廬山峯, and a pig image with a star symbol on its central body found in various archaeological sites. This assertion may need further verification; for example, some scholars define the symbol on the pig as the sun; see Xiaoneng Yang, *Reflections of Early China: Decor, Pictographs, and Pictorial Inscriptions* (Seattle: Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art and University of Washington Press, 1999), p. 98.

³⁰ See L. de Saussure, *Les Origines de l'Astronomie Chinoise* (1930; Repint, Taipei: Chengwen shuju, 1967), pp. 495–526; Henry Maspero, "L'Astronomie Chinoise avant les Han," *T'oung Pao* 26 (1929), p. 323; Zhu Kezhen, "The Origin of the Twenty-Eight Mansions in Astronomy," *Popular Astronomy* 55 (1949); Joseph Needham, *Science and Civilization in China*, pp. 259–262; Yasukatsu Maeyama, "The Two Supreme Stars, Thien-i and Thai-i, and the Foundation of the Purple Palace", in *History of Oriental Astronomy*, ed. S. M. Razaullah Ansari (Dordrecht, Kluwer Academic Publisher, 2002) pp. 3–18; David Pankenier, "A Brief History of Beiji," pp. 211–236. The star Di has different names in the writings of the Warring States to Han dynasty, such as Taidi 太帝 (Great God) and Tiandi 天帝 (Celestial God); see Qian Baocong, "Taiyi kao," pp. 2460–2461.

³¹ Guo Moruo 郭沫若, ed., *Jiaguwen heji* 甲骨文合集 (Beijing, Zhonghua shuju, 1978–1983), nos. 21338–21350, 21356–21357. See Wen Shaofeng 溫少峰 and Yuan Tingdong 袁庭棟, *Yinxu buci yanjiu: kexue jishu pian* 殷墟卜辭研究: 科學技術篇 (Chengdu, Sichuan shehui kexueyuan, 1983), pp. 55–57; Zhentao Xu, David W. Pankenier, and Yaotiao Jiang, *East Asian Archaeoastronomy: Historical Records of Astronomical Observations of China, Japan and Korea* (Amsterdam, Gordon and Breach Science Publishers, 2000) p. 23.

age, its traditional function as the indicator of time and seasons still made it a very significant circumpolar star.³² Therefore, the Chinese observation and worship of the Pole Star surely appeared much earlier than the Warring States period.

The Pole or Pole Star was supposed to be located on the highest and central region of sky with all other celestial bodies moving around it, and the celestial pole corresponded to the position of the king on earth, around whom the bureaucratic system revolved.³³ It is generally agreed that ancient Chinese state religion was of astronomical orientation.³⁴ As Sima Qian said, “Ever since the people have existed, when have successive rulers not followed the movements of sun, moon, stars, and asterisms?”³⁵ The practice of observing the sky centring on the Pole Star for guidance may even have emerged as early as the fifth millennium BCE. In a recently discovered burial (ca. 4600–3900 BCE) of Yangshao 仰韶 culture in Henan Puyang 河南濮陽, a corpse was oriented along the north–south axis, the figures of a tiger and a dragon were laid out using mollusc shells and placed to the west and east of the corpse, and a triangular figure was laid to the north, which has been interpreted as a symbol of the Big Dipper or Dixin, the Star of God.³⁶ Other archaeological evidence also shows that burials and dwellings from the beginning of the Bronze Age were uniformly built in a cardinal orientation, with the longitudinal axis aligned in a north–south direction.³⁷ The principle of symbolic centrality was also clearly manifested. A jade plaque discovered from Hanshan Lingjiatan 含山凌家灘 (ca. 2500 BCE) is inscribed with ‘compass rose’ design with ‘arrows’ pointing from the centre to the four cardinal and four intermediate directions, which suggests the concept of a centre from which influence radiates outward to the eight directions.³⁸ The Shang people called their state ‘Zhong Shang’ 中商 (Central Shang), and the kings conceived themselves as “standing at the core of a series of grids – familial, spiritual, geographical”.³⁹

³²This was true even down to the Warring States–Qin–Han period. For example, in the diagram of the twenty-eight stellar lodges in the lid of the lacquer clothes case from the Zeng Hou Yi tomb of Warring States, the Big Dipper functions as the pointer for the Pole Star; all the seven unearthed *shi* cosmic-board from Han dynasty are centred on the Big Dipper which represents the Pole. See Donald Harper, “The Han Cosmic Board”, *Early China* 4 (1978–79), pp. 1–10; Marc Kalinowski, *Cosmologie et divination dans la Chine ancienne* (Paris, École française d’Extrême-orient, 1991), pp. 68–74; Li Ling, *Zhongguo fangshu zhengkao* 中國方術正考 (Beijing, Zhonghua, 2006), pp. 69–140.

³³Needham, *Science and Civilization in China*, v. 3, p. 230.

³⁴For early Chinese cosmo-political culture of polar-equatorial astronomy and astral–terrestrial correspondence, see also Mircea Eliade, *Le mythe de l’ éternel retour: archétypes et répétition* (Paris, Librairie Gallimard, 1949), Chapter 1; Paul Wheatley, *The Pivot of the Four Quarters: A Preliminary Enquiry into the Origin and Character of the Ancient Chinese City* (Edinburgh, 1971), pp. 468–451; Jiang Xiaoyuan 江曉原, *Tianxue zhenyuan* 天學真源 (Shenyang: Liaoning jiaoyu, 1991); David Pankenier, “The Cosmo-political Background of Heaven’s Mandate,” *Early China* 20 (1995): pp. 121–176.

³⁵Shiji, “Tianguan shu,” 27.1342; David Pankenier, “The Cosmo-political Background of Heaven’s Mandate”, p. 121.

³⁶See Feng Shi, *Zhongguo tianwen kaoguxue*, pp. 278–288; Li Xueqin 李學勤, “Xishuipo longhumu yu sixiang de qi yuan” 西水坡龍虎墓與四象的起源, in *Dangdai xuezhe zixuan wenku: Li Xueqin ji* 當代學者自選文庫: 李學勤集 (Hefei, Anhui jiaoyu, 1997), pp. 101–109. Some scholars do not agree with this interpretation by indicating that the burial contains different layers; see Yan Ming 言明, “Guanyu Puyang Xishuipo yizhi fajue jianbao ji qi youguan de liangpian wenzhang zhong ruogan wenti de shangque” 關於濮陽西水坡遺址發掘簡報及其有關的兩篇文章中若干問題的商榷, *Huaxia kaogu* 華夏考古 1988.4, pp. 50–71.

³⁷Paul Wheatley, *The Pivot of the Four Quarters*, pp. 423–462.

³⁸See Chen Jiujin 陳久金 and Zhang Jingguo 張敬國, “Hanshan chutu yupian tuxing shikao” 含山出土玉片圖形試考, *Wenwu* 1989.4: pp. 14–17; Li Xueqin, “A Neolithic Jade Plaque and Ancient Chinese Cosmology,” *National Palace Museum Bulletin* 27.5–6, pp. 1–8.

³⁹David N. Keightley, *The Ancestral Landscape: Time, Space, and Community in Late Shang China* (Berkeley, 2000), pp. 84–85.

The central position of royal palaces corresponded to the Pole Star, the residence whence the 'Great One' watched over the southerly world of men.⁴⁰ In about 4000–3000 BCE the Big Dipper might have been regarded as the Pole Star, and the *Shiji* actually records a legend: "The Big Dipper is the chariot of the High God". This legend is even visualised in a Han picture as seen in the Wuliang shrine 武梁祠.⁴¹ The other stars that might have been considered as Pole Stars from 2000 BCE to 1000 BCE were named Celestial One, 'Great One', and High God. These names hint at the intimate relationship between High God, the 'Great One', and the deity of the Pole Star. As cited above, Han texts generally identify the 'Great One' with High God. Although these sources are of a somewhat later date, their records are in accord with early Chinese astrological knowledge and may have had an earlier origin. For example in these texts, the Pole Star/Great One is described as the determiner of the four seasons and the controller of wind, rain and other celestial phenomena. In the oracle bone inscriptions, High God is also a cosmic god who commands the deities of Rain, Thunder, and Wind.⁴² If Heaven was supposed to be organised around the Pole or Pole Star, and ancient Chinese state religion was of astronomical orientation, then it is reasonable that the deity of the Pole Star/the 'Great One' was worshipped as the supreme deity – the Di or High God during the Shang dynasty and the Tian or Heaven through the Zhou dynasty.⁴³

2. The Origin of *Dao*: Face Motifs in Jade and Bronze Artifacts of Late-Neolithic Age to Yin-Zhou Period

Why is *Dao* identified with the 'Great One' or deity of the Pole Star and therefore with High God or Heaven in texts of Warring-States to Han? Sarah Allan believes that the focal meaning of *dao* is not a roadway, but a waterway, which is the root metaphor of the Chinese philosophical concept. Moreover, she states that *dao* was not simply modelled on a river that flows continuously from a natural spring, but was taken as the Celestial River that flows unceasingly from the womb of the 'Great One'.⁴⁴ Allan's assumption of the celestial river as the imagery of the water produced by the 'Great One' is brilliant, but her gloss of *dao* as waterway does not seem to accord with the etymological structure of the character. Through an analysis of the character *dao*, this study traces the original implication of the term and

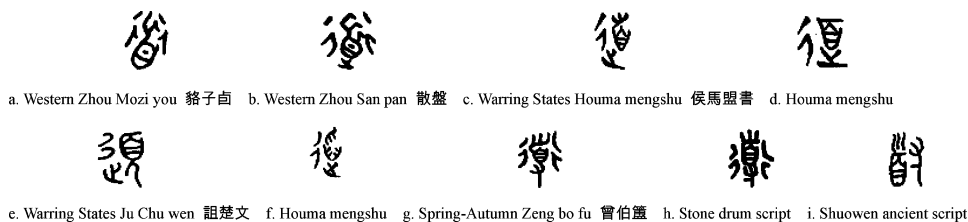
⁴⁰Marcel Granet, *La pensée chinoise* (Paris, 1934), p. 324; Paul Wheatley, *The Pivot of the Four Quarters*, p. 461.

⁴¹See Needham, *Science and Civilization in China*, v. 3, 241, Fig. 90; John S. Major, *Heaven and Earth in Early Han Thought: Chapters Three, Four, and Five of the Huainanzi* (Albany, 1993), pp. 107–108; Pankenier, "A Brief History of Beiji," pp. 220–224.

⁴²See Hu Houxuan 胡厚宣, "Yin buci zhong de shangdi he wangdi" 殷卜辭中的上帝和王帝, *Lishi yanjiu* 歷史研究 9 (1959), pp. 23–50; 10 (1959), pp. 89–110.

⁴³Y. Maeyama has already assumed that the Pole Star was worshipped as the High God and Heaven during the Yin-Zhou period; see his "The Two Supreme Stars, Thien-i and Thai-i, and the Foundation of the Purple Palace," pp. 4–8. Recently, David Pankenier puts forward an interesting conjecture that the character *di* 帝, High God, originally symbolised the intersection of the three lines connecting the principle stars in the handles of UMa and UMi marks the location of the north celestial pole in about 2000 BCE and was a kind of device used to locate true north; see his "A Brief History of Beiji", pp. 229–235, 236, Fig. 16. For the transition from *Di* to *Tian*, see Guo Moruo, *Xianqin Tiantaoguan zhi jinzhan* 先秦天道觀之進展 (Shanghai, Shangwu yinshuguan, 1936), pp. 1–37; Herrlee G. Creel, "The Origin of the Deity T'ien," *The Origins of Statecraft in China* (Chicago, 1970), pp. 493–506; Benjamin Schwartz, *The World of the Thought in Ancient China* (Cambridge, 1985), pp. 46–48. On the other hand, some scholars do not agree that Di or Shangdi represents the supreme god. For example, Robert Eno argues that it may just refer to deceased leaders of a lineage; see his "Was there a high god Ti in Shang religion?" *Early China* 15 (1990), pp. 1–26.

⁴⁴Allan, "The Great One, Water, and the *Laozi*," pp. 283–284.

Fig. 1. *Dao* 道.

provides etymological and archaeological evidence for the identification of *dao* with ‘Great One’ /High God/Heaven.

The character *dao* is not seen in the oracle-bone inscriptions (though it actually appears in another form, which will be discussed below). In Western Zhou bronze inscriptions and other pre-Qin scripts, it is presented in several forms. The earliest form is a compound of two graphic constituents, *shou* 首 (head) and *hang* 行 (a picture of a crossroads, meaning to walk and move, or a road; Fig. 1a). In later forms of this graph the constituent *zhi* 止 foot is added (Fig. 1b), which sometimes combines with the left half of *hang* to form the constituent *chuo* 辵 to walk (Fig. 1c). This graph later became the standard character for *dao*. In some cases, *shou* 首 is written as *shou* 𠂇, *ye* 頁, or *yao* 𠂇 (Figs. 1d–f); *shou* and *ye* also mean head, while *yao* is an erroneous form for *shou*. Sometimes, the constituent *zhi* 止 becomes the erroneous form *you* 又 (Fig. 1g), or adds a decorative dot to become *cun* 寸 (Fig. 1h). The *Shuowen jiezi* provides an ancient script composed of *cun* 寸 and *shou* 首 (Fig. 1i), which Gui Fu 桂馥 defines as *dao* 導.⁴⁵ However, as Peter Boodberg assumes, these are but variants of the earliest form, and the word itself combined both nominal and verbal aspects of the etymon; this is supported by textual examples of the use of the primary *dao* in the verbal sense “to lead”.⁴⁶ Liu Xiang also defines *dao* as a verb meaning to lead and walk.⁴⁷

Duan Yucai 段玉裁 (1735–1815) indicates that *shou* is the phonetic determinative in *dao*.⁴⁸ According to the phonetic reconstruction of archaic Chinese by Li Fanggui 李方桂, both *dao* (*dgəwɣ) and *shou* (*skhjəwɣ) belong to the *you* 幽 rhyme group and share the same final.⁴⁹ Peter Boodberg argues that *shou* is not merely the phonetic but also the semantic and expounds it from the meanings of ‘to head’, ‘to lead’, and ‘headway’.⁵⁰ Scholars have generally acknowledged the significant role of phonetic determinatives in the semantic

⁴⁵ *Shuowen jiezi jizhu*, 2: p. 367. (Figs. 1a–b and g), after Rong Geng, *Jinwen bian* 金文編 (Beijing: Zhonghua, 1985) p. 105, no. 0244; (Figs. c–e), after Gao Ming 高明, *Guwenzi leibian* (Beijing: Zhonghua, 1980), p. 107; (Figs. f and h), after Xu Zhongshu 徐中舒, *Hanyu guwenzi zixingbiao* 漢語古文字字形表 (Chengdu, Sichuan Cishu, 1981), p. 68; (Fig. g), after *Shuowen jiezi jizhu*, p. 367, no. 114. See Peter A. Boodberg, “Philological Notes on Chapter One of the Lao Tzu,” *Selected Works of Peter A. Boodberg*, comp. Alvin P. Cohen (Berkeley, 1979), pp. 460–467; Liu Xiang 劉翔, *Zhongguo chuantong jiazhiquan quanshixue* 中國傳統價值觀詮釋學 (Taipei, Guiguan tushu gongsi, 1993), p. 242; Sarah Allan, *The Way of Water and Sprouts of Virtue* (Albany, 1997), pp. 68–69; Matthias Richter, “Handschriftenkundliche Probleme beim Lesen althinesischer Manuskripte”, in B. Führer, ed., *Aspekte des Lesens in China in Vergangenheit und Gegenwart* (Bochum, Projekt Verlag, 2005), pp. 103–110.

⁴⁶ Boodberg, “Philological Notes on Chapter One of the Lao Tzu”, p. 467.

⁴⁷ Liu, *Zhongguo chuantong jiazhiquan quanshixue*, p. 242.

⁴⁸ *Shuowen jiezi jizhu*, p. 167.

⁴⁹ Li Fanggui, *Shangyuyin yanjiu* 上古音研究 (Beijing, Shangwu chubanshe, 1980), p. 41.

⁵⁰ Boodberg, “Philological Notes on Chapter One of the Lao Tzu”, p. 461.

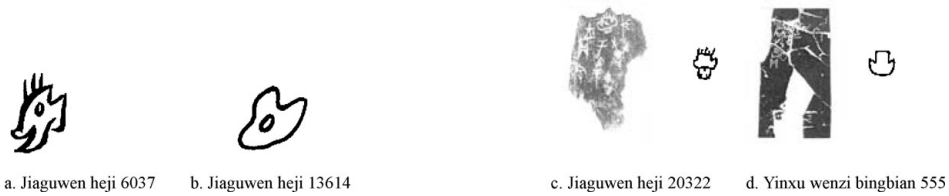


Fig. 2. *Shou* 首.

structure of archaic Chinese characters. In most of the cases, the phonetic is also the semantic and serves as the etymon. Through a thorough examination of the graphs identified as *shou* in the oracle-bone inscriptions, I have made a significant discovery on the etymon and original meaning of *dao*, and therefore find archaeological, iconographic evidence for the textual identification of *dao* with the ‘Great One’ /High God.

In the OBI, two kinds of graphs have been identified as *shou*. The first kind presents pictographs of a head with an eye, mouth, and/or hair (Fig. 2a–b).⁵¹ The second kind presents two very different graphs, one being a mask-like pictograph of a frontal face wearing a protruding-topped plumed crown (Fig. 2c), and the other a pictograph of a protruding-topped crown (Fig. 2d).⁵² In the OBI, these two kinds of graphs are used interchangeably. For example:

Cracking made on *jichou*, Gu, divining: “The king will set out and make the Shou sacrifice, and there will be no harm.” 己丑卜, 畀, 貞: 王畀, 畀, 無它。

Cracking made on *jiaxu*, Que, divining: “On the next *yihai*, the king will set out and make the Shou sacrifice, and there will be no disasters.” 甲戌卜, 畀, 貞: 翌乙亥, 王畀, 畀, 無禍”。⁵³

Here 畀 and 畀 are used in the same way with the same connotation. This verifies that the identification of the second kind of graphs of crowned mask as *shou* by the OBI experts is credible.

⁵¹ After *Jiaguwen heji*, no. 6037, 13614. See Yu Xingwu 于省吾 and Yao Xiaosui 姚孝遂, eds., *Jiagu wenzi gulin* 甲骨文字詁林 (Beijing, Zhonghua, 1996), no. 1086.

⁵² *Jiaguwen heji*, no. 20322, 916; *Jiagu wenzi gulin*, no. 3501; Hu Houxuan 胡厚宣, ed., *Jiaguwen henji shiwen* 甲骨文合集釋文 (Beijing, Zhongguo shehui kexue, 1999), no. 20322; Zhang Bingquan 張秉權, *Yinxu wenzi bingbian* 殷虛文字丙編 (Taipei, Zhongyang yanjiuyuan lishi yuyan yanjiusuo, 1957–1972), no. 555.

⁵³ *Jiaguwen heji*, no. 00916, 06033. Yu Xingwu defines the graph 畀 as *tu* 途, road, and indicates it may be used as phonetic loan character for *tu* 屠, to slaughter; see his “Shi tu,” in *Shuangjianyi Yinqi pianzhi sanbian* 雙劍謠殷契駢枝三編 (Taipei, Yiwen, 1960), 22. However, since the character *tu* 畀 contains the constituent *zhi* 止, foot or to walk, it should originally imply verbal meaning. The *Liji* records, “When a lord departed to visit the son of Heaven, . . . he would make the *Dao* sacrifice and then set out” 諸侯適天子, . . . 道而出; “When lords visit each other, . . . they make the *Dao* sacrifice and then set out” 諸侯相見, . . . 道而出 (Zheng Xuan and Kong Yingda, *Liji zhengyi* 禮記正義, in Vol. 13 of *Shisanjing zhushu zhengliben*, “Zengzi wen” 曾子問, 18.668a/b). *Dao* and *shou* are used interchangeably in early writings (see below). For other interpretations of the character *tu*, see *Jiagu wenzi gulin*, no. 866. The *Liji* was compiled in the Han dynasty, but it contains pre-Qin materials. This has been verified by the excavation of the texts *Ziyi* 緇衣 (correspondent to the “Ziyi” in the *Liji*), *Min zhi funu* 民之父母 (correspondent to the “Kongzi xianju” 孔子閒居 in the *Liji*), and so forth. See *Guodian Chumu zhujian*, 127; 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, 2003), Vol. 1, pp. 169–241; Vol. 2, pp. 149–80. For a detailed comparison of the textual variations between the manuscript versions and the received *Liji*, see Edward Shaughnessy, *Rewriting Early Chinese Texts* (Albany, 2006), pp. 63–93.

As is well known, the face motif (*mianwen* 面紋, also called *shoumianwen* 獸面紋, animal-face motif, or *shenren shoumianwen* 神人獸面紋, divine-man and animal face motif) is the most important motif in jade and bronze artifacts of late-Neolithic to Shang-Zhou period. Various kinds of jade artifacts from Liangzhu culture 良渚文化 (ca. 3500–2000 BC), including *cong* 琮, crown-shaped fittings (*guan Zhuang shi* 冠狀飾), three-pronged plaques (*sanchaxing qi* 三叉形器), awl-shaped ornaments (*zhuxing qi* 錐形器), d-shaped ornaments (*huang* 璜), column-shaped bead (*zhuxing qi* 柱形器), and axes, are dominated by face motifs.⁵⁴ The fullest form of face motif is seen in the “king of *cong*” discovered from Fanshan, which presents a human-like figure grasping a demon-like face in its hands (Fig. 3a):⁵⁵ the man-like face is inversely trapezoid-shaped, with staring round eyes and grinning mouth, wearing a dual headdress – inside a cap and outside a huge peak-centred, plumed crown, the demon-like face has large oval eyes and paired tusks (inners up and outers down), and the surface of the motif is filled with thunder patterns (*leiwen* 雷紋). Scholars usually name the man-like face as divine-man face and the demon-like face as animal face, and together call it animal-face motif or divine-man and animal-face motif. However, as indicated by Robert W. Bagley, although the face motifs of Liangzhu jade artifacts, as well as of Shang-Zhou bronze artifacts, present some features of animals, it cannot be substantiated as any certain animal.⁵⁶ Therefore, in reference to the works of Deng Shuping 鄧淑蘋, Doris J. Dohrenwend, and Jessica Rawson,⁵⁷ this study uses the term face motif.

The thunder pattern fill-in on the mask is usually defined as coiled-cloud pattern (*juanyunwen* 卷雲紋) or cloud-thunder pattern (*yunleiwen* 雲雷紋).⁵⁸ However, according to Rong Geng’s 容庚 study on a similar pattern on bronze artifacts, this kind of pattern should be called thunder pattern. Xu Shen describes the graph *lei* 雷 (雷) as “deriving from *yu*, *lei* resembling spiral-shapes” 從雨，蟲象回轉形，and lists two ancient scripts and one *zhou* script (*zhouwen* 籀文; (Figs. 4a–c)), of which two are added to the graph 雷.⁵⁹ The Song scholar Shen Kuo 沈括 (1031–1095) once got an ancient bronze *lei* 雷 and observed its interweaving patterns of cloud and thunder: the thunder pattern was like the ancient script for thunder, 雷, which symbolised the ‘spiral’ sounds of thunder, so he named the pattern as cloud-thunder.⁶⁰ Rong Geng indicates that this kind of pattern is actually thunder pattern: “What the Song people called cloud-thunder pattern should together be called thunder pattern now. The pattern that curves to left and right like 雷 is the graph for *shen* 申, which is also the graph for *dian* 電” (Fig. 5).⁶¹ Rong is right. In the OBI, the graph *lei* comprises

⁵⁴ Zhejiangsheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo 浙江省文物考古研究所 et al, *Liangzhu wenhua yuqi* 良渚文化玉器 (Beijing, Wenwu, 1990).

⁵⁵ After Zhejiangsheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo Fanshan kaogudui 浙江省文物考古研究所反山考古隊, “Zhejiang Yuhang Fanshan Liangzhu mudi fajue jianbao” 浙江余杭反山良渚墓地發掘簡報, *Wenwu* 文物 1 (1988): 12, (Fig. 20).

⁵⁶ Bagley, *Shang Ritual Bronzes in the Arthur M. Sackler Collections* (Washington, 1987), p. 19.

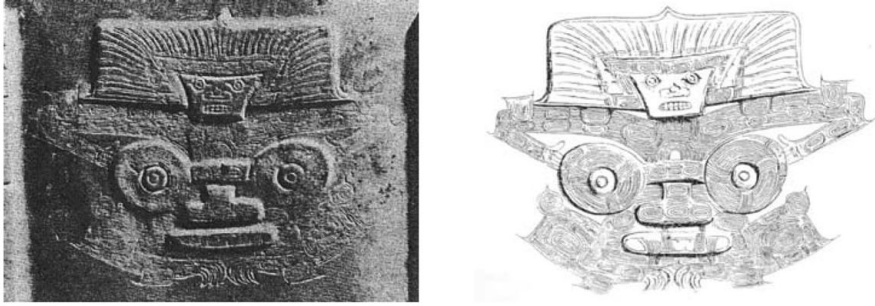
⁵⁷ Deng Shuping, “Gudai yuqi shang qi yi wenshi de yanjiu” 古代玉器上奇異紋飾的研究, *Gugong xueshu jikan* 故宮學術季刊 4.1 (1986), pp. 1–58; Dohrenwend, “Jade Demonic Images from Early China,” *Ars Orientalis* 10 (1975), pp. 55–78; Rawson, *Chinese Jade: from the Neolithic to the Qing* (London, 1995), pp. 32–39, 122–29.

⁵⁸ For instance, Fanshan report, 12; Mou Yongkang 牟永抗, “Liangzhu yuqi shang shen chongbai de tansuo” 良渚玉器上神崇拜的探索, in *Qingzhu Su Bingqi kaogu wushiwu nian lunwenji* 慶祝蘇秉琦考古五十五年論文集 (Beijing, Wenwu chubanshe, 1989), p. 187.

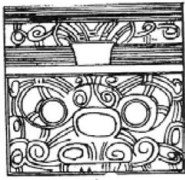
⁵⁹ *Shuowen jiezi jizhu*, 11.2435.

⁶⁰ Hu Daojing 胡道靜, ed., *Mengxi bitan jiaozheng* 夢溪筆談校證 (Shanghai, Shanghai guji, 1987), 19.626–627.

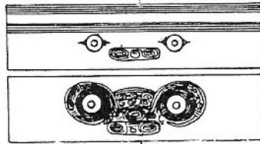
⁶¹ Rong Geng 容庚, *Shang Zhou yiqi tongkao* 商周彝器通考 (Taipei, Wenshizhe, 1985), pp. 117–120.



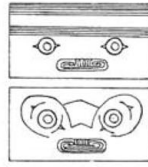
a. Cong from Fanshan



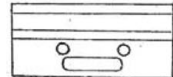
b. Cong from Yaoshan



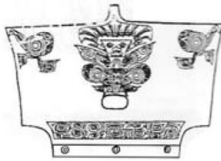
c. Cong from Yaoshan



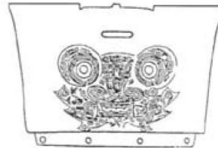
d. Cong from Yaoshan



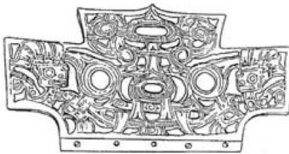
e. Cong from Fanshan



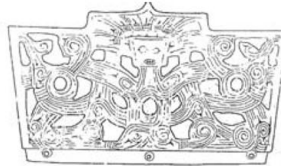
f. Crown-shaped fitting from Yaoshan



g. Crown-shaped fitting from Fanshan



h. Crown-shaped fitting from Fanshan



i. Crown-shaped fitting from Fanshan

Fig. 3. Face motif on Liangzhu culture jades.



a. Shuowen ancient script



b. Shuowen zhou script



c. Shuowen ancient script



d. Jiaguwen heji 3419



e. Jiaguwen heji 14



f. Yinqi cuibian 1570

Fig. 4. Lei (雷).

shen (original graph for dian, lightning, and shen 神, deity) and dots that symbolise thunder sounds (Figs. 4d–f).⁶² This structure manifests ancient Chinese people’s understanding of the thunder-lightning unity – lightning as the shape and thunder as the sound.

⁶²After Xu Zhongshu, *Hanyu guwenzi zixingbiao*, p. 440.



Western Zhou Zuo Fu Bing zhi 作父丙解

Fig. 5. Thunder motif.

a. Plumed-crown motif on Dawenkou culture pottery *zun* from Lingyanghe b. Pig-dragon motif on Hongshan culture jade slit ring from Aohan Dawa

Fig. 6. Crown and pig-dragon motifs.

Apart from some full images, most of the Liangzhu face motifs are simplified, incomplete patterns, dual or single, iconic or abstract and geometric (Figs. 3b–e).⁶³ Scholars in general believe that those jades engraved with face motifs were ritual artifacts and the face motifs represented deities worshipped by the Liangzhu people.⁶⁴ The shape of crown-like fittings is similar to the peak-centred, trapezoid-shaped crown worn on the divine heads (Fig. 3f–i),⁶⁵ so these fittings should also be symbols of the divine.⁶⁶ Since the face motifs of all the Liangzhu jade artifacts are amazingly similar, some scholars further suggest that this kind of face motif represented the deity generally worshipped by all Liangzhu people, which was possibly connected to the later concept of High God in the Shang dynasty.⁶⁷

The plumed-crown motif painted on a pottery *zun* discovered from Dawenkou 大汶口 culture (ca. 5000–3000 BCE; (Fig. 6a)) seems likely to be the prototype for the Liangzhu face motif.⁶⁸ This pottery *zun* is also supposed to have been used as a ritual artifact. Its peak-centred, plumed crown is similar to the Liangzhu crowns worn on the divine heads and

⁶³After Zhejiangsheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo 浙江省文物考古研究所, “Yuhang Yaoshan Liangzhu wenhua jitan yizhi fajue jianbao” 余杭琺瑯山良渚文化祭壇遺址發掘簡報, *Wenwu* 1 (1988): 36, (Fig. 5.1–2); p. 39, (Fig. 14.7); Mou Yongkang, “Liangzhu yuqi shang shen chongbai de tansuo,” p. 191, (Fig. 4–6).

⁶⁴See Fanshan report, pp. 30–31; Yaoshan report, pp. 50–51; Wang Wei 王巍, “Liangzhu wenhua yucong chuyi” 良渚文化玉琮芻議, *Kaogu* 1986.11: 1009–16; Mou Yongkang, “Liangzhu yuqi shang shen chongbai de tansuo,” p. 193.

⁶⁵After the Fanshan report, 42, (Fig. 24); Yaoshan report, 20–22, (Fig. 39, 43, 41).

⁶⁶See Du Jinpeng 杜金鵬, “Lun Linqu Zhufeng Longshan wenhua yuguanshi ji qi xiangguan wenti” 論臨朐朱封龍山文化玉冠飾及其相關問題, *Kaogu* 1994.1: 57. Plumed or horned crowns were symbols of power and divinity themselves. For example, the original graph for *huang* 皇 (august, heaven, god, sovereign) is a pictograph of plumed crown. See Du Jinpeng, “Shuo huang” 說皇, *Wenwu* 1994.7: pp. 55–63.

⁶⁷See Liu Bing 劉兵, “Liangzhu wenhua yucong chutan” 良渚文化玉琮初探, *Wenwu* 1990.2: pp. 30–37. Hayashi Minao 林巳奈夫 interprets these motifs as depicting sun and moon gods; see his “Chūgoku kodai no ibutsu ni arawasareta ‘ki’ no zuzōteki hyōgen” 中國古代の遺物に表された‘氣’の圖像の表現, *Tōhō gakuhō* 61 (1989): pp. 1–93. Wang Wei and Kwang-chih Chang suggest these motifs should be understood as magical or shamanistic; see Wang, “Liangzhu wenhua yucong chuyi,” p. 1015; Chang, “Tan ‘cong’ ji qi zai Zhongguo gushi shang de yiyi” 談‘琮’及其在中國古史上的意義, in *Wenwu yu kaogu lunji* 文物與考古論集 (Beijing, Wenwu, 1986), pp. 252–260.

⁶⁸After Wang Shuming 王樹明, “Tan Lingyanghe yu Dazhucun chutu de taozun ‘wenzi’” 談陵陽河與大朱村出土的陶尊“文字”, in *Shangdong shiqian wenhua lunwenji* 山東史前文化論文集 (Jinan, Qi Lu shushe, 1986), (Fig. 18.) See Du Jinpeng 杜金鵬, “Lun Linqu Zhufeng Longshan wenhua yuguanshi jiqi xiangguan wenti,” pp. 56–57.



a. Shangdong Longshan culture jade blade from Rizhao Liangcheng



b. Shijiahe culture jade face ornament from Zhongxiang Liuhe



c. Erlitou culture jade baton



d. Shang jade face ornament from Jiangxi Xingan



e. Western Zhou jade face ornament from Shaanxi Fengxi

Fig. 7. Face motif.

crown-shaped fittings, and its inverted trapezoid shape of lower part looks just like the shape of the Liangzhu divine faces. Several scholars have suggested that the demon-like face is a version of the pig-dragon motif of slit rings (*jue* 玦) discovered from Hongshan 紅山 culture (ca. 4000–3000 BCE (Fig. 6b)).⁶⁹ The Liangzhu face motif then continues to appear on jade artifacts of the late-Neolithic to the Shang-Zhou period, including Shangdong Longshan 山東龍山 culture (ca. 3000–2000 BCE), Shijiahe 石家河 culture (ca. 2400 BCE), Erlitou 二里頭 culture (ca. 2000–1600 BCE), and Shang and Western Zhou period (Figs. 7a–e).⁷⁰ Although the various kinds of face motif from different cultures had more or less altered, some basic features continued, such as staring paired eyes, peak-centred crowns, and paired tusks with

⁶⁹After Sun Shoudao 孫守道 and Guo Dashun 郭大順, “Lun Liaohé liúyù de yuánshǐ wénmíng yú lóng de qíyuan” 論遼河流域的原始文明與龍的起源, *Wenwu* 1984.6: 13, (Fig. 3.4.) See James Watt, “Neolithic Jade Carving in China,” *Transactions of the Oriental Ceramic Society* 53 (1988–89): pp. 11–26; Ma Chengyuan, ed., *Zhongguo qingtongqi* 中國青銅器 (Shanghai, Shanghai guji, 2003), pp. 314–316; Li Xueqin 李學勤, “Liangzhu wenhua yuqi yu taotiewen de yanbian” 良渚文化玉器與饕餮紋的演變, *Dongnan wenhua* 東南文化 1991.5, p. 43.

⁷⁰After Liu Dunyuan 劉敦願, “Ji Liangchengzhen yizhi faxian de liangjian shiqi” 記兩城鎮遺址發現的兩件石器, *Kaogu* 1972.4, p. 57, (Fig. 2); Jingzhou diqu bowuguan 荊州地區博物館, “Zhongxiang Liuhe yizhi” 鍾祥六合遺址, *Jiang Han kaogu* 江漢考古 1987.2: (Fig. 19.8); Peng Shifan 彭適凡 and Liu Lin 劉林, “Tan Xingan Shangmu chutu de shenren shoumianxing yushi” 談新幹商墓出土的神人獸面形玉飾, *Jiangxi wenwu* 江西文物 1991.3, p. 22, (Fig. 1.1); Zhang Changshou 張長壽, “Ji Fengxi xin faxian de shoumian yushi” 記澧西新發現的獸面玉飾, *Kaogu* 1987.5, p. 470, (Fig. 1); Wu Hong 巫鴻, “Yizu zaoqi de yushi diaoke” 一組早期的玉石雕刻, *Meishu yanjiu* 美術研究 1979.1, p. 70. In addition to the above excavated artifacts, a considerable number of jade artifacts engraved with similar face motifs are scattered throughout the world in different Museums; see Umehara Sueji 梅原未治, *Shina kogyoku zuroku* 支那古玉圖錄 (Kyoto, Kuwana bunseido, 1955); Na Zhiliang 那志良, *Yuzhi tongshi* 玉器通釋 (Hong Kong, Kaifa Company, 1964); Alfred Salmons, *Carved Jade of Ancient China* (Berkeley, Gillick Press, 1938); *Archaic Chinese Jades from the Edward and Louis B. Sonnenchein Collection* (Chicago, 1952); *Chinese Jade through the Wei Dynasty* (New York, 1963); Rene-Yvon Lefebvre d’Argence, *Chinese Jades in the Avery Brundage Collection* (San Francisco: The de Young Museum Society, 1972); Max Loehr, *Ancient Chinese jades from the Grenville L. Winthrop Collection in the Fogg Art Museum, Harvard University* (Cambridge, 1975); Dohrenwend, “Jade Demonic Images from Early China”; Harold Peterson, *Chinese Jades: Archaic and Modern, from the Minneapolis Institute of Arts* (Minneapolis, 1977); Wu Hong, “Yizu zaoqi de yushi diaoke,” pp. 64–70; Jessica Rawson, *Ancient China, Art and Archaeology* (London, 1980); Deng Shuping, “Gudai yuqi shang qiye wenshi de yanjiu”; Du Jinpeng, “Lun Linqu Zhufeng Longshan wenhua yuguanshi jiqi xiangguan wenti,” etc.



a. Jade blade in Taipei National Palace Museum

b. Jade mask ornament in Smithsonian Institution

c. Jade mask ornament in Smithsonian Institution

Fig. 8. Bifacial masks.

inners up and outers down.⁷¹ These motifs reveal not only material exchanges between those cultures, but also a shared and continuous religious faith from the late-Neolithic period to the Shang and Western Zhou.

It is notable that the unified double face of divinity and demon in Liangzhu jades later became two somewhat different faces engraved on both sides of one jade artifact. The paired face motifs of the jade blade discovered from Rizhao Liangcheng, Shangdong cited above represent this kind of development (Fig. 6a). The paired face motifs from both sides of a jade blade preserved in the National Palace Museum, Taipei are quite similar to the Liangcheng motifs (Fig. 8a),⁷² so scholars generally agree that this blade also belongs to the Shangdong Longshan culture. Smithsonian Institution preserves two bifacial jade masks (Fig. 8b–c):⁷³ one pair is close to the Shang jade mask from Jiangxi Xingan (Fig. 6d), and the other is similar to the Western Zhou jade mask from Shaanxi Fengxi (Fig. 6e), so these two jade masks are possibly from Shang and Western Zhou respectively.⁷⁴ The main differences between the paired faces are having or not having tusks, almond or round/spiral eyes, ‘smiling’ or ‘sad’ (comic-tragic) mouths, etc.⁷⁵ Like the unified face motif of Liangzhu jades, these bifacial motifs may imply a divine-demonic unity or the divine commanding over the demon.

Meanwhile, as more and more scholars have agreed, the face motif of late-Neolithic jades was also assimilated into bronze artifacts and became the *taotie* motif (generally called animal face motif now), the most common decor in Shang and early Zhou bronze artifacts (Figs. 9a–d).⁷⁶ There are some basic similarities between the iconography of the

⁷¹For discussions on the continuity and reworking of face motif in jade artifacts of late-Neolithic to Shang-Zhou period, see Du Jimpeng, “Lun Linqu Zhufeng Longshan wenhua yuguanshi jiqi xiangguan wenti,” pp. 55–226; Jessica Rawson, *Chinese Jade: From the Neolithic to the Qing* (London, 1995), pp. 28–53.

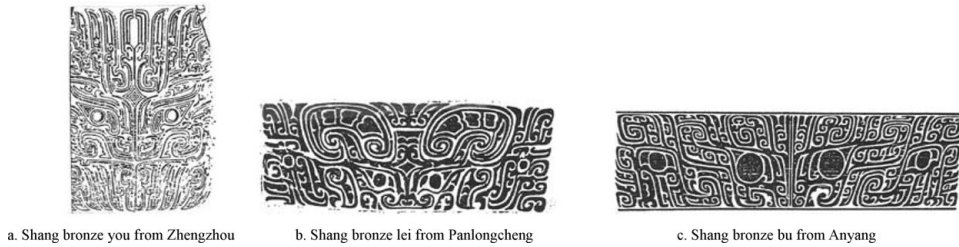
⁷²After National Palace Museum, *Gugong guyu tulu* 故宮古玉圖錄 (Taipei: National Palace Museum, 1982), (Fig. 2).

⁷³After Alfred Salmony, *Carved Jade of Ancient China*, (Figs. 31:2, 3).

⁷⁴See Du Jimpeng, “Lun Linqu Zhufeng Longshan wenhua yuguanshi jiqi xiangguan wenti,” pp. 59–62.

⁷⁵See Dohrenwend, “Jade Demonic Images from Early China,” p. 75.

⁷⁶After Henansheng wenwu yanjiusuo 河南省文物研究所, “Henan xin faxian Shangdai yaocang qingtongqi” 河南新發現商代窯藏青銅器, *Wenwu* 1983.3: (Fig. H1: 11; Hubeisheng bowuguan 湖北省博物館, “Panlongcheng Shangdai Erligang qi de qingtongqi” 盤龍城商代二裏崗期的青銅器, *Wenwu* 1976.2: (Fig. 31: 12); Li Ji 李濟 et al, *Guqiwu yanjiu zhuankan* 古器物研究專刊 (Taipei: Zhongyang yanjiuyuan lishi yuyan yanjiusuo, 1972), 5. (Fig. 29). Concerning the connections between the *taotie* motif and the Neolithic face motif, see Childs-Johnson, “Dragons, Masks, Axes, and Blades from Four Newly-Documented Jade-Producing Cultures of Ancient China,” *Orientalis* 1988.4: pp. 30–41; Ma Chengyuan, ed., *Zhongguo qingtongqi*, pp. 314–316; Zheng Zhenxiang 鄭振香, “Yinxu yuqi tanyuan” 殷墟玉器探源, *Qingzhu Su Bingqi kaogu wushiwu nian lunwenji* 慶祝蘇秉琦考古五十五年論文集 (Beijing, Wenwu chubanshe, 1989), pp. 315–325; and Li Xueqin, “Liangzhu wenhua yuqi yu taotie wen de yanbian” 良渚文化玉器與饕餮紋的演變, *Dongnan wenhua* 東南文化 5 (1991), pp. 42–48.

Fig. 9. *Taotie* motif.

late-Neolithic face motif and that of the Shang–Zhou *taotie* motif, such as staring, paired eyes, frontal face, plumed or horned headdress, and thunder patterns.⁷⁷ On the other hand, the *taotie* motif became more abstract and was confined to a prescribed standard form with striking consistence, which indicates a more unified religious belief system.⁷⁸

Now, going back to the two pictographs of *shou* 首, we find that they are obviously simplified, abstract forms of the face and *taotie* motifs discussed above. The first graph of frontal face and protruding-topped plumed crown is especially similar to the jade face ornament of Shijiahe culture (Fig. 7b), while the second graph of protruding-topped crown is close to the crown-shaped fittings of Liangzhu culture (Fig. 3f–i). Thus, we may assume that the iconography of the late-Neolithic face motif was actually abstracted into a pictograph at the latest during the Shang dynasty, and the original meaning of the pictograph should be the deities the face motifs symbolised. According to the identification of *Dao* with the deity of the Pole Star and High God in pre-Qin to Han writings, the deity the graph *shou* represented might have originally denoted the deity of the Pole Star or High God. The inversely trapezoid-shaped divine face appears consistently in all full forms of Liangzhu face motif (Figs. 3a, b, f, and i). Feng Shi asserts that it resembles the trapezoid-shaped bowl of the Big Dipper and therefore must have represented the deity of the Dipper, which was just possibly regarded as the Pole Star during the Liangzhu period.⁷⁹ Feng’s assertion seems quite convincing, as the contour of the Liangzhu divine face is very peculiar, unlike any human and animal face. In the OBI, High God is the supreme deity of the cosmos, residing in the highest heaven and commanding all the natural forces and celestial bodies, including the deities of Wind, Cloud, Thunder, and Rain.⁸⁰ In each of the two or four corners of some Liangzhu face motifs, a bird is engraved (Fig. 3f); this is in accord with the record that “phoenix is the messenger of High God” (Di shi feng 帝史鳳) in the OBI.⁸¹ As discussed above, the face motifs of jade and bronze artifacts are filled with thunder patterns. The grand sounds of thunder and frightening flashes of lightning would easily make ancient people worship them as the manifestation of the heavenly power. In the Liangzhu ritual jade artifacts, the deity’s cap and limbs are decorated with thunder patterns, and it grasps a demonic face which is also

⁷⁷ See Xiaoneng Yang, *Reflections of Early China*, p. 80.

⁷⁸ See Xiaoneng Yang, *Reflections of Early China*, p. 200.

⁷⁹ Feng Shi, *Zhongguo tianwen kaoguxue*, pp. 98–128.

⁸⁰ See Hu Houxuan, “Yin buci zhong de Shangdi he Wangdi,” pp. 24–50.

⁸¹ See Chen Mengjia 陳夢家, “Shangdai de shenhua yu wushu” 商代的神話與巫術, *Yanjing xuebao* 20 (1936), pp. 526–527; Liu Bing, “Liangzhu wenhua yucong chutan,” p. 35.

filled with thunder patterns. Many *taotie* motifs are also filled with thunder patterns. This may symbolise the supreme deity's command over or possession of the power of thunder and lightning. In the OBI, High God possesses dual personality of good and evil and dual power of reward and punishment: sometimes bestowing a harvest year, while sometimes sending down a draught; sometimes assisting humans, while sometimes bringing disasters to them.⁸² This is in accord with the twofold face motif of divinity and demon. In addition, the Shang and Zhou people often said that High God or Heaven was overlooking their acts from heaven;⁸³ this is also in accordance with the bright 'eye' of the North Star and the staring eyes of the face motifs.⁸⁴

Then, *shou* was added the constituent *hang* 行 (to walk or move, road) to indicate the rotational movement and guidance of the Pole (Star)/Heaven.⁸⁵ As demonstrated by the *shi* cosmic-board, ancient Chinese people imagined the North Pole (Star) as the pivot of heaven or the chariot of High God, which moved round itself and also led heaven and other celestial bodies to rotate around it. Both the first star of the Big Dipper and the Pole Star during the Han were actually named Tianshu 天樞 (Pivot of Heaven), and the North Pole was named Beijishu 北極樞 (North Pole Pivot). The *Zhoubi suanjing* 周髀算經 reads, "The central point of the *xuanji* area of the North Pole Pivot is at the central point of the north heaven".⁸⁶ Likewise, the *Laozi* describes *Dao* as "moving round yet never becoming weary" 周行而不殆 and "turning back is how *Dao* moves" 反者道之動.⁸⁷ The *Taiyi sheng shui* states, "The 'Great One' ... moves with the seasons, circling and beginning again"

⁸²See Hu Houxuan, "Yin buci zhong de Shangdi he Wangdi," pp. 24–50.

⁸³For example, the "Huang yi" 皇矣 (August) poem in the *Shijing* reads,

Oh! August High God
Looks down majestically,
Watching and observing the four quarters
To examine the ills of the people.

In Mao Heng 毛亨 and Zheng Xuan, *Maoshi zhengyi* 毛詩正義, *Shisanjing zhushu zhengliben*, no. 243, 16, p. 1195.

⁸⁴Hayashi Minao has already suggested that the *taotie* motif represented the High God of the Shang and Zhou. He tries to support this argument with a comparison of the *taotie* motif and the graph of *di* 帝 in oracle bone and bronze inscriptions, which he believes to be similar, but other scholars do not agree. See Hayashi, *Chūgoku kodai no kamigami* 中國古代の神がみ (Tokyo, 2002), pp. 123–150; Yang, *Reflections of Early China*, 200. Like his interpretation of the Liangzhu face motif, Kwang-chih Chang defines the *taotie* motif and other animal designs on Shang and Zhou bronzes as images of the various animals that served as the helpers of shamans in the task of communication between heaven and earth, the spirits and the living (*Art, Myth, and Ritual: The Path to Political Authority in Ancient China*; Cambridge, 1983, pp. 56–80). Sarah Allan interprets the *taotie* motif as referring to power, eating, and the passage to the other world ("Art and Meaning", in *The Problem of Meaning in Early Chinese Ritual Bronzes* (London, 1993, pp. 9–33). On the other hand, some scholars have held the opinion that this iconography does not present any religious symbolism. Max Loehr asserts that the motif cannot have had any religious, cosmological, or mythological meaning (*Ritual Vessels of Bronze Age China*, New York: The Asia Society, 1968, p. 13). Robert Bagley further argues that the motif was the product of bronze casting technology (*Shang Ritual Bronzes*, pp. 19–21, n. 47). Both Itō Michiharu and Ladislav Kesner believe that the motif emerged in conjunction with and therefore symbolised the increasing systemisation and centralisation of dynastic institutions in the Shang; see Itō, "Yin Religion and Society: Looking beyond the *T'ao t'ieh* Patterns," *The Journal of Intercultural Studies* 15–16 (1988–89) pp. 55–73; Kesner, "The *Taotie* Reconsidered: Meaning and Functions of Shang Theriomorphic Imagery," *Artibus Asiae* 51.1–2 (1991), pp. 29–53.

⁸⁵In his discussions with me, Professor Li Zehou always emphasises that the character *dao* implies the meaning of movement and process.

⁸⁶Jiang Xiaoyuan 江曉原 and Xie Yun 謝筠, eds., *Zhoubi suanjing* 周髀算經 (Shenyang: Liaoning jiaoyu, 1996) p. 91. This text was compiled during the Han dynasty, but it contains pre-Qin materials of astronomy; see Christopher Cullen, *Astronomy and Mathematics in Ancient China: the Zhou bi suan jing* (Cambridge, 1996), pp. 138–145.

⁸⁷*Laozi*, Chaps. pp. 25, 40.

是故太一... 行於時,周而或[始].⁸⁸ *The Hanfeizi* states, “The sage observed its darkness and void, applied its cyclical movement, and forcedly named it ‘*Dao*’” 聖人觀其玄虛,用其周行,強字之曰道.⁸⁹ The use of the word *hang* 行 (to move) in these expressions vividly explains the original signification of the cyclical movement of the Pole (Star)/Heaven presented by the compound of *shou* and *hang* in the character *dao*.

In addition, as the pivot of heaven, the movement of the Pole never actually strayed from its central position, but rather functioned in the way of guiding and leading the universe to move around it. The *Lüshi chunqiu* reads, “The Pole Star moves together with the heaven but the Pole of Heaven does not move” 極星與天俱遊而天極不移.⁹⁰ Thus, *dao* further derived the meaning ‘to guide’, as the Han dictionary *Shiming* 釋名 glosses, “*Dao*, to guide, to penetrate and guide the myriad things” 道,導也,所以通導萬物也.⁹¹

When used as a noun, *dao* first of all denotes the meaning of the course and order of Heaven. Many scholars have indicated that for the Taoists *Dao* was not the course of life in human society but the course in which the universe worked.⁹² The *Wuxing* 五行 from both Guodian and Mawangdui emphasizes: “*Dao* is the course of Heaven” 道也者,天道也.⁹³ The *Zhuangzi* reads, “In the past those who elucidated the ‘Great Dao’ first elucidated Heaven and then way and virtue” 古之明大道者,先明天而道德次之.⁹⁴ This also indicates that the ‘Great Dao’ is first referred to ‘Heaven’s way’ and then extended to connote “human’s way and virtue”. The *Laozi* states that “weakness is the function of *Dao*” 弱者,道之用,⁹⁵ while the *Taiyi sheng shui* reads, “The course of Heaven values weakness” 天道貴弱.⁹⁶ Here *Dao* and *Tiandao* are used interchangeably. According to the *Zuozhuan*, the court historiographers, diviners, physicians and music masters already had a cosmology in which the course of the celestial bodies was called the course of Heaven.⁹⁷ Thus, when the ‘*Tuan*’ 豕 commentary to the *Zhouyi* states that “observing the divine *Dao* of Heaven with the four seasons [proceeding] without error, the sage established the divine *Dao* as the teaching, and all under Heaven obeyed it” 觀天之神道而四時不忒,聖人以神道設教而天下服矣,⁹⁸ the term ‘divine *Dao*’ implies the divine nature of the *Dao* of Heaven/High God. Indeed, in the *Laozi* and many other early writings, the *Dao* of Heaven is always set as the fundamental and model for the course of humans.

It is notable that in the OBI, there is a graph 𠄎 that comprises *ren* 人 (human) and *hang* 行, which is sometimes added the constituent *zhi* 止 (foot, to walk) or *kou* 口 (mouth; (Figs. 10a–c)).⁹⁹ This graph is also seen in bronze, seal, bamboo, and Stone-drum inscriptions.

⁸⁸ *Guodian Chumu zhujian*, p. 125.

⁸⁹ Chen Qiyou 陳奇猷, ed., *Hanfeizi xin jiaozhu* 韓非子新校注 (Shanghai, 2000), “Jie Lao” 解老, 6.415.

⁹⁰ *Lüshi chunqiu jiaoshi*, “Youshi” 有始, 13.659.

⁹¹ *Shiming*, *Siku quanshu*, 4.1a.

⁹² Needham, *Science and Civilization in China*, Vol. 2, pp. 36–37.

⁹³ *Guodian Chumu zhujian*, pp. 149–150; *Mawangdui Hanmu boshu*, Vol. 1, pp. 19, 24.

⁹⁴ *Zhuangzi jishi*, “Tiandao” 天道, 5.471.

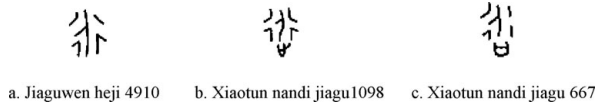
⁹⁵ *Laozi*, Chap. 40.

⁹⁶ *Guodian Chumu zhujian*, p. 125.

⁹⁷ A. C. Graham, *Disputers of the Dao: Philosophical Argument in Ancient China* (La Salle: Open Court, 1989), p. 18.

⁹⁸ *Zhouyi zhengyi*, 3.115a.

⁹⁹ *Jiagu wenzi heji*, no. 4910; Zhongguo shehui kexueyuan kaogu yanjiushuo 中國社會科學院考古研究所, ed., *Xiaotun nandi jiagu* 小屯南地甲骨 (Beijing, Zhonghua, 1980–83), no. 1098, p. 667.

Fig. 10. *Dao* 道.

Some scholars have asserted that this graph should be glossed as *dao* 道.¹⁰⁰ This assertion is now verified by the Guodian texts. In the Guodian *Laozi* (A) this character is used to replace *dao* in the received text, and the same kind of usage is also seen in the Guodian texts *Xing zi ming chu* 性自命出, *Liude* 六德, and *Yucong* (A) 語叢一.¹⁰¹ The original meaning of this character was the movement of humans, or roads for human traffic, so as to differentiate from the character *dao* 道, the movement or course of Heaven. In addition, in the OBI, the character *dao* 道 is often used before or after the character *wang* 王 (king) to express the meaning of “to extol the king” or “the king says”.¹⁰² Thus, another verbal meaning of the character *dao* 道, ‘to say’, may have been derived from the meaning of “to extol the High God” or “the High God says” expressed in ancient divinations and sacrificial performances.

In addition, as is a general rule for characters of common etymon in early writings, the two characters *dao* and *shou* are used interchangeably. For example, there is a phrase “shoude” 首德 in the bronze inscriptions of the Western Zhou Shihong gui 師匚簋. Some scholars define it as “changde” 常德 (constant virtue),¹⁰³ but it is more reasonable to gloss it as “daode” 道德. The expression “ji dao” 稽道 in the *Yi Zhoushu* 逸周書 was cited as “ji shou” 稽首 (to kowtow) in the *Qunshu zhiyao* 群書治要, and the expression “zhui shou” 追首 recorded in the *Shiji* was written as “zhui dao” 追道 (to recall and state) in the stele inscriptions.¹⁰⁴ Thus, *dao* also connotes the meaning of the supreme deity – the ‘Great One’ or High God. The *Laozi* states that *Dao* “images the forefather of High God” 象帝之先, and further describes it as a shadowy image, object, and essence.¹⁰⁵ If we define the image of *Dao* as the face motif which symbolised the supreme deity and first appeared in prehistoric period, even before the appearance of the graph Di 帝 (High God) in the OBI, then the meaning of these lines would become very clear. After Di or Shangdi was used to represent the supreme deity, the original meaning of *shou* or *dao* gradually became blurred, and *dao* 道 and *dao* 道 gradually intermingled.

In some early texts of pre-Qin to Han, however, the divine origin of *Dao* is still mentioned occasionally. Donald Harper thinks that the *Taiyi shengshui* text “provides a Warring States

¹⁰⁰ See Yan Yiping 嚴一萍, “Shi dao” 釋弔, *Zhongguo wenzi* 中國文字, Vol. 7 (1962); “Zai shi dao” 再釋道, *Zhongguo wenzi* 中國文字, Vol. 15 (1965); Cao Dingyun 曹定雲, “Shi dao, yong jian lun xiangguan wenti” 釋道永兼論相關問題, *Kaogu* 考古 11 (1995): pp. 1028–1035.

¹⁰¹ *Guodian Chumu zhujian*, 111–12, 179–81, 187–88, 197. See Qiu Xigui 裘錫圭, “On the Analysis and Transcription of Early Chinese Characters: Examples from the Guodian Laozi,” in *The Guodian Laozi: Proceedings of the International Conference, Dartmouth College, May 1998*, ed. Sarah Allan and Crispin Williams (Berkeley, 2000) p. 54.

¹⁰² Cao Dingyun makes a detailed and convincing discussion of this conclusion; see his “Shi dao, yong jian lun xiangguan wenti,” pp. 1028–1035.

¹⁰³ Du Naisong 杜迺松, “Xizhou tongqi mingwen zhong de ‘de’ zi” 西周銅器銘文中的“德”字, *Jijin wenzi yu qingtongqi wenhua lunji* 吉金文字與青銅文化論集 (Beijing, Zijincheng, 2003), p. 73.

¹⁰⁴ See Wang Niansun 王念孫, *Dushu zazhi* 讀書雜誌, in v. 1152 of *Xuxiu siku quanshu* (Shanghai, Shanghai guji, 1995), 4.5a/b.

¹⁰⁵ *Laozi*, Chaps. 4, 21.

precedent for a deity in charge of genesis”.¹⁰⁶ As mentioned above, the “*Tuan*” commentary to the *Zhouyi* names *Dao* as “divine *Dao* of Heaven”. The *Zhuangzi* describes *Dao* as “inspiring demons and gods and giving birth to heaven and earth” 神鬼神帝, 生天生地.¹⁰⁷ In the *Heguanzi*, *Dao* is named “the *Dao* of the Great One” 泰—之道 and the “sacred *Dao* of divine region” 聖道神方, and is described as a personified divinity with “the heaven and earth acting in its chest, and then completing everything outside” 彼天地動作於胸中, 然後事成於外.¹⁰⁸ The *Liji* records that before the Son of Heaven departed for an expedition, he would make a sacrifice to the High God. In another part, the same text records that before the lord of a state departed to visit the son of Heaven or other lords, he would make a sacrifice called *Dao*.¹⁰⁹ In the second case, traditional commentaries gloss the *Dao* sacrifice as a sacrifice to the spirit of the road. In addition, there is a phrase “*dao Dao*” 禱道 (making sacrifice and praying to the *Dao*) in the bamboo inscriptions of Warring-States Chu discovered from Hubei Jiangling Tianxingguan 江陵天星觀, which scholars interpret as “making sacrifice and praying to the spirit of the road”.¹¹⁰ However, the spirit of the road was actually called ‘*Hang*’ 行 during the Warring-States period.¹¹¹ The *Dao* sacrifice might have originally been a sacrifice to *Dao*/High God as in the first case, but because the original implication became blurred, later it was just understood literally.

3. Laozi: Redefining Dao

Starting from the mid-Western Zhou or a little earlier, some fundamental changes in bronze decoration occurred. In general, the face themes became more abstract, simplified, and geometric, and lost their previous effect of solemnity and mystery. The *taotie* motifs dissolved into an unrecognisable, dismembered pattern or were minimised to a subsidiary role.¹¹² As time went on, by the Spring-Autumn and Warring States period, most people seem to have forgotten the original meaning and function of this Shang and early Zhou decor. In the *Lüshi chunqiu*, the *taotie* is already described as a monster that devours human.¹¹³ Correspondingly, in the intellectual writings of this period, interests in the *Dao* of Heaven (*tiandao* 天道), the movement and course of Heaven, and its relationship with the course of human society seem to surpass interests in the High God itself, although it and other celestial divinities were still reverently extolled. Correlative cosmologies of various kinds sprung up. *Dao* or *tiandao* became the favourite word to replace *di/tian* or *shangdi/huangtian*. These changes may reflect

¹⁰⁶ Harper, “The Nature of Taiyi in the Guodian Manuscript *Taiyi sheng shui*,” 13.

¹⁰⁷ *Zhuangzi jishi*, “Dazongshi” 大宗師, 3.247. This chapter belongs to the “*Neipian*” 內篇 (Inner Chapters) section which is generally considered as the actual work of Zhuang Zhou or Zhuang zi.

¹⁰⁸ *Heguanzi*, “*Tailu*,” *Siku quanshu*, 2.26a.

¹⁰⁹ *Liji zhengyi*, “*Wangzhi*” 王制, 12.431a/b; “*Zengzi wen*” 曾子問, 18.668a/b.

¹¹⁰ See Yan Changgui 晏昌貴, “*Tianxingguan* ‘*Bushi jidao*’ jian shiwen jijiao” 天星觀“卜筮祭禱”簡釋文輯校, in Ding Sixin 丁四新, ed., *Chudi jiaobo wenxian sixiang yanjiu* 楚地簡帛文獻思想研究 (Wuhan, Hubei jiaoyu, 2004), p. 293; He Linyi 何琳儀, ed., *Zhangguo guwen zidian: Zhangguo wenzi shengxi* 戰國古文字典·戰國文字聲系 (Beijing, Zhonghua, 1998), pp. 194–195.

¹¹¹ Yan Changgui, “*Tianxingguan* ‘*Bushi jidao*’ jian shiwen jijiao”, pp. 182, 293.

¹¹² Jessica Rawson, “Statesmen or Barbarians? The Western Zhou as Seen through Their Bronzes”, *Proceedings of the British Academy* 75 (1989): 71–95; Michael Loewe and Edward L. Shaughnessy, eds., *The Cambridge History of Ancient China: From the Origins of Civilization to 221 B.C.* (Cambridge, 1999), p. 465; Xiaoneng Yang, *Reflections of Early China*, p. 195.

¹¹³ *Lüshi chunqiu jiaoshi*, 16.947.

the new development of calendrical and astronomical knowledge. Scholars generally agree that the system of the twenty-eight celestial lodges and the establishment of calendar reached maturity during this period.¹¹⁴ People of this period realised that “the movement of heaven has its constant [course]” 天行有常,¹¹⁵ and were generally interested in the natural, seasonal cycle of cosmos. On the other hand, as myths faded away, the original religious connotation of *Dao*, the ‘Great One’, and the Great Pole/Ultimate became blurred and concealed behind the symbols of the progenitor and the course of the universe. “The art of ‘Dao’ is breaking down for all under the heaven” 道術將為天下裂,¹¹⁶ and “the disputers of Dao” had to seek and redefine its meaning and nature according to their own calendrical and astronomical knowledge, religious faith, philosophical thinking, and socio-political concern.

The authors of the *Laozi* were among those enthusiastic searchers, and perhaps the earliest of them. The character *dao* appears in the *Laozi* 69 times, and many other names and images are also used to refer to it. The opening lines, “The *Dao* that can be spoken of is not the constant *Dao*; the name that can be named is not the constant name”,¹¹⁷ and other similar statements in the text, have led many scholars to explore the theme of the ineffability of *Dao* in the text. “That however is not quite what it wants to say”, A. C. Graham indicates, “The trouble with words is not that they do not fit at all but that they always fit imperfectly”.¹¹⁸ With new light shed by the religious origin of the *Dao* as representing High God and the movement of Heaven, I argue that the central concern of the authors of the *Laozi* was to redefine the identity of *Dao*, or in other words, to make this name/term that had become ineffable on the one hand and confused with the ordinary human course on the other, along with the fading of myths, again effable by a new set of discourse common to their time, and also to clarify the confusion concerning the relationship of *Dao* with the ordinary name of human course. The character *ming* 名, name, appears 24 times in the received *Laozi*, which reveals the authors’ eager concern of naming or renaming. Naming or renaming was a general concern of the thinkers of the “Axial Age,” and, as indicated by Graham, they usually did not seek to know what the ultimate reality was in a thing, but rather were concerned with how to name it correctly and comprehensively.¹¹⁹ In Chapter Fourteen of the *Laozi*, after talking about how the *Dao* cannot be seen, heard, touched, and named, the authors then clearly indicate that if one holds fast to the *Dao* of antiquity, he can apprehend the thread running through *Dao*. The remote antiquity here refers to the origin of *Dao*, as well as the origin of the universe that *Dao* gave birth to. On the other hand, the authors of the text did not simply return to the age of myth, but also seek to rationalise the age-honoured divinity with all the knowledge of their time – astronomy, astrology, cosmology, life and political philosophy. As a result, the text keeps a balance between religion and philosophy, from which it produces the perpetual, stimulating power of the text: rational yet mystical, philosophical yet religious.

¹¹⁴See Chen Zungui 陳遵媯, *Zhongguo tianwenxue shi* 中國天文學史 (Shanghai, Shanghai renmin, 1980), Vol. 1, pp. 212–214; and *Zhongguo tianwenxue shi zhengli yanjiu xiaozu*, *Zhongguo tianwenxue shi*, pp. 23–24.

¹¹⁵Wang Xianqian 王先謙, ed., *Xunzi jiji* 荀子集解 (Beijing, Zhonghua, 1988), “Tianlun” 天論, 11.307.

¹¹⁶*Zhuangzi jishi*, 10.1069.

¹¹⁷All translated citations of *Laozi* in this article are from or aided by D. C. Lau, trans., *Tao Tê Ching* (Baltimore, 1985).

¹¹⁸Graham, *Disputers of the Dao*, p. 219.

¹¹⁹Graham, *Disputers of the Dao*, pp. 215–235.

The multiple names, terms, and images in the *Laozi* are thus used not to illustrate ineffable metaphysical entity, but to redefine the origin, identity, nature, movement, and function of *Dao*. As already discussed above, the Great and One as other names of *Dao* imply its origin as the ‘Great One’, the divinity of the Pole Star or High God, and the images and themes of returning and circling describe the rotational movement of cosmos, with the North Pole (Star) as the central pivot and all other celestial bodies rotating around it. The names and themes of constant, void, nature, and non-action also become transparent from this new perspective. Since the North Pole represents the highest and central pivot that never moves away, it is the only constant thing in the cosmos. Both the Chu bamboo-manuscript *Hengxian* 恒先 (Constant Antiquity) in the Shanghai Museum collection and the Mawangdui silk-manuscript *Daoyuan* 道原 (The Origin of *Dao*) use “constant antiquity” to define *dao*. The former reads, “In the constant antiquity, there is non-being but plainness, still, and void” 恒先無有, 質, 靜, 虛. The latter reads, “At the beginning of the constant antiquity, totally the same as the Great Void; vacuous and the same, it was the One; being the One constantly, it was nothing more” 恒先之初, 迥同大虛, 虛同為一, 恒一而止.¹²⁰ The One refers to the ‘Great One’, the deity of the North Pole/Pole Star, as the *Huainanzi* reads, “When heaven and earth are totally the same, like a chaotically uncarved block, and the myriad things have not been made of and completed, this is called the Great One” 洞同天地, 渾沌為樸, 未造而成物, 謂之太一.¹²¹ The North Pole is the pivot of Heaven and the aligner of time and space, but it is a void region in heaven itself in ancient Chinese imagination (see below). It is from this void region that the universe and the myriad things are given birth, so “the myriad things under heaven were born from Something, and Something from Nothing” 天下萬物生於有, 有生於無.¹²² The void pivot of heaven is like the hub in a cart: “adapt the nothing therein to the purpose in hand, and you will have the use of the cart” 當其無, 有車之用.¹²³

Dao/the deity of North Pole (Star) is a cosmic divinity and force. It is the only constant thing and the only progenitor in the cosmos, so it is ‘self-so’ (*ziran* 自然) and ‘chaotically formed’ (*hunching* 混成). Dwelling at the highest and central point of heaven, it naturally attracts the universe and myriad things to move around it, so as to form the celestial and seasonal cycles. The *Lunyu* reads, “The Master said, ‘To conduct government by virtue may be compared to the North Star: it occupies its place, while the myriad stars revolve

¹²⁰ Ma Chengyuan, ed., *Shanghai bowuguan cang Zhanguo Chu zhushu* (Shanghai: Shanghai guji, 2003), Vol. 3, p. 288; *Mawangdui Hanmu boshu*, 87; Robin Yates, *Five Lost Classics*, p. 173. The *Mawangdui Hanmu boshu* reads “hengxian” as hengwu 恒無 (constant nonexistence); Li Xueqin 李學勤 believes that it should be read as “hengxian”; see his “Boshu *Daoyuan* yanjiu” 帛書道原研究, *Guwenxian luncong* 古文獻叢論 (Shanghai, Shanghai yuandong, 1996), p. 163. Sarah Allan indicates that in the “Xici” commentary to the *Zhouyi* excavated at Mawangdui, “Taiheng” 太恒 (Great Constant) replaces “Taiji” 太極 (Great Pole/Ultimate) in the received text; see her “The Great One, Water, and the *Laozi*,” pp. 276–279. In addition, the *Guodian Laozi* (A) reads, “Outermost void is constant” 至虛, 恒也 (*Guodian Chumu zhujian*, 112). This line is written as “Outermost void is the Pole/Ultimate” 至虛, 極也 in the Mawangdui silk manuscript *Laozi* (*Mawangdui Hanmu boshu*, 11), and as “attaining the void ultimate” 致虛極 in the received text (*Laozi*, Chap. 16). However, some scholars argue that, because *ji* 亟, the original character for *ji* 極, is similar to *heng* 恆, the original character for *heng* 恒, in Warring States to Han manuscripts *ji* is often written as *heng*, or the two are used interchangeably; see Li Ling, “Guodian Chujian jiaodujì” 郭店楚簡校讀記, *Daojia wenhua yanjiu* 道家文化研究 17 (1999), p. 466; Chen Wei 陳偉, *Guodian Chu zhushu bieshi* 郭店楚竹書別釋 (Wuhan, Hubei jiaoyu, 2003) pp. 42, 45–46.

¹²¹ *Huainanzi jiaoshi*, “Quanyan” 詮言, 14.1469–1470.

¹²² *Laozi*, Chap. 40.

¹²³ *Laozi*, Chap. 11.

around it” 為政以德，譬如北辰，居其所而眾星共之。¹²⁴ Thus, “Dao never acts yet nothing is left undone” 道常無為而無不為。¹²⁵ As Victor H. Mair indicates, “Wu-wei does not imply absence of action. Rather, it indicates spontaneity and non-interference; that is, letting things follow their own natural course”.¹²⁶

The *Laozi* is exceptional for its use of feminine names and images. Throughout the text, *Dao* is explicitly called the Mother in five different chapters,¹²⁷ and many other feminine images and terms such as valley, female, motherly love (*ci* 慈), water, weakness, and softness are also frequently used. Some modern scholars interpret the feminine images as based on typical feminine attributes in a traditional patriarchal society.¹²⁸ This interpretation, however, can not explain the pervasive and sincere exaltation of the feminine throughout the text. From our new perspective, these feminine images are again based on *Dao*'s original relationship with the North Pole/Pole Star and Heaven, and are also significant in defining the identity and quality of *Dao* within the framework of naming and renaming.

The *Dao*/North Pole is void in nature, and thus it is *wu* 無 (Nothing) and does not need a name. When it gives birth to the universe, however, it becomes *you* 有 (Something) or the One – the single progenitor of myriad things. The process of production is described as biological ‘*sheng*’ 生, to give birth, in a genealogical succession: *Dao* gives birth to the One, the One to the Two, the Two to the Three, and the Three to the myriad things.¹²⁹ This generative process is described concretely in more detail in the *Taiyi sheng shui* cosmology,¹³⁰ as well as other similar cosmologies presented in the *Lüshi chunqiu*, *Huainanzi*, and so forth. More importantly, *Dao* starts the generative process without another partner. Therefore, the gender of this progenitor is determined as feminine and she is named Mother – “the named is the Mother of the myriad things”; “All under heaven has a beginning, and this beginning is the Mother of all under heaven”.¹³¹ Mother is thereby the signifier of the existence and function of *Dao*. After giving birth to myriad things, *Dao* continues to feed and nourish them with its impartial motherly love.¹³²

According to the *Zhoubi suanjing* 周髀算經, ancient Chinese people believed that the region of the North Pole was hollow and column-shaped, standing between heaven and earth, and protruding to the highest and central position of heaven, in which “the Yang is blocked off and the Yin manifests itself, and nothing is grown there” 陽絕陰彰，故不生萬物。¹³³ Sunlight

¹²⁴ *Lunyu*, 2.1. E. Bruce Brooks and A. Taeko Brooks explain: “The thrust of the saying is the magical power of inactivity”; see their *The Original Analects: Sayings of Confucius and His Successors* (New York, 1998), p. 109.

¹²⁵ *Laozi*, Chap. 37.

¹²⁶ Victor Mair, tr., *Tao Te Ching: The Classic Book of Integrity and the Way, Lao Tzu* (New York, 1990), p. 138.

¹²⁷ *Laozi*, Chaps. 1, 20, 25, 52, 59.

¹²⁸ Judith Chuan Xu, “Poststructuralist Feminism and the Problem of Femininity in the *Daodejing*,” *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 19.1 (2003): pp. 54–55.

¹²⁹ *Laozi*, Chap. 42.

¹³⁰ Both Cui Renyi 崔仁義 and Li Xueqin believe that the *Laozi* cosmology is related to the *Taiyi sheng shui* cosmology. See Cui, “Jingmen Chumu chutu de zhujian *Laozi* chutan” 荊門楚墓出土的竹簡老子初探, *Jingmen shehui kexue* 荊門社會科學 5 (1997): pp. 31–35; Li, “Jingmen Guodian Chujian suojian Guanyin yishuo” 荊門郭店竹簡所見關尹遺說, *Zhongguo wenwubao* 中國文物報 April 8, 1998. Some scholars even assume that the *Taiyi sheng shui* text is a part of the *Laozi* (C). See William G. Boltz, “The Fourth-Century B. C. Guodian Manuscripts from Chou and the Composition of the *Laotzyi*,” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 119.4 (1999), pp. 595–596.

¹³¹ *Laozi*, Chaps. 1, 52.

¹³² *Laozi*, Chaps. 20, 67.

¹³³ *Zhoubi suanjing*, 92.

never reaches this region, so it is dark, void, still, and cold, filled with Yin.¹³⁴ The images of void valley and dark feminine (*xuanbin* 玄牝) in the *Laozi* resemble this region, which is the ‘root of heaven and earth’ and an inexhaustible source of myriad things.¹³⁵ The ‘Valley Spirit’ (Gushen 谷神) that has baffled generations of readers becomes quite clear now – it should refer to the deity of the Pole Star, the deity of the valley-like hollow Pole region. *Dao* never claims merits for what it has done and practices ‘the teaching of wordless’,¹³⁶ because the region of the North Pole is always quiet, and Heaven is forever silent. The *Lunyu* records, “The Master said, ‘What does Heaven ever say? Yet the four seasons go round and the hundred things are given birth. What does Heaven ever say’ “天何言哉? 四時行焉, 百物生焉, 天何言哉”.¹³⁷ The *Mengzi* also states: “Heaven does not talk but simply displays its movement and phenomena” 天不言, 以行與事示之而已矣.¹³⁸ As a result, the authors of the *Laozi* advocate holding fast to the female, darkness, and stillness, and returning to the root and infancy.¹³⁹ Although *Dao*/the Pole Star is the progenitor and aligner of the cosmos, it yields itself to an inconspicuous position and never dominates the cosmos – it is not as bright, spectacular, and dominant as the sun, the moon, and many other celestial bodies. Moreover, the heaven which *Dao* dwells in and represents is more tenuous and soft than the earth, as the *Laozi* states, “The strong and big takes the low position, while the soft and weak takes the high position”.¹⁴⁰ Therefore, yieldingness, softness and weakness also become the celebrated qualities of *Dao*.

4. De: The Impartial Virtue and Power of Heaven

Among all the names, images, and terms used to define *dao* in the *Laozi*, the most important one is undoubtedly *de* 德, yet another difficult term to define. *De*, translated variously as ‘virtue’, ‘power’, or ‘potency’ in English, appears 33 times in the received text. Many qualities attributed to *dao*, such as impartiality, humbleness, femininity, non-action, void, and softness, are also attributed to *de*.¹⁴¹ Nevertheless, the text also makes it clear that *de* is the secondary category which follows and subordinates to *dao*.¹⁴²

As a matter of fact, the earliest structure of the character *de* is quite similar to that of *dao*. In the OBI of the Shang period and the bronze inscriptions of early Western Zhou, the graph *de* is comprised of *zhi* 直 (to erect, upright, impartial sight) and *hang* 行 or the left half of *hang* (Figs. 11a–c). During the Western Zhou, *de* was added the constituent *xin* 心 (heart, mind), which was sometimes added another constituent *zhi* 止 (Figs. 11d–e). In Warring

¹³⁴Jiang Xiaoyuan 江曉原, “*Zhoubi suanjing gaitian yuzhou jiegou*” 周髀算經蓋天宇宙結構, *Jiang Xiaoyuan zixuanji* 江曉原自選集 (Guilin, Guangxi shifan daxue, 2001), pp. 203–211; and Feng Shi, *Zhongguo tianwen kaoguxue*, pp. 92–95.

¹³⁵*Laozi*, Chap. 6.

¹³⁶*Laozi*, Chaps. 2, 34, 43.

¹³⁷*Lunyu*, 17.19.

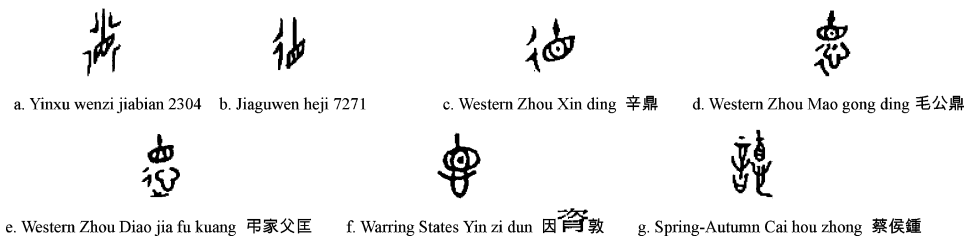
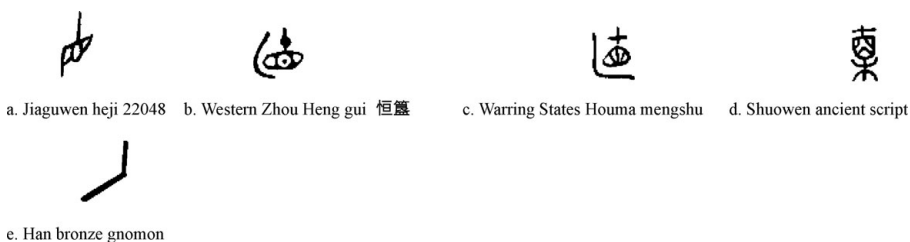
¹³⁸*Mengzi*, 9.5.

¹³⁹*Laozi*, Chaps. 16, p. 28.

¹⁴⁰*Laozi*, Chap. 76.

¹⁴¹*Laozi*, Chaps. 10, 28, 38, 41, 68.

¹⁴²*Laozi*, Chaps. 28, 38.

Fig. 11. *De* 德.Fig. 12. *Zhi* 直 and gnomon.

States scripts, *de* was often written as *de* 愬, which was sometimes added the constituent *yan* 言 (Figs. 11f–g).¹⁴³

Both *zhi* (*dʒjək) and *de* (*tək) belong to the *zhi* 職 rhyme group and share the same final in archaic Chinese.¹⁴⁴ *Zhi* and *de* were used interchangeably; for instance, in the Guodian manuscripts *Wuxing* and *Tang Yu zhi dao* 唐虞之道, *zhi* is used as *de*, or vice versa,¹⁴⁵ so *zhi* is undoubtedly the etymon.¹⁴⁶ In the OBI, *zhi* depicts an eye surmounted by a central, vertical line (Fig. 12a),¹⁴⁷ in the bronze inscriptions, it is added the constituent 丨 and a dot in the straight line as decor (Fig. 12b), which further changed into *shi* 十 (Fig. 12c).¹⁴⁸ The *Shuowen jiezi* lists *zhi*'s ancient script as 槩, which was added the constituent *mu* 木 (Fig. 12d), and glosses *zhi* as ‘impartial sight’ (*zhengjian* 正見).¹⁴⁹ However, ‘impartial sight’ is a later derivation, and the original meaning of *zhi* should be to erect a vertical pole (*zhimu* 直木) to observe and measure solar shadow and other celestial bodies. The *Xunzi* reads, “It is like erecting a vertical pole but fearing its shadow to be curved – nothing is more bewildered than this”.¹⁵⁰ “Vertical pole” is what the *Huainanzi* called “pole of solar

¹⁴³ *Yinxu wenzi jiabian*, no. 2304; *Jiaguwen heji*, no. 7271; *Jinwen gulin*, pp. 984–985; *Zhanguo guwen zidian*, pp. 67–68.

¹⁴⁴ Li Fanggui, *Shangyuyin yanjiu*, p. 37.

¹⁴⁵ *Guodian Chumu zhujian*, pp. 150, 157–158.

¹⁴⁶ Peter Boodberg, “Semasiology of Some Primary Confucian Concepts,” *Selected Works of Peter A. Boodberg*, p. 33.

¹⁴⁷ *Jiaguwen heji*, no. 22048.

¹⁴⁸ After *Zhanguo guwen zidian*, p. 67.

¹⁴⁹ *Shuowen jiezi jizhu*, 2698.

¹⁵⁰ *Xunzi jijie*, “Jundao” 君道, 8.240.

shadow” (*yingzhu* 景柱),¹⁵¹ or the *Zhoubi suanjing*’s record of “erecting a pole to measure solar shadow” 立竿測影, which is also called *biao* 表, *bi* 髀,¹⁵² *nie* 桀, *yi* 杙, or *nie* 臬,¹⁵³ the earliest gnomon. Joseph Needham indicates, “The most ancient of all astronomical instruments, at least in China, was the simple vertical pole. With this one could measure the length of the solar shadow by day to determine the solstices, and the transits of stars by night to observe the revolution of the sidereal year”.¹⁵⁴ Ancient people erected a vertical pole on the floor to observe and measure its shadow under sunlight, or tied a cord to the top of the pole and sight on a star along the cord to observe its revolution. This kind of observation is in accord with *zhi*’s structure of an eye surmounted by a vertical line. The template used to measure the shadow’s length was called *tugui* 土圭, which later combined with the pole to become *guibiao* 圭表, whose shape was just like the constituent 𠄎 added to *zhi*’s original graph (Fig. 12e).¹⁵⁵ Therefore, 𠄎 may represent the developed gnomon.

As discussed above, the *Shuowen* lists *zhi*’s ancient script as 桀, i. e. *zhi* 植. *Zhi* 直 and *zhi* 植 are homonyms and used interchangeably. For example, the “Xiaoming” 小明 poem in the *Shijing* reads, “Quietly fulfill the duties of your offices, loving the just and upright” 靖共爾位, 好是正直.¹⁵⁶ When both the *Ziyi* from the Guodian and Shanghai Museum manuscripts cite this couplet, *zhi* 直 is written as *zhi* 植.¹⁵⁷ In the *Wuxing* from Guodian, *zhi* 植 is used as *zhi* 直.¹⁵⁸ In pre-Qin to Han writings, *zhi* 植 means *huzhi* 戶植 (a vertical wood used to lock gate), wood pole, to erect, and to establish. The *Shuowen* glosses, “*Zhi* means *huzhi*” 植, 戶植也.¹⁵⁹ The *Mozi* 墨子 reads, “The vertical wood and transverse wood of the gate must be strong” 門植關必環鋼. Sun Yirang 孫詒讓 annotates, “*Zhi* is a vertical wood to lock a gate, and *guan* is a transverse wood to lock a gate” 植, 持門直木; 關, 持門橫木.¹⁶⁰ The text again reads, “There are four *zhi* in each tower” 樓四植. Sun Yirang glosses, “Four *zhi* means four pillars” 四植即四柱.¹⁶¹ The *Lüshi chunqiu* reads, “They *zhi* laws and regulations together” 相與植法則也. Gao You 高誘 glossed, “*Zhi* means to establish” 植, 立.¹⁶² These meanings must have derived from *zhi*’s original meaning of erecting a pole to observe solar shadow. Then, *Zhi* 直 and *zhi* 植 are further used interchangeably with *zhi* 殖 (to establish, plant, to

¹⁵¹ *Huainanzi jishi*, “Chuzhenxun” 儆真訓, 2.134.

¹⁵² *Zhoubi suanjing*, pp. 77–78.

¹⁵³ The *Zhouli* records, “Erect a pole with cords to observe solar shadow” 置桀以縣, 眡以景. Zheng Xuan glossed, “*Nie* 桀 was also written as *yi* 彳. Du Zichun 杜子春 said, ‘*Nie* must be written as *yi* 彳, meaning *yi* 杙.’ I think that *nie* is the phonetic loan character for *nie* 臬 in ancient script”. Jia Gongyan annotated, “*Nie* 桀 also means pole” (*Zhouli zhushu*, “考工記”, 41:1344). *Yi* 彳 and *yi* 杙 are used interchangeably, meaning wood pile, wood pole or to erect pile on the floor. Therefore, Du Zichun was actually not incorrect when saying *yi* 杙 was the right word. *Yi* 桀 is used interchangeably with *yi* 莢 and *yi* 藝, meaning to plant; therefore, *yi* 桀 may originally bear the meaning of planting a tree or erecting a pole. Xu Shen defined *nie* 臬 as target (*Shuowen jiezi jizhu*, 6.1185). Thus, *nie* 臬 seems originally unrelated to gnomon, and it is more likely to be used as the phonetic loan character for *nie* 桀, or a wrong form for *zhi* 桀.

¹⁵⁴ Needham, *Science and Civilization in China*, vol. 3, p. 284.

¹⁵⁵ After Feng Shi, *Zhongguo tianwen kaoguxue*, pp. 199–200.

¹⁵⁶ *Maoshi zhengyi*, no. 207, 13.935–940.

¹⁵⁷ *Guodian Chumu zhujian*, p. 129; *Shanghai bowuguan cang Zhanguo Chu zhushu*, vol. 1, p. 169. See Edward Shaughnessy, *Rewriting Early Chinese Texts* (Albany, 2006), p. 95.

¹⁵⁸ *Guodian Chumu zhujian*, p. 150.

¹⁵⁹ *Shuowen jiezi jizhu*, 6.1199.

¹⁶⁰ Sun Yirang, *Mozi jiangou* 墨子闕詁 (Beijing, Zhonghua, 1986), 14.470.

¹⁶¹ *Mozi jiangou*, 14.463.

¹⁶² *Lushi chunqiu jiaoshi*, 17.1092.

breed) and *zhi* 置 (to erect, to establish, to arrange), and therefore *zhi* 直 must also be the etymon for these two characters.¹⁶³

When did the Chinese people first “erect a pole to measure solar shadow”? Joseph Needham dates this in the Shang dynasty,¹⁶⁴ while Feng Shi puts it even earlier to the pre-historic age.¹⁶⁵ All the astronomical observations recorded in the *Zhoubi suanjing* are based on that simple pole. For example, the text records the observation of the *xuanji* 璇璣 or the North Pole region as follows:

To fix the pivot of the North Pole, the centre of the *xuanji*, to fix the centre of north heaven, to fix the excursions of the Pole Star: at the winter solstice, at the time when the sun is at *you*, set up an eight-*chi* gnomon, tie a cord to its top and sight [along the cord] on the large star in the middle of the North Pole. Lead the cord down to the ground and note [its position]. Again, as it comes to the light of dawn, at the time when the sun is at *mao*, stretch out another cord and take a sighting with your head against the cord. Take it down to the ground and note [the positions] of the two ends. They are 2 *chi* 3 *cun* apart. Therefore, the eastern and western extremes are 23,000 *li* [apart]. . . . How do we know the times of the southern and northern extremes? From the fact that the northernmost excursion at midnight on the winter solstice goes 11,500 *li* beyond the centre of heaven, and that the southernmost excursion at midnight on the summer solstice is 11,500 *li* nearer us than the centre of heaven. All this is found by taking sights with the cord tied to the top of the gnomon.¹⁶⁶

“The large star in the middle of the North Pole” refers to the Pole Star, and the *xuanji* circle is the circular area drawn by the North Star’s circling of the North Pole, which ancient people believed to be the region of the North Pole.¹⁶⁷ Based on the observations of gnomon, *Zhoubi suanjing* establishes the model of *gaitian* 蓋天 (heaven as a chariot-canopy) cosmography with the North Pole as its core. For example, the diagram of the seven imaginary celestial circles 七衡圖 is centred on the pole (Fig. 13).¹⁶⁸

In order to obtain correct data of celestial observations, the pole must be erected vertically and midmostly. The *Zhouli* records, “Erect a pole with cords to observe solar shadow”. Zheng Xuan annotated, “In the middle of level floor, they erect a pole of eight *chi* and use cords to make it vertical. Then, they observe its shadow to fix the four directions”. Jia Gongyan commented, “In order to get the shadow of the pole, they must erect the pole vertically. In order to erect the pole vertically, they must overhang cords on the four corners and centres of the pole. They overhang eight cords, and when all the cords are attached to

¹⁶³For example, *Mawangdui Hanmu boshu*, Vol. 4, pp. 29, 123, 159, see Donald Harper, trans., *Early Chinese Medical Literature* (London and New York, 1998), pp. 227, 363, 423–24; *Mozi jiangou*, 14.501; Xu Weiyu 許維通, ed., *Hanshi waizhuan jishi* 韓詩外傳集釋 (Beijing, Zhonghua, 1980), 7.246. Xu Zhongshu defines *zhi* 直 as “to observe the *xuan* 懸 cords with eyes to measure vertical lines” (*Jiaguwen zidian* 甲骨文字典; Chengdu, Sichuan cishu, 1998; 1385). Another possible definition is to observe a carpenter’s ink line to measure vertical line. For example, the ‘*Mian*’ 緜 poem in the *Shijing* reads, “With the line they made everything straight” 其繩則直 (Maoshi zhengyi, no. 237, 16.1157). However, from the facts that *zhi* 直 is the etymon of *zhi* 植, *zhi* 殖, and *zhi* 置 and used interchangeably with them, its original meaning must be erecting a wooden pole to observe and measure solar shadow.

¹⁶⁴Joseph Needham, *Mathematics and the Sciences of the Heavens and the Earth*, pp. 19–24, 210–215.

¹⁶⁵*Zhongguo tianwen kaoguxue*, pp. 197–202.

¹⁶⁶Christopher Cullen, *Astronomy and Mathematics in Ancient China: the Zhou bi suan jing*, p. 191.

¹⁶⁷See Chen Zungui 陳遵媯, *Zhongguo tianwenxue shi* 中國天文學史 (Shanghai, Shanghai renmin, 1980), p. 175; Jiang Xiaoyuan and Xie Yun, ed., *Zhoubi suanjing*, pp. 100–101.

¹⁶⁸After Chen Zungui, *Zhongguo tianwenxue shi*, p. 131.

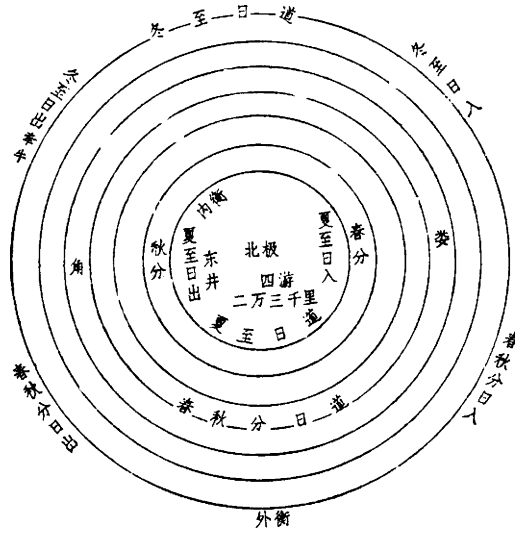


Fig. 13. Diagram of seven celestial circles 七衡圖.

the pole, it is vertical”.¹⁶⁹ The pole erected in the middle of the observation site is called *zhongzheng biao* 中正表, the midmost and upright gnomon.¹⁷⁰ As a result, *zhi* 直 and *zheng* 正 (correct, upright), *zhongzheng* 中正 (fair and correct), and *gongzheng* 公正 (just, fair) become synonyms, and *zhi* and *zheng* even combine to form the word *zhengzhi* 正直 (correct and upright). For example, the “Shuo shu” 碩鼠 poem in the *Shijing* reads, “Happy state, happy state, there we shall be dealt with righteously” 樂國樂國, 爰得我直. Zheng Xuan glossed, “*Zhi* 直 is the same as *zheng* 正.”¹⁷¹ The *Wuxing* from *Guodian* reads, “The central heart is clear and acts uprightly, this is *zhi*” 中心辯然而正行之, 植 (直) 也.¹⁷² The *Hanfeizi* reads, “What we call *zhi* means to be just, with a fair-mind without any partiality” 所謂直者, 義必公正, 公心不偏黨也.¹⁷³ The *Shangshu* reads, “Without partiality, without deflection, the royal course is level and easy. Without perversity, without one-sidedness, the royal course is just and upright” 無黨無偏, 王道平平. 無反無側, 王道正直.¹⁷⁴

To the ancient Chinese, the Pole Star and other celestial bodies were all deities, and the observation of those celestial bodies was sacred, so was the vertical pole used for the observation. As a result, *zhi* was extended to indicate the upright, impartial observation and quality of High God/Heaven. The *Laozi* reads, “To the course of Heaven none is more akin than another; it is constantly on the side of the good man” 天道無親, 恒與善人.¹⁷⁵ The *Shenzi*

¹⁶⁹ Zhouli zhushu, “Kaogongji,” 41.1344.

¹⁷⁰ Zhouli suanjing, p. 93.

¹⁷¹ Maoshi zhengyi, no. 113, 5.437.

¹⁷² Guodian Chumu zhujian, p. 150.

¹⁷³ Hanfeizi xin jiaozhu, “Jie Lao,” 6.390.

¹⁷⁴ Shangshu zhushu, “Hongfan” 洪範, 12.368. C. f. the translation of James Legg, *The Chinese Classics: The Shoo King* (Taipei, 1994), pp. 331–332. A. C. Graham dates the “Hongfan” to ca. 400 BCE and judges its correlation of the five processes with the “five tastes” as a later interpolation; see his *Yin-yang and the Nature of Correlation Thinking* (Singapore, 1986), p. 77.

¹⁷⁵ Mawangdui Hanmu boshu, p. 4.

申子 reads, “The course of Heaven is impartial, and this is what we call constant uprightness” 天道無私, 是謂恆正.¹⁷⁶ The ‘Tuan’ commentary to the ‘Guan’ 觀 (Observing) hexagram in the *Zhouyi* reads, “[Heaven/Ruler] observes all under heaven with impartial and upright sight” 中正以觀天下.¹⁷⁷ The “Xiaoming” 小明 poem in the *Shijing* reads, “Quietly fulfill the duties of your offices, loving the just and upright. When the spirits listen to this, they will bestow you large measure of bright happiness” 靖共爾位, 好是正直. 神之聽之, 介爾景福.¹⁷⁸ The *Zuozhuan* cites Shi Yin’s 史囂 words as follows, “If a state is going to prosper, [the king] listens to the people; when a state is going to fall, [the king] listens to the God. The God is bright and upright and holds the One; its movement follows the people” 國將興, 聽於民; 將亡, 聽於神. 神, 聰明正直而壹者也, 依人而行.¹⁷⁹ *Zhi* 直 and *dao* 道 are further combined to form the phrase *zhidao* 直道 or *zhengzhi zhi dao* 正直之道. The *Analects* reads, “These common people are the touchstone by which the Three Dynasties were kept to the upright course” 斯民也, 三代之所以直道而行也.¹⁸⁰ The *Hanfeizi* reads, “The lord and the subject are not of blood relations, so if the just and upright course is beneficial, the subject will do his best to serve the lord” 夫君臣非有骨肉之親, 正直之道可以得利, 則臣盡力以事主.¹⁸¹

Then, *zhi* 直 was added the constituent *hang* 行 to form *de* 德. On one hand, *de* is used interchangeably with *zhi* to represent the upright, impartial virtue of Heaven; on the other hand, it carries verbal meaning and represents the movement and power of the upright, impartial course of Heaven.¹⁸² Both the *Wuxing* texts from Mawangdui and Guodian read, “Goodness is the course of human, while impartiality (*de*) is the course of Heaven” 善, 人道也; 德, 天道也.¹⁸³ According to Western Zhou bronze inscriptions, the ultimate owner of *de* was Heaven/High God, who frequently bestowed *de* down to selected people. Those people then reverently preserved, brightened, held fast and passed it on to their descendents. For example, the Shi Qiang pan 史牆盤 inscription reads, “High God has sent down exemplary *de*” 上帝降懿德. The *Analects* reads, “Confucius said, ‘Heaven has endowed *de* in me’” 天生德於予.¹⁸⁴

In the OBI, nevertheless, *de* is often used as a verb and related mainly with either military expeditions or sacrifices. This has confused many scholars and led them to conclude that this graph bears no direct relation to the Zhou term *de*.¹⁸⁵ However, if we remember Duke Kang

¹⁷⁶Herrlee G. Creel, *Shen Pu-hai: a Chinese Political Philosopher of the Fourth Century B. C.* (Chicago, 1974), p. 358. This text is attributed to Shen Buhai 申不害, who was born in the state of Zheng 鄭 around 400 BCE. Despite the late appearance of the text in the Han dynasty, it was based in large part on the ideas of Shen Buhai. See Creel, “Shen tzu”, in *Early Chinese texts*, pp. 394–398.

¹⁷⁷*Zhouyi zhengyi*, 3.114b–115a.

¹⁷⁸*Maoshi zhengyi*, no. 207, 13.935–340.

¹⁷⁹*Chunqiu Zuozhuan zhushu*, the 32th year of Duke Zhuang, 10.342.

¹⁸⁰D. C. Lau, trans., *The Analects* (Harmondsworth, 1986), 15.25.

¹⁸¹*Hanfeizi xin jiaozhu*, 4.283.

¹⁸²Zhu Fenghan 朱鳳瀚 argues that the Shang High God was more casual in his will of rewarding and punishing human, while the Zhou High God/Heaven was endowed with impartial, just quality; see his “Shang-Zhou shiqi de tianshen chongbai” 商周時期的天神崇拜, *Zhongguo shehui kexue* 中國社會科學 82 (1993.4): pp. 191–211. This may explain why the concept of *de* became very popular during the Zhou period.

¹⁸³*Mawangdui Hanmu boshu*, p. 19; *Guodian Chumu zhujian*, p. 149.

¹⁸⁴*The Analects*, 7.23. See Vassili Kryukov, “Symbols of Power and Communication in Pre-Confucian China (On the Anthropology of “de”): Preliminary Assumptions,” *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 58.2 (1995): p. 315.

¹⁸⁵Scholars in general define *de* as ‘*xun*’ 循 or ‘*xing*’ 省, meaning “to make an inspection tour”, “to inspect”, “to examine”, etc. For detailed discussions, see *Jiagu wenzi gulin*, no. 2306.

of Liu's words recorded in the *Zuozhuan*, "The major undertakings of a state are sacrifice and war" 國之大事，在祀與戎，¹⁸⁶ the signification of *de* in the OBI will become understandable. The *Guanzi* states, "When initiating major undertakings, they apply the way of Heaven. For this reason, when the former kings launched punitive attacks, they attacked only those who opposed them and not those who were obedient. . . . They attacked the rebel – this is called *wu* (military way), and left the subordinate alone – this is called *wen* (civil way). Both *wen* and *wu* are completely fulfilled – this is called 'de' 舉大事用天道。是故先王之伐也，伐逆不伐順. . . . 貳而伐之，武也；服而舍之，文也。文武具滿，德也。¹⁸⁷ Both *wende* 文德 and *wude* 武德 were the most important 'de' Heaven bestowed on human kings. King Wen and King Wu of Zhou, who claimed they had marvellous *de* bestowed on them and the mandate from Heaven,¹⁸⁸ were traditionally regarded as representatives of the perfect civil *de* and military *de* respectively. The *Shangshu* records, "The three *de* [of the perfect sovereign]: the first is called correctness and uprightness, the second strong subdual, and the third soft subdual" 三德：一曰正直，二曰剛克，三曰柔克。¹⁸⁹ It further illustrates that, in times of peace, the perfect sovereign would naturally take the course of correctness and uprightness; in times of violence and disorder, the perfect sovereign would take the course of strong subdual; in times of harmony, the perfect sovereign would take the course of soft subdual. Strong subdual is military *de*, while soft subdual is civil *de*. The *de* expeditions recorded in the OBI, especially in cases where *de* and *fa* 伐 (to send a punish expedition) are combined to form a compound predicate, may be interpreted as stereotypical declarations of expeditions with a just cause. For example:

Cracking made on *wuchen*, Que, divining: "The king will launch the just operation against the tribe of Tu." 戊辰卜，貞：王徯土方。

Cracking made on *gengshen*, Que, divining: "This season the king will launch the just operation to punish the tribe of Tu." 庚申卜，貞：今者王徯伐土方。¹⁹⁰

Sometimes, the diviner explicitly expressed that High God would confer assistance on the just expedition:

This season the king will launch the just operation against the tribe. The High God will bestow assistance on us." 今者王徯方，帝[受]我又。¹⁹¹

The *Liji* cites the King of Wu's words, "When dispatching an army, there must be a name (cause)" 師必有名。¹⁹² "De/Zhi" 德/直 may have been the earliest name for launching a war. According to the *Zuozhuan*, King Cheng of Chu cited the *Junzhi* 軍志 (an ancient military text), saying: "When an army possesses *de*, it is invincible" 有德不可敵. The same text also

¹⁸⁶ *Zuozhuan*, the 13th year of Duke Cheng, 27.867.

¹⁸⁷ Li Xiangfeng 黎翔鳳, *Guanzi jiaozhu* 管子校注 (Beijing, Zhonghua, 2004), "Bayan" 霸言, 9.473. The citation from *Guanzi* emends "一" to "二(貳)" according to Wang Niansun 王念孫. C.f. the collation and translation of W. Allyn Rickett, *Guanzi: Political, Economic, and Philosophical Essays from Early, A Study and Translation* (Boston, 2001), p. 364.

¹⁸⁸ See, for example, Maogong ding 毛公鼎.

¹⁸⁹ *Shangshu zhushu*, "Hongfan," 12.369.

¹⁹⁰ *Jiaguwen heji*, nos. 559, 6399.

¹⁹¹ *Jiaguwen heji*, no. 6736.

¹⁹² *Liji zhengyi*, "Tangong" 檀弓, 9.333.

records Zifan's 子犯 words, "When an army is just, it is strong; when an army is unjust, it is weak" 師直為壯, 曲為老. It again records Han Wuji's 韓無忌 words, "To correct unjust is just" 正曲為直.¹⁹³ "Zhi/De war or army" is the war or army of correcting the unjust; this is a perfect footnote for "de fa" 德伐.¹⁹⁴

This study shows that *dao*, the focus of intellectual concerns and disputes of the Spring–Autumn and Warring States period, was originally a symbol of the deity of the Pole Star or High God, and it went through an evolution from supreme deity to cosmic order during this period. The redefinition of *dao* by the authors of the *Laozi* reveals a balance between religion and rationality, theistic ideas and natural philosophy. They implicitly mention the divine origin of *dao* from time to time, thus covering the text with a mystic veil, but more often they emphasise *dao* as the heavenly course and cosmic order, representing a perfect model for human course and social order. *De*, in relation to *dao*, originally represented the impartial virtue and power of Heaven. The last chapter of *Zhuangzi* describes the authors of the *Laozi* as "dwelling alone serenely with the spirits and numinous" 澹然獨與神明居, and summarises their "art of *dao*" (Daoshu 道術) as "established in constant non-being, dominated by the 'Great One', gentleness, weakness, modesty, and humbleness as its manifestations, and void yet without damaging the myriad things as its substance" 建之以常無有, 主之乙太一, 以濡弱謙下為表, 以空虛不毀萬物為實.¹⁹⁵ The authors of the *Zhuangzi* chapter clearly understood the religious connotations of *dao* in the *Laozi*, and their summary truthfully conveys the basic ideas of the *Laozi*.

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¹⁹³ *Chunqiu zuozhuan zhengyi*, the 28th year of Duke Xi, 16.511–12; the 7th year of Duke Xiang, 30.978.

¹⁹⁴ David Keightley reads the OBI *de* 德 as *zhi* 直, and interprets "de fa" 德伐 as "straighten out and attack" (*The Ancestral Landscape*, p. 68); Paul Serruys indicates that *de* is ancestral to *zhi*, "with the semantic element indicating a concrete movement in space" ("Towards a Grammar of the Language of the Shang Bone Inscriptions," in *Zhongyang yanjiuyuan guoji hanxue huiyi lunwenji: yuyan wenzizu* 中央研究院國際漢學會議論文集: 語言文字組; Taipei: Zhongyang yanjiuyuan, 1981; pp. 359–360). Both are insightful. In addition, because *zhi* and *zheng* 正 are synonyms and used interchangeably, "de/zhi fa" may also be glossed as "zheng 征/zheng 正 fa"; see Guo Moruo *Buci tongzuan* 卜辭通纂 (Beijing, Kexue, 1983), p. 110.

¹⁹⁵ *Zhuangzi jishi*, "Tianxia" 天下, 10.1093.