

# DATING THE HOUMA COVENANT TEXTS: THE SIGNIFICANCE OF RECENT FINDINGS FROM THE WENXIAN COVENANT TEXTS

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## Introduction

Li Xueqin 李學勤 has made several important contributions to the issue of the dating of the Houma 侯馬 and Wenxian 溫縣 covenant texts (*mengshu* 盟書). In the following paper I will introduce significant findings from the Wenxian covenant texts that also bear on this dating issue. I will present my new argument that the sanctioning spirit called on in the Houma and Wenxian covenants is a mountain deity called Lord Yue 岳, and not a former lord of the Jin 晉 state, as scholars have previously suggested. I will also present evidence that proves the lineage leaders overseeing the covenants were referred to with their personal names in the covenant texts.

The Houma and Wenxian covenant texts are the only examples of original covenants that exist from early China. The texts are predominantly oaths of allegiance, the direct product of political activity by the ruling elites of the Zhao 趙 and Han 韓 lineages of the Jin state. They are primary sources significant for our understanding of a tumultuous period in the history of the Jin state, during which it was torn apart by

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internal feuding, leading ultimately to its partition into the states of Han, Zhao and Wei 魏. The texts, and their associated archaeological finds, also provide evidence for research into areas such as ritual and sacrifice, demographics, and development of the script and language. Given their significance, accurate dating of these materials is important if firm conclusions are to be drawn about their content.

After the Houma covenant texts were discovered in 1965, scholars proposed a number of different dates for the materials, ranging from the early sixth-century B.C.E. to the fourth-century B.C.E.<sup>1</sup> The dating that came to be most commonly cited places the texts in the early fifth-century B.C.E., and links them to a historical event which the *Zuo zhuan* 左傳 records as having taken place in 497 B.C.E.<sup>2</sup> The Wenxian covenant texts were excavated in 1980–81 and in the initial short report of the excavation were dated to the same period.<sup>3</sup> During his work on the Xia Shang Zhou Chronology Project, Li Xueqin revisited the dating of these texts in an article first published in 1998.<sup>4</sup> In this article Li discussed the evidence for two of the suggested dates for the Houma covenant tablets: the early fifth-century B.C.E. date, and another suggested dating of 424 B.C.E.

Evidence applicable to dating is somewhat limited for the Houma and Wenxian texts and scholars have focused on matching the content of the texts to historical names and events in order to date the materials. The tablets were not buried in tombs, but in sacrificial pits, which contained the tablets and sometimes an animal sacrifice and/or a jade offering, but nothing else. We do not have the standard grave goods that lend themselves to dating based on typological comparison. The Houma and Wenxian tablets are similar in their range of shapes and stone types, and their script and much of their formulaic language is close or identical, so there is little doubt they date from the same general period. However, there are no similar sets of materials from other sites to compare them to. The jade offerings are also of little help for dating and the excavators have

1. For the early sixth-century B.C.E. suggestion see Li Yumin 李裕民, "Wo dui Houma mengshu de kanfa" 我對侯馬盟書的看法, *Kaogu* 考古 1973.3, 185–91. For the fourth-century B.C.E. suggestion see Guo Moruo 郭沫若, "Houma mengshu shitan" 侯馬盟書試探, *Wenwu* 文物 1966.2, 4–6; and Guo Moruo, "Chutu wenwu er-san shi" 出土文物二三事, *Wenwu* 1972.3, 2–10.

2. Unless otherwise stated, extrapolated B.C.E. dates are taken from the *Cihai* 辭海 chronology, see *Cihai bianji weiyuanhui*, *Cihai* (Shanghai: Shanghai cishu, 1989), 5427–88.

3. Henan sheng wenwu yanjiusuo, "Henan Wenxian Dong-Zhou mengshi yizhi yi-hao kan fajue jianbao" 河南溫縣東周盟誓遺址一號坎發掘簡報, *Wenwu* 1983.3, 77, 78–89. See also Zhao Shigang and Zhao Li 趙莉, "Wenxian mengshu de lishuo yanjiu" 溫縣盟書的曆朔研究, *Xinchu jianbo yanjiu* 新出簡帛研究 (Beijing: Wenwu, 2004), 197–205.

4. Li Xueqin 李學勤, "Houma, Wenxian mengshu lishuo de zai kaocha" 侯馬、溫縣盟書曆朔的再考察, *Hua xue* 華學, 3 (1998), 165–68.

not made use of them in their dating discussions. Many of the covenant pits did not contain a jade, and the jades are mostly very simple pieces, or offcuts, with little or no design. Carbon-14 dating which was not carried out on sacrifices in the pits, would not, in any case, give precise dates, and not all the covenant pits included sacrificial remains. There were small numbers of pottery fragments at the Houma site that were matched to examples from the adjacent city site, which itself is dated on the basis of typological comparison of pottery to the late Spring and Autumn to Mid-Warring States period.<sup>5</sup> This supports a date for the covenants of somewhere from the sixth- to fourth-centuries B.C.E. A single tablet among the Houma texts includes a date but without a reign year, making it a potential match for a variety of dates in the reconstructed calendar. We also cannot assume that a date on a covenant in one pit can be applied to all the covenants from the many other pits.<sup>6</sup> Thus, discussion of dating for the Houma and Wenxian texts has relied mainly on the comparison of the content of the covenants with transmitted historical texts.

In Li Xueqin's article on the dating of the Houma tablets, the evidence discussed includes the identity of a sanctioning spirit invoked in the texts to oversee the covenants, and the identity of the covenant lord of the Houma tablets. The following paper will introduce analysis of new material from the Wenxian covenant texts of relevance to both these points. I will argue that the sanctioning spirit is a mountain deity and not a former lord of Jin, and this name is thus not relevant to the dating question. I will also discuss persuasive evidence that the excavated covenants refer to the covenant lord using his personal name. This strongly supports the identification of the covenant lord at Houma as Zhao Jia 趙嘉 (Zhao Huan Zi 趙桓子). Below I will first introduce the texts and the main evidence and associated arguments related to the dating question, and then present the new materials and their analysis. I will conclude with a brief discussion of the length of Zhao Jia's reign as leader of the Zhao lineage in light of both the Houma covenants and another excavated text, the recently published Chu 楚 bamboo-slip manuscript, *Xinian* 繫年.<sup>7</sup>

5. Li Xueqin, *Eastern Zhou and Qin Civilizations*, trans. K.C. Chang, (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1985), 40–52. Shanxi sheng wenwu gongzuo weiyuanhui, *Houma mengshu* 侯馬盟書 (Beijing: Wenwu, 1976), 2, 384.

6. There is a date repeated on many tablets in one pit at Wenxian (with possibly one example from another pit). This date has a reign year and a matching date has been proposed, but the many variables involved in reconstruction of the early calendar mean there is potential for erroneous conclusions. Furthermore, as with the Houma tablets, we cannot assume covenants from different pits were carried out on the same day. For discussion of the date from Wenxian, see Li Xueqin, "Houma, Wenxian mengshu li shuo de zai kaocha" and also those works cited in n.3 above.

7. Li Xueqin, ed., *Qinghua Daxue cang Zhanguo zhujian* (2) 清華大學藏戰國竹簡(貳) (Shanghai: Shanghai wenyi, 2011).

### Textual Evidence and Dating in the Houma Covenant Texts

The Houma covenant texts were excavated in 1965 in the city of Houma, in southern Shanxi province.<sup>8</sup> The Wenxian covenant texts were excavated in 1980–81 from Wenxian in northern Henan.<sup>9</sup> The covenants were organized by two of the ministerial families of the Jin state: the Zhao lineage in the case of the Houma site, and the Han lineage at the Wenxian site. The covenants were written using brush and ink on stone tablets, which were then buried in pits dug into a raised earthen terrace. Covenant tablets were found in 43 pits at Houma and sixteen pits from Wenxian. A number of different covenant types can be identified, each one repeated on separate tablets, each tablet individualized with the name of a covenantor. Each covenant type includes demands of loyalty to the head of the lineage, along with specific requirements and prohibitions, the majority aiming at the consolidation of the group centered on the lineage and the identification and rejection of named and unnamed enemies. The number of covenantors participating in each covenant ranged from dozens to thousands. The different covenant types all conform to a basic four-clause structure: name clause; stipulations; submission; imprecation, and share many formulaic phrases.<sup>10</sup>

#### The Evidence

The evidence related to dating discussed herein is comprised of specific graphs and phrases from the Houma texts. The examples below show the context in which these graphs are used and the key phrases relevant to the discussion. Where possible, the examples are laid out following the four-clause structure just mentioned and using an interpretative transcription with added punctuation.<sup>11</sup>

#### 1. Houma Lineage Covenant Texts—Use of the Term *Jia* 嘉

Below is an example of a text from the covenant type known as the Lineage Covenant Texts (*zongmeng lei* 宗盟類). The graph most sig-

8. Shanxi sheng, *Houma mengshu*.

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

10. This four-clause structure was described by Susan Roosevelt Weld: "Covenant in Jin's Walled Cities: the Discoveries at Houma and Wenxian," Ph.D. dissertation (Harvard University, 1990), 353–54.

11. Unless otherwise indicated, transcriptions will be given in an interpretative form, i.e., using the standard characters for the words I believe are denoted by the graphs in the palaeographic materials.

nificant for the dating issue is *jia* 嘉 in stipulation II.B. I leave it here untranslated:

HM 156:1<sup>12</sup>

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

- I. [If] Chao
- II.A dare to not split open his guts and heart [i.e., display true loyalty] in serving his lord,
- II.B and, [if] he dare to not fully abide by *jia*'s covenant, and the decrees [given at] the Ding Temple and Ping Altar,
- II.C and, [if] he, instead, dare to cause [name] and [name] to change, causing them to not guard the two temples,
- II.D and, [if] he dare have the intention of returning Zhao Hu and his sons and grandsons, [and] [list of enemy names], along with [any one of] those who broke or breaks the covenant, to the lands of the Jin state,
- III. my superior, may [you] perspicaciously and tirelessly<sup>13</sup> watching him,
- IV. wipe out that *shi* [the covenantor and any direct male descendants].<sup>14</sup>

## 2. Houma Pledge Texts—Use of the Term *Jia* 嘉

The Lineage Covenant Texts were often found in the same pit with another covenant type, the Pledge Texts (*weizhi lei* 委質類). The Pledge Texts prohibit the covenantor from communicating with the enemy,

12. The labels for the Houma tablets include two numbers, the first is the number of the pit in which the tablet was found, the second is the number of the individual tablet. Thus 156:1 refers to tablet 1 from pit 156. HM is added here to indicate that the tablet is from Houma and not Wenxian. For a copy and image of this tablet, see Shanxi sheng, *Houma mengshu*, 35, 123.

13. I adopt an identification of the word here as *ji* 極 that was suggested by Chen Jian 陳劍: personal communication, February 22, 2009.

14. For a discussion of the scope of the term *shi* 氏 in the excavated covenant tablets, see Crispin Williams, "Early References to Collective Punishment in an Excavated Chinese Text: Analysis and Discussion of an Imprecation from the Wenxian Covenants," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, 74.3 (2011), 437–67.

whose leader is the Zhao Hu seen in the above example. One stipulation of the Pledge Texts includes the graph *jia* 嘉:

□□沒嘉之身及子孫，或復入之于晉邦之中<sup>15</sup>

“[if] \_\_\_\_ [covenantor’s name], to the end of the lives of *jia* himself and that of his sons and grandsons, dare return them [i.e., the enemies] to the Jin state, . . .”

### 3. Houma Confiscation Texts—The Named Sanctioning Spirit

While the above examples refer to the sanctioning spirit with the non-specific “my superior” *wu jun* 吾君, in other examples the spirit is named. Some of the dates suggested for the tablets rely in part on the identification of this spirit as one or other former lord of Jin. This name is found in the covenant type known as the Confiscation Texts (*na shi lei* 納室類), a type found only in pit 67. I argue that the spirit is, in fact, a mountain deity called Lord Yue and will adopt that identification here in the transcription and translation.<sup>16</sup> The name of the sanctioning spirit occurs in the submission clause, clause III:

HM 67:6<sup>17</sup>

- I. □自今以往，
- II.A 敢不帥從此盟質之言，
- II.B 而尚敢或納室者，
- II.C 而或聞宗人兄弟納室者而弗執弗獻，
- III. 丕顯岳公大冢，明極視之，
- IV. 靡夷彼氏。

- I. If [covenantor’s name], from today onwards,
- II.A dares to not abide by the words of this covenant,
- II.B and, furthermore, dares to seize property,
- II.C or knows of lineage members who have seized property, but does not apprehend them and turn them in,
- III. resplendent Lord Yue, Great Mountain, perspicaciously and tirelessly watching him,
- IV. [will] wipe out that *shi*.

15. For an annotated example of a complete Pledge Text, see Shanxi sheng, *Houma mengshu*, 37–39.

16. Wei Kebin 魏克彬 (Crispin Williams), “Houma yu Wenxian mengshu zhong de ‘Yue Gong’” 侯馬與溫縣盟書中的‘岳公’, *Wenwu* 2010.10, 76–83, 98.

17. For a copy and image of this tablet, see Shanxi sheng, *Houma mengshu*, 39–40, 151.

#### 4. Houma Tablet HM 16:3—Date, *Jia* 嘉 and Named Sanctioning Spirit

Tablet HM 16:3 is the only tablet from Houma that includes a date. Attempts to date the Houma tablets to a specific day are based on this date. This tablet also includes both the named sanctioning spirit and the term *jia* 嘉. Much of this text is illegible, and the content does not precisely follow the standard four-clause structure of the covenant texts. The transcription is provided without division or punctuation. A full translation is not given, but relevant phrases are discussed below.

HM 16:3<sup>18</sup>

十又一月甲寅朔乙丑敢用一元□□丕顯皇君岳公□□余不  
敢□□□□□定宮平時之命汝嘉之□□大夫□□大夫  
□□□□□之□□□□□以□□□□□不帥從□書之言皇  
君□□□□視之靡夷□…

The text begins with the date: “Eleventh month, *jiayin* day was the first day of the month, [today is] *yichou* day” 十又一月甲寅朔乙丑.<sup>19</sup> This corresponds to the twelfth day of the eleventh month. The phrase that follows is: “dare to use one . . . resplendent mighty superior Lord Yue” 敢用一元□□丕顯皇君岳公. This appears to announce an offering to Lord Yue. This is then followed by the phrase “I/we do not dare” 余不敢, suggesting an oath is to be sworn. Further on, the phrase “the decrees [given at] the Ding Temple and Ping Altar” 定宮平時之命 occurs, which is also seen in the Lineage Covenant Texts. The following phrase, *ru jia zhi* 汝嘉之, is not seen in other covenant types and gives a further example of the use of the term *jia* 嘉. This phrase is followed by two instances of the term *dafu* 大夫 “minister.” The phrase *ru jia zhi* 汝嘉之 may be understood in a number of ways. At issue is whether or not the person referred to as *jia* 嘉 is being personally addressed. As Li Xueqin points out, if so, then this would imply that he is being addressed by a superior, perhaps the “I” *yu* 余 of the previous phrase.<sup>20</sup> The text ends

18. For a copy and image of this tablet, see Shanxi sheng, *Houma mengshu*, 33, 83.

19. Although it is unclear from the photographs of this tablet, it appears that the editors of the *Houma mengshu* did not think the tablet had been damaged, in which case we should not assume that a reign year is missing from this formula. For example, when quoting the first two lines of the tablet on page 74 of the *Houma mengshu* they make no allowance for lacunae caused by a damaged tablet. If there was no damage to this part of the tablet, then the Houma dating formula does not include a reign year, unlike the formula used for the date in the Wenxian texts. See Shanxi sheng, *Houma mengshu*, 74.

20. Li Xueqin, “Houma, Wenxian mengshu lishuo de zai kaocha,” 166.

with a requirement to follow the words of the covenant, and then what looks like a standard submission and imprecation. The submission starts with “mighty superior” *huangjun* 黃君 and we can conjecture that the spirit called on here is Lord Yue, already mentioned in this text as, we suggested, the recipient of sacrifice.

### 5. Houma Curse Texts—The Name Zhonghang Yin 中行寅

Below is a composite of two fragmentary and partly illegible tablets from Houma pit 105, tablets HM 105:1 and HM 105:2. These texts were named the Curse Texts (*zuzhou lei* 詛咒類) and occur only in this pit. They are the only tablets from Houma which use black ink and not the red ink used in all other extant examples. The key evidence from this text that is used for dating is the name Zhonghang Yin 中行寅.

#### COMPOSITE OF HM 105:1 AND HM 105:2<sup>21</sup>

…無恤之□子，所不虔(?)奉□□主，而敢□□之□□出入于中行寅及□□之所，□□明…為□□□俾不利于…，所敢行…詛蠱…利于…

I. . . . Wuxu’s \_\_\_\_\_,

II.A if [the covenantor] does not sincerely serve \_\_\_\_\_ lord,

II.B and dares to . . . come and go from the place of Zhonghang Yin and \_\_\_\_\_,

II.C . . . , causing harm to . . . ,

II.D if [he] dare act to (?) . . . to curse . . . to [not?] benefit (i.e., cause harm to) . . .

### 6. Houma Tablet Tan 探 8②:3—The Name Handan 邯鄲

A fragment from Houma, labeled Tan 8②:3 and not associated with a particular pit, includes the phrase “ . . . never covenant in Handan . . . ” 永不盟于邯鄲.<sup>22</sup> This phrase and the name Handan are significant for the dating question.

### 7. The Different Categories of Covenant at Houma

The above items are the main pieces of textual evidence relevant to the dating question for the Houma tablets. One further issue is to what extent covenants from different pits can be grouped together and considered to date from the same period.

21. For copies and images of these tablets, see Shanxi sheng, *Houma mengshu*, 41–42, 154.

22. For a copy and image of this tablet, see Shanxi sheng, *Houma mengshu*, 49, 159.



The Houma covenants are divided into six categories based on their content: Lineage Covenant Texts; Pledge Texts; Confiscation Texts; Curse Texts; Divination Texts (*bushi lei* 卜筮類), and Other Texts. The Lineage Covenant Texts are further divided into six sub-categories. Of these, sub-categories 2 to 5 share the same basic text but differ in the number of enemies listed in the covenant, the number increasing in each consecutive sub-category. Lineage Covenant Texts and Pledge Texts are often found together in a single pit and we can assume that, in such cases, they were buried during a single ceremony. Both these covenant types target the same individual, Zhao Hu, as the main enemy and share a prohibition on contact with Zhao Hu's camp, and any attempt to restore members of the enemy camp to the Jin state. Thus, it is reasonable to conclude that both these covenant types are related to a single issue. Tablet HM 16:3, the only dated tablet, was found with Lineage Covenant Texts of sub-category 4, so we can assume they were buried at the same time. The Lineage Covenant Texts, as a group, are assumed to form a series of related covenants, although they cannot all have been buried on a single day since, in some cases, they are found in pits which overlap each other, i.e., where an earlier pit had been cut into by a later pit.

On the basis of this evidence, we may consider the Lineage Covenant Texts, including the dated tablet HM 16:3, together with the Pledge Texts, to be part of a single series of covenants, most probably all dealing with a single issue, but carried out over an extended period. It does not automatically follow that the other two covenant types from Houma, the Curse Texts from pit 105 and the Confiscation Texts from pit 67, were part of this series or relate to the same event. However, a number of the covenantor names (mostly single-character personal names) on the Confiscation Text tablets do match those on Lineage Covenant and Pledge Text examples. If we assume that these personal names refer to the same individuals, then this would suggest that some of the same people who participated in Lineage Covenant and Pledge Texts also took part in the Confiscation Text covenant and, therefore, that these covenants may relate to a single event and date to a similar period. The fragmentary Curse Texts from pit 105 include no evidence that clearly relates their content to the other Houma covenant types. The editors of the *Houma Mengshu* argue that since pit 105 is very close to other covenant pits, containing Lineage Covenant and Pledge Texts, but the pits do not cut into each other, these pits must all be from the same period.<sup>23</sup> However, this is hardly conclusive evidence.

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23. Shanxi sheng, *Houma mengshu*, 77.

### Linking the Houma Evidence to Historical Names and Events

Based on the names introduced above, and interpretation of the content of the texts, scholars have attempted to link the Houma covenants to known historical figures and events, thus supplying specific context and dates for these materials. Below I will introduce identifications suggested for these names, and the proposed dates for the texts.

#### 1. The Name Zhonghang Yin

The name Zhonghang Yin 中行寅 appears in the Curse Texts from pit 105 at Houma. Zhonghang Yin is the name of a historical figure who was the leader of the Zhonghang lineage, one of the six ministerial families of Jin. The transmitted histories record a falling out, at the beginning of the fifth-century B.C.E., between the Zhao main lineage, headed by Zhao Yang 趙鞅 and based in Jinyang 晉陽 (near present day Taiyuan 太原, Shanxi), and a branch lineage, based in Handan. The disagreement was over the control of a group of 500 families (hostages from the state of Wei 衛) held by the head of the Handan branch, Zhao Wu 趙午. In 497 B.C.E. (this date is based on the *Zuo zhuan* record of these events), Zhao Yang killed Zhao Wu after which Zhao Wu's son, Zhao Ji 趙稷, revolted in Handan. Zhao Yang called on the Jin ministerial families to lay siege to Handan. However, the Zhonghang lineage, led by Zhonghang Yin, had ties with Zhao Wu and they, along with their ally, the Fan lineage, led by Fan Jishe 范吉射, refused to attack Handan. Instead, Zhonghang Yin and Fan Jishe joined with Zhao Ji to attack Zhao Yang, who was forced to flee to his Jinyang base.<sup>24</sup> The texts from pit 105 prohibit covenantors from contact with a Zhonghang Yin. Given that the Houma covenants are products of the Zhao lineage, the conjecture is made that this is the historical Zhonghang Yin and that this covenant relates to the events outlined above. This would suggest a date for this covenant sometime during or shortly after 497 B.C.E.

#### 2. The Name Handan in Tablet Tan 8②:3

In the events just described, Handan was the base of the branch lineage led by Zhao Wu, the man killed by Zhao Yang. Tablet Tan 8②:3 prohibits the covenantor from covenanting in Handan and can thus also be linked to this affair.

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24. For a convenient collection of passages from texts which recount this incident, see Shanxi sheng, *Houma mengshu*, 421–29.

3. The Term *Jia* 嘉

The examples given above include the use of the character *jia* in the following contexts:

- a. “[if the covenantor] dare to not fully abide by *jia*’s covenant, . . .” 敢不盡從嘉之盟 (Lineage Covenant Texts)
- b. “[if] \_\_\_\_ [covenantor’s name], to the end of the lives of *jia* himself and that of his sons and grandsons, dare return them [i.e., the enemies] to the Jin state, . . .” □□沒嘉之身及子孫，或復入之于晉邦之中者。 (Pledge Texts)
- c. “You, *jia*’s \_\_\_\_ minister/s \_\_\_\_ minister/s . . .,” or “You, *jia*, [and *jia*]’s \_\_\_\_ minister/s \_\_\_\_ minister/s . . .” 汝嘉之□□大夫□□大夫 . . . (Tablet HM 16:3)

Apart from these examples, three tablets from the Lineage Covenant Texts category have a variant wording that includes *jia*:

- d. “[If] \_\_\_\_ [covenantor’s name] dare not cut and split open his hearts and gut in serving *jia*, . . .” □□□敢不剖判其腹心以事嘉 (Tablets HM 1:40, HM 1:41, HM 1:42<sup>25</sup>)

This variant replaces the following standard wording seen in the Lineage Covenant Texts: “[If] \_\_\_\_ [covenantor name] dare to not split open his guts and heart [i.e., display true loyalty] in serving his lord, . . .” □敢不判其腹心以事其主。 That is to say, the character *jia* 嘉 replaces the term “his lord” *qi zhu* 其主。

Clearly, in these passages, the term *jia* is referring to an individual of high status. In the Lineage Covenant Texts the phrase “*jia*’s covenant” must refer either to this covenant itself or to a previously held covenant. This phrase implies that *jia* was the “covenant lord” *mengzhu* 盟主 of the covenant, that is to say he convened the covenant and was the recognized leader among those covenanting. The variant wording in this category, in which the loyalty stipulation’s “serve his lord” is replaced by “serve *jia*” tells us that it was to the individual *jia* that loyalty was being pledged: this individual was the recognized leader of all those participating in the covenant. In the Pledge Texts the covenantors swear not to return enemies to Jin within the lifetime of *jia* or *jia*’s descendants. This refer-

25. There are further minor variations in the wording: HM 1:40 leaves out the *fu* 腹 of *foxin* 腹心; part of tablet HM 1:42 is missing and the missing section includes the section where we would expect to find the characters *qi foxin yi* 其腹心以. Based on their calligraphic style and several other unusual characteristics of these three texts, they were almost certainly written by a single scribe. For copies of the tablets see Shanxi sheng, *Houma mengshu*, 171–72.

ence to *jia* and his patrilineal line also implies that he was not only the covenant lord, but the hereditary leader of the lineage group on which the covenant was centered. That lineage was Zhao, as is clear from a variant wording in the Covenant Lineage Texts, in which the phrase “*jia*’s covenant” 嘉之盟 is replaced by “Zi Zhao Meng’s covenant” 子趙孟之盟 (HM 1:22).<sup>26</sup> The title uses the honorific *zi* 子, the lineage name “Zhao,” and the word *meng* 孟, which generally implies that the individual was the eldest among his siblings. If the individual addressed as *jia* was, as the above evidence suggests, the leader of the Zhao lineage at the time of the covenant, then the damaged and ambiguous text from tablet HM 16:3 should not be understood as being addressed to *jia*, but to his ministers, thus: “You, *jia*’s \_\_\_ minister/s \_\_\_ minister/s” 汝嘉之□□大夫□□大夫.<sup>27</sup> Thus, in all these examples, the individual referred to as *jia* 嘉 is the covenant lord and the leader of the Zhao lineage.

In the transmitted histories, we do find a Zhao leader whose personal name was Jia. The *Shi ji* 史記 records that Zhao Jia 趙嘉 ruled as the leader of the Zhao lineage for one year and was given the posthumous name Zhao Huan Zi. According to the *Shi ji*, Zhao Jia usurped the leadership from the rightful heir, Zhao Huan 趙浣.<sup>28</sup> There is a divergence of opinion as to which year this record in the *Shi ji* refers to and suggestions include 426, 425 and 424 B.C.E.<sup>29</sup> The background to this event is of some significance for our discussion. According to the *Shi ji*, an earlier Zhao lineage leader, Zhao Jian Zi 趙簡子, had overlooked his first son, Bo Lu 伯魯, as heir and selected his second son, Zhao Wuxu 趙無恤 (Zhao Xiang Zi 趙襄子), to succeed him. When Zhao Wuxu became leader, the *Shi ji* reports that he made the decision to pass the leadership back to his

26. For a copy and image of this tablet, see Shanxi sheng, *Houma mengshu*, 86, 167. Tablets HM 1:23 and HM 1:24 appear to have the same variant, but the title is not fully legible.

27. I would conjecture that the first-person pronoun *yu* 余 that appears earlier in the HM 16:3 text refers to *jia* himself. Thus, in this text *jia* first announces sacrifice to Lord Yue, thus invoking the spirit, he then says that he himself will take some action with respect to the decrees given at the Ding Temple and Ping Altar, and then he goes on to order his ministers to take some action, and says that if they do not obey, this will trigger the imprecation. The imprecation would have applied to the ministers, and perhaps *jia* himself, and the spirit called on to sanction this is almost certainly Lord Yue, invoked at the start of the text.

28. *Shi ji* 史記 (Beijing: Zhonghua, 1959), 43.1796–97.

29. Li Xueqin’s article gives 424 B.C.E., Yang Kuan 楊寬 suggests 425 B.C.E. and Hirase Takao 平勢隆郎 gives 426 B.C.E. See Li Xueqin, “Houma, Wenxian mengshu li shuo de zai kaocha,” 166; Yang Kuan, *Zhanguo shiliao biannian jizheng* 戰國史料編年輯證 (Shanghai: Shanghai renmin, 2001), 56; Hirase Takao, *Shinpen Shiki Tōshū Nenpyō* 新編史記東周年表 (Tokyo: Tōkyō Daigaku Tōyō Bunka Kenkyūjo, 1995), 142–43, 469, 640. In the discussion below this date will be given as 424 B.C.E.

elder brother's line, to his nephew Dai Cheng Jun Zhou 代成君周. Dai Cheng Jun Zhou died before Zhao Wuxu, so the leadership was to pass to Dai Cheng Jun Zhou's son, the above mentioned Zhao Huan, but the position was contended by Zhao Jia.<sup>30</sup> This account is complicated by a disagreement in the sources as to the relationship of Zhao Jia to Zhao Huan. The *Shi ji* describes Zhao Jia as the younger brother of Zhao Wuxu, while the *Shi ben* 世本 calls him Zhao Wuxu's son.<sup>31</sup>

In sum, given the use of *jia* in the Houma covenants to refer to a Zhao covenant lord, the term can be linked to the historical Zhao Jia, recorded in the transmitted histories as holding the leadership of the Zhao lineage for one year, after which he died.

#### 4. The Name of the Sanctioning Spirit

The Confiscation Texts and tablet HM 16:3 give a name for the sanctioning spirit they invoke. The identification of this spirit's name has been a source of debate since the Houma covenants' publication almost 40 years ago. With respect to the dating issue, the question is whether or not the spirit is that of a specific Jin lord. If so, then the tablets, at least those mentioning this name, must date from a period after the death of that lord and, most scholars assume, specifically to the reign of the ruler directly following. That is to say, the Zhao lineage leaders organizing these covenants would have called on the spirit of the most recent former ruler of the Jin state to sanction the oath and punish any transgressors.

#### The Main Dating Theories

Identification of the name Zhonghang Yin and the term *jia* with historical figures provides compelling historical context for the Houma covenant texts. The Curse Texts' prohibition on contact with Zhonghang Yin is taken as evidence linking this covenant to the conflict between Zhao Yang and Zhao Wu in 497 B.C.E. The fragment labeled Tan 8②:3 which prohibits covenanting in Handan may also be linked to this event, given that the Zhao faction opposing Zhao Yang was based in Handan.

If the character *jia* is the name of the historical figure Zhao Jia, then historical records would suggest the covenants with this name should be linked to the succession dispute between Zhao Jia and Zhao Huan. The historical records indicate that Zhao Jia ruled for just one year, 424 B.C.E., before he died. This would place the covenant tablets that include this name to this date, or possibly a period prior to this during which the succession struggle was taking place.

30. *Shi ji* 43.1789, 1796–97.

31. See the *Suo yin* 索隱 commentary for *Shi ji* 43.1796–97.

The named sanctioning spirit is also frequently referred to in these discussions. For, as explained above, if this spirit is that of the previous Jin lord, the assumption is made that covenants using this name can be dated to the reign of the following Jin lord, or at least cannot be dated earlier than the death of the named lord. Suggested identifications of the spirit include Duke Qing 頃 of Jin (r. 525–512 B.C.E.), who was followed by Duke Ding 定 of Jin (r. 511–475 B.C.E.), whose reign would fit the 497 B.C.E. events, and Duke Chu 出 of Jin (r. 474–452 B.C.E.), whose reign period would require the covenants including this name to date from after 452 B.C.E., and would thus favor the 424 B.C.E. date.<sup>32</sup>

For scholars working on the dating of the Houma covenant texts, the issue thus became how to reconcile persuasive evidence that links the materials with historical events dated over 70 years apart: 497 B.C.E. and 424 B.C.E. Scholars identifying the named sanctioning spirit as a former Jin lord, also had to factor his reign dates into the discussion.

The authors of the excavation report for the Houma covenant texts, the *Houma mengshu*, favored the earlier date, and linked all the tablets to Zhao Yang's feud with Zhao Wu and the Zhonghang and other lineages.<sup>33</sup> They argued that the term *jia* was not a personal name, but an honorific, an extension of its basic meaning of "good."<sup>34</sup> This allowed all the tablets to be linked to the 497 B.C.E. incident. On the basis of the date given in tablet HM 16:3, they dated the tablets to the 16th year of the reign of Duke Ding of Jin, 495 B.C.E.<sup>35</sup>

Both Tang Lan 唐蘭 and Gao Ming identified *jia* as the personal name of Zhao Jia, arguing that the covenants that use this name are related to the succession feud between Zhao Jia and Zhao Huan in 424 B.C.E.<sup>36</sup> Gao Ming argues that the pit 105 tablets, which name Zhonghang Yin, are unrelated to the Zhao Jia events. He points out that they are from a separate pit, used black ink rather than the usual red, and that they have no content that would directly relate them to the other texts. On

32. For the identification as Duke Qing of Jin, see Wu Zhenwu 吳振武, "Guanyu Wenxian mengshu zhong de 'Qing Gong' 關於溫縣盟書中的 '苴公', *Xinchu jianbo yanjiu* 新出簡帛研究 (Beijing: Wenwu, 2004), 206–7. For the identification as Duke Chu of Jin, see Gao Ming 高明, "Houma zaishu mengzhu kao" 侯馬載書盟主考, *Guwenzi yanjiu* 古文字研究 1 (1979), 103–15.

33. Shanxi sheng, *Houma mengshu*, 65–68. Zhang Han 張頌 was the main author of the sections in the excavation report that analyze the texts. See also Zhang Han, *Zhang Han xueshu wenji* 張頌學術文集 (Beijing: Zhonghua, 1995).

34. Shanxi sheng, *Houma mengshu*, 65.

35. Shanxi sheng, *Houma mengshu*, 74–77.

36. Tang Lan 唐蘭, "Houma chutu Jinguo Zhao Jia zhi mengzaishu xinshi" 侯馬出土晉國趙嘉之盟載書新釋, *Wenwu* 1972.8, 31–35, 58. Gao Ming, "Houma zaishu mengzhu kao," 108–11.

the basis of the name Zhonghang Yin, Gao argues they probably are a product of the events of 497 B.C.E.<sup>37</sup>

With respect to the identity of the named sanctioning spirit, the authors of the *Houma mengshu* argued that the character was Jin 晉, referring to the former "Lords of Jin" (Jin gong 晉公) and not a particular individual. This identification did not, then, affect the dating question. Gao Ming suggested that the character was *chu* 出 and that the lord in question was Lord Chu of Jin, who died in 452 B.C.E., supporting the suggested link to Zhao Jia and the 424 B.C.E. date.<sup>38</sup>

Li Xueqin identifies *jia* as the name of Zhao Jia and he agrees that the pit 105 tablets are probably related to the incident of 497 B.C.E. In his 1998 article Li adopted what was the most convincing identification for the named sanctioning spirit at the time he was writing, that of Lord Qing of Jin, which placed the covenants using this name in the reign of Lord Ding of Jin (r.511–475 B.C.E.).<sup>39</sup> Li also makes the important point that identifying Zhao Jia as the covenant lord does not require us to assume the covenants mentioning him date from the single year of his leadership of the Zhao lineage, in 424 B.C.E. These covenants could date from an earlier period in which Zhao Jia was already in a position of authority within the Zhao lineage and the Jin ruling elite.<sup>40</sup>

As these various theories demonstrate, the question of whether *jia* is a personal name, and the identity of the named sanctioning spirit are both critical factors for the dating of the Houma covenants. Below, I will first present my argument that the named sanctioning spirit is not a former Jin lord or lords, but "Lord Yue," a mountain spirit and, secondly, offer evidence from the Wenxian covenant texts which strongly supports the identification of *jia* as a personal name.

### Recent Findings from the Wenxian Covenant Texts and their Relevance to the Houma Dating Question

Recent analysis of evidence from the Wenxian covenant texts is of relevance to the dating of both the Houma and Wenxian materials. Most significant are the identification of the named sanctioning spirit, and of a covenant lord name from the Wenxian tablets which matches that of a historical figure.

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37. Gao Ming, "Houma zaishu mengzhu kao," 111–13. The pit 105 tablets had not been published when Tang Lan wrote his article.

38. Gao Ming, "Houma zaishu mengzhu kao," 108–11.

39. See n.32 above.

40. Li Xueqin, "Houma, Wenxian mengshu li shuo de zai kaocha," 167.

### Identification of the Sanctioning Spirit as Lord Yue

Based on a previously unseen variant graph used for the name of the sanctioning spirit, I identify this spirit as Lord Yue and argue that this is a mountain deity, not a former lord of the Jin state.<sup>41</sup>

In the Houma covenant texts, the sanctioning spirit is named in the Confiscation Texts from pit 67 and in tablet HM 16:3, the unique tablet which includes a date. All the Lineage Covenant Texts (apart from HM 16:3) and the Pledge Texts from Houma use the non-specific term “my superior” *wujun* 吾君 for the sanctioning spirit. The Curse Texts are fragmented and the name of the sanctioning spirit is not seen. In the Wenxian covenant texts, all covenant types for which a complete text exists or can be reconstructed use the same named title for the sanctioning spirit as seen in the Houma tablets. Only fragments from Wenxian pit WT1K3 appear to use the phrase “my superior” *wujun*.

The name of the spirit is composed of the name itself, followed by the title *gong* 公 which, in this usage, I will translate as “lord.” This two-character appellation is sometimes preceded with the phrase *pixian* 丕顯 “resplendent” or *huangjun* 皇君 “mighty superior.” The appellation is sometimes followed by the phrase *dazhong* 大冢, for which different interpretations have been proposed. The use of the title *gong* “lord” led the great majority of scholars to assume the spirit was a former lord (or lords) of Jin (or possibly Zhou 周). A notable exception was Emura Haruki 江村治樹 who suggested that the name might be that of a nature spirit, such as those to whom the *Zu Chu wen* 詛楚文 “Curse on Chu” text is directed. Emura, pointing out that the Houma graph denoting the name has 山 *shan* “mountain” as its lower component and that *dazhong* refers to mountains in the *Shi ji*, conjectured that the name might be that of a mountain spirit.<sup>42</sup> This was a most insightful suggestion, agreeing precisely with the identification of the graph proposed here.

The graph denoting the name of this spirit is made up of two components, the lower of which can, as mentioned, be confidently identified as 山 *shan* “mountain.” There is much calligraphic variation in the top component, and it was identification of this component that proved to be the obstacle in identifying this graph. Figure 1 shows a number of examples of the graph, categorized on the basis of variation in the top component.<sup>43</sup>

41. The following section is largely based on Wei Kebin (Crispin Williams), “Houma yu Wenxian mengshu zhong de ‘Yue Gong.’”

42. Emura Haruki 江村治樹, “Kōma Meisho Kō” 侯馬盟書考, Uchida Ginpū Hakushi Shūju Kinen Tōyōshi Ronshū 内田吟風博士頌壽紀念東洋史論集 (Tokyo: Dohosha, 1978), 97 n.43.

43. Examples from the Houma covenant texts are prefixed with “HM” and are taken from Shanxi sheng, *Houma mengshu*. All other examples are from the Wenxian covenants.



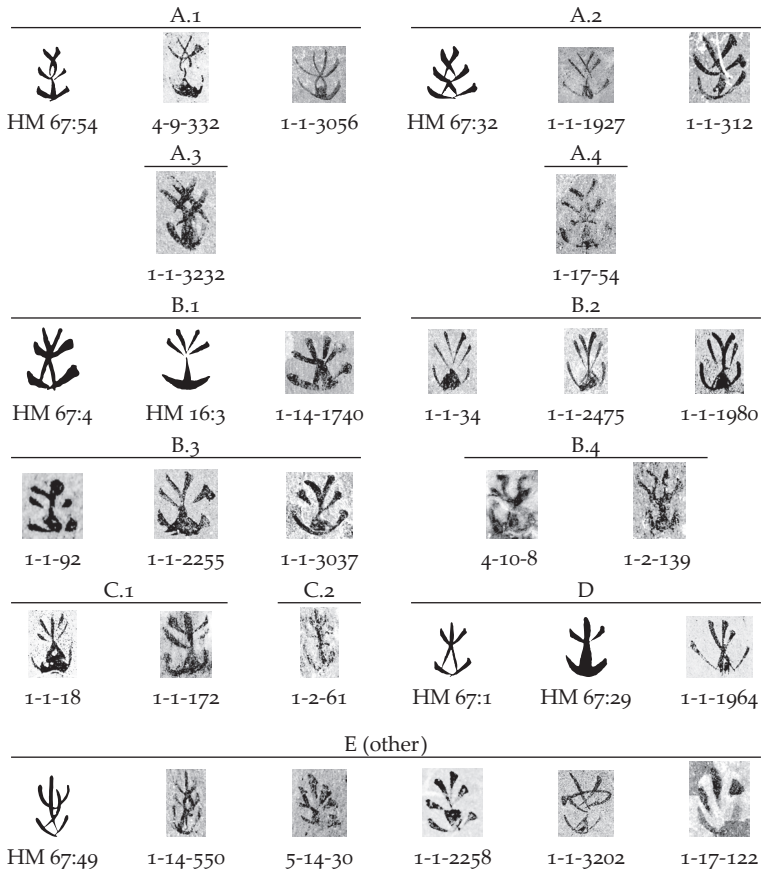


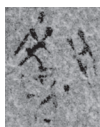
Fig. 1. Examples of the graph for the spirit's name.

The majority of previous transcriptions of this graph relied on the Houma examples since examples from Wenxian had not yet been published. The following transcriptions were suggested: 𤝵, 𤝶, 出, 𤝷, 舌.<sup>44</sup> The Wenxian tablets provide a great many new examples of the graph,

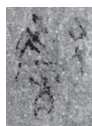
44. For 𤝵, see Chen Mengjia 陳夢家, "Dong Zhou mengshi yu chutu zaishu" 東周盟誓與出土載書, *Kaogu* 1966.5, 277. For 𤝶, see Tang Lan, "Houma chutu Jinguo Zhao Jia zhi mengzaishu xinshi," 31, and also see Zhang Han, "'Houma mengshu' congkao xu" '侯馬盟書' 叢考續, in Zhang Han, *Zhang Han xueshu wenji*, 91–109 (first published in *Guwenzi yanjiu* 古文字研究 1 [1979], 78–102). For 出, see Gao Ming, "Houma zaishu mengzhu kao," 108–11. For 𤝷, see Wu Zhenwu, "Guanyu Wenxian mengshu zhong de 'Qing Gong,'" For 舌, see Li Jiahao 李家浩, "Yan zhong mingwen kaoshi" 戰鐘銘文考釋, *Zhuming zhongnian yuyanxuejia zixuanji*, *Li Jiahao juan* 著名中年語言學家自選集·李家浩卷 (Hefei: Anhui jiaoyu, 2002), 68 n.1.

including previously unseen variations. However, these do not, as one might have hoped, provide any further clues to the identity of this component. In fact, the wide variety of variation has increased the number of components one could consider as a possible match, thus complicating the situation.

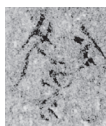
Among these many calligraphic variants, four cases were found in which a completely different graph was used by a scribe.<sup>45</sup> These are the graphs the scribe wrote:



1-14-3730



1-14-3731



1-14-3749



1-14-615

Based firstly on corresponding small-seal *xiaozhuan* 小篆 script components in the *Shuowen jiezi* 說文解字, the top component can be matched with *yin* 𤝵 狢 and the bottom with *yan* 言 言 or *yin* 音 音.<sup>46</sup> The component *yin* 狢 is composed of the “dog” component, *quan* 犬, repeated twice. To support the identity of the top component of the Houma graph as *yin* 狢, we may compare examples of the *quan* 犬 component in other graphs from Houma and Wenxian. The Houma texts include the character *xian* 獻, which has *quan* 犬 as its right-hand component:<sup>47</sup>



HM 67:4



HM 67:16



HM 67:21



HM 67:2

Comparing the *quan* 犬 form of the HM 67:2 example, i.e., 犬, with the top-right component of the Wenxian graph 1-14-615, i.e., 犬, it is clear that they are the same component. In the Wenxian graph this component has both a left-facing and right-facing form, allowing a symmetrical arrangement in which the “dogs” face each other. The *Shuowen jiezi*'s inventory of base-components for the small-seal script does not include a right-facing *quan* 犬 but, we may assume, consolidates this form under the more common left-facing component. As a result the two “dog” components facing each other in the Wenxian graph are transcribed as *yin* 𤝵 in the small-seal script of the *Shuowen jiezi*. The top component of the Wenxian graph can, then, be confidently identified as *yin* 狢. Characters collected

45. Based on the similarity of the hand we can be confident that one scribe wrote all four tablets.

46. Xu Shen 許慎, *Shuowen jiezi* (Beijing: Zhonghua, 1963), 5 (*mu* 目 .5a), 3 (*mu* 目 .1b).

47. Shanxi sheng, *Houma mengshu*, 353.

under this component in the *Shuowen jiezi* include *yu* 獄, comprised of *yin* 狢 and *yan* 言, providing a match for the Wenxian graph.<sup>48</sup> The lower component of the Wenxian graph appears to match *yin* 音 more closely than *yan* 言, but these two components frequently interchange in Warring States scripts, so this does not affect the identification.<sup>49</sup> We may conclude, then, that the variant graph used in these examples to denote the name of the sanctioning spirit is the character *yu* 獄.

The reconstructed Old Chinese pronunciation of the word *yu* 獄 does not match the posthumous name of any Jin (or Zhou) lords from the Eastern Zhou period.<sup>50</sup> However, in the character *yu* 獄's *xiasheng* 諧聲 series (i.e., the group of characters which share *yu* 獄 as their phonetic component), we find the character *yue* 嶽.<sup>51</sup> What is of particular significance is that *yue* 嶽 is frequently found written with the variant character *yue* 岳. The *Shuowen jiezi*'s entry for *yue* 嶽 gives *yue* 岳 as the ancient-script (*guwen* 古文) form for *yue* 嶽.<sup>52</sup> That is to say, *yue* 岳 was the earlier graph and *yue* 嶽 a graph created at a later time to denote the same word. The ancient-script form for *yue* 岳 given in the *Shuowen jiezi* is 𡵑. This form is clearly reminiscent of the graph commonly used for the name of the sanctioning spirit in the Wenxian and Houma covenants, and we may consider whether those forms are, in fact, early examples of the character *yue* 岳.

At the time of writing, there are no graphs from other excavated materials that scholars unanimously identify as *yue* 岳. However, there are examples of early forms of *yue* 岳 in the transmitted examples of ancient-script forms found in the *Han jian* 汗簡<sup>53</sup> and *Guwen sisheng yun* 古文四聲韻,<sup>54</sup> Figs. 2 and 3.

The lower component of these examples is clearly, and in all cases, *shan* 山 "mountain," but the top component shows significant variation. However, comparing these variants to the variant forms of the Houma

48. *Shuowen jiezi*, 206 (10a *yinbu* 狢部.15b).

49. Gao Ming, *Zhongguo guwenzixue tonglun* 中國古文字學通論 (Beijing: Wenwu, 1987), 153–54.

50. I use the Old Chinese reconstruction system of William H. Baxter and Laurent Sagart. At the time of writing, their most recent set of reconstructions is available on the website of the Centre de Recherches Linguistiques sur l'Asie Orientale (<http://crlao.ehess.fr/document.php?id=1217>). For the posthumous names of the Jin and Zhou lords, see, for example, Cihai bianji weiyuanhui, *Cihai*, 5429–39.

51. Bernhard Karlgren, *Grammata Serica Recensa* (Taipei: SMC Publishing Inc.), 312–13.

52. *Shuowen jiezi*, 190 (9b *shanbu* 山部.1a).

53. Guo Zhongshu 郭忠恕, *Han jian* 汗簡, in *Han jian Guwen sisheng yun* 汗簡古文四聲韻, ed. Li Ling 李零 and Liu Xin'guang 劉新光 (Beijing: Zhonghua, 1983), 26 (51a).

54. Xia Song 夏竦, *Guwen sisheng yun* 古文四聲韻, in *Han jian Guwen sisheng yun*, 73 (5.6b, 7a).

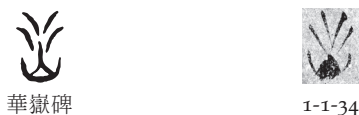


Fig. 2. Graphs for *yue* 岳 in the *Han jian*.



Fig. 3. Graphs for *yue* 岳 in the *Guwen sisheng yun*.

and Wenxian graph, we find an almost identical match in the second of the *Han jian* forms and the B.2 examples from Wenxian:



The *Zhou yun* 籀韻 form from the *Guwen sisheng yun*, 岳, might also be argued to reflect a formalized version of the B.1 examples from Houma and Wenxian, e.g., 岳 (1-14-1740). These examples, coupled with the use of *yu* 獄 as a variant in the Wenxian texts, make a very convincing case for identifying the word denoted here as *yue* 岳/嶽. The scribe's use of *yu* 獄 in place of *yue* 岳 is a case of phonetic loaning. That *yu* 獄 became a standard loan graph for *yue* 岳 is suggested by the later creation of a dedicated character based on this usage, i.e., *yue* 嶽. The character *yue* 嶽 adopts *yu* 獄 as the phonetic signifier and *shan* 山 "mountain" as the semantic signifier to create a phonogram (*xingsheng zi* 形聲字).

The word *yue* 岳/嶽 denotes lofty, often sacred mountains and, I believe, is used in the covenants as the name of a mountain deity called Lord Yue. Lord Yue is called upon in the Houma and Wenxian texts to sanction the covenants. The phrase *dazhong*, which frequently follows this name, may then be understood simply as "Great Mountain/s," referring to the mountain spirit itself, or the mountain/s in which it was thought to reside.<sup>55</sup> The use of the title *gong* "lord" reflects the use of the secular aristocratic hierarchy to organize and rank nature spirits.<sup>56</sup> Perhaps the

55. As mentioned, Emura Haruki made the point that the *Shi ji* uses the term *dazhong* to refer to mountains, see n.42 above.

56. There is evidence for this phenomenon as early as the Shang period. Sarah Allan, for example, points out that in the oracle bones the Shang spirit Di 帝 has "ministers" *chen* 臣, suggesting that "Di commanded a celestial court, like that of the early ruler."

best known example from early transmitted texts of a nature spirit ranked with such a title is the Yellow River spirit, who is given the title *bo* 伯 “earl” and known as “Earl Yellow River” He Bo 河伯. In a description of such ranking of spirits, the “Wang zhi 王制” section of the *Li ji* 禮記 equates mountains with the rank of “lord” *gong* 公:

天子祭天下名山大川：五嶽視三公，四瀆視諸侯。

The Son of Tian sacrifices to the world’s famed mountains and great rivers: the Five Peaks correspond to the Three Lords, the Four Rivers correspond to the regional rulers.<sup>57</sup>

This pairing of the *yue* 嶽/岳 peaks with the title *gong* 公 “lord” accords with the use of this title for the mountain spirit in the Wenxian and Houma texts.

The term *pixian* “resplendent” is used before the title “Lord Yue” in some of the covenant texts. That this term is not restricted to collocation with ancestral human spirits, as is common in bronze inscriptions, is shown from its use with non-human spirits in the *Zu Chu wen*.<sup>58</sup> The term *huangjun* “mighty superior,” which also sometimes occurs before “Lord Yue” in the covenants, is used in bronze inscriptions to refer to a wide variety of living humans and dead ancestors, both male and female, thus its use with an anthropomorphized spirit is not inappropriate.<sup>59</sup>

The practice in early China of sacrificing to nature spirits, particularly mountains, is well documented in transmitted and excavated texts.<sup>60</sup> Examples from Warring States excavated materials include records in the Baoshan 包山 slips of sacrifices to mountains, as well as the late fourth-century B.C.E. Qin Yin 駟 jade tablets *Qin Yin yuban* 秦駟玉版, which record the entreaties of an ailing King Huiwen 惠文 of Qin (r.337–311

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David Pankenier argues: “In both Shang and Zhou . . . we have the projection into the supernatural realm of a socio-political model of sovereignty and hierarchical order.” See Sarah Allan, “On the Identity of Shang Di 上帝 and the Origin of the Concept of a Celestial Mandate (*Tian Ming* 天命),” *Early China* 31 (2007), 7–8. David Pankenier, “The Cosmo-Political Background of Heaven’s Mandate,” *Early China* 20 (1995), 166.

57. *Li ji jijie* 禮記集解, ed. Sun Xidan 孫希旦 (Beijing: Zhonghua, 1989), 347 (“Wang zhi” 王制 13.5.2).

58. Guo Moruo, *Shiguwen yanjiu Zu Chu wen kaoshi* 石鼓文研究詛楚文考釋 (Beijing: Wenwu, 1982).

59. Zhang Zaixing 張再興, “‘Wen’ ‘huang’ kaobian” ‘文’ ‘皇’考辯, *Yuyanwenzixue* (Renda fuyin baokan ziliao 人大複印報刊資料) 2008.5, 101–9.

60. For an overview of mountain worship in early China, see Terry F. Kleeman, “Mountain Deities in China: The Domestication of the Mountain God and the Subjugation of the Margins,” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 114.2 (1994), 226–38. For this practice in the Eastern Han, see Kenneth E. Brashier, “The Spirit Lord of Baishi Mountain: Feeding the Deities or Heeding the *yinyang*,” *Early China* 26–27 (2001–2), 159–231.

B.C.E.) to Mount Hua 華 for blessings and a speedy recovery from his illness.<sup>61</sup> Transmitted texts include examples of mountain spirits being invoked to oversee covenants. For example, part of a covenant quoted in the *Zuo zhuan* lists various spirits called on to sanction the covenant, among them the “famed mountains” *ming shan* 名山.<sup>62</sup> A mountain spirit is particularly appropriate as a supernatural witness, given that its elevated position allows observation of all that goes on. The submission clause of the Houma and Wenxian covenants specifically refers to this constant surveillance: “Resplendent Lord Yue, Great Mountain, perspicaciously and tirelessly watching him [the covenantor].”

The Jin state covered modern day Shanxi and parts of Hebei, Henan, Shandong and Shaanxi, an area of mountains surrounding a series of lower-lying basins. As Terry Kleeman notes, Qu Wanli 屈萬里 suggested that the Yue 嶽 of early texts may refer to Mount Huo 霍, also known as Taiyueshan 太嶽山.<sup>63</sup> This mountain is in Shanxi, about 100 kilometers (62 miles) north of the Houma site. The *Shi ji* provides compelling evidence that Mount Huo was recognized in Jin as a powerful mountain deity. In the 16th year of the reign of Duke Xian 獻 of Jin (661 B.C.E.), Zhao Su 趙夙 is said to have led a Jin army to attack the state of Huo 霍. The leader of Huo flees to Qi 齊. Following this, the *Shi ji* records:

晉大旱，卜之，曰“霍太山為崇。”使趙夙召霍君於齊，復之，以奉霍太山之祀，晉復穰。

Jin suffered a great drought, [Jin’s ritual specialists] divined about this, and said: “Great Mount Huo is the cause of this suffering.” [Jin] sent Zhao Su to summon the Huo ruler back from Qi and reinstate him, and thereby attend to the sacrifices to Great Mount Huo. Jin returned to fecundity [of harvests].<sup>64</sup>

Mount Huo is credited here with the power to bring drought to the whole of Jin, and then return Jin once again to favorable weather condi-

61. For the Baoshan slips, see Chen Wei 陳偉, *Baoshan Chu jian chutan* 包山楚簡初探 (Wuhan: Wuhan Daxue, 1996). Li Xueqin discusses the Qin Yin jade tablets and provides a transcription in Li Xueqin, “Qin yuban suoyin” 秦玉牘索隱, *Gugong bowuyuan yuankan* 故宮博物院院刊 2000.2, 41–45. I have adopted Li’s dating and identification of the Qin king as Huiwen here. For a discussion of these points, and an English translation of this text, see Yuri Pines, “The Question of Interpretation: Qin History in Light of New Epigraphic Sources,” *Early China* 29 (2004), 4–14.

62. *Chunqiu Zuo zhuan zhu* 春秋左傳注, ed. Yang Bojun 楊伯峻 (Beijing: Zhonghua, 1990), 989–90 (Xiang 襄 11.3).

63. Qu Wanli 屈萬里, “Yue yi jigou” 岳義稽古, *Qinghua xuebao* 清華學報 2.1 (1960), 53–68. Cited in Kleeman, “Mountain Deities in China,” 227.

64. *Shi ji* 43.1781.

tions. In this quote, Mount Huo's power over the whole of the Jin state is apparent. In the *Shi ji*, however, Mount Huo is particularly associated with the state of Zhao and its founding myths. The above quote is from the *Shi ji*'s "Zhao Hereditary House" 趙世家 and a Zhao leader, Zhao Su, plays a key role. The mountain is also said to be the location of the grave of Zhao's founding ancestor Fei Lian 蜚廉.<sup>65</sup> In another passage in the "Zhao Hereditary House," Mount Huo sends three spirit envoys with a written prophecy for Zhao Xiang Zi, saying that the mountain will cause Zhao to wipe out the Zhi 知 lineage and, so long as the mountain receives sacrifice, will then ensure Zhao's occupation of further lands.<sup>66</sup> I would conjecture that Mount Huo was a Jin nature deity to which Zhao later gave a central role when creating founding myths for its own state.

The identification of the named sanctioning spirit in the Houma and Wenxian tablets as a mountain deity solves one of the main problems scholars have contended with when considering the dating of the Houma and Wenxian tablets. Since I am confident that this spirit is not that of a former Jin (or Zhou) lord, this name no longer constitutes the source of a restriction on the period during which the covenants were produced.

#### A Historical Han 韓 Leader Named in the Wenxian Texts

This section introduces new material from the Wenxian covenant texts, in which a covenant lord is referred to using a personal name that can be identified with a historical leader of the Han lineage. This strongly supports the view that covenant lords were addressed in the covenants using their personal names, and thus that the term *jia* should be taken as the personal name of Zhao Jia in the Houma covenant texts.

The Wenxian covenant texts include a group of unpublished tablets from pit WT1K3. The tablets from this pit include complete tablets and fragments, but in all cases the text on the tablets is partly or completely illegible. There is not enough remaining text to reconstruct the original full covenant, and this task is complicated by what appear to be some variations in the text of the covenant on different tablets. The covenant begins with a very significant phrase, which can be reconstructed as follows:

所□敢不奉尊啓章以為己主…

If \_\_ [covenantor's name] dare not serve and respect Qizhang 啟章 and take him as his own lord, . . .

65. *Shi ji* 5.174-5.

66. *Shi ji* 43.1794-5.

The graphs used for the name Qizhang include fully legible examples, and their forms are almost identical to those of the corresponding *Shuowen jiezi* small-seal characters. Thus there is no doubt that this is the correct identification for these two graphs. In this opening phrase from the WT<sub>1</sub>K<sub>3</sub> pit tablets, the covenantor is swearing to recognize Qizhang as his lord.

Hao Benxing made the important connection between the name Qizhang in this covenant and the historical Han lineage leader of the same name.<sup>67</sup> The *Shi ben* gives Qizhang as the name of the Han leader Han Wu Zi 韓武子.<sup>68</sup> The Wenxian covenant texts are undoubtedly products of the Han lineage, as is clear from Wenxian covenants which include the name Han 韓 along with what we can assume is the personal name of another covenant lord.<sup>69</sup> We can, then, be confident that the Qizhang of tablets from pit WT<sub>1</sub>K<sub>3</sub> is indeed Han Qizhang, later known as Han Wu Zi. Han Wu Zi reigned from 424 to 409 B.C.E.<sup>70</sup>

The use of personal names of covenant lords in the covenant texts, with only the occasional use of the lineage name, corresponds to the naming convention used for the covenantors themselves. The great majority of Houma and Wenxian texts use just a personal name for the covenantors, with only a very small number using a lineage name along with the personal name. This supports the view that in addressing the spirits, which was the purpose of the covenant and associated ritual, it was normal to refer to an individual using just his or her personal name.<sup>71</sup>

### Discussion

The new evidence from the Wenxian materials introduced above is pertinent to the dating of the Houma covenant tablets in the following ways:

- a. The spirit called on in the Houma tablet HM 16:3, and tablets from pit 67, is Lord Yue, a mountain spirit, and not the preceding ruler of Jin. So, the date or dates of the tablets cannot be restricted to the reign of any particular Jin lord on the basis of this character. This name, then, is no longer a useful criterion for dating the tablets and can be ignored.

67. Hao Benxing, personal communication, September 2008.

68. *Shi ji* 44.1838. See the *Suo Yin* commentary on the name Han Wu Zi 韓武子.

69. While completing this article, I have determined that this name is Qu 取, the name of Han Lie Hou 韓烈侯 (r. 399–387 B.C.E.), see Wei Kebin (Crispin Williams), “Wenxian mengshu T<sub>4</sub>K<sub>5</sub>, T<sub>4</sub>K<sub>6</sub>, T<sub>4</sub>K<sub>11</sub> mengci shidu” 溫縣盟書 T<sub>4</sub>K<sub>5</sub>, T<sub>4</sub>K<sub>6</sub>, T<sub>4</sub>K<sub>11</sub> 盟辭釋讀, *Chutu wenxian yu guwenzi yanjiu* 出土文獻與古文字研究 5 (forthcoming).

70. Hirase gives 423–408 B.C.E., Hirase, *Shinpen Shiki Tōshū Nenpyō*, 144–48, 641.

71. Li Xueqin discusses this and other naming conventions in Li Xueqin, “Xian Qin renming de ji ge wenti” 先秦人名的幾個問題, *Lishi yanjiu* 歷史研究 1991.5, 106–11.



- b. The clear use of personal names to refer to covenant lords in the Wenxian texts strongly supports the suggestion that the term *jia* in the Houma tablets is not an honorific applicable to any leader, but the personal name of the covenant lord. This supports the suggestion that the covenant lord is, indeed, the historical Zhao lineage leader Zhao Jia, the later Zhao Huan Zi.

Based on these findings we must revise our evaluation of the evidence for dating the Houma texts. Firstly, we should now acknowledge that the majority of Houma covenants name Zhao Jia as the covenant lord. Secondly, the named sanctioning spirit is not a former lord but a mountain deity and, thus, there is no reason to restrict the date or dates of the tablets to the reign of (or period following) any one particular Jin lord.

On this basis, one might conjecture that the Houma texts include materials related to two completely separate events. Considering the historical record, the obvious conclusion would be that they reflect both the feud between Zhao Yang and Zhao Wu in 497 B.C.E., and the succession struggle in 424 B.C.E. between Zhao Jia and Zhao Huan. However, such a conclusion would be premature. There are significant problems in the Houma tablets that remain unsolved, including key names that cannot be matched to historical figures linked to these events.<sup>72</sup> Furthermore, the limitations of the historical record cannot be overlooked. For example, mentions of Zhao Jia in the histories are scarce and, apart from the brief mention of the feud with Zhao Huan, provide no information about the events of his life. It may well be that the covenants reflect events simply not recorded in the histories.<sup>73</sup>

Li Xueqin is a staunch proponent of utilizing both historical and archaeological sources to reconstruct the past.<sup>74</sup> This method uses excavated materials to supplement, correct, or to verify the transmitted texts.

72. The most obvious example being that of the main enemy named in the Houma covenants as Zhao Hu 趙弧. If the covenants naming Zhao Jia as leader reflect a conflict with Zhao Huan, then one would expect Zhao Hu to refer to Zhao Huan, but the suggestion that *hu* 弧 could loan for the name Huan 澆 is highly problematic. The reconstructions are: 弧 *hu* < *hu* < \*[g]<sup>ws</sup>a and 澆 *huan* < *hwan*X < \*[c]<sup>o</sup>[n]?. The initial consonants are of different types (labialized and nonlabialized) and the vowels and codas are different. On this basis, *hu* 弧 is not a suitable graph to write the name huan 澆. (I am grateful to William H. Baxter for comments on this issue: personal communication, August 25, 2012.)

73. Susan R. Weld has suggested this may be the case, see Weld, "Covenant in Jin's Walled Cities," 432.

74. This is the approach proposed by Wang Guowei 王國維 in the 1920s, for which he used the term "*er zhong zhengju fa* 二種證據法" the two-types-of-evidence method." Li argues for this approach in his book *Zouchu yigu shidai* 走出疑古時代, rev.ed. (Shenyang: Liaoning Daxue, 1997). See also Wang Guowei, *Gushi xin zheng: Wang Guowei zuihou de jiangyi* 古史新證——王國維最後的講義, ed. Song Tao 宋韜 (Beijing: Qinghua University,

Analysis of the excavated covenant texts demonstrates both the promise and challenge of this approach. On the one hand, the historical records have supplied identifications for several key names in the excavated covenants. On the other hand, the covenants include many names that cannot be easily matched to historical figures, and it is as yet unclear to what extent the events reflected by the covenants were recorded in the histories. In the spirit of Li Xueqin's approach to such problems, let us take Zhao Jia and consider how the excavated materials might help us appraise the brief mentions of this figure in the historical records.

The substantial number of covenants at Houma recording Zhao Jia as the covenant lord imply that he was an important leader. He clearly had the authority to organize major ritual events, involving significant use of both material and human resources. The covenants brought together many people, who swore their loyalty to Zhao Jia as their leader. This happened on many occasions over an extended period of time. Furthermore, Zhao Jia had the authority to make use of a ritual area adjacent to the Jin capital for the ritual burial of the covenants. And yet, the passing reference to Zhao Jia in the historical record paints him as a usurper who seized power for a year and then promptly died. As mentioned above, the historical records cannot even agree on his place in the Zhao genealogy, with the *Shi ji* stating he was the younger brother of Zhao Xiang Zi, while the *Shi ben* calls him Zhao Xiang Zi's son. Let us consider to what extent we might supplement our knowledge of Zhao Jia in light of the Houma covenants and another, more recently published excavated text, the *Xinian*.

With respect to Zhao Jia's place in the Zhao genealogy, the Houma covenant texts include a piece of evidence that suggests Zhao Jia was an eldest son, and thus could not have been Zhao Xiang Zi's younger brother. As mentioned above, there is at least one tablet in which the name "Jia" is replaced with the name Zi Zhao Meng 子趙孟. The term *meng* 孟 is usually used to denote the eldest son. If Zhao Meng refers here to Zhao Jia, as one may reasonably assume, then this implies he was an eldest son, and cannot have been Zhao Xiang Zi's younger brother. This would suggest that the *Shi ben* is correct in saying that Zhao Jia was Zhao Xiang Zi's son.<sup>75</sup>

1996). See also Paul Fischer, "Authentication Studies (辨偽學) Methodology and the Polymorphous Text Paradigm," *Early China* 32 (2008–9), 1–43, particularly pages 31–36.

75. Gao Ming also makes this point: Gao Ming, "Houma zaishu mengzhu kao," 104. There is, it should be acknowledged, evidence from the transmitted histories that appears to suggest the Zhao lineage used *meng* to refer to their leader regardless of his position in the birth order. If this was the case for the scribe who wrote the variant using *meng* in the Houma covenants, then this evidence would not be relevant to the

The historical records tell us nothing about Zhao Jia's life prior to his reported usurpation of the Zhao leadership from Zhao Huan in 424 B.C.E. However, that he was active as a leader well before this time is apparent from another source of new material, the recently published *Xinian*, one of the Warring States bamboo-slip texts housed at Tsinghua University that Li Xueqin and his team have transcribed and annotated.<sup>76</sup> This text suggests Zhao Jia was a powerful leader well before the year 424 B.C.E. The *Xinian* includes the following passage:

晉敬公立十又一年，趙桓子會[諸]侯之大夫，以與越令尹宋盟于鞏，遂以伐齊...

In the 11th year of Duke Jing of Jin's reign, Zhao Huan Zi [i.e., Zhao Jia] met with the ministers of the regional lords and covenanted with the Yue *lingyin*-minister Song at Gong, and then, on this basis, attacked Qi, . . .<sup>77</sup>

This was the year 441 B.C.E., seventeen years before Zhao Jia's reported one-year rule in 424 B.C.E. Zhao Jia is clearly playing a major leadership role on behalf of Jin in the event described here. This reminds us of Li Xueqin's point, mentioned above, that the covenants may reflect Zhao Jia taking a leadership role earlier than the histories would suggest. The *Xinian* clearly supports this suggestion.

If the covenants mentioning Zhao Jia date to before 424 B.C.E., and in light of the *Xinian* evidence that shows him active in 441 B.C.E., then the question becomes what Zhao Jia's status was at these earlier times. As

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question of Zhao Jia's relationship to Zhao Xiang Zi. Tsang Chi-hung 曾志雄 makes this point, citing the study of Fang Xuanchen 方炫琛, see Tsang Chi-hung, "A Study of Alliance Pacts Unearthed at Houma" Houma mengshu yanjiu 侯馬盟書研究, Ph.D. dissertation (University of Hong Kong, 1993), 67–68; Fang Xuanchen, *Zuo zhuan renwu minghao yanjiu* 左傳人物名號研究, Ph.D. dissertation (Taipei: Guoli Zhengzhi Daxue 國立政治大學, 1983), 512, 569–70. Another approach to this problem is to consider the circumstantial evidence the texts provide for the approximate ages of Zhao Xiang Zi and Zhao Jia at the time when they are recorded as having been active leaders. In his 1998 article, Li Xueqin makes the point that if Zhao Jia was Zhao Xiang Zi's younger brother, he would have been a very old man by 424 B.C.E., the time of the succession struggle. Gao Ming notes that Zhao Jian Zi, Zhao Jia's father in this scenario, is reported as already being an active leader in 517 B.C.E. If Zhao Jia had been born around this time, he would have been very elderly by 424 B.C.E., and not fit to engage in a major conflict with Zhao Huan. This is no longer a problem if Zhao Jia was Zhao Xiang Zi's son. He would then have been middle-aged around 440 B.C.E., the time at which evidence from the *Xinian*, discussed below, implies that he was taking an active leadership role. See Li Xueqin, "Houma, Wenxian mengshu li shuo de zai kaocha," 167; Gao Ming, "Houma zaishu mengzhu kao," 104.

76. Li Xueqin, *Qinghua Daxue cang Zhanguo zhujian* (2).

77. Li Xueqin, *Qinghua Daxue cang Zhanguo zhujian* (2), 186.

discussed above, I believe that the language of the Houma covenants clearly implies that, at the time of the Houma covenants in which he is covenant lord, Zhao Jia was the recognized leader of the Zhao lineage. The covenant types from Houma and Wenxian are, in almost all cases, loyalty oaths. They begin with a stipulation requiring the covenantor to be loyal in serving the "lord" *zhu*. The Wenxian covenant from pit WT4K5 additionally requires loyalty to the lord's closest ministers.<sup>78</sup> At Houma and Wenxian great numbers of people pledged their loyalty to these men. In one covenant at Wenxian thousands of covenantors were involved.<sup>79</sup> The logical inference is that the "lord" was not only the "covenant lord" of each particular covenant, but at the time of the covenant was the leader of the lineage on which the covenants were centered. That two of the three covenant lords at Wenxian and Houma, Jia and Qizhang, can be identified with historical lineage leaders only lends further support to this argument.<sup>80</sup>

If Zhao Jia was leader of the Zhao lineage before 424 B.C.E., then the *Shi ji*'s record of his one year reign is inaccurate, and we have a case where excavated materials may allow us to revise our understanding of this period, specifically the reign length of Zhao Jia. A further factor which suggests such a revision may be justified is that the historical records themselves provide contradictory evidence for the reign length of Zhao Jian Zi, the father of Zhao Xiang Zi and, based on the discussion above, the grandfather of Zhao Jia. As Li Xueqin discusses in his 1998 article, the *Shi ji*'s "Zhao Hereditary House" and "Chronological Records of the Six States" 六國年表 record Zhao Jian Zi as dying in the 17th year of Duke Chu of Jin's reign (458 B.C.E.). However, the *Zuo zhuan* implies that Zhao Jian Zi died in the 20th year of Duke Ai of Lu's reign (476 B.C.E.). This is a discrepancy of eighteen years. As Li notes, this has led to speculation that these additional years should be added to the leadership of Zhao Xiang Zi, increasing his reign from 33 to 51 years, from 475 to 425 B.C.E.<sup>81</sup>

In light of the new evidence from the *Xinian*, I propose we add these eighteen years not to the reign of Zhao Xiang Zi, but to the reign of his son, Zhao Jia. If Zhao Jian Zi died in 476 B.C.E., as the *Zuo zhuan* implies, and was succeeded in 475 B.C.E. by his son Zhao Xiang Zi, who then ruled for the 33 years that the *Shi ji* records, then Zhao Xiang Zi would have died in 443 B.C.E. If his son, Zhao Jia, took over the leadership the following year, that would have been 442 B.C.E., which is a year before

78. The term used is *sefu zuoyou* 番夫左右.

79. This covenant is discussed in Crispin Williams, "Ten Thousand Names: Rank and Lineage Affiliation in the Wenxian Covenant Texts," *Asiatische Studien* LXIII.4, 959–89.

80. See n. 69 above.

81. Li Xueqin, "Houma, Wenxian mengshu li shuo de zai kaocha," 167.

441 B.C.E., when the *Xinian* records his playing a major leadership role in Jin. The *Xinian* also mentions Zhao Jia's successor, Zhao Huan. It records Zhao Huan leading a military campaign along with Wei Si 魏斯 and Han Qizhang in the 7th year of the reign of King Jian 簡 of Chu, in 425 B.C.E.<sup>82</sup> This corresponds to the period that the *Shi ji* records as the beginning of Zhao Huan's leadership of Zhao. As mentioned, there is some debate as to the exact year this took place, but there is no suggestion of a major discrepancy between the transmitted and the excavated records as seems to be the case with Zhao Jia.

If this conjecture is correct, then those Houma covenant texts in which Zhao Jia is the covenant lord date between about 442 and 424 B.C.E. It is, then, still possible that these covenants do relate to a succession struggle between Zhao Jia and Zhao Huan. The texts of these covenants do appear to reflect a conflict between two factions within the Zhao lineage, the opposing faction led by the figure referred to as Zhao Hu. That this name cannot be matched with that of Zhao Huan is a major obstacle to this theory. It is also possible that the covenants reflect a process of consolidation of the Zhao lineage under Zhao Jia that was not recorded in the transmitted histories.

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82. Li Xueqin, *Qinghua Daxue cang Zhanguo zhujian* (2), 189.