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Dissertation Abstracts*

Compiled by Jesse J. Chapman

Email: contactjchapman@gmail.com

Chhiv, Laetitia. Ph.D. École Pratique des Hautes Études – Université Paris Sciences & Lettres, 2023. *La légende comme instrument d'édification : le personnage de Yi Yin 伊尹 dans les manuscrits chinois du 4ème siècle avant notre ère.* (*Legend as an instrument of edification: the figure of Yi Yin 伊尹 in the Chinese manuscripts from the 4th century BCE*). theses.hal.science/tel-04587346.

This thesis traces the legendary narrative that formed around Yi Yin 伊尹, who served as a minister to the first king of the Shang dynasty (ca. 1600–1046 BCE). Apart from the Shang rulers, Yi Yin is the only figure to be plainly identified in both oracle bone inscriptions and transmitted texts. Thus, ancient sources relating to Yi Yin span a period of over a millennium. They now also include several Warring States manuscripts (481–221 BCE) that were excavated in the old state of Chu. In the light of these new sources, this study proposes an overall analysis of the legend associated with Yi Yin, addressing the following questions: What do the Chu manuscripts reveal about the legend of Yi Yin? To what extent was this legend used for purposes of edification? How can we interpret the differences and nuances between the numerous written accounts linked to Yi Yin? To answer these questions, I have structured my research in three parts, moving from the general to the specific.

The first part, which is rather descriptive in nature, comprises two chapters that constitute a prelude to the rest of the study. It focuses mainly on three topics: the historical and archaeological context surrounding the discovery of Warring States manuscripts, the methodology used to reconstruct these texts written on bamboo slips, and the deciphering of Chu script. Therefore, I aim to explain the material and technical backgrounds specific to these manuscripts, as well as the issues involved in reading Chu graphs. Drawing on case studies and concrete examples, the synthesis presented here shows that Chinese paleography is a continually evolving discipline. We can thus understand why, in the field of Chu manuscripts, several hypotheses regarding the reconstitution of texts or the interpretation of graphs are likely to coexist.

The two chapters of the second part survey all the sources related to Yi Yin throughout Chinese antiquity, from the 13th century BCE to the 1st century CE. First,

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an analysis of oracle bone inscriptions demonstrates that Yi Yin was the recipient of lavish sacrifices; his position in the Shang pantheon was indeed similar to that of the most prominent ancestral spirits and the most powerful deities of nature. Besides, the particular features of the cult of Yi Yin at that time allow us to determine his historicity. Next, I explore the transmitted literature, which reflects the development of the legend of Yi Yin in four stages, the succession of which coincides with the social and political changes characteristic of each era. Lastly, I present, transcribe, and translate the five Warring States manuscripts that feature Yi Yin as a protagonist, along with two others that mention him.

The third part examines the triple representation of Yi Yin in the manuscripts: as a catalyst of dynastic change, as an expert in culinary arts, and as an adept of self-cultivation. Each of these themes is discussed in a separate chapter. These excavated texts reveal different roles of Yi Yin, which appear little or not at all in received texts, and which may even seem contradictory. Thus, Yi Yin sometimes appears as the teacher of the ruler, sometimes as the hero of a fable that may belong to an alternative and previously unseen legendary cycle attached to this figure. Consequently, even if the manuscripts do not contradict or radically alter the legend of Yi Yin as drawn from the textual corpus that has been passed down since the Han period, they do enrich it significantly. On the basis of all the sources examined, we can now clearly distinguish, on the one hand, the historical figure of Yi Yin, about whom we actually know next to nothing, and, on the other hand, the multifaceted legendary figure of Yi Yin, as an exemplary model highly esteemed by ancient literati, who adapted his portrayal in many different ways to convey their own political and philosophical conceptions.

The conclusion summarizes the findings of the dissertation, and also emphasizes that the main contribution of Chu manuscripts lies in their antiquity and in the raw, unaltered form in which they have come down to us, largely escaping the stylistic and content categories to which we are accustomed through transmitted literature. Such contrasts, some of them quite striking, open new avenues for research off the beaten track of tradition.

Gu, Yixin. Ph.D. Princeton University, 2022. *The Enchantment of Erudition: Models and Manifestations of Literary Culture in Han-Wei China*.

This work undertakes a critical inquiry into the conceptual, aesthetic, and epistemic foundation for a transitional era of Chinese literary culture from the late first century BCE through the third century CE—roughly, from the late Western Han through the Eastern Han and Three Kingdoms (or the Wei dynasty). My investigation focuses on the emergence and proliferation of an intellectual model, which constituted the major emblem of a forcefully arising scholarly ideology over the period under review. Essential to this model was a particular way of *becoming*—namely, a manner of self-oriented accumulation of intellectual labor and resources toward an individually embodied state of erudition and its variable instantiations. During and after the Han, such a model was presented as a collective *imaginaire*, of which the personal embodiments were distributed among a cluster of exemplary figures and the verbal manifestations deposited in a growing repository of ideas and utterances. With circumscribed patterns and variability, this repository foregrounds the image of the individual as a coherent container, transformer, mediator, and producer engaged in a

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variety of texts, knowledge, and beyond. Taken collectively, the emergence and proliferation of individual erudition are indicative of a re-orientation of Chinese literary culture, which, with albeit back-and-forth entanglements with the institutional powers of old and new authorities, was transformed into a new condition sustained by the multi-centered proliferation of intellectual labor and its cultural products, especially writings in the specific sense of a "textual display of erudition." Critically too, the study also examines the integration of "erudition" and "individuality" as a truth-making and power-generating discourse, considering how the eros toward erudition intertwined with specific socio-political motifs and, in terms of "enchantment," sustained a new intellectual mythification of the world and the self.

Rols, Johan. Ph.D. École Pratique des Hautes Études – Université Paris Sciences & Lettres, 2021. *Prohibitions on the Destruction of Fauna and Flora in China from Late Antiquity to the Middle Ages*.

This doctoral research focuses on the analysis of the first Taoist precepts relating to the destruction of the environment (fauna, flora and certain natural areas) under the Six Dynasties (3rd-6th centuries) in relation to the calendar prohibitions of earlier periods (from the 4th century BCE to the 2nd century of the common era). By analyzing texts of very different natures (law codes, philosophical texts, recently excavated manuscripts, Taoist and Buddhist texts, various narratives), this work has made it possible to contextualize the normative discourses and to reconstruct a history of the prohibitions aimed at protecting natural cycles and prohibiting some actions intended to destroy flora or kill fauna (felling trees, burning forests, hunting, etc.).

Alongside a history of normative discourses on environmental destruction, this thesis also deconstructs current political and scientific viewpoints to present some of these ancient Chinese normative discourses on the administrative management of nature and the basic needs of people for ecological ethics. The ideological discourses in vogue on a kind of ancient Chinese indigenous ecology are thus recontextualized to reveal the motivations and evolution of these prohibitions in their economic, political, and religious contexts.

Rather than using texts such as the *Mengzi*, the *Xunzi*, and the *Lüshi chunqiu* dating from the 3rd century BCE as an apology for "sustainable development," this thesis proposes an in-depth study of the different interpretations of nature destruction by shedding light on their uses of notions characteristic of their time, such as *yishi* 以時 ("appropriate periods") which emphasize the importance of matching human activities (economic, cultic . . .) with periods of growth (spring and summer) and retreat and dormancy (autumn and winter).

In general, prohibitions on harming flora, which are mostly effective in spring and summer, follow the idea of a correspondence with the cosmic order. However, the prohibition and authorization of environmental destruction in hemerological and normative texts vary from one source to another, and they evolve in different patterns: seasonal, monthly, and daily. While relying on the same previous sources, discourses will gradually create new categories over time. This is notable in the sixth century CE *Qimin yaoshu*, which distinguishes several traditions of normative texts: on the one hand, the prohibitions coming from agricultural treatises such as the *Simin yueling*

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(second century CE) differ from the ritual prohibitions coming from the calendar ordinances and daily prohibitions.

This thesis shows how the authors of these calendar regulations managed to follow the evolution of knowledge and beliefs by bringing them into line with the exploitation of resources. The general idea conveyed in these texts is that of progress. The natural and "wild" spaces in which the prohibitions are effective do not correspond to a virgin nature. On the contrary, these texts emphasize that they are environments subject to human intervention, in a different way from towns and cultivated land. The mention of these areas (mountains, forests, etc.) in the calendar regulations attests to their economic importance. The enactment of ordinances and prohibitions stems from the fact that they are perceived primarily in terms of resources, rights, and uses. People act and modify these spaces by means of the ordinances and prohibitions of specific places (territorial monopolies, guarded lands . . .) and correlated with suitable periods (seasonal rhythms) as well as to agricultural practices.

After this first part of the thesis presented above, which establishes a historically contextualized inventory of the prohibitions during the periods of the Warring Kingdoms and the Han Dynasty, the second part studies the influences and concordances between these prohibitions and the first precepts of the Buddhist and Taoist Canons, mainly through the text of the fifth century CE "One Hundred and Eighty Precepts of the Lao Lord." This second part thus compares the calendar regulations of late antiquity with the Taoist and Buddhist precepts of the Six Dynasties on the question of safeguarding living beings (animals), flora, and certain natural areas.

This doctoral work demonstrates that a radical evolution concerning the respect of human and animal life begins with the Buddhist and Taoist precepts, and extends to the safeguarding of their environments. In the discourses of the fourth to sixth centuries, the general idea of compassion towards animals is intrinsic to the injunction to spare animal life and the practice of vegetarianism. Therefore, the Taoist precepts analyzed do not refer to the preservation or conservation of wildlife in the face of an external and cataclysmic threat present in the earlier discourses, but rather identify among many faults the killing of animals and take into consideration their freedom, physical integrity, and peace of mind. Similarly, with regard to certain natural areas (which could, among other things, be considered the habitat of the living): mountains, forests, and plains, the core of the precepts and faults concerns the act of destruction, which also applies to goods and foodstuffs. This is also the case for the prohibition of polluting or poisoning water to avoid being the instigator of damage to the living. The effect of prohibiting the destruction of life or things can be interpreted as preservation of wildlife and its habitat, despite a more personal saving purpose. Therefore, following the precepts is a religious practice of self-cultivation aimed at achieving enlightenment (Buddhism) or immortality (Taoism), and differs from the observance of mainly calendrical prohibitions aimed at preserving harmony between humans, Heaven, and Earth in order to avoid celestial wrath and various natural catastrophes.

This thesis underlines an important nuance in the early Taoist precepts: the prohibitions concerning destruction are of two types: when the destruction is useless for man (or even harmful in the case of water pollution) and when it corresponds to

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real needs. The introduction in some precepts of the adverb "do not do something thoughtlessly" (*bude wang*), however, shows possible exceptions to the prohibited practices. "*Bude wang*" serves as a derogation for unexplained cases in which flora is present. The felling of trees, the gathering of flowers and fruits, the excavation of soils and mountains, and the destruction of dams and dykes are all conceivable, if they are consistent with a "purposeful" act. The conclusion of this thesis discusses this new problematic: what is a purposeful act of destroying flora in the Taoist texts of the Six Dynasties? It could be, for example, the same needs as for the calendar regulations (e.g. building wood or firewood). Finally, the "One Hundred and Eighty Precepts of the Lao Lord" have their own limitations in relation to the (somewhat fantasized) idea of a harmonious cohabitation between man and vegetable nature. The purpose of these precepts was essentially to establish moral standards of the most diverse subjects common in the fourth and fifth centuries.

This thesis engages with and contributes to the wider scholarship on the evolution of the history of ideas, environment, and science in China from Antiquity to the Middle Ages. Previous studies have often focused on the history of agriculture and the history of environmental transformations as well as a history of an "ecological Chinese civilization." I show a history of prohibitions in relation to environmental destruction and draw up a historically contextualized inventory of sources. I also answer questions about how we can solve our ecological problems by showing the importance of religious culture in the way people respect their environment.

Rominger, Gian Duri. Ph.D. Princeton University, 2023. *Aural Texts and the Association of Sound and Meaning in Early Chinese Texts*.

This dissertation analyzes the role of sound in language use in early Chinese texts. By focusing on developments of sound-based recurrences such as rhyme and paronomasia, focusing on the classical, foundational texts from the third to first centuries BCE, I offer a new understanding of how textuality, the writing system, and language itself were conceptualized during these centuries. Overall, I argue that these sound-based devices underwent transformative functional and structural changes, in which their primary focus shifted from composition to interpretation. I trace the importance of sound in language use from the Later Mohist textual material through other Warring States texts, including the "Masters' literature" (*zǐ shū* 子書), all the way to Hàn dynasty material. Specifically, this dissertation highlights that sound recurrences in early Chinese texts occur both as a structuring element for longer material – whereby sound coordinates textual units – and as a means to express conceptual and ontological connections valid for ancient language users. Additionally, this dissertation proposes to computationally apply existing historical phonological data at scale to digitized early Chinese textual material in order to detect phonological recurrences.

Key findings of this study include, firstly, that early Chinese rhymes and paronomasia did not only fulfill ornamental and mnemonic functions but could also form the basis for performative segments, arguments, and ontological connections postulated by and in texts. Secondly, functions of paronomasia shift over centuries, changing from compositional devices to decidedly interpretive tools.

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Yao, Zhuming. Ph.D. Princeton University, 2023. *The Synthetic Tongue: Speech, Writing, and 'Speech Writings' in Early China*.

Many early Chinese writings feature a scene of speech. In more literary writings as in more technical ones, writing often puts in the mouth of a speaker what the text tries to get across. Frequently, the speaker's spoken words, comprising a text either in full or in part, also occupy the center stage of writing's attempt at narrating a story, arguing a point, imparting a skill, or simply sorting things out. The list goes on. This lasting, shared, and versatile appeal to, and of, the spoken word in early Chinese writings is the topic of this dissertation. It argues that speech representation is first and foremost a narrative device serving a text's rhetorical aims. Writing does not represent speech as a mere technology of transcription; rather, writing creates a world-in-itself with and through the representation of speech, a highly elevated medium of expression since early on. In the process, this dissertation also shows, there developed a set of representational structures and narrative techniques with which speech representation was approached. The former supply writing with the forms, shapes, and tropes that underlie the representation of speech; the latter the means to make creative but circumscribed variations. Together, they cement the role of the spoken word as a narrative construct that different writings can use and adapt for their own rhetorical purposes. In highlighting these aspects of the spoken word, this dissertation offers an account of a core but underemphasized attribute of early Chinese textuality, models a new methodological approach, and proposes a range of interpretations of texts old and new intended to reevaluate their meaning and significance. Its goal, ultimately, is to promote a new way of reading.

You, Kun. Ph.D. University of Colorado, Boulder, 2024. *Types of Titles and Their Functionality in Early Chinese Textual Culture*. ProQuest Number: 31234591.

The notions of individual authorship and "philosophical schools" have been widely recognized as inadequate and even misleading for understanding early Chinese literature, in particular the Masters Texts, which are often consulted for their philosophical and political value. This realization and the evidence of recently excavated manuscripts, which largely lack paratextual information, suggest that a new methodology for reading early Chinese texts is required.

This dissertation addresses the issue that the very different types of relationship between titles and their texts in early Chinese literature have not yet been sufficiently appreciated: it describes how titles became a convention in book compilation and how they evolved to function as a paratextual device. Understanding this process is key to accurately interpreting early Chinese texts. Due to the lack of early compilers' and authors' explanation of the purpose of titles, I use systematic criteria for determining the interpretive function of titles. These criteria include factors such as type of text, textual structures, the relationship between title wording and text, material features of excavated manuscripts, as well as any other accompanying information.

The first part of the dissertation (chapters one and two) provides a typology of titles based on their functionality, and the second part (chapters three and four) describes the evolving paratextual function of the title in early Chinese textual culture and book history from the mid-5th century BCE to the 1st century CE (i.e., Warring States period to early Eastern Han dynasty). I propose that, in early China, the maturation of

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the title's interpretative function arrived hand in hand with the growing importance of writing as a means of distributing knowledge beyond closed social circles.

This dissertation provides students of early China with a methodological framework needed to understand the role of titles for identifying individual texts (i.e., chapters of transmitted books) or guiding readers in their interpretation, as well as the function of titles in the evolving concept of books as meaningful compilations of texts.

Zheng, Yifan. Ph.D. University of California at Berkeley, 2024. *Accounting for Status: Excavated Texts and Social Identity in Early Imperial China*.

This dissertation delves into the formation of legal identities among commoners in China's earliest empires, focusing on the transitional period from the fourth century BCE to the first century CE. It seeks to contextualize the interest of early Chinese philosophers in self and identity within broader social engineering projects initiated by early states. It examines how ancient Chinese states constructed and tracked identity through administrative devices, creating a rudimentary version of a "status credit system." Analyzing recently unearthed documents including birth registries, passports, "wanted" posters, and funerary relocation documents, this dissertation highlights the experiences of underprivileged groups, which recent archaeological discoveries have depicted in unprecedented detail. Examining a diverse array of such groups, including petty officials, slaves, and convict laborers, this work seeks to complicate the relatively static models of social stratification of this period, paying special attention to how legal punishments and various administrative devices shaped identity, status, and relationship to the state. This dissertation proposes a framework that views status as a form of currency, emphasizing the fluidity of social mobility and the fungibility of merits and debts within the social order.

This dissertation is structured in four chapters, each focusing on a certain group or an aspect of identity and status in early imperial China. Chapter 1 traces the formation of legal and administrative identity from the late Warring States period to the Han Dynasty, examining the bureaucratic drive to identify and categorize the population. This process, detailed in various registers and local census documents, involved gathering comprehensive information, and materially transformed individuals, integrating them into the state's legal and administrative framework. Chapter 2 contextualizes commentaries on the term "*jiaren*" (lit. "family member") to consider family relationships in early imperial China and to reflect on the status of domestic servants in Chinese history. Chapter 3 traces the pre-history of hereditary occupations, emphasizing the role of occupations in shaping identity and social status. Chapter 4 explores how ranks of honor served as status credits, influencing social hierarchy and defining one's merit and debt to the state. These chapters provide an in-depth analysis of the various mechanisms and factors influencing social mobility and status change, from legal punishments, occupational roles, and the ranks of honor system.

[**]All abstracts should be credited to the authors of the dissertations they describe.

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