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The Countenance of the Chou: *Shih Ching* 266–296*

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For some short time, my countenance sustained him;
I led him, showing him my youthful eyes,
Along with me upon the proper path.

—DANTE, *Purgatorio* XXX

I. Prolegomena

It is now generally recognized that to regard *Shih Ching* 詩經 as scripture prompts polemics but not poetry. Much has been done to affirm the value of *Shih Ching* as poetry since the turn of the twentieth century. The scholarly achievements, evident in several languages besides Chinese, are not exactly for the discovery of any poetry at any time unknown, however; they are rather for the deciphering of a poetry sometimes unintelligible—by separating it from circumferential knowledge, which often if not always supersede their common object, *shih* or poetry.[1] For poetry is always there, even though the book has been called a *ching* for some time.[2] In the attempt to free the poetry from the scriptural and other irrelevant forces once so powerfully in control of the approach to this classic, some modern scholars, unwittingly

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[1] For a bibliography of writings especially contributive to the making of a modern *Shih Ching* scholarship, see C. H. Wang, *The Bell and the Drum: Shih Ching as Formulaic Poetry in an Oral Tradition* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974).

[2] Ch'ü Wan-li 屈萬里, *Shih Ching shih-i* 詩經釋義, 2 volumes (Taipei, 1952), I, 3. In Romanizing the Chinese titles I follow the style adopted by the majority of American scholarly journals, except in the case of the Thirteen Classics, *Shih Ching* included, which are capitalized throughout.

perhaps, have even vulgarized it.[3] In order to be reasonably circumspect, I propose to reiterate the observation that the *Shih Ching* poems are demonstrably formulaic, by and large, but they are not all necessarily composed orally and spontaneously.[4] I assume a formative period of *Shih Ching* falling in the span of time from the twelfth century B.C. to the seventh century B.C., when all the 305 songs now extant in the book were undergoing alteration and modification as they were transmitted, or transcribed. Literary elements are ever present throughout even the most formulaic compositions in the *Kuo feng* 國風 section.[5] These compositions, though highly formulaic, are mostly crafted and are not necessarily oral, spontaneous "folk songs" as such.[6]

In the corpus of *Shih Ching*, the farthest from what we understand as folk literature, from the oral quality characteristic of spontaneous composition, indeed, is the group of hymns called the *Chou sung* 周頌 (*Shih Ching* 266–296).[7] However, it is not simply on account of the paucity of formulas and typescenes that we have found these hymns hardly to be folk literature. There are 337 verses (lines) in the *Chou sung*, of which 51 (or 15.1 percent) are what we call "whole-verse formulas." The percentage of formulas in this group is in fact higher than that in the *Ta ya* 大雅 (12.9 percent) and in the *Shang sung* 商頌 (2.6 percent). The literary, aristocratic quality of these poems has to do with the fact that of the 51 whole-verse formulas, 10 (or 19.6 percent) are particular to themselves in the group, the highest among all the sections

[3] Some contributors to the *Ku-shih pien* 古史辨, for example; see Ku Chieh-kang 顧頡剛 (ed.), *Ku-shih pien*, III (Peking, 1931), *passim*. Ezra Pound has also brought down somewhat the poetry of *Shih Ching* in *The Confucian Odes* (New York, 1959). An interpreter of *Shih Ching* on the basis of the Poundian knowledge but without the Poundian naïveté is William McNaughton, *The Book of Songs* (New York, 1971).

[4] In the so-called "oral poetics" based on Milman Parry's studies of the Homeric epics and the Yugoslav tales, published between 1928 and 1933, the formulaic quality of a given poem's language immediately suggests that the poem is composed orally and spontaneously. For basic readings of the theory, see especially Adam Parry (ed.), *The Making of Homeric Verse: The Collected Papers of Milman Parry* (Oxford, 1971), and Albert B. Lord, *The Singer of Tales* (Cambridge, Mass., 1964); for a reconsideration, see Ann Chalmers Watts, *The Lyre and the Harp* (New Haven, 1969).

[5] For a comparable assumption in the studies of oral poetry, see Larry D. Benson, "The Literary Character of Anglo-Saxon Formulaic Poetry," *PMLA*, LXXXI (1966), 334–41. Benson aims at changing the focus of Francis P. Magoun, Jr. in "Oral-Formulaic Character of Anglo-Saxon Narrative Poetry," *Speculum*, XXVIII (1953), 446–67.

[6] The density of formulas in *Shih Ching* can be shown as follows:

Section	*Number of verses*	*Whole-verse formulas*	*Percentage of section*
Feng	2608	694	26.6
Hsiao ya	2326	532	22.8
Ta ya	1616	209	12.9
Sung	734	96	13.1

For a fuller analysis, see C. H. Wang, *op. cit.* Ku Chieh-kang believes that there are no real folk songs in *Shih Ching*, see *Ku-shih pien*, III, and his preface to Chung Ching-wen 鍾敬文 (ed.), *Yüeh feng* 粵風 (Peking, 1927). Lawrence A. Schneider discusses the theory with historical insight. Schneider points out that, among Western Sinologists, Bernhard Karlgren ("Glosses on the Kuo-feng Odes," *Bulletin of the Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities*, XIV [1942], 71–245) complements and substantiates Ku's thesis most fully, whereas Marcel Granet (E. Edwards [trans.], *Festivals and Songs of Ancient China* [London, 1932]) differs from Ku regarding the specific problem. See Schneider, *Ku Chieh-kang and China's New History* (Berkeley, 1971), pp. 164–87.

[7] The numbering of the *Shih Ching* poems follows Hung Yeh *et al.* (eds.), *Concordance to Shih Ching* (Peking, 1934).

and groups in the corpus of *Shih Ching*.[8] In other words, whereas most formulas utilized in other sections, such as the *Kuo feng* and the *Hsiao ya* 小雅, are common, public materials, a large number of the formulas constituting the poems of the *Chou sung* are particular; that is, either they are unknown to the poets of other areas or they are so lofty in nature because of their achieved contents that the poets of other areas, out of awe and respect, naturally avoid them whenever it is possible. So, it is rather on the basis of this internal evidence that we have begun to suspect if the percentage of formulas and typescenes involved in a given group of poems can always determine whether or not they are "folk" or "oral," as the Parry-Lord theory of oral-formulaic composition has influenced many scholars of the "oral poetics" to believe. That the *Chou sung* poetry involves a large number of formulas particular to itself, rarely permitted to poets of other areas, indicates one of the major reasons for us to assume its unique position among the poetry as divided into sections and groups in *Shih Ching*. So far mine is a consideration of the language as an organic medium for the manifestation of poetry. I am not pretending that my approach is by any means scientifically *linguistic*. The linguistic approach, where grammar is also considered, with all its validity, has a tendency to dissect the poem in order to anatomize the language.[9] At its best, the linguistic approach to *Shih Ching* finds itself stopping at the investigation of the compositions on the level of the word or the line. The explication of some *Shih Ching* words by such studious scholars since the nineteenth century as Wang Yin-chih 王引之 (e.g., on the meaning of *ku* 豔), and Wang Kuo-wei 王國維 (e.g., on *shu-shuang* 肅霜 and *ti-ch'ang* 滌場) are doubtless inspiring, so is the recent finding by Paul L-M Serruys on the meaning of *yün* 云.[10] However, the inspired student has yet to move further, to restore the poem with much imagination, in order to arrive at the "poetry" of *Shih Ching*.

In spite of the difference in their critical approaches, students of Chinese literature have a consensus that the *Chou sung*, presently under our consideration, preserves "the oldest datable hymns in our extant texts" of *Shih Ching*.[11] The poems are believed to date from around the turn of the twelfth century B.C., when the Chou dynasty was founded, to the mid-eleventh

[8] The following is a table of comparison:

Section/group	*Number of formulas*	*Formulas particular to section/group*	*Percentage of section/group*
Feng	694	42	6.05
Hsiao ya	532	55	10.3
Ta ya	209	23	11.0
Chou sung	51	10	19.6
Lu sung	41	0	0
Shang sung	—	—	—

Note that the *Shang sung* is not taken into consideration for the reason that its number of formulas is too small. It is obvious that a group of 154 verses with only 4 (or 2.6 percent) whole-verse formulas does not postulate further consideration whether or not they are particular to the group.

[9] For example, W.A.C.H. Dobson, "Linguistic Evidence and the Dating of *The Book of Songs*," *T'oung Pao*, LI (1964), 322–34.

[10] Wang Yin-chih, *Ching-i shu-wen* 經義述聞, SPPY (Rept. Taipei, 1966), V, 22a; Wang Kuo-wei, *Wang Kuan-t'ang hsien-sheng ch'üan-chi* 王觀堂先生全集 (hereafter, *WKTHSCC*), 16 volumes (Taipei, 1968), I, 52–55; Paul L-M Serruys, "The Function and Meaning of *Yün* 云 in *Shih Ching*—Its Cognate and Variants," *Monumenta Serica*, XXIX (1970–1971), 264–337.

[11] Chen Shih-hsiang 陳世驤, "The *Shih Ching*: Its Generic Significence in Chinese Literary History and Poetics," *BIHP*, XXXIX, Part 1 (1969), 378; see also, 394–97.

century, during the reign of King Chao 昭王. However, to regard them as poems of those two centuries is only to assume that they were originally composed at that time, but not that they were finished then in the form we read today. In other words, the poems in the *Chou sung* were actually *initiated* in those two centuries, completed in a form which we today can only imagine to appreciate,[12] and modified and altered from time to time in the subsequent ages until about the seventh century B.C. By the time of Confucius in the late sixth century and the early fifth century B.C., they had finally assumed a definite shape. The time between the initiation of the *Chou sung* and the composition of a number of complaints and laments during the reigns of King Hsiang 襄王 and King Ch'ing 頃王, in the seventh century B.C.,[13] is what I call the formative period of *Shih Ching*. The disparity between the poems as quoted in *Tso Chuan* 左傳 and *Kuo yü* 國語 and as contained in the canon today further supports our assumption of the formative period in which the structure and order of the poems, the verses, and even the words are in variation, highly flexible.[14]

Among modern scholars, Fu Ssu-nien 傅斯年 maintains most rigorously that the poetry of the *Chou sung*, being the oldest in the corpus of *Shih Ching*, suffered the alterations most badly during the formative period, evident in that the hymns appear "fragmentary."[15] Taking into consideration the duration of time which saw these hymns go through, approximately five centuries, we are quite tempted to accept Fu's view. Nevertheless, an analysis of the recurring phrases, their distribution within and without the group, shows the solidity, the hardness of these hymns as a group in the face of possible changes due to transmission and other factors.[16] These hymns retain an elevated stylistic quality which may confirm our assumption that they developed in the formative period with a specific generic force given by its awe-inspiring name, with less attempts from outside to damage it. Although they are the earliest-initiated compositions, they are not necessarily those most drastically removed from their original form. Fragmentary they may seem, but they are not any more illegible or sporadic than many poems outside the group believed to be less archaic and more immediate to the Confucian scholars. As a matter of fact, the thirty-one hymns hold together with some detectible common themes and stylistic features. Its poetry contains the eulogistic expression for the earlier kings of the Chou, their virtue and glory in defining a perpetual institution; the pious utterance to endeavor to continue the institution; and the positive awareness that the emphasis on agriculture is the focus of that endeavor. As a unity, the *Chou sung* possesses a grand style and is thematically unique. The fact that it involves more whole-verse formulas particular to itself, in percentage, and that it alone sustains a distinctive, solemn, and slow movement in rhythm, indicates its unrivalled position among the poems simultaneously undergoing the damage due to any factor in transmission. The poetry in other classes suffered more changes, indeed we shall suggest, than the poetry of the *Chou sung*. The lapses in the

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[12] For instance, Wang Kuo-wei's conjecture in *WKTHSCC*, I, 86–90; and Fu Ssu-nien's in *Fu Meng-chen hsien-sheng chi* 傅孟眞先生集 (hereafter, *FMCHSC*), 6 volumes (Taipei, 1951), II, 18–33.

[13] Traditionally assigned to the era of King Hsiang are nos. 51, 52, 132, 133, 134, 135, 142, 143; and to that of King Ch'ing are nos. 144, 145. See Ou-yang Hsiu's 歐陽修 revision of the *Shih Ching* chronology established by Cheng Hsüan, in *Shih pen-i* 詩本義 (Rept. Taipei, n.d.), appendix: "*Cheng shih Shih p'u*" 鄭氏詩譜.

[14] The *Chou sung* poems are "earliest to be quoted in courtly and diplomatic circles of the states since at least the 8th century B.C." See Chen, "Generic Significance," 395; *cf.* also, Lao Hsiao-yü 勞孝輿, *Ch'un-ch'iu shih-hua* 春秋詩話 (Rept. Shanghai, 1936), III, 25–42.

[15] *FMCHSC*, II, 18–33. *Cf.* also, Chen, "Generic Significance," 394.

[16] See above, n. 8.

division of the *Kuo feng* and the *Hsiao ya*,[17] the awkward order of the poems about the history of the Chou in the *Ta ya*,[18] and especially the large number of whole-verse formulas shared in reciprocity among the three sections,[19] are but some major proofs that the poems outside the *Chou sung* suffered the damage more intently in a shorter period of time than the hymns identified as the *Chou sung* did. The singers and scribes in the five centuries were obviously very cautious in handling the thirty-one hymns. For these hymns, as we are able to recognize now, are expressive of the countenance of the Chou.

Sung 頌, according to Juan Yüan 阮元, is *jung* 容 in the sense of *wu jung* 舞容—the expression of a countenance through dance together with music and poetry.[20] There are other songs in *Shih Ching* which combined are exclusive manifestation of the Chou as a cultural unity, such as the groups called *Chou nan* 周南 and *Shao nan* 召南 (nos. 1–25), but the *Chou sung* alone contains poetry definitely associated with dance at the moment it is chanted to convey the countenance of the Chou. It is true that etymologically *shih*, or poetry, involves an integration of verse, music, and physical performance, and that this notion is the key to which the meaning of *hsing* 興, perhaps the most important concept in the Chinese *ars poetica*, is to be appreciated.[21] Juan Yüan observes, however, that the poems of the *feng* and *ya* sections were only intended for singing, but not necessarily for dancing. Although all poetry may originate in communal dancing and convivial singing, as many modern scholars think, the development of Chinese poetry in the form shown in the majority of *Shih Ching* songs indicates an important separation from spontaneous composition, the creativity uplifted by and finished with dancing. The specific countenance (*jung*) in the conception of Juan Yüan, therefore, literally means how the singer of poetry in this category heightens his intent (*chih* 志) with the physical expression. Accordingly, when we talk about the countenance of the Chou, we refer to the physical expression of the singer as well as the cultural plenitude so symbolized.

Juan Yüan's definition of the *sung* as countenance expressed in the dance has been challenged by Wang Kuo-wei. In his notes on the nature of the *Chou sung*, Wang admits only seven out of the thirty-one hymns to be associated with dancing. He agress that the *sung* means a countenance expressive of eulogistic spirit for the sublime power (美盛德之形容), as originally stated in the "Great Preface" to *Shih Ching*. However, Wang argues, the countenance is not always shown in the dance; it is sometimes manifested in singing and instrumentation. The latter two, Wang argues, are actually more important than the dance. The *sung* poetry differs from other *Shih Ching* songs basically in its slow, solemn movement, with a tendency to prolong the sound and thereby deepening and broadening the sense. The sound is therefore more significant, Wang concludes, than the physical performance in the delineation

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[17] For example, the separation of the songs of the Pei 邶, the Yung 鄘, and the Wei 衛 is not supported by distinction of theme or imagery; and many poems in the *Hsiao ya*, such as nos. 187, 188, 201, 206, 232, 233, and 234, are by no means more "elegant" than most of the songs in the *Kuo feng*.

[18] The founding of the Chou, i.e., the Chou epic equivalent to the *Aeneid*, is to be reconstructed principally from the following poems: nos. 236, 237, 241, 245, and 250. A right order in historical sequence should be as follows: 245, 250, 237, 241, 236.

[19] See above, n. 8.

[20] "*Shih sung*" 釋頌 in *Yen-ching-shih chi* 揅經室集, *Huang Ch'ing ching chieh* (n.p., 1860), 1068, 18b–21a.

[21] For a modern explication of the meaning of *shih*, see Chen Shih-hsiang, "In Search of the Beginnings of Chinese Literary Criticism," *Semitic and Oriental Studies* (University of California Publications in Semitic Philology), XI (1951), 45–62. *Cf.* Tse-tsung Chow 周策縱, "The Early History of the Chinese Word *Shih* (Poetry)," in Tse-tsung Chow (ed.), *Wen-lin, Studies in the Chinese Humanities* (Madison, Wisconsin, 1968), pp. 151–209. For a study of *hsing* in relation to the element of dance in *shih*, see Chen, "Generic Significance."

of the countenance.[22] Wang's thesis has in turn been criticized by Fu Ssu-nien. Accepting Juan Yüan's theory, Fu observes that the thirty-one hymns show some varying resemblance to six patterns of ritualistic dancing he conceives, namely *Ssu-hsia* 肆夏, *Wu* 武, *Shao* 勺, *Hsiang* 象, *Ssu-wang chien-tso* 嗣王踐阼, and *Chi-t'ien* 稷田. In this connection, Fu asserts, all the *Chou sung* hymns should be understood as ritualistic songs accompanied by music for the dance performed in one way or another to express the countenance of the Chou.[23]

The present study takes the agreement found among the three scholars' theses as a point of departure. A certain solemn music of slow movement is the *nómos* in control of the dancing to the hymns chanted in the ancestral temple of the Chou, to eulogize the earlier kings, to admonish the present monarch, and to emphasize the importance of agriculture. The poetry of the *Chou sung* is intended to magnify the virtue of the ruling house. It is a ritualistic expression of the countenance of the Chou. As dance and music, which certainly are most effective in the delineation of the countenance, have lost in the dim past, we can only rely on the last surviving propriety of the art now, the verse, to visualize the ritualistic program.

II. The Earlier Kings

The eulogy for the earlier kings shows a tortuous way the Chou take toward the magnification of a cultural heroism. The heroes extolled are King Wen 文王 and King Wu 武王 in particular, and there are fourteen poems specifically in praise of their virtuous deeds climaxing with the conquest of the Shang 商, in 1111 B.C.[24] It is a tortuous way because the fourteen poems divided into three categories involve a drastic conflict in the concept of heroism—whether or not the martial spirit is to be interpreted as benediction. And yet no conquest can be carried out without the martial aggression. The posterity found it compelling to justify martialism too. These poems are: first, poems 266, 267, 268, 270, 272, and 282 which concentrate on the virtue of the Chou exemplified in the meekness of King Wen; second, poems 271, 285, 293, 294, 295, and 296 which offer another dimension of the virtue exemplified in the rage of King Wu; and third, poems 273 and 274 which confirm the virtue as conceived by King Wen in repudiating the rage in order to define the cultural heroism.

Each category as outlined above may also prove to be a ritualistic sequence in poetry, music, and dance. In the first, where the countenance of the Chou is reverential and humble, King Wen is invoked to witness the piety of the present king. Among the six poems, nos. 266, 267, 268, 272, and 282 reveal in one way or another this moral reliance on the model and standard King Wen has set for his posterity. The rite itself is a manifestation of piety which King Wen initiated and regulated, as the most appropriate way in communicating with Heaven, the spirits, and the ancestors; poem 268 acknowledges it:

It is clear and all the more splendid,
The ordinance of King Wen;
He established the sacrifices
That in the end brought us victory.
It is the auspice of the Chou!

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[22] *WKTHSCC*, I, 93–95.

[23] *FMCHSC*, II, 18–33.

[24] For the dating, see Tung Tso-pin 董作賓, "*Wu-wang fa Chou nien-yüeh-jih chin k'ao*" 武王伐紂年月日今考, *Tung Tso-pin hsüeh-shu lun-chi* (Taipei, 1962), pp. 869–904. Other assumptions include 1124, 1122, 1116, 1070, 1067, 1066, 1047, 1030, and 1027 B.C. *Cf.* also, Ch'en Meng-chia 陳夢家, *Hsi-Chou nien-tai k'ao* 西周年代考 (Rept. Shanghai, 1955).

The virtue of King Wen is also shown in his continuous efforts to establish a pattern of the sacrifice to Heaven in order to discern its mandate and follow it:

The way of of heaven is
Profound and lasting;
The power of King Wen is
Pure— Ah magnificent!
Whatever he has to bestow on us
We receive it as blessing:
Courageously we rely on our King Wen.
May his grandchildren preserve it! (267)

The "way of heaven" is sometimes construed as the heavenly mandate. Cheng Hsüan 鄭玄 annotates *t'ien-ming* 天命 as *t'ien-tao* 天道, the interpretation accepted by most scholars.[25] In this context, the *te* 德 of King Wen is the power, which is the *tao* in action. Despite the danger of risking into anachronism, the ambiguity rising from the contrast between the way of heaven and the power of King Wen greatly enhances our understanding of the poet's intent to qualify the meaning of the heavenly mandate. The mandate generates power in King Wen, who in turn adopts meekness to define his magnanimity.

King Wen is always eulogized as the conceivable reflection of the plenitude and permanence of Heaven. In poem 266, for instance, the nobles performing sacrifice are sung of as holding fast King Wen's virtue in order to vivify his spirit which is now an attribute of the general meaning of Heaven. In poem 272, furthermore, the offer to King Wen is immediately explained as a rite to express our fear of Heaven. Heaven is unknown, to be feared. King Wen is the ancestor, who in the magnification of cultural heroism, in his piety toward the unknown and meekness toward the known, has been given the power to interpret the plenitude and permanence of Heaven. King Wen possesses the kind of awe heaven inspires but not the wrath it commands as shown in the thunder, storm, flood, and famine.[26]

Indeed, the vital word to describe the image of King Wen is *ch'ing* 清 (clear). Poem 268, quoted above, uses the word *clear* to praise the ordinance, hence to eulogize the charisma of King Wen. His clear virtue, moreover, keeps amplifying and radiating without end. The clearness in the charisma of King Wen is the auspice of the Chou, the poet concludes. In poem 266, furthermore, the temple is called the "Clear Temple" 清廟, which represents the apotheosis originated in the very simple motivation of posterity to visualize and feel its glorious ancestor. The temple, Cheng Hsüan remarks, symbolizes the stature of the King. But whereas an ordinary temple may remain a structure without any spiritual attribute, or inspiring gravity, the temple of King Wen is hallowed with a quality of clearness. There is nothing dark, conniving, or sinister in the virtue of King Wen. The clearness inspires and enlightens; it does not dazzle:

The Clear Temple is profound.
The illustrious assistants are serious and concordant:
Stately are these fine men in great number
Holding fast the virtue of Wen
As a response to the one in heaven
Quickly they pace around in the temple.
The greatly illustrious and greatly honored
Never inflicts ennui in his men. (266)

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[25] Chu Hsi 朱熹 amends Cheng's annotation of the poem to a great extent, especially with line 5, but he follows Cheng's reading of *t'ien-ming* as *t'ien-tao*.

[26] *Cf.* Hsü Fu-kuan 徐復觀, "*Chou ch'u chung-chiao chung jen-wen ching-sheng te yao-tung*" 周初宗教中人文精神的躍動 in his history of pre-Ch'in philosophy, *Chung-kuo jen-hsing-lun shih: hsien-Ch'in p'ien* (Taichung, 1963), pp. 15–35.

Arthur Waley's observation that "a dazzling radiance" surrounds the spirit of the dead, including that of King Wen, is probably misleading.[27] Quietness and solemnity are the basic quality of the *ch'ing* of King Wen. The word 射 (*d'iăg) in line 8 is traditionally annotated as 斁 (*diăk), the latter occurring in *Shih Ching* to have two disparate meanings: first, "tired of," "fed up with," in poems 2, 240, 278, 297, and 299 or as an extension "harm," "hurt," "corrupt," in poem 258; second "splendid" (as the sound of the bell and the drum) in poem 301.[28] In the sense of the first meaning, line 8 in the poem indicates that King Wen never tires, harms, or hurt his men by any imposing, dazzling "radiance," any demand as such; or, he does not make his men "tired of," "fed up with" the ceremony. In the sense of the second meaning, it is obvious that King Wen does not inflict his men with dazzling splendor.

The notion that King Wen has established the sacrifices according to an ordinance which finally "brought us victory," as stated in poem 268, indicates his descendants' heavy tendency toward the deification of this charismatic king. For in fact, he is by no means the first king to put emphasis on the rites.[29] King Wen is in the middle of a glorious line of the Chou kings whose epical adventures result in the founding of a dynasty. The epic is what I suggest to be called *The Weniad*; the documents centering on him seem to qualify the epic as one that also begins *in medias res* [30] Among the hymns in the *Chou sung* dedicated to King Wen, poem 270 specifically relates the progress of which he is in the middle:

Heaven created the high mountain;
The Great King cleared it·
He had had it so begun.
King Wen leveled the place:
The difficult hilly Ch'i,
Has had flat roads.
May sons and grandsons protect it!

The hymn is a eulogistic version of the epical progress narrated in poem 237. The merit of King Wen, achieved through his charismatic magnet, prepares for King Wu a point of departure, for the fulfillment of a great task according to the heavenly mandate, to replace the Shang as the ruler of China.

In the second category of the poems dedicated to the earlier kings, martial spirit emerges to fill the atmosphere. And the countenance of the Chou is becoming stern, severe, pompous, and finally solemn, somewhat in contrast with that in the first category, which is "clear." This is the rage of King Wu depicted in a sequence of six poems, believed by some scholars to constitute a ritualistic program called *ta-wu* 大武. The epical progress reaches a climax in the phenomenal military adventures. The six poems (nos. 271, 285, 293, 294, 295, and 296) together confirm a heroism at once seeming to be far removed from the one defined by the magnanimity of King Wen.

Wang Kuo-wei endeavors in his "*Chou ta-wu yüeh-chang k'ao*" 周大武樂章考 to reintegrate the so-called *ta-wu* dance as it is loosely recorded in the "*Yüeh chi*" 樂記.[31] The *ta-wu*,

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[27] *The Book of Songs* (New York, 1960), p. 226.

[28] For a fuller treatment of the problem, see C. H. Wang, *op. cit. Cf.* also, Chang Wei-ssu 張維思, "*Tu Wen I-to chu 'Shih Ching hsin-i'*" 讀聞一多著詩經新義, *Tse-shan pan-yüeh k'an*, I (1940), 103–110.

[29] See, for example, the priority of the temple in the building project of T'an-fu the Old Duke 古公亶父 in poem 237.

[30] For a more detailed description of the proposed *Weniad*, see C. H. Wang, "Towards Defining a Chinese Heroism," *JAOS*, 95, 1 (1975), 25–35.

[31] *WKTHSCC*, I, 86–90. For a criticism, see *FMCHSC*, II, 18–33.

Wang summarizes, is comprised of six parts, each signifying a stage in King Wu's conquest of the Shang. The dance and music are irrecoverable, but the verses remain scattered in the *Chou sung*, Wang suggests. Poetry, therefore, is the only source we can rely on to visualize a grand sequence of ritualistic dance and music portraying the countenance of the Chou. These poems are a eulogy for King Wu, ascertaining his heroism that eventually breaks down a tyranny and sets up new order for China.

The first movement (*ch'eng* 成) of the program is to be inferred in poem 271, which symbolizes the Chou army advancing north. The poem (entitled "*Hao-t'ien yu ch'eng ming*" 昊天有成命 in *Shih Ching*), Wang argues, should be called "*Wu su yeh*" 武宿夜, the title of a dance mentioned in other documents as the foremost of all ritualistic performances. The line that tempts Wang to identify the poem as the mysterious "*Wu su yeh*" is as follows:

su yeh chi ming yu mi
夙夜基命宥密

Departing from all the earlier annotations in traditional *Shih Ching* scholarship,[32] Wang contends that *su* 夙 must be construed as *su* 宿 meaning "to stay overnight."[33] Accordingly we shall approximate the line as follows:

Staying overnight:
[King Wu] begins [to carry out] the mandate
[Which is] ample and secure.[34]

This is the night before the battle takes place between King Wu and the Shang, the "Martial Eve." It is said that the troops of King Wu are so delighted about the fact that the battle to restore justice is at hand, that they sing and dance to expedite the dawn.[35] The ritualistic implication of the singing and dancing is unmistakable. It resembles the funeral games for Anchises in the *Aeneid*, before the outbreak of war in Italy.[36] According to Wang's interpretation, the poem should read as follows:

High Heaven has confirmed the mandate,
Which the two kings receive
To establish the monarchy, without negligence.
Staying overnight,
He began to carry out the mandate
Which is ample and secure—
O how splendid!
He fortifies his will
In order to give repose to the world.

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[32] The traditional interpretation is revised by Bernhard Karlgren in his English translation as "Morning and evening he [King Ch'eng 成王] laid the foundations of his (appointment =) great task, magnanimous and quiet"; see *The Book of Odes* (Stockholm, 1950), p. 241. See also his "Glosses on the Ta Ya and Sung Odes" in *Glosses on the Book of Odes* (Stockholm, 1964), p 81.

[33] *WKTHSCC*, I, 87. *Cf.* Karlgren's reconstruction of archaic Chinese: *sịôk for both 夙 and 宿 in *Grammata Serica* (Rept. Taipei, 1966), p. 397.

[34] For *chi* as "to begin" and *yu* as "ample," see the original Mao annotation. (Karlgren's questioning of the Mao annotation in the *Glosses* does not appear to be necessary.) The character *mi* obtains its meaning of *an* 安 from the notion that, according to *Shuo-wen* 說文, *mi* denotes a flat area among hills in which one can make settlements. As a verb, it means "to grant security to (someone)," hence "secure" in our context.

[35] Wang quotes from the commentary of "*Chi t'ung*" 祭統; see *WKTHSCC*, I, 87. *Cf.* also, *I-wen lei-chü* 藝文類聚 (Rept. Taipei, 1969), XII, 4a (p. 357).

[36] The deaths of Anchises and Gaieta leave Aeneas an orphan. Note that King Wu always refers to himself as "*hsia-tzu Fa*" 小子發, or "Fa the child."

The countenance expressed in the dancing performed to the first movement of the music is *tsung-kan shan-li* 摠干山立: the sternness of King Wu holding a shield, standing straight awaiting the feudatories to arrive.[37]

The second movement of the program is represented in poem 285, which sings of the defeat of the Shang. The vigor of King Wu is celebrated, a positive, advancing issuance of the virtue matured in the charisma of his father. The son inherits the heavenly mandate commanded to King Wen.[38] Now in this poem, the poet summarizes the great conquest in two lines:

Defeating the Yin, he stops killing—
So it is the way he completes the task.[39]

There are undoubtedly great massacres during the battle, as recorded in *Shang Shu* 尙書 and *I Chou shu* 逸周書 among other documents.[40] The countenance of Chou is *fa-yang tao-li* 發揚蹈厲: the explosive power of the Grand Duke Lü Wang 太公呂望, the arch-strategist general of the conquering army, reaches its highest point, with war-like spirit and severity.[41]

The third movement of the *ta-wu* is represented in poem 293, which sings of the return of the Chou troops, triumphant. The poet eulogizes the army for carrying out the great task swiftly in time. The poem is entitled "*Cho*" 酌, and many scholars, in view of the absence of this particular character from the poem itself, suspect that the title "*Cho*" is actually derived from the name of a certain dance called *shao* 勺.[42] The "*Yüeh chi*" does not specify the countenance of the Chou as expressed in this movement, but we may infer from the verses that pomp is most likely the quality of a triumphant army now returning to the south. The poet utters his admiration in two syllables, concluding the eulogy: *yün shih* 允師 (a true army)!

Poem 294 substantiates the fourth movement of the program. The Chou has returned and put China back to the good order. However, the notion, *nan-kuo shih chiang* 南國是疆 indicates continuing efforts of the pompous army of King Wu in appeasing the stirring, restless tribes in the south. The war, which usually is thought to cause bad crop, gives rise to continual good harvests; King Wu has

Given repose to ten thousand countries
And brought about good harvests in continual years.

The fifth movement of the *ta-wu*, Wang Kuo-wei finds, is in poem 295. According to the "*Yüeh chi*," now that the military tasks are completed, King Wu appoints his brothers the Duke of Chou and the Duke of Shao to the left and the right, respectively. The dancers move

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[37] "*Yüeh chi*" 樂記 in *Li Chi*, SPPY, XXXIX, 5b. *Cf.* "*Mu shih*" 牧誓 in *Shang Shu* (Rept. Taipei, 1962), p. 69.

[38] *Cf.* Liu T'an 劉坦, *Chung-kuo ku-tai chih hsing-sui chi-nien* 中國古代之星歲紀年 (Peking, 1957), pp. 126–27. Liu's dating of the conquest falls in 1122 B.C., which is eleven years earlier than that determined by Tung Tso-pin (see above, n. 24). The story that King Wen received the mandate in the forty-second year of his reign, however, is traditionally founded.

[39] Arthur Waley questions the orthodox Chinese interpretation concerning the cessation of killing after King Wu has "conquered the Yin" (his translation of "sheng Yin" 勝殷 in *The Book of Songs*, p. 232). He interprets "*o liu*" 遏劉 as "utterly destroyed" the Yin, implying extermination. For a Western Sinologist's interpretation in keeping with the Chinese orthodoxy, see Henri Maspero, *La Chine Antique* (Paris, 1927; Rept. 1965), pp. 214–19.

[40] See "*Wu ch'eng*" 武成 in *Shang Shu*, p. 71; and "*K'e Yin*" 克殷 and "*Shih fu*" 世俘 in *I Chou shu* (Rept. Taipei, n.d.), IV.3b–8b (pp. 82–92).

[41] "*Yüeh chi*," XXXIX, 5b.

[42] For example, Chu Hsi and Fu Ssu-nien are quite eloquent in the assumption. *Cf.* Wang Kuo-wei, "*Shuo shao-wu hsiang-wu*" 說勺舞象舞, *WKTHSCC*, I, 91–93.

in two files, advancing toward the image of King Wu, which symbolizes the throne to protect and perpetuate. The mood is changed significantly from that conceived in the second movement, where the war-like spirit of Lü Wang is celebrated as explosive and rapid in motion. This change reveals a gradual but definite progress from the martial to the cultural, which the Chou assumes as their countenance in this stage.

The sixth movement is the finale in the program, to be gathered in poem 296. The movement signifies that finally the world has returned to its order prior to the military action, to peace and harmony. The *ta-wu* dance, which primarily extols the martial power of King Wu, is now drawing to an end; the dancers are slowly assuming their positions in tranquility: *wu luan chieh tso* 武亂皆坐.[43] The resting of the dancers symbolizes the calming down of the martial spirit; quietness is the mood. The countenance of the Chou is solemnity again, *solemnity* in contrast to the sternness in the first movement and severity in the second. The movement can be regarded as an affirmation of another phase of the Chou civilization, too, corollary to the inauguration of the offices of the Duke of Chou and the Duke of Shao as found in the fifth movement.

Altogehter, the program of *ta-wu* is a continuation of the epical progress of the Chou originated very early in myth and legend. As a ritualistic sequence, the ascent and descent of the martial spirit are vividly manifested in the verse lines, to which we have the only recourse to reintegrate a heroism once confirmed in the adventures of the Chou. The last two movements, as described above, show a turn of concept—the cultural elegance seems to begin to replace the martial grandeur. As the *ta-wu* in general underlies an admission of the latter as necessary in the epical progress, the last two movements may therefore be regarded as the start of a sense of recantation. The attempt to retract is further revealed in two poems independent from the program which fall into the third category of the liturgic hymns dedicated to the earlier kings, nos. 273 and 274.

Timely he travels his lands
High Heaven takes him as a son.
Indeed, Heaven protects and orders the Chou:
When he proceeds to quake,
All are shaken;
Likewise are the spirits appeased,
And the rivers and soaring mountains.
Indeed the king is monarch!
Bright and glorious is the Chou
Now orderly on the throne;
Then putting away the shields and axes,
Then wrapping the bows and casing the arrows.
We have acquired good virtue
To bestow upon China all over.
Indeed the king will protect it! (273)

The poem eulogizes King Wu for his power to shake and submit even the spirits, and the rivers and mountains, at the time he is commanded by Heaven to, and particularly for his conscience to retract the power when the conquest is done. The attempt to suppress the notion of "*wu*" is unequivocal in his orders to put away the shields and axes, wrap the bows, and case the

[43] "*Yüeh chi*," XXXIX, 5b. The word *luan* in this epithet should be construed as "finale," or "epilogue." Fu Ssu-nien seems to accept the interpretation that *luan* means "in disorder"; see *FMCHSC*, II, 24.

arrows (lines 11–12).[44] The world is to be regulated to another direction, to contemplate on the evil of war, to observe the rise of something splendid inward, and to intensify the cultivation of culture. *Li* 禮 (rite) and *yüeh* 樂 (music) will rule the Chinese mind and heart, and the Duke of Chou's cultural scheme will supersede the Grand Duke Lü Wang's military strategy. In poem 274, which is traditionally believed to be composed during the reign of King Chao, the poet eulogizes King Wu followed by King Ch'eng 成王 and King K'ang 康王 with much attention to the patterns of music played in the rite. A eulogistic poem is a microcosm of the new culture. It settles on the concordance of music and rite to obtain its basic meanings. In the symphony of a royal house, we have finally come to realize the tortuous way the earlier kings have taken to envision a world of peace, prosperity, and justice.

Confucius judges that *shao* music 韶樂 is both ultimately propitious and gorgeous, whereas *wu* music 武樂 is ultimately gorgeous but not as propitious (*Lun Yü* III. 25). As an analogy, we may say that, of the three categories of the *Chou sung* poems dedicated to the earlier kings, the first asserting the quality of *clearness* in the charismatic personality of King Wen is ultimately propitious and gorgeous, while the second maintaining the quality of *sternness* in the *ta-wu* program glorifying King Wu is gorgeous but perhaps not as propitious. Notwithstanding, the third category seriously retracting the martial heroism upheld in the second and surging to regain the cultural elegance defined in the first should be considered a confirmation of the aspiration for the propitious and the gorgeous combined.

III. Solidification

To solidify the empire is, specifically, to understand the meaning of the throne in the ideological and behavioral frames of references established by the earlier kings; and to maintain the relationships with the lesser kings as well as the feudatories. The throne has to perpetuate, and the attitude adopted by the present king, derived from his comprehension of the ancestral deeds and virtues, determines if it will survive. The feudatories and lesser kings come to the court, for consultation, and their pilgrimage signifies the existence of a magnetic point of royalty. Thus, China will hold together. The complexity can be analyzed through an investigation of the pertinence of some liturgic poems in groups. These poems form the essence of the rituals devoted to solidification.

The piety of a Chou monarch is first defined in King Wu's scrupulous endeavor to confirm King Wen's magnanimity through a tortuous way, as set forth above. It is then epitomized in King Ch'eng's cautiousness in succeeding the throne when King Wu dies, largely expressed in poems 286, 287, 288, and 289.[45] Filiality is the countenance of the Chou, attested in the repeated utterances that the king is anxious to keep the throne intact so as to carry on the merits of his ancestors, and that for the purpose he badly needs the auspices of his ancestors. The image of the earlier kings stands out unerringly in the hymn believed to be the prayers King Ch'eng makes at his first royal sacrifice performed in the ancestral temple. Poem 286 mixes the mourning for the former king and the resolution for a new era.

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[44] *Cf.* "*Wu ch'eng*" in *Shang Shu*, p. 70. See also, *Shih chi* 史記, 10 volumes (Peking, 1959), IV, 129. Ezra Pound records the story in his Canto LIII. For a fuller treatment, see C. H. Wang, "Towards Defining a Chinese Heroism."

[45] The orthodox interpretation states that the succeeding king is King Ch'eng in poem 286, hence also in 287, 288, and 289. Chu Hsi endorses it.

Mourning am I, son of yours,
Inheriting the house not yet secure,
Orphaned, lonely, in grief.
O my august father,
You who were pious forever,
Bearing in mind my august grandfather
Who ascended and descended in the court.
I am indeed the son of yours,
Who shall be always reverent.
O my august kings,
The succession will not stop here!

The house is not secure because the throne of King Ch'eng, who is still a child, is harassed by some uncles enfeoffed in the eastern region, namely Kuan-shu 管叔 and Ts'ai-shu 蔡叔. The same fear is expressed in poem 287: "I am not capable of dealing with all the troubles of the house!"[46] The king pleads for custody from his regency and ministries, although he again finishes the hymn with plaints addressed to his august father. A strong sense of responsibility to continue the line of succession and preserve the auspice of the Chou underscores the hymn. The child seems to grow up quickly as he turns from the prayers to his ancestors to the consultation with the regents and the courtiers. He assumes to have the legitimate capacity relevant to a monarch, and pronounces that "consulting you, I hereby begin" to reign (poem 287).

Poem 288 is a dialogue between the subjects and the king. The former advise the king to be reverent to Heaven which, having given the mandate to the Chou, watches him closely all the time. To be reverent to Heaven is to remain humble and meek while diligent. The king replies that he will be alert and learn from the august ones, namely King Wen and King Wu, to realize the meaning of charisma in a monarch. Poem 289 further discloses the king's determination to rise up to the stature of his ancestors. He has made mistakes;[47] with regret and confidence he pronounces:

I have learnt from the mistakes I made
To guard against future errors.
Never again will I expose myself to the wasp
And have myself received the bitter stings.
In the beginning I must be just a wren;
As I fly vigorously I will be a bird.
I, not able to deal with all the house's troubles,
Perch again on the smartweed.

The meekness is originated in King Wen's high personality and King Wu's courage of regret, although in poems 288 and 289 the image of the earlier kings is not as visible as it is in poems 286 and 287. While relying on the earlier kings for guidance to observe the mandate of Heaven, to perpetuate the throne, King Ch'eng turns inward for the vigor and prudence to finish the task of solidifying the empire. The self-criticism of a king is ethically noble. It is repeated in the "*Ku ming*" 顧命 chapter of *Shang Shu*, where King Ch'eng is seen old and wise, issuing in his sickbed the warrants regulating the moral implications of the succession of the throne. Comparing the four poems with the chapter and with the "*K'ang kao*" 康誥, Fu Ssu-nien suggests that the poems form a sequence representing the "Dance of Royal Succession."[48] Filiality is the

[46] *Cf. Shih chi*, IV, 132.
[47] Referring to his suspicion of the Duke of Chou on account of rumors. See especially Cheng Hsüan's annotation.
[48] *FMCHSC*, II, 30–33.

countenance of the Chou; and as the program proceeds, the mood changes from that typical of the mourning for the deceased to that showing the resolution of a new king.

The feudatories support the throne by assisting in the sacrifices, in addition to other institutional duties. The *Chou sung* contains two poems, nos. 269 and 283, unmistakably related to the ceremony in which the feudatories take part, and a third which may be appreciated in this connection. Poem 283, first of all, vividly relates the pilgrimage of the feudal princes from all over China to offer sacrifice to King Wu in the ancestral temple. Here there is the pageantry of the pomp of the royal relatives:

They have come before the glorious king,
To pray for the canons.
Their dragon-banners are bright,
Bells tinkle in the front and above,
And the metal-knobbed reins jingle—
Beautiful, magnificent!
They are ushered to see the brilliant father,
To show their piety, to make offering,
So that they may be vouchsafed long life,
And preserved forever.
Gorgeous and much blessed,
These illustrious lords and glorious princes.
They are bestowed with much bliss,
To continue the splendour into great felicity.

The offering includes fish from Ch'i 漆 and Ch'ü 沮 as poem 281 suggests. Ch'i and Ch'ü are two rivers within the immediate royal domain, an area of the original Chou land. The rivers have been accredited with much significant spiritual implication in the legend and history of the Chou. They have provided the Chou with abundant resources at the start to grow and develop.[49] They are the Tiber of the Chou, enriched with myths and tales, and they are sacred. The fish from these rivers are in great variety, as the poem displays. Wen I-to 聞一多 has discovered that in Chinese literature the fish is a symbol of fertility.[50] In this regard, it may seem especially relevant for the Chou to offer the fish from Ch'i and Ch'ü to the ancestors. A strong sense of family pedigree is involved in the ritual. It seems that the children of the Chou, in offering the fish, are showing to their ancestors that they are offering themselves, who have been bred by these rivers.

After the ceremony, the king shows his appreciation to the feudatories for their participation, in poem 269. The poem also shows the king's expediency in giving advice to the feudal princes. It is observed that the feudatories, like the king himself, are held responsible for the security and prosperity of the Chou since they are all blood members of the ruling house. The king commends his kin and warns them against corruption in their fiefs. Respect and support your monarch, the king decrees, and bear in mind the great task we must join in accomplishing, to perpetuate the throne in permanent glory. He again cites the earlier kings to remind his vassals that the present king only rules a brief section in the long line of succession which the Chou must strive to certify.

Besides the feudal princes, the lesser kings come to the court of the Chou on appropriate occasions. By "lesser kings," I refer to the enfeoffed descendant of the house of Hsia 夏,

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[49] See especially *Shih Ching* 237. For other relevant information, *cf.* Li Tao-yüan 酈道元, *Shui ching chu* 水經注 (Rept. Taipei, 1969), XVI, 221–23.

[50] See *Wen I-to ch'üan-chi* 聞一多全集, 4 volumes (Shanghai, 1948), I, 117–38.

which is now called Ch'i 杞, and especially that of Shang, which is called Sung 宋.[51] They are taken as royal guests into the house of the conqueror. Poems 278 and 284 are the eulogy for the conquered, so to speak; whereas poem 280 tells how these guests are entertained in the court of the Chou before, during, and after the sacrifices for the ancestors of the ruling house. The lesser kings travel to the Chou court to participate in the rites, as do the feudal princes. The diction of these three poems reveals how the relationship between the king and these guests is regulated in a subtle decorum. The first poem of the group, no. 278, presents one of the most striking metaphors in Chinese literature, delicately used to eulogize the guests:

A flock of egrets are in flight
Over the western marsh;
My guests have arrived,
With similar countenance.
On their part, there is no depravity,
And on ours, no harm—
In this way we spend the day and the night
To perpetuate the ultimate fame.

The guests dressed properly are praised for their solemn and sincere appearance. They arrive in group when a flock of egrets are flying over the marsh in the background. As a consequence the guests are compared to the egrets, tidy and justly proud of their origins.[52] The sartorial distinction of the guests reflects their compassion in our rites, the Chou observe, and they certainly have no depraved thought against us. They have come to assist the Chou in performing the rites in the latter's ancestral temple, a gesture to acknowledge the justice of the heavenly mandate. Poem 280 provides a document how the ceremony is finished with an elaborate symphony. The poem starts with the mention of some music masters who are obviously blind, *ku* 瞽. Cheng Hsüan amplifies the theme by quoting from the *Chou Li* 周禮 that the royal orchestra is comprised of forty high music masters, one hundred senior music masters, and one hundred sixty junior music masters, all blind, each assisted in an occasion like the one celebrated in poem 280 by a man who can see. These assistants set up the instruments in order for the musicians to play. The poem records that in this case the instruments include the drums in different sizes for different effects, the tambourines, the stone chimes, the resounding boxes, the clappers, the pipes, and the flutes.[53] The music is harmonious and solemn, and it pleases the ancestors, whose role is obviously played by an impersonator, *kung shih* 公尸, in the ceremony.[54] The formulaic verse *wo k'o li chih* 我客戾止 (our guests have arrived) occurring in poem 278 is repeated here, immediately after the mention of the ancestors:

Our guests have arrived—
Long they observe the complete performance.

The complete performance, with music, verse, and apparently dancing combined to please the ancestors, is probably the origin of Chinese drama. My assumption needs further verification, of course. But considering the presence of the "impersonator," whose role signifies the practice of *make-believe* in a Chinese ritual, and in view of the fact that, for instance, the rise of Greek

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[51] See *Shih chi*, 126–27, 132. *Cf.* also, Fu Ssu-nien, "*Chou tung feng yü Yin i-min*" 周東封與殷遺民, *FMCHSC*, VI, 23–30; and *idem*, "*Yi Hsia tung hsi shuo*" 夷夏東西說, *ibid.*, 42–43.

[52] By using the word "compare" here, I commit myself to the opinion that the poetic technique used in this part of the poem is *pi* 比 (simile or metaphor, or both). Mao takes it as *hsing* 興, and Chu as *fu* 賦.

[53] These are apparently only a part of the instruments used in those days. For a comparison, see poem 301.

[54] *Cf. Shih Ching* 247 and 248.

drama is associated with rites, I am of the opinion that to investigate the origins of Chinese drama one cannot overlook the mimetic performances we may infer from the poem taking place in the court of the Chou.

The guests are not vassals, although like the latter they go on pilgrimage to pay respect to the Chou ancestors. Poem 284 shows the language one chooses as appropriate to relate the particular occasion when Wei-tzu 微子, the Shang descendant enfeoffed in Sung,[55] comes to the royal domain of the Chou. The conquered enjoys the hospitality the conqueror renders.

A guest, a guest,
White is his horse.
Numerous and well attired
Are his select retainers.
The guest stays one night;
The guest stays two nights—
Now, give him tethers,
To tether his horses!
Now, we follow him;
To left and right we escort him.
Having such great dignity,
He will be vouchsafed felicity, big and vast.

The tone is quite passionate, in comparison with that underscoring the poems addressed to the feudatories such as nos. 269 and 283. Ethically, Wei-tzu is an equal of the Chou king, so the poem starts with the notion of "a guest," repeated to emphasize the host's enthusiasm. The eulogy for the conquered is carefully wrought with a poetic diction appropriate to utter by the Chou and felicitous to hear by Wei-tzu. Following the announcement of "a guest, a guest," the speaker describes the color of the pilgrim's horse immediately; white is the color of the Shang.[56] In so doing, the decorum is observed. Then the speaker eulogizes the guest by praising his colorful retainers in array. The words that the retainers are select, as if carved and chiselled, indicate the hyperbolic tendency the Chou poet has to please the guest. It is conceivable that the higher one praises his former rival, the more he displays his magnanimity.

With warning to himself against misdemeanors, appreciation to the feudatories for their participation in ritual practices, and eulogy for the lesser kings to show a true monarch's magnanimity, the present king of the Chou endeavors to seek permanence for the throne. The king, inheriting the virtue of his ancestors, takes up the responsibility to find a decorum in response to the heavenly mandate. The process, as shown in these poems, is one that signifies an ardent realization of the meaning of cultural heroism defined in a tortuous way by King Wen and King Wu. The Chou have a strong sense of fear in their moral judgment. Hsü Fu-kuan 徐復觀 specifies the sense as *yu-huan i-shih* 憂患意識,[57] which gives rise to the concept of reverence (*ching* 敬). To fear, however, is not to be indolent, or despair. According to the moral judgment of the Chou, Hsü writes, success or failure is determined by the behavior of man; "fate" (*chi-hsiung* 吉凶) is a relative, abstract notion that is qualified, and can be changed, by man's vehement action. This *yu-huan i-shih* emphasizes the value of man, his capacity, to rise

[55] For an interesting account of the role Wei-tzu plays before, during, and after the conquest of the Shang, see Sun Tz'u-chou 孫次舟, "*Wei-tzu yü Chou-jen chih kuan-hsi*" 微子與周人之關係, *Tse-shan pan-yüeh k'an*, 1 (1940), 26–28.

[56] Cheng Hsüan points out the notion. It is accepted by most eminent *Shih Ching* scholars including Chu Hsi. For a different interpretation by a modern historian, see Liu Chieh 劉節, *Ku-shih k'ao ts'un* 古史考存 (Rept. Hong Kong, 1963), pp. 292–93.

[57] See *Chung-kuo jen-hsing-lun shih: hsien-Ch'in p'ien*, p. 20.

against calamity. Whereas the Shang put all stress on the power of the spirits (*Yin-jen shang kuei* 殷人尙鬼) in their style of life and government, Hsü concludes, the Chou have by now realized that man should reduce his reliance on the spirits, somehow, and assume a sense of responsibility to rectify the world.[58] The concept of reverence, consequently, means an awareness of the existence of some relativity between the spirits and man. The ancestors, for example, cannot continue to guard us, unless we escalate our will to meet their expectation. The fear is one that, if we do not strive as vigorously as the earlier kings did, we will be disowned and the throne ruined. In the poems manifesting their endeavor to solidify the empire, to perpetuate the throne, the countenance of the Chou inferred from the dancing, which originally integrates the ritual, is reverence. The king of the Chou holds in reverence not only heaven and his ancestors, but also the feudatories and the lesser kings. The eulogy for the conquered especially reveals the Chou's moral sense in maintaining their high culture of fear, one which is in sharp contrast to that of complacency as impersonalized by the last monarch of the Shang.[59]

IV. Agriculture

Agriculture is the legacy of Hou Chi 后稷, or Lord Millet. A group of poems in the *Chou sung* are testimony to the Chou's acceptance of this legacy and how they put emphasis on this aspect of their civilization from generation to generation. Fu Ssu-nien categorizes poems 290, 291, and 292 as what he calls the "Dance of Farming" 稷田之舞.[60] In view of the similarity of subject matter, I propose to introduce poems 275, 276, 277, and 279 to add to the three and to consider the seven poems together as a group in particular celebrating the importance of agriculture.

The myth of Lord Millet is doubtless the core of these poems. Altogether, it is not inconceivable for us to regard the seven poems as a eulogy for him. The ritual, taking its form in the farming, is specifically for Lord Millet. Poem 245 (in the *Ta ya* section) makes it unerring that Lord Millet, who was born by Chiang-yüan 姜嫄 in a prototypically mythical way, is the ancestor of the Chou.[61] The poem, together with a number of others in *Shih Ching*, establishes the image of this ancestor of Chou as nearly an agricultural deity.[62] Lord Millet is perhaps not exactly an agricultural deity in James Frazer's definition, however. The ancestor of the Chou is not shown in any legend or historical episode to die in the fall and be reborn in the spring, the pattern Frazer claims to be shared by all agricultural deities in "the civilized nations of Western Asia and Egypt." Frazer suggests that this process of death and rebirth gives rise to the "dramatic rites of alternating lamentation and joy."[63] Disparity notwithstanding, the fact that Lord Millet does not die "heroically" or naturally to symbolize the changes of the season indicates one reason that "lamentation" is not a theme in the Chinese "Dance of Farming." In other words, we must note here that the countenance of the Chou to be inferred from these poems is by no means elegiac. Moreover, it is noteworthy that the change of seasons, from

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[58] *Ibid.*, pp. 20–24.

[59] *Cf.* King Wu's accusation of the Shang in the three chapters successively entitled "*T'ai shih*" 泰誓 in *Shang Shu*.

[60] *FMCHSC*, II, 33.

[61] The myth is accepted by Ssu-ma Ch'ien as the birth of the Chou; see *Shih chi*, IV, 111–12. For modern treatments of the story, see especially Wen I-to, "*Chiang-yüan lü ta-jen-chi k'ao*" 姜嫄履大人跡考 in *Wen I-to ch'üan-chi*, I, 73–80; and Fu Ssu-nien, "*Chiang-yüan*" 姜原, *FMCHSC*, IV, 13–22.

[62] See poems 245, 258, 300, and 275, the last one to be discussed later in this essay.

[63] *The Golden Bough* (New York, 1940), pp. 395–396. *Cf.* also, Claude Levi-Strauss, *The Raw and the Cooked*, trans. Doreen Weightman (New York, 1970), p. 267.

autumn to winter for example, in an ancient Chinese society never seems to suggest a deterioration of mutable nature (which determines the emotional vicissitude of human beings). Poem 154, for instance, presents winter as a season of rigor and life for the farming people to observe, strongly contrary to the Western notion that it is a season signifying death, or "discontent." The Chinese concept of the completion of a year seems to stress a steadfast progression toward the coming, a zealous expectation of the new year.

Lord Millet does not die in the poetry of *Shih Ching*.[64] A far reaching spirit that tends the crop with passion lingers in this group of the *Chou sung* poems. This is the legacy which the Chou cannot overlook. Somehow, it also marks the fundamental difference between the Chou and the Shang as shown in available documents. Ch'en Teng-yüan 陳登源 notes that the Shang are a people primarily concerned with hunting and animal husbandry, whereas the Chou turn to agriculture because of this recognition that Lord Millet, "who is almost a god" to them, is their origin.[65] The spirit of Lord Millet penetrates all the major *Shih Ching* songs which can be classified as Chou poetry, including the *Ta ya, Hsiao ya, Chou nan, Shao nan, Wang feng* 王風 and *Pin feng* 豳風, besides the *Chou sung*. Of all the poems celebrating agriculture and with Lord Millet mentioned as the giver of the crop, poem 275 is definitely the most concise one which in its slow, solemn rhythm tells of the Chou's awareness of the legacy. The poem is a eulogy for him:

Magnanimous are you, Lord Millet,
You are worthy of matching Heaven.
That we, the thronging people, are fed with grain
Is all owing to your perfection.
You have given us wheat and barley,
According to God's order, to nourish us all—
Not just in this domain or that limit,
But to spread the regular needs all over China.

Lord Millet is worthy of matching heaven because he has invented agriculture for the Chou. The growth of the grain appears in poem 245, for example, to be a happy, felicitous process. Lord Millet, like Nature, touches everything in the field to grow plump and ripe. He is usually the ancestor the Chou invocate and sing of when agriculture is their concern, life their subject. In fact, he is to be differentiated from King Wen or King Wu in that the latter two kings, though apotheosized in the mind of the Chou, are remembered as the saviors who toil and struggle, sometimes resorting to bloodshed, to give them repose. Lord Millet looks after the Chou the way Nature evolves to provide and inspire.[66] As it is easy for Chiang-yüan to give birth to him, "no bursting, no rendering, no injury, no harm" (245/2), it is easy for him to give rise to agriculture (245/4, 5, 6, 7). Further, by observing the way he farms and harvests, the way he offers sacrifice to Heaven, and the way he identifies himself with Nature, we amplify and perpetuate the legacy—we are the Chou, a people of civilization different from the Shang most significantly in this aspect, agriculture.

The orthodox annotation, apparently based on a statement from *Hsiao Ching* 孝經, maintains that poem 275 is indeed composed by the Duke of Chou to eulogize Lord Millet.[67]

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[64] In *Kuo yü*, Lord Millet dies in the mountains; see "*Lu yü*" 魯語 in the book (Rept. Taipei, n.d.), IV, 6. In Ssu-ma Ch'ien's history, Lord Millet also "dies"; see *Shih chi*, IV, 112. Moreover, *Shan hai ching* 山海經 locates the place he is buried; see XVIII, 3a, and XI, 2a.

[65] *Kuo-shih chiu-wen: ti i fen ts'e* 國史舊聞：第一分冊 (Peking, 1958), pp. 73–74; see also, pp. 20–24. For a different view, see Chang Kwang-chih 張光直, *The Archaeology of Ancient China* (New Haven, 1971), p. 249.

[66] In *Kuo yü*, it is said that the Chou offer the *ti* 禘 sacrifice to Ku 嚳, the *chiao* 郊 to Lord Millet, and take King Wen as *tsu* 祖, and King Wu as *tsung* 宗; *op. cit.*, IV, 7a. Wei Chao 韋昭, the annotator, points out the disparity between the system in *Kuo yü* and that stated in *Hsiao Ching* 孝經.

[67] *Hsiao Ching*, SPPY, V, 1b.

While I am prepared to receive any recommendation from researchers in classical philology and linguistics, and especially from the usual skeptics concerned with the merit of the Duke of Chou, I am quite convinced by traditional scholarship to regard the poem as expressive of the Duke's admonition directed to the child king, King Ch'eng, particularly on the matter of agriculture. In this connection, poems 276 and 277 are best construed as the king's order, in turn, to the agricultural officials to lead the people to farm. The king urges the whole nation to go into the fields:

Come and help to finish the king's work,
You who are honorably charged with the job:
Lead on the farmers,
To sow those hundred kinds of grain;
Quickly till your private lands,
Covering the thirty leagues,
And do your plowing,
Ten thousand of you side by side! (277)

It is obvious from the poem that farming is an important work in the finish of the king's duty responding to the heavenly mandate and the ancestral ordinance. The picture is vivid, with a tint of ritualistic solemnity, showing the whole nation at work in the fields; it is almost like a simultaneous bursting of a certain communal spirit that should naturally please Lord Millet. The ploughing, with its rhythmic movement and intensive goal, suggests a ritualistic aspect pertaining to the ceremonial dancing. Poem 276 likewise sets forth the urge and warning given by the king to the agricultural officials in the first stanza. The king then specifies what he expects them to do:

Now that it is the end of the spring,
What do we then seek to know?
How are the new fields? And the old fields? (ll. 6–8)

He asks to be informed of the growth of the grain. If Heaven is in favor, the harvest will prove to be rich. He is anxious, as the farmers themselves, to see the sickles mow. Somehow, the poem also gives an impression that the king is on an inspection tour over the farms. His enthusiasm, which almost amounts to interfering with the farmers (as shown in the last stanza of the poem), indicates a zealous impulse generated from the recognition that Lord Millet is the origin of the Chou.

The so-called "Dance of Farming" has its core in poems 290, 291, and 292. Each of the first two, particularly, is a complete account of the process, the outcome, and the purposes of the cultivation. The orthodox preface to poem 290, obviously in view of its overall thematic structure, remarks that the poem sings of the spring farming for the making of offerings to the *she-chi* 社稷 which, according to *Kuo yü*, has much to do with Lord Millet again.[68] However, the poem actually narrates agricultural activities in its seasonal diversity, from clearing the land, plowing the fields, the sowing, sprouting, and shooting of the grain, weeding, harvesting, and finally to the ritual offering. It is hard for us to conceive an immediate connection between the spring farming and the sacrifice as the preface projects it. In other words, if the preface is not oversimplifying the poetic development of this hymn, it is suggesting that intrinsically farming itself is ritual. The offering to Lord Millet can be observed in the specific stanzas toward the end of the poem, so can it be appreciated by taking the poem as altogether an action. To labor in the fields according to the changes of seasons is to delight Lord Millet, whereas

[68] *Kuo yü*, IV, 6a.

to concentrate on the ceremony after the harvest is to finish the rite. The ceremony, then, is the dénouement of the ardent, pious expression to the god of the crop. For in the final analysis, the poem is almost as categorical as poem 154, a poem about farming activities, insofar as its scope of subject-coverage is concerned. We must either take it as a poetic recount of the successive activities of the farming people in accordance with the seasonal changes, like poem 154 but more orderly than it, or as a liturgical hymn summarizing the activities in a compact form to "report" to the deity; or, still the best, a song which is unique in its attempt to effectuate the realistic account of the agricultural activities with such a passion that the seasonal activities altogether are a ritual dancing.

So does this approach seem to be most illuminating to the interpretation of poem 291. The preface, obviously in the view it projects to elucidate poem 290 and with an intent to correlate the two, suggests that poem 291 is concerned with the autumn sacrifice to Lord Millet. Again, considering the fact that the poem is not too much less elaborate than the previous one in the array of different agricultural operations in the given seasons, we may subject it in the same light to attain a more genuine meaning of the poem as one given rise by a certain ardor which is common with most poems in one way or another qualified as "ritualistic."

Penetrating are the good ploughs.
Now they begin to work on the southern acres.
Now they sow those hundred kinds of grain
Which are really full of life.
Now when those people come to see you,
With baskets and hampers,
The food they bring is millet.
The bamboo hats are plaited,
The hoes are piercing,
To clear away thistle and smartweed.
Now as the thistle and smartweed decay,
The millet grows thick.
Now they reap it as it rustles;
Now they pile it densely:
It is as high as the wall
It is orderly arranged like a comb.
Thereupon they open the hundred houses;
And when the hundred houses are full,
The wives and the children are at peace.
Now they kill the black-muzzled bull
That has curved horns,
In order to continue, to perpetuate,
To perpetuate the man of old.

Beginning with an image of the plough, the hymn is unequivocally to be identified with agriculture. The plough is good, at work sounding *ts'e ts'e* 臺臺 (meaning "penetrating" according to Ma Jui-ch'en 馬瑞辰).[69] The reduplicative expression, also onomatopoeic, immediately reminds one of millet itself, both phonetically (*tsiak for both)[70] and graphically (臺 : 稷).[71] In our context now, it conjures up an image of Lord Millet. Accordingly, we interpret that Lord Millet is "the man of old" specifically celebrated in the last line. The

[69] *Mao Shih chuan-chien t'ung-shih* 毛詩傳箋通釋 (Rept. Taipei, 1968), xxx, 11b–12a. The idea of "sharp," adopted by a number of scholars, appears to be derivative.

[70] Bernhard Karlgren, *Grammata Serica*, pp. 369–70.

[71] Ma Jui-ch'en, *op. cit.*

various activities done in response to the seasonal changes are to be construed, again, as physical and spiritual movements constituting a dance.

The poem can be divided into parts, showing successive, continuous works performed by the farmers, and apparently by their wives too (l. 5). The dancing involves all of them, and even their children (l. 19). Throughout, there is an articulate notion of how nature bestows favor upon those who toil. The weeds decay, for instance, to fertilize the millet. The duration of time, which is easy to induce by observing the diversity of the different works from line to line, is contracted into a single "performance," so to speak, as in poem 290. It is in this light that the preface is appreciated. Poem 291, like 290 again, reaches its climax in the scene of harvest, and its dénouement in the ceremony which, among other functions, unravels the sequence. As in any classical dramatic performance, the relation between the climax and dénouement is immediate. The most revealing example among these hymns of agriculture in this aspect is poem 279. It starts with a statement that in the year of rich harvest, the crop fills all the granaries. Immediately following the description of the rich crop, the singer relates how they make wine from the grain to offer to the ancestors. The mystery of agriculture, if any, is divested of in the ceremony, which also expedites bliss for the coming years.

Chu Hsi remarks that poems 275, 276, 277, 279, 290, and 291, which we have treated separately above, constitute what some scholars claim to be the *Pin sung* 豳頌.[72] The assumption is undoubtedly made on the basis that these poems combined become a unity showing a similar theme to poem 154, which with its rich imagery and diverse accounts of agricultural life in the early times, stands out distinctively as the classic poem of farming in *Shih Ching*. Granting that the assumption is valid and meaningful, we must amend it by rearranging the poems in the order we have adopted above; and poem 279 is the finale in the so-called *Pin sung*. The sequence is like a stylistic elevation of the theme of agriculture embodied in poem 154. Its language and ritualistic import make it different, and probably higher in terms of function, than poem 154, although somehow it is undeniable that in terms of some obvious poetic devices according to modern criterion it is not as rich as the latter.

Nevertheless, in order to come close to the meaning of these earlier poems about agriculture we must not neglect that in addition to the six proposed to constitute the *Pin sung*, there is yet poem 292 to be considered. Poem 292 is the third and last in the "Dance of Farming" defined by Fu Ssu-nien. Fu puts stress on this poem, saying that it "particularly resembles the last stanza of poem 154."[73] Accordingly, we may combine the two assumptions about the *Chou sung* in this regard, and reiterate the new classification introduced earlier in this essay that the "Dance of Farming" in actuality must include the six poems (in the order established above) and poem 292. Indeed, poem 292 most legitimately completes the program dedicated to Lord Millet.

In silk robes clean and bright,
In caps showing deference,
We proceed from the hall to the door-base,
We proceed from the sheep to the bull.
Here are the tripods big and small;
Here are the rhinoceros horns, curving vases.
The good wine is mellow.
Be not noisy, be not insolent,
So we may receive bliss from the great ancestor.

[72] See his comments on the *Pin feng* in general, and on poem 291. *Cf.* also, Juan Yüan, "*Shih sung*."
[73] *FMCHSC*, II, 33.

The poem concentrates on the description of a ceremony appropriately performed to the "great ancestor" (*hu-k'ao* 胡考).[74] The term *hu-k'ao* occurs only twice in *Shih Ching*, with the other in poem 290, which we have placed in the program dedicated to Lord Millet. In view of the formulaic feature characteristic of the naming of this particular ancestor, we suspect that the "great ancestor" here cannot be any other but Lord Millet. Poem 292, though without any definite mention of the agricultural activities, belongs to this group; the conclusion agrees with Fu's, which is derived from comparing its structural function with the last stanza of poem 154.

The seven poems suggesting the program of the "Dance of Farming" should be considered once more. Taking into consideration the impersonator (*shih*) set forth in the preface to poem 292, again, we seem to be able to visualize a dramatic performance that eventually marks the distinctiveness of these poems.[75] Each poem may certainly come out individually as a dance, as we have shown in the discussion of poems 290 and 291, that contributes to the sacrifice to Lord Millet. The evolution of Nature is the *nómos* of the individual dances. The ceremony imitates Nature. The seven poems altogether, moreover, become a complete presentation before the impersonator. The preface further identifies the impersonator as one supposedly for the "Spiritual Star," *ling-hsing* 靈星, which is taken to be the auspicious star of agriculture.[76] The spirit of Lord Millet seems to hover through the presentation. In this context the climax of the whole program is reached in poems 290 and 291, where the scene of harvest is most vividly imitated; the dénouement begins with the brief poem 279 and it is carried out completely in poem 292. By the time poem 292 is danced to, the program is drawing to an end. Since the poem concentrates on the straightforward depiction of the sacrifice, it is given the decisive force to unravel the whole program. The mystery of agricultural success is disclosed: be deferent to the great ancestor Lord Millet; imitate him, offer sacrifice to him, and above all, take the sacrifice seriously, so much so that it almost seems to be the ultimate purpose of assiduous farming. As agriculture is imprinted with a ritualistic color, so is it to be regarded as one of the proprieties that establish and perpetuate the rite. The countenance of the Chou is more relaxed than ever before, attributed with the rhythmic, intensive movements characteristic of all dancings that imitate the deliverance of Nature.

V. Epilogue

In the first year of King Ching of Chou 周景王 (i.e., 544 B.C.), the virtuous Prince Cha of Wu 吳公子札 came to Lu 魯, which practically had been the keeper of the Chou culture since the fall of the Western Chou dynasty in 771 B.C.[77] According to *Tso Chuan*, Prince Cha, being the first envoy from the southern state to visit Lu, asked to observe the music of Chou.[78] The musicians of Lu staged for him a program which is approximately the substance of *Shih Ching*, in the order almost exactly we have of the book today. By this year, seven years after Confucius, *Shih Ching* had apparently taken a rather definite shape.

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[74] For the meaning of *hu*, see Ma Jui-ch'en, *op. cit.*, xxx, 10b.

[75] See above, n. 53; also, Juan Yüan, "*Shih sung*."

[76] That is to say, if the preface is accepted at all. Many important students of *Shih Ching* reject the notion of the "Spiritual Star" in the preface. For example, Chu Hsi ignores it completely; Yao Chi-heng 姚際恒 considers the notion uncouth, see his *Shih Ching t'ung-lun* 詩經通論 (Rept. Hong Kong, 1963), pp. 348–49.

[77] The dating follows Ch'en Meng-chia, *Hsi-Chou nien-tai k'ao*, p. 50.

[78] *Ch'un Ch'iu san chuan* 春秋三傳 (Rept. Taipei, 1962), p. 400.

Prince Cha sat through the program and enthusiastically commented on it almost each time a section of the "music," a group of poems in the subsequent *Shih Ching* division, was performed. The comments were usually brief and appropriate, full of historical and ethical allusions, showing remarkable insight of this prince on a cultural occasion. As was to be expected, the crescendo of the program reached its highest with the performance of *sung* (which was obviously the *Chou sung*, since the prince had asked to observe the music of the Chou).[79] When the musicians finished the *sung*, Prince Cha burst into an affectionate ovation, praising it in such extraordinary length:

> This is the ultimate! It is straightforward but not arrogant; winding but not bending; immediate but not pressing; distant but not alienating; versatile but not voluptuous; recurring but not tiring; melancholy but not forlorn; felicitous but not indulging; utilizing but not exhausting; broad but not exulting; beneficent but not extravagant; apprehensive but not covetous; abiding but not obstructing; progressing but not dissipating. The five notes are harmonious; the eight sounds are concordant; the rhythm accords to *nómos*; and the measure asserts an order. All sublime powers should be like this![80]

It should be noted that by the time Prince Cha heard the music more than five centuries had passed since it was composed. The unity of the *Chou sung* had probably fallen apart, with the dance separated from it. The "*Yüeh chi*" shows that much of the dance was irrecoverable in the time of Confucius; he and his contemporary depended on conjectures to restore portions of the dance.[81] The fact that, according to the narrative in *Tso Chuan*, Prince Cha was entertained by a variety of dances separately following the *sung* indicates the likelihood that the unity of the *Chou sung* had become disintegrated even before Confucius was born. One of the dances Prince Cha watched was also called "*ta-wu*," but from the text it seems that the "*ta-wu*" represented nothing but an attempt of the Lu to figure out the original Chou choreography. Prince Cha "saw the dance of the *ta-wu*, and said, 'How splendid! The sublime of the Chou—is it like this?' "[82] The comment obviously fits a choreographical imitation better than a complete presentation of verse, music, and dancing. His approbation for the *sung*, on the other hand, seems direct and just for a poetry presented with the company of music. The Confucian practice of dancing to the three hundred poems in the subsequent era,[83] accordingly, should be understood as another major attempt to restore the particular apparatus of an ancient aggregation of art.

This essay has sought to identify itself as one of the many modest proposals in the last twenty-five centuries of the Chinese humanities to imitate an art showing the countenance of the Chou.

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[79] It may be possible that the *Lu sung* was also introduced for its lineage.
[80] *Ch'un Ch'iu san chuan*, p. 400.
[81] See "*Yüeh chi*," XXXIX, 4b–7a.
[82] *Ch'un Ch'iu san chuan*, p. 400.
[83] *Mo-tzu*, SPPY, XLVIII, 4a.

周頌樂舞考索

（中文摘要）

王靖獻

《周頌》三十一篇乃《詩》三百中最古老的作品，近代學者，殆無異議。惟《周頌》次第、旨義、文學，則各家說法不同。阮元《釋頌》曰，頌者容也，特指舞容；王國維《說周頌》疑其非，蓋美盛德之形容，或出於樂，不必拘泥舞容；傅斯年《周頌說》重申儀徵理論，反對觀堂聲緩之說。此文承取阮、王、傅三家之志，重予考慮，分《周頌》爲三組，畧加次第，試爲描繪盛德之形容。

第一組十四篇，象文、武先王之德。又分爲三段，第一段極言文王之德之純，包括清廟、維天之命、維清、天作、我將、雝等六篇。第二段美武王事功，或即觀堂據《樂記》製理之大武樂章次第，包括昊天有成命、武、酌、桓、賚、般等六篇，其舞分象摠干山立，發揚蹈厲，南國是疆，武亂皆坐諸容，勝殷遏劉，時周之命，允爲《周頌》英雄史詩之骨格。第三段二篇，記歸馬放牛，偃武（時邁）修文（執競）之事，祀廟柴望，大告武成。

第二組十篇。首爲嗣王踐祚，包括閔予小子、訪落、敬之、小毖；成王紹續文、武之德、夙夜敬止、學有緝熙于光明，此即徐復觀先生所說周人之憂患意識。次爲諸侯朝廟，包括烈文、潛、載見。按宗周發源，本在漆、沮流域，又按聞一多以魚爲蕃殖之隱語，故潛應入此朝廟祭祀部分。再次爲二王之後助祭，包括振鷺、有瞽、有客，極言對方之美，以客禮待之，表示周之博大；有瞽進而提供樂器演奏之指南，具有文獻價值。

第三組七篇，概爲稷田之舞，包括思文、臣工、噫嘻、豐年、載芟、良耜、絲衣。后稷爲此祭祀精神之寄託，周公輔成王，成王戒農官，可見后稷形象之恒常。載芟、良耜二篇略似，其耕澤澤，黍稷茂止，想見十千維耦，協力同心，先民農事所含融之祭祀

舞容竟與詩的起源息息相關也。此組七篇，可與《豳風》七月互爲印證，而以絲衣爲其祭祀儀式之尾聲。

《周頌》樂舞次第，大畧如此。惟年代湮遠，文獻不足，試爲臆測，想當然耳。《左傳》襄公二十九年，吳公子札觀周樂於魯，工爲之歌頌，公子動容，惟宗周旣滅，文物隨之，則季札所觀，或亦僅爲魯之臆測設想耳。觀堂論亡樂經過，畧謂春秋之世，詩樂二家，已自分途，詩家習其義，樂家傳其聲。然而，季札觀樂前七年，孔子生，其門弟子誦弦歌舞詩三百，志在復興古典，其於《周頌》樂舞之把握，恐亦不多；墨者譏之，其故在此耶？漢、魏以下，諸聲更微，迨永嘉之亂，遂全亡矣。周樂舞容，渺不可尋，描摹揣測者，千載以下未嘗稍息。此文分《周頌》爲三，以祭祀爲中心，以音樂爲背景，試爲因襲影射，墨者復出，不知做何感想！