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The Sage Unbound: Ritual Metaphors in the *Daode jing**

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Abstract

This article endeavors to describe and analyze passages of the different versions of the *Daode jing* according to their ritual content. It begins by asserting that the term *li* 禮, usually translated as "ritual," encompasses two different domains: the *Ru* 儒 conception of a ritually ordained society and the detailed execution of ceremonies. The *Daode jing* rejects the first aspect but draws from ritual details in order to construct a series of philosophical interpretations. Two examples in particular show the soundness of the ritual knowledge of the redactors of the text and its versions: the first one linked to military and funeral ritual, the second one with gift-giving ritual. This study analyzes those interpretations through three themes: simplicity and the question of origins; generosity of the Sage and royal magnanimity; the Sage and the king, body, self-sacrifice and the dialectic between the masculine and the feminine.

The passages related to those themes contain images and metaphors derived from ancient ceremonies. The precise analysis of those images shows that the redactors of the *Daode jing* were well aware of the subtlety

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of archaic rituals but chose to select elements that resonated with the ideal of simplicity they extolled. They build on a sacrificial system present in the ritual of Eastern Zhou dynasty, centered on two kinds of offerings: the great stew and the numerous tasty side dishes. The great stew, offered to the creators of human civilization was bland and this blandness was the metaphor the redactors used to present the Way as the pure potential from which everything else emerged. Furthermore, they transformed and subverted ritual characteristics of the old Zhou monarchy, particularly those related to the virtues of generosity of the archaic kings, and the ideology of self-sacrifice of the monarchs, in order to give birth to a new Sage-king, superior to the kings of old, one with the Way and unbound from any limitation.

Keywords: *Daode jing*, ritual, metaphors, simplicity, royal virtues

One of the many difficulties involved in the study of the *Daode jing*, as Li Ling noticed, arises from the fact that the text's highly paradoxical formulation contains sparse references to the general context of the Warring States period.[1] In order to recontextualize it, I will in this article explore the relationship between some concepts present in the various versions of the *Daode jing* and the ceremonials of archaic China.[2] Such an approach is of course

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[1] Cf. Li Ling 李零, *Guodian Chujian jiaodu ji* 郭店楚簡校讀記 (Beijing: Zhongguo renmin daxue chubanshe, 2007, revised edition, abbreviated below as *Jiaodu*), 69.

[2] In this article, I have chosen to refer to the received text in the *Zhuzi jicheng* 諸子集成 edition (Taipei: Shijie shuju, 1955, hereafter *ZZJC*). This version was collated by Wei Yuan 魏源 (1794–1857), author of the commentary and preface to the *Laozi benyi* 老子本義, in 68 chapters (*zhang* 章); it follows the text of the Song-Yuan period scholar Wu Cheng 吳澄 (1249–1333), *Laozi daode zhenjing zhu* 老子道德真經注. This edition presents the material of the received version more or less thematically. The standard edition used by most translations is the one of Wang Bi 王弼 in 81 *zhang*, but since the separation into chapters of all the parallels and versions is problematic, I refer to the *ZZJC*, which has the further interest of mentioning rather systematically changes, additions, and omissions in other versions. On the topic of the arrangements of the chapters, I have found particularly useful Ning Zhenjiang's 寧鎮疆 article, "Jiegou yanjiu shiye xia de *Laozi* cailiao taolun 結構研究視野下的《老子》材料討論," *Hanxue yanjiu* 漢學研究 24.2 (2006): 425–447, and specially 426 ff. for the problems of

problematic since the *Daode jing* is generally considered to be opposed to the Confucian notion of ritual. The 1993 discovery of the Guodian bamboo slips, containing textual precursors to the received version of the *Daode jing*, helped to modify our understanding of this text and induced a renewed interest in many aspects of this "Taoist" canon.[3] This interest led to research

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structure in the received *Daode jing*. Unless otherwise mentioned, all translations are mine. For practicality's sake, references to the chapters of the most widely used version (Wang Bi's) are added to the quotes. For the textual precursors of the received text of the *Daode jing*, I have consulted the original edition of the Guodian bamboo slips: *Guodian Chumu zhujian* 郭店楚墓竹簡, ed. Hubeisheng Jingmenshi bowuguan 湖北省荊門市博物館 (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 1998) and *Mawangdui Hanmu boshu* 馬王堆漢墓帛書, vol. 1 (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 1980) for the Mawangdui versions. I also refer to Liu Xiaogan 劉笑敢, *Laozi gujin: wuzhong duikan yu xiping yinlun* 老子古今：五種對勘與析評引論 (Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexue chubanshe, 2006, abbreviated below as *Laozi gujin*), and the transcription of Robert G. Henricks, *Lao Tzu's Tao Te Ching: A Translation of the Startling New Documents Found at Guodian* (N.Y.: Columbia University Press, 2000, abbreviated below as *Lao Tzu's Tao*). Other references will be indicated in the footnotes.

[3] Parallels to the received *Daode jing* are written on three bundles A, B, C, which contain parallels to 31 chapters of the received version; cf. R. G. Henricks, *Lao Tzu's Tao*, 5. The term "textual precursors" has been coined by William Boltz; cf. William G. Boltz, "The Composite Nature of Early Chinese Texts," in *Text and Ritual in Early China*, ed. Martin Kern (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2005), 61. On the basis of the most cautious studies, I take the position that the most ancient textual ancestors of the received *Daode jing* date from the second half of the 4th century B.C. This date fits well with the conclusion of William H. Baxter, "Situating the Language of the *Lao-tzu*: the Probable Date of the *Tao-te-ching*," in *Lao-tzu and the Tao-te-ching*, ed. Livia Kohn and Michael LaFargue (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998), 231–253, who concludes, basing his work in the phonetic system of the rhymes in the received *Daode jing*, that the language used in it can be dated from the second half of the 4th century. I follow Baxter's conclusion for two main reasons. The first is that no source prior to the 3rd century B.C. quotes passages close either to the Guodian prototypes or to the received version. There is no mention of a source named "Laozi," and no detectable quotation from the different versions or parallels to the *Daode jing* in the *Lunyu* 論語, the *Mozi* 墨子, and the *Mengzi* 孟子. The chapter "Zaiyou 在宥" of the *Zhuangzi* 莊子 ("external chapter 外篇") quotes vaguely from chapter 16 of the received *Daode jing* but is quite late in redaction. Chen Guying 陳鼓應 tried to demonstrate that quotations from the *Daode jing* exist in the *Mozi*, cf. "Mozi yu *Laozi* sixiangshang de lianxi: *Laozi* zaochushuo xinzheng 墨子與《老子》思想上的聯繫：《老子》早出說新證," in *Daojia Wenhua Yanjiu* 道家文化研究, ed. Chen Guying (Shanghai: Shanghai guji

conducted in fields such as the relationship between archaeological data and ancient manuscripts, etymology, to mention a few examples.[4]

The existence of those textual precursors to the received *Daode jing* shows that the version of the *Daode jing* that we have today was put together through a progressive editorial process and allows us to question what Tae Hyun Kim has called the "essentialization" of the philosophical texts of the period, the perception that texts are expressions of a limited number of characteristic concepts unique to identifiable schools of thought.[5] Therefore, the iron-cast opposition between a Confucian "school" attached to the practice of ritual order and a Taoist "school" opposed to ritual must be nuanced.[6]

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chubanshe, 1994), 457–461, note 5; but those quotations appear only in the first three chapters of this source, and not in the "core" chapters (8–37), cf. Angus C. Graham's article on the *Mozi*, in *Early Chinese Text: A Bibliographical Guide*, ed. Michael Loewe (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 336 ff.; see also Ian Johnston, *The* Mozi*: A Complete Translation* (N.Y.: Columbia University Press, 2010), xxx ff. The second one is the physical existence of the Guodian parallels; to date, there is no proof of any other earlier version. On the basis of these two facts, I consider that everything not present in the Guodian parallels in the received version was added and/or modified after the closing of the tomb (at the end of 4th century B.C.).

4 The Guodian bamboo strips also raise the question of the status of those texts vis-à-vis the received version. Numerous studies summarize the debates regarding those issues. To quote a few: Sarah Allan, "The Great One, Water, and the *Laozi*: New Light from Guodian," *T'oung Pao* 89, fasc. 4/5 (2003): 237–285; Edward L. Shaughnessy, "The Guodian Manuscripts and Their Place in Twentieth-century Historiography on the *Laozi*," H*arvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 65.2 (2005): 417–457; Li Ling, *Jiaodu*, 19–23, 35–40; Lu Chen 陸沉, "Guodian *Laozi* yu 'Laozi' gongan 郭店《老子》與「老子」公案," *Zongjiaoxue yanjiu* 宗教學研究 3 (2001): 129–136; Xing Wen 邢文, "Lun Guodian *Laozi* yu jinben *Laozi* bu shu yi xi 論郭店《老子》與今本《老子》不屬一系," *Guodian Chujian yanjiu* 郭店楚簡研究 (Shenyang: Liaoning jiaoyu chubanshe, 1999), 165–187.

5 Cf. Tae Hyun Kim 金泰炫, "Other *Laozi* Parallels in the *Hanfeizi*: An Alternative Approach to the Textual History of the *Laozi* and Early Chinese Thought," *Sino-Platonic Papers* 199 (2010): 7–8.

6 The notion of independent schools of thought is no longer tenable and must be considered to be an "artifact" of Han historiography. Cf. Jens Ø. Petersen, "Which Books Did the First Emperor of Ch'in Burn? On the Meaning of Pai Chia in Early Chinese Sources," *Monumenta Serica* 43 (1995): 1–52; Mark

In this article, I will briefly analyze the term *li* 禮, which is often translated "ritual." In fact, it designates two domains that must be carefully distinguished: the ideological/psychological and the actual ceremonies. It is elements coming from this last aspect that are metaphorized in the *Daode jing* and its textual prototypes. The presence of metaphorized ritual material in the *Daode jing* raises the question of the provenance and the soundness of the ritual knowledge of the redactors of the text. I will demonstrate this soundness through a precise analysis of two examples. I will follow with the examination of three themes linked to different aspects of the metaphorization of ritual information in the received version and its prototypes: simplicity and the question of origins; generosity of the Sage and royal magnanimity; the Sage and the king, body, self-sacrifice and the dialectic between the masculine and the feminine.

The references found in the second and third themes demonstrate that the redactors of the *Daode jing* were aware of many particularities of the archaic royal ritual practices and transformed them for their own purpose.

I. Preliminary Reflections of the Philosophical Use of the Ritual in the *Daode jing*

In the case of the *Daode jing* and its textual precursors, the incentive to analyze the significance of ritual metaphors seems countered by chapter 38 of the received version:

> 失道而後德，失德而後仁，失仁而後義，失義而後禮。夫禮者，忠信之薄，而亂之首。
>
> Losing Dao, next [comes] De; losing De, next [comes] Goodness; losing Goodness, next [comes] Justice; losing Justice, next [comes]

Csikszentmihàlyi and Michael Nylan, "Constructing Lineages and Inventing Traditions through Exemplary Figures in Early China," *T'oung Pao* 89, fasc. 1/3 (2003): 59–99; Kidder Smith, "Sima Tan and the Invention of Daoism, 'Legalism,' et cetera," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 62.1 (2003): 129–156; Paul R. Goldin, "Persistent Misconceptions about Chinese 'Legalism'," *Journal of Chinese Philosophy* 38.1 (2011): 88–104.

> ritual. Therefore, ritual is loyalty and sincerity spread thin and the [source of] disorder.[7]

The term translated as "ritual" comes after a series of other terms, namely the Way 道, the *de* 德, benevolence 仁 and justice 義. Therefore, what is attacked in the *Daode jing* is a general notion, the ethical/political systematizations of the *Ru* 儒 thinkers and their intellectual/moral rationalization of etiquette and proprieties.[8] The concluding sentence of the chapter adds an important nuance: "the great man resides in what is thick and does not stay with what is thin, resides in the substance and does not stay with its embellishment" 大丈夫處其厚，不居其薄，處其實，不居其華，故去彼取此. The opposition between the substantial and the superficial makes it clear that the *Daode jing* considers that ritual in this sense is something to be avoided, because it is too "flowery" and opposed to the whole someness of the Dao.

Nevertheless, the *Daode jing* does not use the usual word for "ritual" but word represented by the Chinese character *li* and, as Tae Hyun Kim noticed, its translation by the term "ritual" can lead to ambiguities.[9] In a Confucian context, it refers to the norms of

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[7] Chapter 38 of the Wang Bi version, cf. *ZZJC*, 下 31c. The translation is borrowed with modifications from Michael LaFargue, *Tao and Method: A Reasoned Approach to the Tao Te Ching* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994, abbreviated below as *Tao and Method*), 366; I have replaced his "morality" by the more common translation "justice" and "etiquette" by "ritual." The *Dictionnaire Ricci de Caractères Chinois* (article 5397) translates *yi* 義 by "rectitude," "vertu," "justice." Victor H. Mair translates *de* 德 by "integrity." See *Tao Te Ching: The Classic Book of Integrity and the Way* (New York: Bantam Books, 1990), 3.

[8] M. Csikszentmihàlyi gives several examples of this moral rationalization of ritual. As the author pointed out, in the Warring States period, the "vocabulary of ritual performance" provided a test for the moral quality of intentions. See *Material Virtue: Ethics and the Body in Early China* (Leiden: Brill, 2004). Cf. "Ethics and Self-cultivation Practice in Early China," in *Early Chinese Religion*, ed. John Lagerwey and Marc Kalinowski, vol. 1, part 2 (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2009), 520.

[9] Cf. "Other *Laozi* Parallels in the *Hanfeizi*," 15, note 17. M. Csikszentmihàlyi gives a short anthropological and historical survey of the difficulties in translating the character *li*. See "Ethics and Self-cultivation Practice in Early China," 522–523.

social conduct, but it can also refer to concrete details of the actual ceremonies, most of them sacrificial in nature.[10]

A passage in the most ancient parallels to the *Daode jing* (Guodian B, corresponding closely to chapter 54 of the received version) mentions sacrifice:

> 子孫以亓(其)祭祀不斮(輟)。
>
> The sacrifices by your descendants will never end.[11]

This sentence is reminiscent of the closing statement of many bronze inscriptions of Western Zhou and Spring and Autumn origins represented here by this example from the Zhubo li 邾伯鬲 (middle Western Zhou): "may my numerous descendants treasure and use [this vessel] for ever" 萬年子子孫孫永寶用.[12] Far from disparaging sacrifice, the Guodian parallel, modeling itself on the archaic dedication sentences of Zhou era bronze inscriptions, extols such ritual acts. The *Daode jing* sentence captures the substance of the ritual formula of the bronzes, breaks its formal mold and gives it more suppleness, inserting it in its own philosophical discourse.[13]

Therefore, since the word represented by the character *li* does not exhaust the full domain of the nature of ritual, it is necessary to look beyond it, for sentences or expressions linked directly or

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[10] Confucius himself was attached to the practicalities of the ceremonial, as this saying shows: "I have often heard about the stands [where the sacrificial meat is placed] and the sacrificial vessels [used by the participants in the sacrifice to eat the offerings], but I have not learned about military affairs" 俎豆之事，則嘗聞之矣；軍旅之事，未之學也. Cf. *Lunyu*, chapter "Weiling gong 衛靈公," *Shisanjing zhushu* 十三經注疏 ed. (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1983, hereafter *SSJ*), 15.60.

[11] *Guodian Chumu zhujian*, slip 16, 8. I use the transcription of R. G. Henricks, *Lao Tzu's Tao*, 108–109.

[12] Cf. *Shang Zhou qingtongqi mingwen xuan* 商周青銅器銘文選, ed. Ma Chengyuan 馬承源, vol. 3 (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 1988), 341. This formulaic sentence expresses the hope that the descendants will be able to offer sacrifices to the person who had the vessel cast. For a study on the characteristics of the dedication sentences, see E. L. Shaughnessy, *Sources of Western Zhou History* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, Oxford: University of California Press, 1991), 83–85.

[13] Marc Csikszentmihàlyi recently contended that "a number of first-person passages in the *Laozi* . . . exhibit strong similarities to . . . inscriptional texts" of a ritual nature. Cf. "Reimaging the Yellow Emperor's Four Faces," in *Text and Ritual in Early China*, 243.

indirectly to the materiality of ritual. This materiality, that is to say, the animals, objects, or specific gestures present in the concrete process of the ceremonies, is a reservoir of images, a symbolic language, a source of metaphors and therefore of thinking.[14]

There is an abundance of these metaphoric uses of ritual in other received texts, either in the *Lunyu* or in *Ru* inspired works.[15] Even in the *Zhuangzi*, there are several mentions of details coming from the ritual/sacrificial systems of archaic China.[16] Those passages, among many others, show that concrete details of ritual could be mentioned and integrated even in texts opposed to the moral understanding of ritual conduct exalted by the *Ru*. The *Daode jing* and its different versions also make use of some ritual details, which are interpreted according to the specifics of its philosophical perspective. One of its main characteristics is that it

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[14] As Paul Ricoeur noticed, ". . . symbol gives rise to thought . . . . The symbol . . . is something for thought, something to think about." Cf. *The Conflict of Interpretations: Essays in Hermeneutics*, ed. Don Ihde (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1974), 288. George Lakoff and Mark Johnson observed that "The metaphors we live by, whether cultural or personal, are partially preserved in ritual. Cultural metaphors, and the values entailed by them, are propagated by ritual. Ritual forms an indispensable part of the experiential basis for our cultural metaphorical systems. There can be no culture without ritual." See *Metaphors We Live By* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 234. More recently, contemporary philosophers have started to explore the possibility of overcoming the mind-body dichotomy through the analysis of the existential and cognitive aspects of ritual in Western and Buddhist domains; cf. Kevin Schilbrack ed., *Thinking Through Rituals: Philosophical Perspectives* (New York: Routledge, 2004).

[15] For example, Confucius, in order to defend the worthiness of one of his disciples, Zhong Gong 仲弓, said: "If the calf of a plow-ox is red and [old enough to be] horned, although men do not want to use it, would the spirits of the mountains and rivers reject it?" 犁牛之子騂且角，雖欲勿用，山川其舍諸. Cf. *Lunyu*, chapter "Yongye 雍也," *SSJ*, 6.22. *Mengzi*, in the chapter "Lianghui wang 梁惠王," took advantage of the reaction of a prince having mercy on a sacrificial ox in order to incite him to redirect his benevolence toward his own people. The ritual provided the thinker with a "springboard," allowing him to rebound with a moral lesson. *SSJ*, 下 6.

[16] To quote a few, the "inner chapter 內篇," "the world of men" (Renjianshi 人間世) in Guo Qingfan 郭慶藩, *Zhuangzi jishi* 莊子集釋, *ZZJC*, 4.81; the chapter "Dasheng 達生," *ZZJC*, 9.285; the chapter "Lieyukou 列御寇," *ZZJC*, 33. 460.

has erased any spatial or temporal references from the text: there is no mention of specific places, names or historical periods. This is valid for the totality of the book and its parallels: temporal or spatial determinations have been erased.[17] Moreover, all the textual precursors to the text and the received version itself are completely devoid of scriptural references: there is no quote from the *Shi* 詩, the *Shu* 書, the *Yi* 易 or any other sources used by the other philosophical texts of the period or even later. The writing/editing process has systematically avoided them.[18]

This systematic avoidance presents a hermeneutical challenge that must be overcome in order to understand the process of the metaphorization of ritual practices in the *Daode jing*. Obviously, this text is not a treatise on ritual. It was nevertheless written during a period (4th and 3th B.C.) and in a society (at least its upper strata) permeated by the ubiquitous practice of religious and political rituals.

In order to understand how the redactors of the different versions of the *Daode jing* were able to make use of ritual practices in their discourse, we have to evaluate the quality of their ritual knowledge.

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[17] This characteristic can be illustrated through a comparison between a passage of the chapter 80 of the received version of the *Daode jing* (cf. 下篇, *ZZJC*, 右 66.65) and another one in the *Mengzi* (Cf. *Mengzi*, chapter "Gongsun Chou 公孫丑," *SSJ*, 3上 20). In the two texts, the common use of the image of "crowing cocks" and "barking dogs" (雞犬之音相聞 / 雞鳴狗吠相聞) defines the limits of a territory but Mengzi inserts his discourse within the acknowledged, traditional historical and geographical frame of the time while the redactors of the *Daode jing* make no reference to such a frame.

[18] This does not mean that the *Daode jing* was not engaged in the intellectual polemics of its time. For example, chapter 3 of the received version makes a direct criticism of *Mozi*'s theories. Nevertheless, even in this case only the notion, "not promoting the worthies 不尚賢," is mentioned, but the name of *Mozi* is omitted. Cf. *ZZJC*, 右 2.2. The first two sentences are translated by Moss Roberts as "Do not promote those who excel and people will have no cause to quarrel" 不尚賢，使民不爭. See *Dao De Jing, The Book of the Way* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 33, modified. It is a direct allusion to the three chapters "Exalting Worthiness 尚賢," belonging to the core doctrines of the *Mozi*. Cf. Ian Johnston trans., *The* Mozi*: A Complete Translation*, xxxiii.

II. The Ritual Knowledge of the Redactors of the *Daode jing*

Martin Kern has recently underlined the importance of what he aptly names the "ritual texture" of archaic Chinese civilization.[19] Indeed, almost all the written materials bear witness to the importance of ritual practices for ancient Chinese culture. The study of those textual remnants must therefore take in account the ubiquity of those practices. While it is relatively easy to identify quotes from the *Odes* 詩經 and received canonical or philosophical sources, ceremonies cannot so easily be reduced to sentences that can be introduced in another text. It is therefore necessary to enter the inner logic of the ceremonies through a close analysis of minute details of specific rituals, including technical vocabulary, objects, victimsand spatial directions that constituted an important part of the "sensorial experience" of the Spring and Autumn and Warring States periods, at least for the noble classes. Two passages will permit a finer understanding of how ritual information was adapted to the specific intentionality of the redactors of the *Daode jing* and its textual precursors.

(a) The Example of Military Rituals in the *Daode jing*

A Guodian parallel (Guodian A, corresponding to parts of chapter 30 of the received version) warns against resorting to warfare in order to rule:

> 以衍(=道)差(=佐)人宝(=主)者，不谷(=欲)以兵强(=強)天下。
>
> One who uses the Way to assist the ruler of men does not desire to use weapons to take the world by force.[20]

This passage could of course be considered to be a condemnation of war in an age characterized by accelerating strife and more "open"

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[19] Cf. Martin Kern, "The Ritual Texture of Early China," in *Text and Ritual in Early China*, vii–xiv.

[20] Cf. *Guodian Chumu zhujian*, slips 6–7, 3. For translation of the first part of the text, see R. G. Henricks, *Lao Tzu's Tao*, 36; for the passage "以兵強天下," I use my own translation.

armed hostility between rival States. It could also be taken as a simple "common sense" piece of advice to a ruler. Such advice is given by the officer Zhong Zhong 眾仲 to the lord of the Lu state, Yin 魯隱公: "Thus, weapons are like fire; if one does not put them aside, one is burned by them" 夫兵猶火也弗戢將自焚也.[21] War can literally backfire and weapons, as instruments of death, are "inauspicious instruments 不祥之器."[22] The use of the category of "inauspicious" in the *Daode jing* is not neutral: it evokes directly the domain of the religious/ritual in connection with the military. The Guodian parallel to received chapter 31 makes use of this link in terms that must be analyzed within the larger context of ritual:

> 君子居則貴左，甬(=用)兵則貴右。故曰：兵者，□□□□□□(不祥之器，非君子之器，不)㝵(=得)已而甬(=用)之。銛(=恬)縛(=龔)為上弗媺(=美)也。訟(=美)之是樂殺人。夫樂□□□□(殺人者，則不可)以㝵(=得)志於天下。古吉事上左，喪(=喪)事上右。是以支(=偏)牅(=將)軍居左。上牅(=將)軍居右言以喪(=喪)豊(=禮)居之也。故殺□□則以恣(=哀)悲位(=莅/涖)[23]之。戰戩(=勝)，則以喪(=喪)豊(=禮)居之。
>
> When the superior man is not at war, he favors the left; and when he uses weapons, the preference is given to the right. That is why it is said, "weapons are inauspicious instruments, not instruments used by the superior man," he uses them [only] when forced to. [Then] he must be silent and reverent, and not praising [those instruments]. Those who praise them [are those who] rejoice in killing; but those who rejoice in killing cannot make their will prevail in the kingdom. Therefore, auspicious ceremonies make the left the place of honor;[24]

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[21] *Zuozhuan* 左傳, "Yin 隱公 4," *SSJ*, 3.23.

[22] Cf. *ZZJC*, 26.24. This passage is part of the beginning of chapter 31 of the received version: "Thus, (even) weapons of good quality are inauspicious instruments; that is why those who follow the Way do not employ them" 夫佳兵者，不祥之器，物或惡之，故有道者不處. Those sentences are not present in the Guodian parallel to this chapter. The inscription of the Chen Ni fu 陳逆簠 (480–456 B.C.) has the expression "auspicious instruments 祥器," that is to say, sacrificial vessels. Cf. *Shang Zhou qingtongqi mingwen xuan,* vol. 4, 552–553.

[23] I follow the lesson of the editors of the *Guodian Chumu zhujian*.

[24] Both the editors of the *Guodian Chumu zhujian* and H. G. Henricks interpret the character *gu* 古, "in ancient times," as *gu* 故, "thus, therefore."

> while funeral ceremonies favor the right.[25] That is why the general second in command is at the head of the left battle corps and the commanding general is at the head of the right battle corps. That is to say [the commanding general] is placed according to the ordinances of the funeral ritual. Thus, the killing of many men[26] is attended to[27] with sorrow and grief; in victory, [the troops] are arranged according to the ordinances of the funeral rite.[28]

The text articulates six elements; the first and second are the left and right directions, associated either with good fortune (third element) or bad fortune (fourth element); the fifth is the domain of war and the final element is the funeral ritual. Directions left and right are mentioned very often in the ritual *compendia*; they are never "neutral" but always associated with precise values. The *Liji* 禮記 states for example that "on the road, men went on the right side, women on the left" 道路男子由右，女子由左.[29] Concerning the social significant gesture of saluting (crossing both hands) rules wanted that a man's left hand was on top while a women's right hand was on top 凡男拜尚左手……凡女拜尚右手.[30] A possibly apocryphal story describes Confucius's physical attitude:

> 孔子與門人立，拱而尚右，二三子亦皆尚右。孔子曰：「二三子之嗜學也，我則有姊之喪故也。」二三子皆尚左。
>
> Confucius was standing with some of his disciples. His hands were crossed with the right hand on top. The disciples crossed their hands in the same fashion. Confucius said, "You do so out of your eagerness

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[25] The received editions have "inauspicious sacrifices 凶事."

[26] In the place of the missing words, the Mawangdui A has "殺人眾" while the *Zhuzi jicheng* edition (26.24) has "殺人眾多"; this edition mentions that both Heshang gong 河上公 and Wang Bi versions have "殺人之眾多." In addition, it notes that the edition of Fu Yi 傅奕 has the character *ze* 則 after the two characters 眾多, exactly like (*pace* those two missing characters) the Guodian version.

[27] I follow the interpretation of the editors of the *Guodian Chumu zhujian*, which gives the equivalence 位=莅. See *Guodian Chumu zhujian*, 121.

[28] Cf. *Guodian Chumu zhujian*, manuscript C, slips 6–7, 121. For an examination of textual variations between the different versions, manuscripts and received texts, cf. *Lao Tzu's Tao*, 117–118. See also *Laozi gujin*, 35–37.

[29] Chapter "Neize 內則," *SSJ*, 27.234.

[30] Ibid., *SSJ*, 28.243.

> to imitate me but I do this because I mourn for an aunt." The disciples [then] put their left hands [back] on top.[31]

The Guodian parallel understands the right to be an inauspicious direction; this is confirmed by numerous sources: Confucius places his right hand on top in a gesture of mourning. [32] Another text in the *Yili* 儀禮 gives a clue concerning the association of funeral sacrifices with the right: "[the victim] is killed to the west (to the right) of the door of the temple; the host does not look [at the slaying]" 殺於廟門西，主人不視.[33] Since the direction of reference is the south, the west corresponds to the right. Compared to other, non-funeral, sacrifices mentioned in the *Yili*, like the sacrifice of one victim 特牲饋食禮, this funeral sacrifice was characterized by a series of inversions: for example, in normal sacrifices to the ancestors, "the host, principal participant to the sacrifice, facing south, watched the victim (killed outside the principal door and east of the temple)" 主人……立於門外東方，南面，視側殺, and "the cooking of the victim was performed to the south-east (left) of the temple stairs" 牲爨在廟門外東南. A funeral was not only a type of ceremony to be performed in an inverted way; the objects of a funeral nature were inauspicious as well and could therefore "pollute" the place of the living. Hence "[the gatekeeper] does not let funeral instruments to enter the palace" 凶器不入宮.[34]

Two elements characteristic of funeral ceremonies are fixed by the ritual *compendium*: strict separation (marked above by inversion) between the funeral and other types of rituals; association of the category of inauspicious with the right. According to the *Zhouli*, "Office of the Dazongbo 大宗伯," there were five categories of ritual:

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[31] Chapter "Tangong shang 檀弓上," *SSJ*, 7.55.

[32] The fact that disciples immediately put their left hands back on top indicates two things: the left hand gesture (left hand on the top of the crossed hands) was the normal gesture for men; a physical gesture was highly significant and by no means neutral. In this case, it was a sign of misfortune if done in reverse.

[33] Chapter "Shiyu li 士虞禮," sacrifice of pacification offered the second day after death, *SSJ*, 42.226.

[34] *Zhouli* 周禮, "Officers of Spring 天官," "Office of the *zhongzai* 冢宰 (officer in charge of the burial mounds)," "Gatekeeper 閽人," *SSJ*, 7.48.

jili 吉禮 (auspicious, ordinary sacrifices), *xiongli* 凶禮 (inauspicious, funeral rites), *binli* 賓禮 (rites of hospitality and official venues), *junli* 軍禮 (military ritual), and finally *jiali* 嘉禮 (wedding ritual).[35] At the first glance, funerary and military rituals belong to two different categories while the Guodian parallel to chapter 31 of the received version "fuses" them. In order to determine whether this "fusion" is made on a ritual basis, it is necessary to examine briefly some characteristics of military ritual.[36]

The Guodian parallel mentions a characteristic already present in the military organization of the Spring and Autumn period: the tripartite organization of the battle corps (center, left and right columns). The *Zuozhuan* records that the Zhou king conducted an expedition against the state of Zheng 鄭; the battle corps was arranged in three groups: the center, commanded by the king himself, the left and the right aisles.[37] In the bronze inscriptions of the Western Zhou period, apart from the *Sima* 司馬, other officers, called *shishi* 師氏 were in charge of the troops.[38] In the *Zuozhuan*, the character *jiang* 將 has a verbal value, "to command." It is only in Warring States period texts that it has acquired the substantive meaning of "commander"; it may have taken this meaning at the very end of the Spring and Autumn period, following the beginning of the reorganization of the states and their military forces.

The domain of warfare cannot be reduced simply to strategy and tactics: it is also one of the most ritualized.[39] Unfortunately, for

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[35] Cf. *SSJ*, 18.119–120.

[36] By military ritual, I mean the ceremonies (sacrifices) and the symbolic gestures performed to signify and reinforce the separated nature of the military domain; this type of ritual is different from the "military regulations 軍禁," literally "military taboos," destined to enforce discipline within the army. Cf. *Zhouli*, "Officers of Autumn 秋官," "Office of the Sikou 司寇," "Enforcer" (*shishi* 士師), *SSJ*, 35.236.

[37] Cf. "Huan 桓公 5," *SSJ*, 6.46.

[38] Cf. Li Feng, *Bureaucracy and the State in Early China* (Cambridge, UK; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 78.

[39] On the general question of the relationship between war and ritual, see the seminal book by G. Bouthoul, *Traité de polémologie* (Paris: Payot, 1970), 363 ff. Martin van Creveld gives a very interesting presentation of the cultural aspects of war in many civilizations throughout history. See his *The Culture of War* (New York: Presidio Press / Ballantine Books, 2008).

archaic China, precise details concerning this type of rite are scarce either in inscriptions or received texts.[40] They have not been collected in a systematized fashion, contrary to sacrifices (for which an abundance of data exists). Nevertheless, two characteristics observable in the domain of funerary ritual are also present in the rare texts pertaining to the military ritual.

The first one is separation; as the *Sima fa* 司馬法 says: "In ancient times, civilian regulations were not used in the army; military regulations were not used in the civilian domain"古者國容不入軍，軍容不入國.[41] That can be illustrated with this norm, noted in the *Liji*, "those riding in war chariots do not bow; those wearing armor do not salute" 武車不式，介者不拜,[42] which is contrary to the rules of civilian behavior. In the domain of funerals, keeping the living from the dead is reason enough to mark a strict separation through ritual. In the military domain, itself marked by violence and death,[43] delimitation was also required; hence "When the army riding on war chariots departed, the tip of the weapons was

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[40] On the topic of specific military rituals during the Western Zhou period, see Yang Kuan 楊寬, *Xi Zhou shi* 西周史 (Taipei: Shangwu yinshuguan, 1999), 661 ff.; Mark Edward Lewis, *Sanctioned Violence in Early China* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990), 22–27.

[41] Cf. chapter "Tianzi zhi yi 天子之義," in *Wujing qishu zhuyi* 武經七書注譯, ed. Guo Rugui 郭汝瑰 (Beijing: Jiefangjun chubanshe, 1986), 90. According to Ralph D. Sawyer and Mei-Chün Sawyer, the *Sima fa* is a compilation of the 4th century B.C., including ancient material more related to military ritual than warfare (tactics, rules of engagement, etc.) *per se*. See *The Seven Military Classics of Ancient China* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1993), 111. Sources like the *Liji*, in the chapter "Wangzhi 王制," give some indications concerning the status of weapons: "Instruments of war are not to be sold in the marketplace" 戎器不粥 (= 鬻) 於市. *SSJ*, 13.116.

[42] Chapter "Shaoyi 少儀," *SSJ*, 35.285. Chapter "Tianzi zhi yi 天子之義" of the *Sima fa* has this passage emphasizing the precautions to be taken by the military when in the city: "Do not hurry in the city. In times of danger, do not show fear. Therefore, [civilian] ritual and [military] rules will be kept separated" 城上不趨，危事不齒，故禮與法表裏也. See *Wujing qishu zhuyi*, 98.

[43] As the *Wei Liaozi* 尉繚子 (in the chapter "Wuyi 武議," *Wujing qishu zhuyi*, 185) says, "The general is an officer of death" 將者死官也. Before this passage, it says, "Therefore, weapons are inauspicious instruments" 故兵者凶器也, an obvious reference to the *Daode jing*. According to *The Seven Military Classics of Ancient China*, 231–232, this text dates from the end of 4th century B.C..

oriented forward, and when it came back, to the rear" 乘兵車，出先刃，入後刃.[44] Thus, "naked weapons" were to be directed toward the enemy and away from the city. This strict rule, when violated, was considered to be anathema, as a story narrated in the *Zuozhuan* shows: a State meeting was organized between the states of Lu and Qi, but the lord of Qi was advised to use tribesmen to capture the duke of Lu. Confucius, presiding at the meeting, averted the capture and said: "Weapons of war should not come close to a friendly meeting. As before the Spirits, such a thing is inauspicious" 兵不偪好，於神為不祥.[45] The second characteristic is the association of military activities with the right direction. The *Sima fa* says, "The domain of the civilian occupies the left and the military the right" 文與武左右也.[46] This association is confirmed by the *Zhouli*:

> (匠人)……營國。方九里，旁三門。國中九經九緯，經涂九軌。左祖右社。
>
> (The engineer) . . . is charged with the construction of the capital; [the ramparts] measure nine *li*, and there are three gates (in addition to the principal gate). In the capital, there are nine roads oriented North-South and nine roads oriented East-West; for the nine roads oriented North-South, (facing South), there are nine tracks for the chariots; the ancestral temple [must be established] on the left [of the central road] and the temple to the god of the Soil must be established on the right.[47]

Another confirmation is given in the chapter "Jiyi 祭義" of the *Liji*: "In building the places of the spirits of the city, the altars to the gods of soil and millet are built on the right and the ancestral temples are

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[44] Ibidem, *SSJ*, 35.286. The following text says "Officers (on chariots) were on the left and foot soldiers on the right" 軍尚左，卒尚右. Thus, the "killing masses," the foot soldiers are placed at the right, whereas the "nobler" officers are on the left.

[45] "Tenth year of the Duke Ding 定公 10," *SSJ*, 56.446. For translation, see James Legge, *The Ch'un Ts'ew, with the Tso Chuen* (Taipei: Southern Materials Center, 1994), 777.

[46] Chapter "Tianzi zhi yi 天子之義," *Wujing Qishu Zhuyi*, 98. As Marcel Granet noticed, it is the right hand that kills. See *La Pensée Chinoise* (Paris: Éditions Albin Michel, 1968), 302.

[47] "Officers of winter 冬官," "Records on trades 考工記," "Builders 匠人," *SSJ*, 41.289.

built on the left" 建國之神位，右社稷，而左宗廟.[48]

Ancestral temples—but more particularly the altars of the soil—had a role to play in military affairs, as this text shows: "The commanding officer of the army receives his orders in the ancestral temple and the sacrificial flesh at the altar of the soil" 師者受命於廟受脤於社.[49] The sacrificial flesh was the means by which a very intimate link between the prince and his officers was established. In this case, it is the flesh (*shen* 脤), specifically offered before military activities, at the altars of the gods of soil and millet.[50] It is because the altars of the soil and millet gods are linked with war that they are associated with the right.

Funeral and military rituals had a lot in common. Both were associated directly with death; both had to be "isolated" from other activities. It was the case with the sacred ground of ancestral temples: during funerals, "Carriage and horses presented for a funeral could enter the gate of the ancestral temple. Contributions of money and horses with the accompanying presents of silk, the white flag [of a mourning carriage] and war chariots, did not enter the gate of the temple" 賵馬入廟門，賻馬與其幣大白兵車不入廟門.[51]

In the Guodian parallel to the received chapter 31 of the *Daode jing*, the association of those two dreadful rituals appears now in a different light: it demonstrates the familiarity of the redactors with ritual matters, a familiarity that allowed them to play with the common characteristics of war and funerals. Armed with a sound ritual knowledge, they combined the two domains to construct their argument in the form of a ritual theorem.[52] This theorem

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[48] Cf. *SSJ*, 48.373.

[49] *Zuozhuan*, "Min 閔公 2," *SSJ*, 11.83.

[50] Cf. *Zuozhuan*, "Cheng 成公 13," *SSJ*, 27.209. "In the ancestral temple, [officers] are given the flesh *fan*; in times of war, they are given the flesh *shen*" 祀有孰膰，戎有受脤.

[51] *Liji* chapter "Shaoyi," *SSJ*, 35.283. The white flag is what makes the carriage a funerary one, hence, its exclusion whereas the military chariot is such by construction.

[52] The Guodian parallel alludes to war not from any strategic or tactical point of view but from the "static" position of troops and generals (after victory). It is not the language of a military commander but of a ritualist familiar with the *minutiae* of the rituals practiced in the temples and the altar of the god of soil.

concludes that the truth of war is death, or, in other words, that rituals of war are indeed a kind of funerary ritual. It proceeds step by step, by looking at the inner meaning of ritual and drawing the consequences of the ritual logic accordingly. This ritual theorem is a reminder of the harsh realities of warfare and does not constitute an absolute condemnation of it. It plays the ritual within its own logic but at the same time reveals this logic by taking it at face value.

The next example will show that the redactors metaphorized the ritual practices in quite a different way.

(b) The Ritual Subverted from Within

This is taken from chapter 62 of the received version of the *Daode jing*, with no equivalence in the Guodian manuscripts:

> 道者萬物之奧，善人之寶，不善人之所保。美言可以市，尊行可以加人。人之不善，何棄之有？故立天子，置三公，雖有拱璧以先駟馬，不如坐進此道。古之所以貴此道者何？不曰以求得，有罪以免耶？故為天下貴。
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> The Way is the innermost master of everything,[53] it is the treasure of the good man and nourishes the bad man.[54] Beautiful words can be

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[53] In the Mawangdui manuscripts, in the place of *ao* 奧, both versions A and B have *zhu* 注. Cf. *Mawangdui Hanmu boshu*, 107; see also W. G. Boltz, "Manuscripts with Transmitted Counterparts," in *New Sources of Early Chinese History*, ed. E. L. Shaughnessy (Berkeley: Society for the Study of Early China and the Institute of East Asian Studies, University of California, Berkeley, 1997), 253 ff., 263 ff., for the dates of the Mawangdui manuscripts. The editors of the Mawangdui manuscripts, referring to glosses of the *Liji*, interpret the *zhu* 注 of the Mawangdui versions as *zhu* 主 (master) and thus the *ao* of the received version as *zhu* 主. See *Mawangdui Hanmu boshu*, 8, note 29. Moss Roberts takes *ao* at literal value but interprets it as a "sacred midden." See *Dao De Jing, The Book of the Way*, 155. I have not been able to find any reference in the ritual compendium or canonical sources supporting this explanation; *ao* means originally the south-west corner of a house and by extension the most retired or secluded place. In the *Zuozhuan*, "Zhao 昭公 13," there is a mention of one *aozhu* 奧主, the inner master of a state (here the State of Chu 楚), the prince Qiji 棄疾, who will become the King Ping 平王. *SSJ*, 46.369.

[54] The Mawangdui version A has the graphic variant 璞 for both *bao* 寶 and *bao* 保. Liu Xiaogan, following the redactors of the *Mawangdui Hanmu boshu* (94, note

> traded; noble deeds can be used as gifts for others. Why should what is bad about men be rejected? Therefore, when the son of Heaven is enthroned or the three ministers[55] are installed, although they are presented with jade *bi* pieces preceded by four horses,[56] it would be better to kneel and offer this way.[57] Why did the ancients value it? Is it not said '[giving it] allows one to obtain [favor], [giving it] allows one to escape punishment'? This is why all in the world treasure it.[58]

Our translation of chapter 62 has been oriented with consideration to two passages from the *Zuozhuan*, both mentioning jade *bi* pieces in a very precise context. The first story is about a successful bargain of one's life against the value of a jade *bi*, a ransom for one's life.[59] The second story involves the lord of the State of Wei 衛, Duke Zhuang 莊公, who tried to escape a revolt by finding refuge in the home of a man he had offended.[60] By offering the jade *bi* to this man, the duke was trying to use it as a ransom for his life,

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27), interprets the second character as *yang* 養 (nourish). See *Laozi gujin*, vol. 1, 591.

55 From the middle Western Zhou era on, three officials, the *Situ* 嗣土 (Supervisor of land), the *Sigong* 嗣工 (Supervisor of work) and the *Sima* 嗣馬 (Supervisor of military affairs) were the highest ranking officials of the king; cf. Li Feng, *Bureaucracy and the State in Early China*, 54 ff.

56 Numerous circular jade pieces, pierced with a round hole have been found by archaeologists. Jade objects and horses were among the gifts recorded in the Western Zhou bronze inscriptions. Cf. Chen Hanping 陳漢平, *Xizhou ceming zhidu yanjiu* 西周冊命制度研究 (Shanghai: Xuelin chubanshe, 1986), 250. Jade *bi* pieces are specifically mentioned in a dozen inscriptions from the Zhou era, for example the Diao Sheng gui 琱生簋 and the Huanzi Meng Jiang hu 洹子孟姜壺 (end of Spring and Autumn period). Cf. *Shang Zhou qingtongqi mingwen xuan*, vol. 3, 209–210, with mention of a "reward jade *bi* piece 報璧"; vol. 4, 549–551, mentioning gifts of jade *bi* pieces to different deities in a funeral context.

57 *Jin* 進, *zuo* 坐 and *gong* 拱 are three words intimately linked to the ceremonial of offering: kneeling and presenting with two hands the gift offered; it is a synthesis of a ceremonial sequence. See *The Way of Lao Tzu* (Tao-tê ching), translated with introductory essays, comments, and notes by Wing-tsit Chan (New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1963), 211, note 5.

58 *ZZJC*, 右下 51, chapter 62 of the Wang Bi edition. The Mawangdui versions (A and B) have two other, less significant, variants: in place of *gong* 公, the version A has *qing* 卿, the version B has *xiang* 鄉; in place of *gong* 拱, the version A has *gong* 共.

59 Cf. "Huan 桓公 10," *SSJ*, 7.53. Translation from James Legge, *The Ch'un Ts'ew with the Tso Chuen*, 55.

60 Cf. "Ai 哀公 17," *SSJ*, 60.477. Translation from James Legge, *The Ch'un Ts'ew with the Tso Chuen*, 850.

but to no avail. The jade *bi* did not, in this case, redeem the offense.

The jade *bi* are representative of the culture of gift-giving (through the use of highly symbolic objects or animals) among the nobility, from the Western Zhou era until the end of Spring and Autumn period.[61] In chapter 62 of the received *Daode jing*, the Way was substituted for the traditional ritual gifts; the redactors proceeded by placing it within and at the center of the ceremonial practiced by the aristocracy.[62] Knowledge of the ritually ordained system of the gift-based relationship among the nobility was requisite for this operation; it is indeed through this system that the one offering the Way could appeal to those who were its most eminent traditional "beneficiaries." What is the Way offered to the monarch? As Liu Xiaogan noticed, the philosophy of the *Daode jing* is a philosophy of non-differentiation.[63] The ruler must disregard differences among those, good or bad, entering his service. I will show below how the figure of the Sage/sovereign rooted in the Way is allowed to break free from the bond of the ritual whose characteristic feature is precisely to establish differences. In other words, what was offered ritually was a method allowing for the subversion of the ritual *from within*.

III. Metaphorization of Ritual Practices in the *Daode jing*: Three Themes

The preliminary examination of instances of metaphorical use of ritual repertoire in the *Daode jing* has allowed a first assessment of the usefulness of taking it into account in the study of the text. It has shown that the relationship between ritual practices and

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[61] David Schaberg, studying in the *Zuozhuan* the concept of *wen* 文 in relation to ritual objects, noticed that "All ritual objects . . . represent the world of social relations. . . ." See *A Patterned Past: Form and Thought in Early Chinese Historiography* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Asia Center [distributed by Harvard University], 2001), 58 ff., 60.

[62] Since the Way takes the place of physical objects, it might be that in this sentence, the character *dao* 道 designates a physical object, a text and thus alludes to a ritual transmission of the text itself, in a manner reminiscent of the archaic gift-giving ceremonial.

[63] Cf. *Laozi gujin*, vol. 1, 593.

philosophical discourse in the text is not univocal. Ritual references clarify the meaning of passages containing ritual allusions and also shed light on the manner in which those practices were "staged" in the text. I have demonstrated that the redactors of the *Daode jing* could play with the ritual by drawing on its internal logic to make philosophical statements against it. When the redactors of the *Daode jing* and its textual prototypes do not play with the ritual but target it, they take aim at one of its particular aspects: the capacity of the ritual to impose differentiations, that is to say, determinations.[64] This philosophical undertaking is further illustrated through three other themes.

(a) Simplicity and the Question of Origins

The ritual fleshes out hierarchical relationship within a society; it also differentiates space (ritual space being the prototype of all space)[65] and time. Time defined by the ritual is articulated through the relationship to ancestry, whether close (the closest ancestors) or remote.

I have identified in an earlier article a complex system of ritual elaborations articulated on a series of two sacrificial offerings, dating back to the end of the Western Zhou era.[66] This system was based on sensory and culinary contrasts between two offerings, the *dageng* 大羹 (great stew) and the *shuxiu* 庶羞 (numerous tasty dishes). The great stew, unseasoned, composed of meat boiled in water, was offered to the remote ancestors, inventors of civilization. The numerous tasty dishes were offered to the "recent" ancestors, those accustomed to the many gustative embellishments of "modern"

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[64] One of the most ancient elaborations on the "rationale" behind ritual is found in the *Zuozhuan*: "[If] there is no difference, it cannot be called *li* [ritual]" 無別不可謂禮. Cf. "Xi 僖公 22," *SSJ*, 15.112.

[65] See Mark Edward Lewis, *The Construction of Space in Early China* (Albany, New York: State University of New York Press, 2006), particularly chapter V, and especially Martin Kern, "*Shi jing* Songs as Performance Texts: A Case Study of 'Chu Ci' (Thorny Caltrop)," *Early China* 25 (2000): 156–164, on the question of ancestral temples.

[66] Cf. Gilles Boileau, "Some Ritual Elaborations on Cooking and Sacrifice in Late Zhou and Western Han Texts," *Early China* 23–24 (1998–1999): 89–124.

civilization. The gustative contrast (unseasoned-bland/seasoned-tasty) was elaborated upon and allowed the construction of numerous opposed notions: simplicity versus sophistication, past versus present, and so forth. Of those two kinds of offerings, the first one was more dignified, the second more "trivial." Moreover, the great stew had the precise function of evoking and memorializing the grandeur of the first civilized ancestors. It is evoked indirectly in another source, the *Lunyu*, with this enigmatic saying of Confucius:

> 子曰：「先進於禮樂野人也，後進於禮樂君子也，如用之則吾從先進。」
>
> The master said, "In the past, those who began [to implement] sacrifices and ritual music were uncouth; those who come after them are [more] refined. As for myself, I follow [the ritual of those] ancient men."[67]

What Confucius called the *yeren* 野人 (literally "men of the wild") were the first civilizing ancestors, who invented the first ritual. To those first ancestors was offered the great stew, a simple dish, comparatively simpler, less "sophisticated" than the many dishes offered to the "recent," close ancestors, in ceremonies characterized by many embellishments in the current (i.e., in Confucius times) culture. For the Master, it was essential not to forget this distant but most honorable past, and to follow it.

Neither the great stew nor the numerous tasty dishes are mentioned directly by name in the received *Daode jing* or its parallels.[68] There are indirect references to the sacrificial system characterized by those two kinds of offerings, observable through

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[67] Chapter "Xianjin 先進," *SSJ*, 11.42. Literally, *xianjin yu liyue* 先進於禮樂 means "[those who] first entered [the domain of] ritual and music"; while *houjin yu liyue* 後進於禮樂 means "[those who] later entered [the domain of] ritual and music."

[68] In his preface to the *Zhuzi jicheng* edition of the received *Daode jing*, Wei Yuan engaged in a diatribe against editors who added material to the "authentic" *Daode jing*, mentioning examples of passages added illegitimately to several editions. He refers also to other additions: "and about other [editors] adding references to the dark liquor and the great stew (literally "[letting added passages about] the dark liquor and the great stew seep through"), how could they defeat [the true meaning of] the Way? 其他漓玄酒，和太羹者，何可勝道. This passage seems to imply that some editions indeed contained references to those two sacrificial offerings or at least added commentaries referring to them.

the two notions of tastelessness and lack of embellishment. The first notion is illustrated by two passages in the Guodian parallels. The first one is in the Guodian C (corresponding to a text in chapter 35 of the Wang Bi version).[69]

> 古道□□□淡可(=呵)其亡味也。見(=視)之不足見，聖(=聽)之不足聞(=聞)，而不可既也。
>
> The Way of old [speaks],[70] insipid, lacking of flavor [are its words]. When looked at, it cannot be seen. When listened to, it cannot be heard. Yet it is inexhaustible.[71]

The beginning of the passage is evocative of a reception at the royal court; the guests[72] were entertained by music and regaled with tasty dishes, but the royal Way's words were bland, bland like the great stew offered to the most distant ancestors. There is a contrast here between what is offered to the guests—music and delicacies—and the Way: delicacies are tasty and music is pleasant to the ears, whereas the noble Way is bland. A second Guodian parallel makes use of the notion of tastelessness (manuscript A, corresponding to chapter 63 of the Wang Bi version):[73]

> 未(=味)亡未(=味)。
>
> Taste that has no flavor.[74]

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[69] Cf. *ZZJC*, 29.27.

[70] The three characters after 道, "之出口," have been supplied from the text in the received version; Mawangdui B has "出言."

[71] Cf. *Guodian Chumu zhujian*, slip 5, 9.

[72] In the "Sacrificial odes of the Zhou 周頌," ode "Zhen lu 振鷺," (*SSJ*, 19–3.326) there is this sentence: "My guests arrived" 我客戾止. Sacrificial ceremonies were solemn affairs, attended by numerous honored guests.

[73] Cf. *ZZJC*, 54.52.

[74] Cf. *Guodian Chumu zhujian*, book 112, slip 14; translation borrowed from *Lao Tzu's Tao*, 48. The *Lüshi Chunqiu* 呂氏春秋, in the chapter "Shiyin 適音," gives the following elaboration: "During the ceremonies of the great banquet, vases containing water were brought and a raw fish was presented on a tray; the great stew was not seasoned, there was something preferred to the taste [of it]" 大饗之禮，上玄尊而俎生魚。大羹不和，有進乎味者也. What was preferred was the taste of the origin, the beginning of civilization. *ZZJC*, 5.50.

If offerings of viands and liquors were fundamental to sacrifices,[75] music was equally important. The Guodian B mentions a particular kind of music: "The sound of the great music is muffled" 大音祇(=希)聖(=聲).[76] This muffled or "bland" music is indirectly evoked in the *Liji*, in a passage mentioning also the most honorable blandness of the great stew:

> 樂之隆非極音也……清廟之瑟，朱弦而疏越，壹倡而三嘆，有遺音者矣……
>
> The grandeur of music lay not in the accomplishment of the melody;[77] For the music of the ode "Qing Miao,"[78] the strings of the lutes were of red [boiled] silk, with the holes wide apart; one [singer] began, and [only] three others joined him; there was a lingering resonance.[79]

This "lingering resonance" designated the "sound of silence" following the performance of the ode. There are a few other texts to consider when examining the notion of simplicity/lack of sophistication. The first one is from the *Zuozhuan*, "Second year of the Duke Huan":

> 清廟茅屋，大路越席，大羹不致，粢食不鑿。
>
> The great ancestral temple has a thatched roof.[80] The brush mat is

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[75] The *Liji*, chapter "Liyun 禮運" says, "Hence, at the beginning of ritual, there is first drink and food" 夫禮之初，始諸飲食. *SSJ*, 21.187.

[76] Cf. *Guodian Chumu zhujian*, slip 12, 118; *Daode jing* chapter 41 of the received version, *ZZJC*, 34.34.

[77] The following sentence is: "Sacrificial offerings of food and liquors [were] not [about] refinement of flavors" 食饗之禮，非致味也.

[78] Ode dedicated to the King Wen (清廟).

[79] Chapter "Yueji 樂記," *SSJ*, 37.300. Translation from James Legge, *The Sacred Books of the East*, vol. XXVIII, *The Li Ki*, part IV (Oxford: Clarendon, 1885), 95. This chapter contains material present in the *Xunzi* 荀子, chapter "Lilun 禮論" and in the *Lüshi Chunqiu*, chapter "Shiyin."

[80] In Western Zhou times, most buildings had thatched roofs. The text alludes either to a specific way to cut or arrange the thatch on the roof of the temple or to the fact that while other temples and palaces had tiles, this temple was left with the archaic-looking thatched roof. The first tiled roofs appeared in the Shandong 山東 province at the end of the Spring and Autumn period; cf. Shen Yunyan 申雲艷, *Zhongguo gudai wadang yanjiu* 中國古代瓦當研究 (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 2006), 8, 10. Information courtesy of Pauline Sebillaud, Ph.D. candidate, EPHE and Jilin University.

> placed on the duke's chariot [used for sacrifices], the great stew is not seasoned, millet [offered during sacrifices] is not husked.[81]

The bland tasting great stew was among a series of ritual objects and/or offerings linked to the idea of the archaic, unrefined way of the distant ancestors.

In addition to the elements mentioned above, the *Liji* adds a jade scepter *gui* 圭:

> 大圭不琢，大羹不和，大路素而越席。
>
> The great jade tablet is not carved. The great stew is not seasoned. The great chariot is not decorated and a [simple] brush mat [is placed on it].[82]

Another text from the same canon adds a very interesting comment:

> 大羹不和，貴其質也；大圭不琢，美其質也。
>
> The great stew is not seasoned; one prizes its simplicity. The great jade tablet is not carved; one appreciates its simplicity.[83]

I have translated the word *zhi* 質 (substance) by "simplicity," with the implicit meaning of "lack of sophistication." The great ceremonial jade tablet was indeed left unpolished and like the great stew its value, that which made this ceremonial item prized, was its *zhi*, its untouched, original substance. The Guodian B (in the passage corresponding to chapter 41 of the received version), in addition to the "Great music," includes this mention: □(質)貞(=真)女(=如)渝(=輸)[84] (Genuine substance seems flawed).[85] However, this substance seems flawed only in comparison with the achieved state of the polished and the complete, just as an unpolished piece of jade is not as "perfect" as a polished one or the great stew is a rudimentary dish when compared to the "perfection" of the sophisticated numerous tasty dishes.

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[81] *SSJ*, 5.39.
[82] *Liji*, chapter "Liqi 禮器," *SSJ*, 23.205.
[83] *Liji*, chapter "Jiaotesheng 郊特牲," *SSJ*, 26.227.
[84] According to the commentaries on the received version.
[85] Cf. *Guodian Chumu zhujian*, slip 12, 118; corresponding to chapter 41 of the received version, *ZZJC*, 34.34; translation from R. G. Henricks, *Lao Tzu's Tao*, 98.

In the Guodian parallel, this passage is preceded by "上德若谷，太白若辱，廣德若不足，建德若偷" (The highest *de* is low as a valley; the greatest purity seems humbled; the most vast *de* seems wanting; the accomplished *de* seems imperfect). The passage on original substance is embedded in a series of what looks like paradoxes; but those paradoxes are not "natives," they are developments, emerging from the apparent paradoxes of Spring and Autumn archaic (or archaic-oriented) rituals, the "flavor" of which is lingering in the *Daode jing*.

The paradoxes of the "noble coarseness" have been extended into the political realm, for example in received chapter 39 (with no parallel in Guodian manuscripts):

> ……貴以賤為本，高以下為基，是以侯王自稱寡。不穀，此其以賤為本，邪非乎？…… 不欲琭琭如玉，珞珞如石。
>
> . . . what is precious has its roots in meanness; what is of the highest [value] bases itself on the ground. That is why lords and kings call themselves lonely [and] unworthy. Is this not [to acknowledge] that debasement is the root of [their status]? They do not want to [to show themselves] glittering like jade but coarse like [unpolished] stone.[86]

The word *gua* 寡 had been employed since the Spring and Autumn period in expressions like *guaren* 寡人 or *guajun* 寡君, as a self-designating name for the territorial lords and the monarchs of the states. The term *bugu* 不穀, meaning literally "no good," was also a self-designation used mainly by the territorial lords. Those titles appear almost always in circumstances where the princes took responsibility for an unfortunate event happening in the State. The *Daode jing* combines those appellations, taken literally, with the concept of coarseness: kings and lords are noble the same way the great stew and the great jade are noble because they are unrefined and apparently humbler than their subjects.

My translation of the passage "高以下為基" takes in account two elements: the first one is the correlation between the word *xia* 下 (down) and the word *ji* 基 (base); the second is the physical

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[86] Cf. *ZZJC*, 33.32.

implementation of ceremonies dedicated to the highest deities: "[For the sacrifice to Heaven and the distant ancestors], the ground was swept and the sacrifice directly offered on it. Clay pottery and gourds were used as utensils" 掃地而祭於其質也，器用陶匏.[87] The sacrifice to the most honored recipients was performed on the very substance (*zhi*) of the soil and on the lowest possible level.

In other passages in the Guodian parallels, the notion of coarseness, or noble simplicity is evoked with the word *pu* 樸:

見(=視)索(=素)保僕(=樸)。

Contemplate what is simple and protect what is plain.[88]

The *Liji*, in a passage of the chapter "Jiaotesheng," (quoted above, in the passage mentioning the great stew and the great jade scepter, prized for their natural substance) has: "How beautiful are the vermilion lacquer and the carved borders of the carriages, [but the king] rides in an undecorated chariot and gives honor to its plainness" 丹漆雕几之美，素車之乘，尊其樸也.[89] This passage uses the same two words found in the Guodian parallel, *su* 素 and *pu*.[90] Moreover, the *Liji* uses a visual contrast between the richly decorated chariots and the "simple" looking chariot of the monarch, between what was colored and carved and what was neither.

Other devices were used in sacrificial ceremonies to manifest the correspondence of the highest hierarchical status with physical lowness or the apparent lack of quality:

有以下為貴者，至敬不壇，掃地而祭。天子諸侯之尊廢禁，大夫士棷

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87 *Liji*, chapter "Jiaotesheng," *SSJ*, 26.224.

88 Guodian A, *Guodian Chumu zhujian*, slip 2, 3; this passage corresponds to the chapter 19 of the received version, *ZZJC*, 15.13.

89 Cf. *SSJ*, 26.227.

90 The Guodian A has five passages making use of the character *pu*. One of the parallels (*Guodian Chumu zhujian*, slip 9, 3, corresponding to the chapter 15 of the received version), beginning with "古之善為士者" (the noblest men of antiquity), describes the characteristics of those ancient noble men in various ways; one of them being that they were "屯(=純？)虐(=乎)亓(=其)奴(=若)樸" (rustic like uncarved wood). It is another example of the correspondence between rusticity/simplicity and antiquity, common to the royal rituals and some passages of the *Daode jing*.

> 禁，此以下為貴也。
>
> In some sacrifices, lowness was the mark of what was most honorable. Sacrifice to the most respected [recipients was not performed] on altars but on the swept ground. The cups of the Son of Heaven and the territorial lords were placed on a tray without feet. The [cups] of the great officers and the [subordinate] officers were placed on trays with feet. This was to manifest that the lowest position was the most honorable.[91]

The *Daode jing* alludes clearly to those ritual prescriptions through the use of a type of vocabulary evocative of ceremonies dedicated to the most distant ancestors and paraphernalia used by the highest members of the nobility; nevertheless it does it according to its own perspective. To understand it, the logic of the ritual must be analyzed *a contrario*. Of the prescriptions in the chapter "Liqi" of the *Liji*, the *Daode jing* deliberately ignored those which prescribe an abundance of certain paraphernalia: (i) the king was allotted 26 vases (*dou* 豆) for his sacrifice, the highest number compared to lower members of the nobility; (ii) shrines in the ancestral temple (*miao* 廟): while the king had nine, territorial lords were authorized only seven; (iii) coffins and funeral feathers (*zhong* 重, *sha* 翣): the king was buried with five coffins and eight feathers while those lower in the hierarchy could use only a smaller number of those items. There is also mention of other paraphernalia whose size is indicative of the dignity of those allowed to use them, such as the palace (*gong* 宮 and *shi* 室), the ritual vases (*qi* 器 and *min* 皿), the

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[91] *Liji*, chapter "Liqi," *SSJ*, 23.205. In one the passages preceding this one, it is also said that during sacrifice to ancestors, the correct ritual procedure put the emphasis on the smallness of size of the vases used for ritual libations (以小為貴). One detail is significant: the vase used by the lord (a term that might apply either to the king or the lord of a territory, in any case the most elevated in the hierarchy of the nobility) was an earthenware jar (君尊瓦甒). This passage does not seem to be related to the size of the vase but to its material, earthenware, that is to say, a type of vase technologically less advanced than the bronze vessels. This material stood as a symbol for the simplicity of the distant ancestors of the "current" civilization. Ritual paraphernalia of the king, when they were deemed to be "simple," assimilated him to the origin of civilization. They were the mark of the antiquity of his lineage but at the same time made him the embodiment of the "original man."

inner and outer coffins (*guan* 棺 and *guo* 槨), and the funeral and territorial mounds (*qiu* 丘 and *feng* 封).[92]

Before examining the nature of the elements not mentioned in the *Daode jing*, it is necessary to remember that those ritual prescriptions were the embodiment of a hierarchy. A hierarchy is partly characterized by the fact that any of its components draws its value from its relative place in it, even the highest or the most honored element is still part of the same chain. What is rejected by the redactors of the *Daode jing* and its prototypes belongs to two different categories. The first one (ritual vases and palaces) is related to ostentation. It collides with the general rejection of the desire to possess too much expressed in the *Daode jing* and its textual prototypes, as is shown in this passage from the Guodian A, corresponding to the received chapter 46:

> 化(=禍)莫大虐(=乎)不智(=知)足。智(=知)足之為足，此亙(=恒)足矣。
>
> Of disasters, none is greater than not knowing when one has enough; to know [when] enough is enough, this [is to enjoy] constant satisfaction.[93]

The second type of ritual prescription is the one related to territory, funerals, and ancestry. The *feng*, the territorial mound, was the marker of the power exerted over a land either by the king (it would then stand for the entire kingdom) or by the territorial lords over the land under their dominion. In the latter case, *feng* was the visible indication of the limits of a given power, and I have shown that the *Daode jing* avoids making references to specific polities or places and mentions only the *tianxia* 天下, the world.

The funeral mounds, the number of coffins, and above all the shrines are paraphernalia related to ancestry. To place oneself within a relation to ancestry is to be in a specific relationship with time: to have ancestors is to be the heir to a long chain of events

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[92] *Liji*, chapter "Liqi," *SSJ*, 23.203–205. Another passage in the same text prescribes the number of ornaments that could be worn by the members of nobility, the king being accorded the richest and the noblest kind.

[93] Cf. *Guodian Chumu zhujian*, slip 6, 3; translation (modified) R. G. Henricks, *Lao Tzu's Tao*, 34.

leading to the present. The present is itself a point in a succession that started before this point and will continue after it. This form of continuity constrained by the past collides with the general perspective (with its emphasis on limitlessness) adopted by the *Daode jing*.[94] Further comparison with the great stew/numerous tasty dishes system offers other clues to this continuity.

The great stew offered to the most distant ancestors preceded the sacrifices to the personal ancestors of the one who offers sacrifices; together, those two types of offerings constituted a temporal frame characterized by evolution (from the simple to the sophisticated, from the bland to the tasty, etc.). Indeed, the ancestral ritual was an anamnesis: the present could be ritualized and valued only as related to the past; it was therefore a "ritual space of memory."[95] According to the *Liji,* chapter "Liqi," the ritual of sacrifice was interpreted as a movement of return to the "historical" roots of civilization:

> 禮也者，反本修古，不忘其初者也。
>
> The ritual, [it is about] returning to the root and cultivating antiquity, in order not to forget the beginning.[96]

The great stew offered to the first civilized ancestors was the symbolic dish through which an act of remembrance of the merit of those ancestors was performed. Does the *Daode jing* use the "historical" (and genealogical) perspective developed in the

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[94] My analysis seems to conflict with the presence, in the textual precursor to chapter 54 of the received *Daode jing*, of this sentence, "子孫以其祭祀不輟," examined above (see footnote 11). It is obviously related to ancestry but it must be noticed that ancestors are not mentioned, only descendants (子孫); the timeframe in this case (as in the bronze inscriptions' closing sentences; see footnote 12) does not include the past but only the indefinite future. In other words, if this sentence can be applied to the *shengren* 聖人 himself, it would make him the human equivalent of the Way who, in the received chapter 4 of the *Daode jing* (no Guodian prototype), is conceived of as the "ancestor of all things 萬物之宗," and therefore without ancestor.

[95] To quote Martin Kern, "*Shi jing* Songs as Performance Texts: A Case Study of 'Chu Ci' (Thorny Caltrop)," 68.

[96] Cf. *SSJ*, 24.211.

ritual? The Guodian A (a parallel to chapter 40 of the received version)[97] has this sentence qualifying the Way: "返也者道僮(=動)也." R. G. Henricks translates this sentence as "'Returning' is the way the Way moves."[98] Is *fan* 返 the equivalent of the *Liji*'s *fanben* 反本?

Noting that in the Guodian version, *fan* was written "返" while in the received *Daode jing*, it was written "反," Liu Xiaogan proceeded to analyze the difference between those two words.[99] They were interchangeable up to a point, but *fan* written "反" could either mean "to return" or "to reverse/to turn over." Liu Xiaogan observed astutely that *fan* 返 (to return) presupposed a point of origin, physical or temporal, to which one could return. In the case of the sacrificial anamnesis symbolized by the great stew, there was indeed such a return to or remembrance of the temporal origin of civilization, but was this the case for the *Daode jing*? Liu Xiaogan argues that in the *Daode jing*, the character *fan* (返 being a variant of 反 in the Guodian version) should be interpreted not as a return but as evocative of the Way conceived as the other side of reality, the most fundamental one. *Fan* 反 should then be apposed (and not opposed) to and understood with *zheng* 正.[100] I will therefore translate "返也者道僮(=動)也" as "'Reversal' is the motion of the Way."

The dialectic between two other concepts in the *Daode jing*—*you* 有 and *wu* 無—sheds light on this notion of reversal.

> 天下之勿(=物)生於又(=有),[又=有]生於亡(=無),又(=有)亡(=無)相生也。
>
> The things of the world are born out of "you"; "you" is born of "wu."

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97 Cf. *ZZJC*, 33.32.

98 Cf. *Guodian Chumu zhujian*, slip 37, 6. R. G. Henricks, *Lao Tzu's Tao*, 77. The received version has "反者道之動."

99 Cf. *Laozi gujin*, 421 ff.

100 See for example the chapter 78 of the received *Daode jing*: "Correct words seem turned upside down (paradoxical)" 正言若反. *ZZJC*, 64.64. For the interpretation of the notion of *fan* 反 as reversal, see Isabelle Robinet, "The Diverse Interpretations of the *Laozi*," in *Religious and Philosophical Aspects of the* Laozi, ed. Mark Csikszentmihàlyi and Philip J. Ivanhoe (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1999), 144–146.

> The "wu" and the "you" engender mutually.[101]

These two concepts are in a synchronic relationship, as are the terms mentioned immediately after this passage (easy/hard 難易, long/short 長短, tone/sound 音聲, before/after 前後). If "wu" is the origin, can it be said to precede historically the "you"? On the contrary, they constitute two simultaneous aspects of the same reality. This understanding modifies the diachronic aspect of the great stew/numerous tasty dishes ritual system, since the great stew represents an earlier stage of the civilization.

This ritual system gives another clue to understanding what the two aspects of reality are: it opposes two categories of taste, bland and tasty. What is bland is devoid of determination, "unmarked" so to speak. What is tasty is identified by a specific taste, "marked" by the adjunction of spices. The *Shiji* 史記, treatise "Yueshu 樂書" has this elaboration of the great stew:

> 大羹不和，有遺味者矣。
>
> The great stew is not seasoned. It has a lingering taste.[102]

The last sentence can be literally translated as "it has a left over / enduring / lingering taste." The indetermination of the blandness of the great stew is what allows its "taste" to subsist. It is that absence of quality that makes it open to all the potentialities of sensorial determinations and at the same times permits one not to be blinded by their actual deployment.[103] Analogically, blandness is the

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[101] Guodian A, *Guodian Chumu zhujian*, slip 15, 4, equivalent to received chapter 40. I do not think that *you* should be translated by "being" or *wu* by "nonbeing." It would "pull" the conceptual frame of the *Daode jing* in a direction first initiated by Parmenides from Elea (5th century B.C.). I suspect that *wu* and *you* are shorthand notations for *youxing* 有形 and *wuxing* 無形, and I am tempted to translate them by "marked/delimited" and "unmarked/non delimited" for reasons that will appear below.

[102] *Shiji* (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1985), vol. 4, 1184–1186. This passage is also found in the *Liji*, chapter "Yueji," *SSJ*, 37.300.

[103] The received version of the chapter 12 of the *Daode jing* (*ZZJC*, 10.9, no correspondence in the Guodian versions) has a passage which develops the sensorial metaphor of flavor and other senses: "The five colors blind the eyes; the five tones deafen the ears; the five flavors dull the palate" 五色令人目

equivalent of "wu" and "tasty" of "you," the former being undetermined and the latter determined. In the *Daode jing*, passages mentioning taste and music could be interpreted as the philosophical metaphorization and modification of ritual elaborations on the value of the great stew / numerous tasty dishes system. What have been emphasized are the synchronous concepts of determination and indetermination. The Dao itself is undetermined, as the Guodian parallel to the received chapter 32 of the *Daode jing* shows:

> 道恒亡名，樸，雖細，天埅(=地)弗敢臣。侯王如能獸(=守)之，萬物將(=將)自賓……訊(=始)折(=制)又(=有)名，名亦既又(=有)，夫亦將(=將)智(=知)止(=止)，智(=知)止(=止)所以不訊(=殆)。
>
> The Way is invariably nameless,[104] unpolished, [and] though imperceptible, Heaven and Earth do not dare make it their subject. [When] lords and the king keep it, the ten thousand things would come to them to be their guests . . . when we start to regulate, names appear; but when names have appeared, we know it is time to stop. Knowing [when] to stop is the way to avoid harm.[105]

Reference to the king and the territorial lords gives this passage a political undertone. The word *bin* 賓 belongs to the very old vocabulary of State court visits and the protocol governing those visits and the State hospitality. The manner it is applied in the passage is coherent with the tendency of the *Daode jing* to "push" ritual concepts outside the limits it usually defines and circumscribes: the ceremonies summarized by the word *bin* were confined within the social network of noble allegiances; here, those limits are

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盲，五音令人耳聾，五味令人口爽. In other words, sensorial determinations can "overload" the senses and thus determine it univocally and so "blind" them.

[104] The received version has "道常無名." *ZZJC*, 26.25.

[105] Cf. *Guodian Chumu zhujian*, A 10, slips 18–19, 4. Translation (modified) R. G. Henricks, *Lao Tzu's Tao*, 53. The two characters read as *shi* 始 and *dai* 殆 are written in the slip in exactly the same way and by the same hand. They have been differentiated with reference to the received version. If the two characters were both read as *shi* 始 (始制有名，名亦既有，夫亦將知止，知止所以不始), the translation would then be "when we start to regulate, names appear; but when names have appeared, we must know it is time to stop. Knowing [when] to stop, we [then] do not begin [to give names]."

transcended by ways of the ritual extended to the cosmos.[106]

The same cosmic understanding can be observed in another textual prototype to chapter 37 of the received *Daode jing*:

> 衍(=道)恒亡為也。侯王若能守之，而萬勿(=物)將(=將)自忩(=化)。忩(=化)而谷(=欲)复(=作)，將(=將)貞(=鎮)之以亡名之樸(=樸)。
>
> The Way constantly does not manifest [itself]; [when] lords and the king can keep it, then the ten thousand things will deploy on their own. [When] they deploy and desire [for them] arises, [one][107] will suppress it [this desire] by [calling on] the unpolished state of the nameless.[108]

The textual prototype to chapter 32 is centered on the close association between naming and power. To name is to have power over that which is named but the Way itself cannot be mastered, not even by Heaven and Earth. On the contrary, to regulate through names is also to take the risk of being regulated, that is to say, determined.

What is a name? It is of course a word designating a particular thing and therefore a determination and that is why the Way is nameless. In archaic China, the procedure employed to resolve what was undetermined was oracular. A textual prototype to the received chapter 35 of the *Daode jing* alludes to this type of procedure:

> 埶(=執)大象天下往，往而不害安坪(=平)大，樂與餌佴(=過)客止(=止)。
>
> Establish[109] the Great Oracle [and the people of] the world will come

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[106] The passage resonates with the cosmological understanding of power frequent in Warring States sources. Cf. Aihe Wang, *Cosmology and Political Culture in Early China* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 75–128.

[107] In the Mawangdui and received versions, *jiang* 將 is preceded with *wu* 吾. It might be a scribal omission.

[108] Cf. *Guodian Chumu zhujian*, A 7, slip 13, 4.

[109] Liu Xiaogan, quoting from the *Yijing*, "Xici shang 繫辭上," "聖人設卦觀象，繫辭焉而明吉凶" (*SSJ*, 7.64, "Sages made the hexagrams, having observed the figures; then added statements to indicate good and ill omens," translation from Richard Rutt, *The Book of Changes* (Zhouyi)*: A Bronze Age Document*, Richmond: Curzon Press, 1996, 409), interprets the first character 埶 as *yi* 埶, a loan for the character *she* 設 "to establish." See *Laozi gujin*, 362. While the "Xici" is not an early reference (according to R. Rutt, *The Book of Changes*, 365, it

> to you. They will come to you and there will be great peace. Music and delicacies,[110] those [are for] the arriving guests.[111]

The expression *daxiang* 大象 is usually translated as "the Great Image" and interpreted by the majority of commentators and translators as the figure of the Way. I agree with the added nuance that the term *xiang* itself is related to divination; for example, in the *Zuozhuan*, "Xi 僖公15," it is thus defined: "The tortoise-shell [gives] its figure" 龜象也.[112] In another story, "Second year of the Duke Zhao 昭公," it is said that:

> 春，晉侯使韓宣子來聘……觀書於大史氏，見易象與魯春秋，曰：「周禮盡在魯矣。」
>
> In spring, the lord of Jin sent Han Xuanzi on an official visit [to Lu] . . . when he looked at the documents [under the keeping of] the historiographers, he saw divination books, the oracles, and the Annals of Lu; he said, "The rituals of the Zhou are all [preserved] in Lu."[113]

Of the two methods employed in divination, the tortoise-shell and the milfoil, the former was the most respected because it was the most ancient.[114] Considering the first quotation from the *Zuozhuan*, "Xi 僖公15," the "Great Image" could also have originally meant the "Great Tortoise-Shell." From Shang times on, divination using this material was effected by putting a white-hot rod to the surface of the shell; the surface was prepared (polished and carved) and after the procedure, cracks appeared on it. Those cracks were the shapes that were interpreted by the diviners but they ruptured the integrity of the surface.

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dates from the end of the 3rd century B.C.), it confirms the relationship between the word *xiang* 象 and mantic procedures.

[110] The word *er* 餌 designates a kind of delicacy mentioned in the chapter "Neize" of the *Liji*.

[111] Cf. *Guodian Chumu zhujian*, C, slip 4, 9.

[112] Cf. *SSJ*, 14.105, translation from James Legge, *The Ch'un Ts'ew with the Tso Chuen*, 169.

[113] Cf. *SSJ*, 42.327.

[114] Cf. R. Rutt, *The Book of Changes*, 35, 146 ff. The *Zuozhuan*, "Xi 僖公 4," adds: "The diviner answered: 'Divination by milfoil is inferior, divination by tortoise shell is superior'" 卜人曰：卜筮短，龜長. *SSJ*, 12.91.

The art of divination was to make visible, to flesh out in tangible, visible signs (in the case of the tortoise-shell, cracks) the obscure causalities of the world. Mantic procedure "tapped" on the universe's infinite source of potentialities and forced them to take a particular shape, determined, limited and "readable," thus finite. Therefore, the mantic procedure and its reading exhausted the limitlessness of possibilities.

Another passage (Guodian B, corresponding to chapter 41 of the received version) has "天(=大)象亡**荆**(=形)" (The great oracle has no marks).[115] Therefore, the great oracle was imbued with all the potentialities of the world; it contained all of them and the one who yielded to it remained free from limitations and determinations. The Guodian parallels take divination to a higher level of abstraction: it is the undetermined potentiality of the shapelessness allowing things to manifest their visible forms.

The great oracle and the Way have many similarities. The Shapeless echoes the Nameless.[116] This Nameless that constantly does not manifest itself (道恆亡為) is even superior to Heaven precisely because the celestial sphere is traversed by visible signs that can be interpreted.[117] This notion of the Way surpassing Heaven was enunciated in this saying of Confucius reflecting on the greatness of the legendary King Yao:

> 子曰：「大哉，堯之為君也！巍巍乎，唯天為大，唯堯則之。蕩蕩乎，民無能名焉。」
>
> The master said: "How great was the sovereign Yao. His majesty was towering. Only Heaven is great and only Yao emulated it. How majestic! People could not give [him] a name."[118]

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[115] Cf. *Guodian Chumu zhujian*, slip 12, 118; *Daode jing*, *ZZJC*, 34.34.

[116] In the *Daode jing*, those terms—*pu*, *su*, *wuwei* 無味, *wuxing* 無形, *wuming* 無名—form a string of metaphors linking the concept of simplicity with the absence of savor, mark, or name. They form a system derived from the ritual but expressing the undetermined character of the Way as the source of all potentialities.

[117] Cf. *Zuozhuan*, "Zhao 昭公 17," *SSJ*, 48.382. In this story there was a comet (有星孛) and a *daifu* 大夫 of Lu, Shen Xu 申須 said: "[Those] signs are constant [manifestations] of Heaven's doing" 天事恆象. In the context of the anecdote, these celestial signs announced a disaster.

[118] *Lunyu*, chapter "Taibo 泰伯," *SSJ*, 8.31.

In this passage, Yao is identified with Heaven, while in the *Daode jing*, the royal figure of the Sage is elevated to the ineffable nature of the Way. Yao's majesty left the people "speechless" so to speak, but the Sage is superior to him. Heaven sent signs and Yao's name is known but the Way does not manifest itself and no one knows the name of the Sage. This Sage is superior to the kings of old and is as undetermined as the Way itself; the Way is the root from which everything flows endlessly. This generosity is also what makes the Sage a true ruler.

(b) Generosity of the Sage and Royal Magnanimity

In a previous article, I have explored the theme of royal generosity through the analysis of several aspects of the ceremonials and the social meaning of the gift-giving rituals in archaic China, initiated by the giving and the partaking of sacrificial meat.[119] The meat-giving ritual, documented not only in received sources but also in bronze inscriptions, was a means to express political relationships (between either rulers and officers or States), hierarchy, reciprocal (asymmetric) obligations, and dependency. The obligation of the ruler to give (particularly sacrificial meat but also land and symbolically significant objects) to his inferiors within the noble class was mirrored by the gifts of kind made by those subordinate to their own "clients." The king (or the ruler) was the initiator of what I have called "a cascade of blessings," a series of descending gifts, wherein the recipient of a gift given by a person in a hierarchical superior position gave part of what he received to an inferior. The metaphor used in one of the *loci classici* describing this system in the *Liji* is relevant to the understanding of concepts evoked in four passages in the received *Daode jing*:

> 祭者，澤之大者也。是故上有大澤，則惠必及下。顧上先下後耳，非上積重而下有凍餒之民也。
>
> What is done at sacrifices afforded the greatest example of the dispensation of favors. Hence when the superior possessed the greatest

[119] Cf. "Conferring Meat in Archaic China: Between Reward and Humiliation," *Asiatische Studien/Etudes Asiatiques* LX 4 (2006): 867–902.

> blessing, acts of favors were sure to descend from him to those below him, the only difference being that he enjoyed the blessing first, and those below him afterwards. There was no such thing as the superior's accumulating a great amount for himself, while the people below him might be suffering from cold and want.[120]

The first part of this text extols the royal and aristocratic virtue of generosity, the flowing of goods toward the inferiors. The second part is a criticism of the process of accumulation of the riches (a monopolizing of them) by the superiors, contradicting the traditional generous behavior of the kings and the lords.[121] It ensues of course that the king could not keep the riches to himself—he could not hoard; in other words, he had to exercise restraint.

Traces of this royal ethos of liberality are present in chapter 81 (no parallels in the Guodian manuscripts) of the received version of the *Daode jing*:

> 聖人不積。既以為人，己愈有。既以與人，己愈多。
>
> The Sage does not hoard. The more he does for others, the more he has himself; the more he gives to others, the more his own bounty increases.[122]

One can say that the Sage is in the same position as the archaic king, master and giver of riches. He, like the king of old, is rich in what he gives. This passage affirms also the necessity for the Sage not to accumulate, an idea reminiscent of the criticisms in the *Liji* against the superiors who accumulate riches instead of giving to their subordinates.

The identification of the Sage with the king is not absolute; from one point of view: to give riches was one of the king's many

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[120] *Liji*, chapter "Jitong 祭統," *SSJ*, 49.376. Translation from James Legge, *Li chi*, vol. 2 (New Hyde Park, New York: University Books, 1967), 243.

[121] This process of accumulation began at the end of the Spring and Autumn period and was linked with the rationalization of resources by the states then more and more engaged in warfare. Cf. M. E. Lewis, *Sanctioned Violence in Early China,* 54 ff.

[122] *ZZJC*, 67.66. Mawangdui variants have a lot of missing or unreadable characters. I use the translation of V. Mair, *Tao Te Ching*, 40.

obligations. Jean Levi noticed that the concept of *bao* 報 (to reciprocate) ran throughout the ritual system of gifts in archaic China.[123] It entailed a reciprocal system of giving and acknowledging what was given. Gifts can be considered from two different perspectives. According to the first, a gift is a favor obtained from a superior; according to the second, the same gift has the potentiality of conferring an obligation on those who receive it. Indeed, ritual giving manifested a whole network of reciprocal and asymmetrical obligations: the superiors had an obligation to give, which allowed them to require allegiance from their inferiors.[124] This ritual frame explains *a contrario* and justifies the translation R. G. Henricks gives of a passage from the Guodian B (parallel to the beginning of chapter 13 of the received *Daode jing*):

> 寵(=寵)辱(=辱)若纓(=纓)…… 何胃(=謂)寵(=寵)辱(=辱)？寵(=寵)為下也。旻(=得)之若纓(=纓)，失之若纓(=纓)，是胃(=謂)寵(=寵)辱(=辱)若纓(=纓)。
>
> "Favor" is really "disgrace" — it is like being in bondage. . . . Why do I say "Favor is like disgrace"? Receiving favors puts you in a dependent position. If you get it, it is like being in bondage; if you lose it, it is like being in bondage. This is what I mean by "favor is really disgrace—it is like being in bondage."[125]

Here the ritual frame and its signification are acknowledged but the redactor chose to put the emphasis on its potential for humiliation and servitude. I will show below that the advice this textual precursor to chapter 13 gives is addressed to the Sage conceived in the image of the archaic king. The redactors were aware of the ritual giving of old but were careful to exonerate the Sage from the obligation it entailed in two ways.

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[123] Cf. "The Rite, the Norm and the Dao: Philosophy of Sacrifice and Transcendence of Power in Ancient China," trans. John Lagerwey, in *Early Chinese Religion*, vol. 1, part 2, 659.

[124] Gilles Boileau, "Conferring Meat in Archaic China: Between Reward and Humiliation," particularly 882 ff.

[125] Cf. *Guodian Chumu zhujian*, slips 5–6, 118; translation from *Lao Tzu's Tao*, 94–97.

They first transformed it by taking advantage of the fact that the archaic king was above any return of the gift: he gave, but nobody gave anything him in return. Of course, since in reality the kings depended on the riches accumulated by their ancestors and on the tributes received from the territorial lords, the redactors of the *Daode jing* were only considering the royal giving as a source of metaphors. The Sage was superior to the kings because, identified with the Way, he was the supreme giver, the one whose riches were inexhaustible.[126]

In order for the Sage to escape the ancient kings' obligations entailed inritual giving, the redactors had also to directly "free" him from the ritual as such. A Guodian passage corresponding closely to the received chapter 56 clarifies this very explicitly:

> 古(=故)不可得而親，不可得而疎；不可得而利，不可得而害；不可得而貴，不可得而戔(=賤)。古(=故)為天下貴。
>
> Therefore, it is not possible to [treat him] as close, it is not possible to [treat him] as distant, it is not possible to benefit him, it is not possible to harm him, it is not possible to [treat him] as noble, it is not possible to [treat him] as debased. That is why he is precious for the world.[127]

The one who is "precious for the world" (為天下貴) is described as outside any possibility of being defined, neither close (*qin* 親) nor distant (*shu* 踈), unconcerned with benefit (*li* 利) or harm (*hai* 害), neither noble (*gui* 貴) nor debased (*jian* 賤). Those categories are the ones delimited by ritual. Even in the case of the king, the ritual imposed limitations and constraints. What the redactors of the *Daode jing* protested against was precisely this aspect, which had been developed in the third century by Xunzi. In the chapter "Fuguo富國" (On enriching the State), the thinker wrote:

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[126] Consider this passage from the Guodian A, prototype to chapter 5 of the received version (cf. *Guodian Chumu zhujian*, slip 23, 6): "天墜(=地)之勿(=間)，丌(=其)猷(=猶)囝(=橐)籥(=籥)與？虛而不屈，逼(=動)而愈出" (The space between Heaven and Earth works like a kiln-bellows and air pipe, which though emptying is not exhausted, and activated, pours more forth). Translation (modified) M. Roberts, *Dao De Jing: The Book of the Way*, 38.

[127] Cf. *Guodian Chumu zhujian*, A 15, slips 27–28, 5. Translation (modified) R. G. Henricks, *Lao Tzu's Tao*, 65 ff.

> 禮者，貴賤有等，長幼有差，貧富輕重，皆有稱者也。
>
> It is the meaning of ritual principles that there should be rankings according to nobility or baseness, disparities between the privileges of old and young, and modes to match these with poverty and wealth, insignificance and importance.[128]

In sum, for the redactors of the *Daode jing*, "the one who is precious for the world" transcended all social categories defined by the ritual; he was so to speak unbound from hierarchical denotations.[129] This runs counter to what ritual was, as a principle of hierarchy, since it is precisely the primary device through which those social hierarchies were established and manifested. The four words, *gui*, *jian*, *qin* and *shu*, represent precise social and hierarchical values that the passage from the *Daode jing* alluded to and rejected.

Two other terms, benefit (*li*) and harm (*hai*) are, in the *Daode jing*, enclosed in the sequence of chapter 56. This mention constitutes a judgment on the essence of ritual as a perpetual exchange of favors and based on interest but not on true generosity, a generosity without reciprocity. This is also a veiled criticism of Xunzi who, in the chapter "Of honor and disgrace 榮辱" talked about "the great distinction between honor and disgrace and the invariable conditions of security and benefit and of danger and harm" 榮辱之大分，安危利害之常體.[130]

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[128] *Xunzi jijie* 荀子集解, *ZZJC*, 10.115. Translation from John Knoblock, Xunzi*: A Translation and Study of the Complete Works* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press: 1988–1994), Books 7–16, 122. According to Knoblock, this chapter is representative of Xunzi's early philosophy (255–256). A Han elaboration extended those principles and applied them to the sacrificial ritual (the original source of all rituals): "Thus, there are ten principles [manifested in] sacrifices . . . [in them] can be seen the difference between what is noble and what is base, the different degrees of family relationship (close and distant) . . ." 夫祭有十倫焉……見貴賤之等焉，見親疏之殺焉……. Cf. *Liji*, chapter "Jitong," *SSJ*, 49.376–377.

[129] His "place outside any (social) places" is analogically equivalent to the text itself, in the sense that the *Daode jing* and its textual precursors are devoid of any precise reference in time, space or obvious textual quotes.

[130] *Xunzi jijie*, *ZZJC*, 2–4, 36. Trans. John Knoblock, Xunzi*: A Translation and Study of the Complete Works*, books 4–6, 189.

Both the parallels to chapters 13 and 56 considered that the Sage must "escape" a ritual system that would put him in a determined place. He was to remain immune from the obligations the ritual entailed. In other words, he was to be *absolutus*, that is to say unbound.

As we have seen, another image used in the description of the superior's (king or lord) generosity in the historical and ritual texts quoted above is that of the flowing of water. The *Daode jing* (chapter 8 of the received version, with no equivalent in the Guodian slips) interprets it in this manner:

> 上善若水，水善利萬物而不爭，處眾人之所惡，故幾於道。
>
> The highest good is like water; Water is good at benefiting the myriad things and does not compete; it occupies the place most men loath. Therefore, it is near to the Way.[131]

The Sage does not enter into competition with his subordinates. His oneness with the Way is the source of all gifts and his generosity is like a flow, benefiting all. The highest good, from which all gifts proceed, is near the Way but seems to lack the royal position of a king.

On the contrary, at least in appearance, it is assigned by the redactors of the *Daode jing* to a place "most men loath." In other words, the highest form of generosity, akin to the royal virtue of liberality, is at the same time higher and lower than those who receive it. In order to solve what appears to be a paradox, it is necessary to explore other passages of the *Daode jing*, related to the ethos of thearchaic monarchy.

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[131] Cf. *ZZJC*, 右 6.6. The Mawangdui A has "上善治水，水善利萬物而有靜" (cf. *Mawangdui Hanmu boshu*, 10). Editors interpret the words *zhi* 治 as *si* 似, *jing* 靜 as *zheng* 爭; Mawangdui B's version is "上善如水，水善利萬物而有爭." My translation is partially based on V. Mair's, itself based on the Mawangdui B: "Water is good at benefiting the myriad creatures but also struggles . . ." (cf. *Tao Te Ching*, 67). This conflicts with the end of the chapter (no variations between the received version and Mawangdui's): "It is precisely because one does not compete that there is no blame" 夫唯不爭，故無尤 (V. Mair's translation). That is why I reject his interpretation ("struggles").

(c) The Sage and the King, Body, Self-sacrifice, and the Dialectic between the Masculine and the Feminine

The Guodian A parallel to chapter 25 of the received *Daode jing* underlines the importance of the figure of the king:

> 天大墜(=地)大道大王亦大。國中有四大安而王居一安。
>
> Heaven is great; Earth is great; the Way is great; and the king too is great. In the kingdom[132] there are four greats, and the king counts as one of them.[133]

In this passage, the place of the monarch is emphasized twice. Was it done, as Michael LaFargue suggests, "to please a royal patron"?[134] I am forced to disagree in part because cosmological discourse on the State began only at the end of the Spring and Autumn period. The *Daode jing* passage does reflect the evolution in the understanding of the status of the king: during the end of the Spring and Autumn period, the use of cosmological imagery developed. For example, the *Zuozhuan* reports the judgment of one of the princes of the Qin, responding to criticisms of the behavior of his father:

> 一世無道，國未艾，國於天地，有與立焉。
>
> One disorderly reign is not enough to ruin the State. The State is established with Heaven and Earth.[135]

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[132] R. G. Henricks translates 國 by "realm" and makes it an equivalent of *yu* 域 (bounded space), with the extended meaning of "all known space" which is not a meaning attested in any other source. His translation nevertheless takes in account the sentences mentioning the overarching role of the Way "silent and still," born before Heaven and Earth (先天地生，寂兮寥兮) that I have not quoted. Cf. *Lao Tzu's Tao*, 208, note 43.

[133] Cf. *Guodian Chumu zhujian*, slips 21–22, 112. For translation, cf. *Lao Tzu's Tao*, 55–57.

[134] Cf. *Tao and Method*, 427.

[135] Cf. *Zuozhuan*, "Zhao 昭公 1," *SSJ*, 41.321. Yuri Pines has shown that the famous Yan Ying, minister of the Qi state, was one of the first who began to define *li* in cosmological terms in his attempt to shore up the authority of the state in a time of political crisis. See *Foundations of Confucian Thought: Intellectual Life in the Chunqiu Period (722–453 B.C.E.)* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2002), 101.

Moreover, numerous passages in the different versions or parallels of the *Daode jing* are related to the person of the monarch and allude to the sacrificial nature of the king.

Chapter 20 of the received edition contains passages[136] that underline the uniqueness of the Sage in a language reminiscent of archaic royal virtues:

> 眾人熙熙如享太牢如春登臺，我獨怕兮其未兆如嬰兒之未咳，儽儽兮若無所歸，眾人皆有餘而我獨若遺……眾人皆有以而我獨頑似鄙。我獨異於人，而貴食母。
>
> The multitude are peaceful and happy; like climbing a terrace in spring time to feast on the meat of a *tailao* offering,[137] But I am tranquil and quiet—not yet determined, like a child who has not yet smiled.[138] Tired and exhausted—as though I have no place to return. The multitudes all have a surplus; I alone am bereft. . . . The multitude has its means; I alone set [myself] apart and am despised;[139] I am alone and apart from all others; I treasure the nourishing mother.[140]

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[136] The first two sentences of the received version have a parallel in the Guodian manuscript B; cf. *Lao Tzu's Tao*, 29, 90–91, for the problem of the placement of those first two sentences. See also Liu Xiaogan, *Laozi gujin*, 245.

[137] The term *tailao* 太牢 designated a sacrificial offering of one ox, one sheep, and one pig. It is here an image of abundance. M. Roberts noticed that since the *tailao* is an offering either in sacrifices or at official banquets, the "multitude" refers probably to the nobles of the royal court. See *Dao De Jing: The Book of the Way*, 72–73.

[138] The Mawangdui manuscript B (cf. *Mawangdui Hanmu boshu*, 119) have *ke* 咳, "to smile" in lieu of *hai* 孩 in the *ZZJC* edition. I follow the correction of R. G. Henricks who bases his interpretation on the Mawangdui manuscripts. Rules concerning the interaction of parents with the newborn are presented in the chapter "Neize" of the *Liji* and will be examined in detail below. The *Daode jing* refers here to what was probably an important sign in this regard. The "Neize" says that when a son reached three months, his father named him when he smiled 咳而名之.

[139] The *ZZJC* edition signals that Heshang Gong, Wang Bi, and Fu Yi's versions have 且 instead of 似. See also Liu Xiaogan, *Laozi gujin*, 248.

[140] Cf. *ZZJC*, 16.15. The Mawangdui versions offer only graphic variants. I use the translation (modified) of R. G. Henricks, *Lao Tzu's Tao*, 91–92, except for the sentence "眾人皆有餘而我獨若遺," where I use V. Mair's (*Tao Te Ching*, 83). And for the last sentence, "眾人皆有以而我獨頑似鄙。我獨異於人，而貴食母," I use the translation (modified) of M. Roberts, *Dao De Jing: The Book of the Way*, 72.

The same idea of abundance opposed to parsimony (amplified here as an image of destitution) is reinvested into the text of the *Daode jing*: the preeminence of the Sage, akin to the eminence of the king, is interpreted in terms of lacking, but this lacking comes from an overabundant giving, to the point of abnegation.

This passage from chapter 20 is a fundamental nexus of information, a place where a series of archaic notions are reworked in a very synthetic manner. In order to understand its complexities, it is necessary to unfold those notions one by one. This analysis will then allow me to expose the way the redactors managed to reinterpret and reorient archaic royal imagery in the *Daode jing*.

The text uses a series of contrasts to mark the difference between the sage and the rest of men. The sentence "我獨異於人" (I am alone and apart from all others) evokes the uniqueness or even the isolation of the monarch (etymologically *μόνος + ἄρχων)*, the one who reigns alone. The king, from a very early age (Shang dynasty) came to call himself *Yu yiren* 余一人 (I, the unique man), an appellation reserved in Zhou times for the Son of Heaven. This title was linked to the monarch in a very specific, sacrificial way.

In chapter 20, the *Daode jing* uses two other images that do not seem to be related to the monarchical ethos. The first is linked to the distress of the sage, "tired, exhausted and with no place to return to" 儽儽兮若無所歸. In chapter 8 of the received version, the highest good occupies a place "most men loathe" 處眾人之所惡. What could this place be? How could it be related to the status of the king? Is it only another of the "Taoist" paradoxes, with no relation to the ancient rituals? Let us first examine this passage from chapter 78 of the received version (no corresponding parallels in Guodian manuscripts):

> 聖人云：「受國之垢，是謂社稷主，受國不祥，是為天下王。」
>
> The Sage says: "The one who swallows the dirt of the country is [the one] called the master of the altars of the soil and the Millet god; the one who bears the misfortunes of the country is the king of all under Heaven."[141]

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[141] Cf. *ZZJC*, 64.64.

The *Zuozhuan* (15th year of the Duke Xuan) notes the words of an advisor to the Duke of Jin; the duke wanted to answer favorably to a request for help from the State of Song when it was attacked by the kingdom of Chu, but this advisor argued that the lord of the Song had to submit to Heaven's will: "The lord of a State [must] swallow the dirt; it is the way of Heaven" 國君含垢，天之道也.[142] Hu Houxuan 胡厚宣, in a series of articles, has shown that the "unique men," the kings of the Shang and Zhou dynasties, were deemed responsible for calamities affecting the kingdom and were the ultimate self-designated victims, sacrificing themselves for the greater good of all.[143] The distress expressed by the sage in chapters 8 and 20 of the *Daode jing* is reminiscent of the one expressed in the ode "Yunhan 雲漢" in the *Shijing*.[144] In this sacrificial ode, evoking the travails of the kingdom during a drought, the king declares "[the drought leaves me] without refuge" 云我無所; "My mind fears heat; my desolate heart is as if on fire" 我心憚暑憂心如熏. In another sentence, the monarch offers himself in sacrifice in order to appease the gods' wrath: "let [the ruin] come to my body" 寧丁我躬.

This passage from the *Daode jing* is not the sole evocation of the personal *devotio* of the ancient kings. A parallel to chapter 13 of the received version in the Guodian B is also related to this aspect of the archaic monarchy:

……貴大患若身……□□□□□(何謂貴大患)若身。虐(=吾)所以有

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142 Cf. *SSJ*, 24.185.

143 Cf. "Shi *yu yiren* 釋「余一人」," *Lishi Yanjiu* 歷史研究 1 (1957): 75–78; "Chonglun *yu yiren* wenti 重論「余一人」問題," *Guwenzi Yanjiu* 古文字研究 6 (1981): 15–33. In the story from the *Zuozhuan*, the advisor refers to a series of common sayings among which are "the rivers and the marshes receive many impurities, the mountains and the bushes hide diseases" 川澤納污，山藪藏疾. The kings made alliances with the powerful but dangerous deities of the rivers and the mountains, sources of numerous riches but also of pestilences. I have developed this aspect of the archaic monarchy in the second chapter of my *Politique et Rituel dans la Chine Ancienne* (forthcoming).

144 Cf. *SSJ*, 18–2.293–295. This ode is traditionally dated from the time of King Xuan 宣王, whose reign was marked by several droughts. Cf. Qu Wanli 屈萬里, *Shijing shiyi* 詩經釋義 (Taipei: Zhonghua wenhua chuban shiyeshe, 1961), 372.

> 大患者，為虐(=吾)又(=有)身，迵(=及)虐(=吾)亡身，或可(=何)□□□□□□(患，故貴為身於)為天下，若可以斥(=託)天下矣。忎(=愛)以身為天下，若可以迭(=寄)天下矣。
>
> Cherish great disasters like your body . . . *why do I say* "cherish a great disaster like your body"? Disasters come to me because of my body. If my body was missing, would I be *reached by (those) disasters? Thus, I have great regards for my body being* for the world, the world can be entrusted to me; thus, I cherish my body for the world, the world can be confided to me.[145]

The fundamental term here is *shen* 身, the body. The insistence of the passage on the body is highly significant in the royal context as is shown by this passage from the *Zuozhuan*:

> 至于夷王，王愆于厥身，諸侯莫不並走其望，以祈王身。
>
> As for the king Yi, having attracted misfortune, none of the territorial lords did not dare not to make haste to offer sacrifices to the gods of mountains and river, in order to pray for the body of the king.[146]

The sentence "*wang qian yu jue shen* 王愆于厥身" means literally "The king [having made] transgressions on his body." The same *Zuozhuan*, "Ai 哀公 6," reports that after strange phenomena showed up in the kingdom of Chu: "the prince of Chu sent [envoys] to consult the chief archivist of the Zhou court; the chief archivist[147]

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[145] Cf. *Guodian Chumu zhujian*, slips 5–8, 7. Received edition, cf. *ZZJC*, 11.10. Missing characters have been supplied by reference to the Mawangdui B manuscript. This edition indicates that some ancient versions omit the copula *yu* 於 (in, toward, for . . .) between the two verbs *ji* 寄 and *tuo* 託. Without this copula, those verbs have the meaning of "entrust . . . to" (active voice); the addition of the copula changes those verbs into the passive voice. Mawangdui manuscripts also omit the copula (cf. *Mawangdui Hanmu boshu*, 117). It must be noticed that the sentences containing *ji* and *tuo*, in the manuscript versions (Guodian and Mawangdui), when compared to the received version, are inverted ("*ji* . . .–*tuo* . . ." in the received versions, "*tuo* . . .–*ji* . . ." for the manuscript versions).

[146] Cf. *SSJ*, 52.412. This episode is also present in the received *Zhushu jinian* 竹書紀年 (*Sibu beiyao* 四部備要 ed., Taipei: Zhonghua shuju, 1965), 7b.

[147] The chief archivist had a very important position in the hierarchy of Western Zhou government; cf. Li Feng, *Bureaucracy and the State in Early China*, 308. He was sometimes associated with another officer, the *neishi* 內史. For the

answered 'the misfortune will be on the king's body. . .'"[148] 楚子使問諸周大史；周大史曰：其當王身乎. The archaic king's body was the repository (or the "target") of the misfortunes afflicting the kingdom; that was why his body was precious for the world.

The anecdote in "Ai 哀公 6" presents an interesting development. The royal archivist suggested that "If [I] offered a substitute sacrifice, the [curse] would be transferred onto [your] subordinates" 若禜之，可移於令尹. The king refused, saying "Heaven is cursing me; [I] have to accept punishment for my transgression; why would I transfer it [to others]?" 天其夭諸，有罪受罰，又焉移之. The royal archivist was making use of one virtue of the operation of sacrifice: to offer something in sacrifice is to offer a substitute for oneself. Nevertheless, this suggestion ran contrary to the archaic notion of the king being sacrificed for the kingdom and indicates that, at that time, there was an attempt to distance the kings from the traditional understanding of their sacrificial role.

There is no trace of such a substitutive operation in the *Daode jing*. On the contrary, the Sage appears to model himself on the king's abnegation.[149]

During the Spring and Autumn period, the transfer of the curse incurred by the royal misconduct onto a surrogate was a new solution offered to the kings for them to escape symbolic death. In earlier times, the death of the king could be symbolized through the sacrifice of a *male* animal. The *Mozi* records such a substitutive offering:

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historical evolution of the perception of the importance of archivists in early China, see also Martin Kern, "Offices of Writing and Reading in the Rituals of Zhou," in *Statecraft and Classical Learning: The Rituals of Zhou in East Asian History*, ed. Benjamin A. Elman and Martin Kern (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 80 ff.

[148] Cf. *SSJ*, 58.459. In other texts, the body of the king is designated by another word, *gong* 躬, as for example in the *Shangshu* 尚書, chapter "Tanggao 湯誥," "the fault will be on my body" 罪當朕躬; or in the ode "Shao Min 召旻," where the Zhou king orders to the officer Zhongshan Fu 仲山甫 to "protect the royal body" 王躬是保.

[149] Of course, the sacrificial death of the king was only symbolic in nature; he was a victim *de jure*, not *de facto*. This might be reflected in chapter 33 (no Guodian parallel) of the received version: "The one who does not lose his position endures. The one who dies but does not perish lives long" 不失其所者久，死而不亡者壽. Cf. *ZZJC*, 27.26.

> 湯曰：「惟予小子履，敢用玄牡，告於上天后：『今天大旱，即當朕身履，未知得罪于上下……，有善不敢蔽，有罪不敢赦，簡在帝心。』萬方有罪，即當朕身，朕身有罪，無及萬方。」
>
> Tang said: "I, Lü this little child, dare to use a black bull to inform the Supreme Lord and the spirits of the earth, saying: 'Now Heaven [has sent] a great drought and it is right that I, Lü, bear the responsibility. I do not know if I have committed a transgression against [the powers] above and below. Where there is good, I dare not conceal it. Where there is a transgression, I dare not pardon it. . . .' If there is transgression in the ten thousand regions, may my body bear it. If there is a transgression borne by my body, may it not affect the ten thousand regions."[150]

It is not the solution proposed by the redactors of the *Daode jing*. I believe that they chose to acknowledge on the one hand this traditional royal virtue of self *devotio*, and on the other hand to "bypass" it through feminization of the Way and what I call a process of "royal neoteny" or juvenilization of the king/Sage.

The feminization of the Way is a trait long recognized by all the commentators. It is illustrated by a parallel to chapter 25 of the received *Daode jing*:

> 又(=有)狀(=狀)混成，先天墜(=地)生，敓(=寂)繆(=寥)，蜀(=獨)立不亥(=改)，可以為天下母。未智(=知)丌(=其)名，䏚(=字)之曰道。
>
> There is a form that developed from primordial chaos that was born before Heaven and Earth; silent and still, it stands on its own and does not change; it can be regarded as the mother of all. Not yet knowing its name, we refer to it as the Way.[151]

This mother, the Way, is the nourishing mother of chapter 20 quoted above. Another text in chapter 6 of the received version, with no counterpart in the Guodian slips, qualifies this Way in a strange fashion:

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[150] *Mozi*, chapter "Jian'ai xia 兼愛下" (core chapter), *ZZJC*, 16.76–77, translation (modified) Ian Johnston, *The* Mozi, 159. This passage is echoed in the *Lunyu*, chapter "Yao yue 堯曰," *SSJ*, 20.79.

[151] Cf. *Guodian Chumu zhujian*, A 11, slip 21, 4. Translation (modified) R. G. Henricks, *Lao Tzu's Tao*, 55.

> 谷神不死，是謂玄牝。玄牝之門，是謂天地根。綿綿若存，用之不勤。
>
> The goddess of the valley[152] does not die; she is called the black female. The door of the black female is the root of Heaven and Earth. Continuously she survives; use [its resources but] do not exhaust it.[153]

There is an obvious parallel between the *xuanmu* 玄牡, the bull substituted for the king, and the *xuanpin* 玄牝, literally the black cow. *Mu* and *pin* are very archaic characters, present in the Shang oracular inscriptions. Their meaning was then "bull" and "cow." Both were used as sacrificial victims, offered to gods or ancestors, a practice continued in later times. The bull could be a substitute for the king precisely because it was a male animal. In contrast, female animals had to be used with care, since their indiscriminate killing could lead to depletion of the herd. It is no wonder then that royal ordinances were decreed in order to avoid this possibility, as this text from the *Lüshi chunqiu* shows:

> 是月也……乃修祭典，命祀山林川澤，犧牲無用牝。禁止伐木，無覆巢，無殺孩蟲胎夭飛鳥，無麛無卵，無聚大眾，無置城郭，掩骼霾胔。
>
> In this month . . . [the Son of Heaven] puts in order the statutes regulating sacrifices, commands that in making sacrifices to the mountains and forests, streams and marshes, no female animal be used as a victim. He issues orders to prevent the felling of trees, to prohibit the overturning of nests, to forbid the killing of very young creatures, creatures still in the womb, just-born creatures, fledgling birds, fawns and eggs, to forbid the conscripting of large groups, to prohibit setting up inner and outer city walls, and to cover up bleached bones and bury decaying bodies.[154]

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[152] The *Mozi*, chapter "Minggui xia 明鬼下" (*ZZJC*, 8.145), has a text reflecting the deep connection between natural places and the numinous: "Even in deep valleys and thick forests, in dark places where no one dwells, you must be careful in your conduct because there are ghosts and spirits watching you" 雖有深谿博林，幽澗毋人之所，施行不可以不董，見有鬼神視之. Translation (modified) Ian Johnston, *The* Mozi, 287–289.

[153] Cf. *ZZJC*, 4.4. For the translation of the last passage, I have been guided by the interpretation of Wu Cheng quoted in the commentaries of the *ZZJC* edition.

[154] *Lüshi chunqiu*, chapter "Mengchunji 孟春紀," "First month of spring 正月紀," *ZZJC*, 1.3; translation (modified) John Knoblock and Jeffrey Riegel, *The* Annals of Lü Buwei*: A Complete Translation and Study* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2000), 63.

Spring was a time of renewal, when no military activity (necessitating large groups of men) could be undertaken. All traces of death had to be erased, and female and young animals could not be hunted or destroyed. Killing those would have been seen as the destruction of life: natural resources represented either by the (potentially or effectively) gravid females or by their offspring were not to be exhausted.[155] The redactors of the *Daode jing* once again expanded on the royal ritual dealing with a concrete matter (here, the "management" of natural resources) to transform and feminize the Way described as the supreme source of everything. By the same token, while alluding to the symbolic *devotio* of the king, they separated the Way and the Sage from the sacrificial ideology of the archaic monarchy. This separation was not absolute, as is shown in this passage from chapter 28 of the received version:

> 知其雄，守其雌，為天下谿。為天下谿，常德不離，復歸於嬰兒。
>
> He who acknowledges the male and protects the female, manifests that he is the receptacle of the [riches of the] world. Being the receptacle of the [riches of the] world, he constantly keeps his power and reverts [to the simplicity][156] of his infancy.[157]

The image of the infant is recurrent in the *Daode jing*. Chapters 10, 20, and 28 of the received version develop this metaphor in a very complex and paradoxical way, but I believe that the concept is an amplification of something already present in the rituals of the monarchy. In other words, the paradox was already there: the Zhou king referred to himself as *yu xiaozi* 余小子 (I, this little child). This self-appellation appears for example in a tripod (師㝬鼎) dated from the reign of King Gong 恭王 (end of 10th century B.C.),

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[155] The text of the *Lüshi chunqiu* indicates that as early as the end of the Spring and Autumn period, non-cultivated areas constituted an important part of the available resources, resources that were brought under the control of the states. On this topic, see Alain Thote, "Au-delà du monde connu: représenter les dieux," *Arts asiatique*s 61 (2006): 65–68.

[156] My translation takes in account the following passage in the same chapter: "He reverts to simplicity" 復歸於樸, a sentence with exactly the same structure. I have shown above that the word *pu* (simple, plain, rough) was an important characteristic of the royal rituals.

[157] Cf. *ZZJC*, 23.21. This chapter has no parallel in the Guodian slips.

concurrently with another self-appellation, *yu yiren*.[158] Three odes have a different version of this appellation, in the form of 予小子 (I, this little child).[159] The ode "Jiang han 江漢" shows that it was reserved to the king: "The king gave charge to Hu of Shao . . . do not call [yourself] 'I, this little child'" 王命昭虎……無曰予小子.[160] In the ritual context of the western Zhou monarchy, the appellation "I, this little child" is related to ceremonial rules: the king, visiting the ancestral temple of his father, refers to himself this way during a period of mourning. This was of course a way to acknowledge that the king was an heir to his deceased father and not the absolute origin of his dynasty.

The question of the father is evoked indirectly in chapter 20 of the received *Daode jing*, in the sentence I have translated as: "[I] am tranquil and quiet—not yet determined, like a child who has not yet smiled" 未兆如嬰兒之未咳. Here, I take *zhao* 兆 in its literal sense. This character designated originally the sign given through the process of divination. For example the *Shuowen jiezi* 說文解字 gives this definition of the character *bu* 卜: "[When] the polished tortoise-shell is burned, the place of the burning forms a mark. It is said that the form [of the burning point on] the tortoise-shell is the sign and [is interpreted according to its degree of] horizontality" 灼剝龜也，象灸龜之形。一曰象龜兆之從橫也.[161]

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[158] Cf. *Shang Zhou qingtongqi mingwen xuan*, vol. 3, 135.

[159] Those sacrificial odes (cf. *Shijing*, *SSJ*, 19–3.330–331) are: "Min yu xiaozi 閔予小子," sacrificial ode, attributed by Qu Wanli to the reign of King Kang 康王; "Fang luo 訪落" (attributed to the same reign); "Jing zhi 敬之." See *Shijing shiyi*, 409–411.

[160] Cf. *SSJ*, 18–4.305–306.

[161] This definition corresponds to a phenomenon observed on Shang oracular inscriptions. The exact way the diviners interpreted the cracks, either at that time or later, remains a mystery. Nevertheless, one can observe that the cracks, largely due to the way the shell was prepared, developed more or less horizontally. On this subject, see Yan Yiping 嚴一萍, *Jiagu xue* 甲骨學, vol. 1 (Taipei: Yiwen yinshuguan, 1978), 699–766, especially 732. The *Zuozhuan*, "Xi 僖公 25," (*SSJ*, 16.118) has this text: "[The lord of Jin] made the diviner Yan consult the tortoise-shell about the undertaking. He did so and said, 'The oracle is auspicious—that of the Yellow Emperor's battle in Banquan.'" 使卜偃卜之，曰：吉，遇黃帝戰于阪泉之兆. Translation (modified) J. Legge, *The Ch'un Ts'ew with the Tso Chuen*, 195. The diviner interpreted the sign, that is to say, the mark (*zhao*) given by the pyromantic procedure applied to the tortoise-shell.

Giving the child a name was the responsibility of the father, as this text from the *Liji* shows: "At the end of the third month [after the birth of the child] . . . the wife with the son appeared before the father. . . . He then took hold of the right hand of his son, and named him when he smiled" 三月之末……妻以子見於父……父執子之右手，咳而名之.[162] The father (here, the sovereign) had to wait three months; he did not give a name to his son at birth. He named the child and thus made him part of the human community; at the same time, he acknowledged his own paternity and the power (and the responsibility) it gave him over the child he had named.[163] Originally, the naming of a child did, in fact, require a mantic procedure and the true name of a child defined his destiny, his characterization.[164]

In contrast, the Sage/ruler of the *Daode jing* has reverted to a state of infancy, before any name could be given to him. He has not smiled; his face has not yet been opened (or cracked) by the sign of a smile. In the same manner, the Great Oracle remains free of marks and the Way is nameless. Identified to the Way, the neotenic Sage/ruler retains the full potentiality of the Origin.

He has become a true king, connected to the nameless mother, free of any determination and beyond even the symbolic death of his historical predecessors.

IV. Conclusion

By the end of the Spring and Autumn period, the ritual texture of Chinese civilization was more and more interpreted as a series of moral imperatives. For Confucius and his disciples, those imperatives were the means through which a society in the throes of political and cultural upheaval could be restructured. One of the consequences of this moral/social understanding of ritual was that ritual details could be disconnected from the ceremonies they were a part of. The intrinsic symbolic value of those concrete ritual elements

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[162] Cf. chapter "Neize," *SSJ*, 28.241. Translation from James Legge, *The Li Ki*, 473.

[163] On this question, see also Marcel Granet, *La Pensée Chinoise*, 322, 327; and Maurice Bloch, *Ritual, History, and Power* (Oxford: Berg, 2004), 126.

[164] Cf. *Zuozhuan*, "Huan 桓公 6," *SSJ*, 6.49.

became available in the form of ritual imagery, which then could be integrated in other discourses, as metaphors.

In parallel, during the Warring States period archaic ceremonies still in use were elaborated upon and amalgamated into a system justifying and explaining social hierarchies. Moreover, this system, based on archaic sacrificial ceremonies, was presented as the principle organizing the relationship of the living with the dead, civilization with wilderness, and the present with the past. It constituted the armature of society as a whole, where every member's place was determined, including the king's.

My article has shown that the *Daode jing*, like many other philosophical sources of the same period, made use of this type of ritual-related metaphor. The redactors of the *Daode jing* demonstrated in passages I have examined in this article their familiarity with the intricacies of archaic rituals. This acquaintance did not translate into a slavish following of ritual prescriptions. On the contrary, they reinterpreted and transformed those ritual data according to the abstractive method they used consistently throughout the received text and its prototypes: the ritual elements were integrated in an editorial and intellectual frame devoid of any precise historical or spatial reference. Accordingly, those passages can be considered to be philosophical developments of preexisting ritual materials.

What was the substance of the method followed by the redactors? Sometimes, they pushed the inner working of the ritual to its logical conclusion, thus producing ritual theorems of impeccable credential. At other times, they worked within it, in order to subvert it. In this regard, they were as "ritually-correct" as they were ritually subversive. What they rejected in the ritual was its potentiality to create strong differentiations and therefore ritual/political constraints for the ruler. For example, while exploiting and expanding on the paradoxes of the pair great stew/ numerous tasty dishes of the ritual, they rejected systematically any reference to the temporal, ancestral, and pseudo-evolutionary system of hierarchical limits those two offerings symbolized. They abstracted from the very concrete details of the ritual a discourse to exalt the Way and put it beyond any determinations.

Moreover, while acknowledging the most archaic traits of Chinese monarchy going back to the days of the Shang dynasty, they redefined and renewed the figure of the monarch as a Sage liberated from the bondage of the ritual. Altogether, there are 63 instances of the word *tianxia* in the received version of the *Daode jing*. Indeed, it was the whole world that the redactors offered to a Sage/ruler unbound from any limitations.

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不受限的聖人——《道德經》的儀式隱喻

徐鵬飛

摘要

本文致力於描述和分析不同版本的《道德經》中提及儀式內容的段落。首先，「禮」這個字通常被翻譯為 *ritual*，但是事實上，「禮」應包括兩個不同的領域，一方面是儒家以禮治國概念中的「禮」，另一方面是墨守儀式的「禮」。《道德經》摒棄第一種「禮」，但卻利用繁瑣的禮儀細節，以建構一系列的哲學詮釋。本文提出兩個例子，以顯示《道德經》纂寫者對禮儀知識正確的認知：第一個與軍事和葬禮儀式相關，第二個關於送禮儀式。本研究將透過以下三個主題來分析《道德經》的儀式隱喻：簡單性和起源問題；慷慨的聖人和王室氣度；聖人和國王、身體、自我犧牲以及男性和女性之間的辯證關係，與這些主題相關的段落包含來自古老儀式的描繪和比喻。這些描繪的精確分析，顯示纂寫《道德經》者既深諳古老儀式的奧妙，又選擇他們理想中讚頌的簡樸。他們在東周儀式中採用一種以兩種祭品為中心的祭祀系統——大羹與庶羞。大羹——供獻給人類文明的創造者，是淡而無味的，這種淡而無味，用來比喻「大道」那種未出現他物前純粹未知的潛能。此外，他們還改造和顛覆舊時周朝君主制的禮儀特點，特別是那些有關古老國王的慷慨美德和自我犧牲的君主思想，用以創造出一個新的聖王，優於老的國王，一個順從「道」的無拘無束的聖王。

關鍵詞：《道德經》、儀式、隱喻、簡樸、王室美德