

SPECIAL FEATURES

Reading Bamboo Texts of the Warring States: Critical Reviews

The Embodied Text: Establishing Textual Identity in Early Chinese Manuscripts.
By Matthias L. Richter. Leiden: Brill, 2013. Pp. viii + 208. €96.00/ \$133.00.

In 2000, Matthias Richter completed a doctoral dissertation entitled “*Guan ren: Texte der altchinesischen Literatur zur Charakterkunde und Beamtenrekrutierung*” (*Guan ren: Texts of ancient Chinese literature concerning the art of character and the recruiting of officials*), in which he studied an early Chinese essay variously entitled “Wen wang Guan ren” 文王官人 (Officials of King Wen) or simply “Guan ren” 官人 (Officials).¹ The essay itself is not uninteresting for the psychological insight it brings to the qualifications to be sought in the recruitment of officials, but what particularly attracted Richter’s attention was that it appears in two only slightly different versions in two different transmitted works, one the *Da Dai Li ji* 大戴禮記 (Dai the Elder’s *Record of Ritual*) and the other the *Yi Zhou shu* 逸周書 (Remainder of Zhou Documents). Comparison of these two versions allowed Richter to employ a methodology known in Biblical studies as form criticism to explore how the differences between the two versions of the text reflect different editorial contexts and to discuss how these differences may have come about and what they might mean about the purposes of the different editors.

As the reference to form criticism might suggest, Richter’s dissertation was within the grand tradition of German textual criticism. It was a superb case study in how China’s ancient literary heritage had been transmitted over the last two thousand years. However, in the year that it was completed, something happened in Chinese textual criticism that would have a profound effect on his future research: in that year the Shanghai Museum manuscripts of Warring States texts were first introduced to the scholarly world. This is a very rich corpus of texts from about 300 B.C., which is

¹ The dissertation was subsequently published, under the same title, as Matthias Richter, *Guan ren: Texte der altchinesischen Literatur zur Charakterkunde und Beamtenrekrutierung* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2005).

to say well before the editors of the Han dynasty were at work. In the years since, Richter has shifted his attention away from the transmitted literature of early China to focus particularly on early Chinese manuscript literature. He has brought to his examination of early manuscripts the same meticulous attention to detail that he displayed in his comparison of the variants in the “Guan ren” texts, and over the years has published a series of studies in which he has placed manuscripts under a microscope,² revealing—just as he did in the case of the Han editors of the “Guan ren” texts—that such attention to detail, and especially to the material aspect of these texts, can greatly inform our understanding of not just what they mean, but also how they mean it.

In *The Embodied Text: Establishing Textual Identity in Early Chinese Manuscripts*, Richter combines these two methodologies in another meticulous study of an early Chinese essay that also appears in different versions: it is included among the Shanghai Museum manuscripts and is there called by its editors *Min zhi fumu* 民之父母, and substantially the same text is also found in the “Kongzi xian ju” 孔子閒居 (Confucius at Rest) chapter of the *Li ji* 禮記 (Record of Ritual) and as a portion of the “Lun li” 論禮 (Discussion of Ritual) chapter of *Kongzi jia yu* 孔子家語 (Family Sayings of Confucius). “Min zhi fumu” 民之父母, translated by Richter as “A Parent to the People,” is a phrase that occurs in numerous early Chinese texts, but in the case of this particular text it is a quotation of a line from the poem “Jiong zhuo” 洞酌 of the *Shi jing* 詩經 (Classic of Poetry; Mao 251) that serves as the stimulus for a series of questions and answers between Confucius and his disciple Zi Xia 子夏 concerning the nature of an ideal ruler. Since this is the most important phrase at the beginning of the text, the Shanghai Museum editor has selected it as the title he has given to the essay, presumably as a means of differentiating it from either the “Kongzi xian ju” or “Lun li” chapters of the two different received texts, both of which include,

² “Towards a Profile of Graphic Variation: On the Distribution of Graphic Variants within the Mawangdui Laozi Manuscripts,” in Matthias Richter, ed., *Methodological Issues in the Study of Early Chinese Manuscripts: Papers from the Second Hamburg Tomb Text Workshop*, *Asiatische Studien / Études Asiatiques* 59 (2005), pp. 169–207; “Tentative Criteria for Discerning Individual Hands in the Guodian Manuscripts,” in Wen Xing, ed., *Rethinking Confucianism: Selected Papers from the Third International Conference on Excavated Chinese Manuscripts*, Mount Holyoke College, April 2004 (San Antonio, TX: Trinity University, 2006), pp. 132–47; “Faithful Transmission or Creative Change: Tracing Modes of Manuscript Production from the Material Evidence,” *Asiatische Studien / Études Asiatiques* 63 (2009), pp. 889–908; “Textual Identity and the Role of Literacy in the Transmission of Early Chinese Literature,” in Li Feng and David Prager Branner, eds., *Writing and Literacy in Early China: Studies from the Columbia Early China Seminar* (Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 2011), pp. 206–36.

in addition to virtually all of the text found in *Min zhi fumu*, also additional material (different in both cases).³

Richter begins his study with a succinct statement of the problem he perceives in traditional Chinese textual criticism:

Until the recent discovery of a substantial number of early Chinese manuscripts, all knowledge of Warring States literature had to rely solely on transmitted texts, fraught as they must be with the effects of the multifaceted vagaries of transmission, reaching from small accidental changes (scribal errors) or intentional modifications (observing taboos or modernizing archaisms) to a fundamental rewriting of the entire text. The corpus of transmitted literature, moreover, provides us with only those texts that, for one reason or another, happened to be selected for transmission, and it presents them in the form in which they were reconstructed in the early empire. (p. 1)

He follows this, several pages later, with his call for a new “reading habit”:

Now that we have early Chinese texts available in their original manuscript form, we must strive to reverse this reading habit [i.e., of reading “literature as disembodied texts”] and do everything possible to recover the meaning embedded in the material features of the manuscript, to try to profit from all the historical information it has to offer, rather than letting our reception be controlled by transcriptions. (p. 8)

Richter’s own reading of the Shanghai Museum manuscript of *Min zhi fumu* as an “embodied text” serves as the antithesis to this past reading of “literature as disembodied texts.” The body he presents is as close to flesh and blood as one can get on the printed page. Although this book is devoted to just a single manuscript, it should serve as a model for how to study the scores of other manuscripts that have surfaced in recent years and which will surely command the attention of more and more scholars throughout the world. Richter’s method of describing the layout of the manuscript, what he terms its “codicological examination”; his care for the precise

³ It has become standard practice in American journalism to disclose one’s relationship if any with the subject of a review. In academic year 2006–07, Professor Richter was a post-doctoral fellow in the Creel Center for Chinese Paleography at the University of Chicago, of which I am the director. Both before and since that time, I have been in regular contact with him concerning scholarly issues of mutual concern. Although we do not always agree on all points (as this review will illustrate as well), I regard him as one of the very best scholars in the field of Chinese palaeography and a close personal friend.

detail of individual characters and the calligraphy with which they are rendered; and his determination of the text's integrity will surely become prerequisites for future studies.

The Shanghai Museum manuscript of *Min zhi fumu* (referred to throughout *The Embodied Text* as **Min zhi fumu*, the asterisk indicating that this is a title supplied by the editors of the corpus, and not one specified by the text itself) is written on fourteen bamboo strips, of which the one complete strip measures 41.5 cm. Fortunately, eleven of the fragmentary strips are missing primarily only the top 2.2 or so centimetres, which on the complete strip marks the margin above the upper one of three binding straps used to bind the strips; these breaks have resulted in only a minor loss of text. In two cases, strips 9 and 10, strips have broken at the point of the middle binding strap, resulting in a loss of rather more text. Fortunately again, it is possible to restore much of this text based on either the internal logic of the text or by way of comparisons with the transmitted counterparts. 397 of about 450 characters in the text have survived, with single characters missing at the tops of strips 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 11, 12, and 13, and about 20 characters each lost from the top halves of strips 9 and 10. It is unfortunate that nowhere in *The Embodied Text* do we find a photograph of the text itself, or even a schematic drawing of it.⁴

As mentioned above, *Min zhi fumu* is cast as a dialogue between Confucius and his disciple Zi Xia. Zi Xia initiates the discussion with the question (this and all other quotations below from *Min zhi fumu* will use Richter's translations):

詩曰幾俤君子民之父母敢問何如而可謂民之父母

In the Odes it is said: "The joyous and easy gentleman is a parent to the people." I make bold to ask: What must one be like to be called Parent of the People? (p. 49)

Confucius responds that one "must penetrate the sources of rites and music, in order to reach the Five Presences, to practise the Three Without, and to attain supremacy in All Under Heaven." At the urging of Zi Xia, Confucius then goes on to enumerate the Five Presences (*wu zhi* 五至): "external things" (*wu* 物), "intentions" (*zhi* 志), "rites"

⁴ I can appreciate that copyright laws may have prevented the use of a photograph. However, *The Embodied Text* does provide a schematic drawing of another text, **Wei li zhi dao* 為吏之道 (unpaginated front matter, Table 2); a similar drawing of "Min zhi fumu" would have been helpful to visualize the text. I might also mention that the citation of the Shanghai Museum publication of "Min zhi fumu" seems to be mistaken: p. 20 n. 8 gives the citation as "Ma Chengyuan 2001-11, I.3, 15-30, 149-180," apparently indicating volume 1 of this series; the correct citation should be volume 2.

(*li* 禮), “music” (*yue* 樂), and “joy” (*le* 樂), and, then with further urging from Zi Xia, also the Three Without (*san wang* 三亡): “music without sound” (*wang sheng zhi yue* 亡聲之樂), “rites without embodiment” (*wang ti zhi li* 亡體之禮), and “mourning without garb” (*wang fu zhi sang* 亡服之喪). Upon still further urging from his disciple, Confucius exclaims that Zi Xia “is now ready to be taught odes” (*jiang ke jiao shi yi* 將可教詩矣), and then proceeds by way of quotations from three different odes to illustrate the Three Without, and then upon further urging from Zi Xia to give five further sets of quotations from three different odes each, all illustrating over and over again the Three Without. Both the *Li ji* and *Kongzi jia yu* counterparts have closely similar structures, though as Richter notes there are also important variations, especially between the two received counterparts and the manuscript.

Richter divides his book into the following three major parts and fourteen chapters, the titles of which are quite descriptive of the various contents:

“Examining the Manuscript and Establishing the Text”

- The Context of the Manuscript
- Codicological Examination
- Paleographic Examination
- Presentation of the Text
- The Extension of **Min zhi fumu*

“The Divergence of Manuscript Text and Transmitted Counterparts: A Review of Homogenizing Readings”

- A Hierarchy of Criteria for Deciding on Disputed Readings
- Variants of Little Consequence for the Content of the Text
- Restoring Lost Manuscript Text
- Variants Concerning the Central Ideas of the Text

“Comparative Interpretation of **Min zhi fumu* and Its Transmitted Counterparts: Differences in the Nature of the Texts and Their Ideology”

- The Core Text
- The Evolving Role of the *Odes* in Ru Instruction
- The Conclusion of the Core Text
- Later Additions to the Core Text: Indexical Text
- Texts as Repositories of Didactic Material: Active vs. Passive Text

Part One constitutes a detailed physiognomy of the manuscript and its context. Like all of the Shanghai Museum manuscripts, *Min zhi fumu* is of unknown archaeological provenance, though there is good reason to believe that it derives from a Warring States tomb in the ancient state of Chu 楚. The editor of the manuscript, Pu Maozuo 濮茅左, reports that the bamboo strips of this manuscript were still encased in mud

from the tomb when they arrived at the museum;⁵ it is surprising that this context of the manuscript is never mentioned by Richter. He does provide a lengthy discussion of palaeographic features of the manuscript, including numerous figures with large-size illustrations of its calligraphy. He concludes this section by noting that the lone punctuation mark in the text, the hook-like mark that comes after the last character on strip 14, beneath which the rest of the strip is left blank, indicates that the manuscript constitutes a discrete text. He explores further the implications of this “extension” of the text in Parts Two and Three of the book.

If Part One constitutes a physiognomy of the manuscript, Part Two provides a comparison of the manuscript with the transmitted counterparts in the *Li ji* and in the *Kongzi jia yu*, and provides a strong argument for the independence—if not quite the priority—of the manuscript text. In the face of what Richter suggests is Chinese scholars’ common tendency to “homogenize” readings of excavated texts, by which he means striving to make them conform to the readings found in transmitted texts, whether counterparts or not, he proposes a series of ranked criteria for deciding disputed readings. These divide into “internal” and “external” criteria, the internal having strict priority over the external. First comes “manuscript orthography,” the way characters or even components of characters are written within a single text. Second, and very much secondary (indeed, it seems to be applied only in a negative way), is “logical coherence in the manuscript text.” This criterion is not well described by Richter, but presumably it would run the gamut from grammatical parallels to philosophical consistency. Only if these internal criteria fail to resolve a disputed reading would one then turn to the external criteria, of which Richter enumerates three: “orthography in closely related other manuscripts,” “textual parallels in other manuscripts or transmitted literature,” and “general usage in Classical Chinese language and script” (p. 70). He follows this theoretical introduction with the longest single chapter in the book: “Variants of Little Consequence for the Content of the Text” (pp. 73–98), in which he uses differences between *wang* 亡 and *wu* 無, *yu* 于 and *yu* 於, *zhi* 至 and *zhi* 致, *huang* 皇 and *heng* 橫, *er* 而 and *si* 斯, and *xi* 系 and *qing* 傾 to illustrate different sorts of variation in *Min zhi fumu* (the first character in the pairs above) versus the *Li ji* or *Kongzi jia yu* counterparts. In most cases it is easy to agree with him that these are variants of “little consequence,” though the difference between *huang* 皇 and *heng* 橫 may be important, as he himself suggests later in the book.

⁵ Ma Chengyuan 馬承源, ed., *Shanghai bowuguan cang Zhanguo Chu zhushu (er)* 上海博物館藏戰國楚竹書(二) (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2002), p. 151. If indeed the manuscript were completely encased in the mud of the tomb, it is hard to understand how the top halves of strips 9 and 10 came to be missing.

Whereas Parts One and Two of *The Embodied Text* are more or less descriptive (despite making certain strong statements about methodologies used in reading manuscripts), Part Three of the book uses evidence in *Min zhi fumu* to offer certain decidedly broad conclusions about the intellectual history of Warring States China. It seems to me that Richter pushes some of these conclusions further than the evidence might suggest. In the remainder of this review, I propose to take up just three or four such instances, each of which I hope will illustrate different sorts of methodological issues.

One of the variants mentioned in the listing of those of “little consequence” is between *huang* 皇 and *heng* 橫 in the phrases “*junzi yi ci huang yu tianxia*” 君子以此皇於天下 (translated by Richter variously as “it is by these that the gentleman attains supremacy in All Under Heaven” [p. 51] or “is resplendent in All Under Heaven” [p. 169]) in *Min zhi fumu* as opposed to “*junzi yi ci heng yu tianxia*” 君子以此橫於天下 (translated by Richter as “[it is by these that the gentleman] traverses All Under Heaven”) in the *Li ji* and *Kongzi jia yu* counterparts. Richter claims that this variant reflects a more limited view of rulership in the Warring States-period *Min zhi fumu* as opposed to the imperial ideology of the *Li ji* counterpart. He says:

The more idealistically conceived Five Presences (starting with intentions, leading to odes, from there to ritual, and via music/joy to grief) are now given this predicate of imperceptibility, and it is said that *qi* and intentions (presumably the ruler’s) “pervade Heaven and Earth” (*sai hu tian di* 塞乎天地). In keeping with this grandiose concept of an imperial ruler who aligns himself with the cosmos, the *Liji* converts the humbler and more factual statement in the manuscript version that the ruler “is resplendent in All Under Heaven” (*huang yu tianxia* 皇于天下, i.e., gains supremacy in the political realm), into a more abstract statement of cosmological dimensions: He “traverses All Under Heaven” (*heng yu tianxia* 橫於天下). The predominant homogenizing reading of the character *huang* 皇 as *heng* {橫} obscures this ideological development from the manuscript text to one that fits the political environment in the early empire. (p. 169)

It may well be that the *Min zhi fumu* manuscript derives from a time with a “humbler” concept of rulers than that seen in the *Li ji*, but I am doubtful that the mere variation between *huang* 皇 and *heng* 橫 can bear the weight of such a broad-reaching distinction. Indeed, I can imagine that some readers might well see more imperial trappings in the “resplendent” *huang* 皇 than in the pedestrian *heng* 橫.

Another broad-reaching argument that Richter makes throughout *The Embodied Text*, and particularly in the chapter entitled “The Evolving Role of the Odes in Ru Instruction” in Part Three is that *Min zhi fumu* suggests a different practice of quoting lines from the *Shi jing* or *Classic of Odes* from that seen in the *Li ji* or *Kongzi jia yu*

counterparts. As Richter notes, even though numerous lines from poems found in the *Odes* are quoted throughout *Min zhi fumu*, the word *shi* 詩 (odes) itself appears only twice in the text.⁶

As noted above, the text begins with Zi Xia asking Confucius a question about a line in the *Classic of Odes*:

詩曰幾俤君子民之父母

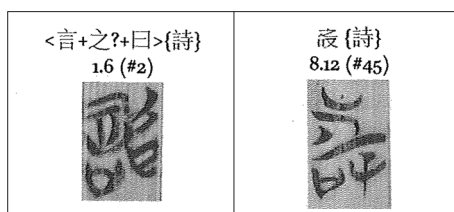
In the *Odes* it is said: “The joyous and easy gentleman is a parent to the people.”

The only other explicit use of the word comes at the end of the third exchange between Zi Xia and Confucius, at which point Confucius responds with the exclamation:

善哉商也將可教詩矣

How excellent Shang is! He is now ready to be taught odes. (pp. 51–52)

What is interesting about these uses of the word *shi* is that even though they both occur in the transmitted counterparts written unproblematically as *shi* 詩, and even though there is very little doubt that *shi* 詩 is also the correct transcription in both of these cases, nevertheless the character is written differently in the two places: its first occurrence includes the three components 言+之+曰, though the 之 component is written differently than usual within the manuscript; the second occurrence also includes three components, 之+口+又, with the 之, the only component the two characters seem to share in common, written as usual in the manuscript.



⁶ In the transmitted counterparts of *Min zhi fumu*, the word *shi* 詩 appears two further times. However, in both of these places, the manuscript clearly writes the corresponding word as *zhi* 志 (intention). It is a staple of traditional Chinese literary criticism that “odes gives voice to the intentions” (*shi yan zhi* 詩言志), and it was also widely believed that there is an integral relationship between the two words *shi* 詩 and *zhi* 志 such that a traditional editor would have felt justified in reading *zhi* 志 as *shi* 詩 (odes) (after all, the *zhi* 之 phonoporic component is integral to both words). Nevertheless, Richter is surely correct in reading the manuscript as he does; not only is the character as written without question *zhi* 志 (intention), but it is also clearly differentiated from other characters in the same manuscript that just as surely write the word *shi* 詩 (ode). Richter notes (p. 113) that even though Pu Maozuo transcribed the first of these characters as *shi*, there is now a consensus that it should be read instead as *zhi* 志 (intention).

Both of these combinations of components are attested elsewhere in Warring States manuscripts as forms of the character *shi* 詩. However, Richter argues that within a single manuscript this calligraphic difference must be meaningful. He suggests that in one case (the first case) it refers to the *Odes* “as the title of a compilation,” while in the second case it refers to “the generic sense of the word ode” (p. 119). He goes on to note that “From the perspective of the modern Chinese orthography that we are accustomed to, such a distinction may seem a fanciful speculation. Yet, for the purpose of reading ancient manuscripts, we must remind ourselves that not only the use of language changes but the ways that language is written change as well.” Actually, very few experienced readers of Warring States manuscripts need to be reminded that “the ways that language is written change as well,” though it is true that no one else has offered an explanation such as this for why these two characters should have been written differently. Richter dismisses the possibilities of aesthetic variation or scribal whim, noting that the manuscript’s copyist was careful throughout to write characters and even individual components in the same manner.⁷ He may indeed be right that the two differently written characters were meant to refer differently to “odes,” but it is not at all clear to me why one and not the other should be understood as either “*Odes*” or as “odes,” not to mention how such a distinction might affect the force of quotations of the *Odes*.

Richter sees in *Min zhi fumu* evidence for still more far-reaching implications concerning the role of the *Classic of Odes* in Confucian teaching. He concludes his discussion of this graphic variant by saying that “The narrative in both the manuscript and the transmitted version certainly does not imply that Confucius has recourse to a written record of the *Odes* when he instructs Zixia. He would surely quote the few lines from memory” (p. 124). Moreover, as mentioned above, one of his chapters is entitled “The Evolving Role of the *Odes* in Ru Instruction” (Chapter 11, pp. 134–46). He begins this chapter by saying that until Confucius’s exclamation that Zi Xia “is now ready to be taught odes” “the *Odes* have played no role whatever in the text. The mere fact that the topic of the discussion, the ideal of the Parent of the People, was mentioned by Zixia in the form of an *Odes* quotation does not make the *Odes* the topic” (p. 134).


Richter’s view of the form in which the *Odes* may have been available to Confucius and Zi Xia, at least as portrayed in *Min zhi fumu*, is anticipated in an earlier discussion of yet another set of variants, this one including also a character in the received text of the *Odes*. Just after Confucius’s exclamation that Zi Xia “is now ready to be taught odes,” he quotes from three different *Odes* to illustrate the Three Without.

⁷ He does not seem to consider the possibility that the scribe’s source text or texts may have written the characters differently, and that the scribe carefully preserved these differences in his own copy.

The second of these is fragmentary because of the missing top half of strip 9, but the missing passage can be restored based on the internal logic of the text and the transmitted counterparts (the interpolated characters are set inside square brackets).

威儀遲遲〔不可選也亡體之禮〕

“My dignified demeanor has always been steady, [nothing can be held against me.]—Rites without embodiment].

The manuscript's character for *chi chi* 遲遲 is . The two short horizontal strokes at the bottom of this character are, as is well known, a ligature mark indicating that the character is to be read twice. As for the two long horizontal strokes above the ligature mark, Richter demonstrates conclusively that they represent a mere simplification or abbreviation of the otherwise complicated component 𠂔 we would expect to find under the 尸 (pp. 104–6). This explanation is a true *tour de force*, and shows Richter at his best. However, I find his treatment of the quotation less satisfying. The quotation corresponds with the *Ode* “Bo zhou” 柏舟 of the *Airs of Bei* 邶風 section (Mao 26), where the first line reads *Wei yi di di* 威儀棣棣. 棣 conventionally stands for the word *di* (cherry-tree), but its binominal form here is explained by the Mao Commentary 毛傳 as *fu er xian xi* 富而閑習, translated by Richter as “lavish and elegant”; the context requires that it mean something like this, even if it is not clear why it should be written this way. In both the *Li ji* and *Kongzi jia yu* counterparts of *Min zhi fumu*, the line is quoted with the allograph *dai* 逮: i.e., 威儀逮逮. It is perhaps easier to imagine how a reduplicated *dai* 逮, which means “to catch” or “to reach,” might better modify “dignified demeanor” (i.e., *wei yi* 威儀) than does *di di* 棣棣, but it is still perplexing. Richter provides the explanation: the correct reading is clearly *Wei yi chi chi* 威儀遲遲 as given in the *Min zhi fumu* manuscript, the reduplicated *chi* 遲 (slow, leisurely) making good sense in the context. As he also notes “the characters 逮 and ultimately also 棣 originate in a graphic error, i.e., a confusion of the graphs 犀 and 隶” (p. 107). I think he is quite right about this, and with this he has resolved a long-standing puzzle in the reading of the *Classic of Odes*. However, when he then goes on to say that this example of a graphic error “confirms Martin Kern’s view that oral transmission must have played an important role in the transmission of the *Odes*” (p. 107) and “Graphic variants resulting from copying errors can reflect a predominantly oral transmission as well” (p. 108), I find myself baffled. This is not the place to take up the question of oral versus scribal transmission of the *Odes*, a major issue in Western *Odes* hermeneutics that has engendered unfortunate polemics on both sides of the debate. But surely a graphic error such as this is evidence of a process of visual copying from one manuscript to another.

Before concluding this review, there is one final topic concerning the embodied text of *Min zhi fumu* on which I would like to comment, a topic in which I have been

interested for some time: the question of misplaced bamboo strips (*cuo jian* 錯簡). It is a topic for which others have found good evidence in the case of *Min zhi fumu* and its transmitted counterparts. It is also a topic with more general implications for the role bamboo-strip manuscripts played in the transmission of China's literary heritage.

In the manuscript, Confucius concludes his presentation of the Five Presences with the statement (found at the bottom of strip 4 and top of strip 5):

哀樂相生君子以正此之謂五至

Grief and joy generate each other. The gentleman takes them as a corrective. This is what one calls the Five Presences. (p. 50)

Two strips later Confucius concludes his presentation of the Three Without with a somewhat longer statement:

君子以此皇于天下系耳而聽之不可得而聞也明目而視之不可得而見也而德既塞於四海矣此之謂三亡

It is by these that the gentleman attains supremacy in All Under Heaven. One may listen and watch ever so attentively, they are beyond the reach and ken of even the keenest ear and the sharpest eye. Yet, their virtue has pervaded all within the Four Seas. This is what one calls the Three Without. (p. 51)

However, the *Li ji* counterpart merges these two passages into one single passage (for the sake of consistency, I will attempt to replicate Richter's translation from *Min zhi fumu*):

哀樂相生是故正明目而視之不可得而見也傾耳而聽之不可得而聞也志氣塞乎天地此之謂五至

Grief and joy generate each other. This is why correctly watching and listening ever so attentively, they are beyond the reach and ken of even the sharpest eye and the keenest ear. Intention and vapour have pervaded all within Heaven and Earth. This is what one calls the Five Presences.

The *Kongzi jia yu* counterpart similarly merges the two passages, but slightly differently:

詩禮相成哀樂相生是以正明目而視之不可得而見傾耳而聽之不可得而聞志氣塞于天地行之充于四海此之謂五至矣

The *Odes* and ritual complete each other; grief and joy generate each other. This is how correctly watching and listening ever so attentively, they are beyond the reach and ken of even the sharpest eye and the keenest ear. Intention and vapour have pervaded all within Heaven and Earth and setting them in motion has filled the Four Seas. This is what one calls the Five Presences indeed.

Conversely, in both the *Li ji* and *Kongzi jia yu* counterparts, Confucius concludes his enumeration of the Three Without with the simple statement “This is what is called the Three Without” (*ci zhi wei san wu* 此之謂三無).

Richter notes that “the most popular argument used to explain the transposition of [this] passage of text is still that of a misplaced bamboo slip (*cuo jian* 錯簡)” (p. 97). Indeed, since this explanation was first proposed by Chen Jian 陳劍 in 2004, it has been routinely cited as an example of this phenomenon.⁸ As Richter himself notes at the beginning of his discussion of the passage, “The sequence in the manuscript text appears far more logical.” The passage includes about thirty characters, a number that might well be written on a single bamboo strip.⁹ Moreover, Chen Jian has shown how the differences in wording in the phrases *de ji sai yu si hai* 德既塞於四海 (their virtue has pervaded all within the Four Seas) and *zhi qi sai yu tian di* 志氣塞于天地 (Intention and vapour have pervaded all within Heaven and Earth) (or especially as the passage is found in the *Kongzi jia yu* version *zhi qi sai yu tian di xing zhi chong yu si hai* 志氣塞于天地行之充于四海 [Intention and vapour have pervaded all within Heaven and Earth and setting them in motion has filled the Four Seas]) could have come about as a result of graphic similarity between the Warring States forms of *de* 德 (𠄎) and *zhi* 志 (志), on the one hand, and *ji* 既 and *qi* 炁 (i.e., 氣), on the other. Chen has also pointed out that in the context of *Min zhi fumu*’s Three Without—“music without sound,” “rites without embodiment,” and “mourning without garb”—

⁸ Chen Jian, “Shangbo jian *Min zhi fumu* ‘er de ji sai yu si hai yi’ ju jieshi” 上博簡《民之父母》「而德既塞於四海矣」句解釋, in Shanghai daxue Gudai wenming yanjiu zhongxin 上海大學古代文明研究中心 and Qinghua daxue Sixiang wenhua yanjiusuo 清華大學思想文化研究所, eds., *Shangbo guan cang Zhanguo Chu zhushu yanjiu xubian* 上博館藏戰國楚竹書研究續編 (Shanghai: Shanghai shudian chubanshe, 2004), p. 253. Richter notes that Xu Shaohua 徐少華 has accepted Chen Jian’s explanation: Xu Shaohua, “Zhushu *Min zhi fumu* de wenben bijiao ji xiangguan wenti fenxi” 竹書《民之父母》的文本比較及相關問題分析, in Ye Guoliang 葉國良, Zheng Jixiong 鄭吉雄, and Xu Fuchang 徐福昌, eds., *Chutu wenxian yanjiu fangfa lunwenji chubian* 出土文獻研究方法論文集初編 (Taipei: Guoli Taiwan daxue chuban zhongxin, 2005), p. 299. For my own acceptance of Chen Jian’s suggestion, see Edward L. Shaughnessy, *Rewriting Early Chinese Texts* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2006), pp. 45–49.

⁹ The Shanghai Museum manuscript of *Min zhi fumu* has between thirty-one and thirty-five characters per full strip, but of course it could not be the source text for either the *Li ji* or *Kongzi jia yu* counterparts since by the time they were edited it had long since been interred in some tomb. However, whether the *Li ji* text derives from the *Kongzi jia yu* text or the *Kongzi jia yu* text derives from the *Li ji* text or, as is more likely, both derive from some third (or fourth) text, the redaction of this passage would surely have made use of a bamboo-strip original.

it makes perfect sense that the phrase about listening should come before that about seeing. However, when the passage follows the Five Presences, seeing takes precedence over listening, as it also does in most other early Chinese linguistic contexts.

It is surprising that in a study entitled *The Embodied Text*, especially one that focuses on variants between unearthed manuscripts and transmitted counterparts, Richter should dismiss this evidence of the role bamboo-strip texts may have played in the editing of those transmitted counterparts.

Chen Jian's opinion that the position of the passage in the manuscript is "obviously" more logical and that its different position in the transmitted texts must "have been caused by a misplaced slip," if stated without a more detailed explanation, is absurd, since the two sentences about eyes and ears are reversed, too. Xu Shaohua assumes a misplaced slip as well, but he also assumes later emendations. The general assumption is always that changes to the text are caused accidentally and amount to damage of the text, which later redactions aimed to repair. The general fluidity of text in early China and the possibility—or rather certainty—that the texts were changed intentionally is disregarded regularly in the text-critical decisions of most scholars. (pp. 97–98)

As I have noted above, Chen Jian's opinion was indeed stated with "a more detailed explanation," including an explanation for why the two sentences about eyes and ears might have been reversed. Moreover, Xu Shaohua is not the only scholar to assume "later emendations." In my own study of misplaced strips in a different Shanghai Museum manuscript and a different chapter in the *Li ji*—the *Zi yi* 緇衣 (Black Jacket), I sought to demonstrate that while variants sometimes came about by accident, sometimes it is possible to show how and even why the editor or editors may have made emendations, even "intentionally." I concluded that case study by drawing certain general lessons about textual transmission in ancient China.

I would suggest that there are several lessons to be drawn from this comparison between the Guodian and Shanghai Museum manuscripts versions and the *Li ji* version of the *Zi yi*. First, texts seem to have been simultaneously stable and fluid. By stable, I mean that the general structure and even much of the wording of the *Zi yi* seems not to have undergone significant change from 300 BC until it achieved its final definitive form at the beginning of the Tang dynasty, almost a thousand years later. By fluid, I mean that in the process of copying and recopying that constituted textual transmission (and here I would note in passing that the production of all three of these versions of the *Zi yi*—the Guodian and Shanghai Museum manuscripts just as much as the *Li ji* version—shows that the transmission of at least this one text was one of copying from one written version to another), changes inevitably entered

into different versions of the text. Many of these changes were unconscious, though some were certainly conscious. . . . As more and more manuscripts from early China—and especially from the Warring States period—have become available, it has become more and more clear that while there was a great deal of writing going on, orthographic conventions were anything but standardized. . . . It is no wonder that the Han scholars who, centuries later, were charged with bringing order to these texts, which in many cases they must have found in even greater disorder than I have posited above for the case of the *Zi yi*, would have had no other recourse than simply to use their best judgment in producing fair copies of the texts. The challenges before them were far greater and far more complicated than those facing later editors of texts written in standard Chinese characters. Far more than editors, they were, in effect, the first commentators on the texts, with the critical difference that their interpretations were necessarily and almost inextricably incorporated into the text itself.¹⁰

If, as literary critics tell us, authorial intent is just about impossible to discern and perhaps irrelevant in any event, then this must be even more true of editorial intent, particularly when we cannot even be sure who the editor or editors may have been. Nevertheless, when changes have occurred in the structure of ancient texts—one is tempted to appropriate the “embodied text” of Richter’s title to speak of their physique to describe this as, for instance, an eye being stuck on the side of the head where the ear is usually found—textual critics in China have long recognized that the mis-ordering of bamboo strips, for the period when texts were still written on bamboo strips, was often the cause of such changes. After all, the word *bian* 編 (to edit) is defined in the *Shuo wen jie zi* 說文解字 as “to put bamboo strips in sequence” (*bian, ci jian ye* 編，次簡也).¹¹

¹⁰ Shaughnessy, *Rewriting Early Chinese Texts*, pp. 92–93.

¹¹ Richter’s note to the sentence “Chen Jian’s opinion . . . is absurd” (admittedly, as I quoted above, what I give here as an ellipsis includes the qualification “if stated without a more detailed explanation”) is surprisingly equivocal. He begins by saying that the Chinese term *cuo jian* 錯簡 is “sometimes used broadly,” support for which he cites Susan Cherniack, “Book Culture and Textual Transmission in Sung China,” *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 54, no. 1 (June 1994), pp. 119–20, which, as its title specifies, is a study of editing practices in the Song dynasty, almost a thousand years after bamboo strips ceased to be the primary medium for book production. He then states: “This caveat is not to suggest, however, that it is advisable to use the expression *cuo jian* as broadly in the study of early manuscripts, where the word *jian* (a wood or bamboo slip bearing one column of characters) is meaningful as a codicological

(Continued on next page)

Conclusion

The main portion of this review has been concerned with three or four problems that I perceive in Matthias Richter's *The Embodied Text*. I would hate for these perceived problems to give the impression that I think this book is anything other than a superb work of scholarship. Indeed, as I said at the outset, in its care for the presentation of the manuscript itself, Richter's study of *Min zhi fumu* will surely serve as a model for future studies of the many individual manuscripts of ancient China that have been unearthed in recent years. If I have dwelled on perceived problems in his broader discussion of the manuscript's intellectual context—problems that I freely admit have long been preoccupations of my own and concerning which I have a particular viewpoint that is by no means shared by all in the field—rather than the book's manifold excellences, it is because I think these are basic methodological issues that are open to further discussion. Since Richter will surely continue to be among the leaders of this still new field, I hope my raising them here will encourage him to bring his care and erudition to their resolution in further such studies.

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Philosophy on Bamboo: Text and the Production of Meaning in Early China. By Dirk Meyer. Studies in the History of Chinese Texts, no. 2. Leiden: Brill, 2012. Pp. x + 395. €137.00/\$182.00.

The title *Philosophy on Bamboo* might lead one to think this book is about reading and interpreting Chinese philosophy as contained in ancient bamboo texts. In fact, the focus of discussion is rather “philosophising” and the production of meaning in ancient Chinese texts. In this volume, Dirk Meyer lays out a “structural” analysis of texts chosen from the Guodian 郭店 corpus, a cache of bamboo manuscripts disinterred in 1993 in Hubei province, China. With the aim of exploring the relationship between manuscript culture and meaning creation, Meyer examines how the authors of these Warring States (c. 481–221 B.C.) discourses structured their philosophical arguments.

(Note 11—*Continued*)

unit and should therefore be reserved for terminological use.” In fact, in studies of early manuscripts, the term *cuo jian* is indeed reserved for this use, and it was with this meaning that Chen Jian used it.