
Drought, Omens and the Body Politic: Debates between Rulers and Ministers in the Shanghai Museum Manuscript “Jian da wang po han”

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Established notions on the relationship between rulers and ministers, and between ritual and politics, are being redefined by the study of recently excavated bamboo manuscripts.

The present paper discusses and provides the first western annotated translation of “Jian da wang po han” 簡大王迫旱 (King Jian dispels the drought), a fourth century B.C. bamboo manuscript from Chu staging a debate between ruler and minister over the cause of a drought afflicting the kingdom and the best way to deal with it. The drought is interpreted as punishment, but opinions differ over the nature of its cause: a ritual, moral or administrative failure of the king.

The paper investigates as well prevalent opinions over the relationship between the king and his kingdom in terms of the metaphor equating the kingdom and its people with the king’s own body, and how the sacrificial exposure of the king’s body to the scorching sun might heal the suffering the drought brings upon the kingdom.

The debate over the mode and meaning of such sacrifice is connected with different views about the nature of the kingdom, its proper organization, the crises facing it and the role of previous traditions, both in Chu and in the wider Warring States intellectual history.

Keywords: Chu bamboo manuscripts, drought, divination, sacrifice, rulers and ministers in the Warring States

States too have their stagnations [as human bodies and water]. When the ruler's virtue does not flow freely [i.e. when he is out of touch with his subjects] and the wishes of his people do not reach him, this is the stagnation of a state. When the stagnation of a state abides by a long time, a hundred pathologies arise in concert, and a myriad catastrophes swarm in. The cruelty of those above and those below toward each other arises from this. The reason that the sage kings valued heroic retainers and faithful ministers was that they dared to speak directly, breaking through such stagnations. (*Lüshi chunqiu* 呂氏春秋, 3rd century B.C.)¹

Yet ther ys a nother disease [of the body politic] remenyng behind, wych gretely trowblyth the state of the hole body, the wych — though I somewhat stond in dowte whether I may wel cal hyt a dysease of the body or no — yet by cause (as physycyonys say) the body and mynd are so knyt togyddur by nature that al sykenes and dysease be commyn to them both, I wyl not now stond to reson much herin, but boldly cal hyt a bodyly disease; and, brevely to say, thys hyt ys: — they partys of thys body agre not togyddur; the hed agreth not to the fete, not fete to the handys; no one parte agreth to other; the temporalty grugyth agayn the spyrytualty, the commyns agayne the nobullys and subyectys agayn they rularys; one hath enuy at a nother, one beryth malice agayn a nother, one complaynyth of a nother. The partys of thys body be not knyt togyddur, as hyt were wyth sp[i]ryt and life, in concord and unite, but dysseveryd asoundur, as they were in no case partys of one body.

1 國亦有鬱。主德不通，民欲不達，此國之鬱也。國鬱處久，則百惡並起，而萬災叢至矣。上下之相忍也，由此出矣。故聖王之貴豪士與忠臣也，為其敢直言而決鬱塞也。In Guan Xianzhu 關賢柱, Liao Jinbi 廖進碧, and Zhong Xueli 鍾雪麗, eds., *Lüshi chunqiu quanyi* 呂氏春秋全譯 (Guiyang: Guizhou renmin chubanshe, 1997), 20.767. Translation by Nathan Sivin, in Geoffrey Lloyd and Nathan Sivin, *The Way and the Word: Science and Medicine in Early Greece and China* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), 224.

(Thomas Starkey, *A Dialogue between Reginald Pole and Thomas Lupset*, 1535–36.)²

Any culture is a series of related structures which comprise social forms, values, cosmology, the whole of knowledge and through which all experience is mediated. Certain cultural themes are expressed by rites of bodily manipulation. [...] These rituals enact the form of social relations and in giving these relations visible expression they enable people to know their own society. The rituals work upon the body politic through the symbolic medium of the physical body. (Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger*, 1966.)³

1. Introduction

As shown by the three introductory quotes from 3rd century B.C. China, Elizabethan England, and modern anthropology, the theme of body politics, specifically the enactment of rituals connecting the health of the king's body to the wellbeing of the whole society, is geographically and diachronically pervasive. And just as a person needs a good physician to keep healthy and to recover health in times of crisis, the king needs advisors and ritual experts.

2 “There is another disease [of the body politic] left to discuss, which greatly troubles the state of the whole body which — though I somewhat stand in doubt whether I may well call it a disease of the body or not — yet because (as physicians say) the body and mind are so tied together by nature that all sickness and disease be common to both, I will not hesitate to boldly call a bodily disease and to say briefly that it consists of this, that the parts of the body do not agree together, the head does not agree with the feet, and the feet with the hands. Not a single part agrees with the other, what is temporal grudges against what is spiritual, the common people against the nobles and the subjects against the rulers, envying each other, bearing malice against each other, complaining against each other. The parts of the body are not tied together, as it were, with spirit and life, in concord and unity, but severed from each other, as if they were by no means parts of one body.” See Thomas Starkey, Sidney J. H. Heritage and J. Meadows Cowper, *England in the Reign of King Henry the Eighth* (London: N. Trübner for the Early English Text Society, 1878), 82 (available at <https://archive.org/stream/englandinreignk00cowpgoog#page/n272/mode/2up>); see also Andrei Salavastu, “Disease of the Body, Disease of the State: A Metaphor of Political Discourse in XVIth Century England (Thomas Starkey),” *Argumentum: Journal of the Seminar of Discursive Logic* 10.1 (2012): 32.

3 Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger* (1966; rpt. London: Routledge, 2001), 129.

The bamboo manuscript object of this study, conventionally titled “Jian da wang po han” 簡大王迫旱 (King Jian dispels the drought), can be dated between 350 to 300 B.C. and ascribed to the former state of Chu, and reflects the conditions of the late Warring States, when a professional class of political advisors was articulating policies and writing texts often directly at odds with the previous enactments of social relations by a class of ritual experts that, especially in the southern kingdom of Chu, was connected with shamanism.

Late Warring States Chu, culturally at the periphery of traditional Chinese Culture, based in the Northern Plains, is now at the center of scholarly research due to the discovery of an increasing large number of manuscripts, mainly on bamboo strips, that provide us with new sources for the study of politics, religion, and intellectual history in general.

The special features of Chu religion are elusive to grasp, due to the sparse and biased coverage of Chu in transmitted sources and the relative lack of contemporary manuscript sources for other parts of China, but from the point of view of this study it is sufficient to note that Chu had a special emphasis on shamanism and spirit possession, on spatial orientation and directionality in religious rituals, that depicted gods and monstrous beings related to directions and special localities.⁴

These features of Chu religion are discussed and challenged in the present manuscript, where a debate is staged between the ruler and his advisors, and between the advisors themselves, over the cause of a drought afflicting the kingdom and the best way to deal with it. What is presented as the best way is an emphasis on the responsibility of the king in providing for his subjects’ livelihood and a decreased role for omens, divinatory practices and sacrifices. Such practices are not merely dismissed, though, but redefined in terms of “proper” rituals and sacrifices.

The structure of the text can be briefly summarized as follows.

King Jian of Chu (r. 431–407 B.C.) is portrayed as being attacked on two fronts: in his country, by the drought, and in his body, by sickness. He needs to expiate his sin towards his country by exposing himself to the sun, and to cure his sickness by neutralizing the demonic curse issuing from the

4 See John Major, “Characteristics of Late Chu Religion,” in *Defining Chu: Image and Reality in Ancient China*, eds. Constance A. Cook and John S. Major (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2004), 121–43.

spirits of the mountains and rivers. In the first part of the text his personal concern with the curse on his health leads him to sacrifice to entities that are not assimilated into the spiritual hierarchy of Chu, which threatens to unravel the ritual regulations presiding over the sacred landscape of his kingdom. In the second part, the king having been convinced that the gods and spirits of Chu could protect him against the demonic curse, the demon cursing the king is identified as the “mother of drought,” whose dream appearance is interpreted according to the moralizing paradigm of Confucian advisers, as a way to punish the king for his failure in the government of the country. The king can then resume his self-punishing exposure to the sun, which includes his entourage and is supplemented by the repair of the capital’s suburbs.

The text consists of 23 bamboo strips and 601 characters. The strips are not numbered or otherwise sequenced;⁵ most scholars believe the text to have just one lacuna,⁶ but opinions differ about the correct sequence. I will follow here the sequence proposed by Ji Xusheng.⁷ The first important contributions, especially by Chen Sipeng, Chen Wei and Zhou Fengwu, have laid the philological foundations for our understanding of the text, and have been conveniently summarized and systematized by Ji Xusheng, whose transcription is here followed unless otherwise stated.

The manuscript has been studied extensively for the light it sheds on Chu

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- 5 In some other Chu bamboo manuscripts the sequence of the bamboo strips is made clear by marks on the back of the strips, as for example a long diagonal line in the manuscript *Bu shu*. See Li Ling 李零, “Bu shu” 卜書 (Text on divination), in Ma Chengyuan 馬承源, ed., *Shanghai Bowuguan zang zhanguo Chu zhushu*, vol.9 上海博物館藏戰國楚竹書 (九) (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2012), 290–302.
- 6 Between strip 17 and 9 (throughout this paper, as customary in the field, the strip number follows the order given by the original editor). Lai Guolong 來國龍 believes the breaks to be much more numerous, such as between strips 2 and 8, and strips 7 and 19; see Lai Guolong, “Jian dawang bo han’ de xushi jiegou yu zongjiao beijing (jian shi ‘sha ji’)” 東大王泊旱的事結構與宗教背景——兼釋「殺祭」, http://www.bsm.org.cn/show_article.php?id=1716 (posted on 6 July 2012, accessed on 9 Dec. 2014).
- 7 The strip order is the following: 1+2+8+3+4+5+7+19+20+21+6+22+23+18+17, 9+10+11+12+14+13+15+16. For alternative opinions see Ji Xusheng 季旭昇, “Jian dawang bo han’ yishi” 東大王泊旱 譯釋, in “*Shanghai bowuguan cang Zhanguo Chu zhushu (si)*” *duben* 《上海博物館藏戰國楚竹書 (四)》讀本 (Taipei: Wanjuanlou tushu, 2007), 74.

religious practices,⁸ as well as on the healing of rulers.⁹

Building on previous studies, I will explore the relationship of the text with two other Shanghai Manuscript texts (“Lubang dahan” 魯邦大旱 [The great drought in the state of Lu] and “Jing Gong nüe” 景公癩 [Lord Jing’s protracted illness]) and a few strictly related transmitted texts from the *Yanzi chunqiu* 晏子春秋, analyzing their similarities and differences on the issues of drought (2) as well as sickness and demonic dreams (3). I will then present a translation of the text with a running commentary¹⁰ (4) and a brief conclusion (5).

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- 8 See Asano Yūichi 淺野裕一, “Shangbo Chu jian ‘Jian da wang bo han’ zhi zaiyi sixiang” 上博楚簡 柬大王泊旱 之災異思想, http://www.gwz.fudan.edu.cn/SrcShow.asp?Src_ID=904 (posted on 13 Sep. 2009, accessed on 10 Dec. 2014); Marc Kalinowski, “Diviners and Astrologers under the Eastern Zhou (770–256 BC): Transmitted Texts and Recent Archaeological Discoveries,” in *Early Chinese Religion, Part One: Shang through Han*, eds. John Lagerwey and Marc Kalinowski (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 392–93; Wang Zhun 王准, “Shangbo si ‘Jian dawang bo han’ zhong de qiyu wushu ji xiangguang wenti” 上博四 柬大王泊旱 中的祈雨巫術及相關問題, *Jiang Han luntan* 江漢論壇 2008.5 (available also at <http://rcc.whu.edu.cn/a/cxwk/sbj/2011/0820/332.html> posted on 1 June 2011, accessed on 10 Dec. 2014). Shen Pei 沈培 and Chen Wei 陳偉 have discussed a specific textual problem related to divination, the term *bi* present in this as well as in other divinatory texts, and respectively explained as *bi* 蔽 and *bi* 比; see Shen Pei, “Cong zhanguo jian kan guren zhanbu de ‘bi zhi’ jian lun ‘yi sui’ shuo” 從戰國簡看古人占卜的「蔽志」——兼論「移崇」說, http://www.gwz.fudan.edu.cn/SrcShow.asp?Src_ID=212 (posted on 16 Dec. 2007, accessed on 10 Dec. 2014) and Chen Wei, “Chu jian ‘bi’ zi shi shuo” 楚簡「秘」字試說, *Chutu wenxian yanjiu* 2012.11: 32–39 (available also at: http://www.bsm.org.cn/show_article.php?id=1568). Lai Guolong has provided a cross-cultural comparison with ancient Roman expiatory practices, investigated the genre affiliation and the structure of the text and discussed a key textual issue related to sacrificial practice. Lai Guolong, “Shuo ‘sha-san’ — jian tan guwenzi shidu zhong de tongjiazhi wenti” 說「殺」「散」——兼談古文字釋讀中的通假字問題, *Jianbo* 簡帛 2009.4:315–31; id., “Diguo yu zongjiao: Gudai Zhongguo yu Gu Luoma diguo de bijiao yanjiu” 帝國與宗教：古代中國與古羅馬帝國的比較研究, in *Gu Luoma he Qin Han Zhongguo* 古羅馬和秦漢中國 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2011); id., “‘Jian dawang bo han’ de xushi jiegou yu zongjiao beijing (jian shi ‘shaji’)”.
- 9 Jeffrey Riegel, “Curing the Incurable,” *Early China* 35–36 (2013): 225–46.
- 10 This is the first complete published translation in a Western language (Lai Guolong generously shared with me a draft English translation he used for his talks on the text).

2. Drought

Drought was understood as a crisis of the normal ritual interaction between the king and the spirits bringing rain. Offering sacrifices to mountains and rivers was a commonly accepted practice, part of the responsibility of the king, as it was believed that mountain and river spirits presided over the natural resources of the territory and that control over them was necessary to ensure the territory's prosperity,¹¹ first of all its agricultural prosperity.

This can be seen in the following passage from the Gongyang commentary on the *Annals*: "To those mountains and rivers that possess the ability to spread moisture over a hundred *li*, the son of heaven gives a rank and sacrifices to them. Rain [?] strikes against the rocks and emerges, enclosing every inch of space. Only Tai Mountain can spread rain all over the world before the morning is even finished. The Yellow River and the ocean can spread their moisture over a thousand *li*."¹²

The traditional approach to drought is therefore to address sacrifices to the spirits presiding over mountains and rivers to redress the balance that a ritual transgression or a sin has unsettled. The approach advocated by the new class of political advisors interprets the crisis is a naturalistic and political way, as a subsistence crisis provoked by the king's lack of oversee. There is therefore need for reform and repentance, but no room for sacrifices and a very limited one for rituals addressed to the spirits.

This can be seen in a text in the Shanghai Museum Collection, "Lubang dahan", where Confucius, being asked by the Duke of Lu about how to deal with a drought, says that: "You should not begrudge offerings of jade and silk towards the mountains and rivers, [but at the same time you should]

11 Vera Dorofeeva-Lichtmann, "Ritual Practices for Constructing Terrestrial Space (Warring States–Early Han)," in *Early Chinese Religion, Part One: Shang through Han*, 1: 636–43.

12 山川有能潤于百里者，天子秩而祭之。觸石而出，膚寸而合，不崇朝而雨乎天下者，唯泰山爾。河海潤于千里 (*Gongyang zhuan*, Xi 31), in Mei Tongsheng 梅桐生, ed., *Chunqiu Gongyang zhuan quanyi* 春秋公羊傳全譯 (Guiyang: Guizhou renmin chubanshe, 1998), 216–17, translation from Brashier, K. E. "The Spirit Lord of Baishi Mountain: Feeding the Deities or Heeding the Yinyang," *Early China* 26–27 (2001–2002): 185–86.

correct punishments [and virtue].”¹³ This conciliatory standing (sacrifices are necessary, as is the ruler’s moral reform) is criticized by his disciple, who thinks sacrifices to be completely useless: “is it not perhaps (the case) that you, sir, over-emphasize the decree (of heaven) [therefore advocating sacrifices to the mountains and rivers to placate Heaven’s wrath]? If you correct punishments and virtue to serve Heaven above, this is right. [But] that one should not begrudge offerings of jade and silk towards the mountains and rivers, is not such a thing improper [=are not these offerings useless]?”¹⁴ In fact, if the mountains and rivers do have powers to bring rain, it would be in their own interest to do so: “As for the mountains, the stones serve as their skin, the trees serve as their population, if heaven does not send down rain, the stones will get scorched and the trees will die, their desire for rain is more intense than ours, how could it still be necessary to wait for our invocations? As for the rivers, the water serve as their skin, the fish serve as their population, if Heaven does not send down rain the water will dry up, the fish will die, how could it still be necessary to wait for our invocations?”¹⁵

Here we see a correlation established between the skin (the surface of the body of the mountains and the rivers, which represent the vital resources of the territory) and the people (the ones that rely on these resources).

The same metaphor is employed in a related piece from the *Yanzi chunqiu*, a text that contains a large amount of material from the Warring States period

13 汝毋愛珪璧幣帛於山川，正刑與〔德〕 (strip 2), from Ma Chengyuan, ed., *Shanghai bowuguan cang Zhanguo Chu zhushu*, vol.2 上海博物館藏戰國楚竹書（二）(Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2004), 201–10. For all texts from the Shanghai Museum Collection, both the transcription and the translation are mine; they are in the process of being uploaded in the *Thesaurus Linguae Sericae* database <http://tls.uni-hd.de/> (the transcription is generally based, for the texts included in volumes 1–4, on the one given by Ji Xusheng in his reader *Shanghai bowuguan cang Zhanguo Chu zhushu duben*, vols. 1–4).

14 吾子若重命其歟？若夫正刑與德，以事上天，此是哉。若夫毋愛珪璧 (3) 幣帛於山川，毋乃不可 (ib. strips 3–4). Here and throughout the article, a number between parenthesis shows the end of a bamboo strip.

15 夫山，石以為膚，木以為民，如天不雨，石將焦，木將死，其欲雨有甚於我，又必待吾命乎？夫川，水以為膚，魚以 (4) 為民，如天不雨，水將涸，魚將死，其欲雨有甚於我，又必待吾命乎？ (ib. strips 4–5).

and which espouses a strong role for ministerial advice and strongly anti-sacrificial slant.¹⁶

In the *Yanzi chungiu* story Duke Jing of Qi faces a drought and is told by diviners that it is due to the “curse of the high mountains and wide rivers” (崇在高山廣水).¹⁷ When Duke Jing proposes to sacrifice to the “numinous mountain” (靈山), Yanzi tells him that the mountain looks at the stones as its body and at the grass as its hairs, and so it would do its utmost to protect it anyway. When the Duke proposes to sacrifice to the Lord of the River (河伯), Yanzi tells him that the Lord of the River treats the water as his state, and the fish as his people, so he would do its utmost to get rain anyway. The only thing that the duke can do is “to show his sincerity by departing from the palace, exposing his body to the sun, and suffering together with the numinous mountain and the lord of the river, and hope for rain” 君誠避宮殿暴露，與靈山河伯共憂，其幸而雨乎。 In other words, skin, body, state and people are connected, and the suffering self-inflicted on the ruler’s body (and specifically on his skin, exposed to the sun) can work as a protection for the state. While there is a sacrificial element in the ruler exposing himself to the sun in

16 For some background on Yanzi and the new light on the book thrown by recent manuscript discoveries, see Scott Cook’s recent study “The Changing Role of the Minister in the Warring States: Evidence from the *Yanzi Chunqiu* 晏子春秋,” in *Ideology of Power and Power of Ideology in Early China*, eds. Yuri Pines, Paul R. Goldin and Martin Kern (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 181–210, arguing for the Warring State origin of much of the *Yanzi* material; about Yanzi’s attitude towards sacrifices, see Miranda Brown, *The Art of Medicine in Early China: the Ancient and Medieval Origins of a Modern Archive* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 36–37. About changing attitudes towards sacrifices in the late Warring States, see Terry F. Kleeman, “Licentious Cults and Bloody Victuals: Sacrifice, Reciprocity, and Violence in Traditional China,” *Asia Major (Third Series)* 7.1 (1994): 185–211.

17 Li Wanshou 李萬壽, ed., *Yanzi chungiu quanyi* 晏子春秋全譯 (Guiyang: Guizhou renmin chubanshe, 1993), 38. There are two more texts in the Shanghai Museum Collection which have transmitted counterparts in the *Yanzi chungiu*: the text “Zhao wang hui shi” 昭王毀室 in volume 4 and the text “Jing gong nūe” 景公癘 in volume 6 (discussed here below in paragraph 3); for details see Shan Yuchen 單育辰, *Chu di Zhanguo jianbo yu chuanshi wenxian duidu zhi yanjiu* 楚地戰國簡帛與傳世文獻對讀之研究 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2014), 325. All three are examples of remonstrances as is, in my analysis, the manuscript object of this study. While this does not imply that our manuscript is to be considered part of the *Yanzi* corpus, it calls for increased attention to both the *Yanzi* and the remonstrance genre; see Scott Cook’s study, as well as David Schaberg, “Remonstrance in Eastern Zhou Historiography,” *Early China* 22 (1997): 133–79.

atonement (or exposing shamans with the same function),¹⁸ what we have here is basically the ruler substituting himself for the usual bloody sacrifice.

Both pieces advocate a limitation of the role of sacrifices, while at the same time not completely rejecting the role of mountain spirits, nor penitential self-sacrifice, as long as they can be interpreted in terms of body politics, of a fundamental affinity between the ruler, its people and the natural resources sustaining them.

Some spirits, though, could not be properly sacrificed to; just as “ghosts and spirits do not accept sacrifices of those who are not of their own line” (鬼神非其族類，不歆其祀)，¹⁹ local rulers should not sacrifice to mountains and rivers out of their territory.²⁰

Sacrificing to supreme beings such as the Tai Mountain and the Yellow River was the privilege of the son of Heaven, while local rulers would sacrifice to the mountains and rivers in their domain,²¹ most of which were situated in an intermediate, liminal position similar to the one of spirits in general, situated between the celestial gods and the unappeased ghosts, as can be seen in the following passage from *Mozi*: “There are the ghosts of Heaven, there are the ghosts and spirits of the mountains and rivers, and there are also the ghosts of people who have died.”²²

18 See Jeffrey Snyder-Reinke, *Dry Spells: State Rainmaking and Local Governance in Late Imperial China* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2009), chapter 2, and Jimmy Yu, *Sanctity and Self-Inflicted Violence in Chinese Religions, 1500–1700* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), chapter 5.

19 *Zuozhuan*, Xi 31(629 B.C.), in Yang Bojun 楊伯峻, ed. & comm., *Chunqiu Zuozhuan zhu* 春秋左傳注 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1990), 487 (here and throughout I reproduce Legge’s translation, occasionally with minor modifications).

20 諸侯，在其地則祭之，亡其地則不祭 (The princes of states sacrificed to those which were in their own territories; to those which were not in their territories, they did not sacrifice.) See “Jifa,” in Lü Youren 呂友仁 and Lü Yongmei 呂詠梅, eds., *Liji quanyi; Xiaojing quanyi* 禮記全譯；孝經全譯 (Guiyang: Guizhou renmin chubanshe, 1998), 825–26.

21 天子祭天下名山大川：五嶽視三公，四瀆視諸侯。諸侯祭名山大川之在其地者。See “Wangzhi,” in Lü Youren and Lü Yongmei, *Liji quanyi; Xiaojing quanyi*, 266. Also See Terry F. Kleeman, “Licentious Cults and Bloody Victuals: Sacrifice, Reciprocity, and Violence in Traditional China,” *Asia Major (Third Series)* 7.1 (1994): 192.

22 有天鬼，亦有山水鬼神者，亦有人死而為鬼者， in Zhou Caizhu 周才珠, Qi Ruiduan 齊瑞端, eds., *Mozi quanyi* 墨子全譯 (Guiyang: Guizhou renmin chubanshe, 1995), 288; translation from Ian Johnston, *The Mozi: A Complete Translation* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), 303.

It was especially the spirits in liminal position (because not properly part of the realm either geographically or genealogically) that might prove dangerous and yet necessary to sacrifice to, to get rid of their curse, which encompasses both drought and sickness, both of which they presided upon, so that: "The Spirits of the hills and streams are sacrificed to in times of flood, drought, and pestilence."²³

This connection between drought and pestilence brings us to an interesting set of stories about royal sickness.

3. Sickness and dreams

When sickness strikes a ruler, courtiers try to find the cause of the illness either by medical or by divinatory means. The default explanation for sickness, especially suddenly occurring ones, like the one in our text, was that demons were causing it, as a personal punishment or as a warning.²⁴

The *Zuozhuan* has a very famous story illustrating this point. The Marquis of Jin dreamed about the Pestilence demon accusing him of having murdered his grandson for no reason. A shaman asked about the meaning of the dream told the marquis that he would not live to eat the next harvest and, notwithstanding the intervention of an able doctor, the marquis indeed dies as predicted.²⁵ In this instance (in this section we will see other narrations also related to the Marquis of Jin, with different outcomes) the sickness comes as a retribution that cannot be averted, the role of the dream being merely to make clear its cause.

Another Shanghai Museum text, "Jing jian nei zhi" 競建內之, presents royal sickness as a potentially beneficial warning, in line with the widespread view on the providentiality of calamities: "If Heaven is not manifesting disasters, and if the Earth is not producing monsters [if you (misbehave but)

23 山川之神，則水旱癘疫之災於是乎禁之。 See *Zuozhuan*, Zhao 1 (541 B.C.), in Yang Bojun, *Chunqiu Zuozhuan zhu*, 1219.

24 Li Jianmin, "They Shall Expel Demons: Etiology, the Medical Canon and the Transformation of Medical Techniques before the Tang," in *Early Chinese Religion, Part One: Shang through Han*, 1114–17.

25 See Yang Bojun, *Chunqiu Zuozhuan zhu*, 849 and Constance A. Cook, "The Pre-Han Period," in *Chinese Medicine and Healing: An Illustrated History*, eds. T. J. Hinrichs and Linda Barnes (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2012), 18–20.

do not get warnings from nature], then tell the ghosts and spirits: “Heaven and Earth clearly have abandoned me!”²⁶

A remarkable story connecting royal sickness, sacrifices to the rivers and mountains and political reform, is available to us both in manuscript form and in multiple transmitted versions, all featuring Yanzi as the main character.

The Shanghai Museum manuscript “Jing Gong nüe”²⁷ relates how Duke Jing of Qi has been suffering of a chronic skin disease for more than one year and after having asked in vain his diviner and invocator to perform effective sacrifices for him, he decides to execute them. Yanzi advises him not to do it, because the aim of the spirits in sending the curse is not to obtain beautiful sacrificial items to spare the duke, but to strengthen his virtue and to examine his actions, so that he will be forced to reform himself, which the duke accomplishes at the end by leaving his palace to observe the sufferings of the people.

Among the three transmitted versions one is in the *Zuozhuan* and two, as fitting, in the *Yanzi Chunqiu*.²⁸ In one *Yanzi* version,²⁹ the duke offers his sacrifices explicitly to the mountains and rivers, as well to his own ancestors.³⁰ Yanzi’s conclusion is that the discontent of the badly governed population brings curses to the spirits and sickness to the ruler’s body, far beyond any ability of his diviner and invocators to overcome them by sacrifices.

26 天不見害，地不生，則訴諸鬼神曰：天地盟（明）棄我矣！“Jing jian nei zhi” 競建內之（strips J2, J7, J4），in Ma Chengyuan, ed. *Shanghai bowuguan cang Zhanguo Chu zhushu*, vol.5 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2004), 169, 173, 170 (translation mine). The next line in the manuscript (though textually problematic) pursues the parallelism between the advice to be garnered by omens and the one given by ministers: If the ministers close by do not admonish me, and those afar do not criticize me then I will tour the *xiang* and *li* (to get advice from the people) 近臣不諫，遠者不謗，則攸 [?] 諸鄉里。The “Jing jian nei zhi” has been first published as an independent text and later recognized as part of a larger text comprising another manuscript from the Shanghai Museum Collection, this is why the strips are referred to as J, meaning that they come from the original “Jing jian nei zhi” text.

27 Published in vol. 6 of the Shanghai Museum manuscript corpus. I follow Scott Cook’s understanding of the graph given here as *nüe* 瘡, see “The Changing Role of the Minister in the Warring States: Evidence from the *Yanzi Chunqiu* 晏子春秋,” in *Ideology of Power and Power of Ideology in Early China*, 205n45.

28 Li Wanshou, *Yanzi chunqiu quanyi*, 336; Zhao 20 (522 B.C.), in Yang Bojun, *Chunqiu Zuozhuan zhu*, 1415–18.

29 Li Wanshou, *Yanzi chunqiu quanyi*, 30.

30 寡人之病病矣，使史固與祝佗巡山川宗廟，犧牲珪璧。See Li Wanshou, *Yanzi chunqiu quanyi*, 30. We know since the oracle bone inscriptions that ancestors could send curses too, see Li Jianmin, “They Shall Expel Demons,” 1: 1108–9.

The same demonic agents cursing the ruler with personal calamities such as sickness (*ligui* 厲鬼 unaffiliated spirits³¹ and spirits of mountains and rivers) were also responsible for public calamities such as drought and pestilence (*li* 癘) — in fact the spirits causing pestilence were indifferently referred to as 厲鬼 or 癘鬼, with the assumption that pestilences were caused by spirits.³²

We know from both transmitted and excavated text that sacrifices were offered to mountain spirits for the health of the king, for example for the king of Qin as we see from the inscription on this jade tablet from Qin dated around 250 B.C.: “I, the small child Yin, dare to submit a great jade scepter, an auspicious jade disk, and an auspicious precious stone, declaring thereby to the spirit of the Great Mountain Hua: May the Great Mountain confer [blessing] and stop my illness which begins in my heart and stomach and goes down to my feet, so that I might be able to recover to my original condition!”³³ As in the case of the King of Qin, these sacrifices were at the same time a medical and a political measure, as sacrificing to spirits that were not one’s own³⁴ was considered improper and therefore such a sacrifice was at the same time a claim that the Great Mountain was an ancestral spirit under the king’s jurisdiction.

This tension between health and jurisdictional claims can be also seen in the following passage from the *Zuozhuan*: “King Zhao was ill, divination was made by the tortoiseshell, and the answer given: ‘The Yellow River is exercising a malign influence.’ The king, however, declined to perform sacrifices to the Yellow River. When his officials begged him to carry out such sacrifices in the suburbs of the capital, he replied, ‘Under all three dynasties

31 The term *ligui* is translated as “unfortunate dead” by Li Jianmin, “They Shall Expel Demons,” 1: 1112; or “unquiet dead”, by Terry F. Kleeman, “Licentious Cults and Bloody Victuals,” 195. Even though these spirits are generally connected with premature or unjust death, I will often design them as “unaffiliated spirits” referring to their characteristic of not having a place to go, a liminal situation that connects them with the mountain demons, with whom they seem to be sometimes indistinguishable.

32 Lin Sujuan 林素娟, “Xian Qin zhi Handai lisu zhong youguan ligui de guannian ji qi yinying zhi dao” 先秦至漢代禮俗中有關厲鬼的觀念及其因應之道, *Zhengda Zhongwen xuebao* 政大中文學報 31.12 (2005): 71.

33 小子駟敢以介圭、吉璧、吉瓊以告于華大山。大山又賜，已吾腹心以下至于足之病，能自復如故。 Transcription and translation from Yuri Pines, “The Question of Interpretation: Qin History in Light of New Epigraphic Sources,” *Early China* 29 (2004): 7.

34 Yang Bojun, ed. & comm., *Lunyu yizhu* 論語譯注 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1962), 22.

of antiquity, with regard to sacrifices it has been ordained that one shall not sacrifice to mountains or rivers beyond the borders of one's own domain. The rivers that Chu sacrifices to are the Yangtze, the Han, the Chu, and the Zhang. Whatever good or ill fortune comes to us comes from these alone. Though I may be a person of no virtue, I have done nothing to offend the Yellow River!"³⁵

In this passage, beside the issue of the proper hierarchy connecting mountains and rivers with the rulers allowed to sacrifice to them, we can see a dispute over a divinatory outcome. That there is a curse afflicting the ruler's health is clear enough, but the entity responsible is an object of dispute, as well as the specific reason why the cursing entity is punishing the ruler. Ultimately, more important than finding the original fault in the ruler's actions, is his change in behavior signaling compliance with what is demanded of his role.³⁶ In fact, a matching passage from the Han compilation *Hanshi waizhuan* 韓詩

35 昭王有疾。卜曰：河為祟。王弗祭。大夫請祭諸郊，王曰：三代命祀，祭不越望。江、漢、睢、章，楚之望也。禍福之至，不是過也。不穀雖不德，河非所獲罪也。 *Zuozhuan*, Ai 6 (489 B.C.), in Yang Bojun, *Chunqiu Zuozhuan zhu*, 1636.

36 This microcosmic-macrocosmic connection between the ruler and his state is related to the later notion of resonance between Heaven and humans (*tian ren ganying* 天人感應) developed by Dong Zhongshu 董仲舒 (179–104 B.C.) whereby Heaven interacts with the emperor through events and omens in the cosmos, rather than to the Frazerian theme of the slaughter of the ailing King, for which see Lucien Scubla, "Sacred King, Sacrificial Victim, Surrogate Victim or Frazer, Hocart, Girard," in *The Character of Kingship*, ed. Declan Quigley (Oxford: Berg, 2005), 39–62. Notions of a microcosmic-macrocosmic relationship between king and country (as well as between Christ and the Church) are part of the European tradition as well, and the related notion of body politic lends itself to the metaphoric image of sickness afflicting the state; see Andrei Salavastru, "Disease of the Body, Disease of the State: A Metaphor of Political Discourse in XVIth Century England (Thomas Starkey)," 18–47. In both cases, in Europe as well as in China, the king acts a mediator between heaven and earth; see the famous study by Ernst Hartwig Kantorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies: A Study in Mediaeval Political Theology* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1957), 88. I do not imply that there is an identity, but simply an analogy between the Chinese metaphor and the European one, the last having been often used to emphasize the relationship between the king as the head and the people as the limbs. For a fuller treatment, see Geoffrey Lloyd and Nathan Sivin, *The Way and the Word: Science and Medicine in Early Greece and China*, 214–26.

外傳 makes clear that due to his compliance with sacrificial regulations and his admission of personal responsibility, the king quickly recovered his health.³⁷

If sacrificing to spirits not belonging to one's own line is not admissible,³⁸ how could the King of Qin do it? When the unappeased spirit has descendants, one can reward them and thereby appease the ghost. This is what the advisor Zichan 子產 (d. 522) did for the Duke of Lu according to the *Zuozhuan*. The duke was haunted by the ghost of Boyou, murdered in a power struggle that left his son without the resources to perform sacrifices for his father. By reinstating the son, Boyou was placated. As Zichan said: "When a ghost has a place to return to, it does not become an evil spirit. I made him return."³⁹

Even if the spirits have no progeny it is still possible to give them a place to return to, by means of sacrifices that recognize their contribution to their community. Their community might be All under Heaven, in the case of great personalities that could receive sacrifices from the reigning emperor, or merely their own state, in the case of lower officials who could receive sacrifices from the feudal lords.⁴⁰ As an instance of the former, we know that Guanzi advised

37 Lai Yanyuan 賴炎元, comm., *Hanshi waizhuan jinzhu jinyi* 韓詩外傳今註今譯 (Taipei: Taiwan shangwu yinshuguan, 1972), 101. Conversely, in another story from the *Zuozhuan*, the Lord of the Yellow River appears to a minister in a dream, promising his help in a coming conflict if the minister would give him precious jades; the dreamer refuses to comply, and meets with disaster. See *Zuozhuan*, Xi 28 (632 B.C.), in Yang Bojun, *Chunqiu Zuozhuan zhu*, 467–68. In a world where the hierarchy of spirits and ghosts is unclear and contested, the refusal to acknowledge a given spirit's influence is not enough to explain such outcome, as noted by Li Wai-ye in "Dreams of Interpretation in Early Chinese Historical and Philosophical Writings," in *Dream Cultures: Toward a Comparative History of Dreaming*, eds. David Shulman and Guy Stroumsa (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 26–27. In this case, disaster follows because the minister who had the dream has a bad conduct (by being greedy and uncooperative) and refuses to change it.

38 *Zuozhuan*, Xi 31 (629 B.C.): (Spirits do not accept the sacrifices of those who are not of their own line) 鬼神非其族類，不歆其祀。In Yang Bojun, *Chunqiu Zuozhuan zhu*, 487.

39 *Zuozhuan*, Zhao 7 (535 B.C.): 鬼有所歸，乃不為厲，吾為之歸也。In Yang Bojun, *Chunqiu Zuozhuan zhu*, 1292. See Richard von Glahn, *The Sinister Way: the Divine and the Demonic in Chinese Religious Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 32.

40 王為群姓立七祀，曰司命，曰中霤，曰國門，曰國行，曰泰厲，曰戶，曰。諸侯為國立五祀：曰司命，曰中霤，曰國門，曰國行，曰公厲。In Lü Youren and Lü Yongmei, *Liji quanyi*; *Xiaojing quanyi*, 830.

Duke Huan to institute sacrifices to the spirits of the five worthy officials of Yao.⁴¹

The *Zuozhuan* reports a story based on this belief. The Marquis of Jin, having been sick for months, dreamed about a brown bear entering his bedroom. Thinking it had to be a demonic presence, an unappeased ghost, the duke's counselor asked his advisor Zichan to identify it. Zichan identified it with Gun, killed by Yao, whose sacrifice had been an imperial tradition since the three dynasties. The duke decided to sacrifice to Gun and his sickness stopped.⁴²

The *Zuozhuan* story leaves implicit the fact that Gun's apparent request of sacrifices implies that the duke, already a hegemon, will rise even further. The *Guoyu* version of the same story makes this more explicit, by adding that beside demanding sacrifices from their own descendants, spirits can make appeal to humans of suitably high status, and that is why, the Zhou royal house having declined in status, it is now up to Jin to carry out the sacrifices.⁴³

41 "Qingzhong jia" in *Guanzi*: Yao's five ministers of old do not have anyone to provide them with sacrificial offerings. I beg you to establish sacrifices to appease these five unaffiliated spirits 昔堯之五吏 { 五官 } 無所食, 君請立五厲之祭, see Xie Haofan 謝浩范 and Zhu Yingping 朱迎平, eds., *Guanzi quanyi* 管子全譯 (Guiyang: Guizhou renmin chubanshe, 1996), 960. *Guanzi* relates this to exploiting the beliefs of the people to obtain from them through sacrificial offerings what the ruler could not obtain through taxes, as noted by Roel Sterckx, *Food, Sacrifice, and Sagehood in Early China* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 153–54. Nevertheless, the belief was widespread, not only among lower social strata. See Chen Yan 陳岩, Cao Huaifeng 曹懷鋒 and Sun Huifang 孫慧芳, "Guanzi Qingzhong jia zhong 'li ji' qian tan" 《管子·輕重甲》中「厲祭」淺探, *Guanzi yanjiu* 管子研究, 2010.4, available also at: <http://www.chinaguanzi.com/newsview.asp?id=578>. The same sacrifice, I argue, is first advocated and then rejected in our manuscript (see *infra* note 56).

42 *Zuozhuan*, Zhao 7 (535 B.C.): 鄭子產聘于晉。晉侯有疾，韓宣子逆客，私焉，曰：「寡君寢疾，於今三月矣，並走群望，有加而無瘳。今夢黃熊入于寢門，其何厲鬼也？」對曰：「以君之明，子為大政，其何厲之有？昔堯殛鯀于羽山，其神化為黃熊，以入於羽淵，實為夏郊，三代祀之。晉為盟主，其或者未之祀也乎！」韓子祀夏郊。晉侯有間，賜子產莒之二方鼎。In Yang Bojun, *Chunqiu Zuozhuan zhu*, 1289. See also Xiong Daolin 熊道麟, *Xian Qin meng wenhua tanwei* 先秦夢文化探微 (Taipei: Xuehai, 2004), 223, and Anne Birrell, *Chinese Mythology: An Introduction* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), 79–81.

43 夫鬼神之所及，非其族類，則紹其同位，是故天子祀上帝，公侯祀百辟，自卿以下不過其族。今周室少卑，晉實繼之，其或者未舉夏郊邪？In Huang Yongtang 黃永堂, ed., *Guoyu quanyi* 國語全譯 (Guiyang: Guizhou renmin chubanshe, 1995), 543.

A text from the *Guwen Suoyu* 古文瑣語, belonging to the corpus of bamboo manuscripts found at the Ji tomb in the third century CE, has a similar story, in which the Duke of Jin dreams of a red bear peeping at him through his bedroom curtains. Zichan, asked about it, identifies it with Fu You 浮遊, a minister of Gong Gong 共工 who, defeated by Zhuan Xu 顛頊, killed himself by drowning and often brought calamities to the world. When he enters a ruler’s hall, Heaven means to kill the ruler, but when he just peeps at the curtains, it is just a warning, and sacrificing to Gong Gong and to Zhuan Xu is enough for the ruler’s sickness to stop.⁴⁴

Both Gun and Gong Gong (and through him Fu You) are mentioned in the *Shanhajing*, the great ancient repository of demonic nature deities. In fact, there seems to be an ongoing struggle about the identification of the spirits presiding over marginal territories, whether they should be identified with mountains demons or with former ministers. The former inhabit a marginal, shapeless world beyond control, while the latter could be given a place by rulers in their sacrificial practices, and yet the boundaries between these two worlds are porous and often undefined, with demons converted into ministers, as well as ministers converted into demons.⁴⁵

This ambiguous status between mountain spirits and unaffiliated spirits, as well as the spirits’ occasional resistance to co-optation, can be seen in a story

44 晉平公夢見赤熊闌屏，惡之，而有疾。使問子產，子產曰：「昔共工之卿曰『浮遊』，既敗於顛頊，自沒沈淮之淵。其色赤，其言善笑，其行善顧，其狀如熊，常為天下祟。見之堂，則王天下者死；見堂下，則邦人駭；見門，則近臣憂；見庭，則無傷。窺君之屏，病而無傷，祭顛頊、共工則瘳。」公如其言，而疾間。 *Guwen Suoyu* 古文瑣語，in Yan Kejun 嚴可均，ed., *Quan shang gu san dai Qin Han Sanguo Liuchao wen; Quan Qin wen* 全上古三代秦漢三國六朝文·全秦文 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1999), 202. In this case, then, it is not the demon appearing in the dream that has to be appeased, but its master Gong Gong, as well as Zhuan Xu 顛頊. The more we know about bamboo manuscripts, the more we are inclined to consider at least part of the Ji Grave manuscript find as authentic Warring States material.

45 This can be seen in the following passage from a *Lishu* 禮書 (Book of Rites) cited in the chapter “Ding gui” 訂鬼 (Revisions on ghosts) in the *Lunheng*: “Emperor Zhuan Xu had three sons who became pestilence demons after death. Among them, one lives in the waters of the Jiang 江 river and is the *nue* malaria demon 虐鬼; one lives in the Ruo 若 river and is the *wangliang* 魍魎 demon; the last one is the demon of small children, who lives in empty houses and abandoned sheds and hides in dark moist corners to startle children.” Cited from Li Jianmin, “*They Shall Expel Demons*,” 1: 1111.

from *Yanzi Chunqiu*, where the ruler is visited in a dream by two beings that the duke's diviner identifies as mountain spirits, but that Yanzi is able to identify as the spirits of two great officials of the past, Xian Tang and Yi Yin. When the duke doubts his identification, Yanzi describes for him the appearance of the two persons, which perfectly matches what the duke saw in his dream, without Yanzi having had access to the duke's own description. As the two great officials have their progeny in Song, their appearance is meant to stop the duke's upcoming invasion. The duke still tries to proceed with the attack, at which point a drum explodes killing a general and making the duke finally desist.⁴⁶

In this instance, Yanzi discourages sacrifices to specific spirits; but as we have seen above in two Yanzi stories about Duke Jing of Qi, the one about the facing a drought and the one about dealing with his enduring sickness, Yanzi displays a generalized anti-sacrificial attitude.⁴⁷ As the spirits in his stories have a real power to haunt and to heal, Yanzi's critique does not amount to a materialistic disregard of the efficacy of blessings and curses, but rather to a refusal to let self-interested sacrifices disrupt the causal relationship between the ruler's conduct and the conditions of the state and its people.

46 Li Wanshou, *Yanzi chunqiu quanyi*, 55. See also Xiong Daolin, *Xian Qin meng wenhua tanwei*, 298–99. A variant of the same story from the *Guwen Suoyu* has Duke Jing of Qi, stopping in Quling 曲陵 on the way to attack Song. He dreams of two extraordinary people, one a giant and the other a dwarf, vividly describing to Yanzi their unusual appearance and their angry voices. Yanzi identifies them with Pan Geng and Yi Yin, angry at the intention of the ruler to attack Song. The ruler desists from his plans. 齊景公欲伐宋，至曲陵，夢見大君子甚長，有短丈夫竇於前。公告晏子。晏子曰：「君所夢何如哉？」公曰：「大君子甚長而大，大下而小上，其言甚怒，好仰。」晏子曰：「若是，則盤庚也。夫盤庚長九尺有餘，大下、小上，白色而髯，其言好仰，而聲上。」公曰：「是也，其竇者甚短，大上而小下，其言甚怒，好俛。」晏子曰：「如是，則伊尹也。伊尹甚大而短，大上小下，赤色而髯，其言好俛，而下聲。」公曰：「是矣！」晏子曰：「是怒君師，不如違之。」遂不果伐宋。 *Guwen Suoyu*, in Yan Kejun, ed., *Quan shang gu san dai wen; Quan Qin wen*, 203. See also Liao Qun 廖群, "Ji zhong suoyu yu xian Qin 'shuo ti' kaocha" 《汲冢瑣語》與先秦「說體」考察, *Lilun xue kan* 理論學刊 2012.4: 113–17.

47 Sometimes the anti-sacrificial stance is very stern; at the end of the piece about Duke Jing of Qi, facing the drought, Yanzi declares himself to be inferior to Guanzi in wisdom, but superior to him in refusing to use sacrifices, as if the acceptance of sacrifices were a real stain on Guanzi's character: 管子有一美，嬰不如也；有一惡，嬰不忍為也，其宗廟之養鮮也。 In Li Wanshou, *Yanzi chunqiu quanyi*, 30.

All these stories support a common point: the open discussion about the ultimate origin and the best solution of crises. Calamities should not be feared, but faced as an occasion for reform, including moral self-reform, up to bodily sacrifice of the self. Reform comes from self-awareness about his faults on the part of the king, and from disinterested open remonstrance on the part of the advisors.⁴⁸ Heightened self-awareness and open remonstrance are necessary because the crises have an inner, hidden cause, disclosed by dreams whose meaning needs to be openly examined. The creatures in the dreams are mostly demonic, liminal beings, whose identification is contended — once the haunting creature has been identified, its function in the crisis in act is clarified and a solution can be found, the body politic can overcome its stagnation, the different elements of the kingdom can be reunited and proper rituals can enact the healing of the previously challenged social relations. Sacrifices to spirits, instead, are self-interested and ultimately delusional.

On the basis of the preceding discussion, I will now proceed with the final part of this article, an annotated translation of the Shangbo piece.

4. “Jian da wang po han” 簡大王迫旱 (King Jian [of Chu] dispels the drought

As mentioned in the introduction, I follow by default Ji Xusheng’s transcription; when I make a different choice, I signal it by putting my own proposed transcription, justified in a footnote, within square bracket after his, as for example in strip 3 the character 蔽 [比]. The text is divided into two parts, with an intermezzo between them. Strip numbers are in thick brackets and follow the strip they refer to. The meaning of certain graphs or groups of graphs remains unclear, and this is signaled by a question mark within parenthesis (?) in the transcription — the corresponding translation is merely tentative, and equally signaled by (?). The lacuna is signaled by the symbol [...].

48 This centrality of remonstrance is a feature that unites the *Yanzi Chunqiu* and the present text, whose central section (titled by me “intermezzo”) deals specifically with the rationale and timing of remonstrance.

Part 1

The text starts with the presence of the drought in the Chu kingdom. King Jian asks turtle diviners to divine about ways to deal with it. The king gets sick while facing the sun performing the divination, in an act of self-punishment that was a known way to stop the drought.

簡大王迫旱，命龜尹⁴⁹羅貞於大夏。王自臨卜。王向日而立，王汗至【1】帶。龜尹知王之炙於日而病，蓋榦逾天(?)。

The great King Jian [of Chu], to dispel the drought, ordered Luo, the overseer of divination by the tortoise-shell, to conduct divination on

(the turtle) Da Xia [about it]. The king participated in the divination personally. The king stood facing the sun; the king's sweat reached his belt. The overseer of divination by the tortoise-shell was aware that the king was scorched by the sun and was therefore ill, and passed over the handle of the canopy to lean over him (?).

It seems that the king's sickness is related to the spirits of the mountains and rivers who appeared to him many times in his dreams. As King Jian has recently acquired the new territory of Ju 莒, he believes that it is the spirits of the mountains and rivers of that locality, that are not part of the Chu pantheon of gods and spirits, which are haunting him. He requests therefore a sequential divination to identify the recipients of the sacrifice,⁵⁰ and the regulating official complies.

49 Five of what seem to be official titles, or combinations of official titles and proper names (*Guiyin* 龜尹, *Liyin* 釐尹, *Lingyin* 陵尹, *Xiangxi* 相徙, *Zhongyu* 中余) appear in this text alone, and their exact meaning is therefore open to conjecture and the translation merely tentative. They have all been analyzed by Wu Xiaoyi 吳曉懿, “Shanghai bowuguan cang Zhanguo chu zhushu (si) suojian guanming ji zheng” 《上海博物館藏戰國楚竹書(四)》所見官名輯證, *Jianbo* 2010.5: 239–50. For the more familiar titles, such as *Lingyin* 令尹 and *Taizai* 太宰, I have followed Barry B. Blakeley's usage. See Blakeley, “Chu Society and State: Image Versus Reality,” in *Defining Chu: Image and Reality in Ancient China*, 56. Wu Xiaoyi suggests that the *Guiyin* 龜尹 is an officer similar to the *Bushi* 卜師 in the *Zhouli*; see Wu Xiaoyi, 240 and *op. cit.* Yang Tianyu 楊天宇, comm., *Zhouli yizhu* 周禮譯註 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2004), 352.

50 A sequential divination (generally known as *xi zhen* 習貞) consists in divining according to a list of recipients, addressing in a sequence each recipient until a positive response (identifying the recipient as the legitimate one) is achieved. See Yan Changgui 晏昌貴, *Wu gui yu yin si: Chujian suo jian fangshu zongjiao kao* 巫鬼與淫祀：楚簡所見方術宗教考 (Wuhan: Wuhan daxue chubanshe, 2010), 188. See also note 55 below for details on the exact graph and word related to this practice.

釐尹⁵¹知王之病，承龜尹速卜【2】高山深溪。王以問釐尹高：「不穀燥⁵²甚病，驟夢高山深溪。吾所得【8】地於莒⁵³中者無有名山名溪，欲祭於楚邦者乎？⁵⁴當蔽【比】⁵⁵而卜之於【3】大夏。如孚，將祭之。」釐尹許諾，蔽【比】而卜之，孚。釐尹致命於君王：「既蔽【比】【4】而卜之，孚。」

As the master of sacrifice was [also] aware of the sickness of the king, he assisted the overseer of divination by the tortoise-shell in speeding up the divination [ritual] towards the high mountains and the deep rivers. The king thereby asked master of sacrifice Gao: “I feel dehydrated and extremely sick, and I have been dreaming many times about high mountains and deep rivers. Are there not among those lands I got in Ju those with famous mountains and rivers to which [we should] want to sacrifice for the state of Chu? You should sequentially divine [about all the mountains and rivers in Ju] on Da Xia. If it is verified, we should proceed with the sacrifice.” The master of sacrifice assented, and sequentially divined [about them all], until it was verified. The master of sacrifice reported the charge to the ruler: “It has already been sequentially divined about, and it has been verified.”

The king then demands to quickly perform a sacrifice to placate the spirit. This is resisted by the official, who admonishes the ruler not to alter the ritual rules for his own sake. The king recognizes his own fault and asks for advice from other officials, who in turn ask for the senior minister’s advice.

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- 51 The *Liyin* 釐尹 is possibly an officer similar to the *Dazhu* 大祝 in the *Zhouli*, see Wu Xiaoyi, *op. cit.*, 239 and Yang Tianyu, *op. cit.*, 359.
- 52 *Zao* 燥 “dry” or “dry itch, scabies” (an ailment generally referred to as *jie* 疥), see Riegel, “Curing the Incurable,” *Early China* 35–36 (2013), 230n11.
- 53 *Fu* 膚 [**pra*] = *Ju* 莒 [**ka*]. The identification is based on historical sources that show King Jian annexing it, but is phonologically problematic. I accept it, like most scholars, but treat the identification with caution. Here and throughout the paper I follow the phonological reconstructions by Axel Schuessler, *Minimal Old Chinese and Later Han Chinese: A Companion to Grammata Serica Recensa* (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2009).
- 54 Most scholars read 者嘑 as 者乎 with 嘑 [**hla?*] serving as loangraph for 乎 [**?a*] and a (rhetoric) interrogative function.
- 55 Chen Wei supports his reading of *bi* 比 [**pi?*] (“numerous, successive”) with a rich set of examples; see Chen Wei, “Chu jian ‘bi’ zi shi shuo”. The original graph is *bi* 詎 [**pit/pits*]. Shen Pei proposes *bie* 蔽 [**pets*] (“to reach a [divinatory] decision”) but the main vowels are different. I follow Chen Wei mainly for phonological reasons; the lexical (and ritual) issue is still unsettled.

王曰：「如孚，速祭之，吾燥一病。」釐尹答曰：「楚邦有常故，【5】焉敢殺[厲]⁵⁶祭？以君王之身殺[厲]祭，未嘗有。」

The king said: “If it has been verified, let’s speed up the sacrifice, I feel dry and very ill.” The master of sacrifice replied: “The state of Chu has a permanent regulation, how could I dare to sacrifice to an unaffiliated spirit? There has never been an instance of sacrificing to an unaffiliated spirit due to the person (=personal concern) of the king.”

The senior minister says that the gods and spirits of Chu will become aware of what has happened and, appreciating the willingness of the king to withdraw his attempt at performing a non-canonical sacrifice, will cure him of his sickness (as the sickness is not further mentioned in the remaining part of the text, this must have proved correct).

王入，以告安君與陵尹⁵⁷子高：「向為【7】私便，人將笑君。」陵尹、釐尹皆持其言以告太宰：「君聖人，且良長子，將正【19】於君。」太宰謂陵尹：「君入而語僕之言於君王，君王之燥從今日以瘥。」陵尹與【20】釐尹：「有故乎？願聞之。」太宰言：「君王元君，不以其身變釐尹之常故；釐尹【21】為楚邦之鬼神主，不敢以君王之身變亂鬼神之常故。夫上帝鬼神高明【6】甚，將必知之。君王之病將從今日以已。」

The king entered [the court] to report to lord An and the overseer of the mountains Zi Gao: “Earlier I acted for my personal convenience [in asking to speed up the divination], people will laugh at you [for giving me such advice].” The overseer of the mountains and the master of sacrifice took hold of his words and reported them to the Great Steward: “You are a wise man and a good elder, you will redress [this situation] for the lord.” The

56 The meaning to assign to this graph remains one of the most debated issues about this text. I interpret 殺 [*srat] as 厲 [*rats] “unaffiliated spirit.” I have argued for this interpretation in paragraph 3, even though the phrase *liji* 厲祭 is attested only (as 厲之祭) in the *Guanzi* passage cited in note 41; in late imperial times the sacrifice to unappeased ghosts was codified and referred to as *jili* 祭厲. Lai Guolong interprets 殺 [*srat] as 散 [*san], postulating a samdhi assimilation n->t: 散祭 [*san]+[*tsat] = 殺祭 [*sat]+[*tsat] and understanding *san ji* 散祭 as a form of *yin si* 淫祀 (heterodox ritual); see Lai Guolong, “‘Jian dawang bo han’ de xushi jieyou yu zongjiao beijing (jian shi‘sha ji)”, http://www.bsm.org.cn/show_article.php?id=1716 (posted on 6 July 2012, accessed on 9 Dec. 2014).

57 Wu Xiaoyi suggests that the *Lingyin* 陵尹 is an officer similar to the officials in charge of mountains and rivers (山虞, 澤虞, 林衡, 川衡) in the *Zhouli*, see Wu Xiaoyi, *op. cit.*, 240 and Yang Tianyu, *Zhouli yizhu*, 243–47.

Chief of Protocol told the overseer of the mountains: "You should enter the court and report my words to the lord, that the lord's dry (sickness) from today will thereby be cured." The overseer of the mountains and the master of sacrifice [asked]: "Is there a reason? We would like to hear it." The Chief of Protocol said: "The sovereign is a good lord, he did (or: will?) not change for his person (=personal reasons) the permanent regulations of the master of sacrifice; the master of sacrifice is in charge of the ghosts and spirits of the state of Chu, and did not dare to change and bring disorder to the permanent regulations of the ghosts and spirits for the king's sake. Now God on High and the ghosts and spirits are extremely lofty and intelligent, they will necessarily recognize this. The sovereign's sickness will thereby finish from today."

Intermezzo

The senior ministers and the officials then debate about situations in which, as it has just happened, it is necessary to admonish a ruler.

令尹子林問於太宰子止：「為人【22】臣者亦有爭乎？」太宰答曰：「君王元君，君善，大夫何用爭。」令尹謂太宰：「唯。【23】必三軍有大事，邦家以机捏(?)，社稷以危(?)歟。邦家大旱，因資智於邦，【18】將為客告。」太宰乃而⁵⁸謂之：「君皆楚邦之將軍，作色而言於廷，王事何」[.....]【17】

The Prime Minister Zi Lin asked the Chief of Protocol Zi Zhi: "Serving in the role of minister should there also be contentions?" The Chief of Protocol answered: "The sovereign is a superior lord, when a lord is good, what use has a dignitary for contentions?" The Prime Minister told the Great Steward: "Indeed. It must be a case when the three armies are involved into a major campaign, the state and the main families are in great trouble (?) and the altars of the land and grain are in danger (?), or when (like now) there is a great drought in the state, so that he should receive advice about the state, then we must make a report on behalf of the guest (=remonstrate to the ruler using the advisors' arguments). The Chief of Protocol then told him: "You are all generals of the Chu state, if you put up a serious countenance and talk about it in the court, how the king's affairs [...]"

58 *Nai er* 乃而 = "then". See Song Huaqiang 宋華強, *Xincai Geling Chujian chutan* 新蔡葛陵楚簡初探 (Wuhan: Wuhan daxue chubanshe, 2010), 310 ff.

Part 2

After a lacuna in the text, we see now the king describing another dream, about a creature being forced to cross the river by beating drums, a kind of exorcism.⁵⁹

王諾，將鼓而涉之。王夢三。閏未，以告相徙與中余：⁶⁰「今夕不穀⁶¹【9】夢若此，何？」

The king assented. [He said that in his dream someone] would beat the drum and make it wade the river.⁶² The king had this dream three times. The inner doors were not yet open (=it was very early), and he told assistant Xi and the *Zhongyu* (?) about it: “Tonight I had a dream like this, why?”

Consulted about the dream’s meaning, the senior minister once again gives his advice, which consists on one hand in the identification of the creature with a monstrous goddess, the mother of drought,⁶³ whose function is to punish the king, and on the other hand in the diagnosis that the problem lies in the king’s mismanagement of the government. The king recognizes his faults, and the senior minister withdraws.

相徙、中余答：「君王當以問太宰晉侯，彼聖人之子孫。」「將必【10】鼓而涉之，此何？」太宰進答：「此所謂之『旱母』，帝將命之修諸侯之君之不【11】能治者，而刑之以旱。夫雖毋旱，而百姓移以去邦

59 See infra note 65.

60 For the terms 相徙 and 中余 no convincing hypothesis is available.

61 The term *bu gu* 不穀 “the unworthy one” was used by rulers as humble first person pronoun. This usage is not very frequent but not unusual either in Warring States texts; it is mostly used in the *Zuozhuan* (21 times), mostly (but not only) in reference to the King of Chu, see Yang Bojun, *Chunqiu Zuozhuan zhu*, 291–92 for a discussion. Besides the *Zuozhuan*, it occurs in *Lüshi Chunqiu* 14 times and a handful of times in *Xunzi*, *Laozi*, *Hanfeizi*, *Zhanguo ce*.

62 Or make *them* wade the river. See infra note 65 for discussion.

63 Identifying a spirit, often by calling it by its true name, ensures that it can inflict no longer any harm, as we have seen in section 3; see also von Glahn, *The Sinister Way*, 85, and also Motif C432.1 (Guessing name of supernatural creature gives power over him-Tom-Tit-Tot), in Stith Thompson, *Motif-index of Folk-literature* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1966), vol. 1, 518. The “Mother of drought” *Han mu* 旱母 corresponds to *Nü ba* 女魃 in the *Shanhajing*, book 17, *Da huang bei jing* 大荒北經, in Yuan Ke 袁珂, ed., *Shanhajing quanyi* 山海經全譯 (Guiyang: Guizhou renmin chubanshe, 1991), 319. See also Snyder-Reinke, *Dry Spells*, 109–10; Riegel, “Curing the Incurable,” 232n17; Edward H. Schafer, “Ritual Exposure in Ancient China,” *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 14.1/2 (Jun. 1951): 162–69.

家。此為君者之刑。」【12】王叫而啣[仰天呻]，⁶⁴ 而泣謂太宰：「一人不能治政，而百姓以絕。」後太宰遜。

Assistant Xi and the *Zhongyu* (?) answered: “Your majesty should ask the Great Steward, the marquis of Jin, about it, he is the offspring of wise men.” [The king said: “in my dream] someone would always beat the drum and make it wade the river,⁶⁵ what does it mean?” The Chief of Protocol advanced and answered: “This is the so called ‘mother of the drought,’ God commands her to reform those among the rulers of the feudal states who are not able to bring order, and to punish them by means of the drought. Now, even without a drought the common people would migrate and thereby abandon the state and the main clans. This is (also) a punishment for the ruler.” The king faced up to Heaven and sighed deeply, telling the Chief of Protocol in tears: “I cannot regulate the government and the common people’s livelihood is thereby severed.” Afterwards the Chief of Protocol withdrew.

The king then asks once more for the senior minister’s advice, this time about how to solve the problem of the drought. The senior minister suggests a double solution: the king should repair the four suburbs, and he should go back exposing himself to the sun together with his closest ministers. The recourse to self-inflicted violence by self-exposure to the scorching sun to terminate the

64 The editor’s transcription was 仰天句[後]. In this case I reject Ji’s transcription and keep the editor’s, with the exception of analyzing 句 as 人[*nin] + 口 and reading it as 呻[*lhin], following Zhao Yuansu 趙苑夙, “‘Jian dawang bo han’ kaoshi si ze” 柬大王泊旱 考釋四則, *Xinzhū jiaoyu daxue renwen shehui xuebao* 新竹教育大學人文社會學報 2013.09 (6:2): 16. Alternatively one could still keep 句 and read it as 啣, meaning of ‘cry out’ according to *Grammatica Serica Recensa*, 108a’.

65 Who wades the river pushed away by the drums: the mother of drought, being exorcised out of the country, or the population, that the mother of drought forces to flee? I choose the first option and translate accordingly, as drums are generally used for exorcising demons; see von Glahn, *The Sinister Way*, 112 and Snyder-Reinke, *Dry Spells*, 108. See also the following lost passage from *Zhuangzi*: “Because the people had many diseases, the Yellow Emperor appointed Shaman Xian to bathe and fast in order to open the nine orifices, to beat the drum and strike the bell so as to excite the heart and exercise the body, to make steps in order to stir up the energies of *yin* and *yang*, and to drink ale and eat scallions in order to remove blockages in the five viscera. Because he beat the drum and hollered in order to drive out pestilence and the drought demon, the people, in their ignorance, thought it was the drought demon who was causing trouble.” Passage quoted in Lin Fu-shih, “The Image and Status of Shamans in Ancient China” in *Early Chinese Religion, Part One: Shang through Han*, 404.

drought is a way to expiate the faults that lead to the drought,⁶⁶ while repairing the suburbs of the capital is a way to repair the transgression that took place at the margins of the kingdom with the inclusion of the new domain of Ju, instead of the rejected non-canonical sacrifice to its not yet assimilated spirits of the mountains and rivers.

返進【14】太宰：「我何為，歲焉熟？」太宰答：「如君王修郢郊，⁶⁷方若然里(?)，⁶⁸君王毋敢栽介蓋；【13】相徙、中余與五連小子及寵臣皆屬，毋敢執澡簦。」

[The king then] had the Chief of Protocol come back: “What should I do, so that the harvest be ripe?” The Chief of Protocol answered: “If his majesty will repair the suburbs (i.e., suburban altars) of Ying, (?), and the king should not dare to erect the great canopy (thereby not being screened against the sun), and assistant Xi and the *Zhongyu* (?) and the five connected young sons (?) and the favorite ministers should all be attached (=follow him?) and should not dare to hold the ceremonial multicolored fan (thereby also not being screened against the sun).

This time no more divination is performed, as the senior minister’s advice laid bare the reasons for the drought and the method to face it. After the required actions have been performed, the crisis is over and a ripe harvest ensues.

王許諾，修四郊。【15】三日，王有野色，屬者有暍人。三日，大雨，邦賴之。發駟躋四疆，四疆皆熟。【16】

The king assented and repaired the four suburbs. After three days, the king had a rustic color (=was tanned), and among his followers there were some suffering from the heat. After three days there was a great rain, the state benefited from it. [The king] sent post horses to reach the four borders, and the four borders all had a ripe harvest.

66 See Jimmy Yu, *Sanctity and Self-Inflicted Violence in Chinese Religions, 1500–1700*, 118–21.

67 The suburbs, with their luminal status, are the appropriate setting for sacrifices to end a drought. We saw in the *Zuozhuan* passage cited in note 37 *infra* that the sacrifice to the Yellow River should have been performed in the suburbs of the capital. As remarked by Constance Cook, “Negotiation with regions outside required not only ancestral protection but increasingly sacrifices to nature deities, such as the earth deity of the wilds (*ye* 野) (versus the *she* 社 inside the city) as well as to the deities of mountains, rivers and other areas in order to bury their dead or to travel into outside areas.” See Constance Cook, “Ancestor Worship during the Eastern Zhou,” in *Early Chinese Religion, Part One: Shang through Han*, 275.

68 Here I do not even attempt to translate.

Conclusion

The structure of the piece is fairly symmetrical.⁶⁹ The action revolves around two crises, the personal health crisis of the king and the public crisis of the drought. The king receives omens about both crises in his dreams, and in both cases the omens are interpreted and debated.

First (strips 1+2+8+3+4) the king is visited by the dream of the nature deities of Ju haunting him. A divination presumably establishes (we do not have details about it) which specific deity is responsible. This first identification is followed by an attempted course of action, a sacrifice that the ritual official deems unacceptable (strips 4+5). The king complies, and a debate ensues among his officials, with the senior minister providing a solution: whatever the specific cause of the sickness, the king's compliance is enough to ensure the spirits' recognition of the kings' sincerity in putting the public good over private concerns, and therefore the lifting of the curse on his health (strips 7+19+20+21+6). The crisis has been resolved by open debate on the meaning of the omen and by remonstrance over a previous hasty solution.

After a passage justifying the recourse to remonstrance in critical situations (strip 22+23+18+17), a very similar schema is repeated.

The king has another, more vivid dream (strips 9+10). Once again there is a debate about its meaning, and once again the senior minister provides the most authoritative interpretation, first identifying the haunting entity (the Mother of Drought, a demonic nature deity), then delving deeper into the real source of the crisis, the king's inability to provide order (strips 10+11+12). At this point the king is ready to hear about the appropriate solution to the public crisis, consisting both in policy (repairing the walls) and in ritual (a reprisal of the king's initial self-exposure to the sun, this time with all the officials participating) (strips 12+14+13). The implementation of the senior minister's advice leads to the complete resolution of the crisis (strips 15+16).

⁶⁹ As the piece is possibly broken in more than one place, these remarks should be treated with caution; I will here simply assume that the text as we have it is fairly close to its original form (see *infra* notes 6 and 7).

Ultimately sickness and drought, the troubles affecting the body politic, are symptoms of a deeper moral and political crisis, whose nature they help to clarify by means of debates between the ruler and his counselors. The spirits' power is recognized, but kept at distance, and emphasis is given to the power of ministerial remonstrance and the king's earnest recognition of his mistakes. This recognition, moving in full circle, is acknowledged by the spirits and rewarded with the removal of sickness and drought, so that the balance of the body politic is reestablished. While the ruler is the passive mediator between the spirits and his people, the senior minister is the active mediator, the only one able to interpret the symptoms, lead the ruler to face the underlying problems and point to their solution. In this, he is similar to the ministerial hero Yanzi, whose loyalty is manifested in both farsightedness and remonstrance.⁷⁰

70 This similarity points to further connections between these and other Shanghai Museum texts and the *Yanzi Chunqiu*, a topic to which I might dedicate a separate study.

旱災、徵兆與身體政治：從上海博物館藏竹簡 柬大王泊旱看君臣的辯論

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通過研究最近出土的竹簡文獻，一些固有概念如君臣關係、祭禮和政治等都得到重新定義。

此文為首篇 柬大王泊旱 的英譯及註解；這篇公元前四世紀的楚簡描述大王和臣子如何討論困擾國土的旱災成因和解決方法。旱災被理解為一種懲罰，但究竟是由於祭儀上或道德上的欠缺，還是大王施政的失敗，則眾說紛紜。

文章還探討關於國王和國土關係的理念——把國土和人民譬喻為統治者的身體，若大王把身體獻祭於烈日下曝曬，便可彌補旱災對國家造成的傷害。

這些關於獻祭形式和意義的討論，關係到對國家本質、組織管治、危機處理、傳統的角色等的不同看法，揭示楚地以至整個戰國時期的思想。

關鍵詞：楚簡 旱災 預言 獻祭 戰國時期的君臣