
CHEN Wei 陳偉 and Peng Hao 彭浩, eds. *Chudi chutu Zhanguo jiance heji* 楚地出土戰國簡冊合集. 6 vols. Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 2011–2024.

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2024 saw the publication of the sixth volume of the collection *Chudi chutu Zhanguo jiance heji* 楚地出土戰國簡冊合集 (hereinafter referred to as *Heji*). With this volume marked the end of a long-term research and editing project launched in 2003 by the Center of Bamboo and Silk Manuscripts of Wuhan University as a “Major Project of the Key Research Base of Humanities and Social Sciences” 人文社會科學重點研究基地重大項目, supported by the Ministry of Education of China (Project No. 03JZD0010). The project initially concerned corpora of Warring States bamboo-slip manuscripts scientifically excavated between 1951 and 1993 from fourteen Chu tombs: Guodian 郭店 M1, Geling 葛陵 M1, Changtaiguan 長臺關 M1, Leigudun 擂鼓墩 M1 (or Zeng hou Yi 曾侯乙 tomb), Wangshan 望山 M1 and M2, Caojiagang 曹家崗 M5, Jiudian 九店 M56 and M621, Baoshan 包山 M2, Wulipai 五里牌 M406, Yangtianhu 仰天湖 M25, Yangjiawan 楊家灣 M6 and Xiyangpo 夕陽坡 M2. The editors state clearly that the collection represents a corpus of more than 3,500 bamboo slips (incl. fragments) and totaling approximately 50,000 Chinese characters. Even though these materials had been published prior, the substandard quality of photographic reproductions of the manuscripts necessitated an update. Furthermore, important progress in the interpretation and study of Warring States bamboo-slip manuscripts has been made since first editions were published, particularly from the 1990s through the beginning of the current century. In the face of such a challenge, a team headed by Professor Chen Wei 陳偉 (Wuhan University) first either collected or reshot clear photographs. The Wuhan team used cameras with infrared technology to shoot the new photographs, which at the beginning of the project was still a novelty in China. The text of the new editions was mainly completed in 2008, and a first version was published in 2009 by the Economic Science Press, as *Chudi chutu Zhanguo jiance (shisi zhong)* 楚地出土戰國簡冊（十四種） (hereinafter referred to as *Shisi zhong*). A revised, but not updated, version of the *Shisi zhong* was published in 2016, as a part of the “Jing Chu wenku” 荆

楚文庫 collection, by Wuhan University Press. From 2011 onwards, Cultural Relics Press of Beijing began publishing a monograph series (*Heji*), directed by Chen Wei and Peng Hao (Jingzhou Museum), that contained both texts and photographs.

As mentioned, the text of the *Heji* edition is approximate to that published in *Shisi zhong*, but with some corrections and updates discussed below. It should be noted that these publications were not specifically dedicated to paleographers or specialists of ancient manuscripts, but were also developed to promote the reading of such documents for a broader audience, such as scholars of ancient Chinese history or philosophy. This explains some editorial choices. First, the transcription mainly uses traditional standard characters written horizontally, like in modern Chinese books. The text of the manuscript is written continuously, like a transmitted text, with the change of slips indicated only by a number at the slip's tail. Modern punctuation has been added by the editors, whereas original marks or punctuation signs regrettably were not necessarily clarified. Repetition marks (*chongwen fuhao* 重文符號) and ligature marks (*hewen fuhao* 合文符號), frequent in ancient manuscripts, are not indicated at all in the transcription. The relevant characters are directly transcribed as they should be read, for instance the word for “water” occurring with a repetition mark as “水_二” is rendered directly as “水水”. While philological and paleographical notes to the transcriptions are numerous, editorial decisions were made to limit the length of the notes, with only the more difficult parts in the manuscripts afforded explanation. Thus while the notes do contain precise and updated (from *Shisi zhong*) bibliographical references to scholarship, quotations, which serve as proof, are generally given in an abbreviated form. It means that although a reader can learn how a scholar reads an individual character or expression, the logic driving such readings is either absent or abridged. As such, readers who may require more context or stability are then obliged to locate the original scholarship from the book's bibliography. In the same way, only a selection of references to relevant works can be found in the notes. The goal here is different from that of more scientifically-driven scholarship in the form of publications referred to as “Jishi” 集釋, where readers expect to find comprehensive quotations of extant scholarship.¹ Besides references to other scholars, the editors, as specialists in the field, occasionally provide an opinion or reading (introduced

1 See for instance the “Jishi” available for the Baoshan Manuscripts; “Baoshan Chu jian jishi” 包山楚簡集釋, in Zhu Xiaoxue 朱曉雪, *Baoshan Chu jian zongshu* 包山楚簡綜述 (Fuzhou: Fujian renmin chubanshe, 2013).

by the expression “*jin an*” 今按). Editorial decisions made by the editors have resulted in a convenient edition with a solid scientific apparatus of the main Chu manuscript corpora.

The six volumes of *Heji* publish ten of the fourteen corpora initially included in the *Shisi zhong*. Each volume addresses one or more corpora and has been published separately as follows: volume 1: Guodian (2011); volume 2: Geling and Changtaiguan (2013); volume 3: Leigudun (2019); volume 4: Wangshan and Caojiagang (2019); volume 5: Jiudian (2021); and volume 6: Baoshan (2024). The four corpora excavated from Chu tombs in Hunan province are not included in this series.

Each volume in *Heji* contains a modern edition of the manuscripts, more or less identical to what is in *Shisi zhong*, as well as black and white photographs of the written sides of the slips. The size of the books (28.5 × 21.5 cm) is smaller than manuscript editions published in recent years which makes them more convenient to use. Like the *Shisi zhong*, the books follow a left-to-right horizontal orientation of displaying the modern Chinese. To ensure consistency, this same orientation is applied to bamboo slip photographs, which correspond to the reverse order of the slips in ancient manuscripts. Because of various factors, such as the quality of earlier photographs and the present condition of the manuscripts, the quality and nature of photographs published in *Heji* vary from one volume to another. For the Guodian Manuscripts, *Heji* uses pictures from the 1998 edition, preserving the bamboo slips' original dimensions.² As many slips of the Guodian corpus exceed 28 cm, the related photographs had to be divided into two pieces, presented side by side, to fit the page dimensions, which is unlike in the original large-format edition. The quality of the pictures is generally the same as in the 1998 edition, but the *Heji* edition seems to have slightly improved in sharpness. A picture of a slip from the “Yucong san” 語叢三 manuscript forgotten (*yijian* 遺簡) by the editors in 1998 is added. Photographs of the verso sides of a few slips from the Guodian Manuscripts “Zun de yi” 尊德義 and “Cheng zhi wen zhi” 成之聞之, showing slip numbers, are also added. For the Wangshan Manuscripts, pictures provided in *Heji* mainly consist of new photographs taken with an infrared camera, allowing the production of high-resolution and high-contrast images. As a result, the ancient graphs are easier to read than in the pictures

2 Jingmen shi bowuguan 荆門市博物館, ed., *Guodian Chu mu zhujian* 郭店楚墓竹簡 (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 1998).

published before.³ However, it should be noted that some slips were damaged after their first publication, so consulting earlier editions remains useful in a few cases. According to the information about the length of the slips published in the 1995 edition, pictures provided in the Wangshan volume of *Heji* are a bit larger than the original manuscripts. Traditional photographs and infrared photographs are both provided for documents from Jiudian M56, whereas only traditional photographs are available for those from Jiudian M621. When both formats are presented for one slip, the slip number is underlined by a wavy line (i.e., “1”) for infrared pictures. Comparisons between traditional photographs taken years ago and infrared photographs taken more recently also make it possible to notice damage or deformation of the original slip. This reminds us of the fragile nature of these ancient manuscripts and that reliable pictures are essential to preserve their heritage. In the last volume of *Heji*, dedicated to the Baoshan Manuscripts, a mix of traditional and infrared photographs has also been used. Earlier editions of Baoshan’s slips—some over 70 cm long—required stitching together three photographs per slip due to technical limitations, leaving visible seams. *Heji* appears to have eliminated this flaw.

Heji preserves the original numberings of the slips and generally follows the original slip order. But in a few cases, when there is consensus among specialists, a new slip sequence has been applied for both the pictures and transcription. We find reordered slips sequences for several of the Guodian Manuscripts, such as “Cheng zhi wen zhi” 成之聞之, “Zun de yi” 尊德義, “Liu de” 六德, and “Yucong si” 語叢四, but some have also been reordered from among the Leigudun and Baoshan collections. The Geling Manuscripts constitute an exception. The sequence in *Heji* is very different from that used in the archaeological report where it was first published, and also differs from the one in Song Huaqiang’s monograph.⁴ This reorganization, based on the dates, the slips format, the content of the text and the calligraphy, is more coherent and makes some of the texts more intelligible. However, it is regrettable that this new ordering of the slips did not include modifying their

- 3 See Hubei sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo 湖北省文物考古研究所 and Beijing Daxue zhongwenxi 北京大學中文系, eds., *Wangshan Chu jian* 望山楚簡 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1995) and Hubei sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo, ed., *Jiangling Wangshan Shazhong Chu mu* 江陵望山沙塚楚墓 (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 1996).
- 4 See Henan sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo 河南省文物考古研究所, ed., *Xincai Geling Chu mu* 新蔡葛陵楚墓 (Zhengzhou: Daxiang chubanshe, 2003) and Song Huaqiang 宋華強, *Xincai geling Chu jian chutan* 新蔡葛陵楚簡初探, in *Chu di chutu Zhanguo jiance yanjiu* 楚地出土戰國簡冊研究, vol. 6, edited by Chen Wei (Wuhan: Wuhan Daxue chubanshe, 2010).

original catalog numbers. Doing so, slips numbers do not follow any regular order anymore and giving the number of a slip does not allow reader to find it easily in this book. This choice also made comparison with former publications quite uneasy. Creating a new numbering and providing a concordance table, as Song Huaqiang did in his book, could have been a good solution to this problem.

While the transcription published in *Heji* corresponds mainly to that of the *Shisi zhong*, differences exist, especially in the later volumes. One reason is that the editors paid more attention to the link between the original graphs and their modern counterparts, and so they partly moved away from the initial idea of a transcription using standard Chinese characters. This is particularly obvious in the last Baoshan volume. Some differences can also be found in the readings followed by the editors, as reflected by the characters placed in brackets in the transcription. Finally, more modifications can be observed in the notes. This first concerns references to academic works published since 2009, but it also frequently includes references to earlier studies that were absent from the *Shisi zhong* edition.

In summary, the six volumes of the *Chudi chutu Zhanguo jiance heji* collection mark a new step in the study of Chu manuscripts, much as the *Qin jiandu heji* 秦簡牘合集 has done for Qin manuscripts.⁵ The *Heji* edition serves as a valuable reference for scholars of Chu manuscripts, offering updated transcriptions, notes, and clearer photographs—both traditional and infrared—that enhance accessibility for non-specialists. Specialists will also appreciate its rigorous scholarship and high-quality images, particularly for corpora like Leigudun, which previously suffered from technical limitations.

5 See Wuhan Daxue Jianbo yanjiu zhongxin 武漢大學簡帛研究中心, Hubei sheng bowuguan 湖北省博物館 and Hubei sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo, eds., *Qin jiandu heji* 秦簡牘合集 (Wuhan: Wuhan Daxue chubanshe, 2014).