

History as a Guide to the Netherworld: Rethinking the *Chunqiu shiyu*

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Between 1972 and 1974 Chinese archeologists excavated three tombs of Han 漢 dynasty (206 B.C.E.–220 C.E.) nobles at the site of Mawangdui 馬王堆, in the suburbs of Changsha, the capital of Hunan Province. The excavation of tomb no. 3 yielded, aside from other precious artifacts, numerous silk manuscripts, as well as several texts written on bamboo and wooden slips. Some of these manuscripts, particularly two copies of the *Laozi* 老子 and the so-called Huang-Lao 黃老 texts attached to these copies, have been extensively studied in China, Japan and in the West, while others have drawn significantly less scholarly interest.¹ One of these partly neglected works is a text named by the editorial team *Chunqiu shiyu* 春秋事語 [Chunqiu affairs and speeches; hereafter *CQSY*], which comprises sixteen brief anecdotes that deal with events of the Chunqiu 春秋 period (722–453 B.C.E.).²

In comparison with the hundreds of studies of other Mawangdui texts, the *CQSY* has remained all but neglected; the three decades after its initial publication have yielded no more than a dozen articles about this manuscript. An initial discussion was spurred by Xu Renfu's 徐仁甫 provocative assertion that the *CQSY* must have predated the *Zuo zhuan* 左傳 (hereafter the *Zuo*) and that it was utilized by the latter's compiler; this assumption allowed Xu to revitalize the long abandoned theory as to the Han provenance of the *Zuo*. Xu's arguments triggered a heated academic discussion that yielded some of the best studies about the dating and authenticity of the *Zuo*, but in the course of this discussion the *CQSY* was

This research was supported by the Israel Science Foundation (grant no. 726/02–1). I am also indebted to Gil Raz, Irene Eber, and to the *JCR* reviewers for their insightful comments and useful suggestions.

¹ The Mawangdui tombs were identified as belonging to the family of Li Cang 利蒼, Marquis of Dai 戴侯; the manuscript-yielding tomb no. 3 belonged to Li Cang's son. For some of the major English studies of the Mawangdui manuscripts, see, e.g., Henricks, *Lao-tzu*; Peerenboom, *Law and Morality*; Yates, *Five Lost Classics*. Many important studies are summarized by Paola Carrozza in her "Critical Review." Medical manuscripts from Mawangdui are discussed in Harper, *Early Chinese Medical Literature*.

² Hereafter all the dates are Before Common Era unless indicated otherwise.

largely forgotten.³ Except for a few in-depth studies, most scholars who deal with pre-imperial history have remained indifferent toward the *CQSY*.⁴

This apparently puzzling neglect becomes understandable after a careful reading of the manuscript, a reading which may become a source of disappointment rather than inspiration for many scholars. Historically speaking, the *CQSY* anecdotes add little if any substantive information about the life of Chunqiu states, as most of them merely summarize earlier narratives from the *Zuo zhuan* and other received texts.⁵ Literarily, the *CQSY* fares badly in comparison with the received texts: it does not match the accuracy of the *Zuo*, the elegance of the *Guoyu* 國語, or the ideological commitment of the *Gongyang zhuan* 公羊傳. The contribution of the *CQSY* to the history of Chinese political thought is similarly negligible; most political discussions recorded in this text are disappointingly shallow. The first researcher of the text, Zhang Zhenglang 張政浪, expressed his frustration with the *CQSY* when he suggested that it was just a “school textbook” aimed at children’s political education.⁶ Although later scholars of the text were more lenient in their evaluations, some of Zhang’s disdain may be justified, as I shall try to show in the first section below.

The readers’ disappointment with the *CQSY* as a historical text notwithstanding, this manuscript may be more interesting than first impression suggests. The present study proposes an alternative explanatory framework for the *CQSY*. Rather than considering its merits or lack thereof as historical or philosophical text, I would like to suggest that this text must be understood in the context of the religious views of the late Zhanguo 戰國 (453–221) to early Han period. Namely, a possible aim of the *CQSY* compilers was not to teach political wisdom but to provide the reader with a guide to the netherworld. Its heroes should be judged not as paragons of wisdom or folly, but as victims of injustice, persons whose violent deaths led them to new, posthumous careers.

A School Textbook? *CQSY* as Historical Text

The discovery and first publication of the *CQSY* coincided with the late phase of the Cultural Revolution, when the ideological imperatives of the “criticize Lin Biao, criticize Confucius” campaign dictated a negative attitude toward texts associated with Confucius

³ For Xu’s arguments, see his “Mawangdui Hanmu boshu *Chunqiu shiyu*” and “Lun Liu Xin zuo *Zuo zhuan*.” For the major replies to Xu’s arguments, see Hu, “*Zuo zhuan* de zhenwei” and Zhao, “*Zuo zhuan* bianzhuan kao.”

⁴ The major studies of the *Chunqiu shiyu* (in the sequence of their appearance) are Zhang, “*Chunqiu shiyu*”; Zheng, “*Chunqiu shiyu* jiaoshi”; Li, “Boshu *Chunqiu shiyu*”; Yoshimoto, “*Shunjū jigo*”; Pian, “Boshu *Chunqiu shiyu* yu *Guanzi*”; Wu Rongzeng, “Du boshu ben *Chunqiu shiyu*”; several other publications are mentioned in Yoshimoto, “*Shunjū jigo*,” 37.

⁵ Only anecdote no. 2 adds heretofore unknown information about the conflict between the state of Southern Yan 南燕 and the state of Jin 晉. For a summary of the *CQSY* content, see the Appendix.

⁶ See Zhang, “*Chunqiu shiyu*,” 37–38.

孔子 (551–479) and his followers. Hence, the pejorative attitude demonstrated by Zhang Zhenglang in his designation of the *CQSY* as “a school textbook produced by some poorly educated teacher” derives primarily from political and not necessarily scholarly reasons.⁷ Yet pejorative language notwithstanding, Zhang Zhenglang, unlike most later researchers, correctly outlined the major problems of the *CQSY*: its inaccuracy, poor organization, and general lack of sophistication. These demonstrable problems, which I shall explore further below, indicate to my mind that the compiler of the *CQSY* was preoccupied neither with presenting a historical narrative, nor with providing his audience with novel political analysis; his interests lay elsewhere.

The *CQSY* was compiled in the second half of the third century B.C.E., and most if not all of its narratives derive from earlier sources, particularly the commentaries to the Lu 魯 *Chun qiu* 春秋 [Spring and autumn annals], the *Zuo zhuan*, the *Gongyang zhuan* and the *Guliang zhuan* 穀梁傳.⁸ The *CQSY* fares badly, however, in comparison with its predecessors. First, it is much shorter and lacks any pretension to comprehensiveness. Second, its structure is haphazard and the arrangement of its anecdotes does not follow any observable principle: neither chronological as in the *Chun qiu*-related texts, nor geographical as in the *Guoyu* or the later *Zhanguo ce* 戰國策. Actually, what we have is a mixture of unrelated stories that cover the period from 722 to 453 B.C.E., and refer, even if briefly, to almost every important Chunqiu state, from Qin 秦 in the northwest to Wu 吳 and Yue 越 in the southeast (see details in the Appendix).

The third major problem of the *CQSY* is its disregard of historical accuracy. The text never mentions dates of events, and supplies few if any relevant details that would help the reader to understand the historical setting of an anecdote. In some cases, the *CQSY* information is notoriously erroneous. For instance, its fifth anecdote opens with a sentence: “Lord Xian of Jin wanted to obtain Sui Hui; Wei Zhouyu requested to summon him [Sui Hui].”⁹ The depicted event occurred in 614. However Lord Xian of Jin 晉獻公 (r. 676–651) died in 651, while in 614 the Jin 晉 ruler, Lord Ling 晉靈公 (r. 620–607), was only seven or eight years old. Definitely, neither Lord Xian nor Lord Ling could have played a role in summoning the fugitive official Sui Hui (Shi Hui 士會) from Qin. Indeed, the *Zuo* explains in great detail that the plan to summon Sui Hui was adopted by the six high ministers of Jin, and the lord had no role in this decision.¹⁰ A possible explanation for this confusion is that the *CQSY* compiler relied on Qin sources that were less precise in dealing with the events of Jin; but in any case it is clear that he made few if any efforts to check the reliability of his information.

⁷ See Zhang, “*Chunqiu shiyu*,” 37.

⁸ For the dating of the *CQSY* and its reliance on earlier sources, see Yoshimoto, “*Shunjū jigo*,” 41–45; cf. Li “*Boshu Chunqiu shiyu*.” On the parallels between *Chunqiu shiyu* no. 16 and the *Guanzi* “*Da Kuang*” 大匡 narrative, see Pian, “*Boshu Chunqiu shiyu yu Guanzi*.”

⁹ 晉獻公欲得隧會也，魏州餘請召之 (*CQSY*, no. 5, p. 7).

¹⁰ See Yang, *Chunqiu Zuozhuan zhu* (hereafter the *Zuo*), Wen 13, pp. 594–596.

Thus, the *CQSY* is not a reliable source of information about Chunqiu history. But maybe it should be treated, in Ronald Egan's words, not as "moralistic and rhetorical history" but just as "philosophy and rhetoric in historical setting"?¹¹ After all, neglect of historical accuracy is not unique to the *CQSY* but reflects a general trend in Zhanguo historiography. Beginning in the early Zhanguo period, court scribes lost their erstwhile monopoly on the compilation of historical texts; they were outnumbered and largely replaced in this function by statesmen and thinkers who used real or imagined historical accounts to promote their political agendas. Such aspects of Chunqiu historiography as accuracy, emphasis on proper dating and richness of details were largely sacrificed for the sake of didactic clarity.¹² The structure of the *CQSY* anecdotes resembles that of anecdotes scattered throughout other Zhanguo texts, such as the *Zhanguo ce* or several chapters of the *Han Feizi* 韓非子. This being so, the evaluation of the *CQSY* should not follow the rigid historiographic parameters of the *Zuo zhuan* but must focus instead on the didactic value of the manuscript.

How can we estimate the didactic appeal of the *CQSY*? Let us compare it with the masterpiece of didactic historiography, which likewise deals with the events of the Chunqiu period, namely the *Guoyu* [Speeches of the states].¹³ Like the *CQSY*, the *Guoyu* comprises numerous anecdotes that deal with the affairs of Chunqiu states. Unlike the *Zuo*, the *Guoyu* concentrates not on the affairs themselves but rather on the policy suggestions and remonstrance by wise statesmen, who criticize the immoral or erroneous behavior of rulers and their aides, and suggest a proper course of action. The *Guoyu* usually supplies a brief verification that elucidates the correctness of the remonstrance, providing the reader with clear proof of the speaker's sagacity. How does the *Chunqiu shiyu* measure in comparison?

The structure of the *CQSY* is akin to that of the *Guoyu*: each of its anecdotes contains a short speech, either remonstrance or "plan" [*mou* 謀], or a critical evaluation of an event by a contemporary or by a later personality, usually followed by the verification of the speaker's sagacity.¹⁴ Although the *CQSY* preserves a higher ratio of straight narration to quoted speech than the *Guoyu*, the speech remains the pivotal part of the text. However, the content of these speeches is quite different. A reader would search in vain for the in-depth political analysis of the *Guoyu* or the originality and candor of the *Zhanguo ce*. The major characteristic of the speeches is their banality: they usually caution the statesmen not to arouse resentment, not to humiliate rivals, not to provoke the enemy's anger, and so on.¹⁵ This lack of deep political insights might have been one of the reasons for Zhang Zhenglang's pejorative attitude toward the *CQSY*.

¹¹ See Egan, "Narratives in the *Tso Chuan*," 351.

¹² For a detailed discussion about the diminishing reliability of Zhanguo historiography, see Pines, "Speeches and the Question of Authenticity."

¹³ For the analysis of the *Guoyu*, see Pines, *Foundations of Confucian Thought*, 39–45; Schaberg, *Patterned Past*, *passim*.

¹⁴ Remonstrance appears in nos. 1, 2, 4, 8, 9, 12 and 14; evaluations in nos. 6, 7, 11, 13, 15 and 16; planning in nos. 3, 5 and 10.

¹⁵ For the detailed analysis of the *CQSY* speeches' content, see Yoshimoto, "*Shunjū jigo*," 45–49.

Aside from being shallow in comparison with other contemporary texts, the didactic value of the *CQSY* remonstrance is further undermined by an unsophisticated structure of some of the anecdotes. In several cases the author forgets to supply a verification of the speaker's sagacity, and the reader who lacks prior knowledge of the depicted event is entirely at a loss. For instance, in the first anecdote an anonymous speaker criticizes Lord Hui of Jin 晉惠公 (r. 650–637) for executing his erstwhile ally, Li Ke 里克. The speech ends without any conclusion; it is only from other sources that we learn of Lord Hui's ultimate failure due to the resentment and mistrust his treachery aroused among his subordinates. In the third anecdote, in which the arrogant Jin leader, Zhi Bo 知伯, is criticized for his haughtiness, only partial verification of the criticism's correctness is given: the anecdote mentions that Zhi was betrayed, but does not inform the reader of his immediate defeat and murder. Although the destiny of Zhi Bo was widely known to readers of *Zhanguo* and later times, it is strange that the author did not add a sentence that could have perfectly served his didactic goals. The absence of verifications here and in anecdote no. 12 suggests that a didactic message, like historical accuracy, was not of primary importance for the *CQSY* author.

To further elucidate the evident carelessness of the *CQSY* compiler we shall analyze one of the anecdotes that deals with the fall of the head of the Zheng 鄭 government, Bo You 伯有 (Liang Xiao 良霄). In the following translation in square brackets I supplement the missing or illegible characters using the *Zuo zhuan* account; my additions appear in braces.

□□ Bo You □□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□
[sent Gongsun Hei 公孫黑 to Chu 楚. Hei refused to go, saying: "Zheng and Chu are long-time enemies, to send me there] is to kill me!" Finally, he did not heed. Bo You also was not worried. He returned to his □ [mansion?] □ [in the mansion] there was a closed chamber; he hung the bells and was continuously drinking wine.

Min Zixin heard about it and said: "Bo You will certainly reach {a bad end}. I have heard: □□ [the best thing] is to serve the ruler without crimes, to treat inferiors without arousing resentment, to consult the worthy and to yield to the able, not to □ those who are in similar position, protect □ with virtue. Second to it is to clarify the preparations and to await the enemy's {moves}. □□□ [Gongsun Hei?] is resentful, and yet {Bo You} dispatched the prince {Gongsun Hei} to the mission: this means to employ a person of a similar rank in order to resolve inter-state enmity. □ to grant □□□□. When your orders are not implemented but □□ humiliate the ruler □□□□□□□□□□□□, to hang the bells and continuously drink wine is to enrage {the enemy's} heart, and to grant him a chance. It is not □ [wisdom?]. When all three {virtues} are lost and one still knows no fear, □□□□□□□□□□."

[Zheng nobles attacked and killed] Bo You, and appointed Zi Chan a chancellor.

□□伯有□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□是殺我也。隧弗聽。伯有亦弗芒，自歸其□，□有閉室，縣（懸）鐘而長飲酉（酒）。閔子辛聞之曰：伯有必及矣。吾聞之，□□事君無罪，禮下無怨（怨），議賢讓能，同立（位）之人弗與□，□德

守也。其次明備以候適（敵），□□□有怨（怨）而使公子往，是以同立（位）之人鮮（解）邦惡也。□贈□□□□也。令有不行而□□咎君□□□□□□□□□□縣（懸）鐘而長欲酉（酒），是怒其心而藉（藉）之間，非□也。三者皆失而弗知畏，□□□□□□□□伯有，而使子產相。¹⁶

Yoshimoto Michimasa 吉本道雅 has shown that this anecdote in the *CQSY* is based on the earlier and much more detailed account in the *Zuo zhuan*.¹⁷ Unfortunately, the abridgement of the *Zuo* text seems to have been performed by an amateur, and some of the basic details of the narrative were distorted or lost altogether. Thus, before the sentence marked above by italics, the *CQSY* omits an essential part of the narrative. In the current version of the *CQSY* the sentence “finally, he did not heed” becomes meaningless: it refers neither to Bo You (who is introduced as the subject of the next sentence), nor to Gongsun Hei, whose speech precedes it. The mystery is solved through the *Zuo* account, which explains that after Gongsun Hei expressed his resentment about the mission to Chu, the alarmed Zheng nobles assembled at Bo You’s mansion to pacify the rival leaders; the sentence “finally, he did not heed” should refer to Gongsun Hei’s neglect of the demands to refrain from violent action.¹⁸ This is not the only inaccuracy in the *CQSY* text, which would be partly incomprehensible without the parallel text of the *Zuo zhuan*.¹⁹

Let us turn now to the didactic heart of the anecdote, namely Min Zixin’s 閔子辛 prediction of a bad end for the careless Bo You. Speeches of contemporaries or of later wise thinkers are one of the major interpretative devices in Chunqiu-Zhanguo historical texts. Among these speeches, predictions are particularly popular: the speakers’ foreknowledge allows a reader to assess the future course of events and to learn which policy choices were acceptable. Predictions are widely employed in the *Zuo* and *Guoyu*; the *CQSY* also readily employs this device.²⁰

The problem of Min Zixin’s prediction is that it was not made by a participant in the events but by a later observer. Although the name Min Zixin does not appear in received texts, scholars unanimously identify him as Confucius’s disciple, Min Ziqian 閔子騫.²¹ Evaluation by a later worthy is not uncommon, but not in the form of a short-term prediction. In the *Zuo zhuan*, *Guoyu*, and other texts, the narrators’ remarks or comments by Confucius and his

¹⁶ *CQSY*, no. 6, p. 9; in supplementing the missing characters I largely follow Zheng, “*Chunqiu shiyu jiaoshi*,” 28–30.

¹⁷ See Yoshimoto, “*Shunjū jigo*,” 39.

¹⁸ See *Zuo*, Xiang 29, p. 1168.

¹⁹ For instance, Gongsun Hei is referred to as prince (Gongzi 公子 instead of Gongsun 公孫)—an obvious carelessness on the author’s part.

²⁰ For the role of speeches in general and predictions in particular as interpretive devices in Chunqiu-Zhanguo historiography, see Schaberg, *Patterned Past*, *passim*; cf. Pines, *Foundations of Confucian Thought*, 14–53; and *idem*, “Speeches and the Question of Authenticity.”

²¹ See Zhang, “*Chunqiu shiyu*”; Li, “*Boshu Chunqiu shiyu*”; Wu Rongzeng, “*Du boshu ben Chunqiu shiyu*,” 35–36.

disciples focus on the post-factum analysis of the events, but never predict short-term developments. This is perfectly understandable; a reader would not be impressed by “foreknowledge” possessed by a person who lived long after the discussed events occurred. Min Zixin’s prediction (“Bo You will certainly reach {a bad end}”) is, therefore, didactically valueless. It is furthermore unlikely that Min Zixin actually “heard” [wen 聞] of Bo You’s behavior: Bo You’s misconduct was not a rumor circulated during Min’s lifetime but a long bygone story that could have been learnt, but not “heard.” This is not a singular case: two other *CQSY* anecdotes (nos. 11 and 15) cite Min Zixin’s “prediction” of the future outcome of the events of 712 and 660 B.C.E. respectively, of which he reportedly “heard.” It seems that the *CQSY* compiler attributed to Min Zixin stock evaluations of the events of the past without concerning himself with either the plausibility or interpretative value of such an attribution.

This careless attitude toward a speech, the major didactic device, further undermines the assertion that the *CQSY* is a “textbook” of political thought. From a textbook we would expect far greater accuracy and a more elaborate didactic message. The *CQSY* author paid little attention either to the factual setting of his anecdotes, or to the didactic value of the speeches. What then was the major goal of combining sixteen stories from the Chunqiu period in a single manuscript? I believe, that the answer to this question will be found neither in the field of historiography, nor in that of political thought, but rather in the field of religion.

Injustice and Violent Deaths—*CQSY* as a List of Ghosts

Earlier I mentioned that there is no observable organizing principle behind the selection of materials in the *CQSY*: the manuscript covers events separated by generations and by thousands of kilometers. Beyond this diversity we may distinguish, however, a common feature of the selected events: all of the *CQSY* anecdotes depict cases of despicable treachery and of political folly. Yet as the above discussion suggests, the selection of these cases does not serve the author in promoting high moral values. Why then did he collect these divergent stories?

Aside from the possible didactic value, we may discern another unifying thread of the *Chunqiu shiyu*, namely the pitiable fates of its protagonists. Of sixteen anecdotes, eleven (nos. 1, 3–6, 9, 11–12, 14–16) depict the deaths of the persons who were murdered, assassinated or executed by their adversaries; the tragedy is aggravated by the fact that the murderers invariably were erstwhile patrons, subordinates or colleagues of the victims. Although many of the victims bore a certain responsibility for their deaths by behaving haughtily or stupidly, this does not diminish the tragedy of their betrayal.

Five other anecdotes deal with inter-state conflicts and do not explicitly mention individual deaths; I shall analyze their content later. Let us first deal with the eleven stories of violent deaths. Their concentration in the manuscript is not incidental. Although we talk of an age of inter-state and social turmoil, when violence and bloodshed were common, this does not explain the *CQSY*’s focus on a certain type of violence. Namely, each of the victims in the eleven “personal” stories was not just murdered or assassinated, but also betrayed. Let us

survey briefly several cases. Li Ke (no. 1), a Jin minister, masterminded the enthronement of Prince Yiwu 公子夷吾, future Lord Hui. Ungrateful Lord Hui had Li Ke executed immediately after assuming power. Zhi Bo (no. 3) was betrayed by his allies, the heads of the Han 韓 and Wei 魏 lineages, on the eve of the decisive victory over his arch-enemy, Zhao Xiangzi 趙襄子; he was summarily murdered, and the triumphant Zhao Xiangzi made a wine cup of Zhi Bo's skull. Hui Bo 惠伯 of Lu (no. 4) was summoned back to his home country by a falsified order of his lord, which he dared not disobey; he was consequently murdered by his rival, Prince Sui 公子遂. Xiao Chao 曉朝 of Qin (no. 5) paid a high price for his wisdom: he discovered the anti-Qin plot of the Jin nobles, but was slandered by his adversaries and summarily executed. Bo You (no. 6), whom we mentioned above, was attacked and killed by his colleague and formal subordinate, Gongsun Hei, who refused to heed Bo You's orders. Ning Xi 甯喜 of Wei 衛 (no. 9) helped the ousted Lord Xian 衛獻公 (r. 576–559 and 546–544) to return to his state; the lord promised: "state affairs will be managed by the Ning lineage, while I shall maintain the sacrifices." Three years later the treacherous lord ordered the assassination of Ning Xi and expelled the Ning lineage. Prince Pengsheng 公子彭生 of Qi 齊 (no. 16) was ordered by Lord Xiang 齊襄公 (r. 697–686) to kill the visiting Lord Huan of Lu 魯桓公 (r. 711–694); later, to quell Lu protests, Lord Xiang ordered the execution of Pengsheng. There is no need to survey other cases; the common motif is clear enough. All eleven victims were murdered by their former allies or protégés, and the betrayal certainly caused strong resentment, which might have continued even after death.

It is the degree of injustice and humiliation inflicted upon them that caused some of the *CQSY* protagonists to develop a new, posthumous career. Pengsheng of Qi was among the first to avenge his death. The *Zuo* tells under year 686:

Winter, the twelfth month. The lord of Qi went on an outing to Gufen, and then hunted at Beiqiu. He saw a large boar. His attendants said: "It is Prince Pengsheng." The lord angrily said: "Pengsheng dares to show himself!" He shot [the boar]. The boar stood like a man and wailed. The lord was terrified, he fell down in his carriage, injured his foot and lost a shoe.

冬，十二月，齊侯游于姑棼，遂田于貝丘。見大豕。從者曰：「公子彭生也。」公怒，曰：「彭生敢見！」射之。豕人立而啼。公懼，隊于車。傷足，喪屨。²²

The frightened lord returned home only to be immediately assassinated by his rivals. It is not clear what Pengsheng's ghost contributed to the assassination, but the two stories are closely connected, which may reflect a belief that the miserable death of Lord Xiang was related to the injustice he inflicted upon Pengsheng. Yet while Pengsheng's ghost might have played a minor role in the events in Qi, another of the *CQSY* protagonists, Bo You, was much more active after his death. For the year 535, eight years after Bo You's tragedy, the *Zuo* tells:

²² *Zuo*, Zhuang 8, p. 175.

The people of Zheng were frightening each other with Bo You, saying: "Bo You has arrived"—and then everybody would be running, not knowing where to go. In the year when the penal code was cast in bronze [536], in the second month, somebody dreamt of Bo You walking, wearing arms; [Bo You] said: "on the *renzi* day I shall kill [Si] Dai 駟帶; next year on the *renyin* day I shall also kill [Gongsun] Duan 公孫段."²³ On the *renzi* day, Si Dai died, and the people of the capital were further terrified. On the *renyin* day of the month when Qi 齊 and Yan 燕 achieved peace [the first month of the next year, 535], Gongsun Duan died and the capital dwellers were more terrified. In the next month, [the head of the government,] Zi Chan established Gongsun Xie²⁴ and [Bo You's son,] Liang Zhi [as hereditary nobles] to appease [the spirits]; then [the ghost attacks] stopped.

鄭人相驚以伯有，曰：「伯有至矣！」則皆走，不知所往。鑄刑書之歲二月，或夢伯有介而行，曰：「壬子，余將殺帶也。明年壬寅，余又將殺段也。」及壬子，駟帶卒，國人益懼。齊、燕平之月，壬寅，公孫段卒，國人愈懼。其明月，子產立公孫洩及良止以撫之，乃止。²⁵

Bo You's extraordinary posthumous activities as well as Zi Chan's way of handling the problem demands an explanation, and the *Zuo* indeed supplies two alternative rationalizations of the events:

[Zi Chan's deputy,] Zi Dashu asked for the reasons [for Zi Chan's action]. Zi Chan answered: "When a ghost [*gui* 鬼] has a place to return [*gui* 歸], he will not become evil; therefore I arranged for him a place to return." Dashu asked: "Why did you also appoint Gongsun Xie?" Zi Chan answered: "To please [the people]. Although these persons [Bo You and Gongsun Xie's father, Zi Kong] acted unrighteously, I still plan to please [their followers]. The policy maker may sometimes violate [regulations] in order to achieve [people's] gladness. Without gladness, there is no trust, without trust, the people would not follow [me]."

子大叔問其故。子產曰：「鬼有所歸，乃不爲厲，吾爲之歸也。」大叔曰：「公孫洩何爲？」子產曰：「說也。爲身無義而圖說，從政有所反之，以取媚也。不媚，不信。不信，民不從也。」²⁶

²³ Both Si Dai and Gongsun Duan participated in the assault on Bo You in 543.

²⁴ Gongsun Xie was a son of a Zheng prime-minister, Zi Kong, who was murdered in 554; Zi Kong's allotment was seized by the rival nobles, and his descendants therefore lost their noble rank.

²⁵ *Zuo*, Zhao 7, p. 1291.

²⁶ *Zuo*, Zhao 7, p. 1292.

Zi Chan's explanation of his action may leave room for doubt as to his motives. On the one hand, he evidently sought a way to appease Bo You's evil ghost by reestablishing his ancestral temple (to which Bo You's soul would "return"). On the other hand, he might have used popular panic as a pretext for reestablishing two former aristocratic lineages, which would improve his standing vis-à-vis other nobles.²⁷ Perhaps this lack of clarity regarding Zi Chan's motives encouraged the *Zuo* compiler to add another explanation for Zi Chan's way of handling the crisis of Bo You's ghost:

When Zi Chan arrived at Jin, Zhao Jingzi asked him: "Could Bo You really become a ghost?" Zi Chan replied: "He could. [What appears after] an initial transformation of human life [i.e., death] is called a *po* 魄 soul; after the *po* appears, its *yang* 陽 part is named *hun* 魂. When [the deceased] consumed plenty of exceptional things [in his life], his *hun* and *po* are powerful; therefore their spiritual essence may achieve the level of divine numinousness. Even when ordinary men and women meet violent death, their *hun* and *po* can make use of other people and they are considered excessive and evil [ghosts]; how much more so for Liang Xiao [Bo You]? He is the descendant of our former ruler, Lord Mu, the grandson of Zi Liang, the son of Zi Er, all of whom were high ministers of our humble state, holding power for three generations. Although Zheng is not rich, and as the saying goes, it is 'a tiny state,' still a person whose [ancestors] held the reins of power there for three generations would have consumed a huge amount of things, and absorbed most exceptional ones. Besides, his lineage is large, he relied on rich [resources], and moreover he met a violent death—is not it appropriate that he would be able to become a ghost?"

及子產適晉，趙景子問焉，曰：「伯有猶能爲鬼乎？」子產曰：「能。人生始化曰魄，既生魄，陽曰魂。用物精多，則魂魄強，是以有精爽至於神明。匹夫匹婦強死，其魂魄猶能馮依於人，以爲淫厲，況良霄—先君穆公之胄、子良之孫、子耳之子、敝邑之卿、從政三世矣。鄭雖無腆，抑諺曰『蕞爾國』，而三世執其政柄，其用物也弘矣，其取精也多矣，其族又大，所馮厚矣，而強死，能爲鬼，不亦宜乎！」²⁸

Zi Chan's speech is one of the most important theoretical discussions of ghosts in pre-imperial literature, and it may be crucial for understanding the agenda of the *CQSY* compilation. Two major reasons cause the appearance of the ghosts. First, a violent death can cause even commoners to attain posthumous malicious spiritual power. Second, the ghost's power is dependent on his or her original living conditions. Rich aristocrats who "consumed plenty of exceptional things" during their lives are more powerful after their deaths than mere

²⁷ For more about Zi Chan's policy, particularly his relations with other aristocrats, see Pines, "The Search for Stability," 31–38.

²⁸ *Zuo*, Zhao 7, p. 1292–1293.

commoners; hence, the chance of a high-ranking noble becoming a ghost is relatively high; and his violent death further increases this probability. We shall return later to Zi Chan's suggestion that the posthumous power of a rich person may elevate him to a position of "divine numinousness" [*shen ming* 神明]; first we must investigate additional reasons for becoming a ghost. A third reason is added in the *Mozi* 墨子: namely, the feeling of resentment by the deceased:

King Xuan of Zhou executed his servant Du Bo, who was innocent. Du Bo said: "My lord kills me although I am innocent; if the dead are insentient, then let it be. If the dead are sentient, then in less than three years I shall cause my lord to know this!" After three years, King Xuan assembled the overlords to hunt at Pu fields; he was accompanied by several hundred chariots and several thousand attendants, who filled the fields. At midday, Du Bo [arrived], riding in a plain chariot drawn by a white horse, wearing crimson headgear, holding a crimson bow and a crimson arrow. He chased King Xuan and shot him in the chariot, [and the arrow] pierced the king's heart and broke in his back. The king fell down in his chariot, slumped over his quiver and died.

周宣王殺其臣杜伯而不辜，杜伯曰：「吾君殺我而不辜，若以死者爲無知則止矣，若死而有知，不出三年，必使吾君知之。」其三年，周宣王合諸侯而田於圃田，車數百乘，從數千人滿野。日中，杜伯乘白馬素車，朱衣冠，執朱弓，挾朱矢，追周宣王，射之車上，中心折脊，殪車中，伏弔而死。²⁹

Du Bo's turning into a ghost to avenge his innocent death was not incidental, but reflected a common pattern of posthumous revenge. Elsewhere *Mozi* tells a similar story about an innocent Yan 燕 minister Zhuang Ziyi 莊子儀 who was also executed by his ruler and whose ghost avenged his death.³⁰ Of course we should remember that *Mozi*'s stories are ideologically biased, and are aimed to serve his thesis of the ghosts' and spirits' righteousness, but the idea that injustice inflicted on a person may be avenged posthumously evidently reflected a broadly shared popular belief. We have therefore three major reasons for a person becoming a powerful ghost: his erstwhile affluence, violent death and being a victim of injustice. The protagonists of the eleven *CQSY* "personal" anecdotes answer all three criteria. Each of them was either an overlord or a high-ranking noble, each of them met a violent death, and each was betrayed and had good reason to feel himself a victim of injustice. Two of the *CQSY* protagonists, Pengsheng and Bo You, became famous heroes of Han and later ghost literature.³¹ The posthumous career of other protagonists might have been forgotten during the Han-period transformation of the Chinese pantheon (of which see below), but the above evidence suggests that they might have developed ghostly careers as well.

²⁹ Wu Yujiang, *Mozi*, "Ming gui xia" 明鬼下, 31.337.

³⁰ Wu Yujiang, *Mozi*, "Ming gui xia," 31.338.

³¹ See Poo, "Ghost Literature," 46–47.

The eleven anecdotes surveyed above suggest that the common thread of the *CQSY* narrative is the depiction of the last events in the life of the ghosts-to-be. How then are the other five anecdotes related to this agenda? Clearly, their protagonists share many common features with the heroes of the previously surveyed stories. While anecdote no. 2 deals with largely unknown events, is only partly legible, and it is difficult to understand who the hero is, other stories deal with well-known personalities, whose destiny did not differ from that of other victims of folly or betrayal. Lord Huan of Qi 齊桓公 (r. 685–643) (no. 7) is the only *CQSY* hero who died a natural death, but he was deeply humiliated immediately thereafter: his heirs began a war of succession, and failed to provide him with a timely burial so that “the maggots that grew in his body crawled into the courtyard.”³² Xun Xi 荀息 (no. 8) masterminded the international successes of the state of Jin, but in 651, upon the death of his patron, Lord Xian, he became involved in a succession struggle, his protégés were murdered, and he had to commit suicide. A powerful leader, Lord Xiang of Song 宋襄公 (r. 650–637) (no. 13), became a victim of his own chivalry: he refused to attack the unprepared Chu army, and as a result Song troops were defeated, and Lord Xiang was mortally wounded. Finally, Bo Pi 伯嚭 (d. 473), a head of the Wu government, paid a high price for trusting foreign leaders. While in anecdote no. 10 he is lauded for heeding the remonstrance of Confucius’ disciple, Zi Gong 子貢, and releasing Lord Chu of Wei 衛出公 (r. 492–480 and 476–456), whom Bo Pi had earlier arrested, on another occasion his trust of the foreigners ended in a personal and political disaster. Bo Pi was too lenient to the arch-enemy of Wu, the state of Yue, whose energetic King Goujian 越王句踐 (r. 496–465) wiped out the state of Wu in 473 and had Bo Pi executed.³³

The miserable fate of the major protagonists of the five “death-less” anecdotes is similar to that of the heroes of the earlier-surveyed eleven stories. Although the latter five anecdotes (except no. 13) do not tell us directly of their protagonists’ end, this specification might not have been required: the fate of such personalities as Lord Huan of Qi, Lord Xiang of Song, Xun Xi, or Bo Pi was well known to an educated Zhanguo or early Han reader. That the anecdotes highlight successful or morally laudable actions of their protagonists aggravates the sense of tragic injustice inflicted on these persons later in their lives, and emphasizes thereby their future feeling of resentment, which, as we have seen, is one of the pre-conditions for developing an afterlife career.

Thus, the unifying thread of the *CQSY* appears to be its focus on the personal tragedies of eminent Chunqiu personalities. The choice of the narratives that deal with the victims of political treachery or folly discloses the reason for the text’s compilation. The *CQSY* is neither a textbook of political wisdom, nor a historical survey of the Chunqiu period. Rather, it is a sketchy introduction to the lives of tragic heroes, whose violent deaths might have caused

³² See Chen, *Lüshi chunqiu*, “Zhi jie” 知接, 16.3, 969–970.

³³ For the destiny of the state of Wu and of Bo Pi personally, see the collection of earlier narratives in *Wu wenhua yanjiu cujin hui*, *Gouwu shi ji*, 78–140.

them to develop posthumous careers as ghosts, or, as the discussion below suggests, as netherworld officials.

Exorcism or a Guide to the Netherworld?

In the above discussion we have seen that the *CQSY* anecdotes focus on the individuals who met violent or otherwise humiliating death, and that the circumstances of their deaths might have caused them to become ghosts; actually, in two cases this posthumous career of the *CQSY* protagonists is depicted in the *Zuo zhuan*. I shall now consider what the compiler's aims were in selecting these stories. In a recent insightful study, Poo Mu-chou has suggested that the Six Dynasties (220–589 C.E.) *zhiguai* 志怪 [anomaly accounts] stories might have served, aside from pure entertainment, as a kind of exorcistic texts.³⁴ Poo's suggestion may serve as a convenient departure point for our further discussion. Is it possible that the stories about Chunqiu men-turned-ghosts also served exorcist goals?

At first sight this may seem an unpromising categorization. After all, in marked distinction from the later *zhiguai* stories, the *CQSY* does not deal explicitly with the ghosts and does not provide the reader with useful information about how to deal with them. The posthumous career of the *CQSY* protagonists is implied but is never mentioned directly, and the text does not teach how to protect oneself from supernatural phenomena. In this regard it differs markedly not only from the *zhiguai* stories, but also from such masterpieces of Zhanguo demonology as the “Jie” 詰 text unearthed at tomb no. 11 at Shuihudi 睡虎地, Yunmeng 雲夢, Hubei province.³⁵ What is then the *CQSY*'s relevance to exorcism?

A possible answer is that the identification of the spirits served itself as an important exorcist technique. Long before the Zhanguo age, visual identification of anomalous phenomena was considered a proper means of reducing their potential harm. The *Zuo* tells of the legendary sage Yu 禹 who had produced a caldron on which the images of “a hundred [strange] creatures” [*bai wu* 百物] were cast in order “to distinguish the divine from the evil,” so that the people would no longer be hurt by evil creatures.³⁶ Eventually, along with visual identification, additional means of dealing with the demonic were added, of which identifying the spirit's name became particularly important.

The sacrality of the name [*ming* 名] in early Chinese culture is of relatively early origin, as is manifest in the Zhou tradition (if not earlier) of tabooing personal names.³⁷ This custom

³⁴ Poo, “Ghost Literature,” 43–64.

³⁵ See Shuihudi Qin mu zhujian zhengli xiaozu, 212–216; cf. a convenient edition of this text in Wu Xiaoqiang, *Qin jian rishu jishi*, 128–148. For the analysis of the “Jie” text, see Harper, “A Chinese Demonography”; Lian, “Yunmeng Qin jian.”

³⁶ *Zuo*, Xuan 3, pp. 669–670. For interpreting “*bai wu*” as “[strange] creatures,” see Campany, *Strange Writing*, 103–104.

³⁷ Han rationalizations of this sacrality resulted in attempts, recorded in such texts as *Chunqiu fanlu* 春秋繁露 and *Shi ming* 釋名, to associate the name [*ming* 名] with its cognates *ming* 命 [command,

apparently reflects an ancient belief in potential damage to a person that may result from revealing his name. Similarly, knowledge of the names of evil spirits and monsters became an efficient way of safeguarding oneself from their malice. An Eastern Han (25–220 C.E.) exorcistic spell unearthed at Gaoyou 高郵, Jiangsu Province, says:

He who died on the *yisi* day has the ghost-name “Heavenly Light.” The Heavenly Emperor and Sacred Teacher already know your name. Quickly go three thousand *li* away! If you do not go immediately, the □□ [monster?] of the Southern Mountain is ordered to eat you. Hurry as prescribed by the law and ordinance.

乙巳日死者，鬼名為天光。天帝神師已知汝名，疾去三千里，汝不即去，南山□□令來食汝，急急如律令。³⁸

Here the malicious deity was neutralized precisely due to its loss of anonymity: as its name became known to Heaven’s Emperor, the “Heavenly Light” ghost lost its power. In the later periods the importance of identifying the spirits’ names as the means of preventing their malice increased. The fourth century C.E. *Baopuzi* 抱朴子 states:

Somebody asked about the method of avoiding the hundreds of ghosts of the mountains, rivers and temples. *Baopuzi* answered: “The *Dao* Masters frequently wear tallies of Heavenly water, as well as ambassadors’ tallies of the Supreme August made of bamboo, and also Laozi’s left-side tally, as well as preserve the true unity³⁹ and reflect upon the generals of three brigades, so that the ghosts dare not approach the humans. Second to this is discussing the registers of the hundreds of ghosts, to learn the names of all the ghosts under Heaven, and bringing *The Chart of the White Lake* and *Records of the Nine Caldrons*—then the multiple spirits will retreat by their own will.”

或問曰：辟山川廟堂百鬼之法。抱朴子曰：「道士常帶天水符、及上皇竹使符、老子左契，及守真一、思三部將軍者，鬼不敢近人也。其次則論百鬼錄，知天下鬼之名字，及白澤圖、九鼎記，則衆鬼自覺卻。」⁴⁰

destiny] and *ming* 明 [numinous clarity, brightness]; see Lian, “Yunmeng Qin jian,” 35–36. For the early tradition of tabooing personal names, see Wang Jian, *Zhongguo gudai bihui shi*, 1–30.

³⁸ Reprinted in Lian, “Yunmeng Qin jian,” 36; I follow Poo Mu-chou’s translation (“Ghost Literature,” 51).

³⁹ *Shou zhen yi* 守真一 here presumably refers to a form of *shou yi* 守一, which is usually translated as “embracing the One,” “meditating on the Monad” or simply “concentrating.” See discussions in Campney, *To Live as Long as Heaven and Earth*, 246–247n422; Robinet, *Taoist Meditation*, 123–124. I am indebted to Clarke Hudson for referring me to these studies.

⁴⁰ Wang Ming, *Baopuzi*, “Deng she” 登涉, 17.308.

The tradition of naming a spirit in order to subdue it remained intact well into the late imperial period as a powerful means of exorcism.⁴¹ In light of it we may understand the potential exorcistic value of the *CQSY* which informs its readers not only of the ghosts' names, but also of the events that led to their posthumous career; this information might have been very useful for a person who encountered a ghost.

The exorcistic explanation of the *CQSY* is therefore plausible, but in my eyes still insufficient, because it does not explain why the text focuses exclusively on political personalities from the Chunqiu period. As we learn from multiple other sources, ghosts in pre-imperial and early imperial religion were neither exclusively souls of deceased celebrities, nor were they necessarily anthropomorphic.⁴² Why then did the *CQSY* neglect other kinds of ghosts for the sake of emphasizing former political leaders?

To answer this question we may turn back to Zi Chan's speech cited above. Zi Chan argued: "When [the deceased] consumed plenty of exceptional things [in his life], his *hun* and *po* are powerful; therefore their spiritual essence may achieve the level of divine numinousness."⁴³ The term "divine numinousness" [*shen ming* 神明] is semantically close to the Chunqiu designation of high-ranking "numinous deities" [*ming shen* 明神]. Unlike commoners, whose unsatisfied souls could become only "excessive and evil [ghosts]," the deceased nobles could develop a better afterlife career. Aside from intimidating their former adversaries, as Pengsheng and Bo You did, the slain celebrities could have attained higher positions in the netherworld.

While we have only scant information about pre-imperial views of the world of the dead, some clues allow us to conclude that it was bureaucratically organized, and in all likelihood, patterned after the bureaucracy in the world of the living. Reports to the netherworld authorities inserted into the tombs suggest a high degree of bureaucratization of the underworld realm, and its close similarity to the imperial officialdom.⁴⁴ But who staffed the netherworld bureaucracy? Luckily, some relevant information may be obtained from the unique "resurrection" text unearthed from the late Zhanguo tomb at Fangmatan 放馬灘, Gansu. This short text, the earliest example of the *zhiguai* story, tells of a man, named Dan 丹, who stabbed his enemy in the year 300, and, fearing punishment, committed suicide. Dan's patron, a Wei 魏 general Xi Wu 犀武, who thought that Dan was not yet fated to die,

⁴¹ See further discussion in Lian, "Yunmeng Qin jian," 36–37.

⁴² As Poo Mu-chou's statistics suggest, only a half of the ghosts depicted in the "Jie" text are anthropomorphic, while others are zoomorphic or even originate from inanimate objects (*In Search of Personal Welfare*, 80).

⁴³ Cf. p. 110–111 above.

⁴⁴ The best, albeit brief discussion of the Han netherworld is, to my mind, that of Poo, *In Search of Personal Welfare*, 165–177. For earlier transformations of religious beliefs that evidently predated changes in the views of the netherworld and the afterlife, see Falkenhausen, "Sources of Taoism." For further evidence of bureaucratization of Zhanguo religion, see Harper, "Resurrection" and "A Warring States Prayer"; for the Eastern Han world, see Seidel, "Traces of Han Religion." For the reports to the netherworld officials, see Huang, "Yunmeng Longgang," 152–155.

“made a declaration to the Scribe of the Director of the Life-Mandate, Gongsun Qiang 公孫強,” who then intervened and indeed succeeded in restoring Dan to life.

The Fangmatan text has been extensively discussed by Donald Harper⁴⁵ and will not be dealt with here; our discussion will focus exclusively on the netherworld official Gongsun Qiang. Qiang was a minister from the late Chunqiu state of Cao 曹; the *Zuo* mentions that a man of Cao dreamt that Gongsun Qiang’s ascendancy would mark the approaching demise of his state, which indeed happened. Qiang was involved in international intrigues aimed at bolstering Cao’s prestige; but ultimately his plans failed, and in 487 he was captured and executed by the Song 宋 invaders who then annexed the state of Cao.⁴⁶ His destiny is akin to that of many other statesmen mentioned throughout the *CQSY*: while partly responsible for his fall, Gongsun Qiang was among those who certainly felt strong resentment after his death. He might have developed a ghostly career, but eventually he enjoyed better luck in the netherworld where he was appointed to the position of Scribe of the Director of the Life-Mandate [*siming shi* 司命史].

Another example of an impressive posthumous career of a former ghost is the post-mortem promotion of the aforementioned Du Bo. Du Bo, a Zhou noble who was unjustly executed by King Xuan and whose ghost avenged his death, became a deity in the state of Qin, which inherited the territory of the Western Zhou royal domain. Sima Qian’s 司馬遷 (c. 145–90) “Treatise on Sacrifices” [*Feng shan shu* 封禪書] mentions that Qin sacrificed to Master Du (i.e., Du Bo), who was “a deity of the smallest ghosts.”⁴⁷ Du Bo like Gongsun Qiang belonged to a group of nobles whose high rank and unjust death provided them with the degree of “divine numinousness” in the afterlife that sufficed to secure new netherworld (in the case of Gongsun Qiang) or otherwise divine (in the case of Du Bo) careers. This case further indicates the lack of a clear-cut distinction between ghosts and netherworld officials, which is not surprising in light of the later Chinese religion in which the lines between deities and demons remained blurred.⁴⁸

The posthumous careers of Du Bo and Gongsun Qiang were not isolated cases. A recently discovered list of early Han deities from tomb no. 5 at Huchang 胡場, Jiangsu, provides us with numerous bureaucratic titles of Han deities, who were in all likelihood deified humans.⁴⁹ Sima Qian mentions among the deities to whom Qin performed sacrifices certain “nine ministers” and “fourteen ministers.” Regretably, the identities of these former dignitaries had been irretrievably lost, as even the earliest commentators of the *Shiji* could not

⁴⁵ Harper, “Resurrection.”

⁴⁶ See *Zuo*, Ai 7–8, pp. 1644–1647.

⁴⁷ 最小鬼之神也 (*Shiji* 28.1375). Sima Zhen 司馬貞 (fl. 745 C.E.) interprets this passage differently: “Although Du Bo’s ghost [*gui*] is small, he still possesses numinous power [*shen ling* 神靈].”

⁴⁸ For the similarity between deities and ghosts in late imperial religious practice in China, see Shahar and Weller, “Introduction,” 11, *et passim*.

⁴⁹ See the list in Yangzhou bowuguan and Hanjiang xian tushuguan, “Jiangsu Hanjiang,” 17.

identify them.⁵⁰ Probably during the four centuries of the Han dynasty, profound changes occurred in the composition of the netherworld bureaucracy, with most of Chunqiu and Zhanguo personalities being replaced with younger and more powerful deities. The later Daoist netherworld bureaucracy preserved only the most eminent pre-imperial personalities, such as one of the *CQSY* protagonists, Lord Huan of Qi, who was appointed to maintain the register of life and death for the Three Offices.⁵¹ Lesser dignitaries, the details of whose lives and deaths had been largely forgotten, were submerged by Qin, Han and later deities, and only occasional archeological discoveries, such as that of Fangmatan, allow us to restore certain names of the members of the pre-imperial and early imperial underworld staff. If my assertion about the content of the *CQSY* is correct, this short text would substantially enrich our knowledge of pre-imperial netherworld bureaucrats.

The Mortuary Context

My final step in completing the religious reinterpretation of the *CQSY* focuses on analyzing the mortuary context of this text. Many scholars habitually analyze unearthed manuscripts as if they were merely a part of the deceased's library, paying little attention to their location within the tombs; and such neglect often results in misinterpretation of the funerary text's content.⁵² To understand the unearthed texts properly, we must remember that these texts, in Anna Seidel's words, "were destined for the eyes of the gods of the soil and the netherworld and are thus essentially of a religious character."⁵³ Unfortunately, aside from Seidel's study, which focused on the Later Han texts, no systematic attempt has been made heretofore to analyze the religious nature of the unearthed manuscripts, although many scholars, particularly Donald Harper and Michael Loewe, have made insightful comments in this regard.⁵⁴ While the scope of this essay prevents me from dealing comprehensively with this complex issue, several preliminary observations may be made, which would allow us to

⁵⁰ See *Shiji* 28.1375 and the commentators' glosses on p. 1376.

⁵¹ For some Chunqiu and Zhanguo personalities who became netherworld officials, see Tao Hongjing's 陶弘景 (c. 452–536 C.E.) *Zhen gao* 真誥, *juan* 16, pp. 12–13.

⁵² For instance, scholars frequently misunderstand the content of letters to the netherworld authorities because they choose to interpret them as ordinary bureaucratic communication (see Huang, "Jiangling Gaotai," and *idem*, "Yunmeng Longgang").

⁵³ See Seidel, "Traces of Han Religion," 24.

⁵⁴ Both Harper and Loewe suggest that the texts might have served to establish the spiritual prestige of the deceased. Harper furthermore opines that the sanctity of the written word might have enhanced the value of the buried texts as a means of "magically protecting the deceased from demonic depredations," while Loewe hypothesizes that the texts also could have been buried for enjoyment or practical post-mortem use by the tomb occupant. See Harper, "Warring States, Qin and Han Manuscripts", 227–228, particularly note 18; Loewe, "Wood and Bamboo Administrative Documents," 190–191.

more accurately assess the nature of the *CQSY* and perhaps of other unearthed manuscripts as well.

Zhanguo and Han ritual compendia are silent on the custom of burying manuscripts with the deceased. This practice apparently remained highly idiosyncratic, since only a tiny faction of the excavated Zhanguo to Han tombs yielded any texts. Nonetheless, the rapid advance of archeological excavations has resulted by now in approximately eighty reports about text-yielding tombs from that age, and this amount allows us to attempt a preliminary classification of the unearthed texts, locating them within the context of the contemporary ideas of the netherworld and the afterlife.⁵⁵

The custom of interring bamboo or wooden texts appeared first in the Zhanguo period as part of the overall changes in religious perceptions and practices. The tombs of that period replicate the houses of the deceased and contain real utensils used by the deceased in their daily life or their ceramic imitations [*ming qi* 明器]. The furnishing of the tombs unequivocally suggests that the world of the dead was conceptualized as similar to—but also clearly separate from—the world of the living.⁵⁶ The Fangmatan resurrection text, like the aforementioned reports to the netherworld authorities, suggests that the dead were ruled by a netherworld bureaucracy, patterned after the mundane bureaucratic machine; the posthumous hierarchy evidently also paralleled or at least resembled the earthly one. The function of the texts in the netherworld was also similar to their role in mundane life: most of them were aimed either to facilitate the deceased's contacts with netherworld officials, or to enhance his prestige in the afterlife hierarchy.

Despite the immense variety of the unearthed documents, their content may be conveniently classified into four broad categories. The most frequent, albeit the shortest texts, are those prepared specifically for the needs of entombment. These include inventories of funerary items [*qian ce* 遣策] which appear in forty-six out of eighty tombs surveyed for the present study; and letters to the netherworld authorities, in which the deceased reports his arrival to the new location, which have so far been found in six tombs from the late Qin period on. The funerary destination of these texts is obvious and does not require further discussion here.⁵⁷

The second group consists of technical texts which contain useful knowledge for everyday activities. These comprise almanacs, divination and sacrifice records for the occupant of the tomb, other divination manuals and hemerological texts, medical and medico-magical texts, geomancy-related materials, recipes and so on (altogether found in twenty-nine

⁵⁵ I have benefited enormously from the publication of the comprehensive list of twentieth-century text discoveries by Enno Giele (<http://www.lib.uchicago.edu/earlychina/res/databases/decm/sites.html>). Aside from his extremely convenient list, I have consulted Pian and Duan, *Ben shiji yilai chutu jianbo*, and also incorporated data from the recently published excavation reports (e.g., Hunan sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiu suo, “Yuanling Huxishan”).

⁵⁶ See Falkenhausen, “Sources of Taoism,” and *idem*, *Chinese Society*, Chapter 7.

⁵⁷ The *qian ce* are surveyed in Ma, *Jianbo*, 95–100; for the letters to the netherworld authorities, see Huang, “Yunmeng Longgang.”

tombs). Religious texts, which inform the reader about demons, deities and netherworld officials, also belong to this group. Donald Harper suggests that some of these texts may have been entombed to show the deceased's versatility in occult knowledge, thereby enhancing his posthumous prestige.⁵⁸ This explanation is certainly valid but it may be further modified.

Most of the excavated "technical texts" apparently served the deceased in his mundane life, and the reason for their entombment was the belief that they would be similarly useful in the afterlife. Just like in the real world, the deceased had to navigate his way in the netherworld and to coordinate his post-mortem actions with the ways of the cosmos. Not only was the structure of the netherworld bureaucracy almost indistinguishable from its earthly counterpart; also, other aspects of mundane existence were paralleled in the tomb, which was often furnished as a micro-cosmos that reflected mundane life and concerns. It is thus not surprising that the texts aimed at facilitating mundane existence were valued in the afterlife as well. Just like the living, the deceased would be concerned about choosing a proper day for action, foreseeing the future, curing illnesses, eating well and avoiding malevolent spirits and deities. The technical texts were aimed at resolving these problems.

The third group of texts is more explicitly connected with the mundane career of the deceased. Tombs of many officials yield samples of administrative, legal or military documents that are clearly connected to the owner's occupation. In all likelihood these documents were directed at bolstering the deceased's status in the afterlife: they could prove his administrative abilities and perhaps guarantee him a place in the netherworld bureaucracy. The documents of this group appear in twenty-five of the eighty tombs, suggesting that this might have been a relatively common way for an official to prepare for a posthumous career.

The fourth group of mortuary texts comprises philosophical, historical, and military writings, which occur in ten out of eighty surveyed tombs. It is possible that some of these texts were inserted for purely personal or sentimental reasons; the *Hou Han shu* tells of a devoted *Ru* 儒, Zhou Pan 周磐 (48–121 C.E.), who asked his sons on the eve of his death to prepare a copy of the "Yao dian" 堯典 chapter of the *Shu jing* 書經 and to place it, along with scribe's utensils, a knife and a brush, in front of his coffin, "to show that I did not forget the Way of the sages."⁵⁹ Such piety was evidently considered exceptional, and in most cases the texts were not prepared specifically for the entombment but were taken from among those that had long been in possession of the deceased; some texts might have been produced decades before their insertion into the grave.⁶⁰ In all likelihood the motivation for the entombment of these texts was similar to that of inserting administrative records into the graves of the deceased officials: namely, bolstering the tomb occupant's posthumous prestige by emphasizing his expertise. Since textual expertise was highly valued in the courts from the Zhangguo period onwards, it is not surprising that experts on philosophy, history and military

⁵⁸ See Harper, "Warring States, Qin and Han Manuscripts," 227–228.

⁵⁹ See *Hou Han shu* 39.1311.

⁶⁰ See for instance Donald Harper's discussion of the differences in the dating of mortuary manuscripts in tomb no. 3 at Mawangdui (*Early Chinese Medical Literature*, 19–21).

thought might have hoped for an appropriate appointment in the netherworld due to their skills.⁶¹

Aside from the texts that can be classified as belonging to one of these four groups, there are rare examples of texts that were entombed exclusively due to their sentimental value for the deceased owner. The most obvious example of these are two letters by Qin conscripts, whose addressee did not want to part from them even after death. Another probable example of such an emotionally-laden text is the “Shen wu fu” 神烏賦 [An ode of the divine crow] found in a tomb of a married couple in Yinwan 尹灣, Jiangsu; the ode speaks of preserving fidelity to one’s spouse in life and death.⁶² These rare examples will not be discussed here, since they are evidently unrelated to the *CQSY*.

To which of the above categories does the *CQSY* belong? The conventional answer places it in the fourth category, which actually comprises most of the manuscripts found in tomb no. 3 at Mawangdui. The problem with this assumption, however, is the visible difference between the degree of sophistication of the *CQSY* and that of other manuscripts from this group found in the tomb. The occupant of the tomb, the son of Li Cang 利蒼, Marquis of Dai 軫侯, was not a poor literatus, nor was he a patron of poor literati, whose most prestigious possession would be a putative “school textbook.” It is almost inconceivable that the owner of rare and sophisticated manuscripts such as the copies of the *Laozi*, the *Zhouyi*, the Huang-Lao texts, and sophisticated historical writing such as the *Zhanguo zonghengjia shu* 戰國縱橫家書,⁶³ would try to bolster his post-mortem prestige with the help of a carelessly prepared collection of Chunqiu anecdotes. It is much more likely, therefore, that the *CQSY* should belong to the second group of texts, which is also broadly represented in tomb no. 3—namely, the “technical” texts aimed at improving the deceased’s chances for success in the netherworld. The *CQSY* belongs then to the same tradition as the Fangmattan resurrection story or the Hanjiang list of deities, and its aim was to introduce the deceased to some of the personalities he might meet in the netherworld (and whom he possibly should avoid there).

I am aware of possible objections to the interpretative framework I have suggested for the *CQSY*. One may wonder, for instance, why the compiler used a quasi-historical narrative instead of an outright religious message, or why he never mentioned explicitly the posthumous career of his protagonists. This way of conveying a religious message through a

⁶¹ Interestingly, the greatest variety of non-technical texts has been discovered in the tombs of early Han princes [*wang* 王] and marquises [*hou* 侯] (aside from Mawangdui, similar large-scale discoveries have been made in the tomb of the Marquis of Ruyin 汝陰侯 at Shuanggudui 雙古堆, Fuyang 阜陽, Anhui, and the tomb of Liu Xiu 劉修, Prince Huai of Zhongshan 中山懷王, at Ding Xian 定縣, Hebei). It is possible that it is not so much that the deceased were extraordinarily versatile, but that they patronized other scholars, and by inserting the texts associated with their protégés manifested their desire to continue similar activities in the afterlife.

⁶² For these texts see respectively *Yunmeng Shuihudi Qin mu bianxie zu*, 25–26; and Qiu, “Shen wu fu.”

⁶³ For analysis of the *Zhanguo zonghengjia shu* unearthed at tomb no. 3 along with the *CQSY*, and a discussion of its unique historical value, see the collected essays in *Zhanguo zonghengjia shu*.

different medium is not unique, however. In a recent study Lydia Thompson has shown that late Han literati occasionally employed images of popular Confucian heroes in an unusual function as tomb guardian deities.⁶⁴ In her case the designer's neglect of historical accuracy in the presentation of traditional personages was one of the major reasons for Thompson's reinterpretation of the tomb images as heroes of religious rather than conventional ethical discourse. Is it possible that a similar phenomenon can be observed for the *CQSY* as well?

The evidence presented above encourages me to answer this question affirmatively. The prevalent interpretations of the *CQSY* as a historical or historical-philosophical compilation cannot adequately explain its obvious problems, such as persistent inaccuracies, careless compilation, and the explicitly shallow didactic message. In the current stage of our knowledge of pre-imperial religious beliefs, despite the revolutionary impact of the archeological discoveries of the recent decades, the lacunae are still too large, and inevitably my interpretation must be partly speculative. Yet the aim of this study is to encourage a reappraisal of the text, and I am content if by adding a religious angle to the discussion of the *CQSY* we can move away from the prevalent practice of interpreting it in the framework of later "Confucian" tradition.

⁶⁴ See Thompson, "Confucian Paragon or Popular Deity?"

Appendix: Summary of CQSY Anecdotes

#	State(s)	Date	Basic Content	Victim(s)
1	Jin 晉	650	Lord Hui 晉惠公 plans to execute his former aide, Li Ke 里克.	Li Ke; later, Lord Hui
2	Jin, Yan 燕	?	(Southern) Yan overcomes Jin and becomes too confident in its power; later defeated by Jin.	?
3	Jin	453	Zhi Bo 知伯 allies with Wei 魏 and Han 韓 lineages, attacks Zhao Xiangzi 趙襄子; is betrayed by his allies.	Zhi Bo
4	Lu 魯	609	Prince Sui 公子遂 enthrones Lord Xuan 魯宣公 after the death of Lord Wen 文公; annihilates his major rival, Hui Bo 惠伯.	Hui Bo
5	Jin, Qin 秦	614	Jin nobles plan to entice the fugitive Sui Hui 隧會 back to Jin; Xiao Chao 曉朝 of Qin reveals their plans, but is mistrusted, betrayed and executed.	Xiao Chao
6	Zheng 鄭	544–543	The prime-minister, Bo You 伯有, fails to impose his authority on Gongsun Hei 公孫黑; is attacked and killed by Hei and Hei's followers.	Bo You
7	Qi 齊, Cai 蔡	657	The Cai wife of Lord Huan of Qi 齊桓公 teases her husband; is returned to Cai and remarries; Lord Huan attacks Cai and destroys it.	Lord Huan (?)
8	Jin, Yu 虞, Guo 虢	658	Xun Xi 荀息 assists Lord Xian of Jin 晉獻公 in obtaining support of the state of Yu in the attack against Guo; the lord of Yu is enticed to support invasion; after Guo is conquered, Jin eliminates Yu as well.	Xun Xi (?)
9	Wei 衛	547–546	Ning Xi 甯喜 agrees to restore the ousted Lord Xian of Wei 衛獻公, who promises to preserve the political power of the Ning lineage; soon thereafter Xi is attacked and killed by the lord's order.	Ning Xi
10	Wu 吳, Wei 魯	483	During the inter-state meeting, Wu envoys arrest Lord Chu of Wei 衛出公; Zi Gong 子貢 of Lu convinces the Wu leader, Bo Pi 伯駘, to release the arrested lord.	Bo Pi (?)
11	Lu	722–712	Lord Yin of Lu 魯隱公 who rules in the name of his half-brother, the future Lord Huan 魯桓公, declines an offer to get rid of Lord Huan; later, Lord Huan believes that Lord Yin is plotting against him, and orders the assassination of Lord Yin.	Lord Yin
12	Song 宋	683–682	Lord Min of Song 宋閔公 ridicules his aide, Chang Wan 長萬; Chang Wan retaliates by assassinating the lord.	Lord Min of Song; later, Chang Wan
13	Song, Chu 楚	638	Lord Xiang of Song 宋襄公 refuses to attack the unprepared Chu army; is attacked by the Chu soldiers, defeated and mortally wounded.	Lord Xiang of Song
14	Wu, Yue 越	544	The men of Wu mutilate a Yue captive and turn him into a guardian of a Wu ship; the prisoner attacks and stabs the king during the royal visit to the ship.	King Yucai 余蔡 of Wu
15	Lu	662–660	Succession struggles in Lu after the death of Lord Zhuang 魯莊公; Prince Qingfu 慶父 assassinates the legitimate heir, Ziban 子般; enthrones and later kills Lord Min 魯閔公.	Prince Ziban, Lord Min of Lu
16	Qi, Lu	694	Lord Huan of Lu discovers during a visit to Qi that his wife has betrayed him with her half-brother, Lord Xiang of Qi 齊襄公; Lord Xiang orders Prince Pengsheng 公子彭生 to kill Lord Huan; later, to quell the Lu protests he orders the execution of Pengsheng.	Lord Huan of Lu, Prince Pengsheng

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