

- 44 Wyatt and Aroonrut, *Chiang Mai Chronicle* (note 6), 41–47.
- 45 Tainturier, *Foundation of Mandalay by King Mindon* (note 40), 41.
- 46 Donald K. Swearer, “Signs of the Buddha in Northern Thai Chronicles,” in *Embodying the Dharma: Buddhist Relic Veneration in Asia*, ed. David Germano and Kevin Trainor, 145–62 (157) (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2004).
- 47 Donald K. Swearer, “Part I. Interpretation,” in Swearer and Sommai, *The Legend of Queen Cāma* (note 33), 3–34 (10).
- 48 Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane*, trans. William R. Trask (Orlando: Harcourt, 1987), 11.
- 49 Peter Skilling, “Geographies of Intertextuality: Buddhist Literature in Pre-modern Siam,” *Aséanie* 19 (2007): 91–112 (98–101).
- 50 Justin McDaniel, “Two Buddhist Librarians: The Proximate Mechanisms of Northern Thai Buddhist History,” in *Buddhist Manuscript Cultures*, ed. Stephen C. Berkwitz, Juliane Schober, and Claudia Brown, 124–39 (137) (London: Routledge, 2009).

CHAPTER 5

Shifting Modes of Religiosity

Remapping Early Chinese Religion in Light of Recently Excavated Manuscripts

ORI TAVOR

RECENT YEARS HAVE WITNESSED a surge in publications concerning newly discovered manuscripts from the Warring States period (453–211 BCE). The discovery of such excavated materials, which offer us fresh and unmediated access to previously unseen sources, has prompted a call for a reassessment of previously held convictions regarding the intellectual world of this constitutive era in Chinese history. In this essay, I will draw on two texts from the Shanghai Museum manuscript corpus in an attempt to reassess the world of religious discourse in early China and reconstruct the evolution of two competing modes of religiosity accompanied by distinct theories of ritual efficacy.

The Shanghai Museum corpus includes more than 1,200 inscribed bamboo strips purchased in 1994 by the Shanghai Museum on the Hong Kong antiquities market.¹ So far, nine transcribed volumes have been published by the Shanghai Museum Press between 2001 and 2012. Written in archaic script that was identified as originating in Chu [楚], an ancient southern state located in the area of modern-day Hunan and Hubei provinces, these manuscripts, which include alternative versions of texts that were preserved in the received tradition, such as the *Classic of Changes* [*Yijing*, 易經, also known as the *Zhouyi*, 周易] and many previously unknown texts, were assigned the approximate date of 300 BCE. The strips, which are uniform in width but range in length from 24 to 27 centimeters, were originally bound together through pared notches. Given that the cords themselves did not survive, and since unlike earlier Warring States manuscripts from the Chu

region, such as the Guodian [郭店] corpus, the Shanghai Museum texts were not archaeologically excavated, organizing the strips into coherent textual units proved to be a long and highly problematic process.²

Following an initial surge of enthusiasm among the sinological community, a growing number of scholars have begun raising some questions regarding the value of studying such unprovenanced manuscripts.³ In this article, I will argue that despite the difficulty in reading these sources as coherent textual units, when read against the backdrop of the received sources, the ideas articulated in them can help us obtain a more nuanced picture of early Chinese intellectual discourse. In this particular case, when read alongside the writings of the Confucian philosopher Xunzi, the Shanghai manuscripts reveal a lively debate between two modes of religiosity: a practical theology associated with a mechanical approach to ritual and a new elite mode of religiosity that traced the power of ritual to a moral theology accompanied by a fixed body of ritual practices. Studying these excavated materials is thus crucial in understanding the intricate changes that took place in the religious world of pre-imperial China and also reveals new avenues of continuity regarding the role of early Chinese religious discourse in the formation of organized religion.

Early Chinese Religiosity and the Spring and Autumn Ritual Reorientation

Recent archaeological excavations suggest that one of the main forms of ritual activity in early Chinese religion involved interaction with ancestral spirits and other divine powers through the mediums of sacrifice and divination. Excavations in sites associated with the Bronze Age cultures of Erlitou [二里头, first half of the second millennium BCE] and Erligang [二里岡, mid-second millennium BCE] point to the existence of standardized ritual practices concerned with the proper disposal of the dead. In the Anyang site [安陽], the location of the capital of the late Shang Dynasty [商, ca. 1200 BCE], archaeologists have unearthed large caches of turtle plastrons

and bovine scapulae that were used in divination rituals. The inscriptions carved on these oracle bones reveal the existence of a complex ritual system accompanied by a specialized vocabulary and strict schedules.⁴

While oracle bone inscriptions contain much information about the rituals of Shang religion, they lack any overt theoretical discussions on the nature, origin, and function of these practices. This, however, does not mean that Shang religion was a religion devoid of any theological framework. It merely indicates that the religion lacked an explicit theology. In fact, the divinatory and sacrificial practices described in the oracle bones correspond to what Jan Assmann refers to as an embedded implicit theology. As opposed to an explicit theology, which operates on a reflective distance from religious practice, explaining it on a theoretical level, in an implicit theology, the ritual acts themselves gave meaning to action by categorizing, constellating, and differentiating among various aspects of reality.⁵

Shang religion thus poses a challenge to scholars who wish to unravel the implicit theology embedded in its rituals and present it to the modern reader. In order to facilitate this process, they often resort to modern theories of ritual and sacrifice. Two such influential interpretations of Shang religious practices, David Keightley's depiction of Shang religion as the "making of ancestors" and Michael Puett's notion of the "give-and-take" [*do ut des*] mentality, are heavily influenced by the commerce model of sacrifice first introduced by French sociologist Marcel Mauss. According to Mauss, sacrifice follows the same rules as gift exchange and thus can be seen as a binding contract between man, the gift giver, and deity, the receiver. By offering a victim in the form of a sacrifice, the sacrificer purchases the powers of the deity for a given price.⁶ While the details of Mauss's model have been criticized, the commerce metaphor and the notion of ritual as a negotiation technique that facilitates communication and exchange between the human and supernatural realms are still used by scholars of religion.⁷

Keightley draws on this model in arguing that the complex ritual system of the Shang reflects a conscious attempt to deal with the capricious nature of the supernatural world through the construction of a standardized bureaucratic religious hierarchy that follows fixed patterns of ritual interaction. This mode of religiosity, he argues, sees the relationship between the

human and the divine as negotiable. By addressing the deceased by their proper name and entering them into the sacrificial schedule, the worshiper is able to take an unpredictable and potentially dangerous ghost and make it into a proper ancestor.⁸

Drawing on Keightley's scheme, Puett describes the religious system of the Shang as one of continuous negotiation in which ritual interactions were used to "influence, mollify, and determine the will of the divine powers, to persuade them to grant assistance and to prevent them from making disasters." Furthermore, this give-and-take mentality was still a fundamental component of Western Zhou Dynasty [周, 1045–771 BCE] religiosity. Western Zhou religious hymns and bronze inscriptions, for instance, were designed to build a proper ancestral pantheon that would work on behalf of the Zhou royal house, while the rituals that accompanied them present an attempt to convince the ancestors to descend to the human world and provide the performer with divine blessings.⁹

During the Spring and Autumn period [770–481 BCE], while the nominal sovereignty of the Zhou kings was still generally accepted, the de facto control over the territories of the Zhou state moved to the hands of local rulers. These sociopolitical changes were accompanied by a shift in the religious sphere, which has been described as a "reorientation away from the ancestors."¹⁰ Although the spirits of the ancestors are still mentioned in Spring and Autumn ritual bronze inscriptions, they are no longer depicted as the addressees of sacrifice or potential givers of aid. The focus of ritual action thus shifts from the veneration of ancestral spirits to the self-panegyric glorification of the living members of the community, and ritual efficacy is depicted as a result of the descendant's own ritually correct behavior.¹¹

The notion of Spring and Autumn "ritual reorientation" has been described as an important initial step in the emergence of a new theory of ritual that found full articulation in the Warring States period. This era is often referred to as the age of the "Hundred Schools of Thought," a time in which new ideas about the self and its relationships with sociopolitical institutions found articulation in a growing corpus of philosophical literature. In the early twentieth century, Western-educated Chinese scholars, influ-

enced by evolutionary models advocated by Victorian anthropologists James Frazer and Edward Tyler,¹² began characterizing the Warring States period as an important junction in which magical and religious modes of thinking gave way to rational philosophical systems such as Confucianism and Mohism.¹³ Despite the eventual demise of the evolutionary model in the second half of the twentieth century, its effects on contemporary interpretations of intellectual discourse during the Warring States period are still palpable.

Yuri Pines, for example, argues that the reorientation in ritual practice in the Spring and Autumn period was accompanied by an intellectual reappraisal of the old Zhou ritual system and the traditional sociopolitical order it represented. Drawing on a variety of received textual sources, Pines describes a process of distillation of certain normative aspects of ritual from a loose set of religious sacrifices to a fully developed idea of a ritual system [*li*, 禮], a set of ethical and sociopolitical guidelines that functioned as the source of political legitimacy and as the means of perpetuating internal social cohesiveness.¹⁴

Pines provides the following account from the *Zuo Commentary of the Spring and Autumn Annals* [*Chunqiu Zuozhuan*, 春秋左传, henceforth referred to as the *Zuozhuan*] in order to substantiate the emerging distinction between the philosophical notion of ritual as a secular set of ethical and social principles and the court rituals associated with the old religion of the Zhou. In this account, when Duke Zhao of Lu [魯昭公, r. 541–510 BCE] is visited by Duke Ping of Jin [晉平公, r. 557–532 BCE], the latter was thoroughly impressed by Zhao's performance of the proper court ceremonies. When he professed his admiration to his advisor Nü Shuqi [女叔齊], Nü replied that Duke Zhao's behavior did not reflect his proficiency in ritual [*li*] but only his knowledge of ceremony [*yi*, 儀], claiming that:

Ritual is that by which [a ruler] protects his State, carries out his governmental decrees and does not lose his people. Now the command over the government [of Lu] is at the hands of the clans, and he [Duke Zhao] cannot take it [from them]. . . . His [royal] house is divided into four parts, and his people get their food from others, not thinking of him or taking any consideration for his future. He

is a ruler whom calamity visits personally, and yet he has no regard to what is proper for him to do. The root and branches of ritual lie in these sorts of things, yet [the duke] fusses over trivial ceremonies as if they were of utter importance. Is it not far from the truth to say that he is good in ritual?¹⁵

According to Pines, this passage clearly indicates that the meaning of *li* as a pattern of governance has overshadowed its religious origins. Moreover, drawing on received sources such as the *Analects* [*Lunyu*, 論語], the *Mencius* [*Mengzi*, 孟子], and the *Mozi* [墨子], Pines argues that the transformation of the semantic field of *li* culminated in the work of the late Warring States thinker Xunzi [荀子, ca. 310–218 BCE], who was able to distill its “pure essence” and finally disassociate *li* from its ties to the Zhou ritual system.¹⁶

Pines’s characterization of this process as a departure from the Zhou religious framework derives from the nature of the primary texts he uses, which are all received sources.¹⁷ Archaeological excavations conducted in the second half of the twentieth century, however, have unearthed a significant number of texts that were never transmitted into the received literary corpus. For scholars of early Chinese religion, the discovery of manuscripts in sites such as Mawangdui [馬王堆], Zhangjiashan [張家山], and Shuihudi [睡虎地] revealed the existence of a flourishing literary tradition composed of technical manuals that offer us a glimpse into the realm of popular religiosity. These texts cover a wide range of topics ranging from self-cultivation manuals to divination and exorcism handbooks. Analysis of these manuscripts suggests that the authors of these texts, namely, astrologers, physicians, diviners, and other ritual specialists who are often grouped together under the rubric of “natural experts,” were active participants in the Warring States intellectual scene; their literature functioned as an important vehicle for the transmission of ideas from popular religion to elite philosophical discourse.¹⁸

The discovery of newly excavated manuscripts has driven leading sinologists to call for a reassessment of early Chinese intellectual history.¹⁹ In the following pages, I will argue that a close reading of two excavated texts from the Shanghai Museum corpus, *Drought of the Great King of Jian* [*Jian*

Dawang Boban, 東大王泊旱] and *Great Drought of Lu* [*Lubang Daban*, 魯邦大旱], reveals the existence of a tension between two types of theology accompanied by distinct theories of ritual efficacy when compared with the backdrop of the received literature. These texts suggest that the Warring States reconceptualization of ritual signaled the emergence of a new moral religiosity that eventually became a fundamental component of Chinese organized religion.

Competing Modes of Religiosity: Two Examples from the Shanghai Manuscripts

The emergence of philosophical disputation in China is often associated with the changing sociopolitical reality of the Warring States period and the rise of a new influential social group known as scholar-officials [*shi*, 士]. This new group viewed civil service as their route to power and influence; and, in most cases, they served as advisors and even high-level functionaries in the governments of the feuding Warring States.²⁰ The emergence of new players in the political arena resulted in an inevitable power struggle between the new aspiring elite and the old guard. Anecdotes of disputes between the two sides, especially criticism directed toward the efficacy of the rain sacrifices associated with the old Zhou religious framework, are abundant in the received literature, such as the following passage from the *Zuozhuan*: “There was a great drought in [the state of] Zheng. [The king] sent three of his officials to perform a sacrifice on Mulberry Mountain. They cut down the trees [for the sacrifice], but it did not rain. Zichan said: “[the goal of] performing a sacrifice on the mountain is to nourish its forests. These [men] have cut down the trees and thus their crime is immense.” He proceeded to take away their official positions and fiefdoms.”²¹ Zichan [子產, also known as Gongsun Qiao 公孫僑, d. 522 BCE] is mentioned throughout the *Zuozhuan*, alongside such figures as Nü Shuqi and Yan Ying [晏嬰, d. 500 BCE], as critics of popular religious ideas.²² Despite the relative abundance of such anecdotes, it is important to note that the

king's instinctive reaction to the drought was to send his ritual specialists to perform a sacrifice on top of the sacred Mulberry Mountain.²³ This suggests that despite Zichan's criticism, the technical give-and-take mentality identified by Keightley and Puett as the dominant theory of ritual efficacy in Shang and Western Zhou religion was still the most natural reaction to a state of crisis in the Warring States period.

The excavated Shanghai manuscript *The Great Drought of Lu* contains a similar narrative of this tension between different modes of religiosity. When a great drought occurred in the state of Lu, Duke Ai [魯哀公, r. 494–468 BCE] summoned Confucius and pleaded for his advice. Confucius, in return, explained that the drought was caused by the duke's failure to practice moral government. When asked for a concrete solution to the problem, Confucius provided the following statement: "The common people only know of the *shuo* rainmaking sacrifice²⁴ [directed towards] the spirits but know nothing of cultivating moral government. Thus, you must be generous in offering jades and silks to the [Spirits of the] Mountains and Rivers and also practice moral government."²⁵ Confucius's recommendation to pursue both courses resonates with his famous assertion in the *Analects* regarding the need to venerate ghosts and spirits but to keep them at a distance.²⁶ The text, however, does not end with that. Upon his return, Confucius reports the case to his disciple Zigong [子貢, 520–446 BCE] and asks for his opinion. Zigong's response is quite surprising:

Practicing moral government, thereby serving Heaven above, this is correct! Lavishly offering jades and silks for the [Spirits of the] Mountains and Rivers, this I cannot endorse. As for mountains, stones are their skin and trees are their people. If the sky does not send down rain, the stones will roast and the trees will die. Their desire for rain is certainly deeper than ours—how can they rely solely on our words [of evocation]? As for rivers, water is their skin and fish are their people. If the sky does not send down rain, the water will dry up and the fish will die. Their desire for water is certainly greater than ours—how can they rely solely on our words [of evocation]?²⁷

Modern scholars, such as Liu Lexian [劉樂賢], attempt to resolve this harsh criticism directed toward Confucius by one of his own disciples by raising the hypothesis that Confucius only suggests the sacrifices to the spirits as a public gesture to pacify the common people who are incapable of understanding the real cause behind the drought: the ruler's failure to practice moral government.²⁸ While Liu's attitude might be dismissed as contemporary Confucian apologetics, his analysis does raise two important points. First, the tension between the natural experts, who sought to perform the rainmaking sacrifices in order to appease the mountain and river spirits, and their opponents, who believed that serving Heaven can only be achieved through moral government, was important enough to be recorded and preserved in this text. Second, this passage confirms that the give-and-take theory of ritual belonged to the realm of popular religion. The newly educated elite, represented in this case by Zigong, sought to criticize this mode of religiosity and replace this implicit practical theology with a new, explicit moral theology based on a devotion to a standardized set of ethico-religious guidelines rooted in cosmic principles.²⁹

So far, based on these passages alone, Zichan's and Zigong's criticism can be understood as representing the process described by Pines as an attempt to distill a normative secular sociopolitical system from a religious framework that had lost its relevance. However, when read against the backdrop of *The Drought of the Great King of Jian*, another excavated text from the Shanghai Museum corpus, an alternative explanation arises. According to this text, when a severe drought fell upon his kingdom, the ruler of Jian, a territory inside the larger southern state of Chu [楚],³⁰ ordered one of his diviners to figure out which deity was responsible for the drought so that they might offer a sacrifice to it in the proper place and stop the drought. The king insisted on participating in the divination process while standing in the blazing sun, and this caused him to fall ill.³¹ Taking his illness as another indicator for the dissatisfaction of the deities, the king was greatly distraught and attempted to persuade his diviners to look for an alternative site for the sacrifice. His idea of performing sacrifices to the mountain and river spirits that resided outside the kingdom of Jian, however, attracted much criticism in the royal court. In order to solve this dispute, the rival

sides sought the advice of the chief minister. After hearing both side of the argument, he responded:

Please go back and convey these words to the king. Tell him that from today he will start to recover from his illness. . . . The king is a good ruler. He did not change the fixed rules of divination for his own sake. You, diviner, control the [sacrifices] to the ghosts and spirits in the state of Chu. You also did not dare to change the fixed rules only for the sake of your ruler thereby creating disorder among the ghosts and spirits. Shang Di, the ghosts, and the spirits are highly discerning. They will surely recognize this. Thus, from this day, the king will start to recover from his illness.³²

Similarly to *The Great Drought of Lu*, this passage suggests that the most natural reaction to a state of drought at the time was to perform a rainmaking sacrifice directed at natural deities. In addition, it also informs us of the structure of these rituals, the identity of the ritual specialists who performed them, and the religious model that underlies them. According to this practical mode of religiosity, the sacrificial procedure begins with a divination designed to ascertain the identity of the responsible deity and locate the appropriate location for the sacrifice. Ritual is thus perceived as a repertoire of techniques placed at the disposal of the ritual specialist in order to create a sacred space in which interaction with the divine is possible. The ultimate success of the sacrifice depends on the ritualist and his ability to use his repertoire to manipulate the deities into reciprocating. This type of trial-and-error style of practical theology associated with Shang and Western Zhou religiosity was still quite pervasive during the Warring States period.³³

As *The Drought of the Great King of Jian* suggests, however, the practical model advocated by natural experts and ritual specialists was criticized by the new, aspiring elite of *shi*, who offered their own model of ritual efficacy focused on piety to a fixed ethical system of practice. Much like Nü Shuqi, Zichan, and Zigong, the chief minister stresses the overall devotion to the system as a whole over the performance of a specific ritual. His reasoning, however, makes it hard to read his argument as a philosophical distillation

indicating a process of secularization. The state of Chu, he argues, has fixed rules about sacrifice. Changing them for the sake of the king's selfish wish for divine blessings will not only harm him politically but will also create chaos in the divine realm. Devotion to this holy fixed system of rituals, however, will not escape the eyes of the High God Shang Di and other supernatural powers.³⁴ These deities will repay such religious piety by healing the king and, by extension, his state. This argument thus reveals the emergence of a moral theology that links the efficacy of sacrifice to a sustained adherence to a strict system of rituals. The fullest and most mature articulation of this model can be found in the writings of Xunzi.

Patterns of the Way: Xunzi and the Question of Ritual Efficacy

Throughout much of Chinese history, the writings of the Confucian thinker Xunzi were rejected by the cultural mainstream.³⁵ In the twentieth century, however, a renewed interest in his writings emerged. The same Western-educated Chinese scholars who associated the Warring States period with a shift from religion to philosophy hailed Xunzi as a staunch critic of religion and the forebear of rationalist thought in China.³⁶ One of the best examples for this attitude is the "Discourse on Heaven" [Tian-lun, 天論] chapter, which is said to be the fullest systematic version of the philosophical skepticism and critical attitude toward popular religion exhibited by *Zuozhuan* thinkers such as Zichan and Nü Shuqi.³⁷ Consider, for example, the following passage: "When stars fall and trees cry, all the people in the state are afraid. They ask: why is this happening? I answer: for no particular reason. Those things occasionally occur due to the transformation of Heaven and Earth and the transformation of *yin* and *yang*. We may be surprised by them, but we should not fear them. Solar and lunar eclipses, unseasonable rains and winds, and dubious sightings of strange stars—these things have been quite common throughout the ages."³⁸ This passage and the "Discourse on Heaven" chapter as a whole are often read as an attack on the practical mode of popular religiosity. Robert Eno, for

example, argues that Xunzi's critique is directed toward the magical mentality exhibited by natural experts such as shamans and other diviners-sorcerers, specifically their claims for transcendental knowledge and ritual authority.³⁹ Edward Machle, however, depicts Xunzi's attempt to differentiate between the ritual system of *li* and superstitious rituals as religiously motivated. In an attempt to discredit Xunzi's image as antireligious, Machle argues that while the latter represent a result-oriented magical mentality, the *li* are religious since they entail a lifelong commitment to a particular way of life and a detailed theology.⁴⁰

Despite his efforts to contest Xunzi's image as a rationalist and an antitheist, Machle's use of the evolutionary model is problematic. Reading Xunzi against the backdrop of the excavated Shanghai drought texts, however, offers us an opportunity to contextualize his theory of ritual within the Warring States religious discourse. According to this reading, Xunzi's attitude represents a mature articulation of an emerging moral theology accompanied by a fixed body of religious practices known as the system of *li*. Set against the practical theology of the natural experts, this elite mode of systematic religiosity seeks to create an indissoluble link between ritual as a system of ethical and sociopolitical guidelines and its divine cosmic origin. Xunzi's critique of the popular theory of ritual efficacy is presented in the following passage from the "Discourse on Heaven" chapter:

If a rainmaking sacrifice is held, and then it rains, what of it? I say, there is no reason. It would still rain even if we do not hold the sacrifice. When the sun and moon are eclipsed, a sun-saving rite is performed; when Heaven sends a drought, a rainmaking sacrifice is performed; before deciding upon serious matters, tortoise shell and milfoil divinations are performed. These [rituals] are not held in order to get a result, but in order to establish a pattern. Thus, the gentleman takes [ritual] as a matter of establishing a pattern while the common people take it as a matter of [sacrificing to the] spirits. To take [ritual] as creating a pattern is auspicious. To take it as [sacrifice to the] spirits is ill-fated.⁴¹

It is important to note that Xunzi does not object to the performance of these rituals but to the religious mentality that underlies them. As opposed to the popular give-and-take mode of religiosity in which rituals are performed for the sake of the spirits, Xunzi's model targets an elite audience in the form of the Confucian gentleman [*junzi*, 君子] and portrays ritual participation as an activity that establishes a pattern. Writing for a new elite audience of educated scholar aspirants, Xunzi wishes to establish a new mode of religiosity based on an absolute sense of devotion to the system of *li* and the ethicoreligious values it represents. Being a gentleman, he argues, involves an enduring commitment to a fixed regimen of ritualized physical, emotional, and spiritual cultivation.⁴² Ritual is thus portrayed as one of the most important human activities: "In Heaven, there is nothing brighter than the sun and moon. On Earth, there is nothing brighter than water and fire. Among material objects, there is nothing brighter than pearls and jades. In the human realm there is nothing brighter than ritual and propriety. . . . Therefore, the fate of man lies in Heaven and the fate of the state lies in ritual."⁴³ As we recall, Xunzi's theory of ritual is depicted by Pines as the epitome of the distillation of *li* from its old religious framework. Nevertheless, Pines also draws our attention to the cosmological and ontological dimension of ritual in Xunzi's thought.⁴⁴ Throughout the "Discourse on Heaven" chapter, Xunzi stresses that calamities do not arise because of malicious supernatural powers and thus cannot be averted through ritual activity performed under the mind-set of a practical give-and-take mode of religiosity. The only method for avoiding these calamities, he argues, is to understand the patterns and movements of reality and then to use this acquired knowledge to one's advantage. This connection between human behavior and cosmic patterns, as observed in the notion of moral government [*xingde*] found in *The Great Drought of Lu*, thus reaches full articulation in Xunzi's theory of ritual and the Way [*dao*, 道]: "Those who cross waterways mark them where it is deep. If the markers are not clear, then people will drown. Those who govern people mark the Way. If the markers are not clear, then disorder will arise. Ritual is the marker. Opposing ritual means throwing the world into darkness. Casting darkness upon the world will bring great disorder."⁴⁵ Rituals, argues Xunzi, are not arbitrary. They

are markers left by sages that function as a prescriptive script, a guiding light for the rest of humanity to follow. Moreover, since rituals are based on the fixed patterns of the Way, one must adhere to them without attempting to alter them. Xunzi's attitude concerning the Way can thus be best understood as one of religious reverence or devotion. By creating an indissoluble link between the structure of the universe and the system of *li*, Xunzi offers an explicit theological justification for a new mode of elite religiosity focused on a commitment to a body of ethicoreligious behavioral guidelines. According to this moral theology, rituals are not performed in order to seek an anticipated result from a supernatural deity. Instead, the performance of rituals of the Way is a pattern-establishing activity that denotes the religious devotion and the moral stature of the practitioner.

Conclusion: Moral and Practical Theologies in Chinese Religions

A close reading of newly excavated manuscripts from the Shanghai Museum corpus against the backdrop of received sources suggests that the Warring States ritual reorientation signified the emergence of a new mode of elite religiosity that challenged the practical implicit theology of the natural experts. The rise of moral religiosity, however, did not signal the disappearance of the give-and-take mentality. While the architects of the new imperial religion of the Han Dynasty [206 BCE–220 CE] used the moral theological framework to construct an official state cult in which the emperor's performance of grand sacrifices is seen as instrumental to the maintenance of social, political, and cosmic harmony, the amoral practical theology associated with the Warring States ritual experts did not die out. Recent studies of Han religion clearly demonstrate that personal religious practices aimed at obtaining individual practical benefit continued to flourish on all levels of society, from the common people to the emperor. Emperor Wu of the Han [漢武帝, 156–87 BCE], for instance, employed the services of natural experts to redesign several state rituals to promote his

personal quest for immortality, while commoners often used their services as healers, diviners, and exorcists.⁴⁶

After the fall of the Han, the tension between practical and moral theologies manifested itself in the rhetoric used by the followers of a new religious movement, Celestial Masters Daoism [Tianshi Dao, 天師道], who attempted to undermine the popularity of their religious rivals: local cults. One of the main strategies used by the Celestial Masters in asserting the superior efficacy of their rituals was to claim that their system of practice was based on a moral theology sent down to Earth by the deified Way. By establishing a link between the bureaucratic organization of the celestial realm and their earthly ethicoreligious codes, the Celestial Masters were able to identify their system as orthodox [*zheng*, 正] and the rituals of rival local cults as heterodox [*xie*, 邪].⁴⁷

The tension between these two modes of religiosity that emerged in early China became one of the key features of Chinese religious discourse and was instrumental in the subsequent formation of such organized religious traditions as Daoism and Buddhism. Unlike these institutional religions, however, early Chinese religion is a particularly amorphous entity that does not conform to contemporary definitions of religion, since it lacks many of the features modern scholars view as fundamental, such as a canonical set of sacred scriptures, organized clergy, or a fixed pantheon. In fact, the label “early Chinese religion” does not refer to a specific empirical singularity. It is mainly used as a heuristic device, a term coined by later scholars to help make sense of a collection of phenomena. This, however, does not mean it should be set aside in favor of the study of religious traditions such as Buddhism and Daoism. Recent years have, in fact, witnessed a surge in book-length monographs devoted to early Chinese state cults,⁴⁸ funerary practices and visions of the netherworld,⁴⁹ self-cultivation and individual pursuits of immortality,⁵⁰ as well as an imposing two-part edited volume dealing exclusively with religious beliefs and practices between the Shang and Han Dynasties.⁵¹ Recently excavated manuscripts feature heavily in these studies, as such sources offer us a glimpse into the realm of popular religiosity in early China and reveal a richer picture than the one reflected in the received literary tradition. Studying these manuscripts thus offers us new ways of

understanding the religious traditions that are still practiced in the Chinese cultural sphere today and, on a broader level, can contribute to our current definition and understanding of religion as a universal phenomenon.

Notes

- 1 Ma Chengyuan 馬承源, *Shanghai Bowuguan Cang Zhanguo Chuzhushu* 上海博物館藏戰國楚竹書 (Shanghai: Shanghai Guji Chubanshe, 2001–2012), 2001: 1–4.
- 2 For more information about the excavation of the Guodian corpus, see Wang Chuanfu 王傳富 and Tang Xuefeng 湯學鋒, “Jingmen Guodian Yihao Chumu 荊門郭店一號楚墓,” *Wenwu* 文物 (1997.7): 35–48.
- 3 Paul R. Goldin defines an unprovenanced text as “one whose original location is unknown.” See Goldin, “Hengxian and the Problem of Studying Looted Artifacts,” *Dao: Journal of Comparative Philosophy* 12 (2013): 153–60.
- 4 Robert Thorp, *China in the Early Bronze Age: Shang Civilization* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006), 102–4, 172–85.
- 5 Jan Assmann, *The Search for God in Ancient Egypt* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2001), 12.
- 6 Marcel Mauss, *The Gift: The Form and Reason for Exchange in Archaic Societies* (New York: Routledge, 1990), 15–17.
- 7 Claude Lévi-Strauss, for example, criticizes the directness of the gift-giving scheme and argues for an alternative theory that stresses the role of the sacrificial object as a mediator between the sacred and profane realms. According to this model, the interaction between these two distinct realms is made possible by the annihilation of the sacrificial victim, which creates a vacuum that must be filled by the anticipated benefit (Lévi-Strauss, *The Naked Man* [New York: Harper & Row, 1966], 224–26). Walter Burkert’s model of “silent trade,” on the other hand, emphasizes the uncertainty of this interaction, arguing that ritual space is constructed in the hope of coaxing the otherwise illusive deity to show itself (Burkert, *Creation of the Sacred: Traces of Biology in Early Religions* [Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996], 139–55). Maria Heim questions the validity of applying Mauss’s model in studying the practice of *dāna*, almsgiving, and argues that ideal gift relationships in South Asian religious discourse do not take the form of a give-and-take mentality but are instead based on “one-way regard and respect” (Heim, *Theories of the Gift in South Asia: Hindu, Buddhist, and Jain Reflections on Dana* [New York: Routledge, 2004], 54).

- 8 David Keightley, “The Making of the Ancestors: Late Shang Religion and Its Legacy,” in *Religion and Chinese Society*, ed. John Lagerwey, 3–63 (Hong Kong: Chinese University of Hong Kong Press, 2004).
- 9 Michael Puett, *To Become a God: Cosmology, Sacrifice, and Self-Divinization in Early China* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002), 41, 67.
- 10 Lothar von Falkenhausen, *Chinese Society in the Age of Confucius (1000–250 BC): The Archaeological Evidence* (Los Angeles: Cotsen Institute of Archaeology, University of California, 2006), 295–97.
- 11 Gilbert L. Mattos, “Eastern Zhou Bronze Inscriptions,” in *New Sources of Early Chinese History: An Introduction to the Reading of Inscriptions and Manuscripts*, ed. Edward L. Shaughnessy, 85–123 (85–88) (Berkeley: Society for the Study of Early China and the Institute of East Asian Studies, University of California, Berkeley, 1997).
- 12 A comprehensive survey of evolutionary theories of magic, religion, and science can be found in Stanley Tambiah, *Magic, Science, Religion, and the Scope of Rationality* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990).
- 13 Feng Youlan 馮友蘭, *A Short History of Chinese Philosophy* (bilingual edition) 中國哲學簡史 (英漢對照) (Tianjin: Tianjin Shehui Kexueyuan Chubanshe, 2007), 2–4. This attitude was also shared by early Western sinologists. In an article written in the 1940s, Derk Bodde claims that “it is ethics (especially Confucian ethics), and not religion (at least, not religion of a formal organized type), that has provided the spiritual basis of Chinese civilization” (Bodde, “Dominant Ideas in the Formation of Chinese Culture,” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 62, no. 4 [1942]: 293).
- 14 Yuri Pines, “Disputers of the Li: Breakthroughs in the Concept of Ritual in Pre-Imperial China,” *Asia Major* 13, no. 1 (2000): 1–41 (6–7).
- 15 Yang Bojun 楊伯峻, *Chunqiu Zuozhuan Zhu* 春秋左傳注 (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 1990), 1266. Quoted in Pines, “Disputers of the Li,” 15.
- 16 Pines, “Disputers of the Li” (note 14), 15, 40.
- 17 By the term “received sources,” I am referring to texts that have been transmitted through history by means of scribal copying as opposed to excavated manuscripts.
- 18 Marc Kalinowski, “Technical Traditions in Ancient China and *Shushu* Culture in Chinese Religion,” in *Religion and Chinese Society* (note 8), 223–48 (239–40); Donald Harper, “Warring States Natural Philosophy and Occult Thought,” in *The Cambridge History of Ancient China*, ed. Michael Loewe and Edward L. Shaughnessy, 813–84 (814) (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

- 19 Li Xueqin 李學勤, *Chongxie Xueshushi* 重寫學術史 (Shijiazhuang: Hebei Jiaoyu Chubanshe, 2002); Edward L. Shaughnessy, *Rewriting Early Chinese Texts* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2006); Michael Loewe and Michael Nylan, eds., *China's Early Empires: A Re-appraisal* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010).
- 20 Cho-yün Hsü, *Ancient China in Transition* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1965), 89–92; Yuri Pines, *Envisioning Eternal Empire: Chinese Political Thought of the Warring States Era* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2009), 115–19.
- 21 Yang, *Chunqiu Zuozhuan Zhu* (note 15), 1382.
- 22 Paul R. Goldin, *Rituals of the Way: The Philosophy of Xunzi* (Chicago: Open Court, 1999), 39–45; Pines, “Disputers of the Li” (note 14), 14–17.
- 23 These rainmaking ceremonies [*dayu*, 大雩], usually performed in the summer, are mentioned more than twenty times in the *Zuozhuan*.
- 24 Reading 斂 as 說. This interpretation is suggested by both Liu Lexian and Li Xueqin (Liu Lexian 劉樂賢, “Shangbo Jian Lubang Dahan Jianlun 上博簡魯邦大旱簡論,” *Wenwu* 文物 [2003]: 60–61; and Li Xueqin 李學勤, *Chongxie Xueshushi* 重寫學術史 [Shijiazhuang: Hebei Jiaoyu Chubanshe, 2002]: 98). In the *Rites of Zhou* [*Zhouli*, 周禮], jade insignia are mentioned as common offerings in sacrifices to the heavenly bodies (Sun Yirang 孫詒讓, *Zhouli Zhengyi* 周禮正義 [Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 1987]: 1591).
- 25 Ma, *Shanghai Bowuguan Cang Zhanguo Chuzhushu* (note 1) (2002), 205–6.
- 26 Yang Bojun 楊伯峻, *Lunyu Yizhu* 論語譯注 (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 2007), 61–62.
- 27 Ma, *Shanghai Bowuguan Cang Zhanguo Chuzhushu* (note 1) (2002), 207–9.
- 28 Liu Lexian 劉樂賢, “Shangbo Jian Lubang Dahan Jianlun 上博簡魯邦大旱簡論.” *Wenwu* 文物 (2003.5): 60–64 (62–63).
- 29 The term I translated as “moral government” is *xingde*, 刑德. In terms of its individual components, the word *xing* refers to laws, while *de* is usually translated as virtue or moral power. John S. Major argues that when used together, the phrase *xingde* refers to a technique of moral government that entails the implementation of punishments and rewards according to cosmic cycles of recession and accretion (Major, “The Meaning of Hsing-te,” in *Chinese Ideas About Nature and Society: Studies in Honor of Derk Bodde*, ed. Charles Le Blanc and Susan Blader, 286–87 [Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 1987]).
- 30 Although the ruler is described in the text as “the Great King of Jian,” he was actually a feudal lord in charge of a fiefdom inside the larger state of Chu.
- 31 Ji Xusheng 季旭昇, Yuan Guohua 袁國華, and Chen Siting 陳思婷, *Shanghai Bowuguan Cang Zhanguo Chuzhushu (si) Duben* 上海博物館藏戰國楚竹書(四)讀本 (Taipei: Wanjuan Loutushu Youxian Gongsi, 2007), 75. For more on self-exposure and rainmaking rituals in ancient China, see Alvin Cohen, “Coercing the Rain Deities in Ancient China,” *History of Religions* 17, no. 3/4 (1978): 244–65; and Edward Schafer, “Ritual Exposure in Ancient China,” *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 14, no. 1/2 (1951): 130–84.
- 32 I have followed the bamboo slip arrangement suggested in this volume and the annotations provided by the editors. This arrangement is also supported by Chen Wei, in Chen Wei 陳偉, “Jian Dawang Bohan Xinyan 《簡大王泊旱》新研,” *Jianbo* 簡帛2 (2007): 259–68.
- 33 Roel Sterckx, “Searching for Spirit: Shen and Sacrifice in Warring States and Han Philosophy and Ritual,” *Extrême-Orient, Extrême-Occident* 29 (2007), 23–54 (32–37).
- 34 The term *Shangdi* [上帝] first appears in Shang oracle bone inscriptions. By the Warring States period, it seems to indicate the highest deity in the religious pantheon and is often synonymous with Heaven [*tian*, 天]. See Robert Eno, *The Confucian Creation of Heaven: Philosophy and the Defense of Ritual Mastery* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990), 1; and Herrlee Creel, *The Origins of Statecraft in China* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970), 493–502.
- 35 Paul R. Goldin, “Xunzi and Early Han Philosophy,” *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 67, no. 1 (2007): 135–66 (136–37).
- 36 Feng, *Short History of Chinese Philosophy* (note 13), 232. This is particularly noticeable in post-1949 Chinese scholarship produced in Mainland China, in which Xunzi is often portrayed as a materialist and his method associated with that of modern science. For a detailed survey, see Goldin, *Rituals of the Way* (note 22), 109 n. 6.
- 37 Goldin, *Rituals of the Way* (note 22), 47.
- 38 Wang Xianqian 王先謙, *Xunzi Jijie* 荀子集解 (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 1988), 313.
- 39 Eno, *Confucian Creation of Heaven* (note 34), 142–43.
- 40 Edward Machle, “Hsün-Tzu as a Religious Philosopher,” *Philosophy East and West* 26, no. 4 (1976): 443–61 (447–51).
- 41 Wang, *Xunzi Jijie* (note 38), 316.
- 42 In another article, I argue that Xunzi perceives ritual as a communal technology of the body that allows humans to transform their bodies and minds and obtain physical and spiritual bounties while at the same time enhancing sociopolitical

stability and harmony (“Xunzi’s Theory of Ritual Revisited: Reading Ritual as Corporal Technology,” *Dao: Journal of Comparative Philosophy* 12, no. 3 [2013]: 313–30).

- 43 Wang, *Xunzi Jijie* (note 38), 316–17.
- 44 Pines, “Disputers of the Li” (note 14), 39.
- 45 Wang, *Xunzi Jijie* (note 38), 318–19.
- 46 Mu-chou Poo, *In Search of Personal Welfare: A View of Ancient Chinese Religion* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998). For more details, see Daniel Sou’s contribution to this volume, “Living with Ghosts and Deities in the Qin State,” which analyzes the recently excavated daybook [*rishu*, 日書] exorcism manuals from the Shuihudi corpus.
- 47 Chi-tim Lai, “The Opposition of Celestial-Master Taoism to Popular Cults during the Six Dynasties,” *Asia Major* 11, no. 1 (1998): 1–20 (11–13).
- 48 Marianne Bujard, *Le sacrifice au Ciel dans la Chine ancienne: Théorie et pratique sous les Han occidentaux*, Monographies de l’École française d’Extrême-Orient 187 (Paris, 2000).
- 49 Constance Cook, *Death in Ancient China: The Tale of One Man’s Journey* (Leiden: Brill, 2006); Hung Wu, *The Art of Yellow Springs: Understanding Chinese Tombs* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2010).
- 50 Poo, *In Search of Personal Welfare* (note 46); Puett, *To Become a God* (note 9).
- 51 Lagerwey and Kalinowski, eds., *Early Chinese Religion: Part One: Shang through Han (1250 BC–220 AD)*, (Leiden: Brill, 2009).

CHAPTER 6

Living with Ghosts and Deities in the Qin 秦 State

Methods of Exorcism from “Jie 詰” in the Shuihudi 睡虎地 Manuscript

DANIEL SOU

IN EARLY CHINESE HISTORY, people maintained a close relationship with entities from the nonhuman sphere, including ghosts and deities. Numerous writings and material artifacts from the Shang 商 dynasty to the Han 漢 dynasty reveal that people worshiped supernatural entities, seeking guidance, petitioning for wealth and prosperity, and expressing devotion. No general sentiments describe how the ancient Chinese viewed their relationship with ghost and deities, but they did believe that these unworldly entities had the power to reward and punish behavior. This perspective is well presented in the chapter “Perceptient of Ghosts, Part III” (*Ming gui xia* 明鬼下) of the *Mozi* 墨子: “Now if all the people of the world believe ghosts and spirits can reward the worthy and punish the wicked, then how could the world be in disorder?”¹ On the evidence of this example, the relationship between humans and nonhuman entities was conditional; immoral and wrongful acts warranted punishment.

Yet the relationship was not exclusively conditional, nor was it simply characterized as a giver-receiver arrangement; in some situations, the relationship turned hostile and frightful, especially when ghosts and spirits chose to inhabit the human realm and haunt the living. What, then, could people living in early China do to protect themselves from harm by an unknown entity? The simple answer is that one had to identify the threat and perform an exorcism.

This essay explains the diverse methods of exorcism practiced by the people of the Qin 秦 state, the kind of supernatural entities they feared,