WRITING AND MATERIALITY IN THE THREE HAN DYNASTY TOMBS AT MAWANGDUI

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Abstract

This dissertation is a study of the different kinds of writing excavated in the 1970s from the three Western Han dynasty (202 BCE-9 CE) tombs at Mawangdui 马王堆, including manuscripts on silk, wood, and bamboo, and inscriptions in different media. I examine the ways these texts were produced, performed, used, viewed, and buried in order to determine the different roles writing played in the lives and afterlives of three members of one noble family, and those connected to them, in the second century BCE. In the process, I show that in addition to recording or communicating important knowledge or information, written texts were also incorporated into a diverse array of artifacts and integrated into a wide variety of cultural practices, and that writing in early Western Han thus ought to be understood as part of early Chinese material and visual culture.

The Introduction provides an overview of the Mawangdui tombs and their contents, including the manuscripts and texts that were found there, as well as recent scholarship on writing, literacy, and material culture. Chapter 1 is concerned with the different ways the Mawangdui manuscripts and inscriptions were produced. Chapter 2 explores how some of the manuscripts were used in ritual performance and display. Chapter 3 describes the use of written texts as amulets and talismans. Chapter 4 details the visual effects of certain kinds of manuscripts. And Chapter 5 speculates about the ways the manuscripts were used and stored above ground, and why they were deposited in the tomb. Finally, my Conclusion summarizes my findings, and the Appendix provides a table containing information about the material and codicological features of the Mawangdui manuscripts and related artifacts.
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List of Dynasties and Rulers

Early Chinese dynasties

Shang 商 dynasty (ca. 1600-1045 BCE)

Zhou 周 dynasty
  Western Zhou 西周 (ca. 1045-771 BCE)
  Eastern Zhou 東周 (ca. 771-221 BCE)
    Springs and Autumnns 春秋 era (ca. 771-476 BCE)
    Warring States 戰國 era (ca. 475-221 BCE)

Qin 秦 dynasty (221-206 BCE)

Chu-Han 楚漢 contention era (206-202 BCE)

Han 漢 dynasty (202 BCE-220 CE)
  Western Han 西漢 (202 BCE-9 CE)
    “Interregnum”: Wang Mang’s 王莽 Xin 新 dynasty (9-23 CE)
  Eastern Han 東漢 (25-220 CE)

Emperors of the Qin and Western Han Dynasties

Qin

First Emperor 秦始皇, Ying Zheng 賢政 (r. 221-210 BCE)
Second Emperor 秦二世, Huhai 胡亥 (r. 210-207 BCE)
Ziying 子嬰 (r. 207 BCE)

Western Han

Emperor Gao 高祖, Liu Bang 劉邦 (r. 202-195 BCE)
Emperor Hui 惠帝, Liu Ying 劉盈 (r. 195-188 BCE)
Emperor Shao 少帝, Liu Gong 劉恭 (r. 188-184 BCE)
Emperor Shao 少帝, Liu Hong 劉弘 (r. 184-180 BCE)
Emperor Wen 文帝, Liu Heng 劉恆 (r. 180-157 BCE)
Emperor Jing 景帝, Liu Qi 劉啟 (r. 157-141 BCE)
Emperor Wu 武帝, Liu Che 劉徹 (r. 141-87 BCE)
Emperor Zhao 趙帝, Liu Fuling 劉弗陵 (r. 87-74 BCE)
King of Changyi 昌邑王, Liu He 劉賀 (Marquess of Haihun 海昏侯) (r. 74 BCE)
Emperor Xuan 宣帝, Liu Bingyi 劉病已 (r. 74-49 BCE)
Emperor Yuan 元帝, Liu Shi 劉奭 (r. 49-33 BCE)
Emperor Cheng 成帝, Liu Ao 劉鰲 (r. 33-7 BCE)
Emperor Ai 哀帝, Liu Xin 劉欣 (7-1 BCE)
Emperor Ping 平帝, Liu Kan 劉衎 (1 BCE-6 CE)
Ruzu 孺子, Liu Ying 劉嬰 (6-9 CE)
Conventions

Chinese characters and romanization:

Full-form (fanti 繁體) Chinese characters and pinyin 拼音 romanization are employed throughout. Text originally published in simplified (jianti 簡體) characters or alternative romanization systems such as Wade-Giles are converted silently, except in the case of titles of published works. Chinese characters for specific terms and titles generally appear only in the first instance within a chapter and are omitted thereafter.

References:

References are generally provided in the footnotes using a modified form of the Chicago Manual of Style format in the first instance within a chapter, with subsequent references given in abbreviated form as the surname of the author followed by the date of publication in parentheses, i.e., Chen (2016). Multiple works by the same author published in the same year are distinguished using lowercase letters of the Latin alphabet, i.e., Chen (2008a). Similarly, multiple works by authors with the same surname published in the same year are distinguished by use of the author’s full name, i.e., Li Ling (1991) and Li Xueqin (1991). References to traditional Chinese sources give only the title of the modern scholarly edition of the text followed by the juan 卷 number and the page reference separated by a period, i.e., Hanshu 51.2235. Full references to these editions are listed in the Bibliography. The first letters of important words in the titles of books and articles are capitalized, even when they appear in lowercase in the titles of original publications.
Titles:

Chinese titles of excavated texts and manuscripts that do not appear on the manuscripts themselves and which have been assigned by scholars are preceded by an asterisk, i.e. the *Wu ze you xing tu 物則有形圖 manuscript. The titles of excavated manuscripts and received works are italicized, while the titles of individual texts within a manuscript, or chapters within a text (either excavated or received), are placed within quotation marks. Thus, the *“Wushi’er bingfang” 五十二病方 is the title of a text that spans Medical Manuscripts I and II, and the “Yuandao” 原道 is the first chapter of the Huainanzi 淮南子. The Chinese rank of nobility hou 侯 is rendered as Marquess throughout, rather than the more familiar Marquis.†


† In this, I follow Paul Goldin, who notes that “[s]trictly speaking, if the English translation of bo 伯 is to be ‘earl,’ then the translation of hou 輝 ought to be ‘marquess,’ not ‘marquis.’ (‘Earl’ and ‘marquess’ are English titles, ‘count’ and ‘marquis’ their French equivalents.)” Goldin remarks that he has “never understood this quirk of Sinology,” and I share his puzzlement. See Paul Goldin, “Representations of Regional Diversity During the Eastern Zhou Dynasty,” in Ideology of Power and Power of Ideology in Early China, ed. Yuri Pines, Paul R. Goldin, and Martin Kern (Leiden: Brill, 2015), p. 36n.16.
Abbreviations

Technical terms

Consistent with the way tombs are typically referenced in Chinese publications, the Chinese word for tomb (mu 墓) is abbreviated as M and used to designate the number of a tomb at an archaeologically excavated site. Thus, Mawangdui M2 = Tomb 2 at Mawangdui.

Principle publications of primary sources


0.1 Background and thesis statement

Over the course of the past hundred years, but particularly in the last few decades, manuscripts made of bamboo, wood, and silk discovered in early Chinese tombs and at other archaeologically excavated sites, as well as acquisitions of illegally looted manuscript corpora, have changed the way we study early Chinese texts, furnishing us for the first time with genuinely ancient textual materials that have not been edited, redacted, or otherwise manipulated by generations of scribes and scholars. These manuscripts are typically untitled, comprised of multiple short units of text, and contain significant levels of graphic and lexical variation in comparison with both transmitted texts and each other, forcing us to reconsider the different roles written texts played in early Chinese intellectual and cultural production.¹ Scholars working on excavated manuscripts and transmitted texts have debated the importance of writing in early China, drawing different conclusions about how widespread literacy was, whether texts were primarily transmitted orally or in writing, and the interaction between writing and other forms of cultural expression such as ritual performance.² In addition, recent scholarship in literacy

studies, the history of writing, and material culture studies has emphasized that literacy is a culturally embedded practice, that engagement with written texts is fundamentally material, and that humans and objects exist in complex relationships to one another.

This dissertation will contribute to these discussions and debates through an examination of the different types of writing discovered in three mid-second century BCE tombs at a site in south central China called Mawangdui 馬王堆. By exploring the manifold ways in which three members of one noble family – and those connected to them – engaged with writing in different contexts variously as work tasks, performance aids, design motifs, ritual tools, talismans, library materials, and burial objects, it will be shown that written texts played significant roles in the elite material and visual cultures of early Western Han China. In the process, we will see that written texts were not used merely to record or communicate important information and knowledge but also as multimedia text-artifacts that often communicated and signified as much through their material forms, and the social and cultural contexts within which they were used, as through the encoding and decoding of graphic signs. As one scholar has argued, “[t]o grasp the full significance of the newly excavated Warring States to Han period manuscripts, it is essential to comprehend their status as part of the material culture of their time.” My dissertation will

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2 See below for a discussion of the scholarship on these subjects.

pursue this line of inquiry, broadening its scope beyond the study of manuscripts while bringing focus to bear on a specific site to encompass the many different forms of writing found in all three of the Mawangdui tombs, studying these texts not just alongside or in relation to things but as things themselves,\textsuperscript{4} artifacts that played important roles in the cultural lives of early Western Han elites.

0.2 Material culture studies

The study of material culture (traditionally defined as the study of man-made artifacts) has undergone substantial change since it rose to prominence in the nineteenth century. Until the 1920s, the study of material culture in the West was largely restricted to the collecting and cataloging of artifacts from non-Western civilizations by museums and universities. The approach was strongly anthropological and “evolutionist” in approach, with artifacts used to support theories about the social organization and technological advancement of “other” cultures. In the 1920s, however, anthropological fieldwork ushered in a change in emphasis from objects to people, and with it a shift from “evolutionism” to “functionalism,” with objects largely studied merely as culturally passive tools and possessions. After the 1960s, however, the advent of structuralist cultural theory and symbolic approaches to anthropology again changed the way objects were understood, and it was now believed that objects could be used to study and explain the way cultural identities and social relationships were formed.\textsuperscript{5}

\textsuperscript{4} Some scholars insist on a distinction between things and objects, either as different classes of artifact or as different artifactual conditions. In general, I will use the terms object, thing, and artifact more or less interchangeably to refer to any article having mass that has come into existence through human intervention. Occasionally, however, I observe the distinction (originally posited by Heidegger and developed by Bill Brown and others) between objects and things as artifacts (to use a neutral term) that present themselves to human subjects in fundamentally different ways. See Chapter 1 for a discussion of this issue.
As a response to the “linguistic turn” of the late twentieth century, scholars in numerous fields, as well as the new interdiscipline of material culture studies, began to examine the ways in which humans interact with artifacts as quasi-agents in their own right, and as a result of this “material turn” it is now generally accepted that human life is inextricably intertwined with the artifacts that surround us, with the way our material worlds shape human experience and identity ultimately threatening the neat dichotomy between human subject and material object.6

A number of scholars working in the field of “New Materialism,” however, have lamented that despite the recent return to objects, studies of material culture have often neglected the material at the expense of the human. While many objects are certainly designed, produced, used, and repurposed to express and engineer social values and identities, these scholars emphasize that both natural and man-made artifacts also have certain irreducible properties and inherent characteristics (size, weight, texture, etc.) that are not wholly culturally contingent or socially symbolic but actually entirely natural or functional, a reflection of the fact that humans interact with things not just as tokens of culture but also as concrete material realities.7


Material culture, then, is something of a nebulous concept. The study of material culture can encompass the study of the raw materials from which artifacts are formed, the technologies used to manufacture them, and the artifacts thereby produced. It can concern itself with the objective properties of an object and how these change over time (what we might call the “scientific approach”), or the culturally contingent ways in which human subjects perceive and interact with different kinds of objects (what we might call the “anthropological approach”).

Further complicating the issue, while the “material” in material culture has been defined by some mainly in relation to man-made artifacts, its contours have also been drawn rather more broadly by others who use the term to refer also to naturally formed objects, or to anything that we can see, touch, or smell but which is neither human nor animal. Even these distinctions, however, have proved contentious. Once animal flesh is consumed by human beings, for example, the materialities of animal and human become indistinguishable, and advances in prosthetics and plastic surgery have blurred the boundaries between objects and people. After all, the human body can be used much like any tool can to warm, blow, or handle, and human substances such as urine, excrement, blood, earwax, and saliva have all been used in the manufacture of different

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8 See Tilley et al. (2006), p. 4.


11 See Dant (1999), p. 11.

kinds of objects.¹³ People make objects, to be sure, but objects quite literally also make people, with the physical makeup of our bodies changing over time in response to material forces and conditions.¹⁴

At its broadest, then, material culture encompasses all that is material; that is, anything that has mass or occupies physical space.¹⁵ However, “materiality” is not the same as materials, at least not as I choose to define it. The term materiality need not apply simply to artifacts and their material properties (though it obviously includes such things), but also to the different processes by which artifacts are designed, produced, used, exchanged, and disposed of, activities that result from interaction between humans and objects in physical space. In the context of writing, materiality encompasses the materials, tools, and actions used to produce written texts, the contexts and environments in which they are created, the different modes of reading, viewing, use, and display through which humans engage with them, and the facilities and modes of human organization within which they are stored and curated.¹⁶ While materiality might seem like an unwieldy, all-encompassing concept, then, I have chosen it precisely because of this copaciousness, and its resulting capacity to bring together the manifold ways in which humans interact with writing (as both practice and product, as both activity and artifact) in a single conversation.¹⁷


¹⁷ My dissertation is thus both a history of things and a history from things. That is, it aims to describe the ways specific objects were produced and used and how they changed over time, as well as using these sources to gain a sense of what early Western Han text culture was like. See Giorgio Riello, “Things That
0.3 Definitions of writing

During recent decades there has been extensive debate about how to define writing. In one camp are those who subscribe to a narrower definition of writing as essentially glottographic, for whom “true” or “full” writing includes only those systems of graphic notation used to represent (however imperfectly) spoken language. In the other camp are those who advocate for a broader, more inclusivist definition encompassing semasiographic (i.e., non-glottographic) writing systems such as those in use in pre-Colombian Mesoamerica, where graphic marks were used to record and communicate knowledge and information pictorially and ideographically (though, crucially, still conventionally) rather than phonetically or logographically (i.e., in reference to sounds or words).

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The idea that writing must refer only to those durable graphic marks used to communicate spoken language, then, is far from universally accepted, and the equation even of glottographic writing with “visible speech” has come under attack in recent years from scholars who have argued that writing and speech represent two distinct systems with different norms and functions, with the decision to write something down affecting not only what we record or communicate but also how we formulate it, including the rate of production, frequency and length of pauses and hesitations, text length, grammatical structures, textual organization, and presentation of ideas, etc.\textsuperscript{21} It is certainly true that even “full” writing captures only certain elements of spoken language, typically transcribing phonemes and syntax but often failing to render tone and intonation accurately.\textsuperscript{22} It is possible for a person to understand the meaning of a written sentence without being able to pronounce the words within it, for example,\textsuperscript{23} and the same graphic unit (a letter of the alphabet, say) can be pronounced in different ways even in texts written in the same language, further complicating the idea that writing is a straightforward transcription of speech.\textsuperscript{24} Indeed, the separation between writing and spoken language is such that writing can actually be used to (de)legitimate, prescribe, standardize, and hierarchize different forms of speech.\textsuperscript{25} For their part, advocates of the exclusivist definition of writing have countered that only glottographic writing can communicate basically any idea that a person can


\textsuperscript{23} See Roy Harris, \textit{Rethinking Writing} (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000), pp. xiii-xiv.

\textsuperscript{24} See Gaur (2000), p. 3.

say, and that even pictures and symbols have to be learned and interpreted through spoken language in order to function effectively as conventional communications.  

While there is a strong(er) connection between glottographic writing and spoken language, then, glottographic signs are ultimately one form of graphic notation/communication among many, including non- or a-linguistic signs such as musical and mathematical notations, and it matters little which definition of writing we subscribe to as long as we recognize the distinctions between the ways different graphic forms of communication operate. Indeed, though all the writing examined in this dissertation is glottographic in nature, I will show that the full force even of this kind of writing cannot be understood apart from broader modes of material “communication” such as design, display, and ritual performance. Focusing too narrowly on writing as transcribed speech risks overlooking the obvious fact that writing and written texts are fundamentally material and thus operate and signify in ways that ultimately transcend linguistic communication. Perhaps especially in ancient contexts where literacy was not widespread, therefore, it is necessary to situate the use of written texts within older, broader systems of signification that are fundamentally material in nature.

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30 See Chapter 2 for a discussion of the differences between the ways language (including writing) and material artifacts communicate and signify.

31 A number of recent studies have dealt with the materiality of ancient and premodern texts. See, for example, the essays in Thomas Meier, Michael R. Ott, and Rebecca Sauer, eds., *Materiale Textkulturen. Konzepete – Materialien – Praktiken* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2015) and Thomas E. Balke and Christina Tsouparopoulou, eds., *Materiality of Writing in Early Mesopotamia* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2016).
0.4 Definitions of literacy

Defining literacy as a skill, or set of skills, is notoriously difficult and complex,\textsuperscript{32} and debate has taken place over the past fifty years about the nature of literacy and its effects on societies and individuals.\textsuperscript{33} Pioneering scholars of literacy such as Jack Goody, Walter Ong, and Eric Havelock tended to view literacy as a more or less self-contained capacity, the development of which fundamentally changes individual cognition and societal development.\textsuperscript{34} Since the 1980s, however, scholars in the field of “New Literacy” have posited a different understanding of literacy. For these scholars, literacy is a multifaceted, culturally situated set of capacities encompassing a wide range of different types of engagement with writing, and while different types of literacy certainly affect the ways humans interact with each other, literacies are but one factor in cognitive development and social change.\textsuperscript{35} The work of these scholars has established

Similarly, numerous studies have emphasized that premodern text cultures need to be understood in relation to various visual and material forms of communication and signification. See, for example, Irene A. Bierman, *Writing Signs: The Fatimid Public Text* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998) and John Baines, *Visual and Written Culture in Ancient Egypt* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

\textsuperscript{32} On this point, see Cipolla (1969), pp. 11-37.


that literacy is less a clearly defined skill (the ability to read and/or write a requisite number of words) than a diverse set of social practices related in one way or another to writing, that take place within specific social, political, and historical contexts. The upshot of these debates is that it is generally reckoned that literacy is not easily associated with changes in cognitive ability, education, social status, or economic success in different historical and/or geographic contexts. As we will see, an expansive understanding of literacy is entirely appropriate for the study of writing at Mawangdui, where writing and literacy were not technologies or capacities

University Press, 2009); and David Barton and Mary Hamilton, Local Literacies: Reading and Writing in One Community (London: Routledge, 2012).

As a result, some scholars have found it necessary to study writing through anthropological or ethnographic analysis. See, for example, Keith H. Basso, “The Ethnography of Writing,” in Explorations in the Ethnography of Speaking, ed. Richard Bauman and Joel Sherzer (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1989), pp. 425-432, 494-495 and the essays in David Barton and Uta Papen, eds., The Anthropology of Writing: Understanding Textually Mediated Worlds (London: Bloomsbury, 2010).

apart but integrated into a whole host of cultural practices including material display and ritual performance.

0.5 The materiality of early Chinese writing


For a new edition of this classic text with extensive notes and annotations, see Hu Pingsheng 胡平生 and Ma Yuehua 馬月華, eds., *Jiandu jianshu kao jiaozhu 簡牍检署考校注* (Shanghai: Shanghai guji, 2004).
Chinese and Japanese scholars have scoured transmitted sources for information about how early Chinese manuscripts were manufactured, and more recent scholarship has compared these accounts with excavated materials in order to establish the tools, media, and technological processes involved in textual production in the Warring States and Early Imperial eras. These accounts have been continually modified and refined on the basis of new archaeological evidence, but attention to the materiality of early Chinese texts has rarely strayed beyond a rather narrow set of concerns, including the dimensions of early manuscripts, manufacturing processes, and storage methods. These basic...
material features are obviously included in my definition of textual materiality, and will be dealt with in this dissertation. However, I am also keen to engage with the technical aspects of early Chinese manuscripts as part of a larger concern with the materiality (broadly conceived) of early Chinese writing, including its performatve, visual, and ritual components.

Like their Chinese and Japanese counterparts, scholars in the West have attended to various different aspects of early Chinese writing including the origins of the Chinese script, the nature of Chinese graphs, the importance of writing to early Chinese intellectual and

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cultural production, and paleography and the nature and development of early Chinese script forms. A handful of recent studies have been devoted explicitly to the issue of literacy in early


China, and though early studies of textual materiality tended to concern themselves mainly with the basic technical features of early Chinese manuscripts, more recently scholars have also begun to take a broader view of the materiality of early Chinese texts, attending to an increasingly wide range of issues including visuality and ritual performance.


My dissertation will contribute to studies of early Chinese writing by incorporating the most recent scholarship on materiality and literacy into a study of three specific Western Han tombs, situating writing within its broader material, visual, and performatative contexts. While the discovery of early Chinese manuscripts in recent decades certainly proves that writing was one way in which certain early Chinese elites sometimes engaged with different kinds of texts, these archaeological discoveries should also prompt us to reconsider the roles different kinds of writing played in early Chinese culture more broadly, not just as vehicles for recording or communicating information in writing but as material artifacts in their own right.

0.6 Mawangdui

0.6.1 Location and structure of the tombs.

The Mawangdui tomb site was discovered in 1971 by workers digging an air raid shelter for the local hospital, and formal excavation work on the three tombs was carried out between 1972 and 1974. The site is located outside Wulipai 五里牌 in the eastern suburbs of Changsha.


長沙，approximately 4km from the city center. The current provincial capital, Changsha is located in the northeast region of Hunan 湖南 in south central China.

It had long been believed that the two mounds, or tumuli, that occupied this site formed part of the burial complex for Ma Yin 馬殷 (852-930 CE), king of Chu during the Five Dynasties (Wudai 五代) era (907–960 CE), hence the name Mawangdui, or “the mounds of King Ma.”

Both mounds were basically the same size and had rounded tops, with M1 located beneath the eastern mound and M2 beneath the western mound. The mound for M3 was barely visible, having been completely covered by the tumulus of M1, leading to the traditional belief that the site contained just two tombs.

The three burial sites were all vertical pit tombs (shuxue tukeng mu 豎穴土坑墓), rectangular in shape and oriented north. In each tomb the corpse had been interred in a series of nested coffins (guan 棺) positioned inside an inner coffin chamber (guanshi 棺室). This inner chamber was enclosed within an outer coffin chamber (guoshi 椿室) that in M1 and M3 was divided into four coffin compartments (guoxiang 椿箱), also known as side compartments (bianxiang 邊箱), labelled the northern, eastern, southern, and western compartments respectively (see Figures 0.1, 0.2, 0.3). These outer coffin chambers were constructed at the bottom of the tomb pits (mukeng 墓坑), which were accessed by sloping tomb passages (mudao 墓道). In each of the tombs, the outside of the coffin chamber had been packed with charcoal

51 Another name for the site was Ma’andui 馬鞍堆 (lit., “horse saddle mounds”), a reflection of the fact that the two tumuli, connected as they were by a strip of earth, resembled the shape of a horse’s saddle. For an overview of traditional myths surrounding the identities of the Mawangdui tomb occupants prior to excavation of the site, see Xiong and You (2006), pp. 13-14.

52 The corpse in M1 was buried in four such coffins, while those in M2 and M3 were buried in just three each.

53 The outer coffin in M2, the earliest of the three tombs, was not physically divided into four compartments. Thus, the designations in archaeological reports of “northern,” “southern,” etc. compartments for the coffin this tomb are actually entirely notional. See BG, pp. 11-13.
Figure 0.1: Photograph of the outer coffin chamber (guoshi) of M1 (HM, 2.7 [Figure 8])
Figure 0.2: Drawing of the outer coffin chamber (guoshi) of M2 (BG, p. 12 [Illustration 6]).
Figure 0.3: Photograph of the outer coffin chamber (*guoshi*) of M3 (BG, color plate 8)
and white clay before the pit was filled in with earth. The walls of the pit were constructed from rammed earth (hangtu夯土), and the grave mound was formed by piling heaped earth (fengtu 封土) on top of the covered pit.54

Though M1 and M3 had not been disturbed prior to excavation, M2 had been looted several times. As a result, the coffins in that tomb had sustained serious damage and much of its contents had rotted away.55 Though the contents of M2 were thus not as impressive as those of M1 and M3, together the three tombs yielded a stunning array of luxury materials, including lacquer dining sets, ritual vessels, silk textiles, food items, items of clothing, cash, household items such as screens and mats, and toiletries and other personal possessions. Some of these items were found stored inside neatly stacked bamboo hampers (zhushi 竹笥), while others were distributed individually or in sets inside the tomb.56

0.6.2 Changsha in the early Western Han

The site where the Mawangdui tombs were found is located in what was probably an eastern suburb of Linxiang 臨湘, the capital of the kingdom of Changsha 長沙 during Western Han.57 The Shiji 史記 (Archivist’s Records) records that the region was vast in size but sparsely

54 For details about the locations of the tombs and descriptions of their coffin structures, see HM, 1.1-27 and BG, pp. 1-11, 26-41. See also David D. Buck, “Three Han Dynasty Tombs at Ma-wang-tui,” World Archaeology 7.1 (1975), pp. 30-45.

55 BG, p. 7 notes that three tunnels dug by different sets of tomb robbers were found, each having reached the bottom of the tomb pit. The robbers do not seem to have accessed the coffin, however. The first tunnel was round in shape, whereas the other two were rectangular. A type of ceramic bowl commonly found at Tang 唐 (618-907 CE) archaeological sites in the Hunan region was found in the first tunnel, indicating that it was dug during that dynasty. The remains of a hand grenade were found in the third tunnel, indicating that it had been dug rather more recently.

56 For an overview of the items found in all three tombs, see Michèle Pirazzoli-t’Serstevens, The Han Dynasty, trans. Janet Seligman (New York: Rizzoli, 1982), pp. 44-60.

57 It is unclear, however, precisely where this city was located. See Huang Shengzhang 黃盛章 and Niu Zhongxun 鈕仲勛, “Youguan Changsha Mawangdui Hanmu de lishi dili wenti” 有關長沙馬王堆漢墓的
populated, noting that owing to an abundance of natural resources there was no poverty or starvation in the area but that it was nevertheless economically backward.\textsuperscript{58} Certainly, Changsha was rather remote from the Western Han capital Chan’an 長安,\textsuperscript{59} though it had long been considered strategically important as a trading post and military garrison.\textsuperscript{60}

Commanderies (\textit{jun} 郡) and kingdoms (\textit{guo} 國) were the two main forms of territorial administration in the Western Han (see Figure 0.4). Kingdoms were largely self-governing, ruled by a king (\textit{wang} 王) who was served by an administration that mirrored that of the central government, while commandery administrations were headed by governors (\textit{shou} 守, \textit{taishou} 太守) and were more closely monitored by the imperial government in Chang’an.\textsuperscript{61} Changsha had been a commandery during the Qin dynasty before it was founded as a kingdom in 202 BCE under the rulership of Wu Rui 吳芮 (d. 201 BCE). It was turned back into a commandery in 157 BCE for two years before it was restored to kingdom status in 155 BCE with greater central oversight over its significantly reduced territories.\textsuperscript{62} Famously, prior to 157 BCE it was the only Western Han kingdom ruled by a king who was not a blood relation of the Han emperor.


\textsuperscript{59} This point is emphasized in Michael Loewe, \textit{Ways to Paradise: The Chinese Quest for Immortality} (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1979), p. 20.

\textsuperscript{60} See Constance A. Cook and Barry B. Blakeley, “Introduction,” in \textit{Defining Chu: Image and Reality in Ancient China}, ed. idem (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2004), p. 4. See also Chapter 5 for a fuller discussion of the history of Changsha, including speculation about textual production there in pre-Han times.


\textsuperscript{62} See \textit{Hanshu} 13.377, 28b.1639.
Map 0.1: Han Empire, 195 BCE from Michael Loewe, *A Biographical Dictionary of the Qin, Former Han, and Xin Periods (221 BC – AD 24)*, p. 809
The tomb occupants

The identity of Xin Zhui 辛追 as the occupant of M1 has been established on the basis of a wooden seal bearing that name found in her tomb. Her corpse is famously well preserved, having been wrapped in numerous body cloths before it was interred in the multi-layered coffins that were then sealed with charcoal, clay, and earth. The corpse measures 1.54m in height and weighs some 34.3kg. An autopsy revealed that Xin Zhui was in her fifties when she died, probably shortly after 168 BCE, and she was in ill health prior to her death, suffering from coronary heart disease among other ailments. Her diet had been high in fats and sugars, and she likely died from a coronary heart attack. Judging by the seeds that were found among her stomach contents, she had eaten melons shortly before she died. She had given birth at some point during her lifetime.

The identity of Li Cang 利蒼 as the occupant of M2 has been confirmed by the three seals that were found in his tomb. Li’s name is given in the Shiji as Li Cang 利倉 (without the grass radical) and in the Hanshu 漢書 (History of the Han) as Li Zhucang 黎朱蒼, but the seal

63 This seal, the only such seal found in M1, carries her name in seal script (zhuanshu 篆書). See HM, 1.129, 2.168 (black and white plate 179). Li Zebin 李則斌 has argued, based on a comparison of naming practices on seals discovered at other sites, that Xin Zhui should be her personal name (minghao 名號) rather than her full name (xingming 姓名). For ease of reference, I will continue to refer to the occupant of M1 as Xin Zhui rather than Xinzhu or “Lady Dai.” See Li Zebin 李則斌, “‘Xin Zhui’ ming, hao kao” ‘辛追’名，號考, in Hunan sheng bowuguan 湖南省博物館 (2016) pp. 80-84.


65 See HM, 1.31-32.

66 All three seals were found in the northern compartment of the outer coffin: a bronze seal with the inscription Changsha chengxiang 長沙丞相 (“Prime Minister of Changsha”), another bronze seal with the inscription Daihou zhi yin 軑侯之印 (“Seal of the Marquess of Dai”), and a jade seal with the inscription Li Cang 利蒼. See BG, pp. 23-25.
bearing his personal name shows that the correct rendering was in fact Li Cang 利蒼 (with the grass radical). The Shiji and the Hanshu both contain brief snippets of information about Li Cang’s career, recording that he was enfeoffed as the first Marquess of Dai 軑侯 in 193 BCE with the right to raise taxes from seven hundred households in Jiangxia 江夏. As Michael Loewe has described, the system of marquessates was one way in which the loyalty of those who served the emperor was rewarded and retained. Marquesses typically did not reside in their marquesates, though they were obligated to collect taxes there and administer the mobilization of those who owed labor or military service. The number of households awarded to a marquess ranged from a few hundred to almost twenty thousand, and marquesses were occasionally required to remove to their estates in order to ensure that security there was maintained, and revenues were properly collected.

As Prime Minister of Changsha Li Cang was the highest administrative officer in the kingdom, second only to the king himself. However, it is unclear precisely when, why, and by whom Li Cang was raised to this position, and scholars are divided about whether he was appointed locally or by the imperial government in Chang’an. His tomb is located due west of


68 The jijie 集解 (Pei Yin 裴駰, 420-479 CE) and suoyin 索隱 (Sima Zhen 司馬貞, 679-732 CE) commentaries to the Shiji both note that Dai was pronounced like da 大, and the suoyin commentary specifies that Dai was located in Jiangxia. Again, for ease of reference, I romanize 軻 as Dai rather than Da. See Shiji 19.978-979. Ma (1981), p. 12 notes that while some modern accounts locate Dai in Hubei 湖北 province, in actual fact Dai was located in the northern part of Jiangxia in present-day Hunan. See also Huang and Niu (1972), pp. 21-24. Jiangxia originally formed part of the kingdom of Huainan 淮南, though it was later transferred to commandery status in 174 BCE.


M1 and sustained significant damage during the construction of that tomb, indicating that he was the first to be buried. The *Shiji* records his death in 186 BCE; no remains of his corpse were found in the tomb.

The identity of the occupant of M3 has proved much more controversial. M3 is located south of M1 and sustained serious damage during the construction of that tomb, meaning that M3 is the earlier of the two. Tests on the bones found in the tomb show that the occupant was a male in his early thirties, and he is now generally reckoned to be Li Xi, the son of Li Cang and Xin Zhui. The *Shiji* and the *Hanshu* record that Li Xi inherited his father’s marquisate, but there is a three-year discrepancy between the date of 165 BCE given for Li Xi’s death in those sources and the burial date of 168 BCE inscribed on a wooden board found in the outer coffin of M3. Because of this, and a perceived discrepancy between the items found in M3 and those thought befitting of a marquess, some scholars have identified the occupant of M3 as a younger brother of Li Xi, rather than Li Xi himself.

71 See Riegel (1975), p. 11.

72 See Riegel (1975), p. 11.

73 Scientific analysis of the bones in M3 place the tomb occupant at 30-40 years of age. See BG, pp. 265-267. Since the tests carried out on Xin Zhui’s corpse put her at around 50 years of age (see HM, 1.31), if she was indeed the biological mother of the occupant of M3 it is likely he was in his early 30s.

74 For Li Xi’s dates, see *Shiji* 19.978 and *Hanshu* 16.618.

75 Gao Zhixi 高至喜 in BG, pp. 237-240 notes, for example, that the tomb occupant was buried in a three-layer coffin, rather than a seven-layer coffin appropriate to a marquess. Gao goes on to state that he may have been a military man based on the weapons and maps found in his tomb, and speculates that he was a younger brother of Li Xi. See BG, pp. 238-239. For a fuller discussion of this issue, see Chapter 5.

Fu Juyou 傅舉有 has argued that the tomb occupant was the second marquess of Dai (i.e., Li Xi) based on the richness of his tomb furnishings, and that the dates given in received sources must be erroneous. See Fu Juyou 傅舉有, “Han dai liehou de jiali—jian tan Mawangdui sanhao muzhu” 漢代列侯的家吏——兼談馬王堆三號墓墓主, *Wenwu* 文物 (1999) 1, p. 96, while Li Shisheng 黎石生 has argued that Li Xi’s (hypothetical) younger brother is the more likely candidate. See Li Shisheng 黎石生, “Changsha Mawangdui sanhao muzhu zaiyi” 長沙馬王堆三號墓主再議, *Gugong bowuyuan yuanankan* 故宮博物院院刊 3 (2005), pp. 150–55, 162. For an overview of these debates, see Jesse James Chapman, “The Rhetoric and Ritual of Celestial Signs in Early Imperial China,” Ph.D. diss., University of California, Berkeley, 2014, p.32n.1 and Fu Juyou 傅舉有, “Mawangdui Hanmu muzhuren shi shei —
Recently, however, Sun Weizu 孫慰祖, the foremost expert on ancient Chinese seals, discovered a damaged seal among the M3 burial finds inscribed with partially visible characters that he and Chen Songchang 陳松長 have reconstructed as Li 利 and Xi 豨. Chen has argued that the fact this seal was placed in M3 suggests that Li Xi was the tomb occupant, since it is unlikely that he would have gifted one of his personal seals to be interred in his brother’s tomb when no such seal was deposited in the tomb of either his mother or father. Chen argues that the tomb occupant of M3, who evidently predeceased Xin Zhui (see above), was in fact Li Xi, and this explains why his seal was not deposited in M1. Chen accounts for the three-year discrepancy between the date of death on the wooden board in M3 and the information given in transmitted sources by speculating that Li Xi’s successor as marquess of Dai observed a three-year mourning period after Li Xi’s death during which time he did not formally take up his post. Since Changsha was located far from the capital, Chen proposes that perhaps the year when the third marquess officially inherited his title was mistaken for the year that Li Xi died, and the incorrect date was entered into official accounts.\(^{76}\)

While there is still some room for doubt, then, the argument that Li Xi was the occupant of M3 is increasingly compelling. For the purposes of this dissertation, however, the precise identity of the individual buried in M3 along with the great majority of the Mawangdui manuscripts is largely irrelevant, for even if we could be more confident about Li Xi’s identity as the occupant of M3 we have no records about what position he held (if any) in Changsha, only that he succeeded his father as marquess of Dai.\(^{77}\) What matters is that the occupant of M3 was a noble of great wealth and status who probably served in some capacity in Changsha during the

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\(^{76}\) See Chen Songchang 陳松長, “Mawangdui sanhao muzhu de zai renshi” 馬王堆三號墓主的再認識, in idem, Jianbo yanjiu wen gao 簡帛研究文稿 (Beijing: Xianzhuang shuju, 2008), pp. 435-442.

\(^{77}\) The occupant of M3 was buried with a significant amount of military paraphernalia, including weapons, maps, and silk manuscripts containing texts on military divination, leading to speculation that he may once have held some sort of military rank. See above and Wenwu chubanshe (1994), p. 140.
early Western Han judging by the fact that he was buried there in a richly furnished tomb along with his mother and father. For now, at least, I will refer to this person as Li Xi.

0.6.4 Introduction to Mawangdui studies

Some twenty years after the discovery of the Mawangdui tombs, Mawangdui studies (Mawangdui xue 馬王堆學) was “officially” recognized as a field of study in its own right. Mawangdui studies can be divided into a variety of different subfields, and scholars with expertise in different disciplines generally work within just one or two of these areas. Some scholars work primarily on the Mawangdui manuscripts, for example, particularly the information they contain about divination, astronomical knowledge, and medical practice in early China, while others work predominantly on lacquerware, the textiles found at Mawangdui, or what the tombs can tell us about early Western Han mortuary culture.

While the Mawangdui manuscripts are usually studied separately from the material culture of the Mawangdui tombs, in fact writing at Mawangdui was incorporated into all these artifact types and cultural practices, including lacquerware and textile production, the construction of the tomb, the funeral rites carried out at the burial site, and the display and deposition of burial objects at the grave site. Rather than restricting the study of writing at Mawangdui to the manuscripts that were found in M3, then, a more holistic approach that examines the different kinds of writing found in all three tombs will provide a fuller and more accurate account of the roles writing played in the lives and afterlives of early Western Han elites. The Mawangdui site is an excellent candidate for this kind of study, since it provides us

78 It has been said that recognition of Mawangdui studies as a multidisciplinary field of research came in August 1992 with the scholarly meeting convened to mark the twentieth anniversary of the discovery of the tombs. See Xiong Chuanxin’s foreword in Mawangdui Hanmu yanjiu wenji – 1992 nian Mawangdui Hanmu guoji xueshu taolunhui lunwen xuan 馬王堆漢墓研究文集 – 1992 年馬王堆漢墓國際學術討論會論文選, ed. Hunan sheng bowuguan 湖南省博物館 (Changsha: Hunan chubanshe, 1994), pp. 1-2.
with three archaeologically excavated tombs (two of which were undisturbed) containing a wealth of textual materials in various media. Moreover, the tombs can be securely dated, and the tombs themselves and certain references in transmitted sources give a clear indication of the rank and status of the tomb occupants.

0.6.5 Introduction to the Mawangdui manuscripts

The Mawangdui manuscripts are written documents made of silk, bamboo, or, in one case, wood.\(^7^9\) Excluding the bamboo documents in the tomb inventory (qiance 遺冊/策) genre found in M1 and M3, which will be dealt with in detail in Chapter 2,\(^8^0\) the Mawangdui manuscripts were found inside a black lacquer case stored in the eastern compartment of the outer coffin in M3.\(^8^1\) Since the tomb had taken on water the manuscripts had sustained varying degrees of damage, and it is sometimes unclear which fragments belong to which manuscripts and how many documents were originally placed inside the case.\(^8^2\) Estimates for the amount of

\(^7^9\) In addition to one of the medical manuscripts that was manufactured from slips of wood (see Chapter 1), the tomb inventory document found in M3 was originally also manufactured from a combination of wood and bamboo (see Chapter 2). For early introductions to the manuscripts found at Mawangdui, see Xiao Han 小涵, “Changsha Mawangdui Hanmu boshu gaishu” 長沙馬王堆漢墓帛書概述, \textit{Wenwu} 文物 (1974).9, pp. 40-44 and Zhongguo kexueyuan kaogu yanjiusuo 國科學院考古研究所 and Hunan sheng bowuguan xiezuo xiaozu 湖南省博物館寫作小組, “Mawangdui er, san hao Hanmu fajue de zhuyao shouhuo” 馬王堆二, 三號漢墓發掘的主要收穫, \textit{Kaogu 考古} (1975).1, pp. 45-57, 61, 75-79. For more recent overviews, see Chen Songchang 陳松長, \textit{Changsha Mawangdui Xihan mu 長沙馬王堆西漢墓} (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1998), pp. 96-111 and Chen Songchang (2012), pp. 16-81.

\(^8^0\) The tomb inventory texts in M1 and M3 were found in the northern end of the eastern compartment of the outer coffin and the northern end of the western compartment of the outer coffin respectively.

\(^8^1\) The case measures approximately 59.8cm in length, 36.8cm in width, and 21.2cm in height (precise measurements vary, see Chapter 5), and is divided into two tiers. The medical texts on bamboo and wood were found in the long, narrow through compartment (tongge 通格) in the bottom tier of the case along with three silk manuscripts that had each been rolled around a long strip of wood. The remainder of the manuscripts, all on silk, were placed in a larger square compartment in the same tier of the case.

\(^8^2\) There are imprints from as yet unidentified documents on the surface of some of the silk fragments that may be the traces of lost manuscripts, for example.
surviving text range from 120,000 to 200,000 characters, making this by far the largest cache of texts from a single Early Imperial tomb, and thousands of books and articles have been written about them.\textsuperscript{83}

There is circumstantial evidence that slips of bamboo (zhujian 竹簡) were used for writing already in the Shang,\textsuperscript{84} though excavated examples date from no earlier than the fifth century BCE. Bamboo slip manuscripts were manufactured by selecting appropriate lengths of bamboo,\textsuperscript{85} cutting the culms to size, splitting the culms into slips, and binding them in one, two, or three places with silk, hemp, or some form of string to form a manuscript that could be rolled up or folded when not in use.\textsuperscript{86} The bamboo knots were typically filed down before the slips were used for writing, and the slips were heated over a fire to remove the moisture and destroy any insect eggs in a process known as shaqing 殺青 (“killing the green”) or hanjian 汗簡 (“sweating the slips”). Writing was usually done on the exposed side of the bamboo (i.e., the side that was originally on the inside of the culm, known in Chinese as zhuhuang 竹黃) and only occasionally on the skin side (known in Chinese as zhuqing 竹青).\textsuperscript{87} Wooden slips (mujian 木簡) are also used, but less commonly.


\textsuperscript{84} See Bagley (2004) and Tsien ([1962] 2004), pp. 96-98.

\textsuperscript{85} Zhang Qisheng 張齊生 et al., \textit{Zhongguo zhucai gongyehua liyong 中國竹材工業化利用} (Beijing: Zhongguo linye chubanshe, 1995) provides a comprehensive overview of the physical characteristics of different kinds of bamboo.

\textsuperscript{86} Some manuscripts were rolled using the first slip (i.e., the rightmost slip) as the axle, while others were rolled with the last slip (i.e., the leftmost slip) as the axle. See Jia (2015), pp. 225-227. For evidence that certain manuscripts were folded rather than rolled, see Jia (2015), p. 224 and Xiao (2015), pp. 110-130.
and boards (*mudu* 木牘) were typically shaped using a knife, with the top and bottom ends of the wood sawed to size and the surface of the wood polished in preparation for writing.\(^{88}\)

Sometimes the bamboo or wooden slips were written up before they were bound, while other times they were bound prior to writing. Occasionally the position of the traces left behind by the bindings (very few manuscripts retain their original bindings) or the notches that were carved to help hold the bindings in place give an indication of whether the writing was done before or after binding. For example, if the bindings seem originally to have obscured parts of certain characters this may suggest that the manuscripts were bound after the writing was completed, whereas if certain graphs seem to have been written around the bindings this may be an indication that the scribe who copied the text was working with a pre-bound manuscript. However, it is rarely possible to say for certain whether a certain manuscript was bound prior or subsequent to writing.\(^{89}\)

It was evidently also common practice for a line to be carved in a spiral formation around the outside of the bamboo culm, producing a curved line that runs across the verso sides of the slips when they are placed side by side in sequence. These verso lines give

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\(^{89}\) It is possible, for example, that scribes used the pre-carved notches to anticipate which portions of bamboo or wood would have been partially obscured by the bindings and simply wrote around these spaces. On this point, see; Xing [= Hsing] (2011), pp. 23-30; Foster (2017), p. 211-212; and Thies Staack, “Could the Peking University Laozi 老子 Really be a Forgery? Some Skeptical Remarks,” unpublished paper (2017), pp. 10-11. Giele (2003), p. 425 further notes that traces of bindings that seem as if they would have obscured certain graphs may sometimes simply reflect the fact that these slips were rebound after writing. Yao (1995), p. 202 notes that texts were likely originally written on unbound slips, which accounts for the traditional vertical orientation of Chinese writing. Writing horizontally on pre-bound slips or tablets of wood or bamboo would have been possible but would have required a table or some other sort of support surface (see Chapter 5).
some indication of slip sequences,\textsuperscript{90} as do the numbers that appear on the verso sides of slips in certain manuscripts\textsuperscript{91} and imprints from other inscribed slips.\textsuperscript{92} Writing was rarely done on the verso sides of bamboo or wooden slips. The physical features of excavated bamboo manuscripts generally do not corroborate the information given in traditional sources about the lengths of the slips used to produce manuscripts for different sorts of texts (classics, commentaries, etc.). In the Eastern Han, Wang Chong and Zheng Xuan 鄭玄 (127-200 CE) noted the apparent connection between the status of the text and the size of the manuscript used to carry it, providing specific lengths for the slips used to record different kinds of text,\textsuperscript{93} though it is unclear how reliable this information may be.\textsuperscript{94}

It is generally reckoned that there were two types of silk manuscript (\textit{boshu} 帛書) in early China: rolled (\textit{juanzhou shi} 巻軸式) manuscripts and folded (\textit{zhedie shi} 折疊式) manuscripts, based on the fact that some of the Mawangdui silk manuscripts were rolled for

\textsuperscript{90} For the verso line phenomenon, see Sun (2011), pp. 449–62; Li (2004), pp. 102–106; Han (2012), pp. 227-335; Jia (2015), pp. 82-102; and Staaak (2015), pp. 157-186. Staaak concludes with the hypothesis that the verso lines were carved in order to indicate the sequence of slips within a culm unit, meaning that even those slips that had been cut unevenly could be lined up in the correct sequence (i.e., next to those slips that had originally been in adjacent positions in the bamboo culm) to produce a smooth writing surface.

\textsuperscript{91} These numbers rarely appear on the recto sides of the slips. See He (2013), pp. 452-458 and Li (2003), pp. 156-160.

\textsuperscript{92} See Jia (2015), pp. 213-224.

\textsuperscript{93} For Wang Chong’s comments, see \textit{Lunheng jiaoshi} 12.557-558, 19.821. For a discussion of Zheng Xuan’s remarks, which seem to confirm Wang’s observations, see Cook (2012), Vol.1, pp. 20-21 and Drège (1997), pp. 243-244.

\textsuperscript{94} As Olivier Venture has noted, references to the dimensions of different manuscripts refer to different kinds of manuscripts, in some instances referring to specific cases while other times indicating more general production standards, and our excavated manuscripts may have been physically altered by the conditions in which they were deposited. Though we do not know if manuscript production was subject to certain measures of standardization already in the Warring States era, judging by excavated finds the manuscripts produced in this period were typically longer than those in the Early Imperial era, with Qin and Han administrative documents typically ranging between 22-25cm in length, broadly corresponding to the measurements provided by Wang and Zheng. Though non-administrative texts exhibit much greater variation in size, over time they seem increasingly to have come to resemble administrative documents in size. See Feng [= Venture] (2011), pp. 554-556. See also Richter (2013), pp. 25-26, who argues that any such production standards would likely have been observed only in small communities.
storage inside the lacquer case while others were folded. However, this apparent difference may merely reflect the way the manuscripts were stored for burial at Mawangdui rather than the ways they were actually used above ground (see Chapter 5). As mentioned above, three of the silk manuscripts from Mawangdui that were found in the long side compartment in the bottom tier of the lacquer case had each been rolled around a long, slender piece of wood: the *Laozi 老子 A manuscript, *Chunqiu shiyu 春秋事語 (Speeches in Narratives from the Springs and Autumn Era), and Medical Manuscript III, which were found underneath the medical manuscripts on wood and bamboo. The rest of the silk manuscripts had been folded and stacked inside the larger, square compartment in the bottom tier of the case. The tomb having taken on water, the manuscripts in this pile had compacted to form a large brick of mud (nizhuan 泥磚) measuring approximately 22 cm long x 16 cm wide x 8 cm thick. The contents of these silk documents are very diverse, including historical anecdotes, philosophical prose, divinatory texts, medical compendia, and other technical documents.

There are references to writing on silk in various transmitted early Chinese texts, including the *Lunyu 論語 (Selected Sayings, or Analects), *Zhouli 周禮 (Rituals of Zhou), the *Yanzi Chunqiu 晏子春秋 (Springs and Autumns Annals of Master Yan), the *Mozi 墨子 (Book of Master Mo), the *Yuejue shu 越絕書 (Book on Yue Exterminating Wu), and the *Hanfeizi...

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95 Chen (2016), p. 271.
96 For an overview of these references, see Chen Songchang (2012), pp. 7-8, 13.
97 Lunyu jishi 論語集釋 31.1065-1067.
98 Zhouli zhengyi 周禮正義 57.2367.
99 Yanzi chunqiu jishi 晏子春秋集釋 7.485.
100 For eg., Mozi jiaozhu 墨子校注 2.97.
101 Yuejue shu 越絕書 13.94-95. The precise meaning of the title of this text is somewhat obscure, and my translation is based on the suggestion offered in Axel Schuessler and Michael Loewe, “Yüeh chüeh shu 越絕書,” in *Early Chinese Texts: A Bibliographic Guide*, ed. Michael Loewe (Berkeley: Society for the
The brief passages in question, however, are of uncertain date, and in any case generally refer retrospectively to special kinds of texts. Though silk has been cultivated in China since Neolithic times, then, it is unclear when it came to be used as a writing material for the kinds of texts we encounter at Mawangdui, though the discovery of the famous “Chu silk manuscript” currently held in the collection of the Arthur M. Sackler Gallery in Washington, D.C. confirms that silk was used to write relatively extended texts at least by the late Warring States era.

Though the small amount of textual material on bamboo and wood from Mawangdui represents a tiny fraction of the total amount of material in those media excavated or acquired from early Chinese sites, then, the silk manuscripts that were discovered there constitute the bulk of our silk documents from early China. In addition to these manuscripts, a number of other items manufactured from silk sheets (containing little to no writing) were found at Mawangdui.

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102 Hanfeizi jishi 韓非子集釋 8.199.


104 This manuscript was looted from a tomb that almost certainly originally also contained other silk manuscripts, judging by the imprints from unidentified documents on the surface of the silk. See Noel Barnard, The Ch’u Silk Manuscript: Translation and Commentary (Canberra: Australian National University Monographs on Far Eastern History 5, 1973), pp. 1-18. Indeed, a small number of badly fragmented and basically illegible silk manuscripts were found in the same tomb from which the Chu silk manuscript was looted after the site was properly excavated. See Li (1985), pp. 437-439.

105 In addition to the document already mentioned, a small number of silk letters from the Han have also been found. See Zhao (2005), pp. 83-84 and Olivier Venture, “Les pieces de soie,” in Drège (2014), p. 347. Li (1985), pp. 443-444 provides a description of excavated paintints on silk from the Warring States era, and Paul van Els, “Dingzhou: The Story of an Unfortunate Tomb,” Asiatische Studien/Études Asiatiques 63.4 (2009), p. 919 notes the existence of a chest containing charred pieces of silk that may originally have been silk manuscripts destroyed by fire in the tomb at Dingzhou 定州 (Hebei 河北, Western Han). Xilinx [= Nishibayashi] (2009), pp. 139-140 and Huang Wenjie 黃文傑, Qin Han wenzi de zhengli yu yanjiu 秦漢文字的整理與研究 (Beijing: Shehui kexue wenxian chubanshe, 2015), pp. 152-153 provide overviews of the small number of silk documents that have been found outside Mawangdui, including letters, Han silk bier banners, and a silk document for securing safe passage on the road. Foster (2017), p. 174 notes that a fake silk manuscript recently appeared on the Beijing antiquities market.
including maps and plans and two (or possibly three) paintings on silk found hanging from the walls of the inner coffin chamber in M3. T-shaped silk banners had also been draped over the coffins in M1 and M3.

We know very little about how silk manuscripts may have been designed or produced in the Warring States or Early Imperial eras, in part because to date very few pieces have been discovered, but also because transmitted sources have not furnished us with any reliable descriptions of the process by which silk manuscripts were manufactured, and as a result scholarly accounts of early Chinese silk manuscript production are uniformly shorter and less detailed than accounts of bamboo manuscript production. The earliest extended description of silk manuscript design appears rather late. In the *Hou Hanshu* (History of the Later Han, comp. fifth century CE), we are told that in the Eastern Han during the reign of Emperor Shun, one Gong Chong submitted to the throne a manuscript made from plain white (i.e., undyed) silk entitled the *Taiping qingling shu* (Writings of the Pure Guidance of Heavenly Peace) that had been discovered by his teacher Gan Ji (d. 200) at the Quyang Spring. The passage tells us that the manuscript was rejected by the court.

106 These items are discussed in detail in Chapters 4 and 5.


108 Indeed, Mu-Chou Poo, *Daily Life in Ancient China* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 2018), p. 130 notes that transmitted texts furnish us with basically no details about how fabrics were produced in early China.

because it contained heretical statements related to *yin* and *yang* 陰陽 and the Five Phases (*wuxing* 五行). Chen Songchang, basing himself on Li Xian’s 李賢 (651-684 CE) commentary to the *Hou Hanshu*, has argued that the term *zhujie* 朱介 that appears in the description of the manuscript refers to the kinds of red rules lines (known as *zhusi lan* 朱絲欄 in modern scholarship) we see in the Mawangdui manuscripts,¹¹¹ and that the term *qingshou* 青首 refers to the black ink dots that appear at the head of certain sections of text. Chen also takes the term *zhumu* 朱目 in this passage as a reference to the kinds of dots used to mark breaks between textual units.¹¹² The fact that this passage appears so late, however, and describes the material and codicological features of a document that had supposedly been divinely revealed, means that it is unreliable as a description of silk manuscript production in late Warring States and Early Imperial China.¹¹³

Silk manuscripts were evidently woven using some sort of loom,¹¹⁴ and the *juan* 絹 silk from which the Mawangdui silk manuscripts were manufactured was produced by weaving thin

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¹¹¹ Ruled black lines are known as *wusi lan* 朱絲欄 (see below).

¹¹² For these comments, see Chen Songchang (2012), pp. 13-14.

¹¹³  *Hou Hanshu* 69a.2548 also states that when Dong Zhuo 董卓 (d. 192 CE) relocated the capital from Luoyang 洛陽 to Chang’an in 191 CE there was great confusion among the populace, and the contents of the various libraries in Luoyang became broken and scattered. This passage tells us that documents on silk (*jianbo tushu* 縣帛圖書) were repurposed, with larger items stitched together to form curtains and canopies (*weigai* 帷蓋) and smaller items turned into sacks or pouches (*tengnang* 椁囊).

¹¹⁴ Jean Mailey, “Suggestions Concerning the Ground of the Ch’u Silk Manuscript in Relation to Silk-Weaving in Pre-Han and Han China,” in *Early Chinese Art and Its Possible Influence in the Pacific Basin, Volume One: Ch’u and the Silk Manuscript*, ed. Noel Barnard in collaboration with Douglas Fraser (New York: Intercultural Arts Press, 1972), p. 111 notes that depictions of small looms operated with foot pedals, the kind which were probably used to manufacture the tabby pattern of the Chu silk manuscript, appear on Han era reliefs. Feng Zhao et al., “The Earliest Evidence of Pattern Looms: Han Dynasty Tomb Models from Chengdu, China,” *Antiquity* 91 (2017), pp. 360-374 provides a description of four miniature loom models with accompanying figurines that were found in a Western Han tomb at Laoguanshan 老官山 in Chengdu 成都. For an overview of Han dynasty looms, see Sun Ji 孫機, comp., *Handai wuzhi*. 
strands of silk together tightly in a plain (pingwen 平紋) or tabby formation. The Mawangdui silk manuscripts come in two standard sizes: a “full width” (zhengfu 整幅) size of 48-50cm and a “half width” (banfu 半幅) size of roughly 24cm. There was apparently no standard length; certain manuscripts were apparently cut to size, while portions of extra silk were left at the beginning or end of others to guard against fraying and accommodate additional text.

Once lengths of silk had been woven, they required extensive preparation before they could be used as a writing surface. From the analysis that has been carried out on the Mawangdui manuscripts, this process involved first applying some sort of translucent glue to the surface of the silk to ensure that ink did not run along the thread lines. Then, a hard object was used to apply pressure, polishing the surface of the silk and ensuring that the glue was applied evenly. Ruled lines were applied to many of the manuscripts, using red cinnabar or black ink to create

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115 There are numerous terms in both classical and modern Chinese for different types of silk, including bo 布 (a general term for silk), juan, zeng 織 (a specialist term for silk woven from thicker threads that was usually darker in color and more durable, as well as a general term for silk), and jian 織 (woven from double threads, making it denser and generally yellow in color). These last three types were used for writing. Juan silk makes for a good writing surface because its plain-woven design means it is strong and durable. See Chen (2007), pp. 21-22 and Chen Songchang (2012), p. 5. See also Zhang (2004), pp. 109-110 and Richter (2011), p. 211n.11.

116 Matthias Richter has speculated that full-width lengths of silk were probably more valuable than half-width silk, since they would have required a loom twice the size to produce them. See Richter (2011), p. 212n.15.

117 A rather late source, Xu Jian’s 徐堅 (d. 729 CE) Chuxue ji 初學記 (Fundamentals of Learning), claims that silk manuscripts were cut (jie 裁) to size based on the length of the text (shu 書). See Pian (2005), p. 79 and Chen Songchang (2012), p. 13.

118 See Chen (2007), p. 22
vertical columns measuring approximately 0.7-0.8mm in width within which text could be written. Some of the manuscripts were also accompanied by protective lining sheets with specially woven upper and lower borders. In general, when silk manuscripts were laid out flat the width of the silk became the height of the manuscript. The manuscripts were folded or rolled with the writing on the inside; no text was written on their verso sides.

As noted above, the Mawangdui silk manuscripts had sustained significant damage, and restoration was carried out on the basis of the size, shape, and contents of the silk fragments, as well as ink that had imprinted from one portion of the manuscript onto another. The great majority of the silk manuscripts bore ink imprints (yinwen 印文) produced by transposed ink (writing, ruled lines, tables, illustrations, etc.), and these give some indication of how the manuscripts can be reconstructed, as well as how certain manuscripts were folded before they were placed inside the lacquer case. Depending on how the ink was transposed, this process could produce identical imprints (zheng yinwen 正印文), imprints inverted horizontally across a vertical axis (fan yinwen 反印文), imprints inverted vertically across a horizontal axis (dao yinwen 倒印文), and imprints that seeped from one side of the silk to another (shen yinwen 滲印文).

119 See Zhang (2004), p. 113; Pian (2005), p. 81; and Zhao (2005), p. 82. Richter (2011), p. 211n.14 states that it is not really understood how or why the “remarkably straight and regular lines” on these manuscripts were drawn, but he speculates that “[t]he most likely function seems to be visual guidance for the eyes of both writer and reader.” See Chapter 5 for a fuller discussion of this issue.

120 See Chapter 1 for a detailed discussion of these lining sheets.

121 For an overview of the reconstruction efforts, see Chen Songchang (2012), pp. 95-96.

122 For a comprehensive overview of these different kinds of marks, see Chen Jian 陳劍, “Mawangdui boshu ‘yinwen’, kongbai ye he chenye ji zhedie qingkuang zongzhu” 马王堆帛書‘印文’，空白頁和襯頁及折疊情況綜述, in Hunan sheng bowuguan (2016), pp. 271-273. Chen notes that in general the clearest imprints are formed by portions of silk containing ink that are pressed downwards onto another piece of silk.
The texts of the Mawangdui manuscripts were copied over a considerable span of time. The texts on the earliest manuscripts were copied during the Qin dynasty, or possibly the late Warring States era, and the later manuscripts may have been copied within a decade or so prior to the sealing of M3 in 168 BCE. The avoidance of tabooed characters (huizi 諱字) used to write the personal names of early Chinese emperors is one way of estimating the date a certain text was copied; the calligraphic style of the writing is another. Lai Guolong 來國龍 has pointed out that we cannot rely on naming taboos to date “private” documents, since, Lai argues, such practices were regularly observed only in official documents. Olivier Venture, meanwhile, has shown that taboos were apparently observed even less systematically than this, and it is unclear how consistent the practice of naming taboos was, whether it was observed for reigning emperors or only for deceased rulers, what types of documents were most likely to observe them, and for how long such taboos were enforced. For these reasons, we must be cautious about using taboos to date the copying of a particular manuscript.

The writing on silk, wood, and bamboo from Mawangdui can be divided into different calligraphic styles, which often represent somewhat distinct (though sometimes also overlapping) evolutionary stages in the development of the Chinese script. In general, for example, those texts written in seal script (zhuanshu 篆書), or in a seal-clerical (zhuanli 篆隸) hybrid, were copied earlier than those written in the ancient clerical (guli 古隸) or later Han

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123 Of course, the question of when the text of a particular manuscript was copied should be distinguished from the question of when the text (or that particular version of it) originally came to be composed.


clerical (Hanli 漢隸/lishu 隸書) script styles.\textsuperscript{126} Manuscripts can rarely be dated securely or specifically on the basis of script style, however, since we know scribes were often required to master multiple different styles, and certain texts contain deliberately archaized graphs for aesthetic or symbolic purposes.\textsuperscript{127} Ideally, taboos and script styles can be used together to arrive at a likely date when the text of a particular manuscript was copied, and in most cases taboos, script style, and internal textual references such as dates bear each other out, allowing us to assign most of the Mawangdui manuscripts to a particular period with some confidence.\textsuperscript{128} With at least one of the manuscripts, however, there is an apparent discrepancy between the taboos observed and the calligraphic style of the writing.\textsuperscript{129}

0.6.6 Introduction to principal publications of primary sources

- Hunan sheng bowuguan 湖南省博物館 and Zhongguo kexueyuan kaogu yanjiusuo 中國科學院考古研究所, eds., Changsha Mawangdui yi hao Hanmu 長沙馬王堆一號漢墓, 2 volumes (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 1973). This is the official excavation report for M1. Vol. 1 contains detailed descriptions of the tomb, its occupant, and the objects that


\textsuperscript{127} For a recent study of some of the script styles in use in different contexts in the early Western Han, see Ōnishi Katsuya, “An Investigation of Clerical Script in Chu Regions during the Qin and Han Periods, and its Relationship to ‘Scribal Writing,’” \textit{Bamboo and Silk} 1.2 (2018), pp. 359-402. See also the discussion of scribal training in Chapter 1.

\textsuperscript{128} See Kalinowski (2005), p. 143, 143n.24 and my discussion of this issue in Chapter 5.

\textsuperscript{129} See, for example, the discussion of the dating of the two \textit{Zhouyi} 周易 (Zhou Changes) manuscripts in Chapter 1. Similar discrepancies appear also in some of the texts excavated at Yinqueshan 銀雀山 (Linyi 至沂, Shandong; Western Han). See Roger T. Ames, trans., \textit{Sun-tzu, The Art of Warfare: The First English Translation Incorporating the Recently Discovered Yin-ch’üeh-shan Texts} (New York: Ballantine, 1993), pp. 16-17.
were buried with her. Vol. 2 features both color and black and white photographs of many of these items. An English abstract appears at the end of Vol. 1. The individual contributors are not named.

- Guojia wenwuju gu wenxian yanjiushi 国家文物局古文献研究室, ed., *Mawangdui Hanmu boshu* 马王堆汉墓帛书, Volumes 1, 3-4 (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 1980-1985). Contains annotated transcriptions and photographs (mostly black and white) of some of the more famous Mawangdui manuscripts. Vol. 1 is dedicated to the two Laozi 老子 manuscripts, Vol. 3 to the *Zhanguo zongheng jia shu* 战国纵横家书 (Book from the Warring States School of the Vertical and Horizontal Alliances) manuscript, and Vol. 4 to some of the medical manuscripts. The editorial team consisted of Zhang Zhenglang 张政烺, Zhu Dexi 朱德熙, Li Xueqin 李学勤 and Qiu Xigui 裘锡圭.

- Fu Juyou 傅举有 and Chen Songchang 陈松长, eds., *Mawangdui Hanmu wenwu* 马王堆汉墓文献, 2 volumes (Changsha: Hunan chubanshe, 1992). A catalogue containing color plates and bilingual captions for some of the items found in the three tombs, including many of the manuscripts. Vol. 2 is a slender supplementary volume entitled *Mawangdui Hanmu wenwu zongshu* 马王堆汉墓文物综述.

- Chen Songchang 陈松长, ed., *Mawangdui boshu yishu* 马王堆帛书艺术 (Shanghai: Shanghai shudian, 1996). Divides the writing on many of the manuscripts into three script styles and provides estimates for the dates the manuscripts were copied based on their calligraphy. The calligraphic features of these manuscripts are described in some detail. Also provides black and white photographs and transcriptions of some of the manuscripts and their contents.
• Hunan sheng bowuguan 湖南省博物館 and Hunan sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo 湖南省文物考古研究所 [led by He Jiejun 何介鈞], eds., Changsha Mawangdui er, san hao Hanmu: di yi juan, tianye kaogu fajue baogao 長沙馬王堆二，三號漢墓：第一卷，田野考古發掘報告 (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 2004). This is the first volume of what was originally planned as a two-volume set. Vol. 1 is the official excavation report for M2 and M3, providing detailed descriptions and black and white and color photographs of the tombs and their contents. Most of the manuscripts are merely described in passing, with the exception of the tomb inventory document and medical manuscripts on wood and bamboo found in M3. The two maps from M3 are also described in detail in this volume. A second volume was originally to be dedicated to the remainder of the manuscripts, but the fate of this work is uncertain. English and Japanese abstracts are provided at the end of the first volume. Individual contributors are listed in the introduction on p. 4.

• Hunan Provincial Museum 湖南省博物館 [led by Chen Jianming 陳建明], ed., Noble Tombs at Mawangdui: Art and Life of the Changsha Kingdom, Third Century BCE to First Century CE 馬王堆漢墓：古長沙國的藝術和生活 (Changsha: Yuelu publishing house, 2008). Bilingual exhibition volume published to accompany the exhibition of the same name that toured the United States in 2009. Provides essays by individual contributors on different aspects of the tombs and the objects that were found in them, including some of the manuscripts. Includes many color photographs.

• Hunan sheng bowuguan 湖南省博物館 and Fudan daxue chutu wenxian yu guwenzi yanjiu zhongxin 復旦大學出土文獻與古文字研究中心 [led by Qiu Xigui 裘錫圭], eds., Changsha Mawangdui Hanmu boshu jicheng 長沙馬王堆漢墓帛書集成, 7 volumes (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2014). A comprehensive publication of all the Mawangdui manuscripts, including the maps, charts, and tomb inventory texts, as well as some of the
other inscribed sources from all three tombs. High-quality color photographs of all the manuscripts, including fragments that have not yet been reconstructed, are provided, as well as lengthy introductions providing comprehensive descriptions of the manuscripts, their publication histories, and outlines of previous scholarship. Annotated transcriptions of the manuscripts’ contents and useful bibliographies are also provided. Individual contributors are listed at Vol. 1, p. 3.

0.7 Overview of chapters

The publication of more or less comprehensive archaeological reports for all three tombs, with information about a wide variety of the burial objects found at Mawangdui as well as photographs and illustrations, and high-quality color photographs of all the manuscripts and detailed annotations and transcriptions of their contents has opened up new avenues for research in Mawangdui studies. For the first time, the Mawangdui manuscripts can be studied as a complete corpus, and the different types of writing committed to various media can be studied together, not just alongside tomb objects but as objects themselves.

Chapter 1 – Producing Texts: The Materiality of Textual Production at Mawangdui

In this chapter, I show that scribal production and textual curation at Mawangdui were not mindless or disembodied processes. Rather, scribes and others who worked to produce and curate written texts and textual materials were immersed in a world of tools, materials, and surfaces, where they were confronted with material challenges that included fraying silk, transposed ink, and delicate slips of bamboo and wood that could easily become disordered. Those involved in textual production at Mawangdui formulated different methods – some of them quite ingenious – to meet these challenges, using them as opportunities for technological experimentation and cultural expression. Different types of writing were designed and
manufactured in different ways depending on the status of the text, the use to which it would be put, and the technical considerations involved, with the writers who left their traces behind in the Mawangdui tombs ranging from highly trained scribes to semi-literate workmen responsible for the manufacture of the coffins.

Chapter 2 – Performing Texts: Writing in Rituals and Ceremonies

In this chapter I focus on the performances within which many of the tomb texts were embedded. From bamboo manuscripts containing inventories of grave goods that were performed during the funeral rites, to a ritual script made of silk used in ceremonies conducted to protect travelers on the road, and ritual messages inscribed on sets of exquisitely produced lacquer drinking cups used in sumptuous banquets, many of the Mawangdui manuscripts and inscriptions were designed for use in ritual performance. I argue that these were living texts that were valued not as silent messages but as prompts, props, and aids that cannot be understood apart from the material contexts within which they were displayed and used.

Chapter 3 – The Materiality of the Sign: Texts as Amulets and Talismans

In this chapter I deal with inscribed artifacts that were thought, through their very presence, to enact change in the world rather than merely describe or record elements of it, examining the different ways in which inscriptions could be used as talismans and amulets designed to attract good fortune and confer protection on their owners and users. Some of these charms took the form of auspicious phrases woven into decorative bands on silk garments, while others were painted in ink onto household items such as bamboo mats. One particularly fascinating type of talisman found in the corridor of one of the tombs took the form of a single bamboo strip recording the participation of a group of guardsmen in the funeral proceedings. In each of these cases, writing was used to repurpose or redesign a different type of artifact, and it
was believed that the presence of certain words and phrases in specific locations and contexts could confer lasting benefits on those around them.

Chapter 4 – Visualizing Texts: The Visual Design of Texts on Silk

In this chapter I examine how the visual appearance of certain texts was used to inculcate values and orthodox modes of perception in those exposed to them. While many of the tomb manuscripts feature tables, charts, and diagrams designed for practical consultation and use, one special manuscript makes use of non-linear writing displayed as a spiral within a circle inside a square to immerse its “readers” in the cosmological and philosophical logic of the text. Here, written characters are used not just as linguistic signs but also as cosmologically charged visual design elements, demonstrating that conventional reading was not the only way early Chinese elites engaged with texts and challenging us to reconsider the applicability of concepts such as illustration, decoration, and ornament in the context of early Chinese aesthetics.

Chapter 5 – Owning Texts: From Library to Tomb

In this chapter I focus on the different ways the Mawangdui manuscripts functioned as possessions during their respective life cycles before they were interred as part of a ritually deposited assemblage of artifacts. Though they were eventually brought together for burial and use by the deceased in the afterlife, they also existed as possessions above ground during the lifetimes of the tomb occupants, and sometimes even earlier than that. By engaging in sensitive readings of the contents of the manuscripts with and against their material forms, I argue that the Mawangdui silk manuscripts were originally designed to consolidate related textual materials for storage and occasional consultation, and that they were repurposed for use as personal possessions by the deceased in the afterlife. In the process, I show that the manuscripts buried in M3 should not be taken as evidence that Li Xi enjoyed a personal connection to these texts.
Rather, burying generically comprehensive corpora of sociopolitically useful texts was one way that Western Han ritualists prepared the dead (and the living) for the transition from life to death, providing them with practical knowledge, cultural status symbols, and familiar artifacts from everyday life.
Chapter 1 – Producing Texts: The Materiality of Textual Production at Mawangdui

1.1 Introduction: scribes in Early Imperial China

To write a text down – to transfer a text from the realm of the mental or the oral to the realm of the material – requires certain tools, materials, and technological competences. The writer or writers responsible for the production of the written text may or may not already be familiar with the text they are writing, they may or may not even be responsible for the text’s composition, but in committing a text to a durable medium they are nonetheless faced with certain choices and challenges affecting the execution of their work. Whether originating with the scribe or imposed from outside, decisions about which tools and materials to use, the layout of the text, and the mode of textual production that is to be employed (a solitary scribe working by himself or a team of scribes working in shifts, for example) will produce markedly different results and have a tremendous impact on the way the text is read and understood. Scholars have only recently begun to investigate how the material characteristics of excavated Chinese manuscripts reflected and affected the different ways they were designed and used, and understanding what these choices were and why they were made requires close examination of

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130 In fact, depending on how generously we define materiality (see the Introduction), the mental and the oral may actually constitute part of the material world since, as Christopher Nugent reminds us, media in the broadest sense includes also voice, sound, and memory. See Christopher M.B. Nugent, “Literary Media: Writing and Orality,” in The Oxford Handbook of Classical Chinese Literature, 1000 BCE-900 CE, ed. Wiebke Denecke, Li Wai-yee, and Tian Xiaofei (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), p. 47.


the manuscript in question in order to uncover the sociological conditions of its production and use.\textsuperscript{133}

Especially prior to the Eastern Han when paper became more affordable and textual production increased dramatically (but for long afterwards as well),\textsuperscript{134} producing written texts often involved working with resources (both material and human) that were hard to acquire and difficult to use. Writing tools and materials such as silk, bamboo, and cinnabar were not ideologically neutral but often enjoyed prestige as a result of their symbolic associations, with exquisitely manufactured manuscripts sometimes communicating as much through their material form as through their written contents.\textsuperscript{135} The selection of different writing tools, materials, and

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\textsuperscript{133} Here, I am gesturing towards D.F. McKenzie’s famous articulation of bibliography as the “sociology of texts.” See D.F. McKenzie, Bibliography and the Sociology of Texts (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1999), particularly McKenzie’s exhortation to “consider the human motives and interactions which texts involve at every stage of their production, transmission, and consumption” (quotation on p.15).


\textsuperscript{135} Indeed, the materials and tools used for writing are hardly ever “neutral” but are coded within a given community’s system of meaning. See Gunther Kress and Theo van Leeuwen, Reading Images: The Grammar of Visual Design (London: Routledge, 2006), pp. 215-225. Similarly, W.J.T. Mitchell reminds us that there is no such thing as a “pure” medium, since different media are necessarily caught up in complex networks of associations and values, including not just different practices, skills, and techniques, but social institutions as well. See W.J.T. Mitchell, What Do Pictures Want? The Lives and Loves of Images (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), pp. 213-215. Martin Powers, Pattern and Person: Ornament, Society, and Self in Classical China (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Asia Center, 2008), p. 2 makes a similar point: “Artifacts are never neutral: their materials are either more or less precious and their manufacture requires more or less skill, labor, knowledge, or ingenuity. For this reason they offer a material template for scales of value. Social values can be mapped onto these material scales through the abstracting power of style.” See also Jean Baudrillard, The System of Objects (New York: Verso, 2002), pp. 8-10.

Even in the modern age, writing tools are still often integrated into systems of cultural value and prestige. Nigel Hall has pointed out that expensive pens, for example, often function less well than cheaper varieties, with the status and prestige that come with their design or monetary value compensating for their inability to perform what is ostensibly their primary function. See Nigel Hall, “The Materiality of Letter Writing: A Nineteenth Century Perspective,” in Letter Writing as a Social Practice, ed. David Barton and Nigel Hall (Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing, 2000), pp. 85-87. Indeed,
techniques, however, was not wholly symbolic or ideological.\textsuperscript{136} Indeed, the decision-making that went into the production of written texts was often largely practical,\textsuperscript{137} taking into account not only the affordances offered by different materials, but also the inherent difficulties that came with them.\textsuperscript{138} Though the manuscripts that have come down to us from Chinese antiquity might seem primitive, clumsy, or illogical to us today, in fact in many cases they would have represented the very height of technological sophistication to their original users,\textsuperscript{139} and those involved in the production and use of written texts were likewise fully aware of the need to design manuscripts (as well as paratextual materials) that could simultaneously reflect and embody the nature and status of the texts they were used to carry, while also ensuring they were fit for their intended purpose. Indeed, as we will see, producing and preserving written texts meant making choices that were variously aesthetic, ideological, and pragmatic.

We do not have a great deal of information about scribal culture in Western Han times, and only a sketchy idea of the conditions in which manuscripts were produced and/or acquired in


\textsuperscript{137} Quite apart from the symbolic associations connected to different tools and technological practices, different technologies also carry their own properties and affordances, making it easier to do certain things and harder to do others. On this point, see Donald A. Norman, \textit{Things That Make Us Smart: Defending Human Attributes in the Age of the Machine} (Boston: Addison-Wesley Longman, 1993), pp. 243, 250-251.

\textsuperscript{138} See my Introduction for a brief discussion of the emphasis placed by certain materially minded scholars on the innate qualities and properties of material artifacts, in contrast to scholars advocating a more “anthropocentric” approach to artifacts, who tend to emphasize the values and associations that human subjects project onto them. Of course, the subjective values that come to be projected onto artifacts usually have some sort of connection to the objective material conditions of the artifacts themselves, and these two approaches are not irreconcilable.


\textsuperscript{139} In a similar vein, Jay David Bolter has pointed out that while we might appreciate a medieval manuscript today as a work of premodern art, the apparent lack of technology mediating between the text and our appreciation of it is a modern allusion. See Jay David Bolter, \textit{Writing Space: Computers, Hypertext, and the Remediation of Print} (New York: Routledge, 2001), p. 15.
regional kingdoms such as Changsha 長沙. Our efforts to reconstruct scribal practices and the circumstances of textual production for the Warring States and Early Imperial eras are complicated by the fact that the majority of excavated manuscript finds from these periods originate from sites in modern-day Hubei 湖北 and Hunan 湖南 provinces, areas that formed part of the kingdom of Chu 楚 until 278 BCE when they were incorporated into the pre-imperial Qin state. Later, these regions would become part of the Qin and Han empires. Our sources thus exhibit a substantial regional bias, and it may be unwise to generalize from them about scribal practices in other parts of the Chinese world. Simply put, we cannot assume that the Mawangdui finds are representative of how texts were produced or transmitted in other parts of the Han empire.

Recent finds from Liye 里耶 in Hunan, Shuihudi 睡虎弟 in Hubei (both Qin dynasty), and Zhangjiashan 張家山 (Hubei; early Western Han) seem to show that in the early empires literary production, which had previously been largely circumscribed to a hereditary caste of officers known as “scribes” (shi 史), slowly developed into a more diffuse scribal culture where trained assistants (zuo 佐) and scribes without family ties to the profession engaged in the production of written texts. These excavated materials can be used to supplement the sparse

140 Tsang Wing Ma, “Scribes in Early Imperial China,” Ph.D. diss., University of California, Santa Barbara, 2017, p. 3n.4 notes that the two most comprehensive studies of early Chinese scribes focus solely on the pre-Qin period, namely Xi Hanjing 席涵靜, Zhoudai shiguan yanjiu 周代史官研究 (Taipei: Fuji wenhua tushu, 1983) and Xu Zhaochang 許兆昌, Xian Qin shiguan de zhidu yu wenhua 先秦史官的制度與文化 (Haerbin: Heilongjiang renmin chubanshe, 2006). See Chapter 5 for a discussion of how manuscripts and manuscript corpora were produced and curated in regional kingdoms during the early Western Han.


accounts of scribal training and examination provided in the “Yiwen zhi” 藝文志 (“Treatise on Arts and Literature”) chapter of the Hanshu 漢書 (History of the Han) and the Shuowen jiezi 説文解字 (Explanation of Simple Graphs and Elucidation of Compound Characters), which both date from Eastern Han times.\(^{143}\)

The English word scribe encompasses a wide range of roles and activities associated variously with authors, copyists, editors, compilers, commentators, transmitters, and readers of textual material.\(^{144}\) In the Qin and Han, the shi (the position conventionally translated into

\(^{143}\) See Hanshu 30.1720-1721 and Shuowen jiezi, p. 315a, which provide brief comments about the ages when scribes started their training (16 [or 17 by traditional Chinese reckoning] according to the Shuowen jiezi, confirmed by the Zhangjiashan materials), how many words they were required to recite (9,000 according to the “Yiwen zhi” and the Shuowen jiezi, but only 5,000 according to the Zhangjiashan materials), the number of script styles they were expected to master (six in the “Yiwen zhi,” eight in the Shuowen jiezi), and how they were tested. By Xu Shen’s 許慎 (ca. 58-148 CE) time regulations such as these were still on the books but apparently no longer followed, and the hereditary caste system that had previously supplied the empire with its core pool of scribes had broken down. We do not know how scribes were trained or tested in Eastern Han. For a brief discussion of this issue and a comparison of these different accounts, see Imre Galambos, Orthography of Early Chinese Writing: Evidence from Newly Excavated Manuscripts (Budapest: Department of East Asian Studies, Eötvös Loránd University, 2006), pp. 151-164 and Anthony Barbieri-Low and Robin D. S. Yates, Law, State, and Society in Early Imperial China: A Study with Critical Edition and Translation of the Legal Texts from Zhangjiashan Tomb no. 247, Volume 2 (Leiden: Brill, 2015), pp. 1090-1091. For an introduction and full translation of the “Statute on Scribes” (“Shi lü” 史律) from Zhangjiashan, see Barbieri-Low and Yates (2015), Vol. 2, pp. 1084-1111. Ironically, the discrepancy between the “Yiwen zhi” and the Shuowen jiezi accounts of how many characters trainee scribes were required to recite may be the result of scribal error, since the characters for five and nine were graphically similar in the Han script. See Martin Kern, “Early Chinese Literature, Beginnings Through Western Han,” in The Cambridge History of Chinese Literature, Volume 1: To 1375, ed. Kang-i Sun Chang and Stephen Owen (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp. 58-59. Xing Yitian 邢义田 [= Hsing-I tien], “Handai Cangjie, Jijiu, bati he shishu wenti – zai lun Qin Han guanli ruhe xuexi wenzi” 漢代《倉頡》、《急就》、八體和史書文體–再論秦漢官吏如何學習文字, in Guwenzi yu gudaishi di er ji 古文字與古代史第二輯, ed. Li Zongkun 李宗坤 (Taipei: Zhongyang yanjiuyuan lishi yuyan yanjiusuo, 2009), pp. 429-468 argues that there is in fact no meaningful discrepancy between the Xu Shen/Zhangjiashan account of eight scripts and the “Yiwen zhi” account of six scripts, since Xu Shen’s account makes clear that the former requirement of eight scripts was no longer in force. Xing argues that after Wang Mang’s reforms, the original requirement of eight script styles was reduced to six. Additionally, Xing notes that, judging by the official writings among the Liye and Han border site finds, in the Early Imperial era even low-level scribes were apparently also trained in grass script (caoshu 草書) in addition to the seal (zhuanshu 篆書) and clerical (lishu 隸書) script styles. See also Ōnishi Katsuya, “An Investigation of Clerical Script in Chu Regions during the Qin and Han Periods, and its Relationship to ‘Scribal Writing,’” Bamboo and Silk 1.2 (2018), pp. 359-402.

\(^{144}\) Lai and Wang (2017), p. 170 note that this applies as well to the case of “scribes” in early China. Indeed, it is also an accurate description of scribal culture in Ancient Egypt. See Niv Allon and Hana Navratilova, Ancient Egyptian Scribes: A Cultural Exploration (London: Bloomsbury, 2017), esp. pp. 1,
English by the word scribe) were low-level bureaucrats whose skills were nevertheless essential for the administration of empire, responsible for maintaining finances and keeping tax records, issuing salaries and food rations, keeping track of convicts and slaves, investigating and recording legal cases, curing illnesses, and determining causes of death. In Qin and Han times, as had been the case at least as far back as the Springs and Autumns era, there was a close connection between the roles of scribes and religious specialists known as invocators (zhu 祝). Though these two groups were not required to attain the same levels of literacy, invocators were expected to be able to read and write texts related to their ritual activities, and scribes were likewise expected to gain familiarity with the different types of sacrificial rites carried out at the various levels of administration from the local to the imperial. Scribes certainly enjoyed high status in comparison to ordinary commoners, but they were still largely low-level bureaucrats appointed to work underneath various officials of different ranks in the counties, commanderies, and central administration depending on their level of ability.


145 See Yates (2014), pp. 144, 148. Yates also argues that the reliance of the early empires on scribes for maintaining records related to local and state finances explains why scribes were sometimes buried with mathematical texts. See Chapter 5 for a discussion of the practice of burying manuscripts in early China.

146 See Yates (2014), p. 148. Indeed, the shi had originally been ritual specialists in the Shang and Western Zhou. See Constance A. Cook, “Scribes, Cooks, and Artisans: Breaking Zhou Tradition,” *Early China* 20 (1995), pp. 252-255. Similarly, Barbieri-Low and Yates (2015), Vol. 2, pp. 1086-1087 state that the roles of scribes and diviners (bu 卜) were linked in the Qin and Han, as they had been from the Shang period onwards. Kai Vogelsang argues that another function of shi in the Shang and Western Zhou was to participate in, and even lead, military campaigns. See Kai Vogelsang, “The Scribes’ Genealogy,” *Oriens Extremus* 44 (2003/04), pp. 4-5.

The training of scribes was apparently strictly administered, but the process was also flexible enough to meet changing sociopolitical conditions. Excavated finds and transmitted sources reveal that the sons of scribes began their studies at the age of 16 (17 by Chinese reckoning) under a mentor (xue’er 学佴), and that after three years of study they were evaluated either by the Director of Scribes (Taishi ling 太史令) in the central government or by the governor (shou 守) in the commanderies, who tested them on the number of words they could write and recite from a circumscribed curriculum of texts, as well as their ability to master as many as eight different script styles. Students were appointed to work under officials of different ranks at different levels of local and imperial administration based on their results in these examinations, and students who performed poorly were barred from entry into the scribal profession. Indeed, demonstrating one’s literary competence was not in and of itself sufficient for guaranteeing access to scribal training and positions since scribes were ideally drawn from a hereditary caste of highly trained specialists, and it was even prohibited for scribes and nonscribes to study together in the same room. However, as the bureaucratization of the empire increased apace, it became increasingly common for assistants (zuo), who were not drawn from the scribal caste, to fill in when the number of scribes was insufficient, such as when a scribe was too old or infirm to carry out his duties. The Liye materials show that even though scribes and assistants generally ran on parallel tracks in terms of their training and advancement, in both the Qin and Western Han there was a certain amount of overlap between the two roles.\textsuperscript{148} In the Qin and Western Han literacy became far more widespread, and bureaucrats in multiple professional positions were engaged in writing and textual activities. Still, only trained scribes were entrusted with real political and legal responsibility.\textsuperscript{149}

\textsuperscript{148} The description of scribal training presented above is based on Ma (2017b), pp. 76-102. See also idem, “Scribes, Assistants, and the Materiality of Administrative Documents in Qin-Early Han China: Excavated Evidence from Liye, Shuihudi, and Zhangjiashan,” \textit{T’oung Pao} 103.4-5 (2017), pp. 297-333. Barbieri-Low and Yates (2015), Vol. 2, pp. 1086-1087 also note that apparently scribes, diviners, and invocators were initially trained in the home before embarking upon formal schooling.

The position of scribes, then, apparently underwent significant changes over the course of the pre-imperial and Early Imperial eras, as a hereditary caste of ritual specialists for whom the production of written texts was but one part of their responsibilities evolved into a larger, more flexibly constituted pool of administrators for whom writing constituted the bulk of their professional activities. However, it is important to remember that the historical evolution of the different roles designated by the term *shi* does not cover the full range of scribal activity in these periods. Given the preservation bias in our excavated sources, and since our earliest written sources (inscriptions on bone, shell, and bronze from Shang and Western Zhou times) overwhelmingly derive from ritual contexts, it seems likely that already in the Shang and Western Zhou, and certainly in the Warring States and Early Imperial eras, different groups of literate or semi-literate professionals were engaged in the production of different types of textual material in different media for different purposes, and the social and material conditions that characterized the lives and activities of the high-ranking scribes-cum-ritualists who enjoyed full mastery over writing and the low-level functionaries who produced purely administrative texts would have been significant.\(^{150}\)

In light of this, it needs to be emphasized that not all the writing found at Mawangdui was produced by the same groups for the same purposes, and that this led to varying textual materialities. Indeed, as we will see in this chapter, the writing from Mawangdui ranges from sophisticated texts written in beautiful script on precious materials such as silk, to individual characters clumsily scrawled or carved by workers or foremen who enjoyed only functional literacy onto the wooden construction materials used to construct the coffins at Mawangdui. As a nobleman who apparently enjoyed great wealth and high status, perhaps even holding some sort

of position in the political hierarchy of the Kingdom of Changsha, Li Xi would have had access to the skills and services of different kinds of scribes in various positions within the Changsha bureaucracy, though we do not know whether the scribes who produced the different kinds of manuscripts found in his tomb worked directly under the employ of a single person or office (Li Cang, or the office of the Prime Minister, for example) or in service to the state.

Though it seems unlikely that the purviews of these scribal positions were so strictly circumscribed as to prevent scribes from working on different types of written documents, it may also be the case that the scribes-cum-ritualists who produced the tomb inventory manuscripts found in Mawangdui M1 and M3 (see Chapter 2), for example, saw their roles and responsibilities as quite distinct from those of the scribes who consolidated textual material onto the silk manuscripts found in M3.

Whatever the differences in status and skill set between the various scribes and writers whose work was left behind in the Mawangdui tombs, this chapter will demonstrate that all these writers had the materiality of their work very much on their minds. Writing texts down not only made them visible, readable, and durable, it also led to the production of “things with attitude,” with material considerations affecting the choice of medium, the design of the manuscript, the

151 See the Introduction and Chapter 5 for discussions of Li Xi’s life and possible career path. Regardless of the precise role (if any) that Li Xi played in the political hierarchy of Changsha, judging by his lavish burial he was doubtless a man of very high social status.

152 Indeed, we do not know for sure that Li Xi was particularly interested in reading written texts, or that he had ever even seen the texts that were buried with him. In my view, it is likely that most of the manuscripts deposited in his tomb were selected postmortem on his behalf by ritual specialists who wished to provide Li Xi with the kinds of materials he would need in the afterlife. See Chapter 5 for a discussion of these issues.

153 Of course, it is also possible that such a distinction never existed, and that the same kinds of scribes who produced the Mawangdui silk manuscripts also worked in ritual administration, producing texts for ritual performance when it was required of them.

154 See Judith Attfield, *Wild Things: The Material Culture of Everyday Life* (London: Bloomsbury, 2000), pp. 11-44. Attfield uses the term “things with attitude” to describe artifacts that are “created with a specific end in view – whether to fulfil a particular task, to make a statement, to objectify moral values, or to express individual or group identity, to denote status or demonstrate technological prowess, to exercise social control or to flaunt political power” (quotation on p. 12).
layout of the text, and the attitudes that the scribes brought to their work. These scribes were fully aware of both the practical potential and symbolic significance of their tools and materials, but they were also all too cognizant of the ways in which their materials and working environments posed certain technical challenges; challenges they attempted to mitigate or overcome, not always successfully. The scribes who produced the Mawangdui manuscripts would not have conceived of their work as the mindless or unmediated task of transposing textual material from one medium to another. Instead, they were immersed in a world of objects and materials, forcing them to grapple with a range of material artifacts and concerns including fraying silk, misplaced slips, shift work, and manuscript design. The Mawangdui manuscripts were produced by scribes who were certainly selective, thoughtful, and creative, but also tired, perhaps overworked, and often frustrated by their materials.

1.2 Text and manuscript

1.2.1 The Zhouyi manuscripts

One of the most important considerations affecting the production of manuscripts at Mawangdui was the status of the text itself. Indeed, the manuscripts discovered at Mawangdui took very different material forms – from rather shoddily produced wooden documents, to more sophisticated documents made of bamboo, to exquisitely produced silk manuscripts – and this hierarchy of materiality largely mirrors the hierarchy of the texts they were used to carry.155 In this section, I will focus on three sets of manuscripts in three different media, ranging from some

155 Rochelle Altman, Absent Voices: The Story of Writing Systems in the West (New Castle, Delaware: Oak Knoll Press, 2004), p. 6 notes that the content of a text often determines the choice of script used to write it down, the size of the page, the format of the carrier, etc. Cf. Matthias L. Richter, The Embodied Text: Establishing Textual Identity in Early Chinese Manuscripts (Leiden: Brill, 2013), pp. 25-26, who argues that while the status of a text may condition the way a manuscript is produced, the manuscript ultimately exists as an object in its own right, only secondarily reflecting the nature of the text.
of the most profound and exalted texts in the Chinese tradition to texts that fell outside
mainstream textual culture (at least as it later came to be defined), to demonstrate the existence
of such a hierarchy, and uncover how these hierarchies affected the ways texts were produced,
used, and stored. In addition, I will demonstrate that in each of these three cases, decisions about
how to give a text a material form in keeping with its status were connected to decisions about
how to protect and preserve the contents of the manuscript.

Contained among the documents discovered in the lacquer case in Mawangdui M3 were
two silk manuscripts containing various texts related to the Zhouyi 周易 (Book of Changes), a
collection of sixty-four hexagrams (gua 卦) and related prognosticatory statements that is
undoubtedly the most important divinatory and philosophical text from early China.\(^\text{156}\) The
Zhouyi is known to us in a transmitted version as well as in the form of several recently
discovered or acquired manuscript corpora.\(^\text{157}\) The first piece of silk (known here as the Zhouyi
manuscript) measures roughly 49cm by 85cm and contains the text of the Zhouyi and a
commentary that has been given the title *“Ersan zi wen” 二三子問 (“Several Disciples Asked”) by scholars. The second piece of silk (known here as the Zhouyi commentarial manuscript) is

\(^{156}\) BG, p. 88 places all these texts under the “arts and literature” (yiwen 藝文) category, while Yu Bing 于
兵 in NTM, p. 88 categorizes the Zhouyi as “philosophy.” See also WW, 1.106-126. The Zhouyi, along
with the commentarial material with which it came to be associated, is also known as the Yijing 易經
(Classic of Changes). For an introduction to the Zhouyi, including its contents and compilation history,
see Edward L. Shaughnessy, “I ching 易經 (Chou I 周易),” in Early Chinese Texts: A Bibliographical
Asian Studies, University of California, Berkeley, 1993), pp. 216-228 and Michael Nylan, The Five

\(^{157}\) For translations and studies of the versions of the Zhouyi that appear in the illegally procured Shanghai
Museum 上海博物館 manuscript corpus (third century BCE?) and the Han dynasty manuscripts from
Shuanggudui 雙古堆 (Fuyang 阜陽, Anhui 安徽), as well as the ca. third-century BCE Guicang 歸藏
(Returning to be Stored) text, a divination manual from Wangjiatai 王家台 (Hubei 湖北; Qin), see
Edward L. Shaughnessy, Unearthing the Changes: Recently Discovered Manuscripts of the Yi Jing (I
Ching) (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014). For translations of the Mawangdui Zhouyi texts,
see Edward L. Shaughnessy, trans., I Ching: The Classic of Changes: The First English Translation of the
overview of the two manuscripts can also be found in idem, “A First Reading of the Mawangdui Yijing
48cm wide and roughly the same length as the Zhouyi manuscript,\textsuperscript{158} containing a number of commentaries to the Zhouyi with their original titles,\textsuperscript{159} and sometimes also character counts: the *“Xici” 繫辭 (“Appended Phrases”) commentary, the “Zhong” 衷 (“Inner Feelings”) commentary,\textsuperscript{160} the “Yao” 要 (“Essentials”) commentary, the “Mu He” 繆和 commentary, and the “Zhao Li” 昭力 commentary.\textsuperscript{161} Of these, only the *“Xici” is known in a transmitted version,\textsuperscript{162} though some of the material in the other commentary texts has also been transmitted as part of commentaries known by different titles (see below).

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\textsuperscript{158} Chen Jian 陈剑 in JC notes that the material format (xingzhi 形制) of the Zhouyi commentarial manuscript is identical (xiangtong 相同) to that of the Zhouyi manuscript. See JC, 3.3. For an overview of the commentarial texts on this manuscript, see Li Xueqin, “Basic Considerations on the Commentaries of the Silk Manuscript ‘Book of Changes,’” \textit{Early China} 20 (1995), pp. 367-380.

\textsuperscript{159} It appears that the manuscript originally contained the titles for each of its commentaries, however owing to damage to the silk not all of them have survived (see below).

\textsuperscript{160} The “Zhong” commentary is also known as the *“Yi zhi yi” 易之義 (“Significance of the Changes”) commentary, the *“Yi zan” 易贊 (“Praise of the Changes”) commentary, and the *“Zi yue” 子曰 (“The Master Said”) commentary.

\textsuperscript{161} Though sometimes treated as a single commentary, their arrangement on the Zhouyi commentarial manuscript suggests that the “Mu He” and “Zhao Li” were perhaps also viewed as somehow textually distinct (see below). Mu He and Zhao Li are names of two of the numerous interlocutors that appear in these texts. See JC, 1.3-69 for color photographs of these manuscripts, and JC, 3.3-162 for introductions to the texts and annotated transcriptions of their contents. For studies and translations of all the texts on these two manuscripts, see Shaughnessy (1996). A proper understanding of the original formats of these two manuscripts developed only gradually, with scholars originally disagreeing over whether these texts were written on one piece of silk or two, how many texts were present on the surface of the silk, and how to divide the various textual and subtextual units. For an overview and critical discussion of the debate, see Kondo Hiroyuki 近藤浩之, “Boshu ‘Zhouyi’ de zhengli guocheng ji qi bianmu” 帛書《周易》的整理過程及其編目, trans. Cao Xueqin 曹學群, in \textit{Jianbo yanjiu yicong (diyi ji) 簡帛研究譯叢 (第一輯)}, ed. Zhongguo shehui kexueyuan jianbo yanju zhongxin 中國社會科學院簡帛研究中心 (Changsha: Hunan chubanshe, 1996), pp. 127-141 and Xing Wen 邢文, \textit{Boshu Zhouyi yanjiu 帛書周易研究} (Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 1997), pp. 29-34. See also Yu Haoliang 于豪亮, “Boshu ‘Zhouyi’” 帛書《周易》, \textit{Wenwu 文物} (1984).3, pp. 15-24; Han Zhongmin 韓仲民, \textit{Bo Yi shuo} 帛易說略 (Beijing: Beijing shifan daxue chubanshe, 1992), pp. 3-12; Li Xueqin 李學勤, “Boshu ‘Zhouyi’ de jidian yanjiu” 帛書《周易》的幾點研究, \textit{Wenwu 文物} (1994).1, pp. 44-49; Xing Wen 邢文, “Boshu ‘Zhouyi’ de pianming yu jiegou” 帛書《周易》的篇名與結構, \textit{Kaogu 考古} (1998).2, pp. 64-66; and Ding Sixin 丁四新, “‘Yizhuan’ lei boshu zhaji shiliu ze”《易傳》類帛書札記十六則, in idem, \textit{Xuan pu chu wen – Ding Sixin xueshu lunwen xuanji 玄圃畜文 – 丁四新學術論文選集} (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2009), pp. 201-233.
Despite some damage to the manuscripts the texts on them are basically legible. Though the handwriting on the two manuscripts is very close (similar in style to the hand that wrote the texts on the *Laozi* manuscripts, see below) there are also several orthographic inconsistencies indicating that the texts on the two manuscripts were likely written by different hands.\footnote{For a thoroughgoing analysis of the transmitted “Xici” (also known as the “Dazhuan” or “Great Commentary”) and the claims it makes about the *Zhouyi*, see Willard J. Peterson, “Making Connections: ‘Commentary on the Attached Verbalizations’ of the *Book of Change*,” *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 42.1 (1982), pp. 67-116. See especially pp. 71-72 for a discussion of the differences between the Mawangdui “Xici” and the transmitted version of the text.} Like the *Laozi* texts, the texts on the *Zhouyi* manuscripts observe the taboo on the character *bang*, the personal name of the founding emperor of the Han, but not the taboo on the character *ying* (the personal name of Emperor Hui), which would seem to indicate that they were written during the reign of either Emperor Gao or Emperor Hui. However, judging by the rather mature nature of the calligraphy, they may have been copied as late as the early years of Emperor Wen’s reign, ca. 180-170 BCE.\footnote{That is, one scribe produced the texts on the *Zhouyi* manuscript, while another scribe wrote the texts on the *Zhouyi* commentarial manuscript.} The writing on both manuscripts is executed in a mature and well-regulated form of the Han clerical (*Hanli*) script with occasional traces of seal script (*zhuan*), and the texts on the manuscripts are clearly presented.\footnote{This latter estimation is given in JC, 3.4.} On both manuscripts, the writing was done in black ink within red vertical ruled lines. Black horizontal lines were also used to create upper and lower margins on the manuscripts.

There is one blank column at the very beginning and very end of the *Zhouyi* manuscript, and the text of the *“Zhouyi” on the first manuscript contains the hexagrams, hexagram statements (*guaci*), and line statements (*yaoci*) in ninety-three columns with an uneven number of characters per column.\footnote{Chen Songchang 陳松長 in YS, pp. 189-212 has the *Zhouyi* manuscripts in the Han clerical script category.} L-shaped hook marks appear in the lower right-hand
corner beneath each of these hexagram statements and line statements. No title or character count is given for either the *“Zhouyi” or for the *“Ersan zi wen” commentary, which is marked off from the preceding text of the *“Zhouyi” by a black rectangular mark that fills the upper margin of the next column following the *“Zhouyi” text. There are section breaks within the commentary marked by one, two, and on one occasion three blank character spaces.

The *“Ersan zi wen” commentary consists of thirty-six columns of text with around seventy-two characters in each column, and takes the form of quotations from Kongzi 孔子 (Confucius, trad. 551-479 BCE) about the Zhouyi as well as questions from unidentified interlocuters.167 The manuscript contains a total of around 2,600 characters and had been folded in half from right to left three times before it was folded once from top to bottom, leading to extensive fragmentation along the crease lines.168 The portions of silk containing the sixty-four hexagrams were evidently located on the inside in the middle of the folded manuscript, and so are well preserved. The portion of silk containing the end of the *“Ersan zi wen” text was evidently located on the very outside of the folded manuscript, and so has sustained fairly

166 Shaughnessy (1996), pp. 17-18 shows that the sequence of the hexagrams in the Mawangdui version is apparently more logical than that of the received version. Whereas in the received version there is “no discernible logic” to the arrangement of the hexagrams beyond the fact that they are grouped by pairs that share a hexagram picture (“either by inversion of the picture or by conversion of all of its lines to their opposite”), in the Mawangdui version of the text the hexagrams are arranged based on a “systematic combination of the hexagrams’ constituent trigrams: the top trigram of a hexagram is the basis of its position in the manuscript’s sequence; it is then combined in turn in a prescribed sequence with each of the other trigrams serving as its bottom trigram. Each of the eight trigrams form a set of eight hexagrams sharing that top trigram.” Liao Mingchun 廖名春 has concluded that the edition of the Zhouyi that served as the basis for the commentaries on the two manuscripts was different from the edition from which the text of the *“Zhouyi” itself was copied onto the Zhouyi manuscript. See Liao Mingchun 廖名春, Boshu ‘Zhouyi’ lunji 帛書《周易》論集 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2008), pp. 29-42.

167 Michael Hunter has noted that, despite the fact that the Mawangdui corpus of manuscripts contains over one hundred comments and pieces of dialogue attributed to Kongzi, none of them can be found in the received Lunyu 論語 (Selected Sayings, or Analects). See Michael Hunter, Confucius Beyond the Analects (Leiden: Brill, 2017), p. 212.

168 Consistent with Chinese scholarship on the silk manuscripts, I use the term pages (yē 頁) to designate the main sections (themselves often comprised of multiple fragments of silk) into which the silk manuscripts had fragmented as a result of disintegration along the crease lines after the manuscripts were folded for storage inside the lacquer case.
extensive damage. L-shaped marks appear to the lower right of certain characters, apparently as punctuation, and small black dots are also used to indicate divisions between sections.

The second silk manuscript (i.e., the Zhouyi commentarial manuscript) contains a total of around 180 columns of text. The first columns of the *“Xici” and “Zhong” commentarial texts feature black rectangular markers in the upper margins. Unlike the received version of the text, the Mawangdui version of the *“Xici” is apparently not divided into any sections, and there are entire sections of the received version of the *“Xici” that do not appear in the Mawangdui version. The *“Xici” starts after a blank column and the first column of the commentary has a blacked out upper margin. The portion of the manuscript between the end of the *“Xici” commentary and the beginning of the “Zhong” commentary is damaged, meaning that the title and the character count for *“Xici” are missing. The *“Xici” text contains a total of forty-seven lines and around 3,000 characters. L-shaped marks in the lower right of certain characters are used as punctuation, and there are two instances of small black dots used as section breaks. The “Zhong” commentary starts on the next line after the end of the *“Xici” commentary and has a blacked out upper margin; it was originally thought to constitute part of the *“Xici” text. The title of the “Zhong” commentary and a character count (2,000) appear at the end of this text. It is fifty-one columns long, though several columns may be missing, and the text also contains certain portions of what we now know as the “Shuogua”説卦 (“Discussion of the Hexagrams”) commentary to the Zhouyi. Though the text of the commentary is rather badly preserved, the “Zhong” commentary begins by discussing the interplay of the cosmic forces of yin 陰 and yang 陽, before turning to engage in a discussion of many of the sixty-four hexagrams, focusing mainly on their titles. L-shaped punctuation marks are used as well as three small black dots, but these dots do not seem to represent section breaks but rather serve as punctuation.

The last column of the “Zhong” commentary and the columns that follow it are badly damaged, but there seems to be a black rectangular marker indicating the beginning of a new text. The “Yao” text starts on the next line following the end of the “Zhong” text, comprising twenty-four columns in total, with the text ending mid-column followed by a blank space and the
title of the commentary. After another space there is a character count of 1,648. It is estimated that around 1,040 out of these 1,648 characters are still legible. The text is divided into sections using black dots, and portions of it are basically portions of the received “Xici” commentary. The part before this is too damaged to reconstruct, but the portions of the text corresponding to the received “Xici” are followed by the record of a conversation between an elderly Kongzi and his disciple Zi Gong 子貢 about the Zhouyi with a focus on its use in divination. The “Yao” text contains no punctuation but there are two small black dots used as section breaks.

The column immediately following the end of the “Yao” text begins with a black rectangular marker, with the opening words “Mu He asked his teacher, saying” (Mu He wenyu xiangsheng yue 繆和問於先生曰). After about seventy columns of text there is a blank space followed by the characters for the name Mu He, but there is no character count. The next column of text is not marked by a black rectangular marker and starts with the words “Zhao Li asked, saying” (Zhao Li wen yue 昭力問曰). In the fourteenth column after this in the middle of the column the characters for the name Zhao Li appear, followed by a space and the number 6,000. Clearly this number is the total character count for both the “Mu He” and “Zhao Li” commentaries, and it seems these are two subdivisions of what it is intended to be read as a single text. Both chapters are divided into subsections using black dots. They include questions asked by a number of interlocuters, including Mu He and Zhao Li. The “Mu He” text contains no punctuation but uses small black dots as section breaks. The “Zhao Li” text likewise contains no punctuation but features these same black dots.

There is a major blank section of the manuscript after the “Zhao li” text. We can tell from the imprints and section breaks in the manuscript that it was laid out with a silk lining sheet covering its right-hand portion, and that this lining sheet overshot the central axis of the manuscript to extend roughly a quarter of the way into the left-hand portion of the manuscript.169

169 See below for a detailed analysis of this and the other silk lining sheets found among the Mawangdui manuscripts.
Then, the manuscript was folded from left to right twice before it was folded from around one third of the way in from the left towards the right-hand side, and then folded from around one third of the way in from the right towards the left-hand side. Finally, it was folded from top to bottom.

The contents of the Zhouyi manuscripts were published only gradually over time. A single black and white photograph of part of the *“Zhouyi” text was first published in a 1974 issue of the journal Wenwu 文物, and transcriptions of the *“Zhouyi” text first appeared in a 1984 issue of the same journal along with black and white photographs of a portion of that text. Black and white photographs of the entire *“Zhouyi” and *“Xici” texts appeared in WW, along with transcriptions of the latter, and black and white photographs of portions of the *“Ersan zi wen” text also appeared in WW, as well as in a 1994 issue of Wenwu, and a 1994 collection of essays on Mawangdui. Transcriptions of the *“Xici” text, along with the first transcriptions of the *“Ersan zi wen,” “Zhong,” and “Yao” commentaries, first appeared in an edited volume on Daoist culture published in 1993, and transcriptions of the “Mu He” and


172 WW, 1.106-126.

173 WW, 1.116-117.

174 Li Xueqin (1994), p. 44.


“Zhao Li” commentaries first appeared in the inaugural issue of the journal *Guoji Yixue yanjiu* 國際易學研究. 177 Black and white photographs of some of the manuscripts also appeared in a book published posthumously by Zhang Zhenglang 張政烺. 178

Until the publication of JC in 2014, however, published transcriptions and photographs of the text-bearing portions of the two *Zhouyi* manuscripts uniformly overlooked the paratextual elements that accompanied them. In addition to the main texts (*zhengwen* 正文) of the manuscripts, the two *Zhouyi* manuscripts were accompanied by twenty-four pages of silk lining sheets (*chenye* 襯頁) and two blank pages (*kongbai ye* 空白頁) of silk, which were published for the first time in JC. 179 Chen Songchang 陳松長 has described how the specially designed lining sheets found among the Mawangdui manuscripts contained no ruled lines and bore only imprinted characters from the manuscripts they were used to protect. These lining sheets were manufactured separately from the manuscripts proper, and are characterized by the presence of upper and lower borders woven from deep-brown silk. Originally it was thought that these borders had been embroidered onto the surface of the silk, but after microscopic analysis it was determined that they were specially woven into the lining sheet itself. In addition, it was determined that most of the lining sheets from Mawangdui were woven from red and light-yellow silk. Chen thus determined that these pieces had never been intended for writing, but


179 While Chen Songchang 陳松長, “Mawangdui boshu ‘kongbai ye’ ji xiangguan wenti” 馬王堆帛書“空白頁”及相關問題, *Wenwu* 文物 (2008).5, pp. 75-80 refers to all twenty-six of these “pages” as “blank pages” (*kongbai ye* 空白頁), the JC editors prefer to maintain a distinction between blank, ruled portions of silk (often bearing imprinted characters) that actually formed part of the original manuscripts, and specially manufactured lining sheets that were separate from the original manuscripts and designed to protect their contents.
were specially designed to protect the surface of the silk manuscripts from receiving imprints from other text-bearing portions of silk after they was folded.\textsuperscript{180}

Chen also notes, however, that the eight pages of lining sheet used to protect the surface of the first Zhouyi manuscript were actually red in color (see Figure 1.1), resulting from the use of two different colors of silk during the weaving process, with silk dyed red using cinnabar (zhusha 朱砂) and silk that was deep brown in color woven together.\textsuperscript{181} Chen claimed that the eight pages of this lining sheet had been produced by cutting up what had originally been a single large lining sheet, with these pieces placed in zig-zag fashion (\textit{cheng duijiaoxing pailie de} 呈對角形排列的) over the top of the Zhouyi manuscript starting from the lower half of “page” one on the bottom right-hand portion of the manuscript and ending with the upper half of “page” eight on the upper left-hand portion of the manuscript. In this way, Chen argued, regardless of whether the manuscript was folded horizontally or vertically the entire surface of the silk would have been protected.\textsuperscript{182}

Chen Jian 陳劍 in JC, however, notes that this cannot have been the case since it would have been neither convenient nor natural to arrange silk lining sheets on the surface of the manuscript in this way. Rather, Chen demonstrates that an entire lining sheet roughly half the size of the first Zhouyi manuscript was placed over the left-hand portion of the manuscript, before the manuscript was folded from right to left three times and then folded once from top to bottom. Because the characters from the manuscript first soaked into the lining sheet and then into the other parts of the manuscript, the imprinted characters on the surface of the manuscript are not as clear as those on the lining sheet.

\textsuperscript{180} Chen (2008j), p. 76.

\textsuperscript{181} Chen Songchang originally thought that the manuscript had been manufactured using silk dyed red with cinnabar, but after microscopic analysis it was determined that it had been manufactured using red and brown silk woven together. See Chen (2008j), p. 79.

\textsuperscript{182} Chen (2008j) p. 79.
Figure 1.1: Red Zhouyi manuscript lining sheet with brown borders and imprinted characters (JC, 1.20)
As noted above, the silk lining sheet used to protect the Zhouyi manuscript was red in color with dark brown borders, and Chen Songchang originally claimed that after this lining material (which, as stated above, he believed had been cut up into eight pages) was placed on the surface of the manuscript in zig-zag formation, the other eight uncovered “pages” of the Zhouyi manuscript were painted (tu 塗) with red cinnabar, so that viewed from above prior to folding all the visible (i.e., uncovered) portions of the manuscript, along with the lining sheets, were red in color. 183 Thus, Chen offered an explanation for why certain portions of the Zhouyi manuscript still bear a slight reddish hue: half of the silk had been painted red to match the redness of the silk lining sheets used to protect the other half of the silk (see Figure 1.2). 184 Once again, however, Chen Jian in JC took issue with Chen Songchang’s conclusions, demonstrating that the redness of portions of the Zhouyi manuscript is entirely owing to seepage from the protective silk lining sheet that was pressed up against it.

Chen Songchang has pointed out that the Zhouyi commentarial manuscript also includes two blank pages with red ruled lines but no brown borders, and that these blank pages feature imprinted characters. Chen Jian in JC has shown, on the basis of these imprinted characters, that these two blank pages actually formed part of the end of the commentarial manuscript proper, and that they were entirely separate from the lining sheet used to protect that manuscript, the remaining “pages” of which do feature the brown borders that, as we have seen, were characteristic of protective lining sheets at Mawangdui (see Figure 1.3). Unlike the silk lining sheet used to protect the Zhouyi manuscript, however, that used to protect the Zhouyi commentarial manuscript was not manufactured using dyed red silk.

183 Chen (2008j), pp. 79-80.
184 Chen (2008j), pp. 79-80. Chen Songchang had in fact originally believed that the slight red hue of certain pages of the Zhouyi manuscript was a result of seeping from the red lining sheet, but he eventually discounted this possibility on the basis that the reddish portions of the Zhouyi manuscript were not, according to his reconstruction, the portions covered by the lining sheet.
Figure 1.2: *Zhouyi* manuscript with residual red color (JC, 1.3)
Figure 1.3: *Zhouyi* commentarial manuscript lining sheet with brown border and imprinted characters (JC, 1.64)
The commentarial manuscript was protected by what are now sixteen pages of silk lining. As described briefly above, according to Chen Jian in JC, when the lining sheet was placed over the right-hand side of the manuscript it actually crossed the manuscript’s central axis, extending somewhat into the left-hand portion of the manuscript. The manuscript was then folded from left to right twice, before it was folded from a point one third in from the left towards the right-hand side, and again from a point one third in from the right towards the left-hand side. Finally, the manuscript was folded from top to bottom. 185

In sum, certain of the Mawangdui silk manuscripts were accompanied by specially manufactured silk lining sheets designed to protect their contents, and these sheets were characterized by the absence of text or pre-ruled lines and the presence of specially woven brown upper and lower borders. As Chen Songchang has correctly noted, however, the manuscripts that were accompanied by such lining sheets were not a random subset of the Mawangdui silk manuscript; rather, specially produced protective lining materials were found only with those silk manuscripts containing the most exalted textual materials: the Zhouyi manuscript (eight red “pages”), the Zhouyi commentarial manuscript (sixteen “pages”), and the *Laozi B manuscript (sixteen “pages”). 186 Chen also argues that the fact that the lining sheet for the Zhouyi commentarial manuscript was not woven from red silk, unlike the first Zhouyi manuscript,

185 Chen Jian 陳劍, “Mawangdui boshu ‘yinwen,’ ‘kongbai ye’ he chenye ji zhedie qingkuang zongshu” 馬王堆帛書 ‘印文’, ‘空白頁’ 和襯頁及折疊情況綜述, in Jinian Mawangdui Hanmu fjue sishi zhourian guoji xueshu yantaohui lunwenji 紀念馬王堆漢墓發掘四十週年國際學術研討會論文集, ed. Hunan sheng bowuguan 湖南省博物館 (Changsha: Yuelu shushe, 2016), p. 281 argues that, since the lining sheet for the Zhouyi commentarial manuscript was evidently slightly too big for this particular manuscript (judging by the fact that it extended past the manuscript’s vertical axis when it was placed onto its surface), we can surmise that it was originally prepared for a slightly longer manuscript, but for some unknown reason was used as a protective lining sheet for this particular manuscript.

186 Chen Songchang speculates that the reason that the *Laozi B manuscript had a protective lining sheet while the *Laozi A manuscript did not might have been because the *Laozi A texts were written on a half-length manuscript that was rolled around a piece of wood, though Chen admits that this difference might also be a function of the different times when the manuscripts were produced, or the different scribal practices involved in their manufacture. See Chen (2008j), p. 80. Certainly, the Zhouyi manuscripts and the *Laozi B manuscript seem to have been copied relatively late in comparison to the rest of the Mawangdui corpus, possibly as part of a batch. See below and Chapter 5 for a discussion of this issue.
indicates that the status of the commentarial texts on the second Zhouyi manuscript was lower in the eyes of the tomb occupant. According to Chen, we can say with confidence that the tomb occupant cared about how certain manuscripts were stored and protected, and that even though the silk manuscripts were found stored together in the tomb in the same lacquer case there is a hierarchical distinction differentiating some of the silk manuscripts from others: the more “classic” the text, the more care was taken to protect it.\textsuperscript{187}

The dating of the Zhouyi manuscripts, and our inability to estimate with any degree of accuracy when their protective lining sheets were manufactured, poses a challenge to the theory proposed by Chen that the material form of the protective silk sheets was a reflection of Li Xi’s personal attitudes towards different kinds of textual material. In fact, I actually doubt that these manuscripts were Li Xi’s personal property.\textsuperscript{188} However, Chen is correct to identify the overlapping material and textual hierarchies reflected in these manuscripts and materials, and it is surely not a coincidence that the Laozi and the Zhouyi, the two texts around which the materials protected by the lining sheets are clustered, are also exalted texts that appear most often in excavated and acquired manuscript corpora.\textsuperscript{189}

In the main, I am in agreement with Chen Songchang’s conclusions. Specially manufactured lining sheets were used to protect a subset of the Mawangdui silk manuscripts, and only those bearing the most prestigious texts.\textsuperscript{190} It was clearly very important that these

\textsuperscript{187} Chen (2008j), p. 80.

\textsuperscript{188} See the doubts raised in Chapter 5 as to the connection between Li Xi and the manuscripts with which he was buried.

\textsuperscript{189} As noted above, early Chinese manuscripts containing texts of the Zhouyi have been found or acquired from numerous sites. For information about the multiple early versions of the Laozi excavated or acquired in recent decades, see William G. Boltz, “Why So Many Laozi-s?,” in Studies in Chinese Manuscripts: From the Warring States Period to the 20th Century, ed. Imre Galambos (Budapest: Institute of East Asian Studies, Eötvös Loránd University, 2013), pp. 1-32.

\textsuperscript{190} Chen Jian has provided a table of the blank portions of silk from Mawangdui, including the protective lining sheets and blank manuscript sections, which differs somewhat from the information given by Chen Songchang in Chen (2008j). See Chen (2016), pp. 278-279. See Chapter 5 for a discussion of how the
documents not become damaged or illegible due to characters being transposed onto other portions of the silk after the manuscripts were folded. As Chen notes, however, of these protected manuscripts only the first Zhouyi manuscript, the one containing the actual text of the Zhouyi, was protected by a lining sheet that was specially woven from red silk. Chen argues that this can be explained by the fact that in early China red was a symbol of status and prestige, and the use of red silk befitted the Zhouyi’s status as one of the most exalted classics in the Chinese tradition. 191

General associations of prestige, however, only go so far as an explanation of why the color red was used for the manufacture of this lining sheet. Indeed, I would argue that the color red was used not simply to reflect the exalted status of the Zhouyi, but rather to reflect more specifically the exalted divinatory use to which the Zhouyi was put. The “Shuogua” commentary to the Zhouyi associates the qian 乾 hexagram (the first of the sixty-four hexagrams, which was thought to represent the source of all things) with a series of roles and substances including Heaven (tian 天) and “great red” (dachi 大赤),192 and the color red was also specifically associated with the Zhou dynasty, who are said in certain sources such as the “Tangong shang” 檀弓 (“Upper Sandalwood Bow”) chapter of the Liji 禮記 (Ritual Records) to have “exalted the color red” (shang chi 尚赤).193 In addition, Guolong Lai has argued that the color red was

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191 Chen (2008j), p. 79. It should be noted that, despite its undeniable status as one of the most prestigious texts in the Chinese tradition, the Zhouyi had not yet been canonized as a “classic” (jing 經) in the early Western Han.

192 Zhouyi jijie zuanshu 周易集結纂疏 10.704-705.

193 Liji jijie 禮記集解 7.173. A famous passage in the Lüshi Chunqiu 呂氏春秋 (Springs and Autumns Annals of Mr. Lü) also associates the Zhou with fire, using the same phrase (shang chi) that appears in the Liji. See Lüshi Chunqiu jishì 呂氏春秋集釋 13.284-285. Michael Loewe notes that the conquest sequence of different elements or powers within which this correlation between the Zhou and fire/red was embedded endured until the end of Western Han. See Michael Loewe, Divination, Mythology and Monarchy in Han China (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p. 56. See also Hans van Ess, “Symbolism and Meaning of Colours in Early Chinese Sources,” in The Polychromy of Antique Sculptures and the Terracotta Army of the First Chinese Emperor: Studies on Materials, Painting...
associated in Warring States and Early Imperial cosmology with the *yang* energy of Heaven, and that the red canopy depicted on the surface of the *Sangfu tu* 喪服圖 (*Diagram on Mourning Vestments*) manuscript from Mawangdui (see Chapter 4) was designed to represent a domed Heaven above a square Earth. The color red was thus variously associated with Heaven, the Zhou 周 (as a dynasty), and the Yi 易 system of divination, enjoying a particular connection to the hexagram that represented the cosmic forces of Heaven. With these connections in mind, perhaps it was thought that a protective lining sheet specially manufactured from red silk would not only properly reflect the cosmic origins and authority of the manuscript’s contents, but also help boost the efficacy of the divinations it was used for.

There was a longstanding tradition prior to the manufacture of these manuscripts of using the color red (cinnabar, specifically) to supplement or adorn Chinese writing. A significant number of Shang period inscriptions on bone and shell, for example, are inlaid with red pigmentation, and red pigments were frequently used to daub bones and other burial items at Shang tomb sites, including royal burials. The vast majority of the Houma 侯馬 covenant texts

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195 Inscriptions on bone and shell from the Wu Ding 武丁 era (period I), in particular, were often inlaid with red (and less often black) pigmentation. See David N. Keightley, *Sources of Shang History: The Oracle-Bone Inscriptions of Bronze Age China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), pp. 54-56, and idem, *These Bones Shall Rise Again: Selected Writings on Early China* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2014), pp. 128-129. Keightley has noted that this was likely done either to increase visibility, make the graphs more attractive, or to make them more potent. However, Keightley also expresses skepticism about their use as a way of boosting the potency of the divinations, since even marginal notations recording administrative records such as deliveries of batches of shells and negative charges were regularly pigmented. See p. 56n.156.
(mengshu 盟書) (ca. fifth century BCE) were brush written in red ink,\textsuperscript{197} and the character yu 禹 (the name of the legendary sage-ruler) appears in the title of one of the diagrams used to conduct divination about childbirth on Medical Manuscript VI from Mawangdui daubed with cinnabar,\textsuperscript{198} a material (also known as dan 丹) that appears in a number of recipes among the Mawangdui medical texts.\textsuperscript{199} While it would surely be ill-advised to reduce all these varied instances of writing featuring cinnabar and the color red to a single explanation or function, it seems that the use of cinnabar as opposed to black ink (which would have been far easier to produce and acquire) was associated with the adornment of certain special types of written text associated with ritual or religious record-keeping, communication, and display. Indeed, the only manuscript from Mawangdui copied using red ink was the *Xingde 刑德 C (Punishment and Benevolence) manuscript, which carries texts related to divination (see Chapters 4 and 5). Certainly, an association between the color red and Zhouyi divination, which, after all, involved nothing less than ritual communion with the forces of the cosmos, would help explain why considerable time and great expense went into the manufacture of this lining sheet. Indeed, weaving red and brown silk together to form a protective lining sheet featuring specially woven upper and lower brown

\textsuperscript{196} Keightley notes that, as the color of blood, red may have enjoyed religious significance in Neolithic and Shang times. See Keightley (1978), p. 56n.156.

\textsuperscript{197} A very small number of the Houma covenant texts are written in black ink, which was the color used to write the covenant texts from Wenxian 溫縣. See Crispin Williams, “Ten Thousand Names: Rank and Lineage Affiliation in the Wenxian Covenant Texts,” \textit{Asiatische Studien/Études Asiatiques} 63.4 (2009), pp. 964-965. Mu-chou Poo has noted that blood was the “binding force” that underwrote many meng covenant rituals during the Eastern Zhou, with blood smeared on objects to ward off evil spirits. See Mu-chou Poo, “Ritual and Ritual Texts in Early China,” in \textit{Early Chinese Religion, Part One: Shang through Han (1250 BC to 220 AD)}, ed. John Lagerwey and Marc Kalinowski (Leiden: Brill, 2009), pp. 293-295. Perhaps the use of red ink to write certain covenant texts reflects a belief in a connection between the color red, blood, and ritual efficacy.

\textsuperscript{198} See Chapter 4 for a description of this manuscript.

borders would have been costlier and more time consuming than the methods used to produce the silk of the Zhouyi manuscript itself.\footnote{78}

Regardless, the use of specially produced lining sheets for the most prestigious manuscripts, and the red lining sheet used to protect the Zhouyi manuscript in particular, speak to a desire to produce manuscripts and paratextual materials\footnote{79} that were capable of serving as the material counterparts of the exalted texts they were used to contain and transmit.\footnote{80} Those responsible for designing, manufacturing, and storing the Zhouyi manuscripts were apparently keenly aware of the potential for writing on silk to lead to the transposition of characters if not properly protected, and they used this opportunity to protect the manuscript with a lining sheet

\footnote{78} The fact that lining sheets were used at all shows that those who produced and used silk manuscripts were aware of the problem of characters transferring onto different portions of silk, making the texts on the manuscripts difficult to read. This being the case, it seems likely that they would have been aware of the potential for the cinnabar used to dye the silk on the lining sheet to transfer to the surface of the manuscript. The fact that such dyed silk was used regardless might further speak to a connection between the use of the color red and the efficacy of the divination.

\footnote{79} Here I am drawing on Gérard Genette’s idea of the paratext as it is articulated in his Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation, trans. Jane E. Levin (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1997). On p. 1 Genette notes that “[a] literary work consists, entirely or essentially, of a text, defined (very minimally) as a more or less long sequence of verbal statements that are more or less endowed with significance. But this text is rarely presented in an unadorned state, unreinforced and unaccompanied by a certain number of verbal or other productions, such as an author's name, a title, a preface, illustrations. And although we do not always know whether these productions are to be regarded as belonging to the text, in any case they surround it and extend it, precisely in order to present it, in the usual sense of this verb but also in the strongest sense: to make present, to ensure the text's presence in the world, its ‘reception’ and consumption in the form (nowadays, at least) of a book.” Designed to preserve the presence of the brush written characters on the surface of the silk and ensure the continued legibility of the text, the silk lining sheets belonging to the Zhouyi manuscripts were produced quite literally to “present” the text in both these senses. Though Genette does not deal specifically with anything like our silk lining sheets, he does mention (p. 32) that packaging, including “protective boxes,” could constitute a potential paratext. Indeed, Genette makes clear (p. 3) that any form of textual materialization, either graphic or phonetic, “may induce paratextual effects,” and that “one may doubtless assert that a text without a paratext does not exist and has never existed.” For a recent study that applies Genette’s work to the study of early Chinese texts, see Heng Du, “The Author’s Two Bodies: Paratext in Early Chinese Textual Culture,” Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 2018.

\footnote{80} Indeed, the use of rare or precious materials to manufacture text-objects for use by elites was widespread in the ancient world. For a discussion of this issue in the context of Ancient Mesopotamia, see Laurie E. Pearce, “Materials of Writing and Materiality of Knowledge,” in Gazing on the Deep: Ancient Near Eastern, Biblical, and Jewish Studies in Honor of Tzvi Abusch, ed. Jeffrey Stackert, David P. Wright, and Barbara Nevling Porter (Bethesda: Capital Decisions, 2010), pp. 167-179.
that simultaneously spoke to the text’s cultural prestige and cosmological significance. The *Zhouyi* manuscripts and their paratexts thus reflect a keen awareness on behalf of those who produced and used them of both the restrictive limitations and the expressive possibilities of the materials from which they were manufactured.

Exalted texts carefully copied onto exquisitely manufactured silk manuscripts are not, however, the only examples of writing from Mawangdui to exhibit an intersection of competing (indeed, complementary) material considerations. Although most of the Mawangdui medical texts were written on sheets of silk, there were also four medical manuscripts manufactured from other materials (three on bamboo, one on wood) divided into two rolls that were deposited in the lacquer case in M3, and these also reflect a desire to materialize texts in ways that were commensurate with their status. And, just like the silk lining sheets used to protect the contents of the *Zhouyi* and *Laozi B* manuscripts, the materiality of these four medical manuscripts was likewise also connected to measures taken to ensure textual preservation.

1.2.2 The *“Shi wen”* and *“He yinyang”* texts on Medical Manuscripts VII and VIII, and the *“Za jinfang”* and *“Tianxia zhidao tan”* texts on Medical Manuscripts IX and X

The artifacts I have called Medical Manuscripts VII and VIII are two manuscripts containing the *“Shi wen”* 十問 (“Ten Questions”) and *“He yinyang 合陰陽 (“Conjoining Yin and Yang”)* texts respectively, and these two manuscripts were found rolled together atop a number of silk manuscripts in the long through compartment of the lacquer case discovered in the eastern compartment of the outer coffin in Mawangdui M3. The *“Shi wen”* text is divided into ten sections and is in a question and answer format, hence the title given to it by scholars. The title of the *“He yinyang”* manuscript, by contrast, was chosen on the basis of the opening line of the text. Both texts deal with matters related to sexual intercourse, and there are

203 Note that the numbers I used to catalog the Mawangdui medical texts differ from those in Harper (1997a).
similarities between the contents of these manuscripts and the contents of other medical texts from Mawangdui including the *“Tianxia zhidao tan” 天下至道談 (“Discussion of the Supreme Way under Heaven”) and *“Yangsheng fang” 養生方 (“Recipes for Nourishing Life”) texts (see below). 204

Both manuscripts were constructed out of thin bamboo slips that are 23cm in length, with the 101 bamboo slips of the *“Shi wen” manuscript measuring 0.6cm wide and the thirty-two bamboo slips of the *“He yinyang” manuscript 0.9cm wide. The characters on the narrower *“Shi wen” slips (see Figure 1.4) are rather small, and there are at most twenty-seven graphs per slip, while the characters on the broader *“He yinyang” slips are larger, and there are around twenty characters per slip (see Figure 1.5). Both texts are divided into sections indicated by black dots at the head of the slip and each section begins on a new slip. The traces of binding marks can be seen on the upper and lower portions of the slips in both manuscripts. 205

204 “Techniques of the bedchamber” (fangzhong shu 房中術) and “techniques for controlling (riding?) women” (yu furen zhi shu 御婦人之術) are prominent topics in the Mawangdui medical literature. For an overview of this topic, see Li Ling 李靈, “Mawangdui fangzhong shu yanjiu 馬王堆房中術研究, Wenshi 文史 35 (1992), pp. 21-47 and Li Ling and Keith McMahon, “The Contents and Terminology of the Mawangdui Texts on the Arts of the Bedchamber,” Early China 17 (1992), pp. 145-185. Yu in NTM, pp. 89-91 briefly treats these two texts under the category of “Medicine and Health Care,” noting (pp. 90-91) that the *“Shi wen” text “outlines the method of nurturing Man’s vital force to promote longevity,” while *“He Yinyang” is a treatise on the art of sexual intercourse.

205 See BG, pp. 74-81 for a transcription of *“Shiwen” and BG, pp. 81-82 for a transcription of *“He Yinyang”; see plates 53-59 (slips 1-101) for black and white photographs of the *“Shiwen” slip and plates 59-61 (slips 102-133) for black and white photographs of the *“He Yinyang” slips. BS, 4 has black and white photographs (“Plates,” pp. 87-98, 99-104) and annotated transcriptions (“Transcriptions,” pp. 143-152, 153-156) for both manuscripts. JC, 6.139-151 has an introduction, notes, and an annotated transcription for *“Shiwen,” and JC, 6.153-158 provides the same for the *“He Yinyang” text. Color photographs for both manuscripts appear in JC, 2.203-211 and JC, 2.212-213 respectively. Harper (1997a), pp. 385-411 provides an annotated translation of *“Shiwen,” and pp. 412-422 provides a translation for *“He Yinyang.” Harper (1997a), pp. 28-29 also provides an overview of the two manuscripts. For a discussion of the calligraphy of these two manuscripts, see Chen Songchang 陳松長, “Mawangdui jiandu shufa yishu sanlun 馬王堆簡書法藝術散論, in idem, Jianbo yanjiu wengao 簡帛研究文稿 (Beijing: Xianzhuang shuju, 2008), pp. 388-391. See also Zhou Yimou 周一謀 and Xiao Zuotao 蕭佐桃, eds., Mawangdui yishu kaozhuz 馬王堆醫書考釋 (Tianjin: Tianjin kexue jishu chubanshe, 1988), pp. 365-397, 398-409; Ma Jixing 马繼興, Mawangdui gu yishu kaooshi 馬王堆古醫書考釋 (Changsha: Hunan kexue jishu chubanshe, 1992), pp. 867-976, 977-1005; Wei Qipeng 魏啟鵬 and Hu Xianghua 胡翔鳴, eds., Mawangdui Hanmu yishu jiaoshi 馬王堆漢墓醫書校釋, Vol. 2 (Chengdu: Chengdu
yinyang” slips the two bindings registers sometimes overlap with the writing on the bamboo, indicating that they may have been written up before they were bound.\textsuperscript{206} The *“He yinyang” text seems to observe the taboo on the character heng 恆, the personal name of Emperor Wen, since slip 103 writes changshan 常山 instead of hengshan 恆山, meaning that it was probably copied between 180 BCE when Emperor Wen ascended the throne and 168 BCE when M3 was sealed.\textsuperscript{207} Both manuscripts were written by different hands in a somewhat cursive style of Han clerical script, though the writing used to copy the *“He yinyang” text is more cursive than that used to copy the *“Shiwen” text.\textsuperscript{208}

Donald Harper has described how the two manuscripts were originally bound separately, with the *“Shi wen” rolled first and the *“He yinyang” rolled around it. The combined bundle was then placed on top of the silk manuscripts in the through compartment of the lacquer case. Harper says it is possible that the two manuscripts were originally rolled together to form a single composite manuscript, or that this was done specifically for burial, noting that, while it is highly unlikely that the manuscripts containing the *“Zajin fang” and *“Tianxia zhidao tan” texts discussed below were originally rolled together, given their very different materialities, the case of the *“Shi wen” and *“He yinyang” manuscripts may show that it was relatively common practice to roll two different bamboo manuscripts together.\textsuperscript{209}

The *“Shi wen” text consists of ten dialogues within which macrobiotic specialists respond to questions, with Huangdi 黃帝 (the legendary Yellow Emperor) serving as the questioner in the first four dialogues. Rong Cheng 容成 and Ancestor Peng 彭祖 number among


\textsuperscript{208} Harper (1997a), p. 28.

\textsuperscript{209} Harper (1997a), p. 28.
Figure 1.4: First eleven bamboo slips containing the “Shiwen” text (JC, 2.203)

Figure 1.5: First eleven bamboo slips containing the “He yinyang” text (JC, 2.212)
the specialists, and these figures are well known in received literate as experts in macrobiotic hygiene. The language used to express the techniques in the text is often highly esoteric and metaphoric, while the text of the *“He yinyang,”* which is divided into nine sections and is about sexual cultivation, begins with an “esoteric poem” but is relatively more straightforward in its prescriptions.210

In sum, with these two manuscripts we see a correlation between the material form of the manuscript and the content of the text it was used to carry. The *“He yinyang”* text is written in a more cursive script on thicker bamboo slips, and though the text itself would have required a relatively high degree of literacy in order to read it, its contents are nevertheless still largely practical and straightforward descriptions of techniques that are very different from the more high-brow philosophical cultivation detailed in the more esoteric *“Shi wen”* text. Though it is possible that the two manuscripts were bound together (perhaps long before they were buried) because of the overlap in their contents, I would suggest that the fact that the thicker slips of the *“He yinyang”* manuscript were rolled around the rather more slender slips of the *“Shi wen”* manuscript may reflect a desire to use the more robust *“He yinyang”* slips to protect the more delicate *“Shi wen”* slips, since these would have been more susceptible to damage.211 In other words, the physical association of these two manuscripts may have had as much to do with practical, material considerations as with intellectual affiliations or thematic overlap.

Medical Manuscripts IX and X contain the texts *“Za jinfang”* 雜禁方 (“Assorted Forbidden Recipes”) and *“Tianxia zhidao tan” 天下至道談 (“Discussion of the Supreme Way under Heaven”) respectively.212 The former manuscript is constructed from eleven wooden slips


211 For a black and white line drawing of the combined bundle formed by wrapping the *“He yinyang”* slips around the *“Shi wen”* slips, see BS, 4, “Transcriptions,” p. 152.

212 BS, 4 has transcriptions (“Transcriptions,” pp. 157-160, 161-167) and black and white photographs (“Plates,” pp. 105-108, 109-116) of both manuscripts. BG, p. 83 has a transcription of the *“Za jinfang”* (see plate 62 for a black and white photograph of the entire manuscript). JC, 6.159-161 provides an introduction and annotated transcription of the *“Za jinfang”* text, and JC, 2.215 provides color
measuring 22-23 cm long and 1.1-1.2 cm wide, with each slip carrying between thirteen and fifteen characters. The text was given the title *“Za jinfang” because it contains numerous curses designed to get the better of an opponent. For example, the prescription on slip 11 of the manuscript says to “take the person’s left eyebrow and place it in alcohol; drink it, and you will certainly obtain them [i.e., the person] 取其左眉置酒中，飲之，必得之.\(^{213}\) The calligraphy used to write the *“Za jinfang” text is highly cursive, and the characters are large and sparsely spaced (see Figure 1.6). The *“Tianxia zhidao tan” manuscript consists of fifty-six bamboo slips measuring 29 cm long and 0.5 cm wide, with each slip carrying between thirty-one and thirty-four characters. The writing is well regulated and attractively executed, with 1 cm margins at the top and bottom of each slip.

Lengths of string had been used to bind the slips of the manuscript containing the *“Tianxia zhidao tan” text in three registers with two strings in each register, and judging by the markings left behind by these bindings the manuscript may have been bound before it was written since the characters seem to have been written around the bindings in places (see Figure 1.7).\(^{214}\) The text can be divided into twenty sections based on the black dots that appear at the top of the first slip in each section, with each section beginning on a new slip. The contents of the text are related to various sexual techniques or “arts of the bedchamber” (fangzhong shu 房中術), and some of the contents bear certain similarities with the *“Shi wen,” *“He yinyang,” and *“Yangsheng fang” texts from Mawangdui.\(^{215}\) The title of the manuscript was selected on the photographs of the entire manuscript. BG, pp. 83-87 has a transcription of the *“Tianxia zhidao tan” text (see plates 63-66 for black and white photographs of the manuscript). See JC, 6.163-171 for an introduction and annotated transcription of the manuscript, and JC, 2.216-220 for color photographs of the entire manuscript. Harper (1997a), pp. 423-424 provides an annotated translation of *“Za jinfang,” and pp. 425-438 provides an annotated translation of the *“Tianxia zhidao tan,” with pp. 29-30 providing an overview of the two manuscripts. See also Zhou and Xiao (1988), pp. 410-414, 415-442; Ma (1992), pp. 1006-1016, 1017-1072; Wei and Hu (1992), pp. 139-140, 141-157; Zhou et al. (1994), pp. 244-255, 343, 344-347; and Zhang (1997), pp. 430-431. For a discussion of the calligraphy of these two manuscripts, see Chen (1997), pp. 391-392.

\(^{213}\) See BG, p. 83 and JC, 6.159. See also Harper (1997a), p. 424.

Yu in NTM, pp. 89-91 lists *“Tianxia zhidao tan” (under the title “The Perfect Heavenly Way”) under “Medicine and Health Care,” noting that its contents mainly have to do with copulation and are similar to that of the *“He yinyang” (their “Harmony of Yin and Yang”) text.

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basis of the five characters that appear underneath a black dot on slip 6, the only writing on this particular slip. Yu Yanjiao 喻燕姣 and Zhou Bo 周波 in JC, however, follow Li Rui 李銳 in arguing that it is possible that this phrase should be read not as the title of a section of text or the manuscript overall, but as the initial portion of a phrase that is completed on the next slip, a phrase that would read, “The supreme way under heaven is as light as water” 天下至道談 (= 淡) 如水.216

The *“Tianxia zhidaotan” text seems to be written using older graphic forms than the *“Za jinfang” text, and also uses the graph ying 盈, which was probably tabooed during and/or after the reign of Emperor Hui.217 Ma Jixing 馬繼興, for example, has argued that since the *“Tianxia zhidaotan” text does not observe the taboo on ying it was probably copied prior to 194 BCE, and Ma dates the clerical script used to write both the *“Tianxia zhidaotan” and *“Za jinfang” manuscripts to early Western Han.218 The writing on the *“Za jinfang” manuscript is a highly cursive form of the Han clerical script, but that of the *“Tianxia zhidaotan” is far more regular and much more carefully executed.219

As noted above, the two manuscripts were originally bound separately, with the manuscript containing the *“Tianxia zhidan tan” text rolled around two bamboo flutes measuring 24.6cm and 21.2cm in length respectively,220 and the manuscript containing the *“Za jinfang” text rolled around the outside of it. The entire composite manuscript was then placed behind the

216 Harper (1997a), p. 426n.5 notes that the editors of BS, 4 (“Transcription,” p. 163n.1) argue that the dot at the top of the sixth slip of this manuscript is a scribe error, and that this is a heading for the rest of the manuscript. See BG, p. 83 and JC, 6.164, 164n.1 (for slip 6).


219 See Harper (1997a), pp. 29-30. Harper, providing a slightly later estimate than Ma, argues that the texts of both manuscripts were probably copied within a period of one or two decades before the death of the tomb occupant.

220 See the description given in Harper (1997a), p. 29. I give slightly different lengths for the flutes, however, following the dimensions given in BG, p. 186. See Chapter 5 for a fuller account of these flutes.
manuscript bundle containing the *“Shi wen” and *“He yinyang” texts in the same compartment in the lacquer case. Both of these texts, the *“Za jinfang” and the *“Tianxia zhidao tan” are compendia: particular materializations consolidated from a broader corpus of textual material that was perhaps edited and redacted by the very scribes who produced these manuscripts. We know this because both texts seem to derive from multiple sources. The *“Tianxia zhidao tan” text, for example, begins by adopting a question and answer format, but this format is quickly abandoned, and the contents of the text, while thematically related, seem to have been cobbled together from different sources. Some sections follow on smoothly from their preceding sections, for example, while others exhibit rather abrupt transitions. As for the *“Za jinfang” text, the contents of the first part of the text, accounting for the first four and a half slips, are all related to the practice of daubing mud in bands of various width on walls, doorways, and underneath beds to solve various difficulties and disputes such as barking dogs, bad dreams, and quarrels between husbands and wives. Slips 6, 7, 8, and 11, on the other hand, each carry single entries related to various charms, and a single entry for a charm spans slips 9 and 10.

The composite nature of the texts, however, may be all that they have in common. The manuscript containing the *“Tianxia zhidao tan” text is an exquisitely produced artifact, carefully executed in beautiful script on slender slips of bamboo with protective margins and three-point binding. Clearly, a considerable amount of care and attention was paid to the manufacture of this manuscript. By contrast, the *“Za jinfang” text is written in highly cursive (almost hasty) script in large characters on significantly thicker wooden slips. The material discrepancies of these two manuscripts reflect the different contents of the texts they were used to carry: whereas the *“Tianxia zhidao tan” concerns elite knowledge and complex medical-philosophical discourse, with references to mythological figures such as Huangshen 黃神 (= Huangdi 黃帝, the Yellow Emperor), the *“Za jinfang” is highly practical and “superstitious” rather than medically or technically advanced. Whereas the former is a sophisticated manuscript for a sophisticated text, one that comprises extended passages of philosophical and cosmological
discourse, the *“Za jinfang”* is a popular text produced by a scribe who was evidently not taking care to produce a fine document.221

The two manuscripts were originally bound separately and were rolled together at some point prior to their interment in the tomb, and one wonders why the *“Tianxia zhidao tan”* was not rolled with the *“Shi wen” and “He yinyang”* manuscripts, since they are related in content and were likewise written on bamboo rather than wood.222 Perhaps the answer is that the slips of the manuscript containing the *“Tianxia zhidao tan”* text were simply much longer than the slips of the manuscripts containing the *“Shi wen” or “He yinyang”* texts (29cm long as opposed to 23cm long). But if the length of the slips was the primary factor in deciding which manuscripts to roll together, one wonders why the manuscript containing the *“Za jinfang”* text, which took the form of wooden slips 22-23cm in length, was not rolled along with the manuscripts containing the *“Shi wen” and “He yinyang”* texts. After all, the manuscript containing the *“Za jinfang”* text comprised just eleven slips, and the near identical lengths of the slips used to manufacture these three manuscripts would surely have made them good candidates for a single

221 Harper notes that the eight graphs written on slip 41 (of the combined *“Za jinfang” / *“Tianxia zhidao tan”* manuscript, i.e., slip 30 of the manuscript containing the **“Tianxia zhidao tan”** text) conclude with the character 『故』 (“thus”), and only occupy the first quarter of the slip. While BS, 4 places a colon after 『故』, clearly treating it as an introduction to the list that follows on the next slip, Harper instead argues that the scribe omitted the portion of text that followed the word 『故』, which should have concluded this section. For some reason, Harper argues, the scribe chose to redact this last portion of the section of the text from which he was copying, accidentally writing the first character (『故』) of this concluding section before he realized his mistake. See Harper (1997a), p. 432, n.1. If Harper is correct, then the scribe seemingly decided not to replace the slip (which would have been somewhat tricky since, as we have seen, the manuscript was likely pre-bound) or to edit the text by erasing the word 『故』 (either by crossing it out with ink or scraping away the surface of the bamboo) or adding some sort of mark to indicate that the graph was written in error. Perhaps this was because the mistake was relatively minor, and so no redaction or editing was necessary. On the other hand, it may also reflect a desire on the part of the scribe not to mar the visuality of the carefully designed bamboo manuscript.

222 Thies Staack, “Reconstruction of Early Chinese Bamboo and Wood Manuscripts. A Review (1900-2010),” Centre for the Study of Manuscript Cultures - Occasional Paper No. 5 (2016), p. 28 has noted that it remains unclear whether these two pairs of manuscripts were always bound together to form a composite manuscript or whether they were rolled this way to better fit into the lacquer case. Even in the latter scenario, however, I would argue that the decision to pair them in this way and to roll the more robust manuscripts around the outside of the more fragile ones reflects a concern for their material preservation rather than a random act of selection.
Certainly, rolling manuscripts of bamboo and wood together was evidently not an issue, since in the end the wooden *“Za jinfang” slips were rolled around the outside of the bamboo *“Tianxia zhidao tan” slips. More likely, then, is that the manuscript containing the *“Za jinfang” text was rolled around the outside of the *“Tianxia zhidan tan” slips precisely because it was made of thicker wooden slips, and so would have offered protection to the more finely manufactured manuscript.

Indeed, it is hard to see why else the manuscript containing the *“Za jinfang” text would have been rolled around the *“Tianxia zhidao tan” slips if not for protection, since, as can be seen from the information provided in Table 1.1, of the four non-silk medical manuscripts from Mawangdui these two were the most unalike in terms of their materiality, as well as in terms of their contents. It is also worth noting that the writing on the *“Za jinfang” slips does not leave an upper margin on the wooden slips, whereas generous upper and lower margins were deliberately left on the slender bamboo slips of the manuscript containing the *“Tianxia zhidao tan” text. This demonstrates that, prior to the two manuscripts being rolled together for burial, the latter manuscript was designed with protection against textual damage in mind while the former manuscript was not. This being the case, it would hardly be surprising if the shoddier manuscript containing the *“Za jinfang” text was rolled around the outside of the far more delicate *“Tianxia zhidao tan” slips in order to offer protection to that manuscript.

223 See BS, 4, “Transcriptions,” p. 160 for a black and white line drawing of the *“Za jinfang” slips wrapped around the outside of the manuscript containing the *“Tianxia zhidao tan” text.
Table 1.1: Material features of the texts on Medical Manuscripts VII, VIII, XI, and X

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Manuscript</th>
<th>Text</th>
<th>Material</th>
<th>Dimensions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Medical Manuscript VII</td>
<td>*“Shi wen” 十問</td>
<td>101 bamboo slips</td>
<td>23cm x 0.6cm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medical Manuscript VIII</td>
<td>*“He yinyang” 合陰陽</td>
<td>32 bamboo slips (rolled around Medical Manuscript VII)</td>
<td>23cm x 0.9cm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medical Manuscript IX</td>
<td>*“Za jinfang” 雜禁方</td>
<td>11 wooden slips (rolled around Medical Manuscript X)</td>
<td>22-23cm x 1.1-1.2cm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medical Manuscript X</td>
<td>*“Tianxia zhidao tan” 天下至道談</td>
<td>56 bamboo slips</td>
<td>29cm x 0.5cm</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If the manuscript containing the *“Za jinfang” text was rolled around the outside of the *“Tianxia zhidao tan” slips in order to protect the more delicate manuscript containing the more precious textual material, then probably this was also the reason the manuscript containing the *“He yinyang” text was rolled around the *“Shi wen” slips, as described above. With that pair of manuscripts, too, the relatively more delicate *“Shi wen” slips were protected by the relatively less finely produced manuscript containing the *“He yinyang” text. As Harper has argued, since the manuscripts in the *“Shi wen” / *“He yinyang” roll shared more similar material features than did the manuscripts in the *“Za jinfang” / *“Tianxia zhidao tan” roll, it is possible that the manuscripts containing the *“Shi wen” and *“He yinyang” texts had been rolled together for some time prior to burial, whereas the *“Za jinfang” and *“Tianxia zhidao tan” slips, given their significantly different material features, may have been rolled together specifically for
Regardless, the fact that in both pairs of manuscripts the “inferior” text was wrapped around the “superior” text, even at the expense of material cohesion within a pair, suggests that manuscripts of bamboo and wooden slips were sometimes stored in such a way – whether specifically for burial, as standard practice above ground, or both – as to ensure the protection of the more precious manuscripts and important texts, reflecting a close connection between material and textual hierarchies in Western Han times.

1.3 Usage and design: the *Laozi manuscripts, the *Chunqiu shiyu and the *Zhanguo zonghengjia shu

The status of the text was not, however, the only consideration governing the way a text was materialized. In this section, it will be shown that, in addition to textual hierarchies affecting the materialization of textual knowledge, the use to which a text was to be put was another factor in deciding how to give it material form. In other words, different manuscripts were designed for different purposes.

The *Laozi 老子 A and *Laozi 老子 B silk manuscripts were found in the lacquer case in the eastern compartment of the outer coffin in Mawangdui M3. The *Laozi A manuscript had been rolled around a piece of wood and was stored alongside two other rolled silk manuscripts, the *Chunqiu shiyu 春秋事語 (Speeches in Narratives from the Springs and Autumn Era) manuscript (see below) and Medical Manuscript III (see Chapter 5), underneath the medical manuscripts on wood and bamboo described above, in the long through compartment of the case.

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224 Both these pairs of manuscripts thus correspond to Marilena Maniaci’s definition of a “complex object,” a term she uses to describe artifacts such as codices that contain multiple texts (often with physically distinct parts) that may have been manufactured and/or altered over a considerable period of time. See Marilena Maniaci, “Chapter 1. Codicology,” in Comparative Oriental Manuscript Studies: An Introduction, ed. Alessandro Bausi et al. (Hamburg: COMSt, 2015), p. 82.

225 Indeed, Ori Tavor has argued that the *“Shiwen” and “*Tianxia zhidao tan” texts were specifically designed as compendia for attracting elite patronage, and this is why they contain deliberately esoteric and “high-end” material. See Ori Tavor, “Authoring Virile Bodies: Self-Cultivation and Textual Production in Early China,” Studies in Chinese Religions 2.1 (2016), pp. 45-65.
The manuscript measures 24cm by 318.2cm and contains six texts, the first two of which basically correspond to the text of the received Laozi, also known as the Daode jing 道德經 (Classic of the Way and of Virtue), but with the sequence of the two sections – the “Dejing” 德經 (“Classic of Virtue”) and the “Daojing” 道經 (“Classic of the Way”) – reversed in relation to the received version.\(^{226}\) The other four texts on the *Laozi A* manuscript are the *“Wuxing jing” 五行經 (“Classic of the Five Virtues”) accompanied by the *“Wuxing jingshuo” 五行經說 (“Commentary to the Classic of the Five Virtues”), the *“Jiuzhu” 九主 (“Nine Rulers”),\(^ {227}\) the *“Mingjun” 明君 (“The Enlightened Ruler”), and the *“Desheng” 德聖 (“Virtuous Sage”). None of the texts on this manuscript originally bore a title; they have been selected by editors and scholars.

The *Laozi B* manuscript was not rolled but folded, and was found alongside most of the other silk manuscripts in one of the middle compartments of the lacquer case.\(^ {228}\) It measures 48cm by 166cm and also contains six texts: the “Jingfa” 經法 (“The Law of the Canon”), the


\(^{228}\) Based on the presence of imprinted characters, Qiu Xigui 裘錫圭 and Guo Yongbing 郭永秉 in JC have determined that the *Laozi B* manuscript was first folded from left to right four times, before it was folded again from top to bottom. This folding method was the same used to fold the Zhouyi manuscript examined above. As previously described, the *Laozi B* manuscript was protected by what are now sixteen “pages” of silk lining sheets. In the same way as the Zhouyi manuscript, the lining silk was placed over one half of the manuscript before it was folded.
“Shiliu jing” 十大經 ("Sixteen Canons"), the “Cheng” 稱 ("Designations"), the “Daoyuan” 道原 ("Origin of the Way"), the “Dejing,” and the “Daojing.” These titles appear with

229 The title “Shiliu jing” was originally transcribed as the “Shi da jing” 十大經 ("Ten Great Canons"). See JC, 4.173n.9. For a study and translation of all four texts, see Yates (1997).


231 The textual units of the two *Laozi manuscripts are described in detail in Matthias L. Richter, “Textual Identity and the Role of Literacy in the Transmission of Early Chinese Literature,” in Writing and Literacy in Early China, ed. Li Feng and David Prager Branner (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2011), pp. 211-213 (see below). The *Laozi A manuscript sustained far more damage than did the *Laozi B manuscript, making it more difficult to determine its original material and codicological features. Both manuscripts made use of red ruled lines, and the *Laozi B manuscript also features upper and lower margins delineated in black ink. There is at least one blank column at the beginning of the *Laozi B manuscript, and a number of blank columns at the end of the manuscript. The number of columns in each text of the *Laozi A manuscript is as follows: “De” (92), “Dao” (77), “Wuxing” (182) ("jing" [45], “shuo” [137]), “Jiuzhu” (52), “Mingjun” (48), and “Desheng” (13). The number of columns in each text of the *Laozi B manuscript are: “Jingfa” (77), “Shiliu jing” (65), “Cheng” (25), “Daoyuan” (7), “De” (34), and “Dao” (35). In both manuscripts textual divisions have been clearly indicated by starting the text on a new column. The first column of each text is further indicated by the presence of either a black dot at the head of the column (*Laozi A), or a completely blacked out upper margin (*Laozi B). The *Laozi B manuscript even marks and titles individual sections within the first two texts, the “Jingfa” and the “Shiliu jing.” By contrast, the texts on the *Laozi A manuscript are untitled and “the textual delineations are ambiguous.” Despite this, within some of the six texts on the *Laozi A manuscript, certain sub-textual units are marked in the same fashion as that used to indicate divisions between textual units (i.e., starting the section on a new column marked by a black dot).
character counts at the end of each text on the manuscript (the titles of individual chapters within the “Jingfa” and “Shiuliu jing” texts are also indicated), and the sequence of these last two texts is also reversed in comparison to the received version of the Laozi.232 Judging by the calligraphy used to write the texts on the two manuscripts, each manuscript was written by a single hand, and the *Laozi A manuscript was evidently copied earlier than the *Laozi B manuscript judging by the script style.233

In 2011, an influential essay by Matthias Richter entitled “Textual Identity and the Role of Literacy in the Transmission of Early Chinese Literature” was published in an edited volume on the topic of writing and literacy in early China.234 In that essay, Richter formulates a

232 BG, p. 89 lists all the texts on the *Laozi A and *Laozi B manuscripts under the zhuzi 諸子 (“various masters”) category. BS, 1 has photographs (“Plates,” unpaginated) and annotated transcriptions (“Transcriptions,” pp. 1-88, 89-114) of both *Laozi manuscripts. JC, 4.1-124 provides introductions and annotated translations for the texts on the *Laozi A manuscript, and JC, 1.95-117 has color photographs of the manuscript. JC 4, 125-215 provides introductions and annotated transcriptions for the texts on the *Laozi B manuscript, and JC, 1.120-166 has color photographs of the entire manuscript.

233 The script of the *Laozi A manuscript is an early form of the “ancient-clerical” (guli 古隸) script style similar to that seen in excavated Qin sources, as well as to the script used to write the *Xingde 刑德 A (Punishment and Benevolence A) manuscript from Mawangdui (see Chapters 4 and 5), which was evidently copied towards the end of Emperor Gao’s reign (in either 196 or 195 BCE) based on an internal date notation and the fact that it does not observe the taboo on the character bang. The texts on the *Laozi A manuscript were likewise probably copied prior to the end of Emperor Gao’s reign. The texts on the *Laozi B manuscript were written in a rather late style of ancient-clerical script, similar in style to the *Wuxing zhan 五星占 (Divination According to the Five Planets) manuscript from Mawangdui (see Chapter 5), which was copied in the third year of the reign of Emperor Wen. The *Laozi B manuscript does not appear to observe the taboos on the personal names of any of the rulers after Emperor Gao, though judging by the calligraphy it probably dates to the reign of Emperor Wen. YS, pp. 65-68 has the *Laozi A manuscript under the ancient-clerical section, noting that the script style is a hybrid of the ancient-clerical and Han clerical (Hanli 漢隸) script styles. Chen in YS also notes that because the manuscript was rolled around a piece of wood the portions on the inside of the roll were rather badly damaged, and that the beginning of the manuscript is also seriously damaged. See YS, pp. 247-265 where the *Laozi B manuscript is listed under the Han clerical section, and Chen notes that, in comparison to the writing on the *Laozi A manuscript, the script on the *Laozi B manuscript is further developed towards fully fledged Han clerical script style. In comparison to the script on the *Laozi A manuscript, the script on the *Laozi B manuscript is also very neat and symmetrical, representing a formalized variety of the Han clerical script. WW, 1.128-130 has a brief entry on both *Laozi manuscripts, noting that the *Laozi A manuscript is written in “archaic Li script while copy B in [sic] standard Han Li script.” For an early account providing an overview of the forms and contents of the two *Laozi manuscripts and a comparison with transmitted texts, see Gao Heng 高亨 and Chi Xichao 池曦朝, “Shitan Mawangdui Hanmu zhong de boshu laozi” 試探馬王堆漢墓中的帛書老子, Wenwu 文物 (1974).11, pp. 1-7, 95-98.
methodology for distinguishing between different modes of textual transmission on the basis of the material features of different manuscripts. For Richter, the material features of different manuscripts reflect specific modes of production and the different usages to which they were put, and he argues that inquiries into the material features of different manuscripts need to be carried out on a case-by-case basis to discover the likely circumstances of their production and use.235 To this end, Richter creates a “manuscript profile” for the two Laozi manuscripts from Mawangdui. I have summarized his findings in Table 1.2.

Table 1.2: Summary of findings presented in Richter (2011)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MATERIAL FEATURES</th>
<th>*LAOZI A MANUSCRIPT</th>
<th>*LAOZI B MANUSCRIPT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Manuscript width</td>
<td>Half-width (24cm)</td>
<td>Full-width (48cm)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Storage method</td>
<td>Rolled</td>
<td>Folded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Layout</td>
<td>Texts written on the full width of the silk</td>
<td>Text written leaving upper and lower margins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Titles</td>
<td>Texts on the manuscript are untitled</td>
<td>Texts on the manuscript are titled</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Textual divisions</td>
<td>Ambiguous textual and sub-textual divisions</td>
<td>Clearer textual and sub-textual divisions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Character count</td>
<td>No character counts</td>
<td>Character counts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Script style</td>
<td>Ancient clerical (<em>guli</em>)</td>
<td>Han clerical (<em>Hanli</em>)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Handwriting</td>
<td>Clear but not particularly neat</td>
<td>Small and very neat</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Orthography

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Orthographical standards are not unified across the texts</th>
<th>Orthographical standards are largely unified across the texts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Attention marks

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Extensive use of attention marks as reading aids</th>
<th>Very limited use of attention marks as reading aids</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Errors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Far fewer errors</th>
<th>Far more errors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Richter argues that the material differences between these two manuscripts reflect their different intended uses. According to Richter, whereas the texts on the *Laozi A* manuscript were meant to be read aloud or used to refamiliarize the reader with the material on the manuscript, the *Laozi B* manuscript was of greater representational value, with its material features reflecting a desire to exert control over textual transmission, by specifying titles and character counts, for example. Richter argues that the texts on the *Laozi A* manuscript were copied by a scribe who was familiar with the texts he was copying, whereas the texts on the *Laozi B* manuscript were copied by a scribe who was skilled but apparently less familiar with his material. Richter thus attributes the codicological differences between the two manuscripts to different functions: the *Laozi A* manuscript was designed for the practical purpose of reading, while the *Laozi B* manuscript was designed for representing and transmitting its texts.²³⁶

Richter’s essay is important and insightful, providing scholars with a methodologically rigorous approach for dealing with excavated manuscripts. However, one might also question some of his conclusions as regards these two manuscripts. In particular, it is not clear that the codicological differences between these two manuscripts might not better be attributed to change over time rather than to a difference in function. That is, perhaps both manuscripts were designed

²³⁶ Richter (2011), pp. 234-236. Marc Kalinowski had made a similar point in relation to these two manuscripts. Namely, that based on their codicological features, the *Laozi A* manuscript seems to have been designed as a sort of “aide-mémoire,” while the *Laozi B* texts were prepared with an eye to presentation. See Marc Kalinowski, “La production des manuscrits dans la chine ancienne: Une approche codicologique de la bibliothèque funéraire de Mawangdui,” *Asiatische Studien* 59.1 (2005), pp. 151-152.
for largely the same purpose – to consolidate textual material related to a text we now know as the Laozi, with both silk manuscripts written and deposited in some sort of institution (see Chapter 5) for consultation when needed – but were simply copied at different times, with the later *Laozi B manuscript emerging from a more mature scribal environment with higher degrees of textual standardization. Certainly, the *Laozi B manuscript shares some codicological features with a number of other Mawangdui manuscripts that were evidently produced around the same time judging by their calligraphy, including the Zhouyi manuscripts examined above, the *Xingde 刑德 B (Punishment and Benevolence B) manuscript (see Chapters 4 and 5), the *Wuxing zhan 五星占 (Prognostication by the Five Planets) manuscript (see Chapter 5), and the *Xiangma jing 相馬經 (Classic of Physiognomizing Horses) manuscript (see Chapter 5), and the texts on these manuscripts are generally neater and easier to read. Of course, it is possible that this “change over time” explanation for the material differences between the two *Laozi manuscripts can be reconciled with Richter’s argument about them having different functions, by arguing that the functions of manuscripts simply changed over the course of the period between the times when the two manuscripts were copied, for example. That is, perhaps the earlier Mawangdui silk manuscripts were designed primarily for reading, whereas the later silk manuscripts were primarily designed for the representation and transmission of textual material. This is not borne out by the evidence from the Mawangdui

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237 Richter (2011), p. 212 notes that these manuscripts all took the form of folded silk sheets measuring approximately 48cm in width, and to a certain extent shared other material features such as ruled lines, margins, and the same script style. Indeed, Richter even goes so far as to say that “[a]pparently, they were produced in the same manufacture or scribal school.” Marc Kalinowski has also noticed a material affinity between these same six manuscripts, noting that they are all in the more recent Han clerical script and share a common mise en page, including the same icons used to indicate divisions between texts and the careful notation of titles and sometimes even sub-titles. Indeed, Kalinowski actually goes further than Richter, suggesting, largely on the basis of the presence of what he sees as atypical graphs, that the six manuscripts were written by the same hand over a period of time between 177-168 BCE. Kalinowski also notes that these six manuscripts apparently reflect the imposition of editorial norms and standards onto the production and reproduction of a diverse range of texts, from canonical and philosophical works to astrological manuals and calendars. See Kalinowski (2005), pp. 144-145. As noted above, another commonality between three of these six manuscripts (the two Zhouyi manuscripts and the *Laozi B manuscript) is the use of specially designed silk lining sheets to protect their contents.
manuscripts as a whole, however (see Chapter 5), and it remains to be seen if the *Laozi A manuscript can plausibly be said to have been designed for ease of reading. Richter mentions that the full-width (48cm) format of the *Laozi B manuscript would have made it more cumbersome to use, probably requiring some sort of support surface in order to read the texts written on it. However, though Richter does acknowledge that the *Laozi A manuscript is by far the longest of the Mawangdui manuscripts, he does not seem to consider the fact that even a manuscript in the full-width format would have been far less cumbersome to read than a manuscript measuring a whopping 318.2cm in length. In addition, as Richter himself points out, the textual divisions and sub-divisions on the *Laozi A manuscript are rather ambiguous, at least compared to those on the *Laozi B manuscript. Though, as Richter argues, it is at least theoretically possible that the *Laozi A manuscript was designed for use by a reader (or readers) who were already familiar with the texts it contained, it is still rather difficult to imagine a person, whatever their degree of familiarization with these texts, finding it easy or convenient to read or refamiliarize themselves with textual material that was ambiguously represented on the surface of a manuscript measuring some ten and a half feet in length! Indeed, even if such a use were possible, it would be hard to argue that the manuscript was designed specifically for such a purpose. In fact, judging solely by

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238 Rens Krijgsman has recently shown how the changing codicological formats of Chinese manuscripts in the early period went hand in hand with changing uses of textual material. See Rens Krijgsman, “An Inquiry into the Formation of Readership in Early China: Using and Producing the *Yong yue 用曰 and Yinshu 引書 Manuscripts,” *T’oung Pao* 104.1-2 (2018), pp. 2-65. However, as well be discussed below, certain of Krigsmann’s conclusions could be said to pose a challenge to some of Richter’s arguments.

239 Richter (2011), p. 220. Richter also notes (pp. 211-212) that full-width manuscripts were probably more valuable than manuscripts in the half-width format, even if they were shorter, since it would have required a loom twice as large in order to produce them. See Chapter 5 for a brief discussion of tables and other support surfaces used during the writing process in early China.


241 Richter (2011). p. 211n.13 credits Chen Songchang, former curator of the Mawangdui materials at the Hunan Museum 湖南省博物館, with providing him with the information about the length of the *Laozi A manuscript. This figure is also provided in BG, p. 88.

the dimensions of the *Laozi A manuscript, this seems rather unlikely. To my mind, the material and codicological features of the *Laozi A manuscript would have made it more difficult – not less – for a reader wishing to read or refamiliarize themselves with this material to orient themselves among the various texts on the surface of the silk, making it particularly difficult to locate a particular passage within a text, for example. Indeed, the consolidation of these texts onto the surface of the *Laozi A manuscript, presumably from different sources given the numerous different formats used, would actually have made them more difficult to read than if they had been left on bamboo, the medium from which they were presumably copied. In addition, there is no reason why the exact same configuration of textual material could not have been committed to a piece of silk that was twice the width and half the length of the *Laozi A manuscript, since the two Laozi manuscripts contain almost the same surface area and accommodate very similar amounts of text. Perhaps the scribe who copied the texts on the *Laozi A manuscript simply chose whatever width of silk they had to hand, or perhaps they did not realize how long the manuscript would turn out to be before they started copying the texts.

243 See Chapter 5 for my argument that the length of many of the Mawangdui silk manuscripts suggests an institutional setting for their production and use, rather than use by an individual owner or user. In comparing two manuscripts from the Warring States and Western Han, Krijgsman has concluded that those manuscripts that rely on the literary features of the texts they carry to guide the reading of the text are less likely to have been used by readers who scanned for information than those manuscripts that use codicological strategies to guide the reading of the text. See Krijgsman (2018), p. 59. Following this argument, of the two *Laozi manuscripts from Mawangdui, I would suggest that it is actually the *Laozi B manuscript, which exhibits far more codicological surrogacy than does the *Laozi A manuscript, that would have been easier to scan if a reader wished to refamiliarize himself with its content. Actually, I would argue that neither the *Laozi A nor the *Laozi B manuscript was designed primarily for scanning or regular reading (though it would certainly have been significantly easier to use the *Laozi B manuscript for this purpose), but rather for consolidation and preservation of textual material. Krijgsman (2018), p. 16 also notes that the increasing standardization of manuscripts may also reflect changing reading habits, with readers no longer as familiar with the material they read or no longer making use of texts primarily in the context of one-to-one instruction.

244 It is possible that the texts on the *Laozi A manuscript were copied from unbound bamboo slips; see my discussion of the *Chunqiu shiyu 春秋事語 (Speeches in Narratives from the Springs and Autumn Era) and *Zhanguo zonghengjia shu 戰國縱橫家書 (Book from the Warring States School of the Vertical and Horizontal Alliances manuscripts) below. If it had been desirable to make this material available for easy reading, one wonders why these bamboo slips were not bound together to form a more usable manuscript (or manuscripts), with titles where appropriate.
Regardless, the length of the *Laozi A* manuscript and the ambiguity with which its texts are arranged suggests that consolidation of related textual material – and not readability – was the primary motivation behind its manufacture. Thus, what distinguishes the *Laozi A* and *Laozi B* manuscripts is probably not a difference in function (i.e., reading vs representation), but a difference in the level of know-how and/or care with which the task of textual consolidation was executed. In other words, the *Laozi B* manuscript was designed not to perform a separate function from the *Laozi A* manuscript, but to perform the same function better, and this is perhaps precisely what we might expect from a manuscript that was copied in the same institutional setting some twenty years after its predecessor.  

Despite certain reservations about the specifics of Richter’s arguments regarding the two *Laozi* manuscripts, it cannot be denied that his essay is a major contribution to our understanding of early Chinese manuscript production, or that the methodology he proposes can be used to better understand certain of the silk manuscripts from Mawangdui. Indeed, in the following section I will apply some of Richter’s observations to two other silk manuscripts from Mawangdui, the *Chunqiu shiyu* 春秋事語 (*Speeches in Narratives from the Springs and Autumns Era*) and the *Zhanguo zonghengjia shu* 戰國縱横家書 (*Book from the Warring States School of the Vertical and Horizontal Alliances*). Although the material on these two manuscripts does not overlap to the same extent as the texts on the two *Laozi* manuscripts, I will argue that these two manuscripts nevertheless represent different approaches to the task of displaying and

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245 Silk manuscripts were apparently often cut after the final portion of text was copied, making the manuscript more or less as long as the text, perhaps with some extra silk left to protect the text-bearing portions of the manuscript from fraying. There were exceptions to this practice, however, and some manuscripts seem to have been designed to accommodate the addition of supplementary text (see below and Chapter 5).

246 Interestingly, the three *Xingde* and two *Yinyang wuxing* 陰陽五行 (*Yin and Yang and the Five Phases*) manuscripts from Mawangdui were also copied over a considerable span of time, and likewise seem to become neater and more readable over time. The fact that these manuscripts were almost certainly designed to perform the same functions (textual consolidation and recopying) suggests that change in the material appearance of manuscripts may have more to do with the refinement of copying practices than with differences in function. See Chapters 4 and 5 for a fuller description of these manuscripts.
transmitting similar constellations of textual material (in this case, historical anecdotes), and that, consistent with some of Richter’s findings, these approaches reflect different intended uses for these manuscripts. While both of the manuscripts were designed to accommodate large quantities of historical narrative, the *Zhanguo zonghengjia shu* manuscript was produced mostly with textual consolidation in mind, while the *Chunqiu shiyu* manuscript presents its material in ways that would have facilitated reading and recopying.

The *Chunqiu shiyu* and *Zhanguo zonghengjia shu* manuscripts were named to reflect the fact that the anecdotes in the former all take place in the Springs and Autumn era, while those of the latter all take place in the Warring States era. As will be discussed in more detail below, the fact that the historical anecdotes found at Mawangdui were divided into collections based on two distinct eras of Chinese history perhaps suggests that already in the Western Han these periods were treated quite differently as potential sources of political knowledge and rhetoric.

The very first transcription of the text of the *Chunqiu shiyu* manuscript was published in the journal Wenwu in 1977, though since then many supplementary transcriptions with additional annotations have been published, and the most up-to-date set of transcriptions and notes can be found in JC. As Yuri Pines has noted, the text has failed to attract much scholarly attention in the years since its initial publication, largely because the text seems to summarize


248 See, for example, Guo Yongbing 郭永秉, “Mawangdui Hanmu boshu ‘Chunqiu shiyu’ bushi sanze” 马王堆漢墓帛書「春秋事語」補釋三則, Chutu wenxian yu guwenzi yanjiu 出土文獻與古文字研究 2 (2008), pp. 320-333.

249 JC, 3.167-200 provides an introduction to the text as well as annotated transcriptions of its contents, which differ in places from the transcriptions and notes provided in BS, 3 (“Transcriptions,” pp. 2-20; “Plates,” pp. 2-8). JC, 1.74-79 provides color photographs of the entire manuscript, including photographs. See also the new partial transcriptions in Guo Yongbing 郭永秉, “‘Chunqiu shiyu’ (yi zhi si zhang) xin shiwen yu zhushi” <春秋事語> (一至四章) 新釋文與注釋放, in Hunan sheng bowuguan (2016), pp. 160-172.
anecdotes in rather careless fashion compared its textual parallels in transmitted texts such as the *Zuozhuan* (Zuo Tradition) and the *Guoyu* (Discourses of the States),

 failing to concern itself with historical accuracy or providing contextual information, and even providing incorrect dates.

The reconstructed manuscript contains ninety-seven columns of text divided into sixteen untitled chapters. The anecdotes are clearly separated from one another on the surface of the silk, with each new anecdote beginning on a new column with the first character of each anecdote preceded by a round black dot at the top of the column. The manuscript had been ruled with red lines, and there are several blank columns at the end of the manuscript after the text of the final anecdote. However, due to the damage sustained by the manuscript, especially in its initial portions, it is impossible to say how much material might be missing. The final portion of the manuscript remains relatively intact, however.

The *Chunqiu shiyu* manuscript measures 74cm long by 24cm wide, and the calligraphy used to write the text is the same style of ancient-clerical hybrid script used to write the texts on the *Laozi A* manuscript, but with heavier brush strokes that do not vary between thick and

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251 Yoshimoto Michimasa 吉本道雅, “‘Shunju jigo’ ko” 「春秋事語」考, Sen’oku hakkokan kiyo 泉屋博物館紀要 6 (1990), p. 37 notes that eleven of the sixteen anecdotes in the text of the *Chunqiu shiyu* manuscript have parallels in the *Zuozhuan*.


slender lines. It was originally found rolled around a 3cm-wide piece of wood, and when the manuscript was unrolled it disintegrated into some two-hundred fragments, leading to serious textual damage.

There is some disagreement over the dating of the manuscript, though scholars agree that it was almost certainly written either during the Qin dynasty, the Chu-Han contention era, or the very early Western Han. The initial transcription published in Wenwu is accompanied by an argument that the text of the manuscript was copied either in the very early Han or prior to the Han based on the fact that it fails to observe the taboo on the personal name (bang) of the Han founder. In addition, Xu Renfu has argued that the fact the text seems to observe the taboo on the personal name of the father of the First Emperor of Qin, replacing the graph chu with the graph jing means it must have been copied after the Qin unification in 221 BCE.

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254 YS, pp. 75-82 provides black and white photographs of the manuscript, along with a transcription of its contents, with Chen Songchang noting that the writing has an air of “ancient simplicity” (gupu) about it.

255 Hitoshi (1983), p. 16 notes that the manuscript was rolled twelve or thirteen times around this piece of wood.

256 Chen Jian notes that the *Chunqiu shiyu* manuscript is the only one of the three silk manuscripts that were found rolled in the long through compartment of the lacquer case (as opposed to folded in the larger compartment, where most of the manuscripts were found) that contains imprinted characters. However, these were all formed as a result of seepage. See Chen (2016), p. 273.

257 Guo Yongbing in JC cites Qiu Xigui’s refutation of the argument that during the reign of the Second Emperor of Qin the grammatical particle yi 謂 was replaced with the particle ye 也. On this basis, Qiu notes, certain scholars have argued that since the text of the *Chunqiu shiyu* manuscript contains numerous instances of the graph ye, it must have been copied during the reign of the Second Emperor. However, Qiu notes that the evidence from Shuihudi and other sites shows that both particles were in use during the Qin dynasty. Instead, Qiu argues that since the text does not observe the taboo on the graph zheng 正, the personal name of the First Emperor, the text must have been copied after the Qin dynasty ended, added to which, Qiu argues (somewhat spuriously), nobody would have dared produce this text at a time when the sayings of the “one-hundred schools” (baijia 百家) were prohibited. See JC, 3.167 and Qiu Xigui 裘錫圭, “Boshu ‘Chunqiu shiyu’ jiaodu” 帛書《春秋事語》校讀, Hunan sheng bowuguan guankan 湖南省博物館館刊 1 (2004), pp. 72-95.

258 Mawangdui Hanmu boshu zhengli xiaozu (1977a), p. 32.
Li Xueqin 李學勤, however, has refuted this argument by showing that the character *jing* was already in use as a variant for *chu* prior to the Qin dynasty, appearing in a number of pre-Qin bronze inscriptions. Li argues that since the most important naming taboo was the avoidance of the graphs used to write the personal name of the current emperor, the manuscript must have been copied prior to Liu Bang’s ascension to the throne as Emperor Gao in 202 BCE, and that the manuscript was probably copied during the Chu-Han contention era.260

The anecdotes on the manuscript all relate to events that took place between 712-453 BCE, the same span of time covered by the *Zuo zhuan*, and the narratives are brief and relatively simple, exhibiting a thematic focus on “judgment and discussion” (*yilun* 議論). Most of the material in the text can be found in one of the three “commentaries” (*zhuan* 傳) to the *Chun qiu* 春秋 (*Springs and Autumns Annals*), the *Zuo zhuan*, the *Gul iang zhuan* 谷梁傳 (*Guliang Tradition of the Springs and Autumns Annals*), and the *Gong yang zhuan* 公羊傳 (*Gongyang Tradition of the Springs and Autumns Annals*), or in the *Guoyu* or certain so-called “masters

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259 Xu Renfu 徐仁甫, “Mawangdui Hanmu boshu ‘Chunqiu shiyu’ he ‘Zuo zhuan’ de shiyu duibi yanjiu – tan ‘Zuo zhuan’ de chengshu shidai he zuohe” 馬王堆漢墓帛書「春秋事語」和「左傳」的事語對比研究 – 談「左傳」的成書和作者, Shehui kexue zhanxian 社會科學展現 (1978).2, p. 209. Xu argues that the fact that the *Zuo zhuan* does not observe this practice means that the *Zuo zhuan* postdates the *Chunqiu shiyu*. However, Zhao Zheng 趙爭 claims that the text was copied after the *Zuo zhuan* in imitation of the narrative style of the *Guoyu*. See Zhao Zheng 趙爭, “Mawangdui boshu ‘Chunqiu shiyu’ xing zhi zaiyi – jian yu Liu Wei xiansheng shangque” 馬王堆帛書「春秋事語」性質再議 – 兼與劉偉先生商榷, Gudai wenming 古代文明 5.1 (2011), pp. 56-61. Luo Xinhui 羅新慧 has compared the historiographical outlooks of the narratives on the *Chunqiu shiyu* manuscript with those of the *Zuo zhuan*, concluding that they are not very “Confucian” (*Ru* 儒), whereas Li Jianjun 李建軍 has claimed that since the quality of the narratives in the manuscript text is pretty poor in comparison to those of the *Zuo zhuan*, the they must pre-date the *Zuo zhuan* and probably served as one of its sources. See Luo Xinhui 羅新慧, “Mawangdui Hanmu boshu ‘Chunqiu shiyu’ yu ‘Zuo zhuan’ – jianlun Zhangguo shiqi de shixue guannian” 馬王堆漢墓帛書「春秋事語」與「左傳」 – 兼論戰國時期的史學觀念, Shixueshi yanjiu 史學史研究 136.4 (2009), pp. 10-17 and Li Jianjun 李建軍, “Boshu ‘Chunqiu shiyu’ kaolun”帛書「春秋事語」考論, Tushuguan lilun yu shijian 圖書館理論與實踐 (2006).5, pp. 44-46.

texts" (zishu 子書). The narratives also contain judgments and appraisals, both from characters within the narratives and from later commentators.

Though Guo Yongbing in JC admits that it is difficult to find any overall editorial unity to this collection of anecdotes, he also notes that their contents are didactic, intended to educate the reader about the successes and failures experienced by various Springs and Autumns-era elites, especially the misfortunes that can result from immoral conduct, speaking out of turn, or political miscalculation. Zhang Zhenglang, who was the first to publish a study of the manuscript, noted that the narratives are otherwise unconnected to each other, and are not divided by state or arranged in chronological order. Zhang observes, however, that each narrative does include some sort of speech, and that these speech portions are often longer than the narrative portions of the anecdotes, justifying the title given to the text by its editors. Zhang argues that, as a genre, “speech” (yu 語) texts were used as a type of “teaching material” (jiaoxue keben 教學課本). According to Zhang, the shi 事 (narratives) of the title is an accurate representation of the fact that the anecdotes also exhibit a preoccupation with narration and the recording of events (jishi 記事). For Zhang, the educational function of the text explains the apparent simplicity of the narratives, since it would not have been necessary for educational texts to have been overly “complicated” (fuza 複雜). Other scholars have also connected the

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262 See Hitoshi (1983), pp. 24-26 for an overview of these judgments and evaluations.

263 JC, 3.168-169.

264 See Zhang Zhenglang 張政烺, “‘Chunqiu shiyu’ jieti” 「春秋事語」解題, Wenwu 文物 (1977).1, p. 36. See also Zheng Liangshu 鄭良樹, “Chunqiu shiyu’ jiaoshi” 「春秋事語」校釋, in Zhujian boshu lunwen ji 竹簡帛書論文集, ed. idem (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1982), p. 18 where Zheng describes the text as a sort of “educational text” (jiaoxue zhi shu 教學之書). Zheng also provides a full transcription of the text (pp. 18-32). Pines (2003), p. 104 notes that the ratio of speech to narration in the text is less than in the Guoyu, yet he also acknowledges that the focus of the text is clearly on speech.
simplicity of the narratives to the text’s overall focus on speech, with Li Xueqin arguing that the anecdotes were edited and simplified from passages in other texts, including the *Zuozhuan*.\textsuperscript{266} Wu Rongzeng 吳榮曾 is something of a lone voice, then, in choosing to focus on narration as the main theme of both the *Zuozhuan* and the text of the *Chunqiu shiyu* manuscript, though even Wu acknowledges that speech is an important part of each of the text’s anecdotes.\textsuperscript{267}

Perhaps the most ambitious and novel argument about the nature of the *Chunqiu shiyu*, however, has been proposed by Yuri Pines. Pines argues that the manuscript was not designed as a teaching aid or historical record, but rather as a document intended to guide Li Xi through the ranks of the underworld bureaucracy. While Pines admits that the text of the manuscript does not actually deal explicitly with ghosts or spirits, and that it fails to foreground a religious dimension to its narratives, he nevertheless contends that because the thematic focus in eleven of the sixteen chapters is on injustice and violent death, the text was intended to guide the tomb occupant through the political vicissitudes of the afterlife.\textsuperscript{268}

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\textsuperscript{265} Zhang (1977), p. 37. Wang Li 王莉, however, has cast doubt on the theory that the text was meant to serve as a child’s teaching aid, arguing that this would not match the status of the tomb occupant or the other texts he was buried with, such as the *Zhouyi* and the *Laozi*. Indeed, Wang argues that the text would have been too sophisticated for a child to understand. See Wang Li 王莉, “*Chunqiu shiyu* yanjiu er ti” 「春秋事語」二題, *Guji zhengli yanjiu xuekan* 古籍整理研究學刊 (2003).5, pp. 42-43.

\textsuperscript{266} Li (1989), pp. 1-6.

\textsuperscript{267} Wu Rongzeng 吳榮曾, “Du bosu ben ‘Chunqiu shiyu’ 讀帛書本「春秋事語」. *Wenwu* 文物 (1998).2, p. 37. Wu also notes that the narrative strategies of the text are far closer to those of the *Zuozhuan* than to the “praise and blame” exegetical techniques of the *Guliangzhuan* and the *Gongyangzhuan*. Cf. Liu Wei’s 劉偉 argument that the text more closely resembles the *Guoyu* than the *Zuozhuan* in Liu Wei 劉偉, “Mawangdui bosu ‘Chunqiu shiyu’ xingzhì lunlue” 馬王堆「春秋事語」性質論略, *Gudai wenming* 古代文明 4.2 (2010), p. 57.

\textsuperscript{268} Pines (2003), p. 120 thus draws a connection between the burial of this manuscript and the interment of technical texts in early China, which were similarly intended to serve the deceased in the afterlife as repositories of useful material. For a recent study comparing the Springs and Autumns-era anecdotes from the *Zuozhuan* with technical knowledge contained in daybooks (*rishu* 日書) and monthly ordinances (*yueling* 月令), see Piotr Gibas, “History as Future – Time, Prediction, and Historical Narrative in the Zuozhuan,” *Early China* 41 (2018), pp. 29-86.
While Pines is to be commended for offering an account of the text that breaks out of the paradigms previously offered by scholars, and while I would certainly endorse his reading of the text as instructive rhetoric rather than as historical data recorded for its own sake, it should nevertheless be emphasized that the *Chunqiu shiyu* manuscript was not, it seems, itself manufactured for burial. As noted above, the calligraphic style in which the text of the manuscript was written, and its failure to observe certain conventions surrounding the tabooing of rulers’ names, suggest that the texts of the manuscript were copied before or around 202 BC, over thirty years prior to its interment in Li Xi’s tomb. This makes it very unlikely that the manuscript was produced specifically for interment as a guide for use by Li Xi in his navigation of the afterlife, since it was evidently copied either when Li Xi was a very small child or before he was even born.

In sum, the narratives in the text of the *Chunqiu shiyu* manuscript were copied by a single hand onto a silk manuscript that was ruled with red columns. The layout in which they are presented on the surface of the silk is consistent throughout, and the narratives are short and rather simplistic, reflecting a concern with speech at the expense of narrative complexity or sophistication. Turning to examine the text of the *Zhanguo zonghengjia shu* manuscript, we will see that this document presents its texts rather differently.

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269 In addition to the comments noted above, Qiu (2004) has argued that, judging by the early form of ancient-clerical script used to write the texts of the manuscript (which, he notes, retains rather a lot of seal elements), the texts were copied in the very early Western Han at the latest. Qiu even argues that, since the manuscript does not observe the taboo on the graph *bang*, it was probably copied before Liu Bang declared himself emperor in 202 BCE. See also Zuo Songchao 左松超, “Tan ‘Chunqiu shiyu’” 談《春秋事語》, Guowen tiandi 國文天地 33 (February 1988), p. 31 for a discussion of the dating of the text. Japanese scholars have also dated the text to pre-Han or early Western Han times, based largely on the observation or lack thereof of certain naming taboos. See Hitoshi (1983), p. 16 and Yoshimoto (1990), pp. 41-45.
Since the original transcription of the text of the *Zhanguo zonghengjia shu* manuscript appeared in *Wenwu* in 1975, several new transcriptions and notes have been published, with JC containing the most up-to-date transcriptions. The text contains twenty-seven anecdotes or chapters (originally untitled) of historical material related to the Warring States era, and there is a significant amount of overlap between these anecdotes and material that has been transmitted in sources including the *Shiji* (Historical Records) and the *Zhanguo ce* (Stratagems of the Warring States). Indeed, eleven out of twenty-seven chapters contain material that can be

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271 See, for example, Meng Qingxiang 孟慶祥, *Zhanguo zonghengjia shu lunkao* 戰國縱橫家書論考 (Harbin: Heilongjiang renmin chubanshe, 1999).

272 JC, 3.201-266 provides an introduction, transcription and notes to the manuscript, while JC, 1.80-94 provides color photographs of the entire manuscript. Ma Yong 馬雍 has provided a table of the chapters arranged chronologically. See Ma Yong, “Bosu ‘Zhanguo ce’ ge pian de niandai he lishi beijing” 帛書「戰國策」各篇的年代和歷史背景, *Wenwu* 文物 (1975).4, pp. 27-40, 26.

273 The name of the Warring States (Zhanguo) period is taken from the text that Liu Xiang compiled between 26 and 8 BCE from fragments of at least six different types of sources he found in the imperial library. The *Zhanguo ce* covers roughly the period 454-221 BCE, though most of the work is dedicated to events that supposedly took place in the mid-Warring States era. See Tsuen-hsun Tsien 錢存訓, “*Chan kuo ts’e* 戰國策,” in Loewe (1993), pp. 1-11. See also J. I. Crump, Jr., trans. *Chan-Kuo Ts’e* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970) for an introduction and full translation of the *Zhanguo ce*. See Pian Yuqian 騰宇骞, *Jianbo wenxian gaishu* 簡帛文献概述 (Taipei: Wanjuanlou, 2005), p. 261 for a description of the materials discovered in the Western Han tomb at Fuyang 阜陽 (Shuanggudui 雙古堆, Anhui 安徽) in 1977, which has also been titled *Chunqiu shiyu* by scholars. This material took the form of a broken title board made of wood and almost one-hundred fragmented bamboo slips, and contains parallels to portions of some transmitted texts such as the *Shuiyuan* 說園 (Garden of Persuasions) and the *Xinxu* 新序 (New Arrangements), also compiled by Lü Xiang. The tomb belonged to Xiahou Zao 夏侯竃, Marquis of Ruyn 汝陰侯 (d. 165 BCE), who was probably the son of Xiahou Ying 夏侯嬰. Another recently discovered tomb belonging to a Western Han nobleman, Lü He 劉賀 (ca. 92-59 BCE), King of Changyi 昌邑 and Marquess of Haihun 海昏侯, also yielded bamboo slips containing historical records that have likewise been titled *Chunqiu shiyu* by scholars. See Jiangxi sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiuyuan 江西省文物考古研究院, *Beijing daxue chutu wenxian yanjiusuo* 北京大學出土文獻研究所 and Jingzhou wenwu baohu zhongxin 荊州文物保護中心, “Jiangxi Nanchang Xihan Haihun hou Liu He mu chutu jiadie” 江西南昌西漢海昏侯劉賀墓出土簡牘, *Wenwu* 文物 (2018).11, pp. 92-93. Judging by these finds, it was apparently relatively common (or at least, not particularly unusual) for Western Han noblemen to be buried with copies of texts containing historical anecdotes relating to the Springs and Autumnns era. For a brief discussion of this issue, see Chapter 5.
identified with parts of these two works.\textsuperscript{274} Yao Fushen 姚福申 has compared the narratives of the text to those in the *Zhanguo ce* in an attempt to determine the kind of editorial work that was carried out by Liu Xiang 劉向 (79-8BCE) in his collation of the latter text,\textsuperscript{275} and Yumiko Blanford, in her efforts to establish the “proximate original word” among different variants in these parallel narratives,\textsuperscript{276} has established that in some instances the narratives in the text of the *Zhanguo zonghengjia shu* manuscript are longer and more sophisticated than those in the *Zhanguo ce.*\textsuperscript{277}

The writing on the manuscript, which is in the transitional ancient clerical style, is some of the finest from Mawangdui,\textsuperscript{278} and the manuscript measures around 192cm long by 23cm wide and contains 325 columns of text. Ink imprints on the surface of the silk were used to reconstruct the fragments of the manuscript, which had fragmented along the creases after it was unfolded. Despite this, however, the beginning and end of the manuscript are basically complete. Each column of text on the manuscript contains between thirty and forty characters, and the text

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\textsuperscript{274} Yumiko Blanford has translated these eleven chapters into English. See Yumiko Fukushima Blanford, “Studies of the ‘Zhanguo zonghengjia shu’ Silk Manuscript,” 2 vols., Ph.D. diss., University of Washington, 1989. Blanford also provides a table (pp. 4-6) showing the overlap between the texts on the manuscript and parallel passages in the *Zhanguo ce* and the *Shiji*. The overlap between the contents of this manuscript and the *Zhanguo ce* and *Shiji* has led some scholars such as Tang Lan 唐蘭 to attempt to use the text of the manuscript to “correct” the transmitted record. See Tang Lan 唐蘭, “Simu Qian su meiyou jianguo de zhengui shiliao” 司馬遷所沒有見過的珍貴史料,” in Mawangdui Hanmu boshu zhengli xiaozu (1976), pp. 123-153. See also WW, 1.127.


\textsuperscript{278} These descriptions can be found in YS, p. 83. See YS, pp. 83-119 for black and white photographs of the manuscript, as well as transcriptions of its contents. BS, 3 also provides black and white photos (“Plates,” pp. 10-24) of the entire manuscript, as well as annotated transcriptions (“Transcriptions,” pp 22-48).
seems to observe the taboo on the graph *bang*, suggesting that it was copied after 202 BCE. Guo Yongbing in JC notes that the text was evidently copied by three different hands judging by the three markedly different styles of writing on the manuscript, with the first scribe copying the first portion of text through the ninth character in column 235, the second scribe copying the next portion up until the very final chapter, and a third scribe copying the final anecdote.279

As with the text of the *Chunqiu shiyu* manuscript, the twenty-seven sections or anecdotes of textual material on the *Zhanguo zonghengjia shu* manuscript are separated by a small round dot, though unlike the text of the *Chunqiu shiyu* manuscript each new chapter follows on from the preceding anecdote without beginning on a new column, meaning that these round separation markers appear not at the head of the column but within the text itself, making them difficult to see at a glance. Also unlike the *Chunqiu shiyu* manuscript, the *Zhanguo zonghengjia shu* manuscript had not been ruled with red lines. The manuscript was evidently collated from at least three different sets of written sources judging by their different textual features, allowing scholars to divide the text into sections comprised of multiple anecdotes. Section 1 includes Chapters 1-14, and with the exception of Chapter 13 all of these anecdotes seem to relate to the famous Warring States strategist Su Qin 蘇秦 (trad., 380-240 BCE).280

279 JC, 3.201. Chen Jian has argued that the last chapter written by the third scribe was added later, and was not produced using the same base text as the first two scribes. Chen bases his argument largely on the fact that, whereas the first scribe was responsible for the vast majority of the manuscript’s contents, and the second scribe wrote a portion of text equivalent to around one third of that completed by the first scribe, the last chapter constitutes just twelve columns of text. Chen also argues that this short additional text is similar in nature to the supplementary text added to the *“Wushi’er bingfang” (“Prescriptions for Fifty-Two Ailments”)* text, which was also added later from another source (see below). Chen argues that the additional text copied by the third scribe occupied a portion of silk that had been deliberately left (rather than being cut away) in order to accommodate such additions. Thus, Chen refers to the material copied by the third scribe as “additional content” (*fuyi neirong* 附益內容; *fuchao de neirong* 附抄的內容) See Chen (2016), pp. 315-316

280 It should be noted, however, that Su Qin’s name does not in fact appear in these anecdotes, and identification of Su as the protagonist of these narratives depends largely on his appearance in parallel passages in transmitted sources. While this could be interpreted to mean that these stories had not yet crystallized around the legendary figure of Su Qin at the time this manuscript was produced, perhaps Su Qin’s associations with these stories were simply so widely known that they did not merit specification.
Section 2 spans Chapters 15-19 and includes character counts at the end of each chapter, as well as a final character count at the end of the section. Finally, Section 3 spans Chapters 20-27. Yang Kuan 楊寬 has noted that the anecdotes in Chapters 20-22 also relate to Su Qin but do not repeat the material found in Section 1, nor do they share the same graphic peculiarities that can be used to group the chapters of Section 1 together as deriving from a single written source.\textsuperscript{281}

In sum, though both of these manuscripts contain collections of historical-anecdotal material selected from a broader repertoire of stories related to historical figures, stories that were used to negotiate historical, philosophical, and political values, the formal differences between the two manuscripts are quite marked. I have summarized these differences in Table 1.3.\textsuperscript{282}

Table 1.3: Comparison of the material, codicological, and textual features of the *Chunqiu shiyu* and *Zhanguo zonghengjia shu* manuscripts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MATERIAL FEATURES</th>
<th><em>CHUNQIU SHIYU</em></th>
<th><em>ZHANGUO ZONGHENGJIA SHU</em></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Manuscript dimensions</td>
<td>24cm x 74cm</td>
<td>24cm x 192cm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Storage method</td>
<td>Rolled</td>
<td>Folded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ruled lines</td>
<td>Yes (red)</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Layout</td>
<td>Uniform</td>
<td>Not uniform</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Textual divisions</td>
<td>Clearer</td>
<td>Less clear</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The graph in the fourth anecdote commonly transcribed as *qin* 秦 and taken as a reference to Su Qin actually writes the word *bai* 拜. See JC, 3.206, 207n.8.


\textsuperscript{282} For a useful account of some of the material features of these two manuscripts, see Olivier Venture, “Les recueils d’anecdotes historiques,” in Jean-Pierre Drège avec la collaboration de Costantino Moretti, ed. *La fabrique du lisible: la mise en texte des manuscrits de la Chine ancienne et médiévale* (Paris: Institut des hautes études chinoises, 2014), pp. 73-78.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Character counts</th>
<th>None</th>
<th>Some</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td><strong>Script style</strong></td>
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<td>Ancient-clerical (<em>guli</em>)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Number of hands</strong></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Orthography</strong></td>
<td>Uniform</td>
<td>Not uniform</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**TEXTUAL FEATURES**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Thematic focus</th>
<th>Speech</th>
<th>Narration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Narrative complexity</strong></td>
<td>Anecdotes are shorter and relatively simple</td>
<td>Anecdotes are longer and relatively complex</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Time period of narratives</strong></td>
<td>Springs and Autumn era</td>
<td>Warring States era</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As the information in this table demonstrates, there are marked differences in the material, codicological, and textual features of these two manuscripts, and, taken together, I argue that these can be explained by the different uses for which the two manuscripts were intended. The *Chunqiu shiyu* manuscript was evidently designed to make its textual content easy to read, with the various anecdotes presented in a uniform layout and the text displayed neatly on the surface of the silk within red ruled lines. In addition, the decision to start each new anecdote on a new column, with these columns clearly marked by the presence of a black dot at the head of the column, would have made it easier to scan the document and distinguish between the different anecdotes, and the manageable size of the manuscript would also have made it easy to handle, and the texts easier to consult. The focus on didactic speech in the anecdotes on the *Chunqiu shiyu* manuscript perhaps reflects a concern with training members of the social and political elite to heed the warnings of history and cultivate the rhetorical skillset necessary for surviving and thriving in a sociopolitical environment characterized by danger and deceit, and the material form of the manuscript certainly seems suited for use in educating a young aristocrat about how to negotiate political life. However, contra Yuri Pines, I would argue that it is far more likely that the *Chunqiu shiyu* manuscript was probably originally designed to educate a
living member of the Chinese elite (or as the base text for copying such a document) rather than specifically for burial.\footnote{283}

The *Zhanguo zonghengjia shu* manuscript, by contrast, seems to have been designed primarily to consolidate and preserve textual material rather than to present it in such a way as to make it easy to read by an individual owner or user. Whereas the manageable size of the *Chunqiu shiyu* manuscript would have made it easy to use or consult on a regular basis, the extraordinary length of the *Zhanguo zonghengjia shu* manuscript, which measured the same width as the *Chunqiu shiyu* manuscript but almost three times the length, at 192cm or over 6 feet 3 inches, suggests that it was designed to consolidate large amounts of textual material, rather than for use in that particular form.\footnote{284} The writing on the manuscript, for example, while certainly beautiful, is not neatly arranged on the surface of the silk, lacking ruled lines and the codicological features that facilitate easy consultation. Indeed, the orthographical and codicological formats of the texts on the *Zhanguo zonghengjia shu* manuscript are not even consistent. Whereas the reader of the *Chunqiu shiyu* manuscript is presented with a manageable amount of textual material arranged in an orderly and easily readable fashion, the reader of the *Zhanguo zonghengjia shu* manuscript is confronted by a mass of text that impresses with its beauty, but which hardly seems to have been designed for ease of consultation. The extended length of the anecdotes on the *Zhanguo zonghengjia shu* manuscript, in addition to the material features of the manuscript (not least its considerable length), seem to reflect a desire to consolidate and preserve textual material related to a common theme (i.e., Warring States rhetorical narrative) rather than to package this material in a way that made it easy to use, at least

\footnote{283} Of course, these two scenarios are not irreconcilable. Perhaps, for example, the *Chunqiu shiyu* manuscript was designed as a base text for copying manuscripts destined for interment in the tombs of deceased elites. However, as noted above, there is no thematic focus in the text of the manuscript on spirits or the underworld, and I prefer to interpret this constellation of textual material primarily as rhetorical instruction for the living, and perhaps only secondarily as material that could also be of use in the afterlife.

\footnote{284} As will be discussed in Chapter 5, whereas silk was in many ways an ideal writing surface, long silk sheets would have been cumbersome and difficult to read, requiring long tables, for example.
for reading. This may be related to the fact that, in comparison to the Springs and Autumns era, which was regularly mined for examples of political and philosophical wisdom, the Warring States period was relatively less celebrated as a potential source of cultural exemplars. While the discovery of this silk manuscript and the existence of similar compendia of anecdotal texts related to the Warring States era in the holdings of the imperial library prove that such material was certainly not completely taboo or considered entirely without use or merit in the Western Han, it is also tempting to speculate that the Warring States period was less often used as a source of rhetorical narrative for use in educational instruction than was the Springs and Autumns era.

Perhaps the most telling distinction between these two manuscripts, however, is the apparent difference in the attitude that the scribes who manufactured them seem to have brought to their work. Whereas the text on the *Chunqiu shiyu manuscript was copied by a single scribe who apparently worked to fashion a document that was easily readable in large part because of its orthographic and codicological uniformity, the *Zhanguo zonghengjia shu manuscript was not designed with readability or visual uniformity in mind. As noted above, the text of the *Zhanguo zonghengjia shu manuscript was copied by three scribes, with the first scribe responsible for the bulk of the text. Interestingly, while the text copied by the first scribe is at first well executed, over time the first scribe seems to have become tired or distracted, with orthographic errors occurring with increasing frequency, necessitating the blacking out and rewriting of numerous graphs. These mistakes become increasingly frequent as the text progresses, and it seems that the first scribe (who, judging by the quality of his writing, was clearly experienced and technically

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285 Indeed, the *Zhanguo ce, which, as we have seen, contains a similar constellation of historical anecdotes from the Warring States era, never fully succeeded in shaking off its “aura of [being] a wicked book.” See Crump (1970), p. 2. As Paul Goldin has pointed out, the narratives on the *Zhanguo zonghengjia shu manuscript are likewise full of treachery and duplicity. See Paul R. Goldin, *After Confucius: Studies in Early Chinese Philosophy* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2005), pp. 88–89. Of course, the texts on the *Chunqiu shiyu manuscript are not exactly lacking in tales of underhanded deeds either, meaning that any difference between the Springs and Autumns and Warring States eras as sources of historical example was probably a relative rather than a categorical one.
competent) became fatigued, introducing more and more errors into the text as time went on. Indeed, scribal fatigue may explain why the first scribe did not finish the entire text and why the second scribe took over. However, whether this scribal handover was the result of fatigue on the part of the first scribe, or whether this was simply part of a regular handover of shifts, it is telling that the point at which the first scribe stopped work and the second scribe took over occurred not at the end of an anecdote, but at the end of a clause within an anecdote. That is, the first scribe stopped copying the text at the end of a meaningful syntactic unit that was nevertheless some fifty graphs short of the end of the anecdote, with the second scribe taking over and completing the chapter before moving on to copy the following sections (see Figure 1.8). If the first scribe had been solely responsible for the copying of the text, he could have

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286 I do not wish to render too negative a judgment on the scribe or his abilities, however. Ma (2017b), pp. 117-158, for example, argues that many Han dynasty scribes were stressed, underpaid, and under-valued, struggling to synthesize vast quantities of textual data. Ma is referring primarily to low-level administrative scribes rather than the kinds of scribes who would likely have produced these silk manuscripts, but his point is well taken. Indeed, John Dagenais has argued that the fact that manuscript culture leaves traces of human emotions, attitudes, and intellectual or bodily states on the documents it produces, should remind us that textual production takes place in the same ethical world to which the texts that emerge from it also point. See John Dagenais, The Ethics of Reading in Manuscript Culture: Glossing the “Libro de buen amor,” (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), pp. 17-18.

287 This first scribal handover took place after the ninth character in column 235 in Chapter 21. See JC, 3.248. This observation poses a challenge to the working hypotheses adopted by Daniel Morgan and Karine Chemla in their reconstruction of the Western Han Suanshu shu 算數書 (Writings on Mathematical Procedures) manuscript from Zhangjiashan, that “one does not change hands mid-slip” and “one does not change mid-section” (emphasis in original). Indeed, Morgan and Chemla’s work ultimately shows that the scribes did in fact change hands mid-section and also mid-slip in their copying of this particular manuscript. See Daniel Patrick Morgan and Karine Chemla, “Writing in Turns: An Analysis of Scribal Hands in the Bamboo Manuscript Suanshu shu 算數書 (Writings on Mathematical Procedures) from Zhangjiashan Tomb No. 247,” Bamboo and Silk 1.1 (2018), pp. 160-162. In keeping with Morgan and Chemla’s findings, the first scribal handover on the *Zhanguo zonghengjia shu manuscript shows a) that scribes working to copy textual material from bamboo to silk (see below) did indeed sometimes change hands mid-section within a text (in this instance, prioritizing the slip they were copying from as the unit of their work rather than the textual integrity of the units into which the material was divided), and b) that scribes did indeed sometimes change hands mid-column of text, at least when copying text onto silk. If this was the case with scribes writing on silk, I see no reason why scribes would not have done this, at least under certain circumstances, when copying texts onto bamboo or wooden slips or boards as well. See also Huang Ruxuan 黃儒宣, “Jiandu gushu shuren hechao yipian de qingkuang shitan – yi Shangbo Chujian ‘Bao Shuya yu Xi Peng zhi jian,” Wuwei Hanjian ‘Yili’ wei li” 簡牘古書數人合抄一篇的情況試探 – 以上博楚簡《鮑叔牙與隰朋之諫》，武威《儀禮》為例, in 2007 Zhongguo jianboxue guoji lunwen 2007 中國簡帛學國際論壇論文, ed. Guoli Taiwan daxue zhongguo
returned to finish his work after taking a break, or perhaps even the next day if his shift had ended. Instead, another scribe was brought in to finish the work, either as a matter of course or as an ad hoc solution to an unexpected problem, suggesting the manuscript was copied in some sort of professional workshop setting.

The text portions of the *Tianwen qixiang zazhan 天文奇象雜占 (Miscellaneous Divinations Based on Astrological and Meteorological Phenomena) manuscript may also have been copied by two scribes. This manuscript, measuring 150cm long by 48cm wide, contains text and illustrations related to divinations carried out on the basis of observations of astrological and meteorological phenomena. BG, p. 89 has the manuscript under the shushu 數術 ("numbers and techniques") category. See JC, 1.203-209 for color photographs of the manuscript and JC, 4.245-290 for an introduction and annotated transcriptions of its contents. Chen Jian has calculated that the manuscript was folded from left to right four times before it was folded top to bottom. See Chen (2016), p. 275. See also WW, 1.154-160; NTM, p. 87; and Harper (2007), pp. 169-189. Chen Songchang 陳松長, ‘Boshu ‘Tianwen qixiang zazhan’ yanjiu santi 帛書《天文奇象雜占》研究三題, in Chen (2008a), pp. 343-345 argues that, not only were the illustrations of the clouds, comets, and other meteorological phenomena depicted on the surface of the silk drawn before the written text was copied (judging by the fact that the text of certain captions is wrapped around the accompanying illustration) by a separate illustrator, the text portions of the manuscript were also written by two different scribes, judging by the two different writing styles. Additionally, Chen argues that the two scribes copied the portions on the right-hand and left-hand side of the manuscript respectively, rather than copying the text in the sequence in which it was meant to be read. Chen notes that while it is possible the two portions of writing were completed by two scribes working simultaneously, it is more likely that the first scribe was replaced by the second as a result of shoddy work. Regardless, if Chen’s conclusions are correct, then this is another instance of a silk manuscript from Mawangdui completed by multiple scribes who conceived of their work as much in material as in textual terms.

The change in hands is clear and could not plausibly be explained by a scribe stopping work and returning to it at a later time. Whether the second scribe began work on the text immediately afterwards or sometime after (the next day or during the next shift, for example), this was clearly a collaborative working environment where scribes worked together to produce manuscripts. As previously noted, Donchoel Bin has shown that numerous Warring States bamboo manuscripts from the Guodian, Shanghai
Whatever the reason why the first scribe did not complete the entire text, the fact that the hand of the second scribe is so visually distinct from the first indicates that, unlike with the copying of the *Chunqiu shiyu* manuscript, visual uniformity was not of paramount importance. Indeed, the visual transition between the second and third scribes is even more abrupt (see Figure 1.9). Even if, as Chen Jian has argued, this final anecdote was copied sometime afterwards from a different source text, it would surely have been possible for the third scribe (and the second scribe as well, for that matter) to have integrated their work into the pre-existing text, if not seamlessly then in a way that did not present such a jarring contrast between the different hands. These abrupt scribal transitions, in contrast to the design of the *Chunqiu shiyu* manuscript, show that visual uniformity was simply not a priority for the scribes who copied the text of the *Zhanguo zonghengjia shu* manuscript.

Perhaps more importantly, however, the fact that the first scribe stopped working mid-anecdote suggests that he viewed his work in terms of material rather than textual integrity. That is, the first scribe did not wait until he had finished copying the complete text of the anecdote he was working on to stop work, but chose to down tools, probably tired and frustrated, mid-anecdote, probably deciding simply to finish copying the text on the bamboo slip he was working on. This is further proof that the scribes who produced this manuscript saw their work as much

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290 Chen Songchang argues that the text of the *Zhanguo zonghengjia shu* manuscript was originally supposed to be copied by a single scribe, but that a second scribe was drafted to finish the work because the first scribe got sloppy. Chen argues that the reason a third scribe was brought in to copy the final chapter was because the quality of the second scribe’s work was sub-par. See Chen Songchang 陳松長, “Mawangdui boshu de chaoben tezheng” 馬王堆帛書的抄本特徵, *Hunan daxue xuebao* 湖南大學學報 21 (2007).5, p. 24. Cf. Chen Jian’s argument mentioned above that the final anecdote written by the third scribe at the end of the manuscript was copied sometime later, and did not belong to the same collated base text as the material copied by the first two scribes.

291 JC, 3.263.

292 It would certainly have been easier to avoid confusion during the scribal handover by finishing the slip he was working on before allowing the second scribe to take over (perhaps physically grouping, marking, or otherwise distinguishing the slips that had already been copied from those that were yet to be worked on), rather than forcing the second scribe to read through the text on the slips to determine where his predecessor had left off.
Figure 1.9: Handover between scribes 2 and 3 on the *Zhanguo zonghengjia shu* manuscript (JC, 1.93) (each scribe copied the text on either side of the fracture in the manuscript)
if not more in terms of an engagement with material artifacts, rather than engagement with texts as disembodied repertoires of cultural expression.

In fact, not only were the scribes who copied the texts on the *Zhanguo zonghengjia shu* manuscript (and possibly the scribes who copied the texts on the *Chunqiu shiyu* manuscript as well) drawing on texts from different sources (judging by the orthographic and codicological differences; see above), there is also evidence to suggest that the texts of both manuscripts were first collated and copied onto unbound bamboo slips before they were copied onto silk. The scribe who copied the text of the *Chunqiu shiyu* manuscript, for example, mistakenly re/copied thirty-two characters (presumably from at least one misplaced slip) from the beginning of Chapter 11 (column 66) onto the end of Chapter 12 (columns 76 and 77), i.e., some two-hundred characters later, and no alterations or deletions were made to indicate that this section of text had mistakenly been re/copied from an earlier anecdote. Not only does this reveal that even the scribe who copied the text of the visually uniform *Chunqiu shiyu* manuscript was sometimes frustrated by his materials, perhaps also approaching his work in part as a material task rather than a textual one, it also seems to indicate that he was copying text from unbound slips of either bamboo or wood. If the scribe had been copying from a bound manuscript, or from wooden boards, then it is hard to see how this mistake could have occurred, since the scribe, in

293 See JC, 3.190, 192n.16 and Feng Shengjun 馮勝君, *Ershi shiji gu wenxian xinzheng yanjiu* 二十世紀古文獻心證研究 (Jinan: Qi Lu shushe, 2006), p. 209. Not only did the scribe not notice that he was copying a portion of text that he had already copied, he also does not seem to have noticed that this repeated portion of text was entirely out of keeping with the context of the anecdote into which it was mistakenly copied, transposed as it was from the beginning of one text to the end of another. This would surely not have happened if the scribe had been paying close attention to the contents of the texts he was copying.

the course of coming to the end of an anecdote, would have had to skip back to the initial portion of the previous anecdote, and mistakenly recopied this section of text without noticing. It is possible that, having finished copying Chapter 12, he meant to start copying the beginning of Chapter 13 but accidentally skipped back to the beginning of Chapter 11. But if that was the case then surely he is unlikely to have started the new chapter mid-column, since this would have run counter to the layout he had followed for the twelve preceding chapters, which all begin on a new column. The most logical explanation is that the scribe did not start writing on a new column because he failed to realize that he should have started a new anecdote, which seems to suggest that the bamboo slip containing thirty-two characters from the beginning of Chapter 11 somehow became misplaced, incorrectly repositioned after the slips containing the text of Chapter 12.

Similarly, in the *Zhanguo zonghengjia shu* manuscript, forty-nine characters that should belong to the part of the text now copied onto column 98 in Chapter 12 were accidentally copied into Chapter 11, and the next forty-seven characters in Chapter 12 were also copied in the wrong place, this time in the correct anecdote (Chapter 12) but later than their intended position in the text. These mistakes would seem to be even clearer evidence of a scribe working with unbound slips. The fact that the misplaced passages should have adjoined one another, and contain almost the same number of characters (forty-nine and forty-seven respectively), suggests that they represent two bamboo slips that were originally side by side, but which somehow got ordered out of sequence. It is very unlikely that these two sections of text were written on slips bound in the correct sequence in a manuscript or arranged side by side on a wooden board, since if this had been the case then the scribe would have had to have skipped ahead to the wrong section

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295 See JC, 3.220-221, 222n.14, 20, and Feng (2006), pp. 209-210. Feng also notes that in this same section of text (column 102), the scribe has skipped the character *yi*, and either the same scribe or a later scribe or editor has added the character in small script to the bottom right of the preceding character. See JC, 3.221, 222n.20 and Feng (2006), p. 208. See also Lai Guolong, “Textual Fluidity and Fixity in Early Chinese Manuscript Culture,” *Chinese Studies in History* 50.3 (2017), p. 176.
of another chapter, mistakenly copied that section of text into the chapter he was currently copying, then, having eventually reached the next chapter, accidentally skipped over the section he had previously jumped to and miscopied, only to miscopy the section that followed this portion of text later in the anecdote. In my view, these mistakes can more plausibly be explained by a scribe copying text from unbound slips, two of which apparently become misplaced without the scribe noticing.

Certainly, if the scribes who copied the text of the *Zhanguo zonghengjia shu* manuscript were working from unbound slips, this would explain why the first scribal handover that took place between the first and second scribes occurred mid-sentence. It would have been entirely natural for a scribe copying from unbound slips (perhaps holding the slip in his left hand while he copied its contents onto silk with his right hand) to view individual slips, and not textual divisions (i.e., chapters) as the primary unit of their work. It would also have made the copying process easier, since copying texts from bound bamboo manuscripts onto long sheets of silk would have required a significant amount of table space (see Chapter 5).

There is thus plenty of evidence to suggest that both the *Chunqiu shiyu* and *Zhanguo zonghengjia shu* manuscripts were copied onto silk from base copies prepared on unbound slips of wood or bamboo. Perhaps these base texts were unbound in order to make it easier to amend the contents of the texts. But if, as seems likely, these base texts had already been collated from multiple sources (as was definitely the case with the *Zhanguo zonghengjia shu* manuscript), then perhaps they were left unbound to save time and reduce expense. Regardless, as we have seen, the *Chunqiu shiyu* manuscript is consistent in both its orthography and its textual layout, while the *Zhanguo zonghengjia shu* manuscript is not. It is possible that the scribe who copied the texts on the *Chunqiu shiyu* manuscript imposed this unity on the texts as he copied them from the base text onto the surface of the silk. Alternatively, perhaps this uniformity pre-existed the copying of these texts onto silk, and was already present on the collated base text from which the text of the silk manuscript was copied. It is even conceivable that the disparate texts from which the base text on bamboo or wood was prepared all featured the same orthographic
conventions and textual formatting. This seems unlikely, however, and it is probably that the visual unity of the *Chunqiu shiyu* manuscript derives either from the design of the scribe who copied the texts onto the silk, or from whoever prepared the base text used to copy the silk manuscript.

However, despite the fact that the *Zhanguo zonghengjia shu* manuscript was likewise copied, at least in part, from unbound slips, no such visual uniformity was imposed onto the texts when they were copied onto silk. Codicological inconsistencies (the presence or absence of character counts, for example) even appear within sections of text copied by the same scribe, suggesting that the scribe merely carried over these different formats from the base text (or texts) he was using. Certainly, it is hardly likely that the same scribe elected to observe different codicological formats and orthographic practices at random. The fact that two manuscripts produced using essentially the same method of textual production ended up looking so different suggests that the priorities and attitudes of those who produced them were ultimately very different, with different levels of care and attention paid to the design and presentation of the texts on the surface of the silk.

Taken together, I believe the evidence laid out above warrants the conclusion that these two manuscripts were designed for somewhat different purposes. Both manuscripts were designed to consolidate related textual material. But whereas the *Zhanguo zonghengjia shu* was evidently designed primarily to preserve in textual form extended, complex, and self-contained historical narratives, the *Chunqiu shiyu* manuscript, which contains shorter, simpler, less self-contained anecdotes with a focus on speech rather than narrative, was evidently designed to present its texts in a more readable fashion. Given their fuller detail and relative narrative complexity, the texts of the *Zhanguo zonghengjia shu* manuscript certainly make for

296 For example, the first scribe copied the text of Chapters 1-14, which do not contain character counts, Chapters 15-19, which do contain these counts, and Chapter 20, which does not. It is unthinkable that the same scribe would switch between conventions so haphazardly, and surely indicates the presence of different formats in the texts from which he was copying.
compelling reading in transcription. But their arrangement on the surface of this silk manuscript would have frustrated the reading process, suggesting that their consolidation was motivated more by a desire to preserve the texts, perhaps for occasional consultation and use for recopying, than by readability per se. Indeed, if Chen Jian is right about the blank space being left at the end of the manuscript deliberately to accommodate the kind of additional anecdotal material that was indeed eventually appended to the manuscript by the third scribe, this would furnish further evidence that textual consolidation and preservation were the primary motivating factors behind the production of the manuscript. By contrast, the consolidation of the texts on the surface of the *Chunqiu shiyu manuscript was about more than just textual preservation; it was about textual presentation, with the readable, visually appealing format of the manuscript no doubt facilitating the kind of instructional use required in order to get the most out of these short, narratively simplistic anecdotes.297 Whereas the *Chunqiu shiyu was designed for use by an individual owner or reader, or as a pre-prepared base text for the production of such a document, it seems the *Zhanguo zonghengjia shu manuscript was not.

1.4 Scribal practice as technique and technology

1.4.1 An introduction to the terms

In this section, I will introduce two silk manuscripts from Mawangdui that show scribes grappling with issues related to manuscript technology. Technical issues of one sort or another are always a part of the writing process, of course,298 but technology is also a polysemous term

297 This is not to suggest that the text of the *Zhanguo zonghengjia shu manuscript is not didactic, nor that it could not be used for instructive or edifying purposes. I am merely suggesting that, unlike the *Chunqiu shiyu manuscript, it does not seem to have been designed primarily with reading or use in instruction in mind.

that can be used in many different ways, and scholars have reminded us that premodern societies had no conception similar to our modern understanding of technology or the technological.

Tim Ingold, for example, has demonstrated that the shift from an Aristotelian concept of tekhnē to our modernist understanding of technology was accompanied by a change in the way the relationship between man and nature was conceptualized.\footnote{See Tim Ingold, \textit{The Perception of the Environment: Essays on Livelihood, Dwelling, and Skill} (London: Routledge, 2000), pp. 294-321. For a brief overview of the history of the term, and its transition from “a systematic study of the arts or the terminology of a particular art” in the seventeenth century to its application primarily in the field of the mechanical in the eighteenth century, and its association with practical acts as opposed to intellectual knowledge in the nineteenth century, see Raymond Williams, \textit{Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society} (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), p. 249.} As part of this rationalization, Ingold contends, an earlier stage of artisanal production characterized by the immersion of the craftsperson in his or her materials as a way of bringing into material form the mental forms envisioned in their mind gave way to the idea of the mechanical operative, who manufactured products on the basis of models provided by external systems that were entirely separate from the particular human capacities of the craftsperson. Ingold argues that this resulted in a reconceptualization of “design” as separable from and anterior to the physical engagement of the craftsperson or the artisan with his or her materials, establishing a firm distinction between design on the one hand and “making” on the other.

On these grounds, Ingold is able to argue that premodern societies did not share our modern sense of the technological as separate from the artisanal.\footnote{Ingold (2000), p. 314.} Indeed, Ingold argues for a distinction between technology and technique, arguing that technique is

“embedded in, and inseparable from, the experience of particular subjects in the shaping of particular things. In this respect it stands in sharp contrast to technology, which consists in a knowledge of objective principles of mechanical functioning, whose validity is completely independent both of the subjective identity of its human carriers and of the specific contexts of its application. Technique thus places the subject at the center of activity, whereas technology affirms the independence of production from human subjectivity.”\footnote{Ingold (2000), p. 315.}
Ingold notes that this transition from technique to technology was accompanied by a transition from the tool to the machine, and that, unlike technology, technique involves tacit knowledge and is ultimately also a form of practice, stating that

“[i]t is in the direct contact with materials, whether or not mediated by tools – in the attentive touching, feeling, handling, looking and listening that is entailed in the very process of creative work – that technical knowledge is gained as well as applied.”\(^\text{302}\)

However, not all approaches to the study of technique position the concept in opposition to technology. Indeed, technique can actually be understood as a part of technology itself. As Baotong Gu has pointed out, technology can be understood in multiple interrelated senses, including 1) tools, instruments, machines, and appliances; 2) skills, methods, procedures, and routines; and 3) forms of social organization such as factories, bureaucracies, and research institutions. Of these different yet often overlapping definitions of technology, the second (skills, methods, procedures, and routines) is also commonly understood as corresponding to the notion of technique.\(^\text{303}\) It is in this sense that I will be using the concept of technique in this chapter, not in opposition to technology but as part of it. Though recent scholarship has emphasized the degree to which technology forms part of the social world\(^\text{304}\) (indeed, it may be the case that there is no such thing as the purely “technical”\(^\text{305}\)), the focus here will not be on the ways

\(^{302}\) Ingold (2000), p. 316.


\(^{304}\) Gu (2009), pp. 24-102 provides a useful overview of the different theories and issues related to understanding technology in both its technical and social aspects.

manuscript technology engineered forms of social organization or identity, but rather on the ways in which scribes grappled with the materiality of their tools and materials (technology in its narrowest sense) as they employed methods and procedures of textual production and arrangement (i.e., technique, or technology in the slightly broader sense) in the execution of their work. Though it is not always possible to differentiate between techniques mandated by external standards and expectations (what we might call “techniques of the profession”) on the one hand, and techniques formulated by individual scribes (what we might call “individual techniques”) on the other, thinking of manuscripts through the lens of technique and technology enables us to see scribes as human subjects responding creatively to the material conditions of their work, not just automatons operating mechanically to transpose text from one medium or surface to another. In this sense, I advocate for an understanding of scribal technology as a fundamental part of scribal culture, with Early Imperial scribes using different techniques to negotiate a world of culturally charged tools and materials in the construction of artifacts for particular uses.\(^{306}\)

1.4.2 The *“Yangsheng fang”* text on Medical Manuscript IV

Medical Manuscript IV from Mawangdui is dedicated to a single text, the *“Yangsheng fang”* 養生方 (“Recipes for Nourishing Life”).\(^{307}\) The manuscript has sustained considerable


\(^{307}\) BG, p. 90 has the text under the *fangji* 方計 (“prescriptions and techniques”) category. BS, 4 contains black and white photographs (“Plates,” pp. 53-70) of the manuscript and annotated transcriptions (“Transcriptions,” pp. 99-120) of its contents. JC, 2.108-127 has color photographs of the manuscript and JC, 6.35-71 contains an introduction to the manuscript and annotated transcriptions of its contents. Harper (1997a) introduces (p. 26) and translates (pp. 328-362) the entire text. See also Ma (1992), pp. 120-122,
damage, though most of its contents, which have to do with prescriptions for warding off aging, boosting vitality, and sexual intercourse, are still basically legible.\textsuperscript{308} The manuscript measures roughly 24cm wide, though the original length is impossible to determine,\textsuperscript{309} and the writing on the manuscript is a fusion of seal and clerical script that is similar, though not identical, to the writing on Medical Manuscript III.\textsuperscript{310} The manuscript was folded repeatedly before it was buried and has disintegrated into a large number of fragments. Wang Hui 王卉 and Zhou Bo 周波 in JC note that it is possible to reconstruct how the manuscript was copied and folded based on the crease lines and the presence of imprinted characters,\textsuperscript{311} though they also point out that the fact that certain portions of the manuscript do not contain imprinted characters, and traces of imprints of red lines can also be found even though the manuscript itself was not ruled with any such lines, could mean that a silk lining sheet with pre-ruled red lines was inserted between them. Chen Jian has strongly refuted this claim, however.\textsuperscript{312} Based on imprints showing contact between the *“Taichan shu” 胎産書 (“Book of the Generation of the Fetus”) and *“Za liaofang” 雜療方 (“Recipes for Various Cures”) texts, we can also be certain that Medical Manuscripts VI and VII were folded inside Medical Manuscript IV containing the *“Yangsheng fang” text.\textsuperscript{313}

\textsuperscript{308} Yu in NTM, pp. 89-91 briefly describes the *“Yangsheng fang” under the “Medicine and Health Care” section, noting that while the title given to the text would seem to reflect a concern for general, overall health, in fact the text is mostly concerned with sexual intercourse. NTM also provides color photographs of portions of the manuscript.

\textsuperscript{309} Harper (1997a), p. 26 notes that the extant pieces measure 140cm in length in total.

\textsuperscript{310} See YS, pp. 55-62 for a discussion of the calligraphy on the manuscript, under the seal clerical category. See also Harper (1997a), p. 26, who estimates that the contents of the manuscript were copied in the period 205-195 BCE.

\textsuperscript{311} Chen Jian and Hirose Kunio 廣瀨薰雄 have pointed out that the clearest imprinted characters usually appear on those portions of silk that were folded underneath silk bearing written text, with the characters on the portions of silk that were pressed up against them imprinting onto the bottom layer. From this, Wang and Zhou hypothesize in JC that the manuscript was folded from left to right, since the imprints on the right-hand side of the manuscript are clearer than those on the left-hand side.

\textsuperscript{312} Chen (2016), p. 281.
The text of the manuscript is written in black ink and there are no ruled lines, though it
does feature upper and lower margins delineated in black ink. The text includes a table of
contents listing thirty-two prescriptions (only twenty-seven of which are still legible), including
tonics and techniques for maintaining good health. This section of the manuscript also contains
an annotated ink drawing of the female genitalia. A total of eighty-seven recipes are preserved on
the manuscript, and these are followed by entries on sexual cultivation.

Wang and Zhou in JC have proposed a new reconstruction of the manuscript, rearranging
the fragments of silk containing the table of contents, which in the previous reconstruction were
positioned at the end of the manuscript, and placing them at the beginning of the manuscript.\(^{314}\)
According to this new reconstruction, a portion of silk at the beginning of the manuscript was
left blank, before the text began with the table of contents and the drawing of the female
genitalia. The titles that appear in the table of contents can be found in the main text that follows
it, and these titles appear slightly raised in relation to their accompanying entries.\(^{315}\) According to
the new reconstruction proposed by Wang and Zhou in JC, the scribe copied the main text until
he reached the end of the manuscript, at which he point he evidently found that he had run out of
space. As a result, the scribe was forced to continue copying the text back onto the blank portion
of silk left at the beginning of the manuscript before the table of contents and the drawing of the
genitalia.\(^{316}\)

\(^{313}\) Chen (2016), p. 313.

\(^{314}\) Note that this reconstruction differs from previous reconstructions such as those in BS, 4 and Harper
(1997a).

\(^{315}\) As we will see, this format is similar to that used in the *“Wushu’er bingfang”* text on Medical
Manuscript I.

\(^{316}\) This would seem to suggest that, unlike certain other manuscripts, the *“Yangsheng fang”* text was not
copied onto a piece of silk that greatly exceeded the length of the text and then cut to accommodate the
finished text. Rather, the piece of silk was evidently cut or produced at a certain length and the text was
copied onto it. Presumably the first portion of silk was left blank so that none of the manuscript’s contents
would be damaged by the silk fraying.
It should be pointed out that Chen Jian has expressed doubts about the placement of the fragment containing the diagram of the genitalia at the beginning of the manuscript, proposing instead a different reconstruction. However, as Chen himself admits, his reconstruction is highly unusual and complex, which may raise doubts as to its correctness. In addition, support for Wang and Zhou’s reconstruction can be found by examining the drawing of the female genitalia that appears underneath the table of contents (see Figure 1.10).

The drawing is positioned underneath and to the right of the table of contents, and to the right of the drawing are the final portions of text that, according to Wang and Zhou, were copied back onto what had originally been a blank portion of silk left at the beginning of the manuscript. Examining this portion of text, it seems that the last two columns (223 and 224 in Wang and Zhou’s JC reconstruction) are written around the drawing, with the text in column 223 stopping short of the end of the column so as not to encroach on the drawing or its annotations, and the remaining text copied onto a new column at the top of the width of silk. In my view, it is very unlikely that this portion of silk could have come at the end of the manuscript, per Chen Jian’s reconstruction, since this would require the scribe to have written the text around a non-existent diagram in a most unnatural way.

More likely, is that this portion of silk containing the table of contents, the drawing, and the final portion of the text in fact appeared at the beginning of the manuscript, as Wang and Zhou have argued in JC. In this way, it is possible to see how the scribe was forced to finish

317 Chen (2016), pp. 306-314 divides the manuscript into twenty-one main fragments, and proposes that the end of the manuscript (pieces 21-19) were folded towards the right to cover pieces 18-16. Then, Chen proposes, the manuscript was folded from right to left by taking piece 2 and placing it on top of piece 15. According to Chen, this left piece 1 overshooting the newly formed left-hand portion of the manuscript, resting atop piece 21/16. Then, the manuscript was folded from left to right twice.

318 Of course, it is theoretically possible that the scribe was leaving room for a drawing that he had already planned out, or which for some reason he had already drawn near the end of the manuscript ahead of time. Both possibilities strike me as extremely unlikely, however.
Figure 1.10: Table of contents and drawing of the female genitalia in the *“Yangsheng fang” text (JC, 2.120)
copying the text in a way that accommodated the existence of a drawing that had already been copied near the beginning of the manuscript.

If Wang and Zhou’s reconstruction is correct, one might well ask why the *“Yangsheng fang”* text was copied onto the manuscript in this way, with the final portion of text written back at the beginning of the manuscript on the portion of silk originally left blank by the scribe. Was the manuscript originally designed in this format? Or was it simply a mistake? In this case, the answer is surely the latter. Even if the primary motivation behind the manufacture of this manuscript was the consolidation of textual material for transmission or presentation rather than for active reading or regular use (see Chapter 5), it would surely have still been considered advantageous for a text to be readable from beginning to end. On this point, there is some evidence that might suggest that this manuscript was in fact used, or at least consulted, at least once after it was produced. Graphs resembling the character *yi* 易 appear at the end of columns 32 and 44 of the text, and judging by the hand in which they are written, and the large size of the graphs, they were clearly added after the main text of the manuscript was copied. Wei Qipeng 魏啟鵬 and Hu Xianghua 胡翔驊 have argued that these graphs, which they seem to understand in the sense of “easy” (*yi* 易), were used to indicate that these were “convenient recipes” (*bianfang 便方*) or “simple and easy prescriptions” (*jianyi fang 簡易方*). Donald Harper, for his part, is at a loss to explain the presence of these graphs, though he does consider the possibility that they were used to indicate that certain recipes were “easy” to prepare or use. Harper also points out that another large graph, this one resembling the graph *dun 盾*, appears underneath column 115. Unfortunately, Harper is also unable to explain the meaning of this graph. One possibility that

319 See JC, 6.41n.2 and Wei and Hu (1992), p. 17n.2.


321 Harper (1997a), p. 346n.6. While recognizing the possibility that this graph is a variant of *dun 盾* (shield), Harper acknowledges, presumably largely based on the context in which the graph appears, that this is unlikely. Strangely, neither the editors of BS nor Wang and Zhou in JC mentions the presence of this graph.
has been suggested to me is that the graph is being used to write the word *hun* 昏 (to faint or lose consciousness). This is an attractive possibility, since although the graph appears underneath column 115, which ends some eight character spaces above the graph, it in fact seems more closely associated with the recipe given in column 114, which appears directly to the right of the graph; a prescription that includes drinking large quantities of alcohol.\(^{322}\)

Whatever their meaning, the size of these three graphs is entirely out of keeping with the rest of the text, indicating that whoever wrote them was not overly concerned about marring the visuality of the manuscript. Indeed, it would seem that they were written in order to serve as a comment on the manuscript’s contents rather than as a supplement to the prescriptions themselves. This might suggest that this manuscript was at least occasionally consulted for the medical knowledge it contained, though it should be noted that the vast majority of the recipes and prescriptions do not contain any such notations, and in any case, we are not currently able to determine what these notations actually say.\(^{323}\) It may be the case, for example, that the manuscript was designed to consolidate and store medical information in textual form primarily with the intention of serving as a base copy for the future production of medical documents, rather than as a document for medical consultation in its own right.\(^{324}\) Interestingly, an additional portion of text was also added subsequent to the initial copying of the manuscript, judging by the way this portion of text, which provides supplementary information about one of the surrounding prescriptions, is located in a convenient blank portion of the manuscript separated from the surrounding text by a black ink line. It is unclear if this section of text was added later by a different hand or by the same scribe who copied the rest of the text.\(^{325}\) Later additions to the

\(^{322}\) This possibility was suggested to me by Xiao Yunxiao 肖蕓曉 (personal communication). See JC, 6.52 and the translation in Harper (1997a), p. 346.

\(^{323}\) See Chapter 5 for a further treatment of this issue.

\(^{324}\) I argue in Chapter 5 that most, if not all, of the Mawangdui silk manuscripts were designed for this purpose.

\(^{325}\) See Chapter 5 and Chen Jian’s discussion of this issue in Chen (2016), p. 317.
Mawangdui manuscripts such as these, designed as they were to update or supplement the information contained in the texts, probably reflect an institutional context for the curation of these manuscript, rather than use by an individual owner or user such as Li Xi (see Chapter 5).

In sum, it seems that the scribe who copied the “Yangsheng fang” medical text ran out of silk before he finished copying the text, forcing him to return to the blank portion of silk he had left at the beginning of the manuscript. Whether the text on this manuscript was copied by an inexperienced or overworked scribe, or whether he was simply careless (numerous incorrect graphs on the manuscript have been blacked out using ink, for example; see the black squares and rectangles that appear on columns 30, 52, 56, 107, 150, 164, 201, 201, 201 and 202), there is clear evidence that he was forced to adapt his technique in order to compensate for the difficulties introduced by the improper use of his materials. Silk is a useful material for accommodating large amounts of text, including diagrams, but it is also delicate and susceptible to fraying, and once mistakes are made (either orthographic errors or design miscalculations) it is much more difficult to amend them, at least in comparison to other materials such as bamboo. All of these factors came into play in the design and manufacture of the “Yangsheng fang” text on Medical Manuscript IV. The scribe presumably chose, or was instructed, to use silk in order to better accommodate a text with an accompanying table of contents and a diagram, but the tendency of silk to fray at its edges apparently led him to leave an initial portion of the manuscript blank so as not to risk damaging the text. Whether his miscalculation arose from this specific decision, or whether he would have run out of silk regardless, the scribe was forced

\[\text{References}\]

326 Three adjacent graphs in this column have been blacked out by a single black ink rectangle.

327 Three adjacent graphs in this column have been blacked out by a single black ink rectangle, with another character blacked out several characters later by a black ink square.

328 Two adjacent graphs in this column have been blacked out by a single black ink rectangle.

329 It is interesting that the blank portion of silk left at the beginning of the manuscript seems to have been a perfect fit for the remaining text. It is possible that the scribe merely finished copying all the text that could fit, perhaps copying the remaining text elsewhere. Or perhaps the scribe had in fact planned out the
to remedy his error by copying the remaining text back onto the beginning of the manuscript, foregoing the measure he had taken to protect it. The manuscript thereby produced emerged out of the constant interplay between the scribe and his materials. Indeed, at times it is difficult to say whether scribe or the silk had the upper hand.\(^330\)

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1.4.3 The *“Wushi’er bingfang” text on Medical Manuscripts I and II

Medical Manuscripts I and II constitute five texts on two pieces of silk: the *“Zubi shiyi mai jiujing” 足臂十一脈灸經 (“Cauterization Canon of the Eleven Vessels of the Foot and Forearm”), the *“Yinyang shiyi mai jiujing” 隱陽十一脈灸經 (“Cauterization Canon of the Eleven Yin and Yang Vessels,” edition A), the *“Maifa” 脈法 (“Model of the Vessels”), the *“Yinyang mai si hou” 陰陽脈死侯 (“Death Signs of the Yin and Yang Vessels”), and the *“Wushi’er bingfang” 五十二病方 (“Recipes for Fifty-Two Ailments”). All five texts relate to medicine: the *“Zubi shiyi mai jiujing” and *“Yinyang shiyi mai jiujing” both describe the paths of eleven vessels (mai 脈) inside the body, with the description of each vessel followed by a list of ailments that are associated with that particular vessel. The descriptions in the former are briefer and simpler than in the latter, and another edition of the *“Yinyang shiyi mai jiujing” can be found elsewhere among the Mawangdui medical corpus. The *“Maifa” is a brief discussion of

331 I have taken the English titles of these five texts from Harper (1997a). See Harper (1997a), pp. 22-24 for an overview of the texts and pp. 192-304 for translations. Note, however, that the reconstruction used by Harper has been superseded by the reconstruction provided in JC. See JC, 2.62-97 for color photographs of all the texts on both manuscripts, and JC, 5.187-308 for introductions to the text and annotated transcriptions of their contents. Black and white photographs (“Plates,” pp. 1-82) of the manuscripts and annotated transcriptions (“Transcriptions,” pp. 15-42) can also be found in BS, 4; note, however, that the reconstruction of the manuscript in BS has also been superseded by that in JC.


337 BG, pp. 89-90 lists these five texts under the “methods and techniques” category.
vessel theory divided into three sections, and the *“Yinyang mai si hou,” at just ninety-eight characters, is the shorted text on these two manuscripts, having to do with the fatal signs associated with the yin and yang vessels as well as the different constituent parts of the human body: flesh, bone, vapor, blood, and muscle. Finally, the *“Wushi’er bingfang” is a manual of recipes for treating ailments organized by category. This text is by far the longest text among the Mawangdui medical texts, accounting for some five sixths of the contents of the two manuscripts. A table of contents appears at the beginning of the text, displayed in four registers, and at the end of the text a second scribe has added several recipes not included in the table of contents.

With the exception of this additional portion of text at the end of the *“Wushi’er bingfang,” the textual content of the two manuscripts was apparently the work of a single scribe, who wrote in a type of seal script that pre-dates the type of seal-clerical script used to write the texts on the *Laozi A manuscript. In fact, Li Xueqin has claimed, based on the calligraphy of these texts, that they may have been copied earlier than any of the other medical texts from Mawangdui, and that they were probably copied during the Qin-Han transition. Ma Jixing 馬繼興 likewise dates the copying of these texts to the pre-Han era, since the script style seems to

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338 WW, 1.146 notes that the *“Wushi’er bingfang” contains around 10,000 characters and records 283 prescriptions, including some Chu-specific diseases and treatments.

339 Harper (1997a) argues, based on this, that the majority of the manuscript was probably copied during the Qin, with the additional text probably dating to ca. 205-195 BCE. Chen in YS, p. 39 notes that the *“Wushi’er bingfang” manuscript is among the earliest manuscripts from Mawangdui, dating to the Qin-Han transition at the latest. The writing on the manuscript largely retains the seal script style, which is why Chen places it in this category, but he also notes that strictly speaking the writing is an early example of the transitional seal-clerical style, featuring both square (fangbi 方筆) and round (yuanbi 圆筆) stroke styles, as well as character forms that are sometimes elongated. The graphs on the manuscript sometimes render elements associated with seal script in the clerical style. See YS, pp. 39-46, 47-54 for black and white photographs and partial transcriptions of the *“Wushi’er bingfang” and *“Zubi shiyi mai jiujing” texts respectively.

340 Li Xueqin 李學勤, “Mawangdui Hanmu yishu jiaoshi’ xu” 「馬王堆漢墓醫書校釋」序, Sichuan daxue xuebao 四川大學學報 (1990).2, p.102. Li also notes that great effort went into producing this manuscript, and that the silk used for its manufacture is particularly fine.
predate the *Laozi A* manuscript, a manuscript that does not respect the taboo on Liu Bang’s name. Ma also observes that some of the character forms are similar to those found inscribed on pre-Qin bronzes.\(^{341}\) There are no ruled lines on the surface of either manuscript.

Two formal elements of these two manuscripts make them particularly interesting: the way in which the texts were copied onto the two manuscripts, and the way in which the manuscripts were stored and used subsequent to their initial manufacture. Owing to the fragmented state in which the two manuscripts were found in the black lacquer case found in the eastern compartment of the coffin of M3, it was originally thought that the five texts constituted a single large manuscript.\(^{342}\) However, in 2007 Kosoto Hiroshi 小曾戶等, Hasebe Eiichi 長谷部英一, and Machi Senjuro 町泉壽郎 (hereafter Kosoto et al.) published a new study and annotated Japanese translation of the *“Wushi’er bingfang”* text in which they prove, based on the presence of imprinted characters, that these five texts were in fact written on two pieces of silk, each measuring 48cm x 110cm.\(^{343}\) Kosoto et al. argue that the scribe left the top right-hand corner of the first manuscript blank (equivalent to two “pages” of reconstructed manuscript fragments), and proceeded to write the texts in columns that ended half-way down the manuscript until he reached the top left-hand corner of the manuscript, ending with the table of contents for the *“Wushi’er bingfang”* text, at which point he rotated the manuscript 180 degrees and started writing again from the top right-hand corner in columns that reached half-way down the page (i.e., before they met the columns of text he had previously written on the other end of the silk) until he reached the end of the manuscript, resulting in a manuscript with columns of text facing each other in opposite directions. This process was replicated on the second

\(^{341}\) Ma (1992), pp. 8-11.

\(^{342}\) The two manuscripts have fragmented into some 114 pieces. Because of the damage sustained by the manuscript, it is not possible to say with certainty how many columns or characters originally appeared on the manuscripts.

\(^{343}\) See Kosoto Hiroshi 小曾戶等, Hasebe Eiichi 長谷部英一, and Machi Senjuro 町泉壽郎, *Gojūni byōhō* 五十二病方 (Tokyo: Tōhō Shoten, 2007), pp. iii-x.
manuscript as the *“Wushi’er bingfang” text was so long as to extend onto and almost fill the second piece of silk. At some point subsequent to this act of copying, however, another scribe decided to add some supplementary recipes to the *“Wushi’er bingfang” text in another hand, first filling up the last five columns of text at the end of the second manuscript before making use of the blank space that the first scribe had left at the beginning of the first manuscript to finish copying the additional recipes. Kosoto et al. note that this additional portion of text was evidently written a considerable of time after the original text was copied, probably several years and perhaps as long as several decades. afterwards This additional text survives only in fragments, and although both Harper and the editors of BS had long noted that they were written in a later hand than the majority of the texts, it was only Kosoto et al. who were able to reconstruct its original position within the manuscript.

Work by Hirose Kunio and Chen Jian has effectively confirmed the validity of this reconstruction, though Chen argues that the manuscripts were in fact first folded

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345 See BS, 4, “Transcription,” p. 75n.1 and JC, 5.298, which also note that the headings found in this additional material are not found in the table of contents at the beginning of the text.

346 See Hirose Kunio, “*Wushi’er bingfang* de chongxin zhengli yu yanjiu” 《五十二病方》的重新整理與研究, *Wenshi* 文史 (2012).2, pp. 42-44, 64-66. Hirose confirms the reconstruction, including the presence of two blank pages, based on the presence of imprinted characters. Hirose has also shown that some of the previously unreconstructed fragments belong to the *“Maifa” text. See Hirose Kunio, “Du Mawangdui Hanmu boshu ‘Maifa’ xiaozha – jianlun Zhangjiashan Hanjian ‘maifa’ de yishu shiwen” 閱馬王堆漢墓帛書「脈法」小札 – 兼論張家山漢簡「脈法」的一處釋文, in *Gansu sheng di’er jie jianduxue guoji xueshu yantaohui lunwenji* 甘肅省第二屆簡牘國際學術研討會論文集, ed. Zhang Defang 張德芳 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2012), pp. 607-610. Chen (2016), pp. 286-287 notes that the surviving upper edges of these manuscripts are all relatively straight and even, while the lower edges underneath the upper registers of text are rather uneven. Chen compares this situation with the lower edges from half-width manuscripts from Mawangdui (such as Medical Manuscripts IV and V and the *Zhanguo zonghengjia shu* manuscript), which he notes are usually rather even as a result of having been cut to size. The uneven lower borders underneath the sections of silk containing the upper registers of texts on Medical Manuscripts I and II, Chen notes, are similar to the uneven lower borders of full-width manuscripts such as the *Xiangma jing* 相馬經 and the *Zhouyi* and *Laozi B* manuscripts, with this unevenness produced by disintegration along the folds. Thus, Chen concludes that Medical Manuscripts I and II were indeed both full-width manuscripts containing text displayed in two registers of facing text.
lengthwise prior to the text being copied, with the scribe flipping the manuscript over to copy the other side (i.e., the bottom half of the silk that had been folded underneath the top half prior to writing) once he filled up the side he was writing on.\textsuperscript{347} In any case, regardless of whether these two silk manuscripts were rotated during the writing process or else folded prior to writing and flipped mid-way through copying the text, the result was the same: the production of two full-width silk manuscripts containing large amounts of text displayed in two registers of facing vertical columns (see Figure 1.11).

The second interesting material feature of the two manuscripts is the way that they were stored.\textsuperscript{348} The two pieces of silk were placed back to back with the writing on each manuscript facing outwards. Then, the first silk manuscript, which was facing upwards, was folded in on itself by folding the second silk manuscript, which was underneath and facing downwards, upwards along the horizontal access. The manuscript was then folded in concertina \textit{(jingzhezhuang de xingshi 經折裝的形式)} or so-called “accordion style.”

Even though the untitled texts on these two manuscripts share a certain degree of thematic overlap, we know that the first scribe copied and consolidated them from five different sources since the formats used to write the texts differ, and space is left between certain texts, for example between the *“Yinyang mai si hou” text and the table of contents for the *“Wushi’er bingfang” text.\textsuperscript{349} The different formats of the texts on the two manuscripts are as follows: the *“Zubi shiyi mai jiujing” begins with the character for “foot” (\textit{zu 足}) raised approximately 1cm

\begin{flushright}
\footnotesize
\textsuperscript{347} Chen argues that this writing process would have been significantly more natural than the one proposed by Kosoto et al. See Chen (2016), pp. 286-287. Indeed, this would explain why only the upper register of the initial portion of the silk was left blank, since the lower register of silk would have been tucked underneath the upper register when the scribe made his decision to leave some silk blank as a measure taken to protect against fraying.

\textsuperscript{348} For the description that follows, see Kosoto et al., pp. iii-x and JC, 5.213-214.

\textsuperscript{349} It is possible that this gap was left because the contents of the preceding texts all focus on arteries, whereas those of the *“Wushi’er bingfang” do not.
\end{flushright}
Figure 1.11: Illustrations of the reconstructions of the technique used to copy the texts on Medical Manuscript I proposed by Kosoto Hiroshi et al. and Chen Songchang respectively.
above the first column of the text, serving as a sort of header. Then, the text details the different foot vessels, with each vessel followed by the list of ailments associated with it. The ailments section of the text begins on a new line and is thus separated from the description of the foot vessels. Once the ailments are described, the text of the next foot vessel is given starting on a new line with a black dot at the head of the column. This format continues until column 25 when the character for forearm (bi 臂) is raised (again approximately 1 cm) above the column and the process starts again, this time detailing information related to the forearm vessels. There are thirty-four columns of writing in this text in total.

The beginning of the *“Yinyang shiyi mai jiujiing” text is badly damaged, but there are thirty-seven columns of text in the reconstructed version of the manuscript. The text names different kinds of vessels (which are not marked by raised headings), followed by the ailments associated with them. The entry for each new vessel begins on a new line, though these entries are not marked by black dots. The *“Maifa” text begins directly after the preceding text and is not marked off in any way, nor is any space left between the two texts. The text contains some eleven columns of continuous text that is not divided into sections, until the final line where the text ends mid-column. This is the only indication that there is a division between the end of the *“Maifa” text and the beginning of the next text. The *“Yinyang mai si hou” beings on the next column following the preceding text and contains just four columns. Again, the text is written continuously with no section breaks until the last line where the text ends mid-column. A gap of approximately ten columns worth of silk is left before the beginning of the table of contents for the *“Wushi’er bingfang.”

The table of contents for the *“Wushi’er bingfang” lists the fifty-two ailments of the main text in four registers along with a note that reads “a total of fifty-two [recipes]” (fan wushi’er 凡五十二) marked by a large black dot. The text proper of the *“Wushi’er bingfang” then begins on the second half of the first manuscript, meaning that the reader would have had to rotate the manuscript 180 degrees in order to proceed from the table of contents of the *“Wushi’er bingfang” to the main text of that work (see Chapter 5). Headings corresponding to
the fifty-two ailments listed in the table of contents are raised above the first columns of their corresponding texts, which describe ailments and potential treatments relevant to these entries. The treatments in that category are laid out one by one, each starting on a new column that beings with the word “one” (yi —), which Harper renders as “another” in his translation.

The first scribe evidently took great care to plan out his work, with the texts fitting onto the two pieces of silk almost exactly after the top right-hand portion of the first manuscript was left blank. The scribe’s organization is made all the more impressive by the fact that he was working without the aid of ruled lines. The fact that the second scribe chose to add supplementary text to the manuscripts in a way that mars somewhat the original well-thought-out format of the manuscripts shows that that it was considered more important to append this supplementary information on the same manuscripts that housed the original texts than it was to preserve an attractive or easily readable format. Certainly, this would not have been a particularly easy manuscript to read, and it would have been tricky to find particular texts, much less specific parts of texts, within the manuscripts as a whole.350

However, reading a manuscript is not the only use for which manuscripts are designed,351 and the techniques used to copy the texts onto these pieces of silk would certainly have facilitated occasional consultation and the recopying of textual material. Indeed, using silk in this way, with the text on the two halves of the manuscript written separately to produce facing columns of text that were read in opposite directions, allowed the scribe to satisfy several obligations at once. Writing columns of text the same length as the lines of text on the sources from which he was copying (probably lines of text on bamboo and/or wood) would have meant that the writing occupied just the upper half of the manuscript (because these shorter columns would not have extended into the lower portions of the manuscript), which would have made the task of copying the texts easier for the scribe but would also have led to considerable wastage,

350 See Chapter 5 for a fuller discussion of these issues.
351 See my discussion of the way the Mawangdui manuscripts were used and read in Chapter 5.
leaving the lower portions of the silk unused. However, transposing shorter columns of text on bamboo into longer columns of text on silk by combining multiple short entries into longer lines of text, thereby producing running columns of text that spanned the entire width of the silk, would not only have made the copying process more cumbersome for the scribe, but also adversely affected the “consultability” of the text. It would have been desirable for the separate entries in the *“Wushi’er bingfang” recipes, for example, to be enumerated one by one in a way that clearly distinguished each individual entry by beginning a new recipe on a new column. In the end, the scribe who designed these manuscripts was able to solve all these problems. Retaining the shorter columns of the bamboo base text but writing them only half-way down the width of the silk before repeating this process on the other half of the silk in the opposite direction not only allowed the scribe to maximize the amount of text he wrote on the surface of the silk (thereby preventing unnecessary wastage), it also made his work easier; obviating the need to transpose shorter columns of text into longer columns and ensuring that the recipes were easily distinguishable and thus relatively convenient to consult and recopy.\(^{352}\) Copying the texts onto silk in this way effectively allowed the scribe to double the amount of consultable text he was able to produce, while making the copying process easier for himself, allowing him to have his cake and eat it too.\(^{353}\) 

In addition, using the silk in this way not only made it easier to copy text onto these manuscripts; it also made it easier to copy text from them. If most of the silk manuscripts from Mawangdui were designed not only with consolidation in mind but also the need for future copying of their contents in altered or recombined form (see Chapter 5), then displaying writing

\(^{352}\) Additionally, displaying the text in two opposite-facing registers of text that did not quite meet in the center of the silk meant that the blank silk in-between the two registers created a virtual dividing line between them, adding to the readability of the manuscript’s contents.

\(^{353}\) In addition, copying text onto the manuscripts in this way reduced the risk that the writing at the bottom of the width of silk would become sloppy or awkward to execute, as was the case with the writing at the bottom of the full-width *Xiangma jing manuscript, for example (see Chapter 5).
in this way made it easier for scribes looking to use these manuscripts to produce further, more usable manuscripts, probably on bamboo or wood.

No less sophisticated was the method used to ensure that these two silk manuscripts continued to serve as a single material unit of consolidated material. Folding the two manuscripts into each other and then folding them concertina style as described above effectively ensured that, once they were folded and stored, the two pieces of silk functioned as a single manuscript. One suspects that this method, or one similar to it, was used to ensure that the two manuscripts were used and stored together throughout their lifespans, and was not employed specifically for burial, since the second scribe who added the supplementary material that spans the end of the second piece of silk and the beginning of the first piece of silk (i.e., the portion that had initially been left blank) was evidently still treating the two manuscripts as a single unit years and potentially decades after the texts on them were originally copied. Since the long *“Wushi’er bingfang”* text spanned four registers on two separate pieces of silk (it will be remembered that the table of contents occupied the upper register of the first piece of silk, and the main text spanned the lower register of that piece and both registers of the second piece, making for four registers in total), folding the manuscripts together in this way was necessary to ensure that the *“Wushi’er bingfang”* text did not become deconsolidated. Folding the manuscripts in this way engineered a material unity to match the textual unity of their contents.

What the procedures involved in the design and execution of these two manuscripts and the steps taken to ensure their material integrity show is that textual production at Mawangdui was characterized not by mindless acts of textual transference, but rather by the application of sometimes incredibly sophisticated scribal techniques, with both the material conditions of textual production and the need to produce documents for particular uses very much in mind.
1.5 Labor and literacy at Mawangdui

Not all the writing from Mawangdui was executed by professional, well-trained scribes; there are also several dozen characters sloppily carved or brush written on the materials used to construct the coffins in M1 and M3. Whether written by ordinary workers or perhaps by the foremen who supervised their work, these characters were evidently written by persons involved in the manufacture, transportation, and/or construction of the wooden boards used to build the series of nested coffins that housed the tomb occupants, with these brief directional notations facilitating the construction process.

As described in the Introduction, the tomb occupant of Mawangdui M1, Li Cang, was interred in a series of nested coffins (*guan* 棺) placed inside a coffin chamber (*guoshi* 棺室), which was located at the bottom of the tomb pit and oriented north. While the coffin chamber was constructed out of thick wooden boards at the bottom of the tomb pit, the outer coffins (*waiguan* 外棺) were constructed outside the tomb and placed around the outside of the inner coffin (*neiguan* 内棺) that contained the corpse, before being buried in the tomb pit.\(^{354}\) Two boards were joined together to form a base board (*di ban* 底板), which was placed on top of a three-piece bottom layer of wood (*dian mu* 墊木) measuring 4.32m by 44.5cm at the bottom of the tomb pit. The top piece of this two-piece base board was constructed from five pieces that together measure 3.65m by 5.5m, and the bottom piece of the base board was constructed from three pieces of wood that together measure 5.4m by 3.55m. Four wall boards (*bi ban* 壁板) were then erected atop the base board, forming the outer walls of the coffin chamber. The eastern and western wall boards measure 4.84m by 1.52m and are 26cm thick, while the northern and southern wall boards measure 4.38m by 1.52m and are 27cm thick. A further four separation boards (*ge ban* 隔板) slightly smaller in size than the wall boards were then placed inside the

\(^{354}\) For a detailed description of the materials and construction methods used to manufacture the coffins in M1, see HM, 1.6-27.
wall boards, leaving space between the separation boards and the wall boards for the deposition of the funeral objects. Then, the four pre-made coffins, including the inner coffin containing the corpse, were placed inside. Finally, a top board (ding ban 頂板) made of seven pieces of wood and measuring 4.8m by 2.92m and 8cm thick was put in place, followed by a further two lid boards (gai ban 蓋板). The following characters were found on these construction materials:

1) Two characters, “northeast” (dongbei 北東), brush-written in black ink on the top-right wooden head stud (quanding 栓釘), also known as a hidden lock (anshao 暗梢), used to join the two pieces of wood to form the base board. The other three head studs are fixed in place too tightly to be visible.355

2) Two inscriptions, “south” (nan 南) and “south one” (nan yi 南一), brush-written in black ink on the two boards on the south side of the top board.356

3) The phrases “east one” (dong yi 東一), “east two” (dong 'er 東二), “east three” (dong san 東三), and “east four” (dong si 東四) were carved vertically from top to bottom on the eastern portion of the bottom piece of the lid board in clerical script with hints of seal script.357

4) The character jia 甲 (the first of the ten Heavenly Stems used to denote the first ordinal number in a sequence, i.e., “first”) is carved onto the top piece of the lid board.358

The tomb chamber constructed for Li Xi, the tomb occupant of Mawangdui M3, were manufactured in a very similar manner: a bottom layer of three pieces of wood (each measuring

355 HM, 1.8-9.
357 HM, 1.13. The editors of the excavation report do not provide photographs or illustrations of these inscriptions.
358 HM, 1.13
4.38-4.40m by 0.45m) underneath a two-layer base board (the top piece made of three pieces of wood, totaling 4.89m by 3.37m; the bottom piece also made of three pieces of wood measuring 4.92m by 3.4m in total), enclosed by four wall boards each measuring roughly 4m by 1.2m, surrounding four separation boards of varying dimensions (between 2.62 and 2.85m long) containing three nested coffins topped by a top board made of eight pieces of wood and a two-layer lid board.\(^{359}\) The following characters were found on these construction materials:

1) The character “west” (xi 西) has been carved in the middle of the western side of the top piece of the base board. The characters “upper two” (shang er 上二) are carved into the middle portion of this board.\(^{360}\)

2) Two phrases are carved into the head wall board: “north X” (bei shu 北) and “north head” (bei shou 北首).\(^{361}\)

3) The phrases “lower one” (xia yi 下一), “lower two” (xia er 下二), and “lower three” (xia san 下三) have been brush-written in ink on the bottom section of the lid board.\(^{362}\)

4) The phrases “north and six” (bei he liu 北和六), “south and five” (nan he wu 南和五), and “western beam” (xi fang 西枋) are carved into the northern, southern and western pieces of the side frame boards (biankuang 邊框) placed underneath the lid boards.\(^{363}\)

These inscriptions are entirely practical and were never intended to be read or appreciated for their aesthetic value. Without exception their execution is unskilled, with unevenly spaced

\(^{359}\) For a detailed description of the materials and construction methods used to manufacture the coffins in M3, see BG, 28-41.

\(^{360}\) BG, p. 32.

\(^{361}\) BG, pp. 32-33. The editors of the excavation report note that the meaning of the former phrase is unclear.

\(^{362}\) BG, pp. 34-35.

\(^{363}\) BG, pp. 35-40.
strokes, distorted stroke size, and clumsily positioned characters (see Figure 1.12) indicating that the individuals who wrote these notations were not fully competent at carving characters or writing with a brush.364 Clearly, these characters were not written by highly-trained scribes or the fully literate ritual administrators responsible for the other texts found at Mawangdui. They were most likely written by the workers responsible for the manufacture, transportation, or construction of these materials, or perhaps by a semi-literate foreman or supervisor. Regardless, they provide clear evidence that at least some members of the work teams responsible for constructing the coffins at Mawangdui were semi-literate, capable of executing at least a circumscribed repertoire of graphs related to their trade.365 The fact that not a single piece contains both brush-written and carved characters may suggest that the different parts passed through different work stations during the manufacture of the coffins, and that the workers employed in these stations had access to different writing materials. However, it is just as likely that the writing was carried out by an individual or individuals working in a single location, and that they were written using whatever instrument (a knife or a brush) was to hand. The carved characters could have been executed with a knife that was primarily used for shaping wood, but the ink-written characters were almost certainly written with a brush designed specifically for that purpose. This suggests that it was probably routine for some workers or their supervisors to

364 As M.T. Clanchy has pointed out, “[t]he commonest sign of an amateur writer is bad layout.” See M.T. Clanchy, From Memory to Written Record: England, 1066-1307 (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1979), p. 134

365 It was evidently rather common practice to number the planks of wood that were used in the construction of early Chinese coffins. See Noel Barnard, “The Ch’u Silk Manuscript and Other Archaeological Documents of Ancient China,” in Early Chinese Art and Its Possible Influence in the Pacific Basin, Volume One: Ch’u and the Silk Manuscript, ed. Noel Barnard in collaboration with Douglas Fraser (New York: Intercultural Arts Press, 1972), p. 84n.7. Reports say that some of the jade coffins discovered in the royal Western Han tombs at Xuzhou 徐州, as well as the wooden coffins discovered in the Jiangxi 江西 tomb of Liu He 劉賀 (who reigned briefly as emperor in 74 BCE; see Chapter 5) were carved with notations specifying the size and locations of various materials used to construct the coffins.
use a writing brush as part of their daily professional activities, and functional literacy may even have been a prerequisite for some of the professions involved in this kind of work.\footnote{The evidence for different degrees of literacy among various non-elite groups in Early Imperial China is discussed in Robin D. S. Yates, “Soldiers, Scribes, and Women: Literacy among the Lower Orders in Early China” and Anthony J. Barbieri-Low, “Craftsman’s Literacy: Uses of Writing by Male and Female Artisans in Qin and Han China,” chapters 10 and 11 in Li and Branner (2011), pp. 339-369, 370-399. Cf. Michael Nylan, “Academic Silos, or, What I Wish Philosophers Knew about History,” \textit{The Bloomsbury Research Handbook of Chinese Philosophy Methodologies}, ed. Tan Sor-hoon (London: Bloomsbury, 2016), p. 109n.34.}

In moving from scribes as a narrowly defined class of professionals to laborers for whom executing written graphs was evidently much more difficult a proposition, we encounter a different set of concerns that are no less material in nature. Whereas scribes butted up against the
materiality of their tools and materials as they sought to protect, design, and create manuscripts that were both beautiful and fit for purpose, the laborers who have left their traces behind on the construction materials in M1 and M3 grappled with the materiality of writing in a rather more basic sense, struggling to formulate the written words necessary for the successful execution of their work.\textsuperscript{367}

\textbf{1.6 Conclusion}

Consistent with the excavated evidence from other early Chinese sites, the scribes who produced the writing left behind at Mawangdui left no names in these sources, nor are they vaunted or valorized in any conspicuous way. The Mawangdui scribes were not, as far as we know, tasked with formulating or reformulating the \textit{content} of these manuscripts, beyond perhaps the rearrangement and recombination of various textual units and subunits, nor do we have any evidence to suggest that they were engaged in weighing the philosophical arguments or prescribing the medical treatments articulated in these manuscripts. Rather, their job was to give the texts they were supposed to copy the appropriate material form.

This does not mean, however, that their work can be reduced to a mechanical operation designed to transpose texts from one medium or format to another. Indeed, the evidence examined in this chapter shows they were fully aware of the stakes involved in the successful materialization of textual material, informed variously by aesthetic, ideological, and pragmatic

\textsuperscript{367} I do not wish to register too harsh a judgment on the abilities of the workmen who made these inscriptions, nor would I wish to overestimate the degree of frustration they may have felt in the course of producing them. After all, it is quite possible (perhaps even likely) that the individuals who made these inscriptions were suitably impressed and satisfied by their own abilities to wield this technology, even at what strikes us as a fairly unsophisticated level. This point was emphasized to me by Armin Selbitschka (personal communication, 2018). Indeed, Robert Bagley has noted how writing with a brush and ink is extremely difficult, and that imitating such writing in other media was more difficult still. See Robert Bagley, “Anyang Writing and the Origin of the Chinese Writing System,” in \textit{The First Writing: Script Invention as History and Process}. ed. Stephen D. Houston (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 219-220.
technological considerations. In working to transpose texts between different media they were forced to deal with complementary and sometimes competing material demands. Working with silk dyed with ideologically charged pigments, misplaced bamboo slips, and writing surfaces that had the tendency to seep and to fray, as well as to frustrate design, these scribes were fully aware that they were working not with disembodied texts or even with objects, but with things; tools and materials that had their own irreducible affordances and limitations, and which were materially and symbolically connected to the broader sociopolitical conditions within which textual production at Mawangdui was embedded.\(^{368}\)

\(^{368}\) The distinction I see here between objects and things comes ultimately from the philosophy of Martin Heidegger, who posited a distinction between “objects” on the one hand (a mass-produced can of Coke, say), which are set apart from other material entities and human connections, and “things” on the other (an exquisitely manufactured handcrafted jug, for example), which invite contemplation of their material qualities and features and enjoy profound connections with the world around them. This categorical distinction has come under attack in recent years, however, by the likes of Bruno Latour, who has lamented that it is based primarily on Heidegger’s prejudices about what constituted true craftsmanship and connectivity. Bill Brown’s reformulation of these categories has rehabilitated some elements of Heidegger’s argument, however, with Brown’s articulation of Thing Theory based on a reorientation of the object-thing dichotomy away from inherent properties (i.e., ontology) and towards subjective perception of the object world (i.e., phenomenology). In other words, the question is no longer “which material entities are objects, and which are things?,” but “under what conditions do material entities present themselves (or not) or appear to human subjects as either objects or things?” See Martin Heidegger, *What is a Thing?*, trans. Vera Duetsch and W.B. Barton (Washington D.C.: Gateway Editions, 1968); Martin Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought*, trans. Albert Hofstader (New York: Harper Perennial, 2011); Bill Brown, ed., *Things*, a special issue of *Critical Inquiry* (Fall 2001); Bruno Latour, “Why Has Critique Run out of Steam? From Matters of Fact to Matters of Concern,” *Critical Inquiry* 30.2 (2004), pp. 233-234. See also Carl Knappett, *An Archaeology of Interaction: Network Perspectives on Material Culture and Society* (Oxford, England: Oxford University Press, 2011), pp. 175-179; Ian Hodder, *Entangled: An Archaeology of the Relationships Between Humans and Things* (Hoboken: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), pp. 8-28; and Bill Brown, *Other Things* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015).
2.1 Introduction: writing as performance

To talk of writing as a performance is to acknowledge that writing, as both an act and as the text produced from that act, often communicates and symbolizes values and ideas in ways that exceed or transcend the linguistic value of the written sign. Indeed, when writing is incorporated into rituals, ceremonies, and acts of public display (a liturgical script, say, or a bill signed into law by the head of state), the “content” or semantic meaning of the written signs contained within the text do not always constitute the sole motivation behind its production and use. While individual signs and assemblages of signs arranged as texts can communicate semantic content through the encoding and decoding of language via the medium of the written word, the various material features of written texts (the medium and design of the physical

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support, the way it is used, etc.) also project and embody certain a-linguistic qualities and significances.\textsuperscript{371} My use of the term “a-linguistic,” as opposed to “non-linguistic,” is a deliberate one, since even texts that can be read, and which sometimes actually are read, can also communicate symbolically through their material form and performative use.\textsuperscript{372} Especially in premodern contexts where the production, ownership, and use of written texts was largely circumscribed to an elite stratum of society, the material form of texts, and the ways in which they were used, often spoke to the wealth, prestige, and power of those involved in textual activities, sometimes even regardless of their content. In this sense, written texts are “hybrid artifacts” that combine graphical, linguistic, material, and spatial characteristics,\textsuperscript{373} and it is necessary to appreciate the powerful a-linguistic functions enjoyed by certain written texts in order to understand what makes them meaningful to those exposed to them.

However, the a-linguistic ways in which written texts communicate meaning should not be understood merely as the material counterparts to linguistic models of communication. Unlike glottographic writing, which generally has the potential to represent spoken language more or less fully and always conventionally,\textsuperscript{374} material artifacts do not communicate with the same specificity as language, but rather symbolize, embody, and engineer somewhat more abstract (though no less powerful) notions and values. Nor are the symbolic properties associated with

\textsuperscript{371} Indeed, in certain contexts the material features of a text can communicate and signify more than the words contained within it. See Christina Tsouparopoulou, “Deconstruction Textuality, Reconstructing Materiality,” in \textit{Materiality of Writing in Early Mesopotamia}, ed. Thomas E. Balke and Christina Tsouparopoulou (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2016), pp. 257-276.

\textsuperscript{372} I have in mind here David Lurie’s distinction between the “legible” and “alegible” significances of inscribed texts, and his recognition that texts mean different things to different groups as a result of their material form. See David Lurie, “The Origins of Writing in Early Japan: From the 1\textsuperscript{st} to the 8\textsuperscript{th} Century C.E.,” Ph.D. diss., Columbia University, 2001, pp. 69-71.


\textsuperscript{374} See my Introduction for a discussion of the different definitions of writing proposed by scholars in recent decades.
material artifacts entirely conventional.\textsuperscript{375} The communicative functions of writing and of written texts, therefore, are not reducible to the transmission of semantic meaning through the linguistic currency of written signs. Texts are supporters and conveyors of written content but they are also \textit{meaningful} in their own right, and as a result it is important to understand texts anthropologically in relation to the broader, a-linguistic modes of culture and communication within which they are so often embedded.\textsuperscript{376} Simply put, reading and writing are not the only things one can do with a written text.\textsuperscript{377}

This chapter examines a group of inscribed sources from Mawangdui M1 and M3 that were all employed in the context of ceremonies and rituals.\textsuperscript{378} By examining the material conditions and characteristics of these texts it is possible to uncover some of the ways in which they were used in performance, including as ceremonial acts of administrative display, scripts for incantatory rituals, and messages incorporated into banquet ceremonies and ritual feasting. From


\textsuperscript{378} The rituals within which the textual sources examined in this chapter were used and displayed were characterized by the use of formalized language and/or actions as part of more or less choreographed, communal acts of celebration, mourning, or communication. For a more expansive definition of ritual as those activities that are in some way “set off” from ordinary practice, see Catherine Bell, \textit{Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice} (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).
documents on bamboo to ritual texts committed to silk and inscriptions on lacquerware, each of these objects was employed not just as a support for communicating or recording linguistic messages but also as artifacts in their own right, artifacts that were performed and sometimes even produced in ritual contexts as a way of embodying and projecting certain sets of sociopolitical values.

2.2 Tomb inventory texts

2.2.1 An introduction to the genre

Mawangdui M1 and M3 have yielded some of the earliest Western Han texts in the so-called “tomb inventory” (qiance 遺策) genre discovered to date. The term qiance is taken from the “Jixi” 既夕 (“[Mourning procedures of] the evening preceding burial”) chapter of the Yili 儀禮 (Ceremonies and Rituals), which relates how lists of gifts, possessions, and funerary objects were employed not just as a support for communicating or recording linguistic messages but also as artifacts in their own right, artifacts that were performed and sometimes even produced in ritual contexts as a way of embodying and projecting certain sets of sociopolitical values.


As we have it, the Yili 儀禮 is a ritual compendium that describes in detail ceremonies related to the shi 士 (men of service) class of elites. Like all transmitted texts from early China the Yili is a multi-layered work, and though it came to resemble something like its present form only gradually during and after the Han it also preserves genuinely ancient knowledge. See William G. Boltz, “Ili 儀禮,” in Early Chinese Texts: A Bibliographical Guide, ed. Michael Loewe (Berkeley: The Society for the Study of Early China, 1993), pp. 234-243. For a history of the development of the Yili, and the two other early ritual texts with which it came to be associated (the Liji 禮記 [Records of Rituals] and the Zhouli 周禮 [Rituals of Zhou]),
items were drawn up as part of the funeral rites for deceased elites, and Ye Gongchuo was apparently the first to use the term in reference to the types of manuscripts that have been found in a number of pre-imperial and Early Imperial Chinese tombs. In fact, lists of funeral items are the earliest as well as the most commonly encountered manuscript type in early Chinese tombs, and the “Jixi” chapter of the Yili describes how various kinds of lists or inventories were actually read aloud by scribes as part of the burial rites for the deceased:

The scribe of the director [of the funeral rites] requests permission to read aloud the funerary list, and an assistant carrying the counting tallies follows him. They stand to the east of the coffin facing the front tie-ropes looking toward the west. Without being ordered not to weep the mourners refrain from weeping, and only the overseer and the overseer’s wife continue to weep. The lamp is brought to the right-hand side with the lamp bearer facing south. As the scribe reads the written document the assistant carries out the count from a seated position. When this is over, the scribe commands the mourners to weep, the lamp is extinguished, and those carrying the document and the counting tallies withdraw in reverse. The Lord’s scribe approaches from the west side to face east and commands the mourners to stop their weeping. The overseer and the overseer’s wife cease weeping. The scribe reads the tomb inventory list aloud, and when this is over, he commands the mourners to weep. The lamp is extinguished, and he


381 Yili 13.193b-194b. Zheng (2005), p. 28 notes that, judging by excavated finds, tomb inventory texts are generally found in the tombs of the aristocratic elites who served as the heads of regional states, enfeoffed nobles, and high- to mid-level regional officials. No tomb inventory texts have been discovered in the tombs of kings or commoners.


383 These lists are the only text type to appear more often than daybooks (rishu) in early Chinese tombs, for example. See Martin Kern, “Early Chinese Divination and Its Rhetoric,” in Coping with the Future: Theories and Practices of Divination in East Asia, ed. Michael Lackner (Leiden: Brill, 2018), pp. 265-266. Indeed, Giele (2003), p. 420 notes that tomb inventory documents are the only written texts that have been found in some 50% of text bearing tombs. See below for a discussion of daybooks and their relationship to some of the Mawangdui tomb texts. Around fifty documents dating from the Warring States era to the Han containing lists of various funerary objects have been discovered in China since 1960, mostly in the south. See Guolong Lai, Excavating the Afterlife: The Archaeology of Early Chinese Religion (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2015), p. 139. However, Zheng (2005), p. 28 reminds us that of all the thousands of tombs discovered so far in the Chu region, only a tiny fraction has yielded tomb inventory (or any other kind of) texts.
Though the precise actions of the various actors as well as the subtle distinctions between the different written documents referenced in this passage are far from clear, there is an emphasis on tightly choreographed ritual performance, including the public reading of funerary texts, throughout.\textsuperscript{385} Indeed, some scholars have attempted to use passages such as this one to distinguish between different types of funeral lists on the basis of the types of items listed, and the nature of the relationship between the donors of these items and the deceased.\textsuperscript{386} While it is


\textsuperscript{385} I use the word “public” to reflect the fact that these rituals and performances took place before an audience, an audience to whom such displays were often directed. As Martin Kern has pointed out, however, there was no “public” audience in early China comparable to that of certain other ancient civilizations such as ancient Greece, and the intended (living) audience for these rituals and ceremonies only ever constituted a highly circumscribed subset of elites including family members, ritual and political subordinates, and invited guests. See Martin Kern, “The Performance of Writing in Western Zhou China,” in \textit{The Poetics of Grammar and the Metaphysics of Sound and Sign}, ed. Sergio La Porta and David Shulman (Leiden: Brill, 2007), p. 113.

\textsuperscript{386} See, for example, Yang Hua 杨華, “Sui, feng, qian – jiandu suo jian Chudi zhusang lizhi yanjiu” 薨, 赐, 遗 – 簡牘所見楚地助喪禮制研究, \textit{Xueshu yuekan} 學術月刊 (2003).9, pp. 49-59. In this article, Yang cites passages from the \textit{Yili} as well as the \textit{Guilangzhuan} 谷梁傳 (\textit{Guilang Tradition of the Springs and Autumnns Annals}), the \textit{Xunzi} 荀子 (\textit{Writings of Master Xun}), and \textit{Baihu tongyi} 白虎通義 (\textit{Comprehensive Account of the White Tiger Debates}) to argue for clear distinctions between different funeral items, including \textit{fu} 訥 (money), \textit{feng} 赐 (horses and chariots), \textit{zeng} 賜 (curiosities \textit{wanhao} 玩好), and \textit{sui} 賜 (items of clothing). Yang argues that while the funereal display of \textit{fu} and \textit{feng} items was aimed at the living, with these items not actually interred with the deceased, \textit{zeng} and \textit{sui} items were intended for use by the dead and so were buried in the coffin with the corpse. Mi (1991), pp. 96, 99 notes that tomb inventory texts include different types of items that represented various connections with the deceased, and that these entries could be written on bamboo slips, wooden slips, or wooden boards. Similarly, Peng Hao 彭浩, “Zhanguo shiqi de qianzhen” 戰國時期的遣冊, \textit{Jianbo yanjiu} 簡帛研究 2 (1996), pp. 53-55 divides Warring States tomb inventory texts into three categories: 1) those which mainly record items of clothing, ritual objects, food vessels, and weapons; 2) those which contain more of an emphasis on records related to chariots, horses, and related items than those in category 1; and 3) those which focus predominantly on horses, chariots, and weapons. See also Zheng (2005), pp. 28-29; Liu Hongshi 劉洪石, “Qianzhen chutan” 遺冊初探, in \textit{Yinwan Hanmu jiandu zonglun} 尹灣漢墓簡牘綜論, ed. Lianyun gangshi
perhaps unsafe to classify too hastily texts found in ancient tombs based on the categories and descriptions provided in transmitted texts of uncertain date, on the basis of archaeological evidence it is nevertheless safe to say that a tradition of burying written lists of items somehow related to the deceased and his or her funeral rites persisted from at least the Warring States era through the Han dynasty, and some of the ways in which these lists were used seem to match the descriptions given in transmitted records in some respects.\(^\text{387}\) Luke Habberstad, for example, has argued that in the case of the tomb inventory texts discovered in the tomb of Marquess Yi of Zeng 曾侯乙 (d. ca. 433 BCE), which are among the earliest manuscripts in any genre discovered in a Chinese tomb, the bamboo slips containing the entries recording the chariots gifted as part of the Marquess’ funeral cortege were actually marked up during the funeral procession by scribes who counted the chariots as they passed by, which, if true, would speak to the performative spectacle within which the slips were displayed and used.\(^\text{388}\)

\(^{387}\) Zheng Xuan’s 鄭玄 (127-200) commentary to the “Jixi” chapter of the *Yili* (*Yili* 13.194b) explains that *ce 策* are equivalent to *jian 簿* (bamboo documents), and that *qian 遣* means “to dispatch” (*song 送*). Tang Lan 唐蘭 interprets Zheng Xuan’s gloss to mean that these documents were used to “dispatch the deceased” (*song sizhe 送死者*). See Tang Lan 唐蘭, “Changsha Mawangdui Han Daihou qi Xinzhi mu chutu suizang qiance kaoshi” 長沙馬王堆漢軻侯妻辛追墓出土隨葬遣策考釋, *Wenshi* 文史 10 (1980), p. 2. It would probably be a mistake to attempt to reduce all the currently known tomb inventory texts, which date to various periods within a span of several hundred years, to a single purpose or function. Guolong Lai, for example, has argued that during the shift from the Warring States to the Early Imperial era, the tomb inventory text went from being a “bookkeeping device for sumptuary control to a symbolic, magico-religious instrument of substitution.” See Lai (2015b), pp. 139, 144. Hong Shi 洪石, “Dongzhou zhi Jindai muzang suo chuwu shu jian du ji qi xiangguan wenti yanjiu” 東周至晉代墓葬所出物疏簡牘及其相關問題研究, *Kaogu* 考古 2001. 9, pp. 59-69 actually argues that using the term *qiance* to describe these inventories is inappropriate, advocating instead for the term *wushu jian du* 物疏簡牘 (“written accounts of items on bamboo and wood”), which appears in multiple tomb inventory manuscripts. For the sake of convenience, I will continue to use the term “tomb inventory texts” to refer to this textual tradition. As we will see, however, the term hardly does justice to the various ways in which these texts functioned as part of elite funeral services in early China.

We will return to this issue presently. For now, suffice it to say that perhaps from the very beginning tomb inventory texts were embedded in ritual acts of administrative display, and the tomb inventory texts from Mawangdui provide further evidence to show that the texts in this genre are not reducible to the mere transmission of information to the deceased, the mourners, or the bureaucrats of the underworld in the form of dry lists of goods and objects. Rather, the tomb inventory texts from Mawangdui were ritual objects in their own right, objects that served not just to carry or transmit administrative records but also to embody in their material form and ceremonial use the value and power of ritual administration and communication. This section will thus begin by describing the bamboo tomb inventory slips that were found in Mawangdui M1 and M3, before turning to trace the lifecycle of these manuscripts from their design and manufacture to their use and performance at the tomb site.

2.2.2 The tomb inventory texts from Mawangdui M1 and M3

The bamboo slips discovered in Mawangdui M1 were found in the northern end of the eastern compartment of the outer coffin, piled atop a lacquer box and wedged underneath two ding 鼎 cauldrons. Because the bindings that had been used to hold the slips together to form a


390 An individual bamboo slip found in the tomb passageway leading to the tomb pit of M2 will be discussed in detail in Chapter 3.

391 My approach to studying these texts is somewhat similar to Igor Kopytoff’s famous use of “cultural biography” to trace the various ways in which objects are used during their lifetime, and the different significances and statuses they can enjoy over time. My analysis of these slips spans a rather more restricted time period, however. See Igor Kopytoff, “The Cultural Biography of Things: Commoditization as Process,” in The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective, ed. Arjun Appadurai (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1988), pp. 64-91. See also Chapter 5 for a more extended discussion of this issue.
The manuscript had rotted away and the slips were found in five small piles, and given the number of tomb inventory slips found in the tomb it seems likely that they were actually bound in multiple bundles or rolls (juan 卷) that were perhaps subsequently rolled or bound together to form a single manuscript before being buried. There were 312 slips in total, all around 27.6 cm in length, roughly equivalent to one chi 尺 and two cun 寸 by Han reckoning. The slips are around 0.7 cm wide, roughly equivalent to three fen 分, and just 1 mm thick. The recto sides of the slips are a yellow-brown color, though the verso sides have largely retained their green hue. Judging by the marks left behind by the bindings the slips were bound in two places after writing, using thin hemp string tied roughly 9 cm from the tops and bottoms of each slip, dividing the slips into three sections of equal length (roughly 9 cm each). The writing on the slips was done in black ink in an early form of Han clerical script (lishu 隸書), though certain characters also retain elements of the small seal (xiaozhuan 小篆) script style prevalent in Qin and early Western Han times, and it would seem that the calligraphy on the slips represents a transitional stage between these two script styles.393 The writing is clear and elegant, beginning at the top of each slip without leaving an upper margin, and there are punctuation marks between certain characters.394

392 My description of these slips is based on that given in HM, 1.130, 153-155 and JC, 6.173-174. For transcriptions of the slips see HM, 1.130-153 and JC, 6.174-220. The slip sequences in these two transcriptions are identical. For photographs of the slips see HM, 2.223-244 (black and white; plates 270-292) and JC, 2.221-249 (color). See also Tang (1980), pp. 1-60; Zhu Dexi 朱德熙 and Qiu Xigui 裘錫圭, “Mawangdui yihao Hanmu qian pao kaoshi buzhen” 馬王堆一號漢墓遣策考釋補正, Wenshi 文史 10 (1980), pp. 61-74; and Xu Daocheng 許道盛, “Mawangdui sanhao Hanmu qian pao zhaji” 馬王堆三號漢墓遣冊札記, in Hunan sheng bowuguan (2016), pp. 320-323.

393 The script used to copy the entries in the tomb inventory text from M1 is very similar to that used to write the labels (mupai 木牌 or qianpai 签牌) attached to the bamboo hampers (zhusi 竹筍) found in the same tomb, as well as contemporary Han bronze inscriptions. These labels and hampers will be described in detail below. See Qiu Xigui 裘錫圭, “Cong Mawangdui yihao Hanmu ‘qian pao’ tan guanyu guli de yixie wenti” 從馬王堆一號漢墓「遣策」談關於古隸的一些問題, Kaogu 考古 (1974).1, pp. 46-55.

394 The writing on the slips may have been executed by more than one hand. On this point, compare the descriptions in HM, 1.130 and Chen Songchang 陳松長, “Mawangdui jiandu shufa yishu sanlun” 馬王堆簡書法藝術三論, in idem, Jianbo yanjiu wengao 簡帛研究文稿 (Beijing: Xianzhuang shuju, 2008), p. 387.
The 312 slips bear a total of 2,063 characters, with the number of characters per slip ranging from just two to twenty-five. The characters are, for the most part, easily legible, recording two types of entry. The first type seems to record directly the items displayed or used in the funeral proceedings, including the names, sizes, and quantities of each item. A typical entry reads, “One lacquer painted fang vase with lid, filled with rice alcohol” 漆畫枋 (= 銛) 一有蓋盛米酒. The second type of entry is marked by a thick black line running horizontally along the top edge of the strip, followed by the words “to the right-hand side” (youfang 右方). These slips mark divisions between sections within the tomb inventory text and contain summaries of the contents of the proceeding slips, which would have been located on the right-hand side of each summary slip when the manuscript was unrolled. See, for example, slip 200: “To the right-hand side, two lacquer painted ladles” 右方漆畫勺二, a summary slip for the two ladles entered individually on the preceding two slips located to the right of the summary slip (see Figure 2.1).

The slips were discovered in a considerable state of disarray, and it is impossible to reconstruct perfectly their original sequence within the manuscript. Tentative reconstruction work has been carried out on the basis of the locations in which the slips were found and their contents, including the summary entries. The reconstructed sequence of slips given in HM and followed by Zheng Shubin 鄭曙斌 and Jiang Wen 蔣文 in JC proceeds according to the following categories: food items, seasonings, alcohol and grain, lacquerware, pottery items, clothing and personal items, musical instruments, bamboo items, and burial items (mingqi 明器) made of wood and clay.

395 Slip 174: HM, 1.144; JC, 6.199.
397 See Chapter 3 for a fuller discussion of mingqi burial objects.
398 Note, however, that the HM editors caution that this sequence is only tentative.
Figure 2.1: Slip 200 (summary slip) from the M1 tomb inventory text (JC, 2.239)
The tomb inventory manuscript found in M3 was constructed from seven wooden boards (*mudu* 木牘) and 400 bamboo slips.\(^{399}\) One of the wooden boards was discovered in the eastern compartment of the outer coffin, while the other six boards were discovered together with the bamboo slips in the northern end of the western compartment.\(^{400}\) These manuscript components were also in a state of disarray when discovered, and judging by the traces of the bindings clearly visible on certain slips in published photographs the manuscript had, like the M1 tomb inventory manuscript, also been bound in two places.\(^{401}\) Given the number of slips in the manuscript, it may have originally been divided into multiple rolls. The slips measure 27.5cm long and 1cm wide, and the number of characters per slip ranges from just one (on a broken slip) to twenty-four. The number of characters per wooden board ranges from twenty-five to ninety-two. The dimensions of the seven boards vary somewhat, ranging between 23-28cm in length and 2.2-6cm in width, according to the figures given in BG. Zhou Shirong 周世榮 in BG takes these boards together with the bamboo slips as the constitutive elements of a tomb inventory text, though, as we will see, there is some disagreement about precisely which boards constitute part of the tomb inventory text proper, and Zheng and Jiang in JC take only six of the boards together with the bamboo slips as parts of the M3 inventory text.

The writing on the slips and boards is also an attractively executed brand of Han clerical script, and, as with the writing on the M1 tomb inventory text, there is some disagreement about whether it is the product of a single hand.\(^{402}\) Five of the seven wooden boards are used to

\(^{399}\) Note that JC, 6.173 corrects the description given in BG, p. 43, where it is erroneously stated that M3 contained 402 bamboo slips and only six wooden boards. For an introduction to these slips, as well as descriptions and transcriptions of their contents, see BG, pp. 43-73 and JC, 6.173-174, 227-263. See also Wang Guiyuan 王貴元, “Mawangdui sanhao Hanmu zhujian zici kaoshi” 馬王堆三號竹簡字詞考釋, *Zhongguo yuwen* 中國語文 (2007).3, pp. 277-280. For black and white photographs of the slips, see BG, plates 20-51; for color photographs see JC, 2.258-294.

\(^{400}\) See below for a discussion of the individual wooden board found in the eastern compartment.

\(^{401}\) See, for example, the traces of binding marks on slips 23/10 (JC, 2.260) and 62/82 (JC, 2.263), among others. References to individual slips and boards in the M3 tomb inventory text observe both the BG and JC slip sequences respectively in the form X/Y.
summarize the entries recorded in the bamboo slips in a similar fashion to the summary slips in
the tomb inventory text from M1, and were evidently also used to divide the manuscripts into
sections.403 These summary boards also carry a line drawn horizontally in black ink across their
top edge. Six of the bamboo slips also bear these black marks and feature the youfang formula.404

402 Compare the descriptions in Yi Qiang 伊強, “Tan ‘Changsha Mawangdui er, san hao Hanmu’ qiance
shiwen he zhushi zhong cunzai de wenti” 談《長沙馬王堆二，三號漢墓》遺冊中存在的問題, M.A.

403 The remaining two boards will be analyzed in some detail below. Yang (2016), p. 328 has claimed
that, unlike the bamboo entry slips, which she argues were prepared ahead of time, the entries on these
wooden boards, which Yang says can be grouped together on orthographic grounds, were written later to
record which items were actually interred in the tomb. Yang explains the discrepancies between the
contents of the summary boards and the contents of the tomb by arguing that the summary entries were
made in some haste, and that changes would naturally have been made to the items planned for burial.
Yang also argues that these summary boards and slips were bound together as a separate document.
However, there are several serious problems with Yang’s argument. First, if the summary slips and boards
were originally bound together then we would surely expect to have encountered these items clustered
in the tomb, perhaps gathered into a single pile. The fact that this was not the case suggests that
they did not form part of a separate manuscript when they were buried. In addition, it is hard to see why
the black summary marks that distinguish these slips and boards from the entry slips would have been
necessary if they had been bound together as a separate document. The black marks on these summary
slips and boards, as well as the introductory youfang formula, show that they were clearly incorporated
into the tomb inventory manuscript in the same way as the summary entries for the tomb inventory text
from M1, as well as those from other sites. Indeed, the formula youfang (to the right-hand side) clearly
shows that these summary entries referred to the entries carried on the slips located to the right of the
summary entries, which would have been entirely unnecessary if the summary material had been bound
separately. The dimensions of the wooden boards also vary considerably, and while this variation would
not have impacted the visual design of the text if the boards had been spaced out as summary boards in a
much longer manuscript comprised mostly of bamboo slips, if they had been bound together as an
independent document then the resulting manuscript would have been rather shoddy looking. Finally, the
summary slips specifying where certain items were to be buried (see below) would have been utterly
unusable if they had not been positioned directly after the slips recording entries for the items to which
these summary slips referred. More useful is Yang’s argument that the M3 inventory text in fact
comprises lists of three kinds of objects: articles that were planned for burial ahead of time (not all of
which were actually interred), people and things that were present at the funeral but not intended for
burial, and people and things that were symbolically present in written form. See Yang (2016), pp. 329-
331.

404 They are slips 295/297, 154/396, 168/397, 183/398, 324/399, and 393/400. These slips all feature short
entries (ranging from just four to nine characters each) either specifying the location of the items in the
tomb (see below) or explaining some information to do with their interment. The fact that these short
entries were made on individual bamboo slips, while the much larger wooden boards were used to write
the much longer summary texts proper, suggests that the item entries were written first before additional
or summary information was recorded on the appropriate surface (wooden boards or bamboo slips) and
inserted into the manuscript before it was bound. This argument is supported by the fact that the writing
on the summary boards and slips seems generally to be less carefully executed than the writing on the
Since the tomb inventory manuscript was in a state of considerable disarray when it was found, several different slip sequences have been proposed.405

As we have seen, several dozen tomb inventory texts constructed from bamboo, wood, or some combination of both, have been discovered in a number of tombs dating to the Warring States, Qin, and Han eras, appearing in the archaeological record more than any other type of text. Indeed, they are often the only texts found in early Chinese tombs. Interestingly, however, to date no tomb inventory text has been found that entirely matches the contents of the tomb in which it was interred.406 Not only this, but the entries in tomb inventory texts from early China are not always internally consistent. Zhou in BG, for example, notes that the numbers given on certain of the M3 inventory text summary boards do not match the figures listed in the preceding entries.407 Various explanations for this phenomenon have been adduced, including damage, looting, deliberate exaggeration, lack of space in the tomb, and the fact that tomb inventory texts included lists of items used or presented during the funeral ceremony, not all of which were actually intended for burial.408 Regardless of the specific reasons for these discrepancies, entry slips. The youfang formula also appears on some of the bamboo slip fragments recording poems from the Shi 詩 (Odes) discovered in the Western Han tomb at Fuyang 阜陽 (Shuanggudui 雙古堆, Anhui 安徽), and was likewise used to indicate that the slips carrying the texts of those odes were located to the right-hand side of the title slips. See Olivier Venture, “Le Livre des Odes,” in La fabrique du lisible: la mise en texte des manuscrits de la Chine ancienne et médiévale, ed. Jean-Pierre Drège avec la collaboration de Constantino Moretti (Paris: Institut des hautes études chinoises, 2014), p. 27. The same phrase also appears in the same position in some of the Bajiaolang 八角廊 (Dingzhou 定州, Hebei; Western Han) texts. See Olivier Venture, “Les six arcanes Strategiques,” in Drège (2014), p. 95. For a different interpretation of the meaning of this phrase, see Thies Staack, “Single and Multi-Piece Manuscripts in Early Imperial China: On the Background and Significance of a Terminological Distinction,” Early China 41 (2018), pp. 29-30n.95.

405 The slip sequences given in BG and JC, for example, differ considerably.


407 See, for example, BG, p. 63, where it is explained that summary board 236/216 provides numbers that do not match the numbers given in the entries on the preceding slips.

however, I argue that it would be a mistake to judge these texts according to the standards of modern administrative inventories, and that it may likewise be inappropriate to treat them as if their sole function was to coordinate burial arrangements or enter into administrative communication with the bureaucrats of the afterlife. As we will see, although great care and attention was sometimes paid to ensure that the entries in the Mawangdui tomb inventory texts accurately reflected the material assemblage of goods and objects used and displayed during the burial rites, they were more than just administrative lists used to coordinate the orderly movement of ritual objects. In fact, consistent with the evidence from tomb inventory texts discovered at other early Chinese tomb sites, the Mawangdui tomb inventory texts actually served as material embodiments of ritual order, objects that were designed, constructed, presented, and performed as ritual objects in their own right.

2.2.3 Producing the Mawangdui tomb inventory manuscripts

It is clear from the way the Mawangdui tomb inventory texts were designed and manufactured that they were not produced merely as administrative records, but as exquisite ritual artifacts. The calligraphy on the slips, for example, is beautifully and carefully executed, and some of the strokes on certain characters have been deliberately elongated for aesthetic purposes, indicating that they were not produced as incidental byproducts of ritual activity but as ritual objects to be used and displayed as part of a ceremonial performance. If the intention had

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409 Michael Loewe, “Wood and Bamboo Administrative Documents of the Han Period,” in New Sources of Early Chinese History: An Introduction to the Reading of Inscriptions and Manuscripts, ed. Edward L. Shaughnessy (Berkeley: Early China Special Monograph Series 3, 1997), p. 190 gestures towards this idea when he says that “[lists of] [f]unerary furnishings which were buried with the dead should not, strictly speaking, be classified with administrative documents; nor may they properly be handled in a survey of literary texts or technical manuals.” Loewe goes on to say that “[t]he inventories of the valuable treasures may have been intended as a catalogue with which to impress the authorities of the next world with a statement of the deceased person’s wealth and status, in the hope of securing appropriate respect and treatment; alternatively they may have been little more than the itemized lists of the goods which the undertakers had been ordered to bury, and which were then marked with signs to confirm that they had been duly placed in or around the coffin” (quotation on p. 191).
simply been to record lists of items related to the deceased and their funeral rites, then writing on wood (which was occasionally used to manufacture the tomb inventory texts found at other sites) would have sufficed, and multiple entries could have been written on a single slip to avoid wasting bamboo. Instead, comprised of single entries recorded on individual slips in an ornate and aesthetically appealing script style, the production of these documents speaks to a close connection between their administrative and ritual functions. The summary slips marked with thick black lines (and, in the case of the text from M3, written on wider wooden boards) allow the reader to skim through the texts to glean their contents, making them easier to use as administrative documents for coordinating the orderly flow of ritual goods and objects. Yet the elaborate and very attractive Han clerical script used to write them also speaks to non-administrative functions. The Mawangdui tombs also yielded texts that were evidently written by confident and capable scribes, yet which were clearly never intended to fulfill any aesthetic functions, but these tomb inventory slips were obviously prepared with an eye to aesthetic

410 In the *Yili* it is claimed that shorter written entries were made on wooden boards while longer entries were written on bamboo slips (*Yili*, 8.133a, 13.194a-194b), and in fact a number of shorter tomb inventory texts comprising entries made on wooden tablets have been found at numerous Western Han tomb sites, including Yunmeng 雲夢 M1, Jiangling gaotai 江陵高台 M18, and Suizhou Kongjiapo 隨州孔家坡 M8 site, all in Hubei. See Hubei sheng bowuguan 湖北省博物館, Xiaogan diqu wenjiaoju 孝感地區文教局, and Yunmeng xian wenhua guan Hanmu fajue zǔ 雲夢縣文化館漢墓發掘組, “Hubei Yunmeng Xihan mu fajue jianbao” 湖北雲夢西漢墓發掘簡報, *Wenwu* 文物 (1973).9, pp. 23-34; Hubei sheng Jingzhou diqu bowuguan 湖北省荊州地區博物館, “Gaotai 18 hao fajue jianbao” 高台 18號墓發掘簡報, *Wenwu* 文物 (1993).8, pp. 19-20; and Hubei sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo 湖北省文物考古研究所 and Suizhoushi wenwuju 隨州市文物局, “Suizhoushi Kongjiapo mudi M8 fajue jianbao” 隨州市孔家坡墓地 M8 發掘簡報, *Wenwu* 文物 (2001).9, pp. 27-31. See also Loewe (1997), p. 191; idem, “Manuscripts Found Recently in China: A Preliminary Survey,” *T’oung Pao* 62.2-3 (1977), pp. 105-106; and Zheng (2005), pp. 33-34 for lists of excavated tomb inventory texts, some of which take the form of inscribed wooden boards.

411 This format was used for certain entries on some of the rather longer tomb inventory texts from the Warring States period, for example those from the tomb of Marquess Yi of Zeng and the Baoshan 包山 and Wangshan 望山 (Jiangling, Hubei) tomb sites. See Mi (1991), p. 97; Constance.A. Cook, *Death in Ancient China: The Tale of One Man’s Journey* (Leiden: Brill, 2006), pp. 211-247; and Habberstad (2014), p. 197.

412 See, for example, the *“Za jinfang” 雜禁方 (“Assorted Forbidden Recipes”) text* on Medical Manuscript IX from M3 discussed in Chapter 1.
beauty. As mentioned above, the calligraphic style of the writing on the slips of the tomb inventory text from M3 is very similar to the style of the writing on the wooden labels (mupai 木牌, qianpai 簽牌) found attached to the bamboo hampers (zhusi 竹笥) used to store many of the goods found in M1 and M3 (see Figure 2.2), and the calligraphic beauty of both these sets of

A total of forty-eight bamboo hampers were found in the coffin of M1. Thirty-three were found in the western compartment of the outer coffin, stacked neatly in three layers: seven hampers on the top layer, six in the middle layer, and ten on the bottom layer. A further nine were found in the southern compartment of the coffin, and six were found in the eastern compartment. The twenty-four best preserved hampers were found on the top and middle layers in the western compartment, with the hampers in the bottom layers having become squashed and waterlogged. The hampers are rectangular in shape, around 48-50cm long, 28-30cm wide, and 15-16cm high. They were woven from thin strips of bamboo (zhumie 竹篾) around 0.4-0.5cm wide and 0.1cm thick. The hampers were tied using red or blue hemp string bindings, and some still had their wooden labels or clay seal blocks (fengni xia 封泥匣) attached to them. The string used to bind some of the bamboo hampers had rotted away, and the wooden labels and clay seal blocks that were originally attached to those hampers were found at the bottom of the coffin compartments. One of the bamboo hampers was considerably larger and finer than the others, measuring 69.5cm in length, 39.5cm in width, and 21cm in height. The contents of the hampers were mainly food, clothing, herbs and other plants, and mingqi burial objects. The hampers containing food items were lined with reed mats.

Thirty-seven clay seal blocks were found still attached to the bamboo hampers at the time of excavation. These wooden blocks are of uneven size, ranging from 4.2-7cm in length, 2.6-2.8cm in width, and 1.1-1.4cm thick, and each has a groove around 0.5cm deep cut into it to accommodate the insertion of a clay seal imprint. Twenty-seven of the seal imprints read “Family Assistant to the Marquess of Dai” (Daihou jiacheng 轭侯家丞) and two read “Commandant of the Right” (you wei 右尉). See Hans Bielenstein, The Bureaucracy of Han Times (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1980), p. 100 for a description of this position. Finally, one of the seal imprints reads “X purchased this” (mai zhi 買之). The characters on the other seven seal imprints are too damaged to read. The practice of using clay seal blocks began in the Warring States era and lasted through the Qin and Han empires, gradually dying out after the Eastern Han when they were replaced by bamboo slips and wooden tablets. Most public and private documents were tied with string, with the knots sealed with clay stamped with seals to prevent anyone from tampering with the contents. See Huang Wenjie 黃文傑, Qin Han wenzi de zhengli yu yanjiu 秦漢文字的整理與研究 (Beijing: Shehui kexue wenxian chubanshe, 2015), pp. 142-151 for an overview of seal imprint blocks from the Qin and Han.

Forty-nine wooden labels were discovered in M1, of which seventeen were still attached to their corresponding bamboo hampers at the time of excavation. All the wooden labels are rounded at the top and rectangular at the bottom, reminiscent of the shape of stone stele, and they are colored black in their upper portions. The sizes of the wooden labels range from 7.1-12cm in length, 3.8-5.7cm in width, and 0.2-0.4cm thick. They feature two holes, either in their upper or lower portions, used to attach them to the bamboo boxes. The wooden labels carry writing in an elaborate form of clerical script describing the contents of the bamboo boxes to which they were originally attached. The calligraphy is bold and aesthetically executed, and seems to have served some sort of display function. It is very similar to the calligraphy used to produce the tomb inventory manuscripts, especially the tomb inventory manuscript from M3. The materiality of the labels is in keeping with the labels used for document cases in Han times.

M1 also contained twenty-two jars (guan 罐子), nine in the eastern compartment and thirteen in the southern compartment. Six of these still had their bamboo labels (zhupai 竹牌) attached at the neck,
sources goes far beyond mere legibility. Indeed, the beauty of the writing is entirely unnecessary from a purely administrative perspective, suggesting that they were executed by specialists and a further seven had fallen off. Of these thirteen, only twelve are still legible or partially legible, denoting the contents of the jars, including soups and sauces. A further three were found in a different compartment. Some of them also have seal imprint blocks bearing the characters “Family Assistant to the Marquess of Dai.”

Fifty-two bamboo hampers were found in M3, though the majority of them were badly damaged. They were found in the eastern, western, and southern tomb compartments of the outer coffin. They were mostly stacked into piles of two tiers, though some piles consisted of three tiers. Twenty-one were found in the eastern compartment (five in the northern end, eight in the middle, and eight in the southern end), seventeen in the western compartment (six in the northern end, five in the middle, and six in the southern end), and fourteen in the southern compartment (five in the eastern end, five in the middle, and four in the western end). They were around 50cm long, 28-30cm wide, and 15cm high. The thin bamboo slips used to manufacture them were around 0.4-0.5cm wide and 0.1cm thick. One was much bigger than the others, measuring 65cm long and 35cm wide. The height is not noted in the excavation report.

Thirteen seal imprint blocks were found in M3. Twelve bore the notation “Family Assistant to the Marquess of Dai” and one read “Li X” (利 ). Fifty-two wooden labels were found in the tomb, though all of them had become detached from their corresponding bamboo hamper. The size of the wooden labels ranges from 6.4-9.9cm long, 4.3-6.5cm wide, and 0.15-0.2 5cm thick.

The writing on the wooden labels combines both utilitarian and ritual functions. On the one hand, these labels denote the contents of the bamboo boxes to which they were attached, and were evidently manufactured and used in the context of cataloging and coordinating the items to be displayed and interred as part of the funeral ceremony. On the other hand, however, the aesthetic form of the labels also speaks to non- or extra-administrative functions. The elaborate script style used to execute the writing, for example, speaks to some sort of display function, and the fact that the graph 箩 (hamper) is most often the largest character on the label perhaps reflects the fact that they were designed to showcase ritual-administrative order as much as to denote the contents of the hampers. As noted above, the calligraphy bears a striking resemblance to the writing on the tomb inventory slips from M1 and M3, and the shape and design of the labels are reminiscent of those that accompanied Han administrative documents. The shape, color, and script style of these wooden labels, then, locates them squarely within Han traditions of ritual and administration, suggesting that they were manufactured and written by the same ritual specialists who produced the tomb inventory texts. The obscure technical terms used on the labels means that only the fully literate would have been able to decode them, yet the labels would also have spoken to those less than fully literate (most of the audience members present at funeral ceremony, perhaps) as attractive symbols of ritual order that reflected both ritual control and expertise.

The figures outlined above show that although each bamboo hamper was originally accompanied by a corresponding wooden label, only a subset of the boxes carried seal imprint blocks with a name or title imprinted in clay. Presumably these were manufactured to show that the contents of these boxes had been donated by the individuals in question. See HM, 1.111-118 for a description of the bamboo hampers and labels from M1, as well as transcriptions of the labels; see also HM, 2.189-191 (plates 208-213; black and white photographs). See JC, 6.221-223 for additional transcriptions of the labels from M1. See NTM, pp. 106, 170-175 for a description of the clay seal blocks from M1 as well as a description and color photographs of some of the labels from the tombs. See HM, 1.126 for the bamboo labels attached to the jars in M1, as well as HM, 2.216 (plate 264; black and white). See BG, pp. 186-201 for a description of the bamboo boxes and labels from M3, as well as transcriptions of their contents. See also BG, plates 58-90 for black and white photographs of the clay seal blocks and labels from M3. See JC, 6.265 for additional transcriptions of the M3 labels.
working to fashion ritual objects rather than clerical functionaries churning out administrative
documents. This argument is supported by the fact that certain entries in the M3 inventory text
specify the exact location in the coffin where the items in question were to be interred,
suggesting that the scribes who produced the writing on these beautiful slips were not just
producing an administrative list but a document that was actually to be used during the course of
the burial ceremony (see below).

We can speculate that both the M1 and M3 tomb inventory manuscripts were probably
bound after writing since their graphs do not seem to have been written around any bindings, and

414 Interestingly, Zhang Jin 張今 has shown, through a detailed comparison of the wooden labels found at
the Liye 里耶 (Lonshan 龍山, Hunan; Qin dynasty), Mawangdui, Juyan 居延 (Gansu 甘肅; Western
Han) and Dongpailou 東牌樓 (Changsha, Hunan; Eastern Han) sites, that over the course of the Qin,
Western Han, and Eastern Han dynasties these types of labels gradually lost many of their most striking
online at the website of the “Center of Bamboo Silk Manuscripts of Wuhan University” 武漢大學簡帛研

415 One is reminded of the 30,000 administrative bone tags excavated at the Weiyang 未央 Palace
in the Former Han: Arguing for a Distinction,” in Manuscripts and Archives: Comparative Views on
Record-Keeping, ed. Sabine Kienitz, Michael Friedrich, Christian Brockmann, and Alessandro Bausi
administrative records would have been difficult to produce, store, and archive, and that the selection of
bone as a medium for administrative documentation seems especially strange considering that bamboo
and wood would have been widely available. Kern argues that the decision to spend time and resources on
the manufacture of these bone records speaks to their “rhetorical” rather than “practical” use.

416 See Chen Songchang 陳松長, “Mawangdui sanhao Hanmu mudu sanlun” 馬王堆三號漢墓木牘散論,
Wenwu 文物 (1994).6, p. 67. The entries on slips 184/398 and 324/399 read: “[the items listed] to the
right-hand side, store on the left-hand side [of the coffin]” 右方藏左方; “[the items listed] to the right-
hand side, store at the head [of the coffin]” 右方藏首. See BG, pp. 60, 68 and JC, 6.262. Note that slip
393/400 also stipulates that certain items should be “sealed in the inner coffin” (yi hong zai guan zhong
以鬨在棺中. See BG, p.72 and JC, 6.263. It is possible that these location slips were designed to inform
the members of the underworld bureaucracy where the items were located in the tomb rather than being
used to guide the interment of the objects as part of the actual burial ceremony. In this case, the
translation should be: “[the items listed] in X position are stored on the X side [of the coffin].” This seems
less likely, however, since the boxes of items were already clearly labeled and arranged in sets in the
coffin compartment, and it is doubtful that the members of the underworld bureaucracy would have
needed this information from the tomb inventory text. Yang (2016), p. 239 notes that the items mentioned
in these location slips were actually found in the corresponding areas of the tomb. See also Lai (2015b), p.
140.
the marks left behind by the bindings on certain slips are positioned in such a way that suggests the bindings would have run through the graphs on other slips in certain places. One of the advantages of this method of textual production would have been that it was easier to replace incorrect slips, and multiple scribes could work on different sections of the manuscript simultaneously. It would also have meant that the manuscript could more easily comprise exactly the right number of bamboo slips without having to remove unused components. Not all tomb inventory manuscripts were manufactured this way; some of the bamboo tomb inventory slips discovered at Changtaiguan 長台關 M1, which date from the Warring States era, for example, were bound prior to writing with gold-colored thread and bear knife marks where groups of characters and even the entire half of one slip have been scraped away, and the bamboo tomb inventory slips from the tomb of Marquess Yi of Zeng seem also to have been bound prior to writing. The care and attention that would have been required to execute beautiful calligraphic writing slip by slip on slender lengths of bamboo just 0.7cm wide reflects a production process that is more in keeping with the manufacture of a ritual object than one where the contents of a pre-made bamboo ledger were filled in for administrative purposes.

Multiple scribes working simultaneously with unbound slips would perhaps have been a less than desirable method of drawing up a list of ritual objects in the first instance, making it particularly difficult to count up totals, for example. This suggests that the scribe or scribes who produced these manuscripts probably did not produce the manuscript by counting or logging items laid out before them prior to or during the funeral, but worked instead from pre-made lists that formed the raw textual material for the production of the manuscripts.

417 It should be emphasized, however, that this is only a hypothesis, and that, in any case, the use of binding traces to judge whether slips were bound prior or subsequent to writing is uncertain. See my discussion of this issue in the Introduction.


Figure 2.2: Wooden label for one box of tangerines (*jiu si*) from M3 (JC, 2.297)
As noted above, if the competent execution of legible writing had been the sole or even the primary motivation behind the manufacture of these texts, then the use of wooden boards or thicker bamboo slips (both of which are represented among the writing materials at Mawangdui) would have sufficed.\(^{420}\) However, the use of bamboo as the main writing material for these burial texts had other ritual and practical implications: texts on bamboo had been used in the Western Zhou in the context of royal investiture rituals and appointment ceremonies (often including written lists of gifts that were read aloud as part of the ritual), as well as ancestor worship and commemoration,\(^{421}\) and writing a tomb inventory text on multiple bamboo slips rather than a

\(^{420}\) Indeed, the practice of writing longer entries on bamboo slips and shorter entries on wooden boards (mentioned in one of the Yili passages, as noted above, and generally reflected in excavated tomb inventory texts) is precisely the opposite of what was most practical and cost-effective.

\(^{421}\) This point is made in Cook (2006), pp. 11-12 and Lai (2015b), p. 141. Bamboo documents (ce 冊) appear in numerous Western Zhou bronze inscriptions as royal charges read aloud by a patron (usually the Zhou king) and gifted to the appointee as part of a ceremony where the appointee’s merits and virtuous accomplishments were celebrated and rewarded. See Constance A. Cook, “Wealth and the Western Zhou,” Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies 60.2 (1997), pp. 279-280; Li Feng, “Literacy and the Social Contexts of Writing in the Western Zhou,” in Writing and Literacy in Early China, ed. Li Feng and David Prager Branner (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2011); Kern (2007); Sarah Allan, “On Shu 書 (Documents) and the Origin of the Shang shu 尚書 (Ancient Documents) in Light of Recently Discovered Bamboo Slip Manuscripts,” Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies 75.3 (2012), pp. 552-555; and Constance A. Cook, Ancestors, Kings, and the Dao (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2017), p. 158. These pre-prepared written charges on bamboo that were read aloud (ceming/ceiling 冊命/冊令) often recorded lists of gifts including ritual paraphernalia, land, and even people, that were given to the vessel’s donor. See, for example, the famous Da Ke ding 大克鼎 inscription that dates from the late Western Zhou translated in Lothar von Falkenhausen, “The Royal Audience and its Reflections in Western Zhou Bronze Inscriptions,” in Li and Branner (2011), pp. 247-249 and Constance A. Cook and Paul R. Goldin, eds., A Source Book of Ancient Chinese Bronze Inscriptions (Berkeley: The Society for the Study of Early China, 2016), pp. 177-180. David Schaberg, “Command and the Content of Tradition,” in The Magnitude of Ming: Command, Allotment, and Fate in Chinese Culture, ed. Christopher Lupke (Honolulu: University of Hawaii, 2005), pp. 30-33 has even noted that it is possible that in some cases the written texts recorded in these inscriptions were actually produced during the ceremony. The public performance of bamboo slips inscribed with lists of luxury items before the ancestral spirits in the Western Han thus had clear historical precedent in the Western Zhou, and judging by the preservation of records (albeit in altered form) of Zhou investiture rituals in Han ritual compendia such as the Yili, Western Han ritualists would have been well aware of the antique origins of these practices. See Von Falkenhausen (2011), pp. 254-264. In addition to the Zhou investiture ceremonies, the records that eventually became part of the Chunqiu 春秋 (Springs and Autumnns Annals) may originally also have taken the form of writing on bamboo slips or tablets (ce) that were read aloud in the ancestral temple in a ritual setting. See Yuri Pines, “Chinese History Writing Between the Sacred and the Secular,” in Early Chinese Religion, Part One: Shang through Han (1250 BC-220 AD), ed. John Lagerwey and Marc Kalinowski (Leiden: Brill, 2009), pp. 318-323 and Newell
single large wooden board or measure of silk made it easier to remove parts of the manuscript during or after the funeral ceremony for ritual deposition in different parts of the tomb, as was done with the tomb inventory texts from the Warring States tomb at Baoshan and elsewhere.\footnote{422} The use of bamboo thus spoke to both the impressive degree of skill and control over resources (both human and material) that went into making the manuscript, and the ritual context within which the manuscript was embedded. Likewise, the wooden boards used in the M3 inventory text were evidently manufactured for both functional and aesthetic purposes. The boards could accommodate more text than even the widest bamboo slip, allowing the scribes to write lengthier summary entries without disturbing the formal and aesthetic order of the manuscript by either squeezing multiple columns of text onto the same bamboo slip or by writing a summary entry across multiple slips.

In both cases – the tomb inventory texts from M1 and M3 – the manuscripts were produced not by clerks or minor functionaries recording information in a ledger, but by highly trained scribes working (sometimes in multiple media) to prepare exquisite and beautiful ritual objects for both use and display. The care that went into the production of these manuscripts reflects the fact that they did not simply record ritual content, but actually embodied ritual order as well as broader notions of correctly patterned (\textit{wen 文}) ritual conduct.\footnote{423} In this sense, the text was a materialization of ritual-administrative order and not just a container of, or reference to, it. The scribes who worked on this document were not just drawing up a list of ritual objects, they

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\footnotetext{422}{Ann Van Auken, \textit{The Commentarial Transformation of the Spring and Autumn} (Albany: SUNY Press, 2016).}

\footnotetext{423}{Guolong Lai notes that the Baoshan tomb inventory manuscript was cut into multiple sections, with each section buried separately in the tomb in a choreographed act of ritual deposition, beginning in the southern compartment of the tomb and proceeding counter-clockwise, replicating movement of the Earth power in Warring States cosmology. See Lai (2002), pp. 40-41 and Lai (2015b), pp. 139-140. See also Chapter 3 for my discussion of the individual bamboo slip found in Mawangdui M2 and its relation to the tomb inventory text genre.}

\footnotetext{423}{For an overview of the transition undergone by \textit{wen} from its original meaning of patterned display to written texts, see Martin Kern, “Ritual, Text, and the Formation of the Canon: Historical Transitions of \textit{Wen} in Early China,” \textit{T’oung Pao} 87.1-3 (2001), pp. 43-91.}
were actually creating one, and we might even speculate that the production of these tomb inventory texts contributed to a shared sense of identity among the scribes and ritual specialists responsible for their manufacture and use.\(^{424}\)

2.2.4 Using the tomb inventory manuscripts

Based on references in later texts, such as the *Yili* passage translated above, it is widely believed that tomb inventory texts were actually used and read aloud during the funeral ceremony as part of a ritual display of administrative order. Despite the obvious dangers in basing our readings of excavated sources on passages from later texts whose dating is uncertain, in the case of tomb inventory texts there is in fact plenty of evidence to suggest that they were indeed displayed and used as part of ritual performance, and that they underwent at least one and possible more verification procedures before being presented at the tomb site. Certainly, we know that tomb inventory texts were regularly “marked up” subsequent to their manufacture as part of one or more verification procedures presumably carried out in order to ensure that the correct items were transported to the tomb site and deposited in the tomb. In addition to the counting marks made during the actual funeral procession found on the slips comprising the tomb inventory text from the tomb of Marquess Yi of Zeng cited above, the slips on the tomb inventory texts discovered in the Warring States tomb at Yangtianhu (Changsha, Hunan) contain notational markers (*yi* 已 and *ju* 句 [= *gou* 勾]) that seem to indicate whether or not the items had been buried, as well as other supplementary notations made after the manufacture of the text.\(^{425}\) This practice of making supplementary notations on tomb inventory texts continued

\(^{424}\) Tamar Hodos, for example, has argued that the production of artifacts, and not just their use or consumption, can also create shared values and identities. See Tamar Hodos, “Local and Global Perspectives in the Study of Social and Cultural Identities,” in *Material Culture and Social Identities in the Ancient World*, ed. Shelley Hales and Tamar Hodos (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 2009), p. 20.
into Early Imperial times, and the tomb inventory text from the Western Han tomb at Xiaojia caochang 蕭家草場 (Jingzhou 荊州, Hubei) contains characters and symbols such as 方 and + that seem to have functioned as verification notations during the burial rites.426 Similar verification marks have also been found on the tomb inventory texts discovered at Western Han sites at Fenghuangtai 鳳凰台 (Jiangling, Hubei) and Yinwan 尹灣 (Donghai 東海, Jiangsu 江蘇).427

The Mawangdui M3 tomb inventory manuscript also includes additional content supplemented after the manufacture of the manuscript proper, and several scholars have argued that these marks and notations were made when the contents of the manuscripts were read aloud during the funeral ceremony for the deceased. In a recently published article, Jiang Wen notes that in addition to check marks that take the form of a single vertical line | or a cross + on some of the M3 tomb inventory text slips, one of the slips (50/34 [+408]), which has fragmented into two pieces, carries an entry for some musical instruments and musicians that ends with a cross-shaped check mark and the notation “verified up to this point” (chou dao ci 餅到此) (see Figure 2.3).428 These three graphs are certainly smaller and less carefully executed than those in the entry that precedes them on the slip, and Tian Tian 田天 has situated them within the context of


Figure 2.3: Slip 50/34 [+408] from M3 tomb inventory text containing cross shaped verification mark and supplementary notion that the entries had been “verified up to this point” (chou dao ci) (JC, 2.261)
verification procedures made at the tomb site during the funeral rites. However, to my mind it seems rather unlikely that this verification notation was made at the tomb site during a ritual ceremony. The notation clearly indicates, for example, that the verification procedure from which it resulted was carried out in stages, with the scribe marking the point in the manuscript at which he had stopped counting, presumably so that he, or another scribe, could return to the task at a later point. It is hard to see how or why this notation could have been made during the funeral rites, and is in my view more easily explained as the byproduct of a verification procedure that took place when the contents of the manuscript were checked at some point prior to the interment ritual. Indeed, most of the other supplementary notions on the M3 tomb inventory manuscript would seem to derive from just such a verification process.

Chen Songchang 陳松長 has identified three sets of notations that he claims were made as part of a verification procedure carried out while the texts were read aloud during the funeral ceremony. One of the supplementary notations that Chen argues was written during the actual ceremony was made on summary board 104/87 (see Figure 2.4), which records the purchase of sixteen additional clay ding cauldrons after it was discovered during some sort of verification procedure that they were missing from the count given in the tomb inventory entry (buzu shiliu mai wading xi tu 不足十六買瓦鼎錫 [= 塗]).

This supplementary notation was clearly added by a scribe working with the finished tomb inventory text and not during the initial production of the manuscript, judging by the information provided and the placement of the graphs on the board, and it is theoretically possible, as Chen argues, that they resulted from a counting process that took place during the

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429 See Tian (2019), esp. p. 70. See also JC, 6.232n.1 (for slip 34/50 [+408]).

430 See Chen (1994), p. 68; BG, p. 54; and JC, 6.237. Zheng and Jiang in JC take the final two characters in this entry to mean that the cauldrons were layered with some sort of tin coating (duxi 鍍錫); see JC, 6.205n.2 (for slip 221 in the M1 inventory manuscript). However, BG, p. 54 notes that no such clay tripods were found in the tomb, suggesting that, if they were ever actually purchased, they were intended merely for display during the funeral ceremony and not for interment in the tomb. See also Lai (2015b), p. 140.
ceremony as the tomb inventory text was being read aloud before a live audience. However, it is worth reflecting on the circumstances that would have required such an entry to be recorded. Perhaps, for example, the scribe simply wanted to update the record for posterity with information that was as accurate as possible. If this was the case, however, then it certainly stands out in the context of a document that contains numerous discrepancies with the actual contents of the tomb, not to mention the fact that this supplementary notation reflects rather poorly on the organizational abilities of the ritualists who coordinated the funeral. As we have seen, the Mawangdui tomb inventory texts, consistent with other examples of the genre, do not generally specify which items were to be buried and which were merely for display at the tomb site, nor do they explain the vast majority of discrepancies in the types and numbers of items interred compared with the entries on the slips. In sum, there is no evidence that the scribes and ritualists responsible for the manufacture of the Mawangdui tomb inventory manuscripts were concerned with recording complete and accurate information related to the burial items, either for posterity or for the underworld bureaucrats to whom these texts were ostensibly directed (see below).

Instead, I propose to read this supplementary entry as a note designed to inform the ritualists responsible for checking the contents of the text that sixteen of the cauldrons listed in the original entries were missing, and so an additional set made from inferior materials had been purchased. It is even possible that the note was meant as an actual instruction for the purchase of these cauldrons. In either case, the notation was made not as a record for posterity or a full and frank account for delivery to the underworld, but rather as a pragmatic communication directed at the ritualists responsible for using the tomb inventory manuscript to coordinate items used in the burial rites for the deceased. As mentioned above, certain slips in the M3 inventory text specify the precise locations where certain items recorded in the tomb inventory slips were to be buried, alerting us to the fact that one of the functions of the text was to communicate
Figure 2.4: Slip 108/47 from M3 tomb inventory text containing supplementary notion referencing the purchase of additional cauldrons (JC, 2.265)
information relevant to the coordination of the funeral goods between the ritualists involved in arranging and carrying out the burial rites. If we assume that certain verification procedures were carried out prior to the ritual reading of the document during the funeral ceremony, for which we actually have suggestive evidence (see below), then this notation makes more sense as a communication between ritualists than as a ritual recording of a procedural error.

A second, and perhaps the most interesting, example of a supplementary notation made subsequent to the initial manufacture of the tomb inventory text, appears on board 407/407 that appears, at least according to Zhou in BG, towards the very end of the manuscript. The board carries an entry for a list of clothing items and sacks of hemp seeds, followed by a note marked off from the rest of the entry by the symbol •. This note reads “Bamboo hamper No. 2, totaling fifteen items, not to be sent” (乙笥凡十五物不發) (see Figure 2.5). Chen has interpreted this phrase as a supplementary note added by the official in charge of reading out the document during the funeral ceremony, and Zheng and Jiang in JC have also associated this note with other notations in the manuscript updating the character counts on certain entries, which they claim were likewise made during some sort of verification process (see below).

Zheng and Jiang also caution, however, that this wooden board should be treated separately from the materials that constitute the tomb inventory text proper. Although Zhou Shirong states in BG that the individual wooden board found by itself in the eastern compartment of the outer coffin of M3 mentioned above was the board that Zhou in BG, and Zheng and Jiang in JC, agree originally came at the very beginning of the manuscript, and which serves as its introduction (hereafter referred to as “the introductory board”; see below), Zheng and Jiang point out that the original excavation report published in the journal Wenwu 文物 states that the wooden board found by itself in the eastern compartment of the coffin of M3 was

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431 See BG, p. 73 and JC, 6.263, 2.294.
433 See JC, 6.263.
Figure 2.5: Board 407/407 from M3 tomb inventory text containing supplementary notation recording list of items not to be sent for interment (JC, 2.294)
in fact this wooden board containing the entry for the fourteen items of clothing and the sacks of hemp seeds, items specifically mentioned in the initial excavation report. Zheng and Jiang note that not only was this board found separately from the other wooden boards and the bamboo slips forming the tomb inventory text in another compartment of the coffin, it can also be distinguished from these materials on the basis of its form and contents. They point out that this board does not contain the phrase “to the right-hand side” (youfang) to introduce its contents like the other summary boards do, nor does it feature the same line drawn in black ink across its top edge that characterizes the other wooden summary boards. The board also has black, diamond-shaped grooves carved into it, and in addition the entry combines two kinds of items, clothing and sacks (nang 囊) of bi 賁 (= fen 薨) hemp seeds, which distinguishes it from the entries and summaries of the various single-category sections of the rest of the tomb inventory text. The physical dimensions of the board also distinguish it from the other boards, as it is significantly shorter (23cm) and wider (6cm) than the summary boards of the M3 inventory text.

This wooden board refers to a “bamboo hamper No. 2,” a reference to the kinds of woven bamboo containers mentioned above that were found alongside wooden labels in M1 and M3, with some of the labels still attached to their hampers. Happily, it has been possible to identify the bamboo hamper referred to in the wooden board entry with one of the labels found in M3, an imitation wooden label marked with the inscription “bamboo hamper No. 2” (yi si 乙笥) in black ink. However, both the form and content of this label distinguish it from the other wooden labels found in M1 and M3. While the other labels have rounded tops painted black and bear inscriptions denoting the contents of the boxes to which they were attached, the label for “bamboo hamper No. 2” is much smaller, square in shape, and was not painted black at the top. Additionally, the inscription “bamboo hamper No. 2” does not denote the contents of the

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hamper. For these reasons, He Jiejun 何介鈞 in BG speculates that this label was interred as a “symbolic object” (xiangzheng wu 象徵物).\footnote{BG, pp. 188-189.}

He Jiejun notes that this is one of three wooden labels that does not bear an entry that can be related to an entry in the tomb inventory text, and since the other two such labels actually denote the contents of the hampers to which they were originally attached (and since one of them was found near the hamper to which it probably originally belonged),\footnote{BG, pp. 188, 198.} it seems that although the tomb inventory texts list certain entries by hamper, the items found in certain hampers in the tomb were listed individually in the tomb inventory entries (or not at all), suggesting that while some hampers had been filled prior to the drawing up of the tomb inventory texts others were filled after the text was compiled. This is further evidence that changes were made to the burial items after the tomb inventory text was made. There are also fifteen containers listed in the tomb inventory text that do not appear either as items found in the tomb or as wooden labels, suggesting that even after the items were sorted into hampers, not all of them made their way into the tomb, at least not in this way.\footnote{BG, p. 198.}

This wooden board is clearly not a part of the tomb inventory text proper, yet I disagree with Zheng and Jiang, who argue that it should be treated separately from the rest of the tomb inventory’s components. Rather, I propose to treat this board as a sort of appendix or addendum prepared during the verification process used to coordinate the items listed in the tomb inventory. This appendix board lists fourteen items of clothing and fourteen sacks of seeds, entries which can be identified almost verbatim with entries in the tomb inventory proper. If this were a tomb inventory entry, then it is hard to see why they would repeat verbatim certain entries already listed in the tomb inventory slips, and if this were a summary board then it is unclear why the scribes would list only some of the preceding entries. The answer to the question of the nature of

\footnote{BG, pp. 188-189.}
\footnote{BG, pp. 188, 198.}
\footnote{BG, p. 198.}
this board, I believe, lies with the final notation: “Bamboo hamper No. 2, totaling fifteen items, not to be sent.” Whether the number fifteen is a miscounting of the fourteen items of clothing listed on the board, or whether it is the total arrived at by adding the fourteen items of clothing to the seeds (in fourteen bags) to form fifteen items, it is clear from the placement of this notation at the end of the preceding entry that it represents a sort of mini summary or explanation of the preceding entries. That is, this wooden board is a supplementary appendix prepared during the verification process to record that one bamboo hamper containing these fifteen items was not to be sent (fa 发) for interment. Indeed, Chen Songchang has remarked that these items of clothing, as well as many other items of clothing listed in the tomb inventory slips, seem never to have been interred at all, with only scraps of silk remaining in many of the boxes.\footnote{See Chen (1994), p.68 and BG, p. 198. Chen wonders why, if the clothing had simply rotted away, the silk manuscripts and silk paintings from the same tomb survived relatively intact. Chen concludes that these items were simply never interred in the first place, an argument fully supported by the entry on the appendix board.} For some reason, then, it was decided at some point during the verification process that one hamper of clothing was not to be interred. A supplementary note stating as much was written on a new appendix board, with this box listed as “bamboo hamper No. 2,” and an imitation wooden label was buried in its place, seemingly as recognition that this box had indeed at one point existed as part of the assemblage of funeral objects. The appendix board was then buried separately from the rest of the M3 inventory text materials along with its associated wooden label in the eastern compartment of the outer coffin.

This appendix entry was probably made on a separate wooden board because it was too long to fit onto one of the existing summary boards, and because as an appendix board rather than a tomb inventory board proper it merited a carrier that could be physically distinguished from the other boards in the tomb inventory text. Certainly, it would have been far easier to draw up this appendix board than to scrape away and re-write the relevant entries on the various bamboo slips, or to replace the slips on which they were recorded. Use of the term fa (to send)
suggests that this notation was meant to communicate that the objects were not to be sent to the tomb site for the ceremony, not that they were not intended for burial, further suggesting that this notation was made during some sort of verification procedure that took place prior to the ceremony itself. Again, contra Chen, I prefer to read this notation as a communication between ritualists rather than as a notation made during the actual burial rites. Supplementary evidence for my argument comes in the form of another notation made on the same board, a notation not examined by Chen but transcribed by Zheng and Jiang in JC as *zhao suo lai* 召所來, “[it/they?] was [were?] summoned.”439 Judging by the large, seemingly hastily scrawled characters and their prominent placement in the center of the lower portion of the board, this notation was almost certainly made some time after the “Bamboo hamper No. 2 entry,” making it unlikely that the former entry was made during the ritual itself. Instead, this notation probably reflects another step in a multi-stage verification process carried out prior to the funeral ceremony (see below).

Again, it should be emphasized that we have no evidence to suggest that the ritualists in charge of creating or verifying these documents were particularly concerned with recording accurate information about which items were to be buried and which were to be displayed, nor were they apparently keen to ensure that the number counts were completely accurate except perhaps when an increase in the numbers of items interred or displayed suited their interests (see below). Instead, these supplementary notations seem more like communications or memoranda between ritualists responsible for the orderly movement and coordination of ritual objects, including the tomb inventory text itself. It was evidently necessary that the ritualists keep each other abreast of certain major changes in the number of tomb items involved in the funeral,

439 This transcription improves on the transcription provided in BG, p. 73: 白^1_2 (?) 未. Unfortunately, Zhou Shirong does not elaborate on what his graphic rendering of this inscription might mean. It is unclear whether the object(s) being “summoned” in this inscription should be the items listed in the entry or perhaps the board itself. If it is the latter, then the entry was probably added to inform a fellow ritualist that the board had been specially requested, presumably for burial. The fact that the board was indeed interred in the tomb may support this reading of the inscription. In addition, no effort has been made to integrate the inscription into the preceding entry, further suggesting that it may have been meant to refer to the board itself and not to the items listed in the entries on the board.

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including the fact that entire sets of expensive and precious cauldrons were missing and that numerous items across several categories had been removed from the collection of burial items.

The final set of supplementary notations that Chen Songchang has argued were made during the funeral ceremony appear on slips 332/313 and 377/356, reading “now four” (jin si 今四) and “now three” (jin san 今三) respectively. These notations were written to reflect an increase in the number of items listed on these tomb inventory slips (see Figure 2.6), and Zheng and Jiang in JC similarly identify these phrases as “collation remarks” (jiaochou yu 校讎語). Judging by the supplementary information provided, the rushed hand, and their placement on the slips, these notations were clearly made subsequent to the initial production of the tomb inventory text. In the case of the jin san notation, if the scribe had merely wanted to update the record during some sort of verification process prior to the funeral ceremony then he could simply have added an extra stroke to update the number count from two (er 二) to three (san 三) without disturbing the formal unity of the exquisitely manufactured bamboo document. The fact that the scribe instead scrawled an additional notation onto the surface of the slip, rather than adding the extra stroke, scraping away the incorrect characters, or adding this notation to the relevant summary board, suggests he may have been working in some haste, quite possibly, as Chen suggests, during the course of the interment ceremony. Interestingly, there are no supplementary notations on the slips or summary boards explaining that fewer items than the number recorded in the relevant item entry were being buried or displayed, even though many of the items in the tomb are fewer in number than their associated entry. Perhaps it was simply considered inappropriate to record such a ritual slippage. Regardless, it is possible, as Chen has argued, that the scribes who read these entries aloud as part of the funeral ceremony may simply not have wanted to miss the opportunity to scribble down a note directly on the slip to reflect the fact that more items were on display than had previously been recorded.

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441 JC, 6.256.
Figure 2.6: Slips 332/313 and 377/356 from M3 tomb inventory text containing supplementary notations “now four” (jin si) and “now three” (jin san) respectively (JC, 2.286 and 2.290)
Of these three sets of additional inscriptions argued by Chen Songchang to be notations made during the funeral ceremony, then, only one (the *jin san* and *jin si* notations) seems to offer plausible (yet ultimately inconclusive) evidence for such a public, ritual inscription. It is unlikely that a scribe reading a text aloud as part of a live funeral ceremony would have been able to produce a written appendix in situ, and, as noted above, the use of the term *fa* (to send) also seems to suggest that the additional notation on the appendix board was made prior to the funeral items being sent to the tomb site, rather than immediately prior to their deposition in the tomb. It also seems unlikely that the ritualists presiding over the funeral ceremony would have been able to arrange for the purchase of an additional sixteen tripods at such short notice, and even less likely that it would have gone unnoticed prior to the ceremony that so great a number of tripods was unaccounted for. In sum, it seems reasonable to assume that these two sets of additional notations were produced by scribes working to verify that the correct items were being prepared for burial at some point prior to the actual funeral ceremony.

Since the introductory board described below specifically mentions that the M3 tomb inventory text was submitted to at least two officials between the time of the text’s composition and its burial, it is impossible to say with absolute certainty when and where the different types of supplementary notations were made. The physical evidence examined above, however, suggests that the M3 inventory text was verified at least twice, encompassing at least two stages of supplementary notation, with at least one of these verification processes taking place before the presentation of the document at the tomb site, and another possibly taking place as part of the burial ceremony itself. As we will see, however, these supplementary notions are not the only pieces of evidence to suggest that the Mawangdui tomb inventory texts were used and displayed as part of the funeral rites for the deceased.

442 Indeed, some sort of table support would have been required to add written text to extremely long manuscripts such as the M3 tomb inventory document, which would seem to suggest the notations were made in some sort of workshop setting rather than at the tomb site within a live ritual ceremony. See Chapter 5 for a discussion of the use of tables as writing supports in early China.
2.2.5 Performing the tomb inventory manuscripts

Evidence for the ritual presentation and performance of the M3 tomb inventory text comes in the form of the wooden introductory board mentioned above, which Zhou Shirong in BG and Zheng Shubin and Jiang Wen in JC place at the beginning of the manuscript (see Figure 2.7). Traces of what appear to be binding marks are clearly visible at the top and bottom of the board, and the fact that these marks run through certain characters in the entry means that it was almost certainly written before it was bound together with the other slips and boards to form the tomb inventory manuscript. Even if the board was not originally bound together with the tomb inventory materials, however, its relation to the tomb inventory text is clearly evidenced by its inscription.

Figure 2.7: Introductory board to M3 tomb inventory text (JC, 2.258)
The board measures 27.5cm long and 3.5cm wide, according to BG, and bears the following message in black ink:

In the twelfth year [of the reign of Emperor Wen, i.e., 168 BCE], in the second month designated *yisi*, on the first day of the month designated *wuchen*. Family Assistant Fen submits [this document] to the Gentleman of the Palace in charge of the funeral [burial? tomb?]. That which is submitted is a bound record of the funeral goods; once the text is taken to the tomb site it is to be completely presented to the Master of the Funeral [burial? tomb?].

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443 My understanding of the precise meanings of these date notations has been greatly aided by the translation in Jeffrey K. Riegel, “A Summary of Some Recent *Wenwu* and *Kaogu* Articles on Mawangdui Tombs Two and Three,” *Early China* 1 (1975), p. 11.

444 See BG, p. 43 and JC, 6.227. Note that these two transcriptions differ significantly from each other, as discussed below.

445 In BG this graph is transcribed by Zhou Shirong as 承 (*cheng*; lit., to bear), who glosses it as *cheng* 丞 (lit., deputy). However, Zheng and Jiang in JC follow Chen Songchang in transcribing it directly as 丞. Zheng and Jiang cite Fu Juyou’s *傅舉有* observation that the Family Assistant (*jiacheng* 家丞) was a relatively senior position, equivalent to the magistrate (*xianzhang* 縣長) of a small county. This tallies with the information given in Bielenstein (1980), pp. 69, 100, where the title is translated as Assistant to the Household. I follow Michael Loewe, *A Biographical Dictionary of the Qin, Former Han and Xin Periods* (221 BC–AD 24) (Leiden: Brill, 2000), p. 760, who translates the title as Family Assistant. Cf. the translation in Charles Hucker, *A Dictionary of Official Titles in Imperial China* (Taipei: Southern Imperials Center, 1984), p. 137, where it is rendered as “Household Aide,” “an assistant to the Administrator (*xiang*) of a Princedom (*wangguo*) or a Marquisate (*houguo*), theoretically one for every 1,000 households in the jurisdiction.”

446 Chen (1994), pp. 64–67 takes the first instance of *yi* 移 as a way of indicating submission (*chengdi* 呈递) of a document to a superior, and the second *yi* as an abbreviation of the phrase *suoyi* 所移, “that which is submitted.” I follow his interpretations.

447 JC gives a useful overview of the different transcriptions and interpretations of this graph, which appears three times in the text. In short, it is unclear whether the graph is being used to write the word *zang* 葬 (funeral) or the word *cang* 藏, either in its more common sense of storage [= burial?], or in its less common sense of a tomb site. Whether the gentleman (*langzhong*) mentioned in the inscription was “in charge of the funeral” (*zhuzang* 主葬), “in charge of the burial” (*zhucang* 主藏), or “in charge of the tomb” (also *zhucang*), it is clear that this is a reference to some sort of official presiding over the organization of at least some part of the funeral proceedings for Li Xi, and not a member of the underworld bureaucracy.

448 Chen (1994), pp. 67–68 argues that the graph that Zhou transcribes as *xuan* 選 (lit., to choose) and reads as *zuan* 撰 (to compile), is actually *zhi* 質 (to check, to verify). Zheng and Jiang in JC, however, cite
While Zhou Shirong had understood this board as an address to “the underworld bureaucracy” (yincao difu 陰曹地府) prepared by the household assistant of the tomb occupant, my translation follows the more recent transcription provided by Zheng and Jiang in JC, who have argued convincingly, based on the latest studies and transcriptions, that the writing on the board in fact describes how the tomb inventory text was to be submitted to living officials presiding over the funeral arrangements at the tomb site. A number of recent studies have essentially confirmed that this board is not, as was once thought, a document in the “announcements to the world below” (gaodi shu 告地書) genre.449

Though the entry does not specifically state that the presentation of the text at the tomb site constituted a part of the funeral ceremony itself, we can infer as much from the fact that the individual who was to take receipt of the document there, the Master of the Funeral/Burial (zang/cang jun 葬/藏君), is clearly a senior official in charge of at least some aspect of the funeral proceedings, and the term used to refer to its presentation (jì zou 具奏, “completely presented”) suggests the ritual presentation of a document from an official to his superior.450 Additionally, it is hard to see why the anticipated handover of this document would have been considered worth recording in this way unless it constituted part of the funeral ceremony, with the text’s self-referential emphasis on its orderly movement, submission (yi 移), and presentation

Li Xueqin’s 李學勤 argument (via Li Jiahao 李家豪) that what Zhou has as xian xuan 先選 (first select) should actually be transcribed as guăng bīng 光 彜, equivalent to the phrase kuāng bīng 墳 彜, Zheng and Jiang follow Li Jiahao in interpreting kuāng as tomb cave” (muxué 墳穴) and bīng as “the cave at the mouth of the burial mound” (zhòng kòu xué 冢口穴).

449 For an overview of the arguments surrounding the nature and purpose of this board, see Michael Friedrich, “The ‘Announcement to the World Below’ of Ma-wang-tui 馬王堆 3,” Manuscript Cultures, Newsletter No. 1 (Autumn/Winter 2008), pp. 7-15. Friedrich comes to the conclusion, based on the language of the entry, that it does not belong in the category of gaodi shu. For similar arguments, see Chen (1994) and Chen Songchang 陳松長, “Mawangdui sanhao Hanmu jinian mudu xingzhi de zai renshi,” 馬王堆三號漢墓紀年木牘性質的再認識, in Chen (2008a), pp. 58-62. See also K.E. Brasier, “Han Thanatology and the Division of ‘Souls,’” Early China 21 (1996), p. 130n.23. For a brief overview of texts in the gaodi shu genre, see Ma (2002), pp. 100-102.

450 The term “completely presented” (jì zou) may itself imply some sort of performance, potentially even a reading aloud of the document before the Master of the Funeral. Alternatively, it could refer to the fact that the text comprised multiple rolls of slips that were “completely” presented as part of the ritual.
to increasingly senior officials placing it squarely within the realm of ritual performance.

The introductory board thus makes clear that the tomb inventory text was not merely a tool used to coordinate ritual proceedings, but a ritual artifact in its own right that was presented as part of the funeral rites. This does not mean, however, that the text was not ultimately intended to be read by underworld bureaucrats. Despite the fact that the text does not contain an explicit address to underworld officials, and although the content of the text differs significantly from the kinds of documents sent to the underworld discovered at other tomb sites, the fact that tomb inventory documents are often found together with such materials in Western Han tombs, including passports and introductory letters specifically addressed to members of the underworld bureaucracy, suggests they may have been intended for the same eventual readership.451 The contents of the tomb inventory texts are extremely dry, and the terms and character forms contained within them are often obscure and complex, meaning that any reader would have had to be both highly literate and actively interested in this kind of administrative record-keeping to find a use for these texts. Certainly, there is no evidence from M1 to suggest that its occupant,

451 The Western Han finds excavated from Jiangling gaotai M18 mentioned above, for example, included four wooden boards of different dimensions, one belonging to the tomb inventory genre and the others serving as passports and introductory letters for the deceased. See Hubei sheng Jingzhou diqu bowuguan (1993), pp. 12-20. The Western Han tomb at Jiangling fenghuang shan 江陵凤凰山 M168 also contained both a tomb inventory text and a bamboo board addressed to the underworld recording the date of burial. See Jining cheng Fenghuangshan yi liu hao Hanmu zhengli xiaozu 纪南城凤凰山一六八号汉墓整理小组, “Hubei Jiangling Fenghuangshan yi liu ba hao Hanmu fajue jianbao” 湖北江陵凤凰山一六八号汉墓发掘简报, Wenwu 文物 (1975).9, pp. 1-7, 22 and Hubei sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo 湖北省文物考古研究所, “Jiangling Fenghuangshan yi liu ba hao Hanmu” 江陵凤凰山一六八号汉墓, Kaogu xuebao 考古学报 (1993).4, pp. 455-512. In the Eastern Han, land contracts (diquan 地券), celestial ordinances for the dead (zhennu wen 镇墓文), and tomb inventory texts often explicitly prayed for protection for the living and absolution from sin for the deceased, and some were accompanied by talismanic characters or diagrams, sometimes containing explicit references to the underworld bureaucracy. Indeed, as Terry Kleeman has pointed out, the fact that no Eastern Han tomb has produced more than one of these three types of document may suggest that they performed similar or even identical functions. See Terry F. Kleeman, “Land Contracts and Related Documents,” in Chūgoku no shūkyō shisō to kagaku: Makio Ryōkai Hakushi shōju kinen ronshū 中国の宗教・思想と科学：牧尾良海博士頌寿記念論集, ed. Makio Ryōkai Hakushi Shōju Kinen Ronshū Kankōkai 牧尾良海博士頌寿記念論集刊行会 (Tokyo: Kokusho kankōkai, 1984), p. 9.
Xin Zhui, was either literate enough or interested enough in written texts to enjoy reading dry administrative documents, or any other kind of documents for that matter, either during her lifetime or in the afterlife. Of course, if these texts were intended to be read by members of the underworld bureaucracy this would only have made their presentation and performance at the tomb site even more powerful. Thus, not only did these ritual artifacts symbolize political power, administrative control, and elite status, they were also potent materializations of the ability to enter into communication with the denizens of the underworld, serving as a powerful point of contact and a material bridge between this life and the next. Carefully compiled from raw textual material, exquisitely manufactured as ritual objects, then ritually presented as part of the burial rites, the M3 inventory text, and almost certainly the M1 inventory text as well, were potent ritual artifacts that symbolized ritual-administrative power.

The ritual use of the Mawangdui tomb inventory texts did not end, however, with their presentation at the tomb site. As we have seen, the entries on the texts were likely read aloud as part of the funeral rites, with the objects displayed and counted in some way before and during the burial. Indeed, that such a counting process did indeed constitute part of the tomb site interment rituals carried out at Mawangdui is evidenced by three bamboo counting slips that were discovered in M1 (see Figure 2.8). These three slips look much like any other bamboo slips, except that their top edges have been worked into a “凸”-shaped point, indicating that they had perhaps been specially prepared for the purpose of ritual counting, and certainly that they were not just scrap pieces of bamboo. The three slips contain no writing and have been marked with a series of black ink dots and strokes that Zheng and Jiang in JC identify as verification.

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452 Michael Nylan has argued that the idea that tomb inventory texts were meant for private reading by the deceased “excises the social context of writing within the ritual system; fails to explain why the texts and inscriptions consigned to tombs were often written in beautiful script and full of mistakes; and presumes that the tomb occupants would not have preferred the Han equivalent of light reading.” Nylan also points out that one of the functions of tomb inventory texts may have been to demonstrate the powerful connections enjoyed by the deceased, and, in the case of male officials, may also have been thought to guarantee them official status in the afterlife. See Nylan (2005), p. 35.

453 See JC, 6.173 for a brief description of these counting slips. For color photographs, see JC, 2.250-251.
(yandui 驗對) marks. The marks seem relatively disordered and hastily produced, a far cry from the kinds of orderly administrative counting records that would presumably have been produced if the scribes had not been working live during a public ceremony.⁴⁵⁴ These separate counting slips, which could not have been marked up during the ceremony by the same person responsible for reading the tomb inventory text entries aloud,⁴⁵⁵ also suggests the presence of multiple ritual-administrative specialists working as part of the funeral proceedings, meaning that administrative display played an even more prominent role in the burial rites. The slips carry no semantic information whatsoever and could easily have been discarded as scrap material produced as a byproduct of ritual activity. The fact that they were preserved and interred along with the items used in the funeral ceremony suggests not only that they carried significance as ritual objects incorporated into the funerary rites, but also that they served as physical manifestations of correct administrative order. It is even possible that these counting slips can be identified with the counting tallies (suan 算) mentioned in the Yili passage translated above.

The counting slips from M1, and perhaps the hastily executed emendations to the number records made on the slips from the M3 inventory text, thus serve as material proof of what the introductory board from the M3 inventory text states more explicitly: proper ritual procedure has been carried out. Taken together, the different types and layers of writing found on the tomb inventory manuscripts from M1 and M3, as well as the other materials related to their production and use, testify that the manuscripts were used and performed as part of a ritual display of administration that took the form of presenting, reading, counting, and perhaps marking the text and its entries within a ritual ceremony. Certainly, the material dimensions of these bamboo

⁴⁵⁴ It is even possible that these disorderly marks were entirely symbolic and did not represent actual counts. An alternative explanation is that only some of the counting slips were interred in the tomb, or that these marks were produced by blotting excess ink from the writing brush used in the ceremony. In either case, they serve as compelling evidence that some sort of textual production and/or display was incorporated into the funeral rites.

⁴⁵⁵ It would surely have been too cumbersome, given the length of the manuscript, for the person responsible for reading the entries aloud to hold the bamboo scroll in his hands while also marking counts on these separate slips, for example.
Figure 2.8: Bamboo counting slips from M1 (JC, 2.251)
manuscripts would have made them impressive feats of administrative spectacle. The format of the documents, with single entries written on individual slips, would have facilitated reading aloud during the ceremony, with the audience exposed to the public reading of the text as a highly visible symbol of ritual order. The bamboo manuscripts would have had to be unrolled during the ritual reading in a strikingly performative manner, with the gradual unrolling of the manuscript portion by portion, and perhaps even scroll by scroll, serving as a performative analog to the orderly arrangement of the items entered in the text. Of course, all of these elements would have been as impressive to non- or semi-literate, for whom the recited lists of luxury items with obscure names may have been confusing if not largely meaningless, as to those with full mastery over reading and writing.

Yang Hua 楊華 has tabulated the data gleaned from the tomb inventory texts discovered so far in Warring States and Early Imperial tombs to demonstrate a connection between the status of the tomb occupant and the lengths of the slips that were used to manufacture their tomb inventory texts. Clearly, the grander the tomb and the higher the tomb occupant’s status, the longer the slips that were used, and it seems unlikely that it would have been necessary to observe sumptuary regulations regarding the material form of tomb inventory texts if they were not considered to be important ritual objects.

456 Lists of obscure terms related to objects reflecting wealth and material splendor recited during choreographed performances, tomb inventory texts, much like 赋 rhapsodic poems, were no doubt intended to impress and overwhelm as much through the overwhelming power of language and sound as through the communication of semantically intelligible words. Fabio Rambelli has noted how even today in Japan, Buddhist scriptures are regularly recited or chanted without their contents being understood by members of the audience. See Fabio Rambelli, Buddhist Materiality: A Cultural History of Objects in Japanese Buddhism (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007), p. 88.

457 Indeed, Michael D. Carrasco, “Performance, Presence, and Genre in Maya Hieroglyphs,” in Englehardt (2012), p. 141 notes that “[p]ublic performance of texts had a central social role in societies whose populations were largely illiterate or semiliterate or in which books and other texts were largely unavailable.”

slips used to produce the tomb inventory texts discovered at Mawangdui was more or less circumscribed, and that the material dimensions of the slips both reflected and projected the elite though not quite exalted status of the tomb occupant. However, it is also telling that the tomb inventory texts from Mawangdui are the longest such manuscripts discovered to date, a length that could easily have been reduced if multiple entries had been made on each slip.460 Indeed, there are plenty of examples of tomb inventory manuscripts written in precisely this way.461 Whether the single-entry slip format was used at Mawangdui deliberately to lengthen the manuscript, or whether this was a byproduct of a form primarily adopted to facilitate the text’s readability, it is certain that the tomb inventory texts from Mawangdui M1 and 3 were extraordinarily long and impressive, something which would not have gone unnoticed or unappreciated by the witnesses to the readings that formed part of the funeral ceremonies. The ritual specialists in charge of these ceremonies evidently found a way to manufacture a ritual text-object to be performed publicly as part of the funeral ceremony that simultaneously respected the sumptuary conventions connected to the form of such manuscripts while also glorifying the importance of the deceased.

Clearly, the form of these tomb inventory texts speaks to a certain calculus directed at their readability. Dedicating an entire slip to each entry was desirable because it displayed at a glance the breadth of the objects listed, and the black marks at the top of the summary slips would also have facilitated reading of the document. In the case of the M1 inventory text, there is even punctuation between certain characters serving to guide the reader in his or her perusal of the manuscript. I have tried to show, however, that the significance or function of these texts is not reducible to “readership” in a strict sense, regardless of the intended audience, and that the

459 Lai (2015b), pp. 143-144 also notes the connection between the presence of tomb inventory texts in tombs and the exalted status of the tomb occupant.


461 The tomb inventory slips from the tomb of Marquess Yi of Zeng and the Baoshan tomb site mentioned above, for example.
ways in which the tomb inventory texts from Mawangdui were designed, manufactured, and performed suggest that their function resided as much in ritual displays of administrative order as in administration proper. The fact that these spectacles of administration took place at the tomb site as part of the funeral ceremony means that the ancestral spirits were also likely thought to constitute part of the audience, and since the King of Changsha donated certain items recorded in the M3 inventory text it is also likely that the King himself, or at least some of his representatives, was also in attendance. The point, however, was not simply to use these documents as tools for informing or even showing the mourners, the King, or the ancestral spirits the splendid array of goods curated as part of the funeral proceedings; rather, the purpose was also to use these tomb inventory texts as ritual objects for performing and embodying ritual-

462 Ritual and administration often went hand in hand in the ancient world, especially in relation to performances of writing. See Laurel Bestock, “Agency in Death: Early Egyptian Writing from Mortuary Contexts,” in Englehardt (2012), pp. 97, 111. Yang (2016), p. 331-332 correctly notes that we should not overlook the importance of acoustic and visual performance to these documents. Indeed, Yang argues that such a performance enjoyed three functions: 1) to represent the family’s grief and observe the ritual need for filial piety; 2) to exhibit the family’s wealth and social status; 3) to announce the arrival of a new soul to the underworld, helping the soul undergo transformation from life to death. Yang notes that the audience for this performance was not just the living mourners and family members but also the ancestral spirits, and she further argues that it was inconsequential that some of the people and items recorded on the slips never actually existed, since the entries were made true (zhen 真) by writing them down and reading them aloud during the funeral ceremony. Yang claims that the words in the tomb inventory texts were brought to life and transmitted to the underworld through the sound of the chanting and the visual spectacle of the performance, helping the tomb occupant and his or her funeral items transition from the world of the living to the world of the dead. Yang also makes the point that tomb inventory documents are not just written sources but also burial items in their own right. Lai (2015b), p. 142 similarly notes that the public reading of tomb inventory texts was carried out for the benefit of the deceased, the assembled mourners, and other guests.

463 Summary board 236/216 refers to certain items that had been “received from within” (shou zhong 受中) and others that had been “provided by the House of Linxiang” (Linxiang jia gei 臨湘家給). Zhou Shirong interprets the former to mean that they were received from the palace of the King of Changsha 長沙王禁中. This being the case, the latter notations most likely refer to the fact that the items had been provided by the Li family. See Hunan sheng bowuguan and Zhongguo kexueyuan kaogu yanjiusuo (1974), p. 43; BG, p. 63; and JC, 6.246. Yang (2016), pp. 329-330 argues that because thirteen items in this entry are listed as shou zhong, and since thirteen clay seal labels (missing their hampers, which Yang argues must have rotted away) were actually discovered in the tomb, the phrase shou zhong must mean that these items were actually interred in the tomb and not intended merely for display, while the other items were retained by the family. Yang’s argument is undermined, however, by the fact that other items also listed as shou zhong were not found in the tomb. See BG, p. 63.
administrative order and communication with the spirit world. The tomb inventory texts allowed the ritual specialists in charge of coordinating the funeral to organize and display the orderly arrangement of people and objects in textual, material, and ritual form. The finely manufactured and exquisitely beautiful scrolls were also material symbols of wealth and ritual order, turning a set of intangible qualities and values into something that could be produced, presented, performed, and eventually deposited in the tomb.

It would thus be a mistake to understand the tomb inventory texts from Mawangdui simply in terms of their contents. Just as a ding cauldron was so much more than just a container for foods or liquids, these texts also spoke to a broader ritual-administrative order beyond the entries they were ostensibly designed to record. While the tomb inventory texts may seem primitive by today’s standards, in fact, in Han times they would have represented impressive feats of ritual-administrative technology, combining scribal virtuosity with multimedia design, and they were shown off as such during the funeral ceremony. Though they may have been used in part to record written entries, the tomb inventory texts were nevertheless manufactured, performed, and interred like any other ritual artifact displayed at the tomb site, and the fact that they were deposited directly in the coffin and not filed away like the other bamboo texts stored in

464 Tian Tian clearly means something similar when she says that “[t]omb inventories are not simply lists that record tomb furnishings; they also played a role in funerary ritual” and “performed a ritual function.” See Tian (2019), pp. 54, 82. Similarly, Guolong Lai has emphasized the role tomb inventory texts played in establishing and maintaining connections between the deceased, the living, and the spirit world. See Lai (2015b), pp. 138, 143, 145-146.

465 Similarly, Leif Dahlberg has argued that abstract notions such as law and authority are constituted as much through a set of aesthetics (dress, spatial organization, architecture, etc.) as by words or explicitly articulated rules and values. See Leif Dahlberg, “Introduction: Visualizing Law and Authority,” in Visualizing Law and Authority: Essays on Legal Aesthetics, ed. Leif Dahlberg (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2012), pp. 1-12.

466 Thus, in a Barthesian sense, the tomb inventory texts served to support the ritual-administrative myths of the Han empire. See Roland Barthes, Mythologies, trans. Annette Lavers (New York: Noonday, 1991).

467 Jay David Bolter has noted that the development of new writing technologies often affects our perception of earlier textual forms, which may have been seen at the time of their production and use as relatively artistically or technologically sophisticated artifacts. See Jay David Bolter, Writing Spaces: Computers, Hypertext, and the Remediation of Print (New York: Routledge, 2001), p. 15.
the lacquer case in the eastern coffin compartment of M3, suggests they had more in common with the artifacts paraded and displayed during the funeral rites than with textual records on bamboo. Indeed, we can say with confidence that the acts of ritual display within which these manuscripts were performed guaranteed that more people were exposed to these documents than any of the other manuscripts preserved at Mawangdui.

2.3 Performing a silk manuscript: the *Taiyi zhu tu

Although, as we saw in Chapter 1, the vast majority of the silk manuscripts stored in the lacquer case discovered in M3 were designed to consolidate multiple texts for future consultation and occasional use, not all the silk manuscripts found in that case were manufactured with consultation in mind. Indeed, one silk manuscript, which goes by various different names in the related scholarship, and which I refer to as the *Taiyi zhu tu 太一祝圖 (Invocation Chart to Taiyi), was designed not for consultation but as a tool for use in ritual performance. As we shall see, the different names that have been used to designate this manuscript reflect the often markedly different theories that have been adduced to explain how this manuscript was actually used, and my analysis of it will build on recent scholarship to examine how the manuscript, and the writing contained within it, functioned within a context of ritual use and performance.

468 Indeed, as I will show in Chapter 5, the rest of the Mawangdui manuscripts, including the documents on silk, are not even recorded in the M3 tomb inventory text.

469 See also Chapter 5 for my arguments that the great majority of the Mawangdui silk manuscripts, for example, were designed for the consolidation and future copying of textual materials, rather than as documents for frequent use or display.

470 The other names that have been used to designate this manuscript include the *Bibing tu 避兵圖/辟兵圖 (Chart on Repelling Weapons), the *Sheshen tu 社神圖 (Chart on the Deity She), the *Shenqi tu 神祇圖 (Chart on the Earth Deity), the *Taiyi bibing tu 太一避兵 (Chart on Taiyi Repelling Weapons), the *Sheshen huhun tu 社神護魂圖 (Chart on the Deity She Protecting the Soul), the *Taiyi jiangxing tu 太一將行圖 (Chart on Taiyi Embarking on a Journey), the *Taiyi chuxing tu 太一出行圖 (Chart on Taiyi Setting Off on a Journey), and the *Bing dao Taiyi tu 兵禱太一圖 (Chart on Military Prayers to Taiyi).
Figure 2.9: *Taiyi zhu tu* manuscript  
(JC, 2.144)
JC provides color photographs of the manuscript (see Figure 2.9),\textsuperscript{471} as well as an introduction and annotated transcriptions of its contents.\textsuperscript{472} The *Taiyi zhu tu* is a silk manuscript or chart (*tu* 圖) that measures 43.5cm long by 45cm wide,\textsuperscript{473} and which was found on the sixteenth layer (the bottom such layer) of the pile of silk documents stored in the large square compartment within the two-tiered black lacquer case. The manuscript is badly damaged, fragmented into numerous separate pieces the reconstruction of which is uncertain.\textsuperscript{474} The manuscript features figures traced in black lines filled in with vibrant colors including red (*chi* 赤), saffron (*tenghuang* 藥黃, a deep hue produced using gamboge pigment), and indigo (*huaqing* 花青).\textsuperscript{475} These fearsome figures are displayed on the manuscript in three loosely arranged registers, and most of them are accompanied by written captions (*tiji* 題記).

The top register is the most badly damaged portion of the manuscript, but parts of two figures that can be identified, judging by their captions, as the Thunder God (*Leigong* 雷公) and

\textsuperscript{471} JC, 2.144-148 and JC, 7.262. See also the photographs published in WW, 1.35 and NTM, pp. 178-179. The manuscript is listed under the *shushu* 術數 (“numbers and techniques”) category in BG, p. 89.

\textsuperscript{472} JC, 6.103-105. See also the transcriptions and discussions in Lai Guolong 來國龍, “Mawangdui ‘Taiyi zhu tu’ kao 馬王堆《太一祝圖》考, Zhejiang daxue yishu yu kaogu yanjiu 浙江大學藝術與考古研究 1 (2014), pp. 1-27.

\textsuperscript{473} See Chapter 4 for a detailed discussion of documents in the *tu* genre.

\textsuperscript{474} Liu Jianmin 劉建民 in JC, for example, notes that although there are serious issues with the way certain fragments have been reconstructed in the upper portion of the manuscript (judging by the presence of imprints that have not been accounted for), the fact that it is so badly damaged means he has been unable to improve dramatically upon previous reconstructions. Li Song 李淞, “Yiju dieyin henji xunzheng Mawangdui sanhao Hanmu ‘Taiyi jiangxing’ tu de yuanmao” 依據疊印痕跡尋證馬王堆三號漢墓「太一將行」圖的原貌, Meishu yanjiu 美術研究 (2009).2, pp. 44-50 describes the different kinds of imprinted characters that can be used to reconstruct the manuscript, and he uses these characters to call into question some elements of the original reconstruction. Li argues that the manuscript was folded from left to right, and that the upper portion of the manuscript has been incorrectly reconstructed in parts. Hirose Kunio 廣瀨薰雄, taking issue with previous attempts at reconstructing the process by which this manuscript was folded, has argued that the manuscript was folded from left to right twice before it was folded again from top to bottom twice. See Hirose Kunio 廣瀨薰雄, “Tan ‘Taiyi jiangxing tu’ de fuyuan wenti” 談 <太一將行圖> 的復原問題, in Hunan sheng bowuguan (2016), pp. 384-385.

the Rain God (Yushi 雨師), are still visible on the left and right respectively. Located between these two figures is the head of the figure who occupies the center of the upper portion of the manuscript. This figure is red with black horns or antlers and is wearing a pair of black short trousers. He is facing straight on with his eyes wide open and his tongue appears to be extended. His arms are by his sides and he stands astride a dragon with a yellow head and black body. This figure may be associated with one or both texts located near his body: a caption that refers to Taiyi located above and to the left of the figure’s right shoulder, and the character She 社 (the name for the god of the land) within a circle located underneath his left armpit.

The body and legs of this central horned figure extend into the middle register of the manuscript. In this middle register, to the right of this creature, stand two figures, at least one of which is probably associated with the “warrior disciple(s)” (wu dizi 武弟子) mentioned in the caption located to the right of the rightmost figure in the pair. A separate caption associated with the leftmost figure in the pair does not provide a name for either figure. These warriors are also facing straight on with their eyes wide open and their tongues extended. Both figures are red but the figure on the left is wearing a red upper garment with a multicolored skirt, and the figure on the right is wearing a black upper garment and a red skirt. Both are wearing black, three-pointed crests or crowns on their heads, and each has one arm raised (the warrior on the left is holding a weapon in this hand; the warrior on the right may also originally have carried a weapon but this portion of the manuscript is missing) with the other arm by his side.

To the left of the central horned figure stand another pair of figures. The figure on the right within this pair is red and has one arm raised with the other by his side. The accompanying caption does not provide a name, but refers to the protective clothing (“horns and clothing”/“horned clothing” [sì qiu 虬裘]) that he seems to be wearing (see below). This unnamed figure is wearing a single-horn hat, and his face is turned towards the central horned figure in the center of the upper portion of the manuscript. To his left stands another figure with horns or antlers. His face and legs are yellow, and his torso is a gray-green color. There may originally have been a caption associated with this figure, but if so, it is missing due to damage. This bearded figure is
using both hands to hold some sort of spear-like weapon, and his body is turned towards the right with his face turned head-on.

In the lower register of the manuscript, flanking and facing the yellow-headed, black-bodied dragon positioned between the legs of the central horned figure, are two more dragons, one on the left and one on the right. The dragon on the left has a black-blue body and a yellow head, and the dragon on the right dragon has a yellow body with a red head. Their captions refer to them as the blue-green (qing 青) dragon and the yellow dragon respectively.

A longer inscription on the right-hand side of the manuscript serves as the “general inscription” (zong tiji 總題記) for the entire manuscript, though from the damage it is hard to tell if the manuscript originally also bore a title. This general inscription reads:

The invocation to Taiyi goes: “Today, on such and such a day, we are about to [travel?], the divine… [will?] wield a bow, Yu travels ahead [of us]. Red bao and white bao do not dare come in our direction, the one-hundred weapons do not dare… us… wild is called insincere, the Big Dipper is in its correct location.” Then, spit to the left and to the right and proceed on your journey without turning to look behind you. 大 (= 太) 一祝

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476 Liu in JC argues that the text-bearing fragment located in the very bottom right-hand portion of the manuscript according to the original reconstruction should, on the basis of its contents, be relocated to the top right-hand position in the manuscript. See JC, 6.104, n.1. Lai (2014), p. 6 also argues that this fragment should be relocated to serve as the beginning of the general inscription, based on the fact that this inscription would then match the format of certain formulaic passages in other related sources. See the discussion below.

477 JC, 6.103.

478 The term bao 包/抱 was a technical divination term used in ancient times to describe the form of auspicious or inauspicious pneuma, vapors, or qi 氣. The terms “red bao” and “white bao” refer to two such inauspicious vapors. See Chen Songchang 陳松長, “Mawangdui Hanmu bohua ‘Shenqi tu’ bianzheng” 馬王堆漢墓帛畫「神祇圖」辯正, Jianghan kaogu 江漢考古 (1993).1, pp. 89-90 and Lai (2014), p. 8n.34.
曰：479「某今日且 (＝行?) 神 (＝將?) 承弓，禹先行。赤包白包，莫敢我鄉 (＝向)，百兵 莫敢我 狂謂不誠，北斗為正。」即左右 (＝唾)， 徑行毋顧。480

The different titles given to this silk manuscript by the various editors and scholars who have studied it reflect the contentions surrounding its original functions, as well as the identity of the horned figure featured in the center of the manuscript, who may be the god Taiyi 太一, who was established as “the supreme deity” in the Han,481 or perhaps the earth god She 社, depending on whether one goes by the caption located to the left of the figure or the single graph located under the figure’s left armpit.482 In order to trace the different possible functions of this manuscript, it is necessary to provide an overview of the various scholarly theories that have been introduced into the debate since the time of the manuscript’s discovery down to the present.

479 Hirose (2016), p. 391 reads the first part of this passage rather differently. While he accepts that it is an oath or incantation (zhouyu 咒語), he argues (based on similar passages in other texts from Mawangdui) that zhu should be read here not as a noun but as a verb. If Hirose’s reading is correct, the first phrase in the passage would thus not introduce an “incantation to Taiyi” but rather an incantation spoken by Taiyi. If Hirose’s interpretation is accurate, this would support some of the arguments about spirit possession and performance made by Guolong Lai (see below).

480 This transcription is based on those given in JC and Lai (2014). For annotations and references to the different readings and interpretations of certain graphs, see JC, 6.103-104 and Lai (2014), p. 8.

481 Han Emperor Wu, for example, established multiple sites of worship to Taiyi during his reign. See Li Ling, “An Archaeological Study of Taiyi (Grand One) Worship,” trans. Donald Harper, Early Medieval China 2 (1995-1996), pp. 1-8. Li notes that, prior to this, the earliest brief textual references to Taiyi are in the Zhuangzi 莊子 (Book of Master Zhuang), the Xunzi 荀子, the Lüshi chunqiu 呂氏春秋 (The Springs and Autumn Annals of Mr. Lü), and the Heguanzi 鶡冠子 (The Pheasant Cap Master).

482 It is uncertain, however, whether this supposed Taiyi inscription originally belonged to the central figure on the manuscript. See Yang Lin 杨琳, “Mawangdui bohua ‘She shen huhun tu’ chanshi 馬王堆帛畫〈社神護魂圖〉闡釋, Kaogu yu wenwu 考古與文物 (2000).2, p. 72. The NTM editors further point out that, although there is some disagreement about how to interpret this painting, it is believed by some scholars that the painting was used by the tomb occupant during his lifetime to pray to Taiyi for victory during his military campaigns. See NTM, pp. 178-179. A theory put forward by Huang Ruxuan 黃儒宣 that the central horned figure in the manuscript is the mythical tyrant Chi You 蚩尤 seems ill-founded. See Huang Ruxuan 黃儒宣, “Mawangdui ‘Bibing tu’ yanjiu” 馬王堆《辟兵圖》研究, Lishi yuyan yanjiusuo jikan 歷史語言研究所集刊 85.2 (2014), pp. 167-207 and Lai (2014), pp. 8-9n.37.
Zhou Shirong was the first to introduce the manuscript in 1986, but given the poor quality of the photographs and the cursory introduction presented in his article the manuscript did not attract much scholarly attention. Four years later, Zhou published another article introducing the manuscript in more detail, and in this article Zhou identifies the central antlered figure as Taiyi flanked by the Thunder God and the God of Rain. Zhou, based on references in other sources including the *Laozi* (Book of Master Lao) and the *Zhuangzi* (Book of Master Zhuang), notes that the “Dayi” mentioned in the inscription placed to the left of the central horned figure’s left shoulder is a reference to Taiyi, the highest deity in the Chu pantheon who appears in texts like the *Huainanzi* (Writings of the Master of Huainan), and who, it was believed, could determine good or bad fortune, prosperity or destruction. Zhou argues, based on the fact that this figure seems to be designated by two labels, Dayi (= Taiyi) and She, that he may be a hybrid deity representing a fusion of the god of fire and the sun worshipped by the people of Chu. Zhou takes the general inscription as carrying some sort of exorcistic function.

In his 1991 study of the manuscript, Li Ling describes it as a “written document in the techniques and numbers genre” (*shushu zhi shu*), noting that the manuscript should not be understood as a chart (*tu*) proper but rather as a “chart document” (*tushu*) since it contains both writing and images. Li further notes that the chart’s general inscription contains


485 For an overview of the references to the gods of Rain and Thunder in transmitted texts, see Zhou (1990), p. 927, and Zheng Shubin 鄭曙斌 in NTM, pp. 63-64.


rhyming characters in both the yangbu 阳部 (jiang 將, xing 行, xiang 鄉 [= 向], and shang [傷]) and gengbu 耕部 (cheng 誠, zheng 正) rhyme categories.\textsuperscript{489}

Li Ling takes issue with Zhou’s identification of the chart’s central figure as a hybrid of both Taiyi and She while remaining vague about how he himself identifies the figure, though he argues that the She label on the manuscript has to do with the fact that Taiyi was thought to have occupied the Central Palace (zhong gong 中宮) in the circumpolar region of the sky, corresponding in Five Phases (Wuxing 五行) theory to the position of Earth (tu 土), which is associated with the graph She.\textsuperscript{491} Li also claims that the nature of the manuscript is that of a “chart for repelling arms” (bibing tu 辟兵圖), based on references in the Baopuzi 抱朴子 (Book of the Master Embracing Simplicity).\textsuperscript{492}

In his own 1991 study of the manuscript, Li Xueqin 李學勤 notes the existence of a bronze dagger-axe (ge 戈) discovered in 1960 in a Warring States era tomb at Cheqiao 車橋 in Jingmen, Hubei province.\textsuperscript{493} The dagger-axe is 22cm long and 5-6.8cm wide and carries an inscription in pre-Qin script that Li transcribes as: “Weapon to repel Grand Year” (bing bi Taisui 兵避太歲). Li notes that Taisui is another term for Taiyi, and that the figure on the dagger-axe is very similar to the central horned figure in the *Taiyi zhu tu manuscript, as both figures are depicted facing head-on with dragons positioned between their legs. Li further notes that the dragons that the figure depicted on the dagger-axe is holding in his hands are similar to the

\textsuperscript{489} The character shang 傷 (to wound), however, is not included in the transcription of the inscription offered above.


\textsuperscript{492} Li Ling (1991), p. 941.

\textsuperscript{493} Li Xueqin 李學勤, “‘Bing bi Taisui ge’ xin zheng” “兵避太歲戈”新證, Jianghan kaogu 江漢考古 (1991).2, pp. 35-36.
dragons depicted on the manuscript. In a separate article from his previous treatment of the manuscript, Li Ling also provides a description of the dagger-axe and builds on Li Xueqin’s idea that its functions are related to those of the manuscript. In 1995, however, Hu Wenhui argued that the words and images on this dagger are unrelated to the *Taiyi zhu tu* manuscript, and that the inscription on the dagger reads not Taisui but rather Dawu (Great martiality), arguing that the weapon possesses a “divine power” (shenli) that protects its owner from harm. Huang Shengzhang has also argued that the character on the dagger-axe is not sui but wu, and that the weapon was used in ceremonial dance suites performed as theatrical depictions of warfare.

In 1992, Chen Songchang published a study arguing that the manuscript represents a prayer to Taiyi for protection from the gods of wind and rain, as well as to the spirits responsible for warfare, hunger, and illness all controlled by the high god Taiyi. Chen argues that it was hoped that these deities would protect the tomb occupant from harm after death as his soul was ascending to Heaven, and that this is why Taiyi is depicted “on the move” on the surface of the manuscript. In 1993, Li Jiahao published an essay in which he also argued that the manuscript depicts Taiyi with the aim of “repelling weapons” (bibing), and that it is the

498 Chen Songchang 陳松長, “Mawangdui Hanmu bohua ‘Taiyi jiang xing’ tu qianlun” 馬王堆漢墓帛畫“太一將行”圖淺論, *Meishushi lun* 美術史論 (1992).3, pp. 93-94. Chen thus argues that the function of the manuscript was similar to that of the T-shaped banner found draped over the coffin in Mawangdui M3.
work of a Warring States Chu scribe.⁴⁹⁹ That same year, however, Chen Songchang, in a separate study from his previous analysis of the manuscript, argued that the main theme of the chart is travel (chuxing 出行), pointing out the repeated use of the term xing 行 (to walk, to travel, journey) in the manuscript, and the fact that the central horned figure (who Chen takes to be Taiyi) himself seems to be setting out on some sort of journey.⁵⁰⁰

In his 1993 study of the manuscript, Li Xueqin introduces the discovery of a 44cm-long sword dating to the Warring States era similar to the dagger-axe that was discovered at Cheqiao in 1960.⁵⁰¹ Li notes that the sword also depicts a figure cast into the weapon, and that this figure is seated and wearing a feather hat, holding some sort of weapon in his right hand as well as a snake in his left. Li argues that this sword also depicts the god Taiyi, and that the sword, the dagger-axe, and the manuscript were all manufactured with the aim of repelling spirits (bibing).⁵⁰² In his 1994 study of the manuscript, however, Li Jianmao 李建毛 notes that while certain scholars believe the function of the manuscript was to pray to Taiyi for protection from malign forces such as thunder, rain, and warfare, in fact the manuscript was produced not specifically for burial but sometime prior to the Western Han, largely based on the fact that the dragon designs on the manuscript are more primitive in nature than the other dragons depicted elsewhere at Mawangdui, and are closer in style to the dragons from the fifth-century BCE tomb of Marquess Yi of Zeng, as well as those depicted on the Chu silk manuscript from a ca. third- or fourth-century BCE tomb at Zidanku 子彈庫 (Changsha, Hunan).⁵⁰³


Li notes that the script style used on the manuscript is late Warring States small seal script, and that it could be the product of a Chu scribe working in the late Warring States period.\textsuperscript{504} Li argues that the manuscript was owned and used during Li Xi’s lifetime along with the other manuscripts found in the lacquer case, in contrast to the silk banners and paintings that were found spread out on the coffin lid or hanging on the walls in the inner coffin chamber.\textsuperscript{505} These documents, Li argues, are all mingqi prepared specially for use after death as part of attempts to create a comfortable, domestic environment in the tomb for the tomb occupant. Li argues that the manuscript could not have been created specifically to repel evil spirits (bixie 避邪) in the tomb, because if had been intended to serve this purpose it would have been laid out like the other silk paintings and banners displayed in the coffin chamber.\textsuperscript{506} Instead, Li interprets this document as a protective talisman (hushen fulu 護身符籙), noting its similarities to later “Daoist” talismanic sources. In this vein, Li also takes the general inscription on the manuscript as an incantation (zhouyu 咒語).\textsuperscript{507} Li further argues that since Li Xi clearly held some sort of senior role in the Changsha military, he would have needed the kind of protection that this document was thought to afford.\textsuperscript{508} Similarly, Zheng Shubin has described the protective services


\textsuperscript{504} Li Jianmao (1994), p. 305.

\textsuperscript{505} See Chapter 4 for descriptions of these paintings.

\textsuperscript{506} Li Jianmao (1994), p. 305. Huang (2003), p. 32 argues that the chart was used during the tomb occupant’s lifetime as a practical tool for averting misfortune and danger, and was not specially manufactured for burial. Huang claims that the manuscript has nothing to do with the soul’s ascension to Heaven but was intended to protect the tomb occupant from danger during his lifetime. Similarly, Zheng Shubin has also speculated that the manuscript was probably used by the deceased during his lifetime, based on the position in the tomb where it was found. See Zheng in NTM, pp. 62-63. Zheng also notes that Taiyi is the head god in texts like the Chuci 楚辭 (Verses of Chu), where he is represented as “the original life-generating god,” a reflection of the primary position Taiyi enjoyed in the Chu pantheon of deities.

\textsuperscript{507} Li Jianmao (1994), pp. 308-309.
provided by the figures bearing arms and armor in the manuscript, arguing that as a senior military commander in the southern part of the Changsha state the tomb occupant would have prayed for the protection of these deities in his campaigns against the Nanyue 南越. Zheng says that the images and the “magic of its inscriptions” would have helped this sacred object protect him from disaster, and was certainly used during his lifetime.\textsuperscript{509}

In another article published in English, Li Ling introduces a number of new archaeological sources that might be related to the *Taiyi zhu tu* manuscript,\textsuperscript{510} including the dagger-axe discovered in 1960 as well as Chu divination texts on bamboo (copied ca. 318-316 BCE) from the Baoshan tomb site. These bamboo divination texts offer frequent prayers to numerous spirits in the hope of eliminating misfortune, most prominently a spirit that has a name with a graphic form derived from da 大, which Li glosses as tai 太. Additionally, Li examines certain characters in two talismanic inscriptions painted in red ink on ordinance-jars from the tomb of one Mr. Cao 曹 excavated in 1972 at Zhujiaoba 朱家堡 in Hu county 户縣, Shaanxi 陕西 province. Li also cites passages from the *Shiji* 史記 (*Archivist’s Records*) and the *Hanshu* 漢書 (*History of the Han Dynasty*) to show that, in the Han, banners emblazoned with symbols related to Taiyi were known as “Taiyi spears” (*Taiyi feng* 太一鋒), and were used as part of the prayers offered to bring about good fortune, especially in the context of armed conflict.\textsuperscript{511} Li also quotes a passage from the *Baopuzi* that says one need not fear misfortune from weapons if one is able to write certain graphs related to astral bodies including the Big Dipper (*Beidou* 北斗) and the sun and the moon (*riyue* 日月). Li Ling argues that the *Taiyi zhu tu* manuscript is related to this practice, since certain of the figures on the manuscript may also represent astral bodies.

\textsuperscript{508} Li Jianmao (1994), pp. 309-310. For a discussion of Li Xi’s possible military service, see Chapter 5.

\textsuperscript{509} See Zheng in NTM, p. 64.


\textsuperscript{511} Li (1995-1996), p. 18.
associated with the four directions or the four seasons.\footnote{Li (1995-1996), pp. 23-24.} In a 1996 article, however, Li Jiahao took issues with some of Li Ling’s conclusions with regard to the Taiyi spear, arguing that the Taiyi of the manuscript and the Taisui of the dagger-axe are not one and the same and should consequently be treated separately from one another.\footnote{Li Jiahao 李家浩, “Zai lun ‘Bing bi Taisui’ ge 再論“兵避太歲”戈, Kaogu yu wenwu 考古與文物 (1996).4, pp. 28-35.}

In 1996, Rao Zongyi 饒宗頤 published an article arguing that the rhymed texts on this chart are of great literary as examples of a genre of chart poetry (tushi 圖詩).\footnote{Rao Zongyi 饒宗頤, “Tushi yu cifu–Mawangdui xinchu ‘Taiyi jiang xing tu’ sijian” 圖詩與辭賦—馬王堆新出〈太一將行圖〉私見, in Hunan sheng bowuguan sishi zhounian jinian lunwenji 湖南省博物館四十周年紀念論文集, ed. Hunan sheng bowuguan 湖南省博物館 (Changsha: Hunan jiaoyu chubanshe, 1996), p. 79.} Rao provides transcriptions of the inscriptions and notes the rhyming portions of the general inscription as well as the caption associated with the warrior disciple figure in the manuscript.\footnote{Rao (1996), pp. 79-80.} Rao argues that the *Taiyi zhu tu* manuscript was not used for repelling weapons (bibing) but rather represented a method of employing weapons (yongbing 用兵), largely on the basis of a passage from the “Yuanyou” 遠遊 (“Far Roaming”) poem in the *Chuci 楚辭 (Verses of Chu)* anthology.\footnote{Rao (1996), pp. 80-81.}

Hu Wenhui was the first to break away from the talismanic paradigm of interpretation used to study the *Taiyi zhu tu*, in his second article on the manuscript.\footnote{Hu Wenhui 胡文輝, “Mawangdui ‘Taiyi chuxing tu’ yu Qinjian ‘rishu.chu bangmen’ 馬王堆「太一出行圖」與秦簡「日書。出邦門」, Jianghan kaogu 江漢考古 (1997).3, pp. 83-88.} In his 1997 article, Hu noted that the inscriptions on the manuscript are related to the ritual ceremonies (yishi 儀式) carried out when the god Taiyi was preparing to set off on a journey, during which he would call on his followers, including the gods of Rain and Thunder and other guardians and dragons also depicted on the manuscript, to accompany him. Hu cites passages from the *Hanfeizi 韓非子*
(Writings of Master Han Fei) and the Huainanzi to show how spirits, including the gods of wind, thunder, and rain, were commonly depicted roaming and traveling with one other.\(^{518}\) Hu cites the “Chu bangmen” 出邦门 (“Departing the Gates of a Country”) text that appears in three versions in different Qin dynasty daybooks (rishu 日書), two from Shuihudi 睡虎地 (Yunmeng 雲夢, Hubei) and one from Fangmatan 放馬灘 (Tianshui 天水, Gansu 甘肅), noting that these texts all talk about the legendary sage-ruler Yu 禹, who is mentioned in the general inscription on the *Taiyi zhu tu* manuscript, in the context of setting out on a journey (chuxing). Hu also references scholarship on the “pace of Yu” (Yu bu 禹步), which appears to have been some sort of ritual action or technique performed when a person was about to leave a state or territory, possibly with the intention of concealing one’s person (yinshen 隱身) as a method of protection.\(^{519}\) Hu notes that this Yubu technique is mentioned in certain texts from Mawangdui, including the *“Wushi’er bingfang” 五十二病方 (“Prescriptions for Fifty-Two Ailments”) and “Yangsheng fang” 養生方 (“Recipes for Nourishing Life”) texts, as well as the *“Yinshu” 引書 (“Book on Pulling”) text excavated from one of the Western Han tombs at Zhangjiashan 長家山, Hubei. Hu points out, however, that these are all medical texts that have nothing to do with steps taken to conceal one’s person. Consequently, Hu argues that the Yubu was a physical action that was performed as part of various different kinds of rituals, including ritual for healing, for concealment, and for repelling weapons, and that in the “Chu bangmen” text from the Qin


\(^{519}\) Hu (1997) p. 84. References to Yubu occur sixteen times in five third-century BCE daybooks and related materials, as well as in later sources, including eight references in the Mawangdui materials. In contrast, there are just a handful of scattered references and allusions to this technique in transmitted texts. Judging by these sources, the Yubu comprised magical movements made with a person’s feet in a three-part routine as an emulation of the way the legendary sage-ruler Yu walked during the time he spent bringing under control the devastating floods that ravaged the world in Chinese mythology. Four of the references in the Shuihudi and Fangmatan daybook materials are related to travel, but references to Yubu appear also in contexts related to medical treatments and sacrificial rites. Performance of the Yubu was apparently also accompanied by the chanting of incantations. See Donald Harper, “Daybooks in the Context of Manuscript Culture and Popular Culture Studies,” in Books of Fate and Popular Culture in Early China: The Daybook Manuscripts of the Warring States and Han, ed. Donald Harper and Marc Kalinowski (Leiden: Brill, 2017), pp. 130-133.

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daybooks mentioned above this technique is employed as part of a ritual performed before setting out on a journey (chuxing), a ritual that also incorporated spoken prayers and incantations (zhuzhou 祝咒). Hu notes the similarities between the incantations from Early Imperial daybooks and the incantations contained in the *Taiyi zhu tu manuscript, such as the general inscription and the caption for the warrior disciple(s). Clearly, Hu argues, the manuscript records the words Taiyi had to say and the acts he had to carry out whenever he was about to set off on a journey (chuxing). Hu also argues, however, that the central figure in the manuscript is not Taiyi himself but the earth god She, based on the fact that the graph 社 is encircled and prominently placed next to his body. Hu quotes a passage in the *Huainanzi to argue for the existence of a contemporary belief that when Yu died he became She, and Hu argues that Yu/She was the most important component of the travel ritual as the figure who walked ahead of the traveler as a way of providing protection, and that this is why he figures so prominently in the manuscript.

In 1997, Lian Shaoming 連劭名 published an article relating the antlered figure in the manuscript to the tomb quelling spirit (zhenmu shen 鎮墓神) figurines made of wood found in Chu tombs that date from the early-, mid-, and late-Warring States periods, noting that what all these figurines have in common is that they have two horns and stand atop a square base. Lian argues that the central horned figure on the manuscript grew out of this protective tradition.

The most recent, and important, substantial study of the manuscript, however, was carried out by Guolong Lai in 2014. Building on the work done by Hu Wenhui described above, Lai argues that the general inscription is a prayer or incantation to be spoken aloud during the rituals performed before setting out on a journey. Lai points out that this is clearly a generic prayer that

was not written specifically for this particular manuscript, since the character "mou ("such and such") in the general inscription suggests that the user of the manuscript would have inserted a specific day or date whenever the manuscript was actually used in performance.\textsuperscript{524} Lai argues that the general inscription not only provides an instruction of what to say as part of the travel rites but also how to act, and similar wording to the inscription, including the exhortation “not to look back” (wugu 毋顧) at the end of the inscription, can be found in texts such as Qin daybooks, as well as other texts from Mawangdui such as the *“Wushi’er bingfang” and the *“Taichan shu” 胎產書 (“Book of the Generation of the Fetus”).\textsuperscript{525}

Lai thus argues that the *Taiyi zhu tu manuscript was a document for use (tongyong wenben 通用文本), a manuscript that provided a visual presentation (shijue biaoxian 視覺表現) of the steps to be performed, the words to be spoken, and the spirits that would consequently confer protection on the traveler. Indeed, Lai argues that the visual forms of the figures were intended to help the traveler imagine the forms of the spirits who were to be summoned and who would confer their “protection and blessings” (huzuo 護佐) on the traveler. Thus, while Lai admits that repelling weapons is indeed one of the functions of this manuscript, he argues that the chart is not reducible to this function alone, and that it served as a guide for the performance of rites intended to secure protective blessings and general good fortune.\textsuperscript{526} Lai argues that although people have debated back and forth about the identity of the central horned figure in the manuscript, precise identification of this figure is less important than appreciation of the fact that the figure, whoever he may be, represents some sort of traveler.\textsuperscript{527} Indeed, Lai argues that by performing the actions described in the manuscript’s general inscription and uttering the words

\textsuperscript{524} Lai (2014), pp. 6-7.
\textsuperscript{525} Lai (2014), pp. 7-8.
\textsuperscript{526} Lai (2014), pp. 8-9.
\textsuperscript{527} Lai (2014), p. 10.
of the invocation, the user of the manuscript was actually possessed by the spirit of Taiyi, She, or Yu.528

Contrary to earlier studies of this manuscript, then, that understood it as some sort of talisman for warding off danger from warfare or natural disaster (either during the life of the tomb occupant, after death, or both), the paradigm shift ushered in by Hu Wenhui and developed by Lai reveals this manuscript to be a performance text designed to guide the user through the steps necessary for carrying out the rites that would invite blessings and protection from divine spirits prior to setting out on a journey. I am in full agreement with this interpretation of the *Taiyi zhu tu manuscript, and believe supplementary evidence can be found in support of Lai’s argument that using the manuscript helped the reader visualize the spirits who were to take possession of his body during the rites. Indeed, there are other captions on the manuscript not examined in detail by Hu or Lai that strongly suggest that the captions were read aloud during a ritual performance. The caption located underneath the raised arm of the red horned figure standing to the left of the manuscript’s central horned figure, for example, reads:

[With] my tiger-horns and fur [armor?], bows and arrows dare not approach.

我虒裘，弓矢毋敢來。529

According to the *Shuowen jiezi 說文解字 (Explanation of Simple Graphs and Elucidation of Compound Characters), the *si 虲 is a type of horned tiger,530 and it seems that the mention of horns and furs, or possibly some sort of armor made of tiger-horns and fur, is a

528 Lai (2014), pp.10-12. Lai provides references to a number of transmitted texts, such as the “Yuanyou” poem in the *Chuci, the “Yuandao” 原道 (“Primordial Way”) chapter of the *Huainanzi, and an invocation text for performance prior to travel written by the Eastern Han official and scholar Cai Yong 蔡邕 (132-192) to show that it was believed that spirits could inhabit and possess the body (futi 附體) of those who invoked them as part of ritual ceremonies and utterances.

529 The transcriptions of this caption in JC, 6.104 and Lai (2014), p. 9 are identical.

530 Shuowen jiezi, p. 103b.
reference to the horned head and/or tight-fitting clothing worn by the figure described in the caption. What is striking about this caption, however, is its use of the first-person pronoun  wo 我 (I, me; we, us; my, our), a pronoun that may also appear in another caption located to the right-hand side of the rightmost bearded red figure wearing the tri-pointed crown or crest on the manuscript. This use of the first-person pronoun lends credence to Lai’s argument that the *Taiyi zhu tu manuscript was used in a performance that allowed the spirits depicted on the manuscript to possess the user’s body, speaking through the user of the manuscript. As described above, we know that at least some of the inscriptions on this manuscript were read aloud because of the extensive use of rhyme and the use of the term mou (“such and such”) as a place-holder in the general inscription, and the performer of these rites would have taken on the role of the spirits mentioned in the captions who spoke through them and inhabited their body, perhaps accompanied by physical movements and dramatic gestures.

Indeed, Hirose Kunio 廣瀨薰雄 has provided an alternative interpretation of this passage that, if correct, would speak further to the performative nature of this document. Hirose agrees that the simplest and most logical interpretation of the term siqiū is that it refers to the clothing of the figure described in the caption. He also notes, however, that there is at least one instance of the term si in the *“Wushi’er bingfang” text from Mawangdui where it is used interchangeably


532 Although many transcriptions of this caption transcribe its first graph as wo 我, Liu Jianmin in JC follows Cheng Shaoxuan’s 程少軒 argument that the caption’s first two graphs should be transcribed as sanglin 桑林. See JC, 6.104 and 104n.10. See also Lai (2014), p. 9. In early Chinese texts the sanglin (lit., the mulberry woods) were performances (originally associated with the Shang kings) incorporating song and dance used to pray for rain.

533 As Adam Schwartz has pointed out, mou appears as a stand-in for either the personal name of a prayer maker, or the subject of the prayer, in texts like the Shu 書 (Documents) and the Yili. See Adam Craig Schwartz, “China’s First Prayer,” Journal of the American Oriental Society 135.1 (2015), pp. 110-111. This use of mou as a non-specific placeholder also appears in excavated models of legal and administrative documents from the Qin and Han. See Anthony Barbieri-Low, “Model Legal and Administrative Forms from the Qin, Han, and Tang and Their Role in the Facilitation of Bureaucracy and Literacy,” Oriens Extremus 50 (2011), p. 126.
with the word *shi* (lit., to apply, to exert), and that the same text makes use of the word *shi* in the sense of “to wear” or “to put on clothing”. Thus, for Hirose, this caption does not *describe* an item of clothing but rather *narrates* an action, which Hirose translates (into modern Chinese) as “Now I put on my fur clothing, no bows and arrows dare attack me” 我現在加穿了裘衣，任何弓矢都不敢來. 534

Indeed, it is hard to think why these inscriptions would be worth writing down in this way if the manuscript had not been designed for use in some sort of performance where some of the words were actually read aloud. The text on the manuscript is clear enough when viewed up-close but would have been too small for any sort of display function, and we can be sure that the manuscript was not designed to record or communicate information about any travel rites because there is a near total lack of descriptive detail, apart from the brief instruction in the general inscription on how to perform the incantation to Taiyi, which reads more like a self-referential narration from inside the ritual itself than a documentary description of its procedure. Outside of a ritual context the writing has no clear function: though most of the captions do specify the identity of their associated figure, or at least designate them in some way, these identifications are secondary to the descriptions of their protective powers and abilities. 535

Indeed, frequent use of the terms *wu* 毋 and *mo* 莫 (“do not”) in the captions may lead us to speculate that they were read not as declarative descriptions (“X dare(s) not do Y”) but as imperative orders (“X, do not do Y!”), serving as forceful commands spoken by the protective spirits through the manuscript’s performer directed at the malevolent forces that threatened travelers on the road. In any case, speaking the words of the manuscript aloud would not have


535 For example, “Warrior disciple(s), the one-hundred blades dare not rise up” (*wu dizi, bai ren wu gan qi* 武弟子・百刃毋敢起); “The yellow dragon grasps a furnace” (*huang long chi lu* 黃龍持鑪); and “the blue dragon clasps a forge” (*qing long feng [= peng] rong* 青龍奉 [= 捧] 容). See, JC, 6.103-104 and Lai (2014), p. 9.
served merely to describe the spirits and their abilities but also actually to invoke them as well as their powers, serving as powerful protection against danger and misfortune.

Sparse, discontinuous text arranged around colorful and elaborately painted figures of spirits and deities, this manuscript would have been an extremely costly and inefficient method of transmitting or storing the kinds of information that we see recorded in greater detail in the daybooks described above, meaning that it was almost certainly designed either for use in ritual performance, or as a model for the production of such a document. Indeed, the time and expense that would have gone into the manufacture of this manuscript mean that it stands apart from the largely documentary daybook materials. Instead, the self-referential, performative nature of the writing, the use of rhyme, and occasional use of the first-person pronoun, suggest that the text was designed to be read aloud as part of a ritual incantation and performance, with the manuscript actually used during the ritual. The dimensions and lightness of the silk would...

536 See Chapter 5 for my argument that the great majority of the Mawangdui silk manuscripts were designed and produced as base texts from which other documents could be made.

537 Another silk manuscript from Mawangdui that seems to have been designed for use in a ritual performance, or as the base text for the production of such a document, is the *Muren zhan (Divination Using Wooden Figurines) manuscript. BG, p. 89 has this manuscript under the “numbers and techniques” category. See JC, 2.25-31 for color photographs of the manuscript, and JC, 5.161-166 for an introduction and annotated transcriptions of its contents. The manuscript measures approximately 33cm by 48cm, and the text runs in the direction of the weft on the manuscript, which is taller than it is long. The manuscript was originally folded from top to bottom twice before it was folded from left to right, with the silk fragmenting along old crease lines that pre-existed those made when the manuscript was folded for storage inside the lacquer case; see Chen (2016), pp. 302, 305. Both the upper and lower sections of the silk bear some imprinted characters, and the bottom right-hand corner of the lower portion of the manuscript contain ink images that have seeped into the silk from another document. Wang Shujin 王樹金 has argued that the document to which these images belong is the *Dixing tu (Topographical Chart) (see Chapter 4 for a description of this document). See Wang Shujin 王樹金, “Mawangdui Hanmu boshu ‘Muren zhan’ tanshu” 馬王堆漢墓帛書《木人占》探述, Chutu wenxian yanjiu 出土文獻研究 12 (2013), pp. 224-225. However, Chen (2016), pp. 302-303 is more cautious, noting that identification of the document from which these imprints were made awaits further research.

The *Muren zhan manuscript features written text accompanied by annotated illustrations explaining how to perform certain divinatory rituals with the aid of human figurines made of wood. These illustrations occupy some two thirds of the upper half of the manuscript on the right-hand side. The manuscript contains a total of ninety-nine illustrations divided into nine columns; the first eight columns contain between eleven and thirteen illustrations, though the ninth column (reading from right to left) seems only to include five illustrations. Each illustration comprises four lines arranged in different configurations accompanied by a brief prognostication (zhanwen 占文) in its center. The final third of the
have made it easy to hold or use during a ritual performance, as well as making it easy to fold, carry, and transport. Use of silk also allowed for text and painted images to be displayed together, something that would have been much harder to accomplish (though certainly not impossible) using wood or bamboo. The use of silk thus allowed the user to read the words aloud at the same time as he was confronted with the images of the very spirits those words were designed to invoke, and the archaic form of Chu script may also have served to boost the performative power of the spoken words to invite the protection of the spirits, who were themselves associated with the Chu region. It was perhaps even thought that the manuscript took

upper half of the manuscript, occupying the leftmost portion of the silk, features twelve columns of written text describing methods of prognostication method (zhanfa 占法) and information about the props (daoju 道具) used in the divination, the earth pits (tu kan 土坎) within which they were arranged, the eight directions, prayers (daoci 禱辭), attendants, and choice of dates. This upper portion of text thus serves as an overall explanation (zonglun 總論) of how to conduct this type of divination.

The rest of the text, which occupies the entire lower portion of the manuscript, describes the different body parts of the wooden figurines, as well as the different divinatory formations (zhanxiang 占象) produced using the figurines and their different names and types of auspiciousness. Certain areas of confusion notwithstanding, it seems that divination carried out using wooden figurines proceeded as follows: first, a pit (kan 坎) was hollowed out of the earth and various props, including figurines, were positioned inside and outside the pit in a certain formation (ju 局). Then, a wooden figurine was tossed towards the pit, accompanied by prayers (jidao 祭禱) and ceremonial actions (yishi 儀式), and divinations were made based on how the wooden figurine affected the formation of the props positioned in and around the pit. Texts that include references to similar divination practices include the Shiji, the Zhanguo ce 戰國策 (Stratagems of the Warring States), the Hanshu, and the Lunheng 論衡 (Balanced Discourses), and wooden figurines have been discovered in a number of Chu tombs from the Changsha region.

Dong Shan 董珊 in JC notes that the calligraphy used to write the text of the manuscript is close to the type of seal-clerical (zhuanli 篆隸) hybrid script known from Qin sources, and he argues that the manuscript was probably copied either in the Qin or during the Chu-Han contention era, in the early Western Han at the latest. Wang Shujin likewise concludes that the manuscript was copied in the Qin or early Han. See Wang (2013), p. 226. Other than these studies, very little attention has paid to this particular manuscript. Guolong Lai, in his article “The Diagram of the Mourning System from Mawangdui,” Early China 28 (2003), p. 47, refers to it by the title “Divination by a Wooden Human Figure.” For references to previous scholarship, see Wang Shujin 王樹金, “Mawangdui Hanmu bosu ‘Muren zhan’ shuluè” 書馬王堆漢墓帛書「木人占」述略 (2008), published online at the website of the “Center of Bamboo Silk Manuscripts of Wuhan University” 武漢大學簡帛研究中心 http://www.bsm.org.cn/show_article.php?id=820 [accessed January 11, 2019] and Wang (2013).

This document may be one of the most usable from Mawangdui. The silk is a manageable size and the text is displayed clearly in relationship to the accompanying illustrations, generally displayed in relatively short entries on individual columns that facilitate consultation. Unlike most of the Mawangdui silk documents, then, one can actually imagine the *Muren zhan being used. For more on this point, see Chapter 5.
on certain talismanic functions after the ceremony was concluded and the manuscript
accompanied the travelers on their journey. Since travel in early China would often have
comprised multiple legs spread out over considerable periods of time within a single journey, it
seems likely that manuscripts such as this accompanied travelers for some time on the road and
were used a number of times during the course of a single trip. Those manuscripts may thus have
served simultaneously as scripts for ritual performance and as ritual object in their own right,
designed not to transmit, consolidate, or store knowledge or information for a reader but to guide
a user in their execution of a ritual performance.

The short, often rhymed inscriptions contained on the manuscript would have been easy
to memorize, and it seems likely a frequent traveler would already have been thoroughly familiar
with these types of travel rites and incantations. Indeed, another silk manuscript discovered in
Mawangdui M3 attests to the frequency and importance of precautions taken to ward off danger
during travel. The *Chuxing zhan 出行占 (Divination on Journeys) is a silk manuscript that
contains information in tabular form as well as running text related to calculations for
determining auspicious and inauspicious days on which to travel (chuxing).538 The manuscript is
in a fragmented state, and portions of it were originally published in the “ancient-clerical” script
(guli 古隸) category in YS as a part of the *Yinyang wuxing 陰陽五行 B (Yin and Yang and the
Five Phases B) manuscript,539 before it was discovered by Shen Jianhua 沈建華 and Li Xueqin
李學勤 that the manuscript in fact constituted a separate document related to travel predictions
and divination.540

538 Like the *Taiyi zhu tu manuscript, BG, 89 has the *Chuxing zhan under the “techniques and number
manipulation” category.

539 See, YS, pp. 129-156 for black and white photographs of the manuscript and partial transcriptions of
the text.

540 See Shen Jianhua 沈建華, “Honglou jishi” 紅樓紀事 in Chutu wenxian 出土文獻 1 (Beijing: Zhongxi
shuju, 2010), pp. 282-283. The two manuscripts can be distinguished by the fact that the ruled lines of the
*Chuxing zhan manuscript are black, while those of the *Yinyang wuxing B manuscript are red. See JC,
5.151.
The *Chuxing zhan* manuscript comprises written text and portions of blank silk, and the written sections can be divided into four quadrants or fragments (labelled *jia* 甲 [top-right], *yi* 乙 [bottom-right], *bing* 丙 [top-left], and *ding* 丁 [bottom-left]) formed by the crease lines made when the manuscript was folded.\(^{541}\) At first it was believed that the manuscript also included two pages of silk lining (*chenye* 襯頁) that had originally been blank but later received imprinted ruled lines and text from the text bearing portions of the manuscript, but it has now been established that these “lining pages” actually constituted part of the original manuscript.\(^{542}\) The dimensions of the reconstructed manuscript have not been published, and there are also some small fragments that have not been incorporated into the reconstruction. Judging by its contents, the competent yet relatively careless hand responsible for the writing of the text, and the fact that the manuscript comprises unused portions of pre-lined silk, however, it seems that the *Chuxing* 

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\(^{541}\) For an introduction to the manuscripts as well as an annotated transcription of its contents, see JC, 5.151-159. For color photographs, see JC, 2.17-24.

\(^{542}\) See the description in JC, 5.151 and Chen Songchang 陳松長, “Mawangdui boshu ‘kongbai ye’ ji xiangguan wenti” 馬王堆帛書‘空白頁’及相關問題, *Wenwu* 文物 (2008).5, p. 76. It was originally believed that the two pieces of lining silk were placed in such a way as to cover the *jia* (top-right) and *yi* (bottom-right) sections of the manuscript, with each piece of silk about half the size of the manuscript. According to this proposed reconstruction, the manuscript would then have been folded horizontally with the pieces of lining silk sandwiched in between the *jia* and *bing* (top-left) and *yi* and *ding* (bottom-left) sections of the manuscript. The manuscript was supposedly then folded vertically so that the backs of the *bing* and *ding* sections faced each other. The portions of the manuscript that were protected on the inside of the folded manuscript received less damage than those portions that were exposed on the outside, which received more serious damage. However, more recently Chen Jian 陳劍 has established that the two “lining sheets” were actually originally blank (yet still ruled) portions of the original manuscript, and that the lines were made deliberately and not imprinted from the main text portion of the manuscript. Supporting evidence comes from the fact that these blank portions of silk do not bear the border sections typical of lining sheets used at Mawangdui (see Chapter 1). Chen was able to show that while two thirds of the silk was taken up by the main text, a full one third of the silk was left blank, and that because of this extra unused silk at the end of the manuscript it was possible to use this section of silk to protect the text-bearing portion of the manuscript. The unused part of the silk was folded from left to right to cover the middle third of the manuscript (the left half of the text), and then the portion of silk containing the right half of the text was folded from right to left to cover the back of the blank third which was covering the central third portion of text. This meant that the blank part of the manuscript was sandwiched beneath both parts of the main text, and when folded no parts of the main text were in contact with each other. Finally, the manuscript was folded from top to bottom. See Chen Jian 陳劍, “Mawangdui boshu ‘yinwen,’ kongbai ye he chenye ji zhedie qingkuang zongshu” 馬王堆帛書‘印文,’ 空白頁和襯頁及折疊情況綜述, in Hunan sheng bowuguan (2016), pp. 281-283.
ZHAN was not produced as a ritual artifact or aesthetically appealing status symbol but rather as a functional tool for regular consultation, or else as the base text for the production of such a document.543

The reconstructed text of the *Chuxing zhan* manuscript comprises a total of thirty-five columns and over 1,300 surviving characters, though it has been estimated that the manuscript originally bore as many as 1,600 characters in total. The contents of the text are related to material found in Qin daybooks such as those from Shuihudi and Fangmatan,544 and the text probably represents a selection of excerpts from multiple daybooks and related materials.545 The text contains a table for determining the identity of the presiding spirits (shensha 神煞) present on particular days in each month, which was used to determine which days were auspicious and

543 One of the table entries, for example, has been scrawled out in a rather sloppy fashion (line 10 of the table; see JC, 5.152 and JC, 5.153n.10). The presence of unused yet pre-ruled portions of silk on the manuscript indicates either that this piece of silk was not manufactured and designed to accommodate this particular text, or that the planning and layout of the text was not well thought through. In either case, the material characteristics of the manuscript speak to its functional use. Most likely, the scribe simply selected an appropriate measure of pre-ruled silk to write the text. It is important to remember that, despite the cost and prestige involved in the production of silk manuscripts, prior to the invention of paper silk was also employed for functional reasons as the most practical writing surface for certain texts. Certainly, there seems to have been no shortage of silk judging by the manuscripts from Mawangdui that were produced using pre-ruled manuscripts. Certain silk manuscripts were even produced in a rather wasteful manner.

544 See Chen Songchang 陳松長, “Boshu ‘Chuxing zhan’ zhong de jige shicheng gainian kaolue” 帛書「出行占」中的幾個時稱概念靠略, Chutu wenxian yanjiu 出土文獻研究 Issue 7 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2005), pp. 82-87, who demonstrates that certain time-related terms from the text of this manuscript are also to be found in daybooks from those sites.

inauspicious for travel. The continuous text portion of the manuscript provides a commentary on selecting days for travel, often going into specific detail. Two typical passages read:

Whenever traveling, do not violate the greatly prohibited days for the direction of travel. When traveling West, do not violate [the prohibition on travel on] hai or wei days; when traveling East do not violate [the prohibition on travel on] chou or si days; when traveling South do not [violate the prohibition on travel on chen or shen days]. 全行者毋犯其鄉 (= 向) 之大忌日，西毋犯亥未，東毋犯丑巳，北毋犯戌寅，南毋 (= 犯辰申)。

Whether in Spring, Autumn, Winter, or Summer: do not travel East on a wuchen day [No. 5], do not travel West on a dingchou day [No. 14], do not travel South on a bingxu day [No. 23], and do not travel North on a renxu day [No. 59]. You cannot travel [in these directions] on any of these dates; if you go you will not return. 春秋冬夏，庚辰毋東，丁丑毋西，丙戌毋南，壬戌毋北，皆不可往焉，往焉不反 (= 返)。

Daybooks have been found at tomb sites all over China but are particularly associated with the Chu region, with excavated finds dating from the fourth century BCE to the Western Han. Indeed, almost twenty daybooks have been discovered to date, and, as we have seen, daybooks are outnumbered only by tomb inventory manuscripts in early Chinese tombs. The precise definition of a daybook can be elusive, but examples discovered so far on wood and bamboo include calendrical texts, often presented in tabular form, as well as explanatory texts and predictions regarding a diverse array of subjects including marriage, childbirth, travel, illness, and dream interpretation. The daybooks reflect a cosmological worldview in which the realm of human affairs and human fate are connected to the cyclical movements of the sixty-day sexagenary cycle, and it was believed that a person could predict and manipulate their fate using divination and prediction based on these correspondences. Excavated finds show that daybooks

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546 See JC, 5.155 and JC, 5.157n.5. The last three graphs in this transcription are missing in the manuscript but have been supplied from parallel passages in the daybooks from Shuihudi and Fangmatan. See also the transcriptions and notes in Liu (2003), pp. 115-130.

547 JC, 5.155.
were not the sole preserve of a small group of specialists, however, but were employed by a relatively large subset of the literate population.548

The information on both the *Chuxing zhan and *Taiyi zhu tu manuscripts is related to material preserved elsewhere in daybook form, and it is interesting that Li Xi himself was not interred with such a text. Probably this is because daybooks, though widely used, were primarily associated with lower-level elites and technical specialists,549 and the burial of daybook-related knowledge in silk form was certainly more in keeping with Li Xi’s status.550 It was obviously considered of the utmost importance that Li Xi be able to select auspicious days and avoid inauspicious ones for setting out on his travels after death, calculations that would have been determined using the information presented in the tables and textual commentary of manuscripts like the *Chuxing zhan. Having selected an auspicious date on which to travel, Li Xi would have


549 On this point, see Poo (2005), p. 114 and Kern (2018), p. 266. Harper (2017), p. 99 examines four wooden slip fragments and one undamaged wooden slip from a Han watchtower in the Ejina 鄂爾多斯 region of Gansu and Inner Mongolia. The watchtower was probably manned in the first century CE, and judging by the other objects found in the two rooms there (potsherds, wooden objects, grain), it was likely inhabited by soldiers. The contents of the slips are all related to travel, including records related to travel rituals and incantations, as well as methods of choosing safe days on which to travel that contain parallels with the text of the *Chuxing zhan. Harper concludes from this evidence that even first century CE soldiers conscripted and sent to the northwest frontier owned and used texts with contents similar to the third- and second-century BCE daybooks found at sites such as Fangmatan, Shuihudi, and Kongjiapo 孔家坡 (Suizhou 隨州, Hubei; Western Han) and the “technical occult manuscripts” from Mawangdui. There are exceptions to this pattern, however. See Harkness (2011), p. 50 who notes that daybook materials have also been found in the Western Han tomb of the Marquess of Huxishan 虎溪山 (Yuanling 沅陵, Hunan; Western Han).

550 Daybook-related materials appear also in the three *Xingde 刑德 (Punishment and Benevolence) and two *Yinyang wuxing silk manuscripts from Mawangdui. Unlike the *Taiyi zhu tu manuscript, however, which may have been designed for use in ritual performance, these five silk manuscripts seem to have been designed primarily with consolidation and future textual production in mind, rather than for use in divinatory procedures. See Chapters 4 and 5.
then been expected to use the *Taiyi zhu tu* manuscript as a ritual script to attract the protection and blessings of certain powerful spirits.

Judging by these two sources, as well as by the daybook materials mentioned above, it seems that careful calculation and preemptive ritual performances were carried out regularly by Western Han elites to ensure that no harm came to them or their fellow travelers on the road. Indeed, the emphasis in the text of the *Chuxing zhan* manuscript is on which days not to travel in certain directions because of the terrible things that might happen, with the text providing much less information about the days that were considered appropriate or auspicious on which to travel. Line 21 of the text of the *Chuxing zhan*, for example, states that “if you go in that direction you will not return” (wang yan bu fan 往焉不反 [= 反]), and line 23 warns that if you travel in certain directions on certain dates you will “return laden with corpses” (zai shi fan 載尸反 [= 返]), with numerous references to death (si 死) and misfortune (xiong 凶) as a result of injudicious travel scattered throughout the text. The *Chuxing zhan* and *Taiyi zhu tu* manuscripts thus reflect a contemporary belief that travel was a dangerous activity, full of both man-made threats (bing 兵) and perilous natural forces such as wind and rain. Indeed, in different ways, use of the *Chuxing zhan* and *Taiyi zhu tu* manuscripts was intended precisely to avoid such dangers.

The regularity with which Western Han travelers likely conducted travel predictions and protective rites, then, as well as the easily digestible form of the text on the *Taiyi zhu tu* manuscript, means that its users probably already knew quite well how to perform the ritual steps and the words of the incantation to Taiyi presented on the surface of the silk. If its users already

551 JC, 5.155.
552 JC, 5.155
553 Indeed, in the Early Imperial era it was believed there were auspicious and inauspicious times (hours, days, months, years) for performing a wide range of different activities, including house building, performing sacrificial rites, burying corpses, taking up office, and getting married. See Liu Tseng-kuei, “Taboos: An Aspect of Belief in the Qin and Han,” in Lagerwey and Kalinowski (2009), pp. 895-901.
knew the words to the short, rhymed incantation and captions on the manuscript, then it seems likely that the *Taiyi zhu tu served not just as a script or prompt for user in ritual performance but as a ritual object in its own right, an integral part of the incantation ceremony that helped lend a sense of predictability, stability, and ritual order to the proceedings.\textsuperscript{554} Presumably holding the silk manuscript while standing before an audience as part of a formal ceremony, the owner of such a manuscript, or perhaps a ritual specialist under their command, would have read the words on the manuscript aloud, perhaps also leading the other participants in the performance of the actions described in the text, such as spitting and dancing. Just as the written text of the general inscription was brought to life through the reading of the words on the manuscript by the manuscript’s performer, then, so too were the spirits on the manuscript brought to life so that they could inhabit the body of the performer, speaking through him and perhaps also leading his body in performance. The text and figures on the manuscript were thus neither referential nor illustrative in a mimetic sense. That is, they did not represent or stand in for magic or supernatural entities that were thought to occupy a separate ontological order of reality. Rather, reading the words of the manuscript aloud harnessed the power that was latent in the written signs, as well as the powers of the spirits and deities, and used them to protect the user of the manuscript and his fellow travelers from harm.\textsuperscript{555}

As a member of the social and political elite Li Xi was no ordinary travel, and it was probably imagined that he would have been accompanied by a large retinue of subordinates

\textsuperscript{554} Niko Besnier has written about how preachers in certain Polynesian communities in the Central Pacific deliver sermons that are written down beforehand, even though they are perfectly capable of memorizing their sermons and delivering them without recourse to a written script, precisely because the use of a script creates a sense of consistency, predictability, and order. See Niko Besnier, \textit{Literacy, Emotion, and Authority: Reading and Writing on a Polynesian Atoll} (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1995), pp. 133-136.

\textsuperscript{555} In the premodern world, it was often thought that texts and images enjoyed the qualities and functions of “the real” rather than serving merely as signifiers. See, for example, Zainab Bahrani, \textit{The Graven Image: Representation in Babylonia and Assyria} (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003), and \textit{The Infinite Image: Art, Time and the Aesthetic Dimension in Antiquity} (London: Reaktion and University of Chicago Press, 2014). See also Chapter 3.
during his underworld peregrinations. In the context of Li Xi’s tomb, then, the *Taiyi zhu tu thus served both a distillation of technical knowledge and a tool for ritual practice, presented in the form of an exquisitely produced silk document that befitted Li Xi’s elite status. Incorporated into regular and pragmatic rites that would nevertheless also have been impressive acts of public display, the *Taiyi zhu tu was simultaneously both a ritual artifact for use in travel rites and a symbol of the political and ritual authority that allowed Li Xi to preside over the execution of such activity.

2.4 Lacquerware inscriptions

Bamboo and silk were not the only surfaces employed as a support for writing that was used in ritual performance at Mawangdui. Large numbers of lacquer vessels (qiqi 漆器), most made of wood but some manufactured using hemp fabric or bamboo, were also retrieved from the Mawangdui tombs, and many of them were inscribed with different kinds of notations and messages, some of which suggest that these inscribed artifacts had a role to play in ritual performance.556

Mawangdui M1 yielded a lavish collection of lacquerware, 184 items in total, including ding 鼎 cauldrons, fang 銚 and zhong 鐘 vases, he 盒 cases, bi 匕 and shao 勺 ladles, zhi 周 cups, ju bei he 具杯盒 cup containers, pan 盤 dishes (including larger shipan 食盤 food dishes and smaller xiaopan 小盤 dishes), yu bowls 盂, an 案 trays, yi 奒 pouring vessels, lian 壺 cases (including shilian 食罋 cases for food items and zhuanglian 妝罋 cases for cosmetics), a ji 几 table, erbei 耳杯 “ear cups” (handled cups), and pingfeng 屏風 screens. Most of these pieces were discovered in the eastern compartment of the outer coffin, but some were also discovered in the northern and southern compartments. This is one of the largest and best-preserved finds of lacquer vessels anywhere in China, and most of the pieces are still in excellent condition. The

556 See WW, 2.18-19 for a useful English language overview of the lacquerware finds from Mawangdui.
writing on the inscribed objects is generally clearly legible and instances of the same character across the corpus differ fairly widely, indicating the work of multiple hands, or possible the same hand across a period of time, though this latter possibility is far less likely (see below).

Of the 184 lacquered vessels from Mawangdui M1, 134 are decorated with patterns executed using different production techniques (see below), and 149 bear some sort of writing. The inscriptions are located on the inside of certain vessels and on the outside of others, and certain vessels bear writing on both their inside and outside. The inscriptions denote either the owners of the vessel (“The household of the Marquess of Dai” [Daihou jia 軑侯家]), the vessel’s volume (“X dou 斗,” “X sheng 升”), or the use to which it was to be put (“Your favored food/ale” [jun xing shi/jiu 君幸食/酒]). 40 pieces have writing related to just one of these functions, and 109 have writings related to two different functions. In addition, 73 pieces bear stamped writing, either on the inside or the outside of the vessel, and some are stamped in just one place while others are stamped in multiple locations. The objects were stamped before they were lacquered meaning that the characters are rather faint and sometimes hard to decipher, but the HM editors note that they seem to denote the workshop where the objects were produced. The writing on the lacquerware from M1 can be divided into the following categories:

Marks of ownership: 12 pieces on cup containers 杯盒, flat dishes 平盤, food dishes 食盤, and pouring vessels 匙.

Usage instructions: 118 pieces on cases 盒, cups 耳, small dishes 小盤, and handled cups 耳杯.

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557 See HM, 1.76-96 for a discussion of the lacquerware from M1. See also HM, 2.141-163 (plates 154-169) for color photographs of some of these objects, and Michèle Pirazzoli-t’Serstevens, “The Art of Dining in the Han Period: Food Vessels from Tomb No. 1 at Mawangdui,” Food and Foodways 4.3-4 (1991), pp. 209-219.

558 See the discussion below for the debate surrounding the addressee of these usage inscriptions.
Volume: 131 pieces on tripods 鼎, boxes 盒, hammers 錘, vases 銚, cups 厝, food dishes 食盤, small dishes 小盤, and handled cups 耳杯.

Printed stamps: 73 pieces on tripods 鼎, ladles 匕, cups 厝, “ear cups” 耳杯, food dishes 食盤, small dishes 小盤, pouring vessels 匙, and cases 匙. 559

A total of 52 lacquered objects were discovered in Mawangdui M2, including hu 壺 pots, zhi 厝 cups, erbei 耳杯 handled cups, pan 盤 dishes (including flat pingpan 平盤 dishes), lian 匙 cases, jianqiao 劍鞘 sword sheaths, jiazuo 箭桿 arrow shafts, jiangan 箭叢 cases, jiangan 箭叢 arrow shafts, liubo qizi 六博棋子 gaming boards. None of these items appears to bear any sort of writing, however. 560

The 319 lacquered objects discovered in Mawangdui M3 include ding 鼎 tripods, fang 銚 vases, zhong 鐘 bells, hu 壺 pots, he 盒 cases, bi 匕 and shao 勺 ladles, zhi 厝 cups, erbei 耳杯 handled cups, jubei he 具杯盒 cup containers, pan 盤 dishes, yu 孟 bowls, an 案 trays, yi 匙 pouring vessels, lian 匙 cases, a ji 几 table, pingfeng 屏風 screens, ji 籐 baskets, and boju 博具 gaming pieces. 561 These pieces were found distributed between the eastern, western, northern, and southern compartments of the outer coffin. The lacquerware from M3 outnumbers even the items found in M1, and even more varieties and designs are represented. The lacquerware from M3 is generally very well preserved, though not quite as well as those pieces from M1. 562

559 HM, 1.76-80. In addition to these four kinds of lacquerware inscriptions, an inscription that we might call a “mark of identification” was found on the bottom of the feet of one of the male tomb figurines from M1. Susan Erickson has translated this inscription (guanren 冠人) as “person with cap.” See HM, 1.97 and 1.100 (Illustration 92.1), and Susan Erickson, “Han Dynasty Tomb Structures and Contents,” in China’s Early Empires: A Re-appraisal, ed. Michael Loewe and Michael Nylan (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p. 67

560 See BG, pp. 13-17 for a description of the uninscribed lacquerware objects from M2.

561 He Jiejun notes in BG that this count excludes lacquered weapons, musical instruments, and partially lacquered sundry items. See BG, p. 117. The gaming pieces include a lacquered eighteen-sided die. Sixteen of the sides bear carvings of the graphs for the numbers one through sixteen, and the remaining two opposite-facing sides are inscribed with the graphs 騃 and 萬 (妻+畏) respectively. See BG, p. 166.

562 See BG, pp. 117-170 for a description of the lacquerware objects from M3. See also color plates 28-36 for photographs of some of these objects.
220 of the lacquerware items from M3 are inscribed with usage inscriptions, 230 bear notations of their notional unit of volume, and 40 bear inscriptions noting their owners (some just the single character Dai 軑). 183 pieces bear stamps naming the location of their production, some on the outside, some on the inside, and some on both. The writing on the lacquerware from M3 can be divided into the following categories:

**Marks of ownership:** 39 pieces including cup containers 具杯盒, large dishes 大盤, flat trays 平盤, food trays 食盤, bowls 盂, trays 案, pouring vessels 匙, and cases 匡.

**Usage instructions:** 229 pieces including boxes 盒, cups 厓, handled cups 耳杯, food trays 食盤, and cases 匡.

**Volume:** 238 pieces including tripods 鼎, vases 鈁, hammers 錘, pots 壺, boxes 盒, cups 厓, handled cups 耳杯, food trays 食盤, and cases 匡.

**Printed stamps:** 183 pieces on tripods 鼎, hammers 錘, pots 壺, ladles 匕, pouring vessels 匙, trays 案, handled cups 耳杯, cup containers 具杯盒, dishes 盤, bowls 盂, cups 厓, and cases 匡.

The script styles of these inscriptions match those on the lacquerware from M1, and seem to have been produced by the same hands. The designs and objects types from M3, however, are slightly more varied and complex than those from M1. Even though the printed graphs on the lacquerware from M3 are faint because they were made before the items were painted, it is clear that they belong to the same type of stamp marks frequently encountered on early Western Han

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563 In the case of both M1 and M3, the lacquerware inscriptions denoting vessel volumes are not always accurate. In general, the larger the vessel the more accurate the notation.

564 These figures should be treated as tentative, however, since the figures in the table on BG, pp.166-170 do not entirely match those provided in the descriptions in BG, pp. 117-166.

565 BG, p. 117
lacquerware, denoting the names of the places and workshops where they were manufactured and painted.\textsuperscript{566}

Various production techniques were used to manufacture the lacquerware objects discovered in the Mawangdui tombs, with most of the cores either carved or turned on a lathe before the middle was gouged out to form the shape of the vessel. In certain cases, cores were also bent from wood. Once the core was produced it was then painted using a mixture of lacquer liquid (a semi-translucent sap extracted from the lacquer tree, \textit{Rhus verniciflua}, or a related species) and ash to even out any irregularities in the surface of the core, before one or more micron-thin layers of pigmented lacquer were applied. Finally, designs were painted onto the surface of the vessel using pigmented lacquer or oil mixed with cinnabar red, malachite green, or some other color. The color scheme on most of the lacquerware items from Mawangdui is red painted on a black background, though some feature black painted on a red background.

Inscriptions were either painted or incised using a needle. The designs include geometric motifs as well as dragons, clouds, and phoenixes, and there are also designs featuring realistic depictions of animals including cats and tortoises.\textsuperscript{567}

\textsuperscript{566} For example, some of these items bear stamped writing noting that the object had been “produced in the Southern village” 南鄉草 (=造), or that they were “painted in the city of Chengdu” 成市飽 (=漆). The Western Workshop of Shu Commandery (\textit{Shu Xi gong} 蘇西工), or simply “the Western Workshop” (\textit{Xi gong} 西工), located in the city of Chengdu in Shu 蘇 commandery, was the most famous producer of official lacquerware in the Qin and Han, providing the Qin and Han emperors with items ranging from weapons and bronzes to lacquered tableware. After the fall of the Qin until the mid-Western Han the workshop ceased to exist as an official, centrally administered workshop, though the artisans employed there continued to produce lacquerware in the form of a market-supervised workforce. See Anthony Barbieri-Low, “The Organization of Imperial Workshops During the Han Dynasty,” Ph.D. diss., Princeton University, 2001, pp. 157-159 and idem, \textit{Artisans in Early Imperial China} (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2007), pp. 80, 143. See also Han Guohe 韓國河, Zhao Haizhou 趙海洲, Liu Zunzhi 刘尊志, and Zhulü 朱津, \textit{Zhongguo gudai wuzhi wenhua shi – Qin Han} 中国古代物质文化史 秦漢 (Beijing: Kaiming chubanshe, 2015), pp. 161-164 for a useful overview of the lacquerware industry in Early Imperial China.

\textsuperscript{567} My discussion of the production techniques and design schemes used to manufacture the lacquerware from Mawangdui is taken from HM, 1.76-77; Joanna Waley-Cohen, trans., \textit{The Lacquers of the Mawangdui Tomb} (Hong Kong: Millennia Limited, 1984); BG, p. 117; NTM, pp. 112-142; Barbieri-Low (2001), passim; idem, (2007), pp. 76-83; and Nie Fei 聶菲 in NTM, pp. 23-40.
Lacquerware production reached its height in the Han having emerged as a new technology at the end of the Springs and Autumnns era, and lacquering was used to waterproof, protect, and ornament vessels, weapons, and household objects. Lacquerware objects were costly and complicated to produce, requiring as many as twenty to thirty artisans working in highly specialized roles in an assembly line model of production to manufacture a single lacquered cup.\(^{568}\) The HM editors note that Changsha did not produce its own lacquer during the Han dynasty but imported it from nearby regions,\(^ {569}\) with the sap transported in containers to workshops where it was heated to remove the remaining water before it was mixed with colored pigments. The lacquering process itself could take several days or even weeks since each lacquer layer was so thin, and a fine lacquer cup could cost the equivalent of ten bronze cups.\(^ {570}\)

Though, as noted above, significant numbers of lacquerware objects from M1 and M3 feature one or more of three different types of inscription, it is the usage inscriptions that most strongly reflect a ritual use for these artifacts. Anthony Barbieri-Low has located these inscriptions within the tradition of painting or incising auspicious phrases on lacquerware, translating them as “your uncommon beer” and “your uncommon food,” and Michèle Pirazzoli-t’Serstevens has similarly translated them simply as “auspicious eating” and “auspicious drinking.”\(^ {571}\)

\(^{568}\) Barbieri-Low (2007), pp. 78-79.

\(^{569}\) HM, 1.94.

\(^{570}\) Some Han lacquerware pieces were inscribed with notations of their value, revealing that a single lacquer platter could cost as many as 1,200 coins. See Barbieri-Low (2007), p. 77.

\(^{571}\) See Pirazzoli-t’Serstevens (1991), p. 10 and Barbieri-Low (2001), pp. 124-125, 125n.66, 178n..47, 183. Cf. the translations of these inscriptions by Jeffrey K. Riegel, “A Summary of Some Recent Wenwu and Kaogu Articles on Mawangdui Tombs Two and Three,” Early China 1 (1975), p. 12 (“please favor the wine” and “please favor the food”); Zhongshu Wang, Han Civilization, trans. K.C. Chang and Collaborators (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982), p. 84 (“auspicious drinking” and “auspicious banqueting”); Erickson (2010), p. 54 (“food for the enjoyment of the master/mistress” and “beer for the enjoyment of the master/mistress”); and Christine Liu-Perkins, At Home in Her Tomb: Lady Dai and the Ancient Chinese Treasures of Mawangdui (Watertown, Mass.: Charlesbridge, 2014), p. 32 (“please eat the food” and “please drink the wine”). Barbieri-Low notes that these auspicious phrases, including individual graphs like shou 壽 (longevity) and li 利 (benefit), were sometimes painted in raw lacquer and
The HM editors, however, note that the graph *xing* 幸 (lit., fortunate, lucky, to enjoy) in the usage inscriptions (“Your favored food/ale” *[jun xing shi/jiu 君幸食/酒]*) is written in an archaic script style that is similar to older character forms, and that this graph is glossed in Li Shan’s 李善 (630-689) commentary to a passage in the *Hou Hanshu 後漢書* (History of the Later Han) as equivalent to the character *xi* 希 (lit., to hope). For this reason, the HM editors interpret these inscriptions as invitations or exhortations directed at the user of these objects to use them for eating and the drinking of alcohol (see Figure 2.10).^572^ 

There is some scholarly disagreement as to who precisely is designated by the term *jun* 君 (“you,” “my lord,” “my lady”) in these inscriptions, with the possibilities including a reference to Li Xi’s title or rank as prime minister (*chengxiang* 丞相) of Changsha, his status as a marquess (*hou* 侯), a term used by children to address their deceased parents, or simply a second-person pronoun used to address a superior.^573^ Wu Songgeng 吳松庚 has argued that in the Western Han it was the relatives of the deceased and not the ritual specialists employed by

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^572^ The HM editors translate these inscriptions into modern Chinese as, “It is hoped that the user [uses them to] eat and drink alcohol” (*xiwang shiyongzhe jinshi, jinjiu 希望使用者進食,進酒*). See HM, 1.78.

Figure 2.10: Lacquerware with usage inscriptions from M1 (WW, 1.54, 59, 69)
the family or the state who oversaw the funeral arrangements for prime ministers and regional lords (zhuhou 諸侯), and since, Wu argues, relatives would not refer to their parents as either lord (junhou 君侯) or prime minister (xiangjun 相君), he takes jun as a term used to designate a deceased parent, which would indicate that these inscriptions were prepared specifically for burial and commissioned by the children of the deceased. 574

Since the same lacquerware inscriptions written in an identical or near-identical set of hands were found in M1 and M3 (the tombs of Xin Zhui and Li Xi respectively), it seems either that a) the vessels were manufactured specially for burial independently for both Li Xi and Xin Zhui; b) the vessels were manufactured specially for Li Xi’s burial and some were retained for future use; c) they were not manufactured specifically for burial in either case but were in use by members of the Li family during their lifetimes, produced and acquired (possibly in multiple batches or gradually over an extended period of time) in significantly large numbers to be buried in multiple tombs, while presumably also retaining or re-commissioning enough lacquerware for continued use above ground by the living members of the family. Though the evidence is inconclusive, judging by the uniformly uninscribed lacquerware items found in M2 it seems that the practice of using inscribing lacquerware vessels at Mawangdui (at least in mortuary contexts) began only after the death of Li Cang in 186 BCE. 575 Certainly, the fact that the usage inscriptions appear on so many different vessels suggests that the term did not designate a specific individual or title but was a general reference to any member of the elite who happened to be using one or more of these items at any particular time in the course of banquet ing and feasting. Hence my translation of these usage inscriptions as “Your favored food/ale.”

574 Wu (2007), pp. 91-93.

575 Though the lacquerware discovered in M2 may not be an accurate reflection of what was originally interred in the tomb, since the tomb was robbed at least three times prior to its excavation, it is relatively unlikely that the tomb originally also contained inscribed lacquerware in the numbers present at the other Mawangdui tomb sites and that only uninscribed examples were left behind, since uninscribed lacquerware vessels would have been just as valuable as their inscribed counterparts. Of course, it is possible that inscribed lacquerware was in use above ground during Li Cang’s lifetime and for some reason these pieces were simply not selected for interment.
Regardless, we can say with certainty that whoever commissioned these inscriptions, and whether they were intended for use in this life, the next, or both, they were evidently intended for use as part of a ritual program involving the correct usage of food and drink vessels within the context of ceremonial feasting.\(^{576}\) The exquisite beauty of the lacquerware and the archaic style of the usage inscriptions suggest a ritual use,\(^{577}\) and these inscriptions may even have represented the utterances spoken in the context of ritual feasting and food offerings, with the presence of the inscriptions compensating for the silence of the Mawangdui tombs.\(^{578}\) The inscriptions may, as suggested by Barbieri-Low and Pirazzoli-t’Serstevens, have been part of a tradition of “auspicious” inscriptions on lacquerware, but this surely does not exhaust their potential significance. If auspiciousness or talismanic power had been the sole motivation behind these inscriptions, for example,\(^{579}\) then why were they not inscribed on each and every object and object type among the eating and drinking vessels discovered in the Mawangdui tombs? And why were they displayed in such prominent and visible locations?

Whereas the ownership inscriptions, volume notations, and factory stamps are often present in less prominent locations such as the side or underside of the vessel, and the writing

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\(^{576}\) Banquets in the Han were not just social gatherings; they were also tightly choreographed and ideologically charged ritual activities, venues for the promotion and maintenance of morally appropriate conduct. Indeed, though they are to be taken with a grain of salt in their particulars, ritual prescriptions from the early empires contained in texts like the *Liji* make clear that those participating in banquets were expected to exhibit ritually and morally appropriate behavior during the proceedings. For an overview of prescritions for banquets and feasts, both implicit and explicit, in Warring States and Early Imperial texts, see Roel Sterckx, *Food, Sacrifice, and Sagehood in Early China* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 2011), pp. 34-42. Anthony Barbieri-Low (2001), p. 7 and Nylan (2005), p. 23 note that as many as several thousands of participants attended official banquets at the Changle 長樂 Palace, and that these participants were sometimes gifted with lacquer dining utensils.

\(^{577}\) Fu Juyou 傅舉有, *Mawangdui Hanmu buxiu zhi mi* 馬王堆漢墓不朽之謎 (Hangzhou: Zhejiang wenyi chubanshe, 2011), pp. 63-64 has commented on the attractiveness of the inscriptions, noting that they are particularly exquisitely balanced and well executed.

\(^{578}\) In Ancient Mesopotamia, inscriptions were sometimes added precisely in order to transform artifacts into votive objects, consecrating them and turning them into “vehicles of devotion and/or requests to deities.” See Gianni Marchesi, “Object, Images, and Text: Remarks on Two ‘Intercultural Style’ Vessels from Nippuri,” in Balke and Tsouparopoulou (2016), p. 102.

\(^{579}\) See Chapter 3 for a discussion of written texts used as amulets and talismans.
style of these inscriptions is sometimes less carefully executed, the usage inscriptions are all displayed very prominently in the center of the top surface of the vessel. The writing is sometimes incorporated into yet never obscured by the other design elements used to ornament the vessel, and when the food vessels were empty (and, in the case of the liquid vessels, when they were filled with clear liquids) the inscriptions would have called to their users: “Eat/drink me!” they seem to cry out.\textsuperscript{580} In the case of the lacquerware from both M1 and M3, the usage inscriptions are found predominantly on smaller vessels such as cups and small dishes, and in the case of the zhi cups and erbei handled “ear cups,” the favored vessel type for usage inscriptions, the vessel would have been lifted to the face using both hands in such a way as to confront the user with the message carried by the ornate inscription.\textsuperscript{581} The presence of these inscriptions on the lacquerware vessels thus encouraged repeated use of these objects as part of ritual feasting.

Even when not in use, however, the inscriptions had a role to play in the correct ritual use of these vessels. Attractively rendered and centrally located on a flat, visible surface, the inscriptions not only attract the gaze of the vessels’ users but also invite them to pick the vessel up to read the inscriptions and appreciate their beauty; the location, style, and content of the inscriptions conspiring to exhort the vessels’ users to engage in ritually appropriate conduct.\textsuperscript{582} These inscriptions are thus part of a tradition dating back to the Western Zhou of inscribing ritual vessels with writing exhorting their users to engage in correct ritual activity. The auspicious

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item The seven-\textit{sheng zhi} cups from M3, for example, measure 13.8cm in diameter and 15cm in height, and the two-\textit{sheng zhi} cups 9cm in diameter and 9.5cm in height. The larger handled \textit{erbei} cups used for drinking from M3 measure 23.6cm in length, 18cm in width, and 8cm in height, and the smaller-handled drinking cups measure 14.5cm in length, 10.5cm in width, and 3.7cm in height. See BG, pp. 123-127.
\item Similarly, Blair (1998), p. 8 has remarked how an Islamic prayer bowl with an inscription of a proverb on it requires the user “to rotate the bowl completely around in a counter-clockwise direction. The inscription thus invites the holder to handle and turn the bowl.” See also Chapter 4 for my discussion of the ways in which the design of the *\textit{Wu ze you xing tu} 物則有形圖 (\textit{Chart on Things Necessarily Having Forms}) manuscript engineers certain uses and bodily movements.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
words or benedictions (guì 褊辭) offered as prayers in ancestor worship (“may my sons and grandsons forever treasure and use [this vessel] to make offerings” [zìsī sūnsūn yòng bāo xiāng 子子孙孫永寶享], for example) often appended to inscriptions on bronze ritual vessels in the Western Zhou served as powerful and impressive methods of ensuring that the correct ritual use of vessels employed in ritual feasting and ancestor worship would be carried out in perpetuity,\(^{583}\) and it seems likely that the Mawangdui lacquerware usage inscriptions were borne of the same desire to ensure the continued correct ritual use of precious ritual objects.

These inscribed lacquerware vessels also share another feature with Western Zhou bronze inscriptions, however. Whereas later Western Zhou inscriptions were often prominently displayed on easily visible areas of the vessel, earlier inscriptions were typically hidden away deep on the inside of the vessel, the very parts of the vessel that were hardest to read but which came into direct contact with the food or drink that was being offered to the ancestors. The inscriptions on the lacquer cups from Mawangdui thus combine two aspects seldom found together in Western Zhou bronzes: a high degree of visibility and close physical contact with the ritual offerings. On these lacquer cups, the usage inscriptions exhort their users to make ritual offerings to their ancestors at the same time as they help carry this message, along with the offerings, to the ancestral spirits themselves, who were similarly enjoined to “enjoy the food/ale.” Thus, the inscriptions bring together past, present, and future users as participants in the kinds of offerings that were used to underwrite familial and sociopolitical bonds.

Whether the inscribed lacquerware at Mawangdui was manufactured primarily for use by the living, or whether they were specifically manufactured for use after death, the interment of these lacquerware vessels would have allowed the grieving descendants of the deceased to bridge the divide between this life and the next by providing their ancestors with ritual objects that spoke to them directly of the necessity of correct ritual usage even after death. With these usage

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inscriptions, the voice of ritual rights and responsibilities becomes part of the ritual object itself. If the vessels were indeed commissioned by the descendants of the deceased specifically for use by their ancestors in the afterlife, then the inscriptions would have allowed the descendants of the deceased to participate in their dead parents’ ritual ceremonies, even in the afterlife. Regardless, the presence of inscriptions on these lacquerware pieces meant that the ritual exhortations ceased to derive from “the outside” and became an internal component of the ritual itself. The usage inscriptions were thus not meta-level reminders or prompts to engage in correct ritual behavior, but rather served as a self-referential ritual voice that derived from within, and itself actually constituted, ritual procedure.

Maintenence of vertical relationships between ancestors and their descendants, however, were not the only kinds of ritual relationships endorsed and engineered by the lacquerware inscriptions. The usage instructions were often inscribed on entire sets of lacquered vessels, and one wonders why this was the case when inscribing just one or two vessels in a set would have served to communicate the same ritual message. Certainly, the presence of writing on so many objects, similar to the lacquer designs on the vessels, would only have increased the prestige associated with the manufacture and ownership of these ritual objects, and the usage inscriptions may also have had the practical function of guaranteeing that the vessels were used appropriately even if they became separated from the set. The presence of usage inscriptions prominently displayed on entire sets of ritual vessels would also have guaranteed a sense of aesthetic order.

Most importantly, however, is the shared sense of identity these inscriptions would have helped engineer. The quantity of lacquerware found in the Mawangdui tombs suggests that members of the Li family regularly held banquets with several dozens and perhaps even

584 Similarly, the ownership inscriptions also served to guarantee that the vessels could not be used by any other than their intended users; i.e., the family of the Marquess of Dai. Using writing to designate ownership of an item was a powerful method of exhibiting royal ritual and administrative control and dedicating ritual objects in the ancient world. See William Harris, Ancient Literacy (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1989), p. 323 and John Baines, Visual and Written Culture in Ancient Egypt (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 100.
hundreds of elites in attendance. The presence of usage inscriptions explicitly addressing the user of each piece would have helped create a shared experience for the assembled elites, simultaneously reminding the users of their elite status as well as their responsibility to engage in ritually appropriate feasting. The inscriptions provided the vessels’ users with constant reminders of the importance of correct ritual use, and the usage inscriptions also helped position the vessels’ users as elite users of ritual objects, with all the rights and responsibilities that entailed.\[585\]

The different types of inscriptions on the lacquerware objects from Mawangdui reflect in various ways a concern for the correct usage of ritual objects. The provenance stamps served as guarantees of quality and methods of accountability for their manufacture, and the marks of ownership identified them as the property of the Li family, while perhaps also enforcing the elite identities of their owners.\[586\] Inscribing lacquerware in this way not only objectified texts, giving them a material form that allowed them to speak from within the ritual itself, it also textualized objects, making ritual readable. In the context of ritual feasting, then, writing and artifact each did what the other could not, and the usage inscriptions on the lacquerware from Mawangdui represent a powerful integration of text, object, and material use. Engagement with ritual messages inscribed on beautiful objects used in tightly choreographed ceremonial contexts was an encounter that combined viewing, reading, and using as an almost undifferentiated fusion of ritually charged activity.

\[585\] Sarah Jackson has written about how inscribed text-objects, including inscriptions on vessels designating names and usages, can help orientate their users as members of certain sociopolitical communities. See Sarah E. Jackson, “Writing as Material Technology: Orientation Within the Landscapes of the Classical Maya World,” in Writing as Material Practice: Substance, Surface, and Medium, ed. Kathryn E. Piquette and Ruth D. Whitehouse (London: Ubiquity Press, 2013), pp. 45-64, especially pp. 52-54.

\[586\] For a discussion of different types of identity and scholarship on the topic, see Chapter 5.
2.5 Conclusion

Ideas, values, and beliefs require materialization in order to be transmitted effectively, resulting not just in objects and images but also in speech, acts, practices, and performances.\textsuperscript{587} In different ways, the sources examined in this chapter show that writing, variously in the sense of written signs, acts of inscription, and inscribed artifacts, was often incorporated into ritual performance. In each of these cases, writing was not a technology apart but a complementary component of broader cultural forms of communication and expression, including material display, public performance, and spoken incantation. Writing as ritual communication at Mawangdui was thus fully integrated into early Western Han material and visual cultures, and it is only by understanding these written sources in relation to the broader material culture of the Mawangdui tombs that we can make sense of how the dynamic relationship between text and materiality helped create and sustain shared identities and experiences.

3.1 Introduction: performative writing and the power of talismanic texts

In the previous chapter I showed how certain texts from Mawangdui were designed for, and used in, ritual performance. In this chapter, however, I move from performance to performativity to consider the ways in which written signs were used to change the world rather than merely describe or symbolize elements of it.

My use of the term performativity to characterize certain uses of writing at Mawangdui is an extension of J.L. Austin’s well-known theory of performative utterances. Just as, after Austin, under certain conditions specific utterances do not simply describe reality but actually constitute and create it (the phrase “I take this man to be my lawful wedded husband” uttered during a marriage ceremony in front of a priest, for example),588 in certain cases writing can also be used, in ways spoken utterances cannot, to define and determine the accepted conditions of reality. Written wills and contracts are just two examples of this kind of writing, and recent studies of performative writing have also addressed the capacity for written signs and messages to transform the spaces where they are found, and the people exposed to them, in ways that exceed or transcend their semantic or linguistic value.589

A number of written sources from Mawangdui attest to the existence of a contemporary belief that, in certain circumstances, the written sign could be used not just to record or

588 See J.L. Austin, How to Do Things with Words (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1955). Austin characterizes as performative those utterances that “do not ‘describe’ or ‘report’ or constate anything at all, are not ‘true’ or ‘false,’” but where “the uttering of the sentence is, or is a part of, the doing of an action, which again would not normally be described as saying something” (quotation on p. 5; emphasis in original).

communicate linguistic messages but actually to effect change in the world through its very material presence. Whether brush written in ink or woven into textiles, whether painted or carved, this use of performative writing, perhaps sometimes also accompanied by spoken utterances embedded within ritual acts and ceremonies, was intended variously to ward off danger, preserve wealth, and attract good fortune. Examining the performative use of writing as amulets and talismans in the Mawangdui tombs reveals that in early Western Han mortuary contexts, and almost certainly above ground as well, complex written texts containing profound philosophical truths or sophisticated technical knowledge were not the only ways in which writing could be used to project or embody elite status and identity. Rather, it was believed that, at least with certain types of writing used in certain spaces, short texts and even individual characters supported on objects ranging from bamboo slips to finely woven silk garments could be used to negotiate a person’s fate and identity, both in this life and the next.590

There is an increasingly large body of scholarship on premodern amulets and talismans, a reflection of the fact that their use was widespread all over the ancient and premodern world, including ancient Egypt, the ancient Mediterranean, ancient Mesopotamia, in early and medieval Judaism, early Japan, medieval Islam, and medieval Europe.591 Amulets and talismans might

590 See Chapter 5 for a discussion of the different conceptions and definitions of identity that have been discussed in recent scholarship.

contain extended passages of writing, short scraps of text, semantically meaningless pseudo-graphs, a combination of pictures and writing, or no writing at all, and they were committed to a wide range of different media including linen, pottery, papyrus, metal, gold, silver, lead, and even plant leaves. A distinction is sometimes drawn between amulets worn or carried for protection and talismans designed to attract blessings and good fortune, and both types of object are sometimes also referred to as charms. What all these objects have in common, however, is that it was believed that their material features (from their medium to any markings they may have had, written or otherwise) and presence in certain spaces and locations functioned to confer some sort of positive force upon the person or persons who owned or used them. In the case of inscribed amulets and talismans, it was often thought that the inscription of auspicious or otherwise ritually charged words and phrases allowed the magic of these words to enter and become part of the object itself, transferring that power to the body of the object’s owner or user.

In many cases the use of amulets and talismans was connected to myths and legends about where writing came from and how written graphs related to cosmic forces and the material world, with writing thought to enjoy certain inherent powers and magical properties. The

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593 See Gaster (1989), p. 146; Pinch (1994), p. 105; and Skemer (2006), p. 9. In this chapter I generally maintain this distinction between amulets and talismans, though occasionally I use the term “talismanic” to describe the transcendent powers of both types of object.


ancient Egyptians, for example, favored written amulets and talismans because they believed that writing had been invented by the deity Thoth, and thus that hieroglyphs could be used to “reify their subjects” rather than simply naming or describing them. In Ancient Israel writing was regarded as part of the thing itself (both signifier and signified) and written names enjoyed the properties of people, making written curses particularly potent. And in ancient Babylonia, the cosmic origins of writing meant that written texts were long associated with magic, and it was believed that “writing and representation produce[d] the real and ha[d] a direct impact on it.”

By way of contrast, judging by transmitted textual sources there was apparently no single commonly accepted early (i.e. pre-Eastern Han) Chinese myth of how writing was invented or how writing related to the world and the cosmos. In the “Xici” commentary to the Zhouyi (Zhou Changes), probably composed sometime around the third century BCE, the invention of writing is associated with the legend of Fu Xi’s (also known as Bao Xi or Pao Xi) invention of the Eight Trigrams (bagua 八卦), as well as the innovations of other mythic figures including Shen Nong 神農, one of the legendary culture heroes who is said to have contributed to the invention of agriculture. The invention of writing is not credited to any particular inventor in this commentary; rather, it is presented as an extension of the principles behind Fu Xi’s invention of the trigrams “in order to communicate

597 See Isaac Rabinowitz, A Witness Forever: Ancient Israel’s Perception of Literature and the Resultant Hebrew Bible (Bethesda: CDL Press, 1993), pp. 33-44. See also Rosalind Thomas, Literacy and Orality in Ancient Greece (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 80, who notes that in Ancient Greece writing down a curse was sometimes thought to make it more effective.
with the virtuous power of the divine intelligence and categorize the conditions of the ten-thousand things” (yi tong shenming zhi de, yi lei wanwu zhi qing 以通神明之德，以類萬物之情). 600

The earliest passages to attribute explicitly the invention of writing to the mythic culture hero Cang Jie 蒼頡 (also 倉頡) can be found in the “Wudu” 五蠹 (“Five Vermin”) chapter of the Hanfeizi 韓非子 (Writings of Master Han Fei), which might date to the third century BCE; 601 and the “Junshou” 君守 (“Gentleman’s Observances”) chapter of the Lüshi chunqiu 呂氏春秋 (Springs and Autumnns Annals of Mr. Lü) compiled around 239 BCE. 602 These are just brief references, however, and the earliest passage to give a detailed account of the circumstances

600 At the end of this passage we are told that “in high antiquity order was achieved by knotting cords, and the sages of later ages exchanged this for written documents and contracts. The one-hundred officials were thus ordered, and the ten-thousand peoples were observed. This idea was probably taken from the guai hexagram” 上古結繩而治，後世聖人易之以書契，百官以治，萬民以察，蓋取諸夬。 601 Dating the various parts of received works like the Hanfeizi is extremely difficult, raising all sorts of methodological questions about the study of early Chinese texts. The lack of reliable information about the circumstances surrounding the compilation of this particular text has led one scholar to lament that “[w]e know next to nothing about when the text was created, what person or persons compiled it, and the circumstances and motivations that informed its compilation, let alone who composed the individual chapters of this 55 chapter compendium.” See Sarah A. Queen, “Han feizi and the Old Master: A Comparative Analysis and Translation of Han Feizi Chapter 20, ‘Jie Lao,’ and Chapter 21, ‘Yu Lao,’” in Dao Companion to the Philosophy of Han Fei, ed. Paul R. Goldin (New York: Springer, 2013), p. 198.

602 See Hanfeizi jijie 韓非子集結 59.540 and Lüshi chunqiu jishi 呂氏春秋集釋 17.443. A passage in the “Jie bi” 解蔽 (“Resolving Concealment”) chapter of the Xunzi 荀子 (Writings of Master Xun) associates Cang Jie with writing and may be earlier than either the Hanfeizi or Lüshi chunqiu passages, but the text does not unambiguously credit Cang Jie with writing’s invention: “For this reason, that there were many who were fond of writing yet [the tradition of] Cang Jie alone was passed down is because of his singularity” 故好書者眾矣，而倉頡獨傳者，壹也 (Xunzi jijie 荀子集結 15.401). In this passage, Cang Jie is listed alongside a number of other mythic culture heroes and the cultural practices and achievements associated with them, such as Hou Ji 后稷, traditionally regarded as one of the fathers of agriculture, but nowhere in this passage does it explicitly state that Cang Jie was the inventor of writing. For a useful account of these legends and the relationships between them, see William G. Boltz, The Origin and Early Development of the Chinese Writing System (New Haven: American Oriental Society, 1994), pp. 130-136 and Françoise Bottéro, “Cang Jie and the Invention of Writing: Reflections on the Elaboration of a Legend,” in Studies in Chinese Language and Culture: Festschrift in Honour of Christoph Harbsmeier on the Occasion of His 60th Birthday; ed. Christoph Anderl and Halvor Eifring (Oslo: Hermes, 2006), pp. 136-139. Bottéro also notes that excavated fragments of Western and Eastern Han editions of the Cangjie pian 倉頡篇 (Writings of Cang Jie) attributed to Li Si 李斯 (ca. 280-208 BCE) also clearly and unequivocally attribute the invention of writing to Cang Jie.
surrounding Cang Jie’s invention of writing is in the “Ben jing” 本經 (“Fundamental Warp”) chapter of the Huainanzi 淮南子 (Writings of the Master of Huainan) compiled around 139 BCE:

“In the past, when Cang Jie created writing, Heaven rained millet and the ghosts wept in the night. When Bo Yi [another mythic culture hero] created wells, the dragons ascended to the dark clouds and the spirits took roost in the Kunlun Mountains [in the Tibetan plateau]. As their [i.e., the people’s] abilities became more numerous, so their virtues became slighter.” 昔者蒼頡作書，而天雨粟，鬼夜哭；伯益作井，而龍登玄雲，神棲昆侖；能愈多而德愈薄矣。603

A second- or third-century CE commentary to the Huainanzi elucidates this passage by explaining that after Cang Jie invented writing, “deceit and falsehood flourished” (zha wei mengsheng 詐偽萌生) and the people “abandoned what was essential and hurried to what was inessential” (qu ben qu mo 去本趨末), leading to Heaven sending down millet in anticipation of their hunger and the ghosts weeping for fear they would be “impeached by the written records” (wei shuwen suo he 為書文所劾).604 The original Huainanzi passage clearly presents the invention of writing, along with other innovations such as water wells, as an acquisition of an ability or technology that had once been the sole preserve of deities and supernatural creatures, but it is unclear precisely what the connection is, if any, between writing and the divine or cosmic substances and forces structuring or inhabiting the universe. Indeed, as early as the first century CE readers of this passage were registering confusion as to its meaning.605

603 Huainanzi jishi 淮南子集釋 8.571-572.

604 Huainanzi jishi 8.571. According to the “Jingji zhi” 經籍志 (“Monograph on Bibliography”) chapter of the Suishu 隋書 (History of the Sui Dynasty), Xu Shen 許慎 (ca. 58-148 CE) wrote a commentary to the Huainanzi some one hundred years before Gao You 高誘 (ca. 168-212 CE) completed his commentary on the same text. See Suishu 34.1006. At some point prior to the eleventh century, however, the two commentaries were merged and appended to the text of the Huainanzi, and though this commentary is often attributed to either Xu Shen or Gao You it is impossible to say with certainty which parts were written by which commentator. See Boltz (1994), pp. 131-132, 131-132n.4.

605 See, for example, Wang Chong’s 王充 (27-ca. 100 CE) comments in Lunheng jiaoshi 論衡校釋 5.249-250. See also Boltz (1994), p. 132n.5 and Bottéro (2006), pp. 140-148. Bottéro speculates that this
Anna Seidel has related this story to a passage in the *Zuozhuan* 左傳 (*Zuo Tradition*) to argue that there was a contemporary belief that naming or depicting ghosts or demons allowed a person to exercise control over them and their powers.\(^{606}\) This is certainly one possibility, however it should be noted that the *Zuozhuan* passage in question does not specifically mention the use of writing to control demons or spirits,\(^{607}\) and although the Xu Shen/Gao You commentary to the *Huainanzi* and a passage in the *Hou Hanshu* 後漢書 (*History of the Later Han*, comp. fifth century CE) both associate writing with the “impeachment” (he 劾) of ghosts and spirits,\(^{608}\) these sources both postdate the *Huainanzi* by several centuries and may reflect Eastern Han beliefs rather than Western Han theories of where writing came from and what it could be used to accomplish.

In the Eastern Han the Fu Xi legend came to be associated with Cang Jie’s invention of writing in Xu Shen’s postface (xu 序) to the *Shuowen jiezi* 說文解字 (*Explanation of Simple Graphs and Elucidation of Compound Characters*, comp. second century CE), where it says that:

“In ancient times, Pao Xi [= Fu Xi] ruled All Under Heaven as king. Gazing upwards he surveyed the figures in Heaven, looking downwards he surveyed the models on Earth, and he observed that the patterns made by the birds and the beasts were commensurate with those of the Earth. Close by he took them from his own person, and far away he took them from the various things, thereby first inventing the Eight Trigrams of the *Changes* in order to transmit exemplars and figures. When Shen Nong knotted cords to install order he thus regulated affairs. When the various occupations multiplied, ornament and artifice blossomed. Huang Di’s [a legendary ruler] scribe Cang Jie saw the traces of the footprints of the birds and the beasts and he knew that by distinguishing and ordering them [i.e., the footprints] he could differentiate them [i.e., the birds and beasts]. He was the first to create writing; the one hundred craftsmen were thereby brought under control and the ten thousand grades were thereby investigated. He probably took this idea from a curious passage in the *Huainanzi* has to do with the fact that writing, in contrast to spoken language, constituted a permanent record that could be consulted for information about one’s ancestors and used to transmit messages to one’s descendants, thereby encroaching on the powers of the spirits.


\(^{607}\) *Chunqiu Zuozhuan zhu* 春秋左傳注 (vol. 1), pp. 669-671 (Huan 桓 3 = 709 BCE).

\(^{608}\) *Hou Hanshu* 82.2749.
This Eastern Han association between Cang Jie’s invention of writing and Fu Xi’s invention of the Eight Trigrams by observing the figures (xiang 象) in Heaven and relating them to the models (fa 法) and patterns (wen 文) on Earth may reflect a contemporary belief that Cang Jie had likewise found a source for the principles of writing in the patterns of the universe, though nowhere is this explicitly stated.\(^6^{09}\) In any case, in post-Han times the legend mutated significantly, and it was now Fu Xi and not Cang Jie who was most commonly credited with the invention of writing.\(^6^{11}\)

In sum, we have a small number of brief, vague, and seemingly contradictory passages of relatively late date,\(^6^{12}\) one of which offers an elaboration or extension of a Warring States story that does not appear to have been widely known or accepted in Warring States or Western Han times,\(^6^{13}\) about which even second and third century commentators were apparently confused. Nowhere in the transmitted textual record do we see unambiguous evidence of a widespread or commonly accepted theory of how writing was invented or discovered, nor is it clear if written

\(^{609}\) *Shuowen jiezi* 15a.314b. See also Bottéro (2006), pp. 148-151.

\(^{610}\) The passage specifies only that Cang Jie was inspired to invent writing by observing patterns in nature, not that he invented writing as an extension or embodiment of those patterns.


\(^{612}\) Bottéro (2006), pp. 151-152 notes that “[a]ccording to the documents which we have access to, the question of the origin of writing did not go further back than the 3rd century before our era.”

\(^{613}\) Martin Kern notes that it is strange that the “Xici” commentary was completely ignored in the philosophical discourse of the Warring States and Western Han, while its story of the emergence of the written script was nevertheless apparently transmitted for centuries in some form, appearing in the Xu Shen/Gao You postface. See Martin Kern, “Feature: *Writing and Authority in Early China*, by Mark Edward Lewis,” *China Review International* 7.2 (2000), pp. 359-360. The fact that Li Xi was buried with a manuscript containing a version of the “Xici” commentary (see Chapter 1) may suggest that he was aware of, and perhaps believed in, its account of the origins of writing. However, I actually doubt that Li Xi was very familiar with the texts found in his tomb. See my discussion of this issue in Chapter 5.
signs were thought to be connected metaphysically to elements of the material world or to the forces and processes that structured the cosmos. Indeed, the account in the third-century BCE "Xici" commentary seems to have been resurrected in altered form in the second century CE to suit the arguments of Eastern Han intellectuals who advocated for the importance of writing to culture and statecraft.

Of course, this apparent lack of any widely accepted theory of writing’s origins makes sense when we consider that recent scholarship has emphasized the relatively peripheral or auxiliary role played by writing in early Chinese intellectual and cultural life, with several important studies demonstrating how writing in early China grew only gradually to take on the powerful symbolic, cultural, and cosmological significances it was to enjoy in later times. In particular, Michael Nylan has shown that it was not until the late Western Han, Xin, and Eastern Han eras that reports were received (and not without skepticism) of miraculous charts and apocryphal texts being discovered, and that with very few exceptions (such as the supposedly divinely or miraculously revealed Hetu 河圖 [River Chart] and Luoshu 洛書 [Luo Document], texts about which we know next to nothing), a small number of written texts came to be

614 Mark Edward Lewis has used these stories to argue for the existence of a widespread belief in the power of writing (which Lewis claims includes the entire “hierarchical series of visual sign networks” in use in the Warring States era) as the pre-eminent technology that made possible all other sagely inventions and institutions. See Mark Edward Lewis, Writing and Authority in Early China (Albany: SUNY Press, 1999), pp. 197-209 (quotation on p. 197). But see the objections raised in Kern (2000a), pp. 359-360. See also Michael Nylan’s comment in “Textual Authority in Pre-Han and Han,” Early China 25 (2000), p. 214n.10 that “[t]he negative associations of Cang Jie’s invention (the ghosts weep at the invention) are also damaging to Lewis’s hypothesis.” In any case, as David Lurie has argued, “[o]ne cannot simply take at face value early assertions about the nature of writing and speech.” See Lurie (2001), p. 41.


616 The Hetu, later accompanied by the Luoshu (both also known by other names) appear in early texts beginning with the Shu 書 (Documents) (where the Hetu appears to refer to some sort of precious artifact symbolizing the political mandate of the Zhou royal house), and are later said (in sources such as the
associated with divine (shen 神) status only in the Eastern Han dynasty. Thus, the Cang Jie legend as it came to be formulated in the Shuowen jiezi was part of a trend in Eastern Han of placing increasing importance on writing and written texts as major sources of ancient wisdom and knowledge, and attempts to trace this legend back to identify the origins of Chinese writing in prehistoric, shamanistic word magic increasingly seem forced and unconvincing.

The fact that writing in early China was never explicitly valorized in the way that it was in ancient Egypt and certain other ancient civilizations, however, does not mean that Chinese writing was not incorporated into practices surrounding communication with the spirits or attempts to secure protection and good fortune from the cosmos. A wide range of excavated sources including Western Zhou (ca. 1045-771 BCE) bronze inscriptions with appended “auspicious phrases” (guci 訛辭), ca. fifth-century BC covenant texts (mengshu 盟書) from Houma 侯馬 and Wenxian 溫縣, ca. third-century BC jade prayer tablets, prayers cast into

“Xici” commentary) to have represented revelatory models of correct, sagely behavior. In some sources, they are said to have emerged from rivers as auspicious signs, and eventually they came to be considered as transcendent religious and political documents that had been conveyed to humanity by supernatural means. According to a number of Eastern Han texts it was believed that whoever received one of these documents was the appointed Son of Heaven. See Grégoire Espesset, “Latter Han Religious Mass Movements and the Early Daoist Church,” in Early Chinese Religion Part One: Shang through Han (1250 BC-220 AD), ed. John Lagerwey and Marc Kalinowski (Leiden: Brill, 2009), pp. 1095-1096. For a discussion of their appearance in early textual sources, see Schuyler Cammann, “The Magic Square of Three in Old Chinese Philosophy and Religion,” History of Religions 1.1 (1961), pp. 37-40; idem, “Old Chinese Magic Squares,” Sinologica 7 (1962), pp. 14-16; Seidel (1983), pp. 297-302; and Zhu Zhen 朱楨, “He Luo shenhua chansheng zhenxiang xintan” 河洛神話產生真相新探, Qi Lu xuekan 齊魯學刊 (1995).6, pp. 28-32.

Han bronze mirrors, Eastern Han prayer-contracts, and other documents addressed to the spirit world inscribed on wooden slips all attest to the belief that, in certain circumstances, writing could be used to increase the efficacy of prayers, spells, and contracts, as well as to make such documents ritually transmittable to the spirit world.

In the late Western Han, Xin, and Eastern Han dynasties, it became increasingly common for texts to be associated with mythic heroes and divine forces as products of revelation, and Han mantic practices involving the use of talismanic texts to communicate with the spirit world were precursors to the use of talismans in Eastern Han and later eras. Judging by both transmitted and excavated sources, the earliest examples of special written talismans known as *fu* designed to confer protection and good fortune on their owners date to the Eastern Han dynasty, though there is evidence to suggest they may have been in use already in

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625 The *Hou Hanshu* relates how Qu Shengqing 麟聖卿 of the Eastern Han, an expert in manufacturing written talismans from cinnabar, was able to use the talismans to kill and control demons and spirits (又河南有麟聖，善為丹書符劾，厭殺鬼神而使命之). See *Hou Hanshu* 82.2749. *Hou Hanshu* 82b.2744-
Qin and Western Han.\(^{626}\) In Eastern Han, land contracts (\textit{diquan} 地券), celestial ordinances for the dead (\textit{zhenmu wen} 鎮墓文), and tomb inventory texts (\textit{qiance} 遺冊/策, sometimes also known as “clothing deeds,” \textit{yiwu quan} 衣物券\(^{627}\)) often explicitly prayed for protection for the living and absolution from sin for the deceased, and some were accompanied by talismanic characters or diagrams.\(^{628}\) Certainly, the use of amulets and talismans, written and otherwise, was

2745 tells the story of another man in Eastern Han, Fei Changfang 費長房, who was killed by demons after losing possession of his talisman. For a discussion of these accounts, see Csikszentmihalyi (2000), pp. 69-70. See also Wu Rongzeng’s 吳榮曾 summary of Eastern Han excavated talismanic writings on pottery and lead in his “Zhenmuwen zhong suo jiandao de Donghan daowu guanxi” 鎮墓文中所見到的東漢道巫關係,” \textit{Wenwu} 文物 (1981).3, pp. 56-63 and Despeux (2000), p. 500. As Donald Harper explains, references to \textit{fu} in pre-Han and Western Han sources take \textit{fu} as a “multi-purpose bipartite token used in Warring States, Qin, and Han administration: one part of the \textit{fu} was retained by the government; the other part was carried by the person, who was required to match his part of the government’s part in order to prove his identity and authority. Extended meanings of \textit{fu} attested in received sources include: signs exhibited by phenomena; congruence between things; and in omenology, matching auspicious signs in nature with human correlates.” See Donald Harper, “Communication by Design: Two Silk Manuscripts of Diagrams (\textit{Tu}) From Mawangdui Tomb Three,” in Graphics and Text in the Production of Technical Knowledge in China: The Warp and the Weft, ed. Francesca Bray, Vera Dorofeeva-Lichtmann, and Georges Métaillé (Leiden: Brill, 2007), p. 182. See also Seidel (1983), p. 310: “The original meaning of \textit{fu}, ‘tally,’ is well known: it is the bamboo, wood or bronze tablets, brick or piece of silk or paper on which contracts were written. The \textit{fu} consisted of two ‘split’ halves (\textit{poufu} 剖符) and each of the two contracting parties kept one tally (\textit{qi} 契) as guarantee. Only if the two halves fitted perfectly, was the contract authenticated.”

\(^{626}\) One of the daybooks (\textit{rishu} 日書) from Shuihudi 睡虎弟 (Yunmeng 雲夢, Hubei 湖北, ca. 217 BCE) refers to a type of talisman known as a \textit{Yufu} 禹符 (“Yu’s talisman”) in the context of rites performed before embarking on a journey. See Harper (2007), pp. 181-182. One of the recipes in the “Wushi’er bingfang” 五十二病方 (“Prescriptions for Fifty-Two Ailments”) medical text from Mawangdui also refers to bathing in water mixed with an incinerated “paired talisman” (\textit{bingfu} 并符) as a way of curing illness. See Donald Harper, Early Chinese Medical Literature: the Mawangdui Medical Manuscripts (New York: Kegan Paul International, 1997), p. 301. Harper speculates (p. 301n.3) that some of the incinerated talisman may also have been drunk beforehand, and that “[i]t seems likely that talismans of wood, bamboo, or fabric inscribed with magical images and script are involved, similar to talismans of later times” (p.301n.1). It should be noted that this is not specified in the recipe itself, however. As an interesting point of comparison, with inscribed Islamic prayer bowls it was common for the water they held to be drunk or used as bathing water as a way of imbibing the power of the inscriptions. See Silverman (1991), pp. 26-27.

\(^{627}\) Recently, Tian Tian 田天 has argued that “clothing deeds,” also known as “clothing lists” (\textit{yiwu shu} 衣物疏), in fact constituted a separate inventory genre that was often material distinguished from tomb inventory texts proper. See Tian Tian, “From ‘Clothing Strips’ to Clothing Lists: Tomb Inventories and Western Han Funerary Ritual,” \textit{Bamboo and Silk} 2.1 (2019), pp. 52-86.
a widespread part of early “Daoism,” as well as medieval Chinese Buddhist and Daoist practice, and even today talismanic texts written on paper are used in China, Japan, and Chinese communities overseas to secure knowledge, wisdom, and prosperity.

Clearly, the lack of explicit theories in early China about the origins of writing and its connection to the material world and the cosmos presented no barrier to the development of a tradition of writing with what we might call “talismanic power.” In this sense, the Chinese situation is comparable to that of the ancient Greeks, who likewise apparently felt no need to ascribe the invention of writing to any sort of deity though they made widespread use of written amulets and talismans. As we have seen, there is a large body of excavated material attesting

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629 See Seidel (1987), pp. 21-57. Terry F. Kleeman, “Land Contracts and Related Documents,” in Chūgoku no shūkyō shisō to kagaku: Makio Ryōkai Hakushi shōju kinen ronshū 中国の宗教・思想と科学：牧尾良海博士頌寿記念論集, ed. Makio Ryōkai Hakushi Shōju Kinen Ronshū Kankōkai 牧尾良海博士頌寿記念論集刊行会 (Tokyo: Kokusho kankōkai, 1984), p. 9 notes that the fact that no Eastern Han tomb has yielded more than one of these three types of document may suggest they performed similar or even identical functions.

629 Daoist talismans were typically oblong pieces of wood or metal inscribed with figurative signs and symbols in black or red ink. Historically, the term “talisman” (fu 符) was often interchangeable in the Daoist tradition with related terms such as “register” (lu 篥), “diagram” (tu 圖), and “written documents” (shu 書, chishu 赤書) that were all thought to embody cosmic energies and give their owners power over divine beings. See Despeux (2000), pp. 498-500. See also Wang Yucheng 王育成, “Donghan daofu shili” 東漢道符釋例, Kaogu xuebao 考古學報 (1991).1, pp. 45-56 and Li Ling, “An Archaeological Study of Taiyi (Grand One) Worship,” trans. Donald Harper, Early Medieval China 2 (1996), pp. 1-39.


631 See Robson (2008), p 132.

632 See Boltz (1994), p. 129n.1, where in the context of a discussion of the different deities credited with the invention of writing in different ancient civilizations, it is noted that “[t]he striking exception to this pattern is ancient Greece, where in spite of a nearly unsurpassed richness of myth and legend, writing was never looked upon as anything other than the mundane, functional device it was, and its origin or invention was apparently never associated with a mythic or legendary figure.” Indeed, not only did the Ancient Greeks not generally ascribe the invention of writing to the gods, with very few exceptions the Greek gods were not portrayed as being actively literate. See Albert Henrichs, “Writing Religion: Inscribed Texts, Ritual Authority, and the Religious Discourse of the Polis,” in Written Texts and the Rise of Literate Culture in Ancient Greece, ed. Harvey Yunis (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 38-40. It should be noted, however, that the worship of gods associated with writing was not entirely unknown in the ancient Mediterranean. In the Este region of Venetia, for example, a
to the existence of a prior tradition in early China of using writing with talismanic power to bless and to protect. My analysis of the sources examined below, some of which have barely attracted the attention of scholars, suggests that already in Western Han certain elites believed in the talismanic power of written signs to ward off danger, preserve wealth, and attract good fortune. Unlike talismans in later times, these sources were not divinely revealed or produced, nor apparently were they thought to embody or reflect cosmic truths or patterns. They do not invoke or reference the power of divine or cosmic forces, nor do they take the form of explicit prayers or addresses to deities or underworld officials. Nevertheless, examining the ways in which these sources were produced, how they were used, where they were found, and their relation to artifacts found in other Han dynasty tombs reveals the presence of what was apparently a relatively widespread belief in the performative power of talismanic writing to secure identity and alter fate, both in this life and the next.

3.2 An individual inscribed bamboo slip

The excavation of Mawangdui M2 led to the discovery of a single bamboo slip located in the middle of the tomb passage (mudao 墓道) leading to the tomb pit (mukang 墓抗) where the body of Li Cang was housed. The slip measures 22.7cm in length by 1.5cm in width, and carries two columns of brush-written characters, fourteen in total, written in blank ink in a competent if somewhat hastily executed style of Han clerical script (lishu 隸書). The color photograph published in the second volume of JC clearly shows a split running part way through the slip beginning at its bottom edge (see Figure 3.1), damaging the last visible graph and rendering it untranscribable, possibly obliterating other graphs in the first column (reading right to left) that

sanctuary dated to 500 BCE has been discovered where offerings including writing materials such as tablets, chisels, and styluses were made to the deity Reitia (lit., “one who writes”). See Marcel Detienne, The Writing of Orpheus: Greek Myth in Cultural Context, trans. Janet Lloyd (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003), pp. 126-127. Indeed, even religious traditions and belief systems that were overtly hostile to the use of written magic, such as orthodox Islam, witnessed widespread use of written amulets and talismans. See Silverman (1991), p. 19.
may have been present on the portions of bamboo that have broken away. This split is not visible in the drawing of the slip published in BG (see Figure 3.2).\(^{633}\) Dan Xianjin 單先進 in BG provides a transcription of the slip’s contents, which I present here followed by my translation:

衛卒辨與長沙王彭人 // 凡廿一人.\(^{634}\)
“Guardsmen allocated to the King of Changsha…men of Peng. // A total of twenty-one persons.”

Dan notes that in antique usage, the graph bian 辨 (lit., to distinguish) can mean “to repay” (changhuan 償還) or “to apportion” (fengei 分給), and he takes the phrase Pengren 彭人 (lit., men of Peng) as a reference to the native or registered place (jiguan 籍貫) of the guardsman (weizu 衛卒) referred to at the beginning of the inscription.\(^{635}\) Zheng Shubin 鄭曙斌 and Jiang Wen 蔣文 in JC note the transcription and interpretations offered by Dan in BG, though they provide a slightly different reading of the slip’s contents:

率卒辨與長沙王人 // 凡廿一人.\(^{636}\)
Commanding soldiers [?] allocated to the King of Changsha…men [of?]…// A total of twenty-one persons.”

There are three differences between the two transcriptions. One difference is that Zheng and Jiang in JC do not feel confident in transcribing the eighth graph in the first column (represented using a  symbol in the JC transcription), which Dan in BG renders as Peng 彭, as noted above. Another difference is that while Dan uses a  symbol to indicate the

\(^{633}\) For the color photograph of the bamboo slip, see JC, 2.257. For the drawing, see BG, p. 10.

\(^{634}\) BG, p. 9. I have inserted a double forward slash (//) in both the BG and JC transcriptions, as well as in my translations, to indicate the division between the characters on the first and second columns on the slip.

\(^{635}\) BG, p. 9.

\(^{636}\) JC, 6.225. I have used bold characters in red to indicate the places where this transcription differs from the earlier transcription published in BG.
untranscribable yet still partially visible graph damaged by the split in the slip mentioned above, Zheng and Jiang have inserted a further three such symbols, presumably to indicate the possibility that roughly three more graphs were originally written on the slip and may have been obliterated by the split. The final difference is that the very first graph in the first column reading right to left, which Dan takes as wei 衛 (as part of the binome weizu 衛卒, “guardsmen”), is rendered as shuai 率 (lit., to lead or command) by Zheng and Jiang in JC.

Unfortunately, Zheng and Jiang do not specify whether they view this difference as graphic or lexical. That is, they do not explain if the graph 率 is to be taken as a graphic variant that writes the word wei, or as a lexical variant used to write a different word, perhaps the first half of a binome shuaizu 率卒 (leading/commanding soldiers?) and not a verb phrase meaning “to lead/command the soldiers.” While I have been unable to find the term shuaizu attested elsewhere in either transmitted or excavated sources, the term weizu is indeed attested in several Han texts, including the Shiji 史記 (Archivist’s Records) and the Hanshu 漢書 (History of the Han Dynasty), where it seems to refer to common soldiers conscripted to serve for a period of time as guards, either in the capital Chang’an 長安 or at the courts of the regional lords (zhuhou 諸侯). On this basis, I take this slip as an itemized entry recording the presence of twenty-one guardsman who had been allocated to the King of Changsha, and who had presumably played some role in the funeral rites for his prime minister, Li Cang.

637 The graphs 衛 and 率 were apparently phonologically somewhat distinct in Han times. See the phonological reconstructions in William H. Baxter and Laurent Sagart, Old Chinese: A New Reconstruction (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014) and Axel Schuessler, ABC Etymological Dictionary of Old Chinese (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2007).

Figure 3.1: Photograph of inscribed bamboo slip from M2 (JC, 2.257)

Figure 3.2: Drawing of inscribed bamboo slip from M2 (BG, p. 10)
No doubt the enigmatic nature of the slip’s inscription in the context of Li Cang’s burial site is the reason why it has failed to attract significant scholarly interest beyond the two transcriptions offered above.\textsuperscript{639} Indeed, Zheng and Jiang in JC caution that since the readings of certain graphs are still uncertain, the nature and significance of the slip away further research.\textsuperscript{640} I would like to suggest, however, that the slip’s material features, as well as the mortuary context in which it was discovered, may provide clues as to how this artifact was used, and that this use was connected to precautions taken to protect Li Cang and his tomb from threats posed by robbers and evil spirits after burial as well as to the tradition of compiling tomb inventory texts as inventories of items used in the funeral proceedings (see Chapter 2).

This individual slip tomb resembles those used to manufacture tomb inventory texts in several respects. The fact that the number record (“twenty-one persons in total”) appears on a second column on the slip, rather than at the bottom of the first column (where the amount of blank space could easily have accommodated these four graphs), speaks to a desire on the part of the scribe to separate out the number record from the entry proper, distinguishing this slip from the format used for the entries on the bamboo slips that constitute the tomb inventory texts found in Mawangdui M1 and M3, which carry only one column of characters per slip. In addition, the slip does not feature the words “to the right-hand side” (\textit{youfang} 右方), the formula used on the summary slips and boards in those documents. However, use of the word \textit{fan} 凡 (in total) at the start of a new column introducing the number of items recorded in the entry matches the format of certain of the wooden summary boards that constitute part of the tomb inventory text from M3, and the word \textit{fan} often appears prominently on summary slips in tomb inventory texts discovered at other sites.\textsuperscript{641} A black mark partially visible on the upper right portion of the slip

\textsuperscript{639} Astonishingly, aside from the transcriptions in BG and JC I am unaware of any sustained scholarly treatments of this individual bamboo slip. A brief reference and transcription appear in Xiong Chuanxin 熊传薪 and You Zhenqun 沈振群, \textit{Changsha Mawangdui Hanmu} 长沙马王堆汉墓 (Beijing: Shenghuo·dushu·xinzhi sanlian shudian, 2006), p. 173. 

\textsuperscript{640} JC, 6.225.
may also be the trace of a blank ink line similar to the ones used to mark the summary slips in the tomb inventory texts from M1 and M3 (see Figure 3.3), and the tomb inventory text from M3 records the participation in the funeral proceedings of soldiers or guardsmen using the same terminology (zu 卒) as the entry on this individual slip.

Measuring 22.7cm x 1.5cm, this slip is wider than the bamboo slips used to write the entries in the tomb inventory texts found in Mawangdui M1 and M3 (which measure 0.7cm and 1.0cm wide respectively), yet narrower than the wooden boards used to write the summary entries for the M3 tomb inventory manuscript (which range between 2-2.6cm in width). Though the slip is somewhat shorter than the bamboo slips used in the Mawangdui inventory texts (which measure 27.6cm and 27.5cm in length respectively), it is close to the length of the shorter wooden summary boards used in the M3 tomb inventory text, the shortest of which measures 23cm. Certain material differences between this slip and the components of the tomb inventory texts from Mawangdui M1 and M3 notwithstanding, then, the content, medium, size, and epigraphic format locate it squarely within the tomb inventory text genre. The fact that the slip is rather wide may indicate that it was manufactured or selected specifically for the purpose of carrying more than one column of text, and the fact that the graphs in the first column are indented to the slip’s right edge rather than written in the center of the slip, with the text carrying over onto a second column when it could easily have fitted onto a single column, suggests that the scribe wrote this inscription not in response to the specific material features or allowances of this particular slip, but according to the format used to write a longer tomb inventory text.

641 It appears, for example, in the entries of the early Western Han dynasty tomb inventory text from Fenghuangtai 鳳凰台 M168 (Jiangling 江陵, Hubei). See Mi Rutian 米如田, “Qiance kaobian” 遺策考辨, Huaxia kaogu 華夏考古 (1991).3, p. 97.

642 See the photographs of the summary boards with black marks on their upper edges in the tomb inventory manuscript from M3: no. 21 in JC, 2.259; no. 39 in JC, 2.261; no. 53 in JC, 2.262; no. 87 in JC, 2.265; no. 216 in JC, 2.277.

643 See, for example, the entries on slips 16, 17, 18 in JC, 6.229-230. For color photographs of these slips, see JC, 2.259.
Figure 3.3: Summary slip from M3 tomb inventory manuscript (JC, 2.259)
It should be noted that there is no positive physical evidence that this slip was originally bound together with other slips as part of a rolled bamboo manuscript: the photograph of the slip published in JC does not appear to show binding notches or marks, for example; nor does it seem that any of the characters were written on the slip in such a way as to accommodate the presence of string, silk, or leather bindings.\footnote{There are no spaces in-between the graphs that would indicate the scribe wrote around bindings strings that were already in place, or which had already been planned, for example. See my Introduction for a discussion of this issue.} However, the same can be said for certain bamboo slips that we know were originally bound as part of a tomb inventory manuscript roll and which likewise do not exhibit any positive physical evidence of having been bound, including the tomb inventory manuscript slips from Mawangdui M3.\footnote{See BG, p. 43} And we know from the deposition of the bamboo slips that constituted the tomb inventory text discovered in Baoshan 包山 M2 (Jiangling, Hubei; Warring States era) that such manuscripts were sometimes cut up during the burial process and deposited in different areas of the tomb.\footnote{The bamboo slips that constituted this text were found distributed between the eastern, southern, and western compartments of the outer coffin. See Guolong Lai, “The Baoshan Tomb: Religious Transitions in Art, Ritual, and Text During the Warring States Period (480-221 BCE),” Ph.D. diss., University of California, Los Angeles, 2002, pp. 32, 40-41 and idem, Excavating the Afterlife: The Archaeology of Early Chinese Religion (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2015), pp. 139-140. Chen Zhenyu 陳振裕, “Hubei Chujian gaishu” 湖北楚簡概述, in Jianbo yanjiu diyi ji 簡帛研究 第一輯, ed. Li Xueqin 李學勤 (Beijing: Falü chubanshe, 1993), p. 7 notes that some tomb inventory documents were divided up, with different sections deposited in different rooms (shi 室) within the tomb along with the items recorded in those slips.} Certainly, we would expect there to have originally been a tomb inventory text buried in Mawangdui M2, since these documents were found in M1 and M3 and it would have been strange for Li Cang’s wife and son to merit such an honor but not Li Cang himself. But if Li Cang’s tomb originally contained a bamboo tomb inventory text, and if this text was cut up or otherwise modified during the burial process, then why was this particular slip separated out from the rest of the manuscript and placed in the middle of the tomb passageway?
Although the precise location where the slip was discovered is not mentioned in the excavation report (the report mentions only that the slip was found in the middle of the tomb passage), it is surely not a coincidence that the passage where the slip was discovered was also home to two ghoulish figures evidently placed in the tomb as deterrents to any grave robbers or harmful spirits attempting to interfere with the tomb or its occupant. The tomb passage in question is a sloped passageway (broader at the top and narrower at the bottom) that leads down from the tomb entrance to the tomb pit from the middle of the northern side of M2. Located along the tomb passage, some 3.5m from the tomb pit, are two wall niches (*bikan* 壁龕) dug 2m high into the sides of the passageway (see Figure 3.4). Each niche housed a single demonic statue or figurine (*ouren* 偶人) made of wood, straw, and clay, comprising a base, feet, a body, arms, a head, and horns, creating a fearsome spectacle for any who passed by and underneath them (see Figures 3.5, 3.6). Although the straw and wood used to manufacture the figurines had long since rotted away, by extracting the moisture from the space left behind by the figurines and pouring plaster into this area it was possible to reproduce plaster cast versions of them. The figurine placed in the western wall stood 105cm tall and seems to have been holding something in its right hand, which was raised in a fist. The figurine in the eastern wall stood 109cm tall and was positioned with its left arm outstretched and its right arm slightly curved, holding some sort of wooden weapon (possibly a spear) that measured approximately 54cm in length.647 The figurines listed in the tomb inventory text for Mawangdui M3, a tomb that also features similarly ghoulish figurines placed in the walls either side of the tomb passage, can probably be identified with this type of figurine.648

Susan Erickson has described how, in addition to using durable materials to construct the tomb, another way of protecting tombs from invasion by robbers or evil spirits included the

647 See BG, pp. 7-9 for a description of the tomb passage, including the figurines and the bamboo slip. For black and white photographs of the figures, see BG, plates 3.2, 4.1, and 4.2.

648 See BG, pp. 9, 48. For the figurines in the passageway in M3, see BG, p. 28 and plate 15.1.
Figure 3.4: Location of the tomb guardians and the three tunnels made by grave robbers in M2 (BG, p. 8 [fig. 4])
Figure 3.5: Tomb guardian from the eastern wall of the corridor in M2 (BG, plate 4.1)

Figure 3.6: Horns of the tomb guardian from the western wall of the corridor in M2 (BG, plate 3.2)
burial of painted wood sculptures located in the corridor outside the tomb chamber, and these tomb guardians (zhenmu shou 鎮墓獸) have been found at a number of Western Han tomb sites. At sites where such figurines have been found they have often been positioned in explicitly defensive positions and postures, with their arms outstretched barring entry into the tomb chamber, for example.  

649 Heavily armed and prominently displayed at a raised, imposing height either side of the tomb passageway, the tomb guardians from Mawangdui M2 fully correspond to the typology of tomb guardians found in the former Chu region, including a base, a body, and horns designed to ward off invasion into the tomb.  

650 There can be little doubt that they were designed to intimidate any who dared enter the tomb and ward off threats to the deceased.

Probably, then, the bamboo slip found in the passageway to M2 should be understood as part of the same protective program as the tomb guardians guarding that same passageway. Just as those figurines were not manufactured merely as representations or imitations of actual guardians but were thought to perform the same very real protective functions as actual spirits or demons,  

651 the deposition of this tomb slip, with its reference to the guardsman who had

649 Susan N. Erickson, “Han Dynasty Tomb Structures and Contents,” in Nylan and Loewe (2010), pp. 27-29. Erickson notes that this custom is associated with Han dynasty tombs in the Changsha region, and that pre-Han tomb guardians were “generally less human in appearance” and usually placed besides the coffin. Though the practice of using tomb guardians to protect tombs continued right up to the very end of the Eastern Han, over time they were largely supplanted by images carved on the door jambs of tomb entrances, or by sculptures placed inside the tomb. Sterckx (2010), p. 424 speculates that tomb guardians may also have been thought to accompany the deceased on their journey to the afterlife. For an overview of the various methods used to protect Han dynasty tombs, including burial objects and archaeological features, see James C.S. Lin, “Protection in the Afterlife,” in The Search for Immortality: Tomb Treasures of Han China, ed. idem (New Haven: The Fitzwilliam Museum, University of Cambridge in Association with Yale University Press, 2012), pp. 77-83.


651 In this, they are similar to the terracotta soldiers guarding the tomb of the First Emperor 秦始皇 (r. 221-210 BCE), which were manufactured not to represent, depict, or replicate real soldiers, but actually to perform their protective functions in the afterlife. See Ladislav Kesner, “(Re)presenting the First
presumably played some sort of role in the funeral proceedings, was surely intended not merely to reference but to actually perform the protective functions associated with the guardsman listed in the entry carried by the slip. Certainly, it was not uncommon in the ancient world for certain types of writing (names, in particular) to enjoy the properties of things and people, or for writing to be thought capable of exerting some sort of influence on material reality. The deposition of this particular slip in the passageway of M2, in the shadow of the tomb guardians controlling access to the tomb pit, would seem to speak to a belief that an inscribed bamboo slip recording the prior participation of guardsman in the funeral ceremony could continue to confer protection upon the deceased even after the ceremony was over and the tomb was closed. The words written on this bamboo slip would thus have functioned performatively; no longer mere signifiers to be decoded by a reader, it was believed that their deposition in the tomb passage as part of a ritual program incorporated into the burial rites allowed the words written on the slip to perform or invoke the protective functions of the guards ostensibly only referenced on the slip.

Of course, it is also possible that this bamboo slip once belonged to a complete bamboo manuscript in the tomb inventory genre, or some related textual tradition, and was simply deposited in the tomb passage by accident after having become separated from the other bamboo slips in the manuscript, possibly by one of the three groups of tomb robbers who are known to have gained access to the tomb pit of Mawangdui M2 prior to its excavation. I believe this to be very unlikely, however. First, it would be quite a coincidence for a single summary slip recording an entry for a band of guardsmen to have been accidentally deposited in the very part of the tomb that was apparently considered most in need of guarding. Furthermore, judging by


652 In ancient Egypt, for example, some amulets consisted entirely of the names of divine spirits. See Pinch (1994), p. 111.

653 In addition to the use of tomb guardians, in the Eastern Han celestial ordinance jars inscribed with red or black writing were sometimes placed in the antechamber of the tomb as a way of guarding and protecting the entranceway. See Seidel (1987), p. 25.
the location of the tunnels dug by the three sets of tomb robbers given in BG (Figure 3.4),

even if the tomb robbers had been willing and able to access the tomb passage where the slip was found they would have had no reason to carry any objects from the tomb pit through the passageway, since the passage did not provide them with a way of entering or exiting the tomb. It is at least theoretically possible that the slip once belonged to an entire manuscript that had originally been deposited in the tomb passage, and that this slip was somehow left behind by the robbers, but this seems highly unlikely given the fact that to date not a single excavated tomb inventory text has been discovered in a tomb corridor.655

Interestingly, we have explicit textual evidence from Mawangdui that at least certain sections of Han society believed in the power of written language – names, specifically656 - to exert control over the very real people and creatures to whom those names referred. One of the

654 See BG, p. 8.

655 Thirty-three of the thirty-five tomb inventory texts listed in the table of tomb inventory texts drawn up by Zheng Shubin, for example, were found inside the tomb chamber, the vast majority inside the actual coffin. The locations of the remaining two tomb inventory texts are not specified. See Zheng Shubin, “Qiance de kaogu faxian yu wenxian quanshi” 遣策的考古發現與文獻詮釋, Nanfang wenwu 南方文物 (2005).2, p. 33. See also Peng Hao, “Zhanguo shiqi de qiance” 戰國時期的遣冊, Jianbo yanjiu 簡帛研究 2 (1996), p. 52. Lai (2015b), p. 144 notes that after the mid-Western Han, tomb inventory texts moved from the outer coffin to the inner coffin where they are often found along with the corpse. Recently, Tian Tian has used the fact that the Western Han tomb inventory text at Fenghuangshan 鳳凰山 M167 was deposited not inside the coffin but within the earth and charcoal used to cover the coffin as evidence that tomb inventory texts were performed at the tomb site and thrown or lowered into the tomb pit as part of the funeral rites. See Tian (2019), pp. 72-73. It is thus theoretically possible that the M2 tomb inventory text as a whole was indeed originally deposited in the tomb passageway, and that the rest of the text has simply rotted away. Again, it strikes me as very unlikely that this particular slip would have survived all by itself, much less in this particular spot.

656 As noted above, Seidel (1983), pp. 320-322 argued that a passage in the Zuozhuan reflects a belief that knowing the names of harmful spirits and saying them out loud gave some measure of control over and protection from those spirits. See also Yuri Pines, “History as a Guide to the Netherworld: Rethinking the Chunqiu shiyu,” Journal of Chinese Religions 31 (2003), pp. 113-115. Certainly, the efficacy of amulets and talismans often depended on the names of the person or persons to be cursed or protected being specified as clearly as possible. See Schiffman and Swartz (1992), pp. 33-34, who note that with medieval Jewish written amulets it was often important to specify as precisely as possible the name of the person who was to benefit from the talismanic magic.
spells described in the *“Za jinfang” 雜禁方 (“Assorted Forbidden Recipes”) text from Mawangdui, for example, advises that:

“When involved in a suit with another person, write the person’s name and set it inside the shoe” 與人頌，書其名直 (= 置) 舐中. 657

Direct textual references to such uses of writing in the Chinese tradition are rare, however, and the fact that the *“Za jinfang” is a collection of spells written on a shoddily produced wooden manuscript (see Chapter 1), rather than on bamboo or silk like the other medical manuscripts discovered at Mawangdui, might lead us to conclude that belief in this type of written magic was more popular or acceptable among lower levels of Han society. 658 Text cultures do not evolve in neat, linear fashion, however, 659 and it would be a mistake to assume a sharp divide between earlier/popular notions of writing-magic and later/elite uses of writing for communication and record-keeping. Donald Harper, for example, has argued that comparing

657 This translation can be found (with the title of the text rendered as “Recipes for Various Charms”) in Harper (1997a), p. 423. Harper explains that “[t]he expectation is that by treading on your opponent’s name in the shoe, you will magically emerge the winner in the suit” (quotation on p. 423n.4). For transcriptions of this spell, see BS, 4.159 and JC, 6.159. The use of writing to affect the outcome of lawsuits was apparently widespread in the Ancient Mediterranean. See Gager (1992), pp. 116-150, who explains how in Greco-Roman times curse tablets were regularly commissioned by participants in trials and lawsuits with the intention of cursing opponents or members of the judiciary. Naming in writing the people to be cursed was an important part of this process. In addition, inscriptions located on the soles of shoes and sandals from late Mediterranean antiquity call for blessings and good fortune for their owners, who are sometimes named. See Van den Hoek, Feissel, and Herrman in Boschung and Bremmer (2015), pp. 319-321.

658 Unlike the vast majority of the medical documents found at Mawangdui, judging by the spells contained in the short *“Za jinfang” text this collection was evidently not compiled predominantly for use by elites. For a brief overview of the manuscript and a translation of the entire text, see Harper (1997a), pp. 29-30, 423-424. See also Ma Jixing 馬繼興, Mawangdui gu yishu kaoshi 馬王堆古醫書考釋 (Changsha: Hunan kexue jishu chubanshe, 1992), p. 1009, where Ma notes that the type of behavior described in this entry was a “prohibited technique” (jinyan shu 禁厭術) that was colored by “superstition” (mixin 迷信) and also “immoral” (bu daode de 不道德的).

659 What David Lurie calls the “alegible functions” of writing, for example, endured in elite circles in premodern Japan even as writing also took on increased importance as a tool for communication and record-keeping. See David Lurie, Realms of Literacy: Early Japan and the History of Writing (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Asia Center, 2011), pp. 67-68
excavated and transmitted sources from early China does not allow us to draw distinctions between elite and non-elite religious ideas and practices given the near total lack of information on the thoughts and actions of ordinary (i.e., non-elite) people provided by these sources. Simply put, we cannot assume that writing was thought to have magical properties only by those who were less than fully literate.

What the individual bamboo slip found in the passageway in Mawangdui M2, as well as the other sources examined below, makes clear is that the use of written magic was still very much a part of the text-object world of Western Han China. In a context where at least certain segments of Han society believed that people, and perhaps also spirits, could be invoked and controlled by writing down their names, given the content of the slip and the location where the slip was found it seems likely that it was deposited with the intention of invoking and receiving the protective services ostensibly only catalogued in the slip’s contents.

Certainly, the material form of bamboo slips and bamboo slip manuscripts would have made it suitable for such a purpose. If the slip originally formed part of a tomb inventory text, then it would have been easy to remove this slip from the manuscript without affecting the readability of the manuscript as a whole, since this one slip contained only a single entry and its removal would thus not have affected the rest of the manuscript’s contents. It was not unusual in the ancient and premodern world for parts of texts, or even entire texts, to be removed from their original manuscripts and contexts for use as protective amulets, and although these texts tended to be religious or somehow spiritually potent rather than dry administrative records, we should

660 Harper (2004a), pp. 229-231. For this reason, Harper uses the term “common religion” not as a reference to the religion of the common people, but to “the everyday religious ideas and practices that individuals of different social levels ‘held in common’” (quotation on p. 229).

661 On this point, see Thomas (1999), pp. 81-82.

662 See Gaster (1989), p. 146, who notes that excerpts from divinely inspired scriptures were often used as amulets or talismans. Pinch (1994), p. 111 also notes that in ancient Egypt extracts from various holy texts, such as the Book of the Dead, were sometimes used as protective amulets. Similarly, Fabio Rambelli, Buddhist Materiality: A Cultural History of Objects in Japanese Buddhism (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007), p. 90 points out that Buddhist texts were often used as sacred objects no different
remember that, judging from the examples from Mawangdui M1 and M3, the tomb inventory text from which this slip was likely taken had itself probably been designed, manufactured, and performed as a ritually charged artifact representing, if not actually embodying, Li Cang’s political power and social status (see Chapter 2). Certainly, we know from the Baoshan tomb finds mentioned above that bamboo slip tomb inventory texts were sometimes partially dismantled and redistributed within the tomb.

If my reading of this single bamboo slip is correct, it provides us with evidence that the material form of both texts and manuscripts was of profound importance to the way in which writing was thought to function, both above and below ground. As part of a tomb inventory text, this slip would have functioned above ground as a way of recording, coordinating, and displaying the participation of a group of guardsmen in the funeral proceedings for the prime minister of Changsha. The materiality of this text, however, also allowed this slip to take on other significances underground, as it was removed from the manuscript and placed in the tomb passage as a way of guarding against interference with the tomb occupant and his belongings. The multipurpose use of this bamboo slip is thus a result of what Webb Keane has called the “bundling” of material features in any artifact, described as “the contingent coexistence of an indefinite number of qualities in any object, which always exceeds the purposes of the designer.” The bamboo slip may originally have been selected, prepared, and inscribed for

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from relics, icons, or talismans. Bates (1991), pp. 56-58 also notes that phrases from the Koran sometimes appeared on Islamic prayer bowls, with Silverman (1991), p. 20 explaining that since the Koran was regarded as the word of God, it was not unusual for passages from that text to be incorporated as an important component of “magico-religious practices.”

663 Webb Keane, “On the Materiality of Religion,” Material Religion 4.2 (2008), pp. 230-231. Keane uses this term to describe how, once ideas are given material form, these artifacts are always susceptible to use in ways that the original designer of the object may never have anticipated. As Keane points out, “[w]ords can become written texts. Written texts can be decorated, they can be physically reverenced by kissing and embracing, they can be physically concealed or revealed, excerpts from them can be placed in protective amulets or burned in order to make potions, the volumes can be opened at random for use in divinatory purposes.”
incorporation into a tomb inventory manuscript, but its material features also allowed it to be repurposed for other ritual functions.\textsuperscript{664}

It is also worth reflecting on the possible talismanic functions that an entire tomb inventory manuscript may have been thought to perform. Was the talismanic power of this individual bamboo slip a function of its ritual removal and deposition in the tomb corridor, or did at least some of its power derive from the fact that it had originally been incorporated into a manuscript that itself already enjoyed certain talismanic functions?\textsuperscript{665} On current evidence, it is hard to say one way or the other.\textsuperscript{666} Regardless, examining the material conditions and contexts within which this single slip was used and buried reveals a powerful fusion of text, ritual, and

\textsuperscript{664} Following the distinctions between different types of functions studied by Beth Preston, we might say that although the “proper function” (the functions that an object copies or inherits from previous incarnations that survived or proliferated because they performed those functions) of the bamboo slip was to support writing as one component of a longer bamboo manuscript, the “system function” (the functions actually performed by an object within its current system of use) of the slip as we find it was to protect the tomb and its occupant. See Beth Preston, “The Function of Things: A Philosophical Perspective on Material Culture,” in \textit{Matter, Materiality, and Modern Culture}, ed. Paul Graves-Brown (London: Routledge, 2000), pp. 26-27.

\textsuperscript{665} Use as talismans has been suggested as one reason why texts were buried in early Chinese tombs. See Michael Loewe, “Wood and Bamboo Administrative Documents of the Han Period,” in Shaughnessy (1997b), pp. 190-191; Anthony Barbieri-Low and Robin D. S. Yates, \textit{Law, State, and Society in Early Imperial China: A Study with Critical Edition and Translation of the Legal Texts from Zhangjiashan Tomb no. 247, Volume I} (Leiden: Brill, 2015), pp. 107-109; Timothy Davis, \textit{Entombed Epigraphy and Commemorative Culture in Early Medieval China: An Early History of Muzhiming} (Leiden: Brill, 2016), pp. 32-33; and my discussion of this issue in Chapter 5. There is evidence from Mawangdui that wooden slips bound to form an artifact resembling a manuscript could enjoy talismanic powers and functions. Of the thirty-three peach wood slips placed underneath the bottom right-hand corner of the silk banner used to cover the lid board of the interior coffin of M1, for example, twenty-two were bound twice using hemp string, and black ink had been used to give the slips facial features. The HM editors describe them as “wooden figurines for expelling evil” (bixie muyong 辟邪木俑), citing as evidence the location in the tomb where the slips were found and the fact that later Chinese texts credit peach wood with certain magical properties. See HM, 1.100-101 and HM, 2.176 (plate 200).

\textsuperscript{666} Yang Yi 楊怡 has argued that the acoustic and visual spectacle of the public performance of tomb inventory texts at the tomb site facilitated the passage of the deceased and his or her funerary items from this life to the next. Yang also argues that the writing and chanting of the tomb inventory entries made their contents true (\textit{zhen 真}) even if certain people and items listed in the manuscript were not buried in the tomb or even present at the funeral ceremony. See Yang Yi 楊怡, “He wei ‘qiance?’ – yi Mawangdui sanhao mu wei li” 何為 “遺册”？－以馬王堆三號墓為例, in \textit{Jinian Mawangdui Hanmu fajue sishi zhourian guoji xueshu yantaohui lunwenji 紀念馬王堆漢墓發掘四十週年國際學術研討會論文集}, ed. Hunan sheng bowuguan 湖南省博物館 (Changsha: Yuelu shushe chubanshe, 2016), pp. 331-332.
administration. Even seemingly mundane administrative records were linked through their materiality to broader, non- or extra-linguistic cultural beliefs and practices, and the material division between ritual and administration remained porous at best.667

We have seen how, in certain conditions, the material presence of written graphs was thought to confer protection on the deceased and their tomb site. Protection from harm, however, was not the only motivation for harnessing the performative power of talismanic writing. At Mawangdui, individual characters were also pressed into service as talismans conferring blessings on their owners and users, committed to various media as a way of attracting good fortune and preserving wealth and prosperity. The rest of this chapter will be devoted to the use of such writings.

3.3 Characters woven into textiles

In Chinese textiles, feng 縫-style needlework refers to narrow bands of silk woven as decoration into clothing and other personal items. One type of feng needlework represented at Mawangdui is known as “thousand gold braiding” (qianjin tao 千金绦), so-called because it has two seal script (zhuanshu 篆書) characters, qianjin 千金 (lit., one thousand [pieces/units of] gold), woven into its design, and because the tomb inventory text from Mawangdui M1 refers to a “thousand gold braiding decoration” (qianjin tao shi 千金绦饰) on slips 266, 267, and 268.668 This design was found on three pairs of gloves discovered in Mawangdui M1 (see Figures 3.7, 3.8), and a body cloth used to wrap the corpse placed in the inner coffin of the same tomb.669


668 See HM, 1.150-151 and JC, 6.213 for transcriptions of the contents of these three slips.
The palm of each handmade glove is made of vermilion damask, with the gloves manufactured by cutting the fabric for the palm straight and sewing it around the thumb section. The finger and wrist sections were manufactured separately. The thousand gold braiding design that appears on narrow bands above and below the palm of the three pairs of open-fingered gloves is rather narrow, just 0.9cm wide, with the braiding divided into three rows, each 0.3cm wide, that repeat every 5.8cm, 6.2cm, or 6.5cm. The design rotates between yin 隱 and yang 阳 patterns, with the yin pattern featuring thin red lines woven into a white background in the central row, and the characters qianjin woven in white, flanked left and right by angular leiwen 雷纹 (lit., thunder pattern) motifs. The yang pattern reverses the elements in this design. The central row containing the woven characters also features an undulating wave design (bozhe wen 波折纹). The braiding design that appears on the edge of the grey body cloth made of hemp fabric used to wrap the corpse is wider at 2.7cm. This design is also divided into three rows, each 0.9cm in width, again rotating between yin and yang patterns that repeat every 4.5cm.

While important to the history of Chinese silk textiles, these gloves have received relatively little scholarly attention since they were discovered, and what little has been said about the woven graphs in their design focuses on the use of writing as an expression, or even a denotation, of monetary value and wealth. Though the costly materials and manufacture

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670 See NTM, pp. 168-169 for a description of the gloves and a high-quality color photograph of one of the pairs, as well as color illustrations of the qianjin pattern and related embroidery techniques. See also Shanghai shi fangzhi kexue yanjiuyuan 上海市紡織科學研究院 and Shanghai shi sichou gongye gongsi 上海市絲綢工業公司, eds., *Changsha Mawangdui yihao Hanmu chutu fangzhipin de yanjiu 長沙馬王堆一號漢墓出土紡織品的研究* (Beijing: Wenwu, 1980), pp. 55-58 for details of the qianjin embroidery design and production methods, and plates 25, 26, 27, 28, and 29 for color photographs and illustrations of the gloves and their designs. See also HM, 1.50-51. Regrettably, the photographs of the gloves in HM are in black and white and of poor quality. See HM, 2.90-91 (plates 104 and 106). WW, 2.16-18 provides a useful English language overview of the fabrics found in the Mawangdui tombs.

671 NTM, p. 168 seems to take the characters as a reference to the cost of the gloves: “[t]he two Chinese characters ‘qianjin’ in seal script on the ribbon indicate how expensive the ribbon was at the time.” Chin (2014), p. 234 suggests something similar: “[t]he ribbon’s intricately woven phrase transposes a fairly
common expression of value from one world to the next, with its material form perhaps evoking the price tag that real-world commodities bore.”
The same qianjin inscription appears on artifacts in different media that have been discovered in other ancient Chinese tombs. In 1997, Cai Yunzhang 蔡運章 published a short article describing two bronze mirrors that were discovered at separate tomb sites in the city of Luoyang 洛陽 in Henan 河南 province. The first mirror was discovered in the Spring of 1991 in a tomb located in the Eastern suburbs of the city. It is small and round in shape, measuring just 9.5cm in diameter and weighing only 61 grams, and the knob (niu 鈕) on the reverse side of the mirror is flanked by the characters qian 千 and jin 金. This knob is surrounded by three concentric rings, and the mirror’s main design is the yuzhuang 羽狀 (lit., feather shape) motif. The second mirror, discovered in April 1993 near the city’s train station, is also small and round.

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672 Many Western and Eastern Han dynasty fabrics excavated from tombs carry auspicious phrases such as “extending years, adding long life, greatly benefitting your songs and grandsons” (yannian yishou dayi zisun 延年益壽大宜子孫); “peace and happiness, as you wish, long life without end” (anle ruyi changshou wuji 安樂如意長壽無極); “extending years, adding long life, may sons and grandsons be long preserved” (yannian yishou changbao zisun 延年益壽長保子孫); and “good fortune to sons and grandsons for a thousand autumns, ten thousand years” (qianqiu wansui yi zisun 千秋萬歲宜子孫). Similar inscriptions have also been found on tiles, bronze mirrors, and lacquer boxes, and on certain fabrics the texts are accompanied by images such as depictions of sacred mountains or immortal realms. For these translations, see Li Wenying, “Silk Artistry of the Qin, Han, Wei, and Jin Dynasties,” in Chinese Silks, ed. Dieter Kuhn (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012), pp. 154-155. For an overview of textiles with auspicious messages woven into their design from the Eastern Han, see Michelle Hsiao-Fawn Wang, “Characters of Design: Writing and Materiality in Early China,” Ph.D. diss., University of California, Berkeley, 2014, pp. 80-115.
in shape, measuring 11.1 cm in diameter and weighing 94.4 grams. The knob is also located at the center of three concentric circles, and the mirror’s principal design element is the dragon-like *panchi* 獬豸 motif. The characters *qian* and *jin* are cast inside rectangular frames placed either side of the knob, and the mirror also features the characters 宜 (*yi*, “proper,” “benefit”) and 主 (*zhu*, owner/ruler/lord), as well as another unidentified graph.^[673] Whereas Cai had originally identified the sites where these mirrors were found as Warring States tombs, in 2003 Zhou Shirong 周世榮 published a short article refuting Cai’s dating of the tombs, arguing persuasively based on stylistic and orthographic grounds that the mirrors could not possibly be products of the Warring States and in fact date to the Western Han, most likely to the reigns of Emperors Wen and Jing (180-141 BCE).^[674]

Cai argues that the *qianjin* inscriptions on the mirrors discovered in Luoyang are not to be taken as accurate notations of value but rather as symbolic metaphors for wealth and status (*fugui* 富貴), and he locates these inscriptions within the tradition of casting auspicious phrases (*ji yu* 吉語 or *jixiang yu* 吉祥語) into bronze mirrors, phrases such as:

- “May this benefit sons and grandsons” (*yi zisun* 宜子孫)
- “May this family enjoy wealth and status” (*jiasheng fugui* 家生富貴)
- “May this family enjoy constant wealth and status” (*jia chang fugui* 家常富貴)
- “May you have great pleasure and wealth and status” (*dale fugui* 大樂富貴)
- “May you live one thousand autumns and ten-thousand years” (*qianqiu wansui* 千秋萬歲)
- “May you extend your years and live a long life” (*yannian yishou* 延年益壽), and even

^[673] For descriptions of these mirrors, see Cai (1997), p. 66.

^[674] Zhou Shirong 周世榮, “‘Luoyang faxian Zhanguo shiqi you ming tongjing luelun’ zhi yi’ 《洛陽發現戰國時期有銘銅鏡略論》質疑, Zhongguo lishi wenwu 中國歷史文物 (2003).4, pp. 61-64. Zhou notes that the form of the characters on the *panchi* mirror discovered in 1993 is very close to that of the small seal (*xiaozhuan* 小篆) characters on the gloves from Mawangdui, and that this script style dates to from after the unification of the scripts in the Qin dynasty, closely resembling the script used in the reigns of the First and Second Emperors of that dynasty. Zhou further notes that the writing on the *yuzhuang* mirror discovered in 1991 seems to be a brand of the transitional seal-clerical (*zhuanli* 篆隸) style. In addition, inscribed mirrors only appear in the archaeological record from the Han onwards. See Loewe (1979), p. 66.
• “May this family enjoy wealth of one thousand [pieces/units of] gold” (jiafu qianjin 家富千金 [my emphasis]).

In his analysis of inscribed Han bronze mirrors, Michael Loewe has shown that while early inscriptions tend to be short and simple, later inscriptions became longer and more complex as part of a transition from inscriptions invoking general blessings to those containing specific references to cosmic forces and deities such as the Five Phases (wuxing 五行), yin and yang 阴阳, and the legendary Queen Mother of the West 西王母. Here are just two of the early- and mid-Western Han mirror inscriptions translated by Loewe:

• “Constant joy without end. For long may we not forget one another” (changle weiyang chang wu xiangwang 常樂未央長毋相忘)
• “Great joy, glory and wealth, and may you find your heart’s desire. A thousand autumns, ten thousand seasons be yours, with the years of your life prolonged for ever [sic] and a day” (dale guifu de suohao, qianqiu wansui yannian yishou 大樂貴富得所好，千秋萬歲延年益壽).

Yanlong Guo has also identified a number of contemporary inscriptions that incorporate the qianjin phrase into blessings for wealth and prosperity, such as “May you gain profit every day with tens of thousands [of coins], may the wealth of our family accumulate up to a thousand catties of gold” (rili dawan, jiafu qianjin 日利大萬，家富千金).

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676 Loewe (1979), pp. 66-69. The Queen Mother of the West was invoked as a way of providing protection against demons and harmful spirits at least as early as the first century BCE. See Seidel (1987), p. 23.
678 Translations from Yanlong Guo, “The Monetary Value of Bronze Mirrors in the Han Dynasty,” T’oung Pao 104.1-2 (2018), p. 80. Guo notes that the expression qianjin, as well as similar phrases often accompanied by or incorporated into inscriptions containing explicit blessings for wealth and good fortune, appear on a number of Western Han bronze mirrors and other types of bronze object, including basins and belt hooks. Guo also notes that the phrase appears in numerous transmitted texts dating to the Western and Eastern Han in reference to a wide range of rare and precious objects, including a horse, furs, items of jade, a sword, a bronze vessel, pearls, and an ivory bed. See Guo (2018), pp. 73-82.
As the translations of the inscriptions analyzed by Cai, Loewe, and Guo demonstrate, the great majority of the Han dynasty mirror inscriptions so far discovered place heavy emphasis on longevity and prolonged wealth and prosperity. Loewe has argued that, among the mirror’s other functions in Han tombs, they were used to protect the deceased against harm, though Kenneth Brashier has refuted this claim to argue that beliefs in the talismanic powers of bronze mirrors emerged only after the Han. Anna Seidel, by contrast, has observed that tombs were only one context in which these mirrors were used, and that many are inscribed with messages that prove them to have also enjoyed talismanic value above ground during the lifetime of the deceased, with references to the prosperity of one’s parents and success in office, for example. Clearly, what the analyses provided by Seidel, Cai, Loewe, and Guo demonstrate is that Han mirror inscriptions were associated with blessings for longevity and prosperity, both in this life and the next. The fact that the very same qianjin inscriptions found on the silk gloves from M1 are also found on certain such mirrors thus suggests these gloves may also have enjoyed a similar talismanic function, and that they were likewise manufactured partly to attract wealth and good fortune. Though the qianjin silk characters are not accompanied by explicit references to or

679 Loewe (1979), p. 64.
681 See Seidel (1982), pp. 98-99, who states that “TLV mirrors were talismans made for the living and only secondarily included in the tombs of their owners.”
682 The talismanic qualities of the qianjin textiles is hinted at in NTW, where we are told that in addition to exhibiting the skill of the artisans who produced these artifacts in small numbers for “an elite clientele,” they were also the “forerunners of the auspicious Chinese characters later used for decorating fabrics.” See Wang Shujin 王樹金, “Brilliant Culture of Dress and Ornament at Mawangdui,” in NTM, pp. 75-76. Of course, just because an artifact was designed with a talismanic function in mind, this does not mean that its owners or users were necessarily aware of or interested in any such function, since different types of writing can mean different things to different people. As Kenneth Brashier has noted, for example, Chinese tattoos among Westerners or non-sensical English writing on Chinese Christmas cards often serve primarily aesthetic functions rather than as linguistic communication. See Ken Brashier, “Han Mirror Inscriptions as Modular Texts,” in The Lloyd Cotsen Study Collection of Chinese Bronze Mirrors, Volume 2: Studies, ed. Lothar von Falkenhausen (Los Angeles: Cotsen Occasional Press, UCLA Cotsen Institute of Archaeology Press, 2011), pp. 100-115.
prayers for longevity, the fact that the vast majority of Han mirror inscriptions do emphasize longevity suggests that a desire for such a blessing was perhaps implicit in their prayers for wealth and good fortune.683

In addition to their use of common terminology, the graphic similarity between the characters woven into the silk gloves and those cast into the bronze mirrors and stamped onto clay plates (see below) also suggests a shared talismanic function. The characters are written in a very similar small seal script style across the different media, meaning that particular attention was paid by engravers and weavers to ensure that the characters looked more or less the same wherever and whenever they were produced. These artifacts do not just share the same words, but in some cases (the gloves and the *panchi* mirror, for example) the same graphic *forms*, an effect that would have been particularly difficult and time-consuming to produce in the case of the characters embroidered into the silk gloves, which were almost certainly executed using some sort of written model. There is also a shared concern for maintaining a visual duality in the way that the characters are incorporated into the designs of these various objects, with the two characters *qian* and *jin* separated by the knob on both mirrors, and by a thin line of silk on the braided design, creating a sense of balance and order. The characters are incorporated into yet not subsumed by these design elements, and though the characters are relatively small and often visible only when examined up close (in the case of the braided design on the silk gloves from M1, for example), they are nevertheless highly legible.684

683 Indeed, the phrase *qianjin* appears on at least one Western Han bronze mirror accompanied by the phrase *yi zisun* 宜子孫 (“[May this] benefit my sons and grandsons”), indicating that it was at least sometimes associated with blessings for long-lasting good fortune. See Guo (2018), pp. 73, 80.

684 Talismanic texts are often placed in obscure or inaccessible locations, making them difficult or impossible to read or decode. Zhongshu Wang, *Han Civilization*, trans. K.C. Chang and Collaborators (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982), pp. 147-150 (see also Figures 223-226) and Jay Xu, *Tomb Treasures: New Discoveries from China’s Han Dynasty* (San Francisco: Asian Art Museum, 2017), pp. 194-195 note the existence of auspicious inscriptions on earthenware bricks and roof tiles from the Western Han, including phrases such as “Profound happiness without end” (*changle weiyang* 長樂未央); “Long life without limit” (*changsheng wuji* 長生無極); “A thousand autumns, ten thousand years” (*qianqiu wansui* 千秋萬歲); and “A hundred million years without limit” (*yinian wujian* 億年無疆).
In a separate article, Zhou Shirong has studied the clay plates (ban 鈑) with jin or qianjin inscriptions discovered in multiple Western Han tombs in the Changsha region, plates which were probably manufactured in imitations of the kinds of ingot currency that would have been in circulation above ground. Zhou correctly notes that the inscriptions on this imitation currency are not to be taken as accurate notations of value, but rather served to demonstrate that the deceased possessed wealth and status, commensurate with the usage of these phrases in transmitted Han texts. Coins and ingots bearing qianjin and other non-standard inscriptions could never have been used legally as money in the Han because they lacked the official inscriptions required of legal tender, and it is highly likely that these clay ingots were manufactured in imitation of “real” metal coins bearing qianjin or similar inscriptions that would have been used above ground as lucky tokens (see below). Certainly, many “real” metal coins and ingots with explicitly talismanic inscriptions such as “auspiciousness” (ji 吉) have been discovered at a number of Western Han tomb sites, demonstrating that the use of metal imitation currency with auspicious inscriptions was widespread in Western Han times. The fact that the qianjin

The location of these messages on the roofs of buildings, and their highly ornate calligraphic form, make them basically unreadable, further suggesting that their function was talismanic rather than aesthetic or communicative. For an overview of tiles with auspicious inscriptions in the Western Han, see Michelle Wang (2014), pp. 48-79.

685 Zhou Shirong 周世榮, “Changsha Xi Han ni (jin) ban – ‘Jin,’ ‘qianjin’ 長沙西漢泥(金)鈑 – “金,” “千金,” Zhongguo qianbi 中國錢幣 93.2 (2006), pp. 24-25. Zhou argues that since these finds were often discovered along with banliang 半兩 and sizhu 四銖 coins, they most likely date to the reigns of Emperors Wen or Jing. Cai (1997), p. 25 also notes that the size and thickness of the clay plates bearing this inscription vary significantly, further demonstrating that the words are not to be taken as a literal notation of their value.

686 See, for example, the round, early Western Han gold ingot or “cake” (bing 餅) discovered in 1961 at Dongtaibao 東太堡 in Shanxi 山西, which has numerous characters including ji 吉 (“auspiciousness”), carved into it. Xia Lu 夏路 notes that the ingot was part of a set of five, all identical in shape, and all but one bear inscribed graphs. Xia also notes that in 95 BCE Emperor Wu cast gold in the shape of the hoof of the legendary qilin 麒麟 as a way of embodying auspiciousness. See Xia Lu 夏路, Shanxi sheng bowuguan guancang wenwu jinghua 山西省博物館館藏文物精華 (Taiyuan: Shanxi renmin, 1999), p. 201. See also Chin (2014), pp. 237-238 and the auspicious inscriptions on Han dynasty coins examined in Jie Song, “Charms Decorated with Liu bo Patterns from the Han Dynasty,” in The Language and Iconography of Chinese Charms: Deciphering a Past Belief System, ed. Alex Chengyu Fang and François Thierry (Singapore: Springer, 2016), pp. 42-48.
inscription appeared in auspicious phrases on bronze mirrors and metal currency in the Western Han lends further support to the theory that its appearance on fine silk garments was also intended to perform a talismanic function.

Kenneth Brashier has argued that scholars have failed to pay enough attention to the very materiality of the bronze used to manufacture Han dynasty mirrors, noting that metal itself was considered a symbol of longevity (shou 壽). Brashier shows how in early Chinese texts and inscriptions, metal and stone (jinshi 金石) were particularly associated with longevity, and that certain Han mirror inscriptions even explicitly reference their metal medium and associate it with durability and permanence. In contrast to bronze, transmitted texts contain relatively few references to the qualities associated with silk, though it seems that silk was widely used as a symbol of wealth and prosperity as well as a medium for ritual expression. The Liji 禮記 (Records of Ritual), for example, contains numerous passages referencing the use of silk in ritual ceremonies and as ritual offerings, and certain passages even allude to an association between silk and charismatic virtue (de 德):

[“Liqi” 禮器 (“Ritual objects”) chapter of the Liji]: “The rolls of silk with the round pieces of jade placed on them showed the honor they rendered to virtue.” 束帛加璧，尊德也。  


688 Brashier (1995), pp. 213-219. Brashier also shows how metal was linked to longevity not only metaphorically but also causally, citing its use in alchemical techniques used to prolong life. Certainly, it is not uncommon for materials to become associated with certain values or even personality types. In Renaissance Europe, for example, some materials were widely thought to embody certain properties and characteristics that made them suitable for certain purposes. See Michael Baxandall, The Limewood Sculptors of Renaissance Germany (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982), pp. 32-38.

689 See, for example, Lunyu jishi 論語集釋 17. 571 and Mengzi zhengyi 孟子正義 2.53-59.

690 Liji jijie 禮記集結 24.666.
“Jiao tesheng” 郊特牲 (“Great Suburban Sacrifices”) chapter of the Liji: “And there were the bundles of silk with disks of jade on them, showing how the princes came to admire and experience the virtue of the king.” 束帛加璧，往德也。691

Transmitted texts also reveal a profound ambivalence towards silk, however. Silk was associated with wealth, prestige, ritual propriety, and even virtue, but it had to be used appropriately lest it become a symbol of greed, ostentation, or even oppression.692 In Han China silk was not just a symbol for wealth but also a unit of currency, and the southern compartment of the coffin in Mawangdui M3 contained two bamboo hampers (zhusi 竹笥) used to store silk that were labelled as “silk currency” (niebi 聶幣)693.

Just as associations of longevity made bronze a suitable medium for inscribing prayers or blessings, then, silk was perhaps regarded as a medium that was particularly suitable for manufacturing a prayer for continued wealth and prosperity. Clearly the qianjin inscriptions cast into Han dynasty bronze mirrors were part of a tradition of using written language to bring about good fortune and attract wealth,694 and it seems likely that the presence of these characters on silk gloves and body cloths was designed to achieve similar results. These characters did not just denote that the items into which they were incorporated were expensive and valuable, nor that the person to whom they belonged enjoyed riches and high status; they also helped to ensure that these conditions would remain true, even after death. While imitation clay plates bearing the qianjin inscription found in Western Han tombs were clearly manufactured specially for burial, it

691 Liji jijie 25.675-676.

692 See, for example, Mengzi zhengyi 29.999 and Mozi jiaozhu 墨子校注 6.263-264.

693 BG, p.227. An additional some ten square pieces of silk currency were found near the bamboo mat in the southern compartment of the coffin. These pieces were all rectangular or square in shape. Furthermore, slip 385/364 of the tomb inventory text from M3 refers to “two bamboo containers of silk currency” (niebi er si 聶幣二笥). See BG, pp. 71-72 and JC, 6.260 for transcriptions of the contents of this slip.

694 In fact, this tradition of casting auspicious phrases in bronze long pre-dates the Han, and similar inscriptions can be found on bronze vessels cast as far back as the Western Zhou dynasty. See Von Falkenhausen (1993), pp. 139-226, especially pp. 150-156.
is likely that the gloves and body cloth found in Mawangdui M1 were actually used by the deceased during her lifetime.\textsuperscript{695} Certainly, it would have taken a long time to produce such exquisitely manufactured items, and this would seem to indicate they were made before Xin Zhui actually died. Regardless, the items were evidently manufactured for use by an elite owner (whether during her lifetime, after death, or both), and it was perhaps thought that by owning, using, and wearing personal items and coins branded with these auspicious characters it was possible to bring about the very wealth ostensibly only denoted by the words of the inscription and connoted by their material carriers.

It is also interesting to note the locations where these inscriptions were placed, locations that would have brought the writing into close contact with the bodies of the objects’ owners. The surface of a coin, the edge of a body cloth, the knob of a bronze mirror, the palm of a silk glove, these auspicious characters were all located on personal items in places that would have touched the bodies of their owners and users, and it is possible that this tactile element was considered crucial to the efficacy of these inscriptions.\textsuperscript{696}

### 3.4 Characters painted on bamboo mats

Interestingly, bamboo slips and silk textiles were not the only objects used to harness the performative power of the written sign. A total of twenty-seven bamboo mats (\textit{zhuxi} 竹席) with the character “family/household” (\textit{jia} 家) written in black ink in each corner were discovered in

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\textsuperscript{695} In Ancient Egypt, amulets that had been worn during a person’s lifetime were sometimes buried with the deceased and were thought to continue to work even after death. See Pinch (1994), pp. 104-105.

\textsuperscript{696} Gaster (1989), p. 145 notes that the power of talismans and amulets often depended on contact with the human body. Likewise, Pinch (1994), p. 105 notes that in Ancient Egypt even larger objects such as headrests could be used as amulets, and it was believed that they worked through physical contact. Certainly, talismanic inscriptions from late Mediterranean antiquity were often committed to objects that came into close contact with their owners and users, such as rings, pendants, brooches, necklaces, and belts. See Van den Hoek, Feissel, and Herrmann in Boschung and Bremmer (2015), pp. 314-315.
Mawangdui M1. One of these mats was discovered rolled up in a tube shape alongside another mat, which does not bear any writing, in the western compartment of the coffin. It is relatively well preserved (measuring 2.35m by 1.69m), and has geometric designs woven into it using the so-called “human character-shape weaving method” (renzi xing bianfa 人字形編法), a reference to the pattern of the weave which resembles the shape of the Chinese character for human (ren 人). HM provides a single black and white photograph of the character jia painted onto one of the corners of this mat (see Figure 3.9).

The other twenty-six mats measure some 2m by 1m and were used to cover the lid board of the coffin. Unfortunately, HM does not mention how these twenty-six mats were manufactured, nor does it include photographs of them. In fact, the only photograph provided is the single black and white photograph mentioned above. Since the photograph is a close-up, it is difficult to tell how large this ink painted character is in relation to the mat as a whole, but judging by the photograph it seems that the graph is rather large and prominently displayed, unlike the qianjin inscriptions tucked away on the bands of the silk gloves and the body cloth studied above. The character in the photograph of the bamboo mat is also clearly written in an archaic seal script style.

As we have seen, the character jia occurs repeatedly in the auspicious phrases found cast into Han bronze mirrors, including some of those listed by Cai Yunzhang and mentioned above (“May this family enjoy wealth and status” [jiasheng fugui 家生富貴], “May this family enjoy constant wealth and status” [jia chang fugui 家常富貴], and “May this family enjoy wealth of ten-thousand [pieces/units of] gold” [jiafu qianjin 家富千金]). Given the prominent placement

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697 See HM, 1.120-121 for a description of these mats.

698 HM, 1.121, figure 106.

699 The mats are briefly described in Christine Liu-Perkins, At Home in Her Tomb: Lady Dai and the Ancient Chinese Treasures of Mawangdui (Watertown, Mass.: Charlesbridge, 2014), p. 11.

afforded to the characters painted on these bamboo mats, as well as the sheer number of them (one in each corner of twenty-seven mats), it seems likely that the character *jia* can be taken as an abbreviation or shorthand for one of these prayers, or a similar phrase. Just as bronze was particularly suited to talismanic prayer inscriptions that emphasized longevity, and silk was considered an appropriate medium for talismanic characters praying for continued wealth, bamboo mats, as household items that would have come into contact with the bodies of the people who sat, stood, and walked on them, may have been considered appropriate carriers for talismanic inscriptions that prayed for the security and prosperity of the family. The fact that the bulk of the mats (twenty-six of the twenty-seven) were found covering the lid board sealing the coffin where Xin Zhui was laid to rest may serve as further proof that these auspicious characters were thought to confer blessings and/or protection on the deceased after death.

Of course, the character *jia* attractively rendered in archaic seal script may also have enjoyed a design function, but then it is hard to explain why the characters were painted rather than incorporated into the weave like the geometric designs that, according to the description in HM, featured on at least one of the mats. It may simply have been too difficult to weave a complex seal-script graph out of bamboo, but the fact that the characters were painted in ink after the geometric patterns had already been incorporated into the mat suggests that the characters were not painted primarily for aesthetic purposes. If, as seems likely, the characters were added sometime after the mats were designed and manufactured, then it is possible they were added specifically for burial, which would further suggest some sort of talismanic function.

701 The word *jia* was also carved on the bottom of some of the lacquerware discovered in 2002 at the Western Han tomb site in Siyang 泗陽 county, Jiangsu 江蘇 province. See Huang (2015), p. 156.

702 Xiong and You (2006), p. 28 describe the arrangement of these twenty-six mats: eight of the mats were arranged horizontally on each of the two long sides of the lid board, with the rest of the mats arranged in the middle of the board in two columns of five mats each. The mats were arranged so that they touched at the corners. Xiong and You also note that when the mats were first discovered the color of the bamboo was bright yellow, as if they had been newly woven. Unfortunately, however, within twenty to thirty minutes of the excavation the bamboo gradually turned black.
Figure 3.9: Character *jia* painted on the corner of a bamboo mat discovered in M1 (HM, 1.121, Figure 106)
In addition, the fact that the graphs were added to each corner of so great a number of mats (all the mats found in M1, barring one that was discovered separately as described above) might speak to the incorporation of these characters into a ritual program organized as part of the burial rites, rather than a production method with a purely aesthetic function in mind. Perhaps it was thought that writing this character on all four corners of so many mats, mats that were eventually brought together and carefully draped over the coffin at the burial site, increased or concentrated their talismanic power.

3.5 Coin inscriptions

Inscribed metal coinage in the form of round discs and square ingots represented perhaps the most widespread use of performative writing in the Han empire. Certain sectors of the Early Imperial Chinese economy were already well on their way towards becoming fully monetized, with the coins produced in huge numbers by state mints exchanged for all kinds of goods and services, and official salaries and taxes paid partly in cash. Coins had been in use in China as early as the mid-sixth century BCE, with different coins in use in the various states that made up the Chinese cultural world, including shovels, knives, and round discs made of bronze, as well as gold ingots and cowry shells. This diversity of coinage continued into the Warring States era.

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703 Though we tend to think of amulets as individual objects, in Ancient Egypt amulets included groups of objects that functioned together as concentrated forms of talismanic power. See Pinch (1994), p.108 and Dieleman (2015), p. 24. As noted above, sets of talismanic celestial ordinance jars with identical inscriptions have been found in some Eastern Han tombs. See Seidel (1987), p. 25.

704 See Huang Wenjie 黃文傑, Qin Han wenzi de zhengli yu yanjiu 秦漢文字的整理與研究 (Beijing: Shehui kexue wenxian chubanshe, 2015), pp. 158-159 for a useful overview of inscribed coinage from the Qin and Han dynasties.

705 See Anthony Barbieri-Low, Artisans in Early Imperial China (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2007), p. 28.
In Qin and Han times, inscriptions denoting the nominal weight or provenance of the metal used to make the coins minted and issued by the government conferred the status of legal tender on official coinage, and as long as the material conditions of the currency were not too far removed from the inscription’s contents the writing on the coin served to guarantee that it carried the value that the inscription said it did. As we have already seen, official currency was not the only type of coinage in use in Han times, however, and “unofficial” coins bearing explicitly talismanic inscriptions that would have rendered them useless as official currency were also widely used as charms for invoking protection and securing good fortune for their owners. Both official and unofficial metal coins have been found in a number of early Chinese tombs, and large quantities of imitation clay coinage (mingbi 冥幣) produced specifically for burial and use in the afterlife have also been found. Indeed, all the coinage found in the Mawangdui tombs belongs to this latter category, clay imitations of coins bearing “official” inscriptions the likes of which were present on the legal tender that circulated as government issued currency above ground.

As clay imitations of “real” money, the Mawangdui coins, in keeping with the ancient Chinese tradition of interring specially produced mingqi 明器 burial objects in tombs with the deceased,707 were presumably manufactured to furnish the deceased with the kind of currency

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707 The term mingqi 明器/冥器 (lit., “luminous” or “dark” objects) refers to burial items manufactured for the deceased in imitation of the kinds of real objects and structures in use above ground. These items were typically smaller in size and made from cheaper materials than their real-world counterparts. The term
(both literal and figurative) they had enjoyed during their lifetime. That is, these coins and ingots served the deceased in the afterlife as money for rendering payment and as a symbol of their wealth and status. These were not the only functions performed by coins in the Han, however; they were also widely integrated into Han artistic motifs and religious iconography. Indeed, I will argue that the clay imitation coins found in Mawangdui M1 and M2 were designed not just as units of underworld currency or markers of status, but also as talismanic tokens intended to ensure that the deceased continued to enjoy good fortune in the afterlife.

Two types of clay imitation coinage were found in Mawangdui M1. The first type is an imitation of the gold ying cheng (lit., Ying weight) ingots that had been issued from the city of Ying (the former Chu capital famed for its production of gold) perhaps as far back as the Springs and Autumns era, and which continued to serve as currency well into the Western Han. Some 300 of these clay ingots were discovered in a bamboo hamper stored in the western mingqi first appears in the Zuozhuan, where it is used to refer to ritual items used in ancestral temples rather than in tombs. The term appears in a number of transmitted early Chinese texts, where the use of such items is rationalized variously as a reflection of virtuous frugality, an act of filial piety, and a recognition of the division between the living and the dead. Earthenware imitations of real ritual vessels and other items and structures have been found in tombs dating as far back as the Neolithic period, but over the course of the Springs and Autumns and Warring States eras the practice of interring such objects became more widespread. Though it would no doubt be inappropriate to reduce all the various examples of mingqi artifacts to a single specific function or purpose, it seems that at least from the Warring States period mingqi were used to demarcate the realm of the living from that of the dead, and to meet the increasing demands for creating tombs that replicated the domestic world of the living without wasting precious or expensive materials. See Von Falkenhausen (2006), pp. 301-306 and Qinghua Guo, The Mingqi Pottery Buildings of Han Dynasty China 206 BC-AD 220: Architectural Representations and Represented Architecture (Brighton: Sussex Academic Press, 2010), pp. 1-7.

708 For a description and photographs of these coins, see HM, 1.126 and HM, 2.220 (plates 254 and 255).


710 See Shi Xiaocun 師小群, “Ying cheng – Zhongguo xiancun zui zao de jinbi” 鄢稱 - 中國現存最早的金幣, Zhongguo huangjin jingji 中國黃金經濟 (1999).3, pp. 44-45. Shi notes that the Erya 爾雅 (Approaching Refinement) glosses the graph cheng 稱 as du 度 (to measure), and that ying cheng ingots could be rectangular or round in shape, with the blocks broken off from the rectangular ingot plates and weighed before they were exchanged. Casting of these ingots ended with the fall of Chu in 223 BCE, but they continued to circulate as currency until the reign of Han Emperor Wu (r. 141-87 BCE). See also Wang Lin 王林 and Chen Longwen 陳隆文, “Youguan Changsha Mawangdui yi hao Hanmu de jige wenti” 有關長沙馬王堆一號漢墓的幾個問題, Shaanxi shifan daxue jixu jiaoyu xuebao 陝西師範大學繼續教育學報 18.4 (2001), p. 54, who note that while many ying cheng ingots have been found buried
compartment of the coffin, with the ingots averaging 6.2cm in length, 3.8cm in width, and 0.4cm thick. The obverse side of the rectangular ingots is divided into three rectangular sections, with each section carrying the characters ying (on the top) and cheng (on the bottom) stamped in raised yangwen 阳文 characters. The reverse side of the ingots is flat and contains no writing or design. After the clay ingot plate was made, gold powder (huangfen 黃粉) was rubbed onto the surface of the characters, and after firing the ingot would have resembled an actual gold ingot. The “earth gold” (tu jin 土金) mentioned on slip 295 of the tomb inventory text in Mawangdui M1 probably refers to these ingots.711

The second type of imitation coinage took the form of clay banliang 半兩 (lit., half-liang; 1 liang = 15.625 grams) coins, stored mainly in forty bamboo hampers, with each container holding around 2,500-3,000 coins. The hampers were crammed into the bottom of the western compartment of the coffin, but piles of coins were also found in the eastern and southern compartments. The clay coins are round in shape (between 2.3-2.8cm in diameter and 0.25-0.5m in thickness) and carry a square hole at their center, recalling Han cosmological conceptions of a square Earth underneath a domed Heaven (see Chapter 4). Most of the coins have the character ban 半 stamped on the right-hand side and liang 兩 on the left, though some coins reverse this arrangement. The “earth money” (tu qian 土錢) entry on slip 297 of the tomb inventory text from Mawangdui M1 probably refers to these coins.712 Banliang coins had been minted in the pre-imperial state of Qin from 336 BCE, and they continued to be minted as the standard imperial coin in the Qin and early Han dynasties with issues taking place in 186 BCE, 182 BCE, together with banliang coins, none has been found alongside the wuzhu 五銖 coinage that was cast from 118 BCE onwards (see below). Other place names found on Chu currency include Chen 陈 and Guangling 廣陵, important economic centers in the former Chu kingdom. See Wu Liangbao 吳良寶, “Zhanguo Chu jinbi xinkao” 戰國楚金幣新考, Jiangsu qianbi 江蘇錢幣 (2010).1, pp. 1-2.

711 See HM, 1.153 and JC, 6.218 for transcriptions of the contents of this slip.

712 See HM, 1.153 and JC, 6.219 for transcriptions of the contents of this slip.
and 175 BCE, before they were replaced in 118 BCE by Emperor Wu’s introduction of the “five zhu” (wuzhu 五铢) coin (1 liang = 24 zhu; 1 zhu = 0.651 grams).\(^{713}\)

Mawangdui M2 also yielded two types of clay burial coinage: 500 clay ingots (which, unlike those found in M1, were round in shape and uninscribed), and 2,000 inscribed clay banliang coins.\(^{714}\) The clay ingots were found in the southern and eastern compartments of the coffin and can be divided into large (350 pieces), medium (100 pieces), and small (50 pieces) sized pieces. The larger coins measure 6.2cm by 2cm, the medium size coins 5.2cm by 1.6cm, and the smallest just 4.4cm by 1.1cm. The banliang coins were found in the western compartment. They measure 2.8cm in diameter and 0.4cm thick and had also been fired.

Although Mawangdui M3 did not yield any inscribed coinage, two bamboo hampers of silk money (niebi 聶幣) were discovered in the southern compartment, with wooden labels bearing the inscription “four thousand [units of] silk currency” (niebi qian si 聶幣千四). An additional some ten square pieces were found near the bamboo mat in the southern compartment of the coffin. As noted above, fixed lengths of silk were also used as currency throughout the Han, and slip 385/364 of the tomb inventory text from Mawangdui M3 carries an entry for these “two bamboo hampers of silk money” (niebi er si 聶幣二笥).\(^{715}\)

In her book *Savage Exchange: Han Imperialism, Chinese Literary Style, and the Economic Imagination*, Tamara Chin provides a useful table of the different currencies discovered at Mawangdui accompanied by information from the relevant tomb inventory text entries and container labels, as well as a selection of other excavated currency finds from the Western Han.\(^{716}\) Interestingly, Chin notes that despite the apparent uniformity of the coinage in

\(^{713}\) In 140 BCE the new “three zhu” (sanzhu 三銖) coin briefly replaced the banliang coin, which was later reintroduced in 136 BCE before the introduction of the wuzhu coin. See Chin (2014), pp. 228-233 and Sophia-Karin Psarras, *Han Material Culture: An Archaeological Analysis and Vessel Typology* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 2015), p. 11.

\(^{714}\) BG, pp. 18-19; BG, p. 227

\(^{715}\) BG, p. 227. See BG, pp. 71-72 and JC, 6.260 for transcriptions of this slip.
official circulation above ground in Han times, the money buried with the deceased in Han times was characterized by great diversity. Different types of coinage in different media have been found in various Han tombs, including both legal tender that could be used above ground and clay versions manufactured specifically for burial in imitation of real currency.\footnote{Chin (2014), pp. 232-233. Note, however, that Chin twice confuses the identities of the tomb occupants of Mawangdui M1 and M3: once in the table on p. 232 and again in her discussion of burying money on p. 233.} Chin notes that whereas some of the metal currency found in Han tombs could presumably have circulated effectively as currency both above and below ground, a third type – personalized coins carrying auspicious inscriptions that have also been found in Han tombs – could only have functioned as talismans. Chin contends that since tomb inventory texts, including those from Mawangdui, list items (including stores of coinage and other currency) by type and number but never by cost, burial money seems not to have been intended primarily for use in the underworld as a method of payment or assessing value but rather to serve as luxury status markers.\footnote{Chin (2014), p. 230-233. Psarras (2015), p. 13 notes that “[i]n the context of the tomb…any representation of currency was apparently acceptable in the afterlife as legal tender.”} Certainly, judging by the bamboo containers where the Mawangdui coins and ingots were found and the tomb inventory entries where they were recorded, these coins were catalogued and stored as items in their own right and were not set aside as reserves of cash distinguished from the other luxury items found in the tombs.

There would thus seem to be considerable differences, in addition to significant similarities, between the ways Han coinage functioned above and below ground. Burying money (whether real or imitation) represented something more than simply transposing the same sets of values and objects from one realm to another; it represented a renegotiation of the ways in which coinage functioned. Though none of the inscribed imitation coinage discovered at Mawangdui features explicitly auspicious or talismanic inscriptions, there is evidence from other tomb sites...
to suggest that even imitation clay currency with official-looking inscriptions enjoyed auspicious associations that allowed them to be used as talismans for offering protection and attracting good fortune (see below).

In fact, the talismanic use of imitation currency with official inscriptions was merely an extension of the logic that underwrote all coin inscriptions in the Early Imperial period, a logic that is readily acknowledged and discussed in the transmitted sources from that era. In fact, the performative nature of standard weight inscriptions was the subject of fierce criticism from those who decried the widespread and sometimes egregious discrepancies between coin inscriptions and the material features of Han coinage. As we have seen, Qin and Han law accommodated a certain degree of deviation of a coin’s inscription from its material conditions, as long as the discrepancy was not too large and was limited to the coin’s weight and not the type of metal used. The inscription also had to be clearly legible. Indeed, this emphasis on a coin’s inscription as a marker of value at the expense of its exact material features was a cause for concern for Han historiographers, who lamented the association between coinage bearing inscriptions of its nominal weight and corruption among the people in the form of forgery and private casting.

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719 See Chin (2014), p. 252 who notes that the *Qinliu* 秦律 (*Statue on Coins*) from Zhangjiashan 張家山 M247 (Jiangling, Hubei; Western Han) specifies that a certain deviation in weight was acceptable as long as the correct metal was used and the inscription (*wenzhang* 文章) was not damaged. See also Barbieri-Low (2007), pp. 129-130, who notes that Qin artisans and merchants were prohibited from selectively circulating coins and withholding others by stockpiling heavy or high-quality coins and palming off light or defective coins on other parties. Barbieri-Low also notes (pp. 253-254) that Wang Mang is said to have enslaved tens of thousands of families as a penalty for counterfeiting coins. Peng (1999), pp. 175-179 observes that the debasement of coins through reduction in their size and alteration of their metallic composition was already widespread in the Warring States era. See also Michèle Pirazzoli-t’Serstevens, *The Han Dynasty*, trans. Janet Seligman (New York: Rizzoli, 1982), p. 31 and Scheidel (2009), pp. 142-147.

720 See Chin (2014), pp. 248-249, 252-255. Chin shows how both Sima Qian 司馬遷 (ca. 145-ca. 86 BCE) in the *Shiji* and Ban Gu 班固 (32-92 CE) in the *Hanshu* lamented the widespread failure of a coin’s inscription (*wen* 文, or *wenzhang*) to meet the ethical and cosmological conditions for patterned writing (*wen*) to represent truth or substance (*shi*) accurately. See *Hanshu* 24b.1154, where the famous statesman Jia Yi 賈誼 (ca. 201-ca. 169 BCE) is supposed to have expressed regret that, owing to the differences in value assigned to coins of different weight, coin inscriptions were creating great chaos
The idea that, in certain circumstances, a coin’s inscription had the power to override and distort material reality was thus both inscribed in Early Imperial law and decried by Han historiographers, and some sense of the performative power of coin inscriptions was apparently widespread in Western Han times. If writing could be used performatively to transform lumps of metal of disparate weight into official currency of standardized value, it is no surprise that writing was also used in performative fashion to transform similar or identical lumps of metal into generators of wealth rather than units of currency. That is, the inscription of auspicious words and symbols onto metal coinage extended the logic of numismatic inscriptions to create talismanic charms that attracted and created wealth and prosperity even as it removed the coins from the monetary economy.

Long before the standardization of metal coinage in Early Imperial times, objects such as cowrie shells had continued to serve as decorations and charm tokens even after they came to be used as currency, and large amounts of currency (in various shapes and sizes and made from different materials) bearing explicitly talismanic inscriptions have been discovered at sites dating to the Springs and Autumns, Warring States, and Early Imperial eras.

Early Imperial coins bearing explicitly talismanic inscriptions are known by various names, including “quelling coins” (yasheng qian 壓勝錢, yansheng qian 厳勝錢), “flower coins” (hua qian 花錢), “folk coins” (minsu qian 民俗錢), “joy and celebration coins” (xiqing qian 喜慶錢), and “congratulatory coins” (hesui qian 賀歲錢). Unlike in previous eras, talismanic coins were no longer usable as legal tender, but held value as personal items used to provide protection and create good fortune, especially in the context of special celebrations and festivities such as weddings, births, and anniversaries. Even in Early Imperial and later imperial times when

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(daluan 大亂) in marketplaces throughout the land. Certainly, in the relatively decentralized political context of the early Western Han, coins of different weight known by different names circulated with the same inscriptions. The casting of a coins was itself a decentralized process, and private minting was rife. See Li Rusen 李如森, Zhongguo gudai zhubi 中國古代鑄幣 (Changchun: Jilin daxue chubanshe, 1998), pp. 135-148; Scheidel (2009), pp. 142-147; Von Glahn (2016), pp. 84-128; and Thierry (2017), pp. 81-118.
talismanic coins increasingly came to be distinguished from official coinage, however, there was often still a close connection in both medium and design between official and unofficial (i.e., talismanic) coinage.\textsuperscript{721}

We have many examples of round coins from the late Western Han onwards that are similar or identical in medium, shape, and size to official coinage but which are inscribed with explicitly talismanic words and phrases such as “Great benefit to sons and grandsons; may their longevity compare to the Queen Mother [of the West]” (\textit{dayi zisun shou bi wangmu} 大宜子孫壽比王母); “[May you] enjoy ease and benefit from drink and food” (\textit{le wushi yi jiushi} 樂無事宜酒食); and “Benefit sons and grandsons and deliver their persons from harm” (\textit{yi zisun tuo shenshang} 宜子孫脫身傷). Some of these inscriptions were also accompanied by decorations of stars, constellations, and other divine symbols and depictions of cosmic bodies, and the widespread use of talismanic coins continued into the Eastern Han and beyond.\textsuperscript{722}

As mentioned above, the fact that the written language of coin inscriptions worked performatively to transform lumps of metal into official currency, even when the material features of the metal did not entirely conform to the content of the inscriptions, was well known in Western Han times. Indeed, as we have seen, there was a significant degree of anxiety surrounding precisely this issue. If inscriptions could transform metal into official currency, and if the ritual burial of clay imitations of everyday objects helped transform them into real objects for use in the afterlife, then the burial of inscribed clay coins represented a fusion of these two traditions. Indeed, the inscribed imitation coins discovered at Mawangdui exhibit significant variation in their size and weight, showing that the performative power of the inscriptions to


\textsuperscript{722} See Song (2016), pp. 42-48. Note that my translations of these inscriptions differ from Song’s. As described above, imitation ingot plates bearing auspicious \textit{qianjin} inscriptions have also been found in numerous Western Han tombs in the Changsha region.
Figure 3.10: Illustration of Eastern Han gold-plated bronze disc with wuzhu coin at its center (Cong and Liu [1998], p. 79, Figure 2.1)
override the materiality of the coin continued into the afterlife. The uninscribed clay ingots found alongside inscribed coinage in Mawangdui M2 prove that writing was not strictly necessary for the efficacy of imitation clay coinage, but the presence of “official” inscriptions on imitation clay currency surely helped create a credibly realistic approximation of real coinage for burial and use in the afterlife. The clay imitation coins buried in Mawangdui M1 and M2 do not bear explicitly talismanic inscriptions, however this does not mean they were not also intended to serve certain talismanic functions.

There is plenty of evidence to suggest that even coins with official inscriptions (both metal coinage used as currency in Han times and clay imitations of such currency used for burial and use in the afterlife) were associated with auspicious forces and talismanic powers. Anthony Barbieri-Low, for example, has described a bronze coin mold from the Western Han that features auspicious design motifs in the form of tigers and dragons, as well as a similar stone coin mold that has words like “auspiciousness” (ji 吉) and “harmony” (ping 平) carved into it. According to Barbieri-Low, the location of these symbols and inscriptions at the top of the mold near the pouring spout shows that the manufacture of coins was connected to ideas about cosmic balance and the harnessing of auspicious forces.723 Similarly, in the Eastern Han, gold-plated bronze discs (liujin tongpai 鎏金銅牌) depicting images of auspicious creatures such as tigers and phoenixes sometimes also featured coins prominently in their design (see Figure 3.10).724

One particularly striking example of Han iconography featuring coins in its design is an Eastern Han earthenware tomb brick housed in the Nelson-Atkins Museum in Kansas City.725


725 Bricks like this one were made using molds before the designs were made using stamps. For museum catalog entries of this brick, see Ross E. Taggart, George L. McKenna, and Marc. F. Wilson, eds.,
The brick measures 40.01cm by 20.32cm by 70.49cm, and features a stag’s head complete with a pair of impressive antlers facing head-on surrounded by leaf designs, *taotie* 饕餮 masks or faces, human figures riding on horses and in carriages, and a large number of *wuzhu* coins (see Figure 3.11). Deer had long been considered auspicious animals in ancient Chinese political and intellectual culture, and antlers were invariably incorporated into the design of the fearsome tomb guardians used to protect Han dynasty tombs (see above). The intimidating *taotie* designs further suggest that the brick was decorated to provide protection for the tomb and its occupants. The use of durable media no less than the protective symbols and auspicious motifs used to decorate it speaks to a clear desire to secure protection and good fortune for the deceased and his or her tomb, and the incorporation of coinage as a prominent element in the design suggests that, much like the brick’s other design elements, clay currency, in addition to symbolizing general wealth and prosperity, also served a talismanic function in the context of Han tombs. That is, the coinage, stag’s head, and *taotie* designs, all rendered in clay, were thought to confer very real protection and good fortune on the deceased. This is a clear example of clay imitation coinage holding talismanic power rather than merely exchange or symbolic value in the context of a Han dynasty tomb.726

Admittedly, this particular tomb brick dates to the Eastern Han and postdates the Mawangdui tombs by at least two hundred years. But coins and coin motifs were also pervasive

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726 See Michèle Pirazzoli-t'Serstevens, “Sichuan in the Warring States and Han Periods,” in *Ancient Sichuan: Treasures from a Lost Civilization*, ed. Robert Bagley (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), p. 55, where it is noted that in Eastern Han mortuary contexts coins “undoubtedly represent[ed] a wish for prosperity in the next world,” and were even depicted on the walls in some tombs. Lothar von Falkenhausen points out that the pervasiveness of coin motifs in Han art means that coins were likely regarded as auspicious above ground as well. See his review of *Savage Exchange* in the *Journal of Chinese Studies* 61 (2015), pp. 335-336. In addition, Chinese coins, judging by the square hole in their center, were designed to be strung together, and were perhaps worn on one’s person rather than simply carried or transported, bringing them into close contact with the bodies of their owners and users. See H.A. Ramsden, *Chinese Openwork Amulet-Coins* (Yokohama: Jun Kobayagawa Co. 1911), p. 2.
Figure 3.11: Eastern Han tomb brick held in the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas City (photograph by the author)
elements of artistic design throughout the Han, contributing to “an iconography of auspiciousness that underlies the visual practices during much of the Han period.” If, by the time of the Mawangdui tombs, coins (both real and imitation) had long been considered appropriate vehicles for talismanic inscriptions, and if inscribed clay imitation coins were often used as visually striking, auspicious design elements in mortuary contexts, it is likely that the presence of similar clay imitation coinage at Western Han tomb sites like Mawangdui likewise served not merely to symbolize wealth or provide the deceased with riches in the afterlife but also to secure for them continued protection and good fortune through their collective talismanic power.

For some reason, the tomb occupants of Mawangdui M1 and M2, or perhaps the people responsible for selecting their burial items, preferred to inter large quantities of imitation clay coinage with official inscriptions rather than coinage in either metal or clay bearing explicitly talismanic inscriptions. Perhaps it was desirable that the coins buried in the tomb could do double duty, simultaneously serving as talismanic tokens and potential currency for practical use in the afterlife. Certainly, burying two kinds of imitation currency, banliang coins in

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727 Von Falkenhausen (2015), pp. 335-336. Certainly, coins and coin motifs were a staple of Eastern Han art on stone and brick tiles. See Wang Zhenduo 王振鐸, Handai kuangzhuan jilu 漢代壙專集錄 (Beiping: Kaogu xueshu, 1935); David Crockett Graham, “Ornamented Bricks and Tiles from Western Szechwan,” Journal of the West China Border Research Society 10 (1938), pp. 191+22 pages (unpaginated) of drawings; Richard C. Rudolph, Han Tomb Art of West China: A Collection of First- and Second-Century Reliefs (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1951), pp. 24, 30, 37, 41n.28; and Jessica Rawson, “Tombs and Tomb Furnishings of the Eastern Han Period (AD 25-220),” in Bagley (2001), pp. 266-267. However, though they are particularly associated with Eastern Han designs, coin motifs appeared on bronze mirrors already in the Western Han. See François Thierry, Amulettes de Chine: Catalogue (Paris: Bibliothèque nationale de France, 2008), p. 16. The wuzhu coin, in particular, was a favored motif, and in later times carrying such a coin was thought to ensure that mothers would bear a male child. See François Thierry, Amulettes de Chine et du Viet-nam: Rites magiques et symboliques de la Chine ancienne (Paris: Le Léopard d'or, 1987), p. 37.

728 In addition to forming part of a longstanding tradition of burying imitation clay objects in tombs with the deceased, making imitation coins out of clay may also have had a practical function. Unlike official bronze coinage there were no sumptuary rules regulating the manufacture of clay coins, allowing the deceased to be buried with huge stockpiles of cash without wasting real money. The coinage would also have been useless to any robbers who might gain access to the tomb. The coins in Mawangdui M2, for example, were apparently left behind by the tomb robbers.
circulation throughout the Han empire as well as ingots associated with Chu, doubtless reflected and reinforced Xin Zhui and Li Cang’s status and identity as members of a family that had been ennobled by the Han emperor, and which served in the region formally occupied by the ancient Chu kingdom. On this point, it is curious that while Xin Zhui and Li Cang were interred with tremendous sums of clay cash, no clay coins where discovered in Mawangdui M3 belonging to Li Xi, though the M3 tomb inventory text does record multiple entries for different types and quantities of over one hundred thousand clay ingots and coins (tu jin 土金, tu qian 土錢). This would seem to suggest that huge sums of clay money were displayed as part of Li Xi’s funeral ceremony but for some reason were not interred in his tomb. Of course, as noted above, Li Xi was buried with a considerable amount of silk money, and it was perhaps merely considered that this type of currency better served to symbolize his wealth and status.

If, as we saw above, huge sums (qianjin; lit., one-thousand [pieces/units of] gold) could be carved onto imitation clay ingot plates to transform them into talismanic tokens, then surely the inscription of much smaller sums onto thousands (and even hundreds of thousands!) of clay imitation coins was a no less powerful and doubtless far more impressive method of projecting wealth and status, as well as securing good fortune and protection for the deceased. In a real sense, the performative power of the writing on coins in circulation above ground and on those buried with the dead served to reinforce the two interrelated economic systems, and both sets of currency operated on the principle that, at least to a certain extent, writing could literally create, rather than simply denote or symbolize, wealth. All Han coin inscriptions were inherently performative: inscriptions on official currency transformed pieces of metal into symbols of imperial authority and state-sanctioned guarantors of value, while the inscriptions on clay imitation coinage went even further, lending the necessary credible verisimilitude to otherwise unremarkable clay objects to give them the same status and power enjoyed by the metal coins.

729 For transcriptions of the contents of these slips, see BG, p. 67 (slips 301 and 303) and JC, 6.261 (slips 376 and 378). See also Chin (2014), p. 232.
issued by the state. But burying clay imitation coins with official inscriptions in Han tombs not only provided the deceased with financial security by furnishing them with a method of payment in the afterlife or a symbol of their wealth and status; it also provided the deceased with auspicious tokens with the talismanic power to provide real security after death.

3.6 Conclusion

The sources examined in this chapter all reflect in different ways a contemporary belief that, under certain conditions, writing (both individual characters and more extensive passages of text) could be used to confer protection and good fortune on the people exposed to them. Three specific conclusions require particular emphasis.

First, it is interesting that the individual bamboo slip, qianjin garments, jia bamboo mats, and inscribed clay coins were all found distributed between M1 and M2 (see Table 3.1 below). None of the written sources I have identified as functioning performatively through their talismanic power was found in M3, which belonged to Li Xi. It may thus be tempting to conclude that there was an inverse correlation between levels of elite literacy in the Li family and belief in the talismanic power of writing, since only Li Xi’s tomb yielded a large number of written texts, perhaps attesting to a relatively high degree of literacy,\textsuperscript{730} and this is the tomb from

\textsuperscript{730} The complex relationship between Li Xi and the texts he was buried with is discussed at length in Chapter 5. To date, no non-funerary texts have been discovered in tombs that can positively be identified as belonging to a female occupant; however, it is not always possible to determine with certainty the sex of the corpse. See Alain Thote, “Daybooks in Archaeological Context,” in \textit{Books of Fate and Popular Culture in Early China: The Daybook Manuscripts of the Warring States and Han}, ed. Donald Harper and Marc Kalinowski (Leiden: Brill, 2017), p. 48. It may have been the case that Xin Zhui and Li Cang believed in the talismanic power of certain texts even if they could not read them or did not know what they said. Lurie (2001), pp. 69-71, for example, reminds us that writing can mean different things to different people, and that just because a talismanic inscribed object is found in a tomb, and just because we have evidence that the tomb occupant believed in these talismanic powers, this does not mean that the tomb occupant would have been able to read the inscription. The tomb occupant may simply have been told what the inscription said or how it was supposed to function. Silverman (1991), p. 20 notes that with Islamic talismanic writings, often the person for whom the inscription was made was illiterate and never intended to read it.
which talismanic inscriptions are seemingly absent. However, as Li Cang’s tomb was repeatedly looted prior to its excavation, it is impossible to say whether or not he was originally also buried with a similar quantity of manuscripts. In addition, it is possible that inscribed talismanic artifacts were in fact interred in M3 but have been overlooked or simply rotted away. Regardless, the fact that Li Xi died in-between his father and mother demonstrates that, both before and after his burial, certain members of the Li family and/or the ritualists responsible for their funeral arrangements believed in the talismanic power of certain types of writing to protect their owners from danger and attract wealth and good fortune on their behalf. In sum, a belief in the magical, talismanic power of writing was not limited to lower levels of Han society but rather reached even the highest elites and their burial practices.

Second, none of the artifacts I have analyzed in this chapter was specifically designed as a talisman or amulet with a material form that marked it as special or significantly different from other examples of that object type. Rather, in each case, either writing was used to appropriate existing objects and object types for talismanic purposes (as in the case of the silk garments, bamboo mats, and coins), or, in the case of the individual bamboo slip, an inscribed artifact was repurposed for use as a talisman. Unlike later, so-called Daoist talismans, these objects did not carry inherent talismanic value because of their embodiment of cosmic forces or divine status, nor do the inscriptions appeal to divine entities or concepts, contain extended prayers, or even enter into communication with, or present addresses to, cosmic divinities or underworlds.

An inscribed bamboo slip numbered among the artifacts found in the earth used to fill in the tomb pit of M3, for example. The slip had broken into two pieces, but originally measured approximately 16.1 cm long by 4.5-4.8 cm wide. One side of the slip retains its green hue, while the other side contains six brush written graphs that are too indistinct to be deciphered. See BG, p. 27.

The repurposing of artifacts for talismanic use was widespread in the ancient world. Greek curses were often inscribed on pieces of scrap lead, for example, and sometimes curse inscriptions were scraped off so the tablet could be used for other curses. See Jaime Curbera, “From the Magician’s Workshop: Notes on the Materiality of Greek Curse Tablets,” in Boschung and Bremmer (2015), pp. 102-104, 107-108. In the Song 宋 dynasty (960-1279), objects such as bronze mirrors and ceramic containers traveled to Japan where they were repurposed for use as talismanic objects. See Yiwen Li, “Chinese Objects Recovered from Sutra Mounds in Japan, 1000-1300,” in Visual and Material Cultures of Middle Period China, ed. Patricia Buckley Ebrey and Shih-shan Susan Huang (Leiden: Brill, 2017), pp. 284-317.
administrators. Rather, the inscribed talismanic sources from Mawangdui attest to a belief in the magical, talismanic power of certain written signs, apparently unrelated to divine status or origins, to effect change in the material world through their very presence and incorporation into the object world of Han ritual and representation. In the context of the tomb, the durability of writing ensured that the power of the auspicious phrases continued to endure long after the voices of the funeral ritualists fell silent.

Third, in each and every case the efficacy of these talismanic texts seems to have depended largely on a close relationship between the text and its material support. The individual bamboo slip recorded the presence of guardsmen who had actually taken part in the ceremony within which the larger tomb inventory manuscript was manufactured and performed, the qianjin inscriptions praying for wealth were found on expensive silk textiles that symbolized wealth and prosperity, the jia inscriptions were made on household items that likely represented the household and its inhabitants who were to benefit from its protection, and the coin inscriptions and their material carriers imitated the type of coinage in circulation above ground. In addition to certain rituals and spoken utterances that likely accompanied the use of some of these talismanic inscriptions, it was evidently considered important that the writing be committed to the appropriate medium in order to guarantee that it functioned properly. Returning to Austin’s theory of performative utterances, just as the words “I do” carry no legal or religious authority outside the context of a wedding ceremony presided over by the appropriate officiant, the full force of these auspicious inscriptions may have depended on their incorporation into the appropriate sites and artifacts. A qianjin inscription on a bamboo mat, for instance, or the character jia written on a bamboo slip may simply not have represented a powerful enough use

734 In this way, the amulets and talismans from Mawangdui examined in this chapter were thought to be “naturally causal,” and did not function, as many traditional written Chinese charms did, bureaucratically to persuade or petition the spirits or the underworld. For a discussion of these different kinds of talismans, see Emily Martin Ahern, Chinese Ritual and Politics (Cambridge: England: Cambridge University Press, 1981), pp. 9-30.
of properly patterned (wen 文) writing, and thus may not have enjoyed the same performative functions as these talismanic text-objects.

In this chapter, although I have focused on the presence and use of written talismans, it seems likely that certain other non-inscribed objects, and perhaps even silk diagrams, found in the Mawangdui tombs served also to confer protection and good fortune on the deceased.\(^{735}\) As

\(^{735}\) See, for example, the so-called *Guaxiang tu 卦象圖 (Trigrams Chart), which was found along with the other silk manuscripts inside the black lacquer case in M3. The silk chart is listed in the qita 其他 (“other”) category in BG, p. 90, and was first published in WW, 1.162 (upside-down and under the name “Illustrations of Trigrams”). The chart measures 48cm by 51.5cm and contains illustrations of over one hundred figures arranged in rows. Most of the figures are delineated in black, though some are in red, and portions of certain figures are also colored in black or an orange-red color. The character nian 年 (“year”) can be found in one of the figures in the third line from the bottom of the manuscript. Dong Shan 董珊 in JC (see JC, 6.107 for a detailed description of the figures on the chart, and JC, 2.149-151 for full color photographs of the manuscript) argues that the chart was folded four times vertically and eight times horizontally, though Chen Jian 陳劍 claims that this is incorrect and that the way the chart was originally folded is unknown. See Chen Jian 陳劍, “Mawangdui boshu ‘yinwen,’ ‘kongbai ye’ he chenye ji zhedie qingkuang zongshu” 馬王堆帛書 ‘印文,’ ‘空白頁’ 和襯頁及折疊情況綜述, in Hunan sheng bowuguan (2016), p. 275. Judging by the reconstruction, the chart featured twelve columns of figures with nine figures in each row making for a total of one hundred and eight figures. Most, though not all, of the figures are symmetrical in shape, and they are rounded at the bottom and square at the top, divided into two halves along the vertical axis. While Dong takes this manuscript as a diagram of divinatory trigrams and figures, Donald Harper, who retitles the manuscript *Fanxin tu 帆信圖 (Diagrams of Banner Tokens), argues that the manuscript functioned as an illustration of the kinds of talismanic banners used in Han times and also as a talisman in its own right. See Harper (2007), pp. 169-189. Harper argues that the chart served as a talisman based largely on the fact that one of the figures in the chart seems to bear the label dayi 大乙 (= taiyi 太一), who, Li Ling has argued, was associated with talismans that conferred blessings and protection on their owners. Harper thus claims that these illustrations represent a fusion of administrative and magico-religious functions; that is, they are both representations/models of banner forms and designs, and potent talismanic figures in their own right. However, given the fact that the documents buried in M3 seem to have been selected with the intention of equipping Li Xi with the kinds of information and knowledge he would have needed to navigate the afterlife (see Chapter 5), and since the *Guaxiang tu manuscript was not displayed or positioned in the tomb in a way that might suggest it was meant to perform any sort of protective function, I prefer Dong’s interpretation to Harper’s.

See also the ten graphs incised in seal script in the bronze crossbow trigger discovered in Mawangdui M2: “[Produced] in the twenty-third year in a private workshop…” (sasan nian si gongshi 卦年三十四工室). Scholars have offered no interpretations of the last four graphs in this inscription. The date in this incised inscription is probably a reference to the twenty-third year (225 BCE) after the ascension of the First Emperor as King of Qin. See BG, pp. 21-22 and plate 9.3 for a black and white photograph of the crossbow. Sophia-Karin Psarras, drawing on the work of Albert Dien, speculates that in the Han crossbow triggers may have been buried in tombs as a way of inviting good fortune as a result of the phonetic correspondence between the words ji 機 (trigger) and ji 吉 (auspiciousness). Psarras also notes that burying crossbows in tombs may have been intended to furnish the deceased with protection, thus serving as talismans, amulets, or both. See Psarras (2015), p. 34. Of course, regardless of
we have seen, writing was not the only component that made these artifacts usable or valuable as talismans, and it would be a mistake to overlook the continuities and similarities between materials inscribed with writing and their non-inscribed counterparts. What the sources examined in this chapter demonstrate, however, is that wherever writing was thought to come from, and whatever else it was used to do, for certain elites in Western Han one of its most important functions was related to its performative power to change the world and a person’s fortunes within it. The talismanic writings from Mawangdui attest to the fact that the use of texts and written graphs could also be fully integrated into broader, non-textual ideas and practices related to magic, ritual, and performance, even at the same tomb site where large numbers of written manuscripts used to record and communicate knowledge and information were found.

Table 3.1: Inscribed talismanic sources from Mawangdui

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Material</th>
<th>M1 (Xin Zhui)</th>
<th>M2 (Li Cang)</th>
<th>M3 (Li Xi)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bamboo slips</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>1 individual bamboo slip</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Silk textiles</td>
<td>Three pairs of silk gloves and one silk body cloth</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bamboo mats</td>
<td>27 mats</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Currency</td>
<td>300 ingots and ca. 100,000 coins</td>
<td>2,000 coins</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
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why the trigger was deposited in the tomb, inscribing this specific date onto the trigger may have been motivated more by the desire to commemorate a sentimental attachment to the object than by boosting any sort of talismanic efficacy. For the connection between labelling artifacts and sentimental attachment, see Katerina Volioti, “The Materiality of Graffiti,” in Ancient Graffiti in Context, ed. Jennifer Baird and Claire Taylor (New York: Routledge, 2010), pp. 146-147.

Chapter 4 – Visualizing Texts: The Visual Design of Texts on Silk

4.1 Introduction: textual visuality and t Programs manuscripts

It should go without saying that once a text is written down and assumes material form it necessarily looks a certain way. Indeed, the way a text looks (its medium, size, shape, design, layout, colors, calligraphic style, accompanying illustrations, etc.) can have a profound impact on the ways it is understood and appreciated, or whether it is even seen at all. In some cases (an informal note hastily scribbled on a scrap piece of paper, for example) the way a text looks may be largely incidental. That is, while the visual form of the text might betray the state of mind of its author as well as certain other conditions of its manufacture, it was not designed with any particular aesthetic impact in mind, save perhaps consideration of the text’s readability.

More often, however, the way a text looks reflects deliberate choices and design considerations, and these may be practical, aesthetic, ideological, or a combination thereof. Texts can communicate using a range of non- or a-linguistic visual strategies, and premodern textual practices often confound straightforward notions of “reading” as the linguistic decoding of written signs. Writing can be used to encode and decode language, of course, but it can also be used in much the same way as non-linguistic marks can to delineate shapes, represent or embody ideological values, and create powerfully moving images. Indeed, writing as linguistic code and writing as evocative image are often so tightly intertwined that some have even questioned the


738 My use of the term “a-linguistic” is intended to represent the fact that sometimes even words that are written and read in the conventional fashion (i.e., which are used to encode and decode semantic content) can also be used to communicate values and ideas in ways that transcend their value as linguistic signs.

739 See my discussion of the different definitions of writing and literacy proposed by scholars in recent decades in my Introduction.
distinction between writing and images as entirely separate modes of representation or communication. To be sure, written texts can be read, but they can also be seen, viewed, and displayed in ways that complement, subvert, or transcend their linguistic function, and the visual form of certain early Chinese texts should force us to consider the many different ways in which communities of early Chinese “readers” engaged with texts as visually compelling artifacts.

We have already seen in previous chapters how certain texts from Mawangdui were designed and produced with the appearance of the text in mind, and that this was done variously to increase readability, to make the text more attractive, or to represent certain ideological or sociopolitical values. Indeed, the manufacture of texts with visual considerations in mind may be almost as old as Chinese writing itself, with certain late Shang period oracle inscriptions arranged on the surface of the bone or shell in aesthetically pleasing ways that also embodied Shang beliefs about the way the cosmos was structured. Likewise, the calligraphic form and

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741 Xing Wen, for example, has remarked that new manuscript discoveries have led us to question the various implications of different textual layouts, and that in early China “[d]ifferent pictorial textual arrangements would carry different intellectual implications and represent different intellectual stances.” See Xing Wen, “Pictorial Arrangements of Excavated Early Chinese Manuscripts,” in Xinchu jianbo yanjiu: xinchu jianbo guoji xueshu yantaohui wenji 新出簡帛研究: 新出簡帛國際學術研討會文集, ed. Ai Lan 艾蘭 and Xing Wen 邢文 (Beijing: Wenwu, 2004), pp. 420, 429.

742 See my discussion of textual production at Mawangdui in Chapter 1.
material layout of Zhou bronze inscriptions are often extraordinarily beautiful, and writing on bamboo slips was also often carefully and attractively executed for deliberate visual effect.

Indeed, aesthetic considerations may even have influenced the development of the Chinese script. Though calligraphic writing would not become valorized as an art form in its own right until centuries after the Mawangdui tombs were sealed, it would nevertheless be a mistake to

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745 Albertine Gaur has noted that calligraphy emerges from an interaction between certain essential ingredients, including “the attitude of society to writing; the importance and function of the text; definite, often mathematically based, rules about the correct interaction between lines and space and their relationship to each other; and mastery and understanding of the script, the writing material and the tools used for writing.” See Albertine Gaur, *A History of Calligraphy* (London: The British Library, 1994), p. 19. Michael Nylan has argued convincingly that it was only from the late-second and early-third centuries CE (i.e., the late Eastern Han) that elegant writing came to be read as an embodiment of the writer’s personality. Prior to this, Nylan argues, writing enjoyed a “functional beauty,” serving “to dignify the content of a text, to dignify the object the text was placed on, or both.” See Michael Nylan, “Calligraphy: The Sacred Test and Text of Culture,” in *Character & Context in Chinese Calligraphy*, ed. Cary Liu and Dora Ching (Princeton: The Art Museum, Princeton University, 1999), pp. 17-77; esp. pp. 17-19. See also Amy McNair, “Engraved Calligraphy in China: Recension and Reception,” *The Art Bulletin 77.1* (1995), p. 106 and the discussion of the late Eastern Han “ethics of orthography” in Vincent Leung, “Bad Writing: Cursive Calligraphy and the Ethics of Orthography in the Eastern Han Dynasty,” in *Behaving Badly in Early and Medieval China*, ed. N. Harry Rothschild and Leslie V. Wallace (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2017), pp. 106-121. See also Li Zehou 李澤厚 with Liu Gangji 劉綱紀, *Liang Han meixue shi 兩漢美學史* (Taibei: Jinfeng chubanshe, 1987), pp. 240-265 for a good introduction to the development of aesthetic theories surrounding calligraphic writing, which Li also shows only developed in earnest in the Eastern Han. Of course, suggesting an Eastern Han context for the initial development of calligraphic art should not be taken to mean that prior to this there was no connection between the way written characters were executed and the message the scribe who produced them wished to express in writing. For example, Valérie Lavoix has noted that the most cursive portions of the “Shenwu fu” 神鳥賦 (="Rhapsody on a Divine Crow”) from Yinwan 尹灣 (Donghai 東海, Jiangsu 江蘇), which dates to ca. 10 BCE, happen to correspond to the most expressive parts of the poem. See Valérie Lavoix, “Un poème des Han: L’exposition du corbeau prodigieux’ de Yinwan,” in *La fabrique du lisible: la mise en texte des manuscrits de la Chine ancienne et médiévale*, ed. Jean-Pierre
overlook the importance of visuality to the production and consumption of the manuscripts that were found there. As we have seen, an exquisitely produced bamboo manuscript bearing finely written characters might bespeak administrative order and ritual propriety as much through its material and visual form as through its textual content, and the visual impact of textual artifacts on their readers and users should not be underestimated.\textsuperscript{746}

This chapter, however, will focus on visuality as it pertains to certain of the Mawangdui silk manuscripts rather than writing on bamboo. My use of the term visuality is a deliberate one, since I believe it accurately describes the phenomena and processes at work when the texts discussed in this chapter were used and read. The \textit{Oxford English Dictionary} provides multiple definitions for visuality, including “The state or quality of being visual or visible to the mind; mental visibility”; “Vision, sight”; and “Visual aspect or representation; physical appearance.”\textsuperscript{747}


Happily, the concept of visuality enjoys a significant amount of overlap with scholarly discussions surrounding a certain type of document known in the Chinese tradition as *tu* (chart or diagram). Judging by its use in Zhou bronze inscriptions, the term *tu* apparently first referred to “some sort of representational token which was used in feudal or military exchanges of the Western Zhou royal house and aimed at the visual anchorage of territorial affiliation or rank in a court ritual.” Later, however, during the Eastern Zhou, the term evolved to refer to “magico-religious” or “proto-scientific” charts, and this meaning continued into the Han and beyond when *tu* became associated with divinely or miraculously revealed diagrams confirming the cosmic identification of the Son of Heaven.748

Francesca Bray has argued that what distinguishes *tu* from other non-linguistic forms of representation and communication such as *hua* (drawings or paintings) and *xiang* (images or figures) is that *tu* was “a specialist term denoting only those graphic images or layouts which encoded technical knowledge,” serving as “templates for action.”749 According to Bray, *tu* was a functional category rather than a stylistic one, comprising manuscripts that offered “spatial encodings (often but not necessarily two-dimensional) of factual information, structures, processes, and relationships, translating temporal or intellectual sequences into purely spatial terms” with the aim of moving the reader or viewer of the manuscript to higher levels of understanding and action.750 Indeed, Bray argues that the three effects of *tu* manuscripts were


750 Bray (2007), pp. 2-3. Similarly, Guolong Lai has translated *tu* as “diagram,” based on the definition in Merriam-Webster: “a graphic design that explains rather than represents; especially a drawing that shows
“communicative (displaying information), pedagogical (inculcating understanding), and/or transformative (effecting cosmic or other changes through the very act of inscription).”

Donald Harper, in his treatment of the topic, cites a passage from the “Guan biao” 觀表 (“Observing Indicators”) chapter of the Lüshi chunqiu 呂氏春秋 (Springs and Autumn Annals of Mr. Lü) compiled around 239 BCE to show that, in Warring States and Early Imperial China, tu, as well as registers (lù 綠), banners (fan 幡), and tokens (bo 薄), were thought to reveal the hidden order of historical events. Harper’s translation of the passage reads:

“非獨相馬然也，人亦有徵，事與國皆有徵。聖人上知千歲，下知千歲，非意之也，蓋有自云也。綠圖幡薄，從此生矣。”

According to Harper, “by the late Warring States it was widely accepted among the elite that the world manifested itself in ways that were convertible to systematic notation. Both the Warring States conception of writing and the cosmological system formed from the lines of the arrangement and relations (as of parts).” See Guolong Lai, “The Diagram of the Mourning System from Mawangdui,” Early China 28 (2003), p. 44n.4.

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752 See Lüshi chunqiu jishi 呂氏春秋集釋 20.580 and Donald Harper, “Communication by Design: Two Silk Manuscripts of Diagrams (Tu) From Mawangdui Tomb Three,” in Bray et al. (2007), p. 172. Harper explains the passage thus: “To paraphrase the Lüshi chunqiu argument, everything exhibits signs – their manifestation is spontaneous, and their significance can be ‘read’ by the sage. Registers, diagrams, banners, and tokens – rather than writing or trigrams – are the cultural products that serve as a material demonstration of the correlation between the signs and knowledge. The Lüshi chunqiu passage explains the function of tu ‘diagrams’ and related objects as part of Warring States epistemological ideas according to which diagrams as well as words provided access to universal knowledge through the formation of a system of signs. Moreover, the signifying function of these objects was embedded in the daily conduct of life and was activated every time one of the objects was utilized (quotation on p. 173).
“Zhouyi trigrams are evidence of this idea.”\(^{753}\) Harper develops this idea to argue that certain \textit{tu} documents, including two of the Mawangdui manuscripts\(^{754}\)

“render phenomena using designs that, once established, predisposed the ancient observer to correlate what was seen in nature with these drawings from the initial moment of observations; that is, drawings had a determining influence on the elite’s perception of nature… In short, the \textit{tu} ‘diagram’ constituted a medium of communication. Like language and writing, \textit{tu} provided a vocabulary that paralleled writing and was far more culturally pervasive than the trigrams of the \textit{Zhouyi}.”\(^{755}\)

Though Harper may overestimate the extent to which Warring States conceptions of writing played a role in the development of \textit{tu} documents,\(^{756}\) I fully agree that certain texts in the \textit{tu} tradition were designed not just to reflect or embody the way the world was configured, but also to facilitate and engineer correct modes of perceiving it. This preoccupation with \textit{tu} and other non- or a-linguistic systems of representation and communication reflects the fact that in late-Warring States and Early Imperial China writing was not considered capable of fully capturing or communicating the totality of the world, or the true natures of the phenomena within

\(^{753}\) Harper (2007), p. 172. Harper also notes (p. 174) that images (\textit{xiang} 象), rather than \textit{tu}, appear regularly in the \textit{Zhouyi} associated with the “mantic figures, line patterns” (\textit{gua} 卦) in that text. Harper concludes that “[F]urther investigation of the Warring States conception of \textit{tu} and \textit{xiang} is needed to determine the distinctive significance of each term. I suspect that the explicit reference to \textit{tu} in \textit{Tianwen} and the absence of \textit{tu} in the argumentation of the \textit{Zhouyi} is significant and may even reflect a contrast between \textit{tu} and \textit{xiang} traceable to differences between the traditions of astrologers and milfoil/hexagram diviners.”

\(^{754}\) These two documents are the *\textit{Tianwen qixiang zazhan} 天文氣象雜占 (\textit{Miscellaneous Divinations Based on Astrological and Meteorological Phenomena}), which Harper renames the *\textit{Tianwen tu} 天文圖 (\textit{Diagrams of Heaven’s Patterns}) (see Chapters 1 and 5), and the *\textit{Guaxiang tu} 卦象圖 (\textit{Trigrams Chart}), which Harper renames the *\textit{Fanxin tu} 幌信圖 (\textit{Diagrams of Banner Tokens}) (see Chapter 3). See JC, 1.203-209 for color photographs of the *\textit{Tianwen qixiang zazhan}, and JC, 4.245-290 for an introduction to the manuscript and annotated transcriptions of its contents. See also BG, p. 89; Yu Bing 于兵 in NTM, p. 87; and WW, 1.154-160. See JC, 2.149-151 for color photographs of the *\textit{Guaxiang tu}, and JC, 6.107 (for a detailed description of the figures on the manuscript. See also BG, p. 90 and WW, 1.162.


\(^{756}\) See my discussion of early Chinese accounts of the invention of writing in Chapter 3.
it. Thus, the “Xici” 繫辭 (“Appended Phrases,” third century BCE?) commentary to the 周易 (Zhou Changes) famously quotes Kongzi 孔子 (Confucius, trad. 551-479 BCE) as saying:

“Writing does not exhaust [the meaning that resides in] words, and words do not exhaust [the meaning that resides in] thoughts. This being so, is it the case that the thoughts of the sages cannot be perceived?” The Master [i.e., Kongzi] said, “Sages set up figures (xiang 象) in order to exhaust thoughts and established the hexagrams (gua 卦) in order to capture exhaustively the real circumstances and the false.” 书不盡言，言不盡意。然則聖人之意，其不可見乎。 」子曰：「聖人立象以盡意，設卦以盡情偽。”

Though the use of writing for administrative purposes as well as the recording of non-administrative texts became increasingly widespread over the course of the early period, passages such as this one demonstrate that, at least in certain circles, there was also a significant degree of skepticism about the capacity of writing to embody or communicate the patterns and structural relationships that ordered the phenomenal world. 758

On this topic, Michael Nylan has situated tu (which she defines as “charts identifying the site and distinctive configurations of power”) within the context of early Chinese aesthetics, an aesthetics which, Nylan argues, “deemed a facility for precise rendering to be less admirable than the ability to intimate the inclusive, the multi-referential, and the multivalent.” 759 According to Nylan, even learned individuals who recognized the importance of writing and written texts to cultural transmission, individuals such as the bibliographical cataloguer Liu Xiang 劉向 (77-6 BCE) and the lexicographer Yang Xiong 揚雄 (53 BCE-18 CE), lamented the attention paid by

757 Zhouyi jijie zuanshu 周易集結纂疏 8.609.


their contemporaries to writing when the relationships between humans and the “cosmic-social harmonies in All-under-Heaven” were more properly expressed through wen 文, or the patterned embodiment and emulation of sagely behavior. Indeed, Nylan writes that

“[b]elieving as they [i.e., Liu Xiang and Yang Xiong] did that mere writing ‘could not completely express words, or words, ideas,’ they were more interested in ‘schemata of recurrent patterns, ultimate origins, and numerical categories implying totality’ – all compact distillations of phenomenal experience which promised to order the unforeseen in human existence while avoiding the misleading demarcations and dichotomies of rhetorical language. Thus, their probably reliance on the kinds of elaborate diagrams on precious silk or lacquered wood known from Mawangdui (Hunan), Juyang (Anhui), and related sites, each of which graphically depicts the parallel symmetries binding the triadic realms of Heaven-Earth-Man, symmetries that allowed the good man to improve materially both his own fate and that of his compatriots by actions synchronized with the sun, moon, and stars.”

Because of this distrust of, or distaste for, writing as a method of recording or communicating profound cosmic truths, when written text featured in tu documents it was often arranged and displayed in non-linear formats that replicated or embodied the structural designs of the forces at work in the cosmos. For this reason, Vera Dorofeeva-Lichtmann has characterized tu writing as a textual layout consisting of “a graphic representation built of textual passages.” Dorofeeva-Lichtmann further argues that

“[i]t is of central importance to note here that a ‘graphic representation,’ while determining interconnections within textual structures, will also have a specific meaning conveyed through its depictive properties. Consequently, a nonlinear textual structure serves a dual function, namely, depictive and elucidative. It can only be fully comprehended through considering both of these facets simultaneously. Thus, the textual passages of a non-linear textual structure ‘make sense’ when regarded as units of a graphic image which links them together.”


Indeed, texts exhibiting this kind of “non-linear structure” have been found in multiple media at numerous tomb sites, including the Warring States Chu silk manuscript from Zidanku 子彈庫 (Changsha 長沙, Hunan 湖南), diagrams on bamboo from a Qin dynasty tomb at Shuihudi 睡虎弟 (Yunmeng 雲夢, Hubei 湖北; ca. 217 BCE), and a wooden tablet from the Western Han tomb at Yinwan.763

_Tu_, then, have been defined as documents comprising written text arranged in a non-linear fashion with the intention of simultaneously embodying and engineering, through the visual arrangement and presentation of their various components, modes of perceiving and understanding the patterns and structures of the cosmos and the relationships between humanity, Heaven, and Earth.764 Within this conception of _tu_, the relationship between text and image was a dynamic one, and either could enjoy primacy over the other.765

The picture is complicated, however, by the fact that this more restricted definition of _tu_ documents competes with a more capacious understanding of the term. According to this more expansive definition, any document that makes extensive use of images or illustrations can count as a _tu_ manuscript, with examples of Mawangdui silk manuscripts that have been described or designated as _tu_ including manuscripts produced and/or interred for the visual pleasure of their...

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763 These texts are analyzed in Dorofeeva-Lichtmann (2004), pp. 7-33. The human-shaped diagram from Shuihudi and the Chu silk manuscript are examined briefly below. The board from Yinwan M6 contains records related to “divination according to ‘the rules of the sacred turtle’” (shen gui zhi fa 神龜之法), a method based on the correspondence between parts of the turtle’s body and the cardinal and semi-cardinal directions. This text is followed by a drawing of a turtle and a separate arrangement of cyclical signs in a diamond formation, similar to the shape of a turtle’s body.

764 At a bare minimum, we can say that the _tu_ form “attach[es] additional aesthetic dimensions to the text not intrinsic to its meaning or wording.” See Kern (2001), p. 46n.6.

765 Bray (2007), p. 3 has noted that sometimes _tu_ served as organizing devices or mnemonics for the easy storage or memorization of textual material.
owner, such as the *Chema yizhang tu 車馬儀仗圖 (Illustration of a Guard of Honor with Chariots and Horses),\textsuperscript{766} the *Chema youle tu 車馬遊樂圖 (Illustration of a Pleasure Trip with Chariots and Horses), and the *Huachuan youle tu 划船遊樂圖 (Illustration of a Boating Pleasure Trip);\textsuperscript{767} technical illustrations such as the *“Daoyin tu” 導引圖 (“Illustrations for Guiding and Pulling”) text on Medical Manuscript III;\textsuperscript{768} maps and plans such as the *Fuzhai tu

\textsuperscript{766} The *Chema yizhang tu was produced by sewing two lengths of silk together to form a single rectangular manuscript measuring roughly 219cm long and 99cm wide (according to the measurements given in WW; 212cm by 94cm according to BG). The manuscript depicts a figure wearing a hat, who may be the tomb occupant, escorted by attendants overseeing some sort of military ceremony replete with soldiers, horses, and chariots arranged in battle formation and accompanied by musical performance. WW and BG note that when the tomb was excavated this manuscript was found hanging on the western wall of the inner coffin chamber, though Zheng Shubin 鄭曙斌 in NTM claims it was found hanging on the eastern wall. The manuscript seems to have been designed and/or displayed in the tomb as a way of providing visual pleasure for the tomb occupant after death, possibly during his journey to the spirit world. For descriptions, illustrations, and photographs of the manuscript, see WW, 1.26-31; BG, pp. 109-113; Zheng in NTM, p. 59; and JC, 7.327.

\textsuperscript{767} WW claims that the *Chema youle tu manuscript was found hanging on the eastern wall of the inner coffin chamber and measures 68.7cm long and 34.9cm wide. It is a fragment of a painting on silk that depicts a mounted rider apparently participating in some sort of hunt. WW further claims that the *Huachuan youle tu manuscript, which they note was also found hanging on the eastern wall of the coffin chamber, measures 17.2cm long and 33.7cm wide, and that this badly damaged piece of silk is a lake scene depicting a woman riding in a boat accompanied by two attendants, as well as fish swimming and dogs running. However, Li Zhengguang 李正光 in BG treats these pieces of silk as a single manuscript that he calls the *Xingle tu 行樂圖 (Chart on a Pleasure Outing). Zheng in NTM also treats these pieces of silk as a single manuscript, which he calls the *Chema huachuan youle tu 車馬划船遊樂圖 (“Merry Making” in NTM; my Chart on a Pleasure Boat Trip with Horses and Chariots). Zheng further claims that this chart was found hanging on the western wall rather than the eastern wall of the coffin chamber. For descriptions, illustrations, and photographs of this manuscript, see WW, 1.32-34; BG, pp. 111-116; Zheng in NTM, pp. 59, 68; and JC, 7.311-324.

\textsuperscript{768} The *“Daoyin tu,” which occupies a roughly 100cm-long portion of Medical Manuscript III, features forty-four illustrations of human figures in various poses. Thirty-one of these figures still bear their original captions (tiji 題記). The figures illustrate poses associated with the therapeutic techniques of guiding (dao 導) breathing and pulling (yin 引, i.e., stretching) the body and limbs with the intention of improving overall health. BG, p. 90 has the “Daoyin tu,” as well as the other texts on Medical Manuscript III, under the fangji 方技 (“prescriptions and techniques”) category. BS, 4 contains transcriptions (“Transcriptions,” pp. 93-96) and black and white photographs (“Plates,” pp. 47-52) of the text and its illustrations, and the entire text is translated in Donald Harper, Early Chinese Medical Literature: The Mawangdui Medical Manuscripts (London: Kegan Paul International, 1997), pp. 310-327. See Harper (1997a), pp. 24-25 for an introduction to Medical Manuscript III. See also the descriptions and photographs in WW, 1.148-150 and Yu in NTM, pp. 89-91, and the description, transcriptions, and photographs in JC, 2.103-107 and JC, 6.15-34. Bray (2007), pp. 3-4 notes that tu fall into two broad categories: “diagrammatic or schematic tu,” which were designed to create understanding and generate
府宅圖 (Chart on Offices and Buildings), the *Dixing tu 地形圖 (Topographical Chart), the *Juzang tu 居葬圖 (“Chart of a Residence and Burial Site”) on Medical Manuscript III, the *Jiandao fengyu tu 箭道封域圖 (Chart on Military Camps and Territorial Divisions), and the *Zhaiwei caotu 宅位草圖 (Chart on Building Positions); illustrations of (talismanic?) action, and “representational images” that functioned much like technical illustrations. The *“Daoyin tu” would seem to fall into the latter of these two categories.

The *Fuzhai tu, also known as the *Zhaifu tu 宅府圖 (Chart on Buildings and Offices), the *Chengshe tu 城舍圖 (Chart on a City Residence), and the *Xiaocheng tu 小城圖 (Chart on a Small City) is a badly damaged manuscript that depicts the layout of a city. The manuscript once contained a considerable amount of writing labelling the gates, watchtowers, pools, and other structures and natural features depicted on the silk, and some researchers believe the manuscript could depict the city that served as the official residence of the Marquess of Dai. BG, p. 90 has the manuscript under the qita 其他 (“other”) category. See JC, 2.168-170 for color photographs of the manuscript and JC, 6.123-124 for an introduction to the manuscript and transcriptions of its contents. See Chapter 5 for a fuller discussion and alternative interpretation of this document.

The *Dixing tu, also known as the *Xi Han chuqi Changsha guo shenping fangqu tu 西漢初期長沙國深平防區圖 (Chart on the Topography and Defenses of the State of Changsha in the Early Western Han) is the world’s oldest extant survey map. It is badly fragmented, and the present reconstructed document measures roughly 96cm by 96cm. It seems to have been folded five times: once from right to left, again from top to bottom, then from left to right again, and from top to bottom two more times. The scale of the map is approximately 1:180,000, with squares, circles, and lines used to represent cities, towns, and waterways. BG, p. 90 has the map in the “other” category. See JC, 2.152-158 for color photographs of the manuscript and JC, 6.109-114 for a description and interpretation of its contents, as well as WW, 1.151; BG, pp. 91-98; and Yu in NTM, p. 87. See also Chapter 5 for a fuller discussion of this document.

The *Juzang tu, also known as the *Chengyi tu 城邑圖 (“City Chart”), the *Yuanmiao tu 園廟圖 (“Chart on Gardens and Temples”), and the *Jiefang tu 街坊圖 (“Chart on Streets and Lanes”) is a map of a city that includes streets, roads, pavilions, towers, and fortresses. It has been described as the oldest extant Chinese city map. BG, p. 90 has the manuscript under the “other” category. See also WW, 1.153; Yu in NTM, p. 88; JC, 2.171-173, and JC, 6.127-134. See Chapter 5 for a fuller discussion and alternative interpretation of this document.

Also known as the *Zhujun tu 駐軍圖 (Garrison Chart), *Fangqu tu 防區圖 (Chart on Defenses), and the *Shoubei tu 守備圖 (Chart on Garrison Duty), this document measures 98cm long and 78cm wide (note, however, that certain scholars have it as 96cm square) and is the world’s oldest extant color military map. The chart features detailed information about various waterways and the locations of the military installations, using different symbols and colors to indicate troop deployments and defensive zones and structures. The map was manufactured from two pieces of silk. BG, p. 90 has the manuscript in the “other” category. See also WW, 1.152; Yu in NTM, pp. 87-88; and JC, 2.159-167 and JC, 6.115-122. See also my discussion of this document in Chapter 5.

The *Zhaiwei caotu, also known as the *Zhucheng tu 駐城圖, is a very badly damaged manuscript that was manufactured from two separate lengths of silk of different dimensions, one wider and one narrower. Reconstruction of the manuscript has been difficult and controversial, but the current reconstruction
banners such as the *Guaxiang tu 卦象圖 (Trigrams Chart);\footnote{See Chapter 3 for a brief discussion of this manuscript.} and charts used in divination and other ritual proceedings such as the *Zhaiwei, zhaixing jixiong tu 宅位，宅形吉凶圖 (Chart on the Auspiciousness and Inauspiciousness of Building Locations and Formations);\footnote{The *Zhaiwei, zhaixing jixiong tu, also known under the title *Zhaixing, zhaiwei jixiong tu 宅形，宅位吉凶圖 (Chart on the Auspiciousness and Inauspiciousness of Building Formations and Locations) is a fragmentary manuscript containing drawings of shapes that seem to represent man-made structures accompanied by prognosticatory statements for divining the auspiciousness or inauspiciousness associated with constructing buildings. BG, p. 90 has it under the “other” category. See JC, 2.174-202 for color photographs of the manuscript and JC, 6.135-137 for an introduction and description. See also my discussion of this document in Chapter 5.} the *Taiyi zhu tu 太一祝圖 (Invocation Chart to Taiyi);\footnote{The *Taiyi zhu tu manuscript is discussed in detail in Chapter 2.} and the *Tianwen qixiang zazhan 天文氣象雜占 (Miscellaneous Divinations Based on Astrological and Meteorological Phenomena).\footnote{This manuscript, measuring 150cm long by 48cm wide, contains text and illustrations related to divinations carried out on the basis of observations of astrological and meteorological phenomena. BG, p. 89 has the manuscript under the “numbers and techniques” (shushu 數術) category. See JC, 1.203-209 for color photographs of the manuscript and JC, 4.245-290 for an introduction and annotated transcriptions of its contents. See also WW, 1.154-160; Yu in NTM, p. 87; and Harper (2007), pp. 169-189. See Chapter 1 for a discussion of the circumstances surrounding the production of the manuscript.} Some of these manuscripts have already been examined in Chapters 1, 2, and 3, and others will be introduced and analyzed in more detail in Chapter 5. For present purposes, it suffices to say that, major difficulties involved in the reconstruction of many of these manuscripts and their often enigmatic contents notwithstanding, we can be sure that the manuscripts from Mawangdui that have been categorized as tu documents in JC and other publications are extremely diverse in nature and exhibit a wide range of different relationships between text (if they contain written text at all) and image, resisting simplified or unified explanations or designations that reduce them to a single genre, form, or function.

measures 55cm long and 76cm wide. The manuscript contains numerous lines and marks, some due to seepage from other manuscripts, as well as measurement notations. The manuscript seems to be a chart for constructing some sort of edifice or structure. BG, p. 90 has it under the “other” category. See JC, 2.174-202 for color photographs of the manuscript and JC, 6.135-137 for an introduction and description. See also my discussion of this document in Chapter 5.

\footnote{See Chapter 3 for a brief discussion of this manuscript.}
\footnote{The *Zhaiwei, zhaixing jixiong tu, also known under the title *Zhaixing, zhaiwei jixiong tu 宅形，宅位吉凶圖 (Chart on the Auspiciousness and Inauspiciousness of Building Formations and Locations) is a fragmentary manuscript containing drawings of shapes that seem to represent man-made structures accompanied by prognosticatory statements for divining the auspiciousness or inauspiciousness associated with constructing buildings. BG, p. 90 has it under the “other” category. See JC, 2.174-202 for color photographs of the manuscript and JC, 6.135-137 for an introduction and description. See also my discussion of this document in Chapter 5.}
\footnote{The *Taiyi zhu tu manuscript is discussed in detail in Chapter 2.}
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Indeed, the vast majority of excavated sources categorized as *tu* by scholars are not themselves designated as such, and there is further no clear definition of what precisely constituted a *tu* document in the transmitted literature from the period. It would thus surely be inadvisable to attempt to formulate a theory or definition of *tu* that encompasses all these very different types of manuscript. Instead, rather than cleave too closely to a native category that is vaguely articulated in transmitted sources and has been inconsistently applied by scholars, I will draw on the concept of visuality as defined above to examine a subset of the Mawangdui manuscripts that fall within the more restricted definition of *tu* recently advanced by scholars. Consistent with the understandings of *tu* advanced by Bray, Dorofeeva-Lichtmann, Harper, and Nylan, all of the manuscripts in this subcategory feature written text arranged in non-linear fashion designed to inculcate the reader with correctly patterned modes of perceiving cosmic structures and relationships. Unlike many of the manuscripts included in the broader definition of *tu*, in these manuscripts text is not used merely to label images, nor are images used predominantly to illustrate written text; rather, the visual arrangement of the text in these manuscripts with and as images was supposed to endow the reader with the ability to perceive the universe correctly and to act within it efficaciously.

However, in contrast to the accounts offered by scholars advocating the restrictive definition of *tu* manuscripts, which have been more or less restricted to documents of a technical nature, in this chapter I will examine a philosophical text from Mawangdui that also satisfies the restrictive definition of a *tu* document, featuring non-linear text displayed alongside and actually as shapes and images in ways that were intended to inculcate correct modes of perception in its readers. In the process, I will argue for a distinction between those documents characterized by what I call “functional visuality” on the one hand, and those that make use of what I refer to as “immersive visuality” on the other. The former type was designed to record or communicate knowledge and information in ways that made it easy to read and consult, with the inculcation

and internalization of their non- or a-linguistic elements playing a decidedly auxiliary role. Perhaps not unsurprisingly, functional visuality was a hallmark of various technical documents, including divinatory texts, as well as practical documents containing digests of ritual prescriptions.\textsuperscript{779} The latter type, by contrast, was designed primarily not for conventional consultation or practical use in technical operations, but rather to impart wisdom and truth by immersing the reader in the material and visual processes and experiences necessary for arriving at a true understanding of the cosmos and humanity’s position in it. I will begin by briefly introducing those Mawangdui manuscripts that fall into my category of functional visuality, before offering the first full translation and study in English of a manuscript entitled *Wu ze you xing tu 物則有形圖 (Chart on Things Necessarily Having Forms), a philosophical document that I argue makes use of immersive visuality to mesmerize and ultimately transform its readers.

4.2 Functional visuality

4.2.1 The *Xingde and *Yinyang wuxing manuscripts

The formal and textual relationships between the three *Xingde 刑德 (Punishment and Benevolence) manuscripts and the two *Yinyang wuxing 陰陽五行 (Yin and Yang and the Five Phases) manuscripts from Mawangdui are very complex, and will be treated in detail in Chapter ____________

\textsuperscript{779} In fact, the most functional uses of *tu as illustrations for use in military strategy may also have been the most widespread, with Chen Pan 陳槃 noting that the “Bingshu” 兵書 (“Military Writings”) category of the bibliographical “Yiwen zhi” 藝文志 (“Treatise on Arts and Literature”) chapter of the *Hanshu 漢書 (History of the Han Dynasty) records a full forty-three scrolls (juan 卷) of *tu documents in the holdings of the imperial library. See Chen Pan 陳槃, “Xian Qin liang Han boshu kao” 先秦兩漢帛書考, Zhongyang yanjiuyuan lishi yuyan yanjiusuo jikan 中央研究院歷史語言研究所集刊 (Bulletin of the Institute of History and Philology) 24 (1953), p. 186. Michael Nylan has gestured towards the idea that *tu could also be largely or purely functional in her critique of Donald Harper’s treatment of the subject: “As is typical, Harper analyzes nearly all *tu in their ‘magico-religious uses,’ not distinguishing these from mundane administrative and other uses of the drawings, by his own account.” See Michael Nylan, “Mapping Time in the *Shiji and *Hanshu Tables 表,” *East Asian Science, Technology, and Medicine* 43 (2016), p. 73n.46.
5. For now, I will briefly introduce the five manuscripts with a focus on those diagrams and tables that contain written text arranged in non-linear fashion. As we will see, all five manuscripts present text in this way with the intention of simultaneously furnishing the reader or user of the manuscript with handy tools for divination while also reinforcing, through the visuality of the text, correctly calibrated modes of perceiving the temporal and spatial structures of the cosmos.

The *Xingde manuscripts are three sheets of silk referred to as *Xingde A (jia 甲), *Xingde B (yi 乙), and *Xingde C (bing 丙) respectively. All three manuscripts contain texts and diagrams related to the movement of cosmic forces associated with punishment (xing 刑) and benevolence (de 德) in the context of divination carried out to determine the auspiciousness or inauspiciousness of certain actions and events. In transmitted texts from early China, most famously the “Erbing” 二柄 (“Two Handles”) chapter of the Hanfeizi 韓非子 (Writings of Master Han Fei), the term xingde is associated with a system of “rewards and penalties” (shangfa 賞罰), two different yet complementary methods used by rulers and officials to engage with ministers and subordinates.\(^{780}\) Later, however, the term xingde came also to refer to predictions of good fortune or disaster based on the manipulation and interpretation of calendrical data, such as the ganzhi 干支 (“stem and branch”) system for recording and representing the sixty days of the sexagenary cycle.\(^{781}\) In texts like the “Tianwen” 天文 (“Heaven’s Patterns”) chapter of the Huainanzi 淮南子 (Writings of the Master of Huainan) and the “Sidai” 四代 (“Four Ages”) chapter of the Dadai liji 大戴禮記 (Ritual Records of Dai the Elder), for example, xing is associated with the cosmic forces of yin 隱 and the moon, while de is associated with the cosmic forces of yang 陽 and the sun.\(^{782}\)

\(^{780}\) Hanfeizi jishi 韓非子集釋 2.39-40.

JC contains color photographs of all three of the *Xingde manuscripts as well as introductions and annotated transcriptions of their contents. *Xingde A measures roughly 75cm long by 50cm wide; it is relatively well preserved and for this reason it has been possible to reconstruct almost all of the manuscript’s contents. Judging by imprints on the surface of the silk as well as by the portions of the manuscripts that have sustained the most damage, it seems that the central section of the silk was exposed on the outside after the manuscript was folded, with the ends of the silk sheet folded on the inside. It had first been folded from top to bottom before it was folded twice from right to left. Finally, the right-hand portion of the silk was folded underneath the left-hand side. The calligraphy of *Xingde A is a rather plain form of the ancient-clerical (guli 古隸) script style somewhat similar to that used to write the texts on the *Laozi 老子 A manuscript and the *“Wushi’er bingfang”* 五十二病方 (“Prescriptions for Fifty-Two Ailments”) text on Medical Manuscript I. The manuscript carries a notation for the “eleventh year of the reign of the current emperor” (jin huangdi shi’yi 今皇帝十一), which, in

782 Huainanzi jishi 淮南子集釋 3.233 and Dadai liji jiegu 大戴禮記解詁 9.164-173.

783 See JC 1.210-219 for color photographs of *Xingde A, JC, 1.220-228 for color photographs of *Xingde B, and JC, 1.229-237 for color photographs of *Xingde C. See JC, 5.1-29 for an introduction, notes, and transcriptions for *Xingde A, JC, 5.31-48 for *Xingde B, and JC, 5.49-64 for *Xingde C. BG, p. 89 has *Xingde A, B, and C under the “military texts” category. Yu in NTM, p. 91 likewise has the *Xingde A, B, and C manuscripts under the category of “Military affairs.” WW, 1.132-143 has photographs and transcriptions for *Xingde B.


785 Chen Shaoxuan 程少軒 in JC, 5.1 argues that the contents of these three manuscripts were probably copied within a relatively short period of time. Note, however, that Chen Songchang 陳松長 in YS, p. 39 argues that the *“Wushi’er bingfang” is one of the earliest texts from Mawangdui, dating to the Chu-Han contention era at the latest. YS, pp. 120-128 has *Xingde A in the ancient-clerical section, and notes that the script style of the writing on *Xingde B is a fairly regulated form of Han clerical script, while that of *Xingde C, which is in a very poor state of preservation, is written in a style similar to that of the ancient-clerical script used to write the text on the *Yinyang wuxing B manuscript (see my discussion of the relationships between these texts and manuscripts in Chapter 5).
addition to other references in the text, allow us to date the copying of the manuscript to the eleventh or twelfth year after Liu Bang’s ascension as King of Han, or 196-195 BCE.786

None of the textual material on any of the three *Xingde manuscripts originally bore a title, but the contents of *Xingde A have been divided into two main texts: the *“Riyue fengyu yunqi zhan” 日月風雨雲氣占 (“Divinations Based on the Sun and Moon, Wind and Rain, Clouds and Vapors”) and the *“Xingde zhan” 刑德占 (“Divinations on Punishment and Benevolence”). Both of these texts can be further sub-divided into smaller units of text and textual materials: the *“Xingde zhan” text includes a table known as the *“Taiyin xingde dayou tu” 太陰刑德大遊圖 (“Chart on the Greater Journey of Taiyin and Punishment and Benevolence”) and a diagram known as the *“Xingde xiaoyou tu” 刑德小遊圖 (“Chart on the Lesser Journey of Punishment and Benevolence”).

The *Xingde B manuscript measures approximately 85cm long (including certain sections of blank silk) and approximately 45cm wide. Despite its fragmented state the manuscript is relatively well preserved, and it has been possible to reconstruct its basic original form. The surface of the silk also bears characters imprinted from texts on other manuscripts, allowing us to ascertain that the left-hand portion of the silk was facing outwards after the manuscript was folded, leading to particular damage to this portion of the manuscript. It seems that it was folded from right to left twice before the left-hand portion of silk was folded underneath the right-hand side. Then, the bottom half of the silk was tucked upwards into the middle of the manuscript, which was then turned over.787 The *Xingde B manuscript can also be divided into two main sections of text that have been given the same titles as those on the *Xingde A manuscript,

786 See JC, 5.1-2 for an overview of the different arguments about when this manuscript was copied.

787 See Chen (2016), p. 284. Chen notes that this is not the only folding method that would account for the imprints on the manuscript; it may have been folded from right to left twice, turned over, then folded again from right to left two more times before the bottom half of the silk was folded on top of the top half.
“Riyue fengyu yunqi zhan” and “Xingde zhan,” with the latter also including the “Taiyin xingde daoyou tu” table and the “Xingde xiaoyou tu” diagram.

The calligraphy used to write the *Xingde B* texts is a fairly regulated form of the Han clerical (Hanli 漢隸) script similar to that used to write the texts on the *Laozi 老子 B* manuscript. The *“Xingde dayou tu” table includes a reference to the “first year of [the reign of] Filial [i.e., deceased] Emperor Hui” (xiao Hui yuan 孝惠元), and this, as well as other references on the manuscript, allows us to date the copying of the *Xingde B* texts to the period in-between the seventh year of Emperor Hui’s reign (188 BCE) and 168 BCE when the tomb was closed.\(^{788}\)

The *Xingde C* manuscript is very badly damaged and has been reconstructed only in fragments, largely on the basis of imprinted characters, the shape of the surviving fragments, and certain ruled section breaks that have furnished scholars with a basic idea of the original format and features of the manuscript. The reconstructed manuscript measures approximately 120cm long and 50cm wide, and it has been possible to ascertain that it was first folded from left to right three times before it was folded once from top to bottom.

The *Xingde C* manuscript is composed of four sections of text as well as three diagrams: the *“Chuansheng tu” (傅勝圖) (“Chart for Transmitting Victory”)) diagram in the *“Chuangsheng zhan” (傅勝占) (“Divination for Transmitting Victory”) section of text, the *“Xingde xiaoyou tu” diagram in the *“Xingde zhan” section, and the *“Digang tu” (地剛圖) (“Chart on the Guiding Principle of Earth”) diagram in the *“Digang zhan” (地剛占) (“Divination on the Guiding Principle of Earth”) section of the manuscript. The calligraphy used to write the

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\(^{788}\) Chen Songchang 陳松長, “Shilun boshu ‘Xingde’ jia, yi ben de zhuanchao niandai zhuanchao” 試論帛書《刑德》甲、乙本的撰抄年代, in idem, *Jianbo yanjiu wenhao 簡帛研究文稿* (Beijing: Xianzhuang shuju, 2008), pp. 155-164 argues that the *Xingde A* texts were copied for Li Cang while he was serving on a military campaign during the eleventh year after Liu Bang’s ascension as King of Han (196 BCE), and that the *Xingde B* texts were copied sometime during the second year of Emperor Hui’s rule, or 193 BCE. Cheng in JC points out, however, that the reference to “Filial Emperor Hui” should be taken to mean that Emperor Hui was already dead when the manuscript was copied (188 BCE at the earliest), since Han emperors were given xiao 孝 only as a posthumous title. See JC, 5.31 and Chapter 5 for a further refutation of Chen’s argument. For the practice of conferring xiao as a posthumous title on deceased emperors, see Miranda Brown, *The Politics of Mourning in Early China* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2007), pp. 21-22.
*Xingde C* texts is very similar to that used to write the texts on the *Xingde A* manuscript, and from cross-referencing certain date notations with records in the *Shiji* (Archivist’s Records) we can deduce that the *Xingde C* texts were copied after the fourth month of Liu Bang’s second year as King of Han (205 BCE). The texts cannot have been copied any later than 196 BCE, as certain parts of the *Xingde A* manuscript were copied and adapted from the texts on the *Xingde C* manuscript (see Chapter 5).

The *Yinyang wuxing* manuscripts are two silk sheets referred to as *Yinyang wuxing A* (*jia* 甲) and *Yinyang wuxing B* (*yi* 乙) respectively. Chen Songchang 陳松長 in *YS* has the script used to write the *Yinyang wuxing A* texts under the seal-clerical (*zhuanli* 篆隷) category, and the texts on *Yinyang wuxing B* in the ancient-clerical category. Though there are significant differences between the contents of the two manuscripts, the texts of both manuscripts are related to divination and prognostication. *JC* has color photographs of both manuscripts, as well as introductions and annotated transcriptions of their contents.

The *Yinyang wuxing A* manuscript is badly fragmented, but from the reconstruction work that has been carried out it is possible to establish that the original manuscript was very long, measuring approximately 224cm. Reconstruction of the fragments has been carried out largely on the basis of imprinted characters, and it is possible that the manuscript was manufactured from two separate lengths of silk. The character forms used to write the texts on the *Yinyang wuxing A* manuscript are not always consistent, indicating that it was probably copied from different sources. Judging by certain dates on the manuscript its contents were

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789 See *YS*, pp. 3-38 for *Yinyang wuxing A* and *YS*, pp. 129-156 for *Yinyang wuxing B*.

790 See *JC*, 1.238-281 for color photographs of *Yinyang wuxing A*, and *JC*, 2.1-16 for color photographs of *Yinyang wuxing B*. See *JC*, 5.65-116 for an introduction and annotated transcriptions of *Yinyang wuxing A*, and *JC*, 5.117-149 for *Yinyang wuxing B*. Both are listed in *BG*, p. 89 under the “numbers and techniques” category. See also *WW*, 1.144-145.

791 Several different estimations have been given for the original length of this manuscript, with at least one scholar arguing that it was longer even than this. For more detail, see the discussion of the often extraordinary lengths of the Mawangdui silk manuscripts in Chapter 5.
copied in 221 BCE at the earliest, and probably not much later. Indeed, judging by the script style, it may be the earliest of the Mawangdui silk manuscripts.\footnote{See YS, pp. 3-38, where Chen places it in the seal-clerical category.} It seems to have been folded from left to right four times before it was folded from top to bottom.\footnote{See Chen (2016), p. 275.} 

The *Yinyang wuxing B* manuscript was evidently copied later than *Yinyang wuxing A*, and the writing on the silk is in the transitional ancient clerical style.\footnote{See YS, pp. 129-156.} Based on certain references in the text of the manuscript, Cheng in JC argues it was almost certainly copied during the regency of Empress Dowager Lü 呂后 (d. 180 BCE) after 188 BCE.\footnote{JC, 5.117.} The manuscript is fairly badly damaged; however, with the exception of certain sections of text, the original form of the manuscript has basically been reconstructed. The reconstructed manuscript measures around 100cm long by 50cm wide, and judging by the presence of imprinted characters on the surface of the silk the manuscript was first folded from top to bottom twice, before it was folded again twice from right to left.\footnote{Chen (2016), p. 306 corrects the reconstruction of the folding technique given by Cheng in JC, which states that the manuscript was folded three times from left to right, not twice.}

As with the three *Xingde* manuscripts, both *Yinyang wuxing* manuscripts are also divided into different sections of text and textual material. The *Yinyang wuxing A* manuscript contains two diagrams: the *“Shitu”* 式圖 (“Chart on Divination”) diagram in the *“Kanyu”* 堪輿 (“Geomancy”) section of text, and the *“Xingri tu”* 刑日圖 (“Chart on Punishment Days”) diagram of the *“Xingri”* 刑日 (“Punishment Days”) section of text. The *Yinyang wuxing B* manuscript, meanwhile, contains the following diagrams: the *“Taiyin xingde dayou tu”* and *“Xingde xiaoyou tu”* in the *“Xingde zhan”* section, the *“Xingri tu”* in the *“Xingri”* section, the *“Chuansheng tu,”* and the *“Digang tu.”* As previously stated, the complex relationships

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\footnote{See YS, pp. 3-38, where Chen places it in the seal-clerical category.}
between these texts and manuscripts will be dealt with in more detail in Chapter 5. For now, suffice it to say that all five of these manuscripts feature diagrams containing written text displayed in non-linear fashion, and there is a significant amount of overlap between the texts and diagrams on the five manuscripts (see Table 4.1).

Marc Kalinowski has written extensively about both the *“Taiyin xingde daoyou tu”* sexagenary grid and the *“Xingde xiaoyou tu”* diagram, which he refers to as the “nine palace diagram” (*Jiu gong tu 九宮圖*). The *“Taiyin xingde daoyou tu”* is a grid that features sixty squares arranged in ten rows of six columns, one square for each of the sixty binominal days in the sexagenary cycle (see Figure 4.1) Each square is labelled in sequence with the binominal notation for the corresponding day, and the lines of each square are marked by different colored dots that change position from square to square, allowing the reader of the grid to trace the cosmic movements of *xing* and *de* on any particular day. Kalinowski emphasizes that the squares on the grid make use of a cosmic representational system known as the “cord-hook diagram,” which is formed by two cords (*er sheng 二繩*) and four hooks (*si gou 四鉤*). The cords are two lines that intersect at the center to delineate a square, and the four hooks refer to the L-shaped lines positioned in each of the four quadrants formed by the two cords. As a result there are twelve end-points in this scheme, one end-point for each of the twelve branches (*zhi 支*).

Thus, the grid used to display this information is not just a functional frame or symbolically neutral decorative motif, but rather an ideologically charged figure formed using a design that was thought to replicate the formative structures of the cosmos. This design is first described in the “Tianwen” chapter of the *Huainanzi*, where it says that the two cords form a cross with a line running from *zi 子* (North) to *wu 午* (South) and another line running from *mao 蛾*

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799 *Huainanzi jishi* 3.207.
卯 (East) to you 西 (West). The text also specifies that the hooks span the corners formed by this cross: chou 丑 and yin 寅 on either side of the northeast corner, chen 辰 and si 巳 on either side of the southeast corner, wei 未 and shen 申 at the southwest corner, and xu 戌 and hai 亥 on either side of the northwest corner. 800

Table 4.1: Diagrams containing non-linear text in the *Xingde and *Yinyang wuxing manuscripts (listed in chronological order) from Mawangdui M3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>*Yinyang wuxing A</th>
<th><strong>Shitu</strong></th>
<th><strong>Xingri tu</strong></th>
<th><strong>Chuansheng tu</strong></th>
<th><strong>Digang tu</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>*Xingde C</td>
<td>&quot;Xingde xiaoyou tu&quot;</td>
<td></td>
<td>&quot;Chuansheng tu&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;Digang tu&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Xingde A</td>
<td>&quot;Taiyin xingde dayou tu&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;Xingde xiaoyou tu&quot;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Yinyang wuxing B</td>
<td>&quot;Taiyin xingde dayou tu&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;Xingde xiaoyou tu&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;Xingri tu&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;Chuansheng tu&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Xingde B</td>
<td>&quot;Taiyin xingde dayou tu&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;Xingde xiaoyou tu&quot;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 4.1: *“Taiyin xingde dayou tu” on the *Xingde B manuscript (JC, 1.220)
This cord-hook pattern, also known on Han dynasty mirrors as the TLV pattern, appears on a wide variety of artifacts, including fourth- and fifth-century BCE bronze vessels and Early Imperial “TLV” mirrors (guiju jing 规矩鏡, boju jing 博局鏡), liubo 六博 gaming boards, seals, and decorative bricks. Though it seems inadvisable to reduce all the varied instances of this motif to a single meaning or explanation, the contexts in which it is found and its correspondence to certain accounts in Han texts of how the cosmos was patterned strongly suggest that it was designed to represent the structures of the cosmos.

The *“Xingde xiaoyou tu” diagram features a circle, divided into two equal parts by a line running through its center, surrounded by eight squares that are attached to it by straight lines. These squares are positioned around the circle in the locations of the four directions (four larger squares representing North, East, South, West) and the four intermediary directions (four smaller squares representing Northeast, Southeast, Southwest, Northwest) (see Figure 4.2). Notations on the diagram itself as well the explanatory texts that accompanies it have allowed scholars to reconstruct its significance and use. The diagram displays the nine palaces (jiu gong 九宮), with the four larger squares (or palaces) corresponding to the four agents (North = Water; South = Fire; East = Wood; West = Metal), and the four smaller squares (or palaces) corresponding to the same agents and directions (Northeast = Water; Southeast = Wood; Southwest = Fire; Northwest = Metal). The central palace (zhong gong 中宮) is associated with Earth. The diagram can thus be used to trace the daily movements of xing and de and to carry out prognostications accordingly. According to Kalinowski, this diagram is a “schematic


representation of the world,” or “cosmogram,” that depicts the various connections between the
directions and the five agents, as well as the movement of binominal units of time across this
spatial arrangement. The diagram thus replicates the dynamic passage of time in relation to the
spatial configurations of the world, and the overall makeup of the cosmos.804

For Kalinowski, the different structural arrangements of the *“Taiyin xingde dayou tu”
sexagenary grid and the *“Xingde xiaoyou tu” diagram of the nine palaces need to be
distinguished clearly. According to Kalinowski, since the sexagenary grid arranges the binomes
of the sexagenary cycle in six columns of ten (the same arrangement of the list that appears as
early as inscriptions on bone from the Shang period) without disturbing the sequence, and is
mainly intended for functional use, it is excluded from Kalinowski’s stricter definition of the “tu
layout.” The *“Xingde xiaoyou tu” diagram of the nine palaces, on the other hand, falls squarely
within this category because the role of the diagram is to represent not just temporal sequences
but also spatial structures and the relationships between the two.805

Despite the distinction Kalinowski has drawn between these two layouts, however, it
should be emphasized that all the non-linear texts on the *Xingde and *Yinyang wuxing
manuscripts listed in Table 4.1 above feature written text arranged in a way that is
simultaneously functionally convenient and revealing of cosmic processes and/or structures (see
Figure 4.3). That is, while the various arrangements of lines, circles, and squares used to display
these non-linear texts were designed to cultivate in the reader or user of the manuscript a certain
sensitivity in their reading and understanding of the cosmos, they also had the practical function
of making it easier to carry out divinations and related ritual activities. Thus, these non-linear
texts fall squarely within the category I have designated functional visuality.

803 Kalinowski (2007), pp. 146-147
Figure 4.2: *“Xingde xiaoyou tu”* (*“Jiugong tu”*) on *Xingde B* manuscript (JC, 1.220)

Figure 4.3: *“Chuansheng tu”* (right) and *“Digang tu”* (left) on the *Yinyang wuxing B* manuscript (JC, 2.1)
4.2.2 The “Nanfang Yu cang” and *“Renzi tu” diagrams on Medical Manuscript VI

The *“Taichan shu” 胎產書 (“Book of the Generation of the Fetus”) is a text on Medical Manuscript VI, a square piece of silk discovered among the Mawangdui manuscripts. The manuscript measures approximately 49cm in height by 49cm in width and had been folded both vertically and horizontally, dividing the manuscript into quarters. The writing on the manuscript is a style of Qin clerical script very similar to that used to write the texts found in M11 at the Qin dynasty tomb site at Shuihudi (ca. 217 BCE), and use of the graph zhi 稹, the personal name of Empress Dowager Lü, indicates that the manuscript was probably copied prior to 188 BCE, possibly as many as several decades earlier.

The contents of the manuscript are all related to childbirth. The top half of the manuscript contains two drawings, while the lower half of the manuscript contains information and recipes intended to aid ensure the health of the child, fix its gender, aid conception, and ease delivery. One of the drawings is a chart used to determine auspicious times and sites for burying the afterbirth, and this chart features twelve squares oriented around a larger central square space within which a title “Nanfang Yu cang” 南方禹臧 (= 藏) (“Burial According to the Principles of Yu in the South”) appears. This title, like the notations of the twelve months and numerical

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806 See Harper (1997a), pp. 27-28 for an introduction to the manuscript, and pp. 372-384 for a translation of the text. BG, p. 90 has this text under the “prescriptions and techniques” category. BS, 4 has black and white photographs of the manuscript (“Plates,” pp. 81-86) and annotated transcriptions (“Transcriptions,” p. 131-142) of its contents. JC, 2.138-143 has color photographs of the manuscript and JC, 6.93-102 contains an introduction and annotated transcriptions of the text. See also Zhou Yimou 周一謀 and Xiao Zuotaou 蕭佐桃, eds., Mawangdui yishu kaozhu 馬王堆醫書考注 (Tianjin: Tianjin kexue jishu chubanshe, 1988), pp. 344-364; Ma Jixing 馬繼興, Mawangdui gu yishu kaoshi 馬王堆古醫書考釋 (Changsha: Hunan kexue jishu chubanshe, 1992), pp. 779-821; Wei Qipeng 魏啟鵬 and Hu Xianghua 胡翔駿, eds., Mawangdui Hanmu yishu jiaoshi 馬王堆漢墓醫書校釋, Vol. 2 (Chengdu: Chengdu chubanshe, 1992), pp. 80-92; Zhou Yimou 周一謀 et al., Mawangdui yixue wenhua 馬王堆醫學文化 (Shanghai: Wenhui chubanshe, 1994), pp. 104-114, 334-335; Zhang Xiancheng 張顯成, Jianbo yaoming yanjiu 簡帛藥名研究 (Chongqing: Xinan shifan daxue chubanshe, 1997), pp. 428-430; and Li (2000), pp. 486-488.

notations in the twelve squares, is written in black ink, though the character yu 禹 has been smeared with cinnabar.808 Each of the twelve squares, which are drawn in red ink, represents a different month and makes use of the same cord-hook layout described above, with the twelve end-points corresponding to the twelve branch signs and their respective compass directions (see Figure 4.4). The *“Fangnei ji” 房內記 (“Records on Matters of the Bedchamber”) text on Medical Manuscript V contains instructions on how to use the chart and specifies which periods are to be avoided for burying the afterbirth, with these points labelled on the chart with the word “death” (si 死).809 Some scholars believe that this portion of text in the “Fangnei ji” was mistakenly copied onto Medical Manuscript V instead of Medical Manuscript VI (see below).

808 Perhaps it was believed that smearing the name of the great sage-ruler Yu with an auspicious color associated with divination would increase the efficacy of the divinations for which the manuscript was used. See my discussion of this issue in Chapter 1.

809 The *“Fangnei ji” text along with the *“Liao shegong dufang” 療射工毒方 (“Prescriptions for Treatments for Poisons”) are two components of what is sometimes regarded as a single text entitled *“Za liaofang” 雜療方 (“Recipes for Various Cures”). BG, p. 90 has *“Za liaofang” under the “prescriptions and techniques” category. BS, 4 has annotated transcriptions (“Transcriptions,” pp. 121-130) of the text and black and white photographs (“Plates,” pp. 71-80) of the manuscript. JC, 2.128-133 has color photographs of the *“Fangnei ji” portion of the manuscript, and JC, 2.134-137 has color photographs of the *“Liao shegong dufang” section. JC, 6.73-85 contains annotated transcriptions of the *“Fangnei ji” text, and JC, 6.87-91 contains annotated transcriptions of the *“Liao shegong dufang” text. Chen (2016), p. 300 calculates that the manuscript was folded from right to left, before the right-hand side of the silk was folded underneath the left-hand portion. Finally, the right half of the silk was folded on top of the left-hand portion. For an introduction and translations of these texts, see Harper (1997a), pp. 26-27, 363-371. See also Pan Yuan. 潘遠根, “Mawangdui boshu ‘Za liaofang’ kaobian” 馬王堆帛書《雜療方》考辨, Hunan Zhongyi xueyuan xuebao 湖南中醫學院學報 9 (1989).3, pp. 154-155; Ma (1992), pp. 749-778; Wei and Hu (1992), pp. 64-89; Zhang (1997), pp. 424-427; and Zhou Yimou et al. (1994), pp. 165-172, 330-333. The manuscript is approximately 24cm wide, though the silk has sustained serious damage and the surviving fragments measure approximately 65cm in length. In-between these two texts (which, as stated above, are sometimes treated as two separate texts) there are six blank ruled columns and a major gap in the manuscript. The script used to write the two portions of text is similar, a style of clerical script with elements of seal script that is close to the style in which the texts on Medical Manuscript I and 2 were executed. However, the calligraphy of the two parts is not a match and they were seemingly copied by two different hands. Most of the recipes in the first text are similar to the aphrodisiacs and tonics of the *“Yangsheng fang” 養生方 (“Prescriptions for Improving Health”) text on Medical Manuscript IV, and most of the content of the second text has to do with treatments for venomous bites.
The second drawing on Medical Manuscript VI is an illustration of two human figures who are displayed with their arms outstretched surrounded by notations of the twelve branches. These illustrations are referred to as the “human writing diagrams” (renzi tu 人字圖) in JC (see Figure 4.5). The same drawings were found among the Shuihudi manuscripts, which also contain textual material describing how to use the drawings to predict a child’s fortune after its birth. The two human drawings are oriented sideways on the manuscript perpendicular to the square diagram, with the surviving branch names labelling various parts of the figures’ bodies: the top of the head, the sides of the head, shoulders, hands, underarms, under the feet, and in the crotch. Comparison with the way the branch signs are arranged around the human figures in the drawings on the Shuihudi manuscripts reveals that the top figure on Medical Manuscript VI represents the seasons of spring and summer, while the bottom figure represents winter and autumn. The child’s fortune is determined by selecting the appropriate figure corresponding to the season in which the child was born and locating the branch sign for their date of birth. The explanatory text in the Shuihudi manuscripts states that the position of the branch sign on the figure reflects the fortunes of the child. For example, if the branch sign in the child’s date of birth appears on top of the head of the figure depicted in the diagram the child will be extremely wealthy. If it appears by the hands, however, the child will grow up to be a thief.

Liu Zhao 刘钊 writing in JC suggests that, given the relationship between the “Nanfang Yu cang” diagram on Medical Manuscript VI and the explanatory information provided in columns 40-42 of the *“Fangnei ji” text on Medical Manuscript V, the scribe may have incorrectly copied these three columns of text onto the wrong manuscript. This seems rather unlikely, however. Even if these two manuscripts were copied by the same scribe (or team of scribes) close in time and location to one another, it is hard to imagine how a scribe would make

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810 See JC, 6.82 for transcriptions and notes for this section of the text.

811 See JC, 6.73.
Figure 4.4: “Nanfang Yu cang” on Medical Manuscript VI (JC, 2.138)

Figure 4.5: “Renzi tu” on Medical Manuscript VI (JC, 2.139)
such an error. More likely, in my view, is that the “Nanfang Yu cang” diagram was copied as a stand-alone diagram without explicit instructions or explanations, presumably because its methods of operation were already widely known and well understood. Similarly, the *“Renzi tu” diagram was not accompanied by any explanatory material, either on Medical Manuscript VI or any other of the Mawangdui manuscripts, and this apparently presented no impediment to its use. Regardless, what is important for the purposes of my discussion is that the non-linear arrangement of text in both the “Nanfang Yu cang” and *“Renzi tu” diagrams was clearly intended primarily to facilitate their use in the practical application of technical knowledge. Again, this locates them squarely within my category of functional visuality.

4.2.3 The *Sangfu tu manuscript

The *Sangfu tu (Diagram on Mourning Vestments) is a rectangular manuscript measuring 26.2cm by 48.4cm. Judging by the presence of imprinted characters it was first folded vertically before it was folded horizontally, and since the upper portion of silk was apparently folded on the inside this section has received relatively little damage, with the lower portions of the manuscript having sustained far more extensive damage.813

812 In order for this portion of text to have been mistakenly copied onto Medical Manuscript V instead of Medical Manuscript VI, the scribe would have had to be copying texts onto two manuscripts simultaneously. Alternatively, the base text from which the two texts were copied (presumably prepared on bamboo or wood) could have been incorrectly divided up during the planning stage prior to the copying of these two manuscripts. If this was the case, however, then one wonders why the diagram referred to in the instructions provided in the *“Fangnei ji” text is referred to by a different title (“Yuzang maibao tu” 禹臧掩埋包图, “Chart on the Burial of the Afterbirth According to the Burial Method of Yu”) from the one that appears on Medical Manuscript VI. The fact that the two titles are close but not identical suggests that they refer to the same generic chart but that the base texts from which the texts on these two manuscripts were copied were not formally associated with one another.

813 See JC, 1.70-73 for color photographs of the manuscript, and JC, 3.163-166 for an introduction and transcriptions of its contents. Curiously, BG, p. 89 has the *Sangfu tu manuscript under the yiwen 藝文 (“arts and literature”) category.
The manuscript features a red canopy outlined in black measuring 18.5cm wide and 3.6cm tall, underneath which are nineteen squares (five in red and fourteen in black) displayed in a quasi-diamond formation, with each square measuring 1.7-2cm per side. These squares are arranged in six rows and six columns with an unequal number of squares in each row and column. Some of the squares are connected by black lines, and the manuscript seems to be missing some squares.\textsuperscript{814} An imprint of the red canopy that appears at the top of the manuscript is clearly visible at the bottom of the manuscript, and there is also a simple figure outlined in black at the very bottom of the chart that Dong Shan 董珊 in JC claims may be an imprint from another as yet undiscovered chart (see Figure 4.6).

The chart seems to display the relationships between different family members, who are represented by squares of different colors. A two-column inscription in ancient-clerical script appears on the right-hand side of the manuscript underneath the canopy,\textsuperscript{815} and a four-column inscription appears on the left-hand side. These inscriptions contain information about which items of clothing were to be worn during the periods of mourning stipulated for different kinds of relatives. Reconstructing the manuscript and the uses to which it was originally put is complicated, however, by the fact that different transcriptions, punctuation, and interpretations of its textual passages have been offered, as well as by the fact that the notations that seem originally to have appeared in the square themselves are now largely unreadable. In addition, different theories have been advanced to explain how the information on this chart relates to passages containing ritual prescriptions in transmitted texts such as the \emph{Liji} 禮記 (Ritual Records) and the \emph{Yili} 儀禮 (Ceremonies and Rituals), and there is even disagreement about what

\textsuperscript{814} See WW, 1.36 where the manuscript is described under the title “Diagram of Funeral Rites.” See also Cao Xuequn 曹學群, “Mawangdui Hanmu Sangfu tu jianlun” 馬王堆漢墓喪服圖簡論, \textit{Hunan kaogu xuekan} 湖南考古學刊 6 (1994), pp. 225-229 and Lai Guolong, “The Diagram of the Mourning System from Mawangdui,” \textit{Early China} 28 (2003), pp. 48-51 for detailed descriptions of the designs and arrangements of the geometric shapes on the manuscript.

\textsuperscript{815} See Lai (2003), p. 50.
Figure 4.6: *Sangfu tu
manuscript (JC, 1.70)
the colors of the squares on the manuscripts originally were, and which family relationships these colored squares represented.816

Whereas Cao Xuequn 曹學群 (followed by Fan Zhijun 范志軍) has interpreted the *Sangfu tu as a schematic representation of the mourning system observed by a particular family, Guolong Lai has argued that the manuscript is instead to be taken as an abstraction of the general principles underlying the Han mourning system, and that this diagram is a generic representation of one version of a system of ritual obligations rather than the genealogy of a particular family.817 Similarly, Hu Pingsheng 胡平生 has argued that the chart was probably used as a simplified rendering of the ritual regulations for mourning, allowing the user of the manuscript to obtain information related to the mourning procedures for the relevant relative when necessary without wading through passages of ritual prescriptions. Hu supposes that charts like this one were widely owned and copied in Han times.818 Additionally, Michael Nylan has argued that the differences between the information provided in the *Sangfu tu and the ritual prescriptions


817 Lai (2003), pp. 62-63. Lai also notes further (p. 62n.56) that the diagram cannot have been designed to represent Li Xi’s family specifically, since he could not possibly have had great-grandchildren while still in his thirties. See Chapter 5 for a brief discussion of the relevance of the *Sangfu tu manuscript to arguments about the relationship between Li Xi and the Mawangdui silk manuscripts.

recorded in transmitted texts provide “evidence for competing visions of family obligations” rather than evidence for widely observed mourning practices based on “canonical” texts in Western Han.\textsuperscript{819}

Regardless of how widely known or accepted the information displayed on the *Sangfu tu* manuscript was in Western Han times, it is clear that the chart presents information related to ritual obligations to different family members in a way that is visually appealing and easy to understand, memorize, and internalize. In addition, the non-linear arrangement of written text accompanies, and is even incorporated into, a design that makes extensive use of ideologically charged geometric shapes. Guolong Lai, for example, has shown that the arrangement of the squares in a diamond shape underneath the red canopy was meant to serve as a microcosm of the cosmos, with the red canopy representing a domed Heaven above, and the squares, arranged in a larger square formation oriented towards the four cardinal directions, representing the Earth below.\textsuperscript{820} The visual design of the chart thus combines practical considerations with aesthetic appeal and cosmic iconography in its schematic rendering of ritual prescriptions and family relationships, again conforming to my definition of functional visuality.

As we have seen, all the manuscripts in my category of functional visuality make use of written text arranged in non-linear fashion, displaying writing using colors and shapes that are ideological charged and representative of dynamic cosmic structures and relationships. In all these texts and manuscripts, however, technical considerations prevail.\textsuperscript{821} To be sure, it would


\textsuperscript{820} Lai (2003), pp. 73-75. See Chapter 1 and below for my discussion of the significance of these colors and shapes in the cosmological thought of Warring States and Han times.

\textsuperscript{821} Gaming is another context in which the non-linear arrangement of text can be found in early Chinese sources, with the way the text is arranged serving both to facilitate gameplay and underscore theories of how the cosmos was structured. For a description of one such game that features non-linear text discovered in an early Western Han tomb at Kongjiapo 孔家坡 M8 (Suizhou 隨州, Hubei), see Luke Habberstad, *Forming the Early Chinese Court: Rituals, Spaces, Roles* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2017), pp. 3-7.
not have escaped the notice of a sophisticated user of these manuscripts that the visual elements were designed to sustain certain notions related to cosmic patterns and ritual propriety, but the easy access and manipulation of this information was nevertheless of paramount importance. This was not the case for all the Mawangdui silk manuscripts, however. Indeed, the following section will introduce a philosophical manuscript characterized by what I have designated “immersive visuality.” With this manuscript, the non-linear arrangement of the text was not designed primarily to facilitate access to technical knowledge or as a summary of ritual prescriptions; rather, the visual design of this manuscript was intended to immerse its readers in the very cosmic logic and system of representation that the contents of the manuscript described.

4.3 Immersive visuality: the *Wu ze you xing tu manuscript

The *Wu ze you xing tu 物則有形圖 (Chart on Things Necessarily Having Forms) manuscript was cataloged for the first time in BG and introduced in 2006 in an article published by Chen Songchang 陳松長 in the journal Wenwu 文物. 822 Full color photographs of the manuscript as well as annotated transcriptions of its contents have been published in JC, with Dong Shan 董珊 in JC following the reconstruction of the manuscript proposed by Chen Songchang and Chen Jian 陳劍 (see Figures 4.7, 4.8). 823

Because of the fragmentary condition of the manuscript it is not possible to say whether or not it originally bore a title, and the title now used to refer to the manuscript was taken from four characters that comprise part of the text on the surface of the silk. 824 Although the *Wu ze

822 BG, p. 90 lists this manuscript under the “other” category. See Chen Songchang 陳松長, “Mawangdui boshu ‘Wu ze you xing’ tu chutan,” 馬王堆帛書「物則有形」圖初探, Wenwu 文物 (2006).6, pp. 82-87, 98.

823 See JC, 1.167-170 for color photographs of the manuscript and JC, 4.217-221 for an introduction and annotated transcriptions.

824 Vera Dorofeeva-Lichtmann has translated the Chinese title of this manuscript as “Beings and things do have a form.” See Vera Dorofeeva-Lichtmann, “Mapless Mapping: Did the Maps of the Shan hai jing
the "Wushi’er bingfang" text that were consolidated onto Medical Manuscript II (see Chapter 1).²²⁶

The lower portion of the manuscript also contains certain imprinted characters from the sections of the *Wu ze you xing tu* manuscript is fairly badly damaged in parts (particularly in its left-hand portions), meaning that significant portions of the text are now missing, enough remains to make the original layout of its contents relatively clear. The square manuscript originally measured approximately 24cm square and had been folded from top to bottom, leading to the imprints of certain characters from the lower portion of the silk onto the upper portion of the manuscript.²²⁵

The writing on the manuscript was done in black ink and displayed in three registers. In the very center of the manuscript is a cluster of text entirely intact, with the graphs comprising the text arranged in a dense spiral to form a large, dark spot. This section of text has to be read starting in the center and proceeding outwards in a clockwise direction. Three characters out of what was almost certainly originally a four-character phrase are arranged at the cardinal points around this central spiral of text. Together, these two sections constitute the first, central-most

Ever Exist?,” in Bray et al. (2007), p. 262 for a brief reference to this manuscript in the context of a discussion of how certain early Chinese texts were arranged as cosmographs.

²²⁵ Chen (2016), p. 303 corrects the previous estimate of 24cm x 20cm for the manuscript’s dimensions offered by Chen Songchang and followed by Dong Shan in JC. Chen (2016), p. 304 notes that, unlike most of the half-width manuscripts from Mawangdui that were folded from left to right, the *Wu ze you xing tu* was rotated 90 degrees before it was folded from top to bottom (following the orientation of the manuscript’s contents) and placed on top of Medical Manuscript II. Chen (2016), pp. 302, 305 further notes that the *Wu ze you xing tu* manuscript, like the *Muren zhan* manuscript (*Divination Using Wooden Figurines*) (see Chapters 2 and 5) and the *Jiuzhu tu* manuscript (*Chart on the Nine Rulers*) manuscript (see below) seems to have fragmented along old crease lines that pre-existed those formed by the folding of the manuscript before it was placed inside the lacquer case.

²²⁶ See Dong Shan 董珊, “Mawangdui boshu ‘Wu ze you xing’ tu yu daojia yingwu xueshuo” 马王堆帛书「物則有形」圖與道家應物學說, Wenshi 文史 (2012).2, pp. 31-32. The lower half of the manuscript retains imprinted characters (from around eleven columns in total) from the *“Wushi’er bingfang”* text, and it seems that these characters seeped through the silk as a result of Medical Manuscript II being placed on top of the *Wu ze you xing tu* manuscript. According to the reconstructions of Medical Manuscript II carried out first by Kosoto Hiroshi 小曾戶等 et al. and later confirmed by Hirose Kunio 廣瀨薰雄 (see Chapter 1), the portion of the text that was imprinted onto the *Wu ze you xing tu* manuscript was located at the end of the text on the outside of the manuscript. See Chen Jian’s discussion of the issue cited in JC, 4.217-218 and Hirose Kunio 廣瀨薰雄, “‘Wushi’er bingfang’ de chongxin zhengli yu yanjiu’《五十二病方》的重新整理與研究, Wenshi 文史 (2012).2, p. 44.
Figure 4.7: Line drawing of partially reconstructed *Wu ze you xing tu manuscript (JC, 4.127)
Figure 4.8: The *Wu ze you xing tu manuscript (JC, 1.167)
register of text. The second register of text should also be read following a clockwise direction, though roughly half its contents (the left-hand portion) are missing. This portion of text is arranged in a circular shape concentrically around the centermost spiral of text and is accompanied by a ring painted in blue-green (qing 青) ink. The orientation of the graphs is such that the text curves around the outside of the circle. The third and outermost register of text is arranged in a square shape around the outside of the first two registers of text. This square section of text should also be read clockwise, though it is very badly damaged, and is accompanied by the outline of a square painted in red ink. The graphs in this portion of text are arranged in such a way that when correctly oriented they run parallel to each side of the square outline.

The non-linear arrangement of the text on the surface of the silk together with the ideologically charged shapes delineated in colored ink that accompany the writing locate this manuscript squarely within the tu tradition as described above. As we will see, though the text portions of the manuscript communicate philosophical wisdom partly through the encoding of language in graphic form, the communicative force of the manuscript is not reducible to the transmission of knowledge or information through the encoding and decoding of written graphs. This manuscript was designed not simply to be read but also to be viewed, manually manipulated, and ultimately internally visualized in a way that made full use of a range of visual (and, indeed, non-visual) stimuli. In this way, the visual design of the manuscript, no less than its written content, was fully integrated into contemporary philosophical discourses surrounding the relationship between spoken language and physical forms. Indeed, I argue that the manuscript was designed to be viewed and used in such a way as to immerse its readers in the cosmic logic that structured the material world, guiding them in their cultivation of the sensitivity required to perceive patterns and manipulate signs correctly. I will begin by providing a translation of the text of the manuscript and introducing its relevant philosophical intertexts.
§ 1 “Respond to what rouses [you], act out of what pushes [you]; this is the ordering of the heart. Do not respond if you are not roused, do not act if not pushed. If your response is harmoniously matched with that which rouses [you], then there is no [forced] entry. Investigate [it], understand [it], and then forget [the external form], and there will be no external [preoccupation].”

Several scholars have noted the similarities between the philosophical ideas explored in this portion of the manuscript and passages in a number of transmitted texts from the Warring States and Early Imperial eras. The “Keyi”刻意 (“Ingrained Ideas”) chapter in the “Waipian”外篇 (“Outer Chapters”) section of the Zhuangzi, for example,

827 Chen (2006), pp. 82-83 reads the character gan 深 as gan 幹 (tree trunk), which he speculates is an abbreviation of the term henggan 恆榦 (eternal trunk) found in the texts on the *Laozi B manuscript. Cao Feng 曹鋒, “Mawangdui ‘Wu ze you xing’ yuanquan nei wenzi xinjie” 馬王堆「物則有形」圓圈內文字新解, in *Guwenzixue lungao* 古文字學論稿, ed. Zhang Guangyu 張光裕 and Huang Dekuan 黃德寬 (Hefei: Anhui daxue chubanshe, 2008), p. 423, however, takes issue with Chen’s interpretation of this graph, arguing that it should instead be read as the word yin 隱 (shade or darkness). More recently Dong (2012), pp. 32-33 has argued convincingly, based on this passage’s intertexts as described below, that this graph is in fact being used to write the word gan 深 (to move or rouse), and it is Dong’s reading that I follow in my translation.

828 Dong (2012), p. 33 notes that the graph shei (who, whom) is used to write the word tui (to push) in other Mawangdui texts, such as those consolidated onto the *Laozi B manuscript, and the “Zhong”衷 (“Inner Feelings”; also known as the “Yi zhi yi”易之義 [“Significance of the Changes”]) and “Xici” commentary texts on the *Zhouyi*周易 commentarial manuscript (see Chapter 1).


830 JC, 4.220-221 and Dong (2012), p. 35 note that the first graph in this four-character phrase (which is now missing from the manuscript) is almost certainly bu 不, since this sequence of graphs appears also in the manuscript’s central spiral of text.

831 See, for example, Chen (2006), pp. 82-87. Dong (2012), p. 33 provides a detailed analysis of this text in relation to the passages in the Zhuangzi 莊子 (Book of Master Zhuang), Huainanzi, and Wenzi 文子 (Writings of Master Wen) translated below.
describes how a sage (shengren 聖人) “responds [only] when roused, moves [only] when compelled, and rises only when he has no alternative.”

Similarly, the “Yuandao” 原道 (“Primacy of the Way”) chapter of the Huainanzi says that a person acting in accordance with the “great dao” (dadao 大道) “responds only when compelled and moves only when roused; [he is] limitlessly faint and profound and changes without [fixed] form or image. Leisurably, carefree, and fully flexible, [he is] like an echo responding to objects in the world.”

The “Jingshen” 精神 (“Quintessential Spirit”) chapter of the same text goes on to describe how the “true man” (zhenren 真人) “responds [only] when roused, moves [only] when compelled, and proceeds only when he has no alternative. Like the illumination of light and the shadow cast by objects, he takes the dao as his model and acts [only] in response.”

And finally, the “Ziran” 自然 (“Spontaneity”) chapter of the Wenzi 文子 (Book of Master Wen) quotes Laozi 老子 (i.e., Master Lao) as saying that “what is meant by no forced action is not that one does not come when pulled, or does not depart when pushed, or that one does not respond when compelled or not move when roused. [It does not mean] being blocked up without flowing or curling up without spreading out.”

Clearly, then, this central spiral of text on the *Wu ze you xing tu* manuscript is fully integrated into the mainstream philosophical discourse of its time. Action, according to the text and its intertexts, should not be forced or contrived but should follow naturally and spontaneously from a person’s encounters with the world. Acting in this way, in concert with the

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832 Zhuangzi jijie 莊子集解 4.133.

833 Huainanzi jishi 淮南子集釋 1.64-65.

834 Huainanzi jishi 7.522-523.

835 Wenzi shuyi 文子疏義 8.368.
vicissitudes of the world rather than against its grain, is, according to the text of the manuscript, the way to order (li 理) one’s heart, and once one learns to engage the world in this way it will be possible to investigate and understand the true nature of the world’s phenomena without dwelling on external forms or appearances.

Chen Songchang has noted the visual similarity between the shape formed by this densely clustered portion of text and certain of the cloud-like shapes on the *Tianwen qixiang zazhan 天文奇象雜占 manuscript from Mawangdui (see Chapters 1 and 5). Indeed, Chen has developed this idea to argue that this central portion of text was designed to serve as a visual representation of the swirling pneuma (qi 氣) from which all things in Heaven and Earth were thought to be formed. Cao Feng 曹鋒, on the other hand, has taken issue with some of Chen’s conclusions, arguing that this central spiral of text has no connection to cosmic pneuma but rather symbolizes the correctly ordered heart (xin 心) referred to in the text. Regardless of whether this central cluster of text was designed to embody or represent specific concepts or phenomena, it is certain that the visual arrangement of the text serves to reinforce the principal philosophical message of the text’s contents. The central portion of text occupies a tiny central section of a small manuscript, meaning that on first encountering the manuscript the reader is confronted with an illegible black spot that barely has the appearance of written text let alone a text that can be readily identified and easily read. Here writing is pressed into double-duty, simultaneously serving as a way of transmitting wisdom through the encoding of language and as a visual pattern that forms part of the manuscript’s overall program of design. In order to proceed from writing as design motif to writing as text the reader has to examine the manuscript close-up,

836 Chen (2006), pp. 82-87.


838 The way in which this cluster of text is first confronted is thus what Oleg Grabar calls “monoptic,” i.e., perceived as a whole at a glance, rather than decoded as language. See Oleg Grabar, The Mediation of Ornament (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), pp. 103-107.
deciphering the words of the densely packed text in a clockwise direction from the inside outwards, probably rotating the manuscript in the process with the spiral of text creating a captivating visual effect.

There were surely easier, more efficient ways of recording or communicating this brief passage of text. Indeed, one might wonder why it would be necessary to go to all this trouble to design and display a short text in this way when, judging by the large numbers of parallel passages in transmitted sources, its contents would have been well-known and probably did not need to be written down. The answer, I would argue, is that the visual display of this central portion of text was designed to force the reader to engage with the message of the text in an immersive way. The message of the text is that one should respond naturally and without affectation in response to stimuli in the world without dwelling on external forms, and the visual arrangement of the text requires the reader to follow the logic of the text by engaging with words that are literally patterned in a way that not only replicates and embodies the cyclical movement of the cosmos (see below), but which also refuses to allow the linguistic function of the written sign (the signifier to the signified) to dominate. The design of the manuscript thus emphasizes the message of the text by using writing not only as linguistic sign but also as patterned image. Once the manuscript is viewed, scrutinized, and visualized, the reader is thus able to move beyond and “forget” ( wang 報 ) the external forms of the written signs and the words they are used to communicate, drawing upon an internalized understanding of the text gained through their encounter with its correctly patterned form.839 The design of the manuscript thus balances the competing needs to render text legible, offer an aesthetically pleasing design, and represent cosmically patterned forms.840

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839 As a relevant point of comparison, Joanna Rapti has written about how certain medieval Armenian inscriptions were so ornate as to divert attention away from linguistic decoding towards contemplation of the overall visual force of the composition and its divine message. See Joanna Rapti, “Displaying the Word: Words as Visual Signs in the Armenian Architectural Decoration of the Monastery of Noravank (14th Century),” in Eastmond (2015), p. 200.
forms exhibited in the text portions of the manuscript, the communicative and immersive force of the manuscript ultimately moves beyond mere writing to encompass and display the manifold relationships between signs and cosmic structures and phenomena.

§ 2 “Speaking all day is not [proper] speaking. Not speaking all day is not being without [proper] speech…has…Necessarily…idleness…for this reason…expands one’s speech.”

Dong Shan has also examined the relationships between this second layer of text and its contemporary philosophical intertexts. The “Yuyan” 寓言 (“Lodged Sayings”) chapter of the “Zapian” 雜篇 (“Miscellaneous Chapters) section of the Zhuangzi, for example, says that “not speaking is evenness. Evenness and speech are uneven, and speech and evenness are uneven. For this reason, we say ‘do not speak.’ Speak without speaking. One may speak one’s whole life without ever [truly] speaking, and one might go without speaking one’s whole life without ever being without [proper] speech” 不言則齊，齊與言不齊，言與齊不齊也，故曰無言。言無言，終身言，未嘗言；終身不言，未嘗不言. In a similar vein, the Laozi 老子 (Book of Laozi).

840 Another point of comparison: Shiela Blair has argued that in medieval Islamic art there was a need to balance legibility on the one hand with visually pleasing aesthetic forms on the other. Indeed, Blair shows that ornate decoration rendering writing less legible was more likely to be found in texts like the Koran, which were already well known, than with historical inscriptions commissioned by patrons who wanted their names and deeds proclaimed for posterity. See Sheila Blair, “Legibility vs. Decoration in Islamic Epigraphy: The Case of Interlacing,” in World Art: Themes of Unity in Diversity. Acts of the XXVIth International Congress of the History of Art, ed. I. Lavin (University Park, Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1989), pp. 329-331. As we have seen, the text on this manuscript, or at least its basic message, was likely already well known, which is probably why the design of the manuscript could afford to sacrifice a certain degree of legibility in order to convey its message through a more complex program of visual design.

841 Context tells us that this missing graph must be wei 為.

842 The text of this portion of the manuscript features black dots in-between certain characters indicated by a full stop in bold (“.”) in my transcription.

843 See Dong (2012), p. 35 for a discussion of the relationships between this portion of the manuscript and the following passages from the Zhuangzi, Laozi, Guanzi 管子 (Book of Master Guan), and Huainanzi.
Master Lao) says that “one who knows does not speak, and one who speaks does not know” 知者不言，言者不知, and “the edification of not speaking and the benefit of unforced action, there are few in the world who attain to these” 不言之教，無為之益，天下希及之. A passage in the same text also says that “it is the Way of Heaven to obtain victory advantageously without contending, to respond advantageously without speaking, and to have things come on their own without being summoned” 天之道，不爭而善勝，不言而善應，不召而自來. Similarly, the second “Xinshu” 心術 (“Techniques of the Mind”) chapter of the Guanzi 管子 (Book of Master Guan) says that “speech that is not spoken is heard louder than a thunderclap; the form of a complete heart is brighter than the sun or moon and more observant than one’s father and mother” 不言之言，聞於雷鼓；全心之形，明於日月，察於父母. In addition, the “Miaocheng” 繆稱 (“Erroneous Designations”) chapter of the Huainanzi says “for this reason the use of speech is manifestly insignificant, whereas the use of non-speech is vastly significant” 故言之用者，昭昭乎小哉。不言之用者，曠曠乎大哉.

Despite the fragmentary condition of this text portion of the manuscript, the main message of its contents is still clear. There are ways of communicating or speaking (yan 言) that are both more appropriate and effective than conventional speech (also yan 言), which, judging by the intertexts mentioned above, often fails to communicate genuine knowledge and understanding about the true nature of the world. Reading this section of text in relation to the first layer of text on the manuscript translated above and locating it in the context of its contemporary philosophical intertexts reveals a distrust for false speech as an inauthentic form of

844 Zhuangzi jijie 7.246.
845 Laozi daodejing zhu jiaoshi 老子道德經注校釋 56.147
846 Laozi daodejing zhu jiaoshi 43.120.
847 Laozi daodejing zhu jiaoshi 73.181-182.
848 Guanzi jiaozhu 管子校注 13.783.
849 Huainanzi jishi 10.718.
communication that has the potential to distort or to mislead. Again, the visual arrangement of the text embodies and reinforces the message of the text’s contents. Writing is used in the conventional way as a string of linguistic signs for communicating semantic content, but, given the text’s obvious distaste for reliance on certain types of spoken words, they are also arranged in a cosmically revealing way that communicates in an a-linguistic fashion. Not only are the words displayed in a circular shape and read in a clockwise direction that replicates the orderly, cyclical movement of the cosmos and the structures within it, the colored outline of the circle that accompanies this portion of text is also cosmologically significant. As we will see, a blue-green line drawn in a concentric circle around a black spot within the red outline of a square would have been immediately recognizable as a visual manifestation of the cosmological concept of a domed Heaven over a square Earth that featured heavily in a wide range of materials dating to late-Warring States and Early Imperial times, with Heaven often thought to have been black or blue and Earth to be red or yellow in color. Reading this portion of text, then, was not just a matter of deciphering written signs but also involved tracing the cosmic structures and patterns of the universe.

§ 3 “If it is a thing it has a form; if it is a thing it has a name. If it is a thing it has [ways of being put into] speech; if a thing has a [way of being put into] speech it is possible to speak about it. Speech has X…illuminating…match components, components conspire [?] X in order to gain insight…in order to gain insight… to where [substance/activity?] returns.”

850 Two horizontal lines arranged one over the other are used in this portion of text to indicate that the last graph in the previous clause is also the first graph in the following clause, which is left unwritten. Thus, 物則有刑 (= 形) - , 物則有名 - , 物則有言= (= 言) 則可言= (= 言) 有 ( = 所?) = (= 自?) 明 當分 = (= 分) 謀 (= 謀?) 以智 以智
員 (= 實?) 所歸.
Chen Songchang, Cao Feng, and Dong Shan have located this portion of text within contemporary philosophical discourse in the *xingming* 形/刑名 ("forms and names") tradition.\(^{851}\) For example, the first “Xinshu” chapter of the *Guanzi*, which says that “things have fixed forms, and forms have fixed names. [He who] matches names is called a sage. For this reason, it is necessary to understand how to engage in not speaking and unforced action. Only then can one understand the regulation of the *dao*” 物固有形，形固有名，名當謂之聖人。故必知不言，無為之事，然後知道之紀.\(^{852}\) The same chapter goes on to say that “speaking without speaking is responding” 不言之言，應也.\(^{853}\) Cao argues that, according to the *Guanzi*, the objective of cultivating “techniques of the heart” (*xinshu*) is to teach a person not to be restricted by external phenomena and to grasp the essence of things in the world through a proper understanding of appropriate speech (*yan*) and correct names (*ming*). In support of his argument, Cao cites the first “Xinshu” chapter of the *Guanzi*, which says that “names are that by which the sages regulate things” 名者，聖人之所以紀物也,\(^{854}\) and the second “Xinshu” chapter, which says that a sage “orders his heart within, the speech that comes out of his mouth, and the tasks he imposes on his people. Thus, meritorious deeds are accomplished and so the people follow [him], and the one-hundred surnames are brought to order” 治心在中，治言出於口，治事加於民，故功作而民從，則百姓治矣.”\(^{855}\)

Again, despite the serious damage to this portion of the manuscript the basic message of the text is relatively clear. All things (*wu* 物) have corresponding forms (*xing* 形), names (*ming* 名), and ways of talking (*yan*) about them, and understanding the ways in which these elements are properly matched (*dang* 當) allows a person to emulate a sage’s ability to gain a true

\(^{851}\) See Chen (2006), pp. 82-87; Cao (2008), pp. 426-427; and Dong (2012), p. 36.

\(^{852}\) *Guanzi jiaozhu* 13.764, 771. See also Dong (2012), p. 37.

\(^{853}\) *Guanzi jiaozhu* 13.771.

\(^{854}\) *Guanzi jiaozhu* 13.776.

\(^{855}\) *Guanzi jiaozhu* 13.782.
understanding of the world and the things that exist in it. Dong Shan notes the philosophical similarities between the writing on this manuscript and the philosophy of “responding to things” (yingwu 應物) elucidated in texts like the Guanzi and the Zhuangzi, which seems to advocate examining words to make sure they are in accordance with true substance (shi 實). Indeed, the “Jingfa” 經法 (“The Law of the Canon”) text on the *Laozi B* manuscript makes a similar claim about the relationship between names (ming) and substance (shi), noting that “if names and substance are in harmony then there will be stability; if names and substances are not in harmony then there will be conflict” 名實{不}相應則定，名實不相應則靜 (= 爭).

It may be a mistake, however, to read skepticism about the communicative or representational value of language per se into the text of the *Wu ze you xing tu* manuscript. The text, at least in the form that we have it, does not say that one cannot properly engage with the phenomenal world through language. In fact, it says precisely the opposite; stating specifically that, it being the case that things necessarily have ways in which they can be put into speech, it is possible to speak about them (yan ze ke yan). Indeed, according to Jane Geaney, there was no conceptual barrier in early Chinese thought between an overarching category of “language” (as abstracted from either speech or writing) on the one hand, and a permanent, unchanging metaphysical “reality” on the other. Instead, Geaney argues, the primary focus of early

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856 Dong (2012), pp. 36-39. The translation of shi as “substance,” however, is controversial. See the references to Jane Geaney’s scholarship below.

857 See JC, 4.141. Hirose Kunio 廣瀨薰雄 in JC notes that, judging by the context, the first instance of bu 不 seems to be a copyist’s error. See JC, 4.142n.31.

858 Thus, for Geaney, translating shi as substance or reality risks imposing a Western metaphysical dualism onto early Chinese thought. According to Geaney, Chinese thinkers did not concern themselves with a potential gap between a permanent, unchanging reality on the one hand and humans’ experience of it on the other. Rather, they were concerned with ensuring that the senses were unimpeded in their discrimination (bian) of stimuli against the background of the world. See Jane Geaney, *On the Epistemology of the Senses in Early Chinese Thought* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2002), passim; idem, “Grounding ‘Language’ in the Senses: What the Eyes and Ears Reveal About Ming 名 (Names) in Early Chinese Texts,” *Philosophy East and West* 60.2 (2010), pp. 251-293; and idem, *Language as Bodily Practice in Early China: A Chinese Grammatology* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2018), passim.
Chinese thinkers was on how to ensure that one’s senses were unobstructed in their discrimination (bian 辨/辯) of things (wu) in the world. In particular, Geaney shows that it was of the utmost importance that ming (names that are heard with the ears) be in accordance with or match (dang) the corresponding actions and activities (shi) that took place in the world and which could be seen with the eyes. According to Geaney, even the Zhuangzi, a text containing passages that are commonly interpreted as advocating radically anti-language positions, actually warns not against the communicative capacity of spoken language per se, but against relying on any of the senses (not just one’s ears) when it is inappropriate to do so – for example, when attempting to understand concepts and phenomena that are simply beyond sensory perception. Geaney has argued further that the Zhuangzi does not take issue with attempts to use one’s senses to engage with the world; rather, the text takes issue with the partiality that comes with discriminating inappropriately, advocating instead the opening up of all the senses to engage with the boundless nature of the universe.859

Of course, it may be the case that our reading of the text of the *Wu ze you xing tu manuscript is somewhat distorted because of the damage it has sustained, but the elucidation of the relationship between things (wu), names (ming), and ways of speaking about them (yan) seems relatively straightforward. In addition, the relationships between these three phenomena as they are laid out in this (admittedly fragmentary) section of text seem in keeping with the message of the cluster of text at the center of the manuscript: engage naturally with the world, not in opposition to it. Just as one should respond (ying) appropriately in response to external stimuli (tui), one should speak (yan) only in accordance with the forms (xing) and names (ming) of things (wu). Thus, the text of the *Wu ze you xing tu manuscript text does not advocate an

anti-language position (indeed, the text partly makes use of writing to communicate its message); rather, it enjoins the user of the manuscript to experience the correct patterning of the aural (i.e., spoken words) in relation to the visual (i.e., written forms, images, and figures). Naturally, the manuscript could only record words in written form. But, as Geaney has argued, writing in early China was not typically understood as an “absence” or “lack” in relation to speech, since in general both speech and writing were understood as two components of a mutually balanced aural/visual polarity.

Taken together, the three layers of text on the *Wu ze you xing tu* manuscript seem to suggest that while one needs to move beyond the trappings of external forms (*wai*) to find proper modes of speech/communication (*yan*) that do not necessarily involve conventional speaking (*yan*), it is also possible/permissible (*ke*) to speak about things (*wu*) as long as one takes into account both the forms (*xing*) and names (*ming*) that are appropriate to them. Following Geaney, this pairing of *xing* and *ming* is not hierarchical or even sequential (Ganey has noted that the relationship between *ming* and *xing* often functions in a similar way to *ming* and *shi*), but represents a polarity constituted of twin components of equal weight. In addition to these paired components, things also have ways of talking about them (*yan*), which, the structure of the text seems to imply, follow as naturally and inevitably (*ze*) as do their form and their name. It is here that the focus of the passages alters slightly, shifting from a discussion of the attributes that follow naturally from the existence of things to a discussion of the potential that follows naturally from the fact that things have proper ways of speaking about them. It having been established that things innately have ways of speaking about them (in addition to their form and name), it is the very existence of these ways of speaking about things (*yan*) that makes it

860 In addition, it is quite possible that the text of the manuscript was supposed to be read aloud, creating a truly aural experience.


862 To say that things innately have forms, names, and ways of speaking about them is not, however, necessarily to say that these attributes are fixed and unchanging. Indeed, Geaney has argued that early
possible and permissible (ke) to speak about them (also yan). In other words, speaking about things should follow naturally from the visual and aural properties attached to the things in the world.

To summarize, the argument of the text of the *Wu ze you xing tu* manuscript is that speech can serve as an effective way of engaging with the world, just as long as one remembers that speech (as an aural stimulus) has to be balanced correctly with actions and forms (as visual stimuli) in order to be trustworthy and effective. The *Wu ze you xing tu* manuscript presents the text visually in such a way as to reinforce its message. The text, and the manuscript on which it is written, thus serve simultaneously as assertions about the way the world and our senses of it are properly structured, and a powerful visual embodiment of that assertion.

The visual arrangement of the text on the manuscript does not merely engineer certain cosmically mandated modes of seeing, however. Rather, the way the text is displayed on the surface of the silk also demands certain modes of use and physical engagement with the manuscript. Chen Songchang, for example, has argued that the text is arranged in this way in emulation of the kinds of diviner’s boards (*shipan* 式盤, also known as “cosmic boards”) that were widely used in Western Han times, boards that reflected the so-called Vaulted Heaven Theory (*gaitian shuo* 蓋天說) prevalent in late Warring States and Han times. According to Chen, diviner’s boards emerged in the early Western Han as tools used by diviners to determine auspicious and inauspicious times for carrying out various activities. They were typically manufactured from two parts, a round “Heaven board” (*tianpan* 天盤) and a square “Earth board” (*dipan* 地盤), connected by a central pin or axle (*zhou* 軸) that allowed the top part to be rotated. The Heaven board was usually centered on the Big Dipper (*beidou* 北斗), with notations representing the units associated with various calendrical and celestial systems inscribed on both

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Chinese thinkers thought of names not as individual units that gained meaning from their relation to other units in a closed, abstract system of “language,” but rather as entities that gained their meaning in relation to the extralinguistic phenomena in a world susceptible to change. See Geaney (2018), pp. 56-62.

boards, for example the twelve months, the names of various spirits (shen 神), the symbols of the ten stems and twelve branches that make up the ganzhi sexagenary system, the twenty-eight celestial lodges (xiu 宿), etc. By rotating the Heaven board, the diviner was able to orient the Big Dipper in relation to these other notations and carry out his or her prognostications. 864

Huang Ruxuan 黃儒宣, however, has shown that diviner’s boards actually pre-date the widespread acceptance of the Vaulted Heaven Theory, and that the design of such boards only came under the influence of this theory during the reign of Han Emperor Wen. Nevertheless, Huang shows how certain texts such as the diagrams found on the Qin bamboo daybook manuscripts and some of the silk manuscripts from Mawangdui shared with Han diviner’s boards a similar cosmological visuality and rotational method of operation, and so belong to a genre of “diviner’s charts” (shitu 式圖). 865 Huang notes how many early Chinese texts make reference to the concept of a round heaven atop a square earth, including the “Yuejian” 説劍 (“Delight in Sword-Fighting”) chapter in the “Zapian” section of the Zhuangzi, the “Xuyi” 序意 (“Postscript”) and “Yuando” 圜道 (“Cyclic Way”) chapters of the Lüshi chunqiu, the “Tianwen” and “Binglüe” 兵略 (“Overview of Military Affairs”) chapters of the Huainanzi, and, most famously, the first volume (shang juan 上卷) of the Zhoubi suanjing 周髀算經 (Gnomon of the Zhou Dynasty and Classic of Calculation), which talks of “a round Heaven and a square Earth” (tian yuan di fang 天圓地方) and “Heaven as blue and black, and the Earth as yellow and red” (tian qing hei, di huang chi 天青黑，地黃赤). 866 Indeed, the *“Quegu shiqi” 却穀食氣


(“Eliminating Grain and Eating Vapor”) text on Medical Manuscript III contains a fragmentary passage that seems to say “what is round is Heaven, what is square is Earth” (yuanzhe tian ye, fangzhe, di ye 圓者天也，方者地也).\(^{867}\)

Clearly, then, while diviner’s boards may pre-date the widespread acceptance of the Vaulted Heaven Theory, both Han examples of such boards and certain texts in the \(tu\) tradition were heavily influenced by that cosmological theory.\(^{868}\) As we have already seen, however, while several of the other silk manuscripts from Mawangdui make use of Vaulted Heaven Theory aesthetics largely for practical or functional purposes, the *Wu ze you xing tu* was designed not for practical functions such as ritual divination or the consultation of information but as a way of immersing the reader in the material and cosmological logic of xingming philosophy, or something close to it. Unlike those other manuscripts, the *Wu ze you xing tu* manuscript was not designed to make the written content of its text easy to read or consult. Indeed, precisely the opposite is true, with the design of the manuscript making its written contents difficult to decipher. The reader would have had to approach the manuscript from up-close, rotating the silk to follow the clockwise direction of the text and the orientation of the graphs on the silk’s surface.\(^{869}\) This rotational operation was shared with other contemporary texts and artifacts, such as the Mawangdui texts examined above and Han dynasty diviner’s

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866 Qian Baocong, 錢寶琮, ed. *Suanjing shishu 算經十書*, vol. 1 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1963), p. 22. See also Huang (2013), pp. 99-102. The “Wenyan” 文言 (“Patterned Words”) commentary to the “Kun” 坤 hexagram in the *Zhouyi 周易* (Zhou Changes) also says that “Heaven is black and the Earth is yellow” (tian xuan er di huang 天玄而地黃). See *Zhouyi jijie zuanshu 周易集結纂疏* 2.94.

867 See JC, 6.5, 5n.1 (line 1) and Harper (1997a), p. 309.

868 Li (2000), pp. 89-176 discusses the relationships between diviner’s boards, diviner’s diagrams, and early Chinese cosmological theories. Indeed, Christopher Cullen has noted that anybody familiar with this theory would immediately have recognized Han dynasty diviner’s boards as belonging to the same representational program. See Cullen (1980-1981), pp. 31-32.

869 Of course, it is possible that the readers of the manuscript moved their bodies around the manuscript instead of rotating it in their hands. However, the manuscript’s small size makes the latter scenario far more likely.
boards, but whereas with those objects the rotation was carried out largely for practical reasons (i.e., as part of divinatory practices), the rotational use of the *Wu ze you xing tu* manuscript was not instrumental for accomplishing technical procedures but rather entirely immersive, intended to confront the reader with a moving image of the cosmos that communicated as much through its visual form (including the arrangements of its written graphs) as through written language. That the manuscript depicts intangible phenomena such as cosmological space would in all likelihood have made the impact of its design all the more powerful, since such images are not merely illustrative but often have the potential to determine the ways in which their subjects are visualized and understood.\(^{870}\) The *Wu ze you xing tu* manuscript thus not only provided a way of reading a text, it provided a way of perceiving and understanding the world.

Cosmographic texts arranged in non-linear fashion copied along with other texts on large, consolidated silk manuscripts, or committed to other media such as wood or bamboo, would have been less easy and more cumbersome to use than a silk manuscript dedicated to a single cosmographic text, such as the *Wu ze you xing tu*.\(^{871}\) However, Chen Songchang has argued that the *Wu ze you xing tu* manuscript served a similar function to another manuscript from Mawangdui, the *Jiuzhu tu* 久主圖 (*Chart on the Nine Rulers*), and that both served as illustrations for elucidating in visual form the written contents of parent manuscripts for which they served as visual accompaniments.\(^{872}\) Cao Feng, however, has countered Chen’s argument by arguing that the *Wu ze you xing tu* is a stand-alone chart for elucidating theories drawn from texts like the “Xinshu” chapter of the *Guanzi*, rather than an illustration of the contents of


\(^{871}\) See Chapter 5 for a discussion of how the material forms of the Mawangdui manuscripts can be used to reconstruct the different ways in which they were stored and used.

\(^{872}\) Chen (2006), p. 87.
another hypothetical work. Whether the *Wu ze you xing tu* was designed as an elucidation or response to a particular text, or whether it reflects the independent expression of a broadly shared discourse prevalent in Western Han times, I am in full agreement with Cao that the *Wu ze you xing tu* manuscript should be read as a forceful, stand-alone document in its own right rather than as an accompaniment or illustration to another text.

The *Jiuzhu tu* manuscript is a small fragment of a silk document that measures just 19.6cm long by 22.5cm wide. The manuscript is very badly fragmented, and all that remains of the text are four black ink inscriptions (two separate inscriptions each repeated once) naming certain types of rulers (*zhu* 主). These inscriptions are accompanied by the colored outlines of geometric shapes, three triangles delineated in black. Inside one of these triangles is a black square outline around an interrupted red outline of another, smaller square. Inside the other two triangles the same shapes can be found but the colors of the black and red squares are reversed.

Though studies of the text of the *Jiuzhu tu* manuscript often treat the fragments of the manuscript as appendages to a *“Jiuzhu”* text that numbers among the texts consolidated on the *Laozi A* silk manuscript, it is clear from the formal features of these fragments that it is in fact a separate document. Chen Songchang, for example, notes that there is no obvious place in the *“Jiuzhu”* text on the *Laozi A* manuscript that could have included these fragments, and judging by the calligraphic style they were clearly copied at different times. The ancient-clerical calligraphic style of the *“Jiuzhu”* text is very similar to that of the texts on the *Xingde A* manuscript, which, as we have seen, was probably copied in 196 or 195 BCE, with the *“Jiuzhu”* text


874 See JC, 4.107-108 for an introduction to this manuscript. For color photographs, see JC, 1.118-119. Chen (2016), p. 305 estimates that the manuscript originally measured 24cm in width, and that it was folded once from top to bottom, or perhaps rotated 90 degrees and then folded from left to right.

875 In my discussion of these texts and manuscripts, the designation *“Jiuzhu tu”* refers not to the text of the fragmentary *Jiuzhu tu* manuscript, but to the separate text found on the *Laozi A* manuscript (see Chapter 1).
text likely also copied around that time. The writing on the *Jiuzhu tu fragments, however, was executed in a style of Han clerical script similar to that used to write the *Wuxing zhan 五星占 (Divination on the Five Planets) manuscript.\(^{876}\) That manuscript bears a series of dates, the last of which is 177 BCE, meaning that the text of the *Jiuzhu tu manuscript was probably copied around that time. Finally, the *Laozi A texts, including the *“Jiuzhu” text, do not observe the taboo on the personal name of Liu Bang, while the *Jiuzhu tu appears to observe this taboo.\(^{877}\) On this basis, Chen argues that since the copying of the *Jiuzhu tu manuscript clearly postdates that of the *“Jiuzhu” text, the former was probably made to explain through illustration the text of the latter.\(^{878}\)

The fact that the *Jiuzhu tu manuscript seems to have been written and/or acquired separately from and subsequently to the *“Jiuzhu” text would suggest that this diagram was not necessarily an integral part of that text. Indeed, the *Jiuzhu tu was probably meant to serve not merely as an attractive illustration of a text, but as an alternative way of representing this information in a way that was easier to visualize, understand, internalize, and ultimately memorize. The fact that it was produced separately from the *“Jiuzhu” text and was not apparently accompanied by any similar text means that this diagram is probably best understood

\(^{876}\) See Chapter 5 for a fuller discussion of this manuscript.

\(^{877}\) It is noted at JC, 4.107 that the *“Jiuzhu” text contains a list of nine rulers, and although there is some damage to the text the list seems to match that quoted in Pei Yin’s 裨貢 (fl. 420-479) jijie 集結 (“collected explanations”) commentary to a passage in the “Yin benji” 殷本紀 (“Annals of the Yin [= Shang] Dynasty”) chapter of the Shi Ji, which cites Liu Xiang’s Bielu 別錄 (Separated Catalog) as listing the nine rulers and mentioning the existence of an accompanying tu chart. See Shi ji 3.94, where the nine rulers are listed, and it is noted that “in total there were nine types, and a chart that depicted their forms” (fan jiu pin, tuhua qi xing 凡九品，圖畫其形). The *Jiuzhu tu manuscript contains inscriptions naming “The ruler who destroys sacrificial altars” (mieshe zhi zhu 烬社之主) and “The ruler who destroys the state” (X 破國之主), both repeated once, and both types of rulers are mentioned also in the *“Jiuzhu” text. As suggested above, the graph guo 國 seems to be an observance of the taboo on bang (the *“Jiuzhu” text has po bang zhi zhu), which would mean that it was copied later than the *“Jiuzhu” text.

not as an illustration in the derivative sense, but as an alternative and perhaps ultimately more efficacious or revealing method of textual representation, a powerful visual alternative to a purely written text that was probably widely known in Western Han times.

Likewise, while, as we have seen, the text of the *Wu ze you xing tu manuscript was clearly fully integrated into the mainstream philosophical discourse of its day, there is no reason to see it as playing an auxiliary role to any other texts or manuscripts. Automatically treating manuscripts like the *Wu ze you xing tu and the *Jiuzhu tu as auxiliary or subordinate to extended linear texts reflects an unfair predisposition on our part for written texts, and an assumption that linear texts represented the dominant way in which complex philosophical ideas were materialized and transmitted. However, the *Wu ze you xing tu was not designed as a derivative illustration of a written text but rather as a vehicle for textual expression in its own right. Although the vast majority of the silk manuscripts from Mawangdui do indeed contain consolidations of linear texts, the *Wu ze you xing tu and *Jiuzhu tu manuscripts show that complex, extended written texts were not the only ways in which philosophical knowledge was transmitted or consumed. If the aim had been to use non-linear textual formations as accompaniments or illustrations to more extended linear texts, then a manuscript that accommodated both text-cosmograms and explanatory linear text could certainly have been produced.879 Indeed, even allowing for the fact that the *Wu ze you xing tu manuscript is a very small piece of silk, it would nevertheless still have represented a considerable “waste” of

879 Indeed, silk was an ideal medium for accommodating text and images together. Of course, it was also possible to combine images, diagrams, and written text together on bamboo or wood, as can be seen from the Qin dynasty manuscripts excavated from Zhoujiatai 周家臺 M30 (Jingzhou 荊州, Hubei; Qin), and it is generally reckoned that bamboo slips were sometimes first bound to form a smooth writing surface before texts and diagrams were committed to them. See Donald Harper, “The Textual Form of Knowledge: Occult Miscellanies in Ancient and Medieval Chinese Manuscripts, Fourth Century B.C. to Tenth Century A.D.,” in Looking at It from Asia: The Processes That Shaped the Sources of History of Science, ed. Florence Bretelle-Establet (Dordrecht, Netherlands: Springer, 2010), p. 60. However, Christopher Foster has noted that in the case of one of the Zhoujiatai manuscripts, the parts of the diagram do not align perfectly no matter how one tries to arrange the slips. Thus, Foster speculates that the diagram may have been drawn on unbound slips. See Christopher J. Foster, “Introduction to the Peking University Han Bamboo Strips: On the Authentication and Study of Purchased Manuscripts,” Early China 40 (2017), pp. 206-207, 207n.113.
material, silk that could have been used to accommodate extended explanatory text if that had been desirable. Indeed, judging by its size, the *Wu ze you xing tu manuscript was designed as a document for personal use (or as the base text for such a document),\textsuperscript{880} and was intended to be read, viewed, and used up-close by individuals rather than displayed before large groups.\textsuperscript{881}

The visual design of the *Wu ze you xing tu manuscript encourages – one might say even demands – certain methods of use (i.e., a rotational operation). Indeed, I would argue that such use was not an incidental stage in the lifecycle of the manuscript but rather represented one of its most fundamental “moments of socialization.”\textsuperscript{882} The text of the *Wu ze you xing tu manuscript is one of a number of early Chinese texts, including the Chu silk manuscript from Zidanku and a Qin bamboo manuscript entitled *Zhengshi zhi chang 思事之常 (The Constants of Government Affairs) from Wangjiatai 王家臺 M15 in Hubei, that was intended to be read from the inside outwards in a spiral sequence, with Li Ling 李靈 arguing that this reading process was designed to mimic the clockwise rotation of the Way of Heaven (\textit{tiandao 天道}) from East to South to West to North.\textsuperscript{883} Consistent with Li’s observations about these other texts, the central spiral of text on the *Wu ze you xing tu manuscript does indeed start with the word \textit{ying 應} (“respond”) located in a position corresponding to the East in the spiral, proceeding in a clockwise direction.

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item See Chapter 5 for my argument that most of the Mawangdui manuscripts were produced as documents for consolidation and re-copying of textual materials.
\item The way the *Wu ze you xing tu manuscript was used was thus a far cry from the communal acts of looking that characterized elite connoisseurship of visual art in the Ming, for example. See Craig Clunas, \textit{Pictures and Visuality in Early Modern China} (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), pp. 113-114. Chen Songchang has speculated that in the case of smaller \textit{tu} manuscripts, such as the *Sangfu tu, the *Taiyi zhu tu 太一祝圖 (Invocation Chart to Taiyi), and the *Wu ze you xing tu, the silk was cut to size, which would explain why there are rarely significant amounts of blank silk on these particular manuscripts.. See Chen Songchang 陳松長, “Mawangdui boshu de chaoben tezheng” 馬王堆帛書的抄本特徵, \textit{ Hunan daxue xuebao 湖南大學學報} 21.5 (2007), pp. 23-24.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}

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Lillian Lan-ying Tseng has speculated that the cosmologically potent design and material form of Han diviner’s boards probably contributed to the efficacy of the divinations for which they were used through their harnessing of cosmic power, and it is possible that the design and concomitant operational use of the *Wu ze you xing tu manuscript was also thought to facilitate the attuning of the manuscripts readers and users to the patterns and relationships that structured the cosmos.

To be exposed to the *Wu ze you xing tu manuscript was not just to read a text that transmitted certain lessons, or which represented widely appreciated knowledge, wisdom, or information. Rather, the multisensory experience of using the manuscript, combining as it did both visual and haptic stimuli, represented an encounter with the shapes, colors, and patterns of the cosmos itself, a powerful example of what Claude Gandelman has called “kinetic subversion.” This was *wen* at its most potent, with the manuscript making full use of the communicative potential of the written sign (linguistic, evocative, pictorial) to bring human bodies (*ren* 人) into concert with Heaven (*tian* 天) and Earth (*di* 地), establishing and reinforcing the relationships between them and blurring the lines between seeing, viewing, using, and reading.

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885 In this, the manuscript somewhat resembles the ornamented text wrapped around some of the bronze vessels from the tomb of Liu Sheng (before 154-113/112 BCE), otherwise known as King Jing of Zhongshan 中山靖王, at Mancheng 滿城, Hebei 河北. The inscriptions in ornate bird-script (*niaozhuan* 鳥篆), otherwise known as “bird-and-insect writing” (*niaochong shu* 鳥蟲書), required that the user turn the vessel around in order to read them. François Louis has thus argued that the appeal of the vessels and their inscriptions was multisensory, combining visual, haptic, and audial elements as the texts were admired, handled, and read aloud. See François Louis, “Written Ornament: Ornamental Writing: Birdscript of the Early Han Dynasty and the Art of Enchanting,” *Ars Orientalis* 33 (2003), pp. 11-31 (esp., p. 12). For an overview of these bronzes, see Michelle Hsiao-Fawn Wang, “Characters of Design: Writing and Materiality in Early China,” Ph.D. diss., University of California, Berkeley, 2014, pp. 17-47.

4.4 Conclusion

Michael Foucault wrote about one of the principles that he claimed “ruled Western painting from the fifteenth to the twentieth century,” that is, the strict hierarchy that characterizes the relationship between linguistic signs and visual representations. As one might expect, the scribes who produced the *Wu ze you xing tu* manuscript were apparently ignorant or unconcerned about any such hierarchy governing the relationships between text and image, at least as it pertained to certain genres of visual material, since neither linguistic code or abstract illustration is privileged in the communicative scheme of the *Wu ze you xing tu* manuscript. Instead, words are used alongside images, and actually as images themselves, as two components of a mutually-constitutive and reinforcing visual-communicative system. Each does what the other cannot: writing as text is used for transmitting specific messages, and writing as image for

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887 Michel Foucault, *This is Not a Pipe*, trans. and ed. James Harkness (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), pp. 32-33: “The two systems can neither merge nor intersect. In one way or another, subordination is required. Either the text is ruled by the image (as in those paintings where a book, an inscription, a letter, or the name of a person are represented); or else the image is ruled by the text (as in books where a drawing completes, as if it were merely taking a short cut, the message that words are charged to represent). True, the subordination remains stable only very rarely.”

888 For this reason, I full support Diane O’Donoghue’s assertion that “[i]f writing and art-making are not, in fact, irreconcilable functions, then our expectations of their respective resources could be expanded.” See Diane M. O’Donoghue, “Critical Distance: Replacing the Practice of Chinese Art History,” *Journal of East Asian Archaeology* 2.1 (2000), p. 337. Claude Gandelman has noted that while when reading words we begin by attending to the signifier, through which we next gain access to the signified, in the case of painted images this relationship is reversed, and we are confronted from the beginning with “the overwhelming presence of the signified.” As a result, Gandelman notes, “[w]ords in paintings pose the question of the primacy of language or, conversely, of the primary of images.” See Gandelman (1989), pp. 142-143. Similarly, Tim Ingold has argued that, unlike images, painted writing is as real as words in any medium. See Tim Ingold, *Being Alive: Essays on Movement, Knowledge and Description* (London: Routledge, 2011), pp. 182-183. Ultimately, sources like the *Wu ze you xing tu* manuscript encourage us to ask whether it is useful to bring a model of “reading” to our understanding of how images are interpreted. See Simon Goldhill and Robin Osborne, “Introduction: Programmatics and Polemics,” in *Art and Text in Ancient Greek Culture*, ed. idem (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p. 8. See also Marco Mostert, “Reading Images and Texts: Some Preliminary Observations Instead of an Introduction,” in Hageman and Mostert (2005), p. 2 where he wonders if “images have a morphology (colours, lines, planes), a syntax and semantics of their own? In other words: do both texts and images have a ‘grammar’? Is it useful to speak of ‘visual literacy’?”
immersing the reader in the logic of the text.\textsuperscript{889} In keeping with the message contained in the text of the manuscript, the manuscript’s visual design reflects a faith in the communicative potential for (written) language only so far as it is produced and properly understood in relation to the true nature or substance of the cosmos and the myriad phenomena within it. Indeed, the colors and shapes on the manuscript are not intended merely as decoration or ornament, at least not as long as those terms are understood (as they commonly are) as somehow auxiliary, posterior, or subordinate to “content.” Rather, the designs on the *Wu ze you xing tu manuscript fulfill Oleg Grabar’s definition of ornament (as opposed to mere decoration) as “the subject of the design,” and the primary system of communication or representation.\textsuperscript{890}

\textsuperscript{889} Similarly, John Baines, \textit{Visual and Written Culture in Ancient Egypt} (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 285 has noted that in Ancient Egypt writing and “pictorial representation” were used to complement each other as mutually reinforcing domains of communication, each with their own strengths and particular uses.

\textsuperscript{890} Grabar (1992), esp. pp. 5, 40-41. Grabar notes (p. 62) that since written words are twice removed from their ultimate referent, they contain more potential for play and expression. Indeed, Grabar speculates that the sensation and experience of encountering a lavishly produced Islamic manuscript, for example, was not solely about facilitating access to the text of the manuscript, but about providing “a different sensation, perhaps the pleasure of contemplating successive smoothly and consistently designed pages and occasionally recognizing a passage or else stopping at a given passage and meditating on it” (quotation on p. 74). Grabar thus moves beyond the definition proposed by Ernst Gombrich, who understood ornament as playing a significant role in framing, filling, or linking surfaces that existed and functioned independently of the ornamentation. See E.H. Gombrich, \textit{The Sense of Order: A Study in the Psychology of Decorative Art} (London: Phaidon Press, 2006). Jessica Rawson, “Ornament in China,” in Powers and Tsiang (2015), p. 371 notes that “[t]he word ornament carries a number of different and unconnected connotations and is hard to pin down, slipping easily between several quite different meanings. Ornament is closely related to, but generally more inclusive than pattern, decoration, and decorative art. Pattern is undoubtedly included within ornament, but it is more limited in scope. It suggests variations of line, color, and texture that involve or imply repetition, as in interlacing circles seen on Roman mosaics or Chinese mirrors of the Liao (907–1119) and Song (960–1279) periods. Decoration, on the other hand, while approximately equivalent (and sometimes here used interchangeably), embraces a wider universe of examples than does ornament. It can be used for lights or tinsel on a Christmas tree. Ornament is unlikely to be used in such contexts.” Jessica Rawson, “Cosmological Systems as Sources of Art, Ornament and Design,” \textit{Bulletin of the Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities} 72 (2000), p. 163 further makes the point that while ornament is often dismissed as “imagery without content,” in fact early Chinese ornament often served as visible signs, the manipulation of which created a framework for understanding the world. Indeed, Jessica Rawson has written elsewhere that ornament is an essential way in which we order the world around us, creating ways of seeing the world. See Jessica Rawson, “Late Shang Bronze Design: Meaning and Purpose,” in \textit{The Problem of Meaning in Early Chinese Ritual Bronzes}, ed. Roderick Whitfield (London: School of Oriental and African Studies, 1993), pp. 67-95. Similarly, Robert Bagley notes that the power of ornament is not reducible to the encoding of ideology, but points towards the power of beauty. See Robert W. Bagley, “Meaning and Explanation” in Whitfield
In a similar vein, Mary Carruthers has described, in the context of medieval European manuscript culture, how pictures no less than words served as signs for stimulating memory as well as powerful methods of encouraging active engagement with the text and internalization of its contents. Carruthers’ analysis of some of the illustrations on the Book of Kells, a ca. 800 CE Irish illustrated manuscript that contains the four gospels of the New Testament and related textual material, is worth quoting at length:

“Let me take as a last example of this distinction the famous black otter eating a salmon that is tucked into the bottom border of the rho on the Chirho page at the beginning of Matthew in the Book of Kells. It is very hard to find amid the myriad and apparently fragmentary forms on this page. But as I suggested earlier, the page is designed to make one meditate upon it, to look and look again, and remake its patterns oneself; the process of seeing this page models the process of meditative reading which the text it introduces will require. The letters on this page are virtually hidden away in the welter of its other forms; indeed, thinking of this aspect of its design, Francoise Henry calls it ‘a sort of rebus.’”

Carruthers introduces five aspects of the Book of Kells that are relevant to my discussion of the *Wu ze you xing tu* manuscript. 1) the visual attractiveness and appeal of the arrangement of the text; 2) use of the a-linguistic communicative potential of words rather than their use as purely linguistic signs; 3) the mutually reinforcing relationship between text and manuscript; 4) the invitation to meditate on the text’s contents, 5) internalization of the message contained in the

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891 Carruthers (2008), p. 337.
text on the manuscript. Much like this page of the Book of Kells, the *Wu ze you xing tu* manuscript draws the reader in with its appealing and enigmatic design, encouraging active modes of reading and viewing, as well as manual engagement. The reader was forced to ask themselves why the text of the manuscript was displayed in this way, to meditate upon its possible significance, and to apply the logic of the text in their everyday life. It would not have been necessary to consult the words of the text very often to reinforce or refresh the message of the manuscript; just looking at (or even remembering and picturing) it from time to time would have been enough. And once internalized the user would carry the message of the manuscript in their mind’s eye, helping them to move beyond language and access genuine cosmological truths, just as the text of the manuscript entreated. In this way, the *Wu ze you xing tu* manuscript was not merely an attractive reflection or appealing product of Han intellectual culture but an active participant in it; an object that produced physical, intellectual, and social effects on the world that created it.893

Unlike the manuscripts in the functional visuality category that I described above, the *Wu ze you xing tu* manuscript was designed and arranged purely for ideological rather than functional purposes. Of course, as we have seen, the design elements in the manuscripts in the functional visuality category were also designed to invite their readers and users to visualize, meditate, and internalize the cosmic structures that those texts represented, but they also displayed writing in this way for largely functional purposes. Indeed, they could hardly have functioned as divination tools and ritual summaries otherwise. With the *Wu ze you xing tu* manuscript, however, the visual design of the manuscript was designed not to facilitate easy access to textual material or smooth consultation of its contents, but rather to meditate and

893 For a brief discussion of this dialectical relationship between art and culture, see Norman Bryson’s introduction in Mieke Bal, Looking In: The Art of Viewing (New York: Routledge, 2001), pp. 1-2. Artifacts like the *Wu ze you xing tu* manuscript encourage us to wonder, with Tim Ingold, if “drawings or paintings [are] of things in the world, or are they like things in the world, in the sense that we have to find our ways through and among them, inhabiting them as we do the world itself?” See Tim Ingold, Being Alive: Essays on Movement, Knowledge, and Description (London: Routledge, 2011), p. 197.
internalize on its ideological significance. This manuscript shows that in early China, non-linear texts were not produced simply out of necessity, but also because they helped inculcate moral values and properly patterned modes of perception.894

What the *Wu ze you xing tu has in common with the manuscripts in the functional visuality category, however, is that it reflects a conviction that the world is ordered in a certain way, and that the correctly patterned use of visual signs affords readers the opportunity to perceive and understand those structures, and to model their actions accordingly. The *Wu ze you xing tu is not just a representation or depiction but rather a participation in an ongoing patterning of the world and our perception of it, as well as an invitation to participate in this process for ourselves.895

894 Indeed, the *Wu ze you xing tu manuscript was designed simultaneously to inculcate correctly calibrated modes of perception, bodily movements, and language use, all of which were decidedly ethical concerns in early China. See Mark Csikszentmihalyi, Material Virtue: Ethics and the Body in Early China (Leiden: Brill, 2004); Michael Nylan, “Beliefs about Seeing: Optics and Moral Technologies in Early China,” Asia Major 21.1 (2008), pp. 89-132; and Sarah A. Mattice, “On ‘Rectifying’ Rectification: Reconsidering Zhengming in Light of Confucian Role Ethics,” Asian Philosophy 20 (2010), pp. 247-260.

895 Viewing and reading this manuscript was thus not simply an inscribing practice (involving the storage and retrieval of information, such as consulting encyclopedias or photographs, for example) but an incorporating one (like a handshake, where the transmission occurs when bodies are engaged in particular activities). See Paul Connerton, How Societies Remember (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1989), pp. 72-73. Connorton notes that “[m]any practices of inscription contain an element of incorporation, and it may even be the case that no type of inscription at all is conceivable without such an irreducible component of incorporation,” though “it is possible to distinguish between actions in which the one or the other predominates” (quotation on pp. 78-79). Similarly, Katherine Hayles has noted that the distinctions between the two are “heuristic rather than absolute.” See Katherine N. Hayles, “The Materiality of Informatics,” Configurations 1.1 (1993), p. 14
5.1 Introduction: ownership and identity

There are many different kinds of ownership, just as there are many different kinds of identity, and the relationships between the two are complex and diverse.\textsuperscript{896} There are things we own ourselves as individuals, for example, others that we own only as long as we occupy certain roles or positions within a profession or social hierarchy, and still others that we own collectively with other people.\textsuperscript{897} Any of these different types of ownership can also be more or less personal, with our connection to the item in question closer or more distant, and our interactions and engagement with it more or less direct.\textsuperscript{898} As for identity, there is individual identity that tends to


\textsuperscript{897} Indeed, in light of this phenomenon of “overlapping stewardship,” it is worth remembering that possession is not necessarily the same as ownership. See Christopher Gregory, \textit{Gifts and Commodities} (New York: Academic Press, 1982), p. 44.

\textsuperscript{898} Helga Dittmar, \textit{The Social Psychology of Material Possessions: To Have is to Be} (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1992), p. 10-11 notes how we make inferences about others on the basis of their possessions, and that people use possessions to symbolize not only their qualities as individuals, but also the groups they belong to and their general social standing. Indeed, Mary Douglas and Baron Isherwood, \textit{The World of Goods: Towards an Anthropology of Consumption} (New York: Basic Books, 1996), pp. vii-
emphasize difference from others, and there is group identity that tends to emphasize sameness. Of course, these should not be understood as clearly or neatly delineated or discrete categories of experience, and identity should ideally be located at the interplay of all these elements.\textsuperscript{899} This is made all the more complicated by the fact that premodern and/or non-Western concepts of identity and its relation to “the self” are often very different from the categories and concepts we tend to use today.\textsuperscript{900} Perhaps particularly in the case of early China, we should be wary of applying any notion of identity that ignores the way early Chinese thinkers seem to have envisioned the role of individuals in relation to family obligations, state service, and cosmological structures.\textsuperscript{901}

The construction of tombs in the Han and the selection of the items that were to be buried in them were surely largely about establishing and securing the identity (however idealized) of the deceased as a member of a certain social group, both retrospectively during their lifetime and prospectively in death.\textsuperscript{902} When attempting to use finds from burial sites as a means of recreating v

\textsuperscript{viii} argue that the use and consumption of material goods needs to be understood not simply as a reflection or indicator of social structures, but as actively constitutive of them.

\textsuperscript{899} On this point, see Chris Fowler, “From Identity and Material Culture to Personhood and Materiality,” in \textit{The Oxford Handbook of Material Culture Studies}, ed. Dan Hicks and Mary C. Beaudry (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), pp. 352-385. See in particular p. 365, where Fowler talks about the false distinction between social identity (which is bound up with “social rights, duties, and roles”) and personal identity (which is “an interiorized sense of self that underlies that social identity”). For Fowler, it is necessary to approach identity holistically by examining the interplay between these different aspects of the self. See also Roz Ivanič, \textit{Writing and Identity: The Discoursal Construction of Identity in Academic Writing} (Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 1998), pp. 1-36. In particular, Ivanič emphasizes (p. 10-12) that while individual identity might be social constructed, it is not socially \textit{determined}, and that the construction of identity involves contestation between multiple constituent elements including society and the self, which combine in various ways to form an identity that is rarely, if ever, stable or unitary.

\textsuperscript{900} See, for example, Bernard A. Knapp and Peter van Dommelen, “Past Practices: Rethinking Individuals and Agents in Archaeology,” \textit{Cambridge Archaeological Journal} 18.1 (2008), pp. 15-34, who gives a good treatment of the dangers involved in imposing modern concepts and standards of identity and individualism onto historical subjects, especially in light of the fact that “in various pre-modern contexts, individuals were seen as clusters of relational statuses and interactions, rather than as fully individuated, autonomous beings” (quotation on pp. 20-21).

\textsuperscript{901} For an extensive treatment of precisely this issue, see Erica Brindley, \textit{Individualism in Early China: Human Agency and the Self in Thought and Politics} (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2010).
some sort of connection between the deceased and the items with which he or she was buried, however, we encounter certain major obstacles. We rarely know exactly precisely when, why, or by whom these objects were selected for burial, for example, and in any case it is typically very difficult to ascertain what their original owners and users would have thought about them. In addition, burial objects found in tombs were typically used above ground by the living before they came to play a role in the mortuary rituals for the deceased, and this transition was often highly complex, with items taking on new significances and symbolisms in the tomb that they never had, or enjoyed in different ways, above ground. Finally, while different tomb objects may never have been associated with each other above ground, previously following largely separate trajectories, they were brought together for burial often in part to make a unified statement about the deceased and the qualities associated with them.

For these reasons, Anke Hein has recently proposed to treat burial sites as “composite objects,” assemblages containing diverse sources and source types, each with their own

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902 Sumptuary regulations governing the scale of the tomb and the objects that were interred with the deceased, for example, show that Han dynasty burial sites served as embodiments of rank and status. Such regulations were rarely, however, observed in every detail, an indication that tombs were spaces for the negotiation of identity rather than unproblematic reflections of it. See Michael Nylan, “Toward an Archaeology of Writing: Text, Ritual, and the Culture of Public Display in the Classical Period (475 B.C.E.–220 C.E.),” in Text and Ritual in Early China, ed. Martin Kern (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2005), p. 34. Indeed, Joanna Sofaer has argued that social relations and identity actually require material expression in order for them to be explored and mediated. See Joanna Sofaer, “Introduction: Materiality and Identity,” in Material Identities, ed. idem (Hoboken: Wiley-Blackwell, 2007), p. 1. On this point, see also Christopher Tilley, The Materiality of Stone: Explorations in Landscape Phenomenology (Oxford: Berg, 2004), p. 217 and Ian Woodward, Understanding Material Culture (Thousand Oaks: Sage Publishing, 2007), pp. 133-137.


904 Linda Hurcombe, for example, has remarked that while we can be sure that the sensory perception of materials and artifacts were important in the past, it is hard to avoid bringing our own standards and prejudices to bear on them. See Linda Hurcombe, “A Sense of Materials and Sensory Perception in Concepts of Materiality,” World Archaeology 39 (2007), p. 532.
individual lifecycles before they entered the tomb. Indeed, Hein argues that it is necessary for us to distinguish between different types of burial objects that enjoyed different relationships with the deceased and occupied different positions within his or her funeral preparations: possessions vs gifts, items selected spontaneously vs carefully planned depositions, items for postmortem use vs ritual symbolism, etc. At the same time, however, it is also necessary to understand how and why these objects came to be associated with one another in their final moment of socialization, as they were selected, curated, and ultimately deposited in the tomb. Tomb objects were rarely chosen or deposited at random, and assemblages of burial objects need also to be understood (or at least explored) as “structured depositions” making more or less coherent statements about the deceased and his or her status or identity.

The artifacts (not all of them textual) found inside the lacquer case in Mawangdui M3 need to be approached, then, both as individual pieces with their own separate histories and uses, and as components of a unified tomb assemblage. Indeed, I will argue that by following these two different trajectories simultaneously we gain an understanding of the different and changing ways in which the Mawangdui manuscripts were used, both in this life and the next. In this chapter, I will begin by examining the forms and contents of the Mawangdui manuscripts themselves before pulling the focus outwards to take in the various material artifacts and processes within which they were embedded: the lacquer case in which they were stored, the coffin structure in which this case was deposited, and the tomb site at which the burial objects were displayed and interred. In the process, I will argue that the great majority of the Mawangdui manuscripts were originally designed and produced in some sort of institutional setting as

documents for consolidating texts and textual material (charts and diagrams, for example). In addition, I argue that these documents were probably used for occasional consultation and as base texts for copying further manuscripts, rather than as the reading material of an individual owner or user. The Mawangdui manuscripts were subsequently repurposed and repackaged (quite literally) for burial, serving simultaneously as a “toolbox” of cultural, technical, and medical knowledge, and as a statement about the kind of man Li Xi was, or should have been. Prior to this, I will argue, Li Xi, and the other members of his family, likely did not enjoy any sort of close personal connection with these manuscripts as their direct owners or users.

5.2 Curating manuscripts: libraries and archives

Scholars in multiple languages have described the Mawangdui manuscript corpus as a “library.”¹⁰⁸ In the main, however, they have remained vague about precisely what they understand this term to mean in the context of the Mawangdui tomb corpus, and what it implies about the connection (if any) between the manuscripts and the man with whom they were interred.¹⁰⁹ Use of the term library to refer to corpora of manuscripts that were buried in early

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¹⁰⁹ Some scholars have implied or assumed a direct personal relationship between Li Xi and the manuscripts he was buried with. See, for example, Daniel Morgan, “What Good’s a Text? Textuality, Orality, and Mathematical Astronomy in Early Imperial China,” Archives internationals d’histoire des sciences 65 (2015), p. 552 who not only refers to the corpus as a “tomb library” but also states that “the library’s owner, the young Marquis Li Xi 利豨 of Dai 軑, appear[s] to have been an eclectic reader.” Similarly, Marc Kalinowski, after studying the codicological features of some of the Mawangdui manuscripts, has claimed that the corpora of manuscripts in the possession of noble families at the beginning of the Han were not disparate masses of textual material held in reserve and never read or consulted, but were periodically modified in order to increase the legibility of their contents and adapt it to the taste of the tomb occupant. See Kalinowski (2005), p. 165.
Chinese tombs is certainly not restricted to the case of Mawangdui, however, and certain scholars have objected to the use of the term to describe buried collections of textual materials since it assumes a relationship between the texts and the tomb occupant that may not in fact have existed or which is otherwise uncertain. In the case of the Mawangdui manuscripts (excluding the tomb inventory texts, which, as we saw in Chapter 2, were prepared specially for burial and deposited separately from the other manuscripts in M3), I find it is entirely appropriate to refer to the collection as a “tomb library,” since I believe this is precisely why this particular constellation of textual materials was curated and placed in Li Xi’s tomb. That is, I believe that the manuscripts were selected for burial to provide Li Xi with a repository of practical knowledge and information for use in the afterlife, as well as a symbolic statement about his elite status (see below). However, while the Mawangdui manuscript corpus almost certainly fulfilled this function in the context of Li Xi’s tomb, the term library still requires scrutiny, since burial and post mortuary use represent just one stage, albeit an important one, in the lifecycle of these manuscripts. My objective in the section of this chapter that follows, then, is to investigate, based on the textual evidence, the ways in which these manuscripts were selected, curated, and used in the context of Li Xi’s tomb.

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911 See, for example, Dirk Meyer, *Philosophy on Bamboo: Text and the Production of Meaning in Early China* (Leiden: Brill, 2012), pp. 6-7, who objects to the use of the term in application to the Guodian corpus of manuscripts for precisely this reason. See also Matthias Richter, “Hamburg Tomb Text Workshop: Introduction,” *Monumenta Serica* 51 (2003), p. 402, who notes that while manuscript corpora from sites such as Guodian, Shuihudi睡虎地 (Yunmeng, Hubei; Qin), Yinqueshan銀雀山 (Linyi, Shandong; Western Han), and Mawangdui have been described as tomb libraries, we must ask “What can be inferred from the spatial and temporal distribution of the tomb libraries known to date, and what is the significance of their presumptive origin in regional traditions, especially after their integration into the Qin and Han empires?” and “What was the intended function of the manuscripts in the mortuary context, especially as regards their position within the tomb ensemble? Can any meaningful relation be established between individual manuscripts within a tomb library or between manuscripts and other funerary objects? How were the manuscripts related to the tomb owners and to their immediate historical and cultural backgrounds?” This chapter will investigate precisely these issues.
on the form and contents of the Mawangdui manuscripts, what the likely connections (if any) were between these manuscripts and their living owners and users above ground.

Recently, scholars have argued for a distinction between ancient libraries and archives based on the contents of their holdings and the uses to which they were put. According to this distinction, archives generally contained collections of practical materials such as bureaucratic, legal, or economic documents that were discarded when no longer useful. Libraries, by contrast, contained “texts of the tradition,” sometimes in multiple copies, that acquired cultural worth through age, rarity, or the material prestige of their carriers.\footnote{See, for example, Michael Nylan, “Manuscript Culture in Late Western Han, and the Implications for Authors and Authority,” \textit{Journal of Chinese Literature and Culture} \textit{1.1-2} (2014), pp. 155-85 and Max Jakob Fölster, “Libraries and Archives in the Former Han: Arguing for a Distinction,” in \textit{Manuscripts and Archives: Comparative Views on Record-Keeping}, ed. Sabine Kienitz, Michael Friedrich, Christian Brockmann, and Alessandro Bausi (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2018), pp. 201-230. See also Katelijn Vandorpe, “Archives and Dossiers,” in \textit{The Oxford Handbook of Papyrology}, ed. Roger S. Bagnall (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), p. 218, who notes that “[t]he term \textit{archive} is clearly reserved for documentary groups of texts, whereas the public or personal \textit{library} is a collection of literary texts” (emphasis in original). Vandorpe notes, however, that the line between archives and libraries is often a blurry one. For an overview of archives in the ancient world, see Ernst Posner, \textit{Archives in the Ancient World} (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1972).} As Michael Nylan has argued, “[i]t is libraries, not archives, that spark passions, even pathologies, insofar as they are deemed more than the sum of their individual parts. It is libraries— not archives— that are the brainchildren of supreme intellectual ambition, since libraries have combined aspects of palace, museum, and shrine to the hallowed past.”\footnote{Nylan (2014), p. 160.} The Mawangdui tomb corpus contained certain pieces that can be characterized as “tradition texts” (the \textit{Laozi} 老子 and \textit{Zhouyi} 周易 manuscripts, for example), though the vast majority of them were technical in nature, containing texts related to medicine or divination.\footnote{Fölster (2018), p. 207, working off the textual divisions in the “Yiwen zhi” 藝文志 (“Treatise on Arts and Literature”) chapter of the \textit{Hanshu} 漢書 (\textit{History of the Later Han}), categorizes texts in the \textit{liuyi} 六藝 (six arts), \textit{zhuzi} 諸子 (various masters), and \textit{shifu} 詩賦 (poems and rhapsodies) categories as “texts of tradition,” and the texts in the \textit{bingshu} 兵書 (military writings), \textit{shushu} 數術 (numbers and techniques), and \textit{fangji} 方技 (prescriptions) categories as technical texts. Thus, in Fölster’s taxonomy, the Mawangdui manuscripts, like the holdings of the imperial collection recorded in the “Yiwen zhi,” would seem to}
Mawangdui M3, meaning that the Mawangdui tomb corpus would seem so have been selected from (more on this below), and certainly as, some sort of library as opposed to an archive.

Unfortunately, our knowledge of archives and libraries in Early Imperial China is very sketchy indeed. Emperor Wu is said to have ordered the construction of several libraries inside and outside his residential quarters in the capital Chang’an 武帝, 1 and according to the “Yiwen zhi” 藝文志 (“Treatise on Arts and Literature”) chapter of the *Hanshu* 漢書 (*History of the Han Dynasty*) this project involved the conservation of books and the recruiting of functionaries to copy them.\(^{916}\) We know almost nothing about how these institutions operated, however, and the discovery of two small hills tentatively identified as the former sites of the Tianlu ge 天祿閣 and Shiqu ge 石渠閣 palace libraries associated with textual learning in late Western Han 不過，917 we have no evidence for how libraries in the Western Han capital were organized, or how, where, or by whom editing, writing, and reading may have taken place.\(^{918}\)

correspond to the contents of a library as opposed to an archive. Of course, whether these technical texts count also as “tradition texts” will depend on how one chooses to define tradition in this context. For my purposes, it is relevant that these technical texts are like tradition texts at least so far as they are unalike the administrative texts characteristics of an archive.

\(^{915}\) Certainly, Emperor Wu was the first Han emperor to take an active interest in literary pursuits. See David Knechtges, *Court Culture and Literature in Early China* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, 2002), pp. 52-53. Drège (1991), pp. 19-24 provides a useful overview of the various different types of libraries and archives that are said to have existed in Western and Eastern Han. See also Fölster (2018).

\(^{916}\) See *Hanshu* 30.1701 and Piet van der Loon, “On the Transmission of the Kuan-tzu.” *T'oung Pao* 41.1-2 (1952), pp. 358-359; Jean-Pierre Drège, *Les bibliothèques en Chine au temps des manuscrits: jusqu’au Xe siècle* (Paris: École française d’extrème-Orient, 1991), p. 19; and Michael Nylan, *Yang Xiong and the Pleasures of Reading and Classical Learning in China* (New Haven: American Oriental Society, 2011), p. 42. The passage in question specifies that these texts were stored in “secret archives” (mifu 祕府), and Michael Nylan, “Calligraphy: The Sacred Test and Text of Culture,” in *Character & Context in Chinese Calligraphy*, ed. Cary Liu and Dora Ching (Princeton: The Art Museum, Princeton University, 1999), p. 59n.5 has emphasized that these institutions were not designed to disseminate knowledge and that “[s]uch secret caches supposedly contained the materials the dynasty would need to maintain its power by ritual, magical, and political means.” Fölster (2018), p. 206n.19 notes the possibility, however, that copies of at least some of the works in the imperial library were gifted to local dignitaries, based on a piece of sealing clay (fengni 封泥) bearing the inscription mifu found in a Western Han tomb in Jiangsu 江蘇 in 1995.


\(^{918}\) See Michael Nylan, “On Libraries and Manuscript Culture in Western Han Chang’an and Alexandria,” in *Ancient Greece and China Compared*, ed. G.E.R. Lloyd and Jingyi Jenny Zhao (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 2018), p. 381. We are somewhat better informed about the state of libraries
Outside the capital, the regional courts of several Han kings were apparently famed as centers of literary activity close in time to when Mawangdui M3 was sealed, including the kingdom of Liang 梁, ruled by Liu Wu 劉武 (r. 168-144 BCE), and the kingdom of Wu 吳, ruled by Liu Pi 劉濞 (r. 195-154 BCE). Records of the activities of these courts, however, do not emphasize the production or use of written texts. By contrast, in the Hanshu, Ban Gu 班固 (32-92) notes that both Liu De 劉德 (r. 155-130/129 BCE), King of Hejian 河間王, and Liu An 劉安 (r. 164-122 BCE), King of Huainan 淮南王, were apparently known for their fondness for written texts. Donald Harper has situated the Mawangdui manuscripts in the context of just this type of regional textual patronage in Western Han, however it should be noted that the Hanshu, our major source for Liu De and Liu An’s supposed textual proclivities, was compiled some two hundred and fifty years after their reigns. In contrast to the account in the Hanshu, for example, the brief Shiji 史記 (Archivist’s Records) account recording Liu De’s activities at court makes no mention of written texts, and the Hanshu account of Liu An’s patronage of literary in the Eastern Han capital at Luoyang 洛陽, where, in addition to the Imperial Library (mishu 祕書), numerous institutions including the Dongguan 東觀, Lantai 蘭臺, Xuanming 宣明, and Shishi 石室 libraries housed literary and historical works, editions of the classics, apocryphal texts, rare and valuable manuscripts, and government documents. The administrations of these libraries and collections was the responsibility of the Palace Assistant Imperial Clerk (yushi zhongcheng 御侍中丞). For an overview of references to these institutions in traditional sources, and scholarly studies related to them, see Rafe de Crespigny, “Scholars and Rulers: Imperial Patronage Under the Later Han Dynasty,” in Han-Zeit: Festschrift für Hans Stumpfeldt aus Anlaß seines 65, ed. Michael Friedrich (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2006), p. 60 and idem, Fire Over Luoyang: A History of the Later Han Dynasty 23-220 AD (Leiden: Brill, 2017), p.32, 32n.45-46.

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920 See Hanshu 53.2410, where Ban Gu compares Liu De’s fondness for collecting and patronizing ancient texts and traditions at his court favorably with Liu An’s preference for writing containing “frivolous disputation” (fubian 浮辯).


922 Shiji 59.2093 mentions only that Liu De was “fond of Ru leaning” (hao Ruxue 好儒學).
production is nowhere to be found in the *Shiji*. In any case, neither the *Shiji* or the *Hanshu* provides us with any details about the institutions in which written texts may have been produced, curated, or stored in the courts of Hejian or Huainan, and the first major library project in Han China for which we have relatively detailed records is the famous bibliographical project commissioned by Emperor Cheng and led by Liu Xiang 劉向 (79–8 BCE) and later by his son Liu Xin 劉歆 (53 BCE-23 CE). As part of this project, written texts were sought out from all over the Han empire and brought back to the capital, where teams of scholars worked to collate and edit the texts that were held there, making new copies that were submitted to the emperor and divided into different bibliographic categories.

Though, judging by their contents, the Mawangdui manuscripts would seem to have been selected from some sort of library containing texts of the tradition as well as technical documents, it is impossible to say for sure whether or not the collection or collections from which they were taken also held administrative (i.e., archival) documents. It certainly seems plausible to suggest that in Changsha 長沙 during the early Western Han administrative documents were produced, curated, and stored separately from tradition or technical texts, but at the present time this must remain speculation. Instead of leaning too heavily on the distinction between libraries and archives, then, I will concern myself instead with the possible relationship that may have existed between Li Xi and the Mawangdui manuscripts prior to his death and

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923 Compare, for example, the accounts in *Shiji* 118.3082 and *Hanshu* 44.2185. Liu An and his retainers are credited with a number of literary compositions in several different genres in the “Yiwen zhi.” See Kern (2014), pp. 126-127.

burial. After all, though we do not normally think of archives as being “owned” in the conventional sense, libraries, depending on their size and the nature of their contents, can enjoy any number of relationships to putative owners. One can easily imagine, for example, a committed bibliophile spending considerable amounts of time perusing documents in his private library, enjoying an intimate connection to them as personal possessions. We can also imagine, however, an elite owner or patron enjoying a far more indirect relationship to a larger, “institutional” library staffed by professional employees that he or she rarely if ever visits and does not actively use. As far as we know, private libraries in China began to develop only in the third century CE, though there is circumstantial evidence to suggest that prior to this certain individuals would have owned, or at least had access to, privately or professionally curated collections of written texts outside the purview of the state (either regional or central). Liu Xiang’s editorial reports, for example, show that he made use of copies of texts from outside the imperial collection, possibly including some from his own library, and the academicians (bosshi 博士) responsible for classical learning in Western Han may well have owned their own private collections of written materials.

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925 Beyond the fact, of course, that archives are in a sense under the ownership, or at least stewardship, of governments and rulers or leaders.

926 By institutional, I mean the type of library that is staffed, curated, and used chiefly by groups and individuals connected to it predominantly or exclusively through employment or some other kind of professional service rather than through personal ownership.


928 See Fölster (2018), p. 225. Ru Chun’s 如淳 (fl. 198-265) commentary to the “Yiwen zhi” chapter of the Hanshu, for example, cites a notation in Liu Xin’s Qilüe 七略 (Seven Epitomes) stating that the Grand Master of Ceremonies (taichang 太常), Director of Archives (taishi 太史), and academicians all possessed their own collections (cang 藏) of textual materials, and that these collections existed outside (wai 外) the holdings of the imperial library. See Hanshu 30.1702. This is clearly a reference to the academicians working in the capital; however, Han academicians were also employed in at least some of the regional kingdoms in early Western Han, and they may also have had access to “private” libraries. See Hans Bielenstein, The Bureaucracy of Han Times (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1980), pp. 188n.126, 202nn. 37-38, 53.
Regardless of the precise nomenclature we choose to adopt, from the evidence outlined above we know that in the Western Han collections of written texts related to literary, cultural, and technical traditions (libraries, if you like) existed outside the Han capital Chang’an, with larger collections in the courts of certain regional kings and perhaps smaller collections of textual materials in “private” hands. We know nothing about the nature of any such libraries in Changsha in the early Western Han, however, and barring new archaeological discoveries it is possible that all we will ever be able to say about manuscript culture there will come from the manuscripts discovered in Mawangdui M3.\textsuperscript{929} As far as we know, judging by the absence of any records in transmitted sources, Changsha was not a major center for the production or transmission of written texts in early Western Han. However, examining the Mawangdui manuscripts themselves reveals that the vast majority of them were produced for use in some sort of institutional setting, which I will call a library. While it is likely that the Li family, as a noble clan with a history of service in the Changsha government administration, would have had access to this library, there is no evidence that Li Xi, his father Li Cang, or any other member of their family enjoyed a close personal connection to the manuscripts with which Li Xi was buried. Indeed, I will argue that the Mawangdui silk manuscripts were not produced for use by any individual owners or users but were instead used to consolidate large amounts of text in various cultural and technical traditions for preservation, occasional consultation, and textual transmission.

\textsuperscript{929} The “Yiwen zhi” does contain a record for “three volumes of fu rhapsodies by the assorted ministers to the King of Changsha (長沙王群臣賦三篇) (Hanshu 30.1791). Unfortunately, we have no further information about when or how these pieces were produced or transmitted. Certainly, this number pales in comparison to the numbers of written texts attributed to other regional courts in the “Yiwen zhi.” See Hanshu 30.1788, for example, for the entry on the “eighty-two volumes of fu rhapsodies by the King of Huainan” (淮南王賦八十二篇) and the forty-four volumes of rhapsodies by the assorted ministers of the King of Huainan” (淮南王群臣賦四十四篇). See also the collections of fu rhapsodies attributed to other regional kings, nobles (hou 侯), and governors (taishou 太守) in that chapter of the Hanshu.
5.3 The form and contents of the Mawangdui manuscripts

5.3.1 The contents of the manuscripts

Generally speaking, the contents of the manuscripts in the Mawangdui tomb library do not seem like the kinds of material that an early Western Han nobleman would have enjoyed or needed to own, at least not in this form (see below). Of course, early Western Han nobles would have benefitted from the advice and technical skills of specialized experts in medicine and ritual divination. Indeed, noblemen like Li Xi probably also presided over, or participated in some way, in divinatory rituals themselves. However, judging by the distribution of the hemerological daybook (*rishu* 日書) manuscripts and related documents that have been discovered in early Chinese tombs, the application of technical knowledge with recourse to detailed written texts was predominantly associated with experts who generally belonged to lower levels of Chinese society than that occupied by Li Xi (see Chapter 2). Certainly, there is no evidence that Li Xi, or men of his station, would have engaged in these sorts of text-based activities on a regular basis, and we cannot assume that they would have had the ability, or been motivated, to read detailed, esoteric prescriptions written in highly specialized language.

Though technical and medical texts predominate in the Mawangdui tomb library, the collection also includes works we would categorize today as philosophy and history (see Chapter 1). It is possible that Li Xi enjoyed reading these kinds of texts, such as the historical narratives of the *Chunqiu shiyu* 春秋事語 (*Speeches in Narratives from the Springs and Autumns Era*) and *Zhanguo zonghengjia shu* 戰國縱橫家書 (*Book from the Warring States School of the Vertical and Horizontal Alliances*) manuscripts, though given the generic breadth of the Mawangdui manuscripts as a whole (containing texts on history, philosophy, divination, and medicine), and the overlap between these materials and text types found in the tombs of other Western Han marquesses (see below), these documents seem to have been selected with the intention of encompassing all the knowledge that a nobleman such as Li Xi would have needed,
rather than as a reflection of his personal tastes or favorite reading material. Indeed, as we shall see, there is precious little evidence that the Mawangdui manuscripts were read by individual owners or users at all.

5.3.2 Evidence of reading

Traces of use and wear can tell us a lot about how an artifact was used, and this is no less true of manuscripts and other written texts. Unfortunately, however, the Mawangdui manuscripts themselves provide us with little evidence to suggest that they were used or read by an individual owner or user. There are, for example, no smudged ink fingerprints on the surface of the silk, and no reader’s marginalia or notations. Of course, absence of evidence is not necessarily evidence of absence, but the idea that these manuscripts were buried in M3 because they were Li Xi’s favorite texts, or personal possessions, finds little to no support in the manuscripts themselves.

There are many different words in classical Chinese corresponding to different types of activities that we would call reading, and even if the ways they are used and the distinctions

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930 In an article originally published in 1993, Chen Songchang 陳松長 argued that, though most scholars tend to divide the Mawangdui manuscripts into generic categories such as philosophy (zhexue 哲學), history (lishi 歷史), and medicine (yixue 醫學), studying them individually as separate textual traditions, in fact these manuscripts should be understood as forming an organic whole that reflects an early Western Han compendium (huibian 匯編) of more or less unified Daoist thought. See Chen Songchang 陳松長, “Mawangdui Hanmu boshu de daojia qingxiang” 馬王堆帛書的道家傾向, in idem, Jianbo yanjiu wengao 簡帛研究文稿 (Beijing: Xianzhuang shuju, 2008), pp. 74-82. Elsewhere, though he notes that the nature (xingzhi 性質) of the silk manuscripts is difficult to pin down definitively, Chen has argued that because these manuscripts were found together they probably represented a collection of the tomb occupant’s favorite and most trusted works on Daoism. See Chen Songchang 陳松長, Boshu shihua 帛書史話 (Beijing: Zhongguo dabaike quanshu chubanshe, 2012), pp. 86-87. As I hope will be made clear in this chapter, there are many reasons why we should doubt both these hypotheses, and the evidence speaks against interpreting the Mawangdui manuscripts according to a biographical model associated with Li Xi himself.

between them are not always entirely clear or consistent, it is obvious that in the main they reflect different types of engagement with (not always written) texts. As a result, in attempting to uncover the different ways a given manuscript may have been read or used we should endeavor to be as specific as possible about the particular types of reading we imagine to have taken place in light of the material features of the manuscript we are studying.

We have already seen in Chapter 2, for example, that the *Taiyi zhu tu 太一祝圖 (Invocation Chart to Taiyi) manuscript seems to have been designed for recitation in some sort of ritual context, or at least as the base text for such a document. And in Chapter 1, I examined Matthias Richter’s argument that the codicological features of a manuscript, including the presence or absence of punctuation and attention marks, can be used to suggest certain models of reading. It should be emphasized, however, that using the codicological features of a manuscript as evidence of reader-oriented design is complicated by the fact that it is often very difficult to determine which of these features (including punctuation) reflect the scribe’s deliberate efforts to produce a manuscript designed for a particular use, and which were merely copied in unmotivated fashion from a source text, or texts, that may itself have been designed for quite different uses. As we saw in Chapter 1, for example, character counts appear only in certain chapters of the text on the *Zhanguo zonghengjia shu manuscript, with the same scribe copying chapters with appended character counts and chapters without them, demonstrating that the presence or absence of certain codicological features is not necessarily evidence that a particular manuscript has been designed for a particular purpose. If any of the Mawangdui manuscripts

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933 See William A. Johnson, Readers and Reading Culture in the High Roman Empire: A Study of Elite Communities (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), pp. 9-14, who notes that different reading practices create different reading experiences. Johnson points out that reading love poetry in a classroom setting, for example, is very different from sharing it over a bottle of wine with a lover.
contained notations that could be attributed securely to a reader, this would provide us with
evidence to suggest that particular manuscript may, at some point in time, have been the personal
possession of an individual owner. Unfortunately, we have no such evidence from the
Mawangdui manuscripts themselves. There are no marginal notations recording a reader’s
impressions or interpretations of any of the manuscripts’ contents, for example. Indeed, the
additional content appended to the texts of several of the Mawangdui manuscripts seem to
suggest that they were housed in some sort of institutional setting for some time after they were
originally produced.

As we saw in Chapter 1, additional content was sometimes added to the end (or in some
cases the beginning) of certain manuscripts, as was the case with the *Zhanguo zonghengjia shu
manuscript, the *“Yangsheng fang” 養生方 (“Recipes for Nourishing Life”) text on Medical
Manuscript IV, and the *“Wushi’er bingfang” 五十二病方 (“Recipes for Fifty-Two Ailments”)
text that spans Medical Manuscripts I and II.934 In the case of the *“Yangsheng fang” text,
additional material was appended to the middle of the manuscript, with the scribe taking
advantage of a blank section of silk to update one of the entries, distinguishing the addition from
the surrounding text by drawing a black line around it (see Figure 5.1).935 This way, there was no
risk of the additional text becoming confused with the surrounding entries.936

934 Chen Jian 陳劍, “Mawangdui boshu ‘yinwen,’ ‘kongbai ye’ he chenye ji zhedie qingkuang zongshu” 馬王堆帛書 ‘印文’, ‘空白頁’ 和襯頁及折疊情況綜述, in Jinian Mawangdui Hanmu fajue sishi zhounian guoji xueshu yantaohui lunwenji 紀念馬王堆漢墓發掘四十週年國際學術研討會論文集, ed. Hunan sheng bowuguan 湖南省博物館 (Changsha: Yuelu shushe, 2016), p. 317 notes that the contents of
these manuscripts, including the additions, were probably eventually recopied onto other manuscripts,
with the scribe formally integrating the additional portions of text into the rest of the manuscripts’
contents in such a way as to obscure the fact that they originally derived from separate sources.

935 See JC, 2.112 for a color photograph of this silk fragment (lines 59-64).

936 This is the only example in the Mawangdui manuscript corpus of a scribe copying additional content
onto a blank portion of silk within the main body of the manuscript, rather than on a blank space at the
end or the beginning of a manuscript. This additional content was probably copied from another source
from that used to prepare the original text of the manuscript, and judging by the writing style it was
executed by a different scribe, or at the very least by the same scribe working at a later point in time. See
These additional entries show that manuscripts were updated on occasion; indeed, some manuscripts were probably designed with updating in mind (see below). Even once certain manuscripts were “finished,” then, they were still occasionally worked on, their contents updated to ensure they continued to serve as more or less complete repositories of useful information. Indeed, the additions made to the text of the *Zhanguo zonghengjia shu manuscript and the *Wushi’er bingfang text, which judging by the difference in script styles were updated some time (possibly as much as several decades) after the original text was copied (see Chapter 1), would seem to show that these manuscripts were stored and curated in some sort of institutional setting for a considerable period of time after they were originally produced. Certainly, it seems far less likely that an individual owner or user such as Li Xi would have copied these additional portions of silk himself, or that he would have sent (returned?) the manuscripts to a workshop or library in order for their contents to be updated. The more plausible explanation is surely that these manuscripts were produced as repositories of textual information, with their contents occasionally supplemented by scribes working in the same institutional setting that produced them.

We also saw in Chapter 1 that undeciphered notations resembling the graphs 易 and 盾 were appended to certain entries in the *“Yangsheng fang” text, and it is possible that these may be notations made by or for the intended users of the manuscript (see Figure 5.2). As I pointed out in Chapter 1, however, the meaning of these notations is unclear, and we cannot use them as secure evidence for establishing that the manuscript was marked up by an individual owner or user. Similarly, a fragment of the *Tianwen qixiang zazhan 天文奇象雜占 (Miscellaneous Divinations Based on Astrological and Meteorological Phenomena) manuscript described briefly in Chapter 1 contains the notation bu yong 不用 (“do not use”) in connection with one of the

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937 As we will see, there is nothing in Mawangdui M3 to suggest that Li Xi was personally involved in the production or copying of written texts.

938 This issue will be taken up again below.
Figure 5.1: Additional entry in the *“Yangsheng fang”* text on Medical Manuscript IV (JC, 2.112)
Figure 5.2: Graphs resembling 易 and 盾 in the *“Yangsheng fang” text on Medical Manuscript IV (JC, 2.110-111, 115)
illustrations on the manuscript, and it has only recently been determined that this notation does not form part of the manuscript’s many prognostication (zhanyu 占語) but rather represents a scribal notation that the illustration (tu 圖) in question had been rendered incorrectly and so was not to be used.  

This notation could be interpreted to mean that the manuscript was designed for use in divination, though it is just as likely that the use (yong 用) mentioned in the notation refers to the fact that this illustration was not to be used when future copies of the manuscript were produced.

The same manuscript contains a phrase that has been parsed by Chen Songchang 陳松長 to mean something like “these texts are not located underneath any [corresponding] images, and have been grouped together by category”此書不才 (= 在) 其圖下者，各已從其等矣. This phrase appears in the bottom left-hand corner of the manuscript, at the end of a section of prognostications that appear without associated illustrations (see Figure 5.3). Interestingly, the notation has been marked off from the preceding text using the same sort of black dot that was used to distinguish the supplementary notations on the M3 tomb inventory texts examined in Chapter 2. This notation does not inform the reader how to use these prognostications, however, and its location at the end, rather than the beginning, of this portion of text also limits its utility.

939 It was discovered that there were actually two versions of this illustration, one positioned in line with the other illustrations in the fourth row of the manuscript, and the other positioned awkwardly above it in-between the third and fourth rows. It seems that the fact that the illustration was drawn incorrectly but in the correct position left no room for the correct illustration to occupy its proper place, forcing the illustrator to squeeze it in elsewhere in the manuscript. At some point, the bu yong notation was attached to the incorrectly drawn illustration. See Chen Songchang 陳松長, “Mawangdui boshu de chaoben tezheng” 馬王堆帛書的抄本特徵, Hunan daxue xuebao 湖南大學學報 21.5 (2007), p. 20 and JC, 4.262.

940 Michael Loewe, for example, has argued that while it is unlikely that a skilled or experienced divination expert would have needed the *Tianwen qixiang zazhan to carry out his operations, it is nevertheless possible that a less skilled practitioner, possibly a disciple, would have valued such a document as a sort of aide-memoire. See Michael Loewe, Divination, Mythology and Monarchy in Han China (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p. 81.

941 Chen Songchang 陳松長, “Boshu ‘Tianwen qixiang zazhan’ yanjiu santi帛書《天文奇象雜占》研究三題, in Chen (2008a), pp. 341-342. Chen also notes the other transcriptions and glosses of this phrase proposed by Liu Lexian 劉樂賢 and Dong Shan 廣珊. See JC, 4.283.
Figure 5.3: Explanatory notation appended to the text of the *Tianwen qixiang zazhan* manuscript (JC, 1.208)
as a guide for the manuscript’s reader. Instead, the notation seems to explain, or perhaps justify, the scribe’s decision to copy these prognosticatory texts in the way that he did, and I would suggest that the notation makes more sense in the context of continuing manuscript production rather than as a notation for guiding an individual reader in their use of the manuscript. That is, the notation likely reflects a context of manuscript production where scribes occasionally explained the choices they had made in the process of consolidating textual materials from different sources, perhaps with the intention of aiding further recopying, rather than an attempt to help an individual reader make sense of the manuscript’s contents.

In sum, the additional content and notations made during and subsequent to the copying of the texts on the Mawangdui manuscripts seem to have been made by and for the same sorts of scribes who produced the texts in the first place, rather than by an individual owner or reader of the manuscripts.

5.3.3 Textual layouts

As we have seen, the techniques, designs, and layouts used to produce many of the Mawangdui manuscripts encourage or demand certain modes of engagement and reading. Indeed, when attempting to determine if and how texts and manuscripts were used, we should first try to ascertain which types of reading were facilitated by the design of the manuscript in question, rather than assuming use by an imagined ideal reader with perfect mastery over the text’s contents, willing and able to overcome any obstacles impeding his or her use of the manuscript.

The vast majority of the Mawangdui manuscripts consolidate large amounts of text, and often also diagrams and illustrations, but the arrangement of these texts and textual materials on the surface of the silk often makes their contents difficult to read and use. Confronted with masses of barely differentiated text on pieces like the *Zhanguo zonghengjia shu* and the *Laozi* manuscripts, for example, it seems hard to imagine a reader, no matter how accomplished
or familiar with the material in question, finding these texts easy to locate or peruse. This is particularly true with the divination texts from Mawangdui. If a reader wished to find a particular entry explaining the implications of a certain weather or astral phenomenon on the *Tianwen qixiang zazhan or *Xingde 邪德 (Punishment and Benevolence) A manuscripts, for example, he or she would have to wade through large amounts of barely differentiated text on the surface of a very long piece of silk (see below) in order to find it. Of course, if these manuscripts were primarily intended to consolidate material for future recopying, with the material recombined and presented in different forms and different media for uses in different contexts (more practical and portable manuscripts made of wood or bamboo, for example), then the readability of the contents of these base manuscripts would not have been of paramount importance. That is, while the text would have had to be legible enough for a well-trained scribe to read and recopy, it would not necessarily need to be presented in a way that facilitated consultation of its contents.

It is true that many of the Mawangdui manuscripts do contain codicological features that, at first glance, may seem to suggest that the manuscripts in question were designed and manufactured with use in mind, including ruled lines, character counts, tables and diagrams, and tables of contents. In addition, certain textual layouts, such as the facing columns of text on Medical Manuscript I would certainly have aided the reading process (see Chapter 1). However, reading and writing are not always entirely separate activities. Indeed, when copying from written texts reading is actually part of the writing process, and many of the features listed above are just as easily explained as measures taken to facilitate textual production rather than reading per se. Ruled red and black ruled lines aided the reading process by making the arrangement of the text neater and more attractive, but this would also have facilitated recopying of the

\[942\] William Johnson has argued that in Ancient Rome elite bookrolls were not produced using techniques for making reading easy such as word spacing or paragraphs, in part because they were not designed for retrieving information or as repositories of information but as “vehicles for performative reading in high social contexts.” See William A Johnson, “Toward a Sociology of Reading in Classical Antiquity,” American Journal of Philology 121 (2000), p. 616. Given that the contents of most of the Mawangdui manuscripts relate to medical and other technical topics, however, it seems rather unlikely that they were designed with such a use in mind.

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manuscript’s contents. Indeed, this may have been the main reason why ruled lines feature prominently in so many of the Mawangdui manuscripts, with the lines facilitating both the copying of text onto the surface of the silk and the subsequent recopying of the text (possibly in altered form) from the surface of the silk.

In addition, while it is hard to imagine how an individual reader or user would have benefitted from the insertion of character counts at the end of certain texts, it makes sense that those involved in the copying and recopying of textual materials would have liked to know how long the texts they were copying were, allowing them to calculate how much material was required in order to produce another written copy of the text, or some version of it, for example. Meanwhile, though tables and diagrams present information in ways that are easier to consult and compare than running, linear text, the size of many of these manuscripts (see below) would have severely inhibited the manual manipulation of the silk, making it hard to make rotational use of the diagrams, for example, or consult the contents of the explanatory text copied elsewhere on the silk. Similarly, the table of contents for the *“Wushi’er bingfang” text was actually copied at the end of the upper register (i.e., in the top left-hand portion) of Medical Manuscript I, meaning that a reader would have had to rotate or flip the silk (see Chapter 1) in order to compare the information in the table of contents to the material in the main text of the manuscript. Certainly, this would have made locating individual entries within the document very difficult. Indeed, since the *“Wushi’er bingfang” text was carried over onto a second long piece of silk (i.e., Medical Manuscript II), this would have made comparison between the table of contents and the entries of the text even more cumbersome. While it is true that, as we saw in Chapter 1, certain features of that manuscript such as the facing columns of text seem to make its contents easier to read, in fact, as with the ruled lines discussed a moment ago, they were probably designed to facilitate the copying and recopying of the text rather than regular reading of the manuscript’s contents.

In sum, the features of these manuscripts suggest that they were designed and manufactured primarily to consolidate textual material for library preservation, possibly
occasional consultation, and further recopying, rather than for active reading. Indeed, in many cases (certainly in the cases of the diagrams on many of the divinatory texts) copying this material onto silk actually made it more difficult to read, consult, or use than it would have been if it had been written (as indeed it probably had been, and would be again) in more manageable formats on shorter manuscripts made of either bamboo or wood. This is not to say that readability per se was not a concern. Judging by the Mawangdui silk documents, text was never apparently copied onto the verso sides of silk manuscripts, for example, presumably at least in part because this would have led to unacceptable levels of textual transposition in the form of ink imprints after the manuscripts were folded.943 The contents of the Mawangdui manuscripts had to be readable, but this readability was more about facilitating occasional consultation and future recopying than regular use by an individual owner, such as Li Xi, and this suggests an institutional setting for their production and curation.

5.3.4 Manuscript dimensions

As we have seen, studying excavated texts as disembodied collections of information risks overlooking the modes of use made possible or desirable by the material design of the manuscripts on which they are found. Indeed, judging by the dimensions alone of many of the Mawangdui silk manuscripts, they were not designed for regular use by an individual owner. Long sheets of silk are ideal for consolidating large amounts of text and for combining writing with charts, diagrams, tables, and non-textual visual images. This is not to say that lengthy texts or a combination of text and images could not be committed to either bamboo or wood, with excavated sources attesting that this was sometimes the case. However, silk was a far better medium for this, allowing greater amounts of material to be consolidated onto fewer

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943 Indeed, this must have been a calculated decision, since copying text onto the verso side of the manuscript would certainly have saved significant amounts of expensive silk.
individual pieces, which could then be folded and stored relatively easily. Silk also had other advantages. It obviated the risk of textual decomposition, for example, since, compared with manuscripts manufactured from bamboo or wooden slips, there was less risk of its components becoming detached or misplaced. Treated silk is also light and durable, making it an ideal writing surface.\footnote{Tsuen-hsuin Tsien, Written on Bamboo and Silk: The Beginnings of Chinese Books (Chicago: Chicago University Press, [1962] 2004), p. 139 notes that prior to the invention of paper, silk was the ideal writing material as it was light, durable, and absorbent, making it easy to write with as well as convenient to store and transport.}

However, though silk may have been an excellent writing material, it is not at all clear that it made for an ideal reading material. As we saw earlier, unlike writing, reading rarely leaves traces behind, making it more difficult to study,\footnote{On this point, see Roger Chartier, The Order of Books: Readers, Authors, and Libraries in Europe Between the 14\textsuperscript{th} and 18\textsuperscript{th} Centuries (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994), pp. 1-2; Jocelyn Penny Small, Wax Tablets of the Mind: Cognitive Studies of Memory and Literacy in Classical Antiquity (London and New York: Routledge, 1997), p. 127; and Konrad Hirschler, The Written Word in the Medieval Arabic Lands: A Social and Cultural History of Reading Practices (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012), p. 5.} which is why scholars have tended to focus on histories and taxonomies of writing at the expense of reading.\footnote{See Jesper Svenbro, Phrasikleia: An Anthropology of Reading in Ancient Greece, trans. Janet Lloyd (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993), pp. 1-2.} Though it is easy to overlook the fact, it is nevertheless true that the reading process is as embodied an experience as writing,\footnote{On this point, see Guglielmo Cavallo and Roger Chartier, “Introduction,” in A History of Reading in the West, ed. Guglielmo Cavallo and Roger Chartier, trans. Lydia G. Cochrane (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1999), pp. 1-36. See also Chartier (1994), pp. 3-4.} and manuscript design both reflects and engineers certain modes of engagement with written texts, meaning that accounts of reading have to be nuanced enough to take into consideration variation in time, place, language, and genre.\footnote{See John Dagenais, The Ethics of Reading in Manuscript Culture: Glossing the “Libro de buen amor,” (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), p. 33.} While the silk used to manufacture the Mawangdui manuscripts was rather durable, frequent use would doubtless have led to damage to the manuscripts, and they were certainly less durable than manuscripts made of
bamboo or wood. Most of all, however, the sheer length of many of the Mawangdui silk manuscripts should prompt us to consider how they may actually have been used.

The vast majority of the Mawangdui manuscripts were manufactured in standard widths of ca. 24 cm or ca. 48 cm, however the length of the silk sheets varied considerably, and some of them were very long indeed. Though the fragmented state of the manuscripts makes it difficult to calculate their original dimensions with complete accuracy, in many cases the reconstructions nevertheless show them to have been manuscripts of extraordinary length. The five longest manuscripts among the Mawangdui corpus are the *Laozi A* manuscript (318.2 cm = 10 ft, 5.276 inches), the *Yinyang wuxing* (Yin and Yang and the Five Phases) A manuscript (224 cm long = 7 ft, 4.189 inches), the *Zhanguo zonghengjia shu* manuscript (192 cm = 6 ft, 3.591 inches), the *Laozi B* manuscript (166 cm = 5 ft, 5.34 inches), and Medical Manuscript III (162 cm = 5 ft, 3.78 inches). It should be pointed out that from a purely textual perspective none of these manuscripts needs to be this long. Each of the manuscripts contains multiple textual units, for example, units that could have been committed to separate carriers. The fact that the five longest manuscripts in the corpus include texts on philosophy, divination, medicine, and historical narrative, meanwhile, strongly suggests that the corpus as a whole is composed of documents designed to consolidate large amounts of textual materials rather than for active

949 Unless otherwise noted, these estimates are taken from the relevant entries in JC.

950 This estimate is given in Chen Songchang 陳松長, “Mawangdui boshu ‘Shifa’ chulun” 馬王堆帛書《式法》初論, in Chen (2008a), pp. 277-278. Chen notes that previous estimates of the original length of the manuscript had it as long as 3.5 m, though Chen’s more conservative estimate is probably more accurate.

951 I have arrived at this estimation after combining the separate lengths provided for the different texts on this manuscript that originally comprised one long piece of silk. Matthias L. Richter, “Manuscript Formats and Textual Structure in Early China,” in *Confucius and the Analects Revisited*, ed. Michael Hunter and Martin Kern (Leiden: Brill, 2018), pp. 197-198 notes that “[w]hen we encounter manuscripts larger than ca. forty slips and of a greater slip length than ca. thirty centimeters, we have reason to doubt that the manuscript was the primary means of access to an otherwise unknown text or that it was used much for reciting and possibly memorizing a text. Manuscripts of such large sizes may have been produced primarily for archival or representative purposes and may have played an ancillary role in the actual communication of their content.”

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Of course, if the manuscripts were primarily designed for consolidation, storage, and occasional consultation or recopying by experts in some sort of library, workshop, or other institutional setting, then the size of the silk sheets would not have represented the same impediment they would have posed for an individual owner or user. For an individual reader attempting to locate texts, often barely differentiated, on huge sheets of silk, however, the length of the silk would certainly have posed a major obstacle.

Indeed, it is worthwhile pausing to consider the operations necessary for reading manuscripts of such length. Certainly, a reader would not have been able to peruse their contents while holding them in their hands, as was the case with most manuscripts made of wood or bamboo, and he or she would certainly have required some sort of table surface in order to use them. Though tables were not ubiquitous work or dining surfaces in Han China, Han elites certainly had access to different kinds of low tables known as an or ji; indeed, such tables were in use in palaces and elite private residences already in the Qin dynasty. Hsing I-tien has observed that, a paucity of unambiguous references to writing at tables in transmitted texts or contemporaneous visual images notwithstanding, the existence of manuscripts on silk proves that, at least in certain circumstances, writing was carried out using some sort of table as a support, since the lightness and limpness of silk would otherwise have

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952 To this we might add that there seems to be no correlation between the material features of the manuscripts and the genres of the material they contain, further suggesting that the corpus as a whole (perhaps with a small number of exceptions, see below) was designed for consolidating and preserving texts.

953 Matthias L. Richter, *The Embodied Text: Establishing Textual Identity in Early Chinese Manuscripts* (Leiden: Brill, 2013), p. 56n.1 also notes that visual representations of reading in early Chinese sources suggest that written documents on wood and bamboo were typically read while holding them in both hands. Of course, since most of these images appear carved into bricks and stone as part of ritually constructed tomb sites, it is uncertain how accurate or representative they are as depictions of regular textual consumption in early China.


955 See Wang Xueli 王學理, ed., *Qin wuzhi wenhua shi* 秦物質文化史 (Xi’an: San-Qin, 1994), p. 245.
made it impossible to use as a writing surface. Hsing also notes that certain bamboo documents that we suspect were bound after writing likewise seem to suggest that tables were used during the writing process, since it would have been extraordinarily difficult to press bamboo slips together tightly enough to form a smooth writing surface suitable for accommodating texts, diagrams, and illustrations without the aid of some sort of support surface.\(^{956}\)

Judging by references in transmitted sources and contemporaneous pictorial images, then, it seems that written texts on bamboo or wood were routinely produced and read without the aid of tables, though tables would have been necessary for writing certain types of documents, including texts on silk. But what about reading? It would certainly have been necessary to use some sort of table as a support surface for reading many of the Mawangdui manuscripts, and judging by the length of the longer manuscripts a table of considerable size would have been required. While it is not impossible that an individual reader such as Li Xi could have had access to such a table, using it as a support surface for reading certain types of written texts,\(^{957}\) in my

\(^{956}\) Xing Yitian 邢義田 [= Hsing I-tien], “Fu ji’an er shu (dingbu gao) – dui Zhongguo gudai shuxie zisi de zaisi” 伏几案而書 (訂補稿) – 對中國古代書寫姿勢的再思 (2014) published online at the website of the “Center of Bamboo Silk Manuscripts of Wuhan University” 武漢大學簡帛研究中心, http://www.bsm.org.cn/show_article.php?id=2029 (accessed January 18, 2019). Hsing also notes that tables excavated from early Chinese tombs, while usually rather low, would in some cases have been high enough for use during the writing process. One table was found in Mawangdui M3; however, at just 90cm long and 16.5cm wide it would not have been large enough to use as support surface for reading the Mawangdui silk manuscripts. See BG, p. 155-157.

\(^{957}\) It is also possible that the longer silk manuscripts were partially unfolded and manually manipulated in such a way as to reveal only certain portions of the text without the manuscript taking up too much space on the support surface, obviating the need for long tables. Perhaps the manuscripts were read using some sort of wooden or bamboo rods to gradually unroll the silk, for example. However, if this was the case, it is curious that no such item was apparently interred along with the texts in Mawangdui M3. Medical Manuscript X was found rolled around two bamboo flutes. However, these flutes are far too short to have been used to unroll full-width manuscripts during the reading process, and in any case were clearly designed as musical instruments. Most likely, they were placed in the lacquer box for use in some sort of ritual, and Medical Manuscript X was simply rolled around them either as a convenient storage method or as a protective measure (see Chapter 1). See below for a fuller account of these flutes. As noted in the Introduction, each of the three silk manuscripts found rolled in the long through compartment of the lacquer case had been rolled around a long piece of wood (mupian 木片). See JC, 3.176-168, 4.1, 6.127. Unfortunately, to my knowledge, no dimensions, photographs, or illustrations of these pieces of wood have been published, except for the estimate given in JC, 3. 167-168 that the *Chunqiu shiyu* manuscript was rolled (approximately twelve or thirteen times) around a piece of wood roughly 3cm wide. Judging
view it is far more likely that these manuscripts were both produced and used in some sort of institutional setting, where long tables were on hand for scribes to copy and recopy the contents of the manuscripts in various forms and in different media. In addition, it seems that the Mawangdui silk manuscripts were generally folded up when not in use above ground, with Chen Jian 陳劍 demonstrating that, in the case of the *Muren zhan 木人占 (Divination Using Human Figurines), *Jiuzhu tu 九主圖 (Chart of the Nine Rulers), and *Wu ze you xing 物則有形圖 (Chart on Things Necessarily Having Forms) manuscripts, the silk had fragmented along old crease lines that pre-existed those made when the manuscripts were folded for storage inside the lacquer case. This, and the fact that the great majority of the Mawangdui silk manuscripts were folded for burial (see below), is strong evidence that they were also stored this way above ground. Again, long sheets of delicate silk carefully folded away when not in use would seem to correspond to the contents of an institutional library rather than the personal collection of an individual owner or user.

by these descriptions, it does not seem that these rectangular pieces of wood had been designed as rollers or staves that would have facilitated the gradual unrolling of the manuscript, nor is there any indication that any such item had even been affixed to the end(s) of any of the silk manuscripts found at Mawangdui. Probably, then, those three manuscripts were rolled around long pieces of wood as a convenient storage method that facilitated their placement inside the long through compartment of the lacquer case, and this method of storage should not necessarily be taken as an indication that they were stored or used this way above ground.

958 See Chen (2016), pp. 302, 305.

959 Indeed, despite the fact that Chen Songchang in BG describes the Mawangdui silk manuscripts as documents in the “handscroll style” (shoujuan shi 手卷式, see BG, p. 88), there is precious little evidence from the manuscripts themselves, or the ways they seem to have been stored, that they were read this way. Marc Kalinowski, “Bibliothèques et archives funéraires de la Chine ancienne,” Académie des Inscriptions et des Belles-Lettres. Comptes rendus des séances de l’année 2003, avril-juin 147.2 (2003), p. 921 notes that some silk manuscripts were rolled instead of folded, and he argues that when unrolled they acted rather like bamboo rolls, whose characteristics they had inherited. However, gradually unrolling the silk from the left-hand side while rolling the silk containing the portions of text that had already been read from the right-hand side would have made consulting the manuscripts’ contents rather troublesome, posing difficulties for using divination diagrams and consulting medical recipes using the table of contents extremely difficult, for example. Cf. Nylan (2014), pp. 160-161.
5.3.5. Duplicate texts

Consistent with certain other excavated or illegally acquired corpora of early Chinese manuscripts, the Mawangdui manuscript corpus contains numerous pairs of duplicate texts. We have already seen in Chapter 1 that the Laozi, for example, is represented twice among the Mawangdui manuscripts, and the *“Yinyang shiyi mai jiu jing” 隱陽十一脈灸經 (“Cauterization Canon of the Eleven Yin and Yang Vessels”) medical text is also represented in two versions (A and B editions) on Medical Manuscripts I and III. By far the most intricately intertwined duplicate texts from Mawangdui, however, come in the form of the material preserved on the three *Xingde and two *Yinyang wuxing manuscripts described in Chapter 4.960 While different explanations have been given for the presence of duplicate texts in different manuscript corpora,961 it seems that these five manuscripts were produced by recopying and recombining related textual materials, including diagrams, in different forms, and that this process took place in some sort of institutional setting where manuscripts with different emphases were produced for different uses.


961 Richter (2013), p. 68n.3, for example, argues that the duplicate manuscript pairs in the Shanghai Museum 上海博物館 manuscript corpus “are most probably writing exercises and thus not representative of the general history of textual transmission.” The fact that manuscript corpora found in early Chinese tombs somewhat regularly include duplicate pairs of manuscripts may also suggest that to some extent quantity was as important as quality when it came to burying written texts with the deceased.
Table 5.1: Textual divisions of the *Xingde and *Yinyang wuxing manuscripts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Manuscript</th>
<th>Texts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>*Yinyang wuxing A</td>
<td>1. **“Zazhan zhiyi” 杂占之一; 2. **“Tianyi” 天一; 3. **“Xi” 徙; 4. **“Tiandi” 天地; 5. **“Nuifa” 女發; 6. **“Zazhan zhi er” 杂占之二; 7. **“Shangshuo” 上朔; 8. **“Ji (yi)” 祭 (一); 9. **“Zhushen jixiong” 諸神吉凶; 10. **“Zazhan zhi san” 杂占之三; 11. **“Dao” 道; 12. **“Zazhan zhi liu” 杂占之六; 13. **“Shi” 室; 14. **“Zhu (yi)” 築 (一); 15. **“Zazhan zhiwu” 杂占之五; 16. **“Zazhan zhi er” 杂占之二; 17. **“Zhu (er)” 築 (二); 18. **“Wuxing jinri deng” 五行禁日等; 19. **“Zazhan zhi qi” 杂占之七; 20. **“Kanyu” 堪輿; 21. **“Xingri zhan” 行日; 22. **“Zhuri” 諸日; 23. **“Ji (er)” 祭 (二); 24. **“Ji (san)” 祭 (三); 25. **“Yiji” 宜忌.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Xingde C</td>
<td>1. **“Chuansheng zhan” 傳勝占; 2. **“Xingde zhan” 傳德占; 3. **“Digang zhan” 地剛占; 4. **“Tianyi yinyang” 天地陰陽</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Xingde A</td>
<td>1. **“Riyue fengyu yunqi zhan” 日月風雨雲氣占; 2. **“Xingde jieshuo” 傳德解說; 3. **“Taiyin xingde daoyou tu” 太陰刑德大游圖; 4. **“Xingde jieshuo” 傳德解說</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Yinyang wuxing B</td>
<td>1. **“Xingde zhan” 傳德占; 2. **“Taiyin xingde daoyou tu” 太陰刑德大游圖; 3. **“Xingde xiaoyou tu” 傳德小游圖; 4. **“Wuxing sanhe” 五行三合; 5. **“Zhuri” 諸日; 6. **“Wuxing jinri” 五行禁日; 7. **“Shangshuo” 上朔; 8. **“Xingri” 堪輿; 9. **“Xingri zhan” 行日</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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962 This subtitle is actually 術, and was selected on the basis of the prominent position of this graph in the text. Though the phonetic element of this graph is unidentified, it is an allograph (a graphic variant with the same pronunciation and meaning) for the word dao 道 (way). See Marco Caboara’s review of The Bamboo Texts of Guodian: A Study and Complete Translation, by Scott Cook in Journal of Chinese Studies 59 (2014), pp. 256-258.
As can be seen from the information provided in Table 5.1, the relationships between the various textual units and sub-units of these five manuscripts is highly complex, and it should be emphasized that the copying process from which the texts of these manuscripts were produced was not a closed loop. That is, while in some cases we can tell that certain textual units on one manuscript were copied directly from the texts on one of the other manuscripts, it also seems that textual material preserved on other manuscripts not included in the Mawangdui corpus was also consulted. For example, it has been established that the *“Xingde zhan”* (“Divinations on Punishment and Benevolence) section of the *Xingde A* manuscript was expanded and rewritten primarily on the basis of the *“Xingde zhan”* section of *Xingde C*, while other divinatory texts were also apparently consulted during the compilation process. In the process of this expansion, content from the *“Digang zhan”* (“Divination on the Guiding Principles of Earth”) and *“Tiandi yinyang”* (“Heaven and Earth, Yin and Yang”) sections of *Xingde C* were apparently also used.

In the course of transmission from *Xingde C* to *Xingde A* the status of the *“Xingde zhan”* section was raised considerably, while the content of the *“Digang zhan”* and *“Tiandi yinyang”* sections was de-emphasized and the *“Chuansheng zhan”* (“Divination for Transmitting Victory”) was even deleted entirely. The *“Xingde zhan”* section of *Xingde B* may

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963 My description of the textual relationships between the five manuscripts described in this section is taken from the accounts provided in JC, 5.1-149.
then have been rewritten on the basis of *Xingde A. Similarly, the *“Riyue fengyu yunqi zhan” (“Divinations Based on the Sun and Moon, Wind and Rain, Clouds and Vapors”) section of the *Xingde B manuscript was copied either directly or indirectly from the *Xingde A manuscript, as their contents are essentially identical.\(^{964}\)

The way in which different units of texts traveled between these manuscripts over time was not a random process. Indeed, it seems that these different manuscripts contain different constellations of text intended for different uses. The contents of the *Yinyang wuxing A manuscript (the earliest of the five), for example, are more diverse and heterogenous than the contents of the other manuscripts. We know that the *“Xingri” (“Punishment Days”), *“Tiandi” (“Heaven and Earth”), *“Tianyi” (“Heaven’s Unity”), and *“Nüfa” (“Woman Issuing”) subsections of *Yinyang wuxing B were copied either directly or indirectly from *Yinyang wuxing A, while the *“Shangshuo” section was expanded and rewritten in *Yinyang wuxing B on the basis of the *“Shangshuo” section of *Yinyang wuxing A. It also seems that the contents of *Xingde B were probably copied on the basis of the *“Xingde zhan” section of *Yinyang wuxing B and the *“Riyue fengyu yunqi” section of *Xingde A. Evidently, the objective of the compiler of *Yinyang wuxing B was to consolidate material from the *Xingde A, *Xingde C, and *Yinyang Wuxing A manuscripts that was related to certain types of divination, encompassing the *“Xingde zhan,” *“Shangshuo,” *“Chuansheng tu,” *“Digang tu,” *“Tianyi,” and *“Xingri” texts. Thus, this manuscript is the most systematic of all the interconnected divination manuscripts from Mawangdui.

Even if the process by which the texts of these five manuscripts were produced was not in fact as straightforward as this sketchy account might make it seem, it is nevertheless clear that these manuscripts, copied at different points in the period roughly between 221 BCE and 188 BCE (?), reflect a context of textual production where different and changing constellations of

\(^{964}\) Kalinowski (2005), pp. 160-161 has argued persuasively that at least some of the contents of the *Xingde B manuscript were copied directly from the *Xingde A manuscript, identifying places where the copyist’s eye seems to have skipped to the wrong portion of text during the copying process.
related materials were reformulated, recombined, and recopied over time. During this process, textual units were apparently sometimes copied more or less verbatim, traveling between manuscripts in basically unaltered form. More typically, however, they were expanded, condensed, or otherwise modified, with the intention of creating different constellations of textual material with different emphases to meet different needs.

Crucially, then, these five manuscripts seem to show that older versions of the same basic texts were not only retained but also reformulated and reproduced in combination with other texts over time. Certainly, it is hard to see why manuscripts would have been produced in this way over a period of several decades for use by an individual such as Li Xi. While one might be tempted to hypothesize that the texts were modified and refined over time mainly to suit changing circumstances or reflect advances in technical knowledge, in fact the patterns of textual movement that can be charted within and between these five manuscripts is not at all linear, and instead of interpreting the differences between them over time as evidence of refinement, improvement, or progression, it seems that instead these manuscripts were probably intended to serve as base texts for copying different constellations of material, probably in more portable and usable formats.

If these manuscripts had been designed as divination handbooks for use by individual owners, then their users would have had to wade through the same basic texts on multiple pieces of silk, requiring not only great patience but also significant expertise. We might also wonder why it was considered necessary to spend considerable time and resources repeating identical or near-identical diagrams and passages of texts onto the surface of different manuscripts. Of

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965 David Keegan, “The Huang-ti nei-ching: The Structure of the Compilation; The Significance of the Structure,” Ph.D. diss., University of California, Berkeley, 1988, pp. 67-113 shows that what were originally independent and movable, self-contained textual units were combined together to form different constellations of textual materials on the Mawangdui manuscripts.

966 For instance, certain of these manuscripts contain explanatory (jieshuo 解說) sections informing the reader how to use the diagrams to carry out certain divinatory operations. *“Xingde jieshuo” sections appear on all but the *Yinyang wuxing A (i.e., the earliest) manuscript, and there is significant overlap

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course, if each of these manuscripts was designed as a more or less independent repository of technical knowledge from which different divination handbooks could be produced for use by technical experts, then the overlap and repetition of information between manuscripts would not have been an impediment. In fact, it would actually have facilitated the copying process, with the duplication of the same basic texts on different manuscripts obviating the need to cobble together documents from multiple manuscripts. Indeed, as we have seen, these manuscripts do not seem to have been designed with technical use in mind, with their size, the dense arrangement of the text, and the obstacles posed to rotational use of their charts and diagrams more in keeping with documents designed primarily for consolidation. This speaks further to their use as base texts for copying the kinds of documents (probably on bamboo or wood) that would actually have been used by experts, or their apprentices, in the course of divination. An institutional context of production and use would also explain why the manuscripts were apparently retained for decades after they were manufactured. These were not obsolete documents retained purely for sentimental value, or because of their cultural prestige or material worth; they were kept around because they continued to be useful as repositories of information in the ongoing production of technical knowledge in textual form.

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For example, Ethan Harkness has found that the Shuihudi, Fangmatan 放馬灘 (Tianshui 天水, Gansu 甘肅; Qin), and Zhangjiashan 張家山 (Jiangling 江陵, Hubei; Western Han) manuscript corpora all contain examples of multiple, partially redundant manuscripts of daybook material. Harkness concludes from this (and the fact that these manuscripts were often found alongside writing tools) that the owners of these manuscripts took a personal interest in editing these manuscripts and their contents. Certainly, the five silk manuscripts from Mawangdui would have served as the ideal base texts for the institutional production of documents containing similar constellations of technical knowledge. See Ethan Harkness, “Cosmology and the Quotidian: Day Books in Early China,” Ph.D. diss., University of Chicago, 2011, pp. 48, 83. For the connection between daybooks and some of the Mawangdui documents, including the *Yinyang wuxing and *Xingde manuscripts, see Liu Lexian, “Daybooks: A Type of Popular Hemerological Manual of the Warring States, Qin, and Han,” in Books of Fate and Popular Culture in Early China: The Daybook Manuscripts of the Warring States and Han, ed. Donald Harper and Marc Kalinowski (Leiden: Brill, 2017), p. 81.
5.3.6 Unfinished manuscripts

Another indication that the Mawangdui manuscripts were designed for textual consolidation in some sort of institutional setting is the presence of what appears to be at least two “unfinished” manuscripts. The *Xiangma jing 相馬經 ([Classic on Physiognomizing Horses]) is a silk manuscript that records information related to the appraising and evaluation of the qualities of a horse based on its physical attributes. The text was copied on a manuscript that is 48cm wide and very long (length unspecified in JC), and the entire manuscript had been ruled with thin red vertical lines to form vertical columns on the surface of the silk, with thicker horizontal black lines located at the top and bottom of the manuscript forming upper and lower margins. The fact that the vertical red lines extend into the otherwise blank margins formed by these black lines may suggest that the red lines were ruled first. Chen Jian has calculated that before it was placed inside the lacquer case the manuscript was first folded from left to right (or from right to left), before the right-hand side of the manuscript was folded underneath the left-hand portion of the silk. The manuscript was then turned over and folded from a point one-third in from the right towards the left-hand side and again from a point one-third in from the left towards the right-hand side. The manuscript was apparently then turned over again, and finally folded once more from top to bottom.

The writing on the manuscript is an attractive and well-ordered style of Han clerical script ([Hanli 漢隸]) that bears similarities to inscriptions from the mid- and late-Western

968 BG, p. 89 has this manuscript under the *shushu 數術* (“numbers and techniques”) category.

969 See JC, 5.169-181 for an introduction to the manuscript and annotated transcriptions of its contents; see JC, 2.32-54 for color photographs of the manuscript.


971 JC, 5.169 notes that this script style is also known as the “current clerical” ([jinli 今隸]) style.
Han, though certain graphs retain elements of the seal script (zhuanshu 篆書) style. The writing is neatly presented and beautifully executed, though the characters that come at the end of each column tend towards a more cursive style with thinner strokes, perhaps suggesting that the scribe was losing concentration or that the silk was supported in such a way as to make writing text on its bottom edge somewhat difficult. The text comprises a total of seventy-seven columns of text and around 4,600 of an estimated original 5,000 characters have survived. The manuscript has sustained fairly serious damage along the crease lines, but Liu Zhao 劉釗 in JC estimates that, judging by the manuscript fragments, less than half of the silk manuscript originally contained writing, with the remaining portions having been pre-ruled with black and red lines but absent written text. Liu speculates, on the basis of these blank, pre-ruled sections of silk, that the manuscript may have been unfinished when it was interred, and that the rest of the uncopied text probably recorded different methods of appraising or treating horses.

The contents of the manuscript can be divided into three sections: the main text (jing 經), a commentary (zhuan 傳), and exegesis (guxun 詁訓/故訓), with each section begun on a new line and the presence of certain sub-sections within each section indicated by round dots or small horizontal marks. The contents of the text have to do with appraising the eyes and the surrounding areas of the horse, a practice mentioned in texts such as the Lüshi chunqiu 呂氏春秋 (Springs and Autumns Annals of Mr. Lü). The contents of the text are not, however, completely understood, largely because we have no transmitted text with which to compare it.

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972 See YS, 159-174 where the *Xiangma jing* is placed in the Han clerical category, with transcriptions and black and white photographs of certain sections of the manuscript.

973 See Xie Chengxia 謝成俠, “Guanyu Changsha Mawangdui Hanmu boshu ‘Xiangma jing’ de tantao” 關於長沙馬王堆漢墓帛書「相馬經」的探討, Wenwu 文物 (1977).8, pp. 23-24. Xie also argues that the calligraphy seems to be by the same hand (i.e., scribe) responsible for copying the contents of the *Laozi B* manuscript.

974 See Chapter 1 for a discussion of scribal fatigue in the context of manuscript production at Mawangdui.

975 See Lüshi chunqiu jishi 呂氏春秋集釋 20.579-580.
It was noted as early as the initial transcription of the text published in 1977 that much of the text is written in a quasi-fu 賦 (rhapsody) style, with extensive use of rhyme and elaborate descriptions filled with metaphors and other literary elements; hence, the manuscript has also been given the alternate title *Xiangma fu 相馬賦 (Rhapsody on Appraising Horses), and it was speculated then, based on certain internal references, that the text was originally compiled in the state of Chu sometime during the Warring States period. That same year, Xie Chengxia 謝成俠 argued that the text was not originally divided into the tripartite structure in which we now have it, based on the fact that the words and phrases used to begin and end the sections into which the text is currently divided often seem neither to introduce or conclude these sections of text. While Xie also argued that the text is essentially unfinished, judging by the fact that it only contains information about the eyes and not the nose, lips, teeth, or any other parts of the horse, Zhao Kuifu 趙逵夫 has argued forcefully in a series of publications that the contents of the *Xiangma jing manuscript represent but one complete, self-contained chapter (pian 篇) dedicated to horses’ eyes, and that this chapter came complete with its own title. Zhao also


978 See also Zhao Kuifu 趙逵夫, “Zaoci jueyu, yiyun hongshen – cong boshu ‘Xiangma jing . Daguang pozhang’ kan Qu fu biyu xiangzheng shoufâ de xingcheng” 藻辭譎喻, 意藴弘深 - 從帛書「相馬經 . 大光破」看屈舘比喻象徵手法的形成, *Liaoning shifan daxue xuebao* 遼寧師範大學學報 (1988).3, pp. 50-51 where Zhao draws a connection between the descriptions in this text and the elaborate descriptions of palaces and gardens in Han fu poetry.

979 See Mawangdui Hanmu boshu zhengli xiaozu (1977b).


acknowledged that the text comprises three sections: the main text (columns 1-22), a commentary (columns 23-43), and exegesis (columns 44-77).\textsuperscript{983} Zhao demonstrated that whereas the exegesis section of the text provides detailed glosses for the words and phrases in the main text, the commentary section is much less tightly connected to it, elaborating on the general sense of its contents while drawing on other references outside the main text itself. Whereas the exegesis is systematic in its elucidation of the main text, then, the commentary section focuses on certain key issues and problems of interpretation. Thus, Zhao argued that while the commentary and exegesis sections may derive from the same author, they both postdate the main text, which he dated to the Warring States era.\textsuperscript{984} Zhao took the first four characters of the main text (and thus of the text as a whole), \textit{daguang po zhang} 大光破章, as the title for the entire text of the *Xiangma jing* manuscript, interpreting the term \textit{daguang} as a reference to the eye of the horse, \textit{po} in the sense of “analyze” (\textit{jiexi} 解析) or “see through” (\textit{shitou} 識透), and \textit{zhang} to mean chapter or section.\textsuperscript{985} Thus, Zhao argues that the writing on this manuscript is a complete text forming a single chapter or section of a larger work, and that this (hypoethetical) longer work should be called the *Xiangma jing*.\textsuperscript{986}

While Xie Chengxia and Zhao Kuifu seem to have different notions of textual completeness, then, in fact they both agree that the contents of the text on the *Xiangma jing* manuscript are, in some sense, incomplete, in that they form part of a longer work the rest of which is absent from the manuscript. Whereas Zhao focuses on the textual integrity of what he

\begin{quote}
\textsuperscript{983} The beginning of each new section starts on a new column but is apparently otherwise unmarked.
\textsuperscript{984} See Zhao (1989a), pp. 262-267. Zhao also notes that that, unlike in the Eastern Han, when \textit{zhuan} commentaries became more like \textit{xungu} exegesis in nature and thus more closely tied to the text on which they offered commentary, in the Western Han the \textit{zhuan} commentarial form was still a semi-independent genre that could roam within and without the text, often introducing information and references from other sources.
\textsuperscript{985} Zhao (1989a), p. 267.
\textsuperscript{986} Zhao (1989a), p. 268.
\end{quote}
takes to be a self-contained and complete textual unit, he nevertheless agrees that this was intended as just one chapter or section within a longer work. Similarly, Xie finds that the manuscript is missing a lot of material relevant to its subject.

As noted above, the manuscript contains a considerable amount of pre-ruled blank silk that appears after the text portion of the manuscript ends. Indeed, most of the manuscript was blank. Chen Songchang, based on the presence of imprints on the surface of the blank portions of silk, has shown that they originally constituted part of the manuscript proper and were not separate lining sheets inserted to protect the contents of the manuscript (see Chapter 1). Thus, Chen also believes that the manuscript was unfinished when it was interred.987

Chen Jian, however, has taken issue with some of Chen Songchang’s conclusions, as well as those of Liu Zhao in JC (who follows Chen Songchang). Chen Jian points out that the *Wuxing zhan 五星占 (Prognostication by the Five Planets) manuscript (see below) also contains large amounts of blank silk, thus disproving Chen Songchang’s assertion that the *Xiangma jing is the only manuscript in the Mawangdui corpus to contain such a large amount of blank, pre-ruled silk. Chen further argues that it is hard to substantiate the claim that the text of either manuscript was unfinished.988 Unfortunately, Chen Jian does not specify precisely why he finds it hard to believe that these two manuscripts were unfinished.

The business of appraising horses was a practical art in Han times,989 but the language of the text is technical and often obscure, and the literary flourishes in the quasi-fu style make it

987 See Chen (2008j), pp. 78-79. Chen also bases his argument about the manuscript being unfinished on the fact that this is the only example of such a phenomenon among the Mawangdui manuscripts. But see the objections raised by Chen Jian below.

988 See Chen (2016), pp. 278, 288-290. Chen also notes that some text from this manuscript is imprinted on the topmost layer of the *Chuxing zhan 出行占 (Divination on Journeys) manuscript discussed in Chapter 2.

989 Roel Sterckx, The Animal and the Daemon in Early China (Albany: SUNY Press, 2002), pp. 156-158 notes that the practice of physiognomizing animals was part of the belief that the character traits and moral values of animals were exhibited through and thus readable from their external forms. Indeed, the practice of physiognomizing horses was apparently quite widespread in Han China, and another excavated manuscript on wood related to the practice was found at Majuanwan 馬圈灣 near Dunhuang 敦
difficult to understand. The commentary and exegesis sections of the manuscript aid, in different ways, the reading of the main text, though little effort was apparently made to distinguish these three sections of text from each other clearly on the surface of the silk. An expert in physiognomy would surely not have required such a document, and a novice would likely have been lost among its esoteric contents. Perhaps the manuscript was designed as a sort of crib sheet or teaching aid for a would-be specialist, but then why was the manuscript designed in a way that wasted so much silk? It seems doubtful that a scribe would use such a large amount of silk to copy a single chapter of a longer work, and it is more likely that the scribe deliberately selected this piece of silk, or at least deliberately neglected to cut away the blank sections of silk at the end of the manuscript, in order to accommodate a greater amount of text. The fact that the blank portions of silk were pre-ruled also suggests that the manuscript as a whole was intended to accommodate more text. It is unclear why this additional text was never copied onto the manuscript, but the manuscript was evidently designed with the possibility of copying additional text in mind.

The *Wuxing zhan 五星占 (Prognostication by the Five Planets) silk manuscript is a divinatory text that presents information about the movement of the Five Planets and

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990 Each section begins on a new line, but these divisions are not otherwise marked by the use of round dots, blacked out margins, or a blank line left in-between sections, for example.

991 Perhaps the material was simply unavailable to copy, having not been acquired or properly prepared, for example.
prognostications based on their positions. The text can be divided into two parts: the first provides divinations related to the movement through the sky and locations of Jupiter (suixing 歲星), Mars (yinghuo 萤惑), Saturn (tianxing 填星), Mercury (chenxing 辰星), and Venus (taibai 太白), with the sections devoted to Jupiter and Venus considerably longer than the rest. The second part of the document consists of tabulations for just three of these planets, Jupiter, Saturn, and Venus, describing their appearance in different lodges (xiu 宿) in the sky. The *Wuxing zhan* manuscript provides a wealth of information about the movements of the planets and is generally accurate, though the divinatory portions of the text make clear that the purpose of the document was not to chart the movement of the planets purely for the sake of doing so, but in order to divine the likely outcomes of political and military events based on the believed

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992 BG, p. 89 lists the *Wuxing zhan* manuscript in the “numbers and techniques” category. JC, 4.223-244 provides an introduction and full transcriptions of its contents; JC, 1.171-202 has color photographs of the entire manuscript. See also Yu Bing 于兵 in NTM, p. 87. For an overview of this manuscript, see Christopher Cullen, “Understanding the Planets in Ancient China: Prediction and Divination in the *Wu xing zhan*,” *Early Science and Medicine* 16.3 (2011), pp. 218-251. Cullen provides a description (pp. 225-228) of the lodge 宿 (xiu) system used to divide the circuit of the planets into twenty-eight sections, each a different width measured in degrees (du 度), with the Sun thought to move through a single du per day. The number of du that a lodge spanned thus determined the number of days the Sun spent there. The lodges are jue 角 (Horn), kang 角 (Gullet), di 氐 (Base), fang 房 (Chamber), xin 心 (Heart), wei 尾 (Tail), ji 畿 (Winnower), dou 斗 (Dipper), niu 牛 (Ox), niu 女 (Woman), xu 虚 (Barrens), wei 位 (Rooftop), shi 室 (House), bi 壁 (Wall), kui 奎 (Straddler), lou 洛 (Harvester), wei 胃 (Stomach), mao 昂 (Mane), bi 毕 (Net), zui 嘴 (Beak), shen 参 (Triaster), jing 井 (Well), gui 鬼 (Ghost), liu 柳 (Willow), xing 星 (Star), zhang 张 (Spread), yi 翼 (Wing), and zhen 軫 (Axletree). The three tables provide the names of the planets with lodge names and certain movements (when it comes out or goes in; when it is in the east or the west, etc.). Cullen points out (p. 224-225) that “[f]or Mercury we are given no tabulated scheme, but we are told that it is normal for the planet to appear at the equinoxes and solstices, and that departures from this behavior are ominous. Only for Mars is there no hint of expected behavior. Indeed, we are explicitly told that: ‘進退無恆，不可為 [極]… Its advance and retreat are irregular: it is not possible to make a standard.’ As expected, no Mars omens are based on ‘irregular’ motion of the planet.” Christopher Cullen, “*Wu xing zhan* 五星占 ‘Prognostics of the Five Planets,’” *SCIAMVS Sources and Commentaries in the Exact Sciences* 12 (2011), pp. 193-249 provides another overview of the manuscript as well as a full translation of its contents. See also Daniel Morgan, “The Planetary Visibility Tables in the Second-Century BC Manuscript *Wu xing zhan*.” *East Asian Science, Technology, and Medicine* 43 (2016), pp. 17-60.

993 Daniel Morgan, however, has noted that while the calligraphy of the text is beautiful the information provided contains numerous errors. See Morgan (2015), pp. 555-558.
correspondences between the movement and location of the planets in the sky and events on Earth.

As the earliest extant work of Chinese astronomy, the manuscript has been used by scholars as an important source for reconstructing early Chinese astronomical thought. He Youqi 何幼琦, for example, has argued that the text was originally composed in the Warring States era, judging by references to geopolitical events and the frequent mention of terms such as kings 王者 (wangzhe), nobles 諸侯 (zhuhou), and generals (jiangjun 將軍), and the text also seems to refer obliquely to events that can be matched to known events in Warring States history. Regardless of the time when the text as we have it was originally composed or

994 Cullen (2011a), p. 218 notes that this is “the earliest surviving Chinese document showing clear evidence of systematic consideration of planetary motions.” See also Liu Yunyou 劉雲友 [= Xi Zezong 席澤宗], “Zhongguo tianwen shi shang de yige zhongyao faxian – Mawangdui Hanmu boshu zhong de ‘Wuxing zhan’ 中國天文史上的一個重要發現 – 馬王堆漢墓帛書中的「五星占」, Wenwu 文物 (1974).11, pp. 28-36; Chen Jiujin 陳久金, “Cong Mawangdui boshu ‘Wuxing zhan’ de chutu shitian woguo gudai de suixing jinian wenti” 從馬王堆帛書「五星占」的出土試探我國古代的歲星紀年問題, Zhongguo tianwen xue shi wenji (di yi ji) 中國天文學史文集 (第一集), ed. Zhongguo tianwenxue shi wenji bianji zu 中國天文學史文集編輯組 (Beijing: Kexue chubanshe, 1978), pp. 48-65; He Youqi 何幼琦, “Shilun ‘Wuxing zhan’ de shidai he neirong” 試論「五星占」的時代和內容, Xueshu yanjiu 學術研究 (1979).1, pp. 80-81. Based on this, He argues that this portion of text likely dates to the late Warring States era, probably 370-320 BCE. He also claims (pp. 81-83) that the text cannot have been copied in Chu, because it contains a derogatory name (jing 荆) for that state, and that the text likewise cannot derive from the state of Qin since it talks about “attacking the West” (xi fa 西伐). He also claims that the text cannot be from the former states of Yan or Qi because these states were more focused on fangshi 方士 activities and were not actively engaged in astral calendrics. For his part, Liu Binhui 劉彬徽 has argued that by the time the text was copied in the Han, the term jing had ceased to be regarded as derogatory. See Liu Binhui 劉彬徽, “Mawangdui Hanmu boshu ‘Wuxing zhan’ yanjiu 馬王堆漢墓帛書「五星占」研究, in Mawangdui Hanmu yanjiu wenji – 1992 nian Mawangdui Hanmu guoji xueshu taolunhui lunwen xuan 馬王堆研究文集 – 1992 年馬王堆漢墓國際學術討論會論文選, ed.
compiled, however, the text of the *Wuxing zhan* manuscript was certainly copied in the Western Han. The writing on the manuscript is a very neat brand of Han clerical script, and the tabular sections of the text contain information for the years up until 177 BCE.

The piece of silk onto which the text was copied is 48cm high and very long (no specific length is given in JC), with a considerable amount of blank space left at the end of the manuscript. The manuscript has been reconstructed largely on the basis of imprinted characters, and there are one hundred and forty-five surviving columns of text containing over 8,000 characters. The manuscript is ruled throughout with thin vertical red lines to create vertical columns, and thicker black lines run across the top and bottom of the manuscript to form upper and lower margins that intersect with these red lines. As with the lines on the *Xiangma jing* manuscript, this means that the red lines were probably ruled first. The characters are clearly written and generously spaced, making for a highly readable text.

Chen Jian has calculated that the manuscript was folded first from right to left, before the left-hand portion of silk was folded underneath the right-hand portion. Then, the manuscript was folded from left to right and from right to left again, before the lower half of the silk was finally folded on top of the top half. In the process, Chen has established that certain blank portions of

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996 YS, pp. 175-188 has *Wuxing zhan* in the Han clerical section and provides black and white photographs and transcriptions of its contents. Chen Songchang in YS notes (p. 175) that judging by the specific dates and reign years given in parts of the text it could not have been copied earlier than the first year of the reign of Emperor Wen. Interestingly, characters in certain date notations such as “First year of the Filial [= late] Emperor Hui” retain elements of the ancient-clerical style.

997 Kalinowski (1998-99), pp. 127-128n.12 notes that the dates provided in the text of the *Wuxing zhan* manuscript range from 246-177 BC, ending in the third year of the reign of Emperor Wen. The calligraphic style is the same as that used to write the text of the *Xingde B* manuscript, suggesting that both documents were copied in the reign of Emperor Wen. We know that the information given for these dates is not entirely predictive, since dates are given according to the reign years of the Han emperors, something that a scribe or diviner time could not possibly have predicted.

998 Judging by my estimations from the photographs published in JC, the manuscript is over four times longer than it is tall, and over half of the length of the manuscript is blank.

999 See Chen (2016), pp. 292-293.
silk that were originally associated with the *“Fangnei ji” 房内記 (“Records on Matters of the Bedchamber”) and “Liao shegong dufang” 療射工毒方 (“Prescriptions for Treatments on Poisons”) texts on Medical Manuscript V should belong to the *Wuxing zhan manuscript, meaning that the blank portions of silk at the end of the reconstructed manuscript now exceed significantly the text-bearing portions of silk.\textsuperscript{1000} Chen also notes that the manuscript begins with a single blank column, as do the two Zhouyi manuscripts, the *Xiangma jing manuscript, the *Xingde B manuscript, and Medical Manuscript VI, and that this practice, equivalent to using fly leaves (feiye 扉頁) or leaving the first slip in a manuscript made of bamboo or wooden slips blank (a practice known as zhuijian 贅简), was designed to protect the beginning of the text.\textsuperscript{1001}

To summarize, the ends of both the *Xiangma jing and *Wuxing zhan manuscripts, which, judging by their calligraphy and certain internal references, are some of the most recently produced documents in the Mawangdui corpus, contain significant amounts of blank silk that exceed even the lengths of the texts of the manuscripts, and these texts can also be shown, based on internal references within the texts themselves, to be somehow incomplete. The text of the *Xiangma jing manuscript, for example, is dedicated to a single part of the horse (the eye), and the text of the *Wuxing zhan manuscript contains tabulated data for just three of the five planets that it describes, explicitly stating that it has not been possible to provide accurate calculations for the regular movements of one of these planets (Mars). It is surely not a coincidence that the two silk manuscripts featuring the longest portions of blank, yet pre-ruled, silk are also those whose contents are somehow incomplete. Regardless of whether we would call the contents of these manuscripts “unfinished,” I believe that the most plausible explanation for their material features is that the long blank sections of silk at the end of the manuscripts were deliberately left in order to accommodate further text.\textsuperscript{1002} This, and the fact that we have evidence from other

\textsuperscript{1000} See Chen (2016), pp. 291-292.

\textsuperscript{1001} See Chen (2016), pp. 294-295.
manuscripts that just such a practice occurred (see above), suggests that these manuscripts were produced in an institution where textual material was acquired over time, with new materials integrated into the relevant library copies where appropriate. These were not finished products, used by technical experts or enjoyed as luxury possessions by elite owners; rather, they were living documents designed to be updated and used in an institutional setting.

5.3.7 Dating the manuscripts

As noted in the Introduction, although we can rarely estimate the date when the individual manuscripts in the Mawangdui corpus were copied with complete accuracy, it is possible, based on the observation of taboos, the calligraphic style in which the text was copied, and internal textual references including dates, to provide more or less accurate ranges of dates within which the manuscripts were copied. Indeed, the various manuscripts in

1002 See Chen (2016), pp. 277-278, 317, who notes that significant portions of blank silk (though nothing close to the amount see in these two manuscripts) appear in-between certain texts on the same piece of silk. See, for example, the gap between the **“Yinyang mai si hou” 陰陽脈死候 (“Death Signs of the Yin and Yang Vessels”) text and the table of contents for the **“Wushi’er bingfang” text on Medical Manuscript I, and the blank silk that comes before the **“Daoyin tu” 導引圖 (“Illustrations for Guiding and Pulling”) on Medical Manuscript III. Chen Jian claims that in some cases where the text ended before the end of the manuscript the excess silk was cut away (caige 裁割), and that this was typically the case with manuscripts containing illustrations or images.

1003 Matthias Richter has attempted to identify which of the Mawangdui manuscripts were written by the same hands, concluding that the *Laozi B, Zhouyi commentarial, and *Xingde B manuscripts were written by the same hand, and the Zhouyi manuscript by another. Richter also concludes that the texts of the *Wuxing zhan and *Xiangma jing manuscripts were written by separate scribes. See Matthias Richter, “Towards a Profile of Graphic Variation: On the Distribution of Graphic Variants within the Mawangdui Laozi Manuscripts,” in Methodological Issues in the Study of Early Chinese Manuscripts: Papers from the Second Hamburg Tomb Text Workshop, ed. Matthias Richter, Asiatische Studien / Études Asiatiques LIX.1 (2005), p. 181.

1004 See the estimates (taken from the relevant entries in JC) given in the Appendix. Chen Songchang (2012), pp. 6-13 also provides an overview of the dates of the various Mawangdui manuscripts. Kalinowski (2005), p. 143, 143n.24 notes that while we might not be able to assign each of the Mawangdui manuscripts to a chronological layer with complete accuracy, our chronology is supported by the fact that when we find multiple script styles on the same manuscript, it is always the newer style that follows the older style, as is the case, for example, with the additions made to the **“Wushi’er bingfang”
the Mawangdui corpus seem to have been copied at different times over a period of some forty to fifty years between the Qin and early Western Han dynasties, and Li Xi, with whom the manuscripts were buried, was not even born when the earliest of them were copied.\footnote{1005}

Several scholars have speculated that Li Xi may have inherited the manuscript collection in some form from his father, Li Cang.\footnote{1006} Chen Songchang, for example, has argued that the *Xingde A* manuscript was probably copied in 196 BCE for use in the military campaigns in which he thinks Li Cang participated, and that after his death he bequeathed it (presumably along with certain other manuscripts) to Li Xi, with whom it was eventually buried.\footnote{1007} Similarly, Zhu Guichang 朱桂昌 has argued that the manuscript collection was gifted by Li Cang to Li Xi as an embodiment of the culture and values of Chinese elites and a reminder of what life was like in the central regions of the empire.\footnote{1008}

There are reasons to doubt both these arguments, however. Contra Chen, as we have seen, manuscripts like the *Xingde A* manuscript do not seem well suited for use in military operations and seem instead to have been produced and used in some sort of institutional context. And, contra Zhu, I do not find the entirely speculative idea that Li Cang would have chosen to gift a collection of written texts to his son as a symbol of elite culture convincing, given what we text on Medical Manuscripts I and II. The taboos observed, as well as the dates given, in certain texts also tend to bear out the chronology. Of course, the question of when the text of the manuscript was copied is distinct from the question of when the texts were originally compiled or composed.

\footnote{1005} It is estimated that Li Xi was around thirty years old when he died in 168 BCE, meaning that the earliest of the Mawangdui manuscripts were probably copied years before he was born. See Kalinowski (2005), p. 143 and my discussion in the Introduction.

\footnote{1006} Carl Knappett had noted how when dealing with the “inter-generationality” of artifacts, it is often difficult to tell if an object was consciously passed down from one generation to the next or simply endured without much thought because it continued to be useful. See Carl Knappett, *An Archaeology of Interaction: Network Perspectives on Material Culture and Society* (Oxford, England: Oxford University Press, 2011), pp. 192-193.


know about the relatively peripheral role written texts played in the cultural life of elites in early Western Han.\textsuperscript{1009} Certainly, as we will see, the archaeological evidence from Mawangdui M3 seems to suggest that Li Xi did not enjoy a close personal relationship with textual learning. Both Chen and Zhu start out by assuming that the Mawangdui manuscripts were the personal possessions of certain members of the Li family. Given the timespan in which the manuscripts were produced, however, I would argue that they in fact derive from an institutional setting that probably pre-existed the association between the Li family and the state of Changsha, and that for this reason it is unhelpful to understand the circumstances of their production and use above ground in relation to Li Xi or his family.

We know very little about the political organization of Changsha prior to Li Cang’s tenure as Prime Minister. Indeed, we are not even certain when Li Cang took up this role, by whom he was appointed, or what he had done to deserve it.\textsuperscript{1010} The \textit{Shiji} states that Wu Cheng 吳

\textsuperscript{1009} See my discussion of the status of writing in early China in Chapter 3.

\textsuperscript{1010} As noted in the Introduction, it is unclear why or how Li Cang was appointed Prime Minister. Ma Yong 馬雍, “Daihou he Changsha guo chengxiang – tan Changsha Mawangdui yihao Hanmu zhuren shenfen he muzang niandai de youguan wenti” 軑侯和長沙國丞相 – 談 長沙馬王堆一號漢墓主人身分和墓葬年代的有關問題, \textit{Wenwu} 文物 (1972).9, p. 15 points out that, despite the fact that at the beginning of the Western Han prime ministers (\textit{chengxiang} 丞相) in the regional kingdoms were supposed to be appointed by the central government, in fact there are numerous examples of early Western Han prime ministers who were relatives of the kings they served. It is thus possible that Li Cang was indeed a relative of the Wu 吳 family who ruled over the kingdom of Changsha. Ma also notes (pp. 17-18) that Li Cang’s military service during the Chu-Han contention cannot have been particularly distinguished, since Liu Bang personally enfeoffed one hundred and thirty-seven nobles at the beginning of the dynasty and Li Cang was not ennobled until the reign of his son, Emperor Hui. In addition, in contrast to many other nobles of renowned military service to the state, neither the \textit{Shiji} or the \textit{Hanshu} makes reference to any sort of military achievements associated with Li Cang (see below).

Bingyi Huang, “From Chu to Western Han: Re-reading Mawangdui,” Ph.D. diss., Yale University, 2005, p. 266n.1 correctly points out that scholarly hypotheses about where Li Cang was born or raised are sheer speculation; however, she favors the hypothesis that Li Cang was not originally from the Changsha region since the generals who fought in the war against Qin were mostly from the eastern part of the former Chu state, including present-day Henan 河南, Anhui 安徽, and Jiangsu 江蘇 provinces. In addition, Huang notes that the Han court usually sent officials from the capital to govern local states. Fu (2011), p. 153, meanwhile, speculates that Li Cang was appointed Prime Minister by Liu Bang as a reward for his military support in the war against Xiang Yu 項羽. As evidence, Fu cites a passage in \textit{Hanshu} 16.578 where the conduct of one Liu Tuo 劉它 (= Xiang Tuo 項它), who was given the surname Liu by Liu Bang along with a marquisate as reward for his military support during the Chu-Han contention (\textit{Shiji} 7.338), is compared to that of the Marquess of Dai, which Fu takes to be a reference to
程（= Wu Ying 吳郢）was serving as the “Pillar of State” (zhuguo 柱國) of Changsha when he was ennobled as Marquess of Yiling 義陵侯 in 198 BCE, and that he died in 191 BCE.1011 Fu Juyou 傅舉有 has noted that zhuguo was the title of an official post in the state of Chu during the Warring States equivalent to Prime Minister (chengxiang 丞相), and that it was still in use during the Chu-Han contention era. Fu thus takes this reference to mean that Wu Cheng was Li Cang’s predecessor as Prime Minister of Changsha.1012 The Shiji and the Hanshu agree that Li Cang was serving as Prime Minister of Changsha when he was enfeoffed as Marquess of Dai in 193 BCE,1013 and if this information is accurate it would mean that Li Cang was appointed Prime Minister of Changsha in 198 BCE at the earliest and 193 BCE at the latest.

However, there is evidence to suggest that Li Cang may have been appointed Prime Minister only in 193 BCE, the very same year he was enfeoffed as Marquess of Dai. The fact that the first mention we have of Li Cang comes with the record of his enfeoffment in 193 BCE, Li Cang. See also the account in Hou Liang 侯良, Mawangdui chuanqi 馬王堆傳奇 (Taipei: Dongda tushuguan gongsi, 1994), p. 248 and idem, Chenfeng de wenming – shenmi de Mawangdui Hanmu 塵封的文明 – 神秘的馬王堆漢墓 (Changsha: Hunan renmin chubanshe, 2002), p. 80 for the same argument. However, Ma (1972), pp. 17-18 casts doubt on this theory, arguing that Ban Gu seems to have mistaken a reference in the Shiji to the military achievements of the Marquess of Dai 戴 (not 戴) for a reference to Li Cang. For this reference, see Shiji 18.929. However, Fu (2011), pp. 153-154 takes the presence of the inscribed bronze crossbow trigger in Li Cang’s tomb (see Chapter 3) as evidence of his military exploits, as does Hou (2002), p. 80. In fact, Hou argues that Li Cang was appointed by the central government because of his military service, with the intention not only of administering the government of Changsha but also keeping an eye on its belligerent Nanyue 南越 neighbors. See Hou (1994), pp. 248-249 and Hou (2002), pp. 78-80.

1011 See Shiji 18.950.

1012 Fu (2011), p. 154. Hou (2002), pp. 78-80 notes that Wu Cheng was enfeoffed one year earlier (194 BCE) than Li Cang and was granted the right to raise taxes from a greater number of households (1,500) yet occupied a lower rank within the system of nobility (Li Cang = 120/137; Wu Qian = 134/137). On this basis, and the fact that Wu Cheng was ennobled alongside other members of the Wu family, Hou argues that Wu Cheng was ennobled because he was a close relative of the royal Wu family, and this was also why he was made prime minister. In contrast, Hou contends that the reason Li Cang was made prime minister and given a higher rank of marquisate must be because his abilities were greatly valued by the central government. Indeed, Hou (1994), p. 248 points out that since Li Cang’s rank in the nobility was approximate to Liu Tuo’s (121/137), this perhaps suggests that Li Cang similarly served in the military with some distinction.

which also happens to be the year Wu Hui 吳回 ascended the throne as King Ai of Changsha 長沙哀王.\textsuperscript{1014} may suggest that Li Cang was appointed Prime Minister by the new king. Ma Yong 馬雍 has noted that the \textit{Shiji} lists “illuminating their rank” (\textit{ming qi deng} 明其等) as one of the five reasons merits (\textit{gong} 功) were conferred on ministers, meaning that once an official had reached a certain rank it was customary for them to be enfeoffed with a nobility as a reflection of their status.\textsuperscript{1015} If Li Cang was indeed enfeoffed as Marquess of Dai as a reflection of his position as Prime Minister of Changsha, then it would make sense that this enfeoffment followed shortly after his appointment, meaning that he probably took up his position only in 193 BCE.

Regardless of precisely when Li Cang was appointed Prime Minister of Changsha during the period 198-193 BCE, if our estimates for the dates of the Mawangdui manuscripts are more or less accurate then many of them were produced years (indeed, perhaps as long as two decades or more) before Li entered office. As stated above, we know nothing about Li Cang’s life or career prior to this time (see below), and it is certainly possible that he had acquired the manuscripts prior to his appointment and brought them with him to Changsha, or that he was already residing in Changsha when he acquired them.\textsuperscript{1016} However, as we have seen, the Mawangdui manuscripts do not seem to have been designed with individual ownership or use in mind, reflecting instead institutional priorities and circumstances of production and use. This being the case, it may be more natural to hypothesize that many of these manuscripts were produced in Changsha prior to Li Cang’s tenure as Prime Minister, perhaps even prior to the formation of Changsha as a regional kingdom in the Han. Changsha had been a commandery during the Qin dynasty,\textsuperscript{1017} and since a number of the Mawangdui manuscripts seem to date to

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item See \textit{Shiji} 17.814.
\item Ma (1972), p. 17. \textit{Shiji} 18.877 records that this types of merit was called “extolling” (\textit{fa} 伐).
\item Arguments that Li Cang descended from a clan that was prominent in the old kingdom of Chu on the basis of scanty records from texts that postdate the Mawangdui tombs by over 1,000 years are unreliable. Cf. Hou (1994), p. 248.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
the Qin or the Chu-Han contention era (see the Appendix), it is possible that manuscript production in Changsha during the early Western Han was a continuation of an institutional patronage of textual production already established in Qin times. Indeed, many of the Mawangdui manuscripts seem to preserve elements of old Chu language and culture.\textsuperscript{1018}

In light of what we know about early Western Han text culture, and given the fact that the manuscripts seem to have been designed for use in an institutional setting and were produced before, during, and after Li Cang’s tenure as Prime Minister, rather than assuming that nobles like Li Cang and Li Xi traveled or worked with portable collections of written texts that they personally curated over time, it seems more likely that the Mawangdui manuscripts were produced in Changsha as part of a regional practice, begun in Qin and continued in Western Han, of producing written texts for use in an institutional setting. Certainly, it would make sense for regional administrative territories in Qin and regional courts in early Western Han to patronize the preservation and production of written texts containing medical knowledge, technical expertise, and rhetorical and philosophical wisdom (all, in one way or another, related to the administration of state activities and the personal conduct of political leaders) necessary for the successful negotiation of an Early Imperial sociopolitical landscape characterized by violence and conflict.\textsuperscript{1019} In any case, there is no evidence that the chronology of the Mawangdui

\textsuperscript{1017} The \textit{Hanshu} informs us that Changsha was a commandery (\textit{jun 郡}) in the Qin before it was established as a kingdom under the rulership of Wu Rui 吳芮 in 202 BCE. See \textit{Hanshu} 13.377, 28b.1639.

\textsuperscript{1018} Xu Zhixiao 徐志嘯, for example, notes that the *\textit{Yinyang wuxing A}, *\textit{Muren zhan}, *\textit{Xiangma jing}, *“Wushi’er bingfang,” *“Yangsheng fang,” *“Taichan shu” 胎產書 (“Book of the Generation of the Fetus”), and *“Za liaofang” 雜療方 (“Recipes for Various Cures”) contain language and references associated with Chu culture. See Xu Zhixiao 徐志嘯, “Lun Chu wenhua de fenqi, tedian yu diwei” 論楚文化的分期，特點與地位, \textit{Zhongzhou xuekan 中州學刊} (1992).2, p. 82. Similarly, Ōnishi Katsuya, “An Investigation of Clerical Script in Chu Regions during the Qin and Han Periods, and its Relationship to ‘Scribal Writing,’” \textit{Bamboo and Silk} 1.2 (2018), pp. 389-397 shows that, in comparison to official writing from the Qin and early Western Han, many of the Mawangdui manuscripts, including the *\textit{Xingde B}, *\textit{Laozi B}, *\textit{Yinyang wuxing A} and \textit{B}, and Medical Manuscripts IV and VII, contain graphic renderings associated with Chu script styles. The fact that some of the earliest manuscripts in the corpus retain elements of Chu language and culture further indicate that these manuscripts were produced locally, or at least at other site(s) that formed part of the old Chu cultural realm.
manuscripts corresponds to our admittedly incomplete knowledge about the Li family or their service in the Changsha region, and no evidence to support a personal or family association between Li Xi and the manuscripts with which he was buried.

**5.3.8 Evidence of personalization?**

The hypothesis that at least some of the Mawangdui manuscripts were the personal possessions of Li Xi, or individual members of his family before him, is hampered by the fact that we find no explicit references to any member of the Li family in the manuscripts themselves. There are no textual references to them, no notes or marginalia that can be attributed to them, and no documents such as colophons or letters to indicate that any of these manuscripts were produced for, presented to, or owned by any individual users or owners, let alone a member of the Li family. Unlike some of the other artifacts in the Mawangdui tombs, such as the lacquerware items explicitly marked as the property of the Marquess of Dai (see Chapter 2), the Mawangdui manuscripts are not labelled as personal property. Indeed, in contrast to certain manuscript corpora discovered or looted at other early Chinese tomb sites, the Mawangdui manuscript corpus contains no personalized records or family histories, genealogies, or chronologies of any kind. Even the *Sangfu tu 喪服圖 (Diagram on Mourning Vestments)

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1019 While we may be tempted to assume that textual production was suspended or seriously interrupted in Changsha at the end of the Qin and during the Qin-Han contention, the fact that the vast majority of the Mawangdui manuscripts (and all of the earliest manuscripts) contain texts related to treating illness and carrying out divinations, largely for use in military operations, would have made them extremely valuable. Indeed, these texts contain precisely the kind of knowledge and information most in need of promotion and transmission during a period of warfare and political confusion. In addition, as we saw in Chapter 1, didactic texts like the text of the *Chunjue shiyu manuscript would also have been valued as guides for navigating a confusing and potentially deadly political landscape. And it has even been argued that the Mawangdui versions of the *Laozi exhibit more of a concern for the practical matters of governance than do the more “philosophical” transmitted versions. See William Boltz, “The Religious and Philosophical Significance of the ‘Hsiang Erh’ Lao-tzu in Light of the Ma-wang-tui Manuscripts,” *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 45.1 (1982), p. 101.

1020 See also Chapter 3 for a brief description of the crossbow found in Mawangdui M2 inscribed with a date that suggests it may have been the personal property of Li Cang.
document examined in Chapter 4, which contains a schematic representation of one version of
the mourning obligations observed in Western Han, is apparently entirely de-personalized,
referring only to generic family members and the prescriptions associated with them rather than
to names of individuals. In fact, the document contains information for family members to whom
neither Li Xi nor Li Cang could possibly have been related.\footnote{Guolong Lai, for example, notes that Li Xi cannot possibly have had great-grandchildren while still in his thirties. See Guolong Lai, “The Diagram of the Mourning System from Mawangdui,” \textit{Early China} 28 (2003), pp. 62-63, 62n.56 and my discussion of that manuscript in Chapter 4.}

One potential objection to my observation that the Mawangdui manuscripts show no
signs of personalization or advertise any sort of connection to the Li family could be raised in
relation to a chart known as the *“Juzang tu” 居葬圖 (“Chart on Residences and Burials”).\footnote{BG, p. 90 has this document in the \textit{qita} 其他 (“other”) category. Yu in NTM, p. 88 calls it “Map of a City,” and describes it as “the earliest map of a city found in China,” noting that the map includes fortresses, towers, pavilions, streets, and roads, making it an invaluable resource for studying city planning and fortification in the Han. WW, 1.153 also has the chart as “Map of a City,” noting that the document measures 52cm long by 52.5cm wide, speculating that it depicts the city of Linxiang (i.e., Changsha) during the early Western Han. See JC, 2.171-173 for color photographs of the chart and JC, 6.127-134 for a detailed description of the chart and its contents.}

This document, also known as the *“Yuan miao tu” 園廟圖 (“Chart on Gardens and Temples”),
the *“Chengyi tu” 城邑圖 (“Chart on a City and Settlements”), and the *“Jiefang tu” 街坊圖
(“Chart on Streets and Lanes”), has been reconstructed from a large number of silk fragments,
and seems to depict a walled city with buildings and watch towers in the north (at the bottom of
the document) and some sort of tomb structure positioned atop a hill in the south (at the top of
the document) (see Figure 5.4). Dong Shan’s 董珊 analysis of the chart in JC, which contains
arguments that have also been published elsewhere,\footnote{See Dong Shan 董珊, “Mawangdui sanhao Hanmu chutu de ‘Juzang tu’” 馬王堆三號漢墓出土的《居葬圖》, in idem, \textit{Jianbo wenxian kaoshi luncong 簡帛文獻考釋論叒} (Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2014), pp. 244-250 and the same article in Hunan sheng bowuguan (2016), pp. 404-409.} follows the speculation made by Han Zhongmin 韓仲民 in the chart’s original publication that the document does not depict the city of Linxiang 臨湘 (i.e., Changsha) but rather the home city and adjacent tomb site of Li Cang at

\footnote{See Dong Shan 董珊, “Mawangdui sanhao Hanmu chutu de ‘Juzang tu’” 馬王堆三號漢墓出土的《居葬圖》, in idem, \textit{Jianbo wenxian kaoshi luncong 簡帛文獻考釋論叒} (Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2014), pp. 244-250 and the same article in Hunan sheng bowuguan (2016), pp. 404-409.}
Figure 5.4: “Juzang tu” on Medical Manuscript III (JC, 2.171)
Dong makes this claim based largely on the apparent resemblance of the hilltop tomb depicted in the chart to the Mawangdui tomb site, and the fact that the tomb passageway on the chart faces north, like the one leading to Li Cang’s tomb. Most tellingly, however, according to Dong, is the fact that the tomb passageway on the chart is labelled with an inscription that reads “Tomb passageway running north-south, ten zhang and two chi in length” yan mao shi zhang er chi 巽袤十丈二尺. For Dong, the city depicted in the chart cannot be Li Cang’s marquisate in Dai 軑, since Dai was located far away from where Li Cang was buried, and must therefore be the city where he lived, which Dong supposes must have been close to the Mawangdui tomb site. For Dong, the fact that the measurement on the chart basically matches the length of the tomb passageway leading to Li Cang’s tomb is also compelling evidence that the tomb in the chart is a representation of Mawangdui M2.

If Dong is correct, this would provide strong evidence that at least some of the Mawangdui silk manuscripts enjoyed some sort of personal connection to Li Cang, since the *“Juzang tu” was not committed to a separate piece of silk as a stand-alone document but actually constitutes part of Medical Manuscript III, coming after the *“Quegu shiqi” 却穀食氣 (“Eliminating Grain and Eating Vapor”) and *“Yinyang shiyi mai jiu jing” 陰陽十一脈灸經 B texts, and the annotated *“Daoyin tu” 導引圖 illustrations. However, to my mind, judging by

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1025 Dong provides ample evidence in the form of citations from premodern texts that the term yan 巽 refers to the tomb passageway, and mao 袤 to the direction North-South. See JC, 6.128, 130n.1

1026 Of course, we have no corroborating archaeological evidence that Li Cang ever actually owned, ruled, or lived in such a settlement, in this or any other location.

1027 Dong notes that, since 1 chi = approx. 23cm, and ten zhang and two chi = 102 chi, then 102 x 23cm = 2346cm, or 23.46m, which Dong claims corresponds to the estimate for the length of the M2 tomb passageway (ca. 20m) given in BG, p. 7. See JC, 230n.1 and Dong (2014), p. 247.

1028 JC, 6.127 notes that this manuscript was not folded but rolled and stored along with the *Chunqiu shiyu and *Laozi A manuscripts in the long through compartment of the lacquer box (see below).
the contents of the *“Juzang tu” itself, and its location on Medical Manuscript III, there is plenty of evidence to suggest that the *“Juzang tu” is not an illustration or map of Li Cang’s tomb site.

In the first place, the hybrid seal-clerical (zhuanli 篆隸) script style of the preceding texts on Medical Manuscript III suggest they were probably copied a considerable length of time before Li Cang was buried in 186 BCE.\textsuperscript{1029} Of course, it is possible that the *“Juzang tu” was drawn long after the preceding texts on the manuscript were copied, but then we must ask why it would have been considered appropriate to place it at the end of a manuscript containing medical texts and therapeutic illustrations.\textsuperscript{1030} If it had been desirable to draw a silk map or illustration of Li Cang’s tomb site and the (hypothetical) city where he lived, perhaps for his viewing pleasure or as some sort of status symbol, then it is strange that the drawing was not committed to a larger piece of silk containing detailed, realistic images and notations of specific sites, such as we find on the *Dixing tu 地形圖 (Topographical Chart)\textsuperscript{1031} and the *Jiandao fengyu tu 箭道封域圖 (Chart on Military Camps and Territorial Divisions)\textsuperscript{1032} documents. In contrast to these documents, which are presented on large, square pieces of silk and contain realistic, detailed, and clearly labelled illustrations of real sites and specific features of the landscape, the *“Juzang tu”

\textsuperscript{1029} See Harper (1997a), p. 25, who gives an estimate of 205-195 BCE for the copying of these texts.

\textsuperscript{1030} As Jesse Chapman has correctly noted in the context of the astrological texts from Mawangdui, we should first at least attempt to read the textual units contained on a single manuscript as somehow connected to each other rather than assuming that two texts have been arbitrarily committed to the same material carrier. See Jesse James Chapman, “The Rhetoric and Ritual of Celestial Signs in Early Imperial China,” Ph.D. diss., University of California, Berkeley, 2015, p. 35. However, Richter (2013), pp. 11-12 notes that sometimes texts that are unconnected to each other are written on the same manuscript for practical reasons. Indeed, Jay David Bolter has noted that ideals about textual unity are relatively recent. In the Middle Ages, for example, unrelated texts were often bound together to form a single manuscript unit. See Jay David Bolter, Writing Space: Computers, Hypertext, and the Remediation of Print (New York: Routledge, 2001), p. 10. However, overwhelmingly the Mawangdui manuscripts show that texts consolidated onto the same piece of silk were generally thematically related, facilitating textual consolidation, as well as institutional preservation and transmission.

\textsuperscript{1031} This chart is a detailed and realistic survey map of local towns, cities, and waterways that measures 96cm square. See the description and references in Chapter 4.

\textsuperscript{1032} This chart is a detailed and realistic map that measures 98cm long by 78cm wide (some scholars reconstruct it as 96cm square) and depicts mountains, waterways, residential wards, buildings and military structures. See the description and references in Chapter 4.
contains just a single caption noting the length and orientation of one specific structure, the tomb passageway. With the exception of the watchtowers at the bottom of the chart, the other illustrations are highly generic and schematic, making no attempt to represent specific details that would lead us to suspect the chart was intended to depict an actual site that existed in the real world. Whoever produced this chart could easily have individualized or personalized its contents by specifying the names of the buildings or the occupant of the tomb. Alternatively, they could have drawn detailed, beautiful illustrations, if the aim had been to produce a visually appealing representation of Li Cang’s burial site. The fact that no such textual or illustrative detail was included in the chart suggests that it was simply not intended to be used in this way. Instead, rather than depicting the specific site where Li Cang was buried, the chart seems to be a generic illustration of what an elite tomb site was supposed to look like, depicting its size, orientation, and ideal proximity to an urban environment.

In this, the *“Juzang tu”* is much closer to the other silk charts depicting buildings and structures found at Mawangdui: the *Zhaiwei, zhaixing jixiong tu* 宅位，宅形吉凶圖 (*Chart on the Auspiciousness and Inauspiciousness of Building Locations and Formations*),\(^\text{1033}\) the *Fuzhai tu* 府宅圖 (*Chart on Offices and Buildings*),\(^\text{1034}\) and the *Zhaiwei caotu* 宅位草圖 (*Chart on Building Positions*).\(^\text{1035}\) Each of these charts also features simplistic line drawings (see Figure 5.5, 5.6, 5.7) and labels containing specific notations detailing the dimensions of man-made structures, sometimes including the same terminology as that found in the sole caption on the

\(^{1033}\) See the citations in Chapter 4 for references to this chart. This chart features shapes labelled with prognosticatory statements about the auspiciousness or inauspiciousness of certain locations and building formations, and seems to have been designed for use in planning construction projects.

\(^{1034}\) See the citations in Chapter 4 for references to this chart. The chart seems to represent some sort of city, with captions noting the dimensions of various structures and the distances between them. No specific names of particular structures or natural features are provided, however, and the information seems entirely generic.

\(^{1035}\) See the citations in Chapter 4 for references to this chart. It seems to be a chart for designing and constructing some sort of edifice, containing notations of certain measurements in the same units (*zhang* and *chi*) that appear in the *“Juzang tu.”*
By contrast, the notations on the *Dixing tu and the *Jiandao fengyu tu contain information about actual places, rather than measurements that could be used to design a building or city. In short, the *Dixing tu and the *Jiandao fengyu tu are detailed maps of real-world locations, while these other charts are generic plans.

In addition, though it is impossible to estimate with any degree of accuracy what the dimensions of these three charts originally were, it is perhaps telling that the only two maps among the Mawangdui corpus are large, stand-alone documents with dimensions that fall outside the standard full-width or half-width formats. By contrast, the size of the *“Juzang tu,” as well as its location at the end of a manuscript dedicated to technical information and illustrations, locate it squarely in the context of documents produced for practical use. Thus, just as the *Zhaiwei, zhaixing jixiong tu, the *Fuzhai tu, and the *Zhaiwei caotu do not depict actual cities or structures, but rather represent schematizations that could be used to design and construct cities and structures, so too does the *“Juzang tu” seem to have been a practical chart used to model the construction of properly positioned tomb structures, rather than a map or illustration of any specific site. Of course, this is not to say that the *“Juzang tu” bears no relationship to actual cities or tombs, or even to Mawangdui M2, merely that any (hypothetical) relationship between

1036 See the numerous instances of the term mao (North-South), the same term that appears in the *“Juzang tu,” in the *Fuzhai tu (IC, 6.124), for example.


1038 The *Dixing tu and *Jiandao fengyu tu were both stitched together from two full-width silk sheets. See Chen (2016), p. 271.
Figure 5.5: *Zhaiwei, zhaixing jixiong tu* manuscript (JC, 2.55)

Figure 5.6: *Fuzhai tu* manuscript (JC, 2.168)
Figure 5.7: *Zhaiwei caotu* manuscript (JC, 2.179)
the illustrations on the *“Juzang tu”* and Li Cang’s tomb site is better explained by Mawangdui M2 being constructed on the basis of the *“Juzang tu,”* or a similar plan.

In sum, the location of the *“Juzang tu”* on a manuscript containing medical texts that seem to have been copied long before Li Cang’s death, and the apparent generic overlap between the caption and illustrations on the *“Juzang tu”* and the contents of the other highly schematic plans found at Mawangdui, suggest that it was not a depiction of Li Cang’s tomb. Thus, there is no clear evidence of personalization in the Mawangdui documents that might lead us to suspect a close connection between them and any member of the Li family.

Examined individually, none of the arguments outlined above offers conclusive evidence that Li Xi did not enjoy a close personal relationship to these manuscripts. Taken together, however, the weight of the evidence suggests that the vast majority of the documents in the Mawangdui manuscript corpus were designed for use in some sort of institutional setting, which I call a library, where they were used to consolidate textual material by genre. The texts in the Mawangdui corpus are overwhelmingly practical, yet their material forms would have made reading them decidedly *impractical.* It appears their contents were sometimes updated, and the information they contained may occasionally have been consulted by experts or other interested readers. In the main, however, these were not documents for reading. Rather, they would probably have been used to store texts and transmit them by making written copies. As we have seen, a small number of the Mawangdui manuscripts were designed in ways that would have made them usable, but it is possible that these documents were also produced as base texts for making further copies rather than as documents for reading or ritual use. Judging by their contents as well by the timespan over which they were produced, the lack of evidence of reading or personalization, the layouts of the texts and the dimensions of the manuscripts, and the presence of unfinished and duplicate manuscripts, it seems that the vast majority of the

1039 As we have seen in previous chapters, for example, the size and textual layouts of the *Muren zhan,* *Wu ze you xing,* *Taiyi zhu tu,* *Sangfu tu,* *Jiuzhu tu,* and *Chunqiu shiyu* manuscripts mean they could plausibly have been used as personal items for active reading or use in ritual performance.
Mawangdui manuscripts were designed and produced for institutional library use, and there is no evidence from the Mawangdui manuscripts themselves to suggest that Li Xi, or any member of his family, enjoyed either direct ownership over, or close personal connection to, any of these documents.

Of course, it is possible that the Mawangdui manuscript corpus was formed by selecting documents from a library or some other institution and then gifted to Li Xi in some form while he was still alive. If this was the case, however, he does not seem to have supplemented the collection by commissioning new manuscripts containing texts that he would have found interesting to read. Indeed, as we have seen, the vast majority of the Mawangdui texts are dry and technical in nature, seemingly produced before Li Xi was born or when he was very young. And, as discussed above, if Li Xi did own this collection of manuscripts in some form while he was alive, there is no evidence that he actually read them.

However, as we have seen, most of the Mawangdui manuscripts seem to have been designed with textual consolidation and transmission, rather than readership, in mind. Some scholars have argued that combining and copying textual material on silk helped fix (perhaps

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1040 Matthias Richter has noted that when it comes to manuscript corpora like Mawangdui and Guodian, it is possible that the tomb occupant used or studied them during his lifetime, or that they received them as gifts, either during their lifetimes or after their death. See Matthias Richter, “Tentative Criteria for Discerning Individual Hands in the Guodian Manuscripts,” in Rethinking Confucianism: Selected Papers from the Third International Conference on Excavated Chinese Manuscripts, Mount Holyoke College, South Hadley, Mass., April 2004; 儒學的再思考: 第三屆國際簡帛研討會論文集, ed. Xing Wen (San Antonio: Trinity University, 2006), p. 133.

1041 It is still possible, of course, that Li Xi in fact collected these manuscripts during his lifetime. If this was the case, however, since the manuscripts are mostly older, were not designed with readability in mind, and do not seem to contain the kind of reading material in which Li Xi would have been interested, then they would probably have functioned primarily as luxury possessions than as usable (i.e., readable) documents. Indeed, Sophie Woodward and Alinka Greasley have emphasized that collections are not necessarily “used” in a straightforward sense, and that they can be “temporally dynamic,” consisting of items that are acquired at different times and used with different degrees of frequency. See Sophie Woodward and Alinka Greasley, “Personal Collections as Material Assemblages: A Comparison of Wardrobes and Music Collections,” Journal of Consumer Culture (2015), pp. 2, 7, 13-14. See also Russell Belk, Collecting in a Consumer Society (New York: Routledge, 1995), p. 65, where collecting is defined as “the process of actively, selectively, and passionately acquiring and possessing things removed from ordinary use and perceived as part of a set of non-identical objects or experiences.”
inadvertently) the forms of those texts, since it was more difficult to edit or rearrange text on silk than on bamboo or wood, and the use of long silk sheets as supports for writing largely obviated the need to divide texts up into multiple scrolls of slips. Indeed, it has even been argued that reading extended texts written on long silk sheets helped engineer and reinforce new ideas about authorship and textual integrity in early China. However, given the fact that the texts on even the longest silk manuscripts from Mawangdui still take the form of short units of texts that could (and, as we have seen, actually did) travel between different manuscripts, indicates that silk likely did not radically change the ways texts were transmitted and understood, and Matthias Richter has recently counselled against attempting to explain the composite, fluid nature of most early Chinese texts as a consequence of their material carriers.

Regardless, numerous scholars have assumed that the use of silk as a medium for writing was associated with the preparation of final editions on the basis of texts drafted on bamboo or wood. Indeed, it has been claimed that in the imperial library at the end of the Western Han, silk was reserved for copying the final versions of redacted, edited, or otherwise newly altered or compiled texts. Michael Loewe, for example, has argued that though the term juan (roll, scroll) sometimes refers in the “Yiwen zhi” to rolls of wooden or bamboo slips, it can also refer to rolls of silk. However, while silk may well have been used to prepare final editions of

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1042 See Allan (2015), pp. 27-28, 35.
1045 See, for example, Tsien (2004), pp. 141-142.
certain texts in the imperial library, in fact the “Yiwen zhi” makes no unambiguous reference to copying texts onto silk as part of Emperor Cheng’s library project, and the reading of juan primarily as roll of (bamboo or wooden) slips seems convincing. Lee Hur-li, for example, has noted that none of the surviving passages from the Bielu 別錄 (Separated Catalog), the text on which the “Yiwen zhi” was based (via Liu Xin’s Qi lüe 七略 [Seven Summaries]), mentions the copying of final versions of texts onto silk, and one of the surviving résumés from that text clearly describes the use of bamboo slips for preparing such a collated edition. The association between writing on silk and the preparation of final editions of written texts, then, is shaky at best, and I would argue that instead of understanding the Mawangdui silk manuscripts as the final destination or highest cultural expression of textual material, we should instead understand the use of silk at Mawangdui as a practical method of consolidating and transmitting texts, with the texts consolidated onto silk continuing to be copied and recopied in different forms on more usable carriers such as bamboo and wood.

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1048 Tsien (2004), pp. 120-121, arguing contra Chen Pan 陳槃, claims that juan and pian 篇 refer to different kinds of material support (silk and bamboo/wood respectively), and that silk was used to prepare the final editions of collated texts on the basis of documents drafted on bamboo or wood. Chen countered Tsien’s arguments, however, by noting that several Han texts, both transmitted and excavated, refer to rolls of bamboo or wood slips using the term juan. See Chen Pan 陳槃, “Sanding xian Qin liang Han jiandu kao” 三訂先秦兩漢簡牘考, Zhongyang yanjiuyuan lishi yuyan yanjiusuo jikan 中央研究院歷史語言研究所集刊 54. 2 (1983), pp. 16-22. See also Chen Mengjia 陳夢家, Hanjian zhuishu 漢簡綴述 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, [1980] 2004), pp. 305-306.

1049 See Lee (2016), pp. 103-105. Richter (2013), p. 5 also notes that the “Yiwen zhi” refers specifically to bamboo and wood rather than to silk.

1050 An excerpt of the Fengsu tongyi 風俗通義 (A Comprehensive Account of Customs and Habits) compiled by Ying Shao 應劭 (d. ca. 200 CE) in the Eastern Han quoted in the Taiping yulan 太平御覽 (Imperial Overview from the Era of Great Peace) compiled in the late tenth century CE claims that Liu Xiang first prepared texts on bamboo before final editions were committed to silk. However, the fact that this information is not recorded in the extant version of the text, appearing some 1,000 years after Liu Xiang’s library project, means it cannot be considered reliable. See Chen (2004), p. 295.

1051 Fölster (2018), p. 209 notes that the phrase “[so that] this writing can be neatly copied” (shu ke shanxie 書可繕寫) (Fölster’s translation) at the end of the reports compiled by Liu Xiang suggests that
Manufacturing silk documents required significant resources, to be sure; silk was expensive, and scribal production required the patronage of highly trained professionals. However, we should not be misled by the symbolic associations that silk manuscripts would have enjoyed as prestige items. Indeed, as far as we can tell silk was produced in large quantities and readily available to elites in Changsha in the early Western Han, and though the materiality of the Mawangdui silk manuscripts certainly served to reflect Li Xi’s rank, wealth, and status in the context of Mawangdui M3, the choice of silk as a writing surface above ground probably had more to do with the capacity of that medium to accommodate large quantities of text and present writing and images together than with the production of prestige artifacts.

We noted above that one of the reasons these particular manuscripts were selected for burial was because they offered a comprehensive summa of Western Han technical, cosmological, and cultural knowledge for use by the deceased in the afterlife; however, comprehensiveness may not have been the only reason these manuscripts were selected. We can assume that manuscripts containing important cultural or technical knowledge would not have been disposed of by burying them in tombs if their contents were not also available in some other written form above ground. That is, the Mawangdui manuscripts were not the only copies of the texts they contained. In many cases, manuscripts would have been time-consuming and costly to produce, and we can assume they would have been wary of permanently disposing of precious editions. This being the case, the fact that the vast majority of the manuscripts in the Mawangdui corpus were already several decades old by the time they were buried with Li Xi, one of the functions of the manuscripts in Emperor Cheng’s library was to serve as base texts for further copying.

1052 Martin Kern, for example, has argued that the silk medium of the Mawangdui manuscripts would have served a representational value in the context of the tomb site, contributing to its “material splendor.” See Martin Kern, “The ‘Odes’ in Excavated Manuscripts,” in Text and Ritual in Early China, ed. Martin Kern (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2005), p. 184.

1053 On this point, see Lothar von Falkenhausen, “Social Ranking in Chu Tombs: The Mortuary Background of the Warring States Manuscript Finds,” Monumenta Serica 51 (2003), p. 495, who speculates that this may explain why so few early Chinese tombs have produced manuscripts.
while most of the more recent manuscripts that were buried with him were either unfinished (the *Xiangma jing and *Wuxing zhan manuscripts) or manufactured from wood or bamboo (Medical Manuscripts VII, VIII, IX, and X; see Chapter 1), suggests that the Mawangdui manuscript corpus was formed by selecting manuscripts that contained important information that could serve Li Xi in the afterlife, but which the library could also afford to part with, and there may have been a preference for burying older, obsolete, or otherwise redundant copies. Some scholars have argued on the basis of recently excavated finds that in the Han official documents were regularly destroyed every ten to thirteen years, a necessary measure since, if left to accumulate, bulky manuscripts made of wood or bamboo would have taken up significant amounts of space. Of course, the Mawangdui corpus did not contain any such administrative texts, and we can assume that the decision to part even with these pieces would not have been taken lightly.

If, after examining the manuscripts themselves, we find little evidence to support the hypothesis that Li Xi enjoyed a close personal connection to the manuscripts with which he was buried, consideration of the role those manuscripts played in his tomb assembly likewise fails to turn up anything to suggest that Li Xi valued these pieces as personal possessions. Indeed, their location in the tomb and the role they played (or lack thereof) in his funeral proceedings seems to suggest precisely the opposite.

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1054 See, for example, Xing Yitian 邢義田 [= Hsing I-tien], Di bu ai bao: Handai de jiandu 地不爱宝：汉代的简牘 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2011), pp. 20–21. In some cases, Hsing actually doubts that documents were stored even this long before they were disposed of, since records suggest that in the Tang 唐 (619-907) and Song 宋 (960-1278) dynasties documents on paper were discarded after just three years, and these would have taken up far less space. Of course, such documentation was likely also produced in far greater numbers than official documents in the Han. Hsing also notes that the disposal of different types of documents would have been carried out according to different conventions, and we know from excavated sites that some documents were reused, and some may even have been used for fuel. For Hsing, the practice of regularly disposing of written documents explains why texts have been found in wells at Liye 里耶 (Longshan 龍山, Hunan 湖南; Qin), Dongpailou 東牌樓 (Changsha, Hunan; Eastern Han), Zoumalou 長沙走馬樓 (Changsha, Hunan; Three Kingdoms), and other sites. See also Xing Yitian 邢義田 [= Hsing I-tien], “Handai jiandu de tiji, zhongliang he shiyong—yi Zhongyanyuan shiyusuo cang Juyan Han jian wei li” 漢代簡牘的體積、重量和使用—以中研院史語所藏居延漢簡為例, Gujin lunheng 古今論衡 17 (2007), pp. 78–80.
5.4 Burying manuscripts

5.4.1 An introduction to a cultural practice

Early Chinese elites were sometimes buried with written texts, though in most cases we are unsure precisely why. Donald Harper has pointed out that historical records from the Han “are silent on the custom of book burial,” though historical works compiled in later centuries such as the Hou Hanshu 後漢書 (History of the Later Han, comp. 5th century CE) and the Jinshu 晉書 (History of the Jin Dynasty, comp. 7th century CE) do contain scattered records of texts being buried in the tombs of scholars in the second and third centuries CE. We are not sure exactly how widespread the practice of burying texts was, though judging by the fact that only a very small fraction of the tens of thousands of Early Imperial tombs excavated to date have yielded written texts, it seems that it was certainly not standard practice. The custom of

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1055 Harper (1997a), p. 3. See also Yuri Pines, “History as a Guide to the Netherworld: Rethinking the Chunqiu shiyu,” Journal of Chinese Religions 31 (2003), p. 118. Harper speculates that perhaps manuscripts were placed in tombs because of their inherent value as material artifacts that reflected the expertise and/or status of their owners, or because they held magical properties. See also Donald Harper, “Warring States, Qin, and Han Manuscripts Related to Natural Philosophy and the Occult,” in New Sources of Early Chinese History: An Introduction to the Reading of Inscriptions and Manuscripts, ed. Edward L. Shaughnessy (Berkeley: Early China Special Monograph Series 3, 1997), p. 227, where Harper argues that some manuscripts in tombs may have been intended to serve a talismanic function, designed to protect the tomb from harm. Similarly, Timothy Davis has argued that the practice of burying texts may sometimes have been related to the use of texts as talismans. See Timothy Davis, Entombed Epigraphy and Commemorative Culture in Early Medieval China: An Early History of Muzhiming (Leiden: Brill, 2016), pp. 32-33.

1056 See Hou Hanshu 39.1311 for the story of one Zhou Pan 周磐 (48-121 CE), who, shortly before he died, is said to have asked his sons to place a copy of the “Yaodian” 堯典 (“Canon of Yao”) chapter of the Shu 書 (Documents) along with a writing knife and brush in front of his coffin “to show that he had not forgotten the way of the sages” (shi bu wang shengdao 示不忘聖道). Similarly, see Jinshu 51.1417-1418 for the biography of Huangfu Mi 皇甫謐 (215-282), who is said to have requested that he be buried with a copy of the Xiaojing 孝經 (Classic of Filial Piety) “to show that he had not forgotten the way of filial piety” (shi bu wang xiaodao 示不忘孝道). Note that in both these records, the emphasis is on showing (shi 示) that the deceased engaged in certain correct activities rather than on the use of texts in the afterlife.
burying manuscripts, with finds clustered in present-day Hubei and Hunan provinces, may have something to do with Chu burial customs, since as far as we can tell the practice was much less commonly observed in the North and it is unlikely this pattern of distribution is attributable solely to accidents of preservation.\textsuperscript{1058} Even within the context of the Chu cultural region, however, the number of text yielding tombs is very small. To date, no non-funerary texts have been found in a tomb that can positively be identified as belonging to a female occupant, though the sex of the corpse is often impossible to determine, and it is possible that texts were sometimes also buried with female elites.\textsuperscript{1059}

Lothar von Falkenhausen has shown that while bamboo manuscripts and individual inscribed bamboo slips are more likely to be found in the tombs of high ranking individuals above the shi 士 (men of service) class (i.e., in the tombs of those who in the Springs and Autumns era would have enjoyed the right to possess sets of ritual bronze vessels), beyond this there seems to be no correlation between the rank of the tomb and the quantity or range of the bamboo manuscripts contained within them. Von Falkenhausen concludes that the decision to bury certain manuscripts in tombs probably was down to the wealth and individual preference of the tomb occupant rather than sumptuary regulations governing the burial of written texts.\textsuperscript{1060}


\textsuperscript{1058} See Kalinowski (2003), p. 892. See also Nylan (2005), p. 5, who notes that most texts from before mid-Han have been found in areas within the Chu cultural sphere. It is possible, however, that the Chu practice of interring burial objects in multiple coffins that were sealed and deposited at the bottom of covered vertical pit shafts led to increased manuscript preservation in this region. See Alain Thote, “Daybooks in Archaeological Context,” in \textit{Books of Fate and Popular Culture in Early China} (Leiden: Brill, 2017), pp. 15-16, 15-16n.16.

However, Alain Thote has pointed out that while technical texts tend to be found in the tombs of individuals of relatively low rank, tombs of higher ranking individuals have yielded a greater variety of manuscripts, including intellectual and belletristic texts.\textsuperscript{1061}

As we have seen, it is often very difficult to say with any degree of certainty whether texts found in tombs served primarily as status symbols or as genuine reflections of the professional or personal interests of the people with whom they were buried. In addition, it is often even unclear which texts were produced specially for burial.\textsuperscript{1062} A number of scholars have argued that just because we encounter manuscripts in a tomb, this does not mean that the tomb occupant was involved in their production, or that they even read or consulted them, and indirect patronage of textual learning may account for many of the texts that have been discovered in early Chinese tombs.\textsuperscript{1063} As noted above, we must also remember that what a tomb can tell us about the life and status of its occupant is filtered through mortuary ritual,\textsuperscript{1064} and it is unclear which actors (the deceased, their family, court ritualists, etc.) were involved in projecting the identity or status of the deceased through the organization of the tomb and his or her funeral rites.\textsuperscript{1065}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{1060} Von Falkenhausen (2003), pp. 439-526. Kalinowski (2003), pp. 905-906 also notes that the richness of the tomb cannot have been the only factor affecting the number of texts or text types buried, since tombs as richly furnished as Mawangdui M1 have yielded a negligible amount of textual material, or, more typically, none at all. By contrast, the relatively modest tombs at Guodian, Shuihudi, and Yinqueshan have yielded significant corpora of texts.
\item \textsuperscript{1061} Thote (2017), p. 48.
\item \textsuperscript{1062} On this point, see Ulrich Lau and Thies Staack, *Legal Practice in the Formative Stages of the Chinese Empire: An Annotated Translation of the Exemplary Qin Criminal Cases from the Yuelu Academy Collection* (Leiden: Brill, 2016), p. 77.
\item \textsuperscript{1063} See, for example, Von Falkenhausen (2003), pp. 495-496. Kern (2005), p. 184 speculates that eclectic manuscript corpora found in tombs such as Guodian and Mawangdui may reflect the tomb occupant’s “sponsorship, or perhaps even mastery, over certain philosophical, religious, or technical traditions.”
\item \textsuperscript{1064} See Von Falkenhausen (2003), pp. 441-442.
\item \textsuperscript{1065} See Selbitschka (forthcoming).
\end{itemize}
A number of different theories have been proposed to explain why certain manuscripts and manuscript corpora were buried in tombs, including burial for ritual purposes, as practical items, gifts, or personal possessions.\textsuperscript{1066} Of course, these different explanations are not necessarily mutually exclusive. Anthony Barbieri-Low and Robin Yates, for example, have speculated that the Zhangjiashan 張家山 (Jiangling 江陵, Hubei; Western Han) legal texts, as well as most of the other medical and mathematical texts from that tomb, were either produced as practice texts and later sold for use as funerary products or were copied in a funerary workshop specifically for burial.\textsuperscript{1067} Michael Loewe has speculated that different types of non-funerary texts were buried in tombs variously for use as talismans, to reflect the professional activities and interests of the deceased, for practical use in the afterlife, and for use as entertainment,\textsuperscript{1068} while Yuri Pines has divided texts found in tombs into the following categories: 1) texts manufactured specially for interment, such as tomb inventory texts; 2) technical texts containing useful knowledge and information; 3) texts related to the career of the deceased aimed at boosting his status in the afterlife; and 4) philosophical, historical, and military texts interred for personal or sentimental reasons. In addition to these four types, Pines notes that in rare cases texts may also have been buried for purely sentimental reasons; certain letters, for example, or the “Shenwu fu” 神烏賦 (= 賦) (“Rhapsody on a Divine Crow”) poem on bamboo from Yinwan M6 尹灣 (Jiangsu 江蘇; late Western Han).\textsuperscript{1069} Similarly, Enno Giele has also suggested six possible reasons why we might encounter texts in tombs: 1) for use by the deceased directly in the afterlife (for pleasure, as handbooks, etc.); 2) as addresses for enlisting the help or protection of beings in the netherworld (i.e., letters or other documents explicitly


\textsuperscript{1069} Pines (2003), pp. 118-120.
addressed to the underworld); 3) texts demonstrating an attitude, status, or achievement (i.e., a copy of the *Xiaojing* as a display of devotion before one’s offspring); 4) as a way of storing or hiding texts that could no longer circulate among the living but which were too precious to destroy; 5) for filling in unused space in the coffin to prevent the corpse from moving around during transportation; 6) accidental presence of manuscripts resulting from re-use as funerary objects.  

Hsing I-tien has even speculated that some tomb manuscripts were manufactured specifically as *mingqi* burial items, and that this explains why certain manuscripts are too long or heavy to be easily readable or usable. Giele has developed a similar theory to explain why manuscripts are often incomplete, sometimes contain seemingly arbitrary excerpts of material, or are found in a disarrayed state. However, Alain Thote has recently provided a comprehensive refutation of Giele’s and Hsing’s arguments.

It may well be ill advised, then, to attempt to formulate a single theory to account for why manuscripts were buried in Warring States and Han tombs, and tomb inventory texts are the only text type whose deposition in early Chinese tombs is more or less well understood.

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1070 Enno Giele, “Using Early Chinese Manuscripts as Historical Source Materials,” *Monumenta Serica* 51 (2003), pp. 428-431. With regards to this last category, Giele notes that three inscribed boards reused as parts for a chariot model discovered in Fenghuangshan 鳳凰山 M9 (Jiangling, Hubei; Western Han) are the only known examples of this phenomenon.

1071 See Chapter 3 for a description of *mingqi* burial objects.


1074 See Thote (2017), pp. 39-48. Thote argues that non-funerary manuscripts were typically owned and used by the deceased during their lifetimes, and that the deposition of non-funerary texts in tombs as a way of providing the deceased with useful knowledge and information was related to changing conceptions of the afterlife that developed from the fourth century BCE. Thote notes (pp. 40-41) that Giele’s idea about *mingqi* texts being mass produced in workshops is at odds with the diversity of the finds, and that the number and types of manuscripts were generally independent of the status of the deceased, contrary to what we would expect if they had been manufactured and buried as *mingqi* items. Finally, Thote points out that non-funerary texts are never found in the same parts of the tomb as funerary texts (such as tomb inventory documents). The manuscripts in the silk case and the tomb inventory text from Mawangdui M3 are no exception to this.
have seen, in the case of Mawangdui M3 these manuscripts seem to have been selected for burial in order to furnish the deceased with the knowledge and expertise he would need in the afterlife, and there is no doubt that this kind of information would have been valued also above ground by living elites. Jesse Chapman, for example, has argued that the manuscripts in the lacquer case in M3 were “as important to the living as to the dead, a corpus of literature useful to any ruling family in uncertain times,” containing models of suasive rhetoric, medical recipes, and technical texts that would have held practical value for interpreting astral phenomena and predicting the outcomes of military operations.1076 Chapman points out that even if the Mawangdui manuscripts had been produced specially for burial, they would nevertheless have been broadly representative of the kinds of texts in use at court, and he further concludes that these documents may not have been the sole possessions of the tomb occupant, but perhaps constituted part of the “corporate property of his clan,” used by experts in technical matters.1077

Given the evidence outlined above, not least the dating of the manuscripts, it is actually possible to confirm that the Mawangdui silk manuscripts were not manufactured specifically for burial. However, I fully endorse Chapman’s observation that the texts buried in Mawangdui M3 probably represented the “corporate property” of either the Li clan or the Changsha state rather than the personal possessions of Li Xi or a particular member of his family.1078 The evidence examined above certainly supports such a claim, but examining the form and contents of the

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1075 See William G. Boltz, “Why So Many Laozi-s?,” in Studies in Chinese Manuscripts: From the Warring States Period to the 20th Century, ed. Imre Galambos (Budapest: Institute of East Asian Studies, Eötvös Loránd University, 2013), p. 1. Indeed, Alain Thote has argued that we have to understand the changing cultural background and evolving conceptions of the afterlife in early China in order to avoid drawing overly hasty conclusions about why texts were placed in tombs. See Thote (2017), pp. 12-13.


1078 Chapman tends to talk of a court at Dai, where the Li family marquisate was located. As far as we know, however, such a court never existed, with Dai merely serving as a location from which the marquesses of Dai were entitled to raise taxes. As a result, these documents were surely curated at Changsha, where Li Xi and his father lived, served, and were ultimately buried.
manuscripts is not the only way to study the hypothetical relationship between Li Xi and the manuscripts in his tomb.1079

A number of text bearing tombs belonging to Western Han marquesses have been discovered in recent decades, and what they tell us about the practice of burying texts in tombs is also illuminating. The undisturbed tomb of Wu Yang 吳陽, Marquess of Yuanling 沅陵侯 (ca. 187-ca.162 BCE), who was buried at Huxishan 虎溪山 in Hunan, for example, contained around 1,500 well preserved inscribed objects, mostly administrative records but also a hemerological record and a number of food recipes.1080 Another such tomb belonging to Xiahou Zao 夏侯竃, Marquess of Ruyin 汝陰侯 (d. 164 BCE) was discovered at Shuanggudui 雙古堆, Fuyang 阜陽 in Anhui 安徽, and yielded fragments of the Shi 詩 (Odes), the Zhouyi 周易, and the Cangjie pian 倉頡篇 (Book of Cangjie), as well as historical records,1081 medical prescriptions, hemerological and mantic manuals, and literary works.1082

Perhaps the most surprising manuscript finds, however, come from the tomb of Liu He 劉賀, King of Changyi 昌邑 and Marquess of Haihun 海昏侯 (ca. 92-59 BCE), which was discovered in Nanchang 南昌, Jiangxi 江西 in 2011. This tomb yielded a large number of written texts, including many that overlap generically with the documents from Mawangdui, such as ritual records, texts containing historical and philosophical wisdom, divination texts, and

1079 Roger Bagnall has noted how the study of ancient texts has been transformed by a new-found appreciation for the ways archaeological contexts can help us understand how they were used. See Roger S. Bagnall, “Materializing Ancient Documents,” Daedalus 145.2 (2016), pp. 79, 82.


1081 As noted above, one of these manuscripts has also been given the title *Chunqiu shiyu by scholars.

medical texts. The discovery of the texts in this tomb is startling, given the fact that the historical record uniformly describes Liu He as a licentious wastrel. Indeed, Liu ruled as emperor for just twenty-seven days in 74 BCE before he was famously deposed as a result of his dissolute behavior. The Hanshu contains numerous passages recording his love of entertainment and dissipation at the expense of engaging in government both during and after his time on the throne, and the texts discovered in his tomb, not least the ritual records and ethical texts such as the Xiaojing and the Lunyu (Selected Sayings, Analects), are seemingly at odds with what we know about his personality and conduct. Of course, it is possible that the transmitted record of Liu He’s brief reign is simply biased or inaccurate, or that he was both a libidinous drunkard and a dedicated consumer of texts. It seems more likely, however, that this apparent discrepancy can be resolved if we approach the deposition of texts in Liu He’s tomb not as a descriptive statement about his personality, inclinations, or behavior, but rather as a prescriptive statement about the kind of knowledge and behavior a man of Liu He’s station should have been engaged in. The generic overlap between the texts in Liu He’s tomb and the Mawangdui manuscript finds may also suggest that the texts in Li Xi’s tomb were likewise deposited as symbols of his status and the normative conduct with which such a person was associated.

1083 The tomb also yielded text types not found at Mawangdui, such as a fragmentary edition of the Shi, as well as other shi poems, and numerous fu rhapsodies. For an overview of these texts, see Jiangxi sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiuyuan 江西省文物考古研究院, Beijing daxue chutu wenxian yanjiusuo 北京大学出土文献研究所, and Jingzhou wenwu baohu zhongxin 荊州文物保護中心, “Jiangxi Nanchang Xihan Haihun hou Liu He mu chutu jiandie” 江西南昌西漢海昏侯劉賀墓出土簡牘, Wenwu 文物 (2018).11, pp. 87-96.


1085 See, for example, the accounts in Hanshu 27b.1366-1367, 68.2937, 72.3061-3062, 89.3638.

1086 Certain differences notwithstanding (see above), both Liu He and Liu Xi’s tombs contained texts and textual materials related to medicine, divination, and ritual, as well as historical narrative and philosophical prose. Indeed, the Yi (Changes) divination texts, historical anecdotes from the Springs and Autumnns period, and medical prescriptions found in Liu He’s tomb are strikingly similar to some of the materials with which Li Xi was buried. As a result, I would argue it makes more sense to understand
As we have seen, the form and contents of the Mawangdui manuscripts, as well as the presence of similar finds in roughly contemporaneous tombs belonging to men of the same rank, seem to suggest that Li Xi did not enjoy a close personal connection to the manuscripts with which he was buried. The following section will examine the archaeological evidence from Mawangdui M3 itself to provide further evidence for this argument.

5.4.2 The archaeological context of the Mawangdui manuscripts

As described in the Introduction, the Mawangdui manuscripts were found inside an undecorated black lacquer case in the eastern compartment of Li Xi’s outer coffin. This two-tier case is rectangular in shape, measuring roughly 59.8cm in length, 36.8cm in width, and 21.2cm in height, and for these reasons it is typically referred to in Chinese publications as the “two-tier rectangular case” (shuangceng changfang lian 雙層長方奩) (see Figure 5.8). The upper tier of the case contained some silk ribbons (sidai 絲帶) and a bundle of silk textiles (si zhipin 絲織品), while the bottom tier was divided into five compartments: a long, narrow “through compartment” (tongge 通格) that runs the entire length of the case, and four shorter, wider compartments of different dimensions. The medical texts on wood and bamboo described in Chapter 1 were found in the through compartment atop three rolled silk
Figure 5.8: Lacquer case containing the Mawangdui manuscripts (NTM, p. 87)

Figure 5.9: Two-tier lacquer case from M3 (BG, color plate 34b)
manuscripts: the *Laozi A* manuscript, the *Chunqiu shiyu* manuscript, and Medical Manuscript III containing the *“Quegu shiqi,”* *“Yinyang shiyi mai jiu jing”* B, and *“Daoyin tu”* texts and the “Juzang tu” chart. Each of these three silk manuscripts had been rolled around a long strip of wood. The composite manuscript formed by rolling Medical Manuscript IX around the outside of Medical Manuscript X (see Chapter 1) was itself rolled round two bamboo flutes (*zhudi* 竹笛).*\(^{1090}\)

As described in previous chapters, the rest of the silk manuscripts were found folded and stacked inside the largest of case’s rectangular compartments. This compartment having taken on water, the manuscripts in the stack had become wet and compacted, forming a sort of “muddy brick” (*nizhuan* 泥磚).*\(^{1091}\) The desiccated remains of a frog were found underneath the stack of silk manuscripts, and two of the other compartments inside the case contained an oyster shell (*muli ke* 牡蠣殼) and plant branches and stems (*zhizhi jing* 植枝莖), while the other compartment was left empty.*\(^{1092}\)

The Mawangdui silk manuscripts can be divided into two kinds based on the width of the silk: those in the standard “full width” (*zhengfu* 整幅) of 48-50cm, and those in the standard “half width” (*banfu* 半幅) of roughly 24cm. However, these sizes do not correspond to the ways the manuscripts were stored inside the lacquer case: the rolled silk manuscripts found in the long through compartment included a longer manuscript (the *Laozi A* manuscript) and shorter manuscripts (the *Chunqiu shiyu* manuscript), and both half-width (the *Laozi A* and *Chunqiu* manuscripts).*\(^{1090}\)

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1091 The dimensions of this muddy stack of silk manuscripts were roughly 22cm long x 16cm wide x 8cm thick. See Chen Songchang 陳松長, “Mawangdui boshu ‘kongbai ye’ ji xiangguan wenti” 馬王堆帛書 “空白頁”及相關問題, *Wenwu* 文物 (2008).5, p. 75.
1092 There are discrepancies in the accounts provided in different publications as to which compartments contained the clam shell and the plant stems and stalks, though all seem to agree that these were stored separately from the silk manuscripts, and that at least one of the compartments in the case was empty. It is theoretically possible that this empty compartment originally contained silk materials that had rotted away. However, this seems very unlikely given the fact that the other silk items in the case (manuscripts, ribbons, and textiles) survived intact. Of course, it is possible that this compartment contained some other sort of perishable item(s).
shiyu manuscripts) and full-width (Medical Manuscript III) manuscripts.\textsuperscript{1093} Indeed, as philosophical, historical, and medical texts of different lengths and widths, these three rolled manuscripts seem to have little to no generic or material affinities with one another.

As Hsing I-tien has observed, we do not really know how documents in different media were stored in different contexts in Han times, and though excavated documents have been found stored in cases or wrapped in cloth, we know next to nothing about the facilities within which manuscripts were stored above ground.\textsuperscript{1094} Marc Kalinowski has speculated that the case may have been designed specifically to house these particular manuscripts, since the dimensions of the two compartments containing the manuscripts match the formats of the manuscripts that were stored in them, with the two groups of manuscripts distinguished not by their size but by the method used to store them.\textsuperscript{1095} However, to my mind, it seems just as likely that the manuscripts were simply prepared for storage in ways that suited the pre-existing design of the case, and that the case was not originally designed to accommodate these or any other type of manuscripts.\textsuperscript{1096} In addition, as noted in the Introduction, based on the contents of the manuscripts and their tentative locations within the manuscript stack (established on the basis of ink imprints), it seems the manuscripts were placed inside the box more or less at random.\textsuperscript{1097}


\textsuperscript{1094} Hsing points out that we do not really know what references in transmitted texts to \textit{zhange} 棟閣 (wooden cupboards/rooms/facilities?) and \textit{jige} 几閣 (tables and cupboards?) actually mean, and we await further archaeological discoveries. Hsing notes further that some documents may have been suspended or hung (\textit{gua} 挲) from walls, based on references in texts and certain excavated images, though we do not know exactly why or how. See Xing [= Hsing] (2007), pp. 77-79.

\textsuperscript{1095} Kalinowski (2005), p. 139. Kalinowski further speculates (pp. 139-140) that compartmentalized cases such as this one may have been one way in which manuscripts were stored above ground. This is certainly a possibility, though, as we will see, there is some evidence to suggest that the case was repurposed for use as manuscript container, either specifically for burial or sometime prior to interment.

\textsuperscript{1096} See my arguments above that the silk manuscripts seem to have been folded and unfolded, rather than rolled and unrolled, for reading.

\textsuperscript{1097} See Chen (2016), p. 315, who notes that it seems that Medical Manuscript II, containing most of the *“Wushi’er bingfang” text, was stacked atop the *\textit{Wu ze you xing tu} manuscript, and that the *\textit{Xingde B
Certainly, the fact that the case contained two tiers, one undivided and the other divided into five compartments of different dimensions, would seem to suggest that its original primary function was unconnected to the storage of manuscripts. In addition, the fact that at least one of the compartments was apparently left empty would seem to suggest that the case had not been designed specially to store this particular collection of materials. However, the fact that the great majority of the Mawangdui manuscripts were folded inside the case, and specially woven protective lining sheets were manufactured for certain manuscripts to guard against transposed silk (see Chapter 1), suggests that silk manuscripts were typically folded, rather than rolled up, for storage above ground. Indeed, as noted above, by comparing the way the Mawangdui silk manuscripts were folded for storage inside the case (reconstructed on the basis of imprint patterns) with the ways the different lengths of silk fragmented over time, Chen Jian has established that the *Muren zhan*, *Jiuzhu tu*, and *Wu ze you xing tu* manuscripts actually fragmented along old crease lines that pre-existed those formed when the manuscripts were folded for storage prior to burial. It seems, then, that silk manuscripts were typically folded away when not in use above ground at Mawangdui, and it is unclear why three were rolled for storage inside the case instead of folded.

Fifteen lacquer cases (*lian*奩) were found in Mawangdui M3. These cases were mainly used to store silk textiles and toiletry products, and many of them are similar in design to the

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1098 Rolling silk manuscripts with writing on just the recto sides would not have led to ink being imprinted from one part of the silk to another, since the text-bearing portions of silk would not have come into contact with one another. The *Chunqiu shiyu* manuscript is the only one of the three rolled silk manuscripts to bear traces of transposed ink, however these were all formed through seepage rather than through direct contact. See Chen (2016), p. 273.

1099 See Chen (2016), pp. 302, 305.
case in which the manuscripts were found, divided into two tiers and/or multiple compartments of different sizes. True, the case used to store the Mawangdui manuscripts was larger than these other cases, but one of the cases, containing items of silk clothing and textiles, was almost as large as the manuscript case and was also divided into two tiers (see Figure 5.9). Rather than having been designed specifically to hold these particular manuscripts, or textual material in general, then, it seems at least as likely that the black lacquer case used to store the Mawangdui manuscripts was repurposed at some point in time for use as a storage container for manuscript material.

Few scholars have paid attention to the non-textual materials found in the manuscript case, and Chen Songchang has admitted that we do not currently know what the desiccated frog, oyster shells, plant remains, and bamboo flutes were used for. Michael Nylan is one of the few scholars to have engaged in speculation as to the possible uses of these items, arguing that “the shells and branches [were] presumably used for exorcistic and fumigation rites.” Nylan is probably correct to connect these items to ritual activities, and the oyster shell may likewise have been intended for use in some sort of divinatory ritual, with the frog perhaps placed inside the case for medicinal purposes. Given that medical and technical texts related to ritual and


1101 See BG, p. 155 for a description of this case, which measures 48.5cm in length by 25.5cm in width and 21cm in height. Unlike the case containing the Mawangdui manuscripts, this case is highly ornamented. However, other of the toiletry cases found in M3 were also coated in unornamented black lacquer.

1102 See Chen Songchang (2012), p. 95. The flutes were clearly intended for use as musical instruments, judging by their shape and the placement of their holes, possibly within some sort of ritual or divinatory performance. One of the flutes measures 21.2cm in length, the other 24.6cm. For more detailed descriptions of these bamboo flutes, see BG, pp. 184-187.

1103 Nylan makes this claim in the context of an argument that “[t]o understand the classical world better, we have little choice but to study texts, ritual sites, and ritual objects together,” an argument with which I wholeheartedly agree. See Nylan (2005), p. 8.
divination predominate in the Mawangdui manuscript corpus, it seems likely that these items were indeed deposited alongside and underneath the manuscripts as both representations of ritual/medical knowledge and tools for use in the application of such knowledge. Indeed, the Mawangdui manuscripts were probably likewise buried both as tools for the cultivation and application of cultural and technical learning, and as symbolic representations of cultural attainment and ritually appropriate conduct, as well as the sociocultural status of the deceased (see below).

Marc Kalinowski has speculated that this collection of manuscripts might reflect aspects of Li Xi’s personality, noting that, just as the gaming pieces, musical instruments, and weapons found in Li Xi’s tomb represent his hobbies and interests, so too might these manuscripts represent his taste for philosophy and science.\textsuperscript{1105} This is certainly a possibility. However, it should be pointed out that the location in the coffin where the manuscript case was found actually suggests that Li Xi did not take an active interest in these materials.\textsuperscript{1106}

As described in the Introduction, Li Xi’s outer coffin was divided into five compartments: a central compartment that housed Li Xi’s corpse, and four storage areas known as the northern, eastern, southern, and western compartments, and these four compartments were

\textsuperscript{1104} It is possible that this frog was actually mistaken for a toad and was placed in the box in order to represent (or furnish the deceased with) the medicinal properties associated with that animal. Indeed, images of toads and frogs are not always clearly distinguished in traditional Chinese sources. See Vivienne Lo, “Huangdi Hama jing (Yellow Emperor’s Toad Canon),” Asia Major THIRD SERIES 14.2 (2001), pp. 72-73. In both transmitted and excavated texts from Western Han, toads are associated with \textit{yin} energy, and were one of the icons associated with immortality and the legendary Queen Mother of the West 西王母. See Sterckx (2002), pp. 61, 86, 200-203.

\textsuperscript{1105} See Kalinowski (2005), p. 137: “La publication toute récente du rapport de fouilles de la tombe n° 3 donne l'image d'un jeune noble menant une existence qui, sans égaler les fastes de la Cour des empereurs Han, combinait les plaisirs du jeu et de la musique avec des préoccupations martiales et le maniement des armes. De même, la présence des manuscrits pourrait témoigner d'un goût particulier de notre homme pour la philosophie et les sciences.” For a similar statement, see Michèle Pirazzoli-t’Serstevens, \textit{The Han Dynasty}, trans. Janet Seligman (New York: Rizzoli, 1982), pp. 56-57.

\textsuperscript{1106} See Richter (2006), pp. 133-134, who argues that in order to understand the roles manuscripts played in early Chinese mortuary culture, one of the factors that needs to be considered is their location within the tomb.
used to house the various different kinds of objects deposited in Li Xi’s tomb. It is generally accepted that Han tombs were often arranged with different compartments serving as different “rooms,” judging by the objects buried in them. The northern compartments of the outer coffins in Mawangdui M1 and M3 were the most spacious storage areas in their respective tombs, and a number of scholars have noted that the northern compartment of M1, belonging to Xin Zhui, seems to have been deliberately furnished with items that reflected her personal interests and tastes, designed as a space where she could enjoy different kinds of entertainment surrounded by her personal belongings, which included a seat, cane, wig, cosmetics, and bronze mirror. The compartment itself was luxuriously decorated with painted screens, silk curtains, and bamboo mats, and wooden figurines of musicians, dancers, and singers were in attendance (see Figure 5.10). The northern compartment of M3 belonging to Li Xi was clearly meant to perform a similar function (see Figure 5.11). This compartment contained bamboo mats, hanging curtains, lacquer screens, a lacquer table, weapons including a sword, spear, bow and arrows, a weapon rack, earthenware incense burner, earthenware lamps, musical instruments (including a qin 琴 zither), and a boju 博具 gaming set. This compartment also contained lacquerware and silk items, as well as one hundred and two out of the one hundred and sixty wooden figurines (muyong 木俑) found in the tomb, including dancers, singers, musicians, and female attendants. By contrast, the eastern compartment of the coffin in M3, where the manuscript case was found, contained seventy-seven pieces of lacquerware, including six lacquer ding 鼎


1109 For a description of the contents of the northern compartment of the coffin in M3, see BG, p. 42.
cauldrons, and twenty-one bamboo hampers (zhusi 竹笥), some with wooden labels (mupai 木牌).\textsuperscript{1110}

In short, both the northern and eastern compartments of the coffin in M3 were used to store items that could be used by Li Xi in the afterlife, and which simultaneously reflected his wealth and status. However, whereas the items stored in the eastern compartment of the outer coffin are generic and depersonalized, the northern compartment had clearly been curated as a space for Li Xi to enjoy his favorite hobbies, creating a statement (however idealized) about the interests and activities appropriate for a man of his station.\textsuperscript{1111} Indeed, the arrangement of Li Xi’s tomb, and the objects that were deposited there, encouraged (perhaps even dictated) certain modes of activity and experience,\textsuperscript{1112} with the ultimate intention of producing and sustaining a habitus within which elite identity could be sustained, even after death.\textsuperscript{1113} It was a space in which the deceased was oriented in certain ways,\textsuperscript{1114} positioned among objects that served as symbols of

\textsuperscript{1110} For a description of the contents of the eastern compartment of the coffin in M3, see BG, p. 43.

\textsuperscript{1111} It is interesting that the manuscript case was discovered alongside other artifacts such as lacquerware that probably represented the communal property of the Li Clan. Perhaps, then, this is an indication that the manuscripts themselves were likewise the corporate property of the Li family or the Changsha state.

\textsuperscript{1112} Tim Ingold has argued that the neat, sequential distinction between design and habitation with regard to human dwellings is increasingly untenable, since we do not first design houses and then live in them but rather continually construct living spaces through the process of inhabitation. See Tim Ingold, \textit{The Perception of the Environment: Essays on Livelihood, Dwelling, and Skill} (London: Routledge, 2000), pp. 173-188. However, other scholars have emphasized that the designs and layouts of the spaces where we live and work condition the kinds of activities that take place within them. For example, Jean Baudrillard, \textit{The System of Objects} (New York: Verso, 2002), pp. 15-16 has examined the ways in which items of furniture and the layout of different rooms create particular sets of interpersonal relations through the curation of different activities in time and space. See also Christopher Gosden, “What Do Objects Want?” \textit{Journal of Archaeological Method and Theory} 12.3 (2005), pp. 199-203. Of course, in the context of Han mortuary culture, the construction of a postmortem “living space” represented the final say about how the deceased was to conduct themselves after death, allowing the ritualists involved in the burial effectively to dictate Li Xi’s actions and activities in the afterlife.


how the arrangement and availability of material artifacts plays a crucial role in teaching humans how to orient themselves in certain spaces. See also Sarah E. Jackson, “Writing as Material Technology: Orientation Within Landscapes of the Classic Maya World,” in Writing as Material Practice: Substance, Surface, and Medium, ed. Kathryn E. Piquette and Ruth D. Whitehouse (London: Ubiquity Press, 2013), pp. 45-64.
his rank and status, and which structured a bodily, sensory experience inside the tomb. If, as Kalinowski has suggested, there was a close personal connection between Li Xi and the manuscripts he was buried with, then we would surely expect the manuscript case to have been deposited in the most spacious area of the outer coffin, alongside the other items displayed and deposited for Li Xi’s personal use and enjoyment. Instead, we find the case in an area of the coffin dedicated to the storage of generic possessions, which, though certainly representative of Li Xi’s wealth and status, were hardly indicative of his hobbies or interests. It was surely intended that Li Xi avail himself in the afterlife of the items stored in this part of the coffin, but nothing speaks to a close personal connection between these objects and Li Xi himself.

It is also important to note that, unlike certain other early Chinese tombs, where written texts and writing materials were sometimes buried together, no writing materials such as brushes, ink, or inkstones were found in Mawangdui M3. Two knives that could have been used for writing were found inside the tomb, but the context of their deposition clearly shows they were intended primarily for use in gaming and as toiletry items. One of the knives was found in the

1115 Yannis Hamilakis, “The Past as Oral History. Towards an Archaeology of the Senses,” in *Thinking Through the Body: Archaeologies of Corporeality*, ed. Yannis Hamilakis, Mark Pluciennik, and Sarah Tarlow (New York: Kluwer Academic/Plenum, 2002), pp. 121-136 treats tombs as spaces for embodied human action, noting how at certain Ancient Greek burial sites “[t]he restricted space of the tombs and their small antechambers with their dark interiors allowing very little natural light to enter, must have resulted in a structured sensory experience dominated by the 'close' senses of smell, of touch, of taste” (quotation on p. 128).

1116 Kalinowski (2003), pp. 895-896, 895n.17 notes that the objects found in tombs from the Warring States and Early Imperial eras often include writing instruments, including Baoshan 包山 (Jiangling, Hubei; Warring States), Changtaiguan 長台關 (Xinyang 信阳, Henan; Warring States), Jiudian 九店 (Jiangling, Hubei; Warring States), Wangshan 望山 (Jiangling, Hubei; Warring States), Shuichudi, Zhoujiatai 周家台 (Jingzhou 荆州, Hubei; Qin), Bajiaolang 八角朗 (Dingzhou 定州, Hebei 河北; Western Han), Yinwan, and Fenghuanshan 鳳凰山 (Jiangling, Hubei; Western Han). Fu (2011), p. 118 has noted that among the many cases and hampers of silks found in Mawangdui M3, one bore a label reading “hamper of bo and zeng silks” 帛繒笥, and he argues that the silk inside this box was probably intended for use as a writing surface. However, this is pure speculation, and no writing tools that could have been used to copy texts onto this silk were found inside the tomb.
Figure 5.11: Photographs of the northern compartment of the outer coffin in M3
(BG, color plates 9, 10)
gaming case stored in the northern compartment of the outer coffin alongside other gaming pieces and tools, and the other was found inside a toiletry case.\footnote{1117}

By contrast, the tomb occupant of Shuihudi M11, a man named Xi 喜, was buried with manuscripts and writing implements actually alongside his corpse in the inner coffin of the tomb,\footnote{1118} and in the late Western Han tomb at Dingzhou, the eastern compartment of the rear chamber of the tomb seems to have been designed as a workplace for the deceased to engage in textual study in the afterlife, complete with a scribe’s knife, three ink slabs, a large cache of inscribed bamboo slips, and a copper pot that may have been used for catching ink.\footnote{1119} Similarly, Ethan Harkness has found that the majority of daybook manuscripts have been found in tombs alongside writing implements, with most daybooks deposited inside the inner coffin along with

\footnote{1117}{See BG, pp. 162-166, 235 and Selbitschka (forthcoming).}

\footnote{1118}{Xi was interred with three bamboo writing brushes stored inside lacquer bamboo cases and a bronze knife. Two of these brushes were actually deposited inside the inner coffin along with the corpse and the bamboo slips. See Selbitschka (forthcoming). Selbitschka admits that the presence of manuscripts or writing tools in a tomb does not necessarily indicate that the deceased enjoyed a close connection to writing, since brushes, ink, and ink stones were also used by early Chinese painters. However, he notes that “the most plausible combination of burial goods suggesting literacy is manuscripts and writing paraphernalia.” Selbitschka also argues that the strongest evidence for literacy is the deposition of writing materials near written texts in the tomb. Selbitschka further notes that few tradition texts are associated with writing tools in tombs, and he speculates that in the case of Mawangdui M3 although the tomb occupant was almost certainly capable of reading the texts he was buried with, and may also have been a writer himself in some capacity, he simply did not choose to emphasize this aspect of his literacy. While this is certainly a possibility, it should be pointed out that there is no positive evidence from the tomb itself to suggest that Li Xi was ever actively engaged in the production of written texts. Selbitschka also provides a useful table showing the distribution of manuscripts and writing paraphernalia in early Chinese tomb assemblages. For an overview of writing tools in early China, see Sun (2008), pp. 277-280 and Sun Ji 孫機, Zhongguo gudai wuzhi wenhua 中國古代物質文化 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2014), pp. 297-321.}

\footnote{1119}{See Paul Van Els, “Dingzhou: The Story of an Unfortunate Tomb,” \textit{Asiatische Studien/\textit{Etudes Asiatiques}} 63.4 (2009), p. 919. Note that Van Els also refers to this corpus as a “posthumous library” (pp. 919, 936). Van Els also compares (pp. 936-937) the diversity of the Dingzhou finds to those from Mawangdui, speculating that perhaps both corpora were intended to be of use as documents for governing. Van Els argues (pp. 916-919) that the occupant of the Dingzhou tomb may have been Liu Xiu 劉脩, King of Zhongshan 中山王 (d. 55 BCE). Elsewhere, Van Els has noted that the Dingzhou tomb also yielded a chest containing fragments of charred silk that may be the remains of a collection of silk manuscripts. See Van Els (2018), p. 16}
the tomb occupant rather than stored in a separate chamber or compartment, speaking to a close personal connection between these manuscripts and their owners.\textsuperscript{1120}

Of course, the presence of writing tools in a tomb does not necessarily mean that the tomb occupant was a professional scribe, though it is strong evidence that he was himself engaged in writing in some capacity.\textsuperscript{1121} There was more than enough space in the lacquer case in Mawangdui M3 to include writing paraphernalia such as brushes or inkstones, and there was more than enough space in the northern compartment of the outer coffin for the lacquer case to be buried alongside Li Xi’s personal possessions.\textsuperscript{1122} Indeed, the case could even have been buried with Li Xi himself inside the inner coffin, if that had been desirable. Instead, the Mawangdui manuscripts were stored inside a case that contained no other writing paraphernalia, which was deposited separately from Li Xi’s personal possessions. Any theory that Li Xi enjoyed a close personal connection to the manuscripts that were buried with him must account for these discrepancies.

Moving from the tomb itself to the rituals performed at the tomb site, we might ask what role (if any) this case of manuscripts played in the funeral rites for Li Xi. As described in Chapter 2, items that were deposited in the tomb, as well as some that were not, were displayed as part of the funeral rites, and entries cataloging many of these items were also read aloud as part of the funeral ceremony. Interestingly, we find no unambiguous references to this manuscript case in the tomb inventory text for Mawangdui M3, though in BG He Jiejun 何介鈞 speculates that the following entry may in fact be a reference to the contents of that case:

\textsuperscript{1120} Harkness also concludes from this evidence that the individual users of these manuscripts were “hands on” in their editing of these manuscripts and their contents. See Ethan Harkness (2011), pp. 48, 50, 50n.6, 83.

\textsuperscript{1121} Niv Allon and Hana Navratilova, Ancient Egyptian Scribes: A Cultural Exploration (London: Bloomsbury, 2017), p. 67 note, for example, that while a large amount of writing equipment was discovered in Tutankhamun’s tomb, he would never have been considered an artist or a scribe

\textsuperscript{1122} Indeed, it is strange that the Mawangdui manuscript corpus contains numerous texts for use in military divination, and yet were not buried along with the weapons stored in the northern compartment of M3.
“One case of bu and zeng silks” (布繒檢 [＝奩] 一) (270/276).\textsuperscript{1123}

However, even if we take this entry as a reference to the manuscript case, it is telling that it contains no explicit reference to written texts, distinguishing it from certain entries in other tomb inventory texts discovered at contemporaneous sites. The tomb inventory text for Zhangjiashan M247, for example, carries entries for “One bamboo hamper [containing] written documents” 書一笥 (slip 34), “One ink brush with case” 筆一, 有管 (slip 39), and “One inkstone with rub stone” 研一, 有子 (slip 40). Similarly, the tomb inventory text for Yinwan M6 carries entries for “Two [scratch] knives” 刀二枚, “Two ink brushes” 筆二枚, “One board [i.e. case] with ink stone” 板研一, and “One ink pouch” 墨橐一.\textsuperscript{1124} Even if, then, the entry in the Mawangdui M3 tomb inventory text is indeed a reference to the manuscript case, it is interesting that the entry should only list the materials inside the case and not their use as writing surfaces. In my view, either the ritualists responsible for preparing the M3 tomb inventory text entry did not value these pieces of silk as carriers of written texts, or, as seems more likely, the manuscript case was simply never entered into the tomb inventory text in the first place.\textsuperscript{1125} If the ritual display of the artifacts recorded in the M3 tomb inventory text was intended to attract attention to their special material and/or symbolic qualities and their relationships to the deceased, then it is curious that the Mawangdui manuscripts themselves were not apparently

\textsuperscript{1123} BG, p. 155. See BG, p. 65 for a transcription of the contents of this slip, and plate 40 for a black and white photograph. JC, 6.253 provides a similar transcription, with Zheng Shubin 鄭曙斌 arguing that the graph jian 檢 is being used to write the word lian 奩. See JC, 2.283 for a color photograph of the slip.

\textsuperscript{1124} Translations modified from Selbitschka (forthcoming). Selbitschka notes that Zhangshajian M247 actually did contain two inkstones with one rub stone each, as well as a bamboo case with a brush inside. The bamboo hamper listed on slip 34 was not found in the tomb, however since manuscripts and writing tools were found nearby it seems that the bamboo hamper had simply rotted away. Shi Rao 師饒 was buried at Yinwan with two writing brushes, two scratch knives, and a lacquer inkstone case. Probably the ink pouch had decomposed before the tomb was excavated.

\textsuperscript{1125} Given the fact that the manuscripts occupied two compartments in the bottom tier of the case, while the upper tier contained a number of silk textiles, if this tomb inventory entry is indeed a reference to the contents of the lacquer manuscript case it is possible that the scribe who drew it up made a record only of what he saw on the topmost layer of the case as he was cataloging the burial items.
singled out for such appreciation. Of course, it is possible that the Mawangdui manuscripts were in fact displayed at the tomb site along with other burial objects, but for some reason were not recorded in the inventory. However, on current evidence it seems that the Mawangdui manuscripts were simply not celebrated as special gifts or possessions at the tomb site.

In sum, we find no evidence from the archaeological context to suggest Li Xi enjoyed a close personal connection to these manuscripts, or to any type of writing. The manuscripts seem to have been placed in a more or less random sequence inside a lacquer case that may have been repurposed for storing texts. Unlike most of the other items found in the tomb, this case was not, it seems, singled out for attention during the funeral rites, nor was it deposited in the area of the tomb containing those items that were most representative of Li Xi’s elite status and personal interests.

A number of scholars have observed that the Mawangdui manuscripts were probably selected from a larger collection of materials, and that this collection probably belonged either to Li Xi himself or to the kingdom his family served. From the evidence examined above, I believe the latter scenario to be much more likely. The Mawangdui manuscripts were probably selected for burial from an institutional library that belonged either to the kingdom or the Changsha royal family, and were interred with Li Xi to provide him with a toolbox of cultural and technical knowledge and information for use in the afterlife. The texts were thus repurposed from documents designed primarily to consolidate information for occasional consultation and the future copying of written texts, to documents that Li Xi could use to conduct divination,

1126 See Chris Gosden, “Making and Display: Our Aesthetic Appreciation of Things and Objects,” in Substance, Memory, Display: Archaeology and Art, ed. Colin Renfrew, Chris Gosden, and Elizabeth DeMarrais (Cambridge, England: McDonald Institute, 2004), pp. 35-45. Gosden notes that “display singles out things from the general flow of life offering them up for contemplation and thought” (quotation on p. 35) and that the “[p]resencing of objects through display makes people conscious of, and thoughtful about, the objects on display and extra sensitive to their special qualities” (quotation on p. 44).

apply medical knowledge, cultivate philosophical wisdom, and understand the patterns of history. Thus, their deposition in Li Xi’s tomb represented the beginning of a new stage in their lifecycle, where they would become personal possessions for use in the afterlife. 1128

5.5 Conclusion: Using texts in the afterlife

The Mawangdui silk manuscripts were interred in Li Xi’s tomb so that he could benefit from the knowledge they contained. We know this because the manuscripts, the contents of which mostly relate to various technical practices, were found alongside ritual tools and medical ingredients (the oyster shell, flutes, plants, stalks, and frog remains), as well as rather more crudely manufactured manuscripts made of wood and bamboo. If the aim had solely been to provide Li Xi with materially or visually impressive symbols of culture and learning, rather than with documents for use, then it is unlikely that a shoddily produced manuscript such as Medical Manuscript IX containing the *“Za jinfang” 雜禁方 (“Assorted Forbidden Recipes”) text (see Chapter 1) would have been included in the collection. The fact that all these pieces were found

1128 The lifecycle approach to artifacts can be distinguished from the biographical approach, with the former tracing the developmental stages of more generic and anonymous sources and the latter emphasizing the special, unique qualities of a particular object from the moment of its creation to the point at which it was discarded. See Karin Dannehl, “Object Biographies: From Production to Consumption,” in History and Material Culture: A Student’s Guide to Approaching Alternative Sources, ed. Karen Harvey (London: Routledge, 2009), pp. 123-125. Igor Kopytoff, “The Cultural Biography of Things: Commodityization as Process,” in The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective, ed. Arjun Appadurai (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1988), pp. 66-67 encourages us to ask, when constructing biographies of artifacts, “What, sociologically, are the biographical possibilities inherent in its ‘status’ and in the period and culture, and how are these possibilities realized? Where does the thing come from and who made it? What has been its career so far, and what do people consider to be an ideal career for such things? What are the recognized ‘ages’ or periods in the thing’s ‘life,’ and what are the cultural markers for them? How does the thing’s use change with its age, and what happens to it when it reaches the end of its usefulness?” As I hope has been made clear, tracing the different stages of these manuscripts’ production and consumption reveals that they played very different roles in different material contexts over time. For an application of some of these concepts to the case of early China, see the essays in Francis Allard, Yan Sun, and Katheryn M. Linduff, eds., Memory and Agency in Ancient China: Shaping the Life History of Objects (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 2018).
together in the same lacquer case tells us that the collection as a whole was interred with the aim of equipping Li Xi with the kind of knowledge he would have needed to navigate the afterlife successfully.\(^{1129}\)

Having originally developed in the Warring States era, the idea of a “bureaucratized afterlife” matured during the Qin and Han dynasties, and it was increasingly believed that the underworld was governed by an administration that mirrored the structure of government above ground.\(^{1130}\) The fact that the Mawangdui tomb library seems to have been curated with an eye to utility, containing all the cultural and technical learning that an elite male member of early Western Han society would have needed, suggests that it was primarily intended to furnish Li Xi with practical knowledge rather than with reading material for personal enjoyment.\(^{1131}\)

This does not mean, however, that the deposition of the manuscripts in Li Xi’s tomb was not also intended to make a (potentially inaccurate) symbolic statement about the cultural learning and ritual propriety of the deceased. That is, whatever Li Xi’s actual hobbies and inclinations, a curated manuscript collection containing historical knowledge, philosophical wisdom, and ritual compendia would have reflected well on his person in the context of a tomb designed to show the best of its occupant. Like the other objects found in the Mawangdui tombs, the burial of this collection of manuscripts also allowed the living to give concrete form to an abstract set of values (ritual, philosophy, culture, learning), creating a totalizing symbol of elite culture, normatively defined, encompassing diverse fields of knowledge and culture in a single

\(^{1129}\) It is also possible that the burial of this case of manuscripts was related to the practice of interring miniature burial objects known as yong 甬 that could become, or serve as, “the real thing” in the afterlife. Perhaps, for example, this was a library in miniature that could serve Li Xi in death just as the much larger Changsha state library had served him and his family in life. For the connection between yong and buried manuscripts, see Giele (2003), p. 434.


\(^{1131}\) We can perhaps imagine Li Xi enjoying the narratives of the *Chunqiu shiyu* and *Zhan guo zonghengjia shu* manuscripts, but these stand out in the context of a manuscript corpus generally characterized by technical concerns.
(albeit composite) material artifact.\textsuperscript{1132} The deposition of these manuscripts thus shows that, at least in the context of Western Han mortuary culture, and almost certainly above ground as well, written texts were valued simultaneously as repositories of information and potent symbols of cultural values and prestige.\textsuperscript{1133} And, in practical terms, the selection of predominantly silk manuscripts allowed the ritualists responsible for coordinating Li Xi’s burial to maximize the amount of textual material that could be buried with him without taking up too much space in the tomb.

The Mawangdui manuscripts thus served several different yet interrelated functions in the context of Li Xi’s tomb. Originally designed as institutional documents, they were transformed through the mechanics of early Western Han mortuary procedure into items for personal use, tokens of ritual and culture, and luxury status symbols. Burying these manuscripts in Li Xi’s tomb enabled the ritualists simultaneously to free up space in the library, maximize the number of texts interred with the deceased, embody his elite social status, and facilitate the continuation of culturally orthodox practices, values, and beliefs in the afterlife. The materiality of silk had a role to play in all these different factors, with the material features of the manuscripts providing

\textsuperscript{1132} See Alfred Gell, “Newcomers to the World of Goods: Consumption Among the Muria Gonds,” in Appadurai (1988), pp. 113-115. Gell describes how some recently enriched Sri Lankan fisherman used their new-found wealth to purchase television sets that were unusable because they had no electricity, or garages even though cars were unable to access their homes. Gell uses Sartre’s concept of “totalizing” to explain how the fishermen turned the disparate elements of their lives and experiences into a reconciled whole without contradictions: a television set with which they could identify as part of their new social status. Similarly, Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi has argued that we surround ourselves with objects as a way of transforming the “precariousness of consciousness into the solidity of things,” since “[t]he body is not large, beautiful, and permanent enough to satisfy our sense of self...[w]e need objects to magnify our power, enhance our beauty, and extend our memory into the future.” See Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, “Why We Need Things,” in \textit{History from Things: Essays on Material Culture}, ed. Steven Lubar and W. David Kingery (New York: Smithsonian Books, 1993), p. 28.

different opportunities for technical production and cultural expression in the different contexts in which they were used.\textsuperscript{1134}

Beliefs surrounding death and the underworld changed significantly over time in early China, as did the styles and structures of early Chinese tombs,\textsuperscript{1135} and ideals surrounding the afterlife were as diverse as the practices used to represent and negotiate them.\textsuperscript{1136} Even in the Han, mortuary rituals and beliefs exhibited significant synchronic and diachronic diversity, with many competing (or perhaps complementary) beliefs and practices existing in tandem.\textsuperscript{1137}

Jue Guo, acknowledging the diversity of pre-Buddhist notions of death and the afterlife in China, notes that one of the dominant models of belief in the afterlife was the “journey model,”

\textsuperscript{1134} Here, we are brought back to Webb Keane’s notion of “bundling.” See Webb Keane, “On the Materiality of Religion,” \textit{Material Religion} 4.2 (2008), pp. 230-231 and my discussion of the term in Chapter 3.


\textsuperscript{1136} Indeed, the afterlife was rarely fully or consistently depicted or articulated anywhere in the ancient world. Poo (1998), p. 177 notes that, with the exception of Ancient Egypt, in antiquity the netherworld was rarely clearly conceived or represented, and beliefs in the afterlife were characterized by great diversity.

\textsuperscript{1137} See, for example, Kenneth Brashier, \textit{Ancestral Memory in Early China} (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Asia Center, 2011), pp. 184-228, where Brashier outlines a spectrum of beliefs including the belief that: 1) the realms of the living and the dead were distinct and existed in an exchange relationship; the mental role of the descendants played no role in communication between them; 2) only living descendants who were sincere (cheng 誠) could engage in exchange relationships with the dead; 3) the medium of interaction between the living and dead is mental in nature, including dreams, illnesses, and meditations; the mental condition of the descendant is a conduit of exchange rather than precondition of it; 4) the dead did not exist wholly separate from the living but as projections of human minds; and 5) the dead were not sentient and interaction with them as impossible. Brashier is keen to point out, however, that these were not mutually independent belief systems, and that the differences between these “genres of discourse” (p. 87) was often a question of emphasis. See also K.E. Brashier, “Han Thanatology and the Division of ‘Souls,’” \textit{Early China} 21 (1996), pp. 125-58; Jessica Rawson, “Chinese Burial Patterns: Sources of Information on Thought and Belief,” in \textit{Cognition and Material Culture: The Archaeology of Symbolic Storage}, ed. Colin Renfrew and Chris Scarre (Cambridge, England: Oxbow Books, 1998), p. 125; Michael Loewe, \textit{Faith, Myth, and Reason in Han China} (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2005), p. 25; and Olberding and Ivanhoe (2011), pp. 1-12.
where the tomb served merely as a temporary “transit-station” before the deceased ultimately embarked on their journey to the next realm, be it Heaven, some sort of immortal paradise, or the land of the dead. However, Guo also notes that many tombs seem to reflect an alternative belief model according to which the tomb was the final abode. Many Han tombs made from brick and stone, for example, resemble real houses, furnished with objects that resembled, and were sometimes indistinguishable from, household items. Guo notes that these seemingly contradictory beliefs actually co-existed, sometimes even in the same tomb, and that the Mawangdui tombs perfectly embody this diversity of beliefs, with paintings that seem to depict an afterlife journey co-existing alongside furnishings that create the feel of an underground home.\footnote{See Jue Guo, “Concepts of Death and the Afterlife Reflected in Newly Discovered Tomb Objects and Texts from Han China,” in Olberding and Ivanhoe (2011), pp. 86-105. For a similar argument that many early Chinese tombs were “waystations,” see Lai (2015b), pp. 75-77, 161-187.}

The construction and curation of the Mawangdui tombs, then, seem to endorse both the journey model and the underground residence model,\footnote{Wu Hung, “Art in a Ritual Context: Rethinking Mawangdui,” \textit{Early China} 17 (1992), pp. 111-112 and Eugene Y. Wang, “Ascend to Heaven or Stay in the Tomb? Paintings in Mawangdui Tomb 1 and the Virtual Ritual of Revival in Second-Century B.C.E. China,” in Olberding and Ivanhoe (2011), pp. 37-38 also comment on the polyvocal nature of the Mawangdui tombs.} and we must be careful about adducing narratives that obscure this diversity.\footnote{The most cautious reader of the Mawangdui tombs in this regard is probably Jerome Silbergeld. See his “Mawangdui, Excavated Materials, and Transmitted Texts: A Cautionary Note,” \textit{Early China} 8 (1982-1983), pp. 79-92.} Regardless of whether the tomb reflected a belief in the journey model, the underground residence model, something in between, or all of the above, however, it is generally reckoned that many if not most burial objects were intended simultaneously to symbolize the kind of person the deceased was, or should have been,\footnote{As we have seen, it would be a mistake to understand early Chinese tombs as unproblematic or unmediated reflections of the life, interests, priorities, and capacities of their occupants. Rather, any desire to embody or project the tomb occupants’ personal or professional lives would have contended with the requirement to exemplify the qualities that the deceased should have embodied as a member of a certain social group. In other words, we must remember that what a tomb tells us about the life and status of its occupant is filtered through various stages of mortuary ritual, and it is unclear which groups were}
furnish them with items they would have needed in the afterlife, be it for some sort of journey or a more settled state of existence. The construction and curation of tombs in early China was thus one way in which the unknown was explained by means of the known, and the Mawangdui manuscripts were part of just such a process.

The curation of the Mawangdui tombs not only created a space for the deceased to inhabit, be it temporarily or for all eternity, but also a set of memories and dispositions. Indeed, the tomb objects in Li Xi’s tomb, including the manuscripts in the lacquer case, helped construct what Jan Assmann has called a “memory of things,” a type of memory engineered by the items we own and curate that helps remind us of who we are and where we come from. Assmann’s observations amount to an acknowledgment that objects make people just as people make objects, and the burial of the manuscripts in Li Xi’s tomb was part of an attempt to control Li Xi’s sense of self (as well, of course, of those who mourned him) as a member of the early involved in the curation of the tomb and the posthumous identity of its occupant. See Rawson (1998), p. 109; Von Falkenhausen (2003), pp. 441-442; and Selbitschka (forthcoming).

1142 See Rawson (1998), p. 111. Similarly, Lynn Meskell has argued that in the case of Ancient Egypt “one could think of the tomb as a time machine that housed all the materials necessary for eternal life: bodies, coffins, statues, paintings of the deceased and his family, ritual paraphernalia, furniture, clothing and jewelry, household goods, food, wine, and so on – every good thing as the Egyptians would proclaim. It was clearly not enough simply to aspire to having it all next time around; it was necessary to provide that material world in the context of the tomb so as to secure it for the future.” See Lynn Meskell, Object Worlds in Ancient Egypt (London: Bloomsbury, 2004), p. 7.


Western Han elite, with all the rights and responsibilities that entailed. Yet the tomb was not just a coercive space, it was also a comforting one, furnished largely with objects familiar from everyday life. There was thus a balance to be struck in the curation of the Mawangdui tombs between creating a space where Li Xi could feel at home and engineering an environment that conformed to the normative tastes and ideals of early Western Han high culture.

The Mawangdui manuscripts were not “objects apart” at Mawangdui, distinct from the other items in Li Xi’s tomb. We did not discover manuscripts and tomb objects in Mawangdui M3; rather, we encounter manuscripts as tomb objects. Like most of the other objects buried with Li Xi, the manuscripts in Mawangdui M3 were simultaneously items for postmortem use, embodiments of cultural learning and technical knowledge, and powerful status symbols. In this, they fully embodied the multifaceted nature of wen 文 as writing, culture, and correctly patterned conduct.


1147 As Serge Tisseron has pointed out, many international hotel chains aim to provide their guests with the same material environment wherever they are in the world so that they do not feel out of place while in a foreign country. See Serge Tisseron, *Comment l’esprit vient aux objets* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2016), p. 12.

1148 Similarly, Rex Winbury has noted that in Ancient Rome books enjoyed a variety of functions, including “cultural and social status signifiers and markers of elite aspirations, as potential memorials to a man’s existence in a society with little belief in an after-life, as items in a private or state library, as prestige artefacts, as gifts in a gift-exchange culture.” See Rex Winbury, *The Roman Book: Books, Publishing and Performance in Classical Rome* (London: Duckworth Press, 2009), p. 11.
Dorothy Ko has noted that Qing dynasty inkstones were entangled in *wen* not only through their use in writing but also through their material form as collectible objects, gifts, tokens of exchange, and inscriptive surfaces. See Dorothy Ko, *The Social Life of Inkstones: Artisans and Scholars in Early Qing China* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2017), p. 3.

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Conclusion

New archaeological discoveries are transforming the way we study early Chinese texts, and it has been noted that a single new find could change what we think we know about early Chinese manuscript culture. \(^\text{1150}\) Studies of early Chinese manuscripts should ideally be sensitive to both geographical diversity and change over time, and it is unlikely that studies dedicated to individual sites or manuscript corpora, no matter how detailed or comprehensive, will account for all the ways writing was used or understood in all contexts. However, by focusing on a single site, and studying all the different forms of writing that were found there, it has been possible to gain some sense of the roles writing played in the lives and deaths of early Western Han elites in the Changsha region.

We have seen that writing was, to varying extents and in different ways, incorporated into a wide range of material artifacts and cultural practices, including not only manuscript production and curation but also lacquerware and textile production, ceremonial performance, tomb building, funereal rituals, and mortuary practice. As a result, early Western Han elites, and those connected to them, engaged with writing and written texts not as disembodied activities or repositories of information, but in the form of tools, materials, surfaces, and artifacts, things to be made, seen, viewed, handled, performed, owned, and sometimes buried. Depending on the circumstances, texts could be work tasks, ritual props, performance aids, magical talismans, visual designs, display items, possessions, and burial objects, with writing used not just to record or communicate important ideas and information but also as part of older, perhaps ultimately more powerful modes of cultural expression such as ritual performance and material display. Written texts could mean different things to different groups in different contexts at different points in their lifecycle. But manuscripts and inscribed objects, no less than the non-inscribed

burial items with which we find them, were always *things*, artifacts that, through the material processes by which they were produced and the material acts in which they were used, had powerful effects on the world that created them. We understand more about writing at Mawangdui when we situate it within the elite material and visual cultures of the early Western Han.
Appendix: Table of manuscripts and related artifacts from Mawangdui

While numerous catalogs have been published over the course of the last few decades listing the various texts from Mawangdui, there is (to my knowledge) no comprehensive catalog containing information about all the Mawangdui manuscripts and the texts contained on them. This is, in part, because reconstruction work on the Mawangdui manuscripts is ongoing, but also because previous studies of the manuscripts have not generally been concerned with studying them as material artifacts. To remedy this situation, I have compiled the following table containing information about each manuscript, including the texts they contain, their physical dimensions, location in the tomb, script style (where relevant), and the (largely approximate) dates when the texts of the manuscripts were copied. This information is necessarily incomplete and provisional and will require updating as new discoveries are made. For now, it is hoped that the information provided here will facilitate future research into the Mawangdui manuscripts, particularly their material and codicological features.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ms. no.</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Alternate titles</th>
<th>Texts</th>
<th>Materials and dimensions (approx.)</th>
<th>Location in the tomb</th>
<th>Notes</th>
<th>Script style and likely date (JC and other sources)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>M1 Tomb inventory manuscript 遺冊</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Tomb inventory text for Xin Zhui</td>
<td>312 bamboo slips, 27.6cm x 0.7cm</td>
<td>M1: northern end of the eastern compartment of the outer coffin</td>
<td>Certain characters retain elements of the small seal script style; may have been written by more than one hand</td>
<td>Early form of Han clerical script; ca. 168 BCE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>M3 Tomb inventory manuscript 遺冊</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Tomb inventory text for Li Xi</td>
<td>400 bamboo slips, 27.5cm x 1cm; 7 wooden boards, 23-28cm x 2.2-6cm</td>
<td>M3: northern end of the western compartment of the outer coffin</td>
<td>Writing may have been executed by more than one hand; one of the wooden boards was discovered in</td>
<td>Han clerical script; ca. 168 BCE</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Manuscripts Found Inside Lacquer Case in M3

<p>| | | | | | |</p>
<table>
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</table>
| **3** | *Laozi* 老子 *A* | N/A | 1. *“Dejing” 德經*; 2. *“Daojing” 道經*; 3. *“Wuxing jing” 五行經*; 4. *“Wuxing jing shuo” 五行經說*; 5. *“Jiuzhu” 九主*; 6. *“Mingjun” 明君*; 7. *“Desheng” 德聖* | Silk, 24 cm x 318.2cm | Long through compartment in the bottom tier of the lacquer case | Rolled around a long piece of wood; script style close to Qin ancient clerical script, similar to the writing on the *Xingde 刑德* and *Chunqiu shiyu 春秋事語* manuscripts; no taboo on 邦 but not 盎*
|   |   |   |   |   |   |
| **4** | *Laozi* 老子 *B* | N/A | 1. *“Jingfa” 經法*; 2. *“Shi da jing” 大史經*; 3. *“Cheng” 称*; 4. *“Daoysuan” 道原*; 5. *“Dejing” 德經*; 6. *“Daojing” 道經* | Silk, 48cm x 166cm | Large rectangular compartment in the bottom tier of the lacquer case | Script style close to that of the *Wuxing zhan 五星占* manuscript; observes taboo on 邦 but not 盎*
|   |   |   |   |   |   |
| **5** | *Zhouyi* 周易 manuscript |   | *“Zhouyi” 象* "Ersan zi wen” 論 《二三子問》卷 1.*“Xici” 繫辭 《易之義》; 2.*“Zhong” 《繫辭》; 3.*“Yi zhi yi” 易之義*; 4.*“Yi zan” 易贊*; 5.*“Yao” 要*; 6.*“Mu He” 論和* | Silk, 49cm x 85cm | Large rectangular compartment in the bottom tier of the lacquer case | Script style very close to the writing on the *Zhouyi* commentarial and *Laozi* 老子 manuscript, with occasional traces of seal script; all three written by different hands; observes taboo on 邦 but not 盎*
|   |   |   |   |   |   |
| **6** | *Zhouyi* 周易 commentarial manuscript |   | *“Xici” 繫辭 《繫辭》*; 2.*“Zhao Li” 《昭力》卷 1.*“Xici” 繫辭 2.*“Zhong” 《繫辭》 3.*“Yi zhi yi” 易之義*; 4.*“Yi zan” 易贊* 5.*“Yao” 要* 6.*“Mu He” 論和*; 4.*Xici 繫辭* | Silk, 48cm x 85cm | Large rectangular compartment in the bottom tier of the lacquer case | Script style very close to the *Zhouyi* and *Laozi* 老子 manuscript, with occasional traces of seal script; all three written by different hands;
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Entry</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Quantity</th>
<th>Material</th>
<th>Dimensions</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Language Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td><em>Chunqiu shiyu</em> 春秋事語</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Sixteen historical anecdotes set in the Springs and Autumns era</td>
<td>Silk, approx. 74cm x 24cm</td>
<td>Long through compartment in the bottom tier of the lacquer case; found underneath Medical Manuscripts VII, VIII, IX, and X</td>
<td>Was rolled around a long piece of wood; similar calligraphic style to the <em>Laozi</em> 老子 A manuscript; no taboo on 邦</td>
<td>Ancient clerical; ca. 206-195 BCE, probably pre-Han</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td><em>Zhanguo zonghengji a shu</em> 戰國縱橫家書</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Twenty-seven historical anecdotes set in the Warring States era</td>
<td>Silk, 192cm x 23 cm</td>
<td>Large rectangular compartment in the bottom tier of the lacquer case</td>
<td>Copied by three different hands; seems to observe taboo on 邦</td>
<td>Ancient clerical; ca. 195 BCE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td><em>Xingde</em> 刑德</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>1.<em>“Riyue fengyu yunqi zhan” 日月風雨雲氣占 [</em>“Yueri”月日, “Fengyu yunqi deng” 風雨雲氣等, “Xingxiu fenye” 星宿分野]; 2. <em>“Xingde zhan” 刑德占 [</em>“Taiyin xingde daoyou tu” 太陰刑德大遊圖, “Xingde xiaoyou tu” 刑德小遊圖, “Xingde jieshuo” 刑德解說]</td>
<td>Silk, 75cm long and 50cm wide</td>
<td>Large rectangular compartment in the bottom tier of the lacquer case</td>
<td>Similar script style to the <em>Laozi</em> 老子 A manuscript and Medical Manuscripts I and II; contains date equivalent to 196 or 195 BCE</td>
<td>Ancient clerical; 196-195 BCE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td><em>Xingde</em> 刑德</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>1.<em>“Xingde zhan” 刑德占 [</em>“Taiyin xingde daoyou tu” 太陰刑德大遊圖, “Xingde Xiaoyou tu” 刑德小遊圖, “Xingde jieshuo” 刑德解說]; 2. <em>“Riyue fengyu yunqi zhan” 日月風雨雲氣占 [</em>“Yueri”月</td>
<td>Silk, 85cm long and 45cm wide</td>
<td>Large rectangular compartment in the bottom tier of the lacquer case</td>
<td>Similar script style to the <em>Laozi</em> 老子 B manuscript; contains certain dates</td>
<td>Han clerical script; ca. 188-168 BCE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td><em>Xingde</em></td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Silk, approx. 120cm long and 50cm wide</td>
<td>Script style very close to that of the <em>Xingde</em> manuscript; contains date notations</td>
<td>Ancient clerical; ca. 205-196 BCE</td>
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<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>“Chuanshe ng zhan” 刑德占</td>
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<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>“Chuanshen g tu” 刑德圖</td>
<td></td>
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<td>3.</td>
<td>“Chuansheng jieshuo” 刑德解說</td>
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<td>4.</td>
<td>“Xingde xiaoyu tu” 刑德小游圖</td>
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<td>5.</td>
<td>“Xingde jieshuo” 刑德解說</td>
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<td>6.</td>
<td>“Digang zhan” 地剛占</td>
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<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>“Digang tu” 地剛圖</td>
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<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>“Digang jieshuo” 地剛解說</td>
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<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>“Tian di yinyang” 天地陰陽</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>12</th>
<th><em>Yinyang, waxing</em> 陰陽五行</th>
<th><em>Shifa</em></th>
<th>Silk, 224cm x 45cm</th>
<th>Large rectangular compartment in the bottom tier of the lacquer case</th>
<th>Early seal-clerical; ca. 221 BCE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>“Zazhan zhiyi” 雜占之一</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>“Tian yi” 天一</td>
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<td>3.</td>
<td>“Xi” 徒</td>
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<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>“Tian di” 天地</td>
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<td>5.</td>
<td>“Nü fa” 女發</td>
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<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>“Zazhan zhi er” 雜占之二</td>
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<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>“Shang shuo” 上朔</td>
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<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>“Shi” 室</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td></td>
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<td>10.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

| 11. | | | | | |
| 12. | | | | | |
18. *“Wuxing jinri deng”* 五行禁日等; 19. *“Zazhan zhi qi”* 震占之七; 20. *“Kanyu”* 堪舆; [““Shi tu” 式圖, “Kanyu zhanfa” 堪舆占法, “Kan yu shensha biao” 堪舆神煞表]; 21. *“Xingri”* 刑日 [““Xingri tu” 刑日圖, “Xingri zhan” 刑日占]; 22. *“Zhuri”* 諸日; 23. *“Ji (er)”* 祭(二); 24. *“Ji (san)”* 祭(三); 25. *“Yiji”* 宜忌.

<p>| 13 | *Yinyang, Wuxing 陰陽五行 B | N/A | 1. <em>“Xingde zhan”</em> 行德占 [““Xingde jieshuo” 行德解説, ““Taiyin xingde dayou tu” 太陰行德大遊圖, ““Xingde xiaoyou tu” 行德小遊圖]; 2. <em>“Zeri biao”</em> 擇日表 [““Xiong” 兒, ““Wuxing sanhe” 五行三合, ““Xuange zhaoyao” 玄戈昭應, ““Wenri wuri deng””文日武日等]; 3. <em>“Wuxing jinri”</em> 五行禁日; 4. <em>“Shangshuo”</em> 上朔; <em>“Xingri”</em> [““Xingri tu” 刑日圖, ““Xingri zhan” 刑日占]; 6. <em>“Tiandi”</em> 天地; 7. <em>“Fusheng tu”</em> 傳勝圖; 8. Silk, 100cm long and 50cm wide | Large rectangular compartment in the bottom tier of the lacquer case | Ancient clerical; 188-180 BCE |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Medical Manuscript</th>
<th>N/A</th>
<th>Size</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Medical Manuscript I</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Large rectangular compartment in the bottom tier of the lacquer case</td>
<td>The last text on this manuscript carries over onto Medical Manuscript II; additional recipes were appended to the end of Medical Manuscript II and the beginning of Medical Manuscript I; character forms similar to Qin and pre-Qin sources</td>
<td>Small seal script; probably Qin or (at the latest) Chu-Han contention era (additional portions of text were copied years and possibly decades later)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Medical Manuscript II</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Silk, 48cm x 110cm</td>
<td>The text on this manuscript begins on Medical Manuscript I; additional recipes were appended to the end of Medical Manuscript II and the beginning of Medical Manuscript I; character forms similar to Qin and pre-Qin sources</td>
<td>Small seal script; probably Qin or (at the latest) Chu-Han contention era (additional portions of text were copied years and possibly decades later)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Medical Manuscript III</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Silk, 49-50cm x 110cm</td>
<td>Long through compartment in the bottom tier of the lacquer case; found underneath Medical Manuscripts VII, VIII, XI, and X</td>
<td>Seal-clerical hybrid; ca. 205-195 BCE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Medical Manuscript IV</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Silk, 24 cm wide; the surviving pieces total 140cm in length</td>
<td>Additional text was appended to a blank portion of silk in the middle of the manuscript; similar script style to Medical Manuscript III</td>
<td>Seal-clerical hybrid; ca. 205-195 BCE</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 18 | Medical Manuscript 醫書 V | N/A | "*"Za liaofang" 雜療方 [="Fangnei ji" 房內記] *"Liaoshe gong dufang" 療射工毒方 | Silk, 24cm wide; the surviving pieces total 65cm in length | Large rectangular compartment in the bottom tier of the lacquer case | The two portions of text seem to have been written by different hands. | Seal-clerical script very similar in style to the writing on Medical Manuscripts I and II; probably Qin

| 19 | Medical Manuscript 醫書 VI | N/A | "*"Taichan shu" 胎產書 | Silk, approx. 49cm wide and 49cm long | Large rectangular compartment in the bottom tier of the lacquer case | Script style is similar to Qin dynasty texts from Shuihudi (ca. 217 BCE) | Same seal-clerical hybrid style as the writing on Medical Manuscript III; probably Qin, Chu-Han contention era, or early Western Han

| 20 | Medical Manuscript 醫書 VII | N/A | "*"Shi wen" 十問 | 101 bamboo slips, 23cm x 0.8cm | Long through compartment in the bottom tier of the lacquer case | Medical Manuscript VIII was found rolled around the outside of this manuscript | Somewhat cursive Han clerical script; probably after 180 BCE

| 21 | Medical Manuscript 醫書 VIII | N/A | "*"He yinyang" 合陰陽 | 32 bamboo slips, 23cm x 1cm | Long through compartment in the bottom tier of the lacquer case | This manuscript was found rolled around the outside of Medical Manuscript VII; seems to observe taboo on 恆 | Cursive Han clerical script; ca. 180-168 BCE

| 22 | Medical Manuscript 醫書 IX | N/A | "*"Za jinfang" 雜禁方 | 11 wooden slips, 23cm x 1.2cm | Long through compartment in the lacquer case | This manuscript was found rolled around the outside of Medical Manuscript VII; seems to observe taboo on 恆 | Highly cursive Han clerical script; ca. 195-178 BCE

| 23 | Medical Manuscript 醫書 X | N/A | "*"Tianxia zhidaotan" 天下至道談 | 56 bamboo slips, 28cm x 0.5cm | Long through compartment in the lacquer case | Was rolled around two bamboo flutes; Medical Manuscript IX was found rolled around the outside of this manuscript; no taboo on 邦 | Regular Han clerical script; possibly prior to 195 BCE

<p>| 24 | *Tianwen qixiang zazhan 天文氣象雜占 | *Tianwen tu 天文圖 | Annotated illustrations of comets and other astronomical phenomena; prognostications without accompanying illustrations | Silk, 48cm x 150cm | Large rectangular compartment in the bottom tier of the lacquer case | Script retains elements of seal style; copied by two separate hands; no taboo on 邦 | Prior to 195 BCE, possibly pre-Han. |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Medium</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Size</th>
<th>Script Style</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td><em>Wuxing zhan</em> 五星占</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Tabular information and text related to prognostications based on the movements of the Five Planets</td>
<td>Silk, 48cm wide</td>
<td>Large rectangular compartment in the bottom tier of the lacquer case</td>
<td>Script style similar to that of the <em>Laozi</em> 老子 B and <em>Xingde</em> 刑德 B manuscripts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td><em>Muren zhan</em> 本人占</td>
<td><em>Za zhan</em> 雜占</td>
<td>Illustrated guide for conducting divination using human figurines made of wood</td>
<td>Silk, 48cm by 33cm</td>
<td>Large rectangular compartment in the bottom tier of the lacquer case</td>
<td>Seal-clerical hybrid similar to Qin sources; probably Qin or Chu-Han contention era</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td><em>Xiangma jing</em> 相馬經</td>
<td><em>Xiangma fu</em> 相馬賻</td>
<td>Text on physiognomizing horses</td>
<td>Silk, 48 cm wide</td>
<td>Large rectangular compartment in the bottom tier of the lacquer case</td>
<td>The text on this manuscript seems to be unfinished; some elements of seal script style similar to that of the <em>Laozi</em> 老子 B manuscript</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td><em>Chuxing zhan</em> 出行占</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Information regarding ritual procedures for ensuring safe travel</td>
<td>Silk, no dimensions given.</td>
<td>Large rectangular compartment in the bottom tier of the lacquer case</td>
<td>Was originally thought to belong to the <em>Yinyang wuxing</em> 陰陽五行 B manuscript</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td><em>Taiyi zhu tu</em> 太一祝圖; <em>Bibing tu</em> 祝兵圖; <em>Sheshen tu</em> 社神圖; <em>Shen qi tu</em> 神祇圖; <em>Taiyi jiangxing tu</em> 太一將行圖; <em>Taiyi chuxing tu</em> 太一出行圖; <em>Bibing tu</em> 祝兵圖; <em>Bing dao Taiyi tu</em> 兵祷太一圖</td>
<td><em>Sangfu tu</em> 喪服圖; <em>Sangzhi tu</em> 喪制圖; <em>Sangli tu</em> 喪禮圖</td>
<td>Ritual script for invoking the protective powers of deities and spirits</td>
<td>Silk, 43.5 x 45cm</td>
<td>Large rectangular compartment in the bottom tier of the lacquer case</td>
<td>Small seal script; late Warring States/Qin?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td><em>Sangfu tu</em> 喪服圖; <em>Sangzhi tu</em> 喪制圖</td>
<td>Schematic representation of one version of the Han mourning system</td>
<td>Silk, 26.2cm x 48.4cm</td>
<td>Large rectangular compartment in the bottom tier of the lacquer case</td>
<td>Seal-clerical</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td><em>Jiuzhu tu</em> 九主圖</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Fragment of a schematic representation of the Nine Rulers</td>
<td>Silk, 19.6cm x 22.5cm</td>
<td>Large rectangular compartment in the bottom tier of the lacquer case</td>
<td>Han clerical; ca. 177 BCE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td><em>Wuze you xing tu</em> 五色占</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Non-linear text elucidating the relationships</td>
<td>Silk, 24cm x 24cm</td>
<td>Large rectangular compartment in the bottom tier</td>
<td>Seal-clerical</td>
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<tr>
<td>No.</td>
<td>Title</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Materials</td>
<td>Dimensions</td>
<td>Presentation</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>33</td>
<td><em>Zhaiwei, zhaixing jixiong tu</em> 宅位，宅形吉凶圖</td>
<td>Chart for divining auspiciousness of building structures and locations</td>
<td>Silk</td>
<td>Large rectangular compartment in the bottom tier of the lacquer case</td>
<td>Seal-clerical</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34</td>
<td><em>Fuzhai tu</em> 府宅圖</td>
<td>Plan for building a city</td>
<td>Silk</td>
<td>Large rectangular compartment in the bottom tier of the lacquer case</td>
<td>Ancient clerical</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35</td>
<td><em>Dixing tu</em> 地形圖</td>
<td>Map</td>
<td>Silk, 96cm x 96cm</td>
<td>Large rectangular compartment in the bottom tier of the lacquer case</td>
<td>Seal-clerical</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36</td>
<td><em>Zhaiwei cao tu</em> 宅位草圖</td>
<td>Plan for building city?</td>
<td>Silk, approx. 76cm wide and 55cm long (but manuscript is badly damaged)</td>
<td>Large rectangular compartment in the lacquer case</td>
<td>Unclear</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37</td>
<td><em>Jiandao fengyu tu</em> 箭道封域圖</td>
<td>Map of military installations</td>
<td>Silk, 98cm long and 78cm wide</td>
<td>Large rectangular compartment in the bottom tier of the lacquer case</td>
<td>Ancient clerical</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38</td>
<td><em>Guaxiang tu</em> 卦象圖</td>
<td>May depict talismanic banners and patterns</td>
<td>Silk, 48cm x 51.5cm</td>
<td>Large rectangular compartment in the bottom tier of the lacquer case</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td></td>
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**Paintings Hanging on The Walls of the Inner Coffin chamber (guanshi) in M3**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Title</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Materials</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Presentation</th>
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</thead>
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<tr>
<td>40</td>
<td><em>Chema yizhang tu</em> 車馬儀仗圖</td>
<td>No text; depicts a military ceremony</td>
<td>Silk, 219cm x 99cm</td>
<td>Western wall of the inner coffin chamber (some reports say eastern wall)</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41</td>
<td><em>Chema youle tu</em> 車馬遊樂圖</td>
<td>No text; depicts a hunting scene</td>
<td>Silk, 68.7cm x 34.9cm</td>
<td>Eastern wall of the inner coffin chamber (some reports say western wall)</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42</td>
<td><em>Huachuan youle tu</em> 划船遊樂圖</td>
<td>No text; seems to depict a pleasure boating scene</td>
<td>Silk, 17.2cm x 33.7cm</td>
<td>Eastern wall of the inner coffin chamber (some reports say western wall)</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Texts cited

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*Dadai liji* 大戴禮記: Wang Pinzhen 王聘珍, comp. *Dadai liji jiegu* 大戴禮記解詁 with

*Daode jing* 道德經: See *Laozi* 老子.

*Guanzi* 管子: Li Xiangfeng 黎翔鳳, comp. *Guanzi jiaozhu* 管子校注 arranged by Liang

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