Introduction

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Chinese Religions—
The State of the Field
Part I
Early Religious Traditions: The Neolithic Period through the Han Dynasty
(ca. 4000 B.C.E to 220 C.E.)

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Introduction

THE STUDY OF CHINESE RELIGIONS is a lively and growing field. Its major bibliographer in the West, Laurence G. Thompson, comments that in revising his bibliography of Western-language publications through 1980 to include those published in the following ten years, the index of various types of contributors increased by over 1,100 names, and the number of research categories grew from eighty-four to one hundred and three (Thompson 1985, 1993). Anna Seidel of the École Française d'Extrême-Orient, Section de Kyoto, published in 1990 a discussion and bibliography of Taoist studies in the West from 1950 to 1990 that for this topic alone is 124 pages long (Seidel 1989–90). New documents, from Shang oracle bones to twentieth-century spirit-writing texts, are being discovered, the Taoist canon has been systematically surveyed for the first time, and fresh interpretations

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of better-known material are appearing, all with more attention to religious rituals and attitudes than was usually the case a few decades ago. The result is a new appreciation of the importance of Chinese religious activities and of their role in history and culture.

Four major scholarly journals are now devoted to research in Chinese religions, *Tōhō Shukyō* (Eastern religions), published by the Japan Society of Taoistic Research, *Shijie zongjiao yanjiu* (The study of world religions), published by the Institute for the Study of World Religions of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, *The Journal of Chinese Religions,* published by the Society for the Study of Chinese Religions, and *Cahiers d'Extrême-Asie,* published by the Kyoto section of the École Française d'Extrême-Orient. Articles about Chinese religions are also frequently published in the *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies, Asia Major, Early China,* and other journals. The Society for the Study of Chinese Religions, affiliated with the Association for Asian Studies and the American Academy of Religion, has since 1975 organized panels and meetings at the annual meetings of both of these associations, and publishes a newsletter as well. The essays that follow are intended to introduce this wide field of study to nonspecialists in the West and provide a synopsis of the state of the field as of 1994. As such, they emphasize studies in Western languages of the last several years, although some important work in Chinese or Japanese is noted as well. However, the reader should understand that most Western studies of these topics owe much to Chinese and Japanese writers, editors, and scholars. Their contributions can be found in the references of the materials cited below. These essays are intended to be selective rather than comprehensive, so some of the more specialized studies are not mentioned.

This collection of essays began with a panel of the same title at the 1992 annual meeting of the Association for Asian Studies in Washington, D.C. It is arranged in two major parts: the first, in this issue, is devoted to studies of early religious practices and beliefs from the Neolithic period through the Han dynasty, with sections on the Neolithic and Shang periods, the Western Chou, the Spring and Autumn period, and the Warring States through the Han. Bibliographies and glossaries are located at the end of each essay. The second group of essays, which will be published in the next issue of the *Journal,* is on studies of Taoism, Confucianism, Buddhism, Islam, and popular religion, traditions still active today.

The most important reasons for studying the ancient religious traditions of China are that they had a powerful influence on the formation of the entire culture, and that they made a significant contribution to the development of world religious life. Here, as elsewhere, no general conclusions about the human experience can be drawn without taking the Chinese case thoroughly into account. Along with India, China is the oldest major literate civilization to continue to exist down to the present. Although there have been many political, economic, and social changes over the centuries, in the realms of culture and life values much continuity persists, particularly at the local and village level. Despite the powerful challenges of modernization and the Cultural Revolution, anthropologists report that since the early 1980s religious rituals and festivals have revived in many parts of China, and temples have been rebuilt. In Taiwan, Hong Kong, and other parts of the Chinese world outside the People's Republic, many old ritual and devotional traditions are flourishing, with changes to be sure, but fundamentally still in forms that would be recognizable by an observer from the Ch'ing period and before. To cite just one small example, Vancouver now has several chapels of the *T'ien tao* or "Celestial Way," a sect with its origins in the *I-kuan tao,* "The Way of Pervading Unity," a popular religious

sect founded in the late nineteenth century. However, the *I-kuan tao* itself is rooted in much older sectarian traditions that go back to the fifteenth century, with teachings, rituals, and deities much older than that. The library of a *T'ien tao* chapel in Vancouver contains many books and tracts that originated in the Ch'ing period, and which, in turn, were based on sectarian scriptures from the Ming and on earlier Buddhist texts. In the study of Chinese religions, such continuities can be found at every hand, as they can in other religious traditions as well. These continuities mean that the present cannot be understood without the past, even the deep past discussed in these essays.

Many aspects of early Chinese religious ideas and practices are still alive, transformed to be sure, but still with us. Recent research on this vast formative period is based on the large number of archaeological discoveries made in the last few decades: 7,000 Neolithic sites, a cumulative total of 150,000 inscribed fragments of Shang oracle bones, 17,000 fragments of Western Chou oracle bones, including 300 with inscriptions, later Chou liturgical inscriptions on bronze vessels, and Warring States-period divination records written on bamboo slips. This material demonstrates the pervasiveness of religious concerns throughout this period, during which what we call "religion" was intimately related to every significant aspect of social and political life, for all social classes. This interrelationship provides the basis for a critique of what is perceived as an over-reliance in the past on philosophical texts for understanding the mentality of early China. It is clear from recent research that the relatively rationalistic approach of the philosophers was not at all typical of the vast majority of the population, including the aristocracy. All of this illustrates the debt that later religious traditions owe to this formative era, beginning with the centrality of ancestor veneration in the earliest period for which we have written records, the Shang (ca. 1575–1050 B.C.E.). David Keightley has argued that "it was the belief in the strength of the Shang ancestors, the central value of the state, which legitimized the Shang dominion." The power of such royal ancestors remained important to all succeeding kingdoms and dynasties. Evidence from later centuries indicates that veneration of ancestors was practiced by much of the population; it has remained a central concern of many until today. Offerings of food to Shang ancestors, properly carried out, were assumed to call for a reciprocal response. An expectation of reciprocity has remained a fundamental understanding of offerings to ancestors and deities ever since. At a philosophical level, Confucius, in turn, declared that mutual concern was the single thread that united all his ethical teachings. Support from both ritual and philosophy made this principle of reciprocal interaction the core value of human relationships that it still is.

A pervasive concern throughout traditional Chinese society was divination, an attempt to understand the connections between human beings and superhuman powers by attributing significance to a great variety of perceived patterns and anomalous events. Divination was a central emphasis of Shang ritual, an emphasis that Edward L. Shaughnessy notes was also present in the Western Chou. A concern with divination has continued ever since. The veneration of deities representing such natural powers as rain, mountains, and rivers also began in the Shang and Chou, as did homage to a high god first called *Ti* or *Shang-ti,* "The Lord Above," then *T'ien,* conventionally and inadequately translated as "Heaven." Such expressions of the ultimate unity of things and of cosmic sanction for proper behavior continued to be worshiped throughout Chinese history, under these and other names, while the "Mandate of *T'ien*" has from the Western Chou been a central concept of conditional divine right to rule. The combination of divination with ritual offerings to deities and ancestor

spirits formed the basis of state rituals that, from the Shang onward, were an important function of the ruler and his officials.

Another early tradition that continues in the present is that of spirit-mediums, classically called *wu*. These *wu* were women or men who it was believed could be possessed by deities and thus gain knowledge and power beyond the ordinary. In antiquity their major functions were to summon rain, purify ritual areas by driving away harmful influences, and call gods down to receive sacrifices. Some sources indicate that it was believed that *wu* could predict the future and heal illness. These functions have all continued in varying forms down through the centuries, although with fewer connections with the state in recent dynasties than earlier. Spirit-mediums are a prime symbol of the intimate relationship between human and divine in Chinese religion, a relationship supported by the classical worldview of a single vital force, *ch'i,* interacting through modes of *yin* and *yang* and the five phases (*wu-hsing*). *Wu* represent the most personal and dramatic form of divination. All of this material cries out for incorporation into discussions of actual understandings of human nature in traditional China, which have so far been carried out at a more abstract, philosophical level.

The world of traditional Chinese common religion was inhabited by multitudes of harmful forces or demons, the causes of illness and disaster. A text from the late third century B.C.E. provides an early, detailed description of such demons. Attempts to get rid of these forces led to a dramatic view of life as a struggle between demonic powers of disorder, and cosmic order symbolized by the gods, a view of life quite different from the ideal of harmony and balance advocated by philosophy. Exorcism of demons took many forms, chiefly oral incantations, written charms, and ritual battle offered by spirit-mediums, the temporary incarnations of the gods. In states of possession, such mediums issue the gods' commands to cease, desist, and begone.

Donald Harper's essay discusses evidence of such orders from the gods by the first century B.C.E., though, of course, exorcistic processions in the Han were discussed some years ago by Derk Bodde in his *Festivals in Classical China: New Year and Other Annual Observances During the Han Dynasty, 206 B.C.–A.D. 220* (Princeton 1975). Some of the Han terms and understandings involved can be found in later Taoist texts as well. Thus, later forms of exorcism owe a debt to these early practices.

It is well known that by the Sung period (960–1279 C.E.) at the latest the deities of Taoism and the state cult were organized into hierarchical pantheons, but recent archaeological discoveries, here noted by Harper, reveal evidence for such pantheons as early as the fourth century B.C.E., with a text from a burial in 70 B.C.E. including the names of over thirty deities. In this period as well we find the beginnings of the quest for immortality much elaborated in later Taoist texts, and we now know that a defining movement in rituals performed by Taoist priests, stepping in the "pace of Yü," was practiced by members of the Ch'in and Han elite as a form of ritual protection (see the Harper essay below). In all these ways, ancient traditions provided important elements that were combined to form the new Taoist religion between the second and fifth centuries C.E.; their influence continued in this new context.

Harper also discusses recently discovered funerary texts from the Later Han including "celestial ordinances for the dead," which show that "the supreme god in the [Han] common religion kept ledgers of the living and the dead," thus anticipating both Taoist practice and "ledgers of merit and demerit," a form of morality book that developed later. A related theme is the function of the tomb as a "spiritual conduit between the living and the dead," as discussed by Constance

Cook for the Spring and Autumn period. Here we see ancient anticipations of the role of the tomb in later *feng-shui* (geomancy) and at the spring festival (*Ch'ing-ming*).

The study of Chinese religions is important not only in its own right, but as an essential element in the study of Chinese culture as a whole. Vast areas of that culture simply cannot be properly understood without the study of its religions, an aspect that in past decades was too much ignored. In its actual practices, China was just as "religious" as any other traditional culture; at this level the skeptical perspectives of a minority of the philosophical elite had little effect. The same can be said for attempts by the state to limit the recipients of ritual offerings by ordinary folk to a few ancestors and local deities. As can be seen in such sources as Wang Ch'ung's *Lun-heng* (Discourses weighed in a balance) of the first century C.E., by that time what the people were already actually doing and believing far exceeded what state-supported ritual texts prescribed. This was even more the case after the advent of Taoism and Buddhism, with their eventual vast arrays of deities and rituals.

An ethics of reciprocity, understandings of human nature, the role of history, attitudes toward harmful forces, dealing with the powers of nature, the foundations of state power, the structure of the family—these and many other crucial aspects of Chinese civilization cannot be thoroughly understood without an appreciation of the role of religious practices and beliefs. This first part of our project is devoted to current studies of the early development of this important dimension.

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Neolithic and Shang Periods

THE COMMON OCCURRENCE OF CULTS OF THE DEAD in Neolithic and early Bronze Age societies around the world raises at least one major question about early Chinese religion: what factors account for the elaboration of ancestor worship in China and for the degree to which—compared to its role in other cultures—it endured? The study of Chinese religion in the Neolithic and Shang periods (ca. 4000–1050 B.C.E.) can contribute to our understanding of such matters, but the bulk of recent scholarship is inevitably and properly focused on technical analyses of sites, artifacts, rituals,

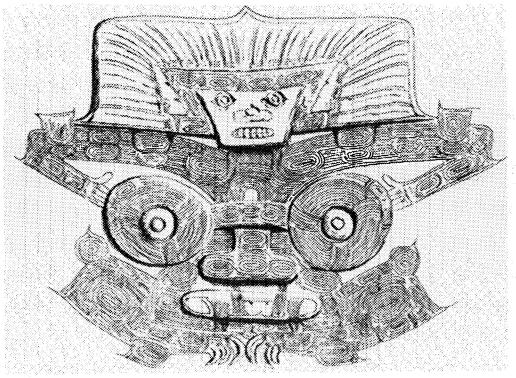
and spiritual Powers. Many studies address problems of definition, such as the nature of Ti, the high god of the Shang, and his cult (Akatsuka 1977:471–537; Ikeda 1981:25–39; Eno 1990); images of T'ien (Heaven, Sky) (Hayashi 1989a); the nature of the Earth Power and its associated altar of the soil (Tai Chia-hsiang 1986); the role of sun, bird, and other totems in Neolithic and Shang belief (Hu Hou-hsüan 1977; Allan 1981; Tu Chin-p'eng 1992; Wu Hung 1985; Paper 1986; Ch'ien Chih-ch'iang 1988; Juyü 1991; Wang Chi-huai 1992; Xiong Chuanxin 1992; Chang Te-shui 1993; Chang Wen 1994; Wang Lu-ch'ang 1994); methods and objects of sacrifice (Ikeda 1980; Ch'iu Hsi-kuei 1985; Childs-Johnson 1987; Lien Shao-ming 1989; Itō 1990; Hao Pen-hsing 1992); the religious dimensions of illness (Takashima 1980) and of settlement building (Akatsuka 1977:494–99).

Most of the seven thousand Neolithic sites that have been discovered remain to be excavated (An Chih-min 1988:754). The initial archaeological reports, sometimes published after long delays (if not languishing unpublished), are frequently provisional (Von Falkenhausen 1992). Although the majority of these sites will probably provide variations on, rather than radical departures from, our present understanding, three recent Neolithic discoveries, all bearing on religious iconography, suggest how significant the new evidence can be, and, in one case, reveal how carefully it must be interpreted.

Wen-wu 1986:8, plate 1

(1) Hung-shan sites (ca. 3600–3000 B.C.E.) in Inner Mongolia and western Liaoning have yielded rock and stone ritual structures, impressive cist burials, and what appear to have been temples. Some two dozen clay fragments of naked "Venus" figures—some of the figures being small, some half life-size, and some life-size—have been found associated with these sites. The most remarkable is a naturalistic head of the so-called "Goddess," with eyes made of jade (illustrated at Fung 1994, facing p. 50). She is thought to have been part of a life-sized statue built around a wooden frame (K. C. Chang 1986:183–86; Fan and Wei 1986; Sun and Ko 1986; *Wen-wu* 1986.8; cf. T'ang Ch'ih 1994). Since the religious art of the later Central Plains traditions did not favor naturalistic depictions of the human form (see below), these remains remind us that not all the complex cultural elements in Neolithic China gave rise to descendants there.

(2) Scholars have interpreted the more descriptive images of a human-cum-animal figure that is found on jade axes and *ts'ung* jade tubes (illustrated at K. C. Chang 1994, facing p. 61) as representations of a god or gods worshiped by the Liang-chu people (ca. 3000 B.C.E.) in the modern Chekiang area. The more abstract and geometric representations of the same god on a number of *ts'ung* reveal that these schematic "animal masks" were indeed simplified, shorthand representations of the "god" (Wang Wei 1986; *Wen-wu* 1988; Keightley 1990). Hayashi (1989:25–44, 60–63) interprets these representations as depicting sun and moon gods, who can be distinguished by the way the eyes are treated. He believes that these gods were adorned with feather headdresses that symbolized the radiation of fiery or watery *ch'i* ("pneuma, ether"), and that these representations were ancestral to the *t'ao-t'ieh* "animal masks," also embedded in feather designs, on Shang ritual bronzes (Child-



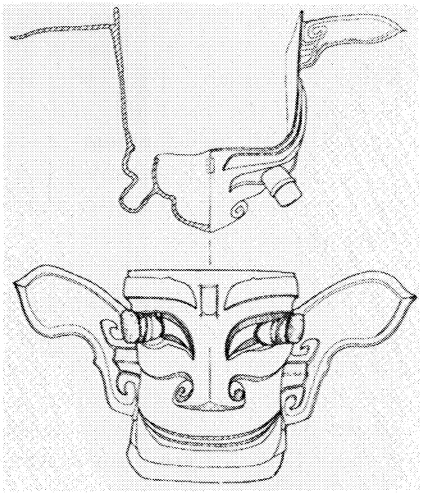
Wen-wu 1988:1.12, fig. 20

Johnson 1988:33–39; *Liang-chu wen-hua,* figs. 4–25; Tu Chin-p'eng 1992, 1994; Wang Cheng-shu 1994). Most experts have argued for the origins of this motif among the peoples of Eastern China (Wu Hung 1979:66–67; Rawson 1980:37–40, 78–79; Huber 1981:117, n. 8, 125; Li Hsüeh-ch'in 1989:79, fig. 12; An Chih-min 1988a:240, 241, 244; Hayashi 1990; Tu Chin-p'eng 1994a; and, more cautiously, Bagley 1987:19, 48, n. 40).

Some scholars (Wang Wei 1986:1015; K. C. Chang 1986a, 1994; Fung 1994:55) suggest these god and mask motifs should be understood as magical or shamanistic, but the matter remains unsettled. Hayashi (1988:27–39, 60–61), based on intensive study of various jade *ts'ung* together with Chou ritual texts and their commentaries, speculates that the Liang-chu *ts'ung* were the functional equivalent of the ancestral tablets (*chu*) of later times. He suggests that the *ts'ung* served as vases in which worshipers placed reeds or other vegetation, with the *ts'ung* registers representing particular halls or lodgings for the ancestors attracted by the cult.

(3) The excavators of a large, vertical-pit burial, near P'u-yang, southeast of Anyang in Honan, have treated it as a Yangshao burial (ca. 4000 B.C.E.) and have drawn attention to two features. First, the three accompaniers-in-death lying near the grave lord have been thought to represent the earliest instance of human sacrifice in China. Second, immediately to the west of the grave lord lay a realistically depicted tiger modeled from mollusk shells; this was paired with a dragon fashioned of the same materials on the east side (illustrated at K. C. Chang 1994:64). These designs, evidently involved in the mortuary ritual, have been taken as remarkable evidence for the early existence of cosmological and religious traditions—such as the placement of the Dragon of the East and the Tiger of the West—that previously had been associated mainly with the Warring States and Han periods (ca. 500 B.C.E. to 220 C.E.). Similarly, in two nearby pits, mollusk-shell depictions of a deer, a tiger, and a man astride a dragon have been thought to provide equally early evidence of the belief that the dead ascended to Heaven on the backs of mythical beasts (*Wen-wu* 1988a; *K'ao-ku* 1989a; Da Gen 1988; Li Hsüeh-ch'in 1988). K. C. Chang (1988; 1994:64) sees the P'u-yang grave lord as a primitive Taoist or as a shaman, ascending to heaven on the backs of the tiger, dragon, and deer that are mentioned in the fourth century C.E. text *Pao-p'u tzu,* or, alternatively, as a shaman buried with representations of his animal familiars.

Unfortunately, the antiquity of these beliefs is in question because a reexamination of the evidence indicates that the accompaniers-in-death were not buried at the same time as the grave lord and may not be associated with him. Further, the lack of any grave goods in either the grave lord's pit or the pits nearby makes it difficult to date the mollusk-shell remains with certainty (Yan Ming 1988). Although the find, widely heralded as "China's oldest dragon" (Da Gen 1988), remains a remarkable demonstration of mortuary cosmology, its relevance to the study of Neolithic religion is now uncertain.



Wen-wu 1989:5.8, fig. 13

Many equally extraordinary discoveries could be cited for the Neolithic period and the Bronze Age. For example, the life-sized bronze heads and mask-like bronze faces, some with "bug eyes" that protrude on stalks, found in sacrificial pits at Kuang-han in Szechwan (Sheng Chung-ch'ang 1987; *Wen-wu* 1987; Bagley 1988; Barnard 1989; Sage 1991:22–26), reveal other early images of the divine that, like the Hung-shan Venus figures, differ significantly from images so far found in the Central Plains.

Understanding, of course, is also to be found in the ordinary. Extensive mortuary remains, mainly in the form of Neolithic and Shang cemeteries, bear importantly on early religious practice (Neolithic cemeteries: *Ta-wen-k'ou* 1974; *K'ao-ku-hsüeh chi-k'an* 1984; Hsieh Tuan-chü 1986; *Wen-wu* 1989; Wu Ju-tso 1990; *Lung-kang-ssu* 1990:54–171, 227–29; *K'ao-ku hsüeh-pao* 1991; Shang Min-chieh 1992. Shang cemeteries: Meng Hsien-wu 1986; 1993; Shang Yen 1986; *K'ao-ku* 1989; Ke Ying-hui 1989; Cheng Jo-k'uei 1992). Scholars have deduced much information about religion from the various modes of burial (primary, secondary, single, collective) as well as from single and mixed gender burials (*Yuan-chün-miao* 1983; Wang Ning-sheng 1985–87), as well as from the posture and orientation of the corpse (Cheng Jo-k'uei 1988; Shang Min-chieh 1991; Watanabe 1994). Others have found evidence of mortuary rituals (Chin Tse-kung 1984; Yang Hsi-chang 1987; Cheng Jo-k'uei 1992; Kao Wei 1993) and early animistic and apotropaic magic, in which the perimiters of jade *ts'ung* found in Liang-chu burials and the turtle shells buried with the Ta-wen-k'ou dead were intended to ward off misfortune in various ways (Wang Wei 1986:1085; Yang Ching-jung 1989; Wang Shu-ming 1991; T'ien Shuang-yin 1993).

Many scholars have discussed the increasing complexity and size of grave structures in both the late Neolithic (*Ta-wen-k'ou* 1974:5–7; Underhill 1983:129, 172; Hsieh Tuan-chü 1987) and Shang periods (K. C. Chang 1980:110–24; Thorp 1980:51–57; 1991:17–21; Yang Hsi-chang 1981; 1986; Yang and Yang 1983), as well as the increasingly lavish use and display of grave goods (*Yin-hsü Fu Hao mu* 1980; Pearson 1981; Underhill 1983). The extensive and dramatic use of human sacrifice in Shang graves is another remarkable feature (Sun Miao 1987:527–543; Huang Chan-yüeh 1983; 1990; *Chung-yuan wen-wu* 1986.3; *K'ao-ku* 1987).

Discoveries of unpillaged Shang tombs, some richly furnished with grave goods, are important for reconstructing Bronze Age mortuary practice. For example, at Anyang, the tomb of Fu Hao, thought to be the consort of the Shang king Wu Ting (d. ca. 1180 B.C.E.), contained over 440 bronzes (K. C. Chang 1980:87–90; *K'ao-ku* 1991; 1992; *Wen-wu* 1991). Such undisturbed tombs provide valuable information about the assemblages and placement of ritual vessels (Thorp 1985:29–36) and about the rationale that underlay the choice of particular insignia and inscriptions on the bronzes—such as those inscribed on the 190 ritual vessels buried with Fu Hao—that Shang mourners had placed in any one tomb (*Yin-hsü Fu Hao mu* 1980:31; Barnard 1986; Ts'ao Ting-yun 1993).

How such mortuary evidence reflects social structure is open to debate (Wang Ning-sheng 1985–87; Pearson 1988), but it is evident that Neolithic and Shang Chinese treatment of the dead reveals much about the increasing stratification of society, on the one hand, and the nature of beliefs in the afterlife, the genesis of ritual, and the development of values like *hsiao* (filiality), and of the ancestral cult of the Shang and Chou rulers, on the other. The ways in which the living treated the dead say much about the ways in which the living treated one another (Keightley 1985; L. Liu 1994).

When we come to the mature Bronze Age, Shang divination inscriptions (ca. 1200–1050 B.C.E.) reveal a world dominated by a complex array of Powers: (1) Ti, the High God; (2) Nature Powers such as Ho, the Yellow River Power, and Yueh, the Mountain Power; (3) the Former Lords (a modern term) such as Wang Hai, who were apparently ex-humans whom the cultists now associated with the dynasty; (4) pre-dynastic ancestors such as Shang Chia; and (5) dynastic ancestors. The workings of these Powers were manifested in the wind, rain, clouds, and other occurrences of daily life. At the same time, a process of ancestralization meant that in some instances the Shang conceived the nature Powers as sharing ancestor-like qualities and vice versa (Akatsuka 1977; Itō 1988–89:70; L. Liu 1994:231); the socio-religious identity of the local population and its ancestors was entwined with both the Power and the place where that Power resided. The divination inscriptions reveal that the Shang rulers treated their ancestors systematically, representing them as more subject to discipline and order than Ti or the Nature Powers were thought to be (T. T. Chang 1970; Serruys 1974; Akatsuka 1977; Itō 1990a; Keightley 1978a; 1982; in preparation [2]). The rigor with which the kings after Wu Ting scheduled their cult is one of the most notable features of late-Shang religious practice (Ch'ang Yü-chih 1987).

Scapulimancy and plastromancy were undoubtedly associated with the rise of ritual experts and the increasing specialization and stratification of late Neolithic society. The discovery of oracle bones in burial areas, associated with clusters of stone-circle shrines, graves, and house foundations at the Aeneolithic site of Ch'in-wei-chia in east central Kansu, for example (*K'ao-ku hsüeh-pao* 1975; Wu Ju-tso 1983:64–65; cf. L. Liu 1994:65–66, 111, 121), encourages the belief that the spirits whom these early diviners consulted were those of departed ancestors. Each family may have addressed its divinations to its own dead kinsmen, at its own stone circle, near which its dead lay buried. Evidence in the Shang inscriptions—including the performance of the royal bone-cracking ritual in the ancestral temple itself—also supports this view of early Chinese divinatory theology (Keightley, in preparation [1]).

Early Chinese religious dialog in general—including Shang oracle-bone divination—has been characterized as shamanistic on a number of grounds (Hsiao Kung-ch'üan 1979:96; K. C. Chang 1983:54–55, 110; L. Liu 1994:330). It has been proposed, for example, that *wang,* "king," was related to such words as *wang,* "emaciated, crippled" and *k'uang,* "mad"; the oracle-bone inscriptions, furthermore, indicate that such cripples were burned in sacrifice (Ch'iu Hsi-kuei 1983); thus it has been argued that the Shang king was himself a shaman (Ch'en Meng-chia 1936:563–66; Schafer 1951:130, 152–62; Shirakawa 1972:31) or that shamanism flourished at the Shang court (Akatsuka 1977; cf. Keightley 1982:299–301).

These interpretations usually rest on reading the Shang graph  as *wu* 巫, "shaman" (Hayashi 1967:210–13). It is uncertain, however, if the word referred to a shaman, as the term is defined by anthropologists, or to a figure who might

be regarded, more broadly, as a priest or medium. Some modern scholarship about late Neolithic and Shang religion uses modern terms such as *wu-shu* (witchcraft, sorcery, shamanism) or *wu-yi* (witch doctor), but does not employ the concept of shamanism as part of a rigorously comparative anthropology (Wang Wei 1986:1015; Tai Ying-hsin 1988; Sung Chao-lin 1988; K. C. Chang 1990b); the attempt of Liang Chao-t'ao (1990) is one exception in this regard. Victor Mair (1990) has proposed that the ancient Chinese word *wu* was derived from Old Persian *magus* and that "mage," rather than "shaman," would be a more accurate translation.

The iconography found on Neolithic pots (Sun Ch'i-kang 1990) and on ritual bronzes also bears on the question of shamanism (Paper 1978). K. C. Chang's studies of the split-image "animal-mask" motif—whose origins in the Liang-chu culture were mentioned above—have led him to conclude that shamanism played a key role in early Chinese chiefdoms and kingship. He argues that the designs on the Shang bronzes represented the animal familiars, offered in sacrifice, through which the kings communicated with the forces that shaped their world (1981; 1983:44–80; 1984; 1990). Chang emphasizes the importance of the "man in beast's mouth" or alter-ego motif (1981:536–54; 1983:61–80; 1990b:58–59) but, as Robert Bagley has stressed, this motif is most prominent on bronzes of southern, not dynastic Shang, origin (1987:35).

Whether we will ever know the true "meaning" of this iconography—if, indeed, it had a meaning at all, as opposed to "visual power" (Bagley 1993)—is uncertain. Ladislav Kesner (1991) has summarized the issues: he includes discussion of the argument, begun by Max Loehr and continued by Robert Bagley (1987), that the animal mask is a product primarily of the technology of bronze casting rather than the theologian's concerns and thus had no symbolic significance but was used "entirely for its animating effect." Both Itō (1988–89) and Kesner stress how the fully articulated animal-mask image emerged in conjunction with, and thus perhaps symbolized, the increasing systemization and centralization of dynastic institutions in the late Shang.

Future work will have to define the putative shamanism of early China with more precision. Did it involve ecstatic possession, travel to other realms, speaking in tongues? And future work will have to demonstrate (as Allan 1991 has attempted to do) precisely how the various forms of early Chinese religious communication operated and how these intersected with the increasingly regularized rituals of ancestor worship that had developed from the Neolithic cult of the dead. K. C. Chang (1983:54–55) and Keightley (1983:16–30), for example, disagree about the role of the *pin* (hosting) ritual that, unlike much of the inscriptional evidence adduced to support the existence of Shang shamanism, was central to the ancestral cult of the post-Wu Ting era. We may be dealing with "shamanism with Chinese characteristics"; just what those characteristics were and how they evolved to meet the religious and political demands of the dynastic state remain to be shown. It will be important to combine the insights of scholars who focus on the oracle-bone inscriptions, and who are thus likely to stress the dominant role played by ancestor worship, with the insights of scholars to whom archaeological and iconographic evidence indicates the importance of other forms of religious activity like shamanism.

Religious activity in early Chinese society was intimately entwined with the existence of kin or pseudo-kin groups. Consequently, many scholars have chosen to emphasize the social and political implications of religious belief rather than its theological content. Paul Wheatley, for example, has proposed that religion may have served as the independent variable in the genesis of the earliest Chinese cities as it "permeated all activities, all institutional change, and afforded a consensual

focus for social life" (1971:319; also Keightley 1973). Others have increasingly stressed how Shang religion legitimated the dominance of the dynastic lineage (Keightley 1975; Ch'ao Fu-lin 1984; Chi Te-wei 1986). For them, Shang religion was involved in the genesis of what eventually was known as the *tsung-fa* system of direct descent (Yang Sheng-nan 1985; Ch'ao Fu-lin 1989). Still other studies have dealt with the systemization of the royal cult, the establishment of various temples, and the admission of only certain royal consorts into the ruling house's sacrificial cycle (Cheng Hui-sheng 1984; Ch'ang Yü-chih 1987; Chu Feng-han 1989; 1990).

K. C. Chang, stimulated by the systematic distribution of temple names by which the Shang worshiped their royal ancestors and by ethnographic analogies, has proposed that Shang kingship alternated between two major ritual, political, or lineage groups that were identified by the "heavenly stems" (*t'ien-kan*) of their temple names (Chang 1963; 1964; 1965; 1973; 1978; 1980:165–89). This hypothesis has generated some controversy (Hsü Chin-hsiung 1965; Hsü Cho-yün 1965; Lin Heng-li 1965); it remains to be seen if other models may explain the distribution of temple names in terms that relate to the demands of the ritual schedule itself rather than to the system of political succession (Ch'eng Meng-chia 1956:401–5; Chi Te-wei 1989; Chu Feng-han 1990:5; Keightley 1991; in preparation [2]).

Much remains to be done, even with the data already available. We need to understand the language of the Shang inscriptions with more precision (e.g., Serruys 1974; 1982). We need to develop more sensitivity to the emic categories of early Chinese religion that will refine, rather than be misshapen by, our etic ones. Many students of early Chinese religion have approached the subject teleologically or genetically, searching for the roots of later Chinese belief or iconography in earlier practice and, in the reverse process, relying on later texts to decipher the earlier evidence (T'ang Ying-ya 1975; Akatsuka 1977; Keightley 1978; 1984; Allan 1979; Hayashi 1988; 1989). Given the difficulty in interpreting the mute archaeological data, such approaches are perhaps inevitable. In numerous cases—such as the links between the Liang-chu *ts'ung* tubes and the animal-mask motifs of the Shang—the continuities proposed seem plausible. It is worth bearing in mind, however, that any study of early China involves not just the origins of what we know as later Chinese civilization, but also the origins of early civilization in China. Not all religious manifestations from this early period necessarily left their mark on later Chinese culture. The Hung-shan Venus figures or the Kuang-han bronze masks discussed above are examples of religious manifestations that need to be examined in their own right rather than as forerunners. Not all religious experience, in short, necessarily supported, nor was integrated with, the institutions and values of the emerging Chinese state. Considerations such as these encourage, for example, the search for shamanism at the highest levels of the Shang court precisely because it is a type of activity that, in terms of later Confucian belief, would have been seen as profoundly unorthodox. Ancestor worship was not the only mode of religious activity practiced in early China. We cannot fully understand how it became increasingly dominant in the elite tradition unless we consider the alternative religious options that were available.

DAVID N. KEIGHTLEY

Glossary

ch'i 氣
Ch'in-wei-chia 秦魏家
chu 主
Fan-shan 反山
Han-shan 含山
Ho 河
hsiao 孝
Hung-shan 紅山
kan 干
k'uang 狂
Kuang-han 廣漢
Liang-chu 良渚
Niu-ho-liang 牛河梁
pin 賓
P'u-yang 濮陽
shih 筮
t'ao-t'ieh 饕餮
Ti 帝
T'ien 天
t'ien-kan 天干
ts'ung 琮
tsung-fa 宗法
wang 王 (king)
wang 尪 (cripple)
Wang Hai 王亥
wu 巫
wu (?) 屮
wu-shu 巫術
wu-yi 巫醫
Wu Ting 武丁
Yang-shao 仰韶
Yueh 岳

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Western Chou Period

ALTHOUGH CHINESE INTELLECTUALS HAVE GENERALLY REGARDED the Western Chou dynasty (1045–771 B.C.E.) as the formative period of Chinese culture, because there was no organized church at the time, studies of religion in China often begin with later developments. While this is a legitimate interpretive principle, it is nevertheless certainly the case that there were facets of religious experience characteristic of Western Chou society.

The Western Chou has been the subject of several recent monographs (Hsu and Linduff 1988; Rawson 1990; Shaughnessy 1991); these provide different perspectives on the cultural context of the period, and all three have at least something to say about the nature of its religion and spirituality. Perhaps most interesting is Jessica Rawson's suggestion (Rawson 1990:93ff., more directly in Rawson 1989) that the Chou ritual and sumptuary laws, laws which were later codified in the ritual text *Chou li,* developed as the result of a "ritual revolution" in the first half of the ninth century B.C.E. A general description of these ritual laws, drawn mainly from traditional sources, is provided in Bilsky 1975. More recent epigraphic and archaeological evidence for the performance of the rituals is analyzed in Hayashi 1981, Wang 1987, and Liu 1989. Wu 1988 observes that during the Western Chou, as in the earlier Shang dynasty, all rituals, including even burial rituals, took place in the family temple, while Yü and Kao 1978/1979 argues for the application of sumptuary laws in Western Chou burial practices (for another view of these practices, see Munford

1985). Whether Western Chou rituals matched the ideal forms found in the later ritual texts or not, it is certainly the case that their practice was differentiated to some extent according to a family's social status. This relationship between family and ritual is made forcefully in Vandermeersch 1977 and 1980, though Chu 1990 is better grounded in archaeological data. Later developments of this ritual system, both real and ideal, are surveyed in Falkenhausen 1990, Poo 1990, and Yü 1987.

Other than the ritual system of the time, probably the most notable religious feature of the Western Chou is divination. Western Chou divination was usually associated with the *I-ching* or *Book of Changes;* for studies analyzing this text within its original Western Chou context, see Shaughnessy 1983 and Kunst 1985. In 1977, at the site of what was perhaps the royal Chou ancestral temple, archaeologists discovered a cache of 17,000 oracle bones, about 300 of which have been found to bear inscriptions. The earliest studies of these oracle bones, usually referred to as "Chou-yuan oracle bones" after the general name of their place of discovery, are synthesized in Wang 1984, while two of the principals involved in their discovery and decipherment have recently published monographic studies (see Ch'en 1988 and Hsu 1989). The only Western-language account of these inscriptions, including especially a discussion of how they differ from Shang oracle-bone inscriptions, remains Shaughnessy 1985–87. Among other features of these inscriptions that show them to be Chou are groupings of six numerals that Chang Cheng-lang has identified as the results of milfoil divination, and thus prototypes of *I-ching* hexagrams (see Chang 1980).

Even as cursory a survey of Chou religion as this could not fail to mention the stimulating interpretations of Shirakawa Shizuka. This indefatigable scholar of all aspects of ancient Chinese intellectual and cultural history is known particularly for his studies of Western Chou bronze inscriptions (Shirakawa 1962–1984) and of the *Shih-ching* or *Book of Songs* (Shirakawa 1981), in both of which he is always extremely sensitive to the ritual contexts of historical developments.

Although archaeology increasingly provides new types of data with which to interpret facets of Western Chou religion, most studies continue to rely on various types of textual materials. There are various general and specialized bibliographies for these studies. For Chinese and Japanese studies of ritual, Saiki 1985 is indispensable, as is Lin 1989 for works relevant to any of the Chinese classics. For a general topical bibliography on the Western Chou, including a section on philosophy and religion, see Fu Hua and P'ei Chen 1984.

Finally, two works provide helpful guidance to anyone wishing to consult this textual tradition: Michael Loewe's *Early Chinese Texts: A Bibliographic Guide* (Loewe 1993) gives a thorough introduction to sixty-four early Chinese texts, including the Western Chou classics. It provides informed discussion of the contents of each text, date of composition, textual history, principal commentaries, Japanese editions, modern studies, and indexes. Shaughnessy forthcoming provides a similar introduction to such epigraphic sources as oracle-bone and bronze inscriptions, as well as such later sources as covenant texts written on stone and the various Ch'in and Han dynasty texts written on bamboo and silk.

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Chou 周
Chou-li 周禮
I-ching 易經
Shih-ching 詩經

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Spring and Autumn Period

IN THE HISTORY OF CHINESE RELIGIONS the Ch'un-ch'iu or Spring and Autumn period (eighth to fifth centuries B.C.E.) was a time of transition between the court rituals of the Western Chou gift-giving society and the private or local cult practices evident in the later Eastern Chou market economy (Cook 1993a). This was the time when the local lords usurped the Chou king's ritual "power" (*te*) to "charge" (*ming*) and the Chou lineage lost its authority. The transition is most evident in the speeches (*yueh*) of the kings and local rulers inscribed on the eating or striking surfaces of the late Western Chou and early Ch'un-ch'iu-period ritual bronze vessels and bells. These speeches or "spoken" liturgies of legitimation initially focused on the spiritually sanctioned right of the ruler to "charge" a gift recipient, but later simply focused on the right of the vessel-maker to charge himself. This shift is most evident after 771 B.C.E. when a western tribal group forced the Chou to flee their ancestral lands and altars. Local lords, originally on the periphery of Chou authority, called themselves kings and manipulated the Chou ideology to legitimate their own independent identities (see Cook on Chu in Cook and Major forthcoming). They relied on the

guidance of ritualists (possibly descendants of the Western Chou *shih* and *yin*) whose knowledge of Chou liturgy and rites was a valued commodity at local courts (Cook 1993b).

The primary sources for Ch'un-ch'iu-period religion include paleographic texts, such as the ritual bronze inscriptions and covenant records, as well as received texts, such as the *Ch'un-ch'iu,* the *Tso-chuan,* the "Ya" and "Sung" sections of the *Shih-ching,* and sections of later ritual texts. These and other Eastern Chou received texts, while certainly preserving material from earlier periods, have been reshaped by Han and later scholars to fit the ideological agenda of their times and thus must be used with caution. Ikeda Suetoshi (see the references for Neolithic and Shang), in his unsurpassed reconstruction of ancient Chinese religion, has attempted to distinguish the historical developments of pre-Confucian religious traditions. Unfortunately, Ikeda's analysis of Ch'un-ch'iu-period religion focuses on the debate over the origin of Chinese agnosticism and "rationality" perceived in later philosophical texts.

The inscriptions, repositories of local adaptations of the Chou ideology of the Mandate of Heaven, consist of essentially two types: brief marriage records, and longer "charge" records. The inscribed bronze vessels, the ultimate symbols of prestige and contract in the earlier Chou gift-giving system (Kane 1982–83; Chang 1983; Cook 1993a), continued to represent legitimation and status in what Takagi Satomi terms the primary preoccupation of the Ch'un-ch'iu era: inter-state relations. The rituals of diplomacy—the feasts (*hsiang*) and the covenants (*meng*)—derived from the Chou gift-giving ceremony and associated mortuary feasts (see Liu Yu 1993). The right to rule was reaffirmed in these feasts through song, dance, and games that ritually reenacted the initial legitimizing act of the Chou godkings Wen and Wu, the conquest of the Shang or the Mandate of Heaven (Cook 1990; Eno 1990; Savage 1992). Tied by marriage (human gifts) into kinship affiliates, lords feasted each other like "fathers and older brothers." Via musical harmonies, the smells of sacrifice, and the inscription itself, the hosts announced their "governing power" (*cheng-te*) and "martial merit" (*wu-kung*) to their "Brilliant Ancestors [and] Accomplished (or King Wen-like) Fathers" (*huang-tzu wen-k'ao*) and their "fine guests" (*chia-pin*) (Takahasi 1988; Cook 1990). The bronze text functioned as a contract between ancestral or spiritual authorities, the host or gift-giver, and the guest or gift-recipient. The contract was sealed or consummated through the process of feasting.

Inter-state relations, family relations, and relations between human beings and the spirits were firmly intertwined throughout the Ch'un-ch'iu period. Studies of the ritualists' use (or misuse) and transmission of earlier divinatory techniques show that while the ancient liturgies may not have been fully understood, there was no distinction between the secular and the sacred. The spirits (*kuei-shen*) clearly influenced all human activities, such as military strategy, political succession, marriage, and illness (Smith 1989; Shiode 1985; and Hsüeh 1985).

Studies of the Altar of Soil and Millet (*she-chi*) (the symbol of statehood), and of mortuary ritual confirm the fused nature of religion, state, and family (Kominami 1987; Ikeda 1981; Akatsuka 1977; see the bibliography for the Neolithic and the Shang). The Altar of Soil and Millet, possibly a fertility symbol and *axis mundi,* by the Ch'un-ch'iu period, like the Chou Mandate of Heaven (represented in microcosm in each "charge" bronze inscription), symbolized the spiritual authorization and legitimacy of the state to exist (or the ascendant lineage group to rule). Destruction of a state's Altar or the capture of its "auspicious metals" cut the ruler's connections to his spirits and his link to power (Chang 1983). Sarah Allan (1991, see the

bibliography for Neolithic and Shang) understands the tomb to function (like the Altar and the bronzes) as a spiritual conduit between the living and the dead.

The elaborately furnished tombs of the period confirm, not only a strong early Chinese belief in the afterlife, but that the tomb, like the diplomatic feasts and covenants above ground, functioned as both a conduit and a place of contract between the living and the dead (see Kleeman 1984 on tomb contracts of Han and later times). In an ideal or elite tomb, ritualists buried all the symbols of consumption and contract with the dead: vessels filled with food and wine, musical ensembles, male and female attendants, personal emblems of status, and texts. The buried bronze texts (no bamboo or silk texts are preserved from the Ch'un-ch'iu period) included personal prayers, blessings, and ritual instructions. Copies of the texts may have been preserved in bronze and/or in other forms in archival temples above ground and used in memorial feasts.

These vestiges of the earlier gift-giving or potlatch-style society (Cook 1993a) were mixed with local icons possibly derived from other religious traditions. In the south, for example, lacquer paintings and sculptures of animals, deities, and beasts were placed by the deceased, perhaps to protect or guide the souls. In elite tombs of the south, ritualists placed wooden beasts with long antlers and extended tongues to the east at the head of the deceased (Major in Cook and Major forthcoming. See Childs-Johnson 1993 for the relationship of this beast to the *t'ao-tieh*). Studies of tomb iconography and textual sources show how the descendants of the deceased performed the rituals of "summoning the cloud-soul" (*chao-hun*) and of "setting up the corpse personator" (*li-shih*) before and after burial to guide and to communicate with the souls (Hu 1990; Carr 1985; K'ang and K'ang 1983; Wu 1992).

Michimasa Yoshimoto, in his analysis of the covenant texts of the late Ch'un-ch'iu period, sees a breakup of states (*kuo*) as a sign of the disintegration of ritual communities. Indeed, the loss of Chou ideological hegemony by the Warring States period is apparent in the replacement of bronze by lacquer as the symbol of prestige in the tombs (see Jenny So on the Chu, in Cook and Major forthcoming). Textual discourse, too, moved to a more personalized rhetoric representing the individuals of a more diverse society in which religious authority was not associated with the retelling of a single Chou tale.

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chao-hun 招魂
cheng-te 政德
chia-pin 嘉賓
Chou 周
Ch'un-ch'iu 春秋
Han 漢
hsiang 享
hsiang 饗
huang-tsu wen-k'ao 皇祖文考
kuei-shen 鬼
kuo 國
Kuo-yü 國語
li-shih 立尸
meng 盟
ming 命
p'o 魄
she chi 社稷
shih 史
Shih-ching 詩經
te 德
Tso-chuan 左傳
wu-kung 武功
ya 亞
yin 尹

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Warring States, Ch'in, and Han Periods

FUNDAMENTAL CHANGES OCCURRED IN CHINESE CIVILIZATION between the fifth century B.C.E. and the second century C.E., roughly corresponding to the Warring States (which officially commences in 453 B.C.E.) and the Ch'in and Han empires (Han rule ends in 220 C.E.). The emergence and maturation of philosophical speculation and of new sociopolitical models have traditionally constituted the ground on which other elements of the contemporary civilization have been drawn. As a consequence, the nature of religious traditions during this period has been poorly understood and insufficiently studied; first, because the documentation preserved in received literature overwhelmingly reflects the politico-philosophical leanings of an elite social stratum and thus offers only a partial, biased view of the range of religious belief and practice; and second, because modern research on Warring States, Ch'in, and Han religion by and large relies on the viewpoints expressed in the received record. Whereas the study of Buddhism and, more recently, of religious Taoism and popular religion is thriving among an ever-growing number of scholars of the history of Chinese religion, the ancient period of Warring States, Ch'in, and Han is still dominated by scholars engaged in the study of the philosophical tradition. The idea that religious belief during the period was tempered by philosophical reason is a widely shared assumption.

In his stimulating account of pre-Ch'in philosophy, A. C. Graham makes the point succinctly: "The tendency throughout the classical age [for Graham, the classical age is the period from 500–200 B.C.E.] is to ignore the spirits of the dead and of the mountains and rivers after paying them their customary respects, and to regard Heaven as an impersonal power responsible for everything outside human control" (Graham 1989:47).

Graham's assessment sounds very much like the religious orthopraxy attributed to the ancient Greeks by modern classicists. In China, Confucius and later philosophers identified as Ju were concerned with the idea of *li* (ritual). Devotion to particular deities through the performance of *li* does not appear to have been the central issue. Clearly, Confucius and his heirs represent one line of development in Warring States, Ch'in, and Han religious traditions (cf. Eno 1990, who argues that *li* is the foundation of pre-Ch'in Ju thought). But it must be emphasized that this is one line of development among many. Monolithic interpretations of the religious traditions of any civilization inevitably falsify. Archaeological discoveries of the last half century have been a great boon to the study of religion. Manuscripts and a variety of other artifacts, primarily excavated from tombs, sometimes reconfirm the received record, sometimes suggest new interpretations of already documented beliefs, and sometimes give evidence of religious ideas that were hitherto unknown for the period.

Mythology, Deities, and Demons

Much of the evidence for ancient Chinese myths occurs in Warring States, Ch'in, and Han received literature. Bodde 1961 remains a useful introduction to the myths, their textual sources, and the methodology of their study. One of the prime textual sources is the *Shan hai ching* [Canon of mountains and seas], a kind of guidebook to spiritual geography, which is studied and translated in Mathieu 1983. Dating the *Shan hai ching* remains problematic, but there is general agreement that the first five books are Warring States, and that the remainder was compiled either during the Han or shortly after. Karlgren's acrimonious criticism of Granet and Maspero for using sources like the *Shan hai ching* to discuss pre-Han myths seems like ancient history itself; see Karlgren 1946. Karlgren regards the *Shan hai ching* as one of a number of Han and later "folkloristic" works that systematize and distort the older myths, and therefore he claims that they are inadmissable as evidence of pre-Han myths (see Bodde 1961:379–82, for a critique of Karlgren's methodology).

The *Shan hai ching* is an important source for individual deities, among whom Hsi Wang Mu (usually translated as Queen Mother of the West) has attracted considerable scholarly attention, in part because of her prominence in connection with immortality in later religious Taoism. Loewe 1979:86–126 and 148–55 reviews the pre-Han and Han textual evidence related to Hsi Wang Mu, and examines her religious significance based on depictions in the archaeological record. Fracasso 1988 proposes that the various textual sources represent three distinct Hsi Wang Mu traditions that are not now resolvable into a composite picture of her. Fracasso also shows convincingly that Hsi Wang Mu cannot be related to the Hsi Mu (Western Mother) and Tung Mu (Eastern Mother) recorded in Shang inscriptions. Wu 1989:108–41 is notable for proposing an interpretation of Hsi Wang Mu's religious significance purely on the basis of her iconography in Han tomb art.

New evidence of the concept of a pantheon in Warring States, Ch'in, and Han religion is emerging in the archaeological record. In Hupei, bamboo-slip divination

records from Pao-shan tomb 2 that date to the second half of the fourth century B.C.E. document a pantheon that includes T'ai i (Grand One), Ssu ming (Director of Lifespan), and Ta shui (Great Water; perhaps the title of the god of the Yangtze); see Li Ling 1990. In Kiangsu, a burial dated 70 B.C.E. (Hu-ch'ang tomb 5) contained a wooden board inscribed with the names of over thirty deities, including T'ien kung (Celestial Sire) and Chiang chün (Lord of the Yangtze); see Anonymous 1981. The significance of these discoveries for reconstructing the common religion of pre-Han and Han times is discussed below.

The Warring States, Ch'in, and Han view of the spirit world did not tend toward a categorical division of the spirits into good and evil, or gods and devils. There was a clear sense that spirits could be helpful or harmful, depending on the circumstance, and that humans required guidance in dealing with them. One function of the *Shan hai ching* was to provide a description of spiritual geography so that humankind would be apprised of the marvels and perils in the environment. Fracasso 1983 deals with this aspect of the *Shan hai ching*. The reality of demonic peril in the immediate environment of the home is underscored in one section of an occult manuscript excavated from tomb 11 at Shui-hu-ti, Hupei (burial dated ca. 217 B.C.E.). Entitled *Chieh* [Spellbinding], this section contains seventy entries related to demonic mischief, including demon attack, sickness, nightmares, and household catastrophes; see Harper 1985. Similar demonographies are known from medieval times, but *Chieh* is the oldest example of demonological literature. It seems that this type of literature was first composed during the Warring States, and that it was disseminated by occult specialists who were colleagues of the philosophers at the courts of rulers and nobles. *Chieh* is also significant because it describes exorcistic procedures used in everyday life that hitherto were documented only as part of formal exorcistic rites in state religion and elsewhere. A picture of Warring States, Ch'in, and Han religious traditions is emerging in which the average person was more intimately involved in magico-ritual conduct than the received record would have us believe.

Shamanism

It has become conventional to refer to the traditions of the *wu* in early China as shamanism. Hawkes 1985:42–51 provides a concise description of the shamanistic elements in the poetry of the *Ch'u tz'u* and the shamanistic influence on Warring States, Ch'in, and Han culture. While modern scholarship attributes great influence to shamanism—including the Chinese concept of divine kingship and mystical experience in works like the *Chuang tzu*—we actually know very little about the practices of the *wu*, their place in society, or their relation to cult organization in Warring States, Ch'in, and Han times. Religious Taoism is sometimes said to have emerged in the Later Han in a milieu that included the *wu* and the *fang shih* (masters of recipes), but this is a rather broad speculation based on the idea that terms like *wu* and *fang shih* denote members of a counter-culture which was the spawning ground for religious Taoism.

We need to be wary of a tendency in recent Chinese scholarship on *wu* to use the term too broadly. In Han times the term *wu* was already applied to what in English is called witchcraft, and *wu shu* (shaman arts) remains a standard term in spoken Chinese for witchcraft or magic. What constituted magic in Han cultural perception cannot be translated into a religious tradition of shamanism. Indeed,

occult belief and practice flourished before the Han among specialists of the sort responsible for composing the recently discovered demonography *Chieh;* the name *fang shih* seems to have been applied to these occult specialists during the Ch'in. Medical manuscripts from Ma-wang-tui tomb 3 at Ch'ang-sha, Hunan (burial dated 168 B.C.E.), include magico-religious content that again reflects the catholicity of technical knowledge of the times; see Harper 1990. Recent Chinese scholarship on the magico-religious, occult element in the culture of the times typically labels it *wu* or *wu shu.* Shamanism as a religious tradition in China is not the central concern; and often the label refers specifically to the superstitious aspects of "idealism" in the feudal struggle between "idealism" and "materialism" (see, for example, Chou and Hsiao 1988:55–56). Inasmuch as the *wu* as a social group are also held to be on the fringes of the mainstream, one consequence of the use of the label *wu* is the marginalization of occult thought within Warring States, Ch'in, and Han intellectual traditions. Anyone reading the recent spate of books in Chinese on the relationship between *wu,* religion, philosophy, and science—caveat lector.

State Religion

The development of cosmological speculation during the Warring States reshaped the long-established religious and ritual elements of the concept of kingship and government. By the mid-third century B.C.E., it was believed that the ideal king coordinated the activities of his state with the forces of nature as expressed in Yin-Yang and Five-Phase theories. The place of ritual calendars in the conduct of government is older. Rickett 1985:148–92 surveys the textual evidence of these calendars as well as their association with sacred buildings in which the king was supposed to execute his ritual function. In a classic study of the cosmo-ritual structure called the *ming t'ang* (Hall of light), Maspero 1948–51 argues that the *ming t'ang* was a purely conceptual construct in the Warring States, and that the first architectural realization of it was during the reign of Wu ti of Han (r. 141–87 B.C.E.). Kaltenmark 1961 furthers Maspero's speculations with a thorough treatment of the cosmological, magical, and religious aspects of royal politics in the Ch'in and Han. The formation of state religion during the Han is well covered by Loewe in Twitchett and Loewe 1986:649–746 (which includes much else on Han religion). Vandermeersch 1980 deals with the genesis of the ritual aspects of government from the Shang into the Warring States, including the influence of various philosophical traditions.

Because of the way in which state-centered orthodoxy tends to determine what gets preserved in the received literature, the textual evidence of Ch'in and Han religion is almost wholly concerned with state religion itself or with religious practices approved by the state. Bodde 1975 is an essential guide to state-approved festivals and rites in Han times. It was also during the Han that formal compendia of *li* (ritual) were compiled as part of the activity of canon formation by the state-sponsored Ju intellectuals. Ebrey 1991 is a ground-breaking study of the role of a written ritual canon in the development of family rituals in China; and chapters 1 and 2 address the formative ancient period. However, the main focus of Ebrey's study is on Sung and later society. There is a need for new sociological research on Han ritual classics (the studies gathered in Granet 1953 remain isolated models).

One of the interesting facts to emerge from recent archaeology is that some of the deities raised to prominence in Han state religion already had a strong following in the common religion. For example, Wu ti established the worship of T'ai i

(Grand One) at the capital in 113 B.C.E., having been advised by *fang shih* that T'ai i was the supreme celestial deity. In addition to reference to T'ai i in the Pao-shan divination records (see above), a chart depicting T'ai i was among the Ma-wang-tui tomb 3 manuscripts. From the text that accompanies the chart we know that it concerns T'ai i's role in overseeing military fortunes; see Chou 1990. (Li Hsüeh-ch'in 1991 argues that the graph Chou reads as *t'ai* is *t'ien* (heaven), which has been effaced in the chart's current state of preservation. T'ien i is the name of another celestial deity in Han times, sometimes identified with T'ai i.) In light of the new evidence concerning T'ai i, the state cult established by Wu ti seems to be less a case of state-initiated religion and more a case of a dialectical relationship between the common religion and state religion.

Ancestor Worship and Mortuary Religion

Archaeology has supplied essential evidence for shifts in ancestor worship and mortuary religion during the Warring States, Ch'in, and Han. It is a peculiar feature of received Han ritual literature that it describes in detail the proper rites for burying the dead, but never addresses the significance of the rites from the perspective of the deceased; nor does it speculate on the conditions encountered by the deceased in the other world. The received literature offers a static image centered on the needs of the community of the living: to have properly buried ancestors in order that these ancestors may be enjoined (with proper ritual respect) to watch out for the well-being of the living. Excavated tombs, primarily of Han date, have yielded artifacts that give us a view of death from the perspective of the dead. Loewe 1979 deals with the theme of immortality in mortuary religion as evidenced in tomb archaeology. Seidel 1982 is both a review of Loewe's book and a significant contribution to further study of the concept of the other world in Han religion. Although the tombs make it perfectly clear that immortality and death are linked ideas, we still have only a rough understanding of how these ideas developed. Why, for example, should the symbols of immortality associated with the *hsien* (transcendent) cult figure prominently in connection with death when the goal of the *hsien* cult was precisely to escape death? Are they merely a token anodyne for the bitter fact of death, or are they a sign of a complex religious phenomenon about which we know little? Seidel suspects the latter, and made significant contributions to reconstructing a Han common religion based on the tomb evidence (see Seidel 1987).

Wu 1988 (see the bibliography for the Western Chou) and Falkenhausen 1990 both use archaeological evidence to trace a shift of emphasis from the ancestral temple to the tomb in Warring States, Ch'in, and Han religion. Their studies are perfect examples of how archaeology facilitates a critical reinterpretation of the received record. Research on the pictorial evidence in tombs and tomb shrines is also burgeoning among art historians, all of which contributes to our understanding of religion. Wu 1989 is especially notable for providing a comprehensive examination of the famous Wu Liang shrine (erected in 151 C.E.).

Common Religion

In this summary, the term "common religion" applies to religious beliefs and practices that were held in common by a broad spectrum of Warring States, Ch'in,

and Han society, but have been little known because they fall outside the parameters of what was deemed important by those whose words have been preserved in received literature. When notice is taken of the common religion in received literature, it is often either removed from its original religious context or treated with disdain. And yet it is precisely in the common religion of the Warring States, Ch'in, and Han that we must look for many antecedents of the religious mentality that led to the formation of religious Taoism and the acceptance of Buddhism in the first and second centuries C.E. Granet 1925 sets out this theory with the hypothesis that the Yu *pu* (Pace of Yu) described in the *Pao p'u tzu* and prominent in religious Taoism, derives from a core of pre-Han common religion. According to Granet, the several references to Yu's physical impairments in early philosophical literature represent an adaptation of a religious practice, the *ur*-Pace, to philosophical speculation on the nature of the hero. Granet's hypothesis has been confirmed by the discovery of the Ma-wang-tui medical manuscripts in 1973, which document the use of the Pace of Yu in magical rituals to treat ailments and in a ritual used for protection while traveling; see Harper 1982 and Andersen 1989–90 (Ch'in and Han manuscripts excavated since 1973 also document the Pace of Yu). The manuscripts indicate that the Pace of Yu was known to and practiced by the Ch'in and Han elite in whose tombs the manuscripts were found, but before the discovery of the manuscripts there was no evidence for this apparently common practice. Without belaboring the issue, terms like "folk religion" and "popular religion" tend to cloud the study of ancient religion by creating distinctions between elite and folk, or between major and minor traditions. When studying a living culture, it may be possible to achieve such fine discrimination, but the capriciousness of the received record should make us suspicious of relying on it to establish what constitutes the elite or major tradition at particular points in China's past.

Archaeology has made it possible to reconstruct Warring States, Ch'in, and Han common religion to a degree that was impossible only several decades ago. New discoveries continue to change the picture. Fortunately, the study of ancient religion has gained momentum in China; and scholarly journals report many of the latest discoveries along with preliminary studies of their religious significance. Research in this field is very much ongoing. Its potential significance is great. From a vantage point in post-Han history of religion, scholars of religion have had the impression that Han and earlier religion was a piecemeal phenomenon that did not yet offer the kind of overall vision of religious Taoism or Buddhism. New evidence indicates the existence of a common religion that provided fertile ground for these later traditions.

Seidel 1987 provides the basis for a new understanding of Han religion and the emergence of religious Taoism. Seidel analyzes four types of funerary texts found in Later Han tombs, one of which is called *chen mu wen* "tomb-quelling texts" by the archaeologists, and "celestial ordinances for the dead" by Seidel. While the ordinances themselves serve a particular mortuary function, they at the same time reveal the existence of a well-organized spirit world overseen by the Celestial Thearch (T'ien ti) or Yellow God (Huang shen). The ordinances show that the supreme god in the common religion kept ledgers of the living and of the dead, and that the ordinances were themselves instruments for verifying the ledger record. Celestial record-keeping and written communication with the gods in the early religious Taoist communities were clearly modeled on a common religious belief. The ordinances also document the belief that it is necessary for the deceased to be *chieh* (released) from blame. Seidel notes the judiciary cast of this idea, and speculates on its significance

for understanding the religious Taoist concept of *shih chieh* (perhaps reflecting a transition from an original concept of exorcistically "releasing" a person from particular spirits, to one of "releasing the corpse" of the Taoist believer by purifying it). Seidel concludes that the common religion of the Later Han "is definitely not the mediumistic folk religion we assume to have preceded Taoism" (Seidel 1987:46).

Many of the characteristics of the common religion that Seidel identifies for the late Han are now being documented for the Warring States, Ch'in, and early Han. For example, the Pao-shan (fourth century B.C.E.) and Hu-ch'ang (first century B.C.E.) texts attest to a well-defined pantheon made up of deities such as T'ai i and T'ien kung (see above). A technical religious usage of *chieh* (release) is attested in the Pao-shan texts that corroborates Seidel's speculation concerning the exorcistic background of the term. Similarly, a second document from Hu-ch'ang addressed to the T'u chu (Earth Ruler) contains the earliest religious usage of the formula *ju lü ling,* "according to the statutes and ordinances" (a standard phrase in Han official documents). It looks as though a pantheon with its own "statutes and ordinances" was already in place in the first century B.C.E. (cf. Seidel 1987:39–42).

One of the latest discoveries relating to the common religion is a remarkable text from Fang-ma-t'an tomb 1, Kansu (the burial is either late Warring States or early Ch'in), that gives the earliest account of a return from death (the theme became popular in Six Dynasties marvel stories; see Campany 1990). The story is set about 300 B.C.E. and describes how a man named Tan killed himself and subsequently returned to life after a living colleague sued the underworld for his release, claiming that Tan's lifespan was not yet complete (see Li Hsüeh-ch'in 1990; Harper forthcoming). The story itself is not a religious document, but it reflects the contemporary fascination with what must have been crucial religious issues. There is much room here for speculation about Warring States and Ch'in common religion.

It was not so long ago that scholars of the history of Chinese religion thought that Han and earlier religion lacked a coherent theology and soteriological perspective and that "personal" religion took hold with the arrival of Buddhism. Studies in religious Taoism have led to better understanding of the indigenous religious landscape. In the same way, current research is changing what we thought we knew about Warring States, Ch'in, and Han religious traditions and their relationship to later Chinese religion.

DONALD HARPER

Glossary

Ch'ang-sha 長沙
chen mu wen 鎮墓文
Chiang chün 江君
Chieh 詰
chieh 解
Ch'u tz'u 楚辭
Chuang tzu 莊子
fang shih 方士
Hsi mu 西母
Hsi wang mu 西王母
hsien 仙
Huang shen 黃神
Ju 儒
Shan hai ching 山海經
shih chieh 尸解
Shui-hu-ti 睡虎地
Ssu ming 司命
Ta shui 大水
T'ai i 太一
Tan 丹
t'ien 天
T'ien i 天一
T'ien kung 天公
T'ien ti 天帝
T'u chu 土主
Tung mu 東母

ju lü ling 如律令
li 禮
Ma-wang-tui 馬王堆
ming t'ang 明堂
Pao p'u tzu 抱朴子
Pao-shan 包山
wu 巫
Wu-liang 武梁
wu shu 巫術
Wu ti 武帝
Yü pu 禹步

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