



Chapter 1

Introduction: The *Lüshi chunqiu*'s Background and Foreground

In the third century before the common era (B.C.E.; all dates are B.C.E. unless noted otherwise), the kingdoms on the central plains of China encountered a period of intense warfare. Out of the various feudal principalities turned kingdoms, only one would stand as victor and unifier. In 256 B.C.E., the Qin army vanquished the vestiges of the imperial house of Zhou, officially terminating that dynasty. At that time, Qin was not prepared to do battle with the remaining seven kingdoms. *Master Lü's Spring and Autumn Annals* (*Lüshi chunqiu* or *Lü-shih ch'un-ch'iu*) was written during a lull in Qin's battles when the child king, Zheng (259–210 B.C.E.), reigned (traditional reign 246–221). Zheng unified the empire and became the self-proclaimed first-generation emperor of Qin (Qin shihuangdi, or Ch'in Shih Huang-ti, reigned as emperor from 221–210). *Lüshi chunqiu* was completed in 241 B.C.E. at the estate of Lü Buwei (Lü Pu-wei), the prime minister of Qin and tutor to the child king, Zheng. A decade after the completion of the *Lüshi chunqiu*, King Zheng began the ensuing nine years of fervent warfare that led to unification of the empire in 221. Before the political unification, *Lüshi chunqiu* created a philosophical consolidation.¹ The *Lüshi chunqiu* performed an important function in the literary and political education of the young King Zheng. It provided a philosophical understanding of and justification for a unified empire that left its mark on the young king, and on the subsequent Han philosophy. After unifying the empire, Qin shihuangdi established the insignia of water for the imperial emblems, employing concepts from *Lüshi chunqiu's yingtong* (Responding and Identifying) chapter, which describes the succession of dynasties according to the timely cycle of the five phases (*wuxing*) to justify his new dynasty.²

To study the *Lüshi chunqiu* is to enter into the tumultuous but progressive times of the Warring States period (403–221 B.C.E.)—commonly referred to as the pre-Qin period because of the fundamental changes that occurred after the Qin unification. The struggle among the eight most powerful states climaxed in unification under one centralized ruler, establishing the rudiments of a dynastic system that persevered for more than 2,000 years. About a century before the military and political unification of the kingdoms, a unified composite philosophy and literature had begun to flower in such works as the *Guanzi* and *Shizi*.³ That eclectic, discriminating, selective, and consolidating trend in philosophical literature blossomed with the *Lüshi chunqiu*, and it continued to bear fruit in the Han dynasty (206 B.C.E.–220 C.E.) in the *Huainanzi* and the *Chunqiu fanlu*. The authors of those texts appropriate the unified amalgamated strategy, philosophical concepts, and even whole passages from the *Lüshi chunqiu*. The *Guanzi*, *Shizi*, and *Lüshi chunqiu* express the possibility of political unification implicitly by setting an example of diverse positions working in harmony with each other, that is, a consolidated philosophy, and explicitly by proposing the unification of the empire. A major theme running through the *Lüshi chunqiu* is the idea of “the proper timing” required to bring about and maintain a unified empire. Proper timing is a constituent process for securing victory in battle and a bountiful harvest, two important aspects in the ancient art of rulership. The idea of proper timing is an important component in divination, and it continued to dominate philosophy in the Han dynasty.⁴

The concern for proper timing in achieving social and political order, specifically how to achieve such an order and to obtain its beneficial results for human life, instructs classical Chinese philosophy, especially in the Warring States period (403–221 B.C.E.). Pre-Qin philosophy has a social and political orientation. The predominant theme of self-cultivation, typical of *daojia* (Daoist or Taoist), *rujia* (Literati or Confucian),⁵ and Mohist thought, which interpreters as diverse as James Legge and Donald Munro are prone to psychologize, given their own cultural commitments, is directed toward the achievement of harmony, both natural and social. To attempt an unbiased study of pre-Qin philosophy, the modern interpreter must be self-conscious of the themes that color one's own philosophical world. For example, contemporary philosophers, such as Fung Yu-lan and Thomé Fang, who discuss ancient Chinese metaphysics and ontology, study the *Yijing* (*I ching* or *Book of Changes*), but they rarely acknowledge the original context and function of that text: it was consulted at court for timely guidance in the art of rulership, and even in its popular usage the text is directed toward lending counsel for one's own life or the well-being of one's family within the temporal social context. The *Lüshi chunqiu* is typical as a classical pre-

Qin text in that it is primarily concerned with discourses directed at influencing social and political order in a timely fashion. At a glance, these discourses appear disjointed because of their diversity, but coherence emerges as a “temporal orientation for maintaining order.”

More will be said below, but a brief description of the *Lüshi chunqiu* (hereafter LSCQ) will show that the text commands an important understanding of the world, and it holds a crucial position during what would prove to be a decisive time in pre-Qin social and political philosophy. The text is not only a product of its day, but it also helps shape an era. The LSCQ was compiled by the retainers and guest scholars at Lü Buwei’s estate during his appointment as prime minister of Qin (249–237 B.C.E.). The work was completed by 241 or, according to another reckoning, by 238. It is one of the few pre-Qin texts that dates itself. The date, though not precise, is given in the *xuyi* chapter.⁶ It is one of the few philosophical texts to avoid the infamous “burning of the books” contained in private collections in 213 B.C.E. The LSCQ was completed toward the end of the classical age of philosophy after the Eastern Zhou dynasty (traditional dates 770–256 B.C.E.). In its day, the LSCQ was a unique phenomenon, because books of its size, more than 100,000 characters, were rare. It marks a fixed date for and a developed form of the unified composite movement in Qin and subsequent Han philosophy. As a compendium or an anthology of classical knowledge, the LSCQ provides a resource for cultural and philosophical material.⁷ Studying this text, one sees that it either focuses on social and political topics organized under a seasonal scheme, or discusses the importance of proper timing in ruling a state.

To the extent that the LSCQ is representative of many pre-Qin philosophers, this study has a bearing on the reevaluation of other classical pre-Qin texts.⁸ The LSCQ’s integral, this-worldly, temporal approach provides one with insights that might occasion a reevaluation of one’s own tradition. In the pre-Qin context, “time,” rooted in historical circumstance, is didactic and heuristic; that is, “time” is not an objective condition but a historical interpretation with moral and cosmic “lessons.” In the principal pre-Qin philosophies, there is no conception of an interpretation or a “theory” divorced from context and performance. Although the expression “theory and action are one” (*zhixing heyi*) was coined relatively late by Wang Yangming (1472–1529 C.E.), the assumption that theory entails praxis is pervasive in pre-Qin Literati and Daoist texts.⁹ Pre-Qin philosophy proffers an alternative to the atemporal approach in European and American social contract theory. The temporal nature of theory and praxis provides a different perspective for legal reform, constitutional interpretation, and environmental ethics.

“Proper timing” or “season” (*shu*) is a central concern in the diverse philosophies of the LSCQ, and this concept has been undervalued or ignored in the Chinese, Japanese, and European commentarial literature on the LSCQ. The art of rulership generated in numerous chapters of the LSCQ has as a unifying feature the presupposition that order is based on a programmatic understanding of human life in its social, political, and cosmic contexts. Although the connection between ethical and political policy and cosmic order may be apparent, in pre-Qin and Han philosophy, cosmic harmony is a core concept. The LSCQ is one of China's earliest extant texts that develops a “temporal cosmology.”

A word about terminology is in order. Generally speaking, there are two different yet interrelated senses of “proper timing”—intrinsic and extrinsic.¹⁰ Proper timing is an event-in-context where the extrinsic perspective underscores the context and the intrinsic outlook emphasizes the event. The former is morphological, the latter genetic. *Extrinsic timing* is the more familiar. When human actions are performed in accordance with either natural or social conditions, there is a timely fit. Extrinsic timing is best described as a “timely action” that appropriately agrees with seasonal and historic circumstances. The execution of policy and the enactment of ritual, coinciding with the seasons and social or historic conditions, constitute timely actions. Agricultural and military operations easily fit the extrinsic model. For example, planting in the spring and harvesting in autumn, or moving troops in the proper season or when the socioeconomic, political, and historical conditions are right.

The second sense of proper timing is the quality of an action that is achieved creatively and spontaneously with a timing intrinsic to the act itself. *Intrinsic timing* does not depend on a given order. It is not determined by external conditions, though it may depend on them. Intrinsic timing is associated with the proper fit between the action and its performer; it is a qualitative experience. The actual act of planting or the act of battle that is executed with creative power exemplifies the model of acting with proper intrinsic timing. For heuristic purposes, it is instructive to distinguish between the two models of timing. It is equally instructive to notice how they meld together to create an event-in-context. For example, sports, especially ball games, appear to fit the extrinsic model of timing, and art forms, such as modern dance or painting, lean toward the intrinsic. But the distinction begins to blur. Certain dances (a waltz, for example), where each step accords with the music, evidence extrinsic concerns not found in a game of handball. Even in the most extrinsically controlled contexts, such as football or square dancing, the performer brings an intrinsic quality to the event. A human articulation of time is found in the performance

of acts that harmonize and creatively appropriate both the extrinsic and intrinsic elements.

In this context, “proper timing” should not be thought of as a formal abstraction but as a selective abstraction that integrates both extrinsic and intrinsic experiences of timing. The term *proper timing* is meant to summon up images that integrate both intrinsic timing and extrinsic timely actions. “Proper timing” is that overall experience of performing actions with an intrinsic quality and extrinsic correspondence. This integration of extrinsic and intrinsic timing is due to the dynamic nature of the Chinese language and its philosophy.

There is a tendency to explain classical pre-Qin philosophy by employing the terminology of classical Greek and Roman thinkers, or modern Western philosophers. This approach does not do justice to the pre-Qin worldview.¹¹ Joseph Needham and others have proposed that Chinese philosophy needs to be conceptualized in dynamic and organic terms.¹² Angus Graham and Sarah Allan argue that English terms do not adequately capture the dynamic character of the Chinese language.¹³ The student of pre-Qin philosophy must keep these *dynamic* and *organic* assumptions in mind. In particular, the *dynamic* nature of pre-Qin philosophy should *not* be thought of as a teleological process—“things” are not developing along the lines of Aristotelian causes; they do not culminate into a Whiteheadian process of creativity or any other end. The dynamic character of the pre-Qin outlook is rooted in the plethora of particular foci that maintain a complex network of processes in and through their mutual interaction. In the context of this work the word “organic” should *not* be thought of in terms of traditional Western organic theory in which the whole organism is greater than the sum of its parts or organs. With these caveats in mind, I will employ the term *organic* as a shorthand for the foci-field net, that is, the complex network of particulars, made up of other particulars, contributing to coherent organizations or “fields,” which in turn are parts of other “fields.”¹⁴ The pre-Qin world is hylozoistic—a living world empowered with *qi*. The relationships obtaining between the particular foci constitute “field cosmology.” The foci-field model is notably different from the traditional Western understanding of the part/whole, organ/organism relationship. The pre-Qin organic world is an emergent order of particular foci changing through their mutual interrelatedness with each other, that is, the field. The interrelationships establish patterns of continuity. Agriculture may have originally sponsored the model; that is, a seed, piece of root, or stalk, the focus, generates a plant as a field, then the plant as a focus propagates a host of other plants—a field—which in turn engenders a seed, root, or stalk, and the dynamic ongoing process continues.

Lü Buwei and the LSCQ

Lü Buwei's life and the compilation of the LSCQ exemplify many aspects of proper timing.¹⁵ The historical background behind the LSCQ and Lü Buwei's motivations for having that anthology compiled are intriguing. It is necessary to put the work in a historical context to gain a full appreciation of it, its sponsor's art of timing, and the philosophy of proper timing contained therein. One is immediately confronted with two obstacles in attempting to reconstruct Lü Buwei's lifetime. First, there is a lack of material on his family and early life before coming into contact with the hostage prince, Zichu (or Yiren), in the State of Zhao between 265–260 B.C.E. Second, there are problems of credibility and textual corruption or intentional alteration in the scant historical material we have concerning Lü Buwei's life, especially his "Biography" in the *Shiji* (*Records of the Historian*). It appears that the original material was altered.¹⁶

The reign of the self-proclaimed first-generation emperor of Qin (221–210) created radical social, cultural, political, and economic changes. Substantial hardship and unnecessary death were inflicted on the people in the undertaking of imperial construction projects such as the imperial highways, palaces, and tombs, and in joining the territorial walls to constitute a great wall. Shihuangdi imposed censorship against the Literati class. This is seen in the promulgation of Li Si's notorious edict, implementing the destruction of private libraries and the execution of scholars.¹⁷ These hardships, and their later exaggeration, created a good deal of animosity against the First Emperor and those associated with him. Time did not heal this wound. Because of the enmity and the didactic nature of ancient (and modern) historiography in China, there has been a tendency by some historians to read anachronistically the tyranny of the Qin dynasty (221–206) back into his earlier reign as King Zheng (traditional reign 246–221—Zheng, in fact, took the throne in the fifth month of 247, when his father died). The anachronistic interpretation is especially problematic, because King Zheng was but a child, without any real control, during the first nine years of his reign (ca. 247–238). He began to wield power after donning the cap and sword of adulthood in 238. There is a tendency to attack anyone associated with Qin shihuangdi as though the early associates were responsible for his tyranny after unifying the empire.¹⁸

These peculiar interpretations of Qin history generate misunderstandings of the LSCQ. Although it is not the object of this book to labor over the diverse interpretations of the LSCQ, especially the inadequate ones, nevertheless one questionable interpretation is well worth noting, because it really distorted the purpose and content of the LSCQ and reemerged recently. This is the view

first proposed by the Song scholar, Gao Sisun, elaborated by the Ming scholar, Fang Xiaoru, and finally synthesized by Kung-chuan Hsiao, proposing that the LSCQ was directed against *fajia* (so-called Legalist) doctrine, particularly the policies of Qin shihuangdi.¹⁹ Such an interpretation can only be based on a selective reading and misquoting of the text coupled with an anachronistic interpretation that the LSCQ opposes policies that were not instituted for at least two decades after the LSCQ's publication. The hypothesis that the LSCQ is anti-Qin ignores the fact that Lü Buwei had power at court and further ignores the long-standing attraction for *fajia* thinkers, such as Shang Yang and later Li Si, at the Qin court. Lü Buwei's "businesslike" approach to politics is not at all at odds with *fajia* procedures. Most devastating to the hypothesis that the LSCQ is an anti-*fajia* text is the *fajia* material contained in the LSCQ itself and, as Hu Shi has argued, some of that *fajia* material may have been written by Li Si himself, especially the *chajin* chapter.²⁰ Regardless of which date one accepts for the compilation of the LSCQ (241 or 238), the text was completed about two decades before Shihuangdi unified the empire and, with Li Si's aid, imposed severe policies. At the date of its compilation, severe restrictions had not yet been imposed. The LSCQ was written when the Shihuangdi-to-be was still a child king. Moreover, if the *Shiji* story were correct (though we have reason to believe it is a later interpolation), Lü was not only King Zheng's prime minister but also his father. This would make it even more unlikely that Lü Buwei opposed court policy, especially when he made a lot of the policy himself during the child king's early reign.²¹ Thus to describe the LSCQ as an anti-*fajia* and anti-Qin work is to impose an anachronism that greatly oversimplifies the content and nature of the LSCQ. Because of these historiographical concerns, scholars approach the history of the state of Qin before and during unification (221), especially the life of Lü Buwei, with a critical eye.

There is another pre-Qin and Han cultural bias to interpret the growth of Qin, west of the central plains, as the ascent of an uncivilized, basically barbaric people, and to see Qin's unification of the empire as an attack on the vestiges of the civilized Zhou dynasty. Because the state of Lu, in the East, was the home of Confucius, it came to be idealized as a cultural center along with the state of Qi. Though Qi was of a tribal, not a royal family, origin, like Qin, nevertheless Qi was noted for sponsoring the Jixia academy, and it became known as a center of political power and learning. Thus, some ancient and modern historians have promoted the impression that the state of Qin was backward and uncultured, which is far from the truth.

To fully apprehend Lü Buwei's relationship to the state of Qin and his sponsorship of the LSCQ, and to further comprehend the essential gravity of

“proper timing” in the LSCQ, one must appreciate the place of “timing” in Lü’s meteoric rise from merchant to prime minister. Lü Buwei was from Puyang (originally part of Wei). By the time he came into contact with the Qin prince, Zichu (or Yiren), held hostage in Zhao, he was known as a wealthy merchant from Yangdi, the capital of the state of Han. Lü Buwei was probably born into the merchant class, which was prospering during the Warring States period. Since he was already a renowned wealthy merchant when he met Zichu between 265 and 260, he was probably in his twenties or early thirties. So Lü Buwei was probably born sometime between 295 and 280. The story recounted in the *Zhanguo* (*Intrigues of the Warring States*) relates that after Lü Buwei became aware of the Qin prince held hostage in Zhao, he returned home to ask for his father’s advice about the yield from investing in agriculture, jewels, or “establishing a ruler.”²² Of course, he was told that political investments promise a much higher return than jewels or produce. As with most investment advice, the higher risk taken for the higher yield is not mentioned—in the end, it cost Lü his estate and his life. The story gives the impression that Lü Buwei was young because he is seeking his father’s counsel, and he appears to be searching for his own career—so he may have been in his twenties when he met the Qin prince.

Zichu, like most political hostages of the day, was only a prince in title. He had no real hope of inheriting the Qin throne. However, in 265, Zichu’s father, Lord An Guo, became heir apparent to the Qin throne. Lord An Guo had taken his favorite concubine, Lady Huayang, as his legal wife. Zichu was the son of a secondary wife, Lady Xia. However, the legal wife, Lady Huayang, remained childless.

Lü Buwei’s rise to power began with the risky investment in gifts and bribes to influence Lady Huayang’s family to assist in convincing her to adopt Zichu as her legitimate heir.²³ The gifts, bribes, and heavy persuasions paid off. Lady Huayang adopted Zichu, and she convinced Lord An Guo to establish him as their heir apparent. Before leaving Zhao, Zichu took a fancy to Lü Buwei’s concubine, and asked for her hand. When she bore a son, Zichu took her as his legal wife. The son, his legitimate heir, became King Zheng upon Zichu’s death in 247.

The *Shiji* adds that Lü’s concubine was already pregnant when she went to Zichu. Because this part of the story is not contained in the other sources, especially the *Zhanguo*, and because it is hardly believable, it is rejected as a later interpolation to slander the First Emperor and Lü Buwei.²⁴ Because of the literary disdain for the merchant class in ancient China, it is not too surprising that Lü Buwei is made out to be self-serving, driven by profit and power. Even if we strip away the scholar-literati bias, it is apparent that Lü Buwei was

an opportunist, an “entrepreneur,” intimately involved in the perilous adventures of court intrigue for whom timing was of the utmost significance.

Once Zichu was safe within the Qin court, uneducated, he was in need of a tutor. Of course, Lü Buwei was at hand to be appointed. This may be significant in understanding Lü Buwei’s motivation in sponsoring the compilation of the LSCQ. First as tutor to Zichu and later as his minister, and subsequently in serving as the prime minister to the child King Zheng, Lü Buwei found himself in the role of court tutor. One of the prime minister’s duties was to supervise the ruler’s education, especially a young ruler. Faced with the responsibility of providing his rulers with a basic education and an understanding of their complex role as king, Lü Buwei, in part, devised the idea of the LSCQ in order to fulfill this twofold educational requirement.

King Zhao of Qin, in the fifty-sixth year of his reign, 251, died. Lord An Guo died in 250, after only one year of rule; he was posthumously titled King Xiaowen. After a little more than a decade of involvement with Zichu, Lü Buwei’s plans yielded large returns. In 249, Zichu, enthroned as King Zhuangxiang, appointed Lü Buwei as assistant chancellor and enfeoffed him as marquis Wenxin (*wen* meaning “cultured,” as in literature, *xin* meaning “credibility”) with the revenues of 100,000 households in Henan and Loyang. The title “Wenxin” implied that Lü Buwei, at least, had the ambition, if not the actual practice, of compiling a great literary work at that time. Zhuangxiang’s reign was also short lived,²⁵ lasting only three years—officially, it was only a few days after ending the three-year mourning period. So Zheng became King of Qin at about the age of twelve (thirteen by Chinese custom) in 247. King Zheng appointed Lü Buwei prime minister with the title Zhongfu (“second father,” or “uncle”), emulating the title and relationship often mentioned in the LSCQ concerning Duke Huan of Qi and his famous minister Guan Zhong, whose name was used for the title of the anthology, *Guanzi*, compiled by the scholars at the Jixia academy in Qi.

Lü Buwei was quite adept at manipulating the times and circumstances of his day to maneuver himself into one of the most influential positions in Qin. The *Shiji* introduces an additional motivation for Lü Buwei to sponsor the compilation of the LSCQ, namely, intellectual competition. Lü Buwei was faced with the practical issue of educating the crown prince, Zichu, and then the child king, Zheng. He was one of the most powerful men in the Warring States period and undoubtedly sensitive to, or at least aware of, the need to propagate learning. Though the *Shiji* makes Lü Buwei appear to be attempting to corner the education market, it was certainly the style of the times for great statesmen and rulers to keep protégés and guest scholars in residence. The *Shiji* reports

that: “Thinking it would be shameful not to equal them when Qin was so powerful, Lü Buwei also invited guests and treated them handsomely, until he had three thousand protégés.”²⁶ At this time there were numerous teachers and their books circulating about the various centers of learning in the different states. Lü Buwei wanted to show his prowess again, or so the *Shiji* continues:

Lü Buwei also had his guests record all their knowledge, compiling more than two hundred thousand words divided into the “Eight References” (*balan*), “Six Discussions” (*lulun* or *liulun*), and the “Twelve Chronicles” (*shierji*). Believing that this work dealt with everything in heaven and earth, comprising all ancient and modern knowledge, he entitled it *Master Lü's Spring and Autumn Annals*. It was displayed at the gate of the Xianyang market, with a thousand pieces of gold hung above it. Itinerant scholars and protégés from other states were invited to read it, and the gold was offered to anyone who could add or subtract a single character.²⁷

We have a fairly good idea when the text was produced. The *xuyi* (Postscript) chapter, which appears at the end of the *shierji* section of the LSCQ, begins by stating that it was “in the eighth year of Qin” (ca. 241 or 238) that Lü Buwei was asked about the meaning of the *shierji*. A few years after its publication, Lü Buwei was dismissed from office in 237, apparently because he was implicated in the Lao Ai revolt of 238. Lü Buwei was later banished to Shu, where he either died in exile or committed suicide in 235 rather than face the hardship of banishment.

The LSCQ was undoubtedly compiled by guest scholars under the patronage of Lü Buwei while he was assistant chancellor, and then the prime minister of Qin between 249 and 238 B.C.E.—most likely it was completed by 241. In part, Lü Buwei's motivation to have the text written was his competition with other centers of learning that were producing books, displaying the cultural and literary heritage of the respective sponsor's state. It is likely that Lü Buwei sought to compile a viable handbook on the arts of rulership that could serve as curriculum in his role as court tutor. Lü Buwei's business sense, his able planning, and his administrative abilities perhaps made him sensitive to the issue of “critical timing.” The role of proper timing was certainly important in everyday affairs, trade, agriculture, and warfare. Lü Buwei's sensitivity is not only seen in the fact that the LSCQ was produced at a crucial time during the Warring States period, but also in the content and the formal structure of the LSCQ itself. A discussion of the character and structure of the LSCQ is required to grasp the importance of proper timing within its structure, its selective, consolidated philosophy, and the diverse but amalgamated approaches toward achieving social and political order.

Season Timing (*chunqiu*) and the Nature of the LSCQ

The LSCQ is a rather long and complex text. It contains more than 100,000 characters, nearly twice the size of the *Zhuangzi*, making it one of the largest texts of its day. It is composed of three “volumes,” containing a total of 160 chapters. It can be described as an anthology with a unifying theme. Lü Buwei had the means to support literally thousands of guest scholars at his estate, and he called upon them to record whatever knowledge they had in order to compile the text known as *Master Lü’s Spring and Autumn Annals*. Lü’s guests came from various backgrounds, and hence their contributions touch upon a wide range of topics: political philosophy, geography, music, court ritual, medicine, history and legend, military arts, farming techniques, and so on. Overall, the work functions as a political handbook with the recurring image of unifying and ruling an empire.

The LSCQ’s content is eclectic, that is, discriminating and selective, drawn from various sources but united in a unique manner, and not easily classified. In the dynastic histories, historians list the LSCQ under the bibliographical classification of *zajia* (unified eclectic “school” or unclassified literature—regrettably mistranslated as “miscellaneous”). The misunderstanding and depreciation of *zajia* as a bibliographical label led some scholars, such as A. Wylie and B. Watson, to discount the value and coherence of the LSCQ.²⁸ As a bibliographic category, *zajia* should not be understood to mean “miscellaneous.”²⁹ As a bibliographic category *zajia* means “unclassifiable under standard headings,” such as poetry, or *rujia* (Literati), *daoja* (Daoist), *mojia* (Mohist), and so on.³⁰ The authors of the LSCQ borrowed material broadly from almost the entire pre-Qin corpus, making it unclassifiable under the standard headings. They unified, or consolidated and amalgamated, that composite material into an eclectic synthetic or syncretic philosophy. Thus the term *zajia* should be understood to have two different meanings. When *zajia* is used as a label for such texts as the *Shizi*, *Huainanzi*, or the LSCQ, then it should be understood to be a label used to denote “an eclectic unified approach to philosophy,” that is, a distinctive philosophy drawn from various sources metamorphosized and amalgamated together.³¹ Otherwise, as a bibliographical heading, *zajia* means “unclassifiable under the standard headings,” such as poetry, history, and so on. When Liu Xiang implemented the *zajia* label in his bibliography, *Qilue*, also published in the *Hanshu*, he defined it as uniting the teachings of the *ru*, Literati, with the Mohists, and unifying the *mingjia* and the *fajia*, noting that this approach was used in the administration of the various states and was a necessary part in

the art of rulership. The LSCQ unifies *rujia*, *Moja*, *mingjia*, and *fajia*, and it blends in *daoja*, *yinyangjia*, *nongjia* (Agriculturalists), *bingjia* (Militarists), *xiaoshuojia* (small talk, or lesser [known] discussions), and *zonghengjia* (political strategy not classified under the other labels).³²

The LSCQ is unquestionably eclectic, that is, selective, in its variety of sources and can be understood as a pastiche or montage of collated ideas, concepts, phrases, passages, and anthologized chapters, but the text does exhibit cohesiveness. The diverse contents are combined into a practical approach concerned with proper timing for the art of rulership. Although the LSCQ may lack a clear logical structure across the diversity of chapters and its three volumes, nevertheless it evidences a kind of coherence because the congruity is aesthetic as well as theoretical, dependent in important measure upon image, metaphor, allusion, rhetorical effect, and seasonal or timely placement in addition to discursive and expository treatises. Complementing the rhetoric, an expository style is developed in the LSCQ that is uncommon for many pre-Qin works, and various types of logical arguments are employed. This coherence is peculiar in that, in the absence of a clearly demarcated theory/praxis distinction and under the sway of proper timing as a central concern, seemingly inconsistent positions can be juxtaposed without necessarily violating the integrity or coherence of the text. Said simply, where proper timing is a factor in correctly managing the kingdom, it can mediate and render coherent opposing positions that would otherwise be incompatible. This model of coherence is apparent in the title of the work and its tripartite structure.

The title *Lüshi chunqiu* is composed of two parts: the first part, *Lüshi*, denotes the sponsor, the Lü clan estate (because the expression “the Lü clan” is awkward, and “Mister Lü” is anachronistic, I render *Lüshi* as “Master Lü,” in the sense of a master or lord of the manor, not a philosophical master or *zi*). The second part, *chunqiu*, emulates and rivals other state’s records, especially the ever-popular *Chunqiu* (*Spring and Autumn Annals*) of the state of Lu, denoting that the text is an important historical record for practicing virtuous rulership. The state of Lu, located in the southwestern part of what is now Shantung province, was noted as a cultural center of the Zhou dynasty, especially because it was the home of Kongzi (Confucius). The historical annals for the state of Lu were recorded by the state historians on a seasonal basis: spring, summer, autumn, and winter. In fact, it was common for all of the states to have monthly annals called *Chunqiu*.

The expression *chunqiu* (“spring and autumn”) denotes the whole year—pivotal agricultural and administrative activities occur during these seasons—and as such, *chunqiu* became a shorthand title for “state histories,” especially

that of the state of Lu and, by extension the name for the era from 722–481, which the state of Lu records cover. Because these seasonal chronicles recorded the timely and untimely behavior, and the policies of the rulers and statesmen, *chunqiu* came to mean a “moral critique.” Along these lines, the *Spring and Autumn Annals* of the state of Lu was given an ethical interpretation in the famous *Zuo* *commentary*. Regardless of Kongzi’s (Confucius’) actual role in the preparation of the *Chunqiu*, the work became an important text for those who followed his teachings. In this context, *chunqiu* came to mean a comprehensive study of appropriate and timely actions for the achievement of social and political order. In imitation, this same purpose is pursued by the *Lüshi chunqiu* and the *Chunqiu fanlu*, which use the phrase *chunqiu* in their titles. The title *chunqiu* was used by later scholars who compiled the historical records of both states and statesmen, such as the *Yanzi chunqiu* and the *Wu Yue chunqiu*.

The *Chunqiu* of the state of Lu was studied as a historical model for initiating appropriate and timely administrative actions for social and political order. Likewise, the LSCQ provided a similar guide for the king of Qin. The LSCQ contains the monthly seasonal rituals (*chunqiu*) that an emperor requires. The *shierji* section is organized under lunar-monthly chapter headings. The LSCQ contains various descriptions of historical events with moral criticisms appended to the stories, constituting a didactic history. It typifies this genre of historical writing as a heuristic record replete with moral examples. This notion of history as moral example is a major factor in the *chunqiu* structure of the *Lüshi chunqiu*.

Both the title of the LSCQ and its tripartite structure disclose a concern for proper timing. The “spring and autumn” (*chunqiu*) part of the title of *Lüshi chunqiu* is probably derived from the *shierji*, the first of the extant three volumes in the received redactions, because it gives the most explicit concern for administering social and political order within the confines of the seasonal cycles (*chunqiu*) of the year. The LSCQ is composed of three volumes or books: *shierji* (Twelve Chronicles), *balan* (Eight References), and *lulun* (Six Discussions). D. C. Lau proposes the possibility that these three volumes are separate attempts to prepare a manuscript for Lü Buwei, which were finally put together to constitute the work, the LSCQ.³³ This helps account for the apparent lack of continuity and transition among the three separate volumes. However, it does not help explain the apparent interrelated numerical arrangement of the three volumes, or why there is not far more repetition.

The first volume is known as the *shierji*, the Twelve Chronicles, or more appropriately the Chronicles of Rulership for the Twelve Lunar-Months of the Year. The *shierji* is divided into twelve monthly sections, three months for each season, and each “month” is subdivided into five chapters. That is, the four

seasons are divided into three-month periods—for example, early, middle, and late spring, and so forth, totaling twelve months—which are subdivided into one chapter directing the ritual for the month and an additional four (weekly) chapters, which loosely guide the attitude and intellect of the ruler and ministers, yielding a total of sixty chapters. The twelve opening chapters of each monthly section constitute the *yueling* (Monthly Commands) chapter of the *Liji* (*Book of Rites*).³⁴ These opening chapters present a general aesthetic guideline for the monthly rituals. This aesthetic order of the rites provides a coherence for the subsequent chapters falling under that “month,” so that the structure of the *shierji* (Twelve Chronicles) taken as a whole cannot be understood without reference to the paramount concern for proper timing in administrative activities, especially planting, weeding, and harvesting, education, the self-cultivation of the ruler and ministers, military matters, funeral rites, and other such affairs of court.³⁵

It is the programmatic concern for proper timing that lends coherence to the opposing philosophies contained in the LSCQ. The concern for timing has been overlooked by those scholars, who propose that the LSCQ is only an encyclopedic collection of contradictory material.³⁶ From a quick synopsis of the *shierji* chapters, one is left with the impression that the material under the spring season is generally *dao**jia*, life affirmative, and considered an extant source of Yang Zhu's thought; the autumn material is chiefly military arts, or *bing**jia*; the summer chapters deal with *ru**jia* subjects, such as ritual music and education; the winter chapters discuss Mohist frugal funerals and *fajia* administrative policy. Argumentative and rhetorical style, that is, concerns of the *ming**jia* (so-called school of names), is evident in all of the chapters, and some *nong**jia* (Agriculturalist), and *yinyang wuxing* (five phases) ideas are expressed in the monthly ritual chapters. This is just a general overview. There is some mixture of various materials and quotations from the various teachers or their works throughout the respective sections; notably, there is a Mohist chapter in the spring section. This overview does capture, in part, what can be called the standard of extrinsic timing—the more rigid formulation where policy is altered and philosophy is applied according to the changing seasons.

In the second chapter of the late summer section, entitled *yinlü* (Tones of the Twelve Pipes), the correspondences between the months of the year and the pitch pipes are given. In the concluding passage of that chapter, the ruler is provided with a guide on which administrative policy to institute during the months correlated with the respective pitch pipes. Musical harmony is employed as a model for correlating the seasons and political policy. For example, the text states that:

In the month corresponding to the *jiazhong* pipe, the second month, the active energy tends to be encompassing, plentiful, harmonious, and equally distributed. The ruler should practice being generous of virtue, and put aside criminal punishments; never initiate affairs to harm any living creature.

In . . . the sixth month, the plant life is thick and flourishing, and the passive [energy] for the first time will begin to push its destruction of life (*xing* lit. punishment).

In the month corresponding to the *yize* pipe, the seventh month, the ruler should organize judicial standards and strengthen criminal punishments; he should select soldiers and sharpen the weapons, preparing for war. During this month he should interrogate and punish those who were unjust so as to appease those who live in the far off corners of the state.³⁷

This passage displays an extrinsic model of timely action where policy is made to correspond to the seasonal changes of the year, and it is informed by an intrinsic timing of musical harmony. When policy is shaped according to proper timing, there is no preassigned controlling principle of unity, but rather there is an aesthetic sense of coherence that emerges out of the context. There is an extrinsic timing that matches the season and an intrinsic timing that allows for improvisation. This reflects back on the character of the text as a whole. The text incorporates a diversity of teachings that might appear to be inconsistent with each other, especially if practiced simultaneously. But when considered from a temporalized perspective, where different times require different programs, the amalgamated array of material and the various views and policies contained in the LSCQ can be construed as having a different order of coherence. My point is that temporality extends the possibilities of coherence and, to some degree, ameliorates differences.

The second volume of the LSCQ, the *balan*, Eight References or Eight Panoramic Views, is composed of eight sections with eight chapters each (minus one chapter).³⁸ Because Sima Qian's description of the LSCQ begins by mentioning the *balan*, it is thought that the original text opened with it.³⁹ When Chinese scholars abbreviate the title of the LSCQ, they call it *Lülan*. Although the significance of proper timing is not as apparent in the structure of the *balan* the way it is in the seasonal arrangement of the *shierji*, the role and function of administering social and political policy in a timely fashion are addressed in various chapters of the *balan*. The opening *lan* begins with a chapter titled *youshi* (There Was a Beginning). Although the chapter is chiefly devoted to cosmological and geological speculations, it is concerned with the temporal "inception" of cosmic order that maintains a link with the other volumes, in that each volume

begins with a temporal “source” or initiating. That is, the spring season opens the *shierji*; the *youshi* (There Was a Beginning) chapter initiates the *balan* section, and the *kaichun* (Opening Spring) chapter begins the *lulun* section. Though cosmogonic speculation was dawning in the late pre-Qin period, nevertheless we must remain sensitive to the traditional organic “self-so” (*ziran*) cosmology, where particulars co-create each other in a natural field of *tian* or *dao*. The *youshi* chapter is concerned with a cosmology of particular places, not cosmogonic origins. The character *shi*, “to begin,” is a cognate with *tai*, “the pregnant womb,” suggesting *creatio ab initio* rather than *ex nihilo*; that is, this being a heuristic model, one should imagine a spiral cycle, not a closed circle, an emergent beginning in the midst of an ongoing process, such as spring beginning again. The *balan* volume discusses various topics relevant to maintaining social and political order. In addition to various references to proper timing spread throughout the *balan*, there are two chapters entirely devoted to that topic, namely, the *shoushi* (Awaiting the Right Time) and the *yuhe* (Opportunities for Meeting). These are discussed in detail in Chapter 4.

The role of timing is more apparent in the structure of the third volume, which opens with a chapter titled *kaichun* (Opening Spring). The third volume is composed of six sections, called *lulun* (or *liulun*, Six Discussions), consisting of six chapters each. Since the *lulun* is chiefly concerned with techniques for farming, it naturally makes frequent reference to seasonal activity. Without timely management of affairs, the planting, growing, and harvesting of crops would be a disaster. Like the *shierji*, the *lulun* begins with a chapter discussing the significance of starting things properly in the spring. The final chapter of the *lulun*, entitled *chashi* (Examining Seasonality), discusses in detail the seasonal factors to be considered in planting, caring for, and harvesting the various grains to obtain a bountiful and nutritious crop.

Despite the numerical and temporal organization of the LSCQ, its eclectic, consolidated approach to diverse topics has made it difficult to interpret. Some scholars have raised a number of significant criticisms against the LSCQ. There are features that challenge any presumption that it has integrity as a text. It is possible to argue one or more of the following positions, namely, that: (1) the three volumes or “books” that compose the LSCQ have no relation to each other; (2) the contents of the three respective volumes seem randomly organized, probably due to its many authors; (3) the chapter titles are ambiguous or have no relationship to a chapter’s content; and (4) the three volumes lack internal consistency, as do a number of chapters. That is, the text in whole and in part is unsystematic and unrelated. Although it would be a time-consuming, trivial exercise to explain the significance of every ambiguous chapter title in relation

to its content, especially since the LSCQ, like all ancient texts, has surely suffered from copiers' errors and the corruptions of time, nevertheless, the reader may take note that in the ensuing chapters in this book the passages cited from the LSCQ do bear a relationship to their respective chapter titles, and that there is a good deal of internal consistency within the subsections of the LSCQ. Burton Watson holds a modified position that the three volumes reveal a formal structure, but this structure is only carried out in the content of the *shierji*.⁴⁰

In spite of these legitimate concerns, there is evidence to allow for a degree of coherence within the text. Central to the structure and content of the LSCQ is the concern for timely action and the articulation of timing in social and political policy. In an important sense, the LSCQ lacks the systematicity of a conventional Western text in that it does not develop one central unifying theme in a discursive, logical manner. But perhaps the requirement for a work to be linear and systematic in the development of its thesis is a culture specific bias. An anthology is not expected to be directed by only one theme, and the LSCQ is an anthology. It is too simple to dismiss the LSCQ as a mere hodgepodge of materials, lacking any logical structure. It does not have an imposed structure. Rather, the architecture of the text is emergent, correlating the specific content with temporal context. The content of any chapter, or even the work as a whole, must be viewed from the perspective of attempting to affect social and political order in a world that is constantly changing, in a pluralistic society comprised of various ethnic groups with life plans and life styles whose members are assumed to have no universalizable human nature that guarantees commensurate conduct. At yet another level, the meaning of the content and the text depend on the reader's own cultural and historical setting. Beginning from the presumption of the actual diversity of human life and the cosmic transformations that attend it, the LSCQ as a political handbook contains material advocating that administrative affairs be conducted with appropriateness and proper timing. The numerical structure of the chapters further emphasizes the temporal harmony of heaven, earth, and human beings as each volume of the LSCQ acts as a kind of "almanac" or "clock" for gaging action.⁴¹

The LSCQ's Impact

The LSCQ undoubtedly influenced the young King Zheng and his adoption of the *yinyang wuxing* symbols of water and LSCQ's justification for the overthrow of dynasties in establishing the Qin empire. The impact of the LSCQ on subsequent East Asian history, philosophy, and literature cannot be underestimated.

The LSCQ played an important role in structuring the administrative and political arrangements of the Qin dynasty (221–206). Though it was short lived, the Qin unification laid the foundation for the Han dynasty (206 B.C.E.–220 C.E.) and thereby all subsequent dynasties. The political and legal structure of the Han owes much to the Qin, and the ritual orientation of the Han court is borrowed from the same material that is included in the leading chapters of the *shierji*, namely, the “monthly commands.” Those chapters impact later Daoist ritual. The proposal for maintaining political order through ritual that integrates the emperor on cosmic, social, legal, and moral levels set a program for the rulers and ministers of the Han. Xu Fuguan has shown, in his three volumes on Han intellectual history, how the LSCQ influenced Han scholarship and politics.⁴² The political organization of the Han dynasty served “Chinese” culture for more than 2,000 years, laying the organizational structure for the subsequent dynastic institutions.

Whether the writers of the LSCQ actually wrote the “monthly commands” chapters of the *shierji* or only borrowed them from another source to structure the chapters of the *shierji* is a question that cannot be definitely answered at this time. Because it is a question of historical origins, it is not relevant to the impact of the LSCQ on subsequent intellectual history. The fact is that the LSCQ contains the earliest extant source of the “monthly commands” material, assuming that the *yueling* (Monthly Commands) chapter of the *Liji* is extracted from the LSCQ. The *Liji* is commonly understood to have been anthologized in the Han. The *Huainanzǐ*'s *shize* (Seasonal Patterns) chapter basically contains the same material. Because of its impact on Han court ritual, the “monthly commands” material was guaranteed a place in subsequent imperial ritual. Later approaches to self-cultivation, ritual, and even magic in Tang, Song, Ming *lixue* (so-called Neo-Confucianism), *xuanxue* (studies in profundity in later Daoism), and Daoist religion all have their roots in Han practices and in the cosmological reflections contained in the LSCQ. Notably, the imperial courtly pursuit of seasonal ritual and the practice of assigning auspicious names to the reign periods show a basic concern both to accord with the seasons, and to strive to constitute the appropriate time. The rituals of liturgical Daoism possess this concern for mutually interrelated, timely, seasonal activity and proper timing in ritual performance. Many of the rituals of early liturgical Daoism are based on the seasonal program of court ritual.⁴³

Not only did the unified eclectic social and political thought contained in the LSCQ have a major impact on Qin and Han philosophy, but it also played an important role in setting the genre of early Han literature. Its amalgamated eclecticism influenced Dong Zhongshu (179–104 B.C.E.) and Prince Huainan,

Liu An (ca. 179–122 B.C.E.). Dong Zhongshu’s *Chunqiu fanlu* is more like the LSCQ in that both of these works sponsor a centralized political structure, celebrating unity in the face of diversity. Although Liu An’s *Huainanzi* borrows much from the LSCQ and owes much to its syncretic approach, nevertheless the *Huainanzi* advocates a decentralized political structure, celebrating diversity in the face of unity. The LSCQ was considered important enough that Gao You (fl. 205–212 C.E.), a late Han scholar, wrote a commentary for it and other important works such as the *Huainanzi*. After the Han dynasty, the LSCQ was often used as a citation in commentaries, especially Li Shan’s (d. 689 C.E.) *Wenxuanzhu* (*Commentary on the Anthology of Literature*) and dynastic encyclopedias, such as Li Fang’s (925–996 C.E.) *Taiping yulan* (*Imperially Reviewed Encyclopedia of the Taiping Era*).

The genealogy of our present editions of the *Liushi chunqiu* traces their redactions back to the Song and Yuan dynasties. It was chiefly due to philological concerns among Qing dynasty scholars that interest was revived in the LSCQ, and now this revival has stimulated a number of Chinese, Japanese, and Western scholars to advance the study of this historically significant text.

The Mythification of History

It has been a common practice in the Euro-American tradition to attempt a reconstruction of ancient cultures through the study of mythology.⁴⁴ The generally received interpretation proposes that archaic Chinese cultures developed along similar lines as Indo-European culture, from mythology to philosophy.⁴⁵ Archaic Shang and Zhou religio-philosophy is based on the veneration of historical clan ancestors. Systematic *myths* begin to emerge late in the pre-Qin period, culminating in the Han dynasty. Chinese cultures develop in their own ways, distinct from Indo-European cultures.⁴⁶

The received interpretation concerning the development of Indo-European cultures and philosophy is that they developed highly rational, historical, and naturalistic worldviews after moving through different forms of religion and more “primitive” modes of expression, for example, myth, magic, nature worship, and so on. Giambattista Vico began the division of history into three parts, borrowing from an ancient Egyptian model of the three ages, namely, the age of the gods, heros, and humans.⁴⁷ G.W.F. Hegel employs this general scheme in his historical dialectic of Absolute Spirit where it develops through art, is negated by religion, and is finally realized in philosophy. Max Müller develops the nature worship theory, which offers an empirical basis through

the interpretation of ancient mythology and language to support the claim that “primitive religion” arose out of people’s confrontation with a hostile environment. Human fear and respect for the elements develop into a system of nature worship, which in time deifies the forces of nature. This polytheism is revealed in the mythology and ritual of “primitive religion,” so that the religion is further rationalized into what Müller called a henotheism; that is, “a king/father god” dominates the polytheistic pantheon—either at different seasonal rites or over periods in the historical development of the mythic literature. Through higher levels of abstraction, monotheism comes into practice. With further advances in reason, monotheism transforms into monism, and philosophy is born. Müller’s analysis certainly has explanatory force for the general development of religio-philosophy found in the *Vedas* and the *Upanishads*. It can be applied to the development of Babylonian, Egyptian, Ionian, and Roman culture, and to philosophy as well. Francis M. Cornford and others attribute the birth of Ionian philosophy to Thales, because he sought a naturalistic interpretation of the world that opposed the traditional religio-mythical appeal to supernatural forces or gods. Setting aside the question of the adequacy of this “rationalization” of pre-Socratic philosophy, there has been a general tendency in cross-cultural and historical studies to export these universal indexicals and to see all civilizations as being dependent on a universal or transcendent principle. When such principles are not readily apparent in other cultures, they are “excavated” or constructed by implication to justify and lend credence to claims that another culture is in fact civilized.

The peculiar and even ironic consideration is that this received interpretation of the development of culture and philosophy is heavily influenced by the archaic, mythological worldview that it attempts to explain. Two recurring features of the myths, from the Indus River to the Tiber, are a cosmogony establishing a purpose (*telos*) for that culture, and the assumption of the universality of the traditional myth. If other peoples lack similar myths, it is an indication of their primitive, uncultured, or maybe even nonhuman status. Note that the received historical interpretation harbors implicit teleology in proposing that rational philosophy develops after religion and its primitive superstitious origins in mythical explanation. The modern interpreters of the past, like the ancient myths, attempt to reconstruct the “origin” of our world of philosophy and science in the cosmogonic myths. The received interpretation is believed to have universal application to cultures or at least to all “developed” cultures. Although the general pattern of progress from myth to philosophy appears to fit the archaic traditions of Persia, India, and the Mediterranean, it does not follow that all archaic cultures display similar developments, as Max Müller,

Carl Jung, Mircea Eliade, Derk Bodde, and others propose. *Contra* such generalizations, Clifford Geertz argues that universalism, especially structuralism, leads to cultural arrogance.⁴⁸ John S. Mbiti argues against the ethnocentric assumptions in Western academic theories, which attempt to account for the origin of religion and philosophy, because such theories assume that the West is a higher culture, while the so-called Third World nations are still at the mythological, “primitive” stage.⁴⁹

The evolutionary approach “from myth through religion to philosophy” has wide appeal among academics, and Chinese and non-Chinese Sinologists adopt it to explain the development of archaic China. The earliest Shang records and objects of material culture are devoid of any complex mythology or even individual systematic myths. Cosmogonic myths are certainly absent.⁵⁰ This inconvenient lack of systematic myth, however, has not prevented scholars from speculating that an archaic mythology existed before the extant ancient literature historicized and humanized the ancient gods.⁵¹ Derk Bodde claims that the ancient “Chinese” myths and gods are different from the post-classical ones in that the ancient tradition lacks a developed “systematic mythology,” and the individual myths are very “fragmentary and episodic.”⁵² He warns against concluding that there were no myths in ancient China. China’s ancient history and myths exhibit euhemerization. Bodde turns the process of euhemerization on its head to account for the absence of early archaic myths and for the presence of what he claims are “historicized” and “humanized” accounts of the clan ancestors.⁵³ Bodde quotes Henri Maspero, who also reverses euhemerization.⁵⁴ This approach is unacceptable, distorting the interpretation of pre-Qin culture and thought.

Bodde criticizes Bernhard Karlgren who argues that the Zhou literature praises the ancients because of their ancestral heritage. The ancient sage emperors were clan ancestors, not gods or demigods. Karlgren advocates the conventional understanding of euhemerization as an evolution from actual events and persons to mythological explanation, correctly explaining the extant literature of ancient China. The predominant “this-worldly” perspective, along with the organic worldview and the overwhelming concern for historical records, suggests that archaic Shang and Zhou culture heroes were most likely actual historical ancestors, or composites of the ancient lineage.

From the archaeological discoveries of the archaic Shang and Zhou material culture—the sacrificial vessels and oracle bones—and their extant literature, there is a stronger case to be made for an “ancestor veneration” basis for Shang and Zhou religio-philosophy. The development of Zhou culture presents the possibility that systematic myth could develop as a cultural response after people

lose their common roots in a shared ancestry, and so the various clans seek a common purpose in systematizing their once-disparate clan histories—the myths attempt to make these people children of the same culture hero, rather than their respective traditional ancestors. Hence with the destruction of the feudal lords of the Zhou, the destruction of the ancestral lineages and ancestral temples, the Han peoples developed mythology.

For the study of ancient China, archaeology provides fertile ground for reconstructing the tradition. In the archaic Shang dynasty, the two predominant objects of material culture—the oracle bones and the bronze sacrificial vessels—reveal that the Shang royal family's socio-spiritual concerns focused on ancestor veneration. The oracle bones were primarily used to contact deceased emperors, ancestors of the royal family, to petition them concerning weather conditions, prospects for the hunt, military campaigns, impending dangers, especially attacks at night, and sickness.⁵⁵ The bones were used to keep records, and the excavation of a Shang bone “library” confirmed the traditional lineage of the Shang rulers given in the *Shiji*, which was compiled much later in the early Han dynasty, showing the accuracy of later historical consciousness, especially concerning ancestral/dynastic lineage.

What we have in the archaic Shang is evidence of a royal family ancestor cult, where the deceased emperor is the composite embodiment of the dynastic lineage and viable heritage, and the ancestors are not beyond this world. They reside among the living and are contacted and revered through the rites and oracles. Sarah Allan and Emily Ahern argue that Chinese gods are actually deceased people.⁵⁶ With increased and more complex economic and military contacts with other peoples, the historical, this-worldly perspective of the Shang was modified in the Zhou with a plurality of ancestral lineages, possibly drawing on the various clan ancestor cults. Although the culture heroes, Yao, Shun, Yu, and Tang, are described as superhuman and inventing the artifacts of culture, they and their accomplishments are presented as natural historical events. The extant literature shows that actual, not reverse, euhemerization was an ongoing process. Culture heroes and actual ancestors are mythologized and deified, especially, after the fall of the grantee houses of Zhou.⁵⁷

Mircea Eliade disregards the possibility that euhemerization or “mythification of historical personages” might account for the development of archaic myth, even though he acknowledges that this process is at work in modern Yugoslavian epic.⁵⁸ Douglas K. Wood provides an example from Nikolai Berdyaev's understanding of the philosophy of history concerning the mythification of history, claiming that history is mythology, not objective empirical science.⁵⁹ For Berdyaev, we must examine both the religio-philosophical assump-

tions and the mythification of history to understand a philosophy of history. The “mythicization” of history is crucial in understanding the archaic Shang conception of time.

Against Eliade’s “universalism,” the pre-Qin conception of time (*shi*) is not tied to static ontology concerned with returning to the cosmogonic beginnings. For the majority of pre-Qin thinkers, time plays a crucial role in their understanding of the dynamic, process cosmology, so that reality or any thing is only realized through its co-creative temporal relationships. Time is not a mere container of events but is instead “the critical time” that makes or breaks the constituting factors of a situation. For many pre-Qin philosophers, time is socially constructed. In this sense, time is ontological and cosmological. Time concerns the existential nature of things.