The Editing of Archaeologically Recovered Manuscripts and Its Implications for the Study of Received Texts

Jingzhou, Hubei, is located in the heart of central China, just about one thousand kilometers south of Beijing, one thousand kilometers north of Hong Kong, about eight hundred kilometers west of Shanghai, and about eight hundred kilometers east of Chengdu, Sichuan. Just to the north of the modern city lies the site of Jinan cheng, the capital of the state of Chu during the Warring States period (453–222 BC). And just to the north of Jinan cheng there is an extensive slightly elevated plateau area that seems to have served as the primary burial ground for Chu officials and their families. Since the 1950s, numerous graves have been unearthed here, the grave goods providing manifold evidence for the thriving cultural life of this important state. Among these grave goods have been numerous bamboo strips bearing writing in ink, the earliest form of the “book” in China. In most cases, these strips have been records that the deceased had created during their lifetimes (either in their public or private lives), or that were produced for their burials. The grave of one Shao Tuo, discovered early in 1987 in the village of Baoshan, provided...
is a particularly good example of the sorts of records typically found in these tombs. Shao Tuo was Chief Minister of the Left (zuoyin 左尹), a local administrator in the Chu government, and many of the strips derive from court cases in which he presided; these constitute the earliest evidence presently available for the development of law in early China. Other records concern divinations that were performed on behalf of Shao Tuo during the illness that eventually claimed his life in 316 BC, and still others carry an inventory of the various goods that were put into his tomb after his death. All of these types of strips are undeniably precious evidence for the institutional and literary traditions of China, but the difficulty of the script in which they were written restricted access to them to just a relative handful of paleographers and their formulaic nature limited their interest to all but the most specialized research.

This situation changed dramatically beginning late in 1993. Two different tombs in the area produced bamboo-strip manuscripts of early philosophical texts that immediately attracted the attention of everyone interested in early China, whether in China or abroad. First to be announced was the discovery of a tomb in the village of Guodian. In August 1993, tomb robbers dug down to the wooden planks covering the outer coffin of the tomb before apparently giving up their efforts. Since no harm was done to the tomb chamber itself, archaeologists simply filled it in again. Two months later, tomb robbers struck the same tomb again, this time opening a shaft into the tomb chamber itself, taking out some of the grave goods and damaging many of the rest. Moreover, before the archaeologists could return this time, rain and mud poured into the tomb chamber from the robbers' shaft. Nevertheless, archaeologists from the Jingmen City Museum were able to salvage much of the contents of the tomb, including a large cache (804 strips) of bamboo strips, most of which were intact. Unlike previous discoveries of bamboo strips in the area, these bore philosophical texts. Since the script on the strips and the style of the rest of the grave goods were very similar to those found in the grave of Shao Tuo at Baoshan, who, as noted above, died in 316 BC, the archaeologists dated the tomb to the end of the fourth century BC, making these the earliest examplars of philosophical texts ever found in China.

Attracting immediate attention were three discrete texts made up exclu-

3. For these strips, see Baoshan Chu jian 包山楚簡, ed. Hubei sheng Jing Sha tielu kaogudui (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 1991).
4. For the most thorough study of all aspects of the Baoshan strips, see Chen Wei 陈伟, Baoshan Chu jian chu tan 包山楚簡初談 (Wuhan: Wuhaxue chubanshe, 1996).
sively of material found in the received text of the *Laozi* 老子, one of the most widely studied and hotly debated texts in the traditional literary and philosophical tradition. Within a month of the publication of the Guodian texts in the spring of 1998, a much-publicized international conference was held in the United States to discuss the significance of these *Laozi* manuscripts. Meanwhile, scholars identified other texts in the cache as deriving from a lineage of Confucianism centering on Kong Ji 孔伋, better known as Zi Si 子思 (483–402 BC), the grandson of Kong Qiu 孔丘 or Confucius (551–479 BC). Zi Si seems to have been crucial in the transmission of Confucian teachings from the time of Confucius himself down to that of Meng Ke 孟軻 or Mencius (c. 390–305 BC), who was to a very great extent responsible for what would ultimately be recognized as Confucian orthodoxy. The study of the Zi Si-Mencius lineage of Confucius has now become the hottest topic in a “fever” of Confucian studies in mainland China.

Apparently at about the same time that the Guodian tomb was being robbed and then excavated, another tomb, presumed to be of similar date and similar nature, was also being robbed somewhere else in the same general vicinity. One can only say “apparently” because, aside from whispered rumors, the only evidence of this tomb was a cache of bamboo strips that appeared on the Hong Kong antiques market early in 1994. These strips, most of them still encased in the mud of the tomb, were immediately purchased by the Shanghai Museum. They proved to be of the same general nature as the Guodian strips, but were even more numerous, numbering over 1,200 strips in all. Although only a portion of this find has been published to date, it is already clear that its

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6. For the first of these texts, generally referred to as Guodian Laozi A (Jia 己), see Guodian Chu mu chu jian, 3–6 (photographs) and 111–17 (transcription); for Guodian Laozi B, see 7–8 (photographs) and 118–20 (transcription), and for Guodian Laozi C, see 9–10 (photographs) and 121–22 (transcription).


8. Dates for Kong Ji and other figures of the Warring States period are taken from Qian Mu 钱穆, *Xian Qin zhuzi xi nian* 先秦諸子紀年 (Xianggang: Xianggang daxue chubanshe, 1956).

contents are every bit as important as the Guodian texts. For instance, the first text in the first published volume is an unprecedented discussion of the Shi or (Classic of) Poetry attributed to Confucius himself; the editors have entitled it Kongzi Shi lun or Confucius’s Essay on the Poetry. The first volume also includes two texts also found at Guodian: a version of the Zi yi or Black Jacket, known already as one chapter of the Li ji or Record of Ritual, and another text variously known as Xing zì ming chu or The Inborn-Nature Comes from the Mandate or as Xing qing lun or Essay on the Inborn-Nature and the Emotions. The second volume contains two texts related to the Kongzi Shi lun (entitled Zi Gao and Lu bang da han or The Country of Lu’s Great Drought), another text (entitled by the editors Min zhi fumu or The Parents of the People) related to the “Kongzi xian ju” or “Confucius at Rest” chapter of the Li ji, as well as an important narrative of China’s earliest history (entitled Rong Cheng shi or China’s Earliest History), while the third volume contains the earliest manuscript version of the Zhou Yi or Zhou Changes. Any one of these texts would be of major significance; the Shanghai Museum cache is said to contain more than eighty in all.

The significance of the texts is manifold. For the history of thought in China, they are undeniably precious. The Warring States period has always been regarded in China as the fountainhead of Chinese thought, the classic age to which all subsequent thinkers looked back for inspiration. Yet, for a period so important, there are relatively few texts that can be securely dated to it. Thus, each new text that is found adds dramatically to the corpus. Perhaps as important as these additions to the corpus are the new versions of texts that have long been known. The Laozi materials from Guodian or the Zi yi texts from both the Guodian and Shanghai Museum caches provide not just new early editions of these texts, but by virtue of having been copied before the standardization of the script in the subsequent Qin (221–207 bc) and Han (202 bc–ad 220) periods, they take us a very large step closer to the original forms of the texts.

That these texts were physically copied in the fourth century bc, almost

10. The Shanghai Museum strips, as these strips are now known, are being published serially: Ma Chengyuan 马承源, ed., Shanghai bowuguan cang Zhanguo Chu zhu shu 上海博物馆藏戰國楚竹書 (Shanghai: Shanghai Guji chubanshe); Volume 1 was published in 2001, Volume 2 in 2002, Volume 3 in 2003; subsequent volumes are expected at the rate of about one per year. For an account of the purchase of these strips and related issues, see “Ma Chengyuan xiansheng tan Shang bo jian” 马承源先生談上博簡, in Shang bo guan cang Zhanguo Chu zhu shu yanjiu 上博館藏戰國楚竹書研究, ed. Liao Mingchun 廖名春 and Zhu Yuanqing 朱元清 (Shanghai: Shanghai shudian chubanshe, 2002), 1–8.

11. Shanghai bowuguan cang Zhanguo Chu zhu shu, Vol. 1, 13–41 (photographs) and 121–68 (transcription). For some discussion of this text, see below, pp. 20–21, 31–33.
certainly within the lifetime of Mencius and not long after the time of Zi Si, or of Confucius or Laozi (if there actually were a Laozi), for that matter, lends them an immediacy that even the most beautifully printed and bound editions can never have. Of course, very few scholars have the privilege (and the responsibility) of working with the original bamboo strips. Most others have access to them only through their final published form. In the case of both the Guodian and Shanghai Museum strips, these publications have appeared in a very timely manner, printed to the highest standards, with beautifully clear photographs of the bamboo strips. But these publications include much more. Not only do they present the strips in certain prescribed orders, but they also provide full transcriptions into modern Chinese characters and copious notes explaining various points. The reader of the publications cannot help but be influenced by the decisions of the editors. This is not to say that those decisions are always the final word. Indeed, many of the hundreds of articles that have already been published in China regarding these bamboo-strip texts have attempted to “correct” one or another of the editors’ readings. It would be very, very difficult at this point to try to issue a new edition that reflected all of the different ways that scholars have sought to rewrite these texts, and I will certainly not try to do so here.

Instead, what I will do, in this chapter, is first to describe in detail the process involved in the production of these editions. Then I will explore some of the problems that other scholars have identified, touching as well on some of the broader questions in the study of the early Chinese literary canon. Some of the problems will be familiar from traditional Chinese textual criticism.

12. Qian Mu, Xian Qin zhi zai xian nian, 221–26 argues against any particular person named Laozi as the author of the Laozi.

13. In fact, after the strips are photographed (for which, see below, p. 15), even the editors work primarily from the photographs, rather than with the bamboo strips themselves. See Li Ling, “Shang bo Chu jian jiaodu ji: Zi Gao pian ’Kongzi Shi lun’ bufen,” for an account of how one of the first editors of the Shanghai Museum corpus worked from photographs.

14. Trying to keep abreast of the flood of publications on the Guodian and Shanghai Museum strips is proving daunting, even with the inception of widespread use of the internet in China. For instance, Wuhan daxue Zhongguo wenhua yanjiuyuan, ed., Guodian Chu jian Guoji xueshu yantaohui lunwenji 郭店楚簡國際學術研討會論文集 (Wuhan: Wuhan Renmin chubanshe, 2000), the proceedings of a conference held just over one year after the initial publication of the Guodian strips and itself published just two years after that initial publication, includes a bibliography of more than four hundred works, most of them already published. For a brief bibliography of scholarship on the Shanghai Museum strips, see Shang bo guan cang Guo-tien Chu zhu shu yanjiu, 465–77. For a more up-to-date bibliography, see Paul R. Goldin, “A Bibliography of Materials Pertaining to the Kuo-tien and Shanghai Museum Manuscripts,” at http://www.lib.uchicago.edu/earlychina/res/bib/manuscripts_bib.html. For an internet site devoted to the discussion of these manuscripts, see http://www.bamboosilk.org.
(jiaochouxue 校雠学 or jiaokanxue 校勘学);15 others will be unique to these bamboo strips. But in all cases, they are the best evidence that we now have for the way in which the Chinese editing process worked and works.

THE “ORGANIZATION” OF ARCHAEOLOGICALLY RECOVERED MANUSCRIPTS

To describe the various steps in the treatment of paleographic materials after their first discovery and leading up to their eventual publication, contemporary Chinese archaeologists use the term zhengli 整理, which means generally “to put into order, to organize.” Needless to say, the steps vary according to the nature of the materials and the circumstances of their discovery. Thus, perhaps the most famous paleographic discovery of modern times, the Mawangdui 馬王堆 silk manuscripts, discovered in 1973 in Changsha 長沙, Hunan, presented relatively few difficulties for their editors (at least in retrospect). These texts were, for the most part, written in a clear Han-dynasty clerical script (lishu 隸書) on rolls of high quality silk that had been carefully folded and placed in a lacquer container.16 But the Mawangdui manuscripts were unusual for several reasons, perhaps the most important being that they were written on silk, which was prohibitively expensive for most texts.17 Until the use of paper became widespread in the fourth and fifth centuries AD, most manuscripts in early China

15. I will not reproduce here the typologies illustrated in numerous excellent studies of textual criticism that have been available in China since the middle of the Qing dynasty. The first systematic illustration of the problems involved in textual recensions was probably the Jiaochou tongyi 校雠通義 of Zhang Xuecheng 章學誠 (1738–1801), while Wang Niansun 王念孫 (1744–1832) demonstrated the application of these principles to one text (the Huainanzi 淮南子) in his Du shu zhi 說書志. An expanded typology was given in the Gu shu yi ju li 古書疑義舉例 of Yu Yue 楊越 (1821–1907), which then served as the basis for several more studies during the first half of the twentieth century, all of which were published as Gu shu yi ju li zhong 古書疑義舉例續集 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1956). For recent overviews of the subject, see Guan Xihua 湯輝, Jiaochou xue 校雠學 (Hefei: Anhui Jiaoyu chubanshe, 1991), and Cheng Qianfan 姜千帆 and Xu Youfu 徐有富, Jiaochou guang yi: Jiaokan bian 校勘廣義: 校勘學 (Jinan: Qi Lu shushu, 1998).

16. For the Mawangdui manuscripts, see, for instance, Guoji Wenwu ju Guwenxian yanjiushi, ed., Mawangdui Han mu boshu (yi) 馬王堆漢墓帛書(壹) (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 1986); this volume contains the two Laozi manuscripts and related texts.

17. Other than the famous Chu Silk Manuscripts, probably discovered in Changsha in 1942, the Mawangdui texts are the only significant archaeological discovery of early textual materials written on silk. For the Chu Silk Manuscripts, see Li Ling 李零, Changsha Zidanku Zhanguo Chu boshu yanjiu 長沙子藏庫戰國楚帛書研究 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1985); and Li Ling and Constance A. Cook, “Translation of the Chu Silk Manuscript,” in Defining Chu: Image and Reality in Ancient China, ed. Constance A. Cook and John Major (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 1999), 171–76.

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were written on bamboo or wooden strips. One or the other of these materials was readily available throughout China, and bamboo was especially well suited to the nature of the Chinese script, which from its earliest appearance tended to be written in vertical columns. However, both wood and bamboo strips, particularly when placed in ancient tombs,\(^{18}\) typically present numerous problems for the archaeologists who discover them, and for the paleographers who try to decipher the texts written on them.

The Guodian strips, so beautifully presented in *Guodian Chu mu zhu jian* 郭店楚墓竹簡 or *Bamboo Strips of the Chu Tomb at Guodian*, are an excellent case in point; the following description of the “organization” process will focus on them.\(^{19}\) When the archaeologists took them from the side compartment of the tomb’s outer coffin, they were encased in mud. After the surface mud had been removed, the individual strips were separated. At this stage, the strips were completely black from the mud; the writing on them, in black ink, was therefore illegible. After a chemical treatment restored a natural color to the strips, thus rendering the writing visible, the strips were photographed and then conserved in test tubes filled with distilled water.\(^{20}\) This constituted only the physical *zhengli* process. Thereafter began the editorial work proper.

Because the straps that had originally bound together the bamboo strips had long since decomposed, and ground pressure had disarrayed the strips (not to mention the damage possibly done by the tomb robbers), the editorial team next had to sort them into discrete units. To do this, they relied first of all on the physical properties of the strips (fortunately, but rather unusually, most of the strips had survived intact): their length, the way that the ends of the strips had been cut (flat or beveled), the number and placement of binding straps (though the straps had decomposed, the places where they had passed over the strips were left without writing, making it easy to determine where they had been), and the calligraphy of the writing. Based on these properties, the editors divided the 730 strips bearing writing into sixteen discrete texts (most

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18. Wooden strips discovered along the *limes* of Central Asia tend to be better preserved upon excavation, even though in many cases they come from the equivalent of garbage dumps. This is due, of course, to the dry, desert conditions there.

19. The “organization” of the Shanghai Museum strips included most of the same steps as those described below for the Guodian strips. However, since these strips were purchased on the antiques market and not excavated by archaeologists, it seems preferable here to limit these remarks to just the Guodian strips.

of the titles of which were assigned by the editors: three texts of Laozi, Tai Yi sheng shui, Tai Yi or The Great One Generates Water, Zi yi or The Black Jacket, Wu xing or The Five Deportments, Cheng zhi wen zhi, or Cheng’s Hearing about It, Zun de yi, or Reverting Virtue and Propriety, Xing zhi ming chu, or The Inborn-nature Comes from the Mandate, Liu de, or The Six Virtues, Lu Mu Gong wen Zi Si, or Duke Mu of Lu Asks Zi Si, Qiong da yi shi, or Failure and Success are Based on Timeliness, Zhong Yu zhi dao, or The Way of Loyalty and Trust, Tang Yu zhi dao, or The Way of Tang and Yu, and four texts referred to as Yu cong, or Thicket of Sayings: A, B, C and D. Physical characteristics allow some of these texts to be grouped together. For example, Cheng zhi wen zhi, Zun de yi, Xing zhi ming chu, and Liu de are all written in the same hand on strips 32.5 cm long with beveled ends, and with a distance of 17.5 cm between the two binding straps; it is generally assumed that they constitute four chapters of a single bound text. Zi yi and Wu xing (and perhaps also Laozi A) are also written on strips 32.5 cm long and with the same beveled ends, but the distance between their binding straps is only 12.8–13 cm; thus, while they too could have been bound together with each other, they could not have been bound together with Cheng zhi wen zhi and the other three texts.

Only after these several more or less mechanical sortings had been accomplished could the editorial team turn to the reading of the texts. This reading involved two preliminary and interrelated steps: the transcription of the

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21. In assigning these titles, editors attempt to replicate the way titles were given to texts in antiquity. For most pre-Qin texts, titles were given in one of three ways: the name of the author (whether real or putative), such as in the case of the Laozi; the first two words of the text (or the first two important words), such as in the case of the Zi yi; or a general description of the main theme of the text, such as in the case of the Wu xing or The Five Deportments.

22. This is the title assigned to the text by the editors of Guodian Chu mu zhu jian based on the first characters of what they have placed as the first strip. The editors do not suggest any interpretation of these characters, though Liao Mingchun, “Jingmen Guodian Chu jian yu xian Qin Ru xue,” Zhongguo zhexue 20 (1999): 54, interprets Cheng zhi as the name of Confucius’s disciple Xian Cheng 謝成. However, it seems clear that this strip has been misplaced, and that it should perhaps follow after what the editors have numbered as strip 30; for this suggestion, see Guo Yi, “Guodian Chu jian Cheng zhi wen zhi pian zheng,” Zhongguo zhexue 20 (1999): 281. If the bamboo strips comprising the text are to be rearranged in this way, then the rationale for this title becomes moot. Other titles that have been proposed for it include Qiu ji or Seeking in the Self; Liao Mingchun, “Jingmen Guodian Chu jian yu xian Qin Ru xue,” 54, and Tian jiang da chang, or Heaven Sends down the Great Constant; Guo Yi, “Guodian Chu jian Cheng zhi wen zhi pian zheng,” 279.

23. As noted above (p. 12), another version of this hitherto unknown text was discovered among the Shanghai Museum texts, the editors there assigning it the title Xing qing lun, or Essay on the Inborn-Nature and the Emotions.
individual characters, in this case written in what is referred to as Chu 楚-script, after the southern state near the capital of which the texts were discovered; and the determination of the sequence of the strips within individual texts. In both of these steps, questions of editorial judgment come very much into play, and consequently they are the steps in which errors are most likely to occur. It is these two steps with which we will be primarily concerned below.

In the case of the Guodian manuscripts, the editorial team responsible for the formal publication had the advantage of one final step. Publication was undertaken by the prestigious Wenwu 文物 (Cultural Relics) Press of Beijing. Before producing the final copy, Wenwu Press sent the draft of the transcription and notes to Qiu Xigui 裘錫圭, professor of Chinese at Peking University and universally acclaimed to be the finest paleographer in China, for his comments and corrections. Many of Qiu’s suggestions were apparently silently introduced into the final draft; others, which the editorial team either did not accept or which were meant only as a supplementary opinion, were entered into the notes supporting the published transcription.

The formal publication, though not without its flaws, as we will see, is of extraordinarily high quality. It includes full-size photographs of the original strips, a transcription, and notes. The photographs are for the most part remarkably clear. The transcriptions adhere rigorously to a format that has become conventional in formal publications of paleographic materials in China. They are in vertical columns; although these columns do not replicate the strips of the manuscripts, strip numbers are indicated with a small Chinese number after and slightly to the right of the last character on a strip. When a character can be transcribed unproblematically into a modern equivalent, then that modern equivalent is given (usually in standard [i.e., fǎntí 繁體] rather than simplified [jiàntí 簡體] characters, unless the character in the manuscript is directly equivalent to the simplified form, as for example is 套, i.e., 木 “to discard” [the standard form of which is 套] of strip 1 of the Lǎozǐ A manuscript). When one character is used in the text but context suggests that another character would conventionally be used in standard Chinese orthography (what is usually referred to as a loan word), the original character is given followed by the conventional character in parentheses immediately after it, as for example 知 (知) or 棄 (棄), both again on strip 1 of the Lǎozǐ A manuscript. Less often, when an original character is regarded as a mistake for another character, the original character is followed by the “correct” character written inside brackets (⟨⟩), as for example the 季, conventionally read as 木 “last, youngest,” which the editors instead identify as the graphically similar 小孝 “filial.”

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the graph 东亚 (used to represent the word dong “east,” in conventional script) appears four times (on strips 37, 38, 39, and 40) in contexts where a parallel in the same text (strip 22) uses the graphically similar 南 (jian “invitation”), and where in the Mawangdui version of the same text is found 南 (jian “simple”). It is clear here that jian “simple” is the word that was intended and that 东亚 is a graphic error for the phonetic loan 东亚. In this case, the transcription accounts for both steps of this identification: 东亚东亚东亚东亚.

These identifications are often routine and quite unexceptionable, as for example understanding 知 “to know” for the manuscripts‘ 知, which in conventional script usually represents 知 “knowledge, wisdom,” or the numerous cases of understanding 有 “to have” for the manuscripts‘ 有, conventionally used for you “again.” However, there are other identifications, often but by no means always substantiated in the notes, that are more problematic. Some of these will be discussed in detail below. There is one philosophy of transcription that regards all such identifications as inappropriate in a transcription.25 But the Chinese editorial practice is one of long standing, and is quite systematic in its application; photographs of the original strips are always available to adjudicate different readings.

Characters that cannot be identified with any modern equivalent are given directly, either in a transcribed version of the components of which they are composed (as for example 隻 in the first strip of the 唐语志道 manuscript, which the editors do not identify with any conventional character but suggest means “to yield, to abdicate”), or simply drawn as they appear on the original strip (as for example 設 in the first strip of 晁差宜世, which Qiu Xigui suspects should be identified as 設 “to examine”). Lacunae in the text are indicated by square boxes (□); if a character is partially visible, it is written inside such a square box, as for example 国 on strip 26 of the 郭象 A manuscript. When it is possible to restore the text in the lacuna (whether from parallels with other copies of the text or from internal parallels), this text is provided in the notes. The Guodian transcriptions also display most, but not

25. This position has been stated forcefully by William G. Boltz with respect to the Guodian manuscripts: “Manuscripts should be transcribed to reveal the exact form of what is written as precisely and unambiguously as possible without introducing any interpolations, alterations or other extraneous material based on assumptions, biases or subjective decisions of the scholar-transcriber or of anyone else. In a nutshell, this means that the transcription should reflect exactly what is written and nothing more”; “The Study of Early Chinese Manuscripts: Methodological Preliminary,” in The Guodian Laozi, 39–40. Li Ling has explicitly countered this view, stating that the conventions used in modern published transcriptions are nothing more than a rationalization of traditional Chinese “reading practice” (du 读; 読法); “Guodian Chu jian yanjiu zhidao,” in Guodian Chu jian Guoji yantaohui lunwenji, 49–50.
all, of the non-character marks found on the original bamboo strips; these apparently indicated different sorts of punctuation. Finally, the transcriptions also introduce, systematically, such modern punctuation marks as commas, periods, colons, semicolons, quotation marks (in the Chinese style, i.e., " "), and indications of book titles (again in the Chinese style, " "); these, of course, derive from the editors' interpretation of the text.

The notes are entirely technical in nature, substantiating problematic transcriptions, indicating parallel passages from which lacunae have been filled or which present alternative readings, and identifying quotations. As mentioned above, the notes to Guodian Chu mu zuo jian also contain Qiu Xigui's suggestions, explicitly marked "According to Qiu" (Qiu an 裘按).

The foregoing description of the zhengli process that went into the making of Guodian Chu mu zuo jian should give some idea as to the favorable circumstances and the truly exceptional publication results that were achieved in less than five years from the date of the Guodian tomb's excavation. The Shanghai Museum strips have been presented, if possible, even more beautifully. Entitled Shanghai bowuguan cang Zhanguo Chu zhu shu 上海博物馆藏战国楚竹书 or Warring States Chu Bamboo Texts Housed at the Shanghai Museum, the volumes contain not only full-size full-color photographs of all of the original strips, but also provide photographs of important corroborating strips mentioned in the extensive notes to the transcriptions. Nevertheless, in the few short years since the publication of the Guodian strips in 1998, and the first volume of the Shanghai Museum strips at the end of 2001, faults have been found even with these excellent editions. In the following sections, I will consider various types of problems that have been the subject of debate.

DIFFERENCES IN TRANSCRIPTION

The reading of any text begins with the word, and the editing of the bamboo-strip texts begins with the transcription of the individual graphs from the Chu script of the fourth century BCE into the standardized Chinese script of today. As mentioned in passing above, many of these transcriptions are unproblematic, others require one or more steps of interpretation, while still others are the subject of very different interpretations. One of the most celebrated recent debates over the transcription of a character concerns the first character in the Shanghai Museum text that the editors have entitled Kongzi Shi lun. Ma

26. For a succinct survey of these marks, see Peng Hao, "Post-Excavation Work on the Guodian Bamboo-Slip Laozi," 34–36. For a systematic survey of punctuation marks, primarily based upon excavated manuscripts, see Guan Xihua 管锡华, Zhongguo gudai biaodian fuhao fazhan shi 中國古代標點符號發展史 (Chengdu: Ba Shu shushe, 2002).
Chengyuan, the Director Emeritus of the Shanghai Museum and the primary editor of this text, first presented it publicly at a scholarly conference held at Peking University on 19 August 2000. In the course of his presentation, Ma showed slides of each of the strips of the text, including especially that which he and almost all other scholars identify as the opening of the text. According to this sequence, the text begins with the character 孔, which Ma suggested should be read as 孔子 "Kongzi" or "Confucius." The = in the bottom right quadrant of the character 孔 is a standard symbol in early Chinese writing, indicating either that the character, or some portion of it, should be read twice (and thus known as a chongwen hao or duplicating mark) or that two characters have been written together as one (known as a hewen or compound character). According to Ma’s interpretation, the character 孔 can be transcribed as 孔, and the = symbol indicates that the 孔 of 孔 should be read twice, giving 孔子 or "Confucius." When Ma finished his presentation, Qiu Xigui, who was in the audience, questioned Ma’s reading, and suggested instead that the element in the upper-righthand quadrant of the graph 孔 should be transcribed as the modern character 布, and that the = in the lower righthand quadrant indicates that this is a compound character, combining 布 and 孔, to be read as 布孔, “Buzi,” apparently a reference to Bu Shang 布商, better known as Zi Xia 子夏 (b. 507 BC). Zi Xia was the disciple of Confucius most acknowledged for his mastery of the Shi or Poetry and the reputed author of the Shi Da Xu or Great Preface to the Poetry, to which the Kongzi Shi Lun, or Buzi Shi Lun 布子詩論 if Qiu were right, has more than a passing affinity. Qiu’s suggestion was immediately seconded by Li Xueqin 李學勤, modern China’s second great paleographer, who adduced evidence that the character 布 was indeed written 布 in Warring States script, at least as an element in complex characters.27

Shortly after this conference, Li Ling 李零, the third of the great contemporary Chinese paleographers and the only one who had been involved in the editing of the Shanghai Museum bamboo strips, said that he too had thought of the possibility of reading 孔 as 布孔, but had ultimately rejected it because of other evidence still to be revealed among the Museum’s manuscripts.28 Nevertheless, the authority of Qiu Xigui and Li Xueqin was persuasive to many. For the next year, prior to the publication of the first volume of Shanghai bowu-
guan cang Zhanguo Chu zhu shu, the volume containing the text in question, most scholars in Beijing tended to refer to the text in question simply as Shi lun 詩論 or Essay on the Poetry, implying thereby that they did not accept Ma Chengyuan’s transcription of the first character or his identification of the text with Confucius. The air went out of the debate in December 2001, when that first volume of manuscripts was formally published. In a note substantiating his transcription as 孔子, Ma Chengyuan published the following passage from a related text referred to as Lu bang da han 鲁邦大旱 or The Country of Lu’s Great Drought.

鲁邦大旱，哀公謂 孔子：子不為我圖之？ 孔子答曰：邦大旱，無乃失諸刑與禮乎？…出遇子貢曰：賜，爾聞巷陌之言，無乃謂丘之言非善？

There was a great drought in the country of Lu. Ai Gong said to 孔子: “Sir, will you not help us with it?” 孔子 answered saying: “When the country has a great drought, is it not a matter of being deficient with respect to punishment and ritual?”... He exited and encountered Zi Gong, saying: “Ci, you have heard the talk of the lanes and the streets; are there those who say that Qiu’s answer was wrong?”

This text was written in the same calligraphy as the Kongzi Shi lun, and was apparently originally bound together with it. It includes the same character 鲁读 by Ma as “Kongzi” (i.e., Confucius) and that Qiu and Li had read as 鲁子 or Buzi. But here 鲁 goes on to refer to himself by the personal name Qiu 丘, which was the personal name of Confucius. The debate over this character ended,29 and most scholars are now content to refer to the text as Kongzi Shi lun.

29. At least the debate was resolved. The final word may have been that of Pu Maozuo 鄭茂左, another senior paleographer at the Shanghai Museum. He separately published a lengthy article (cited above, n. 27) proving beyond any doubt both that the graph in question should be read as “Kongzi” and that “Buzi” would be an anachronistic reading. First, he adduced considerable evidence to show that the element 丘 in the top righthand quadrant of the character ought not be read as the modern character 丘 at all. Rather, it is a slightly deformed version of 人. Indeed, in other Shanghai Museum manuscripts, Kongzi is written as 人. This reading is confirmed by the Song-dynasty Gauen si sheng yun 古文四聲韻, in which under the entry for Kong 孔, there is the notation that it was anciently written 丘; see Guo Zhongshu 郭忠恕, Han jian / Gauen si sheng yun 汗簡/古文四聲韻 (pp. Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1983), 3a (p. 36). Second, he also demonstrated that there is no evidence in any pre-Qin texts that Bu Shang or Zi Xia was ever called Buzi (there is one ambiguous reference to him in the Lü shi chunqiu 呂氏春秋 [Sibu beiyao ed. [“Cha xian” 資善], 21.3b] as Bu Zi Xia 卜子夏, but as Pu notes the “Zi” 子 here is certainly attached to the “Xia” 夏 [i.e., Zi Xia] and not to the “Bu” 卜). Indeed, it was not until the Ming dynasty, in the ninth year of the Jiajing 嘉靖 reign era (i.e., 1530), that he was posthumously awarded the honorific title “Xian xian Buzi” 先賢卜子 or “Prior Worthy Buzi.”
Not all of the questions about the transcription of the Kongzi Shi lun have been, or can be, resolved so easily. The next three phrases in the text, the first words that Confucius is quoted as saying, each contain another character the transcription of which has engendered perhaps even more debate and has proved much more intractable. The phrases in question read: shi wang 隨 "poetry gives voice to the will,"30 or "shi zhi zhi suo zhi ye" 詩志之所至也 "poetry is that at which the will arrives,"31 but apparently does so in a negative fashion; thus, "poetry does not 隨 the will." In the formal publication of the text, Ma Chengyuan transcribes the word as lin 哕 (archaic *mrjəns),32 an elaborated form of lin 存 "to begrudge," but reads it as a phonetic loan for li/*rjəj "to depart"; thus, "poetry ought not depart from the will," "music ought not depart from the emotions," and "eloquence ought not depart from the words."33 This reading has met with little acceptance. Both Li Xueqin and Pang Pu Ⲳ⃃, a senior scholar at the Institute of Philosophy, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, and director of the web site dedicated to bamboo and silk-manuscript texts (http://www.bamboosilk.org), have argued that the archaic pronunciation of li 離 was too different from that of lin 哕, which they agree is the correct transcription of the graph written in the manuscript, to be a possible phonetic loan. Instead, they have proposed another phonetic loan, with yin/*ʔjəm 隨 "shady"; thus, "poetry does not shade (i.e., obstruct) the will," "music does not shade the emotions," and "eloquence does not shade the words." Others have suggested other possible phonetic loans: min/*mjən "to destroy" 34; ling/*rjəŋ 隴 "to surpass" 35; men/*mrjən "pent-up" 36 and lian/*rin 聊 "to pity."37 As both Li Ling and Rao Zongyi 饒宗頤 have pointed

30. The locus classicus of this much quoted formulation is the “Shun dian” 舜典 chapter of the Shang shu 尙書; Shang shu Kong zhuan 尙書孔傳 (Sibu beiyao ed.), 1.9b.
31. This is the famous opening of the Shi Xu 詩序 or Great Preface to the Poetry. The Preface continues: “Zai xin wei zhi, fa yan wei shi 在心為志，發為詩; "In the heart it is the will; expressed in words it is poetry"; Mao Shi Zheng jian 毛詩鄭箋 (Sibu beiyao ed.), 1.1a.
34. Qiuxia 邱德修, “Shang bo jian (yi) ‘Shi wang lin zi’ kao” 上博簡一詩亡隱考, in Shang bo guan Zhanguo Chu zhusu yanjiu, 298.
35. He Linyi 何林儀, “Hu jian Shi lun xuan shi” 浮簡詩論選, in Shang bo guan Zhanguo Chu zhusu yanjiu, 244.
37. Li Ling, “Shang bo Chu jian jiaodu ji,” 7–8, points out this loan, though in the end he suggests that the direct reading of lin is smoother.

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out, while all of these proposed phonetic loans make reasonable sense of the phrases, none of them would seem to be preferable to reading the graph directly as the word lin, which means something like “to begrudge” or “to withhold.” One of the Guodian texts, Qiong da yi shi or Failure and Success are Based on Timeliness, uses the same character in a context familiar from the opening lines of the Lunyu 論語 or Assayed Sayings (i.e., Analects) of Confucius: “mo zhi zhi er bu lin” 莫之知而不吝, “no one knows him and yet he does not begrudge it.” In the context of the Kongzi Shi lun quotation of Confucius’s opening remarks, this would give “Poetry does not begrudge the will,” “music does not begrudge the emotions,” and “eloquence does not begrudge the words.” Perhaps this is not so very different from the sense obtained from most of the phonetic loan suggestions. It seems that everyone knows more or less what the quotation must mean, but each different reading imparts a slightly different nuance. Unlike the case of reading 儀 as “Kongzi” or as “Buzi” discussed above, here it is very difficult to say which, if any, of these nuances is “correct.” Perhaps all, or at least most, of these nuances were pregnantly intended by the original graph 隱, and the best transcription is the one that does the least, in this case leaving the graph in its manuscript form.

Li Ling has pointed out, however, that this alternative was not necessarily available to earlier editors of ancient manuscripts, such as Liu Xiang 劉向 (79–8 BC) and his son Liu Xin 劉歆 (53 BC–AD 23), whose work in organizing the texts in the Han imperial library was discussed in the Preface. They had to choose one reading or another, and their choices necessarily excluded other possible readings.

The ancient books that we read all derive from the Han dynasty, and especially the Eastern Han. The Eastern Han texts of the classics were confluences of texts that were in modern script (jin wen 今文) with those that were in ancient script (gu wen 古文). However, regardless of whether the source text had been in modern or ancient script, the recension invariably used modern script, which is to say the Han-period clerical script (lishu 篆書) that derived from Qin script. The editors’ standard practices were far removed from the forms of the ancient texts, but they did not have available the sort of parenthetical notations that we now have, so no matter how the source text may have read and no matter how many different versions they drew from, what they have transmitted to the present is in all cases a direct conflation and direct revision.

A possible error in the transcription of the Guodian Laozi manuscripts

38. Li Ling, “Shang bo Chu jian jiaodu ji,” 8; Rao Zongyi, “Zhushu Shi Xu xiao jian” 竹書詩序小箋, in Shang bo guan Zhanguo Chu zhushu yanjiu, 228.
transcription, pointed out by Qiu Xigui himself after the publication of *Guodian Chu mu zhu jian*, provides a good illustration of the problem that editors of manuscripts, both ancient and modern, faced and face. The third sentence of what has been designated the first of the Guodian Laozi manuscripts (or Guodian Laozi A) has already been much discussed by scholars interested in intellectual history because it seems to mute explicit criticism of some of the core tenets of Confucius’s thought that is found in the received text of the Laozi. The parallel passage in chapter 19 of the received text counsels doing away with “humaneness” (ren 仁) and “propriety” (yi 義), saying that doing so will have the effect that the people will return to “filial piety” (xiao 孝) and “parental love” (ci 慈).

Cut off humaneness and discard propriety, and the people will return to filial piety and parental love.

The Guodian text, on the other hand, reads:

絶禽棄義，民復孝慈。

which the critical edition published in *The Guodian Laozi*, explicitly following the interpretation of Qiu Xigui, interprets as:

絶禽棄誠, 民復孝慈

Cut off artifice and discard deceit, and the people will return to filial piety and parental love.40

Much of the discussion, and also Qiu’s correction, has focused on the character 虑, and this certainly does present an interesting problem in transcription. In addition, we will see that there is also another important problem in just the first half of this sentence.41

41. There is also an interesting problem in the second phrase of the sentence, the variourum between the jizi 季子 of the manuscript and the xiao ci 孝慈 of the received text. Most scholars have assumed that 季 is a graphic error for 孝, and that tsjəʔ 季 is a phonetic loan for ci/*tsjə 蓁, such that the reading of the received text is “correct” here; see, for instance, Gao Ming, “Some Observations concerning the Transcription and Punctuation of the Guodian Laozi,” in *The Guodian Laozi*, 66. This was the original reading of both *Guodian Chu mu zhu jian* (p. 111) and also of *The Guodian Laozi “Edition”* (p. 195). However, in the same discussion of this sentence where he discussed the graph 虑 (for which, see, below, n. 45), Qiu Xigui has also suggested that jizi understood as “infant” is also a possible reading of the manuscript. There seems to be no conclusive evidence on which to decide between the two readings.

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In his note in Guodian Chu mu zhu jian, Qiu had suggested that 心 be read as a word having the signific 心 “heart” and the phonetic qie/*tshjaʔ, that is, 恐, which he further suggested was a phonetic loan for zha/*tsrak. Since the heart and language (言) significs are frequently interchangeable in the script of ancient manuscripts, from this it is a simple step to arrive at a word such as zha 詐 “deceit, treachery,” which was Qiu’s original suggestion. This suggestion was criticized immediately after the publication of Guodian Chu mu zhu jian for at least two reasons. First, Pang Pu argued that it is philosophically trite to say “cut off artifice and cast away deceit, and the people will return to filial piety and parental love,” and is in any event antithetical to what we know of the thought of the Laozi. Also voicing criticism was Xu Kangsheng, professor of philosophy at Peking University, who found in the “Tai Jia xia” 太甲下 chapter of the Shu jing or Classic of Documents an explicit contrast between wei 爲 “to do,” and lü 劉 “to deliberate,” similar to that which would obtain here if 心 were transcribed as the graphically similar lü 劉 rather than as zha (or any of its derivatives): fù lü hu huo, fù wei hu cheng 弗慮胡獲, 弗為胡成 “not deliberating about it how can one gain; not acting on it how can one succeed?” In his contribution entitled “Jiuzheng wo zai Guodian Laozi jian shidu zhong de yige cuowu” 纠正我在郭店老子簡釋中的一個錯誤 or “Correcting a Mistake I Made in Reading the Guodian Laozi,” presented to the International Conference on the Guodian Chu Strips held in Wuhan, Hubei, in October 1999, Qiu accepted these suggestions, but only after exploring the issue more thoroughly than either Pang Pu or Xu Kangsheng had done. Examining all cases of the graph that occur in the Guodian strips, he concluded that the character must indeed be 心, which could suggest such phonetic loans as zha 詐 “deceit,” jü/*tshjaʔ 怠 “arrogance,” or jü or zha/*tshjaʔ 娇 “pride.” Nevertheless, he also noted that there are cases in the manuscripts where 處 and 劉, when used as components of other characters, are written interchangeably, and also that in other Warring States manuscripts 劉 is sometimes written with an “eye” (目) signific with a line under it (viz. 娇), even more similar to 劉. Thus, it is not impossible, and perhaps likely, that the manuscript’s copyist had here mistakenly written 心 for 劉 “to deliberate.”

42. Guodian Chu mu zhu jian, 113, n. 3. This was apparently one of Qiu’s suggestions that the editors of Guodian Chu mu zhu jian did not incorporate into their transcription, which simply presents a literal transcription of the character as found in the manuscript.
To decide if such a mistake had indeed been made, Qiu said that “it is necessary to consider fully the context.”

By “context” here, Qiu means the contrast with ō in the first half of the phrase. Although the parallel adduced by Xu Kangsheng was from an “ancient text” (guwen 古文) chapter of the Shu jing, and therefore suspect, Qiu found several other texts in which ō “to deliberate” is paired with wei 為 “to do,” including the following from the “Yuan dao” 原道 chapter of the Huainanzi 淮南子: “bu lü er de, bu wei er cheng” 不慮而得，不為而成 “to obtain without deliberation, to succeed without acting.” From all of this, Qiu concluded that ō “deliberation, mentation” should be the preferred reading here, even though it was slightly miswritten on the manuscript.

The contrast with ō also led Qiu to discuss further the correct reading of this character. He noted that the verb wei 為, “to act, to do,” is used numerous times throughout the Guodian manuscripts and, in that sense, is never written with a heart signific (心). Therefore, he suggested, when it is written with such a signific, as it is here, that signific should be significant. This led him to conclude in this case that the character should be read as wei 為 “artifice.” He noted in passing that Pang Pu had argued against this reading of his as well, proposing instead that the 為 portion of the character does mean something like “activity,” but that the heart signific specifies this as emotional activity as opposed to physical activity. Qiu simply dismissed this suggestion as being a bit “abstruse” (xuan 玄). However, in his refusal to consider this possibility, it seems to me that Qiu has made the sort of mistake that appears from time to time in traditional texts. Since modern Chinese script does not have a character such as 為 or 僞, Qiu considered as possible transcriptions for only the conventional characters 為 or 僞. As Li Ling pointed out with respect to the Han and Jin editors, in this case, at least, too does Qiu’s “recension invariably use modern script” to transcribe the ancient script of the manuscript. By doing so, it seems to me that he unnecessarily limits the range of nuances that may have been available to the Warring States author or editor of the manuscript.

In his contribution to the same conference at which Qiu was discussing Pang Pu’s reading of 為 as referring to emotional activity, Pang Pu himself presented a systematic examination of characters in the Guodian manuscripts containing heart significs that would be anomalous in later conventional script. For instance, Pang pointed to the differentiation in conventional script...
orthography between the two words wang 忘 “to forget” and wang 迷, for which there is at least one definition as “to flee, abscond.” Both of these words obviously derive from the same root, wang 迷, “to perish; not to exist,” but the significs of the two characters specify different parameters of meaning: The heart signific, 心, indicates mental or emotional activity, thus the disappearance of a thought (i.e., “to forget”), while the locomotion signific, 迷, indicates physical movement, and thus the disappearance of a person by running away (i.e., “to flee”). This would seem to be elementary Chinese etymology. But the next example introduced by Pang complicates the issue somewhat. In the phrase “junzi dun yu 與 “the gentleman is sincere in himself” of the Guodian text Qiong da yi shi, the character 與 would seem to present a similar situation. It is clear that 與 derives from the root word fan 返 “to turn back,” but while there is a word fan 返 “to return” that specifies the physical motion of “turning back,” there is no corresponding character in conventional Chinese script that specifies the emotional activity of “turning back,” such as “retrospection,” which however the context here would seem to require (viz., “the noble man is sincere in turning back to himself”). As Pang Pu suggests, the proper transcription here would surely be a direct transcription of both the 返 and 心 elements of the graph (i.e., 與 or 返), both of which are essential to the correct understanding of the word intended.

By forcing the script of the Warring States period to correspond to the script of the Han and later, is it not possible that we lose some of the nuance of the original? Consider the following passage from the “Zheng ming” 正名 or “Rectification of Names” chapter of the Xunzi 荀子, a received text that was edited by Liu Xiang at the end of the Western Han dynasty: 49

What is not put into service but is so of itself is called the nature. The nature’s loving or hating, being delighted or being angered, being sad or being amused are called the emotions. The emotions being so and the heart making a choice is called deliberation. The heart deliberating and one’s capacity acting on it is called artifice. When one succeeds only after deliberations are accumulated with respect to it and one’s capacity is practiced with respect to it, this is called artifice.

The repetition of wei 偉, “artifice,” in the last two sentences suggests that

shuo” 郭燕書說: 郭店楚簡 中山三器心旁文字試說, in Guodian Chu jian guoji xuexu yantaohui lunwenji, 37–42.
49. Xunzi (Sibu beiyao ed.), 16.1b.
something has gone wrong with this carefully argued text. 50 Pointing to another Guodian manuscript, Xing zi ming chu, Pang Pu suggests how the Xunzi passage can be restored to a more logical original.

For the body to be calm, don’t snarl; for the deliberations to be profound don’t be emotionally active.

As is probably the case in the Guodian Laozi A manuscript, there is a contrast here between "deliberation," and 舆, which, as Pang argues, seems surely to mean “emotional activity” here as well. Since 舆 “deliberation” is the topic of the fourth sentence of the Xunzi chain of definitions, it is likely, as Pang Pu concludes, that the 舀 "artifice" at the end of the sentence was originally 舀 "emotional activity," such that the sentence should read something like “the heart deliberating and one’s capacity acting on it is called emotional activity.” The internal redundancy and contradiction of the last two definitions of the Xunzi are doubtless due to the disappearance of the word 舀 “emotional activity,” from the language and script of the Han dynasty. Faced with a manuscript that probably read 舀, but without a corresponding character in the modern script into which he was transcribing the definitive edition, Liu Xiang made the same choice that Qiu Xigui would make two thousand years later: to preserve a specialized sense of the root word, in this case 舀 "to do, to act," by writing it with a character with a special signific, but silently changing the signific from “heart” to “man.” As Li Ling pointed out in the passage quoted above, Liu Xiang did not have available an editorial apparatus with parentheses and colons that would allow him to show this change, and so ended up introducing ambiguity into a passage that might otherwise have illustrated just how rich early Chinese notions of emotional activity were.

The two cases examined above in the first phrase of the first chapter of the Guodian Laozi A manuscript present two different lessons for the reading of both manuscripts and received texts, lessons with important general implications for the development of writing in early China. In the first case, after an examination that probed from such different angles as phonetic loans, graphic appearance, linguistic parallels, and philosophical significance, the foremost contemporary Chinese paleographer has concluded that the manuscript’s copyist miscopied a graph, simply turning one vertical stroke into a horizontal stroke, but in the process writing a completely different word, which entirely by

50. Wang Xianqian 王先謙, Xunzi jijie 荀子集解 (1891; rpt. Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1988), 412, quotes various commentators and editors from the Tang dynasty through the mid-Qing dynasty who have discussed the confusion of the two words 舀 "artifice" and 舀 "to do, to act" in this passage.