

Command to Fu Yue 傳說之命

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Entry tags: Tsinghua Text, Text, Early Chinese text, Religious Group, Early Chinese Traditions, Ancient Classics, Tsinghua University strips

"Command to Fu Yue" 傳說之命 (Fu Yue zhi ming) is a Warring States manuscript part of the collection purchased by the Tsinghua University in 2008. The collection has been dated to circa 350 BCE. It has been published in volume three (2012) of the series. The manuscript narrates the story of Fu Yue 傳說, well known in the ancient literature. According to the legend, he lived during the reign of king Wu Ding 武丁 (traditional dates 1250-1129 BCE), working as a laborer. One night, the king had a dream; in the dream, he is told that there is a sage in his reign, whose name and looks are revealed to the king. He thus produced images resembling what he had seen in his dream, and sent his aids out in his reign to look for Fu Yue, who was eventually found and brought back to court to become a crucial component of king Wu Ding's reign. ____ The manuscript is divided into three sections, separated by a blank space; it may be argued that the three are in fact three separate compositions. Each one is titled "Command to Fu Yue" on the verso side. The first section narrates king Wu Ding's dream, and introduces Fu Yue as serving a different lord. The flow of the narrative is interrupted by an act of divination whose pertinency has puzzled scholars. The first part ends with Fu Yue settling in the king's court. The second part opens with Fu Yue again reaching Wu Ding's court, another suggestion that perhaps these three sections are in fact three different stories. An exchange with Wu Ding follows, where the king exhorts Fu Yue to be diligent and a loyal servant. It also warns Fu Yue to be ready for difficult times. The passage uses famous metaphors found in the literature, and the language style is that of bronze inscriptions. ____ The third part is constituted entirely of king's (likely Wu Ding, although the name of the king is never specified) invocations and commands opened by the formulaic "the King said" 王曰. Presumably, these statements are addressed to Fu Yue. As with the second part, the king exhorts his minister to be a loyal servant, not to yield during difficult times, and not disappoint Heaven. ____ The manuscript is most famous in relation to the Exalted Writings 尚書. Of the 25 "forged" chapters (see Shangshu entry in this database), three go by the title "Command to Yue" 說命 (divided in 上中下). Because of the tripartite division of the manuscript, as well as the closeness of the topic, the Tsinghua "Command to Fu Yue" has been identified as the "original" chapter of the Shangshu collection (Li Xueqing; Liao Mingchun). Push-backs against this secure and linear identification arrived soon after (e.g., Li Rui; Ed Shaughnessy); too much information is still missing about the production of these manuscripts and the formation of the Shangshu to make such definite claims. ____ By comparing the manuscript "Command to Fu Yue" to the "Command to Yue" chapters in the received Exalted Writings, several observations can be drawn, although these are more revealing of the fourth century CE intellectual environment that produced the "forged" chapters of the Exalted Writings. A striking difference is the way in which the interaction between Wu Ding and his minister Fu Yue is portrayed. In the circa 350 BCE manuscript, the king commands and orders his soon-to-be minister for loyalty and upright behavior to sustain government. Fu Yue utters a handful of words, and is otherwise not active (or even mentioned) in the narration; by reading the third part of the Tsinghua "Command to Fu Yue" especially, one imagines Fu Yue to be listening in silence. This is very reminiscent of bronze inscriptions, in which kings talk authoritatively to obedient, and for the most silent, ministers. ____ The fourth century CE "Command to Yue," instead, portrays Fu Yue as talkative, having a proper dialogue with the king. The production of the latter was most likely influenced by Warring States intellectual narrations on kings and ministers. During the Warring States, intellectuals and aspiring ministers (sometimes identified as the shi 士 class) become steady protagonists of literary works, likely a reflection of a new importance given to their social class in real-life politics. In these works, they are portrayed as having long exchanges with rulers, outmaneuvering their questions with rhetorical devices, hardly ever interrupted in their disquisition which, very often, are crowned by rulers' praises. Here I suggest that whoever composed the "Command to Yue" in the fourth century CE was imagining their own ancient past on the basis of Warring States narratives and documents, that thus shaped the way in which minister-ruler interaction was portrayed. It remains to be explored what documents the author(s) of "Command to Yue" consulted. ____ For reference, the Tsinghua collection is a collection of manuscripts purchased by Tsinghua University in 2008. Like many other collections of Warring States and early imperial Chinese manuscripts, this material was looted. No information was given, or has since surfaced, regarding the conditions of this purchase (who possessed the manuscripts, or how much was invested in it; see Liu 2015 for an overview of this collection). The strips were authenticated on November 14, 2008, by a group of scholars from several universities and institutions from PRC China. There are currently 11 volumes published, and at least three more are forthcoming. The collection includes an impressive array of manuscripts dated to mid to late Warring States period (453 - 221 BCE), largely of philosophical and historical content. It has become particularly famous for its shu 書 (lit: "writings") related material, i.e. manuscripts that can be associated to chapters of the "Exalted Writings" 尚

書 in light of their content, structure, and tone. They bear on the tradition of this extremely influential work, and have thus received much attention. Other manuscripts include historical texts bearing on the "Spring and Autumn" tradition, texts of philosophic and cosmological content, prayers, etc. See introduction in volume one, pages 3-4, of 清華大學藏戰國竹簡.

Date Range: 400 BCE - 300 BCE

Region: Warring States China

Region tags: Asia, East Asia

Generated with guidance from Professor Armin Selbitschka. a) The eastern part of Gansu (especially the Fangmatan site near Tianshui; excavation report: Wenwu 1989.2: 1-11 and 31; for the sake of convenience, I will attach a digital copy of the report below) b) Shaanxi c) Shanxi d) Hebei e) Henan f) Shandong g) Jiangsu h) Anhui i) Zhejiang j) Hubei k) Hunan

Status of Readership:

✓ Non-elite (common people, general populace)

Sources and Corpora

Print Sources

Print sources used for understanding this subject:

— Source 1: Li Xuexin; 清華大學出土文獻研究與保護中心, ed. Qinghua daxue cang Zhanguo zhujian san 清華大學藏戰國竹簡叁. Shanghai: Zhong Xi shuju, 2012.

Reference: Li Xueqin 李學勤. Xin zhengli Qinghua jian liu zhong gaishu 新整理清華簡六種概述.

Reference: Liao Mingchun 廖名春. Qinghua jian yu 'Shangshu' yanjiu 清華簡與《尚書》研究.

Reference: Li Rui 李銳. Qinghua jian 'Fu Yue zhi ming' yanjiu 清華簡《傳說之命》研究." Shenzhen Daxue Xuebao. Shehui Kexueban 深圳大學學報, 30(6)

Reference: Xie Weiyang 謝維揚. You Qinghua jian 'Yue ming' san pian lun gushu cheng shu yu wenben xingcheng er san shi 由清華簡《說命》三篇論古書成書與文本形成二三事. Chutu wenxian yu Zhongguo gudai guoji xueshi yanhui lun wenji 出土文獻與中國古代文明國際學術研會論文集. Beijing Qinghua Daxue 北京清華大學.

Reference: Shen Pei 沈培. 談談清華簡《傳說之命》和傳世文獻相互對照的幾個“若”字句.

Reference: Edward L. Shaughnessy. A Possible Lost Classic: The *She Ming, or *Command to She". T'oung Pao, 106(4)

Reference: Ma Cui 馬翠. Qinghua jian 'Yue ming' ji shi 清華簡《說命》集釋. M.A. Diss. Hebei University.

Online Sources

Online sources used for understanding this subject:

— Source 1 URL: <https://www.litphil.sinica.edu.tw/public/activities/20171021-01/%E9%82%B1%E6%96%87%E6%89%8D%E6%BC%9A%E3%80%8A%E8%AF%B4%E5%91%BD%E3%80%8B%E4%B8%8E>

— Source 1 Description: annotated edition that reproduces the text on its entirety, by Qiu Wencai 邱文才 (2017)

Reference: Zhang Chongli 張崇禮. Qinghua jian 'Fu Yue zhi ming' jian shi 清華簡《傳說之命》箋釋.

Online Corpora

Relevant online Primary Textual Corpora (original languages and/or translations)

— Source 1 URL: <https://baike.baidu.com/item/%E8%AA%AC%E5%91%BD/12550658>

— Source 1 Description: Baidu's transcription. It includes interpretations of whoever wrote this, so always best to check it against the Qinghua volume or do one own's.

General Variables

Materiality

Methods of Composition

— Written

↳ Inked
— with Ink

Medium upon which the text is written/incised

— Bamboo

Notes: The strips are around 44 cm in length. The first and second sections both have 7 strips, numbered on the back from 1 to 7; the final one also bears the title 《傳說之命》 on the verso side. The third section is instead of 10 strips, also numbered from 1 to 10, and with the title on the verso of the last one. The numbers are placed on the verso side, midway through the strip. The titles are positioned in the lower half of the last strip of each section, also on the verso side. Section one and two are intact; strip one of section three is missing, and the last strip is mildly broken at the bottom.

Was the material modified before the writing or incising process?

— Physical preparation

Notes: Bamboo was cut into strips of more or less uniform size. (See review of studies on the subject in Xiao 2017: 235–46.)

Reference: Xiao Yunxiao. "Restoring Bamboo Scrolls: Observations on the Materiality of Warring States Bamboo Manuscripts." pp. 235–54. CHINESE STUDIES IN HISTORY 50, no. 3 (2017).

Was the text modified before the writing or incising process?

— Other [specify]: unclear. Too little is known. It could have been.

Location

Is the text stored in a specific location?

[Note at which point in time, for reference, if known; select all that apply]

— Field doesn't know

Notes: unfortunately, the collection is looted. It may have been buried in a tomb, but it is not certain. On the question of working with looted manuscripts, see Goldin 2013; Foster 2017; Kern 2019; Smith and Poli 2022

Is the location where the text stored accompanied by iconography or images?

— Field doesn't know

Notes: Notes: unfortunately, the collection is looted. It may have been put together with other objects having images, but it is not possible to know.

Is the area where the text is stored accompanied by an-iconic images?

— Field doesn't know

Notes: unfortunately, the collection is looted.

Production & Intended Audience

Production

Is the production of the text funded by the polity?

— Field doesn't know

Notes: Very little is known about the production and control of these manuscripts.

Is the text considered official religious scripture?

— No

Notes: The manuscript is most famous in relation to the Exalted Writings 尚書. Of the 25 "forged" chapters (see Shangshu entry in this database), three go by the title "Command to Yue" 說命 (divided in 上中下). Because of the tripartite division of the manuscript, as well as the closeness of the topic, the Tsinghua "Command to Fu Yue" has been identified as the "original" chapter of the Shangshu collection (Li Xueqing; Liao Mingchun). Push-backs against this secure and linear identification arrived soon after (e.g., Li Rui; Ed Shaughnessy); too much information is still missing about the production of these manuscripts and the formation of the Shangshu to make such definite claims. I do not consider the "Exalted Writings" or the texts that belong to that category a scripture, since, even though they were clearly authoritative, they were not sacred.

Written in distinctly religious/sacred language?

— No

Intended Audience

What is the estimated number of people considered to be the audience of the text

This should be the total number of people who would serve as the intended audience for the text.

— Field doesn't know

Notes: Potentially, anyone who could read and write and was able to access this material.

Does the Religious group actively proselytize and recruit new members?

— No

Are there clear reformist movements?

(Reformism, as in not proselytizing to potential new conservative, but "conversion" - or rather, reform - to the "correct interpretation"?)

— No

Is the text in question employed in ritual practice?

— No

Notes: Some of the language in the third section of the "Command to Fu Yue" echoes that of Zhou dynasty bronze inscriptions. Some of these inscriptions are on vessels that were used in ritual practices; the relevance of the inscription on the vessel, as well as its content, for the ritual purpose needs to be assessed case by case.

Is there material significance to the text?

— No

Context and Content of the Text (Beliefs and Practices)

Context

Is the text itself accompanied by art?

— No

Are there multiple versions of the text?

— Yes

Notes: If by "text" is meant the same story, with variations of details. As the description of this entry details, this three-part manuscript narrates the story of how Fu Yue 傅說 entered service at the court of Wu Ding 武丁. This story had been recorded in other sources, such as in the Records of the Historian's 史記 section "殷本紀 - Annals of Yin," and is referred to variously. For a mapping of references to this story, see Smith (forthcoming)

Reference: Adam D. Smith. "What Difficulty Could There Be? The Composition of the Guodian Qiong Da Yi Shi 窮達以時 from Memorized Performance Cues.". In Wolfgang Behr and Lisa Indraccolo Eds. Warp, Woof, Wen. Phoneme, Pattern, Pun - Structural Approaches to Early Chinese Texts. Leiden: BRILL. Forthcoming.

↳ Are multiple versions viewed as proper?

— Field doesn't know

↳ Is there debate about which version is proper?

— No

Is the text part of a collection of texts?

— Yes

Notes: This text is a "shu 書" style - a term used to refer to a group of texts that are, or pretend to be, or pretended to be - contemporaneous records, often of formal speeches between kings and ministers from the past (Sarah Allan 2012). There is thus a sense of a collection, although this is by no means a closed, canonized, stable collection during the Warring States era. ____ The manuscript may be considered part of a collection also in the sense that it is currently part of the Tsinghua collection of manuscripts.

Reference: Sarah Allan. On Shu 書 (Documents) and the Origin of the Shang Shu 尚書 (Ancient Documents) in Light of Recently Discovered Bamboo Slip Manuscripts. Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, 75(3)

↳ Is there a sense of canonization?

— No

↳ Is the text part of a series of volumes?

— No

If the text is not explicitly scripture, is it part of another important literary tradition?

— Yes

↳ Cultural with religious implications?

— No

↳ Behavioral literature?

— No

↳ Other

— Other [specify]: That of the "shu 書" style tradition, see answer above and description.

Content

Is the text - or does the text include - a ritual list, manual, bibliography, index, or vocabulary?
(Select all that apply)

— Other [specify]: n/a

Are there lineages or a single lineage established by the text?

— No

Does the text express a formal legal code?

— No

Formulating a specifically religious calendar?

— No

Beliefs

Is a spirit-body distinction present in the text?

— No

Is belief in an afterlife indicated in the text?

— No

Is belief in reincarnation in this world specified in the text?

— No

Are there special treatments for adherents' corpses dictated in the text?

— No

Does the text indicate if co-sacrifices should be present in burials?

— No

Does the text specify grave goods for burial?

— No

Are formal burials present in the text?

— No

Are there practices that have funerary associations presented in the text?

— No

Are supernatural beings present in the text?

— Yes

Notes: Heaven 天 is referred to as an entity that can send out inauspicious events (天出不祥), and as

such it should be respected. It can also aid humans (strip 9 of part three).

↳ A supreme high-god is present

— No

Notes: There is no indication of multiple supernatural beings, among which one is more powerful. This manuscript may as well have been produced in a culture that believed so; but it cannot be evinced from the manuscript itself.

Previously human spirits are present

— No

Non-human supernatural beings are present

— No

Does the text attest to a pantheon of supernatural beings?

— No

Are mixed human-divine beings present according to the text?

— No

Is there a supernatural being that is physically present in the/as a result of the text?

— No

Are other categories of beings present?

— Other [specify]: n/a

Does the text guide divination practices?

— No

Supernatural Monitoring

Is supernatural monitoring present in the text?

— No

Do supernatural beings mete out punishment in the text?

— No

Do supernatural beings bestow rewards in the text?

— No

Messianism/Eschatology

Are messianic beliefs present in the text?

— No

Is an eschatology present in the text?

— No

Norms & Moral Realism

Are general social norms prescribed by the text?

— Yes

Notes: The king is exhorting Fu Yue to be respectful (jing 敬), to be careful in his service, and cautious of Heaven. It invites awareness of circumstances (with the rhetorical "to inspect the four directions, 視四方; later in section three, the king warns the minister to inspect affairs, 視事). These were set as examples of social norms that were valid for more than just ministers. They recur in other texts of the period.

Is there a conventional vs. moral distinction in the religious text?

— No

Are there centrally important virtues advocated by the text?

— Yes

↳ Honesty/trustworthiness/integrity

— Yes

↳ Courage (in battle)

— No

↳ Courage (generic)

— Yes

Notes: In the sense of being prepared to face and handle disasters and difficult things.

↳ Compassion/empathy/kindness/benevolence

— No

↳ Mercy/forgiveness/tolerance

— No

↳ Generosity/charity

— No

↳ Selflessness/selfless giving

— No

↳ Righteousness/moral rectitude

— No

↳ Ritual purity/ritual adherence/abstention from sources of impurity

— No

↳ Respectfulness/courtesy

– Yes

↳ Familial obedience/filial piety

– No

↳ Fidelity/loyalty

– Yes

Notes: As in loyalty to one's king and duties.

↳ Cooperation

– Yes

Notes: By implication, in that Fu Yue should cooperate with the ruler and other ministers for a correct functioning of government

↳ Independence/creativity/freedom

– No

↳ Moderation/frugality

– No

↳ Forbearance/fortitude/patience

– No

↳ Diligence/self-discipline/excellence

– Yes

↳ Assertiveness/decisiveness/confidence/initiative

– No

↳ Strength (physical)

– No

↳ Power/status/nobility

– No

↳ Humility/modesty

– Yes

↳ Contentment/serenity/equanimity

– No

↳ Joyfulness/enthusiasm/cheerfulness

– No

↳ Optimism/hope

– No

↳ Gratitude/thankfulness

– No

↳ Reverence/awe/wonder

– No

↳ Faith/belief/trust/devotion

– No

↳ Wisdom/understanding

– Yes

↳ Discernment/intelligence

– Yes

↳ Beauty/attractiveness

– No

↳ Cleanliness (physical)/orderliness

– No

↳ Other important virtues

– No

Advocacy of Practices

Does the text require celibacy (full sexual abstinence)?

– No

Does the text require constraints on sexual activity (partial sexual abstinence)?

– No

Does the text require castration?

– No

Does the text require fasting?

– No

Does the text require forgone food opportunities (taboos on desired foods)?

– No

Does the text require permanent scarring or painful bodily alterations?

– No

Does the text require painful physical positions or transitory painful wounds?

— No

Does the text require sacrifice of adults?

— No

Does the text require sacrifice of children?

— No

Does the text require self-sacrifice (suicide)?

— No

Does the text require sacrifice of property/valuable items?

— No

Does the text require sacrifice of time (e.g. attendance at meetings or services, regular prayer, etc.)?

— No

Does the text require physical risk taking?

— No

Does the text require accepting ethical precepts?

— No

Does the text require marginalization by out-group members?

— No

Does the text require participation in small-scale rituals (private, household)?

— No

Does the text require participation in large-scale rituals?

— No

Are extra-ritual in-group markers present as indicated in the text?

— No

Does the text employ fictive kinship terminology?

— No

Does the text include elements that are intended to be entertaining?

— No

Does the text specify sacrifices, offerings, and maintenance of a sacred space?

— No

Institutions & Production Environment of Text

Society & Institutions

Society of religious group that produced the text is best characterized as:

— A state

Notes: Even though it has been looted, there are strong indications to the fact that this manuscript was produced in the state of Chu 楚, one of the many politically independent entities the Zhou dynasty broke into as its power declined. See Cook and Major 1999; and the extensive entry on Wikipedia, which gives an overall good account.

Reference: various. Defining Chu: Image and Reality in Ancient China. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press. Constance A. Cook and John S. Major, eds.

Are there specific elements of society that have controlled the reproduction of the text?

— A state

Are there specific elements of society involved with the destruction of the text?

— Other

Notes: n/a

Welfare

Does the text specify institutionalized famine relief?

— No

Does the text specify institutionalized poverty relief?

— No

Does the text specify institutionalized care for elderly & infirm?

— No

Other forms of welfare?

— No

Education

Are there formal educational institutions available for teaching the text?

— Field doesn't know

Notes: Most likely, yes. But primary sources describing the presence and the functioning of educational institutions has not been recovered yet.

Are there formal educational institutions specified according to the text?

— No

Does the text make provisions for non-religious education?

— No

Does the text restrict education to religious professionals?

— No

Does the text restrict education among religious professionals?

— No

Is education gendered according to the text?

— No

Notes: But education in Warring States China was by an large a male, elite business

Is education gendered with respect to this text and larger textual tradition?

— Yes

Notes: Education in Warring States China was by an large a male, elite business

Does the text specify teaching relationships or ratios? (i.e.: 1:20; 1:1)

— No

Are there specific relationships to teachers that are advocated by the text?

— No

Are there worldly rewards/benefits to education according to the text specified by the text itself?

— No

Bureaucracy

Is bureaucracy regulated by this text?

— No

Public Works

Does the text detail interaction with public works?

— No

Taxation

Does the text specify forms of taxation?

— No

Warfare

Does the text mention warfare?

— No

Food Production

Does the text mentioned food production/disbursement?

Bibliography

General References

Reference: Liu Guozhang. Introduction to the Tsinghua Bamboo-Strip Manuscripts.. Brill. Translated by Christopher Foster and William N. French.

Reference: Li Xueqin undefined. Qinghua daxue cang Zhanguo zhujian 清華大學藏戰國竹簡. Zhong Xi shuju 中西書局.

Reference: Martin Kern. 'Xi Shuai' 蟋蟀 ('Cricket') And Its Consequences: Issues In Early Chinese Poetry And Textual Studies.

Reference: Christopher Foster. Introduction To The Peking University Han Bamboo Strips: On The Authentication And Study Of Purchased Manuscripts.

Reference: Adam D. Smith , Maddalena Poli. Establishing the Text of the Odes. The Anhui University Bamboo Manuscript.”.

Reference: Paul R. Goldin. Heng Xian and the Problem of Studying Looted Artifacts. Dao, 12(2)

Entry/Answer References

Reference: Xiao Yunxiao. "Restoring Bamboo Scrolls: Observations on the Materiality of Warring States Bamboo Manuscripts." pp. 235–54. CHINESE STUDIES IN HISTORY 50, no. 3 (2017).

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Reference: Xie Weiyang 謝維揚. You Qinghua jian 'Yue ming' san pian lun gushu cheng shu yu wenben xingcheng er san shi 由清華簡《說命》三篇論古書成書與文本形成二三事. Chutu wenxian yu Zhongguo gudai guoji xueshi yanhui lun wenji 出土文獻與中國古代文明國際學術研會論文集. Beijing Qinghua Daxue 北京清華大學.

Reference: Shen Pei 沈培. 談談清華簡《傳說之命》和傳世文獻相互對照的幾個'若'字句.

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