

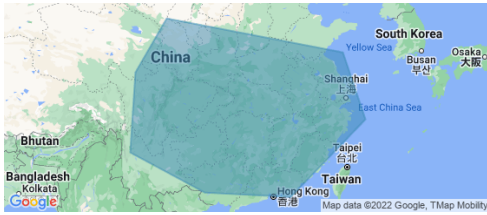
Tian wen 天問

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Entry tags: Yellow and Yangzi Rivers Region, Chinese Folk Religions, Cosmogony, Early Chinese cosmology, Chinese Religion, Early Chinese cosmogony, Cosmology, Text, Religious Group, Early Chinese Traditions

The Tianwen 天問 (“Heavenly questions”) is a long poem structured in a series of questions (wen 問) directly asked to Heaven (tian 天) or concerning heavenly matters, included in the ancient poetry collection entitled Chuci 楚辭 (“Songs of Chu”, often translated into English as “Songs of the south”). Alternative translation for the title Tian wen, besides “Heavenly questions”, are “Asking Heaven” and “Heaven asks”. The poem is attributed to the 4th century BCE Chu 楚 state official and poet Qu Yuan 屈原 (340–278 BCE), yet his authorship of the poem as a whole is debated. The broad range of topics treated and their loose arrangement (possibly due to the mixing up of the slips in the original bamboo copy of the text) support the hypothesis of a collective authorship. Field advances the thesis that Qu Yuan, during one of his trips to Qi, collected diversified fragments circulating at the Ji Xia 稷下 and put them together forming the Tian wen (Field 1986). Hinton suggests that Qu Yuan, in writing the Tian wen, might have drawn most of the material from ancient oral sources (Hinton 2009). The Eastern Han 東漢 (25 CE – 220 CE) poet and librarian Wang Yi 王逸 (fl. 130–140 CE), claiming to have based on Liu Xiang’s 劉向 (79 CE – 8 CE) text, edited the first Chuci anthology with a commentary, the Chuci zhangju 楚辭章句, transmitted in the received version, compiled in the 12th century CE, under the title Chuci buzhu 楚辭補注. Wang Yi’s edition of the Chuci is preserved in the received text, and comprises both a general foreword and several distinct introductions specific for each of the various works, in which he ascribes the Tianwen and other poems, such as the Li sao 離騷, to Qu Yuan. Regarding Qu Yuan’s inspiration for the writing of the poem, Wang Yi refers to an anecdote that allegedly occurred during the author’s exile, an episode that is generally considered not to be historically reliable: according to Wang Yi’s introduction (or rather, according to the source to which the commentator refers), the author would have been inspired by seeing murals depicting spirits, deities, landscapes, mythological characters, and more, painted on the walls of the Chu ancestral temple, and would have written these questions on the same walls (Chuci zhangju, Tianwen zhangju 天問章句). Also in Sima Qian’s 司馬遷 Shiji 史記 the Tian wen is ascribed to Qu Yuan. Regarding its structure and content, the Tianwen lists circa 170 enigmatic and mysterious questions, which remain unanswered, directed to Heaven. It consists of about 370 tetrasyllabic lines arranged in around 90 quatrains, of which the even lines rhyme. On a general level, but there are various exceptions, two lines form a semantic unity, in which the first one introduces the topic, while the second one asks the actual question. In contradistinction to all the other poems attributed to Qu Yuan, in the Tian wen the nonce word xi 兮 is completely absent, fueling skepticism about his authorship of the work. The language is archaic as nowhere else in the Chuci, with the exception of few lines of the Li sao. The topics of the diverse lines are extremely varied and range from cosmogonic matters to the actions of divine and mythological beings and religious beliefs. The poem is traditionally divided into three sections, at least starting from the Tang dynasty 唐 (618–907) times, that separate heavenly, earthly, and human matters (although different commentators divide the poem differently). The first section is concerned with cosmogonic myths and theories, cosmology, and celestial mechanics (e.g. the unaccountability of the origins of the world, the sun and moon’s celestial motion, the stars’ array, etc.); the second section’s focus is put on the asset of earth (e.g. the flood myth, the tilt between the sky and earth resulted from Kang Hui’s 康回 anger, Yi’s 羿 shooting at the suns, etc.); the third and last section refers to the deeds and achievements of legendary characters and to human events (e.g. Yu’s 禹 vicissitudes, the decline of the Xia 夏 dynasty, Nüwa’s 女媧 myth, etc.). Of the questions asked, although for none is an answer offered in the text, some appear to possibly have a knowledgeable answer, while for others a sharp skepticism on the part of the author is evident. It is the case, for example, of the opening verses of the first section: 遂古之初，誰傳道之？At the beginning of distant antiquity, who transmitted the account? 上下未形，何由考之？When above and below had not yet achieved form, how could it be

examined? 冥昭瞢暗，誰能極之？ When darkness and brightness were confused and indiscernible, who could tell them apart? The poem is almost unique in his genre of listing unanswered questions. The only comparable literary work consisting of a list of riddles on a similar subject, yet considerably shorter, is found in the opening lines of chapter Tian yun 天運 (“Heaven’s revolution”) of the Zhuangzi 莊子.



Date Range: 340 BCE - 140 CE

Region: Han empires

Region tags: Asia, East Asia, China

After the short-lived Qin dynasty (221-206 BCE), the Han empires (202 BCE-220 CE) were the second set of polities that ruled over the heartland of present-day China through a unified imperial system. The Liu clan who founded the Western Han (202 BCE-7 CE) emerged from the Chu region along the Yangzi River. Around the beginning of the 1st century CE, an affinal member of the imperial family seized power and founded the Xin Dynasty (9-23 CE). After a period of civil strife, a distant member of the Liu clan eventually founded the Eastern Han (25-220) that reunified the empire. The seat of the imperial house was moved from the western capital of Chang'an (modern-day Xi'an) to the eastern capital Luoyang.

Status of Readership:

✓ Elite

Sources and Corpora

Print Sources

Print sources used for understanding this subject:

- Source 1: Chuci zhangju 楚辭章句. Compiled by Wang, Yi 王逸, edited by Huang, Linggeng 黃靈庚. Shanghai 上海: guji chubanshe 上海古籍出版社, 2017.
- Source 2: Field, Stephen. Tian Wen: a Chinese Book of Origins. New York: New Directions, 1984.
- Source 3: Tang, Bingzheng 湯炳正 et al. Chuci jinzhu 楚辭今注. Shanghai: Shanghai Guji 上海古籍, 1996.

Online Sources

Online sources used for understanding this subject:

- Source 1 URL: <https://ctext.org/chu-ci/tian-wen>
- Source 1 URL: <http://www.schimmelpfennig-research.eu/ccbib/ccb-13tianwen.html>

Online Corpora

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

- Source 1 URL: <https://ctext.org/chu-ci/tian-wen>

General Variables

Materiality

Methods of Composition

– Written

↳ Inked

– with Ink

– Printed with moveable type

↳ Number of sheets

– Bound

Medium upon which the text is written/incised

– Bamboo

Notes: The text, as most literary texts at the time, was likely originally written on bamboo slips. The loose arrangement of the subjects in the poem has been explained as possibly due to the mixing of the bamboo (or wood) strips of the original edition, as a consequence of the deterioration of the bindings (see Hawkes 1985).

– Paper

↳ Specify type of paper

– Specify: not a specific kind of paper

Was the material modified before the writing or incising process?

– Other [specify]: no

Was the text modified before the writing or incising process?

– Other [specify]: no

Location

Is the text stored in a specific location?

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

– No

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

– No

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

– No

Production & Intended Audience

Production

Is the production of the text funded by the polity?

– No

Is the text considered official religious scripture?

– No

Written in distinctly religious/sacred language?

– No

Notes: Hawkes hypothesizes that the odd combination of archaic riddles with speculative questions may indicate that the text was originally a sort of priestly riddle-text, a catechism to be used for mnemonic purposes, rewritten and enlarged by a secular poet, possibly Qu Yuan. (Hawkes 2011)

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

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

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

Notes: Traditionally, based on Wang Yi's 王逸 (fl. 130-140 CE) commentary to the text, Qu Yuan drew the inspiration for writing the Tian wen from the sight of murals depicted on the walls of the Chu ancestral temple. According to this legend, dismissed by scholarly studies of the poem, the author would have written the original version of the text on the temple's walls themselves, to accompany the images of supernatural beings, landscapes, spirits, etc.

Are there multiple versions of the text?

– Yes

Notes: The Tian wen is part of the poetry collection Chuci 楚辭. The received edition of the Chuci, edited during the 12th century CE under the title Chuci buzhu 楚辭補注, displays significant differences in the sequence of the chapters if compared with Wang Yi's 王逸 Chuci zhangju 楚辭章句 (2nd century CE) and the Chuci shiwen 楚辭釋文 (compiled before the Southern Tang). In his commentary to the text, Wang Yi himself claims to refer to a previous edition of the anthology, edited by Liu Xiang 劉向, and ascribes the Tianwen to the Chu 楚 state official and poet Qu Yuan 屈原. Probably, at an early stage, the text circulated in the form of a bamboo manuscript.

↳ Are multiple versions viewed as proper?

– Yes

↳ If multiple versions are proper, is there a differentiation among versions by any means?

– Yes

↳ Age of extant version of text?

– Yes

↳ Content of text?

– No

↳ Ritual purpose of text?

– No

↳ Is there debate about which version is proper?

– No

Is the text part of a collection of texts?

– Yes

Notes: The Tian wen is one long poem pertaining to the Chuci 楚辭 ("Songs of Chu"), a poetry collection of southern verses, attributed to various authors from the state of Chu 楚, including Qu Yuan 屈原 and Song Yu 宋玉, and later poets, such as the editor of the Chuci zhangju 楚辭章句, Wang Yi 王逸.

↳ 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

Notes: The Tian wen 天問, together with the Lisao 離騷 and other poems ascribed to Qu Yuan 屈原, is considered the seminal work of the literary genre of the Chu poetry (Chuci 楚辭), to which Han-era poets also contributed – for instance, Wang Yi 王逸, editor of the Chuci Zhangju 楚辭章句, in which he also included some of his poems. The Tian wen, and the Chuci in general, have been influential on classical Chinese poetry for centuries, for example on the work of poets such as Jia Yi 賈誼, Du Fu 杜甫, and Han Yu 韓愈. After it has been edited as a collection by Wang Yi in Han times, the Chuci collection received the attention of many scholars, and numerous commentaries have been written about it. ----- Hawkes defines the Tian wen poem as a sort of “shamanistic catechism” that mixes together archaic riddles with questions of a speculative or philosophic nature. His hypothesis is that the text started as an ancient, priestly riddle-text used for mnemonic purposes enlarged and rewritten by a secular poet. This poet might possibly be Qu Yuan 屈原, to whom both Sima Qian 司馬遷 and Wang Yi 王逸 ascribed the poem (Hawkes 2012).

↳ Cultural with religious implications?

– Yes

↳ Behavioral literature?

– No

↳ Other

–Other [specify]: Chuci itself became a relevant literary genre.

Content

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

– Other [specify]: none

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

Notes: The text does not explicitly refer to reincarnation. There is a passage which recounts an episode in Gun's 鯀 life in which he transforms into a bear (a turtle or dragon, according to different textual traditions) and shamans bring him back to life: 化為黃熊巫何活焉.

Are there special treatments for adherents' corpses dicated 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: The text refers to several supernatural beings. A deity mentioned in various verses is Di 帝. Di 帝 is the supreme sky deity venerated by the Shang 商 dynasty (17th-11th cent. BCE), that also appears in many oracle bones inscriptions. The Tian wen, among the others, also refers to: Nüwa 女娲, the half-woman half-snake deity believed to have moulded the human kind; Xi He 羲和, the solar deity deemed to have given birth to the ten suns; Hou Ji 后稷, the first ancestor of the Zhou 周 who taught humans how to cultivate the land.

↳ A supreme high-god is present

– Yes

Notes: The text mentions various times Di 帝, the supreme sky deity venerated by the Shang 商 dynasty (17th-11th cent. BCE).

↳ The supreme high god is anthropomorphic or described in anthropomorphic terms

– Yes

↳ The supreme high god is a sky deity

– Yes

↳ The supreme high god is chthonic (of the underworld)

– No

↳ The supreme high god is fused with the monarch (king=high god)

– No

↳ The monarch is seen as a manifestation or emanation of the high god

– Field doesn't know

↳ The supreme high god is a kin relation to elites

– Field doesn't know

Notes: It was rather common for rulers at the time to trace back their own genealogies to high gods.

- ↳ The supreme high god has another type of loyalty-connection to elites
 - Field doesn't know

- ↳ The supreme high god is unquestionably good
 - Field doesn't know

- ↳ Other features of the supreme high god
 - Specify: the text does not provide further information about the high god Di 帝.

- ↳ The supreme high god has knowledge of this world
 - Yes
 - ↳ Knowledge is restricted to a particular domain of human affairs
 - Field doesn't know
 - ↳ Knowledge is restricted to (a) specific area(s) within the sample region
 - Field doesn't know
 - ↳ Knowledge is unrestricted within the sample region
 - Field doesn't know
 - ↳ Knowledge is unrestrict outside of sample region
 - Field doesn't know
 - ↳ Can see you everywhere normally visible (in public)
 - Field doesn't know
 - ↳ Can see you everywhere (in the dark, at home)
 - Field doesn't know
 - ↳ Can see inside heart/mind (hidden motives)
 - Field doesn't know
 - ↳ Knows basic character (personal essence)
 - Field doesn't know

- ↳ Knows what will happen to you, what you will do (future sight)
 - Field doesn't know
- ↳ Has other knowledge of this world
 - Field doesn't know
- ↳ Has deliberate causal efficacy in the world
 - Yes
 - Notes: A few episodes in which the high god Di 帝 rewards and punishes humans are mentioned in the text, yet the text does not specify the motivations behind Di's actions.
- ↳ Can reward
 - Yes
- ↳ Can punish
 - Yes
- ↳ Indirect causal efficacy in the world
 - Field doesn't know
- ↳ Exhibits positive emotion
 - Field doesn't know
- ↳ Exhibits negative emotion
 - Field doesn't know
- ↳ Possesses Hunger?
 - Field doesn't know
- ↳ Can be hurt?
 - Field doesn't know
- ↳ Can be tricked?
 - Field doesn't know
- ↳ Can be imprisoned?
 - Field doesn't know

- ↳ Is it permissible to worship supernatural being other than the high god?
 - Yes
- ↳ The supreme high god possesses/exhibits some other feature
 - Specify: The text does not provide further details.
- ↳ The supreme high god communicates with the living
 - Field doesn't know
- ↳ Does the text make communication with supreme high-god possible?
 - No

Previously human spirits are present

– Yes

Notes: Many of the characters to which the poem refers are humans who lived in the ancient past, some of which are revered, as for example the sage kings of the ancient past, Yao 堯, Shun 舜, and Yu 禹 (also his father Gun 鯀, who failed in the management of waters, appears several times in the poem). Another example is the archer Yi 羿, who shot nine suns. Some deities are also described with anthropomorphic features. It is the case, for example, of Houji 后稷, born when his mother walked on Shang Di's 上帝 footprint, the one who taught humans agricultural techniques. Also Xi He 羲和, the solar deity mother of the ten suns, is described in anthropomorphic terms.

- ↳ Human spirits can be seen
 - Field doesn't know
- ↳ Human spirits can be physically felt
 - Field doesn't know
- ↳ Previously human spirits have knowledge of this world
 - Field doesn't know
- ↳ Human spirits have deliberate causal efficacy in the world
 - Field doesn't know
- ↳ Human spirits have indirect causal efficacy in the world
 - Field doesn't know
- ↳ Human spirits have memory of life

– Field doesn't know

↳ Human spirits exhibit positive emotion

– Field doesn't know

↳ Human spirits exhibit negative emotion

– Field doesn't know

↳ Human spirits communicate with the living

– Field doesn't know

Non-human supernatural beings are present

– Yes

Notes: Among the numerous supernatural beings mentioned in the poem, several dragons, for instance, appear: the Winged Dragon, that draws the watercourse with its tail, paving the way for Yu; and the Torch Dragon (sometimes described as half serpent, half man), lighting up the land with a torch in its mouth. Celestial bodies are also described as supernatural being. For example, the sun is defined as the Spirit of Sunlight (Yaoling 曜靈). Animals are sometimes described with supernatural characteristics too. For example, the text asks about animals capable of speaking.

↳ Supernatural beings can be seen

– Field doesn't know

↳ Supernatural beings can be physically felt

– Field doesn't know

↳ Non-human supernatural beings have knowledge of this world

– Yes

↳ Knowledge is restricted to a particular domain of human affairs

– Field doesn't know

↳ Knowledge is restricted to (a) specific area(s) within the sample region

– Field doesn't know

↳ Knowledge is unrestricted within the sample region

– Field doesn't know

- ↳ Knowledge is unrestricted outside of sample region
 - Field doesn't know
- ↳ Can see you everywhere normally visible (in public)
 - Field doesn't know
- ↳ Can see you everywhere (in the dark, at home)
 - Field doesn't know
- ↳ Can see inside heart/mind (hidden motives)
 - Field doesn't know
- ↳ Know basic character (personal essence)
 - Field doesn't know
- ↳ Know what will happen to you, what you will do (future sight)
 - Field doesn't know
- ↳ Have other knowledge of this world
 - Field doesn't know
- ↳ Non-human supernatural beings have deliberate causal efficacy in the world
 - Yes
- ↳ Supernatural beings can reward
 - Yes
- ↳ Supernatural beings can punish
 - Yes
- ↳ Non-human supernatural beings communicate with the living according to the text?
 - Field doesn't know
- ↳ These supernatural beings have indirect causal efficacy in the world
 - Field doesn't know

↳ These supernatural beings exhibit positive emotion

– Yes

↳ These supernatural beings exhibit negative emotion

– Yes

↳ These supernatural beings possess hunger

– Field doesn't know

↳ These supernatural beings possess/exhibit some other feature

– Specify: The text dedicates just a couple of verses to each deity or mythological entity, therefore it does not provide a detailed characterization of the various characters. On the contrary, the verses hint to an early mythology, partly already lost during the Han dynasty, at the time when the poems have been collected in an anthology.

Does the text attest to a pantheon of supernatural beings?

– Yes

Notes: In addition to the deities already mentioned in the previous notes, the text also refers, for example, to Ping 萍, the god of rain, and Xie 協, the god of wind, traditionally depicted as a flying deer.

↳ Organized by kinship based on a family model?

– Field doesn't know

↳ Organized hierarchically?

– Field doesn't know

Notes: Presumably, Di 帝 was considered the supreme deity, but a precise hierarchy is not specified in the text itself.

↳ Power of beings is domain specific?

– Field doesn't know

↳ Other organization of pantheon?

– Specify: Not specified in the text.

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

– Yes

Notes: Among the various mythological characters mentioned in the text are the three legendary rulers, Yao 堯, Shun 舜 and Yu 禹. The text refers both to their achievements and to family events related to their personal lives. For instance, several passages deal with Yu's management of the waters

and thus with the successful termination of the Great Flood. Just as we are informed about his wonderful birth from the belly of his father Gun 鯀. Similarly, the text refers to Yao marrying his daughters to Shun.

↳ Mixed human-divine beings can be seen?
– Field doesn't know

↳ Mixed human-divine beings can be felt?
– Field doesn't know

↳ Do mixed human-divine beings communicate with the living according to this text?
– Field doesn't know

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]: mythological characters; legendary kings.

Does the text guide divination practices?

– No

Notes: According to Field, there might be a verse in the text referring to divination by means of handling the shi 式, a divination tool known in English by the name of "cosmograph" or "diviner's board". This divination tool provides a cosmological model: it is made of a square stand, representing the earth, on which is mounted a round disk, representing the sky. In particular, Field refers to the following verse of the Tian wen: 天式從橫陽離爰死 (Field 1992).

Supernatural Monitoring

Is supernatural monitoring present in the text?

– Yes

↳ There is supernatural monitoring of prosocial norm adherence in particular
– No

↳ Do expectations of ritual offerings play a role in supernatural monitoring?
– Field doesn't know

Notes: A verse in the Tian wen mentions a meat sacrificial offering. In particular, a sacrifice of pork fat is offered to the supreme god Di 帝 who, in the end, is displeased by the offering: 何獻

蒸肉之膏而後帝不若? "then why when he offered the meat fat was Di displeased?"

- ↳ Supernatural being care about taboos
 - Field doesn't know
- ↳ Supernatural beings care about murder of coreligionists
 - Field doesn't know
- ↳ Supernatural beings care about murder of members of other religions
 - Field doesn't know
- ↳ Supernatural beings care about murder of members of other polities
 - Field doesn't know
- ↳ Supernatural beings care about sex
 - Field doesn't know
- ↳ Supernatural beings care about lying
 - Field doesn't know
- ↳ Supernatural beings care about honouring oaths
 - Field doesn't know
- ↳ Supernatural beings care about laziness
 - Field doesn't know
- ↳ Supernatural beings care about sorcery
 - Field doesn't know
- ↳ Supernatural beings care about non-lethal fighting
 - Field doesn't know
- ↳ Supernatural beings care about shirking risk
 - Field doesn't know
- ↳ Supernatural beings care about disrespecting elders

– Field doesn't know

↳ Supernatural beings care about gossiping

– Field doesn't know

↳ Supernatural beings care about property crimes

– Field doesn't know

↳ Supernatural beings care about proper ritual observance

– Field doesn't know

↳ Supernatural beings care about performance of rituals

– Field doesn't know

↳ Supernatural beings care about conversion of non-religionists

– Field doesn't know

↳ Supernatural beings care about economic fairness

– Field doesn't know

↳ Supernatural beings care about personal hygiene

– Field doesn't know

↳ Supernatural beings care about or expect the maintenance of the place?

– Field doesn't know

↳ Supernatural beings care about other

– Specify: none.

Do supernatural beings mete out punishment in the text?

– Yes

Notes: Di 帝, the supreme god known from Shang oracle bones inscriptions, sends down punishments and rewards to various characters referred to in the poem. For example, he punishes Gun 鯀, yet the reason for this punishment is unknown.

↳ Is the cause or agent of supernatural punishment known?

– No

↳ Is the reason for supernatural punishment known?

– No

↳ Supernatural punishments are meted out in the afterlife?

– Field doesn't know

↳ Supernatural punishments are meted out in this lifetime?

– Field doesn't know

Do supernatural beings bestow rewards in the text?

– Yes

Notes: Some of the supernatural entities referred to in the text appear to be capable of both punishing and rewarding. For example, in a verse, Heaven is said to both punish and reward: 天命反側何罰何佑.

↳ Is the cause/purpose of supernatural rewards known?

– No

↳ Supernatural rewards are bestowed out in the afterlife?

– Field doesn't know

↳ Supernatural rewards are bestowed out in this lifetime?

– Field doesn't know

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?

– No

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

– No

Are there centrally important virtues advocated by the text?

– No

Notes: A passage in the text refers to sages displaying the same virtues (聖人之一德), yet the virtues themselves are not better specified.

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

Notes: The text does not refer to any ritual practice involving suicide, but there is a reference to the suicide of a certain Bo Lin 伯林, whose name is unknown to tradition. According to the passage in the Tian wen, Bo Lin hanged himself.

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?

– Yes

↳ Are sacrifices specified by the text?

– Yes

↳ Animal sacrifice?

– Yes

↳ Human sacrifice?

– No

↳ Are there self-sacrifices specified by the text?

– No

↳ Are there material offerings present?

– No

↳ Is attendance to worship/sacrifice mandatory?

– Field doesn't know

↳ Is the maintenance of the place regulated by the text?

– No

Institutions & Production Environment of Text

Society & Institutions

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

– An empire

Notes: The transmitted version of the text has been compiled during the Eastern Han 東漢 (25 CE – 220 CE), yet the poem itself is attributed to Qu Yuan 屈原, a poet and state official of the state of Chu 楚 during the late Warring States period (5th century -221 BCE).

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

– Other

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

– Other

Notes: none.

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?

– No

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

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

– Yes

Notes: Education had been primarily restricted to males for centuries.

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

Notes: The text refers at several points to the myth of the Great Flood. This account deals with both the unsuccessful management by the father Gun 鯀 and the success of his son Yu the Great 大禹 in ruling the waters. Yu controlled the waters through the building and digging of ditches and canals, thereby eliminating the marshlands and tracing the limits of the nine lands, to which the text also refers.

Taxation

Does the text specify forms of taxation?

– No

Warfare

Does the text mention warfare?

– Yes

Notes: The text does not specify any warfare-related technique, but it refers to some particular battles.



Does the text dictate how to control an institutionalized military?

– No



Does the text restrict/advocate for participation in exogenous military organizations?

– No



Does the text celebrate/bemoan protection/subjugation by an exogenous military force?

– No

Food Production

Does the text mentioned food production/disbursement?

– No

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