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REVIEW ARTICLE

Warnings from History: A Comparative Study of the "Shiji jie" from the *Yi Zhoushu* and the "Wangzheng" Chapter from the *Han Feizi*

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Abstract

The close relationship between the "Shiji jie" (Exposition of Historical Records) chapter of the *Yi Zhoushu* (Remaining Zhou Documents) and the "Wangzheng" (Portents of Destruction) chapter of the *Han Feizi* has long been recognized, but prior to this, the precise nature of the connection has been unexplored. This article presents a comparative study structured around an annotated translation of these two texts. The "Shiji jie" describes how King Mu of Zhou fell asleep and dreamed of a set of instructions for how to avoid the mistakes made by other dynasties and states that led to their decline and fall. This "mirror for princes" text is thought to have inspired Han Fei to create his own version, which has traditionally been read as a series of abstract warnings, describing situations which could lead to disaster for the monarch. This article argues that what Han Fei was actually doing was presenting a series of riddles for the reader to guess, each of which alludes to a specific historical event. The "Wangzheng" thus reframes the "Shiji jie" in terms of both style and content, creating a new literary work.

Keywords: dynastic collapse; *Yi Zhoushu*; *Han Feizi*; riddles

Introduction

This article gives a translation and comparative analysis of two ancient Chinese texts—the "Shiji jie" 史記解 (Exposition of Historical Records) from the *Yi Zhoushu* 逸周書 (Remaining Zhou Documents), and the "Wangzheng" 亡徵 (Portents of Destruction)

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chapter from the *Han Feizi* 韓非子.[1] Both texts concern themselves with the decline and fall of dynasties and polities, and although the contents of these two works are quite different, their underlying themes, style of writing, and handling of catastrophic political upheavals are all strikingly similar. This has not escaped the attention of earlier scholars, a number of whom have drawn attention to the connections between the two, positing that the "Shiji jie" must have functioned as a model for the "Wangzheng."[2] However, since neither text has attracted further detailed analysis, the construction of the "Shiji jie," and the way in which the "Wangzheng" plays upon the tropes established in the earlier work have gone unstudied. These texts offer a case study of the use of negative examples in pre-unification Chinese rhetoric, as the authors list a series of disastrous situations with a view to admonishing the reigning monarch. However, while preserving the basic format of the "Shiji jie," Han Fei profoundly altered its purpose. Where the earlier text invited the monarch to identify problems in their own behavior lest they suffer the same fate as people in the past, the "Wangzheng" flattered the king by inviting him to identify problems in *other* rulers' behavior, so that he can take advantage of their failings.

Both the "Shiji jie" and the "Wangzheng" follow the traditional understanding that a good monarch strengthens the state while a bad monarch destroys it, but at the same time they critique simplistic understandings of this process by exploring the wide range of different scenarios in which regimes collapse, focusing mainly on the interpersonal relationships and character traits of members of the ruling elite.[3] There is a strong didactic message underpinning both texts, but one that addressed what the authors clearly believed were achievable goals—reducing one's own damaging behavior patterns in the "Shiji jie" and taking advantage of the weaknesses of others in the "Wangzheng." Accordingly, this article begins with an annotated translation of the "Shiji jie," in the course of which the author lists twenty-eight disastrous situations that resulted in rulers losing their states. Each set of circumstances is different, but they end with the same result. Almost all of these passages culminate in an epistrophe, in which the reader is informed that because of this situation, such-and-such a regime was destroyed (*yi wang* 以亡). This is followed by an annotated translation of the "Wangzheng," which describes forty-seven situations in which rulers lost (or did not lose) their states, and here, the epistrophe is consistently maintained, with each line ending with the same set phrase: thanks to such-and-such a situation the ruler (and by extension the country) "can be destroyed" (*kewang ye* 可亡也). The differing structure

[1]See Huang Huaixin 黃懷信, Zhang Maorong 張懋鎔, and Tian Xudong 田旭東, *Yi Zhoushu huijiao jizhu* 逸周書匯校集注 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji, 1995), 942–71 ("Shiji jie"); and Chen Qiyou 陳奇猷, *Han Feizi jishi* 韓非子集釋 (Beijing: Zhonghua, 1958), 267–83 ("Wangzheng") respectively. All subsequent references to the *Yi Zhoushu* and the *Han Feizi* will be taken from these two editions unless otherwise specified.

[2]See for example Chen Fengheng 陳逢衡, *Yi Zhoushu buzhu* 逸周書補註 (Beijing: Zhongguo shudian, 1988), 18.10a; and Ma Shinian 馬世年, *Han Feizi de chengshu ji qi wenxue yanjiu* 韓非子的成書及其文學研究 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji, 2011), 68.

[3]These texts do not consider economic, environmental, or social issues except in so far as they impact the personalities involved. Later similar lists, such as the medieval "Wangzheng" produced by Yu Shinan 虞世南 (558–638) and preserved in the *Beitang shuchao* 北堂書鈔 (Book Excerpts from the Northern Hall), do cover natural disasters and other similar regime-ending factors which have nothing to do with difficult interpersonal relationships or the character flaws of monarchs. See Kong Guangtao 孔廣陶, *Beitang shuchao jiaozhu* 北堂書鈔校註 (Tianjin: Tianjin guji, 1988), 42.150–51.

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of the final clause, as will be argued below, is due to the fact that the "Wangzheng" is deliberately constructed to be even more cryptic in its description of disastrous events than the "Shiji jie." The theory that the "Wangzheng" does not represent a discussion of abstract examples, but instead should be viewed as a series of riddles in which the author was referring to well-known historical events, was first proposed by Chen Qiyou 陳奇猷 in his *Han Feizi jishi* 韓非子集釋 (Collected Explanations of the *Han Feizi*) published in 1958.[4] The analysis in the final part of this article is intended to demonstrate that Chen Qiyou's argument is correct, and evidence is preserved in a number of ancient texts which can validate this theory.

"Shiji jie:" An Annotated Translation

維正月王在成周，昧爽召三公左史戎夫，曰：今夕朕寤，遂事驚予，乃取遂事之要戒，俾戎夫主之，朔望以聞。

In the first month, the king was at Chengzhou, and before it got light, he summoned the Three Dukes and the Scribe of the Left, Rongfu, to say: "This evening I have suddenly come to understand that the events of the past should be a warning to me. Let me select the important warnings [contained within] these past events, and appoint Rongfu to take charge of them, so that I may hear them on the first and fifteenth day [of every lunar month]."[5]

#1 信不行，義不立，則哲士淩君政禁而生亂，皮氏以亡。

Since trustworthy actions were not performed and righteousness was not established, clever men transgressed their lord's policies and prohibitions, giving rise to rebellion—because of this the Pi lineage was destroyed.[6]

[4]Nobody at the time seemed to take up this suggestion, and when Chen Qiyou published an updated version of his commentary in 2000, many of the suggestions for concrete historical events this chapter could be alluding to had been removed; see Chen Qiyou 陳奇猷, *Han Feizi xin jiaozhu* 韓非子新校注 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji, 2000), 300–316 ("Wangzheng"). This publication attracted much criticism for its errors and misattributions; see Zhang Jue 張覺, "Chen Qiyou *Han Feizi xin jiaozhu* weijiao weizhu chujie" 陳奇猷韓非子新校注僞校僞注初揭, *Zhongguo wenhua yanjiu* 中國文化研究 2005.1, 131–41; and Che Shuya 車淑婭, "Du *Han Feizi xin jiaozhu* zhaji" 讀韓非子新校注札記, *Guji zhengli yanjiu xuekan* 古籍整理研究學刊 2005.3, 67–70. In fact, there are also significant errors and misattributions in the notes to the 1958 edition; see Masayuki Sato, "Studies of the *Han Feizi* in China, Taiwan, and Japan," in Paul R. Goldin, ed., *Dao Companion to the Philosophy of Han Fei* (Dordrecht: Springer, 2013), 259–61. Nevertheless, Chen Qiyou's understanding of the text was extraordinarily deep.

[5]The "Shiji jie" does not give many clues as to the date of its composition, however, the monarch mentioned in this text has long been presumed to be King Mu of Zhou 周穆王 (r. 976/956–922/918 BCE), on the basis of a reference in the *Zhushu jinian* 竹書紀年 (Bamboo Annals): "In the twenty-fourth year [of the reign of King Mu], his majesty ordered the Scribe of the Left, Rongfu, to compose the *Records*" (二十四年, 王命左史戎夫作記); see Wang Guowei 王國維, *Jinben Zhushu jinian shuzheng* 今本竹書紀年疏證 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji, 1981), 247 ("Muwang" 穆王). Some scholars understand this to mean that the "Shiji jie" must genuinely be a Western Zhou dynasty text, in a tradition that goes back to the earliest known commentary to the *Yi Zhoushu*, produced by Kong Zhao 孔晁 during the Western Jin dynasty (266–316 CE); see Kong Zhao 孔晁, *Yi Zhoushu zhu* 逸周書注 (Beijing: Beijing daxue, 2018), 92 ("Shiji jie").

[6]This line is thought to refer to the destruction of the Pi lineage during the Xia dynasty mentioned in the *Zhushu jinian*, 209 ("Di Bujiang" 帝不降). The connection between these two references was apparently first made by Hu Yinglin 胡應麟, *Shaoshi shanfang bicong* 少室山房筆叢 (Shanghai: Shanghai shudian, 2009), *xubu* 戍部.34.340–41.

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#2 諂諛日近，方正日遠，則邪人專國政禁而生亂，華氏以亡。

Since slanderers and sycophants advanced day by day, while the upright were kept at a distance that increased daily, wicked men established a monopoly over the policies and prohibitions of the country, giving rise to rebellion—because of this the Hua lineage was destroyed.

#3 好貨財珍怪，則邪人進，邪人進，則賢良日蔽而遠，賞罰無位，隨財而行，夏后氏以亡。

Since [the ruler] loved riches and rarities, wicked men were promoted. Because wicked men were promoted, the wise and the good were daily eclipsed and kept at a distance. Rewards and punishments could not be trusted and were allocated in accordance with the bribes received—because of this the Xiahou lineage (Xia dynasty) was destroyed.[7]

#4 嚴兵而不口[8]者，其臣懾，其臣懾則不敢忠，不敢忠則民不親其吏，刑始於親，遠者寒心，殷商以亡。

Since [the ruler] was harsh to his troops and not [kind], his vassals were terrified.[9] Because his vassals were terrified, they did not dare to be loyal. As they did not dare to be loyal, people felt no affection for the officials [that governed them]. When punishments were first carried out on close relatives, those more distant were frightened—because of this the Yin-Shang [dynasty] was destroyed.[10]

#5 樂專於君者，權專於臣，權專於臣則刑專於民，君娛於樂，臣爭於權，民盡於刑，有虞氏以亡。

Pleasure was the sole preserve of the lord, and power the sole preserve of vassals.[11] Since power was the sole preserve of vassals, punishments were inflicted only upon the

[7]This translation follows the commentary by Ding Zongluo 丁宗洛, *Yi Zhoushu guanjian* 逸周書管箋, in Song Zhiying 宋志英 and Chao Yuepei 晁岳佩 eds., *Yi Zhoushu yanjiu wenxian jikan* 逸周書研究文獻輯刊 (Beijing: Guojia tushuguan, 2015), 6.270 which suggests that *wei* 位 (position) in the original text should be read as a graphic error for *xin* 信 (to trust).

[8]The missing character from this line has conventionally been understood as *ren* 仁 (kind), though some scholars have proposed the alternative *xu* 恤 (empathetic); see for example Tang Dapei 唐大沛, *Yi Zhoushu fenbian jushi* 逸周書分編句釋 (Taipei: Xuesheng, 1969), 3.129. The Tang dynasty manuscript of the "Shiji jie," found at Dunhuang, gives this clause as: "He who is harsh, overhasty, and untrustworthy" (嚴疾不信者); see Wang Jiguang 王繼光, "Dunhuang Tang xieben *Liutao* canjuan jiaoshi" 敦煌唐寫本六韜殘卷校釋, *Dunhuangxue jikan* 敦煌學輯刊 1994.6, 47.

[9]In this translation of the "Shiji jie," which concerns ruler-subordinate relations in remote antiquity or mythological time, *chen* 臣 will be translated as "vassal." Meanwhile in the *Han Feizi*, which appears to refer to events in the Eastern Zhou dynasty, *chen* will be translated as "minister," reflecting a more formalized administrative structure.

[10]The conclusion of this section has generally been understood to refer to the appalling punishments devised by the last king of the Shang, as described in texts such as Sima Qian 司馬遷, *Shi ji* 史記 (Beijing: Zhonghua, 1959), 3.105–8; Wang Xianqian 王先謙, *Xunzi jijie* 荀子集解 (Beijing: Zhonghua, 2008), 283 ("Yibing" 議兵); and He Ning 何寧, *Huainanzi jishi* 淮南子集釋 (Beijing: Zhonghua, 2006), 894 ("Daoying xun" 道應訓).

[11]Commentators seem to have ignored the question of whether 樂 in this section refers to music (*yue*) or to pleasures in general (*le*). Since a contrast is made with *quan* 權 (power), this translation follows the latter alternative.

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people. While the lord took delight in his pleasures, vassals vied for power, and the people suffered all the punishments—because of this the Youyu lineage was destroyed.[12]

#6 奉孤以專命者，謀主必畏其威而疑其前事，挾德而責數日疏，位均而爭，平林以亡。

Those who put a small child on the throne in order to gain sole control over the administration will be concerned that the monarch will inevitably fear their might and be suspicious of their previous deeds. Holding to their virtuous [self-image] and repeatedly complaining [about the ruler not rewarding them] will result in them becoming more estranged daily, while fighting because of their equal positions—because of this Pinglin was destroyed.[13]

#7 大臣有錮職譁誅者危。昔者質沙三卿，朝而無禮，君怒而久拘之，譁而弗加，譁[三][14]卿謀變，質沙以亡。

When senior vassals have jobs for life, those who just talk about executions will be in danger.[15] In the past, Zhisha had three vassals who came to court and did not behave with proper courtesy, so their lord became angry and imprisoned them for a long time. He debated [executing them] but did not actually do so, so the three vassals conspired to launch a coup—because of this Zhisha was destroyed.

#8 外內相閒，下撓其民，民無所附，三苗以亡。

Inside and out were alienated from one another,[16] [with superiors] disturbing the people below them, so that [the people] did not have anyone to rely on—because of this the Sanmiao were destroyed.[17]

[12]The Youyu lineage was founded by sage-king Shun 舜. Most surviving references speak of their simple, virtuous style of living and accordance with the rites; see for example Kong Yingda 孔穎達, *Liji zhengyi* 禮記正義 (Beijing: Beijing daxue, 1999), 1336 ("Jiyi" 祭義); and *Huainanzi*, 788–89 ("Qisu xun" 齊俗訓). The *Yi Zhoushu* chapter evidently draws upon a completely different tradition about these people.

[13]The translation of this somewhat convoluted phraseology is based upon the commentary on this line by Kong Zhao, *Yi Zhoushu zhu*, 93 ("Shiji jie"). This kind of crisis baulked large in the concerns of the Zhou elite, since many texts and bronze vessel inscriptions produced over the course of the centuries speak of it; see Edward L. Shaughnessy, "The Duke of Zhou's Retirement in the East and the Beginnings of the Ministerial–Monarch Debate in Chinese Political Philosophy," *Early China* 18 (1993), 41–72; and Constance A. Cook, *Ancestors, Kings, and the Dao* (Cambridge: Harvard University Asia Center, 2017), 255–60.

[14]In this line, the final *hua* 譁 is understood as a mistake for *san* 三 (three) in accordance with the commentary by Chen Fengheng, *Yi Zhoushu buzhu*, 18.15b ("Shiji jie").

[15]This is the first instance in this chapter of what becomes a regular pattern: a general statement is made followed by a specific example, introduced by the phrase *xizhe* 昔者 . . . "In the past . . . ".

[16]The Dunhuang manuscript version gives this line as: "Fine words were daily heard inside while evil words were heard abroad, so that those inside and outside could not hear each other" (美言日聞於內，惡言日聞於外，外內不相聞); see Wang Jiguang, "Dunhuang Tang xieben *Liutao* canjuan jiaoshi," 47.

[17]The Sanmiao people are mentioned in many ancient texts as rebelling against the rule of the sage-kings. Some accounts speak of the sages then attacking (*fa* 伐) or killing (*sha* 殺) them; see Zhu Zugeng 諸祖耿, *Zhanguo ce jizhu huikao* 戰國策集注匯考 (Nanjing: Fenghuang, 2008), 118 (Qince 秦策 1); and Yang Bojun 楊伯峻, *Mengzi yizhu* 孟子譯注 (Beijing: Zhonghua, 2007), 212 (9.3 "Wanzhang shang" 萬章上),

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#9 弱小在彊大之閒，存亡將由之，則無天命矣。不知命者死，有夏之方興也，扈氏弱而不恭，身死國亡。

When a small, weak [kingdom] is sandwiched between the strong and great, survival and destruction will depend on them, because it does not have the Mandate of Heaven. Those who do not understand the Mandate [of Heaven] will die. When the Youxia (Xia dynasty) was in the ascendant, the Hu lineage was weak and disrespectful, so they died, and their country was destroyed.[18]

#10 嬖子兩重者亡。昔者義渠氏有兩子，異母皆重，君疾，大臣分黨而爭，義渠以亡。

He who gives equal weight to his sons by two of his favorites will be destroyed. In the past, [the head of] the Yiqu lineage had two sons by different mothers, and he gave weight to both of them. The lord became sick, senior vassals split into factions and fought with one another—because of this Yiqu was destroyed.[19]

#11 功大不賞者危。昔平州之臣，功大而不賞，諂臣日貴，功臣日怒而生變，平州之君以走出。

He who does not reward great achievement will be in danger. In the past, a vassal of the Pingzhou [lineage] achieved great things and was not rewarded, while slanderous vassals were daily ennobled. The meritorious vassal was furious and fomented a coup,[20] and the lord of Pingzhou went into exile.[21]

#12 召遠不親者危。昔有林氏召離戎之君而朝之，至而不禮，留而弗親，離戎逃而去之，林氏誅之，天下叛林氏。

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respectively. Other traditions emphasize that the sages' virtue was so overwhelming that the Sanmiao were pacified without the need for a single weapon; see for example *Xunzi*, 463 ("Chengxiang" 成相); and Chen Qiyou 陳奇猷, *Lüshi chunqiu xin jiaoshi* 呂氏春秋新校釋 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji, 2002), 1265 ("Shangde" 上德).

[18]There is a reference to the Youhu lineage in the *Huainanzi*, 788 ("Qisu xun"), which states: "They were righteous but were destroyed, because they understood righteousness but did not understand appropriate action" (為義而亡, 知義而不知宜也). Some commentators on the *Yi Zhoushu* regard this passage as related to the same people, but others do not.

[19]According to the *Zhushu jinian*, 228 ("Wuyi" 武乙), in the thirtieth year of the reign of King Wuyi of the Shang dynasty 武乙帝 (r. 1146/7–1112 BCE?), the nascent Zhou regime attacked Yiqu and captured their lord alive. The later conflict between Qin and the Yiqu people described in *Shiji*, 110.2885, is unrelated to this passage.

[20]The character *ri* 日 (day) in the original text is here being read as a graphic error for *chen* 臣, in accordance with the commentary by Zhu Junsheng 朱駿聲 (1788–1858). However, Lu Wenchao 盧文弨 (1717–1796), following a reference preserved in Li Shan's 李善 (630–689) commentary on the *Wenxuan* 文選 (Selections of Refined Literature) argued that this line should be amended to read: "The vassal who had achieved [so much] was daily more furious" (*gongchen ri nu* 功臣日怒); for the original text see Li Shan 李善 et al., *Wenxuan zhu* 文選注 (Taipei: Zhongzheng, 1971), 36.494 ("Xuande huanghou ling" 宣德皇后令).

[21]The Dunhuang manuscript gives this final clause as: "his lordship then fled into exile—Pingzhou was destroyed" (君以出奔，平州以亡), following the standard pattern elsewhere in this chapter; see Wang Jiguang, "Dunhuang Tang xieben *Liutao* canjuan jiaoshi," 48. This is indicative of textual loss from the transmitted text of the "Shiji jie."

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He who summons people from a distance and does not behave in a friendly manner to them will be in danger. In the past, the Youlin lineage summoned the lord of the Lirong to make him pay court, but when he arrived, [the Youlin lineage] did not treat him with proper courtesy. When insisting that he stay, [the Youlin lineage] did not behave in a friendly manner.[22] The [lord of the] Lirong ran away, whereupon the Lin lineage executed him, and so All-Under-Heaven rebelled against the Lin.

#13 昔者曲集之君，伐智而專事，彊力而不信其臣，口[23]良皆伏，愉州氏伐之，君孤而無使，曲集以亡。

In the past, the lord of Quji was proud of his own intelligence and monopolized the business of government, strengthening his own authority while never trusting his vassals, until the [loyal] and good all hid themselves away.[24] When Yuzhou attacked them, his lordship was isolated and had nobody to employ—because of this Quji was destroyed.[25]

#14 昔者有巢氏有亂臣而貴，任之以國，假之以權，擅國而主斷，君已而奪之，臣怒而生變，有巢以亡。

In the past, the Youchao lineage had rebellious vassals that were ennobled; they were placed in charge of walled cities and given power. Once [these vassals] dominated their walled cities, the ruler was sequestered. His lordship took fright and tried to oust them, whereupon his vassals became angry and fomented a coup—because of this Youchao was destroyed.[26]

#15 斧小不勝柯者亡。昔有鄶君嗇儉，減爵損祿，羣臣卑讓，上下不臨，後口[27]小弱，禁罰不行，重氏伐之，鄶君以亡。

[22]Chen Fengheng, *Yi Zhoushu buzhu*, 18.18b ("Shiji jie"), suggests reading this line in connection with the *Zhushu jinian*, 242 ("Chengwang" 成王), which gives an account of the embassy of the Lirong 離戎 to King Cheng of Zhou 周成王 (r. 1042/1035–1006 BCE) in the thirtieth year of his reign. The association between these two texts was first made by Shen Yue 沈約 (441–513), who suggested in his commentary on this line of the *Zhushu jinian* that the Lirong's embassy was prompted by the Youlin lineage's attack on them.

[23]This missing character is generally agreed by all commentators to be *zhong* 忠 (loyal); see *Yi Zhoushu*, 955 ("Shiji jie"). The Dunhuang manuscript also gives *zhong* here; see Wang Jiguang, "Dunhuang Tang xieben *Liutao* canjuan jiaoshi," 48.

[24]The translation follows the commentary by Pan Zhen 潘振, *Zhoushu jieyi* 周書解義, in *Yi Zhoushu yanjiu wenxian jikan*, ed. Song Zhiying and Chao Yuepei, 2.314, in reading *fa* 伐 (to attack) as an error for *kua* 誇 (to be proud of). In addition, a number of early editions give *xin* 信 (to trust), instead of *jian* 賤 in the original text, which would seem to be a preferable reading.

[25]There is a related passage in Fan Ning 范寧, *Bowu zhi jiaozheng* 博物志校證 (Beijing: Zhonghua, 1980), 9.104, which speaks of the lord of the Yujiong clan 榆炯氏 and not the Quji, but the basic story is similar enough to suggest that the same events are under discussion.

[26]*Yi* 已 in the original text is being read as a graphic error for *ji* 忌 (to take fright), following the commentary by Liu Shipei, *Zhoushu buzheng*, 6.47. This line is also quoted, in a slightly garbled form, in the *Bowu zhi*, 9.104.

[27]Ding Zongluo, *Yi Zhoushu guanjian*, 274 suggests adding the character Kuai 鄶 here. Tang Dapei, *Yi Zhoushu fenbian jushi*, 3.135, proposed that the missing character was *jun* 君 (lord), which is confirmed by the Dunhuang manuscript; see Wang Jiguang, "Dunhuang Tang xieben *Liutao* canjuan jiaoshi," 48.

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He whose axe head is too small to dominate the handle will be destroyed. In the past the lord of Kuai was thrifty and frugal, reducing titles and cutting emoluments, so his vassals withdrew from him, and superior and inferiors ceased caring about each other.[28] Later on, [the lord] was reduced and impoverished, while prohibitions and punishments were not enacted. The Zhong lineage attacked them—because of this the lord of Kuai was destroyed.[29]

#16 久空重位者危。昔有共工自賢，自以無臣，久空大官，下官交亂，民無所附，唐氏伐之，共工以亡。

He who leaves weighty positions empty for a long time will be in danger. In the past, Gonggong believed himself to be wise and thought that he did not need any vassals, so he left important offices empty for a long time.[30] Junior officials got together to rebel, and the people did not have anyone to rely on. The Tang clan attacked him—because of this Gonggong was destroyed.

#17 犯難爭權疑者死。昔有林氏、上衡氏爭權，林氏再戰弗勝，上衡氏偽義弗克，俱身死國亡。

He who engages in a life-or-death power struggle without result will be killed. In the past, the Youlin and the Shangheng lineages fought for power. The Lin lineage did battle twice and were not victorious, while the Shangheng lineage acted in a righteous manner but could not defeat them, so both were killed and their countries destroyed.[31]

#18 知能均而不親，並重事君者危。昔有南氏有二臣貴寵，力鈞勢敵，競進爭權，下爭朋黨，君弗能禁，南氏以分。

When [two vassals] are equal in knowledge and ability, but antagonistic, and they are both given equal weight when serving the lord, he will be in danger. In the past, the Younan lineage had two vassals that were noble and favored, equal in authority and of similar might, who competed over promotion and fought for power, while amongst their subordinates, they vied [in building up] their factions. The lord did nothing to prevent this—because of this the Nan lineage [had their lands] partitioned.

[28]This line is quoted in "Wang Jipei" 汪繼培, *Qianfu lun jian* 潛伏論箋 (Beijing: Zhonghua, 1985), 414 ("Zhi shixing" 志氏姓), where these events are said to have inspired the composition of the ode "Gaoqiu" 羔裘; see Kong Yingda 孔穎達, *Mao Shi zhengyi* 毛詩正義 (Beijing: Beijing daxue, 1999), 459 (Mao 146).

[29]According to the *Zhushu jinian*, 193 ("Diku Gaoxinshi" 帝嚳高辛氏), "In the sixteenth year [of his reign], the ruler ordered the Zhong to lead an army to destroy Yukuai" (十六年, 帝使重帥師滅有鄶). This appears to refer to the same events.

[30]There are all sorts of references to Gonggong in classical Chinese literature, and some are mutually incompatible. It is not clear which is intended here. Hao Yixing 郝懿行, *Shanhai jing jianshu* 山海經箋疏 (Ji'nan: Qi-Lu, 2010), 16:4991, associates this line with a passage in the *Shanhai jing* 山海經 (Classic of Mountains and Seas), which records the location of the mountain where Yu attacked the kingdom of Gonggong (*you Yu gong Gonggong guoshan* 有禹攻共工國山). For the original text, see Yuan Ke 袁珂, *Shanhai jing jiaozhu* 山海經校注 (Chengdu: Ba-Shu, 1996), 443 ("Dahuang xijing" 大荒西經). He suggests that Yu was sent by the sage-king Yao 堯, that is the founder of the Tang lineage.

[31]This translation follows Wang Niansun 王念孫, *Dushu zazhi. Yi Zhoushu* 讀書雜志. 逸周書 (Shanghai: Saoye shanfang, 1924), 4:2b, in reading *wei* 偽 (to pretend) as *wei* 為 (to act).

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#19 昔有果氏好以新易故，故者疾怨，新故不和，內爭朋黨，陰事外權，有果氏以亡。

In the past, the Youguo lineage loved to exchange the old for the new, so the old guard got angry and could not get along with the new people, whereupon there was factional fighting inside the country and some secretly served foreign powers—because of this the Youguo lineage was destroyed.

#20 爵重祿輕，比口[32]不成者亡。昔有畢程氏，損祿增爵，羣臣貌匱，比而戾民，畢程氏以亡。

He who piles on titles while reducing emoluments, so that [recipients] cannot support [one character missing in the original text], will be destroyed. In the past, the Bicheng lineage reduced emoluments while they increased titles, so that vassals pretended to be reduced to poverty while in fact they were tormenting the people [for money]—because of this the Bicheng lineage was destroyed.

#21 好變故易常者亡。昔陽氏之君，自伐而好變，事無故業，官無定位，民運於下，陽氏以亡。

He who loves changing old norms and shifting long-established [appointees] will be destroyed. In the past, the lord of the Yang lineage was proud of himself for the way he loved changing things around, so nobody kept their old profession, his officials had no fixed positions, and people kept moving around below—because of this the Yang lineage was destroyed.

#22 業形而愎者危。昔穀平之君，愎類無親，破國弗克，業形用國，外內相援，穀平以亡。

He who is cruel and enacts mutilation punishments will be in danger.[33] In the past, the lord of Guping was cruel and ruthless, but in crushing the country he could not conquer it entirely, so he governed the state by enacting mutilation punishment. Inside and out helped each other—because of this Guping was destroyed.

#23 武不止者亡。昔阪泉氏用兵無已，誅戰不休，并兼無親，文無所立，智士寒心，徙居至于獨鹿，諸侯叛之，阪泉以亡。

He who fights without ever stopping will be destroyed. In the past, the Banquan lineage used their military ceaselessly, executing people and fighting battles without rest, ruthlessly swallowing up [other states]. The civil arts had no place among them and clever men of honor felt bitterly disappointed, whereupon they moved to live as

[32]Various suggestions have been proposed for this missing character including *min* 民 (people) and *ming* 名 (reputation), but there is no consensus; see *Yi Zhoushu*, 962 ("Shiji jie"). In the Tang dynasty manuscript from Dunhuang, this line is given as a statement: "When titles are weighty and emoluments light, this situation is unsustainable" (爵重祿輕，因此不成); see Wang Jiguang, "Dunhuang Tang xieben *Liutao* canjuan jiaoshi," 48.

[33]Here, *xing* 形 is being read as *xing* 刑 (mutilation punishments) following Pan Zhen, *Zhoushu jieyi*, 2.319. In the Dunhuang manuscript, this first instance of *yexing* 業刑 is instead given as *fuxing* 郭刑, which does not make sense. However, below, the phrase *yexing yongguo* 業形用國 from the "Shiji jie" is written as *fanxing yongguo* 繁刑用國 (he governed the state through a plethora of mutilation punishments); see Wang Jiguang, "Dunhuang Tang xieben *Liutao* canjuan jiaoshi," 49.

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far away as Dulu, and the other aristocrats rebelled against them—because of this, Banquan was destroyed.

#24 佷而無親者亡。昔者縣宗之君佷而無聽，執事不從，宗職者疑發大事，羣臣解體，國無立功，縣宗以亡。

He who is violent and unfriendly will be destroyed. In the past the lord of Xianzong was violent and intransigent, not following [the advice of] his officials. Those in charge of administration were afraid of undertaking anything major, and his vassals became isolated from him, so that there was no way for his country to achieve anything—because of this Xianzong was destroyed.

#25 昔者玄都賢鬼道，廢人事天，謀臣不用，龜策是從，神巫用國，哲士在外，玄都以亡。

In the past, Xuandu honored the way of ghosts, abandoning humankind to serve Heaven. They did not employ strategic advisors but followed [divinations by] turtle-shell and milfoil. Spirit shamans were employed in the country while wise men of honor were left out—because of this Xuandu was destroyed.[34]

#26 文武不行者亡。昔者西夏性仁非兵，城郭不脩，武士無位，惠而好賞，財□而無以賞，唐氏伐之，城郭不守，武士不用，西夏以亡。

He who does not put into practice the civil and military arts will be destroyed.[35] In the past, the Xixia were benevolent by nature and opposed to weapons, so their city walls and ramparts were not repaired, and their army officers did not have positions of status. They were kind and liked to give out rewards. Then they ran out of money and did not have a means to reward [people]. The Tang lineage attacked them, their walls and ramparts were undefended, and their army officers were not employed—because of this Xixia was destroyed.[36]

#27 美女破國。昔者績陽彊力四征，重丘遺之美女，績陽之君悅之，熒惑不治。大臣爭權，遠近不相聽，國分為二。

Beautiful women ruin the country. In the past, Jiyang was strong and campaigned in all four directions. Zhongqiu gave them beautiful women, and the lord of Jiyang was delighted with them, as he was seduced into not governing well.[37] His senior vassals

[34]This section is quoted almost verbatim in the *Bowu zhi*, 9.104.

[35]Yu Yue 俞樾, *Qunshu pingyi* 群書平議 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji, 1995), 7.118, argues that since this entire passage is about the failure to institute military arts, the character *wen* 文 (civil) in the opening line was superfluous and should be omitted. However, the commentary by Kong Zhao, *Yi Zhoushu zhu*, 95 ("Shiji jie") states: "Their nature was benevolent, but lacking in civil virtues; they thought fighting wrong, and did not make military preparations" (性仁而無文德, 非兵而無武備), which suggests that the concept of *wen* may be integral to understanding this section of the text.

[36]The final line of this section is quoted with minimal alteration in the *Bowu zhi*, 9.104.

[37]The belief that beautiful women could seduce men to their doom was widely held in ancient China, and indeed makes an appearance in military strategy; for example, the *Liutao* 六韜 (Six Secret Teachings) gives twelve civil methods to attack a country, of which the twelfth is: "present beautiful women and lascivious music in order to bewitch [the monarch]" (進美女淫聲以惑之). See Chen Xi 陳曦, *Liutao yizhu* 六韜譯注 (Beijing: Zhonghua, 2016), 112 ("Wutao" 武韜. "Wenfa" 文伐).

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fought for power, and those near and far did not listen to him, so his country was divided into two.[38]

#28 宮室破國。昔者有洛氏，宮室無常，池囿廣大，工功日進，以後更前。民不得休，農失其時，饑饉無食，成商伐之，有洛以亡。

Palaces ruin the country. In the past, the Youluo lineage's palaces were constantly being altered, with vast lakes and extensive grounds, with the fine work required increasing day by day, as what had been done before was changed afterwards.[39] The people were not able to rest, farmers missed the seasons [for their labor], causing a famine in which there was no food. Chengshang attacked them—because of this Youluo was destroyed.[40]

Contextualizing the "Shiji jie"

The "Shiji jie" is a kind of mirror for princes—a didactic text aimed at members of the ruling elite, which in this case was intended to remind readers of bad rulers whose example they should avoid because it led to the downfall of the regime.[41] Accordingly, this text adopts a format in which the reader—in the first instance the Zhou monarch—is instructed that in the past, an individual ruler or polity behaved in a certain stupid, ill-advised, or malevolent way, with the result that they were destroyed. This text covers twenty-eight such historical instances, which do not appear to be arranged chronologically; in fact, if there is a logic to the ordering of these examples, it is not readily apparent. The introduction suggests that this list was created by King Mu of Zhou, who became enlightened as to the importance of the lessons of the past and wished to avoid the behaviors of negative models.[42] Each of the events referenced in the "Shiji jie" is in the form of an encapsulated tale, in which longer and more complicated narratives with many participants have been condensed until all that is

[38]This section is cited, in an abridged form, in the *Bowu zhi*, 9.104, but the country concerned is named as Qingyang 清陽 rather than Jiyang.

[39]In this translation, *gonggong* 工功 is understood as a mistake for *qiaogong* 巧工 (fine work), following the commentary by Sun Yirang 孫詒讓, *Zhoushu jiaobu* 周書斠補 (Beijing: Zhonghua, 2010), 281 ("Shiji jie").

[40]The *Zhushu jinian*, 213 ("Digui" 帝癸) speaks of one of the many military campaigns attributed to the last monarch of the Xia dynasty, also known as Jie 桀: "In the twenty-first year [of his reign], the Shang commanded a campaign against the Youluo and conquered them" (二十一年, 商帥征有洛, 克之). It is possible that this refers to the same events as the "Shiji jie." This section is also quoted in the *Bowu zhi*, 9.104, where the attackers who destroyed Youluo are identified as the Shang, rather than Chengshang.

[41]This characterization follows the analysis given by Qiao Zhizhong 喬志忠, "Lun Zhongguo gudai de zhengzhi lishiguan" 論中國古代的政治歷史觀, *Tianjin shehui kexue* 天津社會科學 2011.6, 142–49, who notes that unlike other *shu* 書 which provide highly focused admonitions against specific issues, the "Shiji jie" is aimed at training rulers to recognize a wide range of destructive patterns. For a cross-cultural perspective on this genre; see Noëlle-Laetitia Perret and Stéphane Péquignot, eds., *A Critical Companion to the 'Mirrors for Princes' Literature* (Leiden: Brill, 2022).

[42]Interestingly, in the bronze vessel inscription found on the "Shi Qiang pan" 史牆盤, King Mu of Zhou is associated with learning from positive models as well; see Shirakawa Shizuka 白川靜, *Kinbun tsūshaku* 金文通釋, vol. 6 (Kobe: Hakutsuru bijutsukan 1962), 335–66; and Zhongguo shehui kexueyuan kaogu yanjiusuo 中國社會科學院考古研究所 comp., *Yin-Zhou jinwen jicheng shiwen* 殷周金文集成釋文, vol. 6 (Hong Kong: Chinese University of Hong Kong Press, 2001), 132–33.

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left are the key markers allowing the reader to identify the story under discussion.[43] The way this process works can be illustrated by considering the text of #4:

> 嚴兵而不仁者，其臣懾，其臣懾則不敢忠，不敢忠則民不親其吏，刑始於親，遠者寒心，殷商以亡。
>
> #4 Since [the ruler] was harsh to his troops and not [kind], his vassals were terrified. Because his vassals were terrified, they did not dare to be loyal. As they did not dare to be loyal, his people felt no affection for the officials [that governed them]. When punishments were first carried out on close relatives, those more distant were frightened—because of this the Yin-Shang [dynasty] was destroyed.[44]

The "Shiji jie" here describes the fall of the Shang dynasty in terms of a series of causal inferences, focusing on what the author believed to be the most salient issues, without naming King Zhou 紂王, Da Ji 妲己, Prince Bigan 王子比干, or any of the senior officials in the regime supposedly tortured and killed by the last Shang king, nor indeed the future Kings Wen 周文王 and Wu of Zhou 周武王 who eventually triumphed over him and established their own dynasty. The reader was expected to recognize the much more complicated background narrative and key individuals concerned, unpacking the details for themselves. This kind of encapsulation was a highly effective rhetorical tool known from many different transmitted and excavated materials. But today, such writings can be hard to understand, particularly in cases where knowledge of the underlying legends or historical events has not been transmitted. This is certainly a problem with the "Shiji jie," which mentions numerous situations which are otherwise unrecorded in the transmitted or recovered traditions. Fortunately, this text is closely related to the *Zhushu jinian* 竹書紀年 (Bamboo Annals),[45] which not only records the composition of the "Shiji jie" itself, but also references the events mentioned in at least six sections (21 percent) out of the twenty-eight.[46] The connection between these two texts needs more study but offers some tantalizing hints as to the history of transmission of this chapter of the *Yi Zhoushu*. First, however, it is worth emphasizing that the "Shiji jie" is clearly

[43]The concept of "encapsulation" is taken from Sarah Allan, *Buried Ideas: Legends of Abdication and Ideal Government in Early Chinese Bamboo-Slip Manuscripts* (New York: State University of New York Press, 2015), 80–82. This is a very useful term to describe such references where all but the most important identifying information has been stripped from a legend or historical account to reduce it to essentials.

[44]*Yi Zhoushu*, 948 ("Shiji jie").

[45]Here I am following the analysis of both Edward L. Shaughnessy, *Rewriting Early Chinese Texts* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2006), 178; and Robin McNeal, *Conquer and Govern: Early Chinese Military Texts from the Yi Zhou shu* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2012), 77–78, who argue that the version of the text supposedly found with the *Zhushu jinian* in the tomb of King Xiang of Wei in 279 CE was different from the text which has been transmitted to the present day, with the commentary by Kong Zhao.

[46]In fact, Bi Shuchun 畢庶春, "*Yi Zhoushu* pianti zhi jie kaolun" 逸周書篇題之解考論, *Liaodong xueyuan xuebao (Shehui kexueban)* 遼東學院學報 (社會科學版) 19.6 (2017), 25–42, devotes considerable space to demonstrating the close connection between the whole *Yi Zhoushu* and the *Zhushu jinian*, not just the "Shiji jie" chapter, comparing this to the relationship between the *Chunqiu* 春秋 (Spring and Autumn Annals) and its "commentary," the *Zuozhuan* 左傳 (Zuo's Tradition).

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textually corrupt, with the transmitted text known to be missing a number of characters. In addition to that, it is entirely possible that the disruption to the regular rhetorical pattern within some sections is the result of further textual loss. As a result, it is difficult to know whether the problems scholars have today with recognizing some of these encapsulated tales are because they have been damaged out of all recognition, or because they are simply not recorded in other writings available to us. Despite these issues, the connection between the "Shiji jie" and the *Zhushu jinian* remains readily observable and is too prominent a feature of the text to be coincidental.

The date of compilation of the *Yi Zhoushu* as a whole remains highly controversial, with Huang Huaixin 黃懷信, the current doyen of *Yi Zhoushu* studies in China, arguing that the reign of King Jing of Zhou 周景王 (r. 532–520 BCE) forms a *terminus post quem* for what may have been a lengthy and complex process.[47] Meanwhile, Edward L. Shaughnessy supports a two-stage process of compilation, with a core text of thirty-two chapters compiled in the late fourth to early third century BCE; and a second expanded recension compiled sometime around the first century BCE, which included material both earlier and later than the core text.[48] The "Shiji jie" is itself also controversial in dating, with scholars such as Liu Wenying 劉文英 arguing that this chapter should be understood as a genuine court document written during the reign of King Mu of Zhou, because that is what it says in the *Zhushu jinian*; she does not believe that King Mu was a sufficiently well-known ruler in later times to have inspired further literary commemoration.[49] Meanwhile, Luo Jiaxiang 羅家湘, by analogy with other texts in the *Yi Zhoushu* which focus on giving admonitions and advice, dates this chapter to the early Spring and Autumn period.[50] However, both these perspectives fail to give full attention to the significance of the Jizhong 汲冢 tomb finds, where the *Zhushu jinian* was discovered in what was believed to be the tomb of King Xiang of Wei 魏襄王 (r. 335–319 BCE) in 279 CE.[51] It was found together with the *Mu Tianzi zhuan* 穆天子傳 (Tale of Mu, the Son of Heaven), which describes the travels of King

[47]Huang Huaixin, "*Yi Zhoushu* shidai kaolüe" 逸周書時代考略, *Xibei daxue xuebao* 西北大學學報 1990.1, 111–17. This analysis is based upon the fact that the *Yi Zhoushu* texts cover from the period of King Wu to the reign of King Jing—hence, while some of the individual sections may be older, they cannot have been compiled together until after the sixth century BCE.

[48]Edward L. Shaughnessy, "I Chou shu," in *Early Chinese Texts: A Bibliographical Guide*, ed. Michael Loewe (Berkeley: Society for the Study of Early China and Institute of East Asian Studies, 1993), 230–32. This understanding of the development of the text is based upon the work of Huang Peirong 黃沛榮, *Zhoushu Zhouyuepian zhucheng de shidai ji youguan san zheng wenti de yanjiu* 周書周月篇著成的時代及有關三正問題的研究 (Taipei: Guoli Taiwan daxue wenxueyuan, 1972).

[49]Liu Wenying 劉文英, "*Yi Zhoushu* 'Shiji jie' jianxi" 逸周書 '史記解' 淺析, *Shixue yuekan* 史學月刊 2015.6, 125–28. This is a particularly odd assertion given that King Mu was demonstrably a popular literary subject, and many writings about him survive.

[50]Luo Jiaxiang 羅家湘, *Yi Zhoushu yanjiu* 逸周書研究 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji, 2006), 15–20.

[51]This discovery is described in Fang Xuanling 房玄齡, *Jinshu* 晉書 (Beijing: Zhonghua, 1974), 51.1432–33. See also Zhu Xizu 朱希祖, *Jizhong zhushu* 汲冢竹書 (Beijing: Zhonghua, 1960); Kenji Ozawa 小沢賢二, "Kyūchō chikusho saikou" 汲冢竹書再考, *Chūgoku kenkyū shūkan* 中國研究季刊 42 (2006), 1–28; and Zhou Shucan 周書燦, "Jizhong zhengsong yu liushijian zhenwei zhi bian" 汲冢爭訟與流失簡真僞之辨, *Zhejiang shehui kexue* 浙江社會科學 2021.7, 136–43. Meanwhile Ren Naihong 任乃宏, "Jizhong zhuren xinkao: Jianji *Mu Tianzi zhuan* de zuozhe yu shidai" 汲冢主人新考: 兼及穆天子傳的作者與時代,

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Mu of Zhou around his realm and beyond, indicative of a longstanding textual tradition in which this monarch was of particular interest. The *Mu Tianzi zhuan* has been the subject of a great deal of research, which has demonstrated that the core of this text must be genuinely ancient, given that it correctly records the names of many individuals also mentioned in contemporary bronze vessel inscriptions.[52] Furthermore, the fact that a Warring States individual was buried with multiple manuscripts of writings focused on King Mu strongly suggests a cultural context in which he continued to be an important figure. This does not mean that the "Shiji jie" cannot be a Western Zhou dynasty text, but it significantly complicates attempts to date it based upon the popularity or otherwise of its supposed creator.

The *Zhushu jinian—Mu Tianzi zhuan—Yi Zhoushu* group represents a corpus in which King Mu of Zhou is represented very positively. As has been argued by Zhao Fengrong 趙奉蓉, this is a very distinctive understanding of his rule (which was elsewhere universally depicted as ruinous), and hence does not correspond with other ancient transmitted texts.[53] Within this corpus, the *Zhushu jinian* and "Shiji jie" together represent a unique view of the past, which seems to have been part of the intellectual milieu eventually associated with the Wei 魏 ruling house whose lineage is recorded in the final sections of the *Zhushu jinian*. In this vision of the history of the Central States, reference is made to polities and individuals which are totally different from what may be termed the mainstream tradition, found in the *Chunqiu*, *Zuozhuan*, *Guoyu* 國語 (Tales of the States), and *Shiji* 史記 (Records of the Grand Historian), and which is alluded to in the works of masters such as Confucius 孔子, Mencius 孟子, Xunzi 荀子 and so on. While there was some crossover and variation, in the sense that the *Zhushu jinian* describes some events that also appear in the mainstream tradition, and the "Shiji jie" mentions happenings that are not recorded in the *Zhushu jinian*, these texts, together with other parts of the *Yi Zhoushu* and the *Mu Tianzi zhuan* seem to represent a discrete intellectual lineage, which had its roots back in the Western Zhou dynasty. Much more research is needed to elucidate the relationships between these writings and analyze the distinctive tradition of thought that they embody.

Handan xueyuan xuebao 邯鄲學院學報 27.4 (2017), 61–65, considers new theories about the tomb occupant in the light of subsequent textual discoveries.

[52]Edward L. Shaughnessy, "The *Mu Tianzi zhuan* and King Mu Bronzes," *Bulletin of the Jao Tsung-I Academy of Sinology* 1 (2014), 55–75.

[53]Zhao Fengrong 趙奉蓉, "Qianqian zai wei, zhuiji Wen Wu: *Yi Zhoushu* zhong de Zhou Muwang xingxiang" 虔虔在位, 追跡文武: 逸周書中的周穆王形象, *Lilun jie* 理論界 2008.8, 129–31. This analysis focuses on the "Shiji jie" chapter, together with the "Zhaigong jie" 祭公解 (Exposition on the Duke of Zhai) and "Zhifang jie" 職方解 (Exposition on Regional Officials), which also concern King Mu. Research in the "Zhaigong jie" chapter has significantly increased following the publication of a related manuscript, "Zhaigong zhi guming" 祭公之顧命 (The Duke of Zhai's Retrospective Command), from Tsinghua University's collection of looted bamboo strips; see Qinghua daxue chutu wenxian yanjiu yu baohu zhongxin 清華大學出土文獻研究與保護中心, ed., *Qinghua daxue zhanguo zhujian* 清華大學戰國竹簡, vol. 1 (Shanghai: Zhongxi, 2010), 174–75. For research on these texts see, for example, Chen Yingfei 陳穎飛, "Qinghua jian Zhaigong yu Xi-Zhou Zhaishi" 清華簡祭公與西周祭氏, *Jianghan kaogu* 江漢考古 2012.1, 100–106; Huang Tiantian 黃甜甜, "You Qinghua jian sanpian lun *Yi Zhoushu* zai houshi de gaidong" 由清華簡三篇論逸周書在後世的改動, *Zhonghua wenshi luncong* 中華文史論叢 2016.2, 229–44; and Edward L. Shaughnessy, *The Tsinghua University Warring States Bamboo Manuscripts: Studies and Translations 1. The Yi Zhou Shu and Pseudo-Yi Zhou Shu Chapters* (Beijing: Tsinghua University Press, 2023).

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Creating the "Wangzheng"

It has long been recognized not just that the "Wangzheng" is closely related to the "Shiji jie," but that the *Han Feizi* as a whole is a significant source of information about the early reception of the *Yi Zhoushu*. The "Nanshi" 難勢 (On the Difficulties of Utilizing Advantages) chapter of the *Han Feizi* quotes a line from the "Wujing jie" 寤儆解 (Exposition on Distress on Awakening) of this text; while the "Shuilin" 說林 (Forest of Persuasions) chapters twice include quotations explicitly attributed to the *Zhoushu* which are not found in the present text.[54] However, unlike some other parts of the *Han Feizi*, the "Wangzheng" has not received a great deal of academic attention, and there has been no detailed analysis of how this text developed and differed from the earlier work. This is a particularly striking lacuna, given that there has been much confusion over how to distinguish the text now known as the *Yi Zhoushu* (originally *Zhoushu*) from a different text of the same name discovered in the Ji Commandery tomb alongside the *Zhushu jinian*, *Mu Tianzi zhuan* and others.[55] Given that Han Fei based his work upon the "Shiji jie," this chapter cannot possibly have come from a cache of bamboo manuscripts that was not discovered until some five centuries after his death.

To date, analysis of the "Wangzheng" has focused almost entirely on its authenticity; although there have been a few dissenting voices, most scholars have agreed that it is genuinely written by Han Fei.[56] When the dating of the "Wangzheng" is considered, it has usually been placed late in his oeuvre.[57] This chapter opens with

[54]This first textual parallel is considered in Huang Huaixin 黃懷信, *Yi Zhoushu yuanliu kaobian* 逸周書源流考辨 (Xi'an: Xibei daxue, 1992), 6. In the Han dynasty, the catalogue of the imperial library records that the *Zhoushu* consisted of seventy individual chapters (*pian* 篇); see Ban Gu 班固, *Han shu* 漢書 (Beijing: Zhonghua, 1962), 30.1705. The transmitted version contains fifty-nine, making it entirely possible Han Fei was quoting from one of these lost chapters. The importance of the *Han Feizi* for preserving evidence of the authenticity of the received text of the *Yi Zhoushu* is emphasized in Robin McNeal, "The Body as Metaphor for the Civil and Martial Components of Empire in the *Yi Zhou shu*, Chapter 32, With an Excursion on the Composition and Structure of the *Yi Zhou shu*," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 122.1 (2002), 47.

[55]For studies of what is known of the contents of the Jizhong *Zhoushu* text; see Wang Lianlong 王連龍, "Tan Jizhong *Zhoushu* yu *Yi Zhoushu*: Cong chutu wenxian yanjiu kan gushu xingcheng he liuchuan wenti" 談汲冢周書與逸周書: 從出土文獻研究看古書形成和流傳問題, *Zhongyuan wenhua yanjiu* 中原文化研究 2014.4, 104–11; and "Jizhong *Zhoushu* kao" 汲冢周書考, *Guji zhengli yanjiu xuekan* 古籍整理研究學刊 2005.1, 14–19.

[56]For discussions of the "Wangzheng" as an authentic text; see Liang Qixiong 梁啓雄, *Hanzi jianjie* 韓子箋解 (Beijing: Zhonghua, 2009), 6; and Ma Shinian 馬世年, *Han Feizi de chengshu ji qi wenxue yanjiu* 韓非子的成書及其文學研究 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji, 2011), 68. Zhou Xunchu 周勛初, *Han Feizi zhaji* 韓非子札記 (Nanjing: Jiangsu renmin, 1980), 101–107, gives a detailed analysis of the language in this chapter in the context of the rest of the *Han Feizi*, again pointing to its authenticity. Meanwhile, Rong Zhaozu 容肇祖, *Han Feizi kaozheng* 韓非子考證 (Taipei: Tailian guofeng, 1972), 60; and E. Bruce Brooks, "The Present State and Future Prospects of Pre-Han Text Studies," *Sino-Platonic Papers* 46 (1994), 24, suggest that the "Wangzheng" dates to the very early Western Han dynasty. In both cases, the assertion of a later date seems to be made on highly speculative grounds, and Pan Zhonggui 潘重規, "Han Fei zhushu kao" 韓非著述考, in Xianggang daxue zhongwenxi 香港大學中文系, ed., *Xianggang daxue wushizhounian jinian lunwen ji* 香港大學五十周年紀念論文集, vol. 2 (Hong Kong: Xianggang daxue zhongwenxi, 1966), 85–107, provides a comprehensive rebuttal of Rong Zhaozu's contentions.

[57]Zheng Liangshu 鄭良樹, *Han Fei zhi zhushu ji sixiang* 韓非之著述及思想 (Taipei: Taiwan xuesheng, 1993), 141–52. The commentary by Chen Qiyou on riddles #5 and #25 suggests that the former concerns the Zhao–Qin wars, which took place during the reign of King Daoxiang of Zhao 趙悼襄王 (r. 244–236 BCE),

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forty-seven short descriptions of dangerous or unstable political situations, each of which concludes with an epistrophe.[58] At the end of the chapter, the author offers an explanation of the underlying theme he has been developing, stating that the circumstances that he has just outlined would in each case render a country vulnerable to attack, and that it should be entirely possible for a competent ruler to unify the Central States by taking advantage of the turmoil unleashed by such events. This aspect of the text situates the "Wangzheng" part of a long tradition of writings, focused on recognizing the subtle signs of imminent problems, which can lead to a perspicacious observer obtaining significant political or military advantage.[59] *Zheng* 徵 or "portents" were not an important theme in Han Fei's writings, though he does elsewhere occasionally make reference to the idea that the seeds of disaster could be recognized in advance.[60] However, in general, the *Han Feizi* rarely mentions portents except when ridiculing the credulity of those who believed in esoteric techniques for divining the future.

As with the "Shiji jie," the "Wangzheng" was intended as a mirror for princes. Han Fei played an important role in establishing this genre in China, when he explicitly compared the importance of texts as a mechanism for rectifying behavior to the role of the mirror in rectifying appearance.[61] However, the relationship between these two chapters goes deeper than literary style and genre. In a number of instances, the disastrous situations described in the "Wangzheng" are identical to those in the "Shiji jie," for all that the details are entirely different in the two texts (see Table 1). This should not be perceived as a reflection on the historicity of the events discussed in either text, for problems like government corruption and ministers quarreling amongst themselves arose repeatedly over the course of the centuries, and disasters were regularly caused by rulers possessed of weak, cruel, or violent characters. Instead, what is important to note here is the significant thematic overlap between these two texts: though it depends somewhat on how strongly the association is made, even a conservative comparison between these texts suggests that some two thirds (64 percent) of the disastrous situations described in the "Shiji jie" are also found in the "Wangzheng." To put it another way, since the "Wangzheng" provides

and the latter Lord Chunshen 春申君 (d. 238 BCE); see *Han Feizi*, 273n9; and 277n46 respectively. If these attributions are correct and this text does indeed refer to events in the 230s BCE, "Wangzheng" must be a very late work, given that Han Fei died in 233 BCE.

[58]The importance of repetition as a rhetorical device in this chapter is considered in Zhang Cangshou 章滄授, "Lun Han Feizi sanwen de shuoli yishu" 論韓非子散文的說理藝術, *Fuyang shiyuan xuebao (Shekeban)* 阜陽師院學報 (社科版) 1987.2, 54.

[59]The belief that evidence about coming events was ready and waiting, but could only be accessed and utilized by careful observers of subtle signs, is a theme in many pre-Qin Masters' texts; see Albert Galvany, "Signs, Clues and Traces: Anticipation in Ancient Chinese Political and Military Texts," *Early China* 38 (2015), 151–93. The vocabulary used, particularly *guan* 觀 (to observe) is analyzed in Wu Zhongwei 吳忠偉, "Lun guan: Dui Xian-Qin dianji yujing zhong guan gainian de kaocha" 論觀: 對先秦典籍語境中觀概念的考察, *Kong Meng yuekan* 孔孟月刊 38.1 (1999), 22–27. Indeed, rulers are specifically warned of the negative consequences of having other people identify their hidden character-flaws in the "Guanxing" 觀行 (Observing Acts) chapter of the *Han Feizi*, which can be viewed as an intellectual counterpoint to the "Wangzheng."

[60]See for example *Han Feizi*, 284 ("Sanshou" 三守); and 1001 ("Bajing" 八經).

[61]*Han Feizi*, 479 ("Guanxing" 觀行).

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Table 1. A thematic comparison between "Shiji jie" and "Wangzheng"

	"Shiji jie"	"Wangzheng"
bribery	3	7
harsh punishments	4	26
ministers too powerful	5	39
ruler enthroned young	6	29
delayed punishment causes panic	7	35
a weak state sandwiched by stronger ones	9	13
multiple favored sons	10	34
merit unrewarded	11	45
ruler doesn't respect expertise of others	13	18
failure to oust rebels	14	33
multiple senior ministers too powerful	18	24
titles given too readily	20	46
change for change's sake	21	27
ruler is bellicose	23	28
ruler is violent	24	32
ruler is superstitious	25	5
ruler is kind and weak	26	42
ruler overspends on his palaces	28	4

much more detailed and extensive coverage of potential problems, at least eighteen portents of destruction (37.5 percent) are situations also found in the "Shiji jie." This is indicative of the way in which Han Fei took not only the form but also thematic inspiration from his source.

As with the "Shiji jie," the "Wangzheng" deals exclusively with the problems faced by rulers and was intended to be read by monarchs. Given what is known of Han Fei's career, if it is correct that this text was indeed written late in his career, that probably means it was addressed to the future First Emperor of China, then Ying Zheng, King of Qin 秦王嬴政 (r. 247–221 BCE as king; r. 221–210 BCE as emperor).[62] The current transmitted text of the *Han Feizi* includes a memorial addressed to the king of Qin, and Sima Qian claims that the "Shuinan" 說難 (On the Difficulties of Persuasion) and "Gufen" 孤憤 (Solitary Anger) were written while Han Fei was imprisoned in Qin, so there is nothing intrinsically unlikely in the idea that other writings might

[62]The sole source of Han Fei's biography is the *Shiji*. This claims that although a prince of the kingdom of Han, he was ignored by the ruler there. However, ultimately he was sent as an ambassador to Qin, who held him captive and then executed him; see Sima Qian 司馬遷, *Shiji* 史記 (Beijing: Zhonghua, 1959), 6.232; and 63.2145–48.

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also have been produced during this period.[63] In his framing of the "Wangzheng," Han Fei relied upon his reader(s) being sufficiently well-educated that they would recognize the precise terms in which these events are described, call to mind the entire, complex narrative, and then remember whether or not, in the end, this did indeed lead to destruction.

Reading the "Wangzheng" as a series of riddles that Han Fei has set the future First Emperor profoundly changes our understanding of this text. The king of Qin seems to have been very difficult to work for—if it is correct that Li Si 李斯 (d. 208 BCE) developed the formulation *meisi* 昧死 (risking death) to express his respect towards his monarch even in contexts where he was not implying the slightest hint of criticism, then the future First Emperor clearly required exceptionally careful handling from his court.[64] Although not known for his love of riddles (unlike some other monarchs in the Spring and Autumn and Warring States periods),[65] as an admirer of Han Fei's writings, the future First Emperor would presumably have enjoyed the erudition shown, and noted the advice given, even if he did not necessarily intend to make use of it.[66] The king of Qin may also have been fully aware of the fact that the "Wangzheng" was modeled upon the "Shiji jie" and enjoyed the conceit that this text now framed him as superior to the Zhou kings of high antiquity.

An Annotated Translation of the "Wangzheng"

#1 凡人主之國小而家大，權輕而臣重者，可亡也。

When the ruler's capital is small while the estates of his nobles are large; when his authority is light while that of his ministers is weighty—he can be destroyed.[67]

[63]See *Han Feizi*, 29–30 ("Cun Han" 存韓); and *Shiji*, 130.3300, respectively.

[64]Li Si's role in creating this self-deprecating expression is considered in Yuri Pines, "From Teachers to Subjects: Ministers Speaking to the Rulers, from Yan Ying 晏嬰 to Li Si 李斯," in *Facing the Monarch: Modes of Advice in the Early Chinese Court*, ed. Garret P. S. Olberding (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2013), 94–99. During the Han dynasty, *meisi* was understood as an expression dating to the time of the unification of China; see Enno Giele, *Imperial Decision-Making and Communication in Early China: A Study of Cai Yong's Duduan* (Wiesbaden: Harrasowitz, 2006), 92–94. This term also appears in excavated Qin administrative documents; see for example Chen Wei 陳偉, *Liye Qin jiandu jiaoshi* 里耶秦簡牘校釋 (Wuhan: Wuhan daxue, 2012), 376.

[65]For example, King Zhuang of Chu 楚莊王 (r. 613–591 BCE) was explicitly described as "loving riddles" (*haoyin* 好讔). See *Lüshi chunqiu*, 1166 ("Zhongyan" 重言). The same characteristic, termed "delighting in riddles" (*xiyin* 喜隱), is also attributed to King Wei of Qi 齊威王 (r. 356–320 BCE) in *Shiji*, 126.3197.

[66]The king of Qin's admiration for two pieces by Han Fei—"Gufen" and "Wudu" 五蠹 (Five Vermin)—is mentioned in *Shiji*, 63.2155.

[67]*Guo* 國, here, could refer to either the country as a whole or to just the capital city. An almost identical line can also be found in the *Yin Wenzi* 尹文子; see Wang Kailuan 王愷鑾, *Yin Wenzi jiaozheng* 尹文子校正 (Shanghai: Shanghai shudian, 1996), 25 ("Dadao xia" 大道下), which describes six portents of good or evil. This is the portent that the country will be destroyed (*wang guo* 亡國). The dating of the *Yin Wenzi* is highly contentious; see Zhou Shan 周山, "*Yin Wenzi* fei wei xi" 尹文子非僞析, *Xueshu yuekan* 學術月刊 1983.10, 33–37; Dong Yingzhe 董英哲, "Yin Wenzi zhenwei ji qi xuepai guishu kaobian" 尹文子真僞機器學派歸屬考辨, *Xibei daxue xuebao* 西北大學學報 1997.3, 93–98; and Chen Riqing 陳日青, "*Yin Wenzi* zhi yanjiu" 尹文子之研究 (MA thesis, Guoli Zhongyang daxue, 2003). Since this book may have been

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#2 簡法禁而務謀慮，荒封內而恃交援者，可亡也。

When [the ruler] cares naught for laws and prohibitions and puts all his efforts into plots and schemes; when he lays waste to his realm and relies on others to come to his assistance—he can be destroyed [Lord Mu of Lu 魯穆公 (r. 415–377 BCE)].[68]

#3 羣臣為學，門子好辯，商賈外積，小民右仗者，可亡也。

When ministers act upon their learning and their sons enjoy debate;[69] when merchants accumulate wealth elsewhere and the common people bear arms—[the country] can be destroyed.[70]

#4 好宮室臺榭陂池，事車服器玩，好罷露百姓，煎靡貨財者，可亡也。

When [the ruler] loves his palace with its towers and belvederes, embankments and ponds, embellishing his chariots and costumes, trinkets and fancies; when he enjoys the thought that he is exhausting and impoverishing the common people, and burning through resources—he can be destroyed [Lord Kang of Qin 秦康公 (r. 620–609 BCE)].[71]

#5 用時日，事鬼神，信卜筮，而好祭祀者，可亡也。

When [the ruler] acts only on auspicious days, serving the ghosts and spirits and trusting in divination by oracle bone and milfoil, loving sacrifices and ceremonies—he can be destroyed [King Daoxiang of Zhao 趙悼襄王 (r. 244–236 BCE)].

compiled as late at the early medieval period, it is possible this line represents a quotation from the *Han Feizi* and not the other way around. The analysis of Lukáš Zádrapa, "Linguistic Affinities of the *Yinwenzi* Text in the Light of Basic Corpus Data," in *The Gongsun Longzi and Other Neglected Texts: Aligning Philosophical and Philological Perspectives*, ed. Rafael Suter, Lisa Indraccolo, and Wolfgang Behr (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2020), 347–96, strongly suggests this is a late Han to early medieval text.

[68]Chen Qiyou's commentary in *Han Feizi*, 270n2 associates this story with Lord Mu of Lu, as described in the "Shuilin" 說林 (Forest of Persuasions) chapter. His lordship sent his sons to serve in Jin and Chu, only to be warned that this would be no help to him: "If someone were to go to Yue to find a person to save their drowning child, the child would die no matter how good at swimming the people of Yue are. If there were a conflagration and you went to the sea for water, the fire would not be put out regardless of how much water can be found there. Distant water cannot save you from nearby fires. Now Jin and Jing are both powerful states, but Qi is close. If Lu gets into trouble, they will not be able to save it!" (假人於越而救溺子, 越人雖善遊, 子必不生矣。失火而取水於海, 海水雖多, 火必不滅矣, 遠水不救近火也。今晉與荊雖強, 而齊近, 魯患其不救乎？); see *Han Feizi*, 434 ("Shuilin shang").

[69]This translation follows Kong Yingda 孔穎達, *Zhouli zhengyi* 周禮正義 (Beijing: Beijing daxue, 1999), 489–90 ("Xiao Zongbo" 小宗伯) in understanding *menzi* 門子 as designating the sons of a minister and his principal wife. The same term can be found in *Zuozhuan*, 968 (Xiang 9).

[70]In the case of the third admonition, commentators have offered very different interpretations of the term *wai* 外 (elsewhere). Ōta Kata 太田方, *Kan Pishi yokuzei* 韓非子翼毳 (Shanghai: Zhongxi, 2014), 181, understands this as referring simply to private wealth. Zhang Jue 張覺, *Han Feizi jiaoshu xilun* 韓非子校疏析論 (Beijing: Zhishi chanquan, 2011), 242, interprets this as meaning outside the state coffers, but it could equally mean that the merchants have wealth stored abroad where it cannot be taxed.

[71]The commentary by Wang Xianshen, *Han Feizi jijie*, 116, reads *lu* 露as *lu* 潞, meaning "to weaken." However, the binome *balu* 罷露 meaning "exhausted and impoverished" is well attested in ancient Chinese texts; see for example Li Xiangfeng 黎翔鳳, *Guanzi jiaozhu* 管子校注 (Beijing: Zhonghua, 2004), 195 ("Wufu" 五輔); and *Zhanguo ce*, 288 ("Qince" 3).

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#6 聽以爵不待參驗，用一人為門戶者，可亡也。

When [the ruler] listens to people according to their rank and does not wait for proof; when he uses only a single person as a conduit for information—he can be destroyed [Lord Jing of Qi 齊景公 (r. 547–490 BCE) or King Kuai of Yan 燕王噲 (r. 320–318 BCE)].

#7 官職可以重求，爵祿可以貨得者，可亡也。

When official positions can be demanded by the weighty; when titles and emoluments can be purchased with cash—[the country] can be destroyed.

#8 緩心而無成，柔茹而寡斷，好惡無決，而無所定立者，可亡也。

When [the ruler] is lazy and nothing is ever achieved; when he is weak-willed and indecisive; when his likes and dislikes are never settled and he does not have fixed opinions—he can be destroyed.

#9 饕貪而無饜，近利而好得者，可亡也。

When [the ruler] is greedy and never satisfied, when he is only interested in profit and cares for nothing but personal gain—he can be destroyed [Yao, Earl of Zhi 智伯瑤 (d. 453 BCE)].

#10 喜淫而不周於法，好辯說而不求其用，濫於文麗而不顧其功者，可亡也。

When [the ruler] takes delight in excessive [speech] and refuses to be bound by the law; when he enjoys fine rhetorical arguments without demanding that they be practicable, steeping himself in fine literary flourishes without any concern for how [these ideas] might be successful—he can be destroyed.[72]

#11 淺薄而易見，漏泄而無藏，不能周密，而通羣臣之語者，可亡也。

When [the ruler] is shallow and superficial, telling everything to everyone, so that information leaks out and nothing can be kept hidden; when it is impossible to keep secrets because he communicates his ministers' words to all and sundry—he can be destroyed.

#12 很剛而不和，愎諫而好勝，不顧社稷而輕為自信者，可亡也。

When [the ruler] is stubborn and unpleasant, incapable of being conciliatory, ignoring remonstrance and wanting victory [at all costs]; when he pays no attention to

[72]Some editions of the text give the opening of this line as *xi yinxing* 喜淫刑 . . . (When [the ruler] takes delight in excessive punishments . . .” The term *yinxing* is found in a number of ancient texts; see for example Yang Bojun 楊伯峻, *Chunqiu Zuozhuan zhu* 春秋左傳注 (Beijing: Zhonghua, 1981), 403 (Xi 23). However, this translation follows the commentary by Wang Xianshen, *Han Feizi jijie*, 117, who interprets *yin* as short for *yinci* 淫辭 (excessive speech). *Yinci* also appears in a number of pre-Qin texts, such as Yang Bojun, *Mengzi yizhu*, 62 (3.2 “Gongsun Chou shang” 公孫丑上); and 155 (6.9 “Teng Wengong xia” 滕文公下), and this entire section is concerned with problems of language, not punishments.

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the state altars, recklessly displaying his self-confidence—he can be destroyed [Lord Huan of Qi 齊桓公 (r. 685–643 BCE)].[73]

#13 恃交援而簡近鄰，怙強大之救，而侮所迫之國者，可亡也。

When [the ruler] relies on assistance from [distant] allies while treating near neighbors with contempt; when he trusts in receiving help from great and powerful kingdoms while despising those nearby—he can be destroyed [King Xuanhui of Han 韓宣惠王 (r. 332–312 BCE)].

#14 羈旅僑士，重帑在外，上閒謀計，下與民事者，可亡也。

When [the ruler] provides an abode for foreign men of honor, greatly enriching them [but with that wealth] held abroad; when they are allowed to join in strategic in planning [with the ruler] above, and they participate in matters involving the people below—[the country] can be destroyed.

#15 民信其相，下不能其上，主愛信之而弗能廢者，可亡也。

When the people trust the prime minister, and subjects believe their monarch is incompetent; when the ruler loves and trusts [the prime minister] and hence is not able to get rid of him—[the country] can be destroyed [King Kuai of Yan].

#16 境內之傑不事，而求封外之士，不以功伐課試，而好以名問舉錯，羈旅起貴以陵故常者，可亡也。

When gentlemen from inside the borders are left unemployed while [the ruler] wants only foreign men of honor; when [the ruler] does not test and evaluate people according to their achievements but likes to promote them purely on the basis of their reputations; when those from abroad are raised to the nobility to the detriment of long-serving [local] officials—[the country] can be destroyed [Shang Yang 商鞅 (d. 338 BCE) and Wu Qi 吳起 (440–381 BCE)].[74]

#17 輕其適正，庶子稱衡，太子未定而主即世者，可亡也。

When [the monarch] treats his legitimate heir lightly and his sons by secondary consorts hold the balance of power; when no Crown Prince has yet been appointed but the ruler has already passed away—[the country] can be destroyed.[75]

#18 大心而無悔，國亂而自多，不料境內之資而易其鄰敵者，可亡也。

When [the ruler] is arrogant and fails to learn from his mistakes, so that even as the country falls into chaos, he is making much of his own achievements; when he does

[73]The opening clauses of this line are quoted together with part of riddle #34 in the summing up of the official biography of Yuan Shao 袁紹 (d. 202 CE); see Fan Ye 范曄, *Hou Hanshu* 後漢書 (Beijing: Zhonghua, 1965), 74B.2425.

[74]Chen Qiyou's interpretation of this riddle is most peculiar, for he understands it as pertaining to ministers and not rulers. Perhaps this would better be read as referring to Shang Yang's patron, Lord Xiao of Qin 秦孝公 (r. 361–338 BCE), and Wu Qi's patron, King Dao of Chu 楚悼王 (r. 401–381 BCE).

[75]*Chengheng* is here understood as a synonym for *tiheng* 提衡 (to hold the balance of power), terms also found in other chapters of this text; see for example *Han Feizi*, 87 ("Youdu" 有度); 307 ("Shixie" 飾邪); and 1006 ("Bajing").

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not calculate the resources available within his borders but lightly provokes neighboring enemy [states]—he can be destroyed [King Zhaoxiang of Qin 秦昭襄王 (r. 306–251 BCE)].

#19 國小而不處卑，力少而不畏強，無禮而侮大鄰，貪愎而拙交者，可亡也。

When a country is small but does not occupy a humble position; when its authority is weak and yet it does not fear the powerful; when [the ruler] is rude and humiliates great neighbors, and he proves greedy, arrogant, and stupid in choosing his allies—he can be destroyed [King Fuchai of Wu 吳王夫差 (r. 495–473 BCE)].

#20 太子已置，而娶於強敵以為后妻，則太子危，如是，則羣臣易慮，羣臣易慮者，可亡也。

When the Crown Prince has already been established but [the ruler] marries a second wife from a powerful enemy, the Crown Prince is in danger; if this happens ministers will change their plans. When ministers change their plans—[the country] can be destroyed.

#21 怯懾而弱守，蚤見而心柔懦，知有謂可，斷而弗敢行者，可亡也。

When [the ruler] is timorous and lacks the courage of his convictions, so that even if he sees [a problem] early on, he is too weak and fearful [to deal with it]; when he knows what to do and says it can be done, and yet having made his decision does not dare to carry it out—he can be destroyed.

#22 出君在外而國更置，質太子未反而君易子，如是則國攜，國攜者，可亡也。

If an exiled lord lives abroad and the country establishes a different ruler; or if the hostage Crown Prince does not return and the lord changes [the succession] to another of his sons; should this happen, the country will find its loyalties divided.[76] When the country has divided loyalties—it can be destroyed [Lord Dao of Cao 曹悼公 (r. 523–515 BCE)].

#23 挫辱大臣而狎其身，刑戮小民而逆其使，懷怒思恥而專習則賊生，賊生者，可亡也。

When [the ruler] humiliates a senior minister by having an affair with his wife; when he subjects ordinary people to mutilating punishments and torture while making himself odious to his officials, so that they must devote themselves to his service with anger alive in their hearts and remembering every insult, it will give rise to traitors.[77] When traitors arise—[the country] can be destroyed [Lord Zhuang of Qi 齊莊公 (r. 553–548 BCE)].

[76]*Xie* 攜 (to lift) is glossed as meaning *er* 貳 or "disloyal" (here understood as "divided loyalties") in the commentary by Chen Qiyou; see *Han Feizi*, 277n41.

[77]Here, *xia* 狎 is being translated in accordance with the commentary by Tsuda Hōkei 津田鳳卿, *Kan Pishi kaiko zensho* 韓非子解詁全書, in Yan Lingfeng 嚴靈峰, ed., *Wuqiubeizhai Han Feizi jicheng* 無求備齋韓非子集成 (Taipei: Chengwen, 1980), 5.251.

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#24 大臣兩重，父兄眾強，內黨外援以爭事勢者，可亡也。

When two senior ministers hold equal weight; when [the ruler's] uncles and brothers are numerous and strong, using factions inside the state and assistance from abroad to fight for political control—[the country] can be destroyed [Lord Jian of Qi 齊簡公 (r. 484–481 BCE)].

#25 婢妾之言聽，愛玩之智用，外內悲惋而數行不法者，可亡也。

When the words of maids and concubines are listened to, and the schemes of favorites are employed; when those inside the court and out hate each other and repeatedly resort to illegal actions—[the country] can be destroyed [Lord Chunshen of Chu 楚春申君 (d. 238 BCE) and Lord Huan of Qi].

#26 簡侮大臣，無禮父兄，勞苦百姓，殺戮不辜者，可亡也。

When [the ruler] despises and humiliates senior ministers, treating his uncles and older brothers without proper respect; when he makes the common people suffer, torturing and killing the innocent—he can be destroyed [Lord Ling of Zheng 鄭靈公 (r. 605 BCE); Lord Zhao of Lu 魯昭公 (r. 541–510 BCE); Lord Kang of Qin; and Viscount Xian of Han 韓獻子 (r. 573–566 BCE)].

#27 好以智矯法，時以行褋公，法禁變易，號令數下者，可亡也。

When [the ruler] likes to change the law in accordance with what seems good to his mind; when he often damages what is in the public good by his actions, putting the laws and prohibitions into a state of constant flux, while commands and orders are issued repeatedly—he can be destroyed.[78]

#28 無地固，城郭惡，無畜積，財物寡，無守戰之備而輕攻伐者，可亡也。

When there are no fastnesses in his territory and the inner and outer walls are in ruins, and [the ruler] does not have stores or much wealth, and has made no preparations for defense, yet still recklessly attacks others—he can be destroyed.

#29 種類不壽，主數即世，嬰兒為君，大臣專制，樹羈旅以為黨，數割地以待交者，可亡也。

When none among the ruling family live long and monarchs have repeatedly died young so that a babe in arms becomes lord, with senior ministers in complete control; when they bring in foreigners to build up their factions and repeatedly partition off land in order to generate allies—[the country] can be destroyed.

[78]As noted by Paul Goldin, "Han Fei's Doctrine of Self-interest," *Asian Philosophy* 11 (2001), 151–59; and Jin Yinrun 金銀潤, "Xian-Qin fajia gong sixiang tanxi: Yi *Han Feizi* wei zhongxin" 先秦法家公思想探析: 以韓非子爲中心, *Lilun jie* 理論界 2014.1, 53–58, the common good (*gong* 公) was frequently conflated by Han Fei with what was good for the ruler personally. However, in this instance, a clear separation is being maintained between what the ruler gets up to and what is in the general interest of the state and its people.

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#30 太子尊顯，徒屬眾強，多大國之交，而威勢盉具者，可亡也。

When the Crown Prince is honored and admired; when his supporters are numerous and powerful; when he has many allies among great states, and his authority and might have been established prematurely—[the country] can be destroyed [King Mu of Chu 楚穆王 (r. 625–614 BCE)].

#31 變褊而心急，輕疾而易動發，心悁忿而不訾前後者，可亡也。

When [the ruler] is excitable and overemotional, is easily upset and quickly moved to precipitate action; when he is constantly angry and does not consider the consequences—he can be destroyed.

#32 主多怒而好用兵，簡本教而輕戰攻者，可亡也。

When the ruler frequently indulges in fits of rage and enjoys deploying his troops; when he thinks agricultural labor is easy and makes light of fighting battles—he can be destroyed.[79]

#33 貴臣相妒，大臣隆盛，外藉敵國，內困百姓，以攻怨讎，而人主弗誅者，可亡也。

When noblemen are envious of each other and senior ministers flourish, getting support from enemy states abroad while at home they force the common people to attack their enemies, and yet the ruler does not execute them—[the country] can be destroyed [Lord Jian of Qi].

#34 君不肖而側室賢，太子輕而庶子伉，官吏弱而人民桀，如此則國躁，國躁者，可亡也。

When the lord is stupid but junior members of the ruling house are clever; when the Crown Prince is treated lightly but his half-brothers by junior consorts are powerful;[80] when government officials are weak, but the people are strong: this results in the country becoming destabilized. If the country is destabilized—it can be destroyed.

#35 藏怒而弗發，懸罪而弗誅，使羣臣陰憎而愈憂懼，而久未可知者，可亡也。

When [the ruler] hides his anger and does not release it; when he suspends punishments and does not proceed with executions, ensuring that his ministers secretly hate him as they feel ever more terrified, and this situation persists for a long

[79]As is common in early Chinese texts, *ben* 本 (which literally means "root") was used to refer to the fundamental occupation of agricultural labor; see Ōta Kata, *Kan Pishi yokuzei*, 188.

[80]When part of this line is quoted in the *Hou Hanshu*, 74B.2425, it is given as: "when sons born to the main wife are treated lightly but his half-brothers by junior consorts are given weight, this is what is called a portent of destruction" (嫡子輕而庶子重, 斯之謂亡徵).

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time without [the ministers] knowing [what will happen to them]—he can be destroyed [Lord Zhao of Zheng 鄭昭公 (r. 697–695 BCE)].[81]

#36 出軍命將太重，邊地任守太尊，專制擅命，徑為而無所請者，可亡也。

When the generals employed to conduct a campaign are given too much weight; when the governors appointed to guard the borders are too honored, to the point that they have sole control and can write their own orders, doing exactly as they please without having to ask permission from anyone—[the country] can be destroyed.

#37 后妻淫亂，主母畜穢，外內混通，男女無別，是謂兩主，兩主者，可亡也。

When the queen is debauched or the dowager has affairs, that means proper distinction is not maintained between the harem and the outside world and segregation is not observed between men and women. This is called having two rulers and if there are two rulers—[the country] can be destroyed.

#38 后妻賤而婢妾貴，太子卑而庶子尊，相室輕而典謁重，如此則內外乖，內外乖者，可亡也。

When the queen is despised and maids and concubines treated as noble; when the Crown Prince is ignored and his brothers by junior consorts honored; or when the Prime Minister is treated lightly while petitions clerks are given weight; if this happens relationships between those inside and outside the palace may be strained, and if these relationships are strained—[the country] can be destroyed.[82]

#39 大臣甚貴，偏黨眾強，壅塞主斷而重擅國者，可亡也。

When senior ministers are greatly ennobled and their supporters become numerous and strong; when they block [all conduits of information] so as to sequester the ruler, thereby establishing a double hold over the country—it can be destroyed.

#40 私門之官用，馬府之世【絀】，鄉曲之善舉，官職之勞廢，貴私行而賤公功者，可亡也。

When officials are employed on the basis of their service to ministerial households while the descendants of meritorious houses are spurned; when men are promoted on the basis of a good reputation back in their hometown while the achievements of officials [already employed in the government] are ignored, so that private action is considered noble while achievements for the public good are regarded as mean—[the country] can be destroyed.[83]

[81]This translation follows the explanation of this line given by Tsuda Hōkei, *Kan Pishi kaiko zensho*, 5.252: "ministers are suspicious and frightened, for they do not know whether they will be executed or not" (羣臣疑懼而不知誅否).

[82]The term *dianye* 典謁, here translated as "petitions clerks," literally refers to those junior officials who organized applications from visitors who wanted to meet with the ruler; see Ōta Kata, *Kan Pishi yokuzei*, 189.

[83]Not all editions of the *Han Feizi* include the word *chu* 絀 (to spurn); see for example Wang Xianshen, *Han Feizi jijie*, 112.

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#41 公家虛而大臣實，正戶貧而寄寓富，耕戰之士困，末作之民利者，可亡也。

When the ruling house is just an empty shell and senior ministers hold actual power; when those who stay at home are poor but those who go abroad get rich; when men who perform agricultural labor or military service suffer as speculators reap the profits—[the country] can be destroyed.[84]

#42 見大利而不趨，聞禍端而不備，淺薄於爭守之事，而務以仁義自飾者，可亡也。

When [the ruler] sees a very advantageous opportunity and does not seize it; when he hears of disaster and makes no preparations to counter it; when he is negligent and uninterested about matters pertaining to attack and defense but makes every effort to gain praise for being benevolent and righteous—he can be destroyed [Lord Xiang of Song 宋襄公 (r. 650–643 BCE)].

#43 不為人主之孝，而慕匹夫之孝，不顧社稷之利，而聽主母之令，女子用國，刑餘用事者，可亡也。

If [the ruler] does not act with the filial piety of a monarch, but instead admires the filial piety shown by ordinary persons, so that he pays no attention to what would benefit the altars of soil and grain, but just listens to the orders of the dowager queen; when women are employed in the government of the country and eunuchs are involved in politics—[the country] can be destroyed [Lord Huan of Qi].[85]

#44 辭辯而不法，心智而無術，主多能而不以法度從事者，可亡也。

Skilled in rhetoric but unable to keep within the bounds of the law, clever but lacking in craft; when the ruler is highly capable but cannot conduct himself with moderation—he can be destroyed.

#45 親臣進而故人退，不肖用事而賢良伏，無功貴而勞苦賤，如是則下怨，下怨者，可亡也。

When new vassals are promoted and faithful old servants of the throne thrust into the background; when the stupid are employed in the government of the country while the clever and good are passed over; when those who have achieved nothing are ennobled while the hardworking are left to bitter poverty: if this happens, subordinates

[84]*Mozuo* 末作 is often understood to refer to merchants. However, this term was clearly highly pejorative, and mostly referred not to ordinary businessmen, but those engaged in immoral (if not outright illegal) speculation. Such usage can also be found in texts such as the *Guanzi*, 924–25 ("Zhiguo" 治國); and *Shiji*, 30.1430.

[85]The belief that people in different social positions should display their filial piety differently can also be found in the *Xiaojing* 孝經 (Classic of Filial Piety); see Li Longji 李隆基 and Xing Bing 邢昺, *Xiaojing zhushu* 孝經注疏 (Beijing: Beijing daxue, 1999), 5–18. For a translation of this section; see Henry Rosemont Jr. and Roger T. Ames, *The Chinese Classic of Family Reverence: A Philosophical Translation of the Xiaojing* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2009), 106–8. It is on the basis of this line that Rong Zhaozu, *Han Feizi kaozheng*, 60 attributed this entire chapter to the early Western Han. The translation of *xingyu* 刑餘 (literally: "the remnants left after mutilating punishment") as "eunuchs" follows the commentary by Chen Qitian 陳啓天, *Han Feizi jiaoshi* 韓非子校釋 (Shanghai: Shanghai shudian, 1996), 142.

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will seethe with resentment.[86] If subordinates become resentful—[the country] can be destroyed.

#46 父兄大臣祿秩過功，章服侵等，宮室供養太侈，而人主弗禁，則臣心無窮，臣心無窮者，可亡也。

When the titles and emoluments offered to male members of the ruling house and senior ministers exceeds their achievements, and their dress and accoutrements encroach upon those of higher rank; when their palaces and style of life are too extravagant, and the ruler does nothing to prevent this, ministers find their desires unchecked. If ministers find their desires unchecked—[the country] can be destroyed [Lord Huan of Qi].

#47 公婿公孫與民同門，暴傲其鄰者，可亡也。

When the ruler's in-laws and grandchildren live alongside ordinary people and treat them with brutality and arrogance—[the country] can be destroyed.

亡徵者，非曰必亡，言其可亡也。夫兩堯不能相王，兩桀不能相亡，亡王之機，必其治亂、其強弱相踦者也。木之折也必通蠹，牆之壞也必通隙。然木雖蠹，無疾風不折；牆雖隙，無大雨不壞。萬乘之主，有能服術行法以為亡徵之君風雨者，其兼天下不難矣。

These are portents of destruction. I am not saying [such monarchs] will definitely be destroyed; I am saying that it is a possibility. Were there to be two Yaos, they could not both be kings together; were there to be two Jies, they could not destroy each other. The crux of whether they are destroyed or rule as kings lies in their ability to pacify the forces of chaos and manage their respective strengths and weaknesses. Wood that has been broken will be attacked by insects; a wall that has tumbled down will be riddled with cracks. However, even if the wood is wormed, it will not break except in a howling gale; even though the wall is cracked, it will not crumble unless there is heavy rain. If amongst the rulers of great states there was one who could use his mastery of statecraft and upholding of the rule of law to turn himself into the kind of gale or rain that can afflict lords who have experienced portents of destruction, it would not be difficult for him to unite All-Under-Heaven.

The "Wangzheng" Riddles

Riddling was an extremely important part of rhetoric in early China, and many examples are cited and explained in transmitted texts.[87] This form of playing with

[86]A number of commentators on this line have suggested that *qin* 親 (close) should be read as *xin* 新 (new); see for example Ōta Kata, *Kan Pishi yokuzei*, 191; Tsuda Hōkei, *Kan Pishi kaiko zensho*, 5.254; and Wang Xianqian, *Han Feizi jijie*, 120. This would bring this passage into accordance with #19 and #21 in the "Shiji jie" which condemn the ruler for promoting people simply because they are new and fresh to him, regardless of their competency to perform their tasks.

[87]An example is the riddle of the great bird that does not fly or sing, which is given in *Lüshi chunqiu*, 1166 ("Zhongyan"); *Han Feizi*, 412–13 ("Yulao" 喻老); and Shi Guangying 石光瑛, *Xinxu jiaoshi* 新序校釋 (Beijing: Zhonghua, 2009), 271–76 ("Zashi" 雜事 2). Xunzi wrote a series of poetic riddles which are

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language has also attracted academic attention.[88] Riddles were important in so hierarchical and unequal a society as that of the Warring States period because they provided a mechanism for those in a subordinate position to criticize those in power without offending them, for by solving the riddle that had been proposed, the monarch was encouraged to feel pleased with themselves and receptive to advice which if presented less tactfully, was likely to be unpalatable. Riddling was also used in a wide variety of mantic practices, so this rhetoric appears widely within early writings connected to divination and prophecy.[89] In particular, glyphomancy or *chaizi* 拆字 is a form of riddling that has a history that stretches back to at least the time of the Zhou dynasty.[90] The connection made in antiquity between riddling and divination is particularly relevant for understanding the format of the "Wangzheng," for as the title of this chapter suggests, its contents refer to portents of destruction. Interpreting this as a prophetic text is strongly reinforced by the author's choice of riddles to convey this information.

In proposing his solutions to different riddles, Chen Qiyou has made certain assumptions that need to be questioned. First, he believed that one person can be the answer to multiple riddles: accordingly, Lord Huan of Qi is proposed as the answer to riddles #12, #25, #43, and #46. Secondly, some riddles are given multiple possible answers; for example, he suggested four different solutions to riddle #26. In addition, for three riddles, Chen Qiyou suggested that the answer was an individual who is not otherwise mentioned in the *Han Feizi*: that is riddle #5 (King Daoxiang of Zhao), #22 (Lord Dao of Cao), and #26 (Lord Ling of Zheng), since he seems to have viewed their absence from the rest of the text as insignificant. It is not at all clear that these interpretations are correct. Some riddles may indeed have multiple answers because they appear to speak of mutually incompatible situations. However, the analogy between this text and the "Shiji jie" means that it is most likely that for the majority of the riddles, there was only a single answer, in the same way that in the *Yi Zhoushu* text, only one historical situation is being described. This is the case with riddle #4, which is currently the only riddle that can be definitely answered. Chen Qiyou proposed a solution, suggesting that this referred to Lord Kang of Qin, but this is not correct. There is only one ruler in ancient China who had precisely this wording applied to

accounted among the earliest examples of rhapsodies (*fu* 賦); see Wang Xianqian 王先謙, *Xunzi jijie* 荀子集解 (Beijing: Zhonghua, 2008), 472–84 ("Fu").

[88]For studies of pre-Qin and early imperial era riddling; see for example David R. Knechtges, "Wit, Humor, and Satire in Early Chinese Literature (to A.D. 220)," *Monumenta Serica* 29.1 (1970), 79–98; Zhan Huajun 戰化軍, "Xian-Qin yinyu yanjiu" 先秦隱語研究, *Zibo xueyuan xuebao (Shehui kexueban)* 淄博學院學報 (社會科學版) 17.1 (2001), 60–65; Wang Xin 王欣, "Qianxi Xian-Qin yinyu de fengci gongneng" 淺析先秦隱語的諷刺功能, *Zhejiang shifan daxuebao (Shehui kexueban)* 浙江師範大學報 (社會科學版) 2001.1, 38–40; Wang Hongtao 王洪濤, "Lüelun Xian-Qin yinyu de chansheng ji fazhan" 略論先秦隱語的產生及發展, *Tianzhong xuekan* 天中學刊 18.6 (2003), 74–76; and Wai-yee Li, "Riddles, Concealment, and Rhetoric in Early China," in *Facing the Monarch*, ed. Garret P.S. Olberding, 100–132.

[89]For a detailed study of this connection in early imperial China; see Lü Zongli 呂宗力, *Handai de yaoyan* 漢代的謠言 (Hangzhou: Zhejiang daxue, 2011). See also Wu Jing 吳靜, "Yaoyan kaobian" 謠諺考辨, *Nanyang shifan xueyuan xuebao* 南陽師範學院學報 7.5 (2008), 66–69.

[90]For a comprehensive anthology of early references to this technique; see Zhou Lianggong 周亮工, *Zichu* 字觸, in *Zhongguo gudai cezishu* 中國古代測字術, ed. Zhan Xuzuo 詹緒佐 and Zhu Liangzhi 朱良志 (Chengdu: Sichuan daxue, 1993), 1–199.

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him consistently in ancient texts, and that is King Fuchai of Wu. There are three iterations of the same story that use very closely related vocabulary to describe the thoughtless extravagance and reckless wastefulness of the last king of Wu. Chronologically, the earliest and fullest of these accounts is preserved in the *Zuozhuan* 左傳 (Zuo's Tradition) which recounted the deliberations of the Chu ruling elite as the forces of Wu occupied Chen 陳 in the eighth lunar month of 494 BCE. Zixi 子西 (d. 479 BCE), born Prince Shen of Chu 公子申 and at this time the chief minister in that kingdom, proceeded to contrast the personalities of King Helü of Wu 吳王闔閭 (also given, with an alternate graph, as King Helu of Wu 吳王闔廬; r. 514–496 BCE) and his successor, King Fuchai, much to the latter's detriment. Where King Helü was frugal and abstemious, his heir proved extravagant and profligate—and in the quotation given below, the wording identical to the "Wangzheng" is given in bold:

> 今聞夫差, 次有**臺榭陂池**焉; 宿有妃嬙嬪御焉。一日之行, 所欲必成, **玩好**必從, 珍異是聚, 觀樂是務, 視民如讎, 而用之日新。夫先自敗也已, 安能敗我?
>
> Now I hear that Fuchai has **towers and belvederes, embankments and ponds** everywhere he stops, and when he spends the night, he has consorts and concubines, maids and palace women in attendance on him. For each day's journey, he must have everything he wants, **trinkets and fancies** must follow him, and every rarity and marvel must be gathered [for his delectation], spectacles and music must be provided, and he sees the people as his enemy, coming up with new ways to exploit them daily. He has already destroyed himself first, so how can he defeat us?[91]

There is every reason to believe that Han Fei would have been aware of this passage; not only did he frequently quote from the *Zuozhuan* in his writings, but he also wrote the earliest known commentary on the text.[92] Exactly the same occasion is described in the "Chuyu" 楚語 (Tales of Chu) chapter of the *Guoyu* and in almost identical terms. Again, the wording of the phrases "towers and belvederes, embankments and ponds" and "trinkets and fancies" can be found in this version of the story intact, and they are part of Zixi's ringing denunciation of King Fuchai:

> 今吾聞夫差好罷民力以成私好, 縱過而翳諫, 一夕之宿, **臺榭陂池**必成, 六畜**玩好**必從。夫差先自敗也已, 焉能百侮辱, 在修德以待吳, 吳將斃矣。
>
> Now I have heard that Fuchai likes to exhaust his people's strength in order to fulfill his own selfish pleasures, he gives reign to his mistakes and ignores remonstrance. For a single overnight stay, **towers and belvederes, embankments and ponds** must be provided, and the six beasts and all his **trinkets and fancies**

[91] *Zuozhuan*, 1609 (Ai 1). For an alternative translation, see Stephen Durrant, Li Wai-yee, and David Schaberg, *Zuo Tradition/ Zuozhuan: Commentary on the Spring and Autumn Annals* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2016), 1840.

[92] Yuri Pines, "*Han Feizi* and the Earliest Exegesis of *Zuozhuan*," *Monumenta Serica* 70.2 (2022), 341–65.

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> must accompany him. Fuchai has already defeated himself, for unless he can endure humiliation in the cause of repairing his virtue so as to restore Wu, Wu will be eliminated.[93]

A simpler version of Zixi's words, which still repeats the key phrases of the *Zuozhuan*, can be found in the "Quanmou" 權謀 (Judgment and Strategy) chapter of the *Shuoyuan* 說苑 (Garden of Stories).[94] Accordingly, it is most likely that riddle #4 of the "Wangzheng" should be understood as denoting King Fuchai of Wu. Accordingly, Han Fei's intended reader was supposed to first deduce that this was the historical person intended and then move to the next phase of the riddle to understand that in this instance, King Fuchai's behavior did indeed lead to destruction. His kingdom was invaded and conquered by King Goujian of Yue 越王勾踐 (r. 496–465 BCE), and King Fuchai was forced to commit suicide.[95] While none of the other riddles in the "Wangzheng" are as clear as this, it is entirely possible that in the late Warring States era, Han Fei's readership would have deduced from the clues in the wording exactly which monarch or ruler was denoted by each passage, while admiring the linguistic skill of the author in concealing his intention so adroitly. Unfortunately, due to the poor survival of late Warring States era literature, even if we can today recognize similarities in accounts of historical events, it is difficult to pin down the wording of the rest of the "Wangzheng" with the same exactitude as riddle #4. It is very likely, for example, that Chen Qiyou is entirely correct in his assertion that riddle #23 in the "Wangzheng" was intended to denote Lord Zhuang of Qi, for this makes reference to a very specific set of circumstances:

> When [the ruler] humiliates a senior minister by having an affair with his wife; when he subjects ordinary people to mutilating punishments and torture while making himself odious to his officials, so that they must devote themselves to his service with anger alive in their hearts and remembering every insult, it will give rise to traitors. When traitors arise—[the country] can be destroyed.[96]

It would seem entirely plausible to associate this passage with Lord Zhuang's affair with Lady Tang Jiang 棠姜, the wife of his senior minister, Cui Zhu 崔杼 (d. 546 BCE), and his cruel whipping of his servant, Jia Ju 賈舉.[97] In this instance, readers would have been expected to understand that while the state of Qi survived, Lord Zhuang himself was murdered. Similarly, Chen Qiyou's suggestion that riddle #42 pertains to

[93]Shanghai shifan daxue guji zhenglizu 上海師範大學古籍整理組, *Guoyu* 國語 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji, 1978), 579 ("Chuyu xia" 楚語下).

[94]Xiang Zonglu 向宗魯, *Shuoyuan jiaozheng* 說苑校證 (Beijing: Zhonghua, 1987), 327 ("Quanmou"). For a translation of this passage; see Eric Henry, *Garden of Eloquence: Shuoyuan* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2021), 781.

[95]The suicide of King Fuchai of Wu following the conquest of his kingdom is described in many ancient texts; see for example *Zuozhuan*, 1719 (Ai 22). It is perhaps also relevant to mention that the death of the last king of Wu is referenced multiple times in the *Han Feizi*; see 308 ("Shixie" 飾邪); 403 ("Yulao"); and 584 ("Nei chushuo xia" 內儲說下).

[96]*Han Feizi*, 268 ("Wangzheng").

[97]Lord Zhuang's odious behavior is described in *Zuozhuan*, 1096–98 (Xiang 25). His murder also figures in *Han Feizi*, 251 ("Jianjieshi chen" 姦劫弑臣).

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Lord Xiang of Song is also highly plausible, with its portrayal of a foolish and ineffectual ruler who hopes to be praised as benevolent and just. Indeed, in the "Wai chushuo zuoshang" 外儲說左上 (Outer Collection of Rhetorical Devices: Part 1A) chapter of the *Han Feizi*, when recounting the story of Lord Xiang's demise following the Battle of the Hong River 泓水之戰, it says: "The Song army was defeated and the lord wounded in his thigh, so that three days later he died. This disaster came about because he hoped to be thought benevolent and righteous" (宋人大敗, 公傷股, 三日而死, 此乃慕自親仁義之禍).[98] However, in these instances, the wording is not exactly identical to other surviving source texts, so it is difficult to be completely sure these proposed solutions are correct.

It is easy to read the "Wangzheng" without recognizing the riddles, viewing each passage as an abstract example of a situation that might prove disastrous. In the same way, it is entirely possible to grasp the gist of the "Shiji jie" even though many of the events mentioned are otherwise unknown. However, just as our understanding of the "Shiji jie" would undoubtedly be much enhanced by knowing more about the historical background, recognizing the stories behind the "Wangzheng" riddles will improve our grasp of what Han Fei was trying to say. A comparison with other extended riddles on historical characters illustrates the nature of the problem: for example, the *Yang Taizhen waizhuan* 楊太真外傳 (Scandalous Tale of Yang Taizhen) attributed to Yue Shi 樂史 (930–1007) contains a supernatural tale in which thirty-two beautiful women from history appear before Yang Guozhong 楊國忠 (d. 756), each designating herself according to a particular attribute, thus setting a series of conundrums for the reader to solve—some of which are significantly more difficult than others:

> 「裂繒人也。」「定陶人也。」「穹廬人也。」「當壚人也。」「亡吳人也。」「步蓮人也。」 ...
>
> "I am the person who ripped silk" [Bao Si 褒姒 (d. 771 BCE)]. "I am the person from Dingtao" [Lady of Brilliant Deportment Fu 傅昭儀 (d. 2 BCE)]. "I am the person who [lived in] a yurt" [Wang Zhaojun 王昭君 (c. 50–c. 8 BCE)]. "I am the person who sold wine" [Zhuo Wenjun 卓文君 (175–121 BCE)]. "I am the person who destroyed Wu" [Xi Shi 西施 (d. after 473 BCE)]. "I am the person who stepped on lotuses" [Consort Pan 潘妃 (d. 502)] ...[99]

It is perfectly possible to read this tale of revenants without recognizing the women designated by these short riddles. However, all of them were supposed to be women of great beauty who lived more-or-less tragic lives—in some cases dying prematurely by violence or suicide, in others subject to posthumous execration—and this aspect of their biographies linked them to Yang Guozhong's cousin, Yang

[98]*Han Feizi*, 658 ("Wai chushuo zuoshang").

[99]Yue Shi 樂史, *Yang Taizhen waizhuan* 楊太真外傳, in *Songren xiaoshuo xuan* 宋人小說選, ed. Gong Xueming 龔學明 (Shanghai: Zhongxuesheng, 1933), A.57.

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Guifei 楊貴妃 (719–756), who was strangled during an army mutiny after her escape from Chang'an during the An Lushan rebellion. The enigmatic appearance on the scene of these unfortunate beauties serves to deepen the sense of impending doom, and the placement of this tale-within-a-tale at the very end of the first *juan* functions as a prelude to the terrible events to come. Teasing out the commonalities is an important part of the process of reading any historical riddle of this kind. Accordingly, our understanding of the "Wangzheng" is enhanced by viewing these individual disastrous situations not merely as abstract examples but as descriptions of events that actually happened in real life, many with significant ongoing consequences at the time Han Fei was writing, just prior to the unification of China. Reading the "Wangzheng" with these events in mind provides a new, alternative way of interpreting this ancient text.

Conclusion

The "Shiji jie" is one part of an important literary tradition commemorating the life and reign of King Mu of Zhou, a monarch of considerable charisma who left behind him a significant body of writings lauding multifarious aspects of his personality and rule, not to mention his travels around his kingdom and into the realm of the gods. This text specifically praises his ability to learn the lessons of history and understand the causes for the decline and fall of a series of earlier regimes. A significant number of transmitted and excavated texts include discussions of historical precedents given in a highly condensed form: what is unusual about the "Shiji jie" is the decision to focus exclusively on negative examples for moral and ethical instruction. The "Wangzheng" makes use of the same structure, criticizing many of the same kinds of destructive behavior of monarchs and ministers, while also highlighting some new issues of concern, most notably contentious relationships between the ruler and other members of his immediate family.

The *Han Feizi* preserves the voice of an extraordinarily talented author, whose vivid turns of phrase and linguistic artistry have been admired for more than twenty-two centuries. Within this corpus of writing, the "Wangzheng" is unique, with its use of an epistrophe and its cryptic, riddling format. While it is true that some aspects of the "Wangzheng" chapter's formatting and content is taken directly from the "Shiji jie," the decision to move from giving a series of encapsulated tales to outright riddles is remarkable. Choosing to present a series of negative examples through riddles in which all identifying names have been removed means that the author was challenging the reader to recognize the underlying stories through clues in the description and terminology, and to interpret each tale in order to judge just how disastrous these events proved to be in practice. Thus, the "Wangzheng" should be understood as an important survival within the tradition of political riddling in pre-Qin China.

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天下將亡：《逸周書．史記解》和《韓非子．亡徵》的比較研究

米歐敏

提要

《逸周書·史記解》和《韓非子·亡徵》的密切相關性早已被學者認同，但此前之研究尚未指出二者之间更精準的聯係。本文擬以這兩篇經典文獻的注釋翻譯爲基礎，進行比較研究。《逸周書·史記解》描寫了周穆王由於在睡夢中得到了一套指點，告知他應當注意如何避免犯下導致其它朝代和國家衰亡的錯誤。這篇經典文獻是一種君王鏡鑒，并且啓發了韓非創造自己版本的相似内容。《韓非子·亡徵》傳統上被解讀成一系列抽象警告，描述了四十七種可能給君主帶來災難或者置於死地的情況。本文認爲韓非實際上是提出了一系列謎語供讀者猜測，而每個謎語都暗含了一個特定的歷史事件。同時，《韓非子·亡徵》在風格和内容上重塑了《逸周書·史記解》，創造了一篇全新的文學作品。

國家崩潰，《逸周書》，《韓非子》，謎語

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