Chapter 1

Manuscript Materiality: Organizing Sayings in a Collection

今學者皆道書箋之頌語，不察當世之實事。

Scholars these days all just read out hymns and anecdotes from their bamboo manuscripts, and do not examine the actual affairs of the current age.

_HAN FEIZI_ 韓非子, "The Six Contradictions"  六反

Collections of sayings and aphorisms are often taken as the starting point in discussions of Warring States thought and text. Exemplified by works such as the _Lunyu_ and the _Laozi_, they are consistently presented as embodying the earliest textual expressions of the great thinkers and the schools of thought that would shape the intellectual landscape of China up to this day.¹ Despite substantial critique of the notion of “schools of thought,”² and a revaluation of the status of these works as representative of the thought of specific Warring States masters,³ the status of sayings-collections as the starting point of Warring

---

¹ This characterization informs even recent works such as Lewis 1999, and to an extent, Denecke (2010: 208), who, however, perceives the _Laozi_ as a reactionary and deliberately archaized work.
² For valid critiques of the school paradigm, see Csikszentmihalyi and Nylan 2003; Petersen 1995; Sivin 1978.
³ For a critique focussing on relying on the _Lunyu_ as the sole and authentic source of Confucian thought, and for strong arguments against the collection being in existence before the early Han, see Hunter 2017; for further evidence on the literary techniques used in its composition including the (re-)writing of its component materials, see Weingarten 2009. On the textual history of these collections, see Makeham 1996 and Henricks 2000. See also the recent volume of studies reevaluating the _Lunyu_ text based on new methodology and excavated evidence, Michael Hunter and Martin Kern, eds. 2018, in which the contribution by Csikszentmihalyi (2018: 218–49), focusing especially on Han developments, is particularly informative for the present inquiry into the status and formation of collections. Csikszentmihalyi’s chapter focuses exactly on those instances where collections grouped by topic were repurposed for
States text and genre history is conspicuously unchallenged. Many maintain that collections of short sayings and aphorisms preceded the short expositions and dialogues seen in the Mengzi 孟子 and Mozi 墨子, before developing the long and complex essays that make up the Xunzi 荀子 and Han Feizi, culminating in the “encyclopedic” compilations of all the thought in the realm. The underlying rationale to this chronology based on transmitted materials is an array of authors who sought increasingly new ways to outdo their contemporaries and predecessors in argumentative depth and literary skill.

While there is no question that sayings and short collections attributed to masters (mostly Confucius) were already popular by the mid-late Warring States, there is no paleographical evidence for collections of sayings before the Warring States period, let alone that they were associated with particular authors. Instead, this chapter argues that saying-collections were a response to, and thus a product of, the slow maturation of a manuscript culture during the Warring States period. Moreover, far from faithfully recording the words of a certain master, the excavated materials represent different strategies of collecting often unattributed saying and aphorism materials. To different degrees of complexity and sophistication, the materials under discussion represent acts of gathering and structurally integrating pre-circulating “traveling sayings.”

In these collections, material was organized around building blocks. By examining the textual and material strategies used to integrate pre-circulating material into collections, I argue that these short building blocks were the product of how material was organized on bamboo manuscripts, rather than representing actual speech contexts. Finally, I aim to show that these collections reflect an attempt to organize sayings by theme in order to make them interlocutor texts and vice versa. For an argument on the emergence of the Lunyu out of multiple collections, see Crohne 2022: 296–98.

5 For this term see Krijgsman 2014. For composition using collage, see Schwermann 2005.
6 I understand ‘building blocks’—a term popularized in sinology by Boltz’s 2005 seminal article on the subject, to refer to a linguistically or codicologically distinguished textual unit. Their size and structure are relative to the scope and organization of the text as a whole. In terms of textual form, they tend to correspond to a (group of) anecdote(s), song(s) or saying(s), with the caveat that sayings especially tend to be couched in further argumentative statements introducing and interpreting the saying, much like the traditional zhang 章 (paragraph) division used in transmitted editions of the Laozi and Lunyu, for instance. Some texts are arranged around single anecdotes and sayings, while others group the (often short items) together to form slightly larger building blocks. As will become more clear below, there is a tendency in manuscript texts of the period to mark these blocks with either repeated linguistic cues or visual markers on the manuscript. In short, then, the ideal type of building block is the smallest textual unit where visual and linguistic section identifiers meet.
useful in oratory and teaching contexts, for example. The collection thus presents a way of organizing a selection of material from the available body of text in writing, memory, and oral forms, in a format conducive to memorization and reuse of the material in a variety of contexts.

1 The Unborn Laozi: of Materiality and Building Blocks

As noted above, the status of Laozi and Lunyu as starting points in Warring States textual and intellectual developments can be disputed. Since the status of the Lunyu as a finalized text before the Western Han is already the subject of much debate, and because we do not have any excavated evidence for such a collection in any case, the following discussion starts by addressing the excavated *Laozi materials, in particular those from Guodian. The three bundles of slips excavated from the tomb present the clearest evidence for an excavated Warring States sayings-collection that is in some form “ancestral” to a transmitted counterpart. In the background of this chapter lie two simple questions: what were the processes that underlay the formation of such collections? What do their form and structure tell us about their use at the time?

Together with four short bundles of sayings also discussed in this chapter, the *Yucong 1–4, the *Laozi materials form some of the earliest excavated evidence for sayings collections and are dated around 300 BCE. The Guodian *Laozi materials were recovered in three separate manuscript bundles, A, B, and C, each of different physical characteristics (for example, bamboo slip lengths and endings, and calligraphy). Together, the three bundles contain about one third of the material that would end up in the transmitted Laozi versions. While about half of that material is highly similar to the transmitted texts, and it is clear that the material is in some way related to these later collections, there are significant differences.

The order and division of the individual units within the texts is radically different from all other excavated and received Laozi collections. Henricks and Wang Bo have observed topical divisions in the Guodian *Laozi materials not present in later renditions, providing a case wherein the collector(s) sought to organize a collection of material into meaningful units, although it

7 “Laozi materials” is shorthand for the variety of texts that have enough correspondence in content with transmitted Laozi texts to suggest that they were collected within the same broad range of traditions (in the literal sense of handing over) that would eventually produce the transmitted Laozi texts, regardless of whether the Guodian materials specifically were directly ancestral to these texts.

8 For an overview, see Boltz 2005: 55–56.
should be noted that understandings of the internal coherence and meaning of the *Laozi are notoriously open to debate.\textsuperscript{9} Likewise, as LaFargue observed early on, many of the building blocks of the Laozi appear to be composed of rhymed and argumentative components, with the latter steering the interpretation of the former.\textsuperscript{10} The absence of some of these sub-units in the Guodian materials illustrates that these were likely added in later collections or spliced in from different traditions, possibly to steer the pre-existing material in ways that made it applicable to new argumentative needs.\textsuperscript{11}

These differences suggest that a simple process of transcription of existing sayings in order to faithfully preserve old material was not the main focus of collections. Both topical clustering and the embedding of sayings in arguments illustrate two ways of dealing with the problem of meaningfully integrating pre-existing sayings material into a new collection that enabled specific textual functions. This all supports Boltz’s characterization of the material, that “the Guodian material is not properly called the Laozi in any meaningful sense but is rather a collection of textual units some of which have subsequently been brought together by unknown editors or collectors to constitute the text that has been transmitted as the Laozi.” Boltz’s article goes on to argue that not just the Laozi materials, but perhaps the majority of early Chinese texts are the product of collecting relatively stable units (whatever their origins) into differently ordered texts.\textsuperscript{12} While I agree with this general characterization, I want to deepen Boltz’s argument in two aspects. First, as already mentioned, the Guodian *Laozi texts exhibit certain significant differences on the level of the individual units when juxtaposed to later texts.\textsuperscript{13} As Henricks and others have shown, entire lines within units are absent or truncated to an extreme,\textsuperscript{14} and certain building blocks in the Guodian material are divided over multiple chapters in later texts and vice versa.\textsuperscript{15} Clearly, the building blocks themselves

\textsuperscript{10} LaFargue 1994. Whether or not the rhymed components should be seen as originally oral text, and the argumentative components as latter written explication that were later archaized, is moot. The point is that sayings are integrated into a stylistically identifiable pattern, allowing for a variety of different appraisals.
\textsuperscript{11} See the discussion below on the variety of renditions related to chapter 64 in the received Laozi.
\textsuperscript{12} Boltz 2005: 59–62; the quotation is from pp. 59–60.
\textsuperscript{13} See Richter 2006: 253–55 for a lucid breakdown of the problems relating to the delineation of the range and form of building blocks (Richter refers to these as “Kleinstformen”).
\textsuperscript{14} For specific differences in terms of the composition of individual units and differences in the contents, see Henricks 2000: 7–11.
\textsuperscript{15} A prime example can be found in the way both the Guodian *Laozi A and C manuscripts contain material that in the transmitted version forms a single chapter 64. See here especially the tabulation in Cook 2012: 951–1002.
FIGURE 4
Guodian *Laozi A*
manuscript's punctuation and use of empty space, from Jingmen shi bowuguan 1998: color plate 1
IMAGE COURTESY OF JINGMEN CITY MUSEUM

FIGURE 5
Mawangdui silk manuscript B
SOURCE: WIKIMEDIA COMMONS
were not fixed and should perhaps rather be seen as merely providing another layer that aided but not ensured the preservation of textual identity.

Second, Boltz’s understanding of the building block applies most strongly to texts wherein such units were clearly established on the manuscript. That is to say, all of the manuscripts that Boltz draws on for his argument are furnished with visual demarcation of textual units such as the use of punctuation and slip blanking to delineate paragraphs or blocks, in addition to featuring literary elements such as rhyme or parallelisms that reinforce such divisions. Already in the Guodian *Laozi manuscripts, punctuation is used to demarcate some textual units, albeit by no means as extensive as in the latter part of Mawangdui A and the Beida *Laozi materials, which exhibit the general trend of Han manuscripts to increasingly demarcate textual divisions using visual cues, albeit not always consistently. I would therefore argue that to the copyists and presumably the readers of the material, there already was a physically reinforced understanding of the text as consisting of visually identifiable “paragraph” zhang 章 length units. As I argue below, an absence of such visual cues would make it difficult to determine the actual demarcations and identify individual building blocks.

I therefore suggest that the formation of building blocks is closely related to the visual demarcations on the manuscript, representing a compositional choice of organizing a body of material. Whether a composer, copyist, or reader added these visual demarcations may be interesting in terms of intent, but judged from the angle of reception and long-term influence of such divisions, the important question is whether or not the manuscript could carry these divisions of text over and influence new communities of readers and copyists. For materials where such physical demarcations are absent, the dynamic might very well be different. As such, while I agree with Boltz’s general claim that early texts were fluid entities prone to continuous changing and updating to serve new social and intellectual functions, and that in many cases, this dynamic operates on the level of the zhang or building block, yet it is also true that for a great number of texts, the level at which textual coherence occurred was either smaller or larger than the zhang. As Meyer has argued, many argumentative texts have a fixed order of individual building blocks, as determined by the argument that ran throughout the pian 篇 or

---

16 Krijgsman 2018: 9, 16.
17 As shown by Morgan 2011, punctuation was often carried over in copies of manuscripts, see for instance the case of the Tianzi jian zhou 天子建州 manuscripts.
Manuscript Materiality

essay as a whole. Furthermore, across early literature, phrases, stories, and short sayings are often more fundamental units of composition, which could then be recomposed into different building blocks.

Following this train of thought, we ought to examine the use of sayings, their formation into building blocks, and possible relations to manuscript materiality. In particular, I look into the textual and physical means that were instrumental in generating the unity and identity of different layers of a text. Such an enquiry enables us to reach a more complete understanding of the processes governing the formation of collections. In addition, it helps understanding the social needs and textual functions they could have fulfilled.

The trend in which previously circulating materials, oral and written, were incorporated into new written frameworks as a result of a general increase in the use of manuscripts is not limited to specific “master texts” and occurs throughout the Warring States period (and well into the imperial period) rather than just at the start. I suggest that the different strategies of incorporating sayings material are part of general developments towards increased organization and readability of knowledge, in response to increases in availability and communication of material in writing. Users of this material, whether for

---

19 Krijgsman 2014.
20 It should be noted that to rely on graph counts, slip lengths, and other reconstructed material features of transmitted and edited collections, such as Maeder 1992, or Boltz 2005’s analysis of the Zuo zhuan 左傳 and Mengzi materials, cannot be used to understand Warring States textuality. It can only reflect the practices of the Han imperial library, which among other things, presupposes a standardized practice of the physical demarcation of textual units, the length of bamboo slips, as well as scribal practices that were not yet established before the Qin dynasty. I therefore take issue with Maeder’s oft-quoted image of textual formation as “the looseleaf ring binder into which miscellaneous material, including both class notes by different hands and documentary handouts, can be entered, only later to be rearranged, shortened or expanded as new material is found which is deemed pertinent, and as the collectors’ concerns change.” (28). The problem is that it retrospects notions of standardized building blocks and slip lengths onto material from the Warring States. The Fan wu liu xing 范武六行 analyzed below, which exists in two copies of different physical properties yet with similar building blocks demarcated by punctuation, may serve as an example. If textual re-composition occurred using bamboo slips of different lengths and containing different numbers of graphs as a means of direct textual movement, this would generate a chimera of a text. Maeder’s understanding assumes bamboo slip lengths to physically segregate building blocks, and as I will show in my analysis of the *Yucong materials below, this is a practice that occurred only rarely in the Warring States, yet as shown through the Mawangdui, and more so, Beida *Laozi materials, was becoming increasingly common in the Han dynasty. For earlier critiques of this approach, see Kern (2002: 304, n.22) and Richter 2018.
didactic purposes or for use in persuasion, as the *Han Feizi* quotation heading this chapter suggests, increasingly relied on bamboo manuscripts as a means to select and organize material and use it as a basis for teaching and memorization. In the following, I shall discuss several strategies that facilitated the arrangement and division of texts in a collection, their legibility and memorization, and the use of these collections beyond the straightforward preservation of their contents.

2  

**Sound-based Organization: The *Yong yue***

The *Yong yue* 用曰 (*On This Account It Is Said*) manuscript from the Shanghai collection provides an excellent example of a collection that uses sound rather than visual means to organize text on the manuscript. It provides a case of minimal reliance on the written and material nature of the composition while at the same time reflecting developments that are common to the organization of bodies of knowledge in general by illustrating the ways in which textual organization serves readability and therefore social functions of manuscript use.

The *Yong yue* manuscript features 20 slips and appears to have been bound before writing. The graphs are equally dispersed over the slips, with the first graph on each slip very close to the binding string. Reduplication (*chongwen* 重文) and ligature (*hewen* 合文) marks are expressed with two dashes (＝) and the manuscript is closed on slip 20 by a thick horizontal bar, followed by four graphs and a sign in what appears to be a different hand. The text of the *Yong yue* manuscript is rhymed throughout and interspersed with inter-rhyming *yong yue* 用曰 (“On this account, it is said”) statements. These thirteen short statements separate groups of short rhymed blocks of wise sayings dealing with related themes such as speech, governance, the people, and public behavior. Below, I present an example of the first two blocks from the manuscript:

---

21  *This section draws on work previously published in Krijgsman 2018: 21–27.*


23  善古君之 small T-shaped sign on left; note that this last is also one of the most worn slips.

24  Some reconstructions suggest a missing fourteenth *yong yue* statement; see Zi Ju 2010. For an overview of the contents, see especially Gu Shikao 2009b.

25  A backward slash \ indicates a broken slip end, a vertical line | an intact slip end. Squares □ indicates the predicted number of missing graphs, double lines ＝ a reduplication or ligature mark and the numbers in fat brackets the slip number followed by number of graphs. The text is directly presented in modern transcription, except where noted.
Thinking back to when the people where first born, they faced many dangers in their arduous achievements. In seeing these, one finds peace and happiness; in hiding these, one finds violence and punishments. The heart, eyes, and speech are the guideline to perfection and failure. When these three elements have not been attained, the mandate at ease becomes entangled. On this account, it is said: Do not let your affairs be dark and dim! Tyrannical rulers and cruel governments, they overtly display their martial prowess. Through hunting and war games, they diminish the paths in all four directions. [But if you] regulate the laws and restrain the punishments, you give constancy to the people and protect them against failure. Design [your rule] for it to be continued, and consider it difficult to gain reward. The people ... considering it difficult, it still cannot be discarded. On this account, it is said: Rather let your affairs be brilliant and radiant.

As evident from the notes to the text, the lines are not without intertextuality. Much of the content appears rather clichéd and is perhaps best seen as a structured rehashing of common dicta and truths used to bear out the pithy maxims in the yong yue statements. Besides these statements, the text on the manuscript is written out without signs of deliberate structuring. Slips are continuously written from the top to the bottom binding string, ensuring textual preservation and manuscript integrity. The calligraphy is clear and highly legible, and graphs are regularly spaced on the slips. Punctuation on the manuscript is not used for rhyme, rhythmic, or semantic divisions, but only to mark ligature and reduplication. A title is absent, and other than a final thick bar...
Figure 6  Overview of the first fifteen slips of the Shanghai Museum "Yong Yue" manuscript

Source: Ma Chengyuan 2007: 10. Courtesy of Shanghai Guji Chubanshe
followed by a single phrase after which the slip is left blank, there is no visual division into units on the manuscript. The fact that the *Yong yue does not provide any form of visual segmentation seems to assume straightforward, continuous reading, as the manuscript provides no means for starting at a different point in the text. Such segments could of course be projected on the material, but without visual marks, that would require other forms of structuring.

In manuscript texts such as the *Yong yue the structure of the text rather emerges from the reading itself. In giving voice to the text, sentence divisions are made based on sound, rendering rhymes and parallelisms apparent. When the auditory structure of the *Yong yue is represented visually, therefore, the structure and the building blocks of the text reveal themselves clearly:

思民之初生 [*srêŋ] 多險以難成 [*geŋ]
視之以康樂 [*râuk] 懲之以兇刑 [*gêŋ]
心目及言 [*ŋan] 是善敗之經 [*kên]
參節之未得 [*têk] 豫命乃繫 [*ʔweŋ]

用曰 [*loŋ wat] 毋事縸 [*mâk mâk]

強君虐政 [*teŋ] 揚武於外 [*ηwâts]
克獵戎事 [*dzraʔ] 以備四踐 [*dzan?]
制法節刑 [*gêŋ] 恆民守敗 [*prâts]
設其有繼緒 [*s-laʔ] 而難其有惠 [*wi(t)s]
民□□[...] 難之 [*tə] 而亦非能棄 [*khits]

用曰 [*loŋ wat] 寧事赫 [*hrâk hrâk]

The structure of the text is clearly audible and neatly divides into blocks of rhymed lines, interspersed by inter-rhyming yong yue statements. The rhyme within blocks ties together an individual section, and the rhymes between the yong yue statements present a rudimentary ordering of the text together across sections. The main principle of organization is therefore auditory rather than visual. Different rhymes alternate and are variously broken up by the dissonant

---

29 The short phrase after this mark, "Shan gu jun zhi X" (善古君之 X) is written in a distinct hand and could represent anything from a doodle to a reading note. Such notes occur on collections more often, this might reflect the user base of these manuscripts, potentially including students and junior scribes, for instance.
yet inter-rhyming *yong yue* statements. To the ear and body, this structure only emerges and becomes engrained through vocalization.

Yet because of the repetition of similar rhymes across blocks and the rather loose connections between the blocks in terms of meaning, the structural divisions are not firmly safeguarded in the text. In the absence of visual sectioning, repeated, continuous readings of the material are required to memorize the structure for an awareness of the structure to emerge. In such a reading, each section of text functions as a cue for the next. Such repeated acts of reading allow for a perception of unity in meaning to emerge across the text because each section is read through the other. The upshot of this is that the relatively common phrases build upon each other and slowly deepen in meaning as the text is read repeatedly. The optimal mode for breaking the text in its component parts is to read it out loud, bringing out the structure of the text through vocal, mantra-like means rather than visual layout. The auditory organization of the material structures the text as retrievable “gobbets” of knowledge, and while not necessarily ensuring word-perfect recall of individual lines and words, repeated readings facilitate a basic recollection of the textual structure, aiding further memorization and recollection.\(^30\)

This auditory mnemonic is further enabled by a dynamic of rhymed dissonance between the rhymed sayings and the *yong yue* statements. The statements rhyme and some include parallelisms, so they form a higher level of textual organization. At the same time, they contrast with the rhymes of the individual building blocks, and in their dissonance, audibly break up the text into distinct units. As such, textual integrity in memorization is favored both in the individual blocks and, to an extent, in-between blocks. The text is strung together across sections, thus promoting the perception of textual unity.

The process of vocalization argued for above is instrumental to memorization, and indeed to any reading of the text. While there certainly are liturgical contexts where vocalization is a goal in itself, I suggest that in the use of the manuscript, the text was meant to be liberated from its carrier and reused in other contexts, such as debate, admonitions, or speeches for example. Rather than being referenced or read only once, this manuscript text appears to favor the transfer of its content to the memory of the user, and from then on to new compositions. The use of the *yong yue* statements indicates topical divisions within the text and serves as mnemonic pegs in order to anchor the content.

---

\(^30\) On memorizing text through reading, see Rubin 1995: 66–70, and Griffiths 1999: 48; on how manuscript preparation influences styles of reading and vocalization, see also Saenger 1997.
This provides a rudimentary basis of organization, allowing easier retrieval of the content even in absence of the physical manuscript. As a result, the text could then be used for future composition and influence speech habits far removed from the context of the manuscript text itself.31

The extensive auditory structuring seen in the *Yong yue is a relatively extreme case. While many Warring States manuscript texts contain rhyme and rhythmic features, only a few are rhymed throughout or completely structured on the basis of sound. The lack of visual structuring in this manuscript is however very common. Most of the philosophical materials from the Guodian and Shanghai collections, for example, come with minimal visual structuring only, featuring text terminator marks and rudimentary punctuation at best. Collections such as the *Yong yue had their function in that they provided a physical basis for oral delivery in teaching or as an aide de mémoire, so that its contents could be integrated in new contexts and compositions, whether written or oral.

3 Visually Enhanced Organization

In the remainder of this chapter, I discuss a group of collections that illustrate the added functionality of using visual features to amplify textual divisions on the manuscript. Manuscripts used these to solidify building blocks and to highlight topical groupings useful in future argument construction.

3.1 Creating a Building Block: Punctuation and Rhyme in the Fan wu liu xing

The Fan wu liu xing, published in volume 7 of the Shanghai manuscripts, uses punctuation in addition to rhyme and textual cues to integrate sayings and form building blocks. The text is preserved in two copies, A and B. The two copies are written in different hands and on different manuscripts. Of the two,

31 It should be stressed that repeated vocalization and auditory memorization are of course not the only possible modes of engagement. Recitation and other forms of performance and engagement are not being excluded and some are indeed enabled through the material representation of the text. It is only by taking the text internal statements and content into account that it seems likely that memorization through vocalization was an intended mode of engagement. This of course does not mean that the manuscript was indeed used as such. To take a textual analogy, the Chunqiu 春秋 (Springs and Autumnns) is by no means textually optimized for memorization, but some people memorized it nonetheless.
A is largely intact, numbering 30 slips and featuring a title on the back of slip 3. Reconstructions collating the two copies have produced a legible copy of the text. The text is generally divided into two major parts. The first section (from slip 1 to the first half of 14) is mainly composed of questions on the origins of things and the practice of government and ritual; it has been likened to *Chu ci* “Tianwen” 天問, *Zhuangzi* 莊子 “Tianyun” 天運, and the Mawangdui *Shiwen* 十問, among others. The second section (second half of slip 14 to 30) is composed of affirmative statements, some of which answer questions from the first section.

The text, barring some idiosyncrasies possibly indicative of the Chu dialect, is rhymed throughout. As Cao Feng has argued, the affirmative statements included in the text are introduced by “I have heard it said that” 聞之曰, and have intertextual counterparts across the literature, especially in the *Guanzi*, *Wenzi*, *Zhuangzi*, and *Laozi*. The text thus provides a prime example of a (re-)collection of previously circulating sayings. What sets it apart from materials such as the *Yong yue* is that it explicitly marks its intertextuality using formulae such as “I have heard it said that” and “This is why” 是故. These markers function as cues to include saying material into distinct blocks of texts. Moreover, punctuation is used to demarcate these blocks of sayings as distinct units, providing a visual means of segmenting the large body of material into nine manageable units of roughly similar size. At the end of each section, often before the final syntactic break, a short bar (▁) or a hook (┗) shaped mark indicates that a section is about to end:

(7) ... 祭祀奚升[*lhəŋ*], 吾如之何使飽[*prû?]? 順天之道[*lûi?]，吾奚以為首[*lhu?]? 吾欲得 (8) 百姓之和，吾奚事之[*ta]? 敬天之明奚得 [*têk]? 鬼之神奚食[*m-lək]? 先王之智▁奚備[*brək]?
What rises up in sacrifices, and how does one satiate [the ancestors]? In following the way of heaven, what does one take as beginning? When one wants to obtain the compliance of the hundred surnames, how does one serve them? How does one respect heaven's brilliance? How do the spirits of ghosts eat? How is the wisdom of the former kings procured?

日之有 (10) 耳[*noʔ], 左{[lhêŋ]}? 月之有耳[*kwən], 左{[leŋ]}? 水之東流[*ru], 左{[leŋ]}?40 日之始出[*k-hlut, 何故大而不炎[*lam]? 其入 (11) [trun], 左{[tan]}? 天孰高, 與地孰遠[*wanʔ] 豈? 豈為天*thîn]? 豈為地? 豈為雷 (12A) 電 [*lins]? 豈為霆 [*lêŋ]? 土奚得而平 [“bren”]? 水奚得而清 [“tseŋh”]? 草木奚得而生 [*srenʔ]? (13B) 禽獸奚得而鳴 [*mreŋ] (14) 夫雨之至 [*tits], 左{[tə]}? 夫風之至 [*tits], 左{[tə]}?42

If the sun has “ears” (its halo), how does it listen with them? If the moon has an “army” (its aureole), how would it attack with it? The river keeps flowing east, how does it fill up? When the sun first comes up, how come it is big but not bright? And yet when it enters its middle point, how does it gain in brightness? Again and again, I ask, what is higher than
heaven, and what is more expansive than the earth? What is heaven, and what is the earth? What is thunder and what is lightning? How can soil be flat and how can water be clear? What makes grasses and trees grow and what makes beast and bird cry out? Regarding the coming of rain, who prayed and X for it? Regarding the arrival of the winds, who gathered them up and blew them forth?

聞之曰:守道，坐不下席[*_s-lak_]。聞文(16) 圖不與事[*_s-rəʔ_]，先知四海[*_hməʔ_]，至聽千里[*_rəʔ_]，達見百里[*_rəʔ_]。是故聖人處於其所[*_sraʔ_]，安危與存亡，賊盜之作[*_task_]，可先知[*_tre_]。...

I have heard it said that: “In holding on to the Dao, one does not rush from one's seat. In holding culture, one does not involve oneself in the affairs of one's plan. You know the four seas beforehand, and you attain hearing of a thousand miles and reach vision of a hundred miles. This is why the sage resides in his place, and why he can know of the danger and safety, the preservation and loss of the kingdom, and the rise of thieves and brigands before they occur.

The first half of the text gains unity through the repetition of the question words “how” xi 奚 and “who” shu 孰. Both the question and affirmative units of the text are composed of rhymed phrases. Unlike the example of the *Yong yue above, sound as such is not enough to generate clear textual divisions. While the rhymes group individual statements together into short sequences and thus allow for the stringing together of sometimes disparate sayings, the common repetition of *-əʔ rhymes across blocks for instance does not make the use of rhyme discriminatory enough to demarcate sections. Instead, the repetition of the formula “I have heard it said that” is used in combination with punctuation marks to divide the text up in sections.

---

43 Compare Wenzi shuyi (Wang Liqi 2000), 2.95 (“Jing cheng” 精誠): “聖人不降席而匡天下 [...] 不下席而匡天下者，求諸己也.”
The punctuation alerts a recipient to the coming break, and the new section is marked by the repetition of the quotation formula. In other words, punctuation in this manuscript is used to solidify divisions within the text and clearly mark sections from others, thereby forming individual building blocks. One of the reasons is that the internal coherence of the text is far from clear. Rather than asking a set of questions and providing directly related answers, the questions and answers often only have a tangential relation and require a measure of interpretation on account of the recipient in order to connect them. As such it seems that the questions rather present a general foil to introduce a range of sayings dealing with a particular concern without exhibiting any particular order. The majority of the questions deal with the formation of things and natural phenomena, the practice of ritual, and the exercise of government. The answers are focused on the holding of the “One” or the “Dao” as a catch-all to all these queries.

As such, while the lines, “To rise high you have to start from below. A tree of ten arm spans is like a sapling when first growing. When you are about to traverse a thousand miles on foot, you have to start with an inch,” could be understood as an aphoristic set of answers to the question, “In following the way of heaven? What do I take as beginning?” its relation to the rest of the questions is tangential at best. Likewise, the relationship between the statements, “In holding on to the Dao, one does not rush from one’s seat. In holding culture, one does not involve oneself in the affairs of one’s plan,” and the questions about the origins of natural phenomena such as rain and wind, is not clear at all. Only when one relies heavily on interpretation and an integral reading of the latter blocks do possible connections manifest themselves more clearly. For example, the grasping of the Dao and the One are further linked with an understanding of the formation of natural phenomena on slips 21–22. Such an understanding would only emerge out of repeated, and most likely, guided engagement with the text, perhaps in a teaching setting.

To all intents and purposes then, the clearest level of textual coherence occurs among the sayings within an individual building block. This coherence, other than stemming from physical proximity, is achieved by topical groupings, the most obvious example being the set of sayings focusing on small beginnings leading to large ends discussed below. In terms of reception, therefore, textual coherence is most apparent in the visually demarcated sections. While more complex relations amongst building blocks can be construed through repeated readings (just as in the *Yong yue), such structures are not provided by the physical or textual form.

46 For this function, see Richter 2011: 226–27.
Chapter 1

As noted earlier, the stability of building blocks should not be overstated. The majority of the sayings in the *Fan wu liu xing* have intertextual counterparts across the early literature. But this resemblance holds predominantly at the level of the saying and does not extend to the building blocks in their entirety. The closest case of similarity on the level of the building block occurs in the passage on small beginnings. This block features topical coherence among the sayings in a similar manner to Chapter 64 from the *Laozi*, emphasized here:

FWLX 升高從埤，至遠從邇。十圍之木，其始生如蘚。足將至千里，必從寸始。

To rise high you have to start from below. To reach far you have to start from nearby. A tree of ten arm spans is like a sapling when first growing. When you are about to traverse a thousand miles on foot, you have to start with an inch.

LZ:64 其安易持，其未兆易謀。其脆易泮，其微易散。為之於未有，治之於未亂。合抱之木，生於毫末；九層之臺，起於累土；千里之行，始於足下。

What remains still is easy to hold. What is not yet manifest is easy to plan for. What is brittle is easy to crack. What is minute is easy to scatter.

Deal with things before they appear. Put things in order before disorder arises. A tree as big as the combined embrace of several people grows from a tiny shoot. A tower of nine stories begins with a heap of earth. The journey of a thousand li starts from where one stands.

He who takes action fails. He who grasps things loses them. For this reason, the sage takes no action and therefore does not fail. He grasps nothing and therefore does not lose anything. People in their handling of affairs often fail when they are about to succeed. If one remains as careful at the end as he was at the beginning, there will be no failure.

Therefore, the sage desires to have no desire, he does not value rare commodities. He learns not to learn and returns to what the multitude has missed (*Dao*). Thus he supports all things in their natural state but does not take any action.47

---

47 Translation adapted from Wing-tsit Chan 1963: 214.
While there is a common line, a partial overlap in theme, and the shared use of the travel and growth metaphors, the two are vastly dissimilar when seen as integral building blocks. The Laozi building block is itself a composite of statements, aphoristic sayings, and a concluding argument whereas the Fan wu liu xing block appears as an integral set of related sayings. When comparing the contemporary Guodian *Laozi rendition, however, this passage on small beginnings is not followed by the large section headed by “He who takes action fails” as in the received Laozi and is likewise marked as an individual block with a punctuation mark directly following “journey of a thousand li.” It appears that in this case, the sayings on small beginnings travelled as a building block, forming the core for a variety of elaborations and extensions seen in different versions of the Laozi, for instance, where they would form building blocks in their own right.

In determining the span of a building block, therefore, we cannot merely rely on how a block took shape in transmitted versions of a text but need to rely instead on material criteria such as punctuation and textual criteria such as rhyme breaks and cue words within specific collections. The process of collecting sayings material did not stop with the advent of “stable” building blocks in certain texts. Rather, the sayings themselves were used by many other texts at the same time that they formed “stable” building blocks in others. One of the reasons for this is that the sayings were not firmly associated with an individual text or author and could move freely between texts. Collections themselves are a catalyst in this development as they tend to group material around topics and questions rather than author figures and were aimed at redistributing their content to new usage contexts. From this perspective, collections are a means of organizing access to text. They operate as corpus organizers, functioning as nodes between the intertextual world of possible sayings and new compositions in that they select and structure material topically and “redistribute” it to their users, whether this occurred through teaching contexts, reading, memorization, or when used as aide de memoire for persuasion and speeches. This aspect will be addressed more fully in the following section.

49 Krijgsman 2014: 104ff. This is not to say that the section of small beginnings as represented in the Fan wu liu xing represents the earliest occurrence of the block, it is equally possible that a larger block containing this section, as in the Guodian Laozi, was trimmed down in the process of gathering it on this manuscript.
50 Baussi 2010.
3.2 Clustering the “Already Said”: The *Yucong 4

The *Yucong 4 appears to be just such an aide de memoire for the kind of persuaders or strategists vilified in the Han Feizi quotation heading this chapter. The manuscript from Guodian is written on 27 slips. Together with the *Yucong 1–3, it stands out among early Chinese manuscripts through its use of short bamboo slips—*Yucong 4 averaging at 15.1 cm in length—resulting in an easily transportable format. It is bound by two binding strings and features between 15 to 16 graphs per slip, with writing starting from the very top up to the bottom of the manuscript. Different reconstructions have been proposed; here I follow Cook’s reconstruction which comprehensively addresses the text’s themes, use of rhyme, and the manuscript’s use of punctuation. The text is written in a clear and evenly spaced script, and though the graphs are small, they are easily legible. In addition to repetition marks, the manuscript is divided into topical sections using four black blocks ■, after each of which the rest of the slip is left blank. Barring one line, the text of the manuscript is rhymed throughout and the majority of the rhymed blocks are marked with a short mark |, although not consistently.

The text is composed of rhymed blocks including sayings, aphorisms, and general wisdom, which are in turn distributed over the topical sections. Compared to the Fan wu liu xing, the *Yucong 4’s use of punctuation to divide the blocks adds another layer of manuscript structuring, as it distinguishes small blocks from the larger topical clusters. As in the other collections discussed above, the *Yucong 4 is rife with intertext, sharing parallel passages with the Zhuangzi, Shuoyuan, and Huainanzi to name but a few. The text has been understood by some as a handbook for wandering persuaders or speech material for strategists. The first section of the text explicitly discusses the art of persuasion; the following section addresses the theme of choosing one’s words carefully.

53 Cook 2012: 910–11. Note here the presence of graphs at the back of slip 27, which may be anything from supplying missing text on the slip, a reading note, or practice graphs. The presence of such graphs at the end of the manuscript is common to many saying collections, as is the topical focus on beginnings and the importance of speech. Such self-reflexive comments on the status of text are quite common for educational materials. Compare for instance Lichtheim 1996: 243–62.
54 The edition follows Cook 2012: 926–27, directly transcribed into modern orthography.
A relationship] begins with words, [but] endures through true affections. There are no words left unreplied; there is no virtue left unrequited.

言 (2)而苟[*pû]。58
往言傷己[ *kəʔ]。57

(1) 言以始[*lhəʔ]，情以久[*kwəʔ]。|
靡言不酬[*du]，靡德亡報[*pû]。55


Compare Da Dai liji jiegu (Wang Pinzhen, ed. 1983), 72.196 (“Wenwang guanren” 文王官人): “王曰：太師！女推其往言，以揆其來行；聽其來言，以省往行；觀其陽，以考其陰；察其內，以揆其外。是陰陽者可知，偽飾無情者可辨，質誡居善者可得，忠惠守義者可見也.”

58 Compare Da Dai liji jiegu (Wang Pinzhen, ed. 1983), 72.196 (“Wenwang guanren” 文王官人): “王曰：太師！女推其往言，以揆其來行；聽其來言，以省往行；觀其陽，以考其陰；察其內，以揆其外。是陰陽者可知，偽飾無情者可辨，質誡居善者可得，忠惠守義者可見也.”

**Figure 7** Overview of the *Yucong* 4, slips 1–12

*Source: Jingmen shi bowuguan 1998: 105. Image courtesy of Jingmen City Museum*
When words are capricious, the walls have ears:
The words that go forth injure others; the words that come back injure
the self.

(4) 口不慎 [*dins*], 而戶之閉 [*pits*],
惡言復己 [*kəʔ*], 而死無日 [*nit*]. ■

[When your] mouth is incautious and [your] door is shut, Malicious words will come back to you and [your] days will be numbered.

In these two-line blocks, the first line presents an aphoristic statement, and the second focusses its interpretation in the field of "speaking carefully." In the first set, the statement is exemplified with a line reminiscent of the Odes, and in the second and third blocks, pithy images and common expressions are the foil for admonitions cautioning against careless speech. In all cases, common lines are paired together to form small arguments in a manner reminiscent of building block formation in the Laozi.

Collections are, by definition, highly intertextual. But in addition to gathering a variety of circulating materials, many of these collections integrate them along general topics and arguments to form clusters of related material. By grouping blocks of topically related text passages and segmenting them visually, these clusters organize sayings from the stream of tradition around one theme. They can thus be understood as a means of sifting through large bulks of textual data by providing a selection of passages on a certain topic or for a certain argument. In the section above, sayings on carelessness in speech are linked to personal and social consequences and turned into admonishments aimed at persuaders. Accordingly, intertextual phrases are turned into a short argument that on the one hand conveniently groups related materials for future use while at the same time self-reflexively stresses the didactic value of using collected sayings material.

60 Compare *Liji zhushu (Ruan Yuan 1980), 47.1599b ("Ji yi" 祭義): "壹出言而不敢忘父
聲音，目不視邪色，口不出惡言，此三者，君子慎之."
61 The zhi 之 is placed here in the text to preserve the rhyme scheme, I understand the syn-
tax to work in parallel with the preceding clause.
62 For this point see also Krijgsman (2014: 108), building on LaFargue 1994. See also Wagner

1999.
I suggest that this clustering seen in sayings-collections is indicative of a need to organize text into manageable and organized blocks. It points to an increase in both a reliance on, and use of, the “already said,” and thus represents a text culture’s response to a proliferation in preserved speech, whether in writing or through memory, while at the same time indicating a desire to manage this text in order to more effectively use it in new contexts. Collections such as these function like catalysts in the emergence of discourse. They contain what an individual or group decided to be the best phrases, most aesthetically pleasing expressions, or most profound statements of wisdom and turned them to specific purposes.

Ready parallels are found in Medieval European florilegia. These collections of fine quotes, sometimes just simple lists, other times elaborately organized, gather beautiful and useful phrases in one manuscript. Faced with ever increasing quantities of text, people culled their favored material from a wide array of sources, whether written, oral, or previously memorized, and collected them to guard the material against memory loss. They were mulled over, (re-)memorized and internalized, and later interspersed through new compositions, influencing both the selection of materials, arguments, and examples, and altering the very fabric and style of the composition. The collection is thus often indicative of a tendency to gather proper speech habits in written form so that the user can reproduce these habits in speech, writing, and memory.

Manuscripts such as the *Yucong 4 are instrumental because they allow visual demarcation of such topically distinct units, organizing material for future usage and providing ready-made examples of new building blocks in arguments.

While the use of rhyme allows for better memorization of the phrases themselves, the visual divisions enable different reading patterns than the linear vocalization and memorization seen in the *Yong yue. For example, visual demarcation allows for selectively perusing an individual section and taking visually aided pauses in the reading process before picking up the next section, or focusing the reading on a particular topic. There is evidence from cognitive psychology suggesting that sectioning helps memorization, stimulating the recall of individual sections and enabling large amounts of text to

---

63 On “rumination” and the range of food metaphors used to describe the memorization of text by medieval and classical readers, see Griffiths 1999: 43; Carr 2005: 5, and Carruthers 2008: 234, who have made similar observations for early scribal cultures and medieval monastic practices.

64 Compare for instance T. Morgan 2007.
be committed to memory.\textsuperscript{65} A text visually divided in short sections enhances piecemeal memorization and aids with repetition of individual sections. Accordingly, meaningful relations are more likely to center on individual sections rather than on the text as a whole, as is corroborated by the division of themes in \textit{Yucong 4} across visually marked sections.\textsuperscript{66} Other manuscript texts, such as the \textit{Fan wu liu xing} combine these elements by featuring both visual segmentation and the repetition of key formulae between rhymed segments. These developments are parts of larger tendencies in manuscript culture towards visual amplification of textual divisions.\textsuperscript{67}

In the second half of the Mawangdui \textit{A Laozi} manuscript especially, visual structuring is more extensive than in the Guodian manuscripts.\textsuperscript{68} Likewise, many of the technical manuscripts from the Warring States and especially the Qin and Han periods, such as the various manuscripts dealing with the \textit{Changes} \textit{易} and technical and medical manuscripts, show increasing degrees of visual structuring.\textsuperscript{69} In other words, there is a marked increase in the visual organization of manuscripts over time, enabling easier and more varied reading strategies by structuring larger quantities of text. While technical manuscripts have generally been the first to feature extensive visual organization, by the early Han period, philosophical, historiographical, and poetic manuscripts are likewise increasingly structured visually.

Because visual structuring is instrumental in the organization of a text into sections, the history of visual structuring is integral to the developments Boltz identifies for the formation of building blocks as argumentative units. Indeed, the practice of visually demarcating topically related blocks of text seems to enhance the block’s unity and stimulates its transmission as a block. In other words, the formation of sayings collections was not necessarily the result of developments in literary expression, let alone the first form in which early thinkers expressed themselves and were recorded. Rather, I have tried to show that the form of such collections, composed of topical building blocks, was as much the result of developments in manuscript materiality and an increase in intertextual wisdom. With the proliferation of this material there arose the

\textsuperscript{66} See Cook 2012: 917, who argues that the individual sections of the text conform to thematic divisions in its contents.
\textsuperscript{67} For this argument see Krijgsman 2018.
\textsuperscript{68} On the materiality and visuality of the Mawangdui \textit{Laozi} manuscripts see especially Richter 2011. For the Beida \textit{Laozi}, see Han Wei 2012.
\textsuperscript{69} See Krijgsman 2018. Manuscripts of the \textit{Changes} have been unearthed with various degrees of extensive visual structuring; for a good overview, see Shaughnessy 2014.
need to group, organize, and select this material into manageable chunks that could serve further argument construction. The collection thus conceived, is a reaction to a proliferation of discourse, rather than its first written form. The manuscript was the platform used to redistribute this material in organized form across early China. In what follows I analyze two examples from Guodian to show how grouping and organizing sayings on a manuscript opened up a space for more advanced argument construction.

4 Building Blocks That Form Arguments

Building blocks are not just ways to group sayings together into coherent sets—they also form a basis for philosophical arguments. In this section, I shall review two examples from Guodian *Yucong 2 and 3, collections that function to bring together visually distinct building blocks into a larger argumentative frame. As these two cases illustrate, a subset of building blocks often allows the extrapolation of deeper principles from a previous set of building blocks. Taken together, they form a single argument that could be used in a range of contexts.

4.1 Visualizing Argumentative Form: The *Yucong 2

The Guodian *Yucong 2 and 3 use punctuation and the interplay between argumentative form and manuscript layout to structure (non-saying) knowledge. In *Yucong 2,70 blocks of argument are employed to organize a range of concepts under “Nature” 性 and “Desire” 欲, two concepts heavily debated during the Warring States period. These blocks are linked to didactic maxims, and together they form a simple argument on proper behavior. This case illustrates the use of physical characteristics of the manuscript such as slip length, punctuation, and spacing to visually reinforce textual and argumentative structure.

The manuscript carrying the *Yucong 2 is composed of 54 slips of 15.1 to 15.2 cm in length. Each slip is bound by three strings just off the top, in the middle, and at the bottom end. The presence of fine notches made in the slips to hold the strings in position and the double shading on the slips suggests that the strings were bound around the slip, thus it is likely that the production of the manuscript enabled maximum firmness of binding while keeping the individual slips as strong as possible. Much care was taken to produce a sturdy

and durable manuscript, making it eminently suitable for carrying around. With one exception, each slip features a maximum of eight graphs evenly and broadly spaced across the slip.\footnote{The exception is slip 45, which is a maxim (discussed below, paralleled with slip 46) written in nine graphs. It is interesting to note that apparently it was more important to write one maxim as a self-contained unit on the slip—hence squeezing in the final two graphs—rather than resuming it, and thus keeping even spacing, on the next slip, which is clearly related and closes the section with a mark.} The regular placement of graphs does not cross the binding strings and appears planned out in advance or possibly written after binding. The script is clear and uniform and appears to be written in a single hand.\footnote{Note that there is minor variation in the execution of individual components, most notably the \textit{xin} 心 signfic occurs in three different forms in this manuscript, sometimes even on the same slip (compare slips 30, and 3–4). Likewise, \textit{sheng} 生 is executed with or without the middle stroke (compare slips 1–8 with 9–37). Note that these different styles are regularly differentiated in *Yucong 3 for instance, where each occurs only in a specific sub-division of the manuscript also characterized by different punctuation, different hands, and argument structure.} The individual statements, principles, and sorites chains in the text are all followed by a short horizontal dash mark, represented here with an en-dash (–). Except for slips 8, 30 and, possibly, 1, which feature a dash in-between a chain,\footnote{Some of these marks, for example on slip 1 could also be ink-blobs. As Cook 2012: 847 notes, however, all these mid-text marks occur after Nature and might also be understood as a further material underscoring of argumentative primacy of Nature as the ultimate foundation of the sorites.} the marks signal the end of the individual unit after which the rest of the slip is left empty.

The first thirty-seven slips of the manuscript consist of short chains of interlocking concepts, where concept A is “brought forth” through concept B, B through C, and so forth. The remaining seventeen slips contain short evaluative maxims reflecting on these chains and a set of four general principles introduced by “In principle” 凡. The interlocking chains form what is known as a sorites argument in Greek philosophy, where each step in the chain links a primary concept to a further development.\footnote{See also Unger 1994: 53–58, and, Roth 1997: 298.} All of the concepts ultimately stem from either Nature or Desire, in ten and four of the cases respectively, with the chains stemming from Nature consistently longer at a maximum of eight four-character phrases,\footnote{Note that the longest chain on slips 1–4 is not closed by a mark and thus likely ran for at least one more layer. In addition, due to broken and missing slips the absolute division in terms of chains stemming from Nature or Desire is necessarily tentative.} as opposed to a maximum of three phrases for the chains on Desire, for example on slips 13–14:
Covetousness is brought forth from Desire, Betrayal is brought forth through Covetousness, Defilement is brought forth through Betrayal.

In this example, Defilement is presented as ultimately stemming from Desire, through a series of logically understandable connections. It is noteworthy that all of the chains stemming from Desire are composed of negative concepts, and even though some of the chains stemming from Nature are likewise negatively oriented, such as the one below, they also include more positive or general attributes.

The primacy of the concept of Nature is reflected in terms of both chain length and frequency, and by the statement that Desire itself is also subsumed under Nature:

(10) 欲生於性，慮生於欲，
(11) 倍生於慮，爭生於倍，
(12) 黨生於爭。—

Desire is brought forth from Nature, Worrying is brought forth through Desire, Betrayal is brought forth through Worrying, Fighting is brought forth through Betrayal, Ganging up is brought forth through Fighting.

Because every concept is rooted either in Desire or Nature, and because in addition, Desire itself is ultimately rooted in Nature, the logic of the sorites argument subsumes every concept, and thus all aspects of conduct and behavior under a single origin. By connecting specific concepts such as Betrayal to the much more frequently discussed concept of Nature, it places the specific concerns of the text within contemporary philosophical debates at large.

This structure of the sorites is physically underscored by the layout of the text on the bamboo manuscripts. Every block is laid out on the bamboo in

76 Slips 13 and 14 are mired by reading issues. I follow Liu Zhao (2003: 204), and Li Ling (2007: 221), who tentatively read as 塔貪.
77 I follow Liu Zhao (2003: 204), who reads 仏 as 仏倍.
78 I tentatively follow Cook (2012: 856), who reads this graph as wu 汛.
79 Following Li Ling (2007: 221), but glossing as “betrayal” in line with the previous section.
the same way, components of the sorites make up exactly half of a bamboo slip, underscored by the binding string in the middle. On these halves, the first and last concept in the chain respectively occupy the top and bottom end, and the function formula of the chain (*sheng yu 生於) is placed in the middle. After every argument-block, the remainder of the slip is left blank,
Manuscript Materiality clearly demarcating the building blocks as individual units. This highly systematic layout makes an aesthetic claim to the orderly, patterned, predictable, and thus seemingly natural quality of the argument. It physically performs the form of the argument, generating a powerful reading experience. This identity between physical and argumentative form is unique to the *Yucong 1–3 and imbues the argument with persuasive force, which in other texts would be furnished through strategies such as narrative integration, authoritative attribution, or the use of aural features such as rhyme and assonance.

In addition, there are cases in which several blocks are linked together into more complex configurations. For example, a chain dealing with “Strength” 強 (slips 34–35) is diametrically paralleled with a chain on “Weakness” 弱 (slips 36–37). Further correspondences with the maxims, which follow the sorites arguments, suggests that the maxims should be read as forming general conclusions and principles deduced from the sorites arguments:

(15) 謀生於欲，訏生於謀，
(16) 忘生於訏。–

Deceit is brought forth from Desire, Craftiness is brought forth through Deceit,
Negligence is brought forth through Craftiness.

(25) 惡生於性，怒生於惡，
(26) 勝生於怒，基生於勝，
(27) 賊生於基。–

---

82 Following Liu Zhao 2003: 204.
83 Li Ling (2007: 223) suggests read this as huang 慌. I do not think it is necessary to read wang 忘 as a loan here.
Dislike is brought forth from Nature, Anger is brought forth through dislike,
Besting is brought forth through Anger, Hate is brought forth through Besting,
Brutality is brought forth from Hate.

(43) 訥，自安也。賊，退人也。

Craftiness is pleasing oneself. Brutality is distancing oneself from others.

Craftiness 訥 stemming from Desire is juxtaposed to Brutality 賊 stemming from Nature, and both are reduced to a didactic principle that equates favoring oneself to distancing others. This combination of building blocks to form even larger principles thus mimics the logic of the sorites chain, where small steps can lead to larger, and possibly adverse, long-term results. These maxims turn the rather abstract chains of concepts into short arguments. The didactic principles are combined with a sorites chain to construct another building block.

In the following example, Craftiness is further connected to the term Loyalty 忠, in order to form the inverse of the previous argument, i.e., extolling the virtue of serving others as opposed to oneself:

(45) 未有善事人而不返者，
(46) 未有訥而忠者。

There has not yet been excellence in serving others that was not returned.
There has not yet been one who was Crafty and yet Loyal.

85 I follow Li Ling (2007: 222) who reads as xu 訥, compare slips 15 and 46.
86 I follow Li Ling (2007: 224), and read as an 安.
87 See also slips 8–9:

(8) 愛生於性，親生於愛，(9) 忠生於親。
“Fondness is brought forth from nature, congeniality is brought forth through fondness, loyalty is brought forth through congeniality.”
88 Cook (2012: 861) suggests that there is a mark at the end of this statement, but I have not been able to see it on the image of the slip.
89 Cook (2012: 861) notes a structurally similar passage in the Shanghai Museum *Dizí Wen* 手冊間 manuscript slip 21, reading: “吾未見華而信者，未見善事人而憂者.”
Here, the harmful consequences of self-serving behavior are turned around, suggesting that loyal service is rewarded. Chains of seemingly abstract concepts specifying emotions and behaviors are thus turned into moral lessons relating a do ut des approach to public comportment and ethical behavior. One such maxim, which also has a parallel in the Lunyu, brings out the generative logic of the sorites argument by arguing that one should be steadfast every step of the way, in order to reach a favorable outcome in the end:

(50) 毋失吾勢，此勢得矣。–

I should not lose my Disposition, and this is how Disposition is gained.

(51) 小不忍，敗大勢。–

When not enduring the small, grand Disposition will be lost.

The high degree of physical structuring of the argument in this manuscript is rare, but its recombination of common sayings with small blocks of argument to form moral lessons finds counterparts among didactic materials across the globe. This will be developed further in the discussion of the *Yucong 3 below.

4.2 **Wedding Principles and Sayings: The *Yucong 3**

The *Yucong 3 consists of 72 slips, measuring 17.6–17.7 cm in length. The slips were bound, perhaps doubly, by three strings, and the graphs are equally spaced over the slips, just as in *Yucong 2. The key difference in the materiality of *Yucong 3 is that the manuscript is written by three different hands using three different types of punctuation. The hands and punctuation match with other regular divisions such as manuscript layout and argumentative structure to form three distinct textual sections on the manuscript. In

---


91 The three sections are comprised of the following slips, section 1: slips 1–16, 50–51; section 2: slips 17–47, 54–56, 60–63; section 3: slips 48–49, 52–53, 57–59, 64–72. Hands can be differentiated through the differences in the structure of common graphs (or components) such as 也, 者, 之, 治, 心, and 生, and stylistic criteria such as the thickness and slant of strokes, combined with the observation that the punctuation in each section is markedly different. Lastly, it should be noted that the third section matches the *Yucong 1 both in hand, theme, and argument structure, and that the first section has some definitional and thematic overlap with *Yucong 1.
the following discussion, I shall focus on the second part of the first section, composed of two building blocks, each marked by a slanted line, here represented as |.

This section opens with two blocks prescribing the relation of a minister with his ruler, likening it and differentiating it from the relation one has with one's father. The conclusion is that a ruler-minister relation can be severed, just like friendship, whereas family relations are permanent. Thematically, the reasons for breaking off the relationship tally with the two blocks that follow, under discussion here. They focus on the need for mutual support and stress the importance of morally positive influences, a sentiment echoed in the latter blocks. Topically and structurally, the latter blocks are distinct in that they focus on learning, ability, and behavior rather than service to a ruler and do so using a recurrent formula labelling specific types of company and action as either “advantageous” (yi 益) or “disadvantageous” (sun 損):

(9) 與為義者遊, 益。與莊 (10) 者處, 益。起習文章, 益。 (14) 自視其所不足, 益。 (15) 佚, 益。高志, 益。存心, 益。
(11) 與慢者處, 損。與不好 (12) 學者遊, 損。處而亡蹤(13) 習

This first line tallies explicitly with one of the reasons for breaking with a ruler specified in the previous block of section 1 of *Yucong 3, slips 4–5: “If [he] is not righteous and he forces [tasks] on you, you do not have to accept them.” 不義而加諸已,弗受也.

I follow Liu Zhao 2000: 82 and read zu 族 as zu 足. Note similar passages in Da Dai liji jiegu (Wang Pinzhen 1983), 72.189 (“Wenwang guanren”): “伐其所能, 曰損者也” and *Yucong 1, slips 33–35: 禮生於莊, 樂生於薄。禮繁樂零則慢, 樂繁禮零則慢。“-

Rens Krijgsman - 9789004540842
Downloaded from Brill.com09/24/2023 12:12:23PM
via free access
To accompany those who practice propriety is advantageous. To reside with the dignified is advantageous. To take up exercising patterned composition is advantageous. If you yourself show what you lack, it is advantageous. To be free and leisurely [in one's study] is advantageous. To be of grand intent is advantageous. To hold it in one's heart is advantageous.

To reside with the lax is disadvantageous. To accompany those who do not care for study is disadvantageous. To reside [in good company] and yet not excel in exercise, [that] is disadvantageous. If you yourself show what you are capable of, it is disadvantageous. To follow that which brings small pleasures and participate in that which gives small happiness is disadvantageous. Having that which you do not practice is disadvantageous. To practice out of necessity is disadvantageous.

Nearly all of the short items in the first block find intertextual counterparts in other texts, such as the Recruiting Officials 官人 texts. In particular, the structure itself, which contrasts lists of advantageous and disadvantageous behaviors, occurs across early literature and seems to be a trope specifically used for didactic texts. It features in two sayings from the Lunyu for example, where positive and negative forms of friendship and happiness are furnished with

102 The particle ye 也 is problematic. It only occurs once in this block and does not appear to nominalize an expression. Likely its function is emphatic.
103 Compare Da Dai liji jiegu (Wang Pinzhen 1983), 49.78 (“Zengzi Lishi” 曾子立事): “友以立其所能，而遠其所不，苟無失其所守，亦可與終身矣.”
104 I follow Cook (2012: 881) in assigning the slip number 73 and placing it here. The slip was discovered and added to *Yucong 3 by Long Yongfang (2002).
105 I follow Li Ling (2007: 195) and Liu Zhao (2003: 214), who both supplement you 有 here.
106 Compare Lunyu jijie (Cheng Shude 1990), 2.46–47 (“Xue’er” 學而): 有子曰：“禮之用，和為貴。先王之道斯為美，小大由之。有所不行，知和而和，不以禮節之，亦不可行也.”
107 Li Tianhong (2000) and Liu Zhao (2003: 89–90) have shown that this graph should be transcribed as bi 必. I follow Li Ling (2007: 195), who reads bi xing 必行 as the opposite of the preceding you suo bu xing 所不行.
108 I follow Cook (2012: 879) in grouping the “advantageous” and “disadvantageous” statements together. The last line breaks the pattern, simultaneously signaling the end and main point of the list.
109 It is possible also to read this as an inversion of the nominalized predicate, hence “that.”
110 For a reconstruction and study of these materials, see Richter 2005.
examples from learning and (a)moral behavior.\textsuperscript{111} As noted in the texts above, many of the sayings in the *Yucong 1–3 find counterparts in the Lunyu and the Liji, both with a strong didactic element as well. Lastly, the trope appears in the Laozi. There, the normative relation is characteristically inverted, and sun 損, in this case meaning “decrease,” is shown to be the true learning in that it leads to wuwei 無為 as opposed to “worldly” action.\textsuperscript{112}

In short, yi and sun are often used as means to categorize ways and types of learning, and often bear on how individual behavior influences, and is influenced by, that of others. The use of such basic categories, usually presented in lists in order to structure instructions, is a common element in instruction texts across cultures, where they function as placeholders for organizing related concepts.\textsuperscript{113} They function as a building block generator, in that the list could be extended to include an ever-wider range of materials. It is thus likely that this text also would have been used for educational purposes.\textsuperscript{114}

As I argued in the discussion on the *Yucong 2 above, a common feature of the *Yucong texts is that arguments are often followed (or as in the case of *Yucong 1, preceded) by one or more sayings or generalizing statements. In the *Yucong 1, the semantic import of the sayings is often interpreted and steered through the use of definitions,\textsuperscript{115} while in *Yucong 2 and 3 it is rather the reverse. Lists of terms, short arguments, and sorites chains are summarized and commented on using short maxims or sayings. In the case described above, the different aspects of learning, behavior, and conscious choice of action from the list are neatly summed up in a saying which has a parallel in the Lunyu:\textsuperscript{116}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{111} Lunyu jijie (Cheng Shude 1990), 33.149–50, 152 (“Ji shi” 季氏): 孔子曰: “益者三友，損者三友。友直，友諒，友多聞，益矣。友便辟，友善柔，友便佞，損矣,” and: 孔子曰: “益者三樂，損者三樂。樂節禮樂，樂道人之善，樂多賢友，益矣。樂驕樂，樂佚遊，樂宴樂，損矣.”
\item \textsuperscript{112} Laozi jiaoshi (Zhu Qianzhi 2000), 48.192–194: “為學日益，為道日損。損之又損，以至於無為。無為而無不為。取天下常以無事，及其有事，不足以取天下.”
\item \textsuperscript{113} For cross-cultural considerations, see the overview in Grebnev 2020.
\item \textsuperscript{114} Compare also the wise versus the dumb man, laxity versus diligence, and wealth-poverty distinctions often employed to structure lists of moral behavior, see for example T. Morgan 2007, for early Greek and Roman examples. While the antonyms used to categorize are often culturally specific, their structural position and use in knowledge classification is remarkably similar.
\item \textsuperscript{115} Krijgsman 2014: 87–89.
\item \textsuperscript{116} Compare Lunyu jish, 13.443 (“Shu'er” 述而): “志於道，據於德，依於仁，游於藝.”
\end{itemize}
Set your intent upon the way, familiarize yourself with virtue, draw near to humaneness, roam in the arts.

The verbs in this saying, “set intent” 志, “familiarize” 狎, “draw near to” 比, and “roam” 遊 all refer to the subject actively engaging and physically moving into the company of (persons with) the respective virtue. As such, this saying too can be understood as expressing a moral principle, which finds its practical application in the specific exhortations in the list. This is how the two elements link up to form the basis of a short argument.

Both the *Yucong 2 and 3 formulate general statements that are extrapolated from the moral import of the collected sayings. They harness an arsenal of intertext to provide cultural support for the wisdom of these principles and clearly identify the subcomponents using punctuation and spacing on the manuscript. The repetition of the principles through a range of sayings, combined with the clarity of presentation using building blocks, make the texts eminently suited as primers. They were possibly meant to instill proper moral knowledge in students, a function that is attested for other sayings collections across the ancient world.

4.3 Using Saying Collections: Comparative Evidence
The moral didacticism underlying the *Yucong 2 and 3 finds ready parallels in similarly formatted collections from the classical world. Similar functions have been shown to arise from both ancient Greek Gnomai and Egyptian Instruction texts, for example. Lichtheim has argued in a number of publications on Egyptian Instruction texts from the Early Kingdom to the Ptolemaic period that these texts implicitly foreground a moral code, founded on a do ut des principle or the Golden Rule. The internal logic of the individual sayings, sorites, and maxims in the Instruction texts similarly actualize this rule by repeating it in a variety of (largely similarly structured) cases.

117 I follow Li Ling (2007: 195) who analyzes this graph as the old script version of jia 甲 and reads as xia 狎. He suggests that it might have been corrupted to ju 據 in the Lunyu parallel.
118 I follow Li Ling (2007: 195) who reads this graph as bi 比.
119 Lichtheim 1996.
The Demotic Instruction texts from Ptolemaic Egypt do this in a manner strikingly similar to the *Yucong*. Single sayings (monostichs) are joined through similar sentence structures and repetition, and these are concluded with generalizing paradoxes and statements that emphatically underscore the internal logic and code of behavior emerging from the sayings. Each item takes up a single row on the papyrus and is clearly sectioned off as a distinct, but interconnected, piece of wisdom. Lichtheim notes how these instructions were used in educational contexts, and often accompanied instruction either in house by the father, or in school contexts by scribes. In addition, when familiar with the genre and its workings, many people later started collecting and composing their own collections in similar ways, as evidenced in ostraca from the period.

In early Greek and Roman collections of wise sayings, the Gnomai or Gnomologia discussed by Morgan, a similar pattern emerges. She describes how they were seen as embodying and ingraining a model of morality and behavior. On the basis of changes in thematic focus, she notes that certain collections are intended for people from different classes, but the basic value of sayings and maxims in moral Bildung were recognized in and for all circles. Because of this formative aspect of the collections, as with Egyptian case discussed by Lichtheim, they were often used as the basis for any further education. While people from different strata would be taught using the collections, some of the elite would expand on this basis with education in other, more specified areas such as grammar, clerical skills, and so on. Both authors also note that underlying the individual collections was an ontology, a concept of the body and its interactions with the outside world, as well as a certain understanding of the social realities upon which the lessons were predicated.

What is unique to the material in the *Yucong* is that the implicit ontological structures in sections of the texts are explicitly touched upon and conceptualized in other sections. This intimate correlation of ontological and ethical arguments can be observed in texts such as the *Fan wu liu xing* as well. Such links between highly intertextual sayings material on the one hand, and blocks containing ontological or ethical arguments on the other, places the collections discussed here in an intermediary position between singular sayings

---

121 See, for example, the first 17 slips of *Yucong 1* and the final section of *Yucong 3* (slips 58–72), wherein heaven, earth, matter, and the human sphere are connected in an intricate but still not entirely understood system. For a reading of the *Yucong 1* that draws out some of these connections based on conceptual analysis, see Harbsmeier 2011.
122 Gu Shikao 2009a.
and well-rounded essays. In this sense, the texts not only function as corpus organizers, helping users to sift through text and organize it, but also provide an argumentative context within which to place these sayings. As such, they operate as an interface between different modes of argumentation and provide recipients of the texts with a well-rounded and relatively comprehensive basis for education and further argumentation.

5 Conclusions

In this chapter, I have tried to reposition the status of collections in early Chinese intellectual and literary history. I have analyzed them not as faithful collections of certain masters’ words or the fountainhead of early Chinese philosophy, but as creative integrations of pre-circulating materials such as traveling sayings, maxims, and aphorisms. These collections thus operate as intertextual hubs. They draw on apt phrases, then organize them around topics and short arguments, so that the material can be effectively reused in new compositions to influence the speech and writing habits of their users. I suggest that they represent a manuscript culture’s response to a proliferation of textual production, the “already said,” and aim to prepare and organize this material for new uses. Increased formatting, punctuation, and physical means of dividing material into sections enabled topical grouping and higher-level organization of the material into short arguments. In addition, some of these collections add an interpretative structure, whether using ethical or ontological arguments, that provide a framework within which to place and understand the sayings. The collections filter, select, and structure useful materials for their users to draw on when teaching, making persuasive arguments, and so on. The use of similar collections as teaching materials and aides de mémoire for rhetoricians is well attested across early cultures.

Manuscripts provided a visual means to organize collections into building blocks and knowledge into manageable units. Besides reinforcing the internal divisions in the text and grouping certain material under topical headings or arguments, this allowed for different reading strategies and eased piecemeal memorization. The building blocks, as far we can identify them, are to a large extent the products of using the visual capabilities of manuscripts to highlight

---

123 Krijgsman 2014: 106–107. See also Meyer 2011, who divides texts that construct intricate arguments to make a philosophical point and texts that rely on the authority of a master or tradition to convey argumentative force.
syntactic and semantic divisions. Visual amplification was crucial to the establishment of building blocks, since textual cues such as rhyme were not always unambiguous. But the collections themselves were not an endpoint in the story of the sayings and arguments they carried. Rather, through use in teaching contexts they influenced speech and writing habits far beyond their initial composition, a practice (and conviction) well attested across other early manuscript cultures as well.

The maxims, sayings, and argument chains could be recited, memorized, and slowly mulled over to digest and embody their wisdom. Since memory is a fundamental aspect of textual composition, the use of these collections is likely to have influenced later composition as their contents were recycled in new contexts. Pithy expressions of wisdom needed to be explained and contextualized before they could be useful in arguments, however, so the collections under discussion linked the materials under short arguments and topics, or by using a maxim to highlight a specific value embodied throughout the materials. The webs of association thus formed in each collection provided a basis for instilling guidelines of proper moral conduct in education. Likewise, the conceptual associative habits foregrounded in these texts and ingrained through memorization and education can be seen as means by which argumentative patterns were transmitted and reinforced in their users, which would in turn influence other texts and speeches. The fact that much of the content and the form seen in the specific materials discussed here has counterparts across the early literature can be taken as support, but in the absence of clear evidence on Warring States education no definite conclusions can be drawn. What seems clear is that in their function as corpus organizers, these collections operated as important catalysts for the integration of early discourse.

124 It seems likely that building blocks were used in oral discourse as well, but without contemporary evidence, the visual and textual markings preserved on manuscripts are our only way of assessing their form. I assume that building blocks preserved in written form mimic in form their oral counterparts, but it is of course entirely possible that once preserved in writing, the dynamic of production, reception, and transmission changed.