CHAPTER 7

The Yi Zhoushu and the Shangshu: The Case of Texts with Speeches

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In the present study, I wish to reconsider the Shangshu 尚書 and the Yi Zhoushu 逸周書 (Remnant Zhou Documents) as a combined textual corpus.¹ Although

¹ The received Yi Zhoushu and the Zhoushu 周書 mentioned in the Hanshu 漢書 “Yiwen zhi” 藝文志 are two different arrangements of not entirely identical material. This important fact is often overlooked and creates much confusion. The misunderstanding is caused by the table of contents in the extant Yi Zhoushu that mentions titles of seventy chapters (of which fifty-nine remain and eleven are lost). This number roughly agrees with the seventy-one chapters mentioned in “Yiwen zhi,” and if “Zhoushu xu” 周書序 (“Sequential Outline of the Zhou Documents”) at the end of the collection is counted as the seventy-first chapter, the number matches that in “Yiwen zhi” exactly. One might conclude that the Yi Zhoushu, with the exception of eleven lost chapters, has been preserved almost intact, except for evidence mitigating against such a conclusion (see McNeal 2012: 75–82). For example, as Zhou Yuxiu (2005: 24–47) has shown in her study of “Shi xun jie” 時訓解 (“Seasonal Interpretations Explained,” chap. 52), both the language and contents of this chapter betray its Eastern Han origins; apparently, it postdates “Yiwen zhi.” Wang Yinglin 王應麟 (1223–1296) in his Yuhai 玉海 cites passages from “Shi li xu” 諡例序 (“Prolegomena to the Precedents of Posthumous Names”) written by Shen Yue 沈約 (441–513). Shen Yue apparently mentions two different arrangements of the Zhoushu where chapters titled “Shifa” 諡法 (“The Order of Posthumous Names”) were positioned under different numbers. While in one case, he mentions an arrangement with two chapters—“Shifa, I” (“Shifa, shang” 諡法上, 56) and “Shifa, II” (“Shifa, xia” 諡法下, 57)—elsewhere he mentions only a single “Shifa” as chapter 42, whereas the received Yi Zhoushu contains “Shifa jie” 諡法解 (“The Order of Posthumous Names Explained,” 54) (Wang Yinglin 1987: 1034 [54.41a]). No matter whether Shen Yue consulted one or two redactions, the chapters were certainly arranged differently than in the received text. The fact that the Yi Zhoushu continued to undergo significant changes well into medieval times can be further deduced from the arrangement of the extant redaction that is divided into ten sections with a commentary attributed to Kong Chao 孔晁 (third century). This arrangement probably combines features of two different redactions known from medieval bibliographies, one in ten sections with no mention of a commentary and another in eight sections with Kong Chao’s commentary (Shaughnessy 1993). These examples of textual-historical complexities suffice to demonstrate that the transmission history of the Yi Zhoushu was rather complicated, and more such examples can be found in the important contribution of Yanaka Shin’ichi 谷中信一 that remains largely unnoticed outside Japan (Yanaka 1987). That being so, how could it be that the extant redaction agrees with “Yiwen zhi” so accurately? In my opinion, the only possible
the notion of a relationship between these two collections is not new,² most existing studies have been limited to examining particular texts within the *Yi Zhoushu* that appear to be the most reminiscent of the *Shangshu.*³ As a result, the *Yi Zhoushu* is no longer neglected as a source of secondary importance.⁴ Nevertheless, the criteria employed to identify the relatedness between certain texts from the *Yi Zhoushu* and the *Shangshu* are not always clearly defined. Considering that both collections are heterogeneous and cannot be efficiently analyzed in toto, it would be desirable to have a methodological framework to identify groups of texts with similar formal characteristics that would be applicable to both the *Shangshu* and the *Yi Zhoushu*. So far no such framework exists.⁵

² The theory that the *Zhoushu* “must be the remnants of the hundred chapters mentioned by Confucius” (*gai Kongzi suo lun bai pian zhi yu ye* 蓋孔子所論百篇之餘也) was put forward either by Liu Xiang 劉向 (79–8 BCE) or by Yan Shigu 颜師古 (581–645). It is preserved in a conflated line of commentary to the entry on the *Zhoushu* in “Yiwen zhi” (*Hanshu* 30.1706), and it is impossible to establish with certainty which part is a quotation from Liu Xiang and which was appended by Yan Shigu. In any case, the relatedness of the two collections must have been obvious long before Yan Shigu, owing to such facts as the equivalence of titles in the *Zhoushu* and the “Zhoushu” part of the *Shangshu* and the placement of the *Zhoushu* under the same rubric of “Yiwen zhi” as the *Shangshu*.


⁴ Another reason why the *Yi Zhoushu* has gained more attention is a series of influential studies on the “Shifu” 世俘 (“Great Capture”) chapter, a unique text in the *Yi Zhoushu* that contains a detailed depiction of the circumstances of the Zhou conquest of ca. 1045 BCE. The conquest is widely celebrated in ancient sources but “Shifu” is unusual in its depiction of cruelty, archaism of language, and abundance of detail. For important studies, see Gu Jiegang 1963; Shaughnessy 1980.

⁵ Such a framework should be a methodologically justified set of criteria that could be applied to the whole corpus—or to a formally identifiable major subset of comparable material within the corpus. While many texts in the *Yi Zhoushu* evidently contain non-archaic language, disregarding them is methodologically unjustified because (1) there may be different degrees of archaism, and while certain texts are universally acknowledged as “archaic,” some borderline cases are difficult to fit within a simplified dichotomous classification; (2) while it has already become commonplace to compare the *Yi Zhoushu* against the *Shangshu*, a reverse comparison can also be beneficial, as it may reveal later features within the more respected collection and identify some patterns of its diachronic development.