Concepts of "Authenticity" and the Chinese Textual Heritage in Light of Excavated Texts

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Introduction

The issue of the authenticity of transmitted texts has been discussed among Chinese scholars at least since the Han period (206 BC – AD 220). Doubts heightened especially during the late Qing Dynasty and reached their climax when Kang Youwei 康有爲 (1858-1927) declared the old-text classics to be a forgery by Liu Xin 劉歆 (53 BC – AD 23).[1] From the middle of the 20th century onwards this movement of doubting antiquity (*yigupai* 疑古派), has been seriously challenged by manuscripts discovered in early tombs. As they corroborated many passages that had been considered corrupt or even forged, the time had come for Li Xueqin 李學勤 to argue strongly and very prominently against the doubters and in support of the believers in antiquity (*xingupai* 信古派).[2]

Over the last decades, debates over the relative reliability of individual excavated and received texts have raged back and forth, with every new discovery posing the question anew. Their nature, however, make it very clear that a blanket rejection or acceptance of all transmitted texts is not possible. The *Guicang* 歸藏, for instance, a book of divination previously only known through quotations in later texts and long despised as pure invention, was discovered in a grave at Wangjiatai 王家台 in 1993.[3] This find makes it clear that not all quotes from texts no longer extant were pure invention for the sake of lending weight to a specific argument; nevertheless, such manuscript finds also do not allow for a general re-establishing of all transmitted texts or quotes as authentic. Although clearly versions of the same text, excavated manuscripts and their transmitted counterparts show subtle differences in single characters, wording or even sequence and structure that should make us question not so much the text per se but our own ideas of textual transmission and authenticity.[4]

The present paper wants to provide a basis and starting point for such a debate by presenting an overview of Western and Chinese traditions of textual criticism and discussing some of the major issues with the application of these approaches to early Chinese texts. Addressing a wider audience including scholars working on other textual traditions and students in various fields, the paper summarizes the background and current state of the field in a general way that is meant to provide a basis for cross-disciplinary and international discussions. In this context, it is essential to start with a definition of the major concepts used in such debates, including text, edition, original, and forgery, and questioning their applicability and usefulness for discussions on the Chinese textual heritage in particular. The paper then turns to the history and development of textual criticism in both China and the West, an overview that is meant to provide a broad and general background for discussions on how to approach both excavated and transmitted texts in concert. Finally, the paper discusses agents and processes of textual transmission and how they shape and reshape texts over time, arguing

[1] Kang 1891 (1998), 3.
[2] Li Xueqin 1993 (1997).
[3] Lian 1996.
[4] Kern 2019.

that these factors – rather than aspirations to recreated an *urtext* need to form the basis for all debates on the Chinese textual heritage. Throughout the discussion, the *Guicang* is quoted as an example to illustrate major points.

Definitions: Text and Edition, Original and Forgery

Text and Edition

In European philology, the term 'text' has traditionally been defined as a relative term in contrast to commentary. As Jan Assmann puts it: "Ein Gedicht, ein Gesetz, ein Traktat usw. werden überhaupt erst zu einem *Text* im strengen Sinne der Philologie, wenn sie Gegenstand eines Kommentars werden. Der Kommentar macht den Text zum *Text*."[5] Such a definition applies only to a canonized text that is largely fixed in its structure and wording.[6] It does not take into account earlier stages in the transmission process, nor is it compatible with the texts excavated from graves in China. In 1993, Harold D. Roth therefore dedicated a whole article to the problem of "Text and Edition in Early Chinese Philosophical literature" in which he criticised that scholars mostly do not distinguish between text and edition but tend to refer to "manuscripts and their copies as 'texts' and to their much later printed versions as 'editions.'"[7] Following Dearing, he defined a text as "a unique complex and expression of ideas of an author or authors,"[8] while an 'edition' was "a distinct record containing a unique state of a text." As these definitions refer more to a general idea than to the concrete form of a written document, Roth introduces the terms 'exemplar' for a copy of an 'edition', 'recension' for "foundational version or state of a text", 'redaction' for its first record, 'ancestral record' as the "oldest extant edition in a particular lineage" and 'received text' (*textus receptus*) as the extant recension(s) of a text.[9]

In the case of transmitted texts that circulate in printed versions, it is possible to differentiate between all these terms since we have for example a single 'exemplar' of the *Sibu congkan* 四部叢刊 'edition' of a 'text' that exists in different 'recensions,' e.g., with different commentaries, the most important of which Roth would term 'redactions.' Given that its history of transmission is unclear and there is only very little textual material available, in the case of the *Guicang* this elaborate terminology is not easy to apply. Here, the 'text' would be the *Guicang* as a set of ideas that has come down to us in the form of several 'textual witnesses' ("Zeugen")[10] that constitute the 'received text.' On the one hand, there is the body of 'excavated texts,' the two Wangjiatai 'records' which appear to be two 'exemplars' of the same 'recension' or version. On the other hand, we have the 'transmitted text' that in this case consists only of quotations in other sources. These are not really editions, recensions, or redactions but simply collections or reconstructions depending on their layout.

[5] Assmann 1999, 176.
[6] Assmann 2004, 144.
[7] Roth 1993, 215a.
[8] Roth 1993, 227b.
[9] Roth 1993, 227b.
[10] Maas 1960, 6.

Urtext, Original, and Transmission

That neither the excavated *Guicang* nor the various quotations in other texts are the autograph or *urtext* is quite clear, but the longing for an original or at least for a version coming close to it, for authentic material, can be observed in both East and West. According to one modern Western definition an object or manuscript is authentic if it is "of an origin that cannot be questioned" and due to the closeness of its language, form and content to the version intended by the author or authors posses an "authority that is not open to challenge."[11] An original on the other hand is "a work composed firsthand" or the "primary manuscript from which copies are made."[12] It was this original that scholars pursuing biblical studies and classical philologists in the West as well as Chinese philologists from the Qing Dynasty onwards wanted to retrieve from the transmitted sources.

For Chinese texts, this search for the *urtext* is highly problematic because most texts existed in various arrangements and copies transmitted in different schools and with different commentaries. At first, such traditions were often oral and continued to be transmitted orally even after written forms had come to be produced.[13] Moreover, for a long time, sequence and title were not fixed so that the application of terms like authorship, authenticity and original is problematic. Pre-Han editors were therefore faced not with fixed texts but with corpora of single stories and thoughts that had to be compiled anew for every edition. Therefore, the influence of the editors on the content and form of the texts they transmitted was considerable.

This is reflected for instance in the account on Confucius' role in the creation of the classics in the *Kongzi jiayu* 孔子家語: "The texts and documents of the former kings were confused and in disorder. […] Confucius transmitted their teachings to later generations by shaping them into model forms."[14] He thus established them as canonical texts, induced a "Stillstellung des Traditionsstromes" and secured the appearance of the texts, as Assmann describes the process of canonization.[15] Confucius' supposed rearrangement of the 'words of the sages' to shape the texts into model forms (*fashi* 法式)[16] is traditionally seen as editorial work; considerable interference with form and wording was thus considered acceptable if its purpose was to elucidate the 'true meaning.'

Furthermore, scholars were aware of how easily a text could be corrupted during the process of transmission due to incorrect character choice, accidental omissions, and other technical errors; emendations by the editor were thus regarded to be absolutely necessary. The editors' aim was not to reproduce what lay before him character by character but to represent the 'true in principle' (*li* 理), as "truth or authenticity are matters of intrinsic, not extrinsic evaluation," as Yoav Ariel emphasizes.[17] The authors of the *Kongzi jiayu* ~~孔子家語~~ or the *Kongcongzi* 孔叢子, for instance, did not consider

[11] Webster 1961 (1993), 146b.
[12] Webster 1961 (1993), 1591c.
[13] For a discussion of orality and textual transmission see Assmann 2004 and Kern 2005.
[14] *Kongzi jiayu,* j.9, 11b.
[15] Assmann 2004, 144.
[16] *Kongzi jiayu,* j.9, 11b.
[17] Ariel 1989, 59.

their doing to be forgery as they believed to reveal the true heritage of the Kong family.[18] Nevertheless, later on those works were condemned as forgeries.

Authenticity, Forgery, and 'Truth in Principle'

So what then is a forgery or a fake? According to the *Webster*, forgery is "falsely and with fraudulent intent making or altering" something,[19] while a fake is a "worthless or spurious imitation passed off as genuine to deceive esp.[ecially] for gain."[20] Barker points out that the latter word came from the German term 'fegen,' 'to furbish' or 'clean up' which already "reveals an ambiguity that underlies everything here: it has a 'good' sense of improvement, as well as a bad sense of betraying or concealing the essential nature of the object faked."[21] It is the intention of the producer that is crucial for all those definitions. Therefore, Fields and Seddon argue: "It [i.e., scientific testing] cannot detect forgeries, because it cannot reveal anything about the intention of the person who created the object."[22]

The *Brockhaus* remarks about forgeries in the strict sense that they cannot be found in the New Testament "denn sie setzen ein eigenes histor.[isches] Bewußtsein voraus, das im frühen Christentum erst um die Mitte des 2. Jh. einsetzte. […] Die bewuße Erfindung von Schriften und ihre Zuschreibung an frühere Autoren entspricht dann einem späteren apologetischen Interesse."[23] Modern principles of restoration, for instance, are minimalistic and demand to change as little as possible about the current state of the object in question; in Victorian times, however, the aim of restoration was to make the item as new.[24] Also in Europe, the attitude, that we cannot recreate the past and that "authentic revival is either self-delusion or deliberate fakery," as Lowenthal puts it,[25] is thus a recent insight. Until the 18th century, manuscripts were sometimes 'improved' during the copying process by adding supposed missing parts or words and replacing damaged sections while classical statues were 'enhanced' by adding missing parts, sometimes reworking them so much that their character was totally changed.[26]

The view that the correction of perceived mistakes and the addition of 'missing' parts was *per se* falsifying does not harmonize with Chinese traditions either. In China, even today temples and houses rebuilt several times are not called reconstruction but 'original.'[27] Here, like in the reproduction of texts, it is the 'truth in principle' that counts, not the materiality of the object. But buildings even if reconstructed would not loose their function and basic structure, i.e. their true nature, editorial emendations of a text can well lead to the falsification of its true nature, i.e., its meaning.

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[18] Kramers 1950, 136; similar observations have also been made for the *Heguanzi* 鶡冠子 (Vittinghof 1996, 177).
[19] Webster 1961 (1993), 891c.
[20] Webster 1961 (1993), 817a.
[21] Barker 1990, 23.
[22] Fields/ Seddon 2002, 34.
[23] Brockhaus 1988, v. 7, 87b.
[24] Whitfield 2002, 21, ref. 29.
[25] Lowenthal 1990, 20.
[26] Jones 1990, 29 and 32.
[27] Ryckmans 1989, 6ff.

Textual Criticism and Doubting the Chinese Textual Heritage

The problem of authenticity in textual cultural heritage has been discussed in China already since the Han Dynasty, mainly in connection with the classics that were supposed to contain the wisdom of the ancient sages and provide the basis of the social, political and cosmological ordering of the world. The search for the original wisdom of the ancients and the unmasking of spurious books thus inevitably had a political connotation, especially in the old-text/new-text discussion that has split the Chinese scholarship into two camps from Han until modern times.

The Issue of *Weishu*

During the Han period, Wang Chong 王充 (AD 27-100) lamented: "The common tradition is corrupt and dubious, forged books (*weishu* 僞書) are being circulated."[28] Because of the high status ascribed to transmitted texts, the reproach of forgery if directed against a particular text or person in imperial China came close to eliminating it and him from the Confucian world-order.[29] However, not all *weishu* per se were regarded as worthless but could still be consulted if they were considered to be truthful 'in principle' or contained useful material.[30] After all, like early editors, later 'forgers' also compiled their edition from various sources and attributed it to a certain person or tradition whose 'true intention' they wanted to transmit. The line between conscientious editing and emendation and outright forgery with the aim of deceiving others is thus fluid. For instance, Zhang Xincheng 張心澂 differentiates between nine degrees of textual forgery but still subsumes all of them under *weishu*. His definition includes also works that consist of fake and authentic elements alike and even books into which mistakes have intruded or which carry a wrong name.[31] That would turn basically all transmitted texts into forgeries. Although such a radical point of view was voiced only during the 'movement of doubting antiquity', even before the Han Dynasty people were generally aware of how easily a text could be corrupted during the process of transmission.

Already Confucius is said to have complained that "the written documents [of earlier states] are insufficient. If they were sufficient I would be able to rely on them."[32] In another passage he ascribes the defectiveness of such texts to their transmitters: "I have known a time when historians [in doubtful cases] would leave a blank in a text, and when people who had horses would lend them to those who had none. Both customs are now not in existence anymore."[33] In the *Hanshu*, Liu Xin is quoted as complaining that "in the past, the scholars who edited texts did not worry about the lacunae caused by defective texts. In an irresponsible way they followed the vulgar, they broke up passages and took graphs apart."[34] But not only emendations and other intentional alterations were seen as leading to textual changes during the transmission process; also the nature of the Chinese writing system induced deviations as Ge Hong 葛洪 (283-344)

[28] *Lunheng*, j. 29, 12a.
[29] Vittinghof 1996, 174.
[30] Vittinghof 1996, 177.
[31] Zhang Xincheng 1938 (1957), v. 1, 16f.
[32] *Lunyu zhushu*, j. 3, 8a.
[33] *Lunyu zhushu*, j. 15, 11b.
[34] *Qian Hanshu*, j. 36, 33b.

remarks: "A proverb says: if a document is copied three times, 'fish' (*yu* 魚) will become 'Lu' (魯) and 'empty' (*xu* 虛) is going to change into 'tiger' (*hu* 虎)."[35] Among Chinese scholars, all those changes were considered correctable while in modern Western theories, textual change is seen "as the inevitable fruit of an intrinsically corruptive process of transmission."[36] The absence of this streak of fatalism from the Chinese tradition of textual critique allowed for a much bolder approach to the task of editing and a much greater confidence in one's own work.

A further problem not easily solved by emendations is the distortion or even complete loss of texts through war and fire. Especially the so-called 'burning of the books' in 213 BC[37] left scholars in the Han era with the impression "that their tradition had survived only in a defective and fragmented condition, and that it was their task to restore its lost unity and coherence."[38] The most well-known imperial project aimed at re-establishing the Chinese textual heritage was set up in 26 BC by Han Chengdi 漢成帝 (r. 32-7 BC) who ordered an empire-wide search for copies of lost books and put Liu Xiang 劉向 (77-6 BC) and later Liu Xin in charge of rearranging the books found.[39] Their task was not an easy one as they were not dealing with complete copies of neatly arranged books but bundles of bamboo strips in different states of deterioration, different compilations, and even different script forms. Because they also relied on ancient manuscripts reported to have been found for example in the wall of the house of Confucius and other places,[40] the problems they encountered were quite similar to those modern scholars working with excavated texts have to face. Unlike modern editors, however, in unclear cases they could and would not leave blanks or give several conflicting variants; instead, they produced one version that they believed to be as close as possible to the 'original.' Their decisions were repeatedly questioned from as early as the 1st century AD when Wang Chong criticised the texts as having been edited so arbitrarily that "no one knew which part of them was true."[41] Over the following centuries and indeed until the present day, the debate of how to identify forgeries continues.

Restoration of Antiquity and *Kaozhengxue*

During the Han period and in the following centuries, textual criticism was closely emeshed in a politically-loaded debate over the authenticity of transmitted vs allegedly newly discovered versions of key texts. As Hans van Ess has shown conclusively the struggle between the advocates of the old-text (*guwen* 古文) and the new–text (*jinwen*

[35] *Baopu zi*, j. 19, 7a.

[36] Cherniak 1994, 14.

[37] Qin Shi Huangdi 秦始皇帝 (c. 260-210 BC) had banned all classics except for the *Yijing* and colected them in the imperial library. Traditionally it was held that he burned them on purpose but today it is generally assumed that they were accidentally destroyed when fire brook out in the library (Bauer 2001, 112).

[38] Henderson 1991, 40; Henderson doubts that there ever existed such a unity but argues that this circumstance "was obscured by the presumed effects of the Ch'in burning of the books which increasingly took on the proportions of a myth used to justify reconstructions of the canon and its components" (ibd.).

[39] Franke 1968, 308.

[40] Franke 1968 (2001), 289f.

[41] *Lunheng*, j. 28, 10a.

今文) school was more concerned with political than with philological questions.[42] The textual critiques' contribution to the restoration of antiquity (*fugu* 復古), also in the social-political sense, lay in re-establishing what was perceived to be the original or former state of transmitted works (*fu qi gu* 復其古, *fu qi jiu* 復其舊).[43] To identify what was authentic and what were later additions or forgery, scholars relied on the intrinsic criteria of 'correctness' every learned person was deened to be able to identify intuitively.[44]

During most of Chinese textual history, falsified or forged texts were identified in this manner. This changed only during the Qing Dynasty when for the first time "philology, not philosophy, became the methodology to restore the past."[45] In his influential treatise on the *Guwen Shangshu* 古文尚書, Yan ~~Ruoju~~ Ruoqu 閻若璩 (1636-1704) emphasized the importance of doubt as the starting point for all investigations and advocated that the method of *kaozheng* 考證, evidential research, was the main tool to be used. On the detection of forgeries (*bianwei* 辨偽) he wrote: "A forger for the most part relies on what his age thinks highly of, and his words and style are also limited to [those current] in his age. […] These elements can serve as the basis of inductive reasoning [in detecting forgeries]."[46] While he relied heavily on paleographic studies, the so-called 'founding-father' of the school of textual criticism or evidential research (*kaozheng xue* 考證學),[47] Gu Yanwu 顧炎武 (1613-1682), concentrated on ancient phonology and rhymes. He attempted to reconstruct the way the sages themselves had spoken in order to be able to restore and clarify the meaning of the ancient classics.[48]

Phonology and palaeography together with etymology formed the basic methods of evidential scholarship and were accompanied by studies in grammar, history and geography as well as projects which produced a whole range of auxiliary texts such as dictionaries, bibliographies, catalogs and different kinds of compilations.[49] One of the many fields which developed into an independent discipline of its own was the reconstruction of lost texts from later quotations in encyclopedias, anthologies and other sources like they were also compiled for the *Guicang*. With the refinement of these and other, especially linguistic tools which helped to remove layer after layer of supposedly inauthentic material, in the end even the texts themselves came to be questioned.

In the beginning, Qing scholars only rejected the views and texts of the *Songxue* 宋學 but relied on Han Dynasty texts and scholars, hoping that they had been closer to the teachings of the ancient sages – not only in time but also in textual basis and interpretation. Yan Ruo~~j~~qu raised doubts even about those when he argued that the classics used by the old-text school were forgeries by Liu Xin, produced out of political reasons for Wang Mang 王莽 (33 BC – AD 23).[50] Soon, more and more of the *guwen* texts were re-

[42] Ess 1993, 288.
[43] Cherniak 1994, 11.
[44] Cherniak 1994, 87.
[45] Elman 1984, 29.
[46] Yan Ruo~~j~~qu 17th c. (1987), j. 1, 7a/b.
[47] A comprehensive analysis of the intellectual, social, political, institutional and historical context of this movement is given by Elman in his book called *From Philosophy to Philology* (Elman 1984).
48 Elman 1984, 61.
[49] Elman 1984, 69.
[50] Bauer 2001, 310.

jected and Gong Zizhen 龔自珍 (1792-1841) and others advocated to go back to the learning of the *jinwen* school of the former Han.[51] Besides philological interest, they also believed that going back to the real teachings of the ancients could help to deal with contemporary problems. Political and economic pressure on China was growing, making reforms absolutely necessary. Although Western ideas were seen as important, it was also understood that the country needed to find a way of its own based on the Confucian system.[52] In this situation, the teachings of the *jinwen* school seemed especially suitable as their theories of the three ages and Confucius as a savior reminded of Western ideas.[53] Liao Ping 廖平 (1852-1932) and Kang Youwei thus relied on the *jinwen* recension of the classics to develop their idea of Confucius as reformer.[54] Like Yan Ruoqu, Kang Youwei argued in 1891 that the *guwen* recensions were all forgeries by Liu Xin and therefore not worth studying.[55] While accusing Liu Xin of deceiving the world, he himself committed plagiarism as the ideas that made him so famous had originally been developed by Liao Ping.[56] As he was once again true in principle, it probably did not seem such a grave matter to him that he was untrue in this 'minor' detail.

In the end, it were Kang Youwei's and not Liao Ping's writings that influenced many later scholars such as Gu Jiegang 顧頡剛 (1893-1980), the 'founding-father' of the school of doubting antiquity (*yigu pai* 疑古派). His work was also influenced by Cui Shu 崔述 (1740-1816) who argued that the details of events from far antiquity recorded in transmitted texts had been added successively over time and were not to be trusted. He concluded that the accounts of the three emperors in the classics were forgeries and even doubted that the three dynasties had ever existed.[57] Similar to the philologists who removed more and more layers of the textual tradition, he and Gu Jiegang shortened the duration of history.[58] His harsh judgement that high antiquity was "no more than a construct",[59] was criticized as far too radical even by other advocates of the *yigu* movement that became increasingly influential during the 1920s.[60] Nevertheless, Gu Jiegang continued to exercise great influence not only on Chinese scholars but also on Western Sinologists like Arthur W. Hummel, Laurence A. Schneider, H.G. Creel, Hellmut Wilhelm and others who praised his "rigorous scientific manner."[61]

The Western Gaze

What makes Gu Jiegang's approach so attractive for Western scholars are probably the traits of Western influence it shows. Already Qing period *kaozheng* scholarship was not

[51] Elman 1984, 34.
[52] Fung 1952, 673.
[53] Hummel 1944, 519; Bauer 2001, 309.
[54] Hsiao 1976, 67.
[55] Kang 1891 (1998), 3 ff.
[56] Wagner 2002, 148.
[57] Cui Shu 18th c. (1983), vol. 2, 31 f.
[58] Levenson 1956, 404.
[59] Schneider 1969, 781.
[60] Most of the debates concerning the doubts on ancient texts were published by Gu Jiegang in the series called *Gushibian* 古史辨 that appeared in seven volumes from 1926 to 1941 [Gu 1926-35 (1992); Gu 1938-41 (1992)].
[61] Hummel 1929.

entirely untouched by Western influence or at least shows strong parallels with Western ideas. What already struck Hu Shi 胡適 (1891-1962), Gu Jiegang's teacher, as 'generally scientific' about the *kaozheng* principles of scientific research such as the 'search for truth in actual facts' (*shishi qiushi* 實事求是),[62] systematic and wide-ranging gathering of material from all kinds of sources, verification through word-by-word citation and naming of the sources, no plagiarizing, application of rigorous linguistic and historical methods instead of mere exegesis, are very much in accordance with Western ideas of what constitutes science.

In Western biblical scholarship, the first antecedents of historical-critical methodology developed during the late 16th and 17th century until they came to flourish in the 18th century. Doubts regarding the transmitted text had already been voiced very sharply by Johannes Morinus who complained in 1633 that the Hebraic Bible was so heavily falsified that it could no longer be used as sacrosanct source of biblical scholarship.[63] These thoughts as well as the grammatical, philological, phonological and historical methods that had their beginnings around the same time might well have entered China with the missionaries. There, they were easily received and combined with the long tradition of doubting the reliability of transmitted records as well as the emergence of more systematic textual work during since the Song period. Rudolf Wagner moreover argues that in the 18th century the West "had nothing in terms of philology to offer to a highly sophisticated and well recognized group of Chinese literati."[64] As Elman points out, the critical attitude developed in *kaozheng* scholarship might have induced a general openness to Western ideas of rigorous scientific research which came to influence China during the 19th century. This form of textual criticism did not emerge only "as a sudden growth in China, planted by 19th-century imperialists and opium traffickers" but drew heavily on Song Neo-Confucianism and *kaozheng* scholarship.[65]

Still, it remains difficult to distinguish which trait was induced by which side and what might have been a case of direct influence and what parallel development. For example, doubts about the revealed nature of the Bible and the identity of scripture and the word of God which emerged with scholars like Johann Semler (1725-1791)[66] are similar to the increasingly critical attitude towards the relationship of the transmitted texts to the wisdom of the sages that developed within Chinese textual criticism. While for the Qing Dynasty it is hard to say where these developments actually came into contact with each other, at least for Gu Jiegang's skeptic approach we can safely assume that it was heavily influenced by Western theories and ideas, already through his teacher Hu Shi. The impression of being rigorously scientific in a way not limited by cultural boundaries, neither Western nor Chinese, induced scholars to be increasingly taken with this critical approach of doubting layer after layer of the transmitted texts as well as of Chinese history in general.

In the wake of this general trend, Chinese and Western scholars alike tended to disregard many of the earliest and especially cryptic texts such as the *Guicang*. They were also hypercritical of the work of early Qing scholars and especially their compilations as they did not meet their standards of critical research. Especially Ma Guohan 馬國翰

[62] The phrase was originally taken from the *Hanshu*, j. 5, 1a.
[63] Kraus 1958 (19884), 46.
[64] Wagner 1997, 43.
[65] Elman 1984, 35.
[66] Hornig 1961, esp. 65-74 and 84-88.

(1794-1857) was accused of having taken into account too many unreliable sources and added too much exegesis of his own.[67] Until most recently, his work as well as that of other compilers did not find much acknowledgement. When Wang Zhongmin 王重民 approached the overdue appraisal of "Two Qing Editors of Lost Books" in 1932, his article did not find much response.[68] The next step in this direction was taken by Jeffrey Riegel more than fifty years later[69] and also Benjamin A. Elman and other Western and Japanese scholars working the Qing scholarship have acknowledged their work.[70] The fragments themselves, especially if they belonged to works of unclear authenticity like the *Guicang*, have found even less consideration.[71] Nevertheless, the *Guicang* provides an excellent example of how as difficult to read a text as a divination manual with less than ideal transmission and preservation conditions can nevertheless be studied and contribute to our understanding of past societies while at the same time challenging our understanding of authenticity and the nature of textual production.

Problems of Textual Transmission: (Re-)Establishing Texts

Processes and Agents of Textual (Re-)Production

The most important elements in the process of textual (re-)production are physical properties of source and target material and demands, knowledge and general social, physical and psychic condition of those demanding or producing a manuscript.

At least for early Chinese history, it is difficult to identify clearly separate groups of scribes, copyists, editors and authors. Even in the case of manuscripts clearly written by

[67] Wang Zhongmin 1932, 20.

[68] Wang Zhongmin 1932.

[69] Riegel 1976.

[70] Elman 1984, esp. 68 ff.

[71] Although the problem of the three *Yi* has been mentioned briefly by several scholars working on the *Yijing,* there are, to my knowledge, only three exclusive treatments published by Chinese scholars before the Wangjiatai discovery. The one by Liu Shipei 劉師培, first published in 1915, is only a short overview of the textual history of the two *Yi*. See Liu Shipei 1915 (1987). Gao Ming 高明 contributed to an old exegetical discussion when he treated the relationship of the three *Yi* as seen from their names in 1939 (Gao Ming 1939 (1987)). Wang Ning 王宁concentrated on what was left of the *Guicang* itself when he wrote his articles on the reliability of the names *Lianshan* and *Guicang* and on the hexagram names of the latter (Wang Ning 1995). The article on the two *Yi* by Rui Magone, published in 1996, is still concerned with traditional exegetical questions as already the title "Kanon und Konjektur: Das *Lianshan* und das *Guizang* als Topoi der konfuzianischen Exegetik" reveals (Magone 1996). It emerged from an unpublished Master thesis titled "Die zwei verlorengengangenen Werke *Lianshan* und *Guizang*" a copy of which the author kindly placed at my disposal (Magone 1995). In his unpublished dissertation of 1998 which can be consulted at the Guojia tushuguan 國家圖書館 in Beijing, Xing Wen 刑文 examined the excavated material from Wangjiatai (Xing 1998). His thesis concentrates on questions of intellectual history but also contains several passages on the development and context of milfoil divination. The probably most prominent treatment of the excavated *Guicang* was provided by Shaughnessy in 2002 who discussed it in its function as a divination manual similar to the *Yijing*. In 2006, the author of the present paper presented an MA Thesis on the Guicang, comparing transmitted and excavated fragments and suggesting a variety of causes for the discrepancies (Hein 2006)

one person such as the ones found at Mawangdui, we do not know if that person was a scribe supervised by an editor, like Mark Kalinowski suggests[72] or if there was only one person both editing and writing. It is also questionable if the term 'editor' is really adequate as most manuscript versions were not the outcome of a full-fledged editorial project like the one conducted by Liu Xiang and Liu Xin. Even if there was conscious comparing and rearrangement, at least for smaller undertakings editor and user or 'customer' quite often seem to have been the same person.[73]

Prior to the time of Confucius, the literati who were responsible for the (re)production and use of written material were mostly aristocrats.[74] Officials called *shi* 史 were concerned with text production as well as their selection, preservation and administration.[75] When the aristocratic monopoly on learning ceased during the Warring States period, writing was no longer confined to official documents though private authorship had not yet emerged as a concept either. Those new writings were connected with schools of learning, scholarly traditions which produced texts in the form of quotations of their master(s). In regard to the *Lunyu*, Lewis therefore states that "'authorship' and 'authority' are separate, and the writer casts himself in the role of a secretary transcribing the speech of another", although, one may add, he probably also used this media to assert his own position.[76] Such collections became what Kern calls 'texts with a history' that were composed and transmitted within a certain scholarly lineage.

Based on the great amount of graphical variants appearing in these writings, Kern suggests that "to be fully intelligible, texts were transmitted within a defined social framework, most likely a master-disciple(s) structure of face-to-face teaching and learning."[77] Also the highly phonetic way of choosing graphs makes it improbable that the manuscripts circulated freely over long distances as they would hardly have been understandable in far-away regions with different dialects and different conventions of textual notation. Still, some local or school-bound standards must have existed – otherwise even the scribe himself would not have been able to recognize his product some days after – but personal habits might also have influenced the choice of characters.

Authenticity and Oral Transmission

The highly phonetic way of writing not only suggests localized circulation but also an oral mode of textual reproduction and transmission. The image of a potentially professional scribe reproducing a single written source lying in front of them was probably not the standard case. Apart from writing after dictation, there is also the possibility that there was no written source at the scribe's or the reciter's hands at all but that they wrote or spoke according to their memory or more or less detailed notes taken during a lecture or discussion. Texts meant to be transmitted were often committed to memory and passed on from teacher to student over and over again, sometimes in written, sometimes only in recited form. The composition and interpretation would remain

[72] Kalinoswski 2005, 164.
[73] Li Xueqin 1994, 7f.
[74] Li Feng 2008.
[75] Li Feng 2008.
[76] Lewis 1999, 57-59.
[77] Kern 2002, 164.

roughly though not completely the same while the graphical appearance for sure differed between two written versions if there had been instances of non-written textual re-production in between. Such a proceeding would explain many of the deviations we encountered like the addition or omission of graphs, especially of 'little words' with grammatical function, the use of synonyms or slightly different ways of wording a story. Nevertheless, many of those changes could also have occured with a written source at hand, especially if there were no fixed standards or the scribes had the impression that changes were necessary to correct mistakes or render unclear passages understandable. The reasons behind divergences between different versions of the same text are therefore manifold.

Oral transmission of texts is not restricted to the Chinese cultural sphere but well-known as the standard way of transferring cultural knowledge from one generation to the next, especially in pre-literary communities. In the Chinese case, Zhu Xi and others believed that "the ancients had no written texts"[78] while Wang Bo 王柏 (1197-1274) held that "the Way of the sages has been obscured because it has been written down."[79] The insufficiency of written texts to transport and express adequately what was meant is emphasised in classical European as well as in Chinese tradition.[80] In China, even in Song and later periods there was much skepticism towards the written word and even more towards printed editions that lacked any personal dimension and made mistakes disseminate more quickly and lastingly.[81] Private transcription, memorization and vocalization therefore remained important. Gadamer remarks that in ancient Greece orality and writing were not clearly separated but that transmission could happen in both media as it would end in a new orality anyway.[82] He emphasises that oral tradition still has got the possibility of correction and explanation while "schriftliche Tradition unterliegt hingegen der Manipulierbarkeit des Textes, der dem Aktanten völlig veräußerlich ist."[83] This is also how Assmann argues when talking about textual and ritual coherence: "Der Hauptunderschied zwischen textueller und ritueller Kohärenz liegt darin, daß rituelle Kohärenz auf Wiederholung basiert, d.h. Variation ausgeschlossen wird, während textuelle Kohärenz Variation zuläßt, sogar ermutigt."[84] The point is that though every oral performance of a text might be slightly different in reality, it is perceived as being without variation. "Bewußte Variation im Sinne kontrollierter Abweichung kann es nur in Schriftkulturen geben, wo die Vorlage sichtbar vor Augen steht," as Assmann puts it.[85] He believes that it was narrative strands and sometimes formulas that were preserved largely facefully, while the text as a whole would be quite fluent

[78] Zhu Xi 12th c. (1993), j. 10. 10a; for a complete translation see Gardner 1990, 42.

[79] *Shiyi*, j. 1, 1a/b.

[80] Maybe the most famous discussion on this problem in the European context is contained in Platon's *Phaidros* 274c-278b. A translation is provided in Assmann / Assmann/ Harbsmeier 1983, 7-9 where it is also discussed by Gadamer (Gadamer 1983, 11-20). In the Chinese context there is a passage in the "Xici" commentary of the *Yijing*: "Writing cannot fully express speech and speech cannot fully express meaning (yi 意)" [*Zhouyi zhushu*, j. 11, 46a.

[81] For further discussion on authenticity and printing culture in the Song dynasty consult Cherniak 1994, esp. 54 f. and 73-80.

[82] Gadamer 1983, 13.

[83] Gadamer 1983, 40.

[84] Assmann 1999, 97.

[85] Assmann 2004, 139.

and variable. Still, for texts like divination handbooks that were used in a highly ritualized context and furthermore contained rhymed passages[86] the actual wording does not change much even during oral transmission. In the Chinese case, however, word-for-word transmission does not mean character-to-character reduplication.

The use of writing is also not enough to produce coherence also in the choice of characters, especially if written and oral transmission exist alongside each other. Only canonization induces at least a preliminary fixation of the appearance of a text.[87] In the Chinese case, early commentaries show the editors were well aware that what had been written down did not always have to be the standard character for the word the scribe had in mind and that therefore editorial changes could be necessary. If it was truth in principle that had to be expressed, considerable changes were possible that went much further than a mere correction of perceived writing mistakes.[88] Moreover, texts could be adapted to new functions as long as it was believed to agree with the intention of the ancient sages. Confucius, for example, when conducting editorial work on the *Yijing* is said to have transformed the divination handbook into a philosophical and cosmological work.[89] With a text as ambiguous and cryptic as the *Yijing* or any other book of divination, in many cases already the choice of different characters or a slight change of word order would change the meaning significantly. What was 'originally' intended can therefore be difficult or even impossible to reconstruct. This background needs to be kept in mind when comparing excavated and received versions of texts that may bear the same name or have such strong parallels in structure and/or contents that they may belong to the same textual tradition.

The scope and arrangement of text corpora whose 'building blocks' could be moved quite freely was probably influenced by both school traditions and personal needs.[90] As Lewis has pointed out, "the role of reader or transmitter involved a more active role than that assigned to someone who picks up a modern book. To create any text involved a group of people gathered together, often in a teaching situation, and to preserve or expand it across time required that this initial situation be constantly repeated. Should any text cease to be cared for and transmitted by such a group, it could survive only as a bundle of strips that would fall into disorder and perish."[91] Even in later centuries, the habit prevailed to refer not only to a title but always to specific edition to indi-

[86] How the poetic form using rhyme and regular structures can help to preserve the identity of the text throughout many years of transmission is conclusively demonstrated by Kern who shows that there is a greater general instability for passages from the *Shujing* while for the *Shijing* the strong oral element obviously led to a considerable graphic variation but lexical stability (Kern 2005). In a case where even the poles of the poetic structure, the rhyme words, vary Kern argues that the variation was induced either by "conscious compositional choice (with a later editor changing an earlier text) or represent two distinct textual traditions" (Kern 2005, 323). Different interpretation – be they bound to a whole school or a single editor – would of course change the text during the process of oral transmission and especially at the point when it was finally written down.

[87] For further thoughts on this problem see Assmann 2004, esp. 139 ff.

[88] Even unique variants made for doctrinal purposes as Boltz identified them in the Mawangdui material was acceptable at least to the adherents of the respective position (Boltz 1982, 95-117).

[89] Pi Xirui 19th c. (1954), 1-10.

[90] Boltz 2000.

[91] Lewis 1999, 55.

cate the textual lineage. Within these lineages, there was again the *usus* of producing "'hand-collated exemplars' (*chiao-pen* 校本), individual copies of an edition onto which a scholar records his collations and emendations,"[92] as it was still customary in Qing times. If a copy was meant to be for his own use, a scribe would feel even freer to insert characters if he considered a passage to be incomplete or incomprehensible or add further quotations, notes and explanations. For excavated manuscripts, the deposition in a grave suggests that the copies were part of the personal belongings of the deceased and thus meant for limited circulation. Therefore, the general context not only for every grave and its occupant but for the whole custom of the deposition of manuscripts and in this case also divination tools in graves has to be investigated.

General Principles of Studying Excavated Texts with Transmitted Counterparts

Establishing Transmitted Parallels

With any newly excavated text, the first question is if it is entirely unknown or if all or parts of it have been transmitted in another form. For well-known and much-studied texts, establishing this basic fact seems a simple enough exercise, but there are other cases such as the *Guicang* which has been mentioned or quoted only in a small number of transmitted texts, some of them obscure and problematic themselves. The first point of reference and proof of the existence of specific texts and their transmission are bibliographies, such as those contained in the *Hanshu* and later historical texts, however, on the *Guicang* the *Hanshu* remains quiet.[93] Nevertheless, the earliest source mentioning the *Guicang* may predate the *Hanshu*: the *Zhouli* whose date itself is much debated, providing us only with a *terminus ante quem* around the second or third century BC.[94] Moreover the reference does not refer to a concrete written text but only to the method or methods (*fa* 灋[法]) of the three *Yi* without providing direct quotes or even saying that it was a coherent text at all. Also later references are too vague to ascertain if the *Guicang* they are talking about really was a divination handbook of the Shang or a text of a rather different nature or later date of creation. It seems certain, however, that a text called *Guicang* circulated in different editions since the Jin Dynasty, was heavily fragmented during the 12th century and finally lost during the first half of the 15th century. Quotations and fragments were preserved in other texts and reassembled by Qing-scholars like Ma Guohan, Yan Kejun 嚴可均 (1762-1843) and Hong Yixuan 洪頤煊 (1765-1837).

Compliations such as these are not uncommon especially for obscure texts; in the latter case they tend to rely on encyclopedias and compilations of mythical, geographical and historical material, many of them not extant anymore and thus of uncertain reliability. Furthermore, any such compilation is very much shaped by the methods of textual scholarship applied and the views of the authors themselves. In the case of the

[92] Roth 1993, 221.

[93] Several scholars argue that it was a late forgery or a text that had been discovered in the manuscript-find of Jizhong in AD 280 (Pi Xirui 19th c. (1954), j. 1, 8; Guo 1959, 2).

[94] *Zhouli zhushu*, j. 24, 7a. See Karlgren 1926 and Broman 1961 on the issue of the *Zhouli* and its date..

Guicang, following their teacher Sun Xingyan 孫星衍 (1753-1818), Yan and Hong used only material from the Song or earlier periods because they believed that up to this point texts were transmitted without much interruption or falsification.[95] Unlike their teacher, however, who only relied on explicit citations, they incorporated also unattributed fragments whose structure and content seemed to justify an attribution to the *Guicang*. Ma Guohan additionally considered Ming- and Qing-sources which are not only problematic because of their late date but also because many of them advocate *Xiangshu* 象數 (images and numbers) theories, and the quotations may have been adjusted to fit these ideas.[96] The same applies to quotations used in commentaries and sub-commentaries and to a lesser extent encyclopaedias. In all cases they might have been "adapted, gaps concealed and edges smoothed for their new context," as A.C. Dinoisotti remarked for quotations in Europe's classical literary heritage.[97]

The context in which such quotations appear is thus crucial, especially if they are used to weigh in on political questions or the authority of other texts more crucial to the established canon. The *Guicang*, for instance, has primarily been mentioned in texts discussing the relationship of the three *Yi*, the *Lianshan*, the *Guicang* and the *Zhouyi*, debating if the three *Yi* were only different methods or also different texts. If there there had indeed been three or more divination texts, this would throw doubt on the status of the *Yijing* as the first and foremost of all classics. Given this combination of the possible danger to the status of the *Yijing* and the fragmentary and questionable nature of any evidence for the existence of other and potentially earlier divination manuals, there was a general tendency to regard the other texts as forgeries or at least as a-textual predecessors of the *Zhouyi*. During the 19th century finally the *Zhouyi* itself was questioned by scholars like Pi Xirui 皮希瑞 (1850-1908), arguing that: "Before it was appraised by Confucius the *Zhouyi* probably was also only a divination method and not yet a text."[98] Pi Xirui thus called the authenticity and age of the most revered part of the Chinese textual heritage into question and saw the role of all earlier editors as doubtful. These trends in the study of the *Guicang* thus closely mirror general trends in the development of textual criticism outlined above. Doubts about all transmitted texts increased during the following century until they themselves were challenged by new discoveries of the last decades.

[95] Riegel 1976, 174.

[96] The *Xiangshu* school, one of the two most important schools in the interpretation of the *Yijing*, originated during the Han dynasty that worked mainly on methods of changing hexagrams and pointed out connections and analogies with cosmological and calendarical systems. These theories were revived and came to flourish during the Song dynasty. For further information consult Fendos 1988, Smith 1989; Smith 1990, Smith / Wyatt 1990, and Bohn 1998, 164-196.

[97] Dinoisotti 1997, 1.

[98] Pi Xirui 19th c. (1954), j. 1, 8.

Working with Excavated Texts

Issues of Context

Texts in graves are naturally an exciting and important discovery as the context establishes their date and seemingly brings us closer to an 'original' or at least earlier version of the text in question – or even provides texts that were previously entirely unkown. In a way, working with previously unknown texts is easier, especially if they are unique such as letters or private notes, but as soon as they make reference to anything known from transmitted texts, they immediately become emmeshed in old debates on authenticity and authority of specific texts, versions, and editions. Given the long tradition of textual scholarship in China, there is a tendency for excavated manuscripts to be ripped from the graves and studied ardently without much regard for their original context of deposition. This context, however, can be crucial for the interpretation of the manuscripts under consideration. Divination manuals are one of the most frequent kind of texts found in tombs, however, the Wangjiatai grave is special in that it contained several kinds of divinations tools that are only rarely found in graves or other contexts. That these tools and texts were found together, shows that different methods of divination did not exclude each other but could be used simultaneously, an insight that could contribute substantially to debates on the three Yi but is hardly ever mentioned.

Issues of Preservation and Sequence

On a more practical note, the retrieval of manuscripts from usually collapsed and waterlogged graves that furthermore have often been robbed means that the original textual sequence and even the assignation to one text or the other can be problematic. In the case of grave robbing, some of the slips may have been removed or used as torches, so the assemblages may not be complete. Even at the point of interment, the manuscripts may not have been complete. Headings or even titles are relatively late developments, meaning that some texts have to be addressed by reference to the first few characters of their first section – if the first section can be identified. In the case of Wangjiatai, the grave had not been disturbed by tomb robbers, but inflowing water had disturbed the original sequence of the bamboo slips was so much that it could not be safely reconstructed. There were no titles or headings for any of the texts bar one,[99] and the title *Guicang* was assigned only on the basis of the parallels with the transmitted material. According to the excavators, there were two separate *Guicang* manuscripts written in different hands, but as no high-quality photographs are available and the slips have by now moulded away, it is not possible to test this assessment.[100] The same applies to the suggested date – late Warring States period based on the alleged similarity of the *Guicang* writing with the Chu script.

[99] On the *Zhengshi zhi chang* the words *yuan yi sheng fang zhengshi zhi chang* 员(圆)以生枋(方)正(政)事之常 [員(圓)以生枋(方)正(政)事之常] are written once in the centre and twice at the sides. Wang Mingqin argues that this must have been the summary of the main point and therefore something like the title of the text but this interpretation remains debatable (Wang Mingqin 2004, 29)

[100] Wang Mingqin 2004, 28.

Issues of Publication and Transcription

Wangjiatai is an unfortunate – though not entirely unique – case of a discovery of texts in graves that did not receive the kind of attention, funding, and systematic preservation and publication that are by now standard. Wangjiatai was not the earliest modern manuscript find; indeed, some of the most well-published finds such as the Guodian 郭店 or Shuihudi 睡虎地 manuscripts, were discovered around the same time or even decades earlier.[101] Given the debates and unresolved issues surrounding the reading of specific characters and even the sequence of bamboo slips in a specific text or the attribution of some slips to one text or another, it is essential and now well-established standard to publish large, high-resolution photographs of all slips as well as transcriptions and translations into modern characters. Such transcriptions are not an easy matter but highly interpretive and always the target of much criticism.

As far as sequence is concerned, transcriptions of course have to decide for one or the other possibility and also the transcription of the single graphs in their standard equivalent as see, in most publications already includes a considerable degree of interpretation and does not quite agree with Boltz' more rigorous editorial ideals. He demands: "the transcription should reflect exactly what is written and nothing more. The transcription itself is not the place to include decisions as to what the editor thinks the 'intended' character or word might be for a non-standard, rare, or anomalous character or what the 'correct' character or word is for those characters that the transcriber deems 'wrong.' At this stage there is no such thing as a 'wrong' character; there is only what is written and that is what must be transcribed."[102]

Although he allows for "such decisions, corrections, and judgements" to be included either in separate notes or inserted in brackets as long as it is "rigorously distinguish[ed] what the manuscript writes, from what the editor adds,"[103] he demands that "characters that are wholly visible and legible must be transcribed exactly as written, without either abbreviation or elaboration of their constituent graphic structure."[104] As any such publication would not be understandable for readers without a very profound knowledge in palaeography as well as phonology, Xing Wen proposes multi-faced model he calls 'transparent transcription.' Here, a photograph, a 'tracing transcription,' a 'direct transcription,' i.e. the rendering of all components in their standard equivalent, the '*liding* transcription,' i.e,. the clerical equivalent, and finally the 'interpretive transcription,' i.e., what the transcriber thought was the intended word, should be placed besides each other.[105]

For a representation that should be as objective as possible, photograph, tracing copy, standard equivalent of the character and of the intended word would have to be placed beside each other.[106] Probably mainly due to financial reasons, such a complex presentation of text finds has so far not been produced. Even the excellent publication

[101] Jingmenshi 2002; Shuihudi 1978.
[102] Boltz 2000, 40.
[103] Boltz 2000, 41 (in the original the sentence is given in bold print).
[104] Boltz 2000, 40.
[105] Xing 2005.
[106] As proposed by Xing Wen with his model of a 'transparent transciption' (Xing 2005).

of the Guodian material[107] present 'only' full-size photographs, a transcription in vertical columns rendered in complex characters while what the transcribers consider to be obvious loangraphs or mistakes were supplemented by the 'intended' or 'correct' character in brackets. Allthough not all decisions can therefore be retraced in detail, they can be reconsidered with the help of the photographs.

Unfortunately, the only available publication of the Wangjiatai material is kept in abbreviated characters, though some unusual graphs were inserted by hand. Also so-called loan-characters or 'mistakes' thankfully were not 'corrected' but Wang Mingqin added what he thought was the intended character in brackets. The correctness of these decisions cannot be assessed as there are no photographs while the original material has developed fungi and is by now probably long beyond rescuing.

While modern editors posses a wide variety of means to mark doubtful character identifications or propose several readings, editors of the Han Dynasty, for example, on whose work most of the transmitted editions are based, had to make a definite decision.[108] They also had to cope with questions of sequence, the deciphering of ancient script forms and the general problem of identifying the intended meaning behind the characters. Working with excavated manuscripts can help retrace some of the decisions they made and therefore sometimes correct mistakes. On the other hand we should also not rush to the conclusion that a manuscript version"by its very virtue of being contemporary or at least close to the original is inevitably more 'genuine' or authoritative than the received text," as Giele warns.[109] Han Dynasty editors like Liu Xiang and Liu Xin surely had a greater variety of manuscripts at hand then we can consult today. Moreover, we also have to keep in mind that the manuscripts rescued from graves today are not necessarily complete versions of any 'standard' text but might have been abbreviated, enlarged or changed for the various reasons described above.

Comparing Excavated and Transmitted Texts

Overall Text Structure

When comparing excavated manuscripts and transmitted texts, a variety of factors affecting text production and re-production have to be kept in mind. Differences in overall text structure and sequence can be expected especially with multi-part longer texts with no particular line of argument going through them or collections of sayings or idea. One issue with such assessments is that the sequence of excavated bamboo slips is sometimes reconstructed using transmitted versions of the same text, but such assessments can often be checked based on physical characteristics of the slips themselves – provided preservation conditions are sufficiently favorable. The Wangjiatai *Guicang* was poorly preserved and the sequence of slips was thus rearranged based on Ma Guohan's reconstruction. Unfortunately, the presentation of the material does not allow to make sure if sometimes two entries were written on the same slip – the only hint on sequence that remains after the slips themselves were disarranged so badly. We can

[107] Guodian 1998.
[108] Li Ling 1999, 268.
[109] Giele 2000, 4.

only be sure that the hexagram names were not kept in a separate list as Ma Guohan suggested for the transmitted material, but they were combined with the corresponding hexagram symbol and the hexagram statement. For a divination handbook like the *Guicang* that is based on 64 hexagrams, it is obvious that a complete version of the text must have comprised at least 64 entries because otherwise it would not have been of much use in interpreting the divination outcome. That both of the excavated versions between them provide only 54 different hexagrams suggests that they were already incomplete at the time of deposition and/or damaged during the excavation process.

Sentence Structure and Content

The next aspect that needs to be compared is the structure of sentences and whole passages. For the *Guicang*, there are only eight direct parallels, but structure and content are very similar also for the rest of the excavated and transmitted fragments. Most of them are descriptions of divination performed in the past, starting with a description of the situation divination was performed in, then giving the outcome,[110] a cryptic verse and closing with a final explanation; however, not all parts appear in all entries. Especially the final explanations on the (in)auspiciousness of an action or event appears in nearly none of the transmitted fragments while there are several instances in the Wangjiatai manuscripts but also in the Fuyang and the transmitted *Zhouyi*. Shaughnessy suggests that they might originally have been only *ad hoc* explanations added more or less incidentally to the basic text.[111] Considering their form and irregular appearance, this explanation is very convincing. When the divination texts were codified, these passages were not necessarily incorporated.

What can and does also occur are differences in wording – for instance changes in word-order out of inattentiveness or unclear memory, or different ways of referring to the same phenomenon, place, or person[112] - or even different ways of telling the same story. In the case of the *Guicang*, some of those variants are both substantiated by parallels in other sources and therefore seem to depend on different, probably locally bound traditions of transmission.[113] Thus it is probable that at least not all of the transmitted material belongs to the same line of transmission like the excavated *Guicang*.

Comparison of Single Characters

The writing of single characters can only be compared in all details if photographs or tracings of the excavated manuscripts are available, something that is missing for the

[110] The form of this first part most of the time appears like this: In the past X (the one requesting the oracle) divined about Y (a certain affair or question) and had the stalks prognosticated by Z (a diviner). Z (the diviner) prognosticated and said: (In)Auspicious .昔者X貞卜Y而枚占Z. Z占之曰: (不)吉.

[111] Shaughnessy 2002, 117.

[112] For example the exchange of *Yan Di*炎帝 and *Yan Shen* 炎神.

[113] Compare for instance the story of Yi shooting the suns in strips 461 (Wang Mingqin 2004, 31) and 470 (Wang Mingqin 1996, 102), Ma 9b (40a) (citing from the *Shanhaijing*, j. 9, 3b), Ma 12a (41b) (citing from *Shanhaijing*, j. 18, 15b), Ma 12a (41b) (citing from *Chuxue ji*, j. 22, 573), Yan 3a (105a), Hong 2a (3) (citing the *Shanhaijing*, j. 18, 8a, *Lushi*, j. 14, *Houji* 12, *Lushi* 2, 43a).

Wangjiatai material. Nevertheless, in several cases even the transcription shows the exchange or omission of semantic or phonetic elements, a rather common phenomenon of graphic variation. Many deviating graphs can be identified as clear loangraphs, not only because of shared rhyme- and initial-groups for the underlying words but also because in many cases the graphs contain the same phonetic element and can be safely attributed to the same *xiesheng* 諧聲 series.[114] Such variations due to similarities in graphic appearance can occur when copying from a written source but also when writing from memory or dictation, while loangraphs of similar outer appearance are more likely to appear in case of oral transmission. On the whole, it is not always possible to differentiate clearly between 'regular' variants, writing mistakes or even deviation in content. The case of otherwise unrelated words with the same grammatical function is even more difficult to judge as the decision for one over the other does not change anything about the meaning of the sentence.[115] If we draw a profile of graphic variation for the different textual witnesses like Richter suggests, then we can extract information on textual lineage(s).[116] This means a shift in debate from what is the 'correct' or 'original' version to a discussion of several textual traditions that are all perfectly acceptable and equally 'authentic.' That does not mean that the excavated manuscripts cannot be used to correct real mistakes in the transmitted fragments – for the Guicang for instance the phrase 尚毋有咨 /常毋谷月[117] – but it shows that we cannot discard one or the other version completely. The question if any of them can be identified as more reliable or if both are equally valid has to be asked anew for every graph.

Overall Assessment of the Comparanda

Even though some passages are heavily fragmented, the excavated material on the whole shows a close resemblance to the transmitted *Guicang* passages. As the Wangjiatai find can be dated to late Zhanguo or Qin the word 'forgery' is not used in discussions on the *Guicang* anymore; however, what kind of *Guicang* the Wangjiatai divination handbook is, what the relationship with the transmitted fragments and the *Zhouyi* is like, is still under discussion. Although it is generally understood that several divination traditions existed at the same time,[118] it remains unclear if the *Guicang* and the *Zhouyi* developed from the same source or if the latter depended on the former or the other way round. This debate is closely connected with the discussion on authenticity that asks if the *Guicang* really went back on Shang origins and was a predecessor of the *Zhouyi* or if it was written down only later on, maybe even modeled after the *Zhouyi*.[119]

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[114] For example, two different forms of *kǎo* < khâu/ < *khəw? with slightly differing lower components (老/考) which is also synonymous with 耆 *qí* < gji3 < *gərjəj while all three are interchangeable with 耄 *lǎo* < lâu/ < *rəw? (Qiu 2000, 157) because of their similar graphic appearance, meaning and at least in part also pronunciation They all share the same phonetic element, i.e. belong to the same *xiesheng* series. The initials belong to the same group while the rhyme groups are different but belong to those that can overlap (*you* 幽 and *wei* 微).

[115] For example, *er* 而 and *yi* 以.

[116] Richter 2005, 170.

[117] The deviations in this passage have been analyzed in Wang Mingqin 2004, 35.

[118] Smith 1989, Field 2000, Shaughnessy 2002 a.o.

[119] Lian 1996, Wang Mingqin 1996, Ren / Liang 2002, Cheng / Peng 2004, Cook 2004.

Although the material available at present does not provide a clear answer to these questions, it has already become clear that one of the main problems in comparing transmitted and excavated versions of texts lies in the nature of early Chinese texts themselves. They are much less fixed than previously assumed but consist of a great variety of textual traditions that do not simply run parallel but can also influence each other. Apart from that they can change titles or carry no title at all. What later on was called *Guicang* therefore does not have to be identical with what the *Zhouli* referred to when it mentioned this title. But at least the excavated and the transmitted fragments show a close relationship that can be defined more clearly through direct comparison.

What has come down to us are reconstructions from quotations – sometimes even appearing in different versions – recorded in a broad variety of sources from different times and backgrounds. The deviations between those variants, however, are not as significant as between them and the Wangjiatai *Guicang*. As here stories are told differently, sometimes even in connection with different hexagrams, they seem to belong to different textual traditions. Thus, the reconstruction of a common archetype is hardly possible even for single passages, also because the variation between single characters is often synonymic and therefore equally valid.

Textual Transmission and "The Difficulty of the *Yijing*"

A.E. Housman defines textual criticism as "the science of discovering error in texts and the art of removing it."[120] This definition proceeds from the assumption that there is one 'original,' the *urtext* that can be reconstructed from the received textual witnesses. Also most Chinese publications for example on the Mawangdui *Yijing* assume that there was only one correct version of the *Yijing* and normally present differences between the transmitted and the excavated text as mistakes or loan-graphs appearing in the latter.[121] Hertzer criticises this approach and argues that it was questionable if the 'creation' of one 'correct' version of the *Yijing* did justice to its function as a book of divination.[122] Western methods of textual critique that rely on the criteria of *Folgefehler* to construct a *stemma codicum* of the different versions, are not that easy applicable to such texts, even more so because they do not allow for lateral contamination across the branches or for instances of non-written textual re-production in between.

In an article called "The difficulty of the *Yijing*", Smith names two main reasons for the elusiveness of the meaning of this text: the non-linguistic signs, the hexagrams, that were created to make clear what human language is unable to express, and the "lack of 'syntax'" that rendered the meaning cryptic already at an early point of transmission history.[123] Furthermore, the interpretation of the divination outcome was situationally bound due to the ambiguity of the *Yi* and "its longevity as a tool of divination is due in part to the elusiveness of its meaning," as Smith holds.[124] Also Dominique Hertzer argues: "Anders als bei religiösen oder ideologischen Texten, die von der Authentizität des richigen Wortes leben, entfaltet sich die Bedeutung eines Orakelbuches erst durch

[120] Housman 1921, 69.
[121] Hertzer 1996b, 185.
[122] Hertzer 1996b, 103.
[123] Smith 1993, 1-6.
[124] Smith 1993, 12.

die Polysemie der einzelnen Worte wie des gesamten Textes."[125] A search for the sense, the intended word and the graph that renders it most correctly therefore does not make much sense. Transmitted sources on divination have furthermore shown that diviners could modify the statements they found in divination handbooks or even create new ones.[126] These can again have entered into the texts themselves, changed them and induced the development of several transmission traditions. Therefore there is not the *Yijing* or the *Guicang* that can be reconstructed from the extant textual witnesses according to Western ideas of an *urtext*.

To face the problem of the great fluidity of lexicon, writing and text, and to do justice to the different text types, Kern suggested to "establish a distributional pattern of types of variants that appear at the manuscript at hand."[127] Along those lines, Hertzer developed an unfortunately unpublished research guide to the Mawangdui *Yijing* that tries to determine the exact lexical definition of all meanings of a given graph, contrasts the diverging characters and points out similarities and differences in meaning.[128] Undertakings like this as well as studies in phonology, etymology and grammar are the absolutely necessary basis for all further investigations on the various Yi.

Beyond that, it is unclear how to do justice to the broad range of possible meanings when editing a text. For translations, be they in modern Chinese or Western languages, the problem is even greater and the authors most of the time decide for only one reading or – for Chinese-Chinese translations – simply choose one character without further discussions on its meaning or the reasons for their choice. To reconstruct single stages of textual transmission, i.e., different editions and versions, and to confront them in a critical edition remains a goal that for the *Yijing* might be reached within the next decades. For the *Guicang* with its much more unfavorable material basis unfortunately much less preliminary studies or comparisons have been made, but even here systematic analysis and editing should allow for producing a critical edition that can be used for further research on divination methods and manuals.

Conclusion

Throughout this paper, it has become clear that there are many pitfalls and problems with editing early Chinese excavated manuscripts with transmitted counterparts, especially when trying to apply western concepts such as *urtext*, original, or authenticity. At the same time, it has become clear that a systematic approach can go far in making sense of this problematic textual heritage. In five steps, starting from definitions and the history and preconceptions of previous traditions of textual chriticism in both China and the West, the paper then investigated processes and mechanisms of textual (re)production before comparing excavated and transmitted texts and finally combining all of these insights in a teneral textual critique. Applied to the example of the *Guicang*, this approach has shown that the question of the authenticity of the Chinese textual heritage remains rather problematic should rather be supplanted by detailed

[125] Hertzer 1996b, 103.
[126] Smith 1989, esp. 450.
[127] Kern 2002, 155.
[128] Described in Hertzer 1996b, 87-89.

reconstructions of various strands of textual development, research that needs to combine the different strands of evidence discussed throughout this paper.

The tentative comparison between the excavated and the transmitted material on the *Guicang* outlined above is by far not enough to determine the actual date and relationship of the different versions, but it was possible to establish the existence of different lines of transmission. The range of variation furthermore allowed for inferences on the nature of the material and its transmission, the way divination manuals were created and changed over time until they witnessed a gradual hardening of their content and structure that made them distinct from other lines of transmission but also from other divination manuals such as the *Zhouyi*.

In a next step, the results would have to be reconsidered in regard to phonetic and etymological criteria to clarify the relationship between the different versions and pinpoint different phases of textual development. Furthermore, it is absolutely necessary to analyze the content and layout of the grave and start systematic comparisons with other graves containing mantic texts and/or tools. Each text, each edition, each version has to be examined in the context of its emergence and function to highlight its relative importance. A manuscript interred in a grave was not meant to provide an authoritative version of a certain text but was compiled for personal usage and had therefore been arranged much more freely than any official edition. Editors whose aim it was to produce precisely such an authoritative, understandable version would have felt free to change or even add characters or whole passages if they regarded them to be 'wrong' or missing.

To be able to work with transmitted as well as excavated sources we therefore have to be aware of this particular concept of authenticity that does not search truthfulness in every character but in the intended meaning. At the same time, the great fluidity of text and language and the specific modes of textual reproduction at earlier times also have to be kept in mind. Moreover, it became clear that a search for the text, the word and the character is especially inadequate in the case of divination-manuals like the *Guicang* or *Yijing*. The aim of (re-)establishing a presupposed *urtext* is not appropriate to strive for in regard to the early Chinese textual heritage.

What can be reconstructed are the environment and the boarders of the text at hand as well as different stages in the transmission process. Such a proceeding regards the different textual witnesses in their own rights as valuable instances in the history of textual transmission and mirror of the circumstances of their production. On one hand, such an approach thus sets an end to general doubts on the authenticity of the Chinese textual heritage, but on the other it does not lead towards re-establishing the transmitted texts as authentic, unchanged transmissions of the *urtexts* or the 'utterances of the sages' Chinese scholars have been searching for over so many centuries. No edition or reconstruction can ever be "the author's text reconstituted somehow. Like all previous versions, it is a new text, which emerges in a particular historical context but carries with it the entire history of its evolution."[129] The outlines of this evolution, however, can be retraced and presented in critical editions modern scholars should aim for. Then working with the Chinese textual heritage is no longer a question of dwelling in the illusion of being able to recreate the past, nor is it one of general doubting or believing in the authenticity of transmitted texts. Now the time has come for the third approach

129 Cherniak 1994, 8.

mentioned by Li Xueqin: *shigu* 釋古, 'scrutinizing antiquity'[130] and investigating what has come down to us with an appropriately critical mind to find out more about the nature of early Chinese texts and the modes of their (re-)production.

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130 Li Xueqin 1995 (1997), 341-9.

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