

Article

Can Wu and Xi in *Guoyu* Be Categorised as Shamans?

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Abstract: The issue of whether *Wu* 巫 and *Xi* 覡 mentioned in *Guoyu*, ‘Chuyu Xia’ 國語, 楚語下, can be categorised as shamans has been the subject of controversy for a long time. As there is no generally accepted definition of ‘shaman’, we cannot give a definite and universally acceptable answer. Based on a microanalysis of the semantic textual meaning of ‘Chuyu Xia’, this study argues that the meaning of ‘Shang Xia Bi Yi’ 上下比義 in this chapter is to implement the sacred principles of Heaven on Earth and that *Wu* and *Xi* were chosen by the spirits just because they were able to do this. The meaning of ‘Ming Shen Jiang Zhi, Zai Nan Yue Xi, Zai Nü Yue Wu’ 明神降之, 在男曰覡, 在女曰巫 is either ‘*Wu* and *Xi* were possessed by the spirits from Heaven’ or ‘there was a certain form of direct communication between the spirits and *Wu* and *Xi*’. This study, thus, aims to provide a basis for accurately judging whether *Wu* and *Xi* can be categorised as shamans.

Keywords: *Wu* and *Xi*; *Guoyu*; Chuyu Xia; shamanism; possession

1. Introduction

The divergence of opinion regarding whether *Wu* 巫 and *Xi* 覡, mentioned in ‘Chuyu Xia’ 楚語下, can be categorised as shamans is partly due to differences in textual understanding, which have given rise to different views about the definitions and descriptions of *Wu* and *Xi* and partly due to diversities in the definition of ‘shaman’. In the latter case, the definitions of ‘shaman’ inevitably vary across academia (Klein et al. 2001, p. 219). According to Peters and Price-Williams (1980), the term ‘shaman’ originated with the Russian acceptance of the Tungus term ‘saman’, which means ‘one who is excited, moved, raised’ (p. 408, Note 1).¹ Yu and Michael suggested that so long as there is some form of communication with spirits, the communicator can be considered a shaman (Yu 2014, p. 68; Michael 2015, p. 662). Kitagawa (1977) argues that in Siberia, certain techniques of ecstasy or soul flight are essential for judging whether one is a shaman or not, whereas possession is the basic criterion for shamanhood in Southeast Asia and Oceania (p. 360). To Eliade and Boileau, possession should be excluded from the criteria for shamanhood (Eliade [1964] 1989, p. 507, Note 34; Boileau 2002, p. 360). Many scholars emphasise that ecstasy is a criterion for shamanhood (Cf. e.g., Eliade [1964] 1989, p. 499; Hultkrantz 1973, pp. 34–35), while Kehoe emphasises that a shaman must be able to utilise music—to ‘drum and chant to create an altered state of consciousness’ (Kehoe 1996, p. 377). This means that even if our textual understandings of the ‘Chuyu Xia’ are identical, different conclusions may, nevertheless, be drawn.² In the former case, there are differences in the definitions and descriptions of *Wu* and *Xi* as well, and many of them are influenced by the definition of ‘shaman’. For example, Eliade (Eliade [1964] 1989) describes *Wu* and *Xi* as shamans who have the ability to make their souls leave their bodies to travel and the ability to be possessed by spirits, and he tried to discern the difference between these two abilities (pp. 451–53). In Chang’s (1983) description, *Wu* and *Xi* are not only shamans who have the power of possession but are also a ‘crucial part’ of the ruling classes: “In the past, everybody had that access through the shamans. Since heaven had been severed from earth, only those who controlled that access had the wisdom—hence the authority—to rule. Shamans, therefore, were a crucial part of every state court; in fact, scholars of ancient China agree that the king himself was actually



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head shaman" (p. 45). While acknowledging the possibility that *Wu* and *Xi* were possessed by spirits, Keightley (1989) challenged the idea that they were typical shamans: "The 'Chuyu' passage in *Guo yu* . . . either demonstrates bureaucratic resistance to the idea of a free flow of communication between Earth and Heaven, or it implies the existence of yet a third kind of shaman—the shaman-cum-bureaucrat, the shaman-cum-moral metaphysician and strict ritualist—who engages in neither flight, possession, nor ecstasy". To Keightley, "Nothing in the definition of *Xi* and *Wu* requires us to regard these figures as shamans of either the Siberian or Southeastern mode. They were 'invocators' . . . who were able to serve the spirits with purity and reverence" (pp. 23–24, 29–30).³ To Puett (2002), *Wu* and *Xi* were far removed from being shamans; rather, they were "ritual specialists" who "were responsible for maintaining the proper sacrifices" and whose specific duty it was to order the spirits and grant them their proper positions (pp. 106–8).

Although there are various definitions and descriptions of shamanism and *Wu* and *Xi*, the text of the 'Chuyu Xia' remains unchanged; this makes it possible to avoid controversy due to interpretations that deviate from the text's actual meaning. To answer the above question convincingly, we will try to eliminate the obstacles to semantic comprehension through a detailed analysis of semantic textual meaning.

The original text on *Wu* and *Xi* in the 'Chuyu Xia' reads as follows:

I. 昭王問于觀射父曰：‘《周書》所謂重、黎實使天地不通者何也？若無然，民將能登天乎？’

II. 對曰：“非此之謂也。古者民神不雜。民之精爽不攜貳者，而又能齊肅衷正，其智能上下比義，其聖能光遠宣朗，其明能光照之，其聰能聽徹之，如是則明神降之，在男曰覲，在女曰巫。是使制神之處位次主，而為之牲器時服。

III. 而後使先聖之後之有光烈，而能知山川之號，高祖之主，宗廟之事，昭穆之世，齊敬之勤，禮節之宜，威儀之則，容貌之崇，忠信之質，禋絜之服，而敬恭明神者，以為之祝。

IV. 使名姓之後，能知四時之生，牲之物，玉帛之類，采服之宜，彝器之量，次主之度，屏攝之位，壇場之所，上下之神祇，氏姓之所出，而心率舊典者，為之宗。

V. 於是乎有天，地，神，民，類物之官，是謂‘五官’；各司其序，不相亂也。民是以能有忠信，神是以能有明德，民神異業，敬而不瀆，故神降之嘉生，民以物享，禍災不至，求用不匱。

VI. 及少昊之衰也，九黎亂德，民神雜糅，不可方物。夫人作享，家為巫史，無有要質。民匱於祀，而不知其福。蒸享無度，民神同位。民瀆齊盟，無有嚴威。神狎民則，不蠲其為。嘉生不降，無物以享。禍災薦臻，莫盡其氣。

VII. 顓頊受之，乃命南正重司天以屬神，命火正黎司地以屬民，使復舊常，無相侵瀆，是謂絕地天通 (Xu 2002, pp. 512–15).

Professor Keightley's paraphrase reads as follows:

I. King Zhao asked Guan Yifu 觀射父, saying: "What does it mean in 'The Books of Zhou,' where it is said that Chong 重 and Li 黎 actually caused communication between Heaven and Earth to be cut off (tian di bu tong 天地不通)? If this had not happened, would the people be able to ascend to Heaven?"

II. He replied, "This is not what it means; (it means that) in antiquity, the (officers in charge of the) people and the (officers in charge of the) spirits were not intermingled (i.e., were not mixed up). There were those among the people whose spiritual vigor was undiverted and who were also able to act in reverence and rectitude; their intelligence could conform to what is right in the upper and lower realms, their sagacity could blaze afar and display what is bright, their clear vision could illuminate it, their astute hearing could provide thorough understanding of it. Thus, the spirits (ming shen 明神) descended to them. In the case of men, (these special people) were called Xi 覲; in the case of women, they were called Wu 巫. Thus, one employed them to give order to the position and precedence

of the spirits and to prepare their sacrificial victims, the ritual vessels, and the ceremonial garments of the seasons.⁴

III. Subsequently, if there were descendants of those former sages who had achieved glory, who could understand the titles of the mountains and rivers,⁵ the tablets of the high ancestors, the affairs of the ancestral temple, the (alternation of the) zhao and mu generations, the devotion of reverence, the rightness of ritual regulations, the rules of decorum, the adornment of demeanor, the true nature of loyalty and good faith, and the garments for the undefiled sacrifices, and who revered and respected the spirits, one made them Invocaters (zhu 祝).⁶

IV. By employing the descendants of famous clans, those who could know the products of the four seasons,⁷ the animals for sacrifice, the types of jade and silk, the rituals for the colored garments, the capacities of the ritual vessels, the degrees of precedence, the positions of the screens and fans, the places of the altars and open places of sacrifice, the spirits of the upper and lower realms,⁸ the origins of the lineages and clans, and whose minds followed the old codes, became Temple Officers (zong 宗).⁹

V. Thus, there were the officers for Heaven, Earth, spirits, people, and for classifying phenomena; these were called the five officers. Each was in charge of his orderly sequences and did not become confused with the others. Because of this, the people could have loyalty and good faith, the spirits could have their sacred virtue. The people and spirits had their different tasks; these were respected and not defiled (bu du 不瀆). Therefore, the spirits sent down good crops, the people made offerings with the crops, and disasters and calamities did not come. There were no shortages of what they needed.¹⁰

VI. When it came to the degenerate time of Shao Hao 少昊, the Nine Li (Jiu Li 九黎) threw virtue into disorder. The (affairs of the) people and spirits were (once again) mixed up. The objects proper to them (wu 物) could not be distinguished. The people offered their (own) sacrifices, with each family providing its (own) Invocaters and Recorders (wu shi 巫史). There was no desire for the sincerity (of the old arrangements). The people exhausted their resources in sacrifice but knew no good fortune (in return), sending up their offerings without proper order. The people and the spirits occupied the same positions, the people defiling the equal covenant (of old). There were none who stood in reverence and awe. The spirits grew (too) near to the rules of the people and did not purify their conduct.¹¹ Good harvests not being sent down, there were no crops with which to make offerings. Disasters and calamities came repeatedly. There were none who (used up their pneuma) lived out their allotted span.¹²

VII. When Zhuan Xu 瑣 succeeded him (Shao Hao), he charged Chong, the Regulator of the South, to have charge over Heaven and thus made the spirits belong to him. He charged Li, the Regulator of the North, to have charge over Earth and thus made the people belong to him. He caused them to restore the old norms, so that there was no more mutual defilement.¹³ This is what is meant by “he cut off¹⁴ the communication between Earth and Heaven (jue di tian tong 絕地天通)” (Keightley 1989, pp. 35–38).

To critically answer the question whether *Wu* and *Xi* in this chapter can be categorised as shamans, the researchers concerned will inevitably face the following three more specific questions: (1) What is ‘Shang Xia Bi Yi’? Does it mean a travel of souls away from bodies, or anything else? (2) What is ‘Jue Di Tian Tong’? If the cut-off of communication between Heaven and Earth becomes the theme of this chapter, why are the hereditary officials for such communication accepted? What does ‘Jue Di Tian Tong’ really mean then? (3) Are *Wu* and *Xi* possessed? In fact, finding correct answers to the three questions is a prerequisite for answering the more general question of whether *Wu* and *Xi* in this chapter be categorised

as shamans.¹⁵ This study aims to find one or several definite answers to the three questions, and then give several prudent answers to the question whether *Wu* and *Xi* in this chapter can be categorised as shamans based on the judgment criteria of today's researchers for shamanism.

2. What Is 'Shang Xia Bi Yi'?

Clarifying the meaning of 'Shang Xia Bi Yi' 上下比義 in section II of this chapter is not only able to answer the question of whether *Wu* and *Xi* have the ability for soul flight, but also to give us an idea of the basis on which their duties rest; that is, the will of spirits that endorse that *Wu* and *Xi* have the power to make rules in particular fields.

Eliade (*Eliade* [1964] 1989)'s paraphrase of this phrase is "to rise to higher spheres and descend into the lower, and distinguish there the things which it would be proper to do [. . .] (that is, ascend to Heaven and descend to hell)" (pp. 452–53). *Bodde* (1961)'s paraphrase is "to make meaningful collation of what lies above and below" (p. 390). *Bodde*'s translation was accepted by the researchers such as *Chang* (1983, p. 44), but not accepted by *Keightley*. *Keightley* (1989) referred to the meaning of 'Xing Bi Yi yan' 行比義焉 mentioned by *Guoyu*, 'Chuyu Shang' 楚語上 and the meaning of 'Yi zhi yu Bi' 義之於比 mentioned by *Lunyu* 論語, and then translated 'Shang Xia Bi Yi' as to "conform to what is right in the upper and lower realms" (p. 9). In my opinion, all conclusions that *Eliade* drew from the above comprehension (e.g., 'magical Height', 'ascent to Heaven', 'mystical journey', etc.) should be reviewed again, because his comprehension has deviated from the textual meaning of 'Chuyu Xia'. The paraphrase of *Bodde* and *Keightley* is literally consistent with the original text, but it is only literal, scarcely facilitating the accurate understanding of textual meaning. Moreover, the paraphrase of this phrase by quoting similarly used characters from other literature should be based on an analysis of its specific context. The precise meaning of a character is usually determined by its specific context. The approach, which relies solely on a quotation of examples of similar usage of the phrase in previous literature, sometimes makes the problem more complex rather than facilitating the solving of the problem. For example, for 'Yi zhi yu Bi' in *Lunyu* quoted by *Keightley*, *Yingda Kong* 孔穎達 (a commentator in the 7th century) paraphrased 'Bi' 比 as 'intimacy' or to "be close to 親" (*He and Xing* 2000, p. 54), while *Takezoe* ([1934] 2012) translated it as 'obedience' or 'follow' (p. 249). *Thomas Michael* (2015) explicitly limited his translation to a literal meaning, namely, 'above–below (bring close–appropriate)' (p. 681, note 64). This is a rigorous approach. However, what we need is a more in-depth understanding of this phrase beyond its literal meaning.

'Shang Xia', literally meaning 'above–below' can be translated as 'the Heaven–the Earth'. 'Shang Xia Bi Yi' means that "they are able to faithfully implement the principles from the Heaven on Earth". Such paraphrasing is due to not only the theme of *Tong* 通 (i.e., arrive, common or communication) between the Heaven and Earth expressed across this text, but also the fact that "Shang Xia is expressly used to describe 'Shen Qi'" (IV in the original text, '上下之神祇'; i.e., the spirits in Heaven and spirits on Earth) (*Xu* 2002, p. 514). *Kong* interpreted 'Shang Xia' as "Shang means all the spirits in Heaven, the Heaven, the Sun, the Moon, and all Stars; Xia means all the Spirits on Earth, Earth, mountains, forests, valleys, highlands, and hills" (*Xu* 2002, p. 514; *Zheng and Jia* 2000, p. 511).¹⁶ In fact, the Chinese characters 'Shen' 神 and 'Qi' 祇 themselves contain the meaning of 'the Spirits in Heaven' and 'the Spirits on Earth', respectively.¹⁷ 'Shang Xia', which describes them in the foregoing section, emphasises this meaning repeatedly.

'Bi Yi' can be interpreted as 'implement a principle in specific things'. The original meaning of the character 'Yi' is 'solemn and gorgeous appearance' (威儀); and the derived meanings of this character encompass 'the right (things, principles, etc.)' 宜; 宜此者, 'principle(s)' 理, and so on.¹⁸ Here, it expresses the derived meaning 'principle'. The original meaning of the character 'Bi' 比 is 'intimacy' or 'be close to' 密; in 'Chuyu Xia', it also expresses its derived meaning, namely, 'cases or judicial precedents applicable to a particular type of cases' (類例). This character as a noun is used as a verb here, implying

the determination of ‘cases or judicial precedents applicable to a particular type of cases’ according to ‘Yi’.¹⁹

This paraphrase of ‘Shang Xia Bi Yi’ is consistent with the context of ‘Chuyu Xia’. We can use the following content of the contributions of *Wu* and *Xi* and their descendants as an example: “And (the spirits) taught them to define the position and precedence of the spirits and the customary system about spirits’ sacrificial victims, the ritual vessels, and the ceremonial garments of the seasons. And (the spirits) empowered their descendants the ability to Inherit their intelligence and brilliant, empowered their descendants the ability to define the names of the mountains and rivers, the tablets of the high ancestors, the affairs of the ancestral temple, the (alternation of the) zhao and mu generations, the devotion of reverence, the rightness of customary regulations, the rules of decorum, the adornment of demeanor, the true nature of loyalty and good faith, and the garments for the undefiled sacrifices”. According to the quote, the spirits endowed *Wu*, *Xi*, and their descendants with certain abilities, enabling them to formulate the rules of decorum on sacrifice for the spirits (e.g., “And then let them define the position and precedence of the spirits and make the customary system about spirits’ sacrificial victims, the ritual vessels, and the ceremonial garments of the seasons”); hence, they established the rules of decorum on sacrifice for the objects of adoration on Earth such as mountains and rivers, high ancestors, and so on (i.e., “define the names of the mountains and rivers”, and “the tablets of the high ancestors, the affairs of the ancestral temple, the (alternation of the) zhao and mu generations”), and guiding principles of ethics in human society, namely, ‘the true nature of loyalty and good faith 忠信之質’. This implies that these guiding principles of ethics can be the basic principles of the legal system in human society, and that *Wu*, *Xi*, and their descendants can be the formulators of rules of decorum, ethics, and legal systems on sacrifices (in ancient legends); namely, they were empowered by the Spirits to make rules, and were taught by those Spirits (i.e., accept the guiding principles from Heaven). The Spirits chose them because of their capability for ‘Shang Xia Bi Yi’, namely the ability to ‘implement the guiding principles of Heaven to specific things on Earth’. This explains why such paraphrase of ‘Shang Xia Bi Yi’ is consistent with the following textual meaning.

To sum up briefly, Eliade’s view is not supported by any evidence, and Bodde, Keightley, and Michael’s paraphrases are too conservative to introduce parts of the sentence that go beyond the literal meaning of this phrase and to show how the sentence relates to the context. The duties of *Wu*, *Xi*, and their descendants included setting rules not only with regard to the objects of sacrifice, ritual objects, furnishings, and dress, but also in areas involving human ethics and law. They were able to undertake these duties because they had been chosen by spirits. One of the reasons spirits made this choice is that they had the ability to ‘Shang Xia Bi Yi’, namely to implement the guiding principles of Heaven to specific things on Earth. Among these duties, ‘(defining) the true nature of loyalty and good faith’ in this chapter is a common important principle to be observed in the holy realm of communication with the Spirits and in the secular realm of human order. To Yifu Guan, it is such principles that lead to the uniform demand in the field of communication with the spirits.²⁰

3. What Is ‘Jue Di Tian Tong’?

‘Jue Di Tian Tong’ 地天通 is a theme in the conversation between King Zhao 昭王 and Yifu Guan 觀射父. During the conversation, they mention this phrase repeatedly, and also mention the phrase ‘Shi Tian Di Bu Tong’ (使天地不通) as a comparison. Clarifying the meaning of these phrases is a prerequisite for answering the question of whether *Wu* and *Xi* can be categorised as shamans, for our different interpretations of the meaning of this phrase can seriously affect our judgement of the duties of *Wu* and *Xi*. For example, to understand it as ‘cutting off the communication between Earth and Heaven’, as discussed below, would mean that preventing communication between the spirits and human beings is the correct tradition proposed in this chapter, under which the important role played

by *Wu* and *Xi* in such communication should not be justified. This view is irreconcilably contradictory to other statements in this chapter, and does not fit its context.

When commentators in Ancient China annotated ‘Jue Di Tian Tong’ contained in the chapter of ‘Lüxing’ 刑 of *Shujing*, they often fell into a state of logical mess.²¹ The unambiguous interpretation of this phrase in ‘Chuyu Xia’ made by certain ancient commentators has been passed down to us. For example, Zhao Wei 昭 paraphrased ‘Jue Di Tian Tong’ that King Zhao first mentioned at the outset of this chapter as “the way or method of dividing Heaven and Earth” (Y. Xu 2002, p. 512). To be precise, this way or method means “the official post responsible for the secular matters of humans, which is divided from the post responsible for the sacred matters of communication with the spirits”.²²

According to *Shuowen tongxun dingsheng* 說文通訓定聲, the original meaning of the character ‘Jue’ 絕 is ‘cut silk’, and its derived meanings include ‘cut’, ‘cut off’, ‘truncate’, ‘depletion’, ‘breathe one’s last’, ‘the (family’s) demise’, ‘eliminate’, ‘pass through’, ‘get through’, etc. (Zhu [1848] 1984, p. 683; Zong et al. 2003, pp. 1736–37). In ancient texts, it was often used to replace the use of the character ‘Jie’ 截.²³ The character ‘Jie’ has meanings such as ‘cut’, ‘cut off’, ‘truncate’, ‘sort’, ‘tidy’, ‘tidy up’, ‘manage’, ‘governance’ (Zong et al. 2003, p. 848). Tong’s original meaning is ‘reachable’ (i.e., Da 達), and its derived meanings include ‘connection’, ‘communication’, ‘promotion and practice’, ‘thoroughness’, ‘share’, ‘common’, etc. (Zhu [1848] 1984, pp. 38–39; Zong et al. 2003, p. 2290). As far as ‘Chuyu Xia’ is concerned, in the question of King Zhao, ‘Jue’ means ‘cut off’ and ‘Tong’ expresses its original meaning; when the Heaven is unreachable, the phenomenon of ‘the people are able to ascend to Heaven’ is precluded, and ‘Jue Di Tian Tong’ shares the same meaning with ‘Shi Tian Di Bu Tong’ (i.e., the path that connects Heaven to Earth to be cut off). However, the meanings of ‘Jue’ and ‘Tong’ in the speech of Yifu Guan, who explicitly rejected King Zhao’s interpretation, are worth discussing. According to Wei’s paraphrase, Jue means to ‘eliminate’ and Tong expresses its derived meaning ‘common 共 or ‘share’ 同. Specifically, the matters of communication with the spirits in Heaven merely fall under the jurisdiction of *Wu*, *Xi*, and their descendants; all secular matters fall under the jurisdiction of other special agencies. Hence, the two types of authority are separated from each other. This paraphrase can not only establish a logical antonymic relationship with the following ‘intermingle’ 雜 (Bodde 1961, p. 390), but also maintain a consistency of meaning with the following five officers who ‘each was in charge of his orderly sequences and did not become confused with the others’, and the respective charge of Chong or Li over Heaven or Earth (Cf. ‘Chuyu Xia’, V–VI). However, there is difficulty in the interpretation. As mentioned, the authority of the descendants of *Wu* and *Xi* is not strictly limited to the sacred matters of communication with the spirits; instead, they also formulated the principles of ethics within human society (e.g., ‘the alternation of the Zhao and Mu generations’, ‘the true nature of the loyalty and good faith’, etc.).²⁴ This implies that they did not draw a clear boundary between sacred things and secular matters nor followed it. Namely, Wei’s paraphrase is not precise enough.

Today’s scholars followed another path. This phrase was translated by Bodde (1961) as ‘cutting the communication between Heaven and Earth’ (p. 391), which is consistent with its translation given by Keightley (1989, pp. 34–35) and Puett (2002, pp. 106, 108).²⁵ According to this view, Jue expresses the meaning of ‘break’ or ‘cut off’, and Tong expresses its derived meaning of ‘communication’. This paraphrase successfully avoids the difficulty faced by Wei because it does not distinguish the authority between different officials or bureaucratic organs in detail. Nevertheless, it contains something that fails to accurately match the semantic textual meaning. The strict sense of ‘cut off the communication between Earth and Heaven’ is completely inconsistent with the following statement: “The communication between Earth and Heaven, whether in a correct way or not, was never really cut off, from the ideal period in which the spirits actively communicated with *Wu* and *Xi*, to the period in which ‘the people offered their (own) sacrifices, with each family providing its (own). Invocators and Recorders’, until the period in which correct traditions were restored”. In other words, the paraphrase of ‘cutting off the communication between Earth and Heaven’

has a misinterpretation: “To the author(s) of ‘Chuyu Xia’, the communication itself was not cut off, and what should be terminated was the way of communication that Guan considered to be incorrect”.

In my opinion, the character of ‘Jue’ actually replaces the character of ‘Jie’ (as mentioned above). In the textual context, Jie expresses the meaning of ‘tidy up’.²⁶ Tong should be paraphrased as ‘communication’. ‘Jue Di Tian Tong’ means ‘tidy up the communication between Heaven and Earth’. Specifically, the objective of ‘tidy’ is to ensure that certain families such as *Wu*, *Xi*, *Chong*, and *Li* could gain and maintain a monopoly status in the communication between Heaven and Earth. This paraphrase not only tallies with the whole textual meaning, but also avoids the difficulty faced by Wei and Bodde. Strictly speaking, ‘Jue Di Tian Tong’ does not mean ‘cutting off the communication between Heaven and Earth’, nor draws a clear boundary of authority and responsibility between the officials for sacred matters and officials for secular matters. Instead, it means that the communication between the creatures on Earth and the spirits in Heaven must be monopolised by specific hereditary families, but not be handled by any other social members. As we mentioned in the second part of this article, those who monopolised the communication between Heaven and Earth had authority to not only handle secular matters, but also to formulate important guiding principles on handling these matters.

Why did Yifu Guan consider it a correct choice that the communication between Heaven and Earth was monopolised by certain families? In other words, why would disasters and calamities be caused otherwise? This is a deep-seated question regarding how to understand the value of ‘Jue Di Tian Tong’. The original text merely described the difference of effectiveness between different ways of communication, but it did not offer the answer to this question. The paraphrase of Jiegang Gu 顧頌剛 on the chapter of ‘Lüxing’ 呂刑 in *Shujing* (i.e., *Shangshu* 尚書) may be able to provide us with a possible explanation. Taking the Rebellion in 19 century’s Yangtze River Valley as an example, Gu writes, “In “Lüxing”, the sentence ‘Nai Ming Chong Li Jue Di Tian Tong, Wang You Jiang Ge’ is difficult to understand, and how is this related to law-making and penalty? In my view, if each family had the power to communicate with the spirits, people would launch war, fight and kill each other in the name of the wills of the spirits . . . , just like the rebellion of followers of the ‘Bai Shangdi’ that was launched by Xiuqing Yang (i.e., one of the generals of these rebellions) in the name of the Gods’ will in the Yangzi River Valley in the middle 19th century . . . ; this is never a good way to maintain social peace” (Gu and Liu 2005, p. 1957). If we apply Gu’s speculation to this chapter, we can find that the brief statement of the guiding principles of ethics formulated by *Wu* and *Xi* provides us with an important clue. Such principles, which govern the behaviours of members of human society, can be maintained and useful in practice only if they are accepted by a sufficient number of social members. The myth that *Wu* and *Xi* established the norms of sacrifices and ethics through the communication with the spirits undoubtedly provides a certain persuasiveness or justification for such norms of consistency. To Yifu Guan, those who were able to communicate with the spirits served as the makers and vindicators of various rules in the human community. The monopoly of the communication between Heaven and Earth just serves to maintain the consistency of social norms in the human community. It is an opposite case that each family or even each individual had the power to communicate with the spirits, and could use the ‘will of the spirits’ claimed by them as a pretext for family or individual action. If various behaviours violating the previous norms of consistency and even evil behaviours against others can be committed in the name of the spirits, the order of the social community will be threatened and even collapse. This may be explained from the perspective of social effectiveness why ‘Jue Di Tian Tong’ is necessary.

4. Are Wu and Xi Possessed?

The paraphrase of ‘Ming Shen Jiang Zhi, Zai Nan Yue Xi, Zai Nü Yue Wu’ 明神降之, 在男曰覲, 在女曰巫 is considered by Michael (2015) as “decisive for understanding the text as a whole”. Regarding whether there existed shamanism or possession in ‘Chuyu Xia’,

he argued that “it provides the only internal representation of the actual mechanics of the ritual event upon which the rest of the text is based” (pp. 683–84). To date, the dispute about this sentence has mainly focused on whether there was ‘possession’. For example, the translation by Bodde (1961) is “The spirits would descend into them. The possessors of such powers were, if men, called Xi (shamans), and, if women, Wu (shamanesses)” (p. 390). Obviously, he agreed with the existence of possession. Keightley (1989) admitted that this ambiguous sentence had two possible translations, including the above view of Bodde (p. 12), but Keightley preferred the translation ‘the spirits (ming shen 明神) descended to them. In the case of men, (these special people) were called Xi; in the case of women, they were called Wu 巫’ (p. 35). To Keightley, “The spirits were not descending to enter into a Xi or wu; they were descending in order to receive sacrifices in the proper, unmixed-up way from the perspicacious practitioners who understood the importance of good order. There is no evidence of possession, ecstasy, or flight” (p. 13). In this article, Keightley not only carefully analysed the textual context (e.g., ‘spirits sent down crops’ in paragraph II), but also referred to the description of ‘spirits down to Earth’ in the chapter ‘Zhuangong 莊公 32nd year’ in *Zuozhuan* 左傳 and *Zhouli* 周禮, as well as the description of *Wu* and *Xi* in different chapters of *Xunzi* 荀子 (pp. 12–14). Puett (2002), who agreed with Keightley, argued that “The illuminated spirits descended to them. As regards males, they were called Xi (male ritual specialists); as regards women, they were called *Wu* (female ritual specialists)”; he further stated that “the word *jiang zhi* simply means ‘to descend and arrive’, which is exactly what spirits are supposed to do when effective ritual specialists entice them with the proper blandishments” (p. 107). Puett repeatedly emphasised that “The ‘Chu yu, xia’ is a call for a ritual separation of humans and spirits and a critique of any intermingling of the two. The goal is harmony through ritual separation”. He also used “the views ascribed to ritual specialists in the Shang and early Zhou texts” as evidence to prove that *Wu* and *Xi* were ritual specialists rather than shamans possessed by the spirits (pp. 107–9). However, certain scholars have maintained the existence of possession. For example, Michael (2015) noticed that *Wu* and *Xi* had been regarded as ‘suitable mouthpieces for the spirits’ and were positioned ‘to be selected by the spirits’. Faced with the following section, “They established the sites and positions in hierarchical order for the spirits, and also established the design of appropriately colored vessels and seasonal garments”, Michael writes, “If the spirits descended into them, then the reason for the *Wu* to prepare the ritual arena and make these garments is obvious—they were individually responsible for contacting and serving the spirits using their specific means of calling each individual spirit down into them, during which time they wore the sacred garments favoured by that spirit. After descending into them, the spirits, through the mouths and bodies of the *Wu*, then gave instructions about the way to prepare ‘the sites and positions’ of the ritual arena for the séance performances” (p. 684).²⁷

The original text of ‘Chuyu’ cannot support Keightley’s view that the spirits descended to the Earth to receive sacrifices. To be precise, although the following section mentions sacrifices, sacrifices are not the purpose of their descension to the Earth. The purpose of this descension is to enable *Wu* and *Xi* to successfully establish the foresaid series of rules. Prudently speaking, however, it may be a tenable paraphrase that the spirits descended to the Earth to teach *Wu* and *Xi* to formulate the guiding principles of such rules through face-to-face communication rather than possession. The original text indeed did not clearly clarify whether the spirits entered the bodies of *Wu* and *Xi* or descended to certain positions outside their bodies. To be more specific, the existence of possession cannot be proven based on the character ‘Zhi’ (之) in ‘Ming Shen Jiang Zhi’ alone. This is not because Keightley provided sufficient and reliable evidence, but because the character ‘Zhi’ can be interpreted here as both a pronoun and a modal modifier. According to Zhu ([1848] 1984), Zhi’s original meaning is ‘out’ (出), and its derived meanings include ‘go to’, ‘to’, ‘this’, ‘in’, ‘on’, ‘at’, modal particle (語助), and so on (p. 162). What needs to be acknowledged is the possibility of ‘Zhi’ being used as a modal particle here.²⁸ Namely, it can exist only for the rhetorical purpose in this sentence.

II. [. . .] Qi Ming Neng Guang Zhao *Zhi*, Qi Cong Neng Ting Che *Zhi*, Ru Shi Ze Ming Shen Jiang *Zhi*.

其明能光照之, 其聰能聽徹之, 如是則明神降之:

At regular intervals of five to six characters, a relatively independent semantic meaning is expressed, and the character ‘Zhi’ appears repeatedly and regularly. This art of modification gives the sentence a certain regular and classical aesthetic style. In this case, the existence of ‘possession’ is difficult to be proven by this character alone. In addition, the subject described by ‘Zai Nan Yue Xi, Zai Nü Yue Wu’ may be not only ‘the spirits descending to the Earth’ themselves, but also the occurrence of ‘the spirits descended to them’. Facing these options, Keightley refused to paraphrase ‘Zai’ as ‘into’ because this would lead to the paraphrase that the spirits descended to the bodies of *Wu* and *Xi*. Instead, Keightley wisely paraphrased it as ‘in the case of’. This paraphrase successfully avoids the possibility that ‘the spirits descended into them’, but is consistent with the paraphrase of ‘occurrence of such situation (i.e., the spirits descended to the Earth rather than to the bodies of *Wu* and *Xi*)’. In my view, this chapter does not contain any content that conflicts with such paraphrase. The character *Zai*’s original meaning is ‘be’ (存), and its derived meanings include ‘sit’, ‘live’, ‘exist’, ‘watch’, ‘see’, ‘end’, ‘in’, ‘into’, ‘at’, and modal particle (Zhu [1848] 1984, p. 193; Zong et al. 2003, pp. 409–10). Here, ‘Zai’ is interpreted as ‘in’, ‘into’, ‘live’, ‘exist’, or ‘in (the case of)’, like Keightley’s paraphrase, or even modal particle, which can avoid the conflict with any content in this chapter (e.g., this ‘Zhi’ is considered as a modal particle, this sentence can be paraphrased as ‘Nan Yue Xi, Nü Yue Wu’; without doubt, this understanding ultimately stands on the side of Keightley).

The view of Puett (2002) is largely based on his unilateral emphasis on ‘breaking the communication between Heaven and Earth’ (p. 108). As mentioned above, this basis does not seem to fit the text precisely from my point of view.

Michael’s view provides another possibility. Namely, the spirits made *Wu* and *Xi* formulate the next-mentioned rules by means of possession. This possibility also exists. Specifically, one paraphrase that can hold up is ‘Zhi’ in ‘Ming Shen Jiang Zhi’, which can be interpreted as a pronoun referring to *Wu* and *Xi*, as mentioned by Keightley. Accordingly, it can be considered that in the abovementioned sentence (i.e., Qi Ming Neng Guang Zhao Zhi, Qi Cong Neng Ting Che Zhi, Ru Shi Ze Ming Shen Jiang Zhi), ‘Zhi’ is a part of the regular modifying structure in which the second ‘Zhi’ ends. In other words, ‘Qi Ming Neng Guang Zhao Zhi’ and ‘Qi Cong Neng Ting Che Zhi’ constitute two groups of a symmetrical structure. For ‘vision’ (i.e., Ming 明) and ‘hearing’ (i.e., Cong 聰), whether ‘Guang Zhao’ and ‘Ting Che’ describing them or ‘Neng’ 能 connecting the previous and following characters, it is symmetrical in a strict sense. This is a structure that is not strictly available in ‘Ru Shi Ze Ming Shen Jiang Zhi’. Accordingly, we can say that the third ‘Zhi’ has a different character from the two previous ones. Hence, this sentence can be interpreted as ‘the spirits descended into them’. Another paraphrase that can hold up is to interpret the subject described by ‘Zai Nan Yue Xi, Zai Nü Yue Wu’ as ‘Ming Shen’ rather than ‘the occurrence of the situation’. If so, the text can be interpreted as ‘the spirits residing in the bodies of men (integration of the spirits and men) are referred to as *Xi*, and the spirits residing in the bodies of women are referred to as *Wu*’. In this sense, the next-mentioned rules were formulated by *Wu* and *Xi* at the order of the spirits; therefore, the author(s) of ‘Chuyu Xia’ continued, “and then (the spirits) let (them) define the position and precedence of the spirits and make the customary system about the spirits’ sacrificial victims”. Of course, this interpretation alone cannot successfully rule out the possibility preferred by Keightley, while the possibility of ‘possession’ is confirmed. Further, the calling ability of *Wu* and *Xi* mentioned by Michael (2015), namely, “their specific means of calling each individual spirit down into them” (p. 684), is proofless; nowhere in this chapter can we find explicit or implicit proof of this calling ability. In my view, the decision-making power of possession can only be held by the spirits. *Wu* and *Xi*, including their descendants, are merely the ‘object’ selected by the spirits. Their duty can merely be to perform the orders

of the spirits and then formulate the numerous rules on Earth according to the guiding principles specified by them. This is true across the whole text of 'Chuyu Xia'.²⁹

5. Conclusions

The above analysis can be summarised as four points. First, in Yifu Guan's view, *Wu* and *Xi* in this chapter refer to people who are chosen by spirits to act as mediums of communication between human beings and spirits because of their certain virtues and capabilities, such as to 'implement the guiding principles of Heaven to specific things on Earth', and so on. By being possessed by or communicating directly with spirits, they conveyed the rules given to them regarding certain aspects of the ritual, such as the order in which the different spirits were placed, the objects and furnishings of the ritual, the dress of the ritualists, etc., as well as the guiding principles of ethics and laws in human society. A tradition has since been formed that the proper medium for human communication with the spirits is to be chosen from among *Wu* and *Xi*'s descendants. Second, 'Shang Xia Bi Yi' does not mean the ability of souls to 'come out of the bodies', or the ability of souls to fly to Heaven and the underworld, but the ability to apply heavenly principles to the earth. In fact, the full text of 'Chuyu Xia' never stated that *Wu* and *Xi* had the former abilities (i.e., soul flight). If we think that those abilities are prerequisites for shamanism, *Wu* and *Xi* cannot be categorised as shamans. Third, 'Chuyu Xia' maintained that the communication between the spirits in Heaven and human beings on Earth should not be totally cut off, but should be monopolised by certain families (e.g., families such as *Wu* and *Xi*'s). This implies that in the absence of elaborate analysis, we should not directly use 'Jue Di Tian Tong' as a reason for denying the existence of communication between the spirits in Heaven and *Wu* and *Xi*, thereby denying that *Wu* and *Xi* can be categorised as shamans. Fourth, 'Chuyu Xia' indeed admitted that the communication between the spirits and *Wu* and *Xi*, but did not expressly state whether such communication was implemented by means of possession or in a face-to-face way. We can merely maintain the views that are corroborated by textual evidence. This will bring about difficulties in answering whether *Wu* and *Xi* can be categorised as shamans. In my view, if a certain form of communication between spirits and human beings is essential for a shaman, *Wu* and *Xi* should be categorised as shamans; if the necessary conditions for a shaman include possession or if possession is excluded, we will not be able to obtain a definite answer. If we emphasise that ecstasy is a judgment criterion for a shaman, *Wu* and *Xi* cannot be categorised as shamans because this chapter did not mention ecstasy at all. If we emphasise that a shaman must be able to utilise music, this chapter also did not provide any valid evidence to prove that they should be categorised as shamans.

'Chuyu Xia' stated that the main duty of *Wu* and *Xi* was to make and vindicate the rules in diverse fields (including sacrifices and ethics of human behaviours, as mentioned above), but did not contain the contents frequently mentioned by shamanism researchers, such as 'ecstatic trance—flight to Heaven during initiations and other rituals', 'retrieving the errant souls of sick people', and 'escorting the spirits of the dead to the other world'.³⁰ This text specially mentioned that the duties of *Wu* and *Xi* were related to not only the rules of sacrifices (e.g., the objects and dresses used for the rituals, the order in which the different spirits were placed), but also the ethical principles of mankind. This involves a question of whether it is advisable to abuse the right to engage in actual action and even make rules and issue orders on the ground or pretext of the will of the spirits. This abuse would lead to a risky situation that the ethical foundation of society no longer existed and the people entered a state of disorder.³¹ However, to avoid such disorder, there are many ways to systematise the principles of ethics and laws, rather than being left with the sole method of monopolising power by those who make the rules.

Faced with 'Chuyu Xia', Chang's (1983) viewpoint noticed that the monopoly of communication between the spirits and men would bring about a centralised tendency for a ruling power (p. 45). Yu (2014) further argued that the power of communication with the Heaven 'became an exclusive privilege of the prince', implying a core fact of

a self-proclaimed divinely sanctioned ‘absolute monarchy’ (p. 68). The validity of the views in this category depends on a detailed inquiry into ‘whether the rule-making power monopolised by *Wu* and *Xi*, the executive power and the judicial power, can be merged into one’. This, of course, is a separate issue.

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Notes

- 1 For the etymology of the terms involved, Cf. e.g., [Shirokogoroff \(1935\)](#), pp. 268–69); [Keightley \(1998\)](#), pp. 766–67).
- 2 In addition, [Keightley \(1998\)](#) noticed the phenomenon that general theories about Shamanism are trusted by many scholars and listed a few similar opinions (pp. 766–68).
- 3 In [Keightley \(1989\)](#)’s view, ‘we are given [. . .] a standard proto-Confucian, bureaucratic homily in favor of religious and social hierarchy, official jurisdictions, discipline, and self-cultivation’ by the author(s) of ‘Chuyu Xia’, and the ‘enlightening’ attributes of *Wu* and *Xi* ‘were commonly applied to sage leaders in Zhou texts’ (pp. 8, 27).
- 4 Preferably, the last sentence should be construed as: ‘And then, (the spirits) let them define the position and precedence of the spirits and make the customary system about spirits’ sacrificial victims, the ritual vessels, and the ceremonial garments of the seasons’. Such translation considers the regular recurrence of the characters such as ‘Shi’ 使, ‘Er’ 而 and ‘Wei Zhi’ 為之, which constitutes the traditional rhetoric of repetition. For example, ‘(是) 使 [. . .], 而為之 [. . .]’, ‘(而後) 使 [. . .], 而能知 [. . .] 而 [. . .] 者, (以) 為之 [. . .]’, ‘使 [. . .], 能知 [. . .], 而 [. . .] 者, 為之 [. . .]’, etc. In these sentences with a use of the repetition rhetoric, there are approximate meanings. For example, the subjects omitted before ‘let’ (i.e., Shi 使) are all ‘the spirits’.
- 5 Preferably, this sentence should be construed as ‘And (the spirits) empowered their descendants the ability to inherit their intelligence and brilliant, empowered their descendants the ability to define the names of the mountains and rivers’. For details, see Note 4.
- 6 In my opinion, ‘would be appointed as “Zhu”’ is preferable to ‘one made them Invocaters (zhu 祝)’. For details, see Note 4.
- 7 A more appropriate translation may be ‘And (the spirits) empowered their descendants the ability to define the products of the four seasons’. For details, see Note 4.
- 8 A more appropriate translation may be ‘the spirits in Heaven and on Earth’. For the reason, see the following section.
- 9 ‘Would be appointed as “Zong”’ is preferable to ‘became Temple Officers (zong 宗)’.
- 10 For the notes in Keightley’s translation, refer to his original text.
- 11 ‘The people broke the covenant (of old). Those new rituals did not make the spirits feel revered by human beings, (for) the difference in rank between the spirits and human beings in terms of status is not expressed in them’ is preferable to ‘The people and the spirits occupied the same positions, the people defiling the equal covenant (of old). There were none who stood in reverence and awe. The spirits grew (too) near to the rules of the people and did not purify their conduct’. These words are meant to show that people began to hire the intermediary of spirits and human beings to complete the rituals according to their own vision, rather than the traditional way. In these new rituals, the legitimacy of the intermediary’s identity is no longer taken seriously, even the spirits and human beings (such as the ancestors of the ritual planners) are placed in a similar position (rather than a position of clearly different hierarchical rank). These made the spirits feel insulted.
- 12 ‘lived a healthy and long life’ is preferable to ‘(used up their pneuma) lived out their allotted span’. Here ‘Jin Qi Qi’ 盡其氣 means ‘lived a healthy and long life’. Cf. ([Xu 2002](#), p. 515), Z. Wu 吳曾琪’s paraphrase.
- 13 ‘To take care of sacred matters’ is preferable to ‘to have charge over Heaven and thus made the spirits belong to him’, ‘to take care of secular matters’ is preferable to ‘to have charge over Earth and thus made the people belong to him’, and ‘intermingle’ is preferable to ‘mutual defilement’. This means that the spirits will no longer be ‘blasphemed’, and the principles they had previously laid down were observed again.
- 14 ‘Tidy up’ is preferable to ‘cut off’ here. I will explain the rationale in the next section of this paper.
- 15 According to the recommendations of the anonymous referees, this article ‘have to take the Zhoushu 周書 context fully into account when discussing the relevant Guo yu passages’. For ‘the authors of the *Guoyu* in this way establishing an explicit

intertextual relationship between the two the *Zhoushu*, “Lüxing” 呂刑. They thus have King Zhao assume that his interlocutor Yifu Guan is familiar with that text and takes it into account in his answer to the king. In other words, the Zhou shu passage serves as a subtext to the Guo yu. This means that present author has to take the Zhou shu context fully into account when discussing the relevant Guo yu passages. Such attempts will be reflected in this article’s specific discussion of the meaning of particular phrases, such as ‘Jue Di Tian Tong’. Unfortunately, in response to the question we need to answer, neither the text of Lüxing, nor the speculative interpretations it has received from ancient and modern commentators, can provide definitive evidential support for our discussion here. Nor do we currently have any archaeological evidence to prove or disprove these interpretations. In this case, ancient and modern commentators begun to cite the *Guoyu* text, which is an earlier interpretation of Lüxing, to explain Lüxing. This is the reason why this article takes a cautious approach when drawing on its text, interpretation or commentary. Cf. e.g., Gu and Liu (2005, pp. 1950–59).

- 16 In addition, Duan ([1815] 1988) suggested that ‘Shang Xia’ was spelt as ‘’ in ancient times, and the Heaven is at an above position, and the Earth is at a below position, as described in ‘天地為形，天在上，地在下’ (pp. 1–2). The chapter ‘Wenhou Zhiming’ 文侯之命 in *Shujing* 書經 suggests that ‘Zhao Sheng Yu Shang’ 昭升于上. R. Ma 馬融 is paraphrased as follows: Shang ‘means the Heaven’ 謂天也; (Zhu [1848] 1984, p. 904). ‘According to *Yijing* 易經, [The being which is originated in Heaven tends to live “above” (i.e., Shang)], and the being which is originated on Earth tends to be “below” (i.e., Xia) 《易》文言, [本乎天者, 親上;] 本乎地者, 親下’ (Gui [1851] 1987, p. 5). The content in the square bracket was added by the author of this paper.
- 17 According to Duan, ‘“Qi means the Spirits on Earth’ 祇, 地祇’ (Duan [1815] 1988, p. 3; Zhu [1848] 1984, p. 526). *Yupian* 玉篇, the chapter of ‘Shibu’ (示部), ‘Qi means the Gods on Earth’ 祇, 地之神也 (Zong et al. 2003, p. 1596).
- 18 Cf. e.g., Zhu ([1848] 1984): ‘*Liji* 禮記, the chapter of “Zhongyong” 中庸, “Yi 義 means the right (things, principles etc) here” ‘義者, 宜也’; the chapter of ‘Jiyi’, ‘Yi 義 means the right (principles applicable to this case) here’ ‘祭義: ‘義者, 宜此者也’ (p. 485). For the examples of ‘principle’, see *Xinshu* 新書, The chapter of ‘Dao-Deshuo’ 道德說: ‘Yi 義 means the principle(s) here’ 義者, 理也. Cf. e.g., Duan ([1815] 1988, p. 633); Zhu ([1848] 1984, p. 485); Zong et al. (2003, p. 1806).
- 19 Cf. e.g., Duan ([1815] 1988, p. 386), Zhu ([1848] 1984, pp. 591–92). Zong et al. (2003, p. 1207). Further, in the early Han Empire, judicial precedents available to judges were officially referred to as ‘Bi’ 比. See; Ban and Yan (1962, p. 1101); Wang (2012): According to S. Yan 顏師古’s paraphrase, Bi is interpreted based on a similar example ‘師古曰: 比, 以例相比況也’ (pp. 1545–46).
- 20 For details, see the following section.
- 21 e.g., the paraphrase that is claimed by Anguo Kong 孔安 (of course, many scholars considered this claim to be proofless) first argued that ‘Jue Di Tian Tong’ is manifested in the setting of official titles (original text: ‘Yao appointed Xi and He as hereditary officials to sacrifice for Heaven, the Earth and the Gods of four seasons, so that the spirits, gods and the human could enjoy good order, which is referred to as ‘Jue Di Tian Tong’ 堯命羲、和世掌天地、四時之官, 使人神不擾, 各得其序, 是謂‘絕地天通’); then, he declared that the spirits in Heaven would not come to the Earth and humans would not go to the Heaven, known as ‘dividing Heaven and Earth’ (言天神無有降地, 地民不至於天, 明不相干) (Kong and Kong 2000, p. 634).
- 22 This is Wei’s paraphrase of ‘Min Shen Bu Za’ 民神不雜 used by Yifu Guan when he tried to explain what is ‘Jue Di Tian Tong’. Cf. Xu (2002, p. 512). In my opinion, the phrase ‘Min Shen Bu Za’ is only used to describe the times before the communication between spirits and Wu/Xi. To Wei, however, this phrase is used to explain the ‘Jue Di Tian Tong’, for his paraphrase clearly takes into account the restoration of the ‘correct tradition’ mentioned in the following texts.
- 23 e.g., ‘So it can be described as “Jue and then be stability” 故曰, “而定”’ in the Chapter of ‘Fajin’ 法禁, *Guanzi* 管子, Y. Yu 俞樾 & W. Dai 戴望 paraphrased the character ‘Jue’ here as ‘Jie’ 截, which means ‘tidy up’ or ‘arrange’. Cf. Li (2004, pp. 282–83), Zong et al. (2003, p. 1737). In ancient Chinese texts, replacing one character with another one is referred to as ‘Jia Jie’ (假借).
- 24 This is an act of great value, and will be discussed in the following section.
- 25 Keightley translated it as ‘cut off the communication between Earth and Heaven’; and Puett translated it as ‘breaking the communication between Heaven and Earth’ (pp. 34–35).
- 26 Such usage of ‘Jie’ has many precedents in ancient texts, for example, ‘the state of Jie was manifested even in overseas regions’ 海外有截 in *Shijing* 詩經, ‘Shangsong Changfa’ 商頌·長髮; in X. Zheng 鄭玄’s paraphrase, Jie means ‘tidy/make sth in good order.’ Cf. Cheng and Jiang (1991, p. 1035); Zong et al. (2003, p. 848).
- 27 Meanwhile, Michael (2015) also cited the commentary of Lin to prove his view: ‘Lin (2009, pp. 397–99) argues that Zheng Xuan, the great Han Dynasty commentator who did discuss this passage in his commentary to the *Zhouli*, clearly read this phrase to mean possession’ (p. 684, Note 71). However, I did not find the text of ‘clearly read this phrase to mean possession’ in X. Zheng’s commentary cited by Lin (2009). Instead, the text merely contains Lin’s comprehension of X. Zheng’s commentary. In fact, according to Lin’s text ‘gods to descend or possess them’, his comprehension even did not definitely stand on the side of ‘possession’. I agree to Lin’s paraphrase, and we cannot clearly discern whether Zheng’s commentary was inclined toward ‘descend to them’ or ‘possession’. This commentary cannot be used as valid evidence to prove the existence of possession. For details, see Lin (2009, p. 398).
- 28 Like many languages, there exists an unavoidable ambiguity in ancient Chinese. With the pass-away of authors, it is a common occurrence that the precise meanings and modification methods of original texts cannot be clearly understood by readers. In this situation, we have to speculate on various possibilities.

- ²⁹ The descendants of *Wu* and *Xi* mentioned by Michael (2015) nevertheless determined the customary systems such as religions by means of possession; this is also a possibility (while we fail to obtain sufficient evidence); a parallel possibility is that *Wu* and *Xi* acquired hereditary and paranormal abilities because they were once possessed by the spirits. Through these hereditary abilities, the descendants of them became the hereditary makers and vindicators of such customary systems.
- ³⁰ Mair (1990, p. 35) noticed these differences between ‘Shaman’ and ‘Wu’.
- ³¹ Regarding this view, Jean Levi and Keightley already gave some general comments; for example, Keightley (1998) argued that ‘It is about the way in which the early Chinese state maintained its control of religious intercession. Jean Levi’s assessment is similar: ‘Far from creating an opposition between officials and sorcerers [wu],’ the text ‘is bent on nothing but placing the latter under the control of the bureaucrats (Lévi, *Les fonctionnaires divins*, 223)’ (p. 823). Further, the types of shamanic authority which ‘radically diminishes when such societies come into the orbit of centralised authority’ (pp. 76–78) (Hamayon 1996) and ‘independent shamanism’ (pp. 671–72) (Michael 2015) are approximate to the communication between the spirits and human (a state of disorder) in terms of the exclusion relationship with political integration or centralised authority. The communication method considered by Guan to be correct is approximate to ‘may support the political authority and may even emerge from the core of the state’ (p. 193) (Humphrey 1996).

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