

# The Thousand Character Essay, Qian Zi Wen in Mandarin Chinese, senjimon (Japanese), chon jya mun (Korean)

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## Introduction

The Thousand Character Essay is the Chinese nation's earliest and most widespread basic literacy text still extant and in limited use today, mostly for calligraphy, personal improvement and preparation for study of classical Chinese. It was written by Zhou Xingsi (AD?-521) of the Southern dynasties' period Liang Dynasty, about 1,500 years ago.

According to legend, Emperor Wu (ruled AD 502-547) of Liang sought a Chinese character literacy text for his son, and to this end had scholars select a thousand non-redundant characters from work left behind by famed calligrapher Wang Xizhi (AD 321-379) to be put to rhyme by the widely learned and talented scholar Zhou Xingsi, who also wrote China's earliest extant example of a type of historical study known as a Shi Lu or "Factual Record", the Liang Huangdi Shi Lu. Zhou now applied his heart and soul to the task and created a full rhyming text of four-character couplets, eight characters per line in seven chapters, in only one night; legend also has it that his hair and beard went completely white during those momentous hours. The imperial heir for whom it was written in turn grew up to close the circle by compiling the Wen Xuan.

The resulting Qian<sup>1</sup> Zi<sup>4</sup> Wen<sup>2</sup> or Thousand Character Essay was, in the centuries that followed, distributed throughout the Chinese-reading world and has ever since been a major source

of inspiration for calligraphers, due in part to its unique feature of non-repeating characters, and for Chinese schoolteachers, tutors, students and general readers as well. This was true especially throughout the ages when a grasp of the classical language was the key to success in traditional China. It was transmitted to Korea, where it was most influential and a basic part of literacy education well into modern times, Japan, and Vietnam as well. Interestingly, the author's distance in time from his country's recorded beginnings was about the same as our own distance from western classical antiquity. Japan was still in its prehistory during his lifetime.

Aside from Zhou's passing on his historical and cultural knowledge in succinct, simple poetry, the work's richness in grammatical forms and patterns and its classical elements of style and ellipsis made it a basic work to be mastered by all students in basic preparation for the traditional examination system in China, Korea and Vietnam, once the key to an official career. In 20th century South Korea it was the basis of Chinese character (Hanja) literacy education right down to the mid 1970s. The necessary movement toward the vernacular written language in early 20th century China naturally moved the Qian Zi Wen out of the educational mainstream and brought extensive criticism of it and of other traditional literacy texts, such as the Three Character Classic San Zi Jing and Hundred Names Bai Jia Xing, due to their outdated ideology and general irrelevance to modern living and thought and to a certain degree of inherent difficulty. Basically, the lexical items and structures weren't entirely relevant to the needs of modern life, and in the case of the Thousand Character Essay the characters occurred only once, unlike a modern instructional program, which builds on and cycles the content over and over at higher levels. Of course, there was plenty of repetition in the rote memorization process. It was up to the teacher to expand, or for the student to get adequate practice through self-study and daily life. "Difficult to remember, easily forgotten" was a common criticism of Chinese character literacy training for children in modern times based on the traditional primers such as these.

Still, accumulated wisdom stands; why read Homer, Virgil, or Ovid? Must we reinvent ourselves and relearn constantly, the hard way, the lessons of long ago? The wisdom and relevancy of much of the Thousand Character Essay and of ancient China is startling in its clarity today, most clearly in its emphasis on the value of time and on the development of personal character, on doing what we now call "the right thing". And they are a rewarding introduction to the legends of early China and the Chinese view of the cosmos and life. The seven chapters deals with aspects of the world, nature, history, geography, society, and individual conduct while presenting, for practice, a basic set of characters at the core of the moral and intellectual world view of traditional China. Of course some of the content is superstitious, perhaps oppressive, or undemocratic, or gender biased by today's standards, but that is why a teacher is needed, to provide the historical understanding of the past, of its areas of darkness and ignorance, and place it in a constructive and progressive present context.

I have made extensive use of an illustrated modern GB Chinese text and introductory study notes published in China, edited by Xu Hairong, in the Zhongguo Mengxue Tushuo series from Huaxia Chubanshe, Beijing, 2001. It is apparently based on the very earliest commentary by the obscure Li Xian of the Northern Wei. The simplified characters add a certain charm as well, harking back to an earlier time in the development of the Chinese language. It has been especially helpful in resolving the differences between various texts I've seen in print and on the internet. The little Huaxia text, repeat with charming sketches that bring the text to life, also includes the other primers I have mentioned. The copy I have suffers only from a (very) few mistakes in pinyin transcription (mostly n/ng finals, probably typos in the first edition. Also, it duplicates a few characters that are now represented by a single simplified graph. To avoid this in a few places I used the permissible traditional forms (in brackets in the Xinhua Cidian) according to meaning, checking everything (including historical matters) with the other dictionaries old and new, including the Kangxi Cidian, Morohashi Daikanwa, Republic-period Cihai, Lv Erkui's Ci Yuan. Guoyu Cidian, Zhong-Ri Dacidian,

Ricci Institute Sino-French Dictionary and others. It is a bargain at 10rmb (2002 price), ISBN 7-5080-2584-9. Highly recommended, pocket sized for study at work in the paddy while perched between the horns of your Chinese ox. One of the above traditional primers, the Three Character Classic, or San Zi Jing, a work of the 10th-13th century Song Dynasty, has been selected by the United Nations as part of the world heritage of children's literature. I hope that you enjoy these pages and your study of traditional Chinese and China through the Qian Zi Wen. The time will be well spent. As the text tells us, in paraphrase, "an inch of time is more valuable than a foot of jade." To quote Franklin, at the dawn of the American republic, 1,300 years later, "if you treasure life, then treasure time, for time is the stuff of life itself."

Note: A GB Chinese text is completely up; unfortunately I produced it myself. Brackets around a tone number indicate tone sandhi during reading aloud in normal modern Mandarin speech. I use the letter v for the unlauded u as in lv4 meaning "law" or the six Yang notes of the musical scale. Wang Xizhi, Zhou Xingsi and all the calligraphers who have come since are a tough act to follow, so my apologies in advance. NPS

## Chapter 1

天地玄黃，宇宙洪荒。

tian1 di4 xuan2 huang2, yu3 zhou4 hong2 huang1.

The sky was black and earth yellow; space and time vast, limitless.

Notes: Xuan2 here means black, as in xuan2sai4, a foreboding name for the Great Wall. Yu3zhou4 is now a common term for outer space, the cosmos, all creation. Yu3 means the space around us, zhou4 is time eternal. Hong2 huang1 refers to the fluid, plastic, chaotic condition of the primordial state before the structuring of the world, as used in Chinese in Wu Cheng'eng's "Chinese Genesis" in the beginning of his famed 16th century novel "Journey to the West". It is interesting to compare that poetic account to Ovid's own interpretation of the Greek creation in his Metamorphoses; there are many similarities.

日月盈昃，辰宿列張。

ri4 yue4 ying2 ze4, chen2 xiu4 lie4 zhang1.

Sun high or low, moon full or parsed; with stars and lodges spread in place.

Notes: Ying2 means full, referring to the moon; ze4 refers to the sun's inclination. Chen is the sun, moon and stars. Xiu4 here, a rare literary reading, is commonly pronounced su4 in modern

Chinese. It is the character for the star lodges, or Chinese constellations, 28 of them in ancient Chinese astronomy.

# 寒来暑往，秋收冬藏。

han2 lai2 shu(3) wang3, qiu1 shou1 dong1 cang2.

Cold arrives then heat once more; Autumn's harvest, Winter's store.

Notes: The ancestors of the Chinese people were systematically cultivating rice and millet over 4,500 years ago, with a grasp of the seasonal timing of planting and reaping. One site, Tao3he2 Mu3du4 in Zhejiang Province has produced evidence of rice cultivation 7,500 years ago, the oldest such record on earth. Chinese farmers very early on used the lunar calendar, known as the agrarian calendar, nong2 li4, to time their activities, using its 24 periods.

# 闰余成岁，律吕调阳。

run4 yu2 cheng2 sui4, lv4 lv3 tiao2 yang2.

Extra days round out the years; scale in tune with sun and spheres.

Notes: Run4 yu2 refers to the lunar year being about ten days shorter than the time of the a complete journey around the sun. The Chinese added extra months, run4 yue4, to compensate, often lengthening the year. The bamboo pitch pipe played 12

notes, six of them high, called lv4 and considered Yang force, and six low, known as lv3 and considered to reflect Yin energy. These corresponded to the twelve months of the year. In addition, the wind and sound waves from the flute could be used for divination according to Yang and Yin, by scattering ashes.

雲騰致雨，露結為霜。

yun2 teng2 zhi4 yu3, lu4 jie2 wei2 shuang1.

Clouds soar up to end in rain; the dew congeals to morning frost.

Notes: A very succinct and clear description, for the late 5th century, of the physical processes involved, what meteorologists would now call the behavior of an adiabatic mass lifted into colder air under unstable conditions (high lapse rate, or rate of temperature decrease per unit of height), resulting in faster and faster lifting, further condensation and rain. The night's dew freezes with morning's cold. It is also explained as the sublimation of energies of the cultivated Junziren.

金生丽水，玉出昆冈。

jin1 sheng1 li4 shui3, yu4 chu1 kun1 gang1.

Gold is born in the River Li; jade comes from Kunlun's vault.

Notes: The ancient Chinese panned for gold in running streams as prospectors still do. Kunlun probably refers to the Kunlun mountains, where the legendary Jade Pool Yao2chi3 in Tibet,

home of the fairies and the Queen Mother of the West, Xi1wang2mu3 of ancient legend.

# 剑号巨缺，珠称夜光。

jian4 hao4 ju4 que1, zhu1 cheng1 ye4 guang1.

A sword is styled "Excalibur"; a pearl, the "Gleam of Night".

Notes: The Chinese "Excalibur", ju4que1, was the legendary jade sword of Gou3Jian4, (?-465BC), the king of Yue4 during the Spring and Autumn period, BC 770-476. According to one legend, the Mystery Girl, xuan2nv3, an unbeatable swordswoman and transformation of the Queen Mother of the West gave it. He used it to avenge defeat and conquer his archrival, Fu1Cha4, the king of Wu2. It has long referred to any jade sword, etc. The "Gleam of Night" or ye4guang1 was a famed legendary pearl, once, according to superstition, the eye of a whale, also referred to as ye4ming2zhu1.

# 果珍李柰，菜重芥姜。

guo3 zhen1 li3 nai4, cai4 zhong4 jie4 jiang1.

Dearest fruit are pears and apples; fine crops mustard, ginger.

Notes: Li3 meaning "pear", the second most common surname after Zhang1 (with the "bow" radical), in ancient times also referred to the peach. Aside from the mustard plant itself, the seeds were of course used for seasoning food. Ginger is valued

as an ingredient, spice and as a medicinal herb, useful in treating hypertension and other illnesses.

# 海咸河淡，鱗潜羽翔。

hai3 xian2 he2 dan4, lin2 qian2 yu3 xiang2.

Sea is a saline, stream sublime; fish school below, birds flock on high.

Notes: Dan4 meaning clear or pure here, as opposed to saline, is also used as well like "sweet" as the opposite of "dry", in reference to alcoholic drinks. Lin2 literally means "scale(s)" but here refers to fish in general, and yu3 "feather(s)" is used the same way to mean birds. This concludes the first chapter of the Qian1 Zi4 Wen1, which begins with the heavens and earth and progresses to common knowledge about nature.

## Chapter 2

# 龙师火帝，鸟官人皇。

long2 shi1 huo3 di4, niao3 guan1 ren2 huang2.

Dragon Master, Fire King; Bird Official, Lord of Men.

Notes: These are four of China's earliest rulers and officials; they vary according to the many legends. They were perhaps chieftains of small tribal alliances of hamlets. The "Dragon Master" long2 shi1, or, "Dragon-sent Master" long2 ming4 shi1 was none other than Fu2 Xi1, also called Tai4 Hao4, depicted with a snake-like body and human face, who legendarily devised the Ba Gua (trigrams of heaven and earth) and taught his followers how to make nets and to fish, hunt, and raise cattle. Huo3 Di4, the "Fire Emperor" was called Sui4 Ren2, and true to his title he taught the people, legend has it, how to make fire by drilling into wood and how to boil rice. Then there is the later "Glorious (literally, flame) Emperor", or Yan2 Di4, better known as the illustrious Shen2 Nong2, often depicted as a man with the head of an ox. During this reign humanity learned how to make plows and cultivate crops, and he (or the period) is credited in legend with discovering medicinal plants and making the first medicines. Chi1 You2 was chief of a dark-skinned tribe of the north, and gave mankind the first weapons of war. Both he and Shen Nong were defeated by the Yellow Emperor, or Huang2 Di4, named Hsuan1 Yuan2, first to be shown as completely human in form. Chi1 You2 was killed on the plain of Zhuo1 Lu4 in today's central Hebei Province. The Yellow Emperor used the magnetic compass to navigate through Chi You's man-made fog and defeat him. Shao3 Hao4, the "Bird Official" or "Bird-sent Official", niao3 ming4 guan1, was son of Hsuan1 Yuan2, the Yellow Emperor, born of his wife Lei2 Zu3. He was so named for

his revision of Tai4 Hao4's (the above Fu Xi's) metaphysical system, the Trigrams, or Tai4 Hao4 Fa3, and his name was Zhi4; titles include Jin1 De2 Wang2, Jin1 Tian1 shi4, and Qiong2 Sang1 shi4 among others. Ren2 Huang2 was the last of one grouping of legendary "Three Emperors", namely Tian1 Huang2, Di4 Huang2, and Ren2 Huang2. These correspond to tian1, di4, ren2, the san1 cai2, or "Three Achievements" of creation: heaven, earth and people. They also often correspond to Fu2 Xi1, Sui4 Ren2, and Shen2 Nong2. The Book of Poems, (Shang Song) says tian1 ming4 xuan2 niao3, jiang er2 sheng1 shang1, and here is one of the more interesting tales: "Heaven mandated Xuan2 Niao3," (Queen Tun1 Ya4, the blackbird wife of Di4 Ku4), "down it came, gave birth to Shang". So born from a royal egg was Zi3 Xie4 who is the grand ancestor of both the much, much later Shang Dynasty and the clan of Confucius, albeit myriad generations later); Di4Ku4, father of Xia Dynasty founder Yao the Great, was son of Zhuan Xu (the Yellow Emperor's grandson). Legendary figures are often depicted in art as black birds or with crow-like attributes, magpie heads, etc. The many legends differ as to names, groupings, deeds etc. The Wu Di4 or "Five Emperors" vary by account but are typically Huang Di, his grandson Zhuan Xu, Di Ku, Yao2, Shun, and Yu3.

# 始制文字，乃服衣裳。

shi3 zhi4 wen2 zi4, nai3 fu2 yi1 shang1.

The beginning of writing; what's more, wearing clothes.

Notes: In China's remote past, before writing, people kept records by teeing knots in strings or ropes. According to legend, writing originated with Cang2 Jie2, an official of the Yellow Emperor. Furthermore, legend also has it that Lei2 Zu3, wife of

the Yellow Emperor, taught the people how to raise silkworms, cultivate and spin silk, and so textile clothing replaced the animal skins and tree leaves worn up to that time.

推位让国，有虞陶唐。

tui1 wei4 rang4 guo2, you3 yu2 tao2 tang2.

Yielding the throne, passing the land; rulers of Yu2, Tao2 and Tang2.

Notes: Yao2, chieftain of the communities of Tao2 and Tang2, and Shun4, chieftain of the principality of Yu2, or you3yu2, are famed for selflessness; they willfully gave up their reigns to successful and worthy men. Shun4 is therefore often called Yu2 Shun4 or simply Yu2. As for Yao2, he was originally made chief of Tao2 (Dingtao in modern Shandong) and expanded his rule to Tang2, (nowadays Linfeng in adjoining Shanxi), so he is also known in history as Tao2 Tang2 or Tang2 Yao2. According to legend, Yao2 passed on his throne to Shun4, who in turn abdicated to Yu3, the founder of the Xia4 Dynasty in the 21st Century BC, beginning the tradition of hereditary succession to the throne with his son Qi3.

吊民伐罪，周发殷汤。

diao4 min2 fa2 zui4, zhou1 fa1 yin1 tang1

Relieve the people, right the wrong; as did Zhou1 Fa1, as did Yin1-Tang1.

Notes: Zhou1 Fa1 in the original text refers to Ji1 Fa1, original personal name of the man who became Emperor Zhou1 Wu3 Wang2, who crushed the tyrant Zhou4, evil last ruler of the Shang Dynasty and founded the Zhou1, Chinass longest lived dynasty, around 1100BC, roughly contemporary with King David of ancient Israel. Ji1, his surname, had also been that of the Yellow Emperor, taken from the nearby Ji1 River. Yin1 Tang1 refers to the much earlier destruction of Jie2, evil last ruler of the Xia Dynasty, by Cheng2 Tang1, and the later founding of the Shang Dynasty around 1600 BC. Bad Kings Jie2 and Zhou4 are the notorious pair of evil last rulers, the first to lose the Mandate of Heaven, celebrated in many popular sayings such as "Jie2's dog barked at righteousness," and Zhou4's consort, Da2 Ji3 is reviled for her wild banquets, lust, cruelty and excesses. The tenth ruler of Shang, Pan2 Kang1 moved his capital to Yin1, hence in history and literature the Shang is often called Yin or Yin-Shang, and its founder is often known as Yin1 Tang1 or Shang1 Tang1.

# 坐朝問道，垂拱平章。

zuo4 chao2 wen4 dao4, chui2 gong3 ping2 zhang1

Presiding at court and asking the Way; gracious yet lordly, discuss and decide.

Notes: Wen4 here means "enquire, discuss in detail." As for the jun1 zi3's (superior man's, worthy king's) Dao, the Way, the Zhong1 Yong1 (Doctrine of the Mean, Ch.12) says fu4 fu2 zhi1 yu2, ke(3) yi3 yu4 zhi1 yan1; ji 2 qi2 zhi4 ye3, sui1 sheng4 ren2 yi4 you(3) suo3 bu4 zhi1 yan1: "ordinary people (lit. husbands and wives) in all their silliness can come to know, or unwittingly demonstrate, most of it, but in its fine points there is much that even the sages still cannot explain. Chui2 gong3: graciously, (humbly, condescendingly) with genteel dignity. Ping2 zhang1 to

discuss and clarify (matters of the day, of state,); in later times, (Tang, Song) it became the name of a high office, councilor of state. Precedents: Shang Tang relied heavily on Yi1 Yin3 and took his advice; Zhou Wu Wang appointed Lv3 Shang4 to a high military post and empowered him to handle very grave matters. Confucius said that if anybody could fully explain the Way to him some morning, he would be able to die satisfied that night.

爱育黎首，臣伏戎羌。

ai4 yu4 li2 shou3, chen2 fu2 rong2 qiang1

With love he taught the dark and soiled; in submission, wild tribes.

Notes: Li2 here means "black"; li2 shou3 refers to the masses of common people engaged in agriculture as well as to two darker skinned tribes, the Li2 and Miao2, then living in the North. In subsequent times, li2 miao2 has had the non-literal meaning of masses as well, so I believe that here li2 shou3 is a "shuangguanyu" meaning these darker peoples as well as the soiled, sunbaked masses. The Rong2 and Qiang1 were two tribes to the west. Together these represent all the unschooled common folk of various ethnicity as well as the tribes surrounding China in Zhou times; all the tribes in time pacified or otherwise brought around to China's civilized ways, to the way of the cultivated and correct Jun1zi3 ren2; they add their land and talented men to the Chinese state.

遐迩一体，率宾归王。

xia2 er3 yi4 ti3, shuai4 bin1 gui1 wang2

Far and near, they joined as one; all followed, rallied to the king.

Notes: Here, xia2 means "far"; er3 means "near". shuai4 means "completely, all" and bin1 here means "obeyed, submitted"; gui1 here has a similar meaning. Emperor Zhou Wu Wang's son Cheng2 Wang2 and grandson Kang1 Wang2 each ruled with diligence and reason at court, provided relief and assistance far and near and established a great reign over the world; hence the two periods together are famously called Cheng2 Kang1 Zhi1 Zhi4, "The Rule of Cheng and Kang".

鸣凤在竹，白驹食场。

ming2 feng4 zai4 zhu2, bai2 ju1 shi2 chang2

The phoenix calls from bamboo stand; White pony grazes pasture land.

Notes: feng4 is the male of the legendary bird of good fortune, the Phoenix, that feeds on bamboo tips; (huang2 is the female). Bai2 ju1, white pony, is an allusion to the lines "Jiao(3) jiao3 bai2 ju1, shi2 wo3 chang2 miao2" in the Book of Poems, (Xiao3 Ya2, Bai2 Ju1: "Sparkling is the white pony, feeding in our fields.") These sentences state that only under the conditions of universal peace and abundance can these scenes occur. They also serve as a metaphor, signifying cultivated and good people peacefully serving the illustrious king.

# 化被草木，賴及万方。

hua4 bei4 cao3 mu4, lai4 ji2 wan4 fang1

Wise teachings dress each plant and tree; bounty everywhere we see.

Notes: Hua4 is jiao4 hua4 the king's civilizing guidance and cultural enlightenment of his people. bei4 here means to "dress, blanket, cover"; lai4 has a the meaning here of (noun u&c)"benefit(s)". This concludes Chapter 2 of the Qian1 Zi4 Wen2, from the virtuous governance of the ancient emperors to the might, greatness and widespread abundance that they brought forth.

## Chapter 3

盖此身髮，四大五常。

gai4 ci3 shen1 fa4, si4 da4 wu3 chang2

These bodies and this hair of ours; Four Great Things, Five Principles.

Notes: Gai4 here is an initial grammatical particle. Si4 Da4 is the Buddhist notion of "Four Elements", Earth, Wind, Fire and Water. The constituent parts and functions of the body each correspond to one of these. Flesh, bones and hair belong to Earth, body fluids to Water, body temperature to Heat, and internal circulation to Wind. As for the Wu3 Chang2, these are the Confucian "Five Virtues": ren2, benevolence, human kindness; Yi4, righteousness, justice; Li3, ritual, propriety; Zhi4, wisdom, intelligence, and Xin4, truthfulness and trust. These are the traditional Confucians regulating principles of social morality. As the bodily functions are governed by the former, our words and deeds are to be controlled in accordance with the latter.

恭惟鞠养，岂敢毁伤。

gong1 wei2 ju1 yang3, qi(3) gan(3) hui3 shang1

Do honor to your upbringing; how dare one inflict a wound!

Notes: Honor your father and mother and the loving sacrifices they made in bearing and raising you. Who dares harm their own

body, an act of utmost disrespect to one's parents and their kindness! The Xiao4 Jing1 or Classic of Filial Piety says, in its opening chapter discourse between Zengzi and Confucius, "Shen1 ti3 fa4 fu1, shou4 zhi1 fu4 mu3, bu4 gan(3) hui3 shang1, xiao4 zhi1 shi(3) ye3": "Your body, hair and skin were received from your father and mother, so don't you dare harm yourself; that is the beginning of filial piety". This includes the Confucian prohibition against wounding, tattooing, self-mutilation, and excessive, dangerous, deleterious, undignified and or harmful behavior. In its strictest expressions it extended to the cutting of hair and fingernails.

# 女慕贞洁, 男效才良。

nv3 mu4 zhen1 jie2, nan2 xiao4 cai2 liang2

Girls admire the chaste and pure; boys, the talented and good.

Notes: Young women look up to the true wives and chaste maidens in stories who are the traditional models of virtue, while young men seek to imitate illustrious, talented, and good men. Mu4 and xiao4 can both mean pursue, chase, yearn for as well as admire, look up to, emulate, imitate. "A friend who is upright, sincere, and knowledgeable is truly to be valued" said Confucius, in Analects. Countless stories tell of model lie4 nv3, loyal women who remained chaste in widowhood or chose death to betrayal of their marriage vows, such as Meng4 Jiang1 Nv3 who legendarily "cried down" a segment of the Great Wall ku1 dao3 chang2 cheng2 to remove her husband's bones and then drowned herself in the Bohai (Bay of Zhili) to avoid marrying the Emperor Qin Shi Huang.

# 知过必改，得能莫忘。

zhi1 guo4 bi4 gai3, de2 neng2 mo4 wang4

Aware of wrong, you must then change; mind the limits of your strength.

Notes: "Nothing is more obvious than the hidden, nothing more visible than the miniscule". (The Doctrine of the Mean, Ch 1). Zengzi reflected on his failures daily (Analects). With every new day comes a chance to reform... although Zhou was an old country, it was able to restore itself. (The Book of Poems, Greater Odes, Wen Wang) quoted in the Great Learning Chapter 2). de2 here means matching, befitting; neng2 here means ability and is similar to the English modal auxiliary can in that it covers broad potential, including mood of physical ability as well as other those of possibility and permission. "If I said I could not lift Mount Tai over the North Sea," said Mencius to King Xuan Wang of Qi, "could not would really mean due to a lack of ability. But if I said I couldn't break a long stick into smaller pieces, it would simply reflect unwillingness to let it happen." In other words, know what you can accomplish or change and what you can't, for whatever reason. Be self reliant but don't overreach yourself; don't promise what you cannot do. The San Zi Jing tells children of the one-time rascal Dou Yanshan, Dou4 Yan4 Shan1, who, still unmarried and childless after an early life of wrongdoing and wasting his family's fortune, suddenly grasped the ephemeral and treasured nature of an existence and managed to see the error of his ways. He took in and taught orphaned boys and produced five famous scholars, achieving fame and redeeming his parents' good name.

# 罔谈彼短，靡恃己长。

wang3 tan2 bi(3) duan3, mi2 shi4 ji3 chang2

Refrain from talk of others' faults; don't rest upon your strengths.

Notes: A person who does so will never advance. Aesop's fable of the Tortoise and the Hare comes to mind. According to Lao Zi, "A self-glorifying person cannot be considered successful, and will not advance further."

# 信使可覆，器欲难量。

xin4 shi(3) ke3 fu4, qi4 yu4 nan2 liang4

Words must stand the test of proof; good deeds are hard to weigh.

Notes: "Xin4" refers to the reliability of words; they require the test of time and experience. Good deeds, however, are obvious, precious, difficult to measure. "Actions speak louder than words". Laozi says "Beautiful words cannot be believed; words to be trusted are not beautiful". The Great Learning says (Chapt 3) yu3 guo2 ren2 jiao4, zhi3 yu2 xin4, "in dealings with your countrymen, the goal is trust."

# 墨悲丝染，诗赞羔羊。

mo4 bei1 si4 ran3, shi1 zan4 gao1 yang2

Mozi wept that the silk was dyed; in the Poems the lamb was glorified.

Notes: Seeing dyed silk made Mozi think of how the body's original purity and goodness are adulterated, never to return to their original state, just as the dye would never wash out of the silk. Shi1, poem(s) refers to the Shi1 Jing1 or Book of Poems, in which the poem gao1 yang2 praises the austere purity of some legendary local officials who had su1 si1 zhi1 jie2, "the purity of plain silk".

# 景行维贤，克念作圣。

jing3 xing2 wei2 xian2, ke4 nian4 zuo4 sheng4

Exalted go only the wise and good; control desire, achieve sage hood.

Notes: Controlling desire here refers to following moral precepts and rules. The two sentences can be summed up in the exhortation jian4 xian2 er2 si1 qi2, "behold the wise and good, and order your thoughts accordingly".

# 德建名立，形端表正。

de2 jian4 ming2 li4, xing2 duan1 biao3 zheng4

Virtue built, good name made; figure upright, bearing straight.

Notes: This emphasizes the relationship between internal, or personal, rearing and cultivation and the external, or public, achievement of a good name and fame (as opposed to its much more common variant, notoriety). A saying goes: shen1 zheng4 bu2 pa4 ying3 zi3 xie2, "If you stand upright, you need not fear the words of others". Li4 shen1, xing2 dao4, yang2 ming2 yu2 hou4 shi4, "establish yourself, follow the path, build up your name for future generations," says the Classic of Filial Piety, yi(3) xian3 fu4 mu3 "so as to glorify your father and mother". Similarly, the Book of Poems, (Guo Feng, Wei Feng, Qi Ao) says (quoted in Chapter 3 of the Great Learning), you(3) fei3 jun1 zi3, ru2 qie1 ru2 zuo4, ru2 zho2 ru2 mo2, se4 xi1 xian4 xi1, he4 xi1 xuan4 xi1, you(3) fei3 jun1 zi3, zhong1 bu4 ke3 xuan1 x1, "There is an elegant fine young prince, as if chiseled, as if cut, as if ground, as if polished; sung of, celebrated, hailed, proclaimed; there is an elegant young prince, at the end never to be forgotten!"

# 空谷传声，虚堂习听。

kong1 gu3 chuan2 sheng1, xu1 tang2 xi2 ting1

The empty valleys broadly resonate; in hollow halls wisely officiate.

Notes: In the earliest commentary extant today, from Li Xian of the Northern Wei, the empty valleys refer to an ancient story from the

Spring and Autumn period in which a prince un-filially ran off into the wilderness valleys of Mt Fu to make his name heard. Instead of fame, he was fatally lost amidst echoes and trees, and his searching father the King set fire to the woods out of frustration and in hope of leading him back, thus sealing his fate. The lesson is that your place as a prince is in the palace, studying and achieving perfection as a son and brother, then speaking and ruling clearly; your name is formed inside the family, then rises in the world. Literal meanings of ting1 are listen, preside over, to judge, to govern, to rule, officiate, and here the meaning is to speak, to rule. Xi2 here means carefully; with clarity; clearly, in a studied and wise manner, reflecting perfect cultivation. The characters for hollowness and emptiness, abstruseness, add a Buddhist dimension, connoting the emptiness and illusory nature of worldly things, high and low. Sheng1 also refers to the Emperor's works and edicts, name etc., resounding far off in the wilderness. The Emperor's filial piety. Gain the hearts and minds of the world by serving your royal ancestors. Another analogy between nature and society; how to behave in the halls and vast chambers of power, as teacher of all tribes of men and universal giver of laws. All tribes of men everywhere depend on the One's (Son of Heaven's) perfection, his filial piety in particular. Conversely, bad news travels fast down among the people; what goes around comes around, so serve your elders and ancestors, speak, listen, reflect, study the classics and chant sutras, live and rule carefully in pursuit of perfection. This ties into the next line.

禍因惡積，福緣善慶。

huo4 yin1 e4 ji1, fu2 yuan2 shan4 qing4

Calamity's caused by evil stored; blessings result as good's reward.

Notes: Calamity is brought about through the accumulation of repeated acts of evil; bounties and joys happen (are fated) because of many years of good deeds and perfect conduct. This is the Buddhist notion of Yin1 guo3, fatal cause and effect, and that of Yin1 yuan2 (the words are contraposed in the lines) in accord with our stored deeds. Not that the Chinese were without such ideas; proper kingly behavior (particularly in filial obeisance) was long before linked to the avoidance of disaster and the achievement of harmony. When the Qian Zi Wen was written, Buddhism, along with Confucianism and Daoism, was already one of the "Three Great Teachings," having been introduced from India about two to three centuries earlier during the Eastern (Later) Han Dynasty, when systematic religious Daoism had also come into being out of older beliefs. Tantric Buddhist amuletic chants and charm formulas of (sanskrit)Dharani (tuo2luo2ni2 in Chinese), for maximizing one's account of good and minimizing one's balance of evil, appeared in China as early as the 3rd century AD. They coexisted and syncretized (blended) harmoniously for the most part in the Liang state at the time of Zhou Xingsi's writing, with Confucianism dominant. The ethical system of Confucius did yet not have a large formal and exclusive metaphysical system, as was later created in the Northern Song, at its roots. It could probably coexist with any ideological or metaphysical basis, anything that has people sharing the same values; here we see a Buddhist precept adding a new dimension to the foundation of Confucian ethics. Emperor Liang Wu Di, who ordered the Qian Zi Wen created, patronized Buddhism heavily and had state monasteries, known as Liang2 Si4, or Liang Temples built, forseeing the Tang ("Restored Zhou" during her rule) Empress Wu's frenzied and extravagant building of State Temples and prosyletizing of Buddhism nearly two centuries later. Zhou Xingsi could be expected to say something about an important Buddhist teaching in a work called for by such a king, who late in his life actually took vows as a bonze. It was during the Liang, shortly after the Qian Zi Wen's creation that the Tian1 Tai2 Buddhist sect (Tendai in Japanese) was founded, on the Tian Tai mountain range in Zhejiang; Chi4 Cheng2, mentioned below in this work, is one of its peaks. The Japanese later named

Mt Akagi, in present-day Gunma Prefecture, after it. "State-established Temple" building spread, first to Korea and then to Japan and was important in the development and spread of the very early Japanese state beginning on record with Shomu Tenno's edict in the 8th century AD. Buddhism was also very strong in the Southern Dynasty Liang's contemporary Northern Wei Dynasty; this Northern and Southern Dynasties period left many striking and priceless Buddhist relics and works of art.

# 尺璧非宝，寸阴是竞。

chi3 bi4 fei1 bao3, cun4 yin1 shi4 jing4

A foot of jade is no treasure; an inch of time is to fight for.

Notes: Time is life itself, the very unit of existence. Time is money. We struggle to meet a deadline; time is our lives flowing by never to return. Marlowe's Faust, his time up, comes to mind, pleading for "another minute, another second". Benjamin Franklin said "If you treasure life, then treasure time, for time is the very stuff of life itself." Lu Xun's protagonist in Kuangren Riji, "Diary of a Madman" and his delusion becomes interesting from the standpoint of time; if time is life, and labor is time, then people eat each other when they eat the fruits of labor, exploit their time, charge interest and so forth. The Chinese word for time here is *guang1 yin1* or "bright (flash) yin energy", like "moonlight," rare and limited enough. Time is based on heaven's periods of brightness, around which people arrange their activities in life and government, in using the blessings and fertility of earth. An old Chinese saying goes *yi1 cun4 guang1 yin1, yi1 cun4 jin1, cun4 jin1 nan2 mai3 cun4 guang1 yin1*: "An inch of time, an inch of gold, it's pretty hard for that inch of gold to buy an inch of time!" Still, today, it's time that people contend for.

# 資父事君，日严与敬。

zi1 fu4 shi4 jun1, yue1 yan2 yu3 jing4

Nourish your father and serve your king; known as reverence and respect.

Notes: Zi4 means to support, with the sense of nourish here. Shi4 is verbal here, meaning to serve as child or subject, to work on the parent or ruler's behalf, when alive, and to offer prayer when departed. Yan2 here is verbal, as in the ancient meaning of yan2 fu4, revere your father, meaning revere and respect one's parents by supporting and worshipping them, for nothing is greater than their continuance of the male line, "kneeling before and nourishing your living parents is called (yue1) yan2 (Xiao Jing, 9) and this reverent duty, "yan" is the model for service to one's ruler, respect, or jing4. The ancient sages gently taught "respect" (jing4) through filial reverence and duty (yan2); it came naturally to them. Your mother gets your love and your ruler gets your respect; only your father gets both. From filial piety, the above yan2 and jing4, also comes zhong1, or, loyalty, which transfers to serving one's ruler. Fulfilled filial duty to the father brings the blessed light of heaven, that to mother brings the fertile blessings of earth. From the Junzi's filial piety comes the quality of loyalty to ruler. One's character forms in the home filially, and then one's name rises in the world. This line and the next ones deal with the delicate balance between conflicting obligations: private and public, family and State.

# 孝当竭力，忠则尽命。

xiao4 dang1 jie2 li4, zhong1 ze2 jin4 ming4

Devoted to parents with all your strength; loyal to throne with your very life.

Notes: The Xiao4 Jing1, Classic of Filial Piety, resolves this contradiction by viewing proper fulfillment of obligations in each role as a fulfillment of filial obligation; each role in the feudal society has their own way. The emperor's filial duty, extending the rule of civilization and law to the world; the feudal lord's filial obligation, "high but not in danger, full but not overflowing," ie knowing limits and being cautious to preserve status and wealth, (see the next line); then the obligations of government ministers, lower officials, and finally those of commoners, followed by a detailed series of chapters on filial duty as the core of human activity and very specific instructions. Filial piety has its beginning in devotion to parents, its middle course in serving the ruler, its goal in li4 shen1, , establishing yourself and your good name, and illuminating your parents. "Wu2 nian4 er2 zu3, "Remember your ancestors!" says Confucius in conclusion of Chapter 1, quoting the Book of Poems, Yu4 xiu1 jue2 de2, "don't forget their virtue". Filial piety is the basis of the other obligations and duties for the Chinese people, the orientation of other duties and the entire ethical system.

# 临深履薄，夙兴温清。

lin2 shen1 lv3 bo2, su4 xing1 wen1 qing4\*

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Like facing the deep, like treading thin ice; early to rise, warm and cool.

Notes: On caution: The Book of Poems (Xiao Ya, Xiao Min) says zhan4 zhan4 jing4 jing4, ru2 lin2 shen1 yuan4, ru2 lv3 bo2 bing1, "Exercise caution in making war, like standing on the brink of a deep chasm, like treading on the thinnest ice". "They only see the first step, they can't imagine what comes next" it continues; wisdom for today's sequential thinkers, for those whom the world still calls logical men. This exhortation of caution and jin3 shen4, guarding one's purity and integrity is quoted in the Classic of Filial Piety, (The Feudal Lord's Filial Piety) and Analects (8), and is elliptically quoted in the text above as lin2 shen1 lv3 bo2, an admonition to caution. Su4 xing1 above is an elliptical form of a quote from the Book of Poems (Xiao Ya, Xiao Wan): su4 xing1 ye4 mei4, wu2 tian3 er3 suo3 sheng1, "By evening in bed, rising at morn, don't disgrace the ones from whom you were born." Finally, wen1 qing4 is an elliptical form of dong1 wen2 er2 xia4 qing4, describing the duty of a child to keep their parents "in winter, warm and summer, cool," from the Li3 Ji4, or Book of Rites (Qu Li chapter,) a work by Xiao Dai, "Dai the Younger," Dai4 Sheng4 at the end of the Western (former) Han. (His Uncle Dai4 De2 known as "Da Dai", Dai the Eldest, wrote a longer work but it has been lost.) The full quote is fan2 wei2 ren2 zi3 zhi1 li3, dong1 wen2 er2 xia4 qing4, and "A proper thing for all children to do; in winter, warming, in summer, cooling". The San Zi Jing tells children about the model nine-year old Huang2 Xiang1 of the Eastern Han who warmed his newly widowed father's bed in winter and fanned him in summer; he went on to become a noted literary scholar and high official but he is celebrated chiefly for these acts of filial devotion.

\*Xu Hairong's little reader and the Xinhua Cidian (supplementary index) show qing4 for "cooling" but most other dictionaries, including the classic Taiwan and 1961 Beijing Ci Hai, Lu Erkui's Ci Yuan, Zhongwen Dacidian, Wang Yunwu Da Cidian, and Wang Li's Guoyu Cidian, 1936 and 47, including 1982 re-edited 6 volume Taipei edition and even the Morohashi Dai Kanwa Jiten all agree on jing4. The Morohashi gives a note, quoting the ancient

Ci Hui, that \*qing4\* as in \*wen2qing4\* is different in origin from \*qing2\* the dynastic name and gives \*qi-zheng\* as the fan qie splice, indicating \*qing4\*, but he still goes with the others in giving \*jing4\* as the reading. The Kangxi Cidian says \*qi-jing\* qie, qusheng, and cites it as that way in wen2 qing4 and that settles it for me as \*qing4\*. I think that the popular \*jing4\* was perhaps because of morphemic change, alveolar assimilation of this rare word that has been for so many centuries recited only in the collocation shown here, and seldom seen, let alone spoken or heard in any other phonetic environment. Perhaps the "correct" pronunciation in isolation has finally been determined nowadays to be "qing", in line with the Ci Hui and Kang Xi Cidian, or maybe it is pronounced that way in the dialect of power today. "Serious linguistic work is always descriptive, not prescriptive." Qing4 is what authoritative dictionaries in China and the latest Chinese-Japanese dictionaries are showing today.

似兰斯馨，如松之盛。

si4 lan2 si1 xin1, ru2 song1 zhi1 sheng4

Like an orchid is this fragrance; like fresh pines, abundant, dense.

Notes: si1 here is a demonstrative particle, similar to zhe4 or zhe4 yang4. These similar form a metaphor about the rewards of a person's proper moral conduct: energetically following the way of filial piety and maintaining the highest levels of moral integrity will bring one's family good fortune in abundance, as well as the love, admiration and respect of the world.

# 川流不息，淵澄取映。

chuan1 liu2 bu4 xi1, yuan1 cheng2 qu3 ying4

The river flows at endless pace; in deepest pool behold the face.

Notes: Chuan1 means the great river of life, a metaphor for the generations, it never stops; in the deep current by the riverbank we can lean over and behold our face, and perhaps in it the face of older brother or sister, parents and grandparents we knew. A Korean Shijo poem entitled Filial Piety, translated many years ago by Kenneth Rexroth, tells of a scene like this, where a young man, having lost his father and older brother, pauses by still water and peers at his own reflection, and in his face he sees first his brother's face, and then his father's. Likewise our young look up into our faces as parents and grandparents, uncles and aunts, modeling themselves on us. The text above continues to praise the path of filial piety, moving from self to past to those who will follow on; one's being a model for children and grandchildren. On a more metaphysical plane, "Xiao3 de2 chuan1 liu2, da4 de2 dun1 hua4" (The Doctrine of the Mean, Ch. 30). The system of the lesser properties can be seen in the flowing of rivers, that of the greater properties in heavy changes. Zhu Xi (1130-1200 AD) spoke of this in terms of the principles of physical energies of the world that create and nourish without mutual interference. The flow of rivers and the change of seasons belonging to the small properties, the creative, ultimate, and infinite forces of massive earth and high heaven, that support and enclose their realm of creation, belonging to the greater ones. Interestingly, the dun1 in dun1 hua4 extends to a term for the ultimate physical relations between husband and wife, dun1 lun2.

# 容止若思，言辭安定。

rong2 zhi3 ruo4 si1, yan2 ci2 an1 ding4

Stand solemnly and thoughtfully; speak with calm and dignity.

Notes: These lines indicate the required dignified, calm, fair and kind deportment in dealing with others. "Rong2 zhi3" is a contraction of "rong2 mao4 ju2 zhi3", facial expression and bodily manner, or, looks and bearing. ""Yen2 si1 ke3 dao4", "think before speaking" and "rong2 zhi3 ke3 guan1 "be able to show your face and manner" said Confucius in Chapter 9 of the Classic of Filial Piety. His disciple Zi3 Gong4 praised his teacher as being warm, kindhearted, respectful, frugal and modest. These are personal qualities needed for dealing properly with people as above. Your face reflects your ancestors so be dignified and proper and don't dishonor them. Confucius said in (Analects, Ren Li) that "Jun1 zi3 zhou1 er2 bu4 bi4, xiao3 ren2 bi4 er2 bu4 zhou1," basically, "The junziren/big-minded, princely person is open and warm to one and all in his dealings, is generous and does not seek his own kind or consider his own gain; the small minded person thinks first of his gain, seeks his own kind, is not generous, and is neither open nor warm to one and all in his dealings" and also "Jun1 zi3 zhi1 yu2 tian1 xia4 ye3, wu2 di2 ye3, wu2 mo4 ye3, yi4 zhi1 yu(3) bi3": "In his dealings with the world, the junziren is impartial; righteousness is the only company he seeks".

# 篤初誠美，慎終宜令。

du3 chu1 cheng2 mei3, shen4 zhong1 yi2 ling4

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Diligence at start indeed is fine; completeness at ending, duly grand.

Notes: Cheng2 here means "surely, indeed." Whatever you do, be diligent at the start, create a fine beginning, but even more importantly carry through with all your energy to a perfect end, with utter thoroughness. The Chinese say bu2 yao4 you3 tou2 wu2 wei3, "don't make a head (beginning) without a tail (end)"; in normal English, "finish what you start". This is a very important precept in the Chinese culture, tied to the importance of one's words matching one's deeds, the aforementioned xin4, and to cheng2, sincerity, integrity. "Gu4 zhi4 cheng2 wu2 xi2" says the Zhong1 Yong1, or, Doctrine of the Mean (Ch 26), in a moving comparison to the creation of the world. A saying goes "bu2 yao4 hu3 tou2 she2 wei3," literally "don't make a tiger's head with a snake's tail": bear in mind your intent and overall concept and work consistently to your highest standard down to the smallest detail.

荣业所基，籍甚无竟。

rong2 ye4 suo3 ji1, ji2 shen4 wu2 jing4

Glorious works as the foundation, no limit to one's reputation.

Notes: With one's life based upon filial piety and the cultivation of virtue and moral power, there is no limit to how high one can go or how far one's reputation can spread. The Great Learning was known in Zhou Xingsi's time only as a chapter of the Book of Rites, but its admonition to zhi4 zhi1, cheng2 yi4, zheng4 xin1 xiu1 shen1, qi2 Jia1, zhi4 guo2, ping2 tian1 xia4 or, get knowledge, unify the will, rectify the heart, cultivate the self, order the home (home, actually means, on one level, a unit of government in original context, as well as home), rule the country, and finally,

pacify the world, each step the foundation for the next, had been widely believed in for centuries. In the Classic of Filial Piety Confucius makes very clear his concept of transference of good character traits from inside (literally, one's parents and home, home, filial duty and chores) to outside (service to society and government); filial piety transfers into loyalty to ruler, and brotherliness into deference to elders. Even being a good domestic cook is training for being an official. And finally, Confucius argues strenuously, to Zengzi in Chapter 15 of this work, that simple obedience to father is NOT filial piety; one must correct and censor one's father's mistakes, not obey blindly, just as earlier emperors, kings and officials had official ombudsmen or "remonstrating friends" to hold them from ruining their countries with wrong-headedness.

# 学优登仕，摄职从政。

xue2 you1 deng1 shi4, she4 zhi2 cong2 zheng4

Studies superior, step up to serve; be given your duties, join government's work.

Notes: If you are outstanding in studies, i.e. have the extra ability it takes, come forth for official service. Be assigned to a post with important duties, and join in administering the country. In Analects (Zi3 Zhang1) the disciple Zi3 Xia4 says "shi4 er2 you1 ze2 xue2; xue2 er2 you1 ze2 shi4: Successful in service, then study; successful in study, then serve".

# 存以甘棠，去而益咏。

cun2 yi3 gan1 tang2, qu4 er2 yi4 yong3

Alive, under a sweet pear tree; gone, in song of eulogy.

Notes: The Chinese say "gan1 tang2 yi2 ai4" to describe the memory left by a fine official who was beloved by the people. It comes from the story of Shao4 Gong1, The Duke of Shao, or Zhou Shaowang, named Shi4, a son of Zhou Wenwang by a concubine. After Wuwang subdued the last king of Shang and established the Zhou, c.1100 BC, Shi4 was invested as King of Yan4, and made third-rank (of five feudal ranks) duke, assisting Dan4, the Duke of Zhou, in military campaigns and extending Zhou rule. He was then made 2nd class duke, or count, and was sometimes called Shao4 Bo2, famous for diligent administration of agriculture and for virtuous governance. He legendarily lived and ruled under a Gantang tree, a sort of low, spreading pear tree, *pirus betulaefolia*, a sort of shade-tree king, and was beloved by the people, later reverently eulogized in the Book of Poems (Shao4nan2, Gan1tang2).

乐殊贵贱，礼别尊卑。

yue4 shu1 gui4 jian4, li3 bie2 zun1 bei1

Music distinct by social rank, rites according to prestige.

Notes: Gui1 jian4, a term used in the classics referring to the five social ranks, from Son of Heaven down to the commoners, literally "high class (highly valued) - low class (lowly valued)," with these terms also used for quality of things. zun1 bei1 in parallel fashion has a similar meaning, literally "respected - looked down upon". Similarly in Chinese a thing's "high-low" means its height, etc. These lines reflect the social rank-based outlook of feudal society. Analects (Ba Yi) records that the Lu official Ji4

Sun4 used ba1 yi4, 8 octets, or 64 musicians for his musical performances. Confucius said: "If that is sufferable, what in the world is insufferable"? Shi4 ke2 ren4, shu2 bu4 ke2 ren4? The aforementioned Ji4 Sun4's famous problems, recorded in Analects (Ji4 Shi4) left us with a common expression for domestic discord or civil strife, xiao1 qiang2 zhi1 huo4, "trouble inside the city walls".

# 上和和睦，夫唱妇随。

shang4 he2\* xia4 mu4, fu1 chang4 fu4 sui2

The higher is pleasing, the lower harmonious; the husband leads and the wife accompanies.

Notes: Chinese people traditionally used the notion of musical harmony to signify the ideal marital relationship. The Book of Poems (Tang2 Di4) says: qi1 zi3 hao4 he2, ru2 gu3 se4 qin2, "The wife with love of harmony, one plucks the zither, one the lute". Thus the harmonious feelings between husband and wife are known as qin2 se4 qing2, or the "Emotion of a String Duet". This phrase is also used to describe amity between older and younger siblings, as in the poem.

# 外受傅训，入奉母议。

wai4 shou4 fu4 xun4, ru4 feng4 mu3 yi2

Outside, as teacher said you ought; at home, the rules your mother taught!

Notes: The story is told that Mencius, when a boy, often skipped class and neglected his books. His industrious mother, as a lesson, cut the work off the shuttle of her busy loom and held the torn and useless half-woven cloth up before her idle son's eyes, to show him that an untrained mind was just like that wasted cloth. Mencius got the lesson, applied himself to his books and mastered the difficult readings.

诸姑伯叔，犹子比儿。

zhu1 gu1 bo2 shu1, you2 zi(3) bi3 er2

To each uncle and every aunt; as if you'd been their own infant.

Notes: The family has its own hierarchy in speech; between parents and children, between elder and younger. Mencius (Li2 Lou2) said "re2 ren2 qin1 qi2 qin1, zhang3 qi2 zhang3, er2 tian1 xia4 ping2; "If children spoke properly to parents, and younger to elder, there would be peace in the world". This was one of the conditions of behavior between different members of a family that the traditional Chinese insisted on. These lines tell one to behave filially toward parents' siblings, although only father's side is mentioned and was indeed more important in old China, and vice versa.

孔怀兄弟，同气连枝。

kong3 huai2 xiong1 di4, tong2 qi4 lian2 zhi1

Brothers cherish each other; united in the blood they share.

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Notes: Kong3, here means "very". The Tang poet Wang2 Wei2 wrote:

"A stranger all alone in a strange town,  
I think of kin when festivals come round;  
For brothers' news I rise to a high place,  
And everywhere see banquets' empty space."

This deeply moving poem has become very famous.

# 交友投分，切磨箴規。

jiāo1 yǒu3 tóu2 fēn4, qiē4 mó2 zhēn1 guī1

In friendship each must do their share; "Qie mo!" the warning to beware.

Notes: Guan1 Zhu3, a scholar official of the Three Kingdoms Wei Dynasty, also known as the Cao2 Wei4 related an anecdote about his studying with a friend named Hua2 Xin1, who left his place at the books to get up and look dreamily out the window at a passing fancy chariot. "ru2 qiē4 ru2 zuo4, ru2 zhuo4 ru2 mo2!" shouted Guan Zhu to his errant friend, famously cutting away his empty part of the straw sitting mat. It is short for "Ru2 qiē4 ru2 mo2" as encountered above in this chapter, a phrase about polishing and refining oneself from the Shi Jing, quoted in the Great Learning. This was a warning and an admonition to get back to their common purpose or forget their friendship. "Don't let your mind wander".

# 仁慈隱惻，造次弗離。

ren2 ci2 yin3 ce4, zao4 ci4 fu2 li2

Kindness, mercy, sympathy; Don't leave these in emergency.

Notes: No matter what the personal danger or need for expediency that might be involved, don't leave behind your feelings of loving kindness and benevolence, mercy and pity; don't be coldly expedient. In old China, people said bu2 yao4 zao4 ci4, "Don't be rushed," or "Haste makes waste". Even in the most pressing of circumstances, don't fail to respect the basic moral rules.

# 節義廉退，顛沛匪虧。

jie2 yi4 lian2 tui4, dian1 pei4 fei3 kui1

Righteous, just, honest, retiring; though in failure, never lacking.

Notes: A person must be qi jie2, prudent and righteous, zheng4 yi4, upright and just, lian2 jie2, honest and pure, and modest and deferential; even in failure and utter poverty he can never be remiss in honoring and fulfilling these requirements. Analects (Li Ren) says: jun2 zi3 wu2 zhong1 shi2 zhi1 jian1 li3 ren2; zao4 ci4 bi4 yu2 shi4, dian1 pei4 bi4 yu2 shi4 "The high-minded person doesn't leave benevolence long enough to finish a bowl of rice. In danger and haste he honors it; in failure and poverty, he honors it."

# 性靜情逸，心動神疲。

xing4 jing4 qing2 yi4, xin1 dong4 shen2 pi2

Nature settled, feelings mild; heart aroused, the spirit tired.

Notes: In modern Chinese, Xing4 jing4 qing2 yi4 means "a quiet and easy disposition"; here, xing4 jing4 refers to the nature being regulated by and anchored to the various moral requirements; benevolence, righteousness, justness, trust, learning, shame, honesty, thrift, etc. Arousal of the heart here refers to the arousal of interest in an external object; a person or a thing. When such a refined person is aroused, the inner spirit gets tired and weary from struggling to limit the drive and protect the mind.

# 守真志滿，逐物意移。

shou3 zhen1 zhi4 man3, zhu2 wu4 yi4 yi2

Keeping pure brings satisfaction; chasing things, the mind's distraction.

Notes: Preserving one's pure, heaven-sent original nature is the way to achieve true satisfaction; pursuing material things and sensual pleasures will change, corrupt that original nature. Zhen1 refers to one's heaven-sent pure original nature. The Book of Rites says (in the Book of Music): "A person is born contented; that is the way of heaven. Feelings arise about objects and the urge to actions, and these are the desires of that nature (also, literally sexual desires)... (one who) pursues evil without self

regulation, mind lured to distraction and unable to resist, will be destroyed by the principles of heaven".

# 坚持雅操，好爵自縻。

jian1 chi2 ya3 cao1, hao3 jue2 zi4 mi2

Hold fast to your high sentiments; a fine position will come from this.

Notes; Ya3 cao1: your excellent morally cultivated sensibilities, highest sentiments and virtuous behavior from your training. jue2 is an official post; mi2 here means "will follow, belong to, come/result from". This concludes the third, and longest, chapter of the of the Qian Zi Wen, which discusses the ways of cultivation of the high-minded, or junzi, making friends, conducting family life, and serving one's ruler.

## Chapter 4

# 都邑华夏，东西二京。

du1 yi4 hua2 xia4, dong1 xi1 er4 jing1

Ancient capitals, gorgeous and grand; East, Luoyang, and West, Chang'an.

Notes: The order follows that of the four directions, (East before West,) not historical sequence. Chang'an chang2 an1, (the apostrophe shows that it is \*chang an\* and not \*chan gan\*), now Xi'an in Shaanxi shan3 xi1 Province and known in history as the Han "xi1 jing1," or "Western Capital", was established as capital by Emperor Gao Zu, (WG Kao Tsu) named Liu2 Bang1, the dynastic founder of the Western, or Former Han Dynasty in 206 BC. Luoyang, now in Henan Province and still known as such, was established as "dong1 jing1" or "Eastern Capital" by Liu2 Xiu1, Emperor Guang Di, (WG Kuang Ti) when he founded the Eastern, or Later Han over two centuries later in 25 AD. These were thus the two capitals of China during the glorious Han Dynasty. The capital in Zhou Xingsi's time, at the writing of this work during the Southern Dynasties' Liang, (sometimes called xiao1 liang2 after the real name of founder Liang Wu Di, Xiao1 Yan3), was Jian4 Kang1, site of present day Nanjing, Jiangsu Province. Zhang1 Heng2 of the Eastern Han left us a literary work of interest called Er4 Jing1 Zei2, about the two capitals. Dongjing was also the name of other Chinese dynastic capitals; in the Northern Song, Kaifeng and in the alien Jin and Liao, Liaoyang. The Jin "Xijing" was Datong. Dongjing is of course what the Japanese in modern times began calling their Edo Bakufu's capital: Tokyo.

背邙面洛，浮渭据泾。

bei4 mang2 mian4 luo4, fu2 wei4 ju4 jing1

In back Mount Mang, front, River Luo; straddles Rivers Wei and Jing.

Notes: To Luoyang's north (back) is Mount Mang; the city faces (fronts on) the River Luo. Thus it is literally "Luo4 Yang2," or "North of Luo," as the North bank of a river in China is the yang2. or sunlit side. Similarly, the south side of a mountain is its yang2 side,

respectively. A saying goes: "shan1 yang2, nan2; he2 yang2, bei3" literally, "Mountain Yang South, River Yang North". Chang'an stretches between the Rivers Wei and Jing. The Jing is a tributary of the Wei, and the Wei in its turn is a tributary of the great Yangzi.

# 宮殿盤郁，樓觀飛驚。

gong1 dian4 pan2 yu4, lou2 guan1 fei1 jing1

A swirl of palaces unwinding; view from buildings, fright from flying!

Notes: Palace after palace, winding around endlessly; views from the towering buildings high enough to frighten one as if in flight. These lines describe the awesome splendor of the buildings of these two capitals.

# 圖寫禽獸，畫彩仙靈。

tu2 xie3 qin2 shou4, hua4 cai3 xian1 ling2

Depictions of the birds and beasts; painted fairies and spirits.

Notes: Engraved, drawn or painted decorations, icons and murals on the walls, structural beams and rafters etc of ancient palaces, temples and official buildings were commonly depictions of dragons, phoenixes, white tigers, storks and other marvelous, often legendary creatures. Also present were color paintings portraying gods, fairies, spirits, humans, and legendary figures

and scenes, decorating walls, pillars, the insides of flying eaves etc.

# 丙舍傍启, 甲帐对楹。

bing3 she4 bang4 qi3, jia3 zhang4 dui4 ying2

Third Quarters' curtains open wide, fine drapes on pillars to the side.

Notes: The bing3 she4, literally "Third, or C-class, dormitory" was the unit of rooms where the imperial concubines lived, its entrance at the front of the main palace. Its entrance curtains open outward, fine tapestried drapes bunched against two handsome vermilion pillars at the sides. An account in the Han Wu3 Gu4 Shi4, "Stories from Han Wu Di's Reign" (Eastern Han), cited in the Huaxia reader by Xu and others, says that "Han Wu Di used pearl and jade-inlaid fine drapery; inside, incense was offered to the statue(s) of god(s)." This, according to illustration in the little reader probably meant an incense altar with a heavy, ornate tripod and vessel full of ashes in which the sticks were placed, and an elaborate table with food offerings before the likeness(es).

# 肆筵设席, 鼓瑟吹笙。

si4 yan2 she4 xi2, gu3 se4 chui1 sheng1

Throwing banquets, lavish settings; playing flutes, percussion, strings.

Notes: In the palace they indulged in entertainment with endless places set, with musicians playing drums and chimes, the long Chinese zither, and pipes. "Singers, long-sleeved dancers and musicians performed in pleasant weather and cold," a late Tang observer, the sharply satirical poet Du4 Mu4 wrote in a1 fang2 gong1 zei2, cited in the Huaxia reader.

升阶纳陛，弁转疑星。

sheng4 jie4 na4 bi4, bian4 zhuan4 yi2 xing1

Ascending stairs, to Emperor; hats awhirl, as if the stars.

Notes: The two classes of officials, wen2 and wu3, civil and military, mount the stairs to the platform of Heaven, to be admitted to the Emperor's presence. The many hats indicate the presence of so many black ceremonial hats, sparkling like all of the stars in the night sky as they bob and turn. Just as in ancient Rome, the outstanding men and women of the day would become stars in the night sky after death; truly luminaries. "As many as the twinkling bright stars are the vanity mirrors," Du wrote, (cited above); he meant the myriad concubines and courtesans, with plots and tricks and tricks to match. The Doctrine of the Mean (Chapter 26) uses the image of the stars strung across the night sky to convey the the infiniteness yet integrity of creation.

右通广内，左达承明。

you4 tong1 guang3 nei4, zuo3 da2 cheng2 ming2

Right leads to the library, left, the scholars' dormitory.

Notes: guang3 nei4, literally the "wide sanctum" referred to the Imperial library; cheng2 ming2 The name of a Han period palace for high officials, literally "riders of brightness," "illuminaries," etc; their study and rest quarters. Here we have progressed from the main palace to other palatial quarters; the inner library collections and the outer stacks and quarters for scholars, ministers of state and generals. The ostentatious and excessive buildings and surroundings probably seemed quite natural to them.

# 既集坟典，亦聚群英。

ji4 ji2 fen2 dian3, yi4 ju4 qun2 ying1

The legendary Fen2 and Dian3; stacks for use by famous men.

Notes: fen dian refers to the san fen and wu dian, legendary books of early antiquity, the san fen dealing with Fu Xi, Shen Nong and the Yellow Emperor with a treatise on the Great Way, passed along in the Kong Anguo Shang4 Shu1, the Book of History ; both are mentioned in the Zuo Zhuan. Marvelous and rare books were kept in the inner sanctum or Guang Nei of the library building, for use by Court personel, high ministers and their guests; closer to the outside were the stacks and facilities accessible to all officials and scholars. Qun Ying is a phrase still used in today's Chinese official press, meaning "young lions" or "the brave and bold", those idealistic ones, particularly youth, who are eager to serve.

# 杜稿钟隶，漆书壁经。

du4 gao3 zhong1 li4, qi1 shu1 bi4 jing1

Du's cursive script and Zhong's print style, lacquer books, classics from wall.

Notes: Rough drafts were often written in cursive hand, or cao xie, so works of calligraphy in this style are often referred to as Gao3, or drafts. Du4 Du4 of Han Zhang Di's reign (76-89 AD) was famed for his beautiful cursive characters, referred to in these lines. Likewise, Zhong1 You2 of the Three Kingdoms' (Cao) Wei Dynasty was famed for his li4 shu1, or, clerical style of calligraphy. A bit late for the Eastern Han but the succeeding Cao Wei's capital was Luoyang, too (220-265 AD). Qi1 Shu1 were the ancient books comprised of bamboo slips strung together, with characters brushed on in lacquer. The bi4 jing1 were the famous lost works of Confucius in ancient characters recovered by the fifth son of Han Jing Di, invested as the King of Lu, known as Lu3 Gong1 Wang2 around 150 BC from inside a broken-down wall at the Sage's former home in Qufu, Shandong, over three hundred years after his death. The king was demolishing Confucius' old house for an expansion of his palace when the discovery was made. The works included the old character text of the Book of History, Book of Poems, Classic of Filial Piety and others.

府羅將相，路俠槐卿。

fu3 luo2 jiang4 xiang4, lu4 jia2 huai2 qing1

Palace generals and ministers parade; on road outside the ones of lesser grade.

Notes: From inside the palace the top civil and military leadership parade out in two parallel lines, through a gauntlet of the various lower ranking palace officials flanking the path. Jiang4 xiang1,

generals and ministers of state, means the top court officials, civil and military; huai<sup>2</sup> qing<sup>1</sup>, two official classifications, refer to all the lower court officials. In many places in eastern Asia today, graduating students leave school after commencement down a walkway lined on both sides by their applauding classmates from the lower grades.

# 戶封八县，家给千兵。

hu<sup>4</sup> feng<sup>1</sup> ba<sup>1</sup> xian<sup>4</sup>, jia<sup>1</sup> ji<sup>3</sup> qian<sup>1</sup> bing<sup>1</sup>

Each household granted eight counties; each family, a thousand troops.

Notes: feng, (originally, to plant a ceremonial spear into the earth; (bestow a credential in function like the Roman fasces) to grant a feudal title and empowerment, the right to build a fortified capital, maintain over 1,000 armed troops, and take in the harvests of the land and people shi<sup>2</sup> yi<sup>4</sup> to members of the royal family or distinguished ministers, officers etc. In its ideal form the subjects, able-bodied men ding<sup>1</sup> and women kou<sup>3</sup>, were highly organized into basic agricultural units, five hu<sup>4</sup> or households to alin<sup>2</sup> or neighborhood, block, barracks in a sense; five lin<sup>2</sup> to a li<sup>3</sup>, or village, and 500 li<sup>3</sup>, or 12,500 households in turn organized into a xiang<sup>1</sup>, or "district", more or less comprising a xian<sup>4</sup> (county, as above) in those times, receiving some of their basic needs from the local king. A typical grant of eight counties would thus have ideally comprised about 100,000 subjects. This complete feudal society began with the early Zhou, around 1100 BC. The Book of Poems tells us qi<sup>1</sup> yue<sup>4</sup> liu<sup>2</sup> huo, ba<sup>1</sup> yue<sup>4</sup> shou<sup>4</sup> yi<sup>1</sup>, "In the seventh month the fire\* floats by, in the eighth month we receive our clothes"; it touchingly portrays how the lowest subjects passed a an entire year in the Zhou society under idealized conditions. Such a ruler would be granted the right to the harvest

and other duties and services, and to muster and keep men under arms. The eight counties were each administered for the feudal lord by a sub-invested xian4 zheng4, or magistrate. Qin Shi Huang Di did away with this system and established a more centralized rule over counties (xian) and sub-counties (jun) but the Han obliterated all traces of that and returned to the Zhou system of xian4 counties but with stronger centralized Imperial rule for the better part. Feudal grants and titles continued, though, into modern times. In Qin and Han times, an official called a Xian4 ling4 (counties over 10,000 households) or a Xian4 zhang3 (smaller counties) was appointed to administer the areas.

\*Movements of fireflies, shooting stars, (Pursed meteor showers) or huo3 xing1 the planet Mars; perhaps all three. This would be late August or September. Imagine the star-studded black sky that the Zhou people transcendently and abstractly worshipped, with its infinite twinkling bodies viewed from the darkened full fields, ready for harvesting, with myriad fireflies dancing, leaving their traces in the crisp late summer nights and meteorites similarly racing and vanishing overhead. The movement of Mars crossing overhead would indicate the approach of harvest time.

# 高冠陪犇，驱轂振纓。

gao1 guan1 pei2 nian3, qu1 gu3 zhen4 ying1

High hats pace Son of Heaven's chariot; fast driving blows their ribbons all about.

Notes: Wearing their tall ceremonial hats, the feudal lords escort the imperial chariot on a pleasure drive; they drive their teams fast enough to set the long ribbon trim on their hats fluttering back in the resulting wind. Driving was an activity that the ancient

Chinese, including Confucius, felt was well suited to a high-minded, refined and gentlemanly ruler.

# 世祿侈富，車駕肥輕。

shi4 lu4 chi3 fu4, che1 jia4 fei2 qing1

Inheriting excessive wealth and ease; they drive fat horses anytime they please.

Notes: The offspring of these feudal grant receivers were a hereditary aristocracy, entitled by law to fat emoluments. According to the the Book of History, cited in the Huaxia reader, "shi4 lu4 zhi1 jia1, xian2 ke4 you(3) li3": "Among the entitled families, few had any manners or knew the rites". This early source shows that the elaborate practice of recorded hereditary privilege and grants was already in place in Shang times, 1600-1100 BC, before the Zhou. History records that Han Gao Zu invested his minister Cao2 Shen1 as Ping2 Yang2 Hou2, Viscount of Pingyang, a hereditary grant including the grant lands as well as his government post.

# 策攻茂實，勒碑刻銘。

ce4 gong1 mao4 shi2, le4 bei1 ke4 ming2

Wrote scrolls of glories and abundant facts; carved on stones their famous names and acts.

Notes: The Zhou imperial court kept assiduous records of the feudal kings' virtuous acts and glorious achievements on bamboo slips strung together into scrolled books, and ordered their names and deeds carved into stone monuments they erected. ce4 and le4 are verbal, the former meaning "to record on bamboo slips," and the later, "to carve".

# 磻溪伊尹，佐時阿衡。

pan2 xi1 yi1 yin3, zuo3 shi2 a1 heng2

Pan Creek, the place, Yi Yin, the man; assisting as Prime Minister.

Notes: The Pan is a river southeast of Baoji City in Shaanxi Province, where, legend goes, Jiang1 Tai4 Gong1 Lv3 Shang4 was fishing when befriended by Zhou Wuwang. He became Wuwang's close political and military advisor and was entrusted with many important decisions and responsibilities, such as in the destruction of wicked last King Zhou4's Yin-Shang and establishment of the Zhou rule over all the states. zuo2 is "assist"; shi2 is an elliptical form of shi2 zheng4, meaning the governmental decisionmaking and administrative issues of the time. Yi1 Yin2 was in much earlier times discovered by Shang1-Tang1 and dubbed A1 Heng2, from that time on another name for Prime Minister. He similarly advised in the campaign to punish Xia's bad king Jie2, end the Xia and found the Shang. Both aided in making decisions on problems of the day and were relied on in important matters of state. The recruitment of talented and good men, in these early times a simple and idyllic matter of chance meeting, later became a central issue in Chinese civilization.

# 奄宅曲阜，微旦孰營。

yan3 zhai2 qu3 fu4, wei1 dan4 shu2 ying2

Yan's earth, Qufu; less Dan4, who would do?

Notes: Yan was a very ancient state's name, east of Qufu, Shandong. It was later to become the state of Lu3 and the birthplace of Confucius. Dan4 was the Duke of Zhou, surname Ji1, given name Dan4, a brother of Zhou Wu Wang, Ji1 Fa1. Wei1 here means "without," and shu2 is "who," or "where" like the modern Chinese shui2 or na2. Not long after he destroyed the Shang, Zhou Wu Wang died of illness, and out of four younger brothers Zhou1 Gong1 Dan4, the Duke of Zhou, Dan4, assisted his younger brother, still a child, who had become wen2 wang2, the great King Wen, in building and stabilizing the Zhou state. "Where would we have been in the Qufu campaign without the Duke of Zhou? Without Dan, then who"?

# 桓公匡合，濟弱扶傾。

huan2 gong1 kuang1 he2, ji4 ruo4 fu2 qing1

The Duke of Huan brought all in line; helped those weak and in decline.

Notes: Qi's leader Huan Gong assembled his feudal lords and their forces nine times to aid weaker and endangered states. With Guan1 Zhong4 as Prime Minister, he followed a policy of internal strength and external alliances to great advantage, becoming the first of the Zhou hegemons, or ba4. This is

discussed in the Wen De section of Analects. His armed forces came to the aid of the small states yan4 and wei4 when they were endangered by alien tribes, the Rong and Di.

綺回漢惠，說感武丁。

qi3 hui2 han4 hui4, yue(3) gan(3) wu3 ding4

Qi returned to aid Han Hui; Delight affected Shang's Wu Ding.

Notes: is Qi3 Ji4li3, one of the "Four Hermits of Shangshan" or "shang1 shan1 si4 hao4". With white hair and beards they came down from their isolation to aid Han Hui Di when, as Crown Prince, he was challenged for the throne by another son of the late Gao Zu. Wu Ding was a Shang king who, legend says, dreamt of a perfectly cultivated minister and was deeply affected, moved to drawing the man of his dream in a picture and then tiring himself out in a search for that ideal official, Fu4 Yue3, same Yue as above.

俊乂密勿，多士寔宁。

jun4 yi4 mi4 wu4, duo shi4 shi2 ning2.

The best and brightest work diligently; so many fine men, this tranquility!

Notes: These lines refer to the selfless duty, sacrifice and even death in obscurity of the best and most talented officials, civil and military, on which the empire's strength, prosperity and tranquility

rested. In old China, the most talented individuals were styled jun4, the brilliant and beautiful, the "one in a thousand"; next came the yi, the best and brightest, the "one in a hundred".

# 晋楚更霸，赵魏困横。

jin4 chu3 geng1 ba4, zhao4 wei4 kun4 heng2

Jin, Chu, next hegemonists; Zhao, Wei troubled by Axis.

Notes: In the Warring States Period, Su1 Qin2 proposed a coalition of six states against Qin, and this was known as the he2 cong2 or "Alliance", noted for the hegemonic stands of Jin and Chu; Zhang1 Yi4 advocated a pro-Qin group which historians call the lian2 heng2 or "Axis", in which each would resist Qin on their own. After the lian heng was created, the states of Zhao and Wei began to feel the pressure from Qin's first onslaughts.

# 假途灭虢，践土会盟。

jia3 tu2 mie4 guo2, jian4 tu3 hui4 meng2

Stole a march, wiped out Guo; occupied, made a pact.

Notes: Jin's Duke Xian4 used the state of Lu2's territory to march through on his way to annihilating the small country of Guo. On their way back, his troops returned the favor by eliminating their host country as well. Another Jin ruler, Duke Wen, held a meeting on the soil of neighboring Zheng, after defeating Chu at the battle of Cheng2 pu2, and met with all the feudal lords there, forging an alliance. These accounts from the Zuo Zhuan (one version of the

Spring and Autumn Annals) compare evil and moral behavior on the part of kings.

# 何遵约法，韩弊烦刑。

he2 zun1 yue1 fa3, han2 bi4 fan2 xing2

Xiao He valued simple laws; Han was framed and suffered torts.

Notes: Xiao He was Han Gao Zu's Prime Minister. Soon after the establishment of the Han, Gao Zu discarded Qin's complicated legal code and had Xiao He draft a new and simplified code of laws, based on the traditional "Nine Articles," to suit needs of the new times. Earlier, the original innovator and advocate of Qin's system, the famous Legalist philosopher Han Fei, was wrongly accused by enemies and, ironically, died during harsh punishment under his own retributive code.

# 起翦颇牧，用军最精。

qi(3) jian3 po1 mu4, yong4 jun1 zui4 jing1

Qi, Jian, Po and Mu; in use of armies, most refined.

Notes: Qin's generals Bai Qi and Wang Jian, and Zhao's generals Lian Po and Li Mu were in antiquity the most respected of all for their prowess as military commanders. Note again the practice of referring to officials intimately by their first name, very commonly seen in Chinese documents down to recent times in traditional China. For example, in the 19th century Qing court documents

we can see Zeng Guofan's Xiang Army referred to as "Guo's forces".

# 宣威沙漠，馳譽丹青。

xuan1 wei1 sha1 mo4, chi2 yu4 dan1 qing1

Spread of name to deserts far; passed down fame in portraiture.

Notes: sha1 mo4, desert, refers to the far flung deserts and remote border areas of China in general. The former dynasties of China maintained memorial halls with paintings of illustrious past officials, such as the Tang's ling2 yan ge2; the practice might have begun in the Warring States Period, 403-222 BC.

# 九州禹迹，百郡秦并。

jiu3 zhou1 yu3 ji4, bai3 jun4 qin2 bing4

Old Nine States with Yu's tracks in; the Hundred Districts, joined by Qin.

Notes: Yu the Great left his footprints in the form of water control works all over the ancient jiu3 zhou1 or "Nine States", also a name for China. These were the districts of very early China: Yi1, Yu4, Yong1, Yang2, Yan3, Xu2, Liang2, Qing1 and Jing1. The Japanese much later named their southernmost home island Kyushyu after it. The bai3 jun4 or "Hundred Districts" here is also an expression for China. Qin unified the land into 36 big districts; Han later discarded this system and used 103 jun4, or Districts.

# 岳宗泰岱，禪主云亭。

yue4 zong1 tai4 dai4, chan2 zhu3 yun2 ting2

Peak most worshipped, Great Taishan; Chan conducted on Yun and Ting.

Notes: Of the five sacred mountains, the one of the East, called variously by the common term Tai Shan or the more religious Dai Yue or Dai Zong, in Shandong Province, is the most important and the place where the feng4 ceremony is held at the summit, in which an emperor sacrifices to heaven and consecrates or reconsecrates the dynasty. Rulers sacrificed to earth in the chan2 ceremony, conducted at the foot of the mountain on two smaller peaks, Yun (Yunyunshan, in southeastern Taian County, Shandong, considered part of Taishan's range), and Ting (Tingshan in southwestern Zhangqiu County, Shandong). The other holy mountains of China are Mt Hua in the West, Mt Heng in the South, Mt Heng (different character) in the North, and Mt Song at the center.

# 雁門紫塞，鷄田赤城。

yan4 men2 zi3 sai4, ji1 tian2 chi4 cheng2

Mt Yanmen Pass, purple Great Wall; Jitian station, Chicheng's vault.

Notes: Mt Yanmen, meaning "Goosegate," is in the northwest part of modern Shanxi Province; Yanmen Pass is formed by the

saddle between its peaks. It is the home of the family of eternal supernatural foxes in the long version of the novel Ping2 Yao1 Zhuan4 and is cited here as an example of a famous scenic mountain pass. There are also districts, counties, towns, and at least one river by this name. Zi3 sai4, "purple wall," is another word for the Great Wall, what the Chinese call the Wanli Changcheng, 10,000 li Great Wall. Another such old name is the xuan2 sai4 or "black wall" with the additional meaning of dark spirits, ghosts etc as are indeed associated with it. Jitian must have been well known in Zhou Xingsi's day as a relay and refreshment station for the mails and travelers, but today it is chiefly known for its inclusion in this line; that is the first definition in the old Ci Hai. It is recorded there as a district name in Hebei and Ningxia. According to our new Chinese little reader, it was a relay station in today's Hebei Province. Chicheng, the "Redwall," is a mountain in the Tian1 Tai2 range of Zhejiang, of great religious significance in East Asian Buddhism as the tian1 tai2 zong1 Tiantai Zong (in Japanese, Tendai Shyu,) denomination was founded there by Zhi3 Yi4, 538-597 AD, shortly after Zhou Jingsi's lifetime. The early Japanese worshipped mountains too, before Buddhism's introduction and after, and gave this name, Chicheng, pronounced Akagi in Japanese, to a mountain in central Honshyu (Gunma Prefecture) near Tokyo.

# 昆池碣石, 鉅野洞庭。

kun1 chi2 jie2 shi2, ju4 ye3 dong4 ting2

Kunming Pond, Tablet Rock; Juye Swamp, Lake Dongting.

Notes: Kunchi is apparently not Yunan's famed Kunming Lake, but rather Han Emperor Wu Di's privately dug imitation in the northwest of Changsha County, Shaanxi Province, a once-splended pool, now dried up. In Zhou Xingsi's day it was still

noteworthy. It is also known as the dian<sup>1</sup> chi<sup>2</sup>, named after the Yunan (Dian) original. Tablet Rock or Jieshi is a peak northwest of Changli, Funing County in northeastern Hebei Province. From this vantage point one can see the Bohai, or Gulf of Zhili. Funing is one of the "Four Counties" of greater Qinhuangdao, China's northernmost ice-free port, with the famed "First Pass Under Heaven" at Shanhaiguan and the Beidaihe seashore resort. In Ming times, a thousand years after Zhou Xingsi's passing, the Great Wall fortification system was extended throughout this area at tremendous cost, in defense against the Nvzhen and other nomadic peoples, and, in the Wanli era, in 1592 AD, in expectation of an invasion by the Japanese warlord Hideyoshi Toyotomi that was eventually stopped short in Korea. Hideyoshi brought great suffering to the Korean people and helped bring on the financial bankruptcy of the Ming. Today, the Jiaoshan Great Wall in Qinhuangdao probably gives the grandest Bohai panorama of all. Juye refers to an Everglades-like swamp formerly in Juye County, eastern Shandong. This is in North China, but in Zhou Xingsi's day it might have been warmer than now; the famed Cao Cao is said to have grown oranges at Loyang, Henan. At any rate, the huge swamp dried out during the subsequent ages, perhaps from a combination of climate change and human activities. Lastly, if it's lakes that you fancy, take a look at Lake Dongting in Hunan, one of China's most famous bodies of water and a world famous tourist attraction.

旷远绵邈，岩岫杳冥。

kuang<sup>4</sup> yuan<sup>3</sup> mian<sup>2</sup> miao<sup>3</sup>, yan<sup>2</sup> xiu<sup>4</sup> yao<sup>3</sup> ming<sup>2</sup>

Rivers flowing without end, boundless lakes and seas; tall rocks in caves so dark and deep, climate as you please.

Notes: More on the infinite and profound beauty of China, its waters, earth and climate. This concludes Chapter Four of the Qian Zi Wen, which progressed from cultural to physical geography.

## Chapter 5

治本于农，务兹稼穡。

zhi4 ben3 yu2 nong2, wu4 zi1 jia4 se4

Government is based on farming; mind the yearly sowing, reaping!

Notes: Wu4 means "apply yourself diligently" to something, "mind" something etc. Zi means not only "this" but "this year's" as well; really a mot just on Zhou Xingsi's part, revealing his elegant and economical powers of expression. The Chinese of former times were chiefly concerned with agriculture, as we see from the lunar calendar. Wu2 Jing4 of the Tang said: "In all matters, we must all apply ourselves to the foundations. The people are the foundation of the country; clothing and food are the foundation of the people". (Zhengguan Zhengyao, cited in the Huaxia GB reader.)

俶栽南亩，我艺黍稷。

chu4 zai3 nan2 mu3, wo3 yi4 shu3 ji4

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I start the year down in the southern field; there I cultivate the season's yield.

Notes: The Book of Poems says (in the Xiao Ya, Da Tian): "With my keen plow I start the year down in the southern field; the grains I've sown will be so vast and very tall in yield". shu3 ji4, millet and sorghum here refer to grain product in general.

# 稅熟貢新，勸賞黜陟。

shui4 shou2 gong4 xin1, quan4 shang3 chu4 zhi4

For tax they bring the fresh and new; reward or punishment is due.

Notes: shou4 and gong4 both refer to payment of tax in grain. At its worst, the common people were robbed yearly at knifepoint, at idyllic best with a good prince they had their needs taken care of throughout the year in return for their grain. In the Eastern Han this changed with the stronger central authority and the appointment by Han Jing Di of Chao2 Cuo4, 200-154 BC, to high office at court. Chao strengthened the farmers and tradespeople at the expense of the feudal lords (Zhu3 Hou2) and their old kingdoms. The central state's tax collectors took the grain where they could and invested industrious farmers with titles and estates at the expense of the establish feudal interests. He began cutting back severely on the Zhu3 Hou2 and their lands, and encouraged population to move toward the frontier under central government rule in fortified settlements, as a policy against the invading Huns. Finally, seven old feudatories led by Wu2 and Shu3 revolted; when Emperor Jing Di heard of it, he had Chao Cuo put to death.

# 孟軻敦素，史魚秉直。

meng4 ke1 dun1 su4, shi3 yu2 bing3 zhi2

Meng Ke was honest, deep and pure; Shi Yu always true and sure.

Notes: The sage Mencius famously said that the highminded adult should always be true to the "child inside them"; preserve the pure spirit of the child and never take leave of or adulterate one's natural-born pure goodness. (Mengzi, Li Lou, Xia). Shi Yu, or Shi Guanzi Yu of the state of Wei, was praised by Confucius for his uprightness, frankness, correctness and honesty; no matter what the situation, good or bad, whether treated kindly or abused, he would never lose his composure or compromise himself, remaining always "straight as an arrow". "Junzi he2 er2 bu4 liu2": the junzi is mild and agreeable but cannot be swayed from principle.

# 庶几中庸，劳谦谨敕。

shu4 ji1 zhong1 yong1, lao2 qian1 jin3 chi4

Approach the Moderated Mean; strive to be modest, on guard to be clean!

Notes: The Zhong1 Yong1 is the famous Doctrine of the Mean, here rendered as Moderated Mean. What is upright and uninfluenced is Zhong1, or "in the middle"; once affected, the resulting arousal is moderated, and that moderation process is Yong1. The behavior of a pendulum is a good analogy. The

family upbringing, education and moral refinement of an individual allow their various feelings to remain calm and unmoved if not appropriately activated, to be on guard against dangerous arousal, and to limit the resulting engagement of moved feelings appropriately. The common type runs against the Mean, courts danger in pursuit of pleasure or benefit; the highminded, princely person follows the Mean calmly, accepts things they cannot change and extends their life. The refined and highminded person must remain modest and humble, and guard their private moments and thoughts at all times. This enables a person to achieve cheng2, sincerity, to serve society and to share the unfailing regularity and integrity of heaven and earth, like the rules of physics that limit the pendulum. It can never be reached in completeness, like infinity; it is the ideal end of purity, control and integrity which men and women strive to approximate.

# 聆音察理，鑒貌辨色。

ling2 yin1 cha2 li3, jian4 mao4 bian4 se4

Examine the tone and reasoning too; consider the face, how it changes hue.

Notes: In Analects, (Xue Er, One) Confucius said: Qiao3 yan2 ling4 se4, xian(3) yi3 ren2, meaning that "clever words and a charming smile are rarely a sign of kindness". When listening, be careful to distinguish truth from falsehood; carefully examine the voice and the see if the words spoken make sense, and, as the Chinese people have long said, "cha2 yan2 guan1 se4" or "look at the color" of a person's face carefully.

# 貽厥嘉猷，勉其祗植。

yi2 jue2 jia1 you2, mian3 qi2 zhi1 zhi2

Pass down to others your fine principle; encourage them to carefully stand tall.

Notes: Transmit your life experience and moral principles to others, to help them avoid pitfalls in establishing themselves in the world. Confucius said in Analects (Shu Er) "san1 ren2 xing2, bi4 you<3> wo3 shi2": "Out of every three people, there must be one who can be my teacher".

# 省躬讥诫，宠增抗极。

xing3 gong1 ji1 jie4, chong3 zeng1 kang4 ji2

When stung by words, search soul for reason; don't be flattered into treason.

Notes: When receiving harsh words of criticism or warning, even disrespect, sincerely search your soul first for the reason. "Don't accuse the speaker but be warned by his words," goes a Chinese proverb. This notion once more of fan(3) xing3 or self-examination. When you are the subject of praise or flattery, don't get carried away and compromise your loyalties; don't indulge your pride and fall into words or acts of treason due to some sweet words. In old China one's entire family could be beheaded for treason; "mie4 men2 zhi1 huo4," the tragedy of collective family punishment.

# 殆辱近耻，林皋幸即。

dai4 ru3 jin4 chi3, lin2 gao1 xing4 ji2

Lurking scandal, looming shame; in joy move up to wood and stream.

Notes: When you sense the danger of a shameful affair or scandal about to occur, remove yourself to a high, wooded place near water. Laozi said that zhi1 zu3 bu4 ru3, zhi1 zhi3 bu4 dai4: "Those who know a limit don't bring shame; those who know when to stop stay out of danger".

# 两疏见机，解组谁逼。

liang3 shu1 jian4 ji1, jie(3) zu3 shei2 bi1

The brothers Shu saw trouble stem; turned in seals, who forced them?

Notes: The brothers Shu1 Guang3 and Shu1 Shou4 were court officials of Han Xuan Di's reign who received glowing praises after long, dedicated service; five years later the two famously used the pretext of age and infirmity, turned in their seals and retired to their home district. Later people have since said gong1 sui4 shen1 tui4, or, "Attack complete, self in retreat": Quit while you're ahead.

# 索居闲处， 沉默寂寥。

suo3 ju1 xian2 chu3, chen2 mo4 ji4 liao2

Alone reside in tranquil spot; speaking little, moving not.

Notes: The poet Tao Yuanming (372-427 AD) of the Eastern Jin Dynasty (317-420) was tired of involvement in officialdom and retired to the quiet fields and gardens, where he came to love the tranquility and silence. He wrote:

"Living in a grass hut in country,  
Happily resigned from luxury...  
In cottage at the limit of the town,  
Without a sound of cart or horse around".

Happily putting aside the luxuries of official quarters, he went off to a secluded and poor district to till the soil and enjoy a solitary and cloistered existence in purity.

# 求古寻论， 散虑逍遥。

qiu2 gu3 xun2 lun4, san4 lv4 xiao1 yao3

Ponder past words, research and write; dispel your cares, live in delight.

Notes: Lu You of the Song, who spent his later years in seclusion at shan yin, today's Shaoxing in Zhejiang Province, wrote:

"In bed I endlessly read Tao's rhymes  
Then in drizzle go to tend my vines."

That well describes the escape to tranquility in wistful pursuit of the ancients, and the charmingly delightful and idyllic existence that offers joy with everything before one's eyes.

欣奏累遣，戚谢欢招。

xin1 zou4 lei4 qian3, qi1 xie4 huan1 zhao1

Delights all gathered, drudge dispersed; worries gone, in joy immersed.

Notes: The Tang poet Wang Wei who himself withdrew to live as a recluse in Wangzhou, today's Lantian in Shaanxi Province, wrote:

"In old age seeking just tranquility  
Not a thing in this whole world to trouble me...  
An old man of the woods and I once met  
The chatting and the laughter goes on yet..."

This describes the incomparable joy to be found in the putting aside of worldly matters.

渠荷的历，园莽抽条。

qu2 he2 di2 li4, yuan2 mang3 chou1 tiao2

The beauty of the lotus pond; the garden plants, each stem and frond.

Notes: Now we turn to the beautiful scenes of Chinese gardens, which subtly represent the will of the cultivated person.

枇杷晚翠，梧桐蚤凋。

pi2 pa2 wan3 cui4, wu2 tong2 zao3 diao1

Loquat late in year still green, Firmiana fast to fall.

Notes: The Chinese are fond of using the signs of autumn in literature to represent the early passing of a person or life's sadness and ephemeral nature in general. The changes in trees and foliage, rains, migration of birds, and appearance of the sky are commonly used. The firmiana, wu2 tong2 in Chinese, is similar to the the paulownia with its large, heart-shaped leaves, and is often used in such imagery, especially to signify mourning or the onset of old age. The oak, a much different sort of tree, is similarly used by western writers as its leaves also whither and fall rather early. The famed poetess Li Qingzhao of the Song wrote:

All alone and somehow cast in black  
From wutong tree combined with misty rain  
A steady drizzle patters unto dusk  
Can words like sadness really say it all?

The flight of fowl such as geese or more exotic birds is often used as well in the autumnal sense.

# 陈根委翳，落叶飘飘。

chen2 gen1 wei3 yi4, luo4 ye4 piao1 yao2

Old trees bare or dead on ground; fallen leaves fly all around.

Notes: The Tang poet Du Fu wrote:

All around the fallen branches whistle to the ground  
In the air we hear the distant Yangzi's gushing sound.

A rich and sweeping image, deep in meaning and rendered in very simple language.

# 游鷗独运，凌摩绛霄。

you2 kun1 du2 yun4, ling2 mo2 jiang4 xiao1

The roc flies off alone and high; skirts the red cloud in the sky.

Notes: The legendary giant bird of land and sea called the Kun1 Peng2 flies off on its own discretion, soaring high and drawing near to the auspicious red cloud hanging in the autumn sky. The clean and auspicious departure of the great; leaving at the height of one's fame. This concludes Chapter 5 of the Qian Zi Wen, which began with agriculture as the base of government, turned to the cultivation of official morality, spoke of the need for caution and foresight, of dealing with others, and finally got around to the ideal later life in rural seclusion, quiet and tranquility, and the individual's decline decline and death as a natural eventuality.

Chapter 6

# 耽读玩市，寓目囊箱。

dan1 du2 wan2 shi4, yu4 mu4 nang2 xiang1

Dizzy reading, lost in stacks; eyes on bookbags, shelves and racks.

Notes: As a young man, Wang2 Chong1 (27-97 AD) studied freely, literally and figuratively speaking, in the bookshops and stalls of the capital city Luoyang, standing and reading away the days and nights, neglecting to eat and sleep.

# 易輶攸畏，属耳垣墙。

yi4 you2 you1 wei4, shu(3) er3 yuan2 qiang2

Laxness is a thing to fear; the office wall affixed with ear.

Notes: According to the Guanzi, (attributed to Guan3 Zhong4, early legalist philosopher, ?-644 BC) "The walls have ears; there is always the peril of hidden plans leaking out to the world".

# 具膳餐饭，适口充肠。

ju4 shan4 can1 fan4, shi4 kou3 chong1 chang2

Prepare the meals, eat enough; the mouth to suit, the gut to stuff.

Notes: Analects (Xiang Dang Chapter) says "Grain satisfactorily fine, Meat sliced satisfactorily thin." The primary purpose of food is to nourish; everyone should eat their full. "Each type of grain has its own flavor; something for everybody to fill up with," wrote Wang Chong in his celebrated work Lun<sup>2</sup> Heng<sup>2</sup>.

# 饱饫烹宰，饥厌糟糠。

bao3 yu4 peng1 zai4, ji1 yan4 zao1 kang1

Gluttons gorged on boiled game; the hungry glad with coarsest grain.

Notes: Han Feizi (Wu Du Chapter) wrote "Those who cannot get enough coarse feed grain to fill their bellies shouldn't strive after meat and millet dishes".

# 亲戚故旧，老少异粮。

qin1 qi1 gu3 jiu4, lao3 shao4 yi4 liang2

With family and old friends there; old and young, different fare.

Notes: One feeds one's visiting family and friends, each according to age and rank and differently from one's own ordinary food. Cultivated people should go to great lengths and personal sacrifice to feed their guests properly with the maximum quantities and appropriate tasty dishes. Meng Haoran of the Tang wrote:

Old friends prepared a millet chicken dish  
Inviting me into their rural house.

And a poem by Du Fu goes:

In night and rain the spicy greens of spring,  
In blazing heat the millet gathering.

The "spicy greens" are *jiu3 cai4*, (Japanese nira, Korean puchu).

# 妾御績紡，侍巾帷房。

qie4 yu4 ji1 fang3, shi4 jin1 wei2 fang2

Junior wife, spinning thread; combs and towels, making bed.

Notes: Spinning thread, according to the little GB reader, refers to household chores in general; *shi4 jin1* is short for *shi4 zhi2 jin4 zhi4*, serve with towel and comb, i.e. wait on master and mistress hand and foot. The *wei2 fang2* is the curtained bedchamber of the husband and principal wife. Keeping a concubine in very ancient China was a privilege limited to the aristocracy, extending down to the *shi4* rank. According to the *Zuo Zhuan*, cited in the old *Ci Hai*, "By ancient custom, the Son of Heaven is entitled to nine women, a feudal king seven, a grand counselor one wife and two concubines, an ordinary official a wife and one

concubine, and commoners are allowed one wife for each man, one man for each woman". Zhou Xingsi wrote the Qian Zi Wen for a crown prince's benefit, so it speaks to this institution. Things had changed somewhat over the twelve turbulent centuries since the Spring and Autumn Period. Community norms in the fifth century AD varied; the Chinese have long said "when entering a village enquire about the norms and customs; when crossing a border, find out about the laws and prohibitions". The harmonious bond between husband and wife was only an ideal in many instances. A variation on the concubine/female slave theme was a qie2 ying2, or servant girl that a bride was allowed to bring along into a marriage to help with household chores and economic activity.

# 纨扇圆洁，银烛炜煌。

wan2 shan4 yuan2 jie2, yin2 zhu2 wei3 huang2

Silken fan like moon so bright; silver candleholders' light.

Notes: A probable typographical mistake in the reader: the character for purity jie2 as in the earlier zhen1 jie2 repeated when it should be a variant, pronounced xie2 and used in a comparative sense. yuan2 xie2 moon-like, dead literally circle-like. (The avoidance of redundancy in graphs is a main theme of this work.) How elegant the fan held by the refined lady, how bright the light of the fine silver candleholders. The exquisite personal accessories and the elegance of the private chamber. In Zhou Xingsi's day, a poem by his contemporary Jiang1 Yan1 (444-505 AD) entitled "Ban Jieyu's Fan" had similar language, cited in the reader:

"Silken fan like moon so round and big  
Cast out by simpleness amidst intrigue."

This sad poem refers to the story of the woman Ban Jieyu of Han Cheng Di's reign, a talented harem entertainment official brilliant at poetry and song, once the emperor's favorite, who was cast into disfavor and banished by jealous false accusations and trickery. She wrote of her pain in languorous verse.

# 昼眠夕寐，蓝笋象床。

zhou4 mian2 xi1 mei4, lan2 sun3 xiang4 chuang2

Snooze at noontime, sleep at night; bamboo on ivory bed is right.

Notes: The siesta at noon has long been a Chinese custom, no different from Zhou Xingsi's day. Nowadays, where practicable, it is ideally two hours long; employees resume work at 15:00. Schools, factories, and many other public institutions have quiet facilities for this rest. lan2 sun3 refers to the lattice mattress of green bamboo, commonly called a mie4 xi; xiang4 chuang2 refers to an elegant bedstead of carved ivory, again indicating the luxury and ostentaion of the bedchamber in former times.

# 弦歌酒宴，接杯举觞。

xian2 ge1 jiu3 yan4, jie1 bei1 ju3 shang1

Music, song, and tipling party, lift the winecups, drink up hearty!

Notes: The current fondness in China for drinking parties with musical and vocal accompaniment did not just start with the Karaoke craze from Japan; evidently this was a common

pastime of those who could afford it and their guests in Zhou Xingsi's time as well. Du Fu of the Tang later wrote:

The host says that I look like I'm in pain  
Lift the cup, ten full rounds again!  
Now still sober after those ten more  
I feel my mind is stronger than before.

Upon taking the cup in hand, one was expected to down ten cupfuls of wine in quick succession before putting it down again. People in former times commonly said "Human life is fifty years".

矫手顿足，悦豫且康。

jiào(3) shǒu(3) dùn(4) zú(2), yuè(4) yù(4) qiě(3) kāng(1)

Lift your hands and stomp your feet, happy, healthy, with the beat!

Notes: The Great Preface of the Book of Poems says "When words are not enough to say it all, unconsciously the hands then start to dance, the feet as well begin to rise and fall". Here, men are encouraged to abandon their inhibitions and shyness and dance to the rhythm. They would dance individually with their male party companions, as is still sometimes the case in relatively conservative Asian countries like Korea where modesty is highly valued.

嫡后嗣续，祭祀烝尝。

dí(2) hòu(4) sì(4) xù(4), jì(4) sì(4) zhēng(1) cháng(2)

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Main queen's sons continuing; winter, autumn worshipping

Notes: Only the sons of the principal wife, future queen in the case of Liang's crown prince, are legitimate offspring and can join in conducting the sacrificial ceremony of ancestor worship. Zheng1 and chang2 are the winter and autumn sacrifices, respectively. According to the Book of Rites (the surviving Xiao Dai Li Ji mentioned above, Wang Zhi chapter,) the ceremonies are yao4, spring; di4, summer; chang2, autumn, and zheng1, winter.

稽顙再拜，悚惧恐惶。

ji1 sang3 zai4 bai4, song3 ju4 kong3 huang2

Kneel and knock, again ground head; sincere respect, in grief and dread.

Notes: ji1 sang3 refers to a stage of kneeling worship from former times, when the forehead is knocked on the ground to show in utter sincerity to show grievous pain, reverence and fear before one's ancestors' spirits. The sage Xunzi wrote, cited in the little Huaxia GB reader, "when (the kneeling body is) bent forward horizontally, that is called bai4, or worship; when the head and torso start dropping, that is called ji1 shou3, and the grounding of the head is called ji1 sang3". Bai4 above refers to the entire process, to be repeated again.

笺牒简要，顾答审详。

jian1 die2 jian3 yao4, gu4 da2 shen3 xiang2

Your notes and letters brief, concise; replies detailed, thorough, wise.

Notes: In correspondence that you initiate, whether simple note or formal letter, stick to the essentials and be concise. In answering the enquiries of others, go into the necessary detail and cover all the aspects of the issue at hand in depth to the extent of your knowledge and wisdom. The Wenxue (literature) section of the classic shi4 shuo1 xin1 yu3 "The New Language of Today's World," says ci2 yue1 er3 zhi1 da2: "Words concise, point precise".

骸垢想浴，執熱愿涼。

hai2 gou4 xiang3 yu4, zhi2 re4 yuan4 liang2

Bones dirty, long for bathing pool; too hot to handle, wish for cool.

Notes: Here is a famous analogy between physical and mental hygiene. "Bones" of course means the body. Just as we wish for a bath to wash off dirt, we hope some cool breeze will cool off a hot thing in our hands or, by extension, thoughts that are "too hot to handle": to wash the mind of dirty thoughts. The highminded individual, man or woman, bathes in morality for the mind as well as water for the body. Wang Chong says in his Lun Heng (Ji Ri) to use a "washbasin to clean the hands, a tub to clean the body". Confucianists over the years have used this as a metaphor for keeping the mind clean: "yu4 de2," or, "bathing in virtue".

# 驴骡犊特，骇跃超骧。

lv2 luo2 du2 te4, hai4 yue4 chao1 xiang1

Donkey, mule, calf and bull; leaping, rearing, panic full.

Notes: This line should be read in context with the next. The setting is a close-knit agricultural society, a small village or hamlet. When a crime, fire, accident or disorder strikes a home, not only are the people's lives affected but those of their valuable animals too. When sensitive but dumb work animals and cattle suffer fright they can do damage or harm to themselves, each other or their masters, and their productivity suffers as well, causing loss to the family and community. This colorfully applies to domestic violence and dangerous "horsing around" as well, as the donkey has the same "jackass" connotation as in English.

# 诛斩贼盗，捕获叛亡。

zhu1 zhan3 zei2 dao4, bu3 huo4 pan4 wang2

Kill thieves and bandits, every one; arrest and try those on the run.

Notes: Stern advice to the young prince of Liang. Deal with crime severely: burglars, tricksters, highway robbers, lake and river pirates and the rest to be rounded up and dealt with harshly. Round them up, investigate, try them, kill the ones who are to die, punish the others by law. In traditional China in peaceful and prosperous times, the catching of a criminal suspect in the act would have been quite an event. The petty offender would suffer at the indignant hands of the community before being bound

over to the magistrate for brutal interrogation and official punishment, probably a caning and the cangue (public humiliation in a wooden head stock) with a lot more to come. This is the conclusion of Chapter 6 of the Qian Zi Wen, which discussed intellectual curiosity, eavesdropping, everyday domestic science and nutrition, entertainment, filial duties, written communications, morality, public security and criminal justice.

## Chapter 7

布射僚丸，嵇琴阮啸。

bu4 she4 liao2 wan2, ji1 qin2 ruan3 xiao4

Lv Bu's bow, Yi Liao's balls; Ji Kang's zither, Ruan Ji's calls.

Notes: Lv<sup>3</sup> Bu<sup>4</sup> who lived at the end of the Eastern Han was renowned for his skill at archery; Yi<sup>2</sup> Liao<sup>2</sup> of the Spring and Autumn Period was famed for juggling skills, being able to handle nine balls at once, one in hand and eight in mid air; Ji<sup>1</sup> Kang<sup>1</sup> of the Cao Wei was a virtuoso at the Qin, and his countryman Ruan<sup>3</sup> Ji<sup>2</sup> could not only play that instrument brilliantly but could pucker up his mouth as well and famously whistle loud and long.

恬笔伦纸，钧巧任钓。

tian2 bi3 lun2 zhi3, jun1 qiao3 ren4 diao4

Tian gave us brush, Lun, paper fine; Jun compass, wheels, Ren, hook and line.

Notes: Meng2 Tian2 of the Warring States' Qin is credited with the invention of the writing brush; Cai4 Lun2 of the Eastern Han invented papermaking; Ma3 Jun1 of the Three Kingdoms Shu devised and manufactured a compass-equipped cart and the irrigation waterwheel, and the legendary Ren4 Gong1zi3 discovered how to fish with pole, hook and line, as related in Zhuangzi where he is credited with catching a huge fish from the East China Sea by using a cow for bait; it seems that he simultaneously invented the fisherman's tale. Fittingly, "inflating a cow" is an old Chinese expression for exaggeration.

释纷利俗，并皆佳妙。

shi4 fen1 li4 su2, bing4 jie1 jia1 miao4

Peace and benefit to us; together all are marvelous.

Notes: Lv Bu used his longbow skills to pry apart the engaging armies of Yuan Shu and Liu Bei and create a truce during the Three Kingdoms, and Zhuangzi relates how Yi Liao once enthralled people with a merry demonstration of his juggling. The others brought people obvious practical benefits. The writing brush still sells well, and calligraphy is very popular all around the world. Even with computers in such wide use, more paper is being used today than ever, much of it fortunately recycled, and even today's most advanced ships and aircraft carry a basic magnetic compass device.

毛施淑姿，工顰妍笑。

mao2 shi1 shu2 zi1, gong1 pin2 yan2 xiao4

Mao and Shi, most beautiful; brows knit in pain, smile charming still.

Notes: The two legendary Chinese beauties of the Warring States period, Mao2 Qiang2 and Xi Shi. They appeared to have a charming smile even when knitting their brows in pain or displeasure; Xi Shi is famous for maintaining her beauty, poise and mysteriously alluring smile during her attacks of angina and while clutching her chest with a fatal infarction. The expression "Xi Shi feng shou," comes from those last moments of her life, her pose looking like a calm and humble gesture of offering with both hands. She has been an inspiration and model for untold millions of young Chinese girls, with the romance of her pure youth, washing clothes on her laundystone by a river in the mountainous wilds of ancient Sichuan.

年矢每催，曦暉朗曜。

nian2 shi3 mei2 cui1, xi1 hui1 lang2 yao4

The clock of years times out all lives; the blazing sun alone survives.

Notes: The shi3 here is the hour hand on a Chinese water clock, that floats up and down according to the level of water remaining in the device's chamber. The Chinese had these reliable timekeeping devices in antiquity as we can see from the metaphor here; the hour hand changed into an indicator of the years and months irretrievably passing, timing out the lives of all things except for our brilliant, glorious, everlasting sun. All of us slowly pushed toward the end with the passage of our allotted years and months.

# 璇玑悬幹，晦魄环照。

xuan2 ji1 xuan2 wo4, hui4 po4 huan2 zhao4

The Dipper turns suspended in the night; world bathed by last moon's pale and gloomy light.

Notes: The first Xuan2 and the ji1 above refer to the first four stars in the Big Dipper around which it turns, suspended. The Dipper, or Bei3 Dou4 had deep religious significance for the ancient Chinese, who believed it to be the location of the Palace of the Lord of the Pole Star, or Bei3 Dou4 Jun1 in the ancient Zhou sky. hui4 is the last moon of the lunar month, po4 is its pale cold light. The Chinese believed moonlight to be a form of latent Yin energy, the power driving the cold wet magic of earth; the moon is also thought of as a symbol of time and mortality, its cold light having shone on so many forgotten autumns, so many joys and tragedies, births and deaths, festivals and famines; possessed of secrets, intervening in the sleep of people, its beams clearing up puzzling dreams. The pale transparent light of that frozen disc pervades every nook and cranny of the darkened 5th century Central China plain, illuminating huts, earthen and brick walls and outbuildings, showing the stubble of newly harvested fields and the earthen banks and dykes in stark relief. The myriad stars and planets all spread out across the black dome of night as we face the old moon. Fifteen centuries later the American author Willa Cather would write, in her romantic rustic novel My Antonia, "As we walked homeward across the fields, the sun dropped and lay like a great golden globe in the low west. While it hung there, the moon rose in the east, as big as a cart-wheel, pale silver and streaked with rose colour, thin as a bubble or a ghost-moon. For five, perhaps ten minutes the two luminaries confronted each other across the level land, resting on opposite edges of the world... In that singular light every tree and shock of wheat, every

sunflower stalk... drew itself up high and pointed; the very clods and furrows in the fields seemed to stand up sharply... I felt the old pull of the earth, the solemn magic that comes out of those fields at nightfall. I wished I could be a little boy again, and that my way could end there". (The Pioneer Woman's Story, IV).

# 指薪修祜，永綏吉劬。

zhi3 xin1 xiu1 hu4, yong3 sui1 ji2 shao4

Ideas to tinder, leave them blessed; always encourage, guide, suggest.

Notes: The Chinese say that a person should pass down their learning or skill to the next generation in an eternal chain. Setting fire to fresh kindling; the fire is one's spirit, ideas, experience, skills, stored up good works and achievements, and the kindling is the mind and body of the young. zhi3 above is a reading for another character meaning "idea". Set your ideas to fresh tinder. Your descendents are lucky to have your good and wholesome experience and accounts of your life to benefit from, and they too will pass it on in an unbroken chain. Each receives the accumulated wisdom and influence not only from his own parents, relations and seniors but from the ones who went before them, connecting all of us to an unending chain of forgotten ancestors constantly with us.

# 矩步引領，俯仰廊廟。

ju4 bu4 yin3 ling3, fu(3) yang3 lang2 miao4

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Measured steps, neck thrust forward; all the bowing, life at court.

Notes: The Crown Prince of Liang will someday begin his apprenticeship at court. Walking with the regulation square step, neck thrust forward, eyes distant, posture correct, ready and willing to assume the duties, repeated bowing, kowtowing and unquestioning obedience of his future life at court.

束帶矜庄，徘徊瞻眺。

shu4 dai4 jin1 zhuang4, pai2 huai2 zhan1 tiao4

Robes wrapped with sash, severe and grand; calmly pace, behold your land.

Notes: Having served proudly without dishonor, you are truly prepared to wear the imperial robes and crown; stand proudly and severely, and cast your eyes far from your place on on high. The prince has undergone a lifetime of preparation, fu(3) yang3 wu2 hui4 "has served without regret" and is ready to mount the throne as son of heaven. Recall that this is a reader written on the command of Emperor Liang Wu Di for the education of his son.

孤陋寡闻，愚蒙等诮。

gu1 lou4 gua3 wen2, yu3 meng2 deng3 qiao4

Fools and ignoramus; dimwits too, ridiculous.

Notes: We must spend time with people like this every now and then. Just let others see their foolishness and laugh at them. When a knowledgeable person condescends to argue with or berate an ignorant fool, it is often hard for an impartial observer who doesn't know the subject well to tell who is right and who is the better cultivated.

# 谓语助者，焉哉乎也。

wei4 yu3 zhu4 zhe, yan1 zai1 hu1 ye3

So-called helpers; yan zai hu ye.

Notes: On this humorous note, Zhou Xingsi wrapped up the Qian Zi Wen, his hair and whiskers white. He inverted the clauses here so that these final particles used in classical Chinese could mark the end of the work in style. Yan1 as in the famous schoolteacher's scolding admonition, taken from the Great Learning, "xin bu zai yan" (heart isn't in it) is emphatic like an exclamation point; zai1 as in "da zai" (How great!) is emotive or interrogative, hu1 as in "bu yi le hu" (isn't it a joy?) is similar but more interrogative and less emotive, and ye3 is variously an indicator of decision as well as a copula and, fittingly, the most common final particle in classical Chinese.

English text with GB Chinese is now complete. Two complex forms (from the Xinhua Cidian), for yun2 "cloud" and fa4 "hair", have been substituted to avoid repetition of graphs.