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Meaning-Construction in warring states philosophical discourse : a discussion of the palaeographic materials from Tomb Guōdiàn One
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Chapter 6

THE STRUCTURE OF MEANING

6. The Structure of Meaning

The present chapter positions the argument-based texts from Guōdiàn One in the broader context of the intellectual activities of Warring States' élite-circles, as can be judged from the excavated materials under review. By discussing this ideal type of texts from a bird's eye view, my aim is to elucidate the specific characteristic of argument-based texts as a whole.

To highlight the distinctiveness of argument-based texts, I shall contrast the techniques of meaning-construction as advanced in this ideal type of texts with what for the moment I call 'non argument-based texts' from the same environment. Based on the way by which meaning is constructed in non argument-based texts, I shall generate a descriptive definition for this ideal type of texts. The focus of analysis, however, remains the argument-based texts. Along with my discussion of the two ideal types of texts from Guōdiàn One, I shall engage in a broader discussion of authorship and writing in the intellectual history of Warring States-China overall.

Based on the comparison of the different techniques of meaning-construction in these two ideal types of texts I shall also reflect briefly on the dialectical processes of philosophic discourse and strategies of meaning-construction as manifested in these texts. As I argue in this chapter, groups having access to different kinds of texts influence the structure of the texts they use—and vice versa. That is to say, texts also foster the formation of different social groups, or ‘textual communities’.¹ By implication, reflected in these two ideal types of texts, we see the correlation of social communities and meaning-construction in philosophic writing. In this respect, the present chapter highlights the distinction between two ideal types of texts; by considering the differences of meaning-construction manifested therein, this chapter attempts to throw some light on the very activity of philosophizing in early China overall.

6.1. Argument-Based Texts

As shown in the preceding discussion (chap. 2 through 5), the basic constituents of the argument-based texts are particularly stable units, that is, highly distinct building blocks, of which these texts have eventually evolved. In most cases, these building blocks contain a decidedly formulaic language.

The foremost characteristic of the argument-based texts from *Guōdiàn One* is to link up the different building blocks into larger entities. Various notions of the text can thus be connected into greater schemes—and finally into a coherent whole. The building block as described in these texts hence is not an isolated unit. Quite to the contrary, by relating the various building blocks into integrated wholes, the texts in question ascertain a so-called ‘systematic’ disquisition of philosophic concerns.² By weaving the various building blocks into larger wholes, argument-based texts furthermore generate an additional

¹ On the phenomenon of communities that group around particular texts and constitute, so-called ‘textual communities’, see the discussion by Brian Stock (1983) on textual communities in medieval England.

² As discussed in Part One of this work, I fully agree with Boltz that building blocks are characteristic of early Chinese texts, but my analysis of the argument-based texts has shown that Boltz errs in concluding that this results in a “composite nature” of these texts that opposes “integral, structurally homogeneous texts” (see William Boltz 2005, pp. 70 f).

meaningful level for advancing their ideas. The argumentative structure of this type of texts fulfils a vital semiotic function in that it opens up a meaningful height behind the verbatim content of the text. The formal patterns of these texts are thus philosophically relevant as modes of meaning creation. In other words, argument-based texts as defined in chapters 2 through 5 present full-fledged philosophic reflections on a specified topic. These texts do so in self-contained writing. The argument-based texts need no further contextualization. They can stand on their own.

As mentioned in the Introduction (chap. 1), ‘argument’ in this context should not be mistaken for the concept known from Western tradition. Argument-based texts do not apply techniques such as for instance, logic deduction or syllogism, and hence do not seek to ascertain ‘truth’ such as seen in Greek philosophy. Instead, ‘argument’ in this ideal type of texts should be understood as *a pattern that, in its use, generates argumentative force*. The addressee of the text should be persuaded to accept the philosophic position presented in the text as good, and accordingly, as something that can be followed and that can be put into practice. Thus, instead of advancing ‘arguments’ in the Western-sense of the word, these texts present philosophic positions, of argumentative force, nonetheless.

As demonstrated (chap. 2-5), the manuscripts analyzed do not hold to a uniform argumentative pattern to present an organized discussion of a philosophic concern. Nonetheless, some patterns that recur throughout can indeed be recognized. This, for instance, are the features ‘overlapping structure’,³ ‘double-directed parallelisms’ (or ‘segments’),⁴ the ‘principal insertion’,⁵ and of course, all kinds of systematic references to the intellectual environment of these texts—be it direct or indirect quotations of texts of whatever kind,⁶ citations of the lore of shared cultural memory of contemporary élite, or general allusions to all kinds of concepts and notions of different origin.⁷

³ For the feature ‘overlapping structure’, see especially my discussion of the “Zhōng xīn zhī dào” (chap. 2).

⁴ For the feature ‘double-directed parallelism’ (or segment), see especially my discussion of the “Qióng dá yǐ shí” (chap. 3).

⁵ For the feature ‘principal insertion’, see especially my discussion of the “Wǔ xíng” (chap. 4).

⁶ As already noted in chapter 1 (Introduction), I basically follow Konrad Ehlich (1998) in that I use ‘text’ in a sense that comprises the everyday-mundane category, yet in a way that the text does not need to be

The observation that argument-based texts apply all kinds of techniques to ascertain organized reflections on a given philosophic issue helps us to recognize another, closely interrelated fact, which is highly important for our attempt to evaluate and classify the exponents of written philosophy of mid to late Warring-States period. The fact that the texts analyzed present appreciably methodical disquisitions on a certain philosophic problematic in what we might want to call ‘closed’ writing (on the level of composition) shows that the *idea of a philosophic text as a coherent and self-contained unit* was already well-established in those circles that were participating in the philosophical discourse of that period, and which were producing this type of philosophical texts. This will become more explicit in the following discussion.

6.2. Conscious Production of Text

As we have seen, the “Zhōng xìn zhī dào” (chap. 2), to begin with, is composed of strictly organized building blocks. These building blocks contain the stringent pattern of a recurring ab-ab-c scheme. The second ab-group of this pattern always specifies the contents of the first ab-group, but it also continues the argument presented, so that we should talk about the feature ‘overlapping structure’. The entire information of such a unit (what we call a building block) is concluded in the final c-component.⁸ Strikingly, the distinct pattern, which we have noted for the building block is also realized on the level of the macro structure of the text, that is, the composition of the text at large. By means of relating the various building blocks with each other according to this ab-ab-c scheme, the macro structure of the text is capable of specifying the conceptual dimensions of the ruler (the *jūnzǐ* 君子) as pictured by the author(s) of the text. Moreover, by means of its formal structure the “Zhōng xìn zhī dào” makes clear that only by

(entirely) written in nature; likewise, it can also appear in oral form—or as Martin Kern puts it, “co-exist in both”. (See Kern 2005, p. 293, n. 1). Also, ‘text’ does not only denote any utterance, but is an identifiable entity. See also Konrad Ehlich 1982.

⁷ See my discussion of “Qióng dá yǐ shí” for its reference to the shared memory of Warring States élite. The quotation of texts (for instance odes, *shī*), see the detailed discussion in the “Wǔ xíng”.

⁸ See my discussion of the “Zhōng xìn zhī dào” (chap 2).

realizing his immanent nature as specified in the text, namely by carrying out the conduct of trueheartedness (*zhōng* 忠) and trustworthiness (*xìn* 信), the ruler will transform into the human reflection of the cosmic elements heaven (*tiān* 天) and earth (*dì* 地)—and this should indeed be the goal of every ruler.⁹ The penultimate building block of the text, then, breaks away from this uniform pattern. Instead of processing the account therein in the pattern overlapping structure, this particular building block presents an enumeration of rules that define a normative behavior to be fulfilled by the ideal(-ized) ruler. The interruption of the mantra-like rhythm of the text at this junction must accordingly be considered a conscious device for stating the argument of the text. It transforms the abstract account of the text into a concrete request addressed at the ruler of a state. If the ruler accepts the position as presented in the text as true, he cannot but follow the request as articulated in this particular unit. Building block five thus is the culmination of the argument of the text. We have also seen that this particular building block contains all argumentative elements of the entire text. The building block in question must accordingly be specified in the context of the argumentative purpose of the text overall. From what we have seen in other manuscripts on the level of a text's micro structure, that is, on the level of the individual building block, we should describe this unit as 'principal insertion'.¹⁰ Due to the fact that this unit as a whole obtains the function of a principal insertion on the macro level of the text, which thus spells out the overall concern of the text and, accordingly, organizes the argument of the text at large, it can be considered as a 'distanced' type of the argumentative pattern described (in contrary to the principal insertion on the micro level, in which one particular line breaks out of the otherwise consistent structure of an individual building block).

From the brief review of the detailed analysis of the text (chap. 2) we see that the “Zhōng xìn zhī dào” is organized in a highly systematic fashion. The philosophic position of the text is established with great care, and it is by means of its formal structure that it obtains compelling argumentative force. Each building block is at its proper place. Any displacement of these would destroy the macro structure of the text. Extending the text or

⁹ See also Dirk Meyer 2005 [2006], p. 60.

¹⁰ For the detailed description of the feature principal insertion, see my discussion of the “Wū xíng” (chap. 4).

leaving out other parts of the same would likewise disrupt the well-balanced train of thought. The compositional structure of the text is fixed. This is not a trivial remark. Conversely, it is against the background of recognizing a fixed compositional formal structure which has been ascertained with great care for the text as a whole that we can stipulate the following: due to a fixed macro structure that organizes the argument of the text at large, we realize that the very concept of *text as coherent composition* is already fully established in the “Zhōng xìn zhī dào”. The “Zhōng xìn zhī dào” is a self-contained unit. This observation helps us to gain another insight concerning the argument-based text under review: it is against this background of a highly balanced, coherent, and finally ‘closed’ text that we realize conscious author(s) behind the composition of this type of text. The authors in mind are characterized by the fact that they have absolute control over the materials they use.¹¹ Intentionally, authors craft a highly balanced, coherent and, on the compositional level, ultimately closed text.

In its degree of systematic organization that has not only been realized on the level of the individual building block, but also on the macro level of the text, the “Zhōng xìn zhī dào” is not exceptional, as the comparison with other texts from Guōdiàn One inevitably shows. Quite to the contrary, the same tendency of strict organization can also be argued for the other argument-based texts that are part of this collection of Warring-States manuscripts. The “Qióng dá yǐ shí”, for its part, deals with the tension between heaven and man as we have seen in my discussion of the text further above (chap. 3). The formal structure of the text accounts for this dichotomy. At every level of composition, the tension described semantically is also made visible by means of its formal structure. At the very least, it can be stated that by means of imbedding its concern into a compelling formal structure, which equals the thought of the text itself, the “Qióng dá yǐ shí” creates a persuasive environment for its uncomfortable concern—if not even processing a mimesis of the philosophical idea of the text on the level of its formal structure! Similar to what I have described for the “Zhōng xìn zhī dào”, the “Qióng dá yǐ shí” as a whole

¹¹ Similar remarks were made by Rudolf G. Wagner concerning the Wáng Bì *Lǎozǐ* (see Rudolf G. Wagner 1980, p. 37). Based on the structure of the text, Wagner postulates an author behind the text. Wagner’s conclusion was criticized harshly by Michael LaFargue 1994, pp. 308 f., *ibid*, p. 596, n. 35. For a brief discussion of both positions, see further below.

also obtains the formal structure of one individual building block. The macro structure of this unit thus fulfills the same integrating function that we have seen in the “Zhōng xìn zhī dào”.

The way in which the “Qióng dá yǐ shí” processes two individual argumentative lines (what I have described as lineal and hierarchical), at a first sight seems to be contradictory. However, the detailed study of the argumentative features of the text reveals that the tension created in fact functions as an integral part of the text’s strategy to enforce its concern and to formulate a request at the address of the people (in the first place most likely the minister). This makes it hard to believe that the “Qióng dá yǐ shí” could have been developed at the spur of the moment. The formal structure of the text is highly balanced; its organization is fully consistent. Just as it holds true for the “Zhōng xìn zhī dào”, any adding to or omissions from the text (on the structural level!), or even any relocation of the building blocks of which the texts has eventually evolved would disrupt the coherence of organization. Again, we see a text that is highly crafted, and it is against this background that we recognize conscious authors mastering their art. Argumentative lines are designed with great care over the length of the text at large, leading to well-balanced—and structurally closed—units. We even trace this kind of authorial self-consciousness and the awareness of these author(s) to compose proper formal structures so as to processing argumentative lines with compelling force when looking at the materials, which most likely stem from third sources, but which eventually have found their way into the argument-based texts under review. As described in detail in the analysis above (chap. 3), the “Qióng dá yǐ shí” incorporates stories and myths for bringing across the point in mind. These stories and myths were taken from a pool of a shared cultural memory. As can be seen easily, even though stemming from third sources, the stories used are tailored in alternating parallel style so that they fit the overall tone of the “Qióng dá yǐ shí”. The parallel form into which these stories were cast also stresses the basic principle that underlies these six examples in an identical way, and the formal perfection of the account adds to the credibility of the stories themselves. Accordingly, the strict form of this passage accentuates the common truth underlying these stories. The coherent structure also accounts for the fact that the materials assembled turn into a stable

building block. The unit at large can thus function as a medium which presents a unified notion for processing the argument of the text overall.

Evidence for the notion of coherent wholes in the processing of an argument cannot only be traced in the rather brief argument-based texts from *Guōdiàn* One such as the “Zhōng xìn zhī dào” or the “Qióng dá yǐ shí”. Instead, the same degree of authorial self-consciousness can also be recognized in the two long and highly complex texts, namely the “Wǔ xíng” (chap. 4) and the “Xìng zì mìng chū” (chap. 5)—two texts that are often considered to be far from mature.

The “Wǔ xíng”, to begin with, targets the ruler of a state. It establishes a program of self-cultivation, according to which the imagined ruler will become like King Wén. The “Xìng zì mìng chū”, for its part, presents a multi-layered analysis of the relation between human nature and the phenomenological world around the subject self. Without postulating the notion of mind as a blank slate, it pays high attention to the impact of the outside world on all levels, that is, the phenomenological world as a whole and society at large for the shaping of the human mind.

The author(s) of the “Wǔ xíng” have established a convoluted system of cross-referential links throughout the text, by which means they process highly complex trains of thought. These links can span over various layers of the text. At times, this makes it highly challenging to follow the train of thought presented therein. At this point it is difficult to say with certainty whether or not this should be considered a conscious device for adding weight to the thought of the text itself. However, making the less strongest claim on the interrelation of form and thought in the “Wǔ xíng”, the analysis has shown that the process of self-cultivation as described in the “Wǔ xíng” has the same underlying pattern as the formal structure of the text itself. The process of self-cultivation takes on a circular form, and the vital aspect for moral self-cultivation lies in the ability to become aware of the potency that already lies within oneself. The final element for realizing self-cultivation thus is a sudden experience of this circularity, rather similar to that of

understanding the argumentative line of the text itself, which is also designed in circular fashion.

The “Xìng zì mìng chū”, then, also establishes a system of referential links throughout the text. In order to pattern its argument and to ascertain some stability for processing its trains of thought, the “Xìng zì mìng chū” employs various devices on the formal level of the text, and it is by this means that it ascertains a multi-layered analysis of mind, human nature, and the world around the individual self. This, for instance, may be parallel a-b-c schemes realized on ‘distanced’ levels of the text, that is, spanning over various building blocks; or ‘topoi-framed’ units (also on the distanced level) which, in turn, ascertain the vertical organization of arguments—not only linear ones. Similar to the “Wǔ xíng”, parts of the formal compositional structure of the “Xìng zì mìng chū” also reproduce the pattern underlying the functioning of mind, as imagined by the author(s) of this text. Then, just as seen in the “Wǔ xíng”, the “Xìng zì mìng chū” also describes a circular movement underlying the process of moral cultivation. The ‘true objective standard’, as I translate the concept of *dào* 道 in this context, always lies within the individual self. By implication, as the authors of the text see it, the individual simply has to become aware of the potency, which already is an integral element of his, so as to succeed in moral cultivation.

The “Wǔ xíng” establishes a complex and highly layered system of thought. The five virtues discussed therein are split up twice into two groups, respectively. What I call the ‘*wǔ xíng*’-theory thus opens up a horizontal and a vertical differentiation of the five virtues: First, the “Wǔ xíng” distinguishes the five virtues between those that can only be aspired to achieve (*zhì* 志), and those that be acted for (*wéi* 為). The first group, which consists of the virtues ‘sagacity’, *shèng* 聖 and ‘righteousness’, *yì* 義, describes an abstract affair. This equals the inner cultivation of the ‘Way of heaven’, or *tiān dào* 天道. The latter group consists of the virtues ‘wisdom’, *zhì* 智, ‘benevolence’, *rén* 仁, and also ‘ritual propriety’, *lǐ* 禮. This group describes the transformation of this inner state into the ‘Way of humans’, which the text calls the *rén dào* 人道.

The second differentiation of the five virtues as presented in the text distinguishes between primary and secondary virtues. Primary virtues (or benchmark virtues) are ‘sagacity’, *shèng* 聖 and ‘wisdom’, *zhì* 智. They account for the formation of the secondary virtues. Secondary virtues, which in turn depend on the primary virtues, then, are ‘benevolence’, *rén* 仁, ‘righteousness’, *yì* 義, and ‘ritual propriety’ *lǐ* 禮.

The ‘*wǔ xíng*’-theory establishes a hierarchy of the five virtues: Of the two ‘benchmark’ virtues ‘sagacity’ and ‘wisdom’, ‘sagacity’ is considered the foremost virtue. Second to the benchmark virtues rank ‘benevolence’ and ‘righteousness’ because they account for the formation of ‘ritual propriety’, *lǐ* 禮. ‘Righteousness’ and ‘benevolence’, in turn, seem equal in rank: on the one hand, ‘righteousness’ belongs to the *zhì* 志-subgroup of virtues. The *zhì* 志-subgroup ranks higher than the *wéi* 為-subgroup, and ‘benevolence’ in turn belongs to the latter subgroup. Seen from this perspective, it would thus seem that ‘benevolence’ ranks lower than ‘righteousness’. On the other hand, throughout the text ‘benevolence’ is correlated with ‘sagacity’ and ‘wisdom’. These, we remember, are the primary virtues of the ‘*wǔ xíng*’-theory and thus rank highest. Thus, it is most likely that the authors of the text understand these two virtues to be equally important. Accordingly, the ‘*wǔ xíng*’-theory presents the following hierarchy of virtues: ‘Sagacity’, ‘wisdom’, ‘righteousness’/‘benevolence’, and lastly ‘ritual propriety’.

By means of processing various trains of thought in a highly complex fashion, the text finally establishes a coherent system, which is what I call the ‘*wǔ xíng*’-theory. This ‘*wǔ xíng*’-theory, in short, can be described as follows: ‘sagacity’ takes the lead in the formation of ‘righteousness’. If paired with awareness, this ultimately leads to ‘potency’. ‘Wisdom’, then, takes the lead in the formation of ‘benevolence’ and ‘ritual propriety’. If paired with appropriate understanding, this ultimately leads to ‘goodness’. ‘Potency’ describes an abstract matter. It equals man’s inner cultivation of the ‘Way of heaven’ (天道). ‘Goodness’, for its part, is the transformation of this inner state into worldly affairs.

Thus, what the text labels the ‘Way of humans’ (人道) describes the conversion of man’s ‘potency’ (*dé* 德) into worldly affairs.

As we have seen, the “Wǔ xíng” presents a multi-layered, coherent and meaningful system, namely the ‘*wǔ xíng*’-theory (and so does the “Xìng zì mìng chū” in its analysis of human nature). Different argumentative lines therein are processed in parallel fashion vis-à-vis each other. At times, these lines are linked together, so that the text at large establishes a coherent whole in which all elements find their proper place to complete a meaningful system. The fact that the two different “Wǔ xíng” texts that so far have come to our sight, namely the “Wǔ xíng” from Mǎwángduī Three and that from Guōdiàn One, are organized in a slightly different fashion to process the overall concern of the text, does by no means contradict my assumption that both of them present one coherent and highly developed ‘*wǔ xíng*’-theory; but it *does* say something about the nature of texts in Warring States period: texts were still open to change even if presenting elaborate ‘systems of thought’. The larger meaningful units remain consistent in both texts, and the argumentative lines processed as a whole are coherent throughout. The argumentative lines processed are identical in both texts. Seen from a comprehensive perspective, the ‘*wǔ xíng*’-theory remains unaltered. Then, why is it that the two texts do differ at the end? The slightly different presentation of the coherent ‘*wǔ xíng*’-theory in the two texts, one might guess, simply reflects individual predilections of certain groups; otherwise, it could also have occurred at some stage in the long and possibly wide-ranging process of the (oral?) transmission of the text, which in itself would make it difficult to maintain the textual integrity of ‘the’ “Wǔ xíng”.¹² The ‘*wǔ xíng*’-theory itself, however, remains stable.

The overall structure of the “Wǔ xíng”—and the same holds true also for that of the “Xìng zì mìng chū” (also below)—without a doubt is quite different from that seen in the shorter argument-based texts “Zhōng xìn zhī dào” or “Qióng dá yǐ shí”. The “Wǔ xíng” should not be considered a ‘closed’ text. It is not a text that is immune to slight changes

¹² Remember the chronological distance of at least 150 years that lies between Guōdiàn One and Mǎwángduī Three.

on the structural level of composition, which, as I have repeatedly stated, I find it unlikely to see for the organizational structure of either the “Zhōng xìn zhī dào” or the “Qióng dá yǐ shí”. The present ‘*wǔ xíng*’-theory (or the concern of the “Xìng zì mìng chū”), in its place, should be understood as a highly reasoned system. Without ruling out that the ‘*wǔ xíng*’-theory may have evolved from the accumulation of different (and may be even differing) sources and traditions, which I will discuss in more detail in chapter 8 below, I hold that the ‘*wǔ xíng*’-theory, which we see from both the Mǎwángdūi Three and Guōdiàn One “Wǔ xíng”, is a conscious, reasoned, and well designed approach to a prevalent concern in those-days China.

The texts discussed in part One of this study (chap. 2-5) all have in common that different kinds of convoluted types of trains of thoughts have been established therein. Argumentative lines can thus be processed on different levels. Accordingly, the texts discussed do not only present linear types of argumentation and thought-processing. Instead, on different levels, these texts develop highly systematic and reasoned disquisitions of philosophic concerns, which were widespread and hotly debated in different circles of Warring-States élite. Important for our present discussion, then, is that we also realize that in contemporary China, the notion of coherent texts and highly balanced argumentative lines was already well established. It is against this background of highly complex and yet coherent texts, and highly layered and to high degrees systematic philosophic edifices that I postulate conscious authors behind these texts or systems. Mastering their arts, these authors were intentionally crafting well-balanced, and even ‘closed’ texts. It is at this stage that we can talk about conscious philosophy that has found its way into self-contained writing.

6.3. Non Argument-based Texts of Warring States-China

If we compare the non argument-based texts with the argument-based texts from the same environment, the differences of these two types of texts come to light most plainly. Even though the individual building block also forms the basic constituent of the argument-based text at large, the author(s) of this kind of texts nevertheless develop complex systematic analysis of a given philosophic topic by combining these units into larger meaningful entities, that is, the pericope, the sub-canto, canto and finally the text overall, as we have seen in the analysis of these texts. The building block of the argument-based text thus does not represent an isolated unit, but in the truest sense of the word, it is a *building block* of a larger whole.

The structure of non argument-based text differs in this respect. The idea to be transmitted in this kind of texts does not reach beyond the level of the individual building block. Different building blocks are not related towards each other on the formal level of the text. They do not generate greater meaningful wholes. Instead, the ‘building block’ of this kind of texts is the final unit for communicating a concern. Formally, it is fully ‘isolated’. In the truest sense of the word it represents what Rudolf G. Wagner has called a “unit of thought”.¹³ As this unit forms the only and ultimate level of communication of the text—for the moment I am not taking into account the level of face to face communication within a group that may have existed on the basis of the written text; instead I simply concentrate on the written object unearthed—it also spells out the entire philosophy of the text because this unit *is* the entire text. Every new unit reflects on a different concern. Thus, every new unit must be seen as an individual text in its own right. By implication, it seems that what we today call ‘the’ “Lǎozǐ”, or ‘the’ “Zī yī”, should be nothing else but a subsumption for an anthology of formally unrelated units. In this respect, especially for what we call “Lǎozǐ”, an anthology of unknown origin, it holds true that the denotation ‘non argument-based text’ is somewhat misleading. The label suggests a coherent whole, in which the various units of thought are combined into one reasoned system—and this is exactly what I argue against. By implication, the denotation

¹³ See Rudolf G. Wagner 1999 (b).

‘non argument-based text’ should describe the anthology of (formally) unrelated units. It does not claim any so-called ‘systematic’ idea underlying such an anthology—at least not on the formal level, to begin with. ‘Non argument-based text’ thus is nothing more than a phrase to work with, although not a very suitable one, I admit. In the process of describing how meaning is created therein, I shall provide a new definition for this ideal type of texts, to which belong the so-called “Lǎozǐ” and “Zī yī” from the paleographic materials under review.

In the same vein, calling the ultimate units of textual communication in such anthologies ‘building blocks’ is likewise misleading. These units do not build a larger and coherent whole on the formal level of the non argument-based text. Thus, keeping in mind the conceptual difference of this particular unit with that of the argument-based texts, I will not call it ‘building block’ but simply ‘unit’ (or ‘unit of thought’ with reference to Wagner). Due to the isolated (and thus ultimate) character of the unit of thought in non argument-based texts, systematic and highly layered disquisitions of thoughts in the fashion as developed in argument-based texts are fully absent therein. Meaning-construction in this type of texts must hence work fundamentally different from that of the argument-based texts. Instead of advancing a systematic argument by combining different building blocks into larger integrated wholes, the particular units of thought in non argument-based texts remain isolated. As such, the particular unit of thought can only provide situational statements (or responses) on given concerns. Instead of attempting to generate what we may reasonably call conscious philosophy in self-contained writing, these isolated units of thought are probably best described as *isolated reactions* on prevailing issues. The consciously designed multi-layered analysis of a given philosophical concern remains absent therein. This is why the particular unit of thought must be considered to be the final engagement on a specified issue. Instead of generating argumentative force, meaning had to be constructed by different means.

6.4. “Lǎozǐ” and “Zī yī”

The anthologies that have been identified—or at least conventionally labeled so—as “Lǎozǐ” and “Zī yī” from the corpus of excavated paleographical materials under review are non argument-based texts par excellence. The two texts are made up of distinct units of thought, which, in both texts respectively, show no apparent relation of one with another on the formal level of the non argument-based text. Instead of generating a systematic analysis of a given philosophic concern by integrating the various units of thought into larger coherent wholes, by which a text would establish a reasoned argumentative structure overall (such as seen in argument-based texts), each unit of thought of the anthologies “Lǎozǐ” and “Zī yī” only provides short statements on given conditions.

The two texts under review belong to the canon of transmitted texts. This makes them rather exceptional. No other text from this environment survived the transmission process to the present day. The “Lǎozǐ”, to begin with, is known as the *Classic of the Way and the Virtue*, or *Dào dé jīng* 道德經. The origin of this anthology is everything but clear. “Charming legends”, as LaFargue calls them so tellingly, ascribe the work as a whole—the so-called “Classic of five thousand words” (*wǔ qiān zì jīng* 五千字經)—to the legendary figure Lǎozǐ 老子.¹⁴ The anthology called “Zī yī”, for its part, has survived as one chapter of the *Book of Rites*, *Lǐ jì* 禮記, a ritualist’s compilation of controversial provenance.¹⁵ Today the *Lǐ jì* is viewed as one of the ‘Five Classics’.¹⁶ The “Zī yī” is generally thought of stemming from nearest environment of Zǐsī 子思, the grandson of Confucius Kǒng Jí 孔伋 (ca. 483-402 BC). As such, it is generally believed to belong to the now lost work of the so-called Zǐsīzǐ 子思子, which nature is in fact all but clear.¹⁷

¹⁴ Michael LaFargue 1994, p. 301. For a detailed description of some of the traditional views on the ‘historical’ figure Lǎozǐ and the *Dào dé jīng*, see Anna Seidel (1931-1991) 1969. See also Chan Wing-tsit (1901-1994), 1963.

¹⁵ Jeffrey Riegel 1993, p. 293.

¹⁶ On the Classics, see Michael Nylan 2001.

¹⁷ Most explicit about the identification of the “Zī yī” with the work of Zǐsīzǐ probably is the “Yīnyuè zhì” 音樂志 of the *Suī shū* 隋書, which quotes the words of Shěn Yuè 沈約 (441-513) saying: “The ‘Zhōng

The two non argument-based texts “Lǎozǐ” and “Zī yī” were continuously handed down to the present day. Moreover, next to the finding of paleographical materials from Guōdiàn One, two other locations also yielded one copy of the texts each: the tomb Mǎwángduī Three contained what has been identified as “Lǎozǐ”; the “Zī yī” in turn is part of the Shànghǎi collection of Chǔ manuscripts. These finds provide insights to the conditions of non argument-based texts during Warring States period at large, and they help us to contrast these with that of argument-based texts from that period. Any attempt to establish a watertight discussion of the nature of texts during the Warring-States period would not have been possible without these findings. Not surprisingly, none of the excavated manuscripts (or in fact bought from unscrupulous tomb looters) is identical with its supposed counterpart. Differences include phraseology, dissimilar formulae when referring to other sources, different locations of particular units of thought in the text overall, materials that are simply absent in one of these texts (or versions), and even dissimilarities in the formal structure of composition of the individual units of thought themselves.

6.4.1 The “Lǎozǐ” from Guōdiàn One

What we generally refer to with ‘the’ “Lǎozǐ” from Guōdiàn One must in fact be described as unrelated materials found on three different bundles of bamboo strips. Consensus refers to these with “Lǎozǐ A” (老子甲), “Lǎozǐ B” (老子乙), and “Lǎozǐ C” (老子丙). The three bundles differ in physical appearance of the strips, but also in the handwriting with which the various strips are inscribed. Because the later copies of the “Lǎozǐ” (beginning from Mǎwángduī Three) contain materials, which match to high degrees with those seen on the three different bundles from Guōdiàn One, the Guōdiàn

yōng”, “Biǎo jì”, “Fāng jì”, “Zī yī” were all taken from the *Zīsīzǐ* 中庸 標記 坊記 皆取自 子思子. Cited in Li Xuéqín 李學勤 1999 (c), p. 76.

Since the excavation of the strips from Guōdiàn One, especially Chinese colleagues attempt to reconstruct the work *Zīsīzǐ*. Publications on this issue are vast, so that I will list them here. For a critical discussion of the “*Zīsīzǐ*-myth”, see Mark Csikszentmihalyi 2004.

One materials are nowadays seen as an earlier version of the received *Lǎozǐ*; by implication, the different materials of the three bundles of strips, the so-called “*Lǎozǐ*” passages, are likewise conceived as one composition overall. However, the tomb itself and its textual contains provide no explicit references that could substantiate such assumptions.

6.4.1.1 Bundles “A”, “B”, and “C”

Initially, scholars tended to assume that the spacing of the characters on the strips shows that binding of the strips into different bundles came before any writing.¹⁸ This seems to be a misinterpretation of the practice of contemporary manuscript production.¹⁹

Bundle “A” contains 39 strips, each of which lengths to ca. 32.3 cm respectively. The strips are tapered towards both ends and they are well preserved. Of the 39 strips, only one is in a fragmentary condition. As we can judge from the marks on the strips, two cords have previously connected bundle “A” at a distance of about 13 cm.²⁰

Bundle “B” consists of 18 strips. Different from those of bundle “A”, the bamboo strips of the present bundle are cut evenly at both sides. With the length of about 30.6 cm, these strips are slightly shorter than those of bundle “A”. As in bundle “A” two cords connected the strips of the present bundle at a length of 13 cm.²¹ Different, then, is the condition of the bamboo strips: of the 18 strips that constitute bundle “B” only eight remain entirely complete.

¹⁸ See William Boltz 1999, p. 591.

¹⁹ Personal communication with Chén Jiàn 陳劍 (Shànghǎi, April 3, 2007). On early manuscript production, see Zhāng Xiǎnchéng 張顯成 2004, esp. Chap. 3. The fact that some strips contain corrections or amendments on the backside of the strips (such as seen in the Guōdiàn One “*Zī yī*” strip 740) leads ad absurdum the assumption that binding the strips into different bundles came before any writing.

²⁰ Húběi shěng Jīngmén shì bówùguǎn 1998, p. 111.

²¹ Húběi shěng Jīngmén shì bówùguǎn 1998, p. 111.

The bamboo strips of bundle “C”, finally, are remarkably shorter than those of the other two bundles: they length only about 26.5 cm. As seen in bundle “B”, the strips of bundle “C” are cut evenly at both sides. Two cords used to connect the strips of bundle “C” at a distance of 10.8 cm. Bundle “C” contains 28 bamboo strips (of which twelve remain complete), yet only 14 of these can be clearly identified as belonging to the so-called “Guōdiàn Lǎozǐ”. The remaining 14 strips carry previously unknown materials. The editors of the Húběi Provincial Museum assume that these materials constitute another individual text. Originally carrying no title, these materials are now generally referred to with the designation “The Great One Generates Water”, or “Tài yī shēng shuǐ” 太一生水.²² The “Tài yī shēng shuǐ” describes the process of how the world is created, starting off from the “Great One”, the *Tài yī* 太一,²³ and reasons on the implications of this for government.

Bundle “A” contains twenty individual units of thought. These can be identified with what would be the following *zhāng* 章 of the received *Lǎozǐ*: 19 and 66; 46 (the middle- and end-part); 30 (the initial- and end-part); *zhāng* 15, 64 (the end-part); *zhāng* 37, 63, 2, 32, 25; *zhāng* 5 (middle part); 16 (the initial part); *zhāng* 56, 57, 55, 44, 40, and finally *zhāng* 9—in this order.

Bundle “B” contains eight individual units of thought. These can be identified with what would be the following *zhāng* 章 of the received *Lǎozǐ*: 59; *zhāng* 48 and 20 (the initial part); *zhāng* 13 and 41; *zhāng* 52 (the middle part); finally appear what we identify with *zhāng* 45 and 54 of the received *Lǎozǐ*.

The first 14 strips of bundle “C”, then, contain five units of thought, all of which can be identified with parts of the received *Lǎozǐ*. These are: *zhāng* 17, 18 and 35; 31 (the middle- and end-part); *zhāng* 64 (the end-part). Taken as a whole, the three bundles

²² For the “Tài yī shēng shuǐ”, see Húběi shěng Jīngmén shì bówùguǎn 1998, p.13 (for a photograph of the strips), pp. 123-126 (for text and notes).

²³ Since the excavation of the “Tài yī shēng shuǐ”, studies on this manuscript count into the hundreds. For a detailed analysis of this text and further references, see Sarah Allan 2003. For a recent review of (mostly Chinese) scholarship on the “Tài yī shēng shuǐ”, see Chén Lìguī 陳麗桂 2005.

contain about two-fifth of the materials known to us from the transmitted versions of the *Lǎozǐ*. A division of the materials into so-called *dé* 德 and *dào* 道-parts is not even remotely present.

The three bundles contain different kinds of markings on the strips. Black dots of different size seem to mark off some of the units described. Yet, this is not done in a coherent way:²⁴ in bundle “A”, space has been left following some of these markings and before the next unit of thought begins. In two cases, bundle “A” also contains the tadpole symbol (𪛗),²⁵ namely on strip *a*32 and on strip *a*39. Subsequent to these symbols, the strips carry no further graphs. The strips of the latter two bundles also contain markings on the strips. However, only in bundle “C” we can observe a somewhat more consistent use of these, for every single unit of thought is followed by such a black mark. Based on these observations, namely that only some units are marked off by signs on the strips, whereas others are not, it would seem to be a good idea first of all to assume some kind of internal relation between those units that are not distinguished from one another by means of such markings. One even might want to go so far as to propose that those instances that are not marked off as individual units by such marks should, accordingly, not be regarded as different units at all, only because other (received) versions do so.²⁶ Nonetheless, when taking into closer scrutiny what has been written on the bundles, we recognize that these units show no inherent relation with each other, and they also differ appreciably in tone and style. By implication, it seems that we should indeed treat most of these instances as individual units, even when they are not signaled accordingly. In most cases this accords with the transmitted versions of the text. The marks on the strips should thus be explained in a different way. Did they function as indicators revealing the

²⁴ Subsequent to the following units appears a marking on the strips, which signals the end of the unit: “A” 1, 3, 7-12, 14, 15, 17-19. In unit “A” 4 such a mark appears right before the last character of the unit. I believe that this mark has been displaced by the mistake.

²⁵ Taken from strip *a*32.

²⁶ Units that are not marked off by the use of a black square on the strips are “A” 2, 5-6, 13, and 16. Accordingly, one could argue for an internal relationship of the following clusters: “A” 2 and 3; 4 through 7; 13 and 14; 16 and 17.

importance of some of these units? Or did they only represent unusual breaks (or changes) in the rhythm?—we simply do not know.²⁷

In the same vein, it would seem to be a good assumption to think of a distinction between those materials recorded on bundle “A” that have been distinguished from other units by the use of the tadpole symbol. Yet, when looking at these units, the reasons for the tadpole symbol on strips *a32* and on strip *a39* are not self-evident either. The tadpole symbols on bundle “A” might mark off different origins of the units assembled in that ‘non argument-based text’. One may think of a scribe who had to assemble different *Vorlagen* so as to ‘complete’ his collection of the “Lǎozǐ”, and he indicated this accordingly; or one could argue that there *was* no such “Lǎozǐ” (and not even the notion of the same) in those days Chǔ-China. It could then be the case that the tadpole symbols on bundle “A” signal different non argument-based texts, collected on one bundle of bamboo strips. If this were the case, we had to consider the materials on bundle “A” as three different collections of various unrelated units of thought, that is, different non argument-based texts all of which fixed on one and the same bundle of bamboo strips. Given the fact that there existed the custom of assembling different texts on one and the same bundle of strips—as seen from the argument-based texts—this assumption seems not implausible.²⁸

To provide just one example for (presumably) different units of thought that are not marked off accordingly, I refer to what consensus refers to as units “A” 2 and “A” 3. These are the first units of thought assembled in bundle “A” that are not demarcated by any sort of markings on the strips. The two units also appear in the received versions, where they are clearly distinguished as individual *zhāng* 章 (that is, *zhāng* 66 and the middle- and end-part of *zhāng* 46). When looking at the two units, we see no obvious textual or rhetorical relation between them—neither in the Guōdiàn One text, nor in the received versions. It thus seems that different units of thought assembled in the non

²⁷ So far we do not know too much about markings in excavated manuscripts. See, however, the survey by Péng Hào (2000, pp. 34 ff.) on punctuation marks in excavated manuscripts. See also Guǎn Xihuá 管錫華 2002.

²⁸ As seen, the “Qióng dá yǐ shǐ”, for instance, shares the bundle of strips with the “Lǔ Mùgōng wèn Zǐsī”; the “Zhōng xīn zhī dào” shares the bundle of strips with the “Táng Yú zhī dào”.

argument-based texts under review were not necessarily distinguished by use of explicit signs on the strips:

“A” 2

江海所以為百谷王，以其^{A3}能為百谷下；
是以能為百谷王。

聖人之在民前也，以身後之。
其在民上也，以^{A4}言下之；
其在民上也，民弗重也。
其在民前也，民弗害也。

天下樂進而弗詹；
^{A5}以其不爭也，故天下莫能與之爭。

That by which rivers and seas [can] be kings of the many valley streams, is their^{A3} ability of being below the many valley streams;
That is why they [can] be kings of the many valley streams.

That what makes the wise man standing in front of the people, is [his ability of] putting himself behind them.
That what makes him standing above the people, is [his ability of] setting his^{A4} words below them;
He stands above the people, and yet the people do not regard [him] as heavy.
He stands in front of the people, and yet the people do not suffer harm from [him].

The entire world is delighted advance him and never to criticize him;
^{A5} For he never competes, nobody under Heaven has the ability of competing with him.

“A” 3

罪莫重乎甚欲，
咎莫憯乎欲得，
^{A6}禍莫大乎不知足。

知足之為足，此恆足矣。

Of all fault, none is heavier than exceeding greed,
Of all blemish, none leads to more grief than yearning for gain,
^{A6} Of all disasters, none is greater than not knowing when [you] have enough.

When understanding that [having] enough is sufficient, [you] always have enough.

From the example above it becomes evident that these two units did not share any close relation with each other in terms of a formally coherent approach on a certain issue. From the bird's eye view it thus becomes evident that even though the concern of the two is related to a certain degree—the two units clearly adopt a position directed against greed and human strive for superiority—formally they do not share any related features. The common use of the negating particle *mò* 莫 ‘none, nobody’,²⁹ is not part of a symmetrical grammatical concern between the two units.³⁰ By implication, we cannot regard them as parts of a larger consistent composition of the kind seen in the argument-based texts discussed above, in which one topic is discussed in a so-called ‘systematic’ fashion over the entire length of what we now consider to be two individual units. Accordingly, for our evaluation of the non argument-based text at large we can therefore safely conclude that even if there were no markings on the strips that could indicate a new unit of thought, this does not imply that the unit of thought is in any way related to the previous- or subsequent one, that together they would form a coherent whole. Each unit of thought should accordingly be regarded as presenting an isolated (and ultimate) answer to a particular concern, regardless the physical organization of the bamboo strips. The end of an individual unit likewise marks the end of the engagement with a certain concern. Each unit should thus be considered a text in its own right.

When looking at the two units themselves, we notice that none of these units of thought develops a ‘systematic’, or multi-layered analysis of a certain topic of the kind seen in the argument-based texts discussed above, in which one philosophic concern is investigated from all kinds of different perspectives. The different units of thought remain unconnected, and thus isolated standpoints on certain issues. Whereas argument-based texts establish highly organized discussions of a relevant concern by means of connecting

²⁹ That is, in the last line of “A” 2 (strip *a5*) and the first part of unit “A” 3 (strip *a6*).

³⁰ Whereas the grammatical particle *mò* 莫 of “A” 2 negates an auxiliary verb, that of “A” 3 negates a full verb.

different ideas into a greater meaningful whole, the two units under review state their point in a different way: they either establish analogies of the kind seen in “A” 2, in which the good ruler is set in correspondence with rivers and seas, from which then results some kind of necessary behavior of the (idealized) ruler; or they simply contrast right behavior with wrong behavior, as indeed seen in unit “A” 3. In any case, different from processing an organized argumentative line of the kind ascertained in argument-based texts, the two units under review do not aim to provide something like a complex approach. An organized ‘analysis’ of a prevailing issue from different perspectives by which the position of the text (of the author/s of the text) realizes what I have called *argumentative force* is fully absent. Instead, the two units under discussion have to rely on something else to make their point, and this can be best described with *authoritative force* that is implied in the reference to their statements. Take, for instance, the second unit under review (“A” 3). The addressee of this unit of thought simply has to accept the position of the text as true, such as “Of all fault, none is heavier than exceeding greed” in order to believe that “When understanding that [having] enough is sufficient, [you] always have enough”. Thus, the recipient of the text is not guided through a balanced discussion, such as seen for instance in the processing of the argument in the “Xing zì míng chū” (or any other argument-based text). Quite to the contrary: confronting the imagined audience directly with the intellectual position of the text was fully sufficient to make the case. Meaning-construction was based on reference to authority, not on reason.

That authoritative force underlying these isolated statements was sufficient for conveying meaning can be witnessed with relative ease: notwithstanding the absence of any argumentative patterns designed to persuade the audience of these units of thought—which, by implication, should have fueled the fruitful transmission of meaning—these isolated units of thought, without a doubt, were successful in the communication of their intellectual positions. This can be judged on the basis of two observations. First, the brief and, at times, even enigmatic or simplistic statements were considered to be important enough to take the effort and fix them on bamboo. Otherwise they would not have been part of the present finding of paleographic materials. This holds true not only for the immediate intellectual environment of tomb Guōdiàn One (both spatially and

chronologically) as other findings of these units of thought convincingly show.³¹ Second, the units of thought as collected in bundle “A” (and also “B” and “C”) were continuously handed down for generations. All of these units persisted in the later canonized compilation familiar to us under the title *Classic of the Way and the Virtue*. Even if most of these units have taken on an appreciably different form—be it that certain words differ, that the internal structure is not the same therein, or that some of these units are significantly shorter than their transmitted counterpart—thought and tone of these units in most cases remain the same also in the received classic.³²

The fact that these units of thought were considered important enough to fix them on bamboo (notwithstanding the rather simplistic message of some of these standpoints), and that all units of thought persisted to the present day, ultimately shows that at least in some

³¹ Such as, for instance, the finding of similar units of thought from tomb Mǎwángduī Three.

³² Differences can nonetheless be seen in *zhāng* 17, and especially *zhāng* 18 of the received versions (in the following I refer to the Wáng Bì version), when comparing these units with those of the “Guōdiàn Lǎozǐ” (see, however, Qiú 2006). The beginning sentences of *zhāng* 18 of the received version reads “Cut short sagacity, discard wisdom, and the people will benefit a hundredfold; cut short benevolence, discard righteousness, and the people will return to filially and compassion; cut short artistry, discard profit, and there will be no robbers and thieves” 絕聖棄智 民利百倍 絕仁棄義 民復孝慈 絕巧棄利 盜賊無有. This implies a certain disregard for the values ‘sagacity’, ‘benevolence’ and ‘righteousness’, from which results modern scholars’ general assumption that this passage is an attack on so-called “Confucian” values. The “Guōdiàn Lǎozǐ” (bundle “A”), instead, reads: “Cut short wisdom, discard distinctions, and the people will benefit a hundredfold; cut short artistry, discard profit, and there will be no robbers and thieves; cut short affection, discard deliberation, and the people will return [to the purity] of [unlearned] youngsters” 絕智棄辨 民利百倍 絕巧棄利 盜賊無有 絕為棄慮 民復季子. As can be seen, the “Guōdiàn Lǎozǐ” does not entail any disrespect for ‘sagacity’, ‘benevolence’, and ‘righteousness’, as many scholars assume for the Wáng Bì (and other transmitted versions). This has triggered the debate, which of the versions seen render more closely the ‘original spirit’ of the *Lǎozǐ*—a discussion we see whenever there exists a close counterpart to a Guōdiàn One text, as I have discussed in length in chap. 4 (“Wǔ xíng”) and chap. 5 (“Xíng zì míng chū”). Briefly, we can distinguish two currents explaining this difference: one idea is to argue that the “Guōdiàn Lǎozǐ” represents the ‘original spirit’ of *Lǎozǐ*; the transmitted versions represent later emendations, presumably around the time of the appearance of the *Zhuāngzǐ*. Most representative for this view probably is Qiú Xīguī 裘錫圭 2004 (b) and Qiú Xīguī 2006. The other view is that the “Guōdiàn Lǎozǐ” has been ‘Confucianized’, and thus represents a later emendation. Scholars holding this assumption believe that the transmitted versions of the *Lǎozǐ* thus render its ‘original spirit’. Scholars most representative for this view probably are Zhōu Fēngwǔ 周鳳五 (2000), Lǐ Líng 李零 (2002), Lǐ Xuéqín 李學勤 (2002) and also (2005). Lǐ Líng (2002) even assumes that the tomb-occupant himself changed the text. This assumption can be refuted because it is unlikely to assume that the occupant wrote any of these texts at all. Due to the authoritative character of these units of thought (see above) it also is unlikely that imagined students of his would have altered the text themselves. Accordingly, the differences should either be explained with reference to the hardening of different schools when coming closer to the Hàn 漢 times, thus accepting a continuous and lineal development of these units from Guōdiàn One down to the received versions and hence subscribing to Qiú’s view referred to above. Or, when refuting any connection of the Guōdiàn One materials with later versions of the *Lǎozǐ*, one might simply want to argue that these differences represent different currents of thought.

circles of Warring States intellectual activities, the units collected in bundle “A” (and similarly those of bundles “B” and “C”) must have been commonly known and also highly respected. Groups—this denotes not only a narrowly confined circle of people, but also refers to an abstract cultural identity—must have been gathered around these textual authorities, which in turn further stabilized these authorities. Note however: the fact that these units of thought have already taken on the shape of authoritative ideas prevailing in some elite-circles of the Warring States, does not by necessity also imply the inverse conclusion assuming that the authoritative character of these statements results from the existence of the prevailing concept of one authoritative “Lǎozǐ” behind these statements. Without a doubt, such a concept would connect these units of thought into one philosophically prevalent current, thus lending a group-identity in those circles. However, just as William G. Boltz has put it so convincingly, we should be aware of labeling a late fourth century BC manuscript “with a name (or concept), for which our first evidence is a century or more later.”³³

To conclude, in authority-based texts meaning is constructed not by relating the different units of thought into greater meaningful schemes. Instead, as seen from the materials commonly labeled “Guōdiàn Lǎozǐ”, meaning-construction relies on reference to authority. As the transmission of these isolated units of thought shows, texts of this type were successful in their particular approach to construct meaning. In the following, I shall refer to this type of texts as ‘authority-based texts’. By this, I attempt to highlight the structural differences of this ideal type with that of the argument-based texts discussed in Part One of the present study.

³³ See William G. Boltz 1999, p. 596. The parenthesis is my insertion.

6.4.2 The “Zī yī” from Guōdiàn One

Something similar in terms of meaning-construction also holds true for the “Zī yī”: instead of advancing a reasoned disquisition of thought by blending different units of thought into a greater meaningful whole, meaning is generated by reference to authority. As such, the “Zī yī” is another example of the ideal type ‘authority-based text’.

The “Zī yī” from Guōdiàn One contains 47 strips. These have a length of ca. 32.5 cm respectively. The strips are tapered towards both ends, and they are well preserved. Not a single strip is in a fragmentary condition. As we can judge from the marks on the strips, two cords have previously connected the Guōdiàn One “Zī yī” at a distance of 12.8 to 13 cm.³⁴

The text of the Guōdiàn “Zī yī” is complete. Each unit is followed by a heavy black marking on the strips, dividing the entire work into 23 units of thought—and this number is also mentioned explicitly at the end of the text. Somebody has closed it. Thus, contrary to the materials assembled on bundles “A”, “B”, and “C”, that is, the so-called “Guōdiàn Lǎozǐ”, it seems that we can postulate with relative certainty that the Guōdiàn One “Zī yī” has been considered to be one entity already during the Warring States period—at least by the community that was using the text. Accordingly, different from the materials of the so-called “Guōdiàn Lǎozǐ”, the label ‘authority-based *text*’, it seems, is not in the slightest misleading for this collection of otherwise unrelated units of thought.

The Guōdiàn One “Zī yī” contains 1,156 characters. As such, it is notably shorter than the transmitted version of the “Zī yī”, chapter the *Book of Rites*, the *Lǐ jì* 禮記, which contains some 1,549 characters.³⁵ Compared with the received version of the “Zī yī”, the exhumed units of thought are organized in a more tightly fashion. Two units of thought (maybe even three?) seen in the received version and now part of the received *Lǐ jì*, are not extant in the excavated authority-based texts. Interestingly, the formal organization of

³⁴ Húběi shěng Jīngmén shì bówùguǎn 1998, p. 129.

³⁵ See also Edward L. Shaughnessy 2006, p. 66.

exactly these two (three?) units of thought differs appreciably from the rest of the work. Due to the otherwise consistent scheme of the individual units of thought, but also the fact that these units are not extant in either of the exhumed authority-based texts, one feels tempted to explain these passages of the received *Lǐ jì* as later intrusions. Lastly, just as seen from the materials collected on the three bundles of strips, “A”, “B”, and “C”, in comparison to the received *Lǎozǐ*, the units of thought assembled in the manuscript version of the “Zī yī” also appear in a very different order than in the received *Lǐ jì*.

6.4.2.1 The Authority-based Text “Zī yī”: Manuscript and Received Text

The two manuscript ‘editions’ of the “Zī yī” are strikingly similar. Blinding out for a moment the fact that the Shànghǎi version of the “Zī yī” is badly preserved, the two manuscript versions seem to have been about the same in length, share the same contents, and the units of thought assembled therein even share the same textual order.³⁶ Notwithstanding the extraordinary overlap of the two manuscripts, which is indeed exceptionable and otherwise unseen, it nevertheless seems that neither of the two was directly used as *Vorlage* for the other, for many characters of the two texts differ. This important observation needs to be explored in more detail.

Most of the different characters can be subsumed under the feature of “graphic variation”, as defined by William G. Boltz.³⁷ That means, in the two manuscripts different graphs were used for expressing essentially the same word.³⁸ Many of the variations were most obviously phonetically orientated.³⁹ This could point to a text that was relatively stable in

³⁶ The Shànghǎi “Zī yī” is seen on twenty-four strips of about 54.3 cm length, if complete (today only eight strips remain intact). Originally, the strips were connected by three binding straps. For the Shànghǎi “Zī yī”, see the Shànghǎi collection of Chǔ manuscripts: Mǎ Chéngyuán 馬承源 2001 vol. 1, pp. 43-68, and pp. 169-213.

³⁷ See William G. Boltz 1997, p. 258.

³⁸ For examples of characters that fall under Boltz’ definition of “graphic variation”, see Shaughnessy 2006, p. 68.

³⁹ In many cases, the phonophoric used remains consistent in the two versions, whereas the significant changes, or is left out entirely. For instance, the Guōdiàn One text writes yà 亞 (OC *ʔ^hak-s) where the Shànghǎi text reads wù 惡 ‘to hate’ (OC *ʔ^hak-s) (see strip ㄗ6/18 of the Guōdiàn One text; ㄗ4/3 of the Shànghǎi manuscript). The two graphs are in the same *xiéshēng* series and share the same phonophoric.

wording but unstable in writing. Yet, we could also imagine a situation, in which a scribe was dictating either of the two texts to himself in the process of producing another copy of this text. This would ultimately result in a phonetically based copy of the text—and not a graphically orientated copy of that *Vorlage*—and could thus explain the graphic variations in these texts despite their otherwise extraordinary textual, that is, structural stability. In other words, it seems that despite the graphic variations seen in the texts, we have no evidence for ruling out that the scribes in question might have either consulted one of the two manuscripts, or a common third *Vorlage* when producing their texts, which, without a doubt, would explain the extraordinary similarity of the two.

Yet, there are also other types of variations occurring in these texts, and these do indeed help us to draw a more precise picture about the textual relationship of the two manuscripts. I have those graphs in mind that basically do express the same concept but that nonetheless do not share the same phonetic value. To provide just one example, in unit 2 of the manuscript versions (what would be *zhāng* 章 11 of the received “Zī yī” from the *Lǐ jì*),⁴⁰ the Guōdiàn One text writes *jiàn* 見 (most likely for *shì* 視) for what the

Another example for a phonetically based graphic variation is *měi* 美 ‘beautiful’ (*mrəj?): the Guōdiàn One manuscript writes 媿 (strip zy1/5) whereas the Shànghǎi text replaces the signific 頁 ‘leaf’ for 女 ‘woman’ (strip Zy1/4). The phonophoric remains consistent in both texts. By implication, the two graphs belong to the same *xiéshēng* series and share the same Old Chinese reading: *měi* 美 ‘beautiful’ (*mrəj?); *wēi* 微 (OC *məj). On strip zy2/2, the Guōdiàn One manuscript writes *yí* 儀 ‘model’ (OC *ŋ(r)aj) with the phonophoric 我 我 ‘we; I’ (OC *ŋ⁶aj?) and the signific 心 ‘heart’, whereas the Shànghǎi manuscript uses the signific 土 ‘earth’ (strip Zy1/24); among many others. An example for a mere phonetic borrowing of otherwise unrelated words, for instance, is the use of *shòu* 獸 ‘hunt; (wild) animal’ (OC *ŋuk-s) in the Guōdiàn One manuscript for *shǒu* 守 ‘to maintain; keep; guard’ (OC *[s-t]u?) in the Shànghǎi text (strip zy38/21 of the Guōdiàn One manuscript; Zy19/36 of the Shànghǎi manuscript), which often occurs in paleographic materials. (This loan only becomes an option after OC *n₂- and *s-t- had merged, which had happened by the time of Middle Chinese, when both become sy-, namely *shòu* 獸 < syuwH; and *shǒu* 守 < syuwX. The use of *shòu* 獸 and *shǒu* 守 seems to indicate that the merger of *n₂- and *s-t- had already occurred by late fourth, early third century BC; personal communication with William H. Baxter). The same is true for the kind of borrowing seen in unit 21, namely the use of *bì* 駢 ‘fat and robust horse’ (OC *[b]i[t] or *[b]ri[t]) for *pǐ* 匹 ‘mate; adversary, enemy’ (OC *p^{hi}i[t]) (zy42/13 of the Guōdiàn One manuscript; Zy21/41 of the Shànghǎi manuscript); among many others.

⁴⁰ Strips zy2/10-3/12 of the Guōdiàn One text; strips Zy1/32-2/16 of the Shànghǎi text. For the received “Zī yī”, I refer to the version seen in the *Lǐ jì zhèng yì* 禮記正義, which is part of the Ruǎn Yuán 阮元 (1764-1849) edition of the *Thirteen Classics* of 1815.

Shànghǎi text expresses with *shì* [目氏], both of which meaning ‘to show’.⁴¹ Whereas the two characters express essentially the same meaning, their phonetic value differs appreciably. The two words do not fulfill the criteria for phonetic similarity in Old Chinese for loan characters and phonetic components: *shì* 視 has the Old Chinese reading *[g]ij-s; or *[g]ijʔ-s (or *jiàn* 見 has the Old Chinese reading *kʰe[n]-s; or *N- kʰe[n]-s); *shì* 眡, instead, reads *[d]i[j](ʔ)-s. Variations of this kind are a rather strong indicator for ruling out that the scribe(s) in question might have copied either of the two manuscripts to produce a new text.⁴² Thus, in spite of the similarity attested, each of the two manuscript versions of the “Zī yī” should be considered having had its own textual history. This is particularly important since the two manuscripts otherwise display such a neat internal textual coherence and, at the same time, display so clear differences with reference to the received version of the text. By implication, the similarity of the two texts has to be explained in a different way than by postulating a shared textual lineage.⁴³

⁴¹ See *Shuōwén jiězì*, p. 132.

⁴² We could, however, also explain this instance by saying that this shows palatalization of velars before front vowels, possibly a Chǔ dialect feature (other examples include *[g]eʔ for *[d]eʔ; *tet as phonophoric in place of *ket-s; personal communication with William H. Baxter). Another example of this kind of variation is a different quotation from a now lost chapter of the Documents, namely the “Proclamation of Yīn” (*Yīn gào* 尹誥) (zy5/9 of the Guōdiàn One manuscript; Zy3/15 of the Shànghǎi manuscript), in which the Shànghǎi version writes *kàng* 康 (OC *k-lʰaŋ) for *tāng* 湯 (OC *(kə-)lʰaŋ) in the line: “It was only Yīn 尹 who truly reached Tāng 湯 (OC *lʰaŋ) (唐)”. Even though the main vowel and the coda of the two words are identical, the two words represented by the different graphs do not share the same position of articulation for the initial. (For the criteria for phonetic similarity in OC for loan characters and phonetic components, see chap. 5: “Xing zì míng chū”, p. 197, n. 80.) Variations of this kind are commonly seen in early Chinese manuscripts. Another variation of this kind also is a quotation from the Documents, namely the “Lord Yá” (*Yá jūn* 雅君) (zy10/8 of the Guōdiàn One manuscript; Zy6/20 of the Shànghǎi manuscript), in which the Guōdiàn One version writes *cāng* 滄 (OC *[tsʰ]aŋ) for *hán* 寒 (OC *[g]ʰa[n]) in the line: “In the sharp cold of the extreme winter, ...”. Similar to what we have recognized above, the main vowel of the two words is identical; yet, the two words have a different position of articulation of the initial, and they do not share the same coda. As it is the case in the other examples, the two words basically have the same (broader) meaning. It seems that the Guōdiàn One “Zī yī” and the one from the Shànghǎi collection of Chǔ manuscripts were using a different *Vorlage* of the Documents. Other differences include variations of the kind in which the different graph used has a different reading *and* a different meaning, such as for instance seen in a quotation from the Odes, namely “King Wén” (*Wén wáng* 文王; Máo 235) (zy34/6 of the Guōdiàn One manuscript; Zy17/29 of the Shànghǎi manuscript), in which the Shànghǎi version writes *yì* 義 (OC *ŋ(r)aj-s) for *jìng* 敬 (OC *kreŋʔ-s).

⁴³ Remember what we have noticed further above in our discussion of the “Wǔ xíng” (chap. 4): not the textual dissimilarity between two copies is noteworthy, but it is high textual overlaps between different manuscripts that should catch our interests. See also our discussion on the textual relationship of the

Instead, it seems that we have to explain this extraordinary textual overlap by postulating that the “Zī yī”, as we see it from the excavated materials under review, did already enjoy the status of a stable work during mid to late Warring States—at least in the confines of some self-aware circles that were active at that time, and in which circles these texts were circulating. The fact that the Guōdiàn One text explicitly names the number of units at the end of the text (*èrshí yòu sān* 二十有三) corroborates this assumption.⁴⁴

The two manuscripts are organized in the following fashion. The opening unit can be identified with what would be *zhāng* 章 2 of the received “Zī yī” from the *Lǐ jì*. Subsequent to what would be *zhāng* 2 of the received “Zī yī” list units 11, 10, 12, 17, 6, 5, 4, 9, 15, 14, 3, 13, 7 (which is split up into two units in the manuscripts), 8, 23, 18, 22, 21, 19, 20, 24—in this order. What would be *zhāng* 1, 16 and the first part of 18 of the received text are not extant in either of the two manuscript versions of the “Zī yī”.⁴⁵

The general structure of these units can be described as follows. Every unit—both in the received text as well as in the manuscript versions—is introduced by quoting the master’s words. In most cases, this statement is headed by the formula “The master says” (*zǐ yuē* 子曰). Only the first unit in the manuscript versions introduces the master’s words with *fū zǐ yuē* 夫子曰, which basically carries the same meaning as *zǐ yuē* 子曰.⁴⁶ It is most likely that the different formula was used to mark off this particular unit as the first entity in the row of altogether twenty-three units of thought.⁴⁷

The introductory statement in general is relatively brief. It ranges from eleven graphs (in unit 20) to fifty-nine graphs (in unit 11) in the manuscript version, and it is only slightly longer in the received text. The statements quoting the master’s words, then, are always

Guōdiàn One “Xìng zì míng chū” with the “Xìng qíng lùn” from the Shànghǎi collection of Chǔ manuscripts (chap. 5).

⁴⁴ Strip zǐ47/5-8. The number has been written on the middle of the strip with blank parts on top and below.

⁴⁵ For a brief reflection on the differences of the various units of the “Zī yī”, see Edward L. Shaughnessy 2006, p. 66, n. 9.

⁴⁶ Another interpretation would be to read *fū* 夫 as a particle, thus making “and now the master says”. This would be in line with the use of this particle in the *Huáinánzǐ*, in which it is the first word of the text.

⁴⁷ In the received version, units 1 and unit 7 have different introductory formulae. I come back to this further below.

corroborated by reference to other authoritative sources. In the manuscript versions this can either be an ode from the anthology called *shī* (Odes), or a quotation from what is generally believed as belonging to what consensus refers to with *shū* (Documents)—or by reference to both.⁴⁸ The composer of the “*Zī yī*” himself does not appear in the text with his own voice—neither in the manuscript versions, nor the received “*Zī yī*”. The idea of each individual unit of thought is thus stated only by reference to statements taken from the pool of a shared belief.⁴⁹ Thus, similar to what we have seen from the various units of thought assembled in bundles “A”, “B”, and “C”, the various units of thought that constitute the authority-based text “*Zī yī*” also rely on the authoritative force implied in these statements:

“Guōdiàn One *Zī yī*” unit 1

^{zy1} 夫子曰：「好美如好緇衣，惡惡如惡巷伯，⁵⁰
則民咸服而型不頓。」⁵¹
詩 ^{zy2} 云：「儀型文王，萬邦作孚。」

^{zy1} The honorable master said: “Love beauty as [I] love the “Black Robes”,⁵² hate wickedness as [I] hate the “Senior Palace Eunuch”⁵³ – and the people will then all

⁴⁸ *Zhāng* 18 of the received text is very different in style as compared to the other units both of the received and the manuscript versions: it is introduced twice by (different) statements from Confucius. The first statement is not followed by any reference to an authoritative source from the shared cultural memory, be it the *shī* or the *shū*. The preceding part is not extant in the manuscript versions. Units 1 and 16 of the received text (both of which are not extant in the manuscript versions) also differ from the overall style of the work: unit 1 only quotes the master’s words without any further reference to any ode or any passage from Documents (on basis of which Shaughnessy 2006, pp. 75, 77 believes that it does indeed belong to the “*Biǎo jì*”, which heads the “*Zī yī*”). Unit 16, instead, lists four quotations from Documents, which is otherwise unseen in the “*Zī yī*”. This unit seems to be a later insertion. Beyond that, the received “*Zī yī*” also quotes the *Changes*, *Yì* 易, once, namely in the concluding line of the final unit 24, which also is not seen in the manuscripts. The manuscript versions of the “*Zī yī*” have no references to *Changes* at all.

⁴⁹ It can be accepted that the master’s words, that is, the statements of Confucius, were widely known in those circles in which the “*Zī yī*” was circulating.

⁵⁰ As mentioned above is the only unit, in which the “*Zī yī*” introduces the words of the Master with the formula *fū zǐ yuē* 夫子曰 “the honorable master said.” The other units introduce the Master’s words with *zǐ yuē* 子曰 “the master said.”

⁵¹ I follow the suggestion of the editors of the Shànghǎi “*Zī yī*” manuscript (see Mǎ Chéngyuán 馬承源 vol. 1, p. 175) to read *zy1/17* with *xián* 咸 ‘all’ instead of *zāng* 臧 ‘good’, as suggested by the editors of the Guōdiàn One “*Zī yī*” (see Húběi shěng Jīngmén shì bówùguǎn 1998, p. 131, n. 4). For the graph *zy1/18 fú* 服 ‘to submit’ (它 in the manuscript) I follow Shaughnessy (2006, p. 94 n. 39) as the archaic forms of 服 and 孚 (the last word of the ode cited) are cognate. For the graphs *zy1/21* (‘model’) and 23 (‘crumble’) I follow Shaughnessy 2006, pp. 72-74 (see also Shaughnessy [Xià Hányí 夏含夷] 2004, pp. 294 f).

submit [to you], and [your] model will not fall down.” Odes^{zy2} say: “A model of propriety, that was King Wén – and the ten-thousand states [all] acted sincerely.”⁵⁴

“Guōdiàn One Zī yī” unit 2

子曰：「有國者章好章惡，以視民厚，則民^{zy3}情不[糸弋]。」
詩云：「情共爾位，好是正直。」

The master said: “If he who possesses a state displays [what he] loves and displays [what he] hates so as to show the common peoples [what he] values important, then the^{zy3} sentiments of the people will not be flawed.”

Odes say: “Be thoughtful and deferential at your position; love those that are honest and [those that are] righteous.”⁵⁵

Such as it holds true for the other representatives of the ideal type authority-based text discussed above, these units of the Guōdiàn One “Zī yī”, and we could also chose other units and arrive at the same conclusion, fully rely on reference to authorities to state their concern—be it Odes or the words of Confucius himself. None of these units attempts to state their point by choosing a so-called ‘systematic’ approach on a certain issue, such as seen from the argument-based texts analyzed above. Different units of thought are not integrated into a larger and coherent whole—at least not on the formal level of composition. Instead, such as seen from the materials assembled in bundles “A”, “B”, and “C”, that is, the so-called “Guōdiàn Lǎozǐ”, each unit of thought is formally unrelated to the other. Even though the two units under review share the same focus, namely proper rule, and refer to authoritative sources so as to state their point in a consistent fashion, they nevertheless do not advance *one* disquisition of a subject by correlating the two units—let alone the entire “Zī yī”—into a larger coherent whole. Instead, similarly to

⁵² Black robes were used as high minister’s court dress during the Zhōu dynasty (ca. 1025-256). Moreover, “Black robes” is a song in the Odes (*Máo* 75). The song “Black Robes” praises the virtuous behaviors of Duke Huán of Zhèng 鄭桓公 (r. 806-771 BC) and his son Duke Wǔ 鄭武公 (r. 770-744 BC).

⁵³ *Xiàng bó* is the title Senior Palace Eunuch of the Zhōu court. The name is also the title of an ode (*Máo* 200). The ode portrays the disrespect of the wickedness of a senior palace eunuch during the reign of King Yōu of Zhōu 周幽王 (r. 781-771 BC). It is most likely that the speaker (Confucius) does not hate the ode as such, but, such as in “Black Robes”, describes his feelings about what is described therein, that is, virtue in the “Black Robes” and wickedness in the “Senior Palace Eunuch”.

⁵⁴ Quoting the ode “Dà yǎ: Wén wáng” (*Máo* 235).

⁵⁵ Quoting the ode “Xiǎo yǎ: Xiǎo míng” (*Máo* 207).

what we have seen from the materials collected in bundles “A”, “B”, and “C”, in which, what LaFargue calls “Laoist saying” [sic], corroborate a generally shared belief, meaning-construction in these units lies in their reference to authority, be it Confucius, Odes, or Documents, not in establishing *argumentative* force.⁵⁶ The recipient simply has to trust that “If he who possesses a state displays [what he] loves and displays [what he] hates”, then the sentiment of common people will “not be flawed”. Or the recipient has to follow the analogy drawn in the second unit quoted, namely that loving beauty and hating wickedness (like Confucius loves the “Black Robes” and hates the “Senior Palace Eunuch”) will result in the people’s submitting to the ruler, whose model will then remain intact, so that, finally, the ruler will be like King Wén—the model of proper rule.

Thus, in a similar fashion like that seen from the materials collected in bundles “A”, “B”, and “C”, the recipient of the text—I should rather say “texts”—is supposed to accept the positions advanced therein as true simply because they are authoritative. The texts do not aim to persuade the recipient of these message(s) by providing something like a balanced disquisition of the subject. The recipient either subscribes to their point, or not.

This is not to say that the various units of thought as seen in the manuscript versions of the “Zī yī” lack a consistent outlook. Conversely, the individual units of thought consistently state the matter by quoting the master’s insights, which can be seen as introductory formula marking off the begin of a unit of thought. The master’s words then witness corroboration (better: proof) in that the unit of thought refers to the authoritative and well-known source of ancient odes (and to a lesser extent passages from the Documents). Despite the fact that the units of thought are not integrated into a coherent whole, the uniform pattern applying to the individual units of thought nevertheless leads to a consistent outlook of the work overall. This macro-consistency, so to speak, does not create argumentative force as seen in the argument-based texts; the different units of thought remain formally isolated. Nevertheless, the macro-consistency creates a high modus of identification of the recipient with the work at large. Due to the fact that the

⁵⁶ For Michael LaFargue’s ideas on the “Lǎozī”, see same author 1992 and 1994. On his notion of “sayings from the oral tradition of a small ‘Laoist’ community”, see idem 1992, pp. 190 ff.

individual units of thought appear in consistent fashion, they satisfy all of a group's expectations. Beyond any doubt, this leads to a great acceptance of the work at large, but also of what is expressed in the various units of thought. Pattern and thought of the work harmonize.⁵⁷ The consistent outlook of the “Zī yī” hence provides the basis for a greater acceptance of a group with the standpoint expressed in the various units of thought; moreover, the macro-consistency of the excavated versions of the “Zī yī”, as Martin Kern has already pointed out, also shows to be an effective tool to assure textual stability—both on the level of the particular unit of thought as well as for the work as a whole.⁵⁸ Thus, even though the individual units of thought of the “Zī yī” remain isolated and thus do not blend into a consistent disquisition of a particular philosophic concern in the fashion of argument-based texts, the macro-consistency of the work nevertheless allows us to conclude that—different from the materials collected in bundles “A”, “B”, and “C”—the “Zī yī”, without a doubt, was considered to be one work during the Warring-States period, even though it contained mutually isolated units.

Before closing this chapter I want to draw attention to another observation, which is necessary for our evaluation of authority-based texts at large: the first unit of the “Zī yī” provides the key how to approach (and thus to understand) this work at large. It presents nothing less than the hermeneutical instruction (*Leseanleitung*) that governs each particular unit of thought as assembled in this work: Confucius states that one should love beauty as he himself loves the “Black Robes”; and that one should hate wickedness as he himself hates “Senior Palace Eunuch”. This line clearly must have had another meaningful level than only the literal information given. “Black Robes” and “Senior Palace Eunuchs” do not simply refer to the phenomenological level, namely the physical court dress of high ministers at the court of the Zhōu and its ritual meaning, or to the office of the Senior palace eunuch and his potential influence on the ruler; nor do these references reveal what is described in these odes. Instead, by advancing the names “Black Robes” and “Senior Palace Eunuch” the author(s) of the “Zī yī” are referring to the cultural information behind the odes as agreed by the social community around the

⁵⁷ Compare this with what David Schaberg (2001, pp. 51 ff.) notes about literary patterning as conceived of an image of the order that cultural achievements would bring about.

⁵⁸ See Martin Kern 2005 (c), pp. 300 f.

master's particular interpretation of these. The author(s) of the “Zī yī” thus—safely—assume that within the confines of certain cultural communities, knowing “Black Robes” by necessity also implies both *knowledge* of a particular cultural interpretation of the same by the particular social community, which the author(s) had in mind when composing the “Zī yī”, but also *identification* with this interpretation (knowledge alone would not suffice to communicate thought). By implication, “Black Robes” not only refers to the ode itself. The quote implies that knowing the ode also implies knowing about all the virtuous behaviors of Duke Huán of Zhèng 鄭桓公 (r. 806-771 BC) and his son Duke Wǔ 鄭武公 (r. 770-744 BC), and also *identifying* this knowledge with the very ode quoted. In the same vein, reference to “Senior Palace Eunuch” simultaneously implies the disrespect of the wickedness of a senior palace eunuch during the reign of King Yōu of Zhōu 周幽王 (r. 781-771 BC). Having this cultural—and group-based—interpretation in mind, the statement advanced in this unit of thought can be seen in a completely different light. Only by understanding that mentioning these odes does not describe Confucius' bias or reservation of the odes themselves but more importantly, *the complex cultural interpretation of these odes by certain textual communities*, that is, groups that consistently identify one corpus of texts (written or oral) as authoritative, and which have agreed on one consistent interpretation of these, one can understand the reference to the odes advanced. By implication, only with this cultural background in mind, one understands what the author(s) of the “Zī yī” had in mind by advancing these quotes.

Meaning-construction in the “Zī yī”, by implication, only works with special cultural training. Again, as seen from the materials from bundles “A”, “B”, and “C”, the fact that these units were written down not only in the direct environment of Guōdiàn One, but also witnessed certain stability in Warring States overall, in itself proves the successful construction of meaning in these groups as seen from the units of thought advanced. This assumption is further corroborated by the fact that an understanding of these units of thought requires a profound preexisting cultural, that is, group-based identification and consent with a given interpretation.

Lastly, by mentioning the Odes in exactly this context, which implies at least one hermeneutical step so that the unit of thought can be meaningful to the recipient of the text, the author(s) of the “Zī yī” show how quotations in the various units of thought are to be taken in order to make sense of the units of thought advanced: they must be taken as integrated cultural wholes. Reference to a particular ode, by implication, implies reference to a particular cultural understanding of the same, as it is current in the textual community around the “Zī yī”. Demanding a particular strategy to generate meaning, the first unit of thought suggests that all units of thought to follow make use of the same device of backing up Confucius words by advancing the Odes (or indeed, the Documents) in this fashion. By implication, the units to follow should be approached in the same fashion as the first unit of this anthology of ideas. Thus, seen from the fact that the unit under review can reasonably be considered to be the hermeneutical instruction to the “Zī yī” at large, it is no wonder that this very unit appears at top of the “Zī yī”—and that it is also marked off accordingly.⁵⁹

6.5. Conclusion

Different from the argument-based texts discussed above, authority-based texts from the same environment do not communicate any concern beyond the level of the particular unit. The individual units of thought remain formally isolated. By implication, each particular unit of the ideal type authority-based text must be approached in its own right. No formal element, be it catchwords or semiotic webs of integrating structures, incorporates the various units of thought into an integrated whole. Seen from the formal level of composition, the authority-based text should thus be understood as collected units of thought; not a coherent entity that advances meaning only as a whole.

Despite this, the example of the “Zī yī” has shown that the authority-based text can likewise have a consistent outlook. The fact that the first unit of thought in the “Zī yī”

⁵⁹ As noted, only the first unit of thought in the “Zī yī” is introduced by the formula *fūzǐ yuē* 夫子曰 “the honorable master says”, instead of by *zǐ yuē* 子曰 “the master says”.

also provides a *Leseanleitung* (hermeneutical instruction) for the collection of thoughts overall, and that this is even marked off in the first unit of this collection, moreover suggests that even in the ideal type of authority-based texts we may find a partly fixed order according to which the units of thought are assembled therein. Such a macro-consistency implies that the individual units of thought are organized in a consistent fashion. Despite the fact that the macro-consistency of such a text does not transform the individual unit of thought into a building block of a larger whole, it nevertheless sanctions the recipient's identification with the work at large and thus leads to greater acceptance of what is expressed in the various units of thought. Accordingly, even though the consistently designed authority-based text remains a collection of isolated units of thought, the macro-consistency can nevertheless sanction a text's overall stability.

The fact that the “Zī yī” not only displays a consistent outlook, but in fact also carries a *Leseanleitung* for the text as a whole, which to some extent also determines the sequence of the units of thought,⁶⁰ furthermore reveals an important insight concerning the idea of composition of this work at large: just like the argument-based text, the authority-based text can be a mindfully designed work. It does not have to be an ‘accidental’ collection of otherwise unrelated materials. This is not a trivial remark. Quite to the contrary: If we recognize that authority-based texts only advance isolated statements on current concerns—despite the fact that the concept of constructing meaning by advancing a systematic discussion in self-contained texts—we then learn that the differences between this ideal type of text and the argument-based texts is not sufficiently explained when pointing to a chronologic-teleological model of text-generation. Instead, as seen, the authority-based text as a whole can also be a consciously designed work. This shows that the ‘failure’ to generate meaning by advancing a so-called systematic discussion of a philosophic problem in a self-contained text might stem from a conscious decision for the production of this type of text (or against the production of argument-based texts). It does, by implication, not necessarily point to earlier chronologic layers of text production. The lack of a so-called systematic discussion in self-contained texts as attested for the

⁶⁰ The particular unit providing a *Leseanleitung* for other entities, by necessity, must head the anthology of thoughts.

authority-based texts hence does not mean that there *was* no such concept at the time when the authority-based text with coherent outlook was composed. Instead, it seems that we should rather explain the composition of the *mindfully designed* authority-based text as intentional choice for exactly this type of text. Or, vice versa, it was an intentional choice against argument-based texts, including all its relevant implications.

Argument-based texts seek to establish their point by ascertaining argumentative force. The addressee of the text is persuaded to accept the philosophic position presented therein as good, and accordingly as something that can be followed and that can be put into practice. The authority-based text, instead, relies on authority for stating its concern. A statement is provided, an authority cited, and that is it. The recipient of the authority-based text can either subscribe to the position of the text; or discard it.

The reliance on authorities implies exclusiveness. As authority-based texts fully rely on authority for stating their concern—and this can be either ‘Confucian’ sayings, quotations from Odes, Documents or other sources of shared memory, what Assmann calls “kulturelles Gedächtnis”⁶¹—the acceptance of and identification with these must have been a necessary precondition for the successful conveyance of their concern. That these texts were written down and persist to the present day furthermore shows that meaning-construction in these texts *was* successful. We must hence assume an agreement of the recipient with the ideas transported, pointing to a largely group-based use and circulation of these texts.

In contrast to the group-based use and circulation of authority-based texts, the use of argument-based texts has a more ‘open’ character. Reasoning on a certain philosophic concern, these texts advance systematic approaches for being persuasive. In this attempt, these texts (or the authors thereof) could not rely on the pre-established identification with the ideas transported. Quite to the contrary, in their attempt to construct meaning, these texts had to generate reasoned disquisitions of philosophic concerns. It can thus justifiably be assumed that the target recipient of these texts, as a rule, is located outside a

⁶¹ Jan Assmann 1999, esp. pp. 19-24.

specified, or ‘closed’, group. Even though argument-based texts may also cite the lore of a shared *élite*-group’s identity, they do not rely on it. Quotations may be a part of their approach. However, their stress lies on a reasoned discussion. Based on the fact that argument-based texts do not rely on authority, but, instead, advance reasoned approaches to be persuasive, hence suggests that these texts did not entail a group-based (and group-restricted) use and circulation. Argument-based texts allow a more ‘democratic’ approach to philosophy.

Authority-based texts are in stark contrast to this. The reliance on authority points to a group-based use and circulation of these texts. The preconditions for a successful construction of meaning is that *élite*-groups of whatever kind must have shared the same values as the those expressed in the authority-based texts; moreover, the recipient also must have accepted the rather dogmatic approach of these texts. From this follows that, on the one hand, authority-based texts had to rely on group-based identities in order to ascertain a successful communication of their concern. On the other hand, authority-based texts also generated the very values to be shared by the recipient of the text. Thus, authority-based texts not only demanded group identities and the consent of ideas for constructing meaning successfully; what is more, these texts themselves also generated groups with shared values and, by implication, enabled articulate group identities. In this mutual relationship of authority-based texts and group identities, either side fueled the (identity-) formation of the other.

The fact that authority-based texts rely on authority to construct meaning, which—given the successful conveyance of thought—implies the consent of the addressee with the ideas conveyed, furthermore suggests that face-to-face communication on the basis of the text has played a vital role in the conveyance of meaning in this type of texts. The authorities quoted—be it reference to Odes or Documents in case of the “*Zī yī*”, or the citation of “Laoist sayings” [sic]—had to be explained in order to be meaningful. The recurring reference to shared knowledge (or group-based knowledge) as seen in these texts makes them look like ideal educational materials in the face of one philosophic concern. In a way, the authority-based texts bear resemblance with archives, as described

by Jack Goody, in that they attempt “to gather together—and in so doing to formalize—all the knowledge that we have, as well as offer critical comments on the accumulated information”.⁶² The information assembled in the authority-based texts is that which is relevant for the group identities. As such, it contains “all the information” necessary for educating (and shaping) the particular groups in mind. Thus, instead of advancing meaningful argumentative patterns for pursuing a consistent disquisition of a philosophic concern throughout the text as a whole (I have called this ‘semiotic webs’ of argument-based texts), distinct masters or a group-based education must have had a similar function for generating meaning in authority-based texts. Conversation with the master on the basis of the text (or cultural, that is, group-based consent with the ideas transported in the text) can hence be considered the ‘semiotic webs’ of the authority-based text. Much later, with the canonization of the authority-based texts, written commentaries substituted these masters’ words. Authority-based texts have then become silent—just like the argument-based texts.

For argument-based texts, it can instead be assumed that they allowed a more autonomous approach to thought. In these texts, the ‘semiotic webs’ lay in formal patterns, not in conversations with a master. These texts are situated outside defined groups. By implication, instead of explaining the composition of either of the two ideal types of text by having a pure chronologic model in mind, I suggest to add more stress on the socio-political background against which these texts were produced. Due to the persuasive character of the argument-based texts and the more reasoned approach for advancing a philosophic concern, argument-based texts have a more articulate “oppositional stance”, as Mark Edward Lewis would call it, and thus advance a rather autonomous voice as compared with the authority-based texts from the same environment of paleographic finding.⁶³ In other words, what we see from the different types of meaning construction as manifested in these texts are the dialectical processes of philosophic discourse and strategies of meaning-construction. Groups having access to different kinds of authority-based texts influence the structure of these texts—and vice

⁶² See Jack Goody 2000, p. 115. The “Spring and Autumns Annals”, *Chūn qiū* 春秋, forms a good reference for a “transmitted archive”.

⁶³ For the “oppositional stance” of a philosophic text, see Mark Edward Lewis 1999, p. 93.

versa (texts forming different social groups)! Reflected in these texts, we see the correlation of social communities and meaning-construction in philosophic writing.

Lastly, history tells us that a group-based circulation was stronger than circulation based on reason: on the one hand, authority-based text had a more exclusive character, as group-based use and circulation must have restricted the wide circulation of these texts. On the other hand, due to the fact that certain groups needed the authority-based texts as a vital element of their group-identity, these texts were better guarded against loss and decay. This is in stark contrast with the rather solitary voice of the argument-based texts. Whereas none of the argument-based texts from Guōdiàn One have survived to the present day, all authority-based texts from same environment persisted into canonized versions: the materials collected in bundles “A”, “B”, and “C” persisted into the later “Lǎozǐ”,⁶⁴ and the “Zī yī” survived as a chapter of the *Lǐ jì*. Especially later in the course of the hardening of distinct ‘schools’, the matter of group identities must have played an enormous role for this. However, this is a different story to tell, which due to space falls out of the scope of the present study.

⁶⁴ On what is sometimes assumed to be part of these materials, namely the so-called materials “Tài yī shēng shuǐ”, see my discussion further below (chap. 7).

