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A good son is sad if he hears the name of his father : the tabooing of names in China as a way of implementing social values

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Citation

Adamek, P. (2012, September 11). *A good son is sad if he hears the name of his father : the tabooing of names in China as a way of implementing social values*. Retrieved from <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/19770>

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Author: Adamek, Piotr

Title: A good son is sad if he hears the name of his father : the tabooing of names in China as a way of implementing social values

Date: 2012-09-11

A Good Son Is Sad if He Hears the Name of His Father

The Tabooing of Names in China as a Way of Implementing Social Values

Proefschrift

ter verkrijging van
de graad van Doctor aan de Universiteit Leiden,
op gezag van Rector Magnificus prof. mr. P.F. van der Heijden,
volgens besluit van het College voor Promoties
te verdedigen op dinsdag 11 september 2012
klokke 13.45 uur

door
Piotr Adamek
geboren te Stalowa Wola
in 1972

Promotiecommissie

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Acknowledgements

This study would not have been written without the support and the help of many people, whom I wish to acknowledge and thank. Especially I am indebted to Prof. Roman Malek who “discovered” the English translation draft of Chen Yuan’s work *Shihui juli*, made by Dr. Heinrich Busch (1912–2002), and recommended it to me as a subject for my doctoral research. Later he continuously supported the project with his advice. I am also deeply grateful to my doctoral thesis supervisor Prof. Barend ter Haar who accompanied me with his experience. His ideas, directions, references and corrections helped me to broaden my scope of research.

Moreover, I want to express my gratitude to the staff of the Sinological Institute in Leiden and the Monumenta Serica Institute in Sankt Augustin, especially to the editors Barbara Hoster and Dirk Kuhlmann for their corrections and to the librarian Alek Stypa for his advice. I profited from helpful suggestions by Zbigniew Wesółowski, Jacek Pawlik, Hartmut Walravens, Françoise Aubin, Carine Defoort, Peter Ramers, Jiang Ryh-Shin and Pan Feng-Chuan and encouragement of my SVD-community, especially by Jerzy Skrabania, Karl Josef Rivinius, Othmar Gächter, Gregor Weimar, Dariusz Piwowarczyk and Günther Gessinger.

My research on the tabooing of names has been assisted by numerous teachers, colleagues, relatives, and friends. Discussions with my Chinese friends Anna Zhang, Johanna Zhang, Elisabeth Guo, Teresa Li, Maria Guan, Joseph Xue, Joseph Jing and Joseph Gao opened for me some new perspectives. Colleen Sunderland corrected my English. Last but not least, the support of my parents and siblings was very important for me.

Conventions

All Chinese names and quotations are reproduced in traditional Chinese characters, with the only exception of the titles of modern articles and books, published in the People's Republic of China in simplified characters. We give the Chinese characters of a word or name at their first occurrence and wherever they are relevant to the argument of this study. The transcription of all Chinese characters in text is in *hanyu pinyin*, other transcription systems in quotations have also have been changed to *hanyu pinyin*. The translation of book titles follows Wilkinson 2000 when available.

For convenience sake the characters to the examples of taboo names are also listed at the end of the dissertation in two Alphabetical and Chronological Lists.

Abbreviations

CAB	China Ancient Books database 中國基本古籍庫 (provided by Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin)
CAJ	China Academic Journals Full-text Database (provided by Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin)
CSJC	<i>Congshu jicheng (chubian)</i> 叢書集成初編
d.	died
j.	juan
r.	reigned
SBBY	<i>Sibu beiyao</i> 四部備要
SBCK	<i>Sibu congkan</i> 四部叢刊
SKQS	<i>Siku quanshu</i> 四庫全書

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Reading about the history of China, one finds many stories of people's lives. Some of them are amusing, others are tragic. There is for example the comic story about the minister and teacher Feng Dao 馮道 (882–954) living in the period of Five Dynasties. He was teaching the *Daodejing* to his students, including the famous first line: “The Dao that can be trodden is not the enduring and unchanging Dao” (*dao ke dao fei chang dao* 道可道非常道).¹ Yet the students did not dare to read the character *dao* aloud, as it was the name of their teacher. Every time they had to read the sentence, they read it as: “‘Not dare to say’ that can be ‘Not dare to say’ is not the enduring and unchanging ‘Not dare to say’” (*bukan shuo ke bukan shuo fei chang bukan shuo* 不敢说可不敢说, 非常不敢说).² The example is also interesting because of its information on learning practice.

Two other stories about Xu Ji 徐積 (1028–1103) and Liu Wensou 劉溫叟 (909–971) come from the Song period. The father of Xu Ji had the name Shi 石 and the father of Liu Wensou the name Yue 岳. The names of these fathers meant “stone” (*shi*) and “high mountains” (*yue*), which affected their sons for their entire lives. The first one never used stone tools in his life, and had to pay extraordinary attention when walking, in order not to step on stones. Once, as he happened upon a stone bridge on his way, he had to ask other people to carry him across the bridge on their back.³ Liu Wensou, on the other hand, never hiked in the mountains all his life. Moreover, he could never listen to the music, because the word for “music” (*yue* 樂) sounded like the word for “high mountains”.⁴ Even if such stories may be partly apocryphal, they do illustrate the enormous impact that was ascribed to name taboos.

Some stories are tragic, as shown by the following example of Wang Xihou 王錫侯 (1713–1777), a scholar from Jiangxi. In 1775, he compiled a dictionary, called *Ziguan* 字貫. In the introduction to it, he wrote, for illustrative purposes, the personal names of Confucius and three emperors: Kangxi, Yongzheng and Qianlong. In oversight, he wrote

¹ *Daodejing*, j. 1, p. 1. For translation see Legge 1963, p. 95.

² Probably the story was recorded first in *Leishuo*, j. 49, p. 3225, of Zeng Zao 曾慥 (d. ca. 1160). The story can also be found in *Tianzhongji*, j. 24, p. 29 of Chen Yaowen 陳耀文 (16 c.) and in *Wuzazu*, j. 16, p. 3, of Xie Zhaozhi 謝肇淛 (1567–1624), as well as in later works. Another possible translation of the sentence: “‘Not dare to say’ that can be ‘Not dare to say’ is very ‘Not dare to say’.”

³ *Bishu luhua*, j. 2, pp. 65–66 by Ye Mengde 葉夢得 (1077–1147).

⁴ *Qidong yeyu*, j. 4, p. 44, by Zhou Mi 周密 (1232–1298). See also Ma Yifan 2008, pp. 103–104; Ma Yifan 2008a, p. 63.

their complete names. When he realized it, he cut the names from the printing blocks, but a number of unexpurgated copies had already passed into circulation. This accidental writing of a few names cost him his life. It was condemned by Emperor Qianlong as an unprecedented crime, rebellion and high treason. Wang Xihou was executed on December 27, 1777. His property was confiscated and his books were burnt. His family was arrested and his sons and grandsons were killed or sent as slaves to Heilongjiang. The governor and a few officials of Jiangxi province were dismissed.⁵ This happened during the heyday of the so-called Literary Inquisition, a period of intense scrutiny of publications for any possible form of conscious or (most of the time) unconscious written criticism of the Qing dynasty and its Manchu origins.⁶

No less tragic is the story, predating the former by fifty years, that recounts the life of an official from Zhejiang province, Zha Siting 查嗣庭 (1664–1727), who was sent to conduct examinations for the *juren*-degree (舉人 “recommended man”) in Jiangxi province during the reign of the Yongzheng 雍正 emperor. In 1726, he confirmed the following verse of the *Classic of Poetry* (*Shijing*): “(The royal domain of a thousand *li*) is where the people rest” (*wei min suo zhi* 維民所止)⁷ as the topic of the examination essay. Yet somebody realized that the characters *wei* 維 and *zhi* 止 of the sentence resembled the name of the Emperor but missing the top part, in other words being “decapitated” characters. The emperor was furious and ordered the arrest of Zha Siting, who soon fell ill and died in prison. His corpse was dismembered and displayed in public. His two elder brothers were imprisoned and his wife exiled. A special imperial decree suspended provincial examinations in Zhejiang for a few years.⁸ His fate is not entirely surprising, since the Yongzheng emperor had come to the throne only recently and there were rumours that he had acquired the throne in an irregular way. He would therefore have been extremely sensitive on this issue.⁹

⁵ *Donghua xulu* “Qianlong chao 乾隆朝”, j. 86, p. 11, by Wang Xianqian 王先謙 (1842–1917). See also Hummel 1943, pp. 819–820. One more accusation was that the names of the emperors were written after the name of Confucius.

⁶ More about the Literary Inquisition see Guy 1987.

⁷ *Shijing*, j. 21, p. 13. For an English translation see James Legge 1966, p. 637. Hummel (1943, p. 22) gives *Daxue* as the source of the quotation, which, however, reads (with reference to *Shijing*): *wei min suo zhi* 惟民所止, having the character *wei* 惟 in place of *wei* 維, cf. *Daxue*, j. 3, p. 3. For the English translation of *Daxue* see Legge 1970, p. 317.

⁸ *Huaiting zaibi*, j. 13, pp. 4–5 of Fa Shishan 法式善 (1753–1813). About the case see also Hummel 1943, p. 22; Goodrich 1966, pp. 80–81. For Zha Siting see *Zhongguo renming da cidian* 1964, p. 656.

⁹ About Yongzheng see also ter Haar 2009, pp. 435–480.

There are many curious and tragic stories in the history of China that have as their common denominator a taboo name that affected people's lives and sometimes even brought death. Thus, the practice of tabooing names in China affected and determined social values for centuries and was important for commoners and emperors alike. It was considered an important part of social and political culture. But why was the tabooing of names so important that ignoring tabooed characters could even result in capital punishment? What do we actually know about the tabooing of names in China?

In the following, we will try to answer these and other questions connected with the fascinating topic of tabooing of names.

1.1. Subject Matter

This dissertation deals with the tabooing of names in China, which is called *bihui* 避諱 in Chinese. The names of sovereigns, gods, holy men, ancestors, officials, teachers, friends, etc. were all considered taboo, in other words it was prohibited to pronounce them or to record them in writing. Furthermore, because of the specific features of the Chinese language, characters identical or similar in writing or pronunciation were often avoided as well.

It is surprising what an enormous impact *bihui* had on Chinese culture. The tabooing of names was observed in the family and on the street, in the office and in the emperor's palace. The practice of *bihui* had serious consequences for the lives of the Chinese and for Chinese historiography. It resulted in the changing of thousands of personal names, official titles, geographical names and so forth, but also of the names of plants and things, common expressions, and even the Heavenly Stems—characters that are used in the Chinese system of dating days, months and years.¹⁰ People avoided certain places and things, and they refused to accept offices. They were punished and sometimes even killed in connection with the tabooing of names. Old texts were “improved”, old meanings changed and forgotten.

The tabooing of names was not a short-lived phenomenon in the history of China. It was present in just about every period. The first written evidence of *bihui* that we have probably comes from the time of Western Zhou (1046-771 BC). However the tabooing of names was not only a written, but also an oral custom (see 3.3.1.4), and it is likely that the

¹⁰ Cihai 2009, p. 502. The Ten Heavenly or Celestial Stems are *jia* 甲, *yi* 乙, *bing* 丙, *ding* 丁, *wu* 戊, *ji* 己, *geng* 庚, *xin* 辛, *ren* 壬, *gui* 癸. No case of tabooing of characters of the Earthly Branches (*dizhi* 地支) could be discovered.

practice is much older and goes back to the language taboos of prehistoric China. The custom persisted throughout the imperial period, from the Qin dynasty founded in 221 BC and ending with the abdication of the last Qing emperor in 1912, with a peak in the Song period (960-1279). After the last Chinese emperor was forced to abdicate and the Republic was established in 1912, the practice of tabooing names slowly became less prevalent, though it is still not entirely extinguished.

In its long history, numerous changes took place in the tabooing of names. Various methods were used in different periods to avoid taboo names or characters, such as a change of pronunciation, changes in the way of writing a character, just leaving an empty space, masking it with a piece of yellow paper, etc. A complex system of rules was created in order to take the strain of and to avoid exaggerated tabooing. It was determined by whom, when and where a taboo had to be observed or not. *Bihui* was an expression of courtesy and respect, fear and anger, legitimization of power and religious protection.

Tabooing of names is a worldwide phenomenon which can be seen in many cultures on every continent. For example the name of God (YHWH) was taboo for Jews,¹¹ and numerous other examples of taboos on names of relatives, the deceased, kings and sacred persons can be found for instance in old Egypt¹² and Rome,¹³ as well as among the Aborigines in Australia.¹⁴ However, because of the specific nature of the Chinese writing system and the length of this cultural tradition, the *bihui* of China was very particular and it is hard to find any other nation having such an elaborate system of name taboos.

The taboo custom existed as an important element of Chinese culture and was perceived as significant by Chinese and foreigners alike (for examples of tabooing in Korea and Japan, see 9.5). The tabooing of names was used for implementing social values and demonstrating the political hierarchy. The status of a human being in society was given a “material” expression through the taboo of his name. Rulers struggled for the maintenance of the taboos of their names as a very important affirmation of their legitimacy. A name was considered the essence (“soul”) of a human being, and the tabooing of names was seen as the centre (“heart”) of culture, i.e., of the norms and values which structure the society.¹⁵

¹¹ See Van Imschoot 1968, p. 796-798.

¹² Mathewson Denny 1987, p. 304. The most powerful name for a god in Egypt was his secret name.

¹³ Mathewson Denny 1987, p. 304. Romans preserved secret lists of divine names.

¹⁴ Mathewson Denny 1987, p. 303, 306. The high god’s names were closely guarded secrets, known only to the initiated males of high status. A person’s secret name was never uttered beyond the ritual setting.

¹⁵ Burszta 2010, p. 6. The author quotes the Polish philosopher Leszek Kołakowski (1928–2009), who wrote: “... Culture is taboos or, to put it another way, a culture without taboos is a square circle.” See

Chinese culture cannot be contemplated without the tabooing of names, as a crucial expression of the way in which social values were implemented and expressed.

1.2. Terminology

This section will map out the basic terminology and concepts around name tabooing, as encountered in Chinese and Western literature. It is necessary to define our terms and to point out the specific ways in which terms such as “taboo” in our analysis of Chinese name tabooing will be used. The reader who is less interested in such issues may of course skip this section.

Western terminology

The term “taboo” is one of the basic concepts of ethnology. In modern ethnology it is defined as: “a social prohibition or restriction sanctioned by suprasocietal (innate) means or a socially sanctioned injunction alleged to have the force of such a prohibition (...) at the intersection of human affairs and the forces of the larger universe.”¹⁶ A more elaborate and systematic characterization of the concept of taboo in general and in China will be made in the next chapter (see 2.1). Here it is important to point out that the concept of taboo is very wide and describes many kinds of prohibitions in every culture with, of course, contextual differences in every case. It has to be considered that the cultural and religious context of China (for example, the question of suprasocietal authority) makes Chinese taboo specific. Nevertheless, the use of such a general term helps us to see connections with other civilizations and is useful today. The Western concept of taboo covers such Chinese concepts as *bihui* 避諱, *jinji* 禁忌 and *jihui* 忌諱.

There is a special kind of (language) taboo, called “name taboo.” It is connected with the names of men or ghosts, and can be observed in many cultures. It includes “naming taboo”, i.e., taboos involved in the process of selecting a new name at birth or even later in life, in other words specific rules which names cannot be used. But there are also names (words or characters) which became taboo in other circumstances, for example when a new ruler was installed (see 5.4.2) or a girl was married into a new family (see 6.4.2).

Kołakowski 1993, p. 186.

¹⁶ Wagner 1987, p. 233.

Probably the best Western term corresponding to the Chinese term *bihui* is “tabooing of name” (or “name tabooing”), which will be used in this dissertation. This term will be used to refer to the whole range of “name taboo,” its evolution and context. This includes customs related to spoken and written names, and includes the power of names and the context of their avoidance. Possible variations in the understanding of the term will be explained in concrete cases. Below I will discuss in more detail possible ambiguities of meaning between the Chinese and English expression for taboo, including name taboo, just as we find them in many other “intercultural concepts” (for example, in conceptual pairs such as *zongjiao* 宗教 and religion, or Confucianism and *rujia* 儒家, where the Chinese and English terms do not perfectly coincide with each other).¹⁷ Therefore the term “tabooing of name” should also be used with reservation.

The Chinese idea of *bihui* as “the avoidance of names” is a direct translation of the term without the burden of historical connections (as, for example, the term “taboo”) and can serve as a neutral expression for our topic. It expresses, however, only one important aspect of *bihui*. Apart from avoiding names, *bihui* also includes other cases of taboo. There are, for example, instances of intentionally breaking taboos (see 4.4.6), invoking the powerful taboo name of ghosts in order to control them (see 1.2.3) or using inauspicious characters to harm people (6.1.3). The term “avoiding” or “avoidance of names” does not express the deeper background of *bihui* as a specific cultural practice, with its rich connotations in the Chinese context. Because the term “taboo” has been long established in Western scholarship, we will still use this term in this dissertation, despite the fact that this will introduce some spill-over from other fields of study.

Concealment and euphemism are methods specifically used in Chinese historiography for protecting or punishing one person. The record of a name or description of a situation can be intentionally omitted (concealed) or denoted in other indirect words (euphemism). These methods are also related to *bihui*. They are, however, not necessarily a case of name tabooing. Concrete examples of concealment and euphemism will be described later (see 3.3.1).¹⁸

¹⁷ For discussion about “terminology transfers” see Thoraval 1996, pp. 58-61. About the concept of “religion” in China see, for instance, Feuchtwang 2010, pp. 11-28; Feuchtwang 1989, pp. 43-44; Ching 1993, pp. 1-3. For concepts of Confucianism and *ru* see Jensen 1997, esp. pp. 137-147, 154-181.

¹⁸ For more about concealment and euphemism in Chinese historiography see Emmrich 1992, pp. 36-46.

Different terms can be used in the western terminology for the phenomenon of Chinese *bihui*. The term “tabooing of names”, despite of its connotations, seems to be the best expression for the diversity of the topic.

Chinese terminology

With regard to *bihui* 避諱, three different connotations are known: a. “to keep something in secret, to conceal, to deflect” (*huibi* 迴避, *taobi* 逃避, *yinhui* 隱諱); b. “the avoidance of an unpleasant situation, or of inauspicious characters and words”; and c. the concrete narrow (perhaps original) sense of “tabooing names of persons deserving respect.”¹⁹ If it is not explicitly stated, we use *bihui* only in the third meaning.

The character *bi* 避 can be found already in the oracle inscriptions as 𠄎, where it denotes the name of a person (subject of a king) or the name of a state.²⁰ In early texts such as the *Mencius* (*Mengzi*) or *Sayings of the states* (*Guoyu*) etc. it means: “to abandon, to deflect, to counteract, to offend, to refuse politely, to obviate.”²¹ It can be found in such compositions as: *biji* 避忌 (taboo), *bixiefu* 避邪符 (amulet to avoid evil), *bixiong* 避凶 (to avoid calamity).

The character *hui* 諱 was recorded from the Western Zhou on bronze vessels as 諱 and means: “to go astray, to make a mistake.” In the Eastern Zhou (772-221 BC) it was written as 諱 and the meaning was already: “to be filled with fear, hesitate, to be disobedient”, for instance in the phrase *buhui* 不諱 – “to be deprived of longevity.”²² We find this character in the ancient texts such as the *Tradition of Zuo* (*Zuozhuan*) (“not to speak, to keep silent, to conceal”), *Rites of Zhou* (*Zhouli*) (as a posthumous name of ancient sovereigns which is prohibited), *Mozi* (“to avoid, to evade”), *Records of Ritual* (*Liji*: “not to pronounce a taboo name, the taboo name”). Similar meanings of *hui* can be found in *Chuci* (“to conceal”).²³ There are many possible compositions in which the character *hui* is used, such as *fanhui* 犯諱 (“to violate a taboo”), *yinhui* 隱諱 (“taboo”), *huicheng* 諱稱 (“the avoided name of a dead or of a respected person”), *huibing* 諱病 (“to conceal a

¹⁹ Cf. *Xiandai Hanyu cidian* 2005, p. 65; Wang Xinhua 2007, pp. 1-2; Wang Yankun 1997, p. 1; Fan Zhixin, p.1.

²⁰ *Jiaguwen zidian* 1988, pp. 156-157.

²¹ Cf. for example *Mengzi*, j. 2, p. 14; *Guoyu*, j. 1, p. 1. See also *Hanyu dacidian* 1993, Vol. 10, p. 1267; *Grand Dictionnaire Ricci* 2001, Vol. 4, pp. 997-998.

²² *Jinwen dacidian* 1999, p. 4367; *Grand Dictionnaire Ricci* 2001, Vol. 3, p. 244.

²³ Cf. *Zuozhuan*, j. 5, p. 16; *Zhouli*, j. 6, p. 43; *Mozi*, j. 9, p. 2; *Liji*, j. 1, pp. 38-40; *Chuci*, j. 6, p. 2. See also *Hanyu dacidian* 1993, Vol. 11, p. 357.

malady”), *huizi* 諱字 and *huiyan* 諱言 (both meaning “to avoid a character or mentioning”), *huishi* 諱飾 (“to mask, to disguise”). There are also many character combinations connected with every kind of taboo. The expression *bihui* 避諱 was probably first used in Han times in the work *Huainanzi*, in the meaning of a common taboo without direct connection to naming practices.²⁴

An important word used in the context we are concerned with here is *jinji* 禁忌. It is the most frequently used Chinese word for taboo, defined in the 1999 edition of the *Sea of Words (Cihai)* dictionary as: “Men or things prohibited from coming into contact with common people, as well as taboo (*jihui* 忌諱) terms, words and actions.”²⁵ The character *jin* 禁 is not known in oracle or bronze inscriptions. It appears in works such as the *Han Feizi* or *Records of Ritual (Liji)* in the meaning of “interdiction, prohibition, secret, imperial domain, to abandon, fear of God, to exorcise.”²⁶ In contrast, the character *ji* 忌, which appears in bronze inscriptions as 𠄎 or 𠄎,²⁷ has the meaning “to envy, to hate, to fear, to venerate, anniversary of death (especially of king or parents), the seventh day after death” in works such as the *Classic of Poetry (Shijing)*, *Classic of Documents (Shangshu)* and *Zhou Changes (Zhouyi)*.²⁸ Possible compositions are: *jihui* 忌諱, *jibi* 忌避. Also interesting are the words *jixin* 忌心 (“envy” – note that the character *xin* 心 – heart, feeling – does not appear together with *jin* 禁), *jichen* 忌辰 (“anniversary of the death of emperor or of parents, as a day when wine and affairs have to be avoided”),²⁹ *jiri* 忌日 (“taboo day”) and *jiyue* 忌月 (“taboo month”). The last two combinations have a special meaning in Buddhism as taboo days or months.³⁰ Similar in meaning to the character *ji* 忌 is the character *ji* 忌, which can be found in the bronze inscriptions of the Eastern Zhou as 𠄎 (“to be full of fear and respect”)³¹ and in *Huainanzi* (as “to alert”).³² It is also translated as “sincere” or “taboo.”³³ *Jin* 禁 and *ji* 忌 appear separately in early Chinese texts, but from the Eastern

²⁴ *Huainanzi*, j. 21, p. 4.

²⁵ *Cihai* 1999, p. 849.

²⁶ *Han Feizi*, j. 1, p. 10; *Liji*, j. 1, p. 40. See also *Hanyu dacidian* 1993, Vol. 7, pp. 919–920; *Grand Dictionnaire Ricci* 2001, Vol. 1, pp. 1035–1038.

²⁷ *Jinwen dazidian* 1999, p. 1818; *Grand Dictionnaire Ricci* 2001, Vol. 1, p. 447.

²⁸ *Shijing*, j. 1, p. 8; *Shangshu*, j. 6, p. 59b; *Zhouyi*, j. 5, p. 1. See also *Hanyu dacidian* 1993, Vol. 7, p. 406; *Grand Dictionnaire Ricci* 2001, Vol. 1, pp. 447–448.

²⁹ Cf. *Grand Dictionnaire Ricci* 2001, Vol. 1, pp. 447–448.

³⁰ *Foxue dacidian* 1961, Vol. 2, p. 1118.

³¹ According to *Grand Dictionnaire Ricci* 2001, Vol. 1, p. 501.

³² *Huainanzi*, j. 10, p. 3.

³³ Cf. *Hanyu dacidian* 1993, Vol. 11, p. 251; *Grand Dictionnaire Ricci* 2001, Vol. 1, p. 501.

Han period onwards they also appear together (for instance in the *Book of the Han – Hanshu* – the history of the Western Han that was written in the early Eastern Han).³⁴ Yet there was still a difference in meaning between the two words. *Jin* denotes the intervention of external (usually supernatural) power and is associated with a ruler (in society) or a deity (in the religion). *Ji* is a subjective sense (emotion) of interdiction of an activity. Hence *jin* had also an exorcistic meaning and *ji* did not.³⁵ The combination *jinji* expresses the merging of collective (social and religious) restrictions for the individual and his own psychological and emotional limitations.

Another term used in Chinese for “taboo” is *jihui* 忌諱. Both characters (*ji* and *hui*) were already used together in the *Rites of Zhou (Zhouli)*, where *ji* means the “day of death of former kings,” and *hui* refers to their taboo names.³⁶ The word *jihui* is similar to *jinji*, and is often used as its equivalent. The difference lies in the emphasis of prohibition. *Jihui* is used especially for describing local customs and restrictions and we will not use it very often in this study.³⁷

One more term connected with “taboo” is *jie* 戒. It can be found already in the oracle inscriptions as two hands with a halberd 𠄎, where it means “to perform the *jie* sacrifice.”³⁸ In the bronze inscriptions of the Eastern Zhou it denotes “to be vigilant.”³⁹ In texts such as *Classic of Changes (Yijing)*, *Classic of Documents (Shangshu)*, *Classic of Poetry (Shijing)*, *Analects (Lunyu)*, *Mengzi* it means “to be attentive, to protect against a danger, to prepare for a ceremony through abstinence.”⁴⁰ Later the term *jie* or *jielü* 戒律 was also used in Buddhism as a translation of Sanskrit word *śīla* (“ethical rules of Buddhist life, natural moral behaviour pattern as opposed to monastic rules”).⁴¹ There are many precepts (*jie*) in Buddhism, but none of them has a connection with the tabooing of name. However, in the Buddhist initiation ritual a new name is acquired, which is called *jieming* 戒名 (“Dharma name”), also known as *faming* 法名, *fahao* 法號, or *fahui* 法諱 (see 9.2.2).

³⁴ *Hanshu*, j. 30, p. 19.

³⁵ For exorcistic practices see Poo Mu-chou 1998, pp. 52-53.

³⁶ *Zhouli*, j. 6, p. 43.

³⁷ We can say that “*ji* is the same as *hui*, but *jin* is not the same as *hui*” (Ren Cheng 2004, p. 5). Cf. also the differentiation of taboo terms in the *Liji*: “If you enter one state, you should ask about *jin*, if you enter one county, you should ask about *su* 俗 (customs), if you enter one house, you should ask about *hui*” (*Liji*, j. 1, p. 40).

³⁸ *Jiaguwen zidian* 1988, p. 239.

³⁹ *Jinwen dazidian* 1999, p. 1906; *Grand Dictionnaire Ricci* 2001, Vol. 1, p. 746.

⁴⁰ *Zhouyi*, j. 2, pp. 1-2; *Shangshu*, j. 1, p. 26a, *Shijing*, j. 1, p. 2, *Lunyu*, j. 16, p. 5, *Mengzi*, j. 2, p. 8.

⁴¹ *Foxue dacidian* 1961, Vol. 2, pp. 1107-1108 ; *A Dictionary of Chinese Buddhist Terms* 1937, p. 239; *Grand Dictionnaire Ricci* 2001, Vol. 1, p. 746.

In Daoism the character *jie* also denotes precepts for daily life and ritual rules.⁴² The character *jie* also appears in general terms in combinations such as *jieji* 戒忌 (“to abstain, to beware”), *jiexin* 戒心 (“to be watchful, vigilant”) and *jieyan* 戒言 (“injunctions, precepts”).⁴³

In order to avoid the different connotations between Chinese and Western terms, Chinese scholars sometimes use the Chinese transcription of the English word “taboo” (which was originally a Polynesian term): *tabu* 塔怖 or 塔布. The difference between Chinese *jinji* and Western “taboo” seems to be, however, primarily historical, as they both are labels for customs and practices that may vary widely between different cultures. Some Chinese scholars in religious studies point out that in the beginning, the Western concept of taboo meant only spiritual power (*mana*) and did not include impurity.⁴⁴ Only later did it grow into the general term which can be considered more or less identical to the present Chinese term *jinji*. However, Chinese scholars in folklore studies regard “taboo” and *jinji* as synonyms, pointing out that there was no distinction between the “sacral” and the “impure” in the Chinese past.⁴⁵

1.3. State of the Field in Taboo Studies

Writing on *bihui* has a long tradition in China, starting from the Han dynasty. Tools such as lists of taboos, depiction of rules, examples of tabooing and discussion about related problems were created in order to clarify and define the practice of tabooing names and to help people in carrying out the taboos. The first known descriptions and rules for tabooing names can be found in the *Tradition of Zuo* (*Zuozhuan*) and *Records of Ritual* (*Liji*, see 3.3.1). Taboo clauses were present also in many imperial decrees since the Han dynasty (see 4.1.1 and 4.2.2. for the Han). Many examples of taboo can be found in the Standard Histories (*zhengshi* 正史, see, for example, 4.1.1). The first works dealing explicitly with name taboos were collections and lists of existing taboos (see 4.4.2). They show how important the knowledge about names and their taboo already was at an early stage of Chinese history. The earliest larger work specifically dealing with *bihui* seems to be *Taboo Names of Former Rulers* (*Jiujun minghui* 舊君名諱) written by Ying Shao 應劭 (2 c. AD)

⁴² *Zhonghua daojiao da cidian* 1995, p. 564. More about *jie*, *jin* and *ji* as kinds of precepts in Daoism see Kohn 2004, pp. 2-4.

⁴³ Cf. *Hanyu dacidian* 1993, Vol. 5, pp. 206-207; *Grand Dictionnaire Ricci* 2001, Vol. 1, pp. 746-747.

⁴⁴ About the relation between *mana* and “taboo,” and their inseparability see: Greschat 1992, pp. 13-16.

⁴⁵ Ren Cheng 2004, p. 3-4.

during the period of Eastern Han time.⁴⁶ Unfortunately, this work has been lost, in addition to two other works of the first millennium, *Explanation of Taboo* (*Shihui* 釋諱) written by Chen Shou 陳壽 (233-297) in the Jin era,⁴⁷ and *Outline of Taboos* (*Huixinglüe* 諱行略) written by an unknown author during the Tang dynasty.⁴⁸ An extensive search has failed to find any quotations from these three works by subsequent authors. They were probably lists of dynastic taboos (so-called *huipu* 諱譜).

The first extant detailed comments on *bihui* originate from the Song period. There are chapters or subchapters of works dealing with taboos of successive dynasties, as for example in *Tolerant Study Notebooks* (*Rongzhai suibi* 容齋隨筆) by Hong Mai 洪邁 (1123–1202),⁴⁹ in *Collection by a Villager* (*Yeke congshu* 野客叢書) of Wang Mao 王楙 (1151–1213),⁵⁰ in *Forest of Learning* (*Xuelin* 學林) of Wang Guanguo 王觀國 (12 c.),⁵¹ and in *Rustic Words of a Man from Eastern Qi* (*Qidong yeyu* 齊東野語) of Zhou Mi 周密 (1232–1298).⁵² The custom of name tabooing is also discussed briefly in this period by Peng Shuxia 彭叔夏 in *Finest Blossoms in the Garden of Literature* (*Wenyuan yinghua bianzheng* 文苑英華辨證),⁵³ Lü Zuqian 呂祖謙 (1137–1181) in *Ancient Prose Key* (*Guwen guanjian* 古文關鍵),⁵⁴ Yue Ke 岳珂 (1183–1243) in *Records of Kui Tan* (*Kui Tan lu* 媿鄰錄),⁵⁵ Wang Qinruo 王欽若 (962–1025) in his encyclopedia *Outstanding Models from the Storehouse of Literature* (*Cefu yuangui* 冊府元龜). The last book lists taboo names of emperors of former dynasties⁵⁶ and mentions a few rules and examples of tabooing.⁵⁷ Larger works of the Song period, such as: Song Minqiu's 宋敏求 (1019–1079) *Later Records About Taboo Practice* (*Huixing houlu* 諱行後錄) in five *juan*,⁵⁸ and Li Chun's 李椿 *Restoration of Civil Exams*

⁴⁶ According to *Jingshi biming huikao*, j. 3, p. 66. The work is first listed as *Runan junhuiyi* 汝南君諱議 in *Suishu*, j. 33, p. 8. Runan (today in Hunan province) is the home county of Ying Shao. About Ying Shao see Loewe 1993, p. 105.

⁴⁷ See *Huayang guozhi*, j. 11, p. 7, written also in the Jin period by Chang Ju 常璩 (291–361). The work is mentioned there in the biography of Chen Shou.

⁴⁸ *Jingshi biming huikao*, j. 3, p. 66. The work is listed as *Huixinglu* 諱行錄 in *Xin Tangshu*, j. 58, p. 16 and in *Songshi*, j. 203, p. 12.

⁴⁹ *Rongzhai suibi*, j. 4, p. 49; j. 9, p. 123; j. 11, p. 142.

⁵⁰ *Yeke congshu*, j. 5, p. 44; j. 9, p. 83; j. 19, pp. 191–192.

⁵¹ *Xuelin*, j. 3, pp. 67–70.

⁵² *Qidong yeyu*, j. 4, pp. 39–45.

⁵³ *Wenyuan yinghua bianzheng*, j. 8, pp. 54–55.

⁵⁴ *Guwen guanjian*, j. 1, pp. 16–18.

⁵⁵ *Kui Tan lu*, j. 2, pp. 3–5.

⁵⁶ *Cefu yuangui*, j. 3, pp. 6–17.

⁵⁷ *Cefu yuangui*, j. 31, pp. 15–19; j. 182, pp. 16–21.

⁵⁸ Recorded in *Songshi*, j. 203, p. 13.

(*Zhongxing dengke xiaolu* 中興登科小錄) in three *juan*⁵⁹ are sadly lost. No works of authors from the Yuan and Ming periods dealing with tabooing of names were discovered in the course of this study.

The writing on name tabooing was continued in the Qing dynasty. A few works are known from that period, such as Lu Feichi's 陸費墀 (1731–1790) *Register of Emperors' Temple, Posthumous, Era and Taboo Names* (*Lidai diwang miaoshi nianhui pu* 歷代帝王廟諡年諱譜) in one *juan*, Huang Benji's 黃本驥 (1781–1856) *Register of Taboo Names* (*Bihui lu* 避諱錄) in five *juan*, and Zhou Ju's 周槩 *Outline of Taboo Names in Twenty Two Standard Histories* (*Nianer shihuilue* 廿二史諱略). In addition to the list of name taboos of past dynasties, these works gave examples of their avoidance in the past, too. But as Chen Yuan 陳垣 (1880–1971) already noted, “these three books came from the same source (*Qidong yeyu* 齊東野語), gave no quotations, had a large amount of mistakes and cannot be a foundation for further research.”⁶⁰ Specialized discussion of *bihui* can be found in works of some historians of that time, such as Gu Yanwu 顧炎武 (1613–1682) in *Record of Knowledge Gained Day by Day* (*Rizhi lu* 日知錄),⁶¹ Zhao Yi 趙翼 (1727–1814) in *Miscellaneous Notes from my Mourning Period* (*Gaiyu congkao* 陔餘叢考),⁶² Wang Mingsheng 王鳴盛 (1722–1798) in *A Critical Study of the Seventeen Histories* (*Shiqi shi shangque* 十七史商榷),⁶³ Wang Chang 王昶 (1724–1806) in *Collection of Bronze and Stone Inscriptions* (*Jinshi cuibian* 金石萃編)⁶⁴ or Qian Daxin 錢大昕 (1728–1804) in *Record of Self-renewal from the Ten Yokes Study* (*Shijiazhai yangxin lu* 十駕齋養新錄).⁶⁵ The latter was the first scholar to use knowledge concerning name taboos in order to resolve some complex historical problems in his *Discrepancies in the 22 Histories* (*Nianer shi kaoyi* 廿二史考異).⁶⁶ It was a sign that research had started to develop beyond the limited problem of using and understanding taboo characters. Qian Daxin can therefore be called a pioneer of textual criticism. Another brief work from this period concerning *bihui* is Liu Xixin's 劉錫

⁵⁹ Recorded and briefly described in *Zhizhai shulu jieti*, j. 7, p. 196.

⁶⁰ Cf. Chen Yuan 1958, p. 2.

⁶¹ *Rizhilu*, j. 23, pp. 22–29; j. 26, pp. 12–14.

⁶² *Gaiyu congkao*, j. 31, pp. 20–24. For Zhao Yi, see *Zhongguo lidai renming da cidian* 1999, p. 1645.

⁶³ See, for example, *Shiqi shi shangque*, j. 54, pp. 482–483; j. 68, pp. 725–726. For Wang Mingsheng, see *Zhongguo lidai renming da cidian* 1999, p. 198.

⁶⁴ *Jinshi cuibian*, j. 42, pp. 3–5; j. 101, pp. 6–9. For Wang Chang, see *Zhongguo lidai renming da cidian* 1999, p. 118.

⁶⁵ *Shijiazhai yangxin lu*, j. 11, pp. 9–11; j. 16, pp. 18–19. For Qian Daxin, see: *Zhongguo lidai renming da cidian* 1999, p. 1911.

⁶⁶ See, for example, *Nianer shi kaoyi*, j. 12, p. 258.

信 *Study on Taboo Names of Past Dynasties* (*Lidai huiming kao* 歷代諱名考, 1784).⁶⁷ Chapters about name tabooing are included also in Xu Song's 徐松 (1781–1848) *Song Dynasty Manuscript Compendium* (*Songhuiyao jigao* 宋會要輯稿),⁶⁸ Hang Shijun's 杭世駿 (1695–1772) *Classified Corrections of Erraneous Records* (*Ding'e leibian* 訂訛類編)⁶⁹ and Zhang Zhidong's 張之洞 (1837–1909) *Words of Youxuan* (*Youxuanyu* 輶軒語).⁷⁰

Although there were numerous texts concerning name taboos prior to the 19th century, most of them were, however, limited to lists of examples, especially of emperors' taboo names, or were very fragmentary examinations of the taboo custom. One important contribution is the work of Zhou Guangye 周廣業 (1730–1798) from Haining 海甯 (in Zhejiang). He spent 30 years collecting materials on *bihui*, and sometime around 1796 he prepared an extensive text entitled *Collected Studies on Taboo Names in the Classics and Histories* (*Jingshi biming huikao* 經史避名彙考) in 46 chapters. The work was considered, as Chen Yuan for example describes it, “the most exhaustive collection of historical materials on *bihui*.”⁷¹ Zhou Guangye gives a good introduction to the Chinese phenomenon of the tabooing of name,⁷² and he lists not only the examples of emperors' taboo names for each historical period, but also those of officials, relatives of the emperor, teachers, friends and Daoist monks.⁷³ He gives no notes on the Qing dynasty, because he had to observe its taboos. Unfortunately, for a long time the work was not published, and it was only in 1981 that the manuscript was finally printed in Taiwan. To this day it has been insufficiently exploited by researchers and has had little impact on previous research, since even Chen Yuan did not actually use this work.

The first systematic academic work on *bihui* was Chen Yuan's *Examples of Taboo Names in Historical Writings* (*Shihui juli* 史諱舉例), published in 1928 by the journal *Yanjing xuebao* 燕京學報.⁷⁴ This work, considered as the framework of modern taboo studies (*bihuixue* 避諱學), remained the only scholarly work of this type in the field until the 1990s, and is regarded even today as a standard work, repeatedly republished⁷⁵ and

⁶⁷ *Lidai Huiming kao*, pp. 1–24.

⁶⁸ *Songhui yaojigao*, j. 51, p. 2054.

⁶⁹ *Ding'e leibian*, j. 3, pp. 20–24; j. 6, pp. 11–12.

⁷⁰ *Youxuanyu*, j. 5, pp. 3782–3785.

⁷¹ Chen Yuan 1958, p. 2.

⁷² *Jingshi biming huikao*, j. 3, pp. 42–66.

⁷³ *Jingshi biming huikao*, j. 24–42, pp. 350–616.

⁷⁴ Chen Yuan 1928, pp. 537–651.

⁷⁵ The most recent reprint was in 2004 by Zhonghua shuju 中华书局 in Peking.

quoted by Chinese scholars.⁷⁶ Chen Yuan described methods, effects and mistakes of tabooing, discussed different issues connected with taboo, gave a historical review of taboo in diverse times and established a basis for later taboo studies. Even if some topics brought up by Chen Yuan were only later elaborated, his book is still to this day a very important tool for research.

The difficult years of foreign invasions and civil war in the 1930s and 1940s were not favourable for research. The impulse given by Chen Yuan was picked up only in 1944 by the famous Chinese essayist Hu Shi 胡適 (1891–1962), who used the *Shihui juli* to carry out an analysis of taboos of both Han dynasties.⁷⁷ Qu Wanli 屈萬里 (1907–1979) conducted research on posthumous names during the Shang/Yin dynasty (1948).⁷⁸ Chen Yuan himself also wrote new contributions to the study of *bihui* in separate chapters or annexes to other works, for instance in *Jiu Wudaishi jiben fafu* 舊五代史輯本發覆 (1937)⁷⁹ and *Tongjian huzhu biaowei* 通鑑胡注表微 (1945–46).⁸⁰ Later, in the People's Republic of China, Qi Rushan 齊如山 analyzed taboos of the Qing dynasty (1952)⁸¹ and Guo Moruo (1892–1978) examined taboos of the Shang and Zhou dynasties (1954).⁸² Numerous authors, such as Wang Jieyu, for example, in his article of 1966,⁸³ described the tabooing of name for a more general audience.

The theme of tabooing of names in China was noticed by Western scholars as well. The oldest mention is probably by Hilderic Friend in his “Euphemism and Tabu in China” in 1881,⁸⁴ and by Arnold Vissière in his “Traité des caractères chinois” in 1901.⁸⁵ But the first to explicitly illustrate and analyze this problem was Erich Haenisch (1880–1966). In his article “Die Heiligung des Vater- und Fürstennamens in China” in 1932, a good description of name taboo, its influence on the life of the Chinese and on written texts is given.⁸⁶ Haenisch also provided an overview on emperors' taboos with dates of their validity. Additionally, he pointed out many problems, such as the origin of tabooing or the problem of common and private taboos. Haenisch thought that *bihui* originated in a fear of ghosts,

⁷⁶ Cf. for example Fan Zhixin 2006, p. 210, 243, 256, 272, 280, 295–301.

⁷⁷ Hu Shi 1944, pp. 3055–3067.

⁷⁸ Qu Wanli 1948, pp. 219–226.

⁷⁹ Chen Yuan 1937, pp. 52–59.

⁸⁰ Chen Yuan 1997, pp. 62–75.

⁸¹ Qi Rushan 1952, pp. 8–9.

⁸² Guo Moruo 1954, pp. 113–119.

⁸³ Wang Jieyu 1966, pp. 9–13.

⁸⁴ Friend 1881, pp. 71–91.

⁸⁵ Vissière 1901, pp. 320–373. He analyzed taboo names of Qing emperors and of Confucius.

⁸⁶ Haenisch 1932, pp. 1–20.

was later transformed into deference (not excluding fear, but going beyond it) and lost its connection “with superstition.”⁸⁷ According to him, taboo was observed in the beginning only in the family of the sovereign, and only as recently as in the Han period did family taboos and taboos of holy men appear. There are practical taboo problems noted by Haenisch in connection with *bihui*, such as the observance of taboo by guests, violation of name taboos by Europeans and the reaction of Chinese (“eine tiefe Erschütterung” because of “der Profanierung eines dem Sohne heiligen Namens”),⁸⁸ the importance of taboo (ein “todwürdiges” Verbrechen) and the severity of punishment (Haenisch did not specify how severe).⁸⁹ Haenisch noticed that many new connotations of characters can be explained through the observance of taboo. It is difficult to overestimate the importance of this short article with its many new insights. However, although Haenisch advocated that research on name taboo should be expanded and become more focused, and he suggested an analysis of the above-mentioned work by Chen Yuan as well as a “quellenmäßige Abhandlung”, i.e. discourse based on sources,⁹⁰ his article remains until now practically the only Western contribution that undertakes *bihui* as its main theme. A review of this article was written in 1934 by the Czech sinologist Gustav Haloun (1898–1951) in the journal *Orientalistische Literaturzeitung*.⁹¹

After Haenisch, over the past eighty years, the problem of name taboo in China was mentioned in the West only in connection with other topics. An important step forward was the precise analysis of names in China done by Wolfgang Bauer (1930–1997), in his 1959 monograph *Der chinesische Personennamen*, in which he depicted the social and magical meaning of names in China, their structure and content. This work contains one chapter about the tabooing of name.⁹² His differentiation of taboo as interdiction of written and spoken characters serving as a name (name taboo) and interdiction of some words by naming (naming taboo) should be appreciated. Bauer focused primarily on this second group and mentioned the tabooing of names (prohibition of new names and the change of old ones)

⁸⁷ Haenisch 1932, p. 6.

⁸⁸ Haenisch 1932, p. 9.

⁸⁹ Haenisch 1932, p. 12.

⁹⁰ Haenisch 1932, p. 4.

⁹¹ Haloun 1934, pp. 576–579. Haloun criticized Haenisch, e.g. because he did not note previous Western authors on this topic (Friend, Vissière) and did not use Chen Yuan’s *Shihui juli*. He said that the method used by Haenisch (interpretation of taboo as a juridical problem) and dealing with *bihui* as if it belonged only to Confucian ethics is not right. Haloun thought that the taboo custom was absorbed by literati with “lahme ethische Begründungen” (p. 578), but its source, power and importance should be seen in the folk religion. According to him, it is not possible to distinguish *bihui* and other kinds of “Chinese magic of word.” Even in the official policy, examples of these can be seen.

⁹² Bauer 1959, pp. 263–270.

presuming an usurpation of authority, and connected with maladies or religion. Bauer also linked taboo with the magical power of names and criticised Chinese authors for only pointing out of the reverence for ancestors and emperors as the motive of tabooing. Unfortunately, his book did not receive much attention outside the German speaking world.

Further research on various forms and aspects of taboo in its wider sense in China based on some Chinese classical texts was done by Thomas Emmrich in his 1992 dissertation *Tabu und Meidung im antiken China*. Alongside a few other groups of taboo, i.e. connected with seasons, cohabitation of genders, or ritual actions, there is an entire chapter dedicated to language taboo.⁹³ There is only a short fragment about *bihui*,⁹⁴ but it is important to point out his description of the relation between the usage of names and someone's status, the usage of names as offence and dishonour within the *baobian* 褒貶 (praise and denigration) method of historiography ascribed to Confucius (see 3.3.1.2). He described also the changing of names in order to adjust a fate and the tabooing of words through concealment or euphemism.

There are a few other contributions dealing with name tabooing in the Western literature. The contribution of B.J. Mansvelt Beck "The first Emperor's taboo character..." should be mentioned. He analyzed the name taboo for the First Emperor of the Qin on the basis of a "Chronicle" from Shuihudi 睡虎地 and demonstrated that this name had not been considered taboo during the emperor's lifetime.⁹⁵ Mieczysław J. Künstler examined the taboos of a few names of animals from a linguistic perspective in his article „Taboo and the development of periphrasis in Chinese" published in 1994.⁹⁶ In general, it can be concluded that research on *bihui* in the West is still insufficient and has not received much attention.⁹⁷

In contrast, in modern China since the end of the 1970s, and especially since the 1990s, a boom of research on taboo can be seen. There are numerous articles popularizing the problem of name tabooing.⁹⁸ New editions, reviews and comments to old works on *bihui* have been published.⁹⁹ The research concentrates today on different topics related to the tabooing of name. There is a number of articles describing the problem of *bihui* in concrete

⁹³ Emmrich 1992, pp. 12-49.

⁹⁴ Emmrich 1992, pp. 25-27.

⁹⁵ Mansvelt Beck 1987, pp. 68-85.

⁹⁶ Künstler 1994, pp.129-138.

⁹⁷ There is still an article of Michel Soymié "Observations sur les caractères interdits en Chine", dealing with some taboo instances in Dunhuang texts (Soymié 1990, pp. 377-407).

⁹⁸ Cf. for example Zhou Xiuqiang 1979, p. 3; He Wenbai 1984, pp. 63-65; Li Hualin 2001, p. 26; Chen Ming 2004, pp. 22-23.

⁹⁹ Cf. for example Zhang Hengjun 2003, pp. 77-79 about the tabooing of names in the works of Chen Yuan.

works, for example, in novels such as the *Dream of the Red Chamber* (*Hongloumeng* 紅樓夢) by Cao Xueqin 曹雪芹 (ca. 1715–1764),¹⁰⁰ *The Plum in the Golden Vase* (*Jinpingmei* 金瓶梅, 16 c.),¹⁰¹ *Marriage Awakening the World* (*Xingshi yinyuan* 醒世姻緣) by Xi Zhousheng 西周生 or Pu Songling 蒲松齡 (1640–1715) and *Yu, Jiao, and Li* (*Yujiaoli* 玉嬌梨) by Di'an sanren 荻岸散人 of the Qing period).¹⁰² Similarly, an analysis of name tabooing was done of the *Gongyang Commentary on the Spring and Autumn Annals* (*Gongyangzhuan* 公羊傳), as well as the first Chinese work on historiography *Generalities on History* (*Shitong* 史通) by Liu Zhiji 劉知幾 (written ca. 708–710), the long Tang poem *Ballad of the Lady Qin* (*Qinfuyin* 秦婦吟) by Wei Zhuang 韋莊 (851–910), the *Veritable Records of Qing Taizu* (*Qing Taizu shilu* 清太祖實錄, issued in 1636, revised in 1683), as well as a host of other individual works.¹⁰³

Other scholars have been involved in the research and analysis of *bihui* regarding specific concrete persons, including Du Fu, Sima Qian, Han Yu, and others.¹⁰⁴ Yet another group of scholars has tried to analyze *bihui* in a specific geographical region, i.e. in Sichuan, Henan,¹⁰⁵ or in one fixed period, i.e. during the Qin, Han and Jin dynasty, Three Kingdoms (Wu), Wei and Jin, Tang, Song, Western Xia, Liao, Jin and Yuan.¹⁰⁶ The period of the Taiping Rebellion has appeared particularly often in studies of taboo.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁰ Wei Ziyun 1994, p. 5; Jia Sui 1994, pp. 125–134; Zhang Yingxian – Zhang Renshi 2010, pp. 306–322.

¹⁰¹ Cf. Cheng Jiping 1998, pp. 39–44. According to the article, the author of *Jinpingmei* intentionally violated imperial taboos, and therefore he did not sign the text with his original name. As we know the author of *Jinpingmei* was Lanling Xiaoxiao sheng 蘭陵笑笑生 (The Scoffing Scholar of Lanling). This is a clear pseudonym and the identity of author is not yet known.

¹⁰² For *Xingshi yinyuan* see Cao Dawei 1988, pp. 64–71. For *Yujiaoli* see Su Tiegge 1987, p. 54.

¹⁰³ For *Gongyangzhuan* see Li Xiaowei – Lian Yongjie 2009, pp. 48–52. For *Shitong* see Li Qiuyuan 1988, pp. 14–21, 13. For *Qinfuyin* see Zhang Tianjian 1985, pp. 61–64. For *Qing Taizu shilu* see Xue Hong 1988, pp. 33–44. For *Lunyu* see Cheng Bangxiong 1997, pp. 109–117. For *Shiji* see Liang Jianbang 2001, pp. 23–27. For *Songshu* and *Nanshi* see Zhu Xiangyun 2004, pp. 37–40. For *Mingshi* see Wang Hongkai 1990, pp. 273–276. For *Shanghanlun* see Mao Jinyun – Chen Min 1997, pp. 2 and 59; Mao Jinyun – Chen Min 1997a, p. 43. For *Yanshi jiaxun* see Qian Guoqi 2004, pp. 43–51, 112.

¹⁰⁴ For Du Fu see Wang Zhongyong 1992, pp. 6–12 and 17. For Sima Qian see Liang Jianbang 2001, pp. 23–27; Liang Jianbang 2002, pp. 54–56. For Han Yu see He Gensheng 1995, pp. 65–71.

¹⁰⁵ For Sichuan see Xiang Xi 1999, p. 7. For Henan see Lin Conglong 1995, p. 46; Bao Ximing 2008, pp. 164–166.

¹⁰⁶ For Qin dynasty see Cheng Qili 1989, pp. 38–42; Liu Dianjue 1988, pp. 217–290. For Han and Jin dynasty see Huang Qingmin 2004, pp. 147–149. For Three Kingdoms (Wu) see Liu Dianjue 1991, pp. 119–144. For Wei and Jin see Wang Jian 2000, pp. 8–12, 21. For Tang dynasty see Deng Rui 1985, p. 3; Xu Lianda 1993, pp. 17–24; He Genshen 1999, pp. 12–15; Wang Jian 2002b, pp. 100–103. For Song dynasty see Zhu Ruixi 1988, pp. 89–94, 88; Wang Zengyu 1998, pp. 59–61. For Western Xia see Han Xiaomang 1994, pp. 59–63. For Liao, Jin and Yuan dynasties see Wang Jian 2002a, pp. 18–22.

¹⁰⁷ Cf. for example Wu Liangzuo 1987, pp. 120–125; Wu Liangzuo 1988, pp. 106–113; Wu Liangzuo 1993, pp. 101–107; Chen Peirong 1994, pp. 89–90; Xu Yuan – Rui Min – Gui Chang 2003, pp. 43–45; Liu Hongwei 2010, pp. 31–32.

There are further contributions about some aspects of the tabooing of names, for instance the origin of *bihui* and its first period in Shang and Zhou,¹⁰⁸ taboo names in the rubbings of stone steles,¹⁰⁹ or in Dunhuang-texts,¹¹⁰ as well as about particular cases of *bihui* (i.e., of an official or someone's father), abstract principles of *bihui*,¹¹¹ the application of taboo knowledge for determining the age and authenticity of a text on the basis of taboo, and the study of taboo in dialects.¹¹² Still other articles deal with single taboo characters or try to reconstruct the pronunciation of characters with the help of the taboo custom.¹¹³ This development of research in China, done at the turn of the 21st century, yielded a few monographs summarizing the results of many research works. Wu Liangzuo studied name taboos during the rebellion of the Heavenly Kingdom of Great Peace in the mid-nineteenth century in his *Taiping tianguo bihui yanjiu*,¹¹⁴ Wang Jian described the chronological development of *bihui* in his *Zhongguo gudai bihui shi*¹¹⁵ and Li Deqing listed about 800 examples of geographical names that were changed because name taboos in his *Lishi diming bihui kao*.¹¹⁶ In 1997, a dictionary of taboo characters was published by Wang Yankun with 987 entries, in which name taboos are listed, quoted and commented.¹¹⁷ Another good dictionary was edited by Wang Jian.¹¹⁸

Research on tabooing of name is a very hot topic in China and has attained the status of an autonomous field of study within the discipline of history – (name) taboo studies (*bihuixue* 避諱學). In the past few years, two monographs have been published which systematically review current knowledge about name taboo. In 2006 Fan Zhixin 范志新 in his book *Bihuixue* 避諱學 collected and described the results of research on the origin and kinds of name taboo, methods and principles of tabooing, problems connected with taboo and its determination, and the application of knowledge of taboo in practice. He also showed how to use the principles of *bihuixue* in the dating and studying of historical documents. A selection of articles about name taboo and a rich bibliography on *bihui* are

¹⁰⁸ Cf. Cao Songlin 1984, pp. 108-112; Wang Jian 1999, pp. 44-46; Zheng Huisheng 2000, pp. 121-122.

¹⁰⁹ Yi Ta 2001, pp. 64-65.

¹¹⁰ Wang Yunsheng 1996, pp. 59-65 ; Dou Huaiyong, Xu Jianping 2004, pp. 52-56.

¹¹¹ Wang Zhenzhu 2009, pp. 95-97.

¹¹² Wen Changyan 2000, pp. 62-65.

¹¹³ Yu Wanli 1993, pp. 26-35, 50; Yu Wanli 1995, pp. 137-146, 136.

¹¹⁴ Wu Liangzuo 1998.

¹¹⁵ Wang Jian 2002.

¹¹⁶ Li Deqing 2001.

¹¹⁷ Wang Yankun 1997.

¹¹⁸ Wang Jian 2011.

also included in his book.¹¹⁹ One year later, in 2007, the book of Wang Xinhua *Bihui yanjiu* was published, in which the author described, among other things, new topics in the field, such as penalties for offences against taboo or the development of taboo custom.¹²⁰

A review of the current status of taboo studies shows that there are numerous results of research. We know a lot about *bihui* in different periods, places, books or taboos of specific persons. This research still needs to be continued. It has concentrated so far especially on imperial taboos, while other topics are somewhat neglected because of the sources used and the traditional approach. For example, the problem of *bihui*'s origins and its first periods during the Shang and Zhou dynasty needs further research. One other problem is the limitations of *bihui*. The research in PR China describes name taboo as an absolutely secular phenomenon with no relation to magic or religion. Related taboo practices such as avoidance of ominous words, of the Five Elements or of Celestial Stems (see for example 9.3.1) are subsumed under problems of name tabooing. Other topics and themes like taboos in Daoism or folk religion are practically omitted, perhaps apart from the previously mentioned work of Zhou Guangye, which has a broad view on *bihui*. One interesting topic is the problem of taboos in the ideology of rebellions. However, until now (apart from Taipings), it has not been brought up.

In the last 15 years methods of *bihuixue* have been repeatedly applied to solve problems in other disciplines, such as Dunhuang studies or *Honglouloumeng* studies, for example, but its further application in other subjects should be continued, e.g. in phonetic studies and for the identification of age and authenticity of works. Also needed is a discussion about the place of *bihuixue* within other disciplines. Name taboo studies can be considered on the one hand an ancillary discipline of history, to which it offers indispensable tools, and on the other hand also as a part of anthropology, as the phenomenon of taboo is an important component of culture or the history of religion.

The research on taboo in China has reached a point where it needs a new methodological level and more integration with social and religious studies. A source of new ideas can be inter alia works of Chen Yuan and Zhou Guangye, which are used only partially by contemporary scholars. Last but not least, an impulse for the renewal of research in the West is needed, which can bring progress to all sinological disciplines. Some Western authors have already included brief remarks about name tabooing, e.g. Rafe de

¹¹⁹ Cf. Fan Zhixin 2006, pp. 317-429.

¹²⁰ Wang Xinhua 2007, pp. 121-129, 154-163.

Crespigny in his *Biographical Dictionary of Later Han to the Three Kingdoms*,¹²¹ but an overarching study is still lacking.

1.4. Purpose and Scope of the Research

Upon first reading the rough draft of a translation of Chen Yuan's *Examples of Taboo Names in Historical Writings* (*Shihui juli* 史諱舉例), done by Heinrich Busch (1912–2002), the author of this dissertation considered it an old work with merely historical value. It was introduced to him by Roman Malek who inherited this translation after the death of Heinrich Busch as a new editor of the *Monumenta Serica*. Heinrich Busch had spent many years translating this work.¹²² He was of course well-known as the editor of the journal *Monumenta Serica* for many decades and shares with the author of this dissertation a common background as a member of the Society of the Divine Word (SVD). The *Examples of Taboo Names in Historical Writings* is a standard work about the *bihui* problem written 1928 in classical Chinese.¹²³ Among Busch's unpublished works found at the Monumenta Serica Institute, his draft English translation of the *Shihui juli* was completed at the end of the 1950s.

In the process of my research, it became more and more apparent that the topic of tabooing names practically appears in all periods of Chinese history and is a very important aspect of Chinese culture. As noted, the custom of tabooing names has been actively studied in China in recent years, but it is hard to find Western literature on the subject. On the other hand, the new (Chinese) research is still in a relatively early stage. Though there have been numerous articles on the topic in the past twenty years, only a few attempts were made at a systematic, comprehensive view, as in the previously mentioned works of Wang Jian, Fan Zhixin and Wang Xinhua.¹²⁴

Hence it is the purpose of this dissertation to analyze and describe the practice of the tabooing of names in China. This work intends to show the historical evolution of this practice and its implications for Chinese culture. The tabooing of names in China is not a marginal or insignificant problem, but really at the core of Chinese culture and an important way of implementing social values.

¹²¹ Cf. for example De Crespigny 2007, pp.14, 31, 206, 289, 339, 1125.

¹²² About Heinrich Busch see Malek 2006, p. 491-508.

¹²³ Chen Yuan 1928.

¹²⁴ Wang Jian 2002; Fan Zhixin 2006; Wang Xinhua 2007.

There are many questions that need to be studied and that were posed in the beginning of this research, such as: What is the origin of the *bihui* custom in China? Does it have any relation to other taboo customs? How did *bihui* evolve in history? Was it only an expression of courtesy and respect? What are the social and religious aspects of *bihui*? What impact did the tabooing of names have on Chinese culture? What about taboos of women and rebels? Not every question can be answered. As this dissertation progressed, it was discovered that the Chinese custom of *bihui* had a strong connection to “religious taboo” (*j inji*) and can be considered as an eminent part of it. The tabooing of names in China has been found as a conglomerate of various customs: official and private, religious and profane. The usage of social, political and religious taboos evolved in different periods and segments of society and was affected by different factors and trends, as for example the authority and power of the emperor, or local customs.

The topic of name taboos is approached from different angles in this study. In order to provide an introduction to the phenomenon of the tabooing of names, it starts with a detailed systematic and historical description of name taboo practices from historical perspective. In this work, there is a strong emphasis on the textual dimension of this practice (the implications of name taboo for texts). At the same time, however, a historical-anthropological analysis is given in order to understand social, political and ideological contexts of taboo practice. This dissertation is an attempt to determine the place of name tabooing in Chinese culture.

The first source and the starting point of this project was, as already mentioned, Chen Yuan’s *Shihui juli* (in the beginning through Busch’s translation). The first step was to make a presentation and critical edition of translation. In the original project of this dissertation the author wanted to attach Busch’s translation to the present work in order to exemplify in that way the topic of name tabooing. However, it would most likely be redundant for the reader, as many topics established by Chen Yuan are already discussed in this work in combination with more material and new insights, and so it was finally decided to omit it. This dissertation is to be understood as a continuation of the reflection on name tabooing in China in the spirit of Chen Yuan. It maps out questions that Chen Yuan did not answer or did not pose, and tries to lay out in that way some directions for future research in this field.

Apart from the *Shihui juli*, numerous historical works have been used as sources, especially standard dynastical histories. The historical literature included many taboo

examples and can provide an overview of the official practice of this custom. Other additional sources (archaeological, poetic etc.) have also been used sporadically. Numerous articles and research contributions dealing with name tabooing have been analyzed and verified.

As for the approach used to present the issue of name tabooing, three methods have been employed. An editorial method was used in the beginning for the preparation of the English text of the *Shihui juli*, including a critical overview of the translation, comparison with the original edition, comments and additions. Philological and historical methods were used to analyze historical sources in their context and to describe the problem.

The present dissertation has, of course, its limitations. As it is based mainly on Chinese historical works, which were usually written by a small corpus of the male literate elite, many aspects of religious and popular culture could be analyzed only in a limited way. Because of the wide spectrum of the taboo issue in China and the stage of research on this topic, numerous topics have only been partly elaborated. It is hoped that this contribution can serve as an incentive for future research elaborating this theme. It is to be understood as the first step of research that will be continued. Most of the sources used here are written in classical Chinese and in most cases no existing translations have been discovered. Therefore the author is aware of possible inaccuracies in his translations.

The dissertation is divided into ten chapters: The first chapter introduces the subject, terminology and the state of the field. The second one on taboo and names shows the context of name tabooing in China. The third chapter introduces the basic characteristics of name tabooing (subjects, kinds, methods, principles, etc.). Then the fourth chapter discusses the origin of the *bihui* custom and its development until the Qin dynasty. The next three chapters describe the history of taboo practice in successive periods: its ancient period (chapter five), its culmination (chapter six) and its final stage (chapter seven). Here it also touches upon the problem of name taboo in China today. Chapter eight shows the impact of the tabooing custom on the lives of people, and chapter nine – its impact for historiography. In the tenth and final chapter, specific themes related to name tabooing are analyzed, such as taboos of women, taboos in religious practice, the impact of Chinese taboo on other countries and particular cases of taboo custom. In the concluding remarks, the meaning and impact of the custom of tabooing names on Chinese culture will be summarized.

1.5. Relevance

More than 80 years ago the first systematic study on name tabooing in China was done by Chen Yuan. However, only recently an intensive research on this topic started in China and become an important interdisciplinary field of research, *biHuixue* 避諱學. This knowledge about tabooing of name helps us to understand the practice of *bihui* and to determine taboo characters better, but also to reveal various editions of works, to determine the age of texts, to reconstruct old names, meanings and pronunciations, etc. At the present time, it is not possible to imagine historiography or literary criticism in China without a deep knowledge of *bihui*. Serious research on Chinese history, especially research based on historical texts, needs to include the findings of *biHuixue* in its own analysis.¹²⁵

This dissertation intends to be a systematic study of Chinese name tabooing customs, which until now have been relatively little explored in Western language sinological studies. Existing research in Chinese is extensively used, but new themes are introduced as well, such as taboos of women, or the adoption of name taboos by rebels. Furthermore, this work attempts to provide a long-term perspective on the changing dynamics of tabooing, such as the shift from tabooing based on oral usage towards taboos based on the written forms of tabooed characters.

¹²⁵ Cf. „*Bihuixue* is an indispensable knowledge in the research on Chinese history” (*Zhongguo lishi da cidian* 2000, Vol. 2, p. 3246).

CHAPTER TWO: TABOO AND NAME

The concept of the tabooing of name involves two terms: taboo and name. In order to have a good grasp of name tabooing in China, one needs to understand the context of both these ideas and their perception in China. This will be described in two steps. In the first one, the problem of taboo in the world and especially in China will be analyzed, dealing also with related questions. In the second step, the focus will be on the question of naming in China, its meaning and importance in Chinese culture, which is essential to this study.

2.1. Taboo

2.1.1. Concept

What is a taboo? The term is very complex and we all have our own understanding of this idea. Various definitions of taboo present various aspects of this phenomenon.¹ One of them is proposed by Roy Wagner in *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, as follows:

a social prohibition or restriction sanctioned by suprasocietal (innate) means or a socially sanctioned injunction alleged to have the force of such a prohibition ... at the intersection of human affairs and the forces of the larger universe.²

According to this concept, taboo means the temporary or continuous avoidance of contact with a designated person, thing or place, avoiding of some words and names. The “avoided” person or thing is “impure,” i.e., dangerous, because of its “power” which can harm. In some societies (as, e.g., in Polynesia) this power of impure and of “sacred” persons (things) is not clearly distinguished. Also the distinction between the power of a ruler and that of a priest or deity is not present.³ Ethnologists sometimes describe this power – cosmic principle or energy, connected with auspiciousness – with the Polynesian word *mana*.⁴ *Mana* power is also the actual source of taboo prohibition.⁵ For believers, this power is present everywhere and in every living being (or even in other entities in nature as

¹ Cf. definitions of taboo in Wagner 1987, pp. 233-236; Kreinath 2005, pp. 3-4; Marschall 1998, pp. 877-879; Schmidt 2001, pp. 160-162.

² Wagner 1987, p. 233.

³ Marschall 1998, p. 877.

⁴ In Chinese *mana* power (*manna* 曼納) is usually translated as “the power of soul,” *lingli* 靈力. In some aspects it can be perhaps compared with Chinese concepts of *qi* 氣 (as energy) or *de* 德 (as ethical power), and with the Christian concept of *charisma* (cf. Wagner 1987, p. 234; *Zongjiao cidian* 1981, p. 954).

⁵ Therefore it is important not to overstress the description of taboo as “prohibition.” In fact, rules of prohibition are important but secondary in taboo practice. The most important is the veneration of “sacral” power.

for example stones), but it can have a different intensity. After contact with a prohibited person or word, common people are overpowered with *mana*. Therefore they have to avoid it or, if contacted, to purify themselves.

Taboo is a worldwide phenomenon, appearing in many aspects of life and has been examined by different disciplines, e.g., history of religion, historiography, linguistics and psychoanalysis, which all give their own interpretations. The meaning of taboo as used in these disciplines is very comprehensive and complex. Different phenomena of various cultures have been described as taboo. This complexity and continuous erosion of its meaning has sometimes caused the term “taboo” to be considered too generic, and thus some academics prefer not to use it.⁶ Certainly there is no single, universal concept or system of taboo. Scholars prefer to use this term for specific phenomena of one culture, and some of them replace the word “taboo” with terms from the respective culture that they study.⁷ This dissertation adheres to the concept of taboo because of its familiarity for the reader (compared to the Chinese term *bihui*), but it is also important to remember its Chinese peculiarities. It can help us see similarities and differences between Chinese taboo customs (*bihui*, *jinji* etc.) and other taboo phenomena in the world.

2.1.2. History of the Term “Taboo”

The term “taboo” has had a long history before it became an important key concept, especially in the terminology of religious studies and cultural anthropology. The word “taboo” originated in the Tongan (Polynesian) language and denoted an important element of the religious and social structure there. It was first quoted in 1784 by James Cook during his journey through the South Pacific. He explained “taboo” as a “religious interdiction,”⁸ affecting people, things and activities. The missionaries and ethnologists of the 19th century noticed that taboo is an unusual status given to people and things with clearly defined rules, violation of which is punished.⁹ Research on taboo was intensified at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries. In his famous book *The Golden Bough*, the social anthropologist James George Frazer (1854–1941) described taboo as a “negative magic” preceding religion, and associated it with “primitive” societies.¹⁰ French sociologist Émile Durkheim (1858–1917)

⁶ Cf. Schmidt 2001, p. 161.

⁷ Schmidt 2001, pp. 160-161; Emmrich 1992, p. 2.

⁸ Cook – King 1784, p. 10.

⁹ Marschall 1998, p. 877.

¹⁰ Frazer 2002, p. 19: Taboo is “a negative application of practical magic.”

described taboo as “le culte négatif” and identified it as a system of religious prohibitions distinguishing *sacrum* and *profanum*.¹¹ The psychoanalyst Sigmund Freud (1856–1939) characterized taboo as a primal conflict of ambivalent feelings between forbidden behaviors and the veneration.¹² In the second half of the 20th century new research on taboo was conducted by Mary Douglas, who described “taboo” as a relational term depending on the specific culture, with different systems of symbols, and as a necessary element of social structure.¹³ At the turn of the 20th century, yet another aspect of taboo was disclosed by Michael Lambek: Taboos are “acts which performatively establish and maintain moral states of social commitment and individual conscience.”¹⁴ The observance of taboo is significant in the constitution of personhood and society. It instills and maintains social values. There are other scholars, such as F.R. Lehmann, Claude Lévi-Strauss, Franz Baermann Steiner, H. Webster, Marvin Harris or Chris Knight, who deal with the problem, and a fair number of works can be found that contemplate taboo and its different aspects.¹⁵

In particular, the studies by of Douglas and Lambek about the nature of taboo can help us to understand better the custom of tabooing in China. Taboo is not just a command or prohibition. Taboo is much more an experience and form of expression for individuals. It is a fundamental element of human relations and an essential part of culture. It is the way to implement and perpetuate social values. As the following chapters will show, such was also the case for name tabooing in China.

2.1.3. The Context of Taboo and Related Phenomena

Taboo is related especially to magic,¹⁶ i.e., with “ritual actions and conduct used by people in order to affect affairs and events, which are normally outside the domain of their influence.”¹⁷ If taboo can be called a “passive” avoidance, then magic is an active approach.

¹¹ Durkheim 1912, p. 427.

¹² Freud mentioned especially the veneration for parents, as well incest and patricide as two universal taboo behaviors. See Freud 1913, p. 86. Cf. also other taboo scholars of that period, as W. Robertson Smith (“purity proscriptions of Hebrew and Arab are relicts of former taboo”), cf. Marschall 1998, p. 877.

¹³ Douglas 1966, pp. 58-72; Cf. also the school of functionalism (“ritual of taboo is important for keeping up the social order”), e.g. Radcliffe-Brown 1965, pp. 133-152; F.R. Lehmann (“taboo belongs as prohibitive in almost every culture connected with religion or power”), according to Marschall 1998, p. 878.

¹⁴ Lambek 2001, p. 15430. Cf. also Lambek 1992, pp. 245-266.

¹⁵ Cf., e.g., Lehmann 1930; Lévi-Strauss 1962; Steiner 2008, pp. 297-438; Webster 1942; Harris 1983; Knight 1991.

¹⁶ The Chinese equivalent of what is “magic” is disputable. The traditional translation as *wushu* 巫術 or *fashu* 法術 is controversial, because of the history of these two concepts. Cf. *Cihai* 1999, pp. 415 and 1781; *Zongjiao cidian* 1981, p. 486.

¹⁷ Waldenfels 1997, pp. 225-226.

In that sense, they often go together: magical words should be avoided outside the ritual context, and active use of a tabooed word causes a perceived change of reality.¹⁸

In connection with taboo, it is relevant to stress the importance of magical words and signs in magical practice.¹⁹ Signs, characters or scripture were used as a talisman (or in other words: amulet, charm, fetish) – as a so-called “script amulet” or “symbol amulet.”²⁰ People believed that talismans could be attributed a magical force and could cause positive occurrences or eliminate negative events. Thus, a talisman could have prophylactic, apotropaic and therapeutic functions. From the modern Western point of view, it was a “carrier of power (...) in the tension between sorcery and medicine.”²¹

Also portents (omens) are relevant in the context of taboo.²² They are “signs that, if understood or interpreted correctly, can reveal personal destinies and the will of the gods.”²³ As is known, omens “occupy a central position in traditional Chinese thought.”²⁴ Words, characters and phrases heard by chance can foretell the future and destiny of people. Names are important as omens in a special way because of their connection to the individual. They have a “real” power and therefore they should be chosen carefully.

2.1.4. Limitations of the Term

Admittedly, the reader should be aware of a few biases that can interfere in dealing with the tabooing of name in China. First of all, one must take care to avoid differentiating between taboo phenomena in primitive and developed traditions. Such value judgments and evolutionism have been rejected by ethnology and the study of religion at least since the research of Bronislaw Malinowski. Concepts such as taboo or magic can be found in various forms in many different cultures, not excluding the so-called “high cultures.” Although a “traditional” evolutionistic approach can still be seen among scholars and in society, taboo should be described neutrally, without prejudice.²⁵

¹⁸ The term “magic” is sometimes contested by historians as coming from religious studies. The expanded word “ritual” is proposed in place of “magic.” The latter one shall be used in this work, as it is more concrete and highlights the belief in intervention of “external” (or “strange,” as it is said in China) powers.

¹⁹ About the magic of script in China (in Daoism) see Drexler 1994.

²⁰ The terms “talisman” and “amulet” are actually synonyms. Some scholars try to distinguish between an active influence (talisman) and a passive impact (amulet) for events.

²¹ Sefrin 2001, pp. 162-165.

²² About the importance of omens in China see Lippiello 2001.

²³ Bloch 1987, p. 454.

²⁴ Erik Zürcher, “Foreword” in: Lippiello 2001, p. 11.

²⁵ For further remarks on the anthropological discourse on magic, religion and evolutionism see: Tambiah 1990; Malinowski 1954.

On the other hand, it should be stressed that all “Western” terms and concepts we use for the reader’s convenience are to be regarded carefully. In particular, religious concepts such as “religion,” “gods,” “sacrum” etc. can be easily misunderstood. There is no need here to discuss the problem of religion in China, but it should be pointed out that Chinese religious traditions do not have a concept of “supernaturality.” Everybody and everything, including ghosts and gods, is part of the natural order of things. Everything is interconnected in the cosmic power of nature.²⁶ Therefore, concepts such as taboo or magic etc. should also be interpreted without reference to transcendence.

2.1.5. Taboo in China

In China there is a concept with a very similar meaning to “taboo,” called *jinji* 禁忌 (mentioned already in the Introduction, see 1.2). *Jinji* means “men or things, which are prohibited to contact, and other prohibited terms, words and actions.”²⁷ There exist numerous popular *jinji* in China, related to different situations in life. A child, for instance, should by no means sit down on a dustpan, otherwise it will become defiant;²⁸ one should never place one’s chopsticks straight up in a bowl of rice, because it is a mourning custom. Examples vary from taboos on parts of body (men must not touch a woman’s arm),²⁹ through taboos on a rainbow (it is prohibited to point at it with a finger)³⁰ up to taboos of sacrifices and ghosts.³¹

Is *jinji* identical with taboo? Of course, the term *jinji* has its own long history of evolution, and its historical meanings are sometimes different from the term “taboo” in Polynesia. Some Chinese scholars of religious studies note for example that *jinji* includes both the connection to spiritual power (identified with Polynesian *mana*) and to impurity, which was less important in Polynesia.³² Moreover, the distinction of partial terms *jin* and *ji* for prohibitions from outside and inside was made. In fact such distinctions have only historical importance. Today, most Chinese scholars, especially in ethnology, use the terms *jinji* and “taboo” as synonyms to describe phenomena both in China and elsewhere.

²⁶ The ontological position of Chinese religious tradition is monism. For more about religion in Chinese society see Yang 1961; Eichhorn 1973; Clart 2009; Poceski 2009; Campany 2003, pp. 287–319.

²⁷ *Cihai* 1999, p. 849.

²⁸ Cf. Ren Cheng 2004a, p. 94.

²⁹ Ren Cheng 2004, p. 69.

³⁰ Ren Cheng 2004, p. 516.

³¹ For more examples of taboo in China see Ren Cheng 2004; Wan Jianzhong 2001.

³² Cf. *Zongjiao cidian* 1981, p. 1009.

The research on taboo in China has a long tradition, dating back to at least J.J.M. de Groot in the West, and started in a modern sense in China by Cai Yuanpei (1868-1940) after the May Fourth Movement (1919).³³ After a long break taboo studies were taken up again at the end of the 20th century. Research has revealed an enormous wealth of taboos, with many kinds in different social groups and in various periods of China's history.

2.1.6. Kinds and Functions of Taboo

It is not possible to describe precisely all kinds of taboo in a few words. While such an excursus shall not be attempted here, it is necessary to distinguish different forms of taboo in order to make the topic more concrete. According to social anthropological research, taboo is situated "at the intersection" of man and universe.³⁴ Because of that it can affect almost every aspect of personal, social and religious life.

Many taboos determine the relation of a human being to his own life. Human body, clothes, jewellery, food,³⁵ dwelling, toilet and recreation, religious practices – they all have their taboos, in China as well. There were, for example, taboos for ear wax in China. It could not be thrown carelessly to ground. The belief was that if somebody stepped on it incidentally, it would hurt the person to whom it belongs. Even worse, if the ear wax was swallowed, the consequence would be deafness. Therefore such a secretion was also commonly called "deafness" *erlong* 耳聾.³⁶

Other taboos were connected with a person's social relations in the family and society. All the *rites du passage* were involved here, as for example birth, marriage, funeral and mourning. Also relations between genders and generations, different professions, politics etc. had their own taboos. Relations with nature, animals, plants and objects, including ghosts and gods were all tabooed. For example, in silkworm husbandry, the silkworms were considered the most tender, "sacred" and sensitive creatures. It was believed that they could tolerate and eat only mulberry leaves cut by scissors after sunrise. Moreover, no pregnant woman or elderly man should enter the shed where silkworms were reared. It would harm the silkworms, just as it would if somebody slept in that place.³⁷

³³ Cf. Cai Yuanpei 1976.

³⁴ Wagner 1987, p. 233.

³⁵ For example, about the beef taboo see Goossaert 2005 and Goossaert 2005a.

³⁶ Ren Cheng 2004, p. 67.

³⁷ Cf. Ren Cheng 2004, pp. 372-373.

Among various kinds of taboo, speech taboo played a particular role. As language is very important in human interpersonal communication, every kind of taboo had its particular form of linguistic expression called language taboos. Many words and characters were avoided, if they were regarded as inauspicious, especially in case of words related to sexuality and toilet or characters that were homonyms (homophones) with another one that had a bad meaning. Also today, one may wonder why the Chinese do not like the number “four” (*si* 四), if one does not know that its pronunciation is almost identical (though with different tone) with “death” (*si* 死). Similarly, the Chinese avoid speaking about “cutting of pear” (*fenli* 分梨), as it is pronounced just like “separation” (*fenli* 分離). Different articulation in various dialects is an additional reason for taboo customs.

Before focusing on language taboos, something should be said about functions of taboo. In various social and historical contexts taboo was perceived or used in different roles. In many cases, taboo was an expression of veneration and fear of “strange” powers like nature, gods or ghosts. Often it was also used for the demonstration of political power and the legitimization of authority. Perhaps the most important function of taboo was to be a guarantee of protection: protection of rulers and shamans, protection of respected persons, the elderly, the weak, women and children. If they were considered “taboo persons,” they were safe. This protection was especially important in times of passage (adolescence, initiation, marriage etc.), therefore such rites contain many taboos.

Another function of taboo was preventive, for example to prevent the consumption of toxic food or to avoid maladies that could be transmitted via contact with the deceased. Consolation and survival in times of crisis, control and limitation of desires, accumulation and annexation of knowledge (morality), and consolidation of society are also listed by scholars as functions of taboo.³⁸

2.1.7. Linguistic Taboo, *Bihui*, and Tabooing of names

Linguistic taboo is, as already mentioned, a kind of taboo known in almost every culture. Language, both spoken and written, is the most important medium of communication between human beings. People perceive a connection between a word and the object it describes, as well as a causal relation between a verbal order and its execution. Thus a word

³⁸ Schmidt 2001, p. 162; Kreinath 2005, p. 4.

can have a “performative” power.³⁹ That is why taboo words were also an important part of the taboo system in China.

It seems that the first form of tabooing was “to not speak out.” The needed information was conveyed or “performed” with a gesture of the hands, or the movement of the head or one’s eyes. This was sometimes not enough and other words would have to be used in place of the taboo word. This kind of linguistic taboo is called *bihui* in Chinese.⁴⁰ The custom of *bihui* included many kinds of tabooing, like taboo of inauspicious words, taboo of words connected to sexuality or toilet, taboo of vulgarism, taboo of numbers, age, etc.⁴¹ They all are common in other cultures, too. However, one kind of *bihui* led to particularly elaborate practices in China, much more than in other cultures, which was the tabooing of name, and especially the tabooing of the name of the ruler. This custom has had a tremendous impact on Chinese culture, history and politics.

No special term has been proposed for tabooing of name, and research on it is simply called “the study of avoidances” (*biHuixue*).⁴² But this term is in fact misleading, because of the various dimensions it includes, such as the avoidance of names, inauspicious words, etc. Therefore, although the research field is called the tabooing of name, scholars often include tabooing of other words as a part of it. This fact makes the already imprecise distinction between *jinji* and *bihui* still more unclear.

But is the differentiation actually needed? Some Chinese scholars think that such a distinction is necessary – they describe, therefore, *bihui* as a uniquely Chinese phenomenon and *jinji* as the much more common taboo custom. *Jinji* is designated as a “primitive taboo” and *bihui* as a cultivated “Chinese taboo.” They point out that *jinji* appears earlier than script, and that Chinese taboo is present in written and spoken forms. *Jinji* taboo stopped on the level of custom, and *bihui* starts on the level of system and law. “Primitive taboo” is strongly connected with “primitive religion,” fear of ghosts and shamans, and the Chinese taboo with “humanistic” Confucian culture. *Jinji* concern the relationships between man and deity, and *bihui* – between men. “Primitive taboo” affects one’s own name and names of strangers as well, and does not distinguish between classes. The change of a name is made in order to prevent a calamity in an important situation. It has a kind of flexibility, as there

³⁹ See the analysis of performative utterances made by the British philosopher of language Austin 1979, pp. 233-252.

⁴⁰ Ren Cheng 2004, p. 321.

⁴¹ Further examples of taboo of this kind see Ren Cheng 2004, pp. 321-343.

⁴² The term *minghui* 名諱 and *minghuixue* 名諱學 would be perhaps more suitable.

is no difference of value between the old and the new name. In contrast, the “Chinese taboo” (*bihui*) is connected with the strata of society: the lower class observes the taboo of the superior. The effect of *jinji* is psychological, and of *bihui* physical; the executor of punishment of “primitive taboos” is the man violating taboo himself, while in the case of Chinese taboos punishment comes from the man whose name was taboo.⁴³ This should be enough to clarify some common Chinese views.

In fact, however, the author of this dissertation is not persuaded by this argumentation. There is no substantial difference between *jinji* and *bihui*, since the latter is simply one manifestation of the first. The Chinese taboo custom (*bihui*) is certainly unique in the world, because of its culture, history, various dimensions, and the specificity of the Chinese language. But it is still a special case of taboo (*jinji*) and should be understood as a part of it. Notwithstanding its special aspects, customs partially similar to *bihui* can be seen outside China as well. We also do not consider taboos of popular culture (*jinji*) as “primitive” and taboos prescribed and legitimated by state authority as a “modern” custom. Consequently, it can not be argued that “*jinji* is based on a primitive thought ... and *bihui* is based on modern thought.”⁴⁴ Actually they are both inseparable.

2.2. Name

The significance of names for people of all periods and cultures is known. In the perception of Chinese people, too, the name was very important and affected the whole life of a man.⁴⁵ The significance of names in China seems to be connected with the tabooing of name.

2.2.1. Characteristics of Chinese Names

There are many words for the concept of name in China, though usually with important nuances in their connotations and conventions of usage. The most important of them is *ming* 名. The character does not only denote the personal name of a man, but also the real name of all things and terms (concepts), as there is no difference in Chinese between the name and the term.⁴⁶ But unlike the “inanimate” sphere of nature, which has only a *ming*, a human being usually possessed many names in China.

⁴³ Fan Zhixin 2006, pp. 15-18; Wang Xinhua 2005, pp.66-69; Wang Xinhua 2007, pp. 1-2.

⁴⁴ Wang Xinhua 2005, p.66.

⁴⁵ Two unique monographs about names in the Chinese culture are Wolfgang Bauer's *Der chinesische Personennamen* (Wiesbaden 1959) and Viviane Alleton's *Les Chinois et la passion des noms* (Paris 1993). Remarks on names in China can be found in Wilkinson 2000, pp. 96-105; Emmrich 1992, pp. 14-21.

⁴⁶ Bauer 1959, p. 34.

The name given to infants by parents after the birth was the “milk name,” *xiaoming* 小名 (also *ruming* 乳名, *xiaozi* 小字) and is a familiar term normally used only in the family. Later, traditionally three months after birth, a child received from his father a “personal name,” *ming*,⁴⁷ which became his real name and the most important of all names. It was also called *daming* 大名 (or *xueming* 學名). After a young man or woman came of age (boys during the capping ceremony *guanli* 冠禮, at age of 20 (Chinese style years), girls in the hair-pinning ceremony *jili* 笄禮, at 15) they would get a “courtesy name,” *zi* 字 (also called *biaozi* 表字).⁴⁸ It was normally used outside the family. There were also many other alternative names chosen by the man himself or by other people for him. Especially the literati had “literary names,” *hao* 號 or *biehao* 別號 (one to four characters), “room names,” *shiming* 室名 or “studio names,” *zhaiming* 齋名 (from the Tang period onwards). Other people could have nicknames and sobriquets (*chuohao* 綽號, *hunhao* 渾號, *hunming* 渾名, *waiming* 外名, *waihao* 外號), given usually by others. Officials had official names (*guanming* 官名), monks, nuns and priests – religious names (*faming* 法名, *fahao* 法號 – Buddhist,⁴⁹ *daohao* 道號 – Daoist, or *huiming* 會名 – Christian). The ancestral hall names (*tangming* 堂名) were used by kin groups.⁵⁰ Furthermore, the posthumous honorary name *shihao* 諡號 was bestowed by the court from the Zhou to the Qing dynasties⁵¹ or by the family and clan after death and mourning,⁵² and the personal name *ming* was from that time considered “taboo” (*hui* 諱). Rulers had more names, although they differed in various dynasties. The “temple name” *miaohao* 廟號 was used after the death of the ruler in the ancestral temple and written on the ancestral tablets.⁵³ The “era name,” *nianhao* 年號 was

⁴⁷ Wilkinson 2000, p. 98.

⁴⁸ About the capping ceremony see Dai Chonghai 2006.

⁴⁹ Note that lay Buddhist might also adopt religious names (*faming*). See ter Haar 1992, p. 39, Fn. 57 and p. 79, Fn. 45.

⁵⁰ Wilkinson 2000, p. 103.

⁵¹ Posthumous names started perhaps in the Shang time (Falkenhausen 2006, p. 56). The King Xiao of Zhou (about 891–886 BC) is declared as the first having a posthumous name. The practice was stopped in the Qin dynasty as being disrespectful. Since the Han period posthumous names were renewed and were sometimes very long. A distinctive feature is the last character, usually being *wang* 王 or *di* 帝 (*Zhongguo lishi da cidian* 2000, Vol. 2, pp. 2987–2988; *Cihai* 1999, p. 1543; Wilkinson 2000, p. 103).

⁵² About special posthumous titles of officials in the Tang dynasty see Wu Liyu 2008, pp. 413–438.

⁵³ Sporadically used from the Han period on, although there are possible temple names in the Shang-Yin time. It remained customary since the Tang period. A distinctive trait is the last character, usually *zu* 祖 (ancestor) or *zong* 宗 (progenitor) (*Zhongguo lishi da cidian* 2000, Vol. 2, p. 1921; *Cihai* 1999, p. 1172; Wilkinson 2000, p. 109).

chosen by an emperor as a motto, a regal title of the reign period.⁵⁴ Rulers might even be referred to by their era names, especially in the Ming and Qing periods, when a ruler only had one era name. Every emperor also had a “tomb name,” *linghao* 陵號.

The most important of all names listed here is the real or personal name *ming*, “le nom par excellence”.⁵⁵ It can have one or two characters, and both forms were practiced simultaneously in the history of China. An exception is the time after Emperor Wang Mang (AD 9–23) who prohibited bisyllabic personal names – an interdiction that was retained until about the third century AD. In the late Ming and Qing dynasty two-character names became standard, but since the 1950s (and especially since the 1970s), one syllable personal names have become more and more common.⁵⁶ The most important reason for bisyllabic given names was the practice of marking seniority among brothers or sisters and for marking members of the same generation, the so-called system of *paihang* 排行 (order of rank). In this system, one character of a given name indicated the rank in the family, e.g., *bo* 伯 or *meng* 孟, *zhong* 仲, *shu* 叔, and *ji* 季 – for the eldest, second, third and youngest brother – it was the *paihang* of age. One character in names of brothers and cousins of the same generation (alternatively a part of it in one-character-names) could be fixed. It was the *paihang* of generation (also called *beihang* 輩行).⁵⁷ When this social practice was temporarily discredited after 1949, bisyllabic given names also became less common in mainland China. Today, they have returned again to common use, also to avoid a duplication of names.

2.2.2. The Perception of Name

Names, especially personal names, played a very important role in Chinese and many other ancient cultures. A name was a “phonetic image of a man,”⁵⁸ and because of that, there was an inseparable connection between them. If something had no name, it did not exist. This phenomenon was already described by the famous anthropologist James George Frazer as follows:

⁵⁴ The custom was known since the Han period. Several names were possible for one emperor. The era name was used as a traditional system of dating (*Zhongguo lishi da cidian* 2000, Vol. 1, p. 1045; Wilkinson 2000, pp. 181–182). Also “the Republic of China” is considered like an era name.

⁵⁵ Alleton 1993, p. 7.

⁵⁶ Wilkinson 2000, p. 100.

⁵⁷ A good description of two *paihang* systems (both often mixed in the literature) can be found in Bauer 1959, pp. 147–222.

⁵⁸ Cf. Bauer 1959, p. 1.

... the link between a name and the person or thing denominated by it is not a mere arbitrary and ideal association, but a real and substantial bond which unites the two in such a way that magic may be wrought on a man just as easily through his name as through his hair, his nails, or any other material part of his person.⁵⁹

Such a perception of name was also particularly apparent in the case of China. There is “no other nation in the world having more estimation for name than the Chinese. They perceive until today a strong interconnection (literally: identity) between the name of a human being and his destiny.”⁶⁰ Thus, the name in China was perceived as the person himself, and as a destiny affecting the whole human life, as his “soul.”⁶¹

Every name, not only of human beings, but also of animals, plants, “natural phenomena,” and of gods or ghosts, was the “soul” or “essence” of that entity. A good instance of the vital importance of names for the Chinese can be seen in the story included in the preface of Liu Xiu 劉秀⁶² to the *Classic of Mountains and Seas (Shanhaijing 山海經)*: “During the time of Emperor Xiaowu (Wu of Han) a strange bird was offered to him; it refused to eat anything. When Dongfang Shuo 東方朔 (154–93 BC) looked at it, he gave its name (*sic*) and [told] what it should be fed; and he was right.”⁶³ The bird needed a name in order to eat and to live. “No name” means here that a creature can have no vital force.⁶⁴

The name in China had a “sacral” character. It was understood as fate. “The name expressed the essence of man and foredoomed his destiny.”⁶⁵ This connection can be seen already in the form of characters. As pointed out by Bauer, the two characters *ming* 名 (name) and *ming* 命 (fate, destiny) originally were one and the same word, graphically

⁵⁹ Frazer 2002, p. 244.

⁶⁰ Bauer 1959, p. 33.

⁶¹ There was no concept of “soul” in Chinese thought as an absolute, spiritual being, as opposed to the body and matter (Granet 1985, p. 293). According to Granet (ibid., p. 301), at birth a human being receives “two groups of life power” *yin* and *yang*: blood (*xue*) etc. from the mother, and breath (*qi*) and name from the father.

⁶² The original name of Liu Xiu 劉秀 (50 BC – 23 AD) was Liu Xin 劉歆. He changed it because of taboo of Emperor Ai – Liu Xin 劉欣 (r. 6–1 BC). Cf. *Hanshu*, j. 36, p. 31a.

⁶³ *Shan Hai Ching* 1985, p. 384.

⁶⁴ For more about the significance of names of animals see Roel Sterckx 2002. Sterckx mentions, for example, that “the role of naming and the mastery of animal nomenclature were central elements in the early Chinese perception of the animal world” (p. 30), that “according to Confucius, knowledge about animals was to be acquired through the exegesis of their names in a literary text” (p. 29), and that “through the use of sacrificial names the status of the animal transformed from profane into sacred” (p. 30). Cf. also the naming of animals in the Bible. God formed out of the ground all the animals and brought them to the man. Whatever the man called each living creature that was its name. *Die Bibel* 2006, p. 6 (Gen 2, 19).

⁶⁵ Kałużyńska 1990, p. 18.

represented by a mouth and a man kneeling in front of it.⁶⁶ The relation between both characters was mentioned also in the *Luxuriant Gems of the Spring and Autumn* (*Chunqiu fanlu* 春秋繁露)⁶⁷ of Dong Zhongshu 董仲舒 (179–104 BC): “(The wise men of old time) referred to expression (*ming* 鳴) of destiny (*ming* 命) as name *ming* 名” (鳴而命者謂名).⁶⁸ In the past and today, the connection *mingming* 命名 is used for “giving a name.”⁶⁹

This special relationship between a name and a human being in Chinese tradition was not disrupted after death. The name guaranteed the perpetuation of life. If no spirit tablet inscribed with the taboo name of the deceased is attached to the grave, “there is no continuing inhabitant of the grave in the sense of a distinct personality.”⁷⁰ The name on the tablet should not be written unclearly – this means the soul is gone.⁷¹ The spirit tablet and the name on it, being considered the man himself, receive the prayers and veneration of a person’s family.

2.2.3. The Power of Name

If the name was so important for the life and destiny in China, knowledge about somebody’s name was connected with power over him. It was perceived as having control, which could be used actively, causatively and effectively. If somebody knew and called the real name of other persons, animals, ghosts or gods, he could control and command them, and also injure them. Thus the use of name was not only nominal, but had a performative character, and could actively change reality. Therefore names were present already in early China, e.g., in the incantations, already before written amulets first appeared. There are many magic formulas in the history of China, including for example secret names of gods and ghosts.⁷² People knowing the names of ghosts obtained power over nature. They could come into contact with ghosts, control and command them.⁷³ Therefore knowledge about names was kept secret.

⁶⁶ Bauer 1959, pp. 37-38, cf. also Karlgren 1964, p. 219.

⁶⁷ For more about this work see Queen 1996; Loewe 1993, pp. 77-87.

⁶⁸ Cf. *Chunqiu fanlu*, j. 10, p. 1b.

⁶⁹ Cf. Schuessler 2007, p. 387: “*ming* 命 – to name, give a name (to a person).” We may associate also a similar idea in Europe, expressed in the Latin sentence: *Nomen est omen*.

⁷⁰ Mathewson Denny 1987, p. 305.

⁷¹ De Groot 1910, p. 1127.

⁷² Cf. Drexler 1994, p. 12.

⁷³ De Groot gives an example of one man knowing names of ghosts and using them to catch fish and tortoises (De Groot 1910, p. 1126).

The power of name can be seen in the naming practice of gods and ghosts in many cultures. In religions of ancient times, including those of China, gods were normally not called by their “real names” – they were referred by their attributes or without a name.⁷⁴ A certain contradiction can be seen in many religions between request and interdiction of using the name of a god.⁷⁵ For example in the Bible (Old Testament) God himself reveals confidentially his own name – Yahweh. But later we read about prohibition of the use or overuse of the name of God.⁷⁶ Similarly in China, we see that, for example, the pious repetition of the name of the Buddha Amitabha⁷⁷ in the Pure Land sect of Buddhism is believed to be a “real way” to reach him. It is because “the existence of god is proven, if (his name) is called.”⁷⁸

2.2.4. Protection of Names

Knowledge of names was a great power in China and was used to control the “supernatural” world. However, on the other hand, it was dangerous if a person’s own name was detected by ghosts. Knowing the real name of a human being, ghosts could injure and even kill them. Therefore different methods were developed to protect the “real name” (*ming*) of people. One should protect one’s own name, conceal it, or change it into a false, frightening one.⁷⁹ Already children – weak and hence very vulnerable to attacks by ghosts – should have a “pseudonym” – an inferior, substandard name, which was not the “real” one and would misguide an enemy.⁸⁰ The relationship between “real” names (*ming*) and “not real” pseudonyms (*hao*) can be seen for example in a story from the 19th century in Qujiang county:

People ask the local Daoist priest to choose a pseudonym for their child and write it on a sheet of paper (...). The sheet was posted on the gate of the local temple. The parents then returned shouting the pseudonym loudly, in the hope, (...) demons who heard it

⁷⁴ Waldenfels 1997, p. 25.

⁷⁵ Waldenfels 1997, p. 155.

⁷⁶ Cf. *Die Bibel* 2006, p. 56 (Ex 3,13-15), p. 72 (Ex 20,7), p. 174 (Dtn 5,11). The name *Yahweh* was avoided by Jews out of reverence. It was not spoken and not read, not even during a reading of the Bible. The title “Adonai” (Lord) was used instead in prayers. Also interesting is that names of former gods had to be erased, cf. *Die Bibel* 2006, p. 182 (Dtn 12, 3). About historical problems with the translation of the divine name of the Christian God into Chinese see Kim Sangkeun 2004.

⁷⁷ For the practice of “nian Fo” 念佛 (focused especially on Japan) see, e.g., Andrews 1973; Fujiwara Ryosetsu 1987, pp. 435-438.

⁷⁸ Waldenfels 1997, p. 155. For more on the importance and power of names in religions, see Goldammer 1960, pp. 232-234.

⁷⁹ Cf. De Groot 1910, pp. 1128-1129.

⁸⁰ Cf. Buckley Ebrey 1981, p. 303.

would only remember this false name, and thus be unable to steal the soul of the child.⁸¹

In fact most kinds of names enumerated earlier (see 2.2.1.) had the important function of protection. The alternative names protected the “real” name – the personal name that contained the essence of a person. A pseudonym/sobriquet (*hao* 號) could protect the personal name (*ming*). It was a name, but not the “real name,” because in contrast to the *ming*, it did not affect the “real” person. Therefore it could be used or should be used to avoid a violation of the real name. Similarly, a courtesy name *zi* was given to young men in order to shield their *ming* in public life. Many other names, including posthumous names (*shihao*), which protected the “real” name after death, prevented the misuse of the *ming* in different periods and situations of life. This was important, because the “real” name should be guarded as life itself. The other names did not usually have to be protected, because they were not real, not “sacred.”⁸²

2.2.5. Naming

If the name is very important for the life and fate of human beings, giving power and requiring protection, it should also be chosen carefully. The custom of naming (*mingming* 命名) in China is therefore very significant. The choice of a name is not accidental and arbitrary, but is a process in which a character with corresponding meaning and pronunciation is found, and even the number of strokes and components of a written character are considered.⁸³ This is understandable, because the chosen character will affect the whole life of a man, and every possible ominous connection should be discovered and avoided. Therefore many taboo words are known in the naming custom. We read about it in the *Records of Ritual (Liji)* and *Tradition of Zuo (Zuozhuan)*:

In giving a name to a son, it should not be that of a state, nor of a day or a month,⁸⁴ nor of any hidden ailment, nor of a hill or river.⁸⁵

The name must not be taken from the name of the State; or of an office or of a mountain or river; or of any malady; or of an animal; or of a utensil, or of a ceremonial offering.⁸⁶

⁸¹ Ter Haar 2006, p. 166. Similar custom can be seen among Mongols (Hamayon 1981, p. 176).

⁸² Cf. Bauer 1959, pp. 33-34.

⁸³ Cf. Bauer 1959, pp. 41-42.

⁸⁴ This statement is striking, especially in view of the fact that Shang Kings' names always used cyclic signs.

⁸⁵ *Liji*, j. 1, p. 21b. For translation see Legge 1968, Part III, p. 78.

Existing names of people could not be used by naming, especially the names of deceased and living ancestors.⁸⁷ There was also a prohibition against taking names of heroes, emperors, gods or ghosts.⁸⁸ Therefore the custom of giving children the same names as their ancestors, as seen, for example, in the case of Europe, or of referring to them as “the son of ...” (still visible in family names such as Johnson or Anderson), was practically unknown in China.⁸⁹

2.2.6. Interpretation of Names

The life and fate of a human being were often interpreted in relation to his name. Why did the Prince of Mu of Jin lose his kingdom? It was because he gave his son the name Chou 仇 (enemy).⁹⁰ The number of strokes, pronunciation and parts of character were used to explain a past event in the lives of people or for forecasting their future. The advisor of the ruler of Wu state foretold the fast death of Cao Pi 曹丕 (r. 220–226) – ruler of the Wei state – after his enthronement, because he was able to recognize that two parts of characters in the name of the ruler of Wei – *bu* 不 (“no”) and *shi* 十 (“ten”) could be interpreted as “no more than ten years.”⁹¹ The name was also decisive in the important moments of life, as for example a marriage. The names of the young girl and young man were compared to decide if their union was going to be auspicious or not.

2.2.7. Change of Names

Although names were chosen very carefully, life brought many unexpected situations. The connection between the fate of not only a person, but also of a state and his or its name was considered as a matter of course. There were times when a name had to be changed, because the change of an ominous situation depended on the conversion of name. Therefore innumerable examples of name changing can be found, especially if it could improve the fortune of people or designate the start of a new life. There is an example of such a change

⁸⁶ *Chunqiu zuozhuan*, j. 5, p. 16b. For translation see Legge 1966, Vol. 5, p. 50.

⁸⁷ Cf. Buckley Ebrey 1981, p. 303.

⁸⁸ Bauer 1959, p. 30.

⁸⁹ As it is shown by Chen Yuan, there were apparently exceptional cases in the period of the Southern and Northern Dynasties (both in the South and in the North) that fathers and sons could have the same character in their names, which was not seen as an offensive practice (cf. Chen Yuan 1958, pp. 91–93).

⁹⁰ *Chunqiu zuozhuan*, j. 4, p. 10. For translation see Legge 1966, Vol. 5, p. 40.

⁹¹ *Sanguozhi*, “Wuzhi”, j. 8, pp. 5b–6a.

in the life of Liu Sanbian 柳三變 (971–1053). As he became old and sick he changed his name to Yong 永 (eternal), in order to change this fate.⁹²

The intentions behind name changes in China can be sorted in a few groups.⁹³ Names were changed in order to improve one's own fate or to avoid the fate of a person with a similar name. Names were also altered in order to mark the start of a new period of life. They could be changed if the rules of taboo or generation name (*paihang*) were changed, or in order to hide the actual name from the government (e.g., because of persecution).⁹⁴ Finally, names could be bestowed as an award or punishment also after death.⁹⁵ A name could be changed by the affected person, but also by other people, e.g. by the emperor.⁹⁶

2.2.8. Rectification of Names

In connection with the change of name, the systematic “Confucian” conception of rectification of names (*zhengming* 正名) should also be mentioned here.⁹⁷ “Attributing names to realities in both human society and the natural world and using those names in a perfunctionary and performative way was a means to order the world.”⁹⁸ The name and its correspondence with reality were important in China. Therefore Chinese philosophers wrote much about the difference between reality and its denoted representation. There is a discussion about name and reality in the School of Names, *mingjia* 名家, the rectification of names by Confucius and the discussion about the meaning of names (*ming*) at the beginning of the text of *Daodejing*.⁹⁹ If the name did not correspond with reality, it was supposed to be changed. Furthermore, the change of name was to be done first, before the change of facts. Without that, any change of reality was impossible. However, the rectification of names has been never explicitly linked to the subject of tabooing names by modern scholars.

⁹² *Shengshui yantanlu*, j. 8. p. 75.

⁹³ The custom of name changing was not unique to China. We can compare the change of Abram (to Abraham), Simon (to Petrus) or Saulus (to Paulus) in the Bible as an indication of a crucial transformation in their lives.

⁹⁴ Cf. the case of Jesuit missionary Alfonso Vagnone/Alphonse Vagnoni. He came to China in 1604 and took the name Wang Fengsu 王豐肅 (courtesy name Yiyuan 一元 or Taiwen 泰穩). In 1625 after the Nanking persecution, he changed his name to Gao Yizhi 高一志 (courtesy name Zesheng 則聖). For his biography and works, see Pfister 1976, pp. 85-95.

⁹⁵ Cf. Bauer 1959, pp. 54-65.

⁹⁶ Bauer 1959, p. 52. Similarly geographical names were changed for different reasons, as for example a strange incident, change of dynasty or war. It was because geographical names were perceived as a meaningful omen. For examples of changes of geographical names see Chiao 1970, p. 103.

⁹⁷ For rectification of names cf. Gassmann 1988; Makeham 2003, 813-814.

⁹⁸ Sterckx 2002, p. 40.

⁹⁹ Barret 2003, p. 429.

2.2.9. Power of Script

The name had a power not only in its oral pronunciation but also in the form of written characters. For Chinese the script itself had a magical character and possessed its own power. Magical signs can banish evil ghosts or, on the contrary, provoke calamity.¹⁰⁰ “The ideographical character of Chinese script appears in the magic of scripture.”¹⁰¹ Chinese rites use paper charms, amulets or prayer sheets with written characters. They are applied in order “to cover most of the misfortunes which man may encounter wherever he lives: ill-health, bad luck (...). They protect “from evil spirits or people” and they are capable “to remove ‘uncleanness’ from a house after sickness or death.”¹⁰²

The power of script is especially apparent in Daoism. It can be seen, for example, in the *fu* 符 amulet – very common in Daoist ritual. It was usually “written on a long strip of paper and composed of mystic writings and symbols.”¹⁰³ Components of characters written on amulets were often inverted, omitted or duplicated.¹⁰⁴ If somebody was in need, the Daoist master (*daoshi*) wrote one or several complicated secret characters, often not existing in standard Chinese. The person using these magic characters as an amulet was protected from gods and ghosts.¹⁰⁵

As we can see, the script, similar to the name, was considered to have a special power. It is no wonder that they were often combined and used together, and that names could be often found in charms. “The entry of one’s name (...) may give the final degree of potency”.¹⁰⁶ In this way the “concrete” god or ghost could be addressed, and the concrete human being could receive his help. “If a charm is burned for a special purpose, the name and address of the person to whom benefit is to accrue should first be written on them.”¹⁰⁷ The same is done if a certificate to the Heavenly Gods is needed: in the centre the name and address of the user should be written along with the message or instruction to gods.¹⁰⁸ The mystical scripture is often connected with the name of a god. The *fu* amulet is actually a

¹⁰⁰ *Zarys dziejów religii* 1988, p. 97.

¹⁰¹ Drexler 1994, p. 1.

¹⁰² Topley 1953, p. 63.

¹⁰³ Topley 1953, p. 63.

¹⁰⁴ Drexler 1994, p. 11.

¹⁰⁵ Drexler 1994, p.16.

¹⁰⁶ Topley 1953, p. 64.

¹⁰⁷ Topley 1953, p. 68.

¹⁰⁸ Topley 1953, p. 76.

materialisation of mystical forms that represent the mystical name of a deity, which should be adjured and is also a manifestation of cosmic energy.¹⁰⁹

Concluding, it should be pointed out that the name was perceived in China as the “essence” of a human being. It had, in the beliefs of the Chinese, an extraordinary importance for life and a special power, in both speech and script. Therefore the name had to be protected and its use avoided in normal life. As the name was significant and related to the fate of a person, it should be chosen carefully. And it had to be changed if it affected a human being negatively.

This chapter described the concept and context of the phenomenon of taboo, and its concrete form in China as *jinji*. Also various kinds and functions of taboo in China have been detailed. Linguistic taboo in particular has been distinguished. In this context, the protection and avoidance of name in China, called *bihui*, has been exposed as a special case of taboo (*jinji*) – the tabooing of name.

¹⁰⁹ Drexler 1994, p. 6; see also Drexler 2001, pp. 227-248.

CHAPTER THREE: BASIC CHARACTERISTICS OF NAME TABOOING

Human names were perceived as the “essence” of a human being in China and were tabooed. The problem of tabooing names is quite complex. Therefore it seems appropriate to provide a survey of basic features of this topic. Different groups of persons whose names were tabooed will be designated and described. Various kinds of names and titles of people, which were objects of tabooing, will be analyzed. Tabooing of words and characters, as well as their homonyms and parts of characters will be distinguished. Miscellaneous methods of taboo avoidance will be defined, and principles of taboo practice will be discussed. We will also ask when and where taboo names were avoided, and what motives people had for avoidance or, on the contrary, for open use of taboo names, as well what functions the tabooing of names had in Chinese society. Throughout the presentation of this topic we will follow the evolution of taboo and evaluate its importance in the history of China.

3.1. Tabooed Persons

Anybody's name could potentially be considered as taboo. Usually, however, the tabooing required an adequate conviction and respect of other people or otherwise the custom could never have lasted. That is why names were often tabooed because of the name-bearer's function and depending on someone's relationship to that person. One person could be at the same time an object of taboo practice, i.e., a tabooed person, and its subject, i.e., a tabooing person. The name of a hypothetical Mr. Wang could be taboo for his children and grandchildren, as he was their father and grandfather, and for his pupils, as he was their teacher. On the other hand, Mr. Wang would observe a taboo of the names of his ancestors as their son, his teachers, officials, and of course the name of the emperor. As we can see, tabooing was a relational activity, i.e., the tabooing of name expressed a hierarchical relationship to the tabooed person.

In traditional Chinese society we can distinguish a few groups of tabooed persons. The first group consisted of emperors and their relatives: ancestors, wives, crown princes and other members of the royal family (see 3.1.1). The taboo customs of this group are best known, because most records of taboo practice refer to them. Less known is the second group of tabooed persons connected with religious belief and legends, such as real and legendary heroes, sages, and famous persons (e.g., Confucius), but also names of gods,

ghosts and priests (see 3.1.2). The tabooing of their names is sometimes affiliated with official taboo practice, but usually considered as informal taboo. The last group consists of persons tabooed in a limited way within the family or society: relatives of one's own family (see 3.1.3) and respected persons (officials, teachers and friends, see 3.1.4). The so called "family taboo" (*jiahui* 家諱) – taboo of relatives (especially from the father's side), and "internal taboo" (*neihui* 內諱) or women's taboo (*fuhui* 婦諱) – taboo of maternal relatives – are part of this third group.

Taboo of a person's own relatives, teachers, friends and local officials was restricted to a concrete group of people and was therefore called "private taboo" (*sihui* 私諱) – contrary to the taboo of emperors, which should be observed by everybody and was thus called "public taboo" (*gonghui* 公諱) or "state taboo" (*guohui* 國諱). Taboos of ghosts and legendary heroes, if mentioned, are usually counted among the common taboos, similarly as sometimes taboos of the highest officials of the state.

3.1.1. Emperors and Related Persons

The most important for rulers and therefore the mostly recorded and studied taboos in China were those of kings and emperors. The personal names (*ming*) and often other types of names or titles of deceased monarchs, and since the Han dynasty also of living ones, were taboo. Name taboos related to emperors were usually strongly maintained by custom and law, and affected the life of most people, although the practice still evolved and had various characteristics in different periods. Usually it had to be observed in the whole country for seven generations. Taboos for the founder of a dynasty – the Great Ancestor or Taizu – were observed for the entire duration of a dynasty. The selection of taboo names of rulers and their ancestors was renewed with each new dynasty and finished with its fall. The strongest punishment – sometimes even decapitation – was applied for violation of the emperor's name and could sometimes carry consequences for nine generations of relatives. Most instances of name tabooing mentioned in the literature were connected to the emperor.

As this is the largest group of tabooed persons, examples of avoiding their names can be found in almost all different periods of Chinese history.¹ It is no wonder, for example, that the name the founder of the Han dynasty, Liu Bang 劉邦, is practically not quoted in the *Book of the Han* (*Hanshu*), and the character *bang* 邦 is replaced in numerous

¹ Probably the biggest collection of instances of emperors' taboo can be found in *Jinshi biming huikao*, pp. 69-377.

places in the text by the character *guo* 國. The reason for that is already explained in the commentary of Xun Yue 荀悅 (148–209) to the *Book of the Han*, just at the beginning: “(Emperor Gaozu’s) taboo was Bang, his courtesy name was Ji. All instances of the character *bang* were replaced by *guo*.” The same statement can again be found at the same location in the text in the later commentary of Yan Shigu 顏師古 (581–645): “The fact that the characters *bang* were replaced by *guo* is because tributaries tabooed the dynastic name.”²

Two thousand years later, in the Qing dynasty we still find very similar cases. The personal name of Qianlong was Hongli 弘曆, and both of its characters had to be tabooed. If the reader consults for example the *General Catalogue to the Imperial Collection of Four* (*Siku quanshu zongmu tiyao* 四庫全書總目提要, printed 1793), he will discover six “unfamiliar” works listed there – all containing the character *hong* 宏, as *Hongzhi Bamin tongzhi* 宏治八閩通志 or *Hongzhi Huzhou fuzhi* 宏治湖州府志.³ In fact these works are not unknown: the first was written by Huang Zhongzhao 黃仲昭 (1435–1508), the second was compiled by Wang Xun 王珣 – both published in the ruling period (1487–1505) of the Hongzhi emperor 弘治 (which is the year title, not a proper name) of the Ming. From this time on their titles were conveyed in this way. However, the first characters of these titles were changed in the *General Catalogue to the Imperial Collection of Four* from the original *hong* 弘 to *hong* 宏, because of the taboo name of the Emperor Qianlong.⁴ Other examples of tabooing of imperial names will be mentioned chronologically in the next chapters.

Beside names of emperors, names of family members of sovereigns, too, were often taboo. These names were a taboo for the emperor himself, but because of his status they sometimes had to be observed by everybody in the empire. Especially the name of the father of the emperor was tabooed, even if he had not been an emperor himself. An example of a taboo name of an emperor’s father can be found in the Basic Annals of the First Emperor of Qin dynasty in the *Records of the Historian* (*Shiji*): “In the 23rd year (223 BC), the King of Qin again summoned Wang Jian 王翦 (...) to lead an attack on ‘Jing’ 荆.”⁵ An unaware reader would probably wonder where this curious country of Jing could be. The explanation

² Cf. *Hanshu*, j. 1 shang, p. 1a.

³ *Siku quanshu zongmu tiyao*, Vol. II, p. 1560. On the advantages and shortcomings of *Siku quanshu zongmu* see: Xu Zhenxing 2006, pp. 38-39.

⁴ See also other books titles with the *hong* 弘 character changed because of taboo in: Wang Yankun 1997, p. 161.

⁵ *Shiji*, j. 6, p. 7a. Cf. English translation in Burton 1993, p. 41; Nienhauser 1994, Vol. I., p. 134.

is very simple and was included in the commentary *Correct Interpretations/Meanings of the Shiji* (*Shiji zhengyi* 史記正義) by the Tang historian Zhang Shoujie 張守節. As he explains, the quote refers to the conquest of the well-known state of Chu by Qin. However the character *chu* 楚 was taboo and could not be used, because the personal name of the father of the First Emperor of Qin was Zichu 子楚. Therefore it was replaced by the character *jing*.⁶ This taboo version survived into the following dynasties.

Similarly, names of other ancestors of the emperor, the crown prince (*taizi* 太子), the queen consort (*huanghou* 皇后) and the empress dowager (*huang taihou* 皇太后) were sometimes avoided. There are even examples for taboos on the names of the parents of the queen consort, family on the mother's side, the emperor's son-in-law, or the whole distant royal family. We will describe concrete cases of them in subsequent chapters. Numerous discussions are known in various periods of Chinese history on the question whether the avoidance of such taboos was correct or not.

For example, tabooing the name of the crown prince (*taizi*) was practiced already from the Western Han period, as presumed by some scholars.⁷ We find such an instruction in the practice of naming already in the important Han-work entitled the *Records of Ritual* (*Liji*), which prohibited choosing names identical to the name of the crown prince.⁸ Interestingly, the word *taizi* itself is also an effect of tabooing. The former title for a crown prince was *shizi* 世子 and it was changed to *taizi* because of the taboo of the Emperor Taizong of the Tang dynasty, Li Shimin 李世民 (r. 627–649).⁹ We can find numerous cases of taboos for the name of a crown prince also in subsequent dynasties. One of them about an official of the Jin dynasty Zhang Xingxin 張行信 (1163–1231) was recorded in the *Standard History of Jin* (*Jinshi*): “Zhang Xingxin's courtesy name was Xinfu 信甫 and his former name Xingzhong 行忠. He changed it because of the taboo of the Crown Prince Zhuang Xian 莊獻.”¹⁰ The crown prince mentioned in the story was Wanyan Shouzhong 完顏守忠 (d. 1215), the son of the Emperor Xuanzong of Jin (r. 1213–1223).

The tabooing of the queen consort's and the empress dowager's names was different in various dynasties. Although this kind of taboo belongs to the internal taboos (*neihui*),

⁶ *Shiji*, j. 6, p. 7ab.

⁷ Fan Zhixin 2006, p. 40.

⁸ *Liji*, j. 1, p. 46b: *bugan yu shizi tongming* 不敢与世子同名.

⁹ Fan Zhixin 2006, p. 40.

¹⁰ *Jinshi*, j. 107, p. 8a.

sometimes it was observed in the whole state, especially if the empress had political power. An instance of that taboo is that concerning the name Fengniang 鳳娘, which belonged to the queen consort Ciyi 慈懿 (1144–1200) of Emperor Guangzong (r. 1189–1194) from the Southern Song dynasty, as noted in the late Ming work the *Sichao wenjianlu* 四朝聞見錄. Because of the empress' name, the word for jewelweed *impatiens cyathiflora* (*jinfenghua* 金鳳花) was changed to “flower of a good daughter,” *hao nü'er hua* 好女兒花.¹¹ Ciyi was *de facto* ruler of China in 1189–1195 when Emperor Guangzong became ill. She was considered temperamental – according to a story from the *Standard History of Song* (*Songshi*), after Ciyi heard that the emperor had admired the hands of a concubine, she sent him the latter's truncated hands on a dish at lunch time.¹² No wonder that nobody risked speaking out her name openly.

3.1.2. Sages, Legendary Persons, Gods and Ghosts

The next group of tabooed persons includes sages (holy men) and legendary emperors. Also names of ghosts and gods can be included among this kind of tabooed persons. Although different cases of such tabooing can be found in various periods, there was no one unified taboo custom. This kind of taboo was probably regarded as a “popular taboo” (*jinji*), but sometimes entered the practice of state taboo. It depended on the decision of the emperor.

The most famous taboo of this kind is the taboo of Confucius' name (Qiu 丘) which was observed in China especially during the Tang and Song dynasty, but also in other periods. The Qing compilation of name taboos *Jingshi biming huikao* says in this regard: “If (copyists) during the Song dynasty saw the taboo character of Holy Man (Confucius), they changed it to *mou* 某 (certain).”¹³ A special edict of the Emperor Yongzheng (r. 1722–1735) was issued in 1724, mandating that the character *qiu* 邱 should be written in place of the taboo name of Confucius.¹⁴

Also taboos of other illustrious and legendary people, such as Laozi 老子, Guan Yu 關羽 (d. 219), Zhu Xi 朱熹 (1130–1200), Wu Zixu 伍子胥 (5 cent. BC), Meng Haoran 孟浩然 (a poet of Tang, 690–740 AD), were observed, as were the taboos of legendary rulers' names, such as the Yellow Emperor 黃帝 (named Xuanyuan 軒轅), Yao 堯, Shun 舜 and

¹¹ *Sichao wenjianlu*, j. 5, p. 44a; Cf. Wang Xinhua 2007, p. 69.

¹² Cf. *Songshi*, j. 243, p. 13b.

¹³ *Jingshi biming huikao*, j. 40, p. 585.

¹⁴ *Qiaoxi zaji*, p. 33b-34a.

Yu 禹.¹⁵ A special case is the taboo of God Jahwe (Jehovah) 爺火華 during the period of the Taiping Rebellion (see 10.3.1).

If taboos of persons were ordered to be followed by the emperor, they became “public taboos” (*gonghui*) or “state taboos” (*guohui*) and were generally observed by everybody.

3.1.3. Family

Besides the public taboos (*gonghui* 公諱) or state taboos (*guohui* 國諱), there were family taboos (*jiahui* 家諱) and private taboos (*sihui* 私諱), affecting one family or one group of people. They were especially observed by literati. The most important person in this group was the father of the family, his ancestors and close relatives from the paternal side. Examples of that kind of name taboo can be found in the literature, if the author of the respective work observed his family taboo. For example, the compiler of the *Book of the Later Han* (*Hou Hanshu*) Fan Ye 范曄 (398–445 AD) writing his work did not use the character *tai* 泰, and if he came across names having this character (such as Zheng Tai 鄭泰, Guo Tai 郭泰 etc.), he changed them to *tai* 太.¹⁶

There are also examples of taboo for the name of one’s mother, names of collateral relatives (eldest brother or uncle), and distant ancestors of one’s father. Chinese historians assume that the poet Du Fu 杜甫 (712–770) tabooed his mother’s name Haitang 海棠 because he never mentioned flowers of the crab apple, *haitanghua* 海棠花 in his poems.¹⁷ Sometimes a father observes the taboo for his son.¹⁸ Family taboos were generally limited to one family, but might also be observed by friends and neighbors. There are also examples for observing private taboos of officials by the emperor himself.¹⁹

3.1.4. Persons of Respect

The last group includes respected persons: officials, whose names were taboo for a group of subordinates, teachers and friends.²⁰ Names of superiors were tabooed for their subordinates. For example, local people had to avoid names of local officials. Also private taboos

¹⁵ Cf. Fan Zhixin 2006, pp. 65–67 ; Wang Xinhua 2007, pp. 39–45.

¹⁶ *Xuelin*, j. 3, p. 68.

¹⁷ *Xianjulu*, p. 3.

¹⁸ Cf. Wang Xinhua 2007, p. 62.

¹⁹ Wang Xinhua 2007, p. 63. See also Fan Zhixin 2006, pp. 69–80.

²⁰ Cf. Wang Xinhua 2007, pp. 46–56; Fan Zhixin 2006, pp. 80–93.

observed by officials were avoided by colleagues in office. Respect for officials in this aspect was considered as similar to the respect shown to the emperor and therefore had his support. The custom started perhaps from the mourning rituals of the Han period.²¹ We know, for example, that as Chen Yi 陳逸 became the Senior Official of Lu (*Lu xiang* 魯相),²² the name of his father Chen Fan 陳蕃 (d. 168 AD), formerly the Imperial Guardian of the Emperor Ling of Han, was taboo for the local people. They apparently pronounced the characters *fan* 蕃 as *pi* (皮).²³

There are also examples of names of teachers that were tabooed. One should respect one's teacher just as one would one's brothers. In particular, it was impermissible to use the name of a teacher directly. Other titles were used instead of that, as *shi* 師, *gong* 公, *sheng* 生, *jun* 君 or *xian* 先 and *xianjun* 先君. In Song times, the titles *fuzi* 夫子 (master)²⁴ and later *xiansheng* 先生 (literally "first born") were popular.²⁵ The modern meaning of the term *xiansheng* (sir, gentleman, and in the south also teacher) clearly derives from this usage. Friends were usually called directly by their names. But there were also cases in which the use of a friend's given name was considered disrespectful. The courtesy name of a friend had to be used instead or the word "brother," *xiong* 兄.

3.2. Taboo Names

After knowing which kinds or groups of people were "tabooed persons" in China, we should determine which of their names were tabooed. As well-known, the Chinese used many types of names with different connotations and not all of them were relevant for tabooing. The meanings of and relationships between names are described in the previous chapter (cf. 2.2.1). The most important in tabooing was of course the given name (*ming* 名), which was considered as someone's real or true name, and even as the person in question him- or herself. It could be called a standard taboo name, because most examples of taboo are related to this type of name.

For example, the given name Xian 賢 of the Emperor Jingzong (r. 969–982) of the Liao dynasty was taboo for everybody in the Liao state. When in 1043 AD the Song official

²¹ Fan Zhixin 2006, pp. 80-81.

²² Cf. Hucker 1985, pp. 230-231.

²³ Fan Zhixin 2006, p. 82.

²⁴ Cf. the name Confucius Latinized by the Jesuits from Kong *fuzi* 孔夫子 (Master Kong).

²⁵ Cf. Fan Zhixin 2006, pp. 85-87.

Li Weixian 李惟賢 was sent as an envoy to Liao, he had to avoid the taboo name of the former emperor and change his name (temporarily) to Baochen 寶臣.²⁶

Beside tabooing of the given name, there are also examples, especially in case of the emperor, for tabooing other names and titles, including their family name (*xing* 姓), milk name (*xiaoming* 小名, *ruming* 乳名, or *xiaozi* 小字), courtesy name (*zi* 字) – given in adulthood, posthumous name (*shihao* 謚號) – the honorary title granted to a dead former emperor, an era name (*nianhao* 年號), the title of a dynasty (*guohao* 國號), other imperial honorific titles (*zunhao* 尊號), and the name of the imperial tomb (*lingming* 陵名). Sometimes the name of an office (*guanming* 官名) was a taboo, too.²⁷

The purpose of most of these alternatives names was to protect the given name *ming* and replace it. Therefore they were not usually tabooed. Sometimes they were avoided in special situations and conditions, and not tabooed when the situation changed. There are three possible circumstances of such cases: if somebody wanted to show an excessive respect, if the pronunciation of an inauspicious word resembled a taboo name, and if the name belonged to a detested man.²⁸ The name of the short-lived Xin 新 dynasty founded by Wang Mang 王莽 (9–23 AD) between the two Han dynasties is such an example. As is known from the *Book of the Han* (*Hanshu*), after his defeat, the name of the dynasty was tabooed and the characters *xin* 新 were changed: “In this year he (Wang Mang) changed eleven public names replacing *xin* 新 with *xin* 心; later he repeatedly changed *xin* 心 to *xin* 信.”²⁹

Chen Yuan and other Chinese authors include taboo words that were not names or titles of people in the custom of name taboos (*bihui*) as well. Many different characters were taboo in China, such as numbers, animals of Chinese zodiac, the five phases (elements), inauspicious words (maladies, barbarians), swear words, or characters implying usurpation of power.³⁰ These characters were often tabooed in names. Although they are not taboo names, they are sometimes discussed by Chinese scholars in this context. They will be mentioned in this study only in some instances related to the tabooing of names.

²⁶ *Xuzizhi tongjian changbian*, j. 142, p. 33.

²⁷ Cf. Wang Xinhua 2007, pp. 76-93; Fan Zhixin 2006, pp. 54-65.

²⁸ Wang Xinhua 2007, p. 79.

²⁹ Cf. *Hanshu*, j. 99 zhong, p. 20.

³⁰ Cf. Wang Xinhua 2006, pp. 93-97.

3.3. Taboo Characters and Sounds

The most important and most frequently tabooed characters were of course those directly denoting the real name of a taboo person, which was called *zhengming* 正名 (also *zhenghu* 正呼, *zhengzi* 正字, *benzi* 本字, *zhenghui* 正諱). For example, Zhang Kui 張奎 of the Song refused to accept an office in Qingzhou 慶州 (today Qingyang 慶陽 in Gansu province), because the same character *qing* 慶 was the given name of his father Yuqing 余慶, as we read in the *History of Song* (*Songshi*).³¹

However, the tabooing of a concrete name was not only limited to the character or words that constituted the name. The reason for this is that the characters of the Chinese language have numerous homonyms and many different characters are similar in writing. As a consequences these homonyms and similar characters might also be often involved in the tabooing custom. Which characters and sounds were related to the tabooed one and became taboo as well?

There are many examples for the tabooing of characters that are homonyms of a taboo character, i.e., having an identical or similar pronunciation, but a different way of writing. They are called *xianming* 嫌名. The avoidance of *xianming* affected a large group of characters. For example, in the Southern Han Kingdom (917–971) of the Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms Period, the names of the prefectural governor of Mengzhou 蒙州 (today in Mengshan county 蒙山 in Guanxi province) – Long Xiao 龍驍, of his father – Que 碯, and of his son – Qiong 蛩 were all taboo for the people of this prefecture. They tabooed not only these three names, but also their homonyms and referred to the “owl” (*xiao* 梟) as “to spit thirteen” (*tuoshisan* 唾十三), the “magpie” (*que* 鵲) as “why are you happy” (*xinaihe* 喜奈何) and the “cricket” (*qiong* 蛩) as “autumnal wind” (*qiufeng* 秋風).³²

Characters having a taboo character as a constituent part and characters graphically similar to it could be tabooed, too, even if such instances are not as numerous as those of the groups mentioned before.³³ For example, because the name of Emperor Wuzong (r. 840–846) of the Tang dynasty was Yan 炎, the characters *tan* 談 and *dan* 淡 were also tabooed and changed to *tan* 譚 and *dan* 澹.³⁴

³¹ *Songshi*, j. 324, p. 12a.

³² *Qingyilu*, j. 2, p. 30b.

³³ Cf. Wang Xinhua 2007, p. 97-108; Fan Zhixin 2006, pp. 27-36.

³⁴ Cf. Wang Xinhua 2007, p. 107.

The avoidance of homonyms is known since the period of the Three Kingdoms. Before that time we have only examples of tabooing the character of a given name. During the Jin period (265–420) instances of this kind of tabooing became very numerous. The avoidance of homonyms (*xianming*) reached its culmination in the Song time. At that time, together with the real characters of a name, up to 55 homonymous characters had to be avoided, for example during the reign period of Emperor Gaozong (r. 1127–1162).

The avoidance of homonyms can be seen also in the family taboos. Only in the time from the Five Dynasties Period to the Song dynasty (907–1279) could the tabooing of parts of characters also be seen. Later tabooing was normally limited to the actual character of a name. This disappearance of homonym taboos in the later period was caused perhaps by the fact that the usual practice of reading aloud, which was dominant before, started to change in the Southern Song time (1127–1279) into silent reading, so the avoidance of homonyms became less important.³⁵ The avoidance of homonyms of inauspicious words can be seen continuing further. Similarly homonyms of auspicious words could be used: for example also nowadays we can see depictions of bats (*bianfu* 蝙蝠), because they are homonymous with happiness (*fu* 福).

3.4. Ways of Tabooing

The avoidance of taboo names was practiced in various manners. Below we describe different inventive ways in which successive generations of Chinese people dealt with this problem. The repertoire varied from replacing a character or leaving a blank space to all kinds of changes to the character, such as leaving out strokes or simply covering it up with yellow paper.

3.4.1. Replacement of Characters

This method was the most commonly used one. It replaces the taboo character with another character. The new character could be chosen according to its meaning, pronunciation or structure. There were seven possible methods of how to choose the substitute character or word.

³⁵ Cf. Cherniack 1994, p. 53-54. There is also a note about the tabooing of names in the Song dynasty (pp. 106–108).

a. Characters with the same or similar meaning

The new character could be chosen because of its similar meaning. This kind of taboo can be found in various periods. The first known example comes from the Qin dynasty, from the stone inscriptions which were left by the First Emperor during his successive journeys to the central mountains that marked the eastern boundaries of his empire. In the inscription on the stele of Mount Langye (Langyetai 琅邪臺) in Shandong the character *zheng* 正 has been replaced by *duan* 端 with the same meaning “proper.”³⁶ The tabooing of the character *zheng* because of the name of the First Emperor – Zheng – and its replacement by character *duan* is also described in the *Index to the Records of the Historian* (*Shiji suoyin* 史記索隱) by Sima Zhen 司馬貞 (8th century).³⁷ This method was also used in the case of tabooing the father of the First Emperor (Zichu 子楚) recorded in the *Records of the Historian* (*Shiji*). The character 楚 *chu* is replaced there by *jing* 荆 with the same meaning “thorny tree” (see 3.1.1).³⁸

During the Han dynasty every taboo character had an adequate replacement (based on meaning rather than on sound). As mentioned above, the character *guo* 國 was used in order to taboo the character *bang* 邦, which was the name of the Emperor Gao of Han – Liu Bang 劉邦 (r. 206–195 BC). Later this method was still used, but often a few equivalent characters were applied for a single name taboo. During the Tang period, the character Yuan 淵 meaning “whirling water” from the name of Emperor Gaozu (r. 618–626) was replaced by various characters with a similar meaning, such as *shui* 水 “water”, *chuan* 川 “river” or *quan* 泉 “spring”. For example the sentence “the first (sword) was called Longyuan, the second one – Tai’a” (*yiyue longyuan eryue tai’a* 一曰龍淵二曰泰阿) from the *Lost Records of the State of Yue* (*Yuejueshu* 越絕書) by Yuan Kang 袁康 (Eastern Han period)³⁹ is recorded as *yiyue longquan yiyue tai’a* (一曰龍泉一曰泰阿) in the *Book of the Jin* (*Jinshu*, compiled 644⁴⁰ by Fang Xuanling 房玄齡).⁴¹ The method was used not only for the tabooing of the emperor’s name but also for taboos of other persons.⁴²

³⁶ See the description of this case and the discussion of it in 4.4.2. For the inscription, see Kern 2000, pp. 25–34.

³⁷ *Shiji*, j. 16, p. 3b.

³⁸ *Shiji*, j. 6, p. 7a.

³⁹ *Yuejueshu*, j. 11, p. 3a. This book has been studied by Olivia Milburn. See Milburn 2010.

⁴⁰ Wilkinson 2000, p. 503.

⁴¹ *Jinshu*, j. 36, p. 12b.

⁴² Cf. also Teng Ssu-Yü 1968, p. 24 with English translation of *Family instructions of Master Yan* (*Yanshi jiaxun* 顏氏家訓) of Yan Zhitui 顏之推 (531–591): “In all cases of prohibited names a character of the

b. Characters with related meaning

It was also possible that the new character did not have the same meaning, but had another kind of connection with the tabooed character. There are, for example, a few examples of the character *yin* 殷 being replaced by *shang* 商 because of the taboo name of the Emperor Taizu of the Song – Kuangyin 匡胤 (r. 960–976). Here two steps are involved, for the character 殷 is evidently only a homonym of 胤 and therefore not strictly speaking taboo. Nonetheless, in the *Thousand Character Classic* (*Qianziwen* 千字文, written in the 6 c.⁴³) the word *yintang* 殷湯 is replaced by *shangtang* 商湯.⁴⁴ In *History of Yuan* (*Yuanshi*) we read that the poet Shang Ting’s 商挺 (1209–1288) former family name was Yin 殷, but he changed it because of the Song imperial taboo.⁴⁵ The characters *shang* 商 (Shang dynasty) and *yin* 殷 (late period of the Shang dynasty) have a related meaning (though they can also be understood as synonyms).

Two other instances can be found in the period of Southern Dynasties. As the general Hou Jing 侯景 (d. 552) usurped the throne of Liang and established the short-lived Han dynasty (551–552) he also ordered new state taboos. Because the name of his grandfather was Zhou 周, all characters *zhou* had to be changed to *ji* 姬, as we can see in *History of the Southern Dynasties* (*Nanshi* 南史). Both of these characters were connected, since Ji was the family name of the Zhou dynasty’s kings.⁴⁶

A similar example can be found in *The Primary Anthology* (*Chuxueji* 初學記), though here inauspicious words and not names are tabooed in such a way: The superstitious Emperor Ming of Song of Southern Dynasties (r. 465–472) avoided the character *bai* 白 (white) – probably because the color white signified mourning and therefore reminded him of death – and ordered “to replace all these characters by *xuan* 玄 (black), *huang* 黃 (yellow), *zhu* 朱 (vermilion) or *zi* 紫 (purple).”⁴⁷ Thus the character *bai* was replaced by him with characters for other colors.

same meaning may be substituted.” In the same work other examples of such tabooing can be found (pp. 23–26).

⁴³ Wilkinson 2000, p. 49.

⁴⁴ *Qianziwen*, p. 4.

⁴⁵ *Yuanshi*, j. 159, p. 2b.

⁴⁶ *Nanshi*, j. 80, p. 12a.

⁴⁷ *Chuxueji*, j. 25, p. 7a.

c. Characters with opposite meaning

An inauspicious character could be replaced by a lucky one. This kind of tabooing can be found especially in the period of the Taiping rebellion (1850–1864, see 10.3.1), when for example the *xinhai* 辛亥 year (1851) was changed to *xinkai* 辛開, *guichou* 癸丑 year (1853) to *guihao* 癸好, and *yimao* 乙卯 year (1855) to *yirong* 乙榮, because the characters *hai* 亥 (homonym of *hai* 害 – harm), *chou* 丑 (homonym of *chou* 醜 – ugly), and *mao* (pronunciation the same as *mao* 冇 – not to have) was regarded as unlucky. The same method was used for recording days.⁴⁸

d. Characters with the same or similar pronunciation

It seems that before the Three Kingdoms period, characters with the same pronunciation were used to replace taboo characters. Even in the *Book of the Han* (*Hanshu*) there is recorded a case that the Emperor Wang Mang (r. 9 – 23 AD), mentioned above (see 3.2), ordered a change of characters from *xin* 新 to *xin* 心 and later to *xin* 信 because of his dynastic name Xin 新. In the next centuries this way of tabooing was less often used because homonyms were tabooed, too. But there are, in any case, isolated examples of such a method, as for example in *Forest of Learning* (*Xuelin* 學林), where we read that the character *wu* 戊 was changed to *wu* 武 because it was a part of the character *mao* 茂 in the taboo name of the grandfather (Maolin 茂琳) of the Emperor Taizu (r. 907–912) from the Later Liang dynasty.⁴⁹

More popular are instances where characters with a pronunciation similar (but not identical) to that of the taboo character were used to replace it. Such a method was used even during the Tang and Song dynasties, when the avoidance of homonyms reached its peak. Among the substitute characters for the taboo name of the Emperor Taizu of Song (r. 960–976) – Kuang 匡 – there are, for example, the characters *guang* 光 and *kang* 康, which have a similar pronunciation to *kuang*.⁵⁰ Also during the period of the Taiping rebellion characters with similar sounds were used for tabooing. We know, for example, that in order to taboo the name of Yahweh/Jehowah (Yehehua/Yehuohua 耶和華/爺火華) the Taipings changed the character *hua* 華 to *hua* 花 (these two characters have a different tone), e.g., *huaren* 華人 to *huaren* 花人 (see 10.3.1).

⁴⁸ Cf. *Banxing lishu*, pp. 195–200. Wang Jian 2002, p. 268.

⁴⁹ *Xuelin*, j. 3, p. 70.

⁵⁰ Notice that there is impossible to reconstruct the exact pronunciation of that time.

e. Courtesy name as a substitute

Taboo characters of a name could be replaced by one of the alternative names that elite males would have. Often the given name (*ming*) was changed to the courtesy name (*zi*). When we read the *Book of the Jin (Jinshu)*, compiled in the Tang period in 644, we can observe that persons who originally had characters such as *yuan* 淵 or *hu* 虎 in their names were called by their courtesy names. This was, for example, the case of Shi Hu 石虎 (295–349, Emperor Wu of the Later Zhao state) whose name was changed to Shi Jilong 石季龍,⁵¹ or Liu Yuan 劉淵 (251–310, Emperor Guangwen – the founding emperor of the Xiongnu state Han Zhao) whose name was changed to Liu Yuanhai 劉元海.⁵² Both of these changes to a courtesy name were made because of Tang taboos for the names of Emperor Gaozu (r. 618–626) – Yuan 淵, and his grandfather Hu 虎. The method of tabooing by using a courtesy name instead was often applied in various periods, if the given name of a person included a taboo character and had to be changed.

f. New characters

The name offending a taboo could sometimes be changed to a completely new one, with no connection to the original one. This method was used, for example, when the name of Yizheng county 儀徵縣 was changed for a short time (1908–1912) to Yangzi 揚子 – its old name from the Tang era – because of the taboo of the Last Emperor Qing Puyi 溥儀.⁵³

g. Special expressions

Sometimes special expressions were used to avoid taboo words. An example of that can be seen in the story from *Records From the Centre of Heaven (Tianzhongji 天中記)* presented in the introduction of this study: because of the name of the teacher Feng Dao 馮道 (882–954) students reading the character *dao* 道 in the first sentence of the *Classic of the Way and Virtue (Daodejing 道德經)*, pronouncing it as “not dare to say” (*buganshuo* 不敢說), in order not to offend the taboo of their teacher’s name.⁵⁴

⁵¹ See for example *Jinshu*, j. 7, p. 7b.

⁵² See for example *Jinshu*, j. 5, p. 2b.

⁵³ Huizipu 諱字譜 according to Wang Yankun 1997, p. 536.

⁵⁴ *Tianzhongji*, j. 24, p. 29.

3.4.2. Alteration of the Character

The second group of tabooing methods is changing a part of a character, or its position. One part of the character (*pianpang* 偏旁) could be added (e.g. tabooing of *xiu* 秀 by *you* 莠), removed (e.g., tabooing of *yong* 顛 by *yu* 禺), changed to another one (e.g., tabooing of *yu* 渝 by *yu* 喻), or sometimes to a similar one (e.g. tabooing of *fang* 方 by *wan* 万). We know that scholar-general Zhao Kui 趙葵 (1186–1266) of Southern Song changed the name of Fangcheng town 方城 to Wancheng 万城, because of the taboo name of his father Zhao Fang 趙城. Later the name was erroneously written as Wancheng 萬城.⁵⁵

a. Addition of new elements to a character

A character could be adapted to a taboo requirement by changing its structure through adding a new element. For example, the character *lan* 覽 was written with a different radical as *lan* 攬 in the work of Wang Xizhi's 王羲之 (307–365) *Preface to the Poems Composed at the Orchid Pavilion* (*Lantingxu* 蘭亭序), in order to avoid his family taboo (Wang Lan 王覽 206–278 was his great grandfather).⁵⁶ In the period of the Taiping rebellion, for example, the word “scholar” (*xiucai* 秀才, sometimes also called *xiushi* 秀士 in the Qing period), was changed to *youshi* 莠士 to avoid the taboo name of the Taiping leader Hong Xiuquan.⁵⁷

b. Omission of parts of a character

One or several components of a character could be dropped because of taboo. An instance of this can be found, for example, in the *History of the Yuan* (*Yuanshi*): Jin Lüxiang's 金履祥 (1232–1303) former family name was Liu 劉. He changed it by omitting parts of the character to Jin 金 in order to avoid a homonym of the taboo name of King Qian Liu 錢鏐 (r. 907–932) - the founder of the Kingdom of Wuyue (907–978) in the Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms Period.⁵⁸ One other instance can be seen in the *Book of Taboo Characters* (*Huizipu* 諱字譜), where an imperial edict is mentioned that all characters *yong* 顛 had to be

⁵⁵ *Jingshi biming huikao*, j. 35, p. 579.

⁵⁶ *Bijing*, j. 6, p. 17a.

⁵⁷ *Nanzhongji*, p. 641.

⁵⁸ *Yuanshi*, j. 189, p. 2b.

changed to *yu* 禺 because of the taboo of the Emperor Jiaqing of Qing – Yongyan 顓頊 (r. 1796–1820).⁵⁹

c. Exchanging part of a character for another one

Such a case of taboo from the Han period is claimed, for example, in the Song source *Verification of Family Names in Old and New Books* (*Gujin xingshi shu bianzheng* 古今姓氏書辯證) by Deng Mingshi 鄧名世 (12 c.): the official Yu Mi 渝彌 of the Emperor Jing of Han (r. 156–141 BC) had to change his name in 148 BC to Yu 喻 in order to avoid the taboo name of Ayu 阿渝 – Empress Bo 薄 (the first wife of the Emperor, d. 147 BC).⁶⁰

d. Change of place or separation of a character's parts

A part of the character can also change its place (i.e., *xing* 星 to 日生 – written as one character), or two parts can be written separately, preserving the former pronunciation as one character (i.e., *ye* 曄 to 日華).

3.4.3. Omission of Strokes

Another way of tabooing is the elimination of a few strokes – usually the last stroke – in a taboo character. This method of tabooing probably started in the Tang period. Possible previous examples cannot be confirmed, because many different writing styles were used before that time. But in the Tang era the omission of strokes as a method of tabooing was apparently common already. This is a visual method that fits changes in the way of reading.

The first known instance is probably the record of a stone inscription of general Li Ji 李勣 (594–669), dated 677 AD, where the character *shi* 世 in the name of the general Wang Shichong 王世充 (d. 621) of the Sui dynasty is written without the middle stroke in order to observe the taboo for the name of Emperor Taizong from the Tang – Li Shimin 李世民 (r. 627–649).⁶¹ Later this method was practiced until the Qing dynasty, where characters such as *xian* 弦, *xuan* 炫, *xuan* 眩, *xian* 絃, *xian* 舷, *xuan* 洊, *xuan* 脣, *xuan* 銜, and *xuan* 鉉

⁵⁹ *Lidai huizipu*, j. 1, p. 1a.

⁶⁰ *Gujin xingshi shu bianzheng*, j. 30, p. 413. The author of this dissertation supposes that the example comes originally from a Han source, not from this compendium, but was unable to find a concrete source from that time.

⁶¹ The name of Li Ji himself was also a result of tabooing custom. His original name was Xu Shiji 徐世勣. The new family name was bestowed upon him by the Emperor. He later dropped the character *shi* because of the taboo of the Emperor Taizong. See also 3.5.8 and 6.2.4.

were written without the last stroke (with the component 玄), due to the name of the Emperor Kangxi – Xuan 玄 (r. 1661–1722). Thus the taboo on Xuan 玄 was taken one step further, since all characters containing this element were changed. This method of tabooing was maintained solely by visual means, without any change in pronunciation. But it can also be supposed that leaving out strokes reminded the reader of the taboo status of a character that should not be pronounced.

3.4.4. Omission of Character

Yet another way of tabooing was to not write the taboo character at all. Instead of it, an empty place could be left, but it was also possible to record the location of the taboo character by the characters *wei* 口 (surround), *mou* 某 (certain), or *hui* 諱 (taboo).

a. Omission

This method is perhaps the oldest one and has its roots in the practice of “not to call” (*buming* 不名) and concealment in the Zhou time that will be explained more precisely later (see 4.3.1.2). The taboo character could be omitted, as for example in the inscription on the tower of Dengci temple 等慈寺, where the name of the already mentioned general Wang Shichong 王世充 (d. 621) is written as Wang Chong 王充.⁶²

b. Empty place

A popular method of tabooing was to leave an empty place instead of the name. It is probably connected with the practice of leaving a blank place in front of royal names of emperors or dynasties, and in front of words of political power, which was a well-known practice in traditional China. The title of the emperor could be written higher than other lines of the text: either by writing it in a position raised above the text, or by bringing the surrounding text down to a lower position.⁶³ This typographically enacted the fact that one should normally kowtow or bow for an emperor. Other characters indicating the power of

⁶² *Jinshi cuibian*, j. 42, p. 3b.

⁶³ The author of this dissertation found, for example, such a practice in the preface of the *Luzhou chuji* 鹿洲初集 of Lan Dingyuan 藍鼎元 (1680–1733). The sentences with the character *shang* 上 are cut and start with a new line two fields above the main text. The sentence including characters of the dynasty *Da Qing* 大清 starts in the same way one field above the main text (*Luzhou chuji*, p. 5). Later in the same work empty places are left before characters *da* 大 (great), *kang* 康 (part of the Era name of the Emperor Kangxi) and *chao* 朝 (dynasty). Cf. *Luzhou chuji*, j. 1, p. 9. Similarly, an empty place is left before the word *taizi* (crown prince) in *Yizhai shiwenji*, j. 5, p. 7.

the emperor were preceded by an empty field. It was a way to show reverence to the institution of emperor.⁶⁴

c. Character *wei* 匚

The place of a taboo character could be marked by the character *wei* 匚. The example can be seen in the *Jigu* Edition (汲古本) of the *Book of the Southern Qi* (*Nan Qishu*), where it replaced the character *shun* 順 in the name of the general Xiao Shunzhi 蕭順之 (5th c., the brother of the founding emperor of the Southern Qi dynasty). A commentary “Song taboo” is made above this spot.⁶⁵ Sometimes the label was even placed around the taboo character.⁶⁶

d. Character *mou* 某

This method, too, is very old. The example from the *Classic of Documents* (*Shangshu*), considered sometimes the oldest known example of taboo, used this way of tabooing.⁶⁷ Of course, the true age of this fragment of *Book of Documents* is very disputable, and by implication also of this instance of taboo. It is certain that many later works also used this method to avoid a prohibited name. For example, in the *Book of the Southern Qi* (*Nan Qishu*) the name of the founding emperor of the Southern Qi (Xiao Daocheng 蕭道成) is not written directly, but is replaced by the characters *moujia* 某甲.⁶⁸

e. Character *hui* 諱

This method was especially used from the Three Kingdoms period onwards to the Tang dynasty. Often, names of emperors were tabooed with the character *hui*, but it can also be seen in some geographical names.⁶⁹

⁶⁴ More about the Chinese practice of „raising the head“ (*taidou* 抬頭) as an expression of reverence see 7.4.1. We are not sure whether the custom was present only in printing or also in manuscripts.

⁶⁵ According to *Jingshi biming huikao*, j. 12, p. 182.

⁶⁶ Fan Zhixin 2006, p. 128.

⁶⁷ For more precise description of the case see 4.3.1.1.

⁶⁸ *Nan Qishu*, j. 18, p. 2b.

⁶⁹ Cf. for example *Sanguozhi*, j. 5, p. 5a: the character *hui* is used in place of the Emperor Wen of the Wei dynasty Cao Pi; *Nan Qishu*, j. 3, p. 10b. Cf. also Wang Xinhua 2007, p. 197.

3.4.5. Other Methods

a. Alteration of pronunciation

One possibility for tabooing a spoken name was to change the pronunciation, but not the character. For a long time, historians disputed whether this method was really used. Some of them presumed that this method was used for tabooing as early as the Qin dynasty, because the name of the First Emperor Zhèng 政/正 was read as zhēng.⁷⁰ But later, Chen Yuan showed that many characters such as zheng 正 had different pronunciations in earlier times, and cannot be regarded as an example of taboo.⁷¹

Yet, instances of this kind of taboo – especially from the Song times – are so numerous that they cannot be ignored. We read, e.g., in the *Dream of the Red Chamber* (*Honglouloumeng* 紅樓夢), that Lin Daiyu 林黛玉, the mother of whom was called Min 敏, if she met the character *min* while reading (aloud) a book, read it every time as *mi* 密, and if she met this character in writing, she omitted one or two strokes.⁷² The alteration of pronunciation affected words only at the time they were actually spoken. There are three possible variations of this method. If the character originally had two or more pronunciations, one of them could be tabooed and the other used in place of the former. Further, the character could take the pronunciation of its substitute, as, e.g., the character *bang* 邦 for the taboo of Liu Bang could also be read as *guo* 國, even if it was not changed in writing. As one more possibility, any other pronunciation could be taken, more or less arbitrarily chosen by the tabooing person. This could work best in a more or less oral culture,⁷³ otherwise people would still be aware of the written form. But if writing was only used for reading and speaking aloud, changing the sound would be enough.

b. Dividing a character

There are a few ways of tabooing names not mentioned directly by Chen Yuan, but noticed by other scholars. One of them is to divide a character into two characters with a different pronunciation (i.e., *jing* 敬 to *gouwen* 苟文). In such a way, for example, the family name Jing 敬 was changed twice, as far as we know: during the period of the Five Dynasties and

⁷⁰ Cf. *Qidong yeyu*, j. 4, p. 39.

⁷¹ Chen Yuan 1958, p. 8. See also discussion about the taboo name of the First Emperor of Qin in 4.4.2.

⁷² *Honglouloumeng*, *hui* 2, p. 10. For translation see Hawkes 1973, Vol. I, p. 82.

⁷³ Pronunciations of dialect could play an additional role here.

Ten Kingdoms, in order to taboo the name of the Emperor Gaozu of the Later Jin (Shi Jingtang 石敬瑭, r. 936–942), and during the Song dynasty, in order to taboo the name of the grandfather (Jing 敬) of Emperor Taizu (r. 960–976).⁷⁴ This method also seems to be related to the Chinese practice of literomancy – fortune-telling by dividing and analyzing characters (*cezi* 測字 or *chaizi* 拆字).

c. Attachment of a character

One can also attach a new character to the tabooed one, forming a new name. This was done, for example, by one of editors of the *Kangxi Dictionary*, Chen Jing 陳敬 (1638–1712), who changed his name to Chen Tingjing 陳廷敬. The story was described in the *Draft to the History of Qing* (*Qingshigao* 清史稿).⁷⁵ In this way, the new name differs from the tabooed one. There are only a few examples of this kind.

d. Alteration of character order

One could write the characters in reverse order. We know, for example, from the *Collection of Gossip From Mountains Surrounded by Iron* (*Tieweishan congtao* 鐵圍山叢談) of Cai Tao 蔡條, that the name of *caigeng* 菜羹⁷⁶ (dish with thick juice) was called *gengcai* 羹菜, because its pronunciation was too similar to the name taboo of a high official of the Song dynasty Cai Jing 蔡京 (1047–1126).⁷⁷ However, cases with such a way of tabooing were not very common.

e. Indirect description

Yet another way of tabooing was an indirect description. For example, the taboo character *yan* 炎 was described as “two *huo* 火”,⁷⁸ and the taboo character *xu* 旭 as *ri* 日 following *jiu* 九.⁷⁹ This method seems to be close to riddles and word games (*miyu* 謎語).

⁷⁴ According to *Qidong yeyu*, j. 4, p. 40.

⁷⁵ *Qingshigao*, Liezhuan, j. 54, p. 5b. There is probably an earlier source of that story but the author could not find it.

⁷⁶ Pronounced apparently as *jing*.

⁷⁷ *Tieweishan congtao*, j. 2, pp. 19b–20a.

⁷⁸ *Yinhualu*, j. 5, p. 38.

⁷⁹ *Mengxi bitan*, j. 3, p. 17.

f. Covering with a yellow paper

Especially in the Song and Jin period, covering a taboo character with a piece of yellow paper was used for tabooing. For example, we can read in the Interpretation on the *Spring and Autumn Annals* (*Chunqiu Hushizhuan* 春秋胡氏傳) of Hu Anguo 胡安國 (1074–1138), that when compilers saw an emperor's taboo, they did not change it, but covered it with yellow paper.⁸⁰ The same method was also used to cover family taboo characters.⁸¹ Yellow paper was probably used for the reason that this color is considered the color of emperor, the color of heavenly status, and is commonly used in Daoist rituals for the same reason.

g. Leaving a gap to be filled by other people

One more way for tabooing in writing was to leave an empty space instead of a (family) taboo character and later ask other people to fill the places left. This method was called “completion of taboo” (*tianhui* 填諱). In that case, often a special note was included at the beginning or at the end of a text that so-and-so completed the writing of taboo characters. The author of this dissertation found such a note in *Records of Famous Feats* (*Mingjilu* 名蹟錄) of Zhu Gui 朱珪 (1731-1807).⁸² It is also known, for example, that as Shao Jingbang 邵經邦 (d. 1558) wrote his *Records in the Pavilion of One Mirror* (*Yijian ting ji* 一鑒亭記), all *jian* 鑒 characters were not written by his hand, because Jian 鑒 was the name of his father. We can find an additional note (in smaller script)⁸³ below it, explaining what happened: “Li Tong has filled in the taboo characters” (李炯填諱).⁸⁴

h. Omitting the last part of a common expression

The last part of a common expression (so called *xiehouyu* 歇後語) is sometimes omitted, if it contains a taboo name. This concealment of the second part of an expression is very popular in China, not only in relation to taboo. We know, e.g., that the expression from *Analects* (*Lunyu*): *bang jun shu sai men* 邦君樹塞門 was omitted because of the taboo name Shu of Gaozu's father of Northern Qi.⁸⁵

⁸⁰ *Chunqiu Hushizhuan*, “Lun minghui zhazi 論名諱劄子”, p. 2a; Cf. also *Baiguanzhen*, j. 2, p. 19b.

⁸¹ Fan Zhixin 2006, p. 128.

⁸² Cf., for example, *Mingjilu*, j. 3, pp. 11b and 13a.

⁸³ Notice that comments on taboo are also made in small script on the side of a taboo character (see Fan Zhixin 2006, p. 128).

⁸⁴ Quoted in *Hongyilu* 弘藝錄 of the same author Shao Jingbang 邵經邦, see *Hongyilu* j. 25, p. 5b.

⁸⁵ *Zixiaji*, j. xia, p. 4b.

3.5. Principles of Tabooing

The implementation of name taboo varied and different taboo principles can be found in various periods in China. There are, however, rules that might be called traditional or classical.

The most important “canonical” text on tabooing that explains the basic principles came from the *Records of Ritual (Liji)*:

When the ceremony of wailing is over, a son should no longer speak of his deceased father by his name. The rules do not require the avoiding of names merely similar in sound to those not to be spoken. When (a parent had) a double name, the avoiding of either term (used singly) is not required. While his parents (are alive), and a son is able to serve them, he should not utter the names of his grandparents; when he can no longer serve his parents (through their death), he need not avoid the names of his grandparents. Names that would not be spoken (in his own family) need not be avoided (by a great officer) before his ruler; in the great officer’s, however, the names proper to be suppressed by the ruler should not be spoken. In (reading) the books of poetry and history, there need be no avoiding of names, nor in writing compositions. In the ancestral temple there is no such avoiding. Even in his presence, a minister need not avoid the names improper to be spoken by the ruler’s wife. The names to be avoided by a wife need not be unspoken outside the door of the harem. The names of parties for whom mourning is worn (only) nine months or five months are not avoided. When one is crossing the boundaries (of a state), he should ask what are its prohibitory laws; when he has fairly entered it, he should ask about its customs; before entering the door (of a house), he should ask about the names to be avoided in it.⁸⁶

This text can also be understood as a legitimization of already existing norms and prescriptions. It was often quoted later as a standard by most emperors and officials over the centuries, even if its principles were not always observed.

From this canonical text, we can deduce the following principles of tabooing:

- tabooing starts after mourning (ceremony of wailing);
- there is no taboo in the ancestral temple;
- the interior taboo (*neihui* 內諱) is observed only inside of house/palace;

⁸⁶ *Liji*, j. 1, pp. 38b-40a. Translation according to Legge 1968, Part III, p. 93.

- there is no taboo for names of deceased distant relatives – needing five months (so-called *xiaogong* 小功) or nine months (*dagong* 大功) mourning time;
- homonyms are not tabooed;
- characters of composite names are tabooed only together and not separately;
- taboo does not affect the written texts, especially *Classic of Documents* (*Shangshu*) and *Classic of Poetry* (*Shijing*), poetry and historical works.

All of these principles are explained in more detail further below. Additionally, I will analyze two more principles, which are not included in the *Records of Ritual*, but are nonetheless important for the practice of tabooing names:

- the names of earlier ancestors (whose tablets were moved to the temple of distant ancestors) are not taboo;
- and there is no taboo after someone's abdication or dismissal.

Rules of tabooing and differences in practice of different periods of history will also be discussed more precisely where relevant in the historical surveys below.

3.5.1. Tabooing Starts after Mourning

The first rule is rooted in the time when taboo concerned only dead people and is connected with the point of someone's definitive change from living to dead. This was the ceremony of wailing at the end of the mourning period in Chinese traditional funeral rites.⁸⁷ Traditionally in China after the death and placement of the body in a coffin (after three days), a wailing period started. Three months after the death of scholars (*shi* 士) was their burial. During this three-month period, three sacrifices for appeasing the gods (*yuji* 虞祭) occurred. After the funeral, a sacrifice to mark the end of weeping (*zuku* 卒哭) took place on a specially selected, appropriate day (*jia* 甲, *bing* 丙, *wu* 戊, *geng* 庚, *ren* 壬), about 100 days after someone's decease. Therefore it was sometimes called among the people the "one hundred-day sacrifice". The funeral of high-ranking nobles (*dafu* 大夫) was three months and the "end of crying" five months after his death, while the funeral of a feudal lord (*zhuhou* 諸侯) was five months and the "end of crying" seven months after the death.⁸⁸ It meant that the wailing period was over, the soul moved to the temple, and the deceased should no longer be called by his name.

⁸⁷ More about Chinese funeral rites see Gao Chongwen 2006, pp. 447-472.

⁸⁸ *Yili zhushu*, j. 43, p. 8a; Wang Xinhua 2007, pp. 209-210.

The *Classic of Rites*, besides listing this principle together with other rules of tabooing, repeats it later in another context with a stress on the turning point between life and death: “When the ceremony of wailing is over, tabooing starts. Affairs of living are finished, and affairs of ghosts begin.”⁸⁹ The commentator of the Han time, Zheng Xuan 鄭玄 dates, observes that one should venerate the names of ghosts and spirits/gods, and taboo (these names).⁹⁰ Thus it appears that the period before the wailing ceremony still belongs to the affairs of living and the names of living were not taboo (*hui*).

A big change was made in the Qin dynasty (221–207 BC): the names of the living also became taboo. Not only the given name (*ming* 名) of the emperor after his death (then called “temple taboo” *miaohui* 廟諱), but also during his life time (then called “imperial name” *yuming* 御名) had to be avoided.⁹¹ It can be said that, in this way, the affairs of the living and of the ghosts became mixed, the rules of “taboo of the dead” (*sihui* 死諱) and “not to name” (*buming* 不名) jumbled (see about them 4.1.1), and this principle of the *Records of Ritual (Liji)* gradually became useless.

But still much later in a note in the *Old History of the Five Dynasties (Jiu Wudai shi)* about Emperor Gaozu of the Later Jin dynasty (r. 936–942), the following statement can be found: In the sixth month of the seventh year Tianfu (942), “Emperor Gaozu died ... In the seventh month *wuzi* day an imperial edict was applied: the names of districts, counties, offices and personal names of people should be changed, if they include homonyms of former emperor(s).”⁹² The change was made only after the death of the Emperor, even if only after one month of the wailing period and not after one hundred days as it was said in the *Records of Ritual*. It means that the principle of tabooing after mourning was still used sometimes.

3.5.2. No Taboo in the Ancestral Temple

When offering sacrifices in the ancestral temple,⁹³ the taboo was not to be observed.⁹⁴ This is understandable, because the sacrifice and the contact with ancestors were possible only, according to belief, if they were called by their real name. Through this ritual use of their

⁸⁹ *Liji*, j. 2, p. 89a.

⁹⁰ *Liji*, j. 2, p. 89a.

⁹¹ In the Qin and Han dynasties a noticeable increase of various types of names took place.

⁹² *Jiu Wudaishi*, j. 81, p. 1b.

⁹³ About the form of ancestral temple see Tiberi 1963, pp. 338–340.

⁹⁴ Cf. Instructions of Sima Guang about ancestral rites in Buckley Ebrey 1981, pp. 79–83.

name, the ancestors became present. There are notes about the practice of this principle: the last Emperor of the Wei state of the Three Kingdoms period – Cao Huan 曹奂 (the Emperor Yuan, r. 260–265 AD) always tabooed the name of his father. Only when offering a sacrifice in the temple did he not do so.⁹⁵

3.5.3. The Taboo of the Interior (*neihui*) Observed Only Inside

The interior taboo (*neihui* 內諱) is sometimes called taboo of women (*nühui* 女諱), because it normally concerned the female part of society. According to Chinese tradition, men act outside the home and women within it (*nan zhuwai nü zhunei* 男主外女主內). The taboo of a woman is therefore effective only in her own family. This principle can be found in the *Records of Ritual (Liji)*. The rule “*neihui* does not leave the palace” includes two situations:

- there is no need for tabooing the names of women (both wives and concubines) of the emperor in front of him;
- there is no taboo for the names of his wives and concubines outside the palace.

The interior taboo could denote the name taboos of women in high positions, but also taboos of their fathers and ancestors. The names of wives and concubines of the emperor were taboo, but this was practiced normally only inside the palace. Usually there were not too many occasions to taboo their ancestors. We know, however, numerous situations in which the interior taboo “went out” of the palace or even became as important as the taboo of the emperor. This was the case if the position of wife or concubine became particularly elevated, when she found special favor of the emperor, or received political power.

The principle of the *Records of Ritual* concerning the interior taboo was broken for the first time around the time of the Western Jin dynasty (265–317). The first exception was probably made for the taboo of an empress dowager, as the respected mother of the emperor. In the *Book of the Jin (Jinshu)* there is a passage about tabooing the name of the empress dowager Achun 阿春 (ca. 290–326 AD, see more about this taboo in 5.3 and 10.1.3). Because of that, the name of Fuchun County 富春 was changed to Fuyang 富陽 county, and the title of the work the *Spring and Autumn Annals (Chunqiu 春秋)* temporarily to *Yangqiu 陽秋*.⁹⁶

⁹⁵ *Sanguozhi*, j. 4, p. 24b.

⁹⁶ *Qidongyeyu*, j. 4, p. 41.

Later, the tabooing of the empress dowager was slowly extended to include tabooing of the imperial consort. In 266 AD we have a proposal made for Emperor Wu of Jin (r. 265–290 AD), to issue a taboo of the imperial consort and the emperor together. The argument was that it would bring more veneration to her name. Ultimately, the Emperor did not agree. He came back to the *Records of Ritual* and issued a decree saying: “The *Records of Ritual* said that the interior taboo does not leave the palace, and today it is tabooed. It is not correct. We do not accept it.”⁹⁷ But we know from the same chapter of the *Tongdian* that a bit later in the Eastern Jin, the taboo of “the small ruler” (*xiaojun* 小君), which means empress, appears continuously in lists of imperial taboos.⁹⁸

There are numerous instances of that kind of taboo during the Tang, Song and Jin dynasties, as the importance of interior taboo then reached its greatest extent. In the Jin dynasty there were also taboos of the imperial consort among the temple taboos (*miaohui* 廟諱). For example, in the *Collected Rites of the Great Jin Dynasty* (*Da Jin jili* 大金集禮) we find the names of the mother of Emperor Shizong of Jin (r. 1161–1189) and of another empress (the former wife of his father) listed among the temple taboos.⁹⁹ In the Jin dynasty there were also examples for observance of taboos of the imperial consort’s father. We read, e.g., in the *Tongdian* that a general resigned from his office because of taboo of the empress’ father.¹⁰⁰ Later, in the Ming and Qing dynasties, this kind of taboo repeatedly declined in practice.

The interior taboo had to be observed in the palace by personal attendants, but also by other people coming there, such as, e.g., actors, singers, etc. They always had to first ask about the taboo of the empress, in order not to make a mistake. But apparently the taboo of the empress was usually not known among common people.

A special case is Empress Wu Zetian 武則天 (r. 690–705) of the Tang dynasty, who reached the power of an emperor. Her status was no longer that of the emperor’s wife, but rather of a female emperor. Therefore her taboo cannot be regarded as *neihui*.¹⁰¹ Sometimes the term interior taboo (*neihui*) is mixed with family taboo (*jiahui*), which is not correct. However, as the family taboos of the emperor became more important in the course of time, the meaning of interior taboo often increased as well.

⁹⁷ *Tongdian*, j. 104, p. 555.

⁹⁸ *Tongdian*, j. 104, p. 553.

⁹⁹ *Da Jin jili*, j. 23, p. 203.

¹⁰⁰ *Tongdian*, j. 104, p. 554.

¹⁰¹ See more about the Emperor Wu Zetian in 6.2.7. and 10.1.2.

3.5.4. No Taboo for Names of Deceased Distant Relatives

Taboo of the names of distant relatives did not need to be observed. Distant relatives are those for whom only the long (*dagong* 大功) or short (*xiaogong* 小功) mourning periods were prescribed. Chinese custom knows five kinds of mourning periods. The strongest was *zhanshuai* 斬衰 – which lasted for three years.¹⁰² It was prescribed after the death of parents, husband, husband's father and mother. *Qishuai* 齊衰 was the second one. It was obligatory for a stepmother and foster mother (three years), for grandparents and wife (one year), for great-grandparents (five months), for great-great-grandparents (three months). *Dagong* and *xiaogong* are prescribed for distant relatives. The long mourning period lasted for nine months. The prescribed cloth was thicker than that of *xiaogong*. It was obligatory for male cousin with the same surname, an unmarried female, aunts, sisters, grandsons and many others. The *xiaogong* period was five months. The shortest mourning period was called *sima* 緦麻, and was observed for three months.

According to the *Records of Ritual*, there was no need to taboo the names of distant relatives. The rule was apparently not very strong and was often broken. One exception is already marked in *Records of Ritual*: if in the family the taboo was observed by the father, the son also had to taboo it, even if it concerned relatives which were distant for him.¹⁰³

3.5.5. The Names of Earlier Ancestors Are Not Taboo

One other principle of tabooing, mentioned above, said there was no need to taboo the name of a distant ancestor whose tablet had already been moved (*tiao* 祧) to the “distant temple.” The word *tiao* also means the “temple” (shrine) where sacrifices for spirits of deceased distant ancestors were made.

In the emperor's ancestral temple there were concrete places (*miao* 廟, “temples”) designated for the veneration of ancestors: seven in the family of the emperor, five of high-ranking nobles (*dafu* 大夫), three of feudal lords (*zhuhou* 諸侯), one of scholars (*shi* 士). The shrines or tablets of the ancestors were arranged in two rows, north and south of the shrine for the founder of the house, *zu* 祖, which was immovable.¹⁰⁴ On one side, facing south, were the tablets of fathers. These places were called *zhao* 昭. On the other side,

¹⁰² Actually 26–36 months, since a “year” refers in China to the transition and not to the full year (i.e., only three celebrations of a New Year). The last month of the preceding year and the first of the following are always included.

¹⁰³ *Liji*, j. 1, p. 39a.

¹⁰⁴ Cf. hence the expression *bu tiao zhi zu* 不祧之祖.

facing north, were those of sons. They were called *mu* 穆. Accordingly, the system of shrines in the ancestor temple was called *zhaomu* 昭穆. After a death in the family, the tablet of one of the remote ancestors was removed in order to make room, and moved to the shrine of distant ancestors.¹⁰⁵

If the tablet of an ancestor was moved to the distant temple, his name, according to the *Records of Ritual*, should not be tabooed any longer. Later, as tabooing expanded, this rule, too, was broken. Especially in the Song dynasty the rule was often forgotten and tabooing was continued longer. The changing practice of this rule will be described in the successive survey chapters (for instance in sections 6.2.4 and 6.4.6).

3.5.6. No Taboo after Abdication or Dismissal

This principle means that there is no need to continue tabooing a name after the dismissal of an emperor, queen consort, or crown prince. We know, for example, about Sun He 孫和 (223–253), the son of the founder of the Wu state in the Three Kingdoms period – Emperor Da (Sun Quan 孫權, r. 222–252 AD). Sun He became crown prince in 242. Unfortunately, it strained relations with his brother Sun Ba 孫霸, who wanted taking over as crown prince. Finally in 250 AD the Emperor became angry. He forced Sun Ba to commit suicide, deposed Sun He to the status of a commoner and exiled him to present-day Zhejiang. There he was forced to commit suicide three years later. After this, his name, which was avoided before (see examples in 5.2.1 and 5.2.5), was also no longer taboo.¹⁰⁶

3.5.7. Homonyms Are Not Tabooed

This means that words with the same or similar pronunciation (especially with the same tone) as the taboo character should not be tabooed. There are no instances for tabooing of homonyms before the Qin dynasty, but the reason for that could be that before this period there were not many examples of tabooing anyhow.

Some scholars saw the tabooing of the name of the First Emperor Zheng 政 as the first instance of avoiding homonyms. They showed that the character *zheng* 正 was tabooed and changed to *duan* 端.¹⁰⁷ But later, Chen Yuan verified that it is not a case of a homonym.

¹⁰⁵ For more about ancestral temples in China see Lévi-Strauss 1969, p. 311–345.

¹⁰⁶ Cf. Fan Zhixin 2006, p. 157.

¹⁰⁷ Cf. *Nianershi huilue* 廿二史諱略 according to Wang Xinhua 2007, p. 202.

During the Qin, the characters 政 and 正 were still used interchangeably due to the script reform that was not yet completed.¹⁰⁸

Therefore the earliest accepted example of tabooing a homonym is from the Jin dynasty: as we know from the *Book of the Jin (Jinshu)*, the people of Jingzhou 荊州 tabooed the name of the general Yanghu 羊祜 (221–278). They referred to all doors (*hu* 户) as gates (*men* 門), and changed the name of Revenue Section (*hucao* 户曹)¹⁰⁹ to *cicao* 辭曹.¹¹⁰

Later, especially in the Tang and Song dynasties, we find many examples of tabooing homonyms. It became a common custom also among the literati. But we know from the same time that there were parallel instances of not tabooing homonyms, and their avoidance was criticized as irregular, e.g., by Han Yu 韓愈 (768–824) in his essay “Against taboos” (*Huibian* 諱辯, see 5.2.8).¹¹¹

Most of the imperial taboos in the Song dynasty included many homonyms that had to be avoided, e.g., because of the given name (Gou 構) of the Emperor Gaozong (r. 1127–1162) – as many as 55 other characters became taboo, because they had a similar pronunciation (see 6.4.3 and the chronological list of taboos in the appendix). In the Ming and Qing dynasties the custom of avoiding homonyms decreased. Concrete examples will be given when the relevant periods are discussed.

3.5.8. Two Characters of Composite Names Are Not Tabooed Separately

As we know already from the *Records of Ritual (Liji)*, characters of two-character given names (full personal names, called in Chinese *erming* 二名 or *fuming* 復名), did not have to be avoided individually. The name as a whole was, of course, taboo, but its characters were tabooed only if put together. The most quoted case is the taboo name of Confucius’ mother – “The name of the mother of Confucius was Zhengzai 徵在. Saying *zai* he did not use *zheng*, saying *zheng* he did not use *zai*” (*yan zai bu cheng zheng, yan zheng bu cheng zai* 言在不稱徵, 言徵不稱在).¹¹²

¹⁰⁸ Cf. Chen Yuan 1958, pp. 73–74. See also the discussion about the tabooing of the character *zheng* 正 in 4.4.2.

¹⁰⁹ Hucker 1985, p. 259.

¹¹⁰ *Jinshu*, j. 34, p. 6b.

¹¹¹ *Quan Tangwen*, j. 558, pp. 1a–2a.

¹¹² *Liji*, j. 2, p. 89b. For translation see Legge 1968, Part III, p. 190.

Another example we can find in the *Tradition of Zuo (Zuozhuan)* is where the title *sikong* 司空 was changed to *sicheng* 司城 because the name of Prince Wu of Song was Sikong.¹¹³ It means that *si* alone was not tabooed that time. When Wang Mang 王莽 took over power in 9 AD, he forbade two-character given names. This practice of a single given name was continued for about 300 years. Later, double given names appeared again, but the principle of the *Records of Ritual (Liji)* was already forgotten, and therefore single characters of a composite name started to be avoided as well.

We find in the *Book of the Southern Qi (Nan Qishu)* what is probably the first example of tabooing one of the two characters in a name separately: the name Daoyuan 道淵 was changed to Xueyuan 薛淵 because of the name of the Emperor Gao of Southern Qi – Daocheng 道成 (r. 479–482).¹¹⁴ Many similar instances can be found until the Tang dynasty, and we can see that it became a custom. Yet it was not officially mandated by the emperor. Emperor Taizong of Tang (r. 627–649) still gave out an imperial edict reminding people of the principle of the *Records of Ritual (Liji)*.¹¹⁵

According to the *Tongdian* 通典, only with the Emperor Xuanzong (r. 712–756) was the rule of the *Records of Ritual (Liji)* definitively broken. At that time, the Ministry of Revenue (*minbu* 民部)¹¹⁶ was changed to *hubu* 戶部,¹¹⁷ because of the taboo name of Emperor Taizong – Shimin 世民. However, this opinion is also questionable, as we do not have an edict with the order of tabooing single characters – on the contrary, we have examples showing that emperors did not welcome this existing custom. For example, in the *Zhongzhouji* 中州集 we find the story of Li Shoujie 李守節, who deleted the character *shou* in his name after the enthronement of the Emperor Aizong of Jin (r. 1224–1234), whose name was Shouxu 守緒. The Emperor, knowing it, said: “I do not want people taboo one character. Why does Li Shoujie do it?” The answer of his minister was: “It is because of reverence to Your Majesty.”¹¹⁸

According to Duan Yucai 段玉裁 (1735–1815) the change of the principle, especially in the popular understanding, came from a miscomprehension of the original meaning of the *Records of Ritual (Liji)*, which used the character *pian* 偏 in the sentence

¹¹³ *Chunqiu zuozhuan*, j. 5, pp. 16b, 18a.

¹¹⁴ *Nan Qishu*, j. 30, p. 1a.

¹¹⁵ Cf. *Jiu Tangshu*, j. 2, p. 6a.

¹¹⁶ Hucker 1985, p. 333.

¹¹⁷ *Tongdian*, j. 23, p. 136.

¹¹⁸ *Zhongzhouji*, j. 7, p. 11a.

“composite names are not ‘partially’ tabooed” (*er ming bu pian hui* 二名不偏諱).¹¹⁹ According to Duan, its meaning as “incomplete” caused the popular translation “Double names cannot be tabooed incompletely,” i.e., every character should be avoided, neglecting the original principle.¹²⁰ However, it is reasonable to assume that the meaning of this rule was continuously present among officials of the Chinese state, as this principle was repeatedly mentioned in the historical literature.

3.5.9. No Taboo in Written Texts and when Reading the *Classics of Poetry and Documents*

This principle means that the texts of some classical works should not be tabooed in order to protect the truth of real facts. Later the principle sometimes also included reading aloud of classical texts. Besides, reading aloud of poetry or historical books sometimes required no observance of taboos, according to this principle. The original text was not to be changed, but had to be protected. In fact, as we will see, the principle was often forgotten or violated, and numerous classical texts were affected by the tabooing of names (cf., e.g., stone inscriptions of Han dynasty in 5.1.1). Still, it is not difficult to see why sometimes changing a text was impossible, for instance when using a book such as the *Spring and Autumn Annals*, in which every character was thought to have been consciously chosen by Confucius himself in order to carry subtle meanings of praise and blame.

3.6. Period of Tabooing

In order to establish the appropriate period of tabooing, we need to determine the starting and end points of concrete cases of tabooing. The beginning of tabooing (*hui*) the name of a deceased person was, according to principles of the *Records of Ritual (Liji)*, the end of the mourning time after this person’s death. Tabooing during a person’s lifetime was perhaps partly practiced before the Qin dynasty as “not naming” (*buming*), and after it also concretely as “taboo” (*hui*). It was observed especially after the ceremony of capping. From that moment, the courtesy name *zi* of person had to be used. But it was also appropriate to taboo the name of a child even immediately after its birth. Therefore, children were called by a different name in order to protect them from ghosts.

¹¹⁹ *Liji*, j. 1, p. 39a. Cf. translation of Legge: “When (a parent had) a double name, the avoiding of either term (used singly) is not required” (Legge 1968, Part III, p. 93).

¹²⁰ *Jingyun louji*, j. 11, pp. 1a-2b. Cf. also Wang Zhenzhu 2009, pp. 95-97.

The length of time a taboo was to be observed depended on the person it applied to. The longest was the tabooing of the name of the emperor. The taboo of founders of a dynasty was usually avoided until the end of its rule. The taboo of other emperors was observed for the time of seven generations (a very common ritual practice). This is connected with the system of *zhaomu* 昭穆 and the principle of distant ancestors (see 3.5.5). This system, used until Qing dynasty, determined the end of taboo as the moment that the ancestral tablet was moved into the distant temple, which took place after seven generations.¹²¹ This principle can also be proven with an example given by Gu Yanwu 顧炎武 in his *Record of Daily Knowledge* (*Rizhilu* 日知錄), where stone inscriptions made in the time of the Emperor Wenzong of Tang (r. 826–840) tabooed characters of the last seven emperors preceding his reign, but not those of remaining former rulers.¹²²

If we check instances of taboo in the *Book of the Han* (*Hanshu*) we can see that they are also limited only to the last seven emperors. Characters of emperors' names were no longer avoided in chapters dealing with emperors after that time. Certainly sometimes tabooing was observed after the prescribed time, or even in successive dynasties (for example because of respect or as an established custom), but this was not the rule.

Private taboos were observed probably only in the life time of the people concerned (e.g., the taboo for consorts of the emperor), or sometimes for two or three generations (e.g., taboo of officials or of family ancestors). At least according to the prescription of the *Records of Ritual*, the taboo of a grandfather was to be observed for as long as one's father lived. In the practice of naming, the names of ancestors were taboo insofar as the names were known.

Of course, taboos of legendary rulers and of sages such as Confucius had no time limits, but were practiced differently in various periods. Also the taboos of characters concerning the usurpation of power (like *tian* 天 – heaven or *di* 帝 – the emperor) or taboos of inauspicious characters were not limited to a particular period of time.

3.7. Place and Circumstances of Tabooing

Generally speaking, if the real given name was perceived as taboo, it could not be arbitrarily used anywhere, apart from special situations, for example if one wanted to

¹²¹ The rule was perhaps applied not only for emperors. In the rules of Daoism there is one (No. 245) stating that the monk should take care that seven generations of ancestors ascend in to heavenly hall (Hackmann 1931, p. 27).

¹²² *Rizhilu*, j. 23, p. 21b.

summon the presence of the tabooed person during a ritual occasion. This was the case in the temple. According to common belief, the deceased person, or god or ghost, could appear only if that individual heard her/his own real name. In other situations the name was taboo. It was sometimes used by parents for children and young people (often the milk name *xiaoming* was used instead of it), or sometimes among friends. But after the capping ceremony, people were normally addressed by their courtesy name *zi* in order to protect their real name.

Another matter was the tabooing of characters and sounds of somebody's name in real life or in books. It was of course impossible to taboo every character of every name. Therefore everybody was mindful not to speak and write characters of taboo names of relatives, respected persons, superiors, or persons having an emotional relation to him. Here we can see differences in the place and circumstances of taboo observance between different kinds of taboo.

If we consider the taboo custom of a hypothetical Mr. Wang, we will see that he avoided especially taboos of his own family. In particular, characters of the name of his father, and sometimes other ancestors, were emotionally prohibited for him. It can be supposed that this taboo was subjectively the strongest one and was kept in every place by the taboo person himself. On the other hand, observance of one's family taboo was limited to persons related to him, usually only family and friends.

A distinction was made if this person became a superior or a respected person. Mr. Wang had to be tactful toward his superiors, officials, teachers, friends, and could not use their taboo characters, especially in front of them. These taboos were related to a limited group of people and often to a concrete place, as, e.g., office. The tabooing depended here on people's power and influence. For example taboos of the imperial court (*neihui*) were usually avoided only by insiders. But there are also examples for their observance outside court, or even as a state taboo in concrete cases.

Mr. Wang had to avoid, of course, characters of the emperor's name and those of former emperors (state taboo), and sometimes the taboo of sages. These taboos had to be generally avoided by everybody in every place and every situation. Also inauspicious characters and words implying usurpation of power had to be avoided. They were normally tabooed in order to prevent calamity or a putsch.

Special attention was paid to names of subordinates and of one's own sons. They could not have names offending the taboo of their superior or their father. If the name of a

subordinate had characters similar to the name of superior, it had to be changed. If the name of office offended the taboo of an upper official, he could change it or had to refuse it. Special rules were to be followed at the site of imperial examination. Besides state taboo and their own taboos, students had to observe the taboos of examiners (see 8.2.2).

3.8. Motives of Tabooing

Let us now deal with the question why names were tabooed in China, and what role tabooing played in society. There were at least three possible motives of tabooing: fear, reverence and hate. Chinese authors suggest reverence or respect for the taboo person as the main and almost exclusive reason for tabooing.¹²³ Historically, however, fear of the supernatural world was probably the main original motive.¹²⁴ This fear of sacral power of superiors, gods and ghosts was present as a motive throughout Chinese history. Nowadays this motive can still be seen in China as a fear of inauspicious words and as a fear of the names of ghosts in popular belief. In “official” history, the motive of respect for superiors, relatives and friends etc. became more and more important, although here, too, the fact that real personal names represented power over someone would not have been forgotten.

One very different motive for tabooing was anger. The names of irritating persons could be tabooed and changed, or openly used in order to offend in this way the taboo person. Sometimes tabooing was also a way for legitimization or – on the contrary – for usurpation of political power (see 3.8.4). This last habit should be noted, perhaps not as a conscious motive, but surely as an important reason of avoidance for a long time. All of these social, political, religious and other motivations and functions of name taboo shall be analyzed here.

3.8.1. Taboo out of Fear (*jihui* 忌諱 or *jinji* 禁忌)

Tabooing of words because of fear was very popular in the whole history of China and its surrounding regions.¹²⁵ Especially common was the tabooing of inauspicious words and characters, which can be seen until now. The function of taboo here is to protect people and

¹²³ It is because they distinguish “primitive taboo” (*jinji*) connected with fear and the “Chinese taboo” (*bihui*) connected with “humanistic” Confucian culture (cf. 2.1.7).

¹²⁴ Cf. Wang Xinhua 2007, pp. 31-32.

¹²⁵ Although this present research focused on Han Chinese custom, it is interesting to know that this kind of (writing) taboo can be seen, aside from Han China, in the Nestorian-Turkish texts from Turfan. They have two different ways of tabooing for the names of gods and ghosts: sublime and depreciated. For example, the word for devil “šumnu” is written backwards, out of fear (Knüppel 2008, pp. 107-108).

not to provoke evil powers. It is normally regarded as a “popular tabooing custom,” and is therefore not always appreciated in the Chinese historiography which is done by educated elites. Nonetheless, these are fundamentally very similar customs.

Many examples of that tabooing will be given in the following chapters. Here we mention that especially in the south of China the expression *lisan* 離散 (disperse) is understood as inauspicious, and because of that people do not pronounce words with similar sounds. They call, for example, pear (*li* 梨) as “round fruit” (*yuanguo* 圓果), and umbrella (*san* 傘) as “vertical hat” (*shuli* 豎笠).¹²⁶

The same happened with people’s names if they included characters considered to be inauspicious. There is an example of an Advanced Scholar (*jinshi*) in the Ming period called Ai Zhenji 哀貞吉. Emperor Jiajing (r. 1521–1566) considered the character *ai* 哀 in his name as inauspicious and changed his name by adding a stroke to make it Zhong 衷.¹²⁷

Another thing that should be mentioned here is the fear of punishment in the case of offending the taboo of superiors. Such a motive is not really taboo from fear (*jihui*). As a matter of fact, it is not always possible to separate strictly taboo from fear and taboo out of reverence. In China, as in many other cultures, fear and reverence often went together, as we know it for example from the *Bible*: “Let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear.”¹²⁸

3.8.2. Taboo out of Reverence and Courtesy (*jinghui* 敬諱)

Because of respect, courtesy, or etiquette the name of a person (emperor, superiors, relatives) became taboo, and its characters or characters with similar pronunciation and structure could not be spoken. It is the most “standard” motivation for taboo. This motive is mentioned, e.g., in the *Spring and Autumn Annals*, *Gongyang’s Tradition* (*Chunqiu Gongyangzhuan* 春秋公羊傳): “You have to taboo persons of respect, relatives and sages.”¹²⁹ The function of taboo here was to protect the name of the taboo person from

¹²⁶ *Shuyuan zaji*, j. 1, p. 7.

¹²⁷ *Jingshi biming huikao*, j. 46, p. 645. Wang Xinhua 2007, p. 32 gives this example as taboo from hate, but the emperor had nothing against the *jinshi* himself. He tabooed a character because of his fear of inauspicious words.

¹²⁸ *Die Bibel* 2006, p. 1357 (Hebr 12, 28).

¹²⁹ *Chunqiu Gongyangzhuan*, j. 9, p. 9a.

insult and disadvantage and to express reverence to it. Taboo out of reverence (*jinghui*) originated in the prehistorical fear and veneration of the chieftain and shaman.¹³⁰

3.8.3. Taboo out of Hate (*ehui* 惡諱, *zenghui* 憎諱)

It is interesting that avoiding a taboo name and offending a taboo name could both express somebody's anger. For example, Emperor Suzong of Tang (r. 756–762) tabooed the character *an* 安 and changed many geographical names (mostly of counties and districts) containing this character. In this way he expressed his hate of the rebellious general An Lushan 安祿山 (703–757).¹³¹ The motive of taboo here was to conceal someone's name as a kind of revenge, to offend him in that way, and also to protect oneself from offence by the presence of a hated name.

Sometimes motivations of hate and fear come together, as in the case of a general of the Tang dynasty, Li Baoyu 李抱玉 (703–777). “He was a great-grandson of An Xinggui 安興貴, but after the insurgence of An Lushan he changed his family name to Li.”¹³² It is probably fear of possible consequences (having the same name as a rebel), but also hatred for him. On the other hand, the new family name Li is in itself also a politically significant choice: it was the family name of the emperor. A very different kind of *ehui* is to use somebody's name in public, with the intention to offend him.

3.8.4. Taboo out of Legitimization and Usurpation

A name, especially that of the emperor, had an important connection to power and politics. The tabooing of a ruler's name was strictly preserved as a sign of loyalty, and the violation of this taboo was punished as *lèse majesté*, sometimes with the death sentence. In this way, any possible form of usurpation was eliminated. On the other hand, a deliberate offence of taboo could be interpreted as a sign of usurpation of power.

Many characters that expressed power during the Song, Yuan, and Qing dynasties were taboo, and could not be used, because they were understood as an usurpation of imperial power. Special edicts were issued in order to forbid their use and force people to

¹³⁰ Cf. Wang Xinhua 2007, pp. 31–32.

¹³¹ Chen Yuan 1958, p. 33–34. Of course, fear could also be another motive as An Lushan and his son were still alive when the emperor ordered the tabooing of his family name.

¹³² *Xin Tangshu*, j. 138, p. 3a.

change names with such characters.¹³³ Such words were for example: *di* 帝 (emperor), *huang* 皇 (imperial), *jun* 君 (ruler), *long* 龍 (dragon), *shang* 上 (the one on high), *sheng* 聖 (sage), *tian* 天 (heaven), and *yu* 玉 (jade) (cf. 10.3.1). On the other hand, the highest deity from the divine pantheon, the Jade Emperor, continued to have this name and many other deities also received high feudal titles such as Emperor or King. The point here is that such divinities could only carry these titles because they had been bestowed by the Emperor himself.¹³⁴ There are numerous examples from the *Tolerant Study Notebooks* (*Rongzhai xubi* 容齋續筆) collected by Hong Mai 洪邁 showing that given names and family names were changed because they contained these characters.¹³⁵

Another example comes from the *Sketches from the Study room of Possible Transformation* (*Nenggaizhai manlu* 能改齋漫錄) and describes “the illegitimate aspirations” in the names of two officials because of their names: Daming 大明 (great brightness) and Peixian 丕顯 (great and splendid). These words were used in the *Classic of Poetry* (*Shijing*) in order to describe the virtue of King Wen of Shang and in the *Classic of Documents* (*Shangshu*) in order to depict his plans.¹³⁶ The use of these names by officials of the Song time was seen as a usurpation of the emperor’s power. We also know from the same source that once during the examination for the *gongshi* 貢士 degree, more than ten graduates were eliminated or degraded because their names “implied the usurpation of privileges.” They used forbidden characters such as *bi* 辟 (monarch) or *yuanxun* 元勳 (extraordinary merit in state affairs).¹³⁷

Still more visible is this function of taboo in one case from the time of the Five Dynasties. When Zhu Quanzhong 朱全忠 declared himself emperor of the new (Later) Liang dynasty (907–923), he changed his name from the time of the Tang dynasty – Quanzhong 全忠 (completely loyal) to Huang 晃 (bright). A special imperial decree then allowed the use of characters from the old name and forbid the use of the new one.¹³⁸ The new name legitimated the new emperor and was presented as a kind of mandate to his subjects. The emperor, especially if he started a new dynasty, needed to confirm his power

¹³³ More about edicts of the Song emperors against the use of names implying the usurpation see Chen Yuan 1958, pp. 31–32.

¹³⁴ For more about titles of gods in medieval China see Hansen 1990, pp. 79–104.

¹³⁵ *Rongzhai xubi*, j. 4, p. 12a; Chen Yuan 1958, p. 31.

¹³⁶ *Shijing*, j. 16, p. 3a; *Shangshu*, j. 6, p. 35a.

¹³⁷ *Nenggaizhai manlu*, j. 13, p. 335–336.

¹³⁸ Chen Yuan 1958, p. 149.

for himself and for his subjects. Taboo of legitimization and usurpation can perhaps be seen (on the part of subjects) as a special case of taboo of reverence (legitimization) or of hate (usurpation). It can be also seen as a method of attestation and keeping of power.

The basic characteristics of the custom of tabooing names were introduced in this chapter. There were various persons whose names were avoided for different reasons. Especially names of emperors, their ancestors and their families were tabooed – a practice well-documented in literature. But also numerous other persons in society and the family were tabooed persons, such as officials, revered persons, fathers, teachers etc. Even more names of sages and legendary persons, and names of gods were tabooed.

Normally the given name was considered taboo, but there are also cases of tabooing courtesy names and other names and titles. Usually the exact character of a name was tabooed, but there are also many cases of tabooing homonyms and characters similar to the taboo character.

Throughout Chinese history, numerous methods of tabooing were elaborated. The character could be replaced or partly changed. Because of tabooing, strokes could be omitted, special marks could be made in its place or it could be covered with a yellow paper, etc. There are also various normative rules for tabooing a name, which were observed by various means in history. Different motives for tabooing names have also been described in this chapter.

With this basic knowledge, the reader can now take a look at the taboo custom in sequential periods of Chinese history, which will be described in the following chapters.

CHAPTER FOUR: BEGINNING OF THE CUSTOM

Forty years after Pisidia in Asia Minor was conquered by the Romans in 25 BC and incorporated into a new province of Imperium Romanum – Galatia – a large monument was built in Apollonia and called Monumentum Apolloniense. This is how the Romans documented important military successes. The monument consisted of statues of Emperor Augustus and his relatives. There was an inscription on the statue base that read: “The Deeds of the Divine Augustus” (*Res Gestae Divi Augusti*), placed also in other localities of the Imperium. The inscription mentions many names identical with the personal name of the deceased deified First Emperor of Rome – Gaius (Julius Caesar Augustus 63 BC – 14 AD).¹

The First Emperor of China, vested after territorial conquest and unification, and also bearing the divine title “August Emperor” (*huangdi*),² had other principles. In order to eulogize the virtuous power of Qin and “announce his historical achievements to the cosmic spirits,” the First Emperor erected steles with inscriptions on mountains in different directions of his territory. In this way he integrated these places in his “overall system of cosmic ritual.”³ Characters identical with his personal name Zheng 政/正 could not be written, and no statues of him were erected. As one of the inscriptions – on the stele of Mount Langye (Langyetai 琅邪臺) in Shandong – needed the character *zheng*, another character – *duan* 端 – was used as a substitute in the expressions “*duanping fadu*” 端平法度 (He rectified and balanced the rules and measures) and “*duanzhi dunzhong*” 端直敦忠 (They are upright and straight, solid and loyal).⁴ This is very early evidence of name tabooing, showing a fundamental difference between Roman and Chinese imperial culture.

4.1. Origin and Time of Appearance

After the basic characteristics of name tabooing in China were introduced in the previous chapter, we now want to inquire where the roots of the custom can be found, and how its evolution looked in Chinese history. We will describe sources, evaluate the authenticity and reliability of supposed taboo examples and discuss topics relevant to different dynasties.

¹ Witschel 2008, pp. 241-266.

² Kern 2008, p. 225.

³ Kern 2008, p. 233.

⁴ For the text of the inscription and an annotated translation see Kern 2000, pp. 25-34: *duanping fadu* (p. 26); *duanzhi dunzhong* (p. 31).

4.1.1. The Roots of Name Tabooing in China

The custom of tabooing names did not appear by accident. But it is almost impossible to find the explicit roots of taboo names in written texts, probably because so many early texts have been lost and the excavated texts have not yet been fully studied for this issue. Different examples are given as a possible first evidence of the custom (see 4.1.2). But even if we accept that the oldest example from the *Classic of Documents* (*Shangshu*, using the character *mou* 某 in place of the name of the King of Wu, see 4.3.1.1. below), is a true example of tabooing, this still says little about the beginning of the custom. In fact the custom of tabooing names may well be as old as the history of human religiosity.⁵ Since we lack sources on this phase of human history, we can only speculate how taboos and name taboos actually came into being. We can, however, attempt to trace the origins of name tabooing in the earliest sources that we have on Chinese history.

In addition, we can try to analyze motives affecting people who avoided a taboo name. This should also bring us closer to the possible origins of the custom. Two phenomena seem to have provided the principal stimulus for tabooing and became an important basis of the custom: the phenomenon of death and fear of it, and the phenomenon of naming people with its connection to the human being and to life.

Death, as an unavoidable and incomprehensible phenomenon, is a very basic concern for humans of all times and places. People asked what happened with a human being after death, and as they could not explain it, they felt both respect and fear for dead people. They believed that the dead were not far away and might perhaps come to visit if their names were spoken. Therefore it was normally advisable not to use the name of the dead. This belief of the connection between a man and his ghost after death is well-known in China. We read about it in the *Records of Ritual* as follows: “If a man is dead he is called a ghost (*gui* 鬼).”⁶ The Chinese did not use the names of the dead, so that ghosts would not come and hurt them. This custom was called “taboo of the dead” (*sihui* 死諱) or simply “taboo” (*hui* 諱).

The name, as Chapter Two has just shown, was perceived as having a very strong relation with a person and his life, often as an equivalent of them both (see 2.2.2). The name, just like the body, should be protected, in order not to be hurt by ghosts and evil

⁵ This claim was made about the magic of name by probably the best expert on name tabooing – the contemporary Chinese scholar Wang Jian (cf. Wang Jian 1999, p. 46).

⁶ *Liji*, j. 8, p. 38b.

men. There are many examples of magic in China using names to hurt other people or gods. One of them is recorded in the *Records of the Historian (Shiji)*. The ruler Wuyi 武乙 made a statue of a person, named it “the God of Heaven” (*tianshen* 天神), and then beat and pierced it, because he thought in this way he could hurt the god himself. Later Wuyi was killed by a lightning bolt, which was interpreted as a revenge of the god for the ruler’s blasphemy.⁷ A similar example can be found in the *History of the Southern Dynasties (Nanshi)*, in the story of Emperor Wu 武帝 (r. 502–549) of Liang in the period of the Northern and Southern Dynasties, whose milk name (*xiaoming* 小名) was Alian 阿練. His second son hated him, as he considered himself mistreated. When he was in Xuzhou 徐州, he ordered all “silk trees” (*lianshu* 練樹)⁸ to be cut, hoping to hurt his father this way.⁹ This goes to show how old and how strong the magic of names in China was – it stands at the beginning of the custom of name tabooing and was an important part of Chinese religiosity. It is no wonder that names – both one’s own and that of others – had to be protected. This custom of reverence for names of the living was called “not to name” (*buming* 不名).

How were names to be protected and avoided if using names is necessary for contacts between people? The simplest way is to use alternative names in relationships. This was the reason for establishing additional names, as for example the Chinese courtesy name *zi* 字. Therefore it meant that in many cases the given name *ming* 名 and the courtesy name *zi* had a similar meaning: *zi* was understood as an equivalent of *ming*. It is unclear to this day when the courtesy name *zi* first appeared, but the phenomenon seems to be much older than the written documents we have.¹⁰

It is probably impossible to determine which of these two customs was first: tabooing names of the dead, or reverence for names of the living. Although both of these customs accentuated different aspects, they still had many similarities – through their relation to the real name (the same for the living and the dead), and through the ambivalent emotions of reverence and fear (in both cases: for living respected persons and for the dead).

⁷ *Shiji*, j. 3, p. 8a.

⁸ Probably *albizia* – a kind of tree related to *acacia*.

⁹ *Nanshi*, j. 53, p. 6a.

¹⁰ It can be claimed that Confucius had such a name. *Shiji*, j. 47, p. 2a.

4.1.2. Discussion about Time of Appearance

There are still scholars who want to find a concrete “initial example” of tabooing names in texts, and to designate precisely the moment of that “incident.” Wang Jian 王建, probably the best expert on that topic today, has gathered arguments of different Chinese scholars into four groups according to the time of appearance of name tabooing presumed by them.¹¹

The biggest group of scholars indicates the Zhou period as the starting point for tabooing names. This traditional concept was supported, e.g., by Chen Yuan 陳垣. He wrote that “the practice of tabooing names started under Zhou, matured under Qin-Han, and reached its apogee under Tang and Song”¹² and this opinion has been repeated by many other scholars.

As the source for this opinion scholars usually quote the commentary to the *Tradition of Zuo* (*Zuozhuan*), written by Kong Yingda 孔穎達 (574–648). In the *Tradition of Zuo* Prince Huan, after the birth of his son, asked his ministers about his name and they answered *inter alia*: “People of Zhou served their deities/ancestors with avoidance. The name of the people is tabooed after death.”¹³ Kong Yingda commenting on this sentence in the Tang period, said: “In the Shang there was no custom of tabooing names, it started in Zhou.”¹⁴ This comment of Kong Yingda was repeated by many scholars e.g. by Wang Guanguo 王觀國 (12 c.) in his *Xuelin* 學林,¹⁵ Zhou Mi 周密 (1232–1298) in his *Qidong yeyu* 齊東野語,¹⁶ Zhou Guangye 周廣業 (1730–1798),¹⁷ Chen Yuan (mentioned above) and many others to this day.¹⁸ However the original sentence of the *Tradition of Zuo* did not explicitly or implicitly refer to the Shang to begin with – it was over-interpreted by Kong Yingda and cannot be used as an argument.

There are also those who feel that the practice of tabooing names started only in the Eastern Zhou period. For example Zhao Yi 趙翼 argued in the Qing era in his *Gaiyu congkao* 陔餘叢考 that there are examples of names that were not tabooed in the *Classic of Po-*

¹¹ Wang Jian 2002, pp. 2-7.

¹² Cf. Chen Yuan 1958, p. 1.

¹³ *Chunqiu Zuozhuan*, j. 5, p. 16b. Cf. the translation of Legge: “The people of Zhou do not use the name which they bore in serving the Spirits of the dead; and the name is not mentioned after death” (Legge 1966, Vol. 5, p. 50). See also 4.3.1.2.

¹⁴ *Chunqiu zuozhuan zhengyi*, j. 6, p. 13b: “Zi yin yiwang, weiyong hui fa, hui shi yu Zhou” 自殷以往，未有諱法，諱始于周。

¹⁵ *Xuelin*, j. 3, p. 67.

¹⁶ *Qidong yeyu*, j. 4, p. 39.

¹⁷ *Jingshi biming huikao*, j. 3, p. 1.

¹⁸ Cf. Wang Xinhua 2007, p. 2.

etry (*Shijing*) and *Tradition of Zuo* (*Zuozhuan*). The names of the Kings of Wen and Wu appear in the *Classic of Poetry*, and the names of marquis Xi of Jin and Prince Wu of Song in the *Tradition of Zuo*. Zhao Yi used this as an argument that there was no taboo practice in Western Zhou.¹⁹ Now, there is no guarantee that texts of the *Classic of Poetry* and *Tradition of Zuo* in their present form have been preserved in all details from Shang or Zhou time. Indeed, the reverse is most likely true and the absence of taboos could therefore be easily attributed to later corrections. Moreover every dynasty knows examples of non-tabooing, and this type of argument from silence cannot be used as a reliable argument.²⁰ But insofar as we have no reliable written documents describing tabooing practice from earlier times, opinions like the one above can still be found today.

Some scholars reject the presence of *bihui* in the Zhou period entirely, and argue that the practice started in the Qin era. This is, for example, the opinion of Yuan Mei 袁枚 (1716–1797) from the Qing dynasty, who in his *Suiyuan suibi* 随园随笔 said: “*Bihui* started from Qin Shihuang, as the taboo name of his father Zhuangxiang 莊襄 (Chu 楚) was changed to Jing 荆, and because of his name, Zheng 正, the first month (*zhengyue* 正月) was renamed as *yiyue* 一月.”²¹ He gave no further explanations. In modern times, Guo Moruo 郭沫若 (1892–1978) argued for the same in his article “Tabooing did not start in Zhou period” (*Hui bushi yu Zhouren bian* 諱不始于周人辨).²² He used three arguments: 1. the unreliability of examples from the *Tradition of Zuo* (just mentioned) and also from the *Sayings of the states* (*Guoyu*),²³ because the age of these texts cannot be determined; 2. no examples of tabooing of names in the bronze inscriptions of the Zhou era (he gives an example in which the name Bao 保 from the time of Duke Zhou 周公 is directly mentioned);²⁴ 3. There are many *tiangan* names²⁵ in his collection of bronze vessels *Liang Zhou jinwen cidaxi* 两周金文辭大系, which means that they were popular in the Zhou and that the names of ancestors were not tabooed on the offering vessels.

Yet, contemporary research seems to confirm the contents of the *Tradition of Zuo* (*Zuozhuan*) and *Sayings of the states* (*Guoyu*). It is assumed that the *Tradition of Zuo* was

¹⁹ *Gaiyu congkao*, j. 31, p. 23.

²⁰ This opinion follows Wang Jian 2002, p. 3.

²¹ *Suiyuan suibi xia*, j. 16, p. 1a.

²² Guo Moruo 1954, pp. 113–119.

²³ *Guoyu*, j. 15, p. 2ab (for the description of this case see 4.3.1.4).

²⁴ Mingbao 明保 was the son of the Duke Zhou.

²⁵ Names using characters of the 10 Heavenly Stems and the 12 Earthly Branches.

compiled about 403–389 BCE, and many archaeological discoveries confirm its words.²⁶ Also, the *Sayings of the states* cannot be seen as unreliable. Although the name Bao was not a tabooed name, other words of the text are still disputed. That one name was not tabooed cannot be an argument that the custom of tabooing names was not practiced at all. The *tiangan* names, mentioned by Guo Moruo, were not real names and were given only after death. And the possible reason for that can be precisely the custom of tabooing names.²⁷

There are scholars who place the starting point of *bihui* in the Shang-Yin period. This opinion was first expressed by the scholar Zhang Shinan 張世南 (13th century) of the Song period. He wrote that “Yin people tabooed ghosts, and therefore used courtesy names (*zi*).”²⁸ He gives no arguments for his opinion. Because Yin rulers had a given name (*ming*) and also a *tiangan* name, Zhang Shinan thought these *tiangan* names were given after death during offerings and he argues there was a practice not to express the name of the King directly in Yin times – as was the case when tabooing names. He is supported by modern scholars such as Qu Wanli 屈萬里 (1907–1979), who wrote that the Yin people did not use the name of a ruler in their oracle inscriptions, but the character *wang* 王 instead, because of a taboo on their names.²⁹ Also Dong Zuobin 董作賓 (1895–1963) wrote that as Zu Geng 祖庚 died on the *geng* 庚 day, this day was turned into his ghost name Geng in order to avoid pronouncing his name directly.³⁰ In fact the *tiangan* characters in names can only be an argument that some form of tabooing names was practiced in the Shang-Yin period, but not that it actually started that time.

Some scholars, as, e.g., the scholar Gu Yanwu 顧炎武 (1613–1682) of the Qing period, have tried to determine the start of name tabooing in the legendary Xia times, testing names of its rulers in the *Classic of Documents* (*Shangshu*). He detected that the legendary Emperor Yao 堯 was called “Thearch / Emperor” (*di* 帝) after his death, and Emperor Yu 禹 – “August Ancestor” (*huangzu* 皇祖), and declared this as the beginning of *bihui* practice.³¹ Another attempt was made by Dong Zuobin, mentioned above, who found “a second name” in the names of two (Kong Jia 孔甲 and Lü Gui 履癸) of the last four rulers

²⁶ The physical text we have was undoubtedly edited much later, but the transmission most probably predated the Han period. Cf. Loewe 1993, pp. 67–76; Pines 2009, pp. 429–442 argues for an early date of the *Chunqiu Zuo*zhu.

²⁷ Cf. Wang Jian 2002, p. 5.

²⁸ *Youhuan jiwén*, j. 3, p. 15.

²⁹ Qu Wanli 1948, pp. 219–226.

³⁰ Dong Zuobin 1951, p. 10.

³¹ *Rizhilu*, j. 2, p. 1.

of Xia. He realized that in the end of the Xia period, rulers were deified and their names were tabooed.³² A Taiwanese scholar, Yang Junshi 陽君實 goes still further. He states that not only both the names at the end of the dynasty Xia, but also others in the beginning of it can be found, such as Tai Kang 太康, Zhong Kang 仲康, Shao Kang 少康, and Di Ning 帝寧. According to him, the character *ning* 寧 is erroneously read for *ding* 丁 on the bamboo slips, and *kang* 康 is in fact *geng* 庚 (by mistake or because of the identical form of these characters in the past).³³ It would mean that the system of taboo names existed already in the beginning of Xia.

As pointed out by Wang Jian, the mistake of all these attempts to identify the starting point of *bihui* is that they try to find the answer only in texts (which is typical of Chinese research), and usually without giving too much consideration of the texts as objects.³⁴ Since there is a difference between the transmission of a text (or material in the text) and the moment that the present copy or version was finally fixed, such evidence is often not reliable. In addition, it is impossible to find a starting point of name tabooing in texts because its roots may well be in the very ancient past in the first place and can therefore not be pinned down to one concrete moment in history. It will have been a long process connected with the evolution of human mentality and religious beliefs.

4.1.3. *Jinji* and *Bihui*

In order to avoid misunderstanding, we should once more stress the inseparability of the customs of *jinji* 禁忌 (taboo in general) and of *bihui* 避諱 (name taboo). Some Chinese scholars try to differentiate questions of the origin of taboo names into two categories: the origin of the tabooing of names in general (what they call *jinji*) and the origin of “civilized” tabooing of name (what they call *bihui*).³⁵ Differences between *jinji* and *bihui* as they are recognized by Chinese authors have been discussed earlier (see 1.1.7), and it has been argued here that they are really one and the same tabooing phenomenon. One Chinese scholar, Wang Xinhua, used this division and distinguished periods of evolution of name tabooing in the following way:

(In the first period) tabooing of name (*jinji*) was limited to one’s own person only: the subject and object of taboo were the same human being ... The most important was the

³² Dong Zuobin 1951, p. 7.

³³ Yang Junshi 1960, p. 19.

³⁴ Wang Jian 2002, p. 7.

³⁵ Cf. Wang Xinhua 2007, p. 12.

relation with nature and name tabooing helped to protect man himself from the outside world ... (In the second period) name tabooing included also other related people ... and became a social phenomenon ... causing differentiation between people of lower and higher status. In the third period connections between the human being and nature decreased, and were exchanged for relations between human beings. The subject and object of taboo were divided as well ... In this way *jinji* became *bihui*.³⁶

The evolution of tabooing, as described by Wang Xinhua, tries to differentiate schematically the relation of a human being to nature and to himself, and the social relations to other people. As argued before (see 1.1.7), we feel that there is no substantial difference between both, but only a difference in legitimization of *bihui* by state authority as a “modern” and prescribed or codified custom, and *jinji* as mere custom. Therefore we also see not substantial evolution between these two types of taboo, if they are different types to begin with. In another article Wang Xinhua argues even more directly: “*Jinji* is based on a primitive thought ... and the *bihui* is based on the modern thought.”³⁷ Such differentiation is superfluous, because as we will see below, old practices of *jinji* can at any time become prescribed again (as it happened, e.g., in the Yuan time) and many customs considered as *jinji* (for example tabooing of inauspicious words) were practiced up to the modern time.³⁸ Statements about one type of taboo being more modern than the other derive more from the inbuilt tendency of modern historians to consider literati customs more rational than popular customs, than from a detailed analysis of the customs in question.

4.2. Shang

Tabooing of name has its roots in the very distant past, but our knowledge about this practice during and before the Shang period is very limited. Yet, this period is very important for the practice of the tabooing of names and should be marked. The custom was apparently practiced as a spoken taboo, until script was invented, but this is now impossible to research. Oracle inscriptions are almost the only extant written sources of that time, and are usually very laconic and without an expanded explanation, but still record many names.

³⁶ Wang Xinhua 2007, pp. 18-19.

³⁷ Wang Xinhua 2005, p. 66.

³⁸ We should mention here the problem of differences of taboo custom among common people and in the high society. The prevalent opinion of scholars is that the tabooing of names was in the beginning practiced only in the high society and only much later by the common people. Certainly it is impossible to determine the custom among common people, as we have only very few sources from the time before Qin and most of them are names of rulers and their families.

4.2.1. Sources

Script started in China, as far as we know, under the Shang dynasty. The oldest known evidence for it are oracle-bones inscriptions (the oldest from the time of King Wuding 武丁, ca. 1250–1200 BCE),³⁹ as well as some records on bronze, pottery, jade, stone and ceramic vessels. These inscriptions include “given and family names,”⁴⁰ especially those of rulers. However, we do not know too much about “given names.”

The names we find in the oracle inscriptions belong to two groups: names of ancestors, rulers and their family, and names of diviners. The pre-dynastic ancestors and the dynastic kings of Shang had many ceremonial names (technically called *miaohao* 廟號)⁴¹ and one of their important characteristics was the use of the *tiangan* cyclical characters.⁴² In addition, characters signifying relationships and special characteristics (as, e.g., “great” *da* 大) were used.⁴³

Real given names were apparently very rare. The reconstructed list of the Shang dynasty is generally similar to that in the *Records of the Historian (Shiji)*.⁴⁴ Different ceremonial names were used when different types of sacrifice for ancestors were offered. For example King Zuyi 祖乙 had seven names or titles as Fuyi, Neiyi, Zuyi, Xiaoyi, Xiaozuyi, Yazuyi, Houzuyi.⁴⁵ Besides names of ancestors and contemporary rulers, the names of their wives, children, feudal lords and royal servants are also recorded in the oracle bones, as for example names of 64 wives and 53 children of King Wuding.⁴⁶

One group consists of diviners’ names. According to Keightley “most Shang names recorded in the inscriptions are thought to have been generic rather than the exclusive possession of individuals” and were probably inherited. It is still unclear if they “refer to individuals, statelets and their leaders, places ... or local powers worshipped there.”⁴⁷ We know that in some periods the name of the diviner was inscribed, and in other periods omitted.

There are further sources of subsequent periods which deal with names dating back to the Shang dynasty. Separate names can be found in the *Classic of Poetry (Shijing)* and

³⁹ Keightley 1978, p. xiii.

⁴⁰ Cf. Keightley 1978, p. 134; Cheng Te-k’un 1960, p. 155 and 176; Bauer 1959, p. 20.

⁴¹ Cheng Te-k’un 1960, p. 220.

⁴² According to Cheng Te-k’un, they are not connected with their date of birth or death, and are also not a posthumous title, but the day of worship (Cheng Te-k’un 1960, p. 219).

⁴³ Cheng Te-k’un 1960, p. 220.

⁴⁴ Cf. *Shiji*, j. 3; Cheng Te-k’un 1960, p. 218; Keightley 1978, p. 95.

⁴⁵ Cheng Te-k’un 1960, p. 221 (Chinese characters of names are not listed in the book).

⁴⁶ Tung Tso-pin 1964, p. 82. It is possible that some of these names for women were for the same wife.

⁴⁷ Keightley 1978, p. 102, Fn. 37.

Classic of Documents (Shangshu), and the *Records of the Historian (Shiji)* and *Bamboo Annals (Zhushu jinian 竹書紀年)* both have a special chapter treating the Kings of Shang.⁴⁸ Yet the problems of authenticity and age of these texts are still being debated and evidence from these sources cannot be considered definitive.⁴⁹ Chinese historiography used the names and the history of Shang written in the *Records of the Historian* as a basis for its research. And the “given names” conveyed from the *Bamboo Annals (Zhushu jinian)* are listed in encyclopedias as the real names (*ming*) of Shang rulers.⁵⁰ Although the texts we have are quite remote from the Shang period, parts of them might have been transmitted faithfully in oral tradition. This is also, for example, the possible explanation for the similarity of names of Shang kings in oracle inscriptions and in the *Records of the Historian*.

4.2.2. Characteristics of Name Tabooing in the Shang Period.

We still do not have a complete view for the use of names in the Shang times. The existence of given names can be presumed, but their real function is disputable. There are definitely many names in the inscriptions of oracle bones, such as the names of diviners, officials, family members of the emperor.⁵¹ But many of them can be explained as clan, functional or generic names.

Other questions are connected with names of rulers. In the oracle inscriptions from Shang times we found phrases such as “The King (asked) the oracle (which) said” (*wang bu yue* 王卜曰)⁵² where the character “king” is used instead of a name. Then again other names appear in the oracle bones and bronze inscriptions, predominantly with the *tiangan* characters, when ancestors are designated. They are considered by most scholars as temple or ceremonial names, given after death. It can then be presumed that there was a custom in Shang to call rulers during their lifetime by the title of “king” (*wang*), and to bestow upon them a posthumous name after death. One step further would be a supposition that these sometimes numerous ceremonial names should replace or protect the real name, which was a taboo, both during lifetime and after death.⁵³ However, all of this is just supposition.

⁴⁸ *Shiji*, j. 3; *Zhushu jinian*, j. shang, pp. 20b-35b.

⁴⁹ For text criticism cf. Loewe 1993, pp. 39-47 (for *Bamboo Annals*) and pp. 405-414 (for *Records of the Historian*). Though these sources are not fully reliable, they are the next best after oracle inscriptions.

⁵⁰ Cf. for example *Zhongguo lishi da cidian* 2000, pp. 1699-1700 (Wuding 武丁).

⁵¹ Cf., for example, Lefevre 1985, p. 380.

⁵² Hsü Chin-hsiung 1979, esp. p. 24 (S 0452). Cf. also Lefevre 1985, for example, pp. 335, 346-347.

⁵³ Cf. Wang Xinhua 2007, pp. 5-6.

Most examples of name tabooing concern rulers, which is nothing unexpected, given the nature of our sources. Also later in the history of China, even in the Qing dynasty, most recorded names were those of rulers. The modern scholar Fan Zhixin 范志新 has argued that other persons in the oracle inscriptions, such as princes, ministers, wives and sons, are addressed directly by name, and that the custom of *bihui* had only just started and concerned only rulers.⁵⁴ Yet, it may also be argued that the real meaning of these names is still unclear. Some of them express family relations (for example “brother” *xiong* 兄) or are singular cyclic characters (*nei* 内, *zi* 子).⁵⁵ Still other people besides rulers had a kind of “temple name” as, for example, the queen consort of King Wuding (also a powerful priestess and military leader). She is addressed in oracle bone inscriptions as Mother Xin (*muxin* 母辛) or as Fu Hao 婦好.⁵⁶ Also unclear is the origin of the temple name of the King Wuding – Gaozong 高宗 – in the *Records of the Historian* (*Shiji*).⁵⁷

4.3. Zhou

The victory of King Wu over the Shang armies is traditionally considered a pivotal point when a change was supposedly made from a loose practice of name tabooing to a system of political rituals. In fact, this should be considered only as a legend. We simply lack the evidence to say anything with certainty about the early Zhou and Shang periods. There are many other regulations thought to have been made by this first ruler of Zhou, and they all are very likely fictional. Instead, they have been projected back in time in order to provide them with the aura of venerable age and by implication truth. What we can really observe is that the practice of name tabooing as we know it in Zhou became codified thanks to the rise of writing late in this period, and that it developed many different forms.

4.3.1. Sources

We want to describe examples and rules of taboos which can be found in written documents during Zhou time. But there is one problem that should be mentioned in the beginning: the dating of our sources is often difficult and disputable. The texts which we will discuss below were mostly changed or compiled during the Han. Therefore specific fragments of texts

⁵⁴ Fan Zhixin 2006, p. 18.

⁵⁵ Cf. Table 6 in: Keightley 1978, p. 195.

⁵⁶ Cf. Keightley 1978, p. xvi. The function of the name Fu Hao is disputable. The meaning of it is “the goodness of woman/wife.”

⁵⁷ *Shiji*, j. 3, p. 8a.

can be weak as an argument. Below we present the available evidence, but the reader should keep this overall caveat in mind.

4.3.1.1. *Classic of Documents (Shangshu 尚書)*

The oldest written text related to the tabooing of names is recorded in the *Classic of Documents (Shangshu)*. This is at least the traditional opinion of Chinese historiography.⁵⁸ We find here information that the King of Wu, in the second year after he destroyed Shang (according to tradition 1065 BC), became seriously ill. Therefore his brother, the Duke of Zhou, built an altar for kings Tai 太, Ji 季 and Wen 文 (his ancestors) and sacrificed himself on behalf of his brother saying:

Mou 某, your great descendant, is suffering from a severe and violent disease; if you three kings have in heaven the charge of watching over him, Heaven's great son, let me Dan 旦 be a substitute for his (*mou*) person.⁵⁹

We can see that the word *mou* is written twice in place of the name of the King Wu. These two characters are explained in the commentary of Kong Anguo 孔安國 (from the early Han period) in the following way: "The descendant" is King of Wu 武王, *mou* means his name, used because the subject tabooed the name of the ruler.⁶⁰ The King of Wu had the family name Ji 姬 and the given name (*ming*) Fa 發. The Duke of Zhou could not use his name, and because of that he used *mou*. An adequate (correct) interpretation should be: "Your great descendant Ji Fa."⁶¹

The dating of the text of the *Book of Documents* is debatable. It is hardly a text from Western Zhou (and the commentary is even later), although the chapter "Jinteng" 金縢 is presumed by some Chinese scholars to be "original" and one of the oldest in the version we have today.⁶² There are three possible explanations for this text:⁶³ 1. the character *mou* was really used by Duke Zhou and designated the name of the King Wu (Ji Fa 姬發); 2. the son of King Wu – King Cheng 成王 – tabooed the name of his father (as argued by the Han commentator Zheng Xuan 鄭玄);⁶⁴ 3. later historiographers avoided the name of King Wu

⁵⁸ Cf. Wang Jian 2002, p. 16.

⁵⁹ *Shangshu*, j. 4 xia, p. 2a. For translation cf. Legge 1966, Vol. 3, pp.353-354.

⁶⁰ *Shangshu*, j. 4 xia, p. 2b.

⁶¹ Wang Jian 2002, p. 17.

⁶² Wang Xinhua 2007, p. 3; For an opposite opinion see Loewe 1993, pp. 376-389, esp. 379.

⁶³ According to Wang Xinhua 2007, p. 3.

⁶⁴ *Shangshu zhushu*, j. 12, p. 13a.

(as argued by the early Qing author Gu Yanwu 顧炎武).⁶⁵ The third option is most likely, because the Duke of Zhou did not need to keep a taboo in the temple, and the King of Cheng was too young to participate in the ceremony. There are also several instances that the character of the name of King Wu (Fa 發) or King Wen (Chang 昌) is directly written in the *Book of Documents*.⁶⁶ Besides, the Duke of Zhou's own name is not tabooed in the text quoted above. But that would be plausible as a way of saying "I".

4.3.1.2. *Spring and Autumn Annals* (*Chunqiu* 春秋)

Concealment and tabooing of events in Zuo's, Gongyang's and Guliang's Tradition

There are a few paragraphs in the *Spring and Autumn Annals* explained in the *Traditions of Zuo* (*Zuozhuan* 左傳), *Gongyang* (*Gongyangzhuan* 公羊傳) and *Guliang* (*Guliangzhuan* 穀梁傳) as tabooing (*hui* 諱). Both texts claimed that the *Spring and Autumn Annals* used concealment as a method of tabooing: the name of a person should have been written, but it was not. This is then explained as the tabooing of the name of a person related to a specified situation. A good analysis of that way of tabooing has been made by Thomas Emmrich.⁶⁷

We find, for example, in the *Spring and Autumn Annals* under the year 690 BCE the sentence: "The Prince of Ji lost his country" (*Ji hou da qu qi guo* 紀侯大去其國). The meaning of this sentence is explicated in the *Tradition of Gongyang* (which is a Han source) as follows:

What means 'lost'? It means 'was defeated'. Who defeated him? The army of the Qi state. Why is the Qi not mentioned? Because of tabooing (*hui* 諱) the name of Duke Xiang (*Xiang gong* 襄公). The *Spring and Autumn Annals* tabooes illustrious people (*Chunqiu wei xian hui* 春秋為賢諱).⁶⁸

Of course it is not possible to ascertain if the text of the *Spring and Autumn Annals* is a real case of tabooing, or just later speculation from the viewpoint of the Han time. Furthermore, the *Spring and Autumn Annals* are a very laconic source since it stems from the oldest known phase of archival writing anyhow.

⁶⁵ *Rizhilu*, j. 24, p. 5a.

⁶⁶ Cf., e.g., *Shangshu*, j. 1, p. 33b; j. 3, p. 33a.

⁶⁷ Emmrich 1992, pp. 36-42.

⁶⁸ *Chunqiu Gongyangzhuan*, j.6, p. 6a.

Another fragment of *Spring and Autumn Annals* is explained as taboo in the *Tradition of Guliang* (*Guliangzhuan*). The original text has only a short notice in the fifth month of the twelfth year of Duke Ai (483 BC): “Mengzi died” (*Mengzi zu* 孟子卒). The *Tradition of Guliang* (which is a Han source) explained that Mengzi was the wife of Duke Zhao 昭公 of Lu. The absence of the name of Duke Zhao is intentional in order to conceal (*hui* 諱) the fact that he violated the order of exogamy.⁶⁹ The ruling families of Lu 魯 and Wu 吳 (family of wife) were all offsprings of Zhou and had the same family name Ji 姬.⁷⁰ Therefore their marriage was against ritual, and was tabooed. Similar explanation can be seen in the *Tradition of Zuo*.⁷¹

On the other hand, non-tabooed names are used in the *Spring and Autumn Annals* as a kind of reproach (according to later commentaries). As explained by Thomas Emmrich, the *Spring and Autumn Annals* accurately and intentionally chooses or omits an expression, according to the method of *baobian* 褒貶 (praise and denigration). The direct use of personal names is a way to criticize a person. The reason for the criticism could be losing a state, fleeing, being captured, and violating a mandate. One more motive was the attack by a clan with an identical clan name.⁷²

As an example of such an explanation, we can give the following fragment of the *Spring and Autumn Annals*: “In the duke’s twenty-fifth year (635 BC), in spring, in the king’s first month, on *bingwu* 丙午 day, Hui 燬, marquis of Wei 衛, extinguished Xing 邢. In summer, in the fourth month, on *guiyou* 癸酉 day, Hui marquis of Wei died.” The explanation of the *Tradition of Zuo* was that “the lords of Wei and Xing were of the same surname Ji 姬 and therefore the text gave the given name of the marquis to his disgrace.”⁷³ Such explanations are, of course, disputable. Furthermore, the reverse could be argued: the use of names that should be tabooed could mean that tabooing was not yet widely practiced.

Tabooing of names in *Zuo’s Tradition*

Two texts of the *Tradition of Zuo* (but not from the *Spring and Autumn Annals* themselves) referred to the tabooing of names. One of them described rules of naming and included taboo names, which could not be used. The occasion was the birth of the son of Prince Huan

⁶⁹ *Chunqiu Guliangzhuan*, j. 20, p. 11a.

⁷⁰ Wang Jian 2002, p. 16.

⁷¹ *Chunqiu Zuo zhuan*, j. 59, p. 1a.

⁷² Emmrich 1992, p. 31.

⁷³ *Chunqiu Zuo zhuan*, j. 15, p. 1a.

of Lu, and only this fact is noted in the *Spring and Autumn Annals*. He asked the Duke Shen Xu 申繻 for help in naming and got a long explanation:

Names are taken from five things: some (come from) pre-intimation; some (are) auspice of virtue; some (result from) striking appearance of a child; (some are) the borrowing (of) a name of some object; or some similarity ... The name must not be taken from the name of the State; or of an office; or of a mountain or river; or of any malady; or of an animal; or of a utensil, or of a ceremonial offering. The people of Zhou do not use the name which they bore in serving the Spirits of the dead; and the name is not mentioned after death.⁷⁴

This is a very important text and a basic statement for tabooing in the custom of naming.

Directly after these rules above, two important examples of the concrete practice of name tabooing are mentioned. According to the commentary of *Tradition of Zuo*, titles were changed because of the name taboo of a ruler: The given name (*ming*) of the marquis Xi of Jin (晉僖侯, r. 840–823 BC, also called marquis Li 晉釐侯) was Situ 司徒. His name was identical with the title of office and in order to taboo his name, “the name of office was changed (to *zhongjun* 中軍).” The name of Lord Wu of Song was Sikong 司空 (r. 765–748 BC), identical with the office. Therefore his name was tabooed and “the name of office changed (to *sicheng* 司城).”⁷⁵

4.3.1.3. *Records of Ritual* (Liji 禮記)

The *Records of Ritual* was compiled in its present form during the Han period but stems, in part, from older traditions.⁷⁶ The date and origin of the work and its individual sections are controversial. According to tradition, the work is attributed to Confucius, but the present compilation was reworked by various scholars during the Han Dynasty, finally perhaps by Cao Bao 曹褒 (d. 102 AD) or his school.⁷⁷ The *Records of Ritual* contains the biggest collection of rules of name tabooing. It was therefore often quoted in later periods as the standard work for that subject (see, for example, 5.2.6, 5.3.4 and 5.4.2). Whatever its historical origins, it has since become a canonical work.

⁷⁴ *Chunqiu Zuo zhuan*, j. 5, p. 16ab. For translation see Legge 1966, Vol. 5, pp. 49–50.

⁷⁵ *Chunqiu Zuo zhuan*, j. 5, pp. 16b, 18a. Explanation in brackets was made by Du Yu 杜預 (222–285).

⁷⁶ Cf. Loewe 1993, pp. 295–296. Loewe argues, however, not to be too hasty “in assuming that parts of the *Liji* originated in the pre-Han texts.”

⁷⁷ Loewe 1993, pp. 293–295.

Rules of taboo

The most important fragment of the *Records of Ritual* has been partly presented already and discussed in the section on rules of taboo (3.5). Here because of its importance, we quote fully:

When the ceremony of wailing is over, a son should no longer speak of his deceased father by his name (*zu ku nai hui* 卒哭乃諱). The rules do not require the avoidance of names merely similar in sound to those not to be spoken (*bu hui xian ming* 不諱嫌名). When a parent had a double name, the avoiding of either term used singly is not required (*er ming bu pian hui* 二名不偏諱). While his parents are alive, and a son is able to serve them, he should not utter the names of his grandparents; when he can no longer serve his parents through their death, he need not avoid the names of his grandparents. Names that would not be spoken (in his own family) need not be avoided (by a great officer) before his ruler; in the great officer's, however, the names proper to be suppressed by the ruler should not be spoken. In (reading) the Books of Poetry and of Documents, there need be no avoidance of names, nor in writing compositions (*Shi Shu bu hui, lin wen bu hui* 詩書不諱, 臨文不諱). In the ancestral temple there is no such avoidance (*miao zhong bu hui* 廟中不諱). Even in his presence, a minister need not avoid the names improper to be spoken by the ruler's wife. The names to be avoided by a wife need not be unspoken outside the door of the harem (*fuhui bu chumen* 婦諱不出門). The names of parties for whom mourning is worn (only) nine months or five months are not avoided.⁷⁸

Further rules for avoidance of names of relatives are described in *Records of Ritual*:

After the wailing was ended, there commenced the avoiding of certain names. An officer did not use the name of his paternal grandfather or grandmother, of his father's brothers or uncles; of his father's aunts or sisters. Father and son agreed in avoiding all these names. The names avoided by his mother the son avoided in the house. Those avoided by his wife he did not use when at her side. If among them there were names which had been borne by his own paternal great-grandfather or great-grand-uncles, he avoided them (in all places).⁷⁹

⁷⁸ *Liji*, j. 1, pp. 38b-40a. For translation see Legge 1968, Part III, p. 93.

⁷⁹ *Liji*, j. 7, p. 83b. Translation according to Legge 1968, Part IV, p. 161.

The listed persons are all distant relatives and normally did not need to be avoided.⁸⁰ But if they were tabooed by one's father and mother, the whole family had to taboo them. Taboos of one's wife were not be used in her presence, but could be spoken in other situations.

Concrete examples for implementation of rules

After rules of name tabooing, a text about the practice of behavior is included:

When one crosses the boundaries of a state, one should ask what its prohibitory laws are (general taboos); when entering it, he should ask about its customs; before entering the door (of a house), he should ask about the (taboo) names to be avoided in it. (*ru jing er wen jin, ru guo er wen su, ru men er wen hui* 入竟而問禁, 入國而問俗, 入門而問諱).⁸¹

Next, the behavior is described in the case when somebody incidentally violated a taboo name:

When an officer, by mistake, used a name to his ruler which was supposed to be avoided, he rose to his feet.⁸² If he were speaking to anyone who had a name that should be avoided with the ruler, he called him by the name given to him on his maturity.⁸³

Three more fragments from the *Records of Ritual* (in the chapter “Tangong” 檀弓) explain customs connected with tabooing of names and the rule of non-tabooing of homonyms with the example of Confucius' mother:

When the wailing is over, the name of the deceased is avoided. The service of him as a living (person) is over, and that for him in his ghostly state has begun. When the wailing is over, the cook with a bell having a wooden clapper issues an order throughout the palace, saying, “Give up disusing the names of the former rulers, and henceforth disuse (only) the name of him who is newly deceased.” This was done from the door leading to the chambers to the outer gate.⁸⁴

The second fragment is as follows, referring to Confucius as the Master:

⁸⁰ For rules of tabooing of distant relatives see 3.5.4.

⁸¹ *Liji*, j. 1, p. 40a. For translation cf. Legge 1968, Part III, p. 93.

⁸² It means the position on a mat on the ground, so this is quite a physical exertion, from sitting to the menial position of standing.

⁸³ *Liji*, j. 7, p. 94a. Translation according to Legge 1968, Part IV, p. 168.

⁸⁴ *Liji*, j. 2, p. 89a. For translation see Legge 1968, Part III, p. 190.

When a name was composed of two characters they were not avoided when used singly. The name of the Master's mother was Zhengzai 徵在. When he used Zai, he did not at the same time use Zheng; nor Zai, when he used Zheng.⁸⁵

And the third fragment is as follows:

When Zipu 子蒲 died, the wailers called out his name Mie 滅. (A disciple of Confucius) Zigao 子皋 said, "So rude and uncultivated are they!" On this they changed their style.⁸⁶

The *Records of Ritual* notices here a mourning ritual *fu* 復 that involved calling the name of dead.⁸⁷ Mie 滅 was apparently the given name of Zipu. The soul of the dead person is called by his real name. It is necessary to perform the ritual. Later, after mourning, a respectful son would be sad if he saw a person similar to the deceased or heard words similar to the names of his parents.⁸⁸ Tabooing connotes respect and longing for the dead relative. It is a kind of extension of the funeral ceremony. Therefore Zigao's criticism about calling the name during a ritual is strange. It is also possible that the ritual or social practice was in flux at the time.

Further prescriptions

Two other texts in the *Records of Ritual* determined who should be called by name and who not. It is not clear if the prescriptions were made for life or for historiography.

The ruler of a state should not call by their names (*buming* 不名) his highest ministers, nor call by their surnames the two noble ladies who accompanied his wife to the harem. A Great Officer should not call in that way an officer who had been employed by his father, nor the niece and younger sister of his wife (members of his harem). (Another) officer should not call by name the steward of his family, nor his principal concubine. The son of a Great Officer (of the king, himself equal to) a ruler, should not presume to speak of himself as "I, the little son". The son of a Great Officer or (other) officer (of a state) should not presume to speak of himself as "I, the inheriting son, so-and-so". They should not so presume to speak of themselves as their heir-sons do.⁸⁹

⁸⁵ *Liji*, j. 2, p. 89b. For translation see Legge 1968, Part III, p. 190.

⁸⁶ *Liji*, j. 2, p. 45b. For translation see Legge 1968, Part III, p. 153.

⁸⁷ For more about this ritual see Yü Ying-Shih 1987, pp. 365-369.

⁸⁸ *Liji*, j. 7, p. 83b.

⁸⁹ *Liji*, j. 1, p. 46b. For translation see Legge 1968, Part III, pp. 100-101.

The second passage reads as follows:

The Son of Heaven should not be spoken of as 'going out (of his state)'. A feudal prince should not be called by his name, while alive. (When either of these things is done), it is because the superior man will not show regard for wickedness. A prince who loses his territory is named, and also one who extinguishes (another state ruled by) lords of the same surname as himself.⁹⁰

The last two sections of the *Records of Ritual* determine situations of tabooing names by the emperor, and the office responsible for taboo names.

When an officer (*shi* 士) was speaking before the ruler, if he had occasion to speak of a Great Officer (*dafu* 大夫) who was dead, he called him by his posthumous epithet, or by the designation of his maturity (a name of courtesy); if of an officer (who was also dead), he called him by his name. When speaking with a Great Officer, he mentioned officers by their name, and (other) Great Officers by their designation. In speaking at a Great Officer's, he avoided using the name of the (former) ruler (*gonghui* 公諱), but not that of any of his own dead (*sihui* 私諱). At all sacrifices and in the ancestral temple, there was no avoidance of names (*hui* 諱). In school there was no avoidance of any character in the text.⁹¹

And from another part of the same book:

The Grand Recorder had the superintendence of ceremonies. He was in charge of the tablets of record, and brought before the king what (names) were to be avoided, and what days were unfavorable (for doing particular affairs). The son of Heaven received his admonitions with reverence.⁹²

These numerous passages from the *Records of Ritual* approach many topics related to the tabooing of names. They determine basic rules, which were observed or discussed later in the whole history of China (cf. 3.5). They describe the way to inquire about taboo and the proper behavior in various situations. Still more the *Records of Ritual* give concrete examples for to demonstrate the manner of tabooing. A special official is mentioned, who records taboo names and remind rulers of them. No wonder that in the whole history of China the *Records of Ritual* were considered as the fundamental and normative text, deciding about the time, situation and way of taboo observance.

⁹⁰ *Liji*, j. 1, p. 63b. For translation see Legge 1968, Part III, p. 113.

⁹¹ *Liji*, j. 6, p. 23b. For translation cf. Legge 1968, Part IV, pp. 17-18.

⁹² *Liji*, j. 3, p. 35a. For translation see Legge 1968, Part III, pp. 238-239.

4.3.1.4. Other Sources

There are still a few other sources mentioned in relation to name tabooing in this period. One of them is the story of Fan Xianzi 范獻子 in the *Sayings of the states* (*Guoyu*). The compilation of this work is presumed by research to be from 431–314 BC (with the chapter “Jinyu” dated to 384–336 BC).⁹³

Fan Xianzi visited Lu and asked people of Lu about the Ju 具 and Ao 敖 mountains, opposite to their country. Fan Xianzi asked: “Are they not called Ju and Ao?” They answered: “These are taboos of former rulers Xian 獻 and Wu 武.” Fan Xianzi came back ... and said: “It is important to learn. I went to Lu and used two of their taboos, and made myself look ridiculous because of my ignorance.”⁹⁴

It is an instance of unintentional violation of local taboos. Dukes Xian of Lu (Ju 具, 886–855 BC) and Wu of Lu (Ao 敖, 824–816 BC) were presumed to have lived about 300 years before the described journey in the 21st year of the Duke Zhao of Lu (521 BC). The text shows that knowledge of tabooed names was very important, especially for educated people. Of course it is also possible that this is a textual invention and not a description.

Another case is described in the *Han Feizi*. As the Lord of Wei entered Zhou, he was asked by a guardsman about his name (*hao* 號). He answered “Duke Land-Extender” (*bijiang* 辟疆). The guardian said that a duke cannot have the same name as the Son of Heaven (*tianzi* 天子). After that the Lord of Wei corrected himself and said “Duke Hui 燬” and was allowed to enter.⁹⁵ The Feudal Lord of Wei had used a name/title for himself identical with the title of the King of Zhou, which was considered a violation of taboo. This case can also be regarded as an arrogation of titles (see also 8.1.1).

There is also a sentence in the *Mengzi*, interpreted as an explanation of tabooing of given names. “Mencius answered, ‘For mince and broiled meat there is a common liking, while that for sheep-dates (*yangzao* 羊棗) was peculiar. We avoid the name, but do not avoid the surname. The surname is common; the name is particular.’”⁹⁶

⁹³ Loewe 1993, p. 264.

⁹⁴ *Guoyu*, j. 15, p. 2ab.

⁹⁵ *Han Feizi*, j. 14, p. 7b. For translation see Liao 1959, p. 132.

⁹⁶ *Mengzi*, j. 14, p. 14a. For translation see Legge 1966, Vol. 2, pp. 497–498. Besides after another fragment of *Mengzi* the commentator of Han period Zhao Qi 趙岐 (108–201) noticed about Duke Wen of Teng 滕文公 (4–3 c. BC) that the name of his father Duke Kao 考公 was changed “by later generations” to Duke Ding 定公, because of an (undetermined) name taboo (cf. *Mengzi*, j. 5, p. 1a.).

In the last source the *Rites of Zhou* (*Zhouli* 周禮), we find the description of the second official responsible for taboo names (*xiaoshi* 小史). “The official *xiaoshi* ... distinguished the system of *zhaomu* 昭穆 (see 3.5.5) ... and decreed taboos of ruler (*jihui* 忌諱).”⁹⁷ Here, according to the commentator Zheng Xuan 鄭玄 (127-200), *ji* 忌 means taboo days of former rulers, and *hui* 諱 means their names.⁹⁸

4.3.2. Characteristics of the Period

Although the dating and authenticity of the sources which we presented above are still disputed, the existence of name tabooing in the Zhou period is generally accepted by scholars. The evidence is sufficient to assume that personal names were really tabooed in that time. There are relatively many prescriptive texts about taboo in this time, but not too many concrete examples. It is possible, however, that this was largely an elite custom and we cannot tell how widely it was practiced socially. Most sources used here originated in the late Zhou period. They generally described taboos of rulers (*guohui* 國諱). This is not surprising because these sources are “official” works made in the court by professional writers.

4.3.2.1. Taboo as a System

Chinese researchers write about a significant change in tabooing of names starting in the Zhou period, from religious relations between humans and gods, to a “secular” relation between people, and from the tabooing of the dead (*sihui* 死諱) to tabooing of the living (*shenghui* 生諱).⁹⁹ Religious and political power was combined in China before the Zhou period. Besides, the political system of Zhou, with its Mandate of Heaven (*tianming* 天命), was established as a religious system. The ruler was also the main priest and had a mandate and authority to perform sacrifices for ancestors.¹⁰⁰ This also implied the authority to rule the state.

Therefore sacrifices in the ancestral temple and knowledge about names of ancestors were very important. During sacrifices, using taboo names, the ruler could come into contact with the souls of ancestors, and receive authority from their hands. Apparently there was no difference between taboos of dead ancestors (*sihui* 死諱) and of the state (*guohui* 國

⁹⁷ *Zhouli*, j. 6, p. 43b.

⁹⁸ *Zhouli*, j. 6, p. 43b.

⁹⁹ Wang Xinhua 2007, pp. 121-123.

¹⁰⁰ For more about the ancestor worship in the Zhou period see Cook 2009, pp. 237-279.

諱), but since all the sources used in this research are related to the state, one cannot be sure. Only later did the state taboo take on a special role, as protection of the ruler's authority.

Special officials were established in the Zhou dynasty to be responsible, amongst others, for recording taboo names and organizing sacrifices: Grand Scribe (*dashi* 大史)¹⁰¹ and Junior Scribe (*xiaoshi* 小史).¹⁰² They were responsible for sacrifices in the temple of ancestors: Grand Scribe for regular sacrifices and Junior Scribe for occasional ones. They had to record taboo names and taboo days of ancestors and present them to the ruler, and were also competent in the rules of tabooing.¹⁰³ Subsequent dynasties also preserved these or similar offices (cf. 5.1.2.4).

Offerings and prayers to ancestors in the temple expressed reverence and worship, similar to the avoidance of taboo names outside the temple. The violation of taboo was shameful as an indication of ignorance, but we have no records that it was punished by the ruler. It can be presumed that the punishment was the shame,¹⁰⁴ taking place primarily in the psychological and social sphere, and directly accompanying the act of violation. It needed no special rules. In this age of highly personal relationships shame may have been a more severe punishment than it would be in a more bureaucraticized society. Later the violation of taboo started to be considered more and more as an insult in the relation between the violating person and the tabooed person (cf. the method of reproach in 4.3.1.2). Therefore the need for punishment appeared. It is also possible that punishment reflects the increase of state power more than expressing a viewpoint on taboos.

The punishment and the act of violation were separated in the Zhou period, and the punishment started to be performed by the ruler, as a kind of enforcement of veneration for the living ruler. The tabooing of names became formalized as the center and basis of the political system in China, as a law protecting stability in society and a method of demonstrating reverence for the ruler.¹⁰⁵ Very meaningful here are the words of Kong Rong 孔融 (153–208 AD), who later stressed the importance of taboo custom in the society. His words

¹⁰¹ Hucker 1985, p. 470.

¹⁰² Hucker 1985, p. 237.

¹⁰³ Tsien Tsuen-Hsuei 1963, pp. 5–6.

¹⁰⁴ For more about the shame and the phenomenon of losing face (*diulian* 丟臉) in China see Konior 2008, pp. 43–62.

¹⁰⁵ Wang Jian 2002, p. 29.

recorded in the *Beitang shuchao* 北堂書鈔 noticed that “the high and the low classes have a system, and the center of this system is the tabooing of names.”¹⁰⁶

4.3.2.2. Methods for Tabooing

In the sources used for this research, the following methods for tabooing in this early period can be found. The given name (*ming* 名) could be concealed. Concealment because of taboo is highlighted above in the two examples from the *Spring and Autumn Annals* (see 4.3.1.2). The intentional violation of a taboo, i.e., the direct use of personal names as a way of criticizing and reproaching can be seen in the same work.¹⁰⁷ We should remember that both methods are also a written record of expression, but it can be presumed that they are the oldest (and also the most natural) methods of tabooing.

Probably there was also an equivalent of taboo in speech. However, the spoken form of taboo is more difficult to verify. An example can be found in the *Sayings of the states* (*Guoyu*) in the example above (see 4.3.1.4), where the names of two mountains are not spoken (i.e., are taboo) because of their identity with the names of former kings, and an unintentional violation of them is shameful.¹⁰⁸

Other methods of tabooing have been only found as single examples in the texts of Zhou: the exchange of one character (from *sikong* 司空 to *sicheng* 司城 and from *situ* 司徒 to *zhongjun* 中軍 in the title) in the *Spring and Autumn Annals* (*Tradition of Zuo*)¹⁰⁹ and a replacement by a courtesy name (*zi* 字) in the *Records of Ritual* (*Liji*).¹¹⁰ These two methods were probably developed in the late Zhou or written down only in the Han period.

The difference between the tabooing of names of the living and of the dead is kept distinctive by means of special terms (cf. 4.1.1). In the sources, we can see that the tabooing of names of the dead is called *hui* 諱. Names of the living are “not spoken” (*buming* 不名).¹¹¹ They regulate hierarchical relations between living people.

¹⁰⁶ *Beitang shuchao*, j. 94, p. 2b.

¹⁰⁷ *Chunqiu Zuo zhuan*, j. 15, p. 1a.

¹⁰⁸ *Guoyu*, j. 15, p. 2ab.

¹⁰⁹ *Chunqiu Zuo zhuan*, j. 5, pp. 16b, 18a.

¹¹⁰ *Liji*, j. 6, p. 23b.

¹¹¹ *Liji*, j. 1, p. 38b; j. 1, p. 46b.

4.3.2.3. Types and Rules of Tabooing

The tabooing of names in the Zhou period is often compared to that in later dynasties, with the system of the name tabooing in the Zhou time being considered inconsistent and under-developed. But on the other hand, we can see that the long Zhou period was the time in which the practice and rules of tabooing names were first formalized. It is this formalization that provided the basis for the custom of name tabooing for the next two thousand years, even if further changes also took place.

The evolution can be seen if we compare rules in texts of the *Tradition of Zuo* and *Records of Ritual*. In the *Tradition of Zuo* we can see rules for taboo words prohibited in naming, which included names of states, offices, mountains, rivers, maladies, animals, ceremonial utensils etc., and names are only taboo after death (see 4.3.1.2).¹¹² In the *Records of Ritual* we already see formalized prescriptions with time, place and principles which should be considered in tabooing. The tabooing (*hui*) started after the mourning time. There was no need to taboo homonyms, characters of double names,¹¹³ classics and other writing compositions. There was no taboo in the ancestral temple and no private taboo before the ruler. There was no taboo of grandparents' names after the death of one's father, etc (see 4.3.1.3).

These rules were developed during the Zhou era and became the basis for the system of taboo in the next dynasties, though of course they evolved later, too. Theory and practice of the tabooing custom of that time are still discussed, but one can suppose that, if such rules were made, there were concrete instances which enforced them.

Most examples of tabooing we have from that period are taboos of rulers. There are only a few instances of family taboo (*jiahui* 家諱) from this time. One of them is the text of the *Spring and Autumn Annals* commented in the *Tradition of Guliang*. In the text of the *Spring and Autumn Annals* is mentioned the ancestor of Confucius, called Kong Fu 孔父, living six generations earlier. The *Tradition of Guliang* commented that Confucius (considered by earlier historians as the compiler of the *Spring and Autumn Annals*) tabooed (as private taboo) the name of his ancestor (*xianhui* 先諱) and wrote "father" (*fu* 父) in place of it, as a kind of a posthumous name.¹¹⁴

¹¹² *Chunqiu Zuo zhuan*, j. 5, p. 16b.

¹¹³ A double name was perhaps considered as a single word. It would mean that there was no tabooing of characters, but of words in that period.

¹¹⁴ *Chunqiu Guliang zhuan*, j. 3, p. 3ab.

The case described above and the tabooing of the name of his mother Zhengzai 徵在 by Confucius¹¹⁵ could be perhaps consider as first known examples of the custom of private taboos. The small number of private taboo examples could be interpreted as the beginning of a diffusion of taboo practice from the taboo of a ruler to taboo of relatives (*jiahui*), at first in the high society. More plausible seems, however, the explanation that only cases of tabooing by the ruler (and Confucius) and that of the ruler were written down, and other spoken taboos of names of dead ancestors were not.

The practice of tabooing (or not speaking) names of living people (*buming* 不名) was probably not very strict, and related to a particular situation. In all likelihood there were already differences in tabooing between higher and lower classes of society. The text of the *Records of Ritual* prescribed that rulers should not speak the names of their ministers and noble ladies, while the Great Officer was prohibited from speaking those of former officers and the relatives of his wife.¹¹⁶ This implies that there were also private taboos of living, but – differently from the case of taboos of death (*hui* 諱) – they depended on the person's function in society or in the family.

4.4. Qin

The First Emperor of Qin is known as the unifier of the various Chinese kingdoms. It can be presumed that the practice of tabooing of names was also unified. It is still too early, however, for a comparison of taboo practice in various parts of China. The sources begin to be better dated and researched from this period. But the examples of taboo are still often controversial. The tabooing of name “originated under the Zhou Dynasty and matured under the Qin Dynasty”.¹¹⁷ However, the short Qin dynasty could, practically speaking, only employ the existing practice of former periods, maybe in a reformed way.

4.4.1. Sources

Similarly to the Zhou period it is hard to determine texts from the period of the Qin dynasty. We can probably speak only of the Inscription of Langyetai, mentioned in the beginning of this chapter, as dating definitely from that time. There are various other texts supposed to

¹¹⁵ *Liji*, j. 2, p. 89b.

¹¹⁶ *Liji*, j. 1, p. 46b.

¹¹⁷ Chen Yuan 1958, p. 1.

be originally from the period of Qin. The tabooing of names of Qin emperors is used as one of the methods of verification.

One (not explicit) Qin text is included in the *Records of the Historian (Shiji)* in the Basic Annals of the First Emperor of the Qin.¹¹⁸ It was recorded that on the “twenty-third year (224 BC): the king of Qin summoned Wang Jian 王翦, requesting him to make a special effort to return to active duty. He sent him to lead troops in an attack on Jing 荊.”¹¹⁹ The word “Jing” was explained as an archaic name for Chu 楚, used for tabooing the personal name (Zichu 子楚) of the First Emperor’s father. This explication was first written in the *Correct Meaning (Zhengyi 正義)* – the commentary to the *Records of the Historian* written by Zhang Shoujie 張守節 in the 8th c. AD, which is, of course, a very late commentary.¹²⁰

In the same Annals, we can find another sentence that is explained as an instance of taboo. It was recorded that “The Second Emperor conducted a fast at the Wangyi 望夷 palace.”¹²¹ According to the Zhou Guangye 周廣業 (1730-1798), the character yi 夷 (east barbarians) means in fact hu 胡 (north barbarians) and was put here only as an equivalent for the taboo character of the Second Emperor.¹²² This is not a strong example, since the character yi could have been in the original, too.

Besides, also in the *Records of the Historian*, but in the Chronological Table by Months for the period Qin-Chu (209–206 BC), the sequence *duanyue* 端月 is used for the first month two times (for the years 207 and 208).¹²³ According to the *Guide Rope to Obscurities (Suoyin 索隱)* – a commentary to the *Records of the Historian* written by Sima Zhen 司馬貞 in the 8th c. AD, the usual expression *zhengyue* 正月 was tabooed here because of the personal name of the First Emperor Zheng 政/正.¹²⁴ This very late commentary is regarded here as disputable, too.

A fragment of the *Lüshi chunqiu* is also listed as a possible case of taboo. It is generally accepted that the *Lüshi chunqiu* was written during the rule of the First Emperor, that

¹¹⁸ About textual problem in the *Shiji* see Nienhauser 2003, pp. 39-58.

¹¹⁹ *Shiji*, j. 6, p. 7a. For translation see Watson 1993, p. 41. The tabooing is mentioned in a footnote.

¹²⁰ *Shiji*, j. 6, p. 7ab; Cf. also Chen Yuan 1958, p. 1.

¹²¹ *Shiji*, j. 6, p. 28b. For translation see Watson 1993, p. 71. No note about tabooing is mentioned.

¹²² *Jingshi biming huikao*, j. 5, p. 87.

¹²³ *Shiji*, j. 16, p. 3b and 6a.

¹²⁴ *Shiji*, j. 16, p. 3b.

is, about 239 BC.¹²⁵ There is a sentence “In the matter of yesterday, you were the master (*zhi* 制); in the business of today, I am the master (*zhi* 制)” (*zuori zhi shi zi wei zhi, jinri zhi shi wo wei zhi* 昨日之事子為制, 今日之事我為制).¹²⁶ It was compared with the following sentence from the *Spring and Autumn Annals (Tradition of Zuo)*: “In the matter of sheep, you were the master (*zheng* 政) of yesterday; in the business of today, I am the master (*zheng* 政)” (*chou xi zhi yang zi wei zheng, jinri zhi shi wo wei zheng* 疇昔之羊子為政. 今日之事我為政).¹²⁷ These two very similar sentences originate apparently from the same source, but are written differently: one of the distinctions is the character *zhi* 制 used in place of *zheng* 政. The comparison was made very late: only the scholar Chen Shuhua 陳樹華 of the Qing dynasty considered the line in the *Lüshi chungiu* as a quotation from the *Tradition of Zuo*, and the character *zhi* 制 as the tabooing of the name of the First Emperor Zheng 政.¹²⁸ It is no wonder that modern researchers of the *Lüshi chungiu*, such as, for example, Chen Qiyu 陳奇猷 (1917–2006) assumed that this fragment simply came from another source and that this example is therefore not really an evidence of taboo.¹²⁹

There are also two sentences of the *Zhanguoce* 戰國策 considered as evidence of taboo of Qin. This source is perhaps older than the Qin period, but the text we have today is much younger, and the time between taboo observances of sequential dynasties could have affected the text. Regarding the origin of the *Zhanguoce*, it can also be said that, although it deals with events before 221 BC, it was compiled only at the end of the first century BC.¹³⁰

In the *Zhanguoce*, in the fragment about the Qin state, a reference was found for the state of Jing 荆.¹³¹ The character *jing* 荆 was commented on by Bao Biao 鮑彪 (12 c.) in the Song period as the taboo equivalent for Chu 楚 (the name of the First Emperor’s father).¹³²

Later in the same work, there is one more sentence having the character *ying* 郢.¹³³ Similarly the use of the character *ying* 郢 (which was the name of the capital of the Chu state) was commented on by Bao Biao as the taboo for Chu 楚.¹³⁴

¹²⁵ Loewe 1993, p. 324.

¹²⁶ *Lüshi chungiu*, j. 16, p. 14a.

¹²⁷ *Chunqiu Zuo zhuan*, j. 21, p. 6b.

¹²⁸ According to Wang Yankun 1997, p. 645.

¹²⁹ Chen Qiyu 1984, Vol. 3, p. 1009.

¹³⁰ Loewe 1993, p. 4.

¹³¹ *Zhanguoce*, j. 3, p. 5a.

¹³² *Zhanguoce zhu*, j. 3, p. 51a.

¹³³ *Zhanguoce*, j. 6, p. 8b.

¹³⁴ *Zhanguoce zhu*, j. 3, p. 65ab. Cf. also examples of taboo collected by Liu Dianjue 1990, pp. 217–290.

4.4.2. Problems with the Character *zheng*

We now have no other examples of possible taboo names except for these of rulers (First Emperor Zheng 政/正 and Second Emperor Huhai 胡亥), and of the father of the First Emperor, King Zhuangxiang 莊襄 – Zichu 子楚. If the examples above are to be explained as taboo, there are many other cases where these three names appear without taboo in the same source which was supposed to taboo them.¹³⁵

For example, in the *Records of the Historian* (in the passages related to Qin), the character *zheng* 政 can be found at least 5 times,¹³⁶ *zheng* 正 3 times, two of them as 正月, ¹³⁷ *chu* 楚 – 15 times, and *hu* 胡 – 12 times,¹³⁸ sometimes only a few lines from the examples above. Why do sources taboo a name at one time, and then fail to at another time? Perhaps it happened because of the existence of various later copies and compilations that tabooed or did not taboo these characters. Why should Sima Qian (145–87 BC) taboo the name of the First Emperor of the former Qin dynasty at all? Perhaps he used the original or older texts and copied them into his work without changing taboo characters.

If we do presume that the examples above are instances of taboo avoidance, then new problems appear. Most of them are related to the taboo character of the First Emperor 政/正, which is supposed to be replaced by his equivalent *duan* 端 (see examples in the beginning of this chapter). This new (or since that time noted) method of tabooing was later used in many dynasties, especially during the Han time. Besides, the meaning of *zheng* (first [month]) and *duan* (beginning) is similar, like in the later practice of the Han time.

But if we assume that the expression *duanyue* 端月 in the *Records of the Historian* is really an example of taboo for the first month (*zhengyue* 正月), as in the example above (see 4.4.1), we should ask which characters were in fact avoided. The name of the First Emperor is known as Zheng 政 (today the fourth tone) and the character of the first month as *zheng* 正 (first tone). Some scholars of the past already announced this example as the first case of avoiding homonyms or assumed that the pronunciation of the character *zheng* 正 changed because of taboo.¹³⁹ Others argued that according to the *Records of the Histori-*

¹³⁵ Cf., for example, *Zhanguoce*, j. 3, p. 4a, 9a, 10ab, 11ab.

¹³⁶ *Shiji*, j. 6, p. 1ab, 34b, 35a, 38a.

¹³⁷ *Shiji*, j. 6, p. 1a, 6a, 36a.

¹³⁸ Cf., e.g., *Shiji*, j. 6, p. 2a (for *chu*); p. 39a (for *hu*).

¹³⁹ *Youhuan jiwen*, j. 9, p. 52. Wang Xinhua 2007, p. 252. For archaic pronunciations of *zheng* 正 see Karlgren 1957, nr. 833j; for 征 – nr. 833o; for 政 – nr. 833r.

an, the name of the First Emperor was given because he was born in the first month, and should be, in fact, Zheng 正, and writing it as zheng 政 is a mistake.¹⁴⁰

According to the research of Chen Yuan, we know that the character zheng 正 was at that time another variant of zheng 政. That is likely because at that time, radicals (classifiers) were not yet fixed.¹⁴¹ As Chen Yuan wrote, the pronunciation of zheng 正 in first and fourth tone is also known in other sources and was not connected with taboo there.¹⁴² Both characters zheng (政 and 正) were interchangeable at that time.¹⁴³ But there were also some rules of interchanging, which we perhaps do not know. The character zheng 政 can be seen in many combinations in the *Spring and Autumn Annals*, being interchangeable with the character zheng 正, but the first month is nowhere written as zhengyue 政月, but only as 正月. Furthermore, if we mention that zheng 政 and duan 端 also do not have a similar meaning (which was usual for equivalents in the Han period), the rules of tabooing seem to be still more unclear. Therefore, the modern scholar Wang Jian suggested that the real name of Qin Shihuang was Zheng 正, as the only plausible explanation of taboo.¹⁴⁴ Moreover, it was written in the *Records of the Historian* as Zheng 政 not because of a mistake, but because of taboo.¹⁴⁵ However, as we have no original Han version of the *Records of the Historian*, it is not possible to determine the truth of this conclusion.

One more aspect of name taboo of Qin Shihuang was analyzed by B.J. Mansvelt Beck on the basis of the “Chronicle from Shuihudi” 睡虎地, found in the tomb of a man named Xi 喜 (d. ca. 217 BC, i.e. during the reign of the First Emperor).¹⁴⁶ The Chronicle records events of 306–217 BC, and contains on strip 3 (recorded in the year 251 BC) the sentence: “The fifty-sixth year, the posterior ninth month: Zhao died. First month: Su was born.” (*wushi liu nian hou jiuyue Zhao si zhengyue Su chan* 五十六年後九月昭死正月遯產). Mansvelt Beck tries to explain how the tabooed character zheng 正 (and two more in the Chronicle) appeared in this text during the rule of the First Emperor, and he initially

¹⁴⁰ Wang Jian 2002, p. 34.

¹⁴¹ Cf. Boltz 1994, pp. 158-167.

¹⁴² Cf. Chen Yuan 1958, p. 8. This argumentation of Chen Yuan is also disputable, because we are not sure about the sounds of the *Shiji*-time.

¹⁴³ Wang Jian 2002, pp. 34-35.

¹⁴⁴ Cf. Wang Jian 2002, p. 35.

¹⁴⁵ *Jingshi biming huikao*, j. 5, p. 79.

¹⁴⁶ Mansvelt Beck 1987, p. 68-76.

finds the possible solution in an intentional violation of taboo,¹⁴⁷ if the Chronicle was not to be intended for public. But then he notices that the Chronicle observes another Qin taboo (the name of the father of the First Emperor Zichu 子楚), and that entries of the Chronicle are not only private. He states that the character *zheng* 正 was not considered taboo during the life of the First Emperor, but only after his death. He argues in support of that thesis that other examples from the time of the reign of the First Emperor, like the expressions *duanzhi* 端直 and *duanping* 端平 in the Inscription from Langyetai, mentioned before (see 4.), are current expressions and not taboo instances.¹⁴⁸

4.4.3. Characteristics of the Period

It is generally emphasized that the short period of the Qin dynasty had an immense influence on the whole of Chinese history, also in the field of name tabooing.¹⁴⁹ In fact, our knowledge about the practice of that period is still vague. It seems that there is no single example of taboo in our sources beyond any doubt. The reason is *inter alia* the diversification of spoken and written forms Chinese used, and our deficient knowledge about spoken expressions and writing of that time.

The First Emperor and his subjects probably had many taboos in their customs, among them also the taboo of names, especially for the dead. It is also possible that he supported the tabooing of name intentionally, as a medium for legitimated political power. As well known, the First Emperor carried out many reforms. One of them was the termination of the custom/system of posthumous names (*shifa* 諡法).¹⁵⁰ This custom was a kind of expression of esteem for the dead ancestor and is, as one may suppose, an indication for the existence of name tabooing before that period. It can be presumed that the reason for termi-

¹⁴⁷ This option is also preferred, because the Chronicle use disrespectful expressions such as “died” (*si* 死) for the four kings of Qin instead of “passed away” (*zhong* 終) as for the death of Xi’s father (cf. Mansvelt Beck 1987, pp. 69-70).

¹⁴⁸ Mansvelt Beck 1987, pp. 72-73. Other scholars Wu Guang (Wu Guang 1985, p. 157) and Carine Defoort (Defoort 1997, pp. 24-26) pointed out taboo cases in the collection of philosophical writings *Heguanzi* 鶡冠子 from the Warring States period as arguments for dating. According to Wu Guang there are two cases in chapters 1 and 2 with the character *duan* 端 used as the equivalent of the taboo character *zheng* 正 (*Heguanzi*, j. shang, p. 1b and j. shang, p. 2b), which show that these two chapters were compiled under the Qin. Carine Defoort mentioned, however, that taboo observance is not very reliable in that case: the tabooed fragment of text can be a later copy, though it is “tempting to believe” that it was written or copied at the end of the Qin. The argument of taboo for the dating of fragment in the Qin time was repeated by Yang Zhaogui (Yang Zhaogui 2002, p. 75).

¹⁴⁹ For other kinds of taboo in the Qin and Han periods, for example time taboos, birth taboos, marriage taboos, body taboos, etc. see Liu Tseng-Kuei 2009, pp. 881-948. Tabooing of names is shortly mentioned on pp. 935-936. See also Wang Jian 2002, p. 31.

¹⁵⁰ *Shiji*, j. 6, p. 9a.

nation was to avoid the evaluation of the life of (the dead) ruler, and in this way to strengthen the centralized political power.¹⁵¹

Another change was the gradual spread of Chinese writing. In the Shang and Zhou period, usually only professional writers were involved in the process of recording facts, most often related to religious customs. Now reading became more general (or less “exclusive”) and also men of letters started to write more and more about relations between people. Writing became ever more common, and general knowledge appeared.¹⁵² It had a concrete impact for written taboo names and characters: concrete rules in writing were needed.

In conclusion, we can say that the taboo custom in all likelihood appeared and evolved a long time before the Qin dynasty. Various taboo examples can be presumed in the Shang and Zhou periods. However, the sources we have at hand do not allow a precise description of the practice of that time. It is certain that the subsequent Han dynasty already had a developed system of tabooing names, which must have had its origin in earlier decades or even centuries.

Before the Han, in the three periods that have been described here for the reader, taboo custom was probably still strongly connected with religion, and the differentiation between “official” and “popular” taboo custom was still not distinct. A certain evolution can be assumed in the custom of tabooing names: from different types of social and religious taboos (taboo of fear, taboo of ruler) to one state taboo. Another evolution was the unification of the taboo of the dead (*sihui*) and the reverence for living people (later called *shenghui*, related to the practice of “not to call” – *buming*). From the Han dynasty onwards, this difference disappeared and both taboos had to be avoided. Further, we can suppose a slow change of motives for tabooing in that time, from the feeling of shame to tabooing by proscription.

¹⁵¹ Wang Jian 2002, p. 32.

¹⁵² Cf. Lewis 1999, p. 13.

CHAPTER FIVE: NAME TABOOING IN ANCIENT TIMES

“Field chicken” (*tianji* 田雞) and “wild chicken” (*yeji* 野雞) are not chicken at all. I made this unexpected discovery while having lunch in a restaurant of Macao. “Field chicken” is a frog and “wild chicken” – a pheasant. Both names are the result of tabooing. The names for frog (*wa* 蛙 and *guo* 鵒) have been avoided since antiquity as symbols of the moon and dark feminine *yin* forces.¹ In order to explain the second taboo, we also have to “chercher la femme.” The First Emperor of Han – Gaozu – had a wife, Empress Lü Zhi 呂雉 (241–180 BC), who became powerful especially as Empress Dowager and regent after the death of her husband in 195 BC. Her name Zhi 雉 became taboo and nobody dared to use it directly in speech or writing. However *zhi*, also means “pheasant” and the bird had to be called in some way. Therefore, the new expression “wild chicken” (*yeji* 野雞) was adopted and is used to this day in most Chinese languages – Northern as well as Southern.²

5.1. Han

There are numerous examples of name tabooing in the Han period, not only of the emperor, but also of the emperor’s relatives (father, mother, wife), and private family taboos (e.g., Sima Qian avoided the name of his father in the *Records of the Historian*, see 5.1.2.2). Concrete characters (often synonyms) were appointed as equivalents (*daizi* 代字) for taboo characters. It is a unique feature of that period. On the other hand, the word “such and such” (*mou* 某) could also be used instead of a name, as is sometimes the case in the *Book of the Han* (*Hanshu*) and *Records of the Historian* (*Shiji*). In the Han dynasty the tabooing was still not consistent. There are examples of tabooing and not tabooing in the same source. In the *Records of the Historian* and *Book of the Han* no name of Han emperors was written in their own chronicle, but in other parts tabooed characters are preserved. The author of this dissertation found in the *Records of the Historian*, for example, 13 characters *bang* 邦, 14 *ying* 盈, 24 *qi* 啟, and 5 *che* 徹 (taboo names of four emperors of Han). There are also numerous characters known as Han taboos in the *Book of the Han*. As our extant sources are later copies, we can only presume that these works were copied in various times, or were compiled from different fragments (underlying sources). When copying tabooed characters may have been restored and other inconsistencies may have crept in. It

¹ Cf. Künstler 1994, p. 131.

² Cf. Künstler 1994, p. 130.

seems implausible that authors of the *Records of the Historian* and *Book of the Han* intentionally tabooed only in parts of their works.

5.1.1. Sources

Records of the Historian (Shiji)

Our main sources for the period of Han dynasty are the three historical works: the *Records of the Historian*, *Book of the Han* and *Book of the Later Han*. They contain numerous characters interpreted as equivalents of taboo. Some of the fragments are apparently quotations from other works such as the *Spring and Autumn Annals (Tradition of Zuo)* or *Classic of Documents (Shangshu)*, but with a different character used in place of the taboo name. For example, a sentence with the character *ying* 盈 from the *Tradition of Zuo*³ is written with the character *man* 滿 in the *Records of the Historian*,⁴ which replaced the taboo name Ying 盈 of the Emperor Hui of Han (r. 194–188 BC). Similarly, in a fragment from the *Book of Documents*⁵ all *heng* 恆 characters, being the name of the Emperor Wen (r. 179–157 BC), are replaced by *chang* 常 in the *Records of the Historian*.⁶

Numerous other characters in the *Records of the Historian* have been discovered and explained later by Chinese historians as taboo instances. There is, for example, the case of the character *cheng* 逞, explained as being the taboo character *ying* 盈 by the *Jijie Commentary*,⁷ and two characters *chang* 常, explained as representing the tabooed character *heng* 恆 by the *Suoyin Commentary*.⁸ According to the same *Suoyin Commentary*, because of the name taboo of Emperor Jing of Han (r. 156–141 BC), Qi 啟, the name of Wei Ziqi 微子啟 (the son of the Emperor Yi of the Shang Dynasty) was written as Wei Zikai 微子開 in the *Records of the Historian*.⁹ The character *mou* 某 used in another sentence¹⁰ is also commented as a taboo of the same Emperor.¹¹

³ *Zuozhuan*, j. 10, p. 4a: “Wan is the completion of numbers” (*wan ying shu ye* 萬盈數也). Legge 1966, Vol. 5, p. 125.

⁴ *Shiji*, j. 44, p. 1b: (*wan man shu ye* 萬滿數也)

⁵ *Shangshu*, j. 4 shang, p. 30b.

⁶ *Shiji*, j. 38, p. 6b.

⁷ *Shiji*, j. 39, p. 28a..

⁸ *Shiji*, j. 2, p. 3b and j. 2, p. 10b.

⁹ *Shiji*, j. 38, p. 1a.

¹⁰ *Shiji*, j. 10, p. 5b.

¹¹ Chen Yuan 1958, p. 4.

Finally, in the afore-mentioned *Records of the Historian*, a case of taboo of an empress is reported. The sentence “wild chicken crows in the night” (*yeji ye juan* 野雞夜雉) is commented in the *Jijie Commentary* as a taboo instance of the word “pheasant” (*zhi* 雉), because of the name of Empress Dowager Lü Zhi 呂雉 (d. 180 BC), the wife of Emperor Gaozu of Han (206–195 BC).¹²

Book of the Han (Hanshu) and Book of the Later Han (Hou Hanshu)

Numerous characters of the *Book of the Han* and *Book of the Later Han* are presumed to be tabooed because of the names of emperors of the Han dynasty. As we already mentioned, characters which were the names of reigning emperors are not present in their own Annals sections. For example, there is no *bang* 邦 character in the “Annals of the Emperor Gao” (“Gaodi ji” 高帝記), as it was his given name. This fact was explained as taboo custom by Xun Yue 荀悅 and Yan Shigu 顏師固 – commentators of the *Book of the Han*.¹³

The use of the character “such and such” (*mou* 某) in a sentence of the *Book of the Han*¹⁴ is strictly explained as avoidance of the taboo character *bang* 邦.¹⁵ But still more important is the explicit statement by the author of the *Book of the Han* Ban Gu 班固 himself in another fragment. After a sentence with the character *mou* 某 he explained: “The character *mou* means the name of the Emperor Gao” (*mouzhe, Gao huangdi ming ye* 某者, 高皇帝名也).¹⁶

In other sentences in the *Book of the Han*, we can find yet other characters explained as taboo by Xun Yue or Yan Shigu:

- the character *tong* 通 as the equivalent of the character *che* 徹 – the name of Emperor Wu of Han (r. 140–87 BC), both meaning “to penetrate”;¹⁷

- the character *bu* 不 as the equivalent of the character *fu* 弗 (both meaning “not”) – the name of Emperor Zhao of Han (r. 86–74 BC).¹⁸ The relevant fragment is a changed quotation from the *Spring and Autumn Annals (Tradition of Zuo)*;¹⁹

- the character *mou* 謀 as the equivalent of the character *xun* 詢 – the name of

¹² *Shiji*, j. 28, p. 3b.

¹³ *Hanshu*, j. 1 shang, p. 1a.

¹⁴ *Hanshu*, j. 1 xia, p. 11a. The same sentence in *Shiji*, j. 8, p. 26a.

¹⁵ Wang Yankun 1997, p. 11.

¹⁶ *Hanshu*, j. 99 shang, p. 34b.

¹⁷ *Hanshu*, j. 45, p. 1a.

¹⁸ *Hanshu*, j. 20, p. 42b.

¹⁹ *Chunqiu Zuo zhuan*, j. 17, p. 13a.

Emperor Xuan of Han (r. 73–49 BC),²⁰ both meaning “to plan”;

– the character *jun* 俊 as the equivalent of the character *ao* 驚 – the name of Emperor Cheng of Han (r. 32–7 BC),²¹ and so forth.

In the same way, the equivalents of taboo names of emperors from the Eastern Han dynasty (25–220 AD) are listed in the Commentary to the *Book of the Later Han* (*Hou Hanshu*): the taboo character *da* 烜 of the Emperor Zhang (r. 76–88 AD) is replaced by *zhao* 著 or *zhao* 昭,²² the taboo character *zhao* 肇 of the Emperor He (r. 89–105 AD) is replaced by *shi* 始,²³ the taboo character *bing* 炳 of the Emperor Chong (r. 144–145 AD) is replaced by *ming* 明,²⁴ and the taboo character *zuan* 纘 of the Emperor Zhi (r. 145–146 AD) is replaced by *ji* 繼.²⁵ In all of these cases, the taboo character shares some meaning with the tabooed character.

Other sources

We have very early evidence of taboo custom in the text of the *Daodejing* discovered in Mawangdui (Changsha). From the Han tomb (No. 3) of Mawangdui, dated to 168 BC, writings on silk were excavated with two versions of the *Daodejing*: Text A (*jiaben* 甲本) and Text B (*yiben* 乙本). Text A of the *Daodejing* has the sentence “And when it is cultivated throughout the state, good fortune will be in abundance” (*xiu zhi yu bang qi de nai feng* 修之於邦其德乃豐),²⁶ where “the state” is written with the character *bang* 邦. Text B replaced the character 邦 (taboo of Gaozu 206–195) with the character *guo* 國. As the name of the next Emperor Hui (194–188) is not tabooed, the texts could therefore be quite precisely dated to the time of Emperor Gaozu (Text A), and after his death but before 168 BCE (Text B)²⁷ – since taboos were for the dead.²⁸

²⁰ *Hanshu*, j. 8, p. 1a. Wang Yankun 1997, pp. 518–519.

²¹ *Hanshu*, j. 10, p. 1a.

²² *Hou hanshu*, j. 3, p. 1a.

²³ *Hou Hanshu*, j. 4, p. 1a.

²⁴ *Hou Hanshu*, j. 6, p. 13b.

²⁵ *Hou Hanshu*, j. 6, p. 14a.

²⁶ *Daodejing*, j. 54, p. 118 (here already replaced by the character *guo* 國).

²⁷ According to Liu Xiaogan 2009, p. 213, the silk editions were dated by archeologists to 195 BC (Silk A) and 169 BC (Silk B).

²⁸ Interesting that the same Text A from Mawangdui has the character *heng* 恆 in place of the familiar *chang* 常 in the famous first lines of the *Daodejing* (*dao ke dao fei heng dao* 道可道非恆道, *ming ke ming fei heng ming* 名可名非恆名), cf. *Daodejing*, j. 1, p. 1. It is because the character *heng* was later tabooed as the name of the Emperor Wen of Han, changed to *chang* and the text was perpetuated in the new form in later editions. Cf. *Daodejing*, j. 1, p. 1, Fn. 2 and 5.

Further examples of name tabooing are assumed in the text of the *Huainanzi*. The character *xiu* 修 in the text²⁹ is explained by Yan Shigu as the taboo equivalent of *chang* 長,³⁰ which was the name of the father of Liu An 劉安 – author or patron of the *Huainanzi*. The work *All About Rulership* (*Duduan* 獨斷) of Cai Yong 蔡邕 (132–192) explains that the title *jinzhong* 禁中 was apparently changed to *shengzhong* 省中, because of the name of the marquis of Yangping Wang Jin – the father of queen consort Wang Zhengjun 王政君 of Emperor Yuan of Han).³¹ In the *Shuowen jiezi* 說文解字 of Xu Shen 許慎 (58–147) the words “imperial taboo” (*shanghui* 上諱) were found, e.g., after taboo characters as: *hu* 祜,³² *zhuang* 莊,³³ *xiu* 秀,³⁴ *da* 烜,³⁵ *zhao* 肇,³⁶ which were all names of emperors of Han.

Decree of Emperor Xuan (64 BC)

The first known decree of an emperor on taboo is known from the Han time (64 BC), recorded in the *Book of the Han* (*Hanshu*):

We have heard that in old times the names of the sons of heaven were of a kind that they could be known with difficulty (as they were rare) and easily avoided. Now the people when presenting memorials often violate (my) taboo and become liable to punishment. I have great pity for them, and hereby order my name to be changed (from Bingyi 病已)³⁷ to Xun 詢. All cases of violation which occurred before this decree are forgiven.³⁸

Emperors of Han supported the principle that names should have less used characters and be easy to avoid (*nanzhi er yibi* 難知而易避). Sometimes they intentionally changed their names because of that. It shows that the most important for them was the voluntary observance of taboo in practice, not only because of punishment.

²⁹ *Huainanzi*, j. 19, p. 5a.

³⁰ Wang Yankun 1997, p. 43–44.

³¹ *Duduan*, p. 3a. About *Duduan* see Giele 2006.

³² *Shuowen jiezi*, j. 1 shang, p. 1b.

³³ *Shuowen jiezi*, j. 1 xia, p. 1b.

³⁴ *Shuowen jiezi*, j. 7 shang, p. 7b.

³⁵ *Shuowen jiezi*, j. 10 shang, p. 7b.

³⁶ *Shuowen jiezi*, j. 12 xia, p. 6a. if you want you could combine these footnotes into one note At the end of his sentence.

³⁷ The characters *bing* and *yi* were both common and therefore they were hard to avoid.

³⁸ Cf. *Hanshu*, j. 8, p. 12a.

Outer Commentaries to the Book of Songs by Master Han

In the *Outer Commentaries* (*Hanshi waizhuan* 韓詩外傳) from the Han period an incident related to the custom of proper usage of name taboos can be found. The action supposedly took place in the Warring States Period. It is a dialogue between marquis Wen 文 of Wei 魏 (d. ca. 396 BC) and his minister Cang Tang 蒼唐. The son of the marquis Wen – Ji 擊 – became the ruler of the Zhongshan 中山 state.

The marquis Wen asked: Is Ji well? Cang Tang gave no answer. Wen asked three times and three times there was no answer. He asked: Why do you not give me an answer? (He was told in response) I wait for You, Marquis, not to call the name of the ruler ... If You ask using his name, I do not dare to answer. Thereupon marquis Wen asked: Is the ruler of Zhongshan well?”³⁹

The text shows that even fathers had to taboo the name of their son, if he became ruler.

Stone inscriptions

Finally we want to mention the stone inscriptions of the Eastern Han period, which sometimes reflect taboo practices. In the Stone Classics of Han – according to the *Lishi* 隸釋 of the Song period – the character *bang* 邦 was replaced by the character *guo* 國 in the texts of the *Analects* (*Lunyu*) and *Classic of Documents* (*Shangshu*).⁴⁰ In the Zhang Qian stele 張遷碑 (186 AD) the same happened with the text of the *Classic of Poetry* (*Shijing*) and in the Stone Tower of Kaimu temple 開母廟 (123 AD) from Henan the character *qi* 啟 was replaced by *kai* 開.⁴¹

5.1.2. Characteristics of the Period

5.1.2.1. Codification of Taboos

The tabooing of names in the Han period is already accepted as a widespread practice by all scholars. This is the first period having not only plenty of examples of taboo, but also a concrete system of rules. The standard rules of *bihui* were codified in the *Records of Ritual* (*Liji*). The time of its formation, apparently different for various parts, is still discussed by scholars (see 4.3.1.3), but these rules were definitely given their final shape during the Han

³⁹ *Hanshi waizhuan*, j. 8, p. 102.

⁴⁰ *Lishi*, j. 14, p. 13b.

⁴¹ Chen Yuan 1958, p. 2.

period. We have already described the *Records of Ritual* in the section concerning the Zhou period (see 4.3.1.3), because we presume that the rules of tabooing already existed before the Han dynasty.⁴²

The general rule was to avoid the taboo of an emperor when presenting a memorial or addressing the emperor.⁴³ The fact that we have many instances of not avoiding taboo in inscriptions and writings can be explained by a lax attitude toward tabooing at that time, but the inconsistency could also have been caused by later revisions. Perhaps the rule of the *Records of Ritual* about not tabooing in written literary works also played a role and the taboo was originally used mostly in day-to-day administrative practice.

The Han time was apparently a time of stabilisation and codification of the custom of name tabooing. The modern scholar Wang Jian presumed that rules for tabooing names were part of a new system of rituals, made by Shu Suntong 叔孫通 at the orders of the First Emperor of Han, who unified elements of different rituals of the Zhou and Qin periods, probably also of different regions of China.⁴⁴

What is certain is that the Han dynasty already knew decrees with promulgations of the emperor's taboo.⁴⁵ Dictionaries since that time have notes supposed to be the equivalents of taboo characters,⁴⁶ which became a characteristic trait of that time. For example, dictionary from the Han Dynasty *Shuowen jiezi* 說文解字 (early 2nd c. AD) of Xu Shen 許慎 (ca. 100 AD) has explanations such as “*bang* is *guo*” (*bang, guo ye* 邦,國也).⁴⁷ On the other hand already in the oldest extant Chinese dictionary⁴⁸ *Erya* 爾雅 (compiled possibly in the 3rd c. BC)⁴⁹ we find sentences such as “*xun ... is mou*” (*xu ... mou ye* 詢...謀也),⁵⁰ where the supposed “equivalent character” is placed as an explanation of the respective “taboo character.” Entries like that can be also explanations of characters, not obligatory the indication of tabooing. Therefore the author of this dissertation thinks that such sentences are hardly evidence of equivalents of taboo. Both listed characters have, in fact, similar meanings, which in English could be respectively translated as “country” and

⁴² For more about the Han period see Loewe 1967.

⁴³ Chen Yuan 1958, p. 129.

⁴⁴ Wang Jian 2002, pp. 35-36.

⁴⁵ Cf. Decree of Emperor Xuan (64 BC) recorded in *Hanshu*, j. 8, p. 12a., mentioned in 5.1.1.

⁴⁶ Cf. references to equivalents of taboo in Wang Jian 2002, pp. 36-38.

⁴⁷ *Shuowen jiezi*, j. 6 xia, p. 5b.

⁴⁸ Loewe 1993, p. 94.

⁴⁹ Loewe 1993, p. 96. The first reference we have comes from the Eastern Han period.

⁵⁰ *Erya*, j. shang, p. 1b.

“state”. Admittedly, such dictionaries could have been used to find a character to replace a tabooed one.

The system of equivalent characters for tabooing was called “the method of equivalent characters” (*tongxun daihuan* 同訓代換).⁵¹ Such characters were known apparently before the Han time. For example, the name of Duke Huan of Qi, Bai 白 (Jiang Xiaobai 姜小白, d. 643 BC), was probably tabooed with the equivalent character *hao* 皓 (both meaning “white”),⁵² and the name of Duke Ding of Lu – Song 宋 (509-495 BC) was exchanged for *shang* 商 (another name for the Song state).⁵³ But only in the Han times did the custom of *tongxun daihuan* become a system.

5.1.2.2. Tabooed Persons

The known examples (see 5.1.1) are not many, but include both men and women, more distant ancestors, public and private persons: empresses, their fathers, uncles, fathers of private persons. There are instances of tabooing names of an emperor’s relatives and also of one’s own ancestors. Therefore, we can presume that tabooing names must have been much wider spread than we know at present.

Tabooing, particularly the written tabooing of names, was probably especially cultivated in the higher circles of society. Concrete examples of tabooing of private family names can be found in works of famous writers of that time. The compiler of the *Book of the Master of Huainan* (*Huainanzi*) Liu An 劉安 (179–122 BC, grandson of Emperor Gao) apparently tabooed the name of his father Liu Chang 劉長, as a result of which many *chang* 長 characters in his book were changed to *xiu* 修.⁵⁴

In the *Records of the Historian* (*Shiji*) Sima Qian (ca. 140–86 BC) tabooed the name of his father Sima Tan 司馬談 and changed the character *tan* 談 to *tong* 同, as for example in names of Zhang Mengtan 張孟談,⁵⁵ or Zhao Tan 趙談.⁵⁶ But there are still other 17

⁵¹ Sometimes it was also called *tongxun xiangdai* 同訓相代 (cf. Wang Jian 2002, p. 67), and during the Qing dynasty *huixun* 諱訓 (Wang Jian 2002, p. 38).

⁵² *Jingshi biming huikao*, j. 26, p. 436.

⁵³ *Jingshi biming huikao*, j. 6, p. 91. About the meaning of *shang* 商 see *Handian* 漢典 (www.zdic.net).

⁵⁴ *Yeke congshu*, j. 9, p. 85. In fact there are still many *chang/zhang* 長 characters in the *Huainanzi* (Cf., for example, *Huainanzi*, j. 3, pp. 5b, 9b, 11b). Perhaps they were only tabooed if read as *chang* and not if read as *zhang*.

⁵⁵ *Shiji*, j. 43, p. 10b.

⁵⁶ *Shiji*, j. 39, p. 25b; j. 43, pp. 2a and 3b.

(untabooed) *tan* 談 characters that the author of this dissertation found in the *Records of the Historian*,⁵⁷ remaining unexplained.

5.1.2.3. Rules and Methods of Tabooing

The extent of the avoidance of homonyms in the Han time is still disputed. The discussion was inspired by a sentence from the *Records of the Historian* (*Shiji*) with two characters *chetong* 車通.⁵⁸ In the commentary the *Shiji jijie*, it was explained that both of these characters should actually be written as *chezhe* 車轍 (the rut). A different character was used, according to the *Shiji jijie*, “because of the taboo of the Emperor Wu of Han”.⁵⁹

Yet we know that the real character tabooed by the synonym *tong* 通 is *che* 徹 (the taboo of the Emperor Wu 140–87 BC). Avoiding the character *zhe* 轍 would signify that the homonym of a taboo character was also avoided. Therefore, for example, Zhou Guangye declares this example as the starting point of that practice.⁶⁰ Chen Yuan, in contrast, moved the starting point of homonym avoidance to the Three Kingdom period.⁶¹ He demonstrates that there is an almost identical sentence in the *Book of the Han* (*Hanshu*),⁶² where the character *dao* 道 is written in place of *tong* 通, which can not be considered as an equivalent of a taboo character *che* 徹. He suggests to abandon explanations of the *Shiji jijie* in this way.⁶³

However, the characters *tong* 通 and *dao* 道 are very similar when handwritten. As the modern scholar Wang Jian notes, we know today many quotations from the *Records of the Historian* in the *Book of the Han*, in which similar characters are confounded.⁶⁴ Besides, the term *chedao* 車道, that is presented by Chen Yuan as counterevidence against the explanation of the *Shiji jijie*, can be presumed to be an erroneous writing of *chetong* 車通 (or the reverse). Therefore, the explanation given in the *Shiji jijie* can be conclusive, and the tabooing of homonyms in the Han time is possible.

⁵⁷ Cf., for example, *Shiji*, j. 39, p. 27a.

⁵⁸ *Shiji*, j. 27, p. 26b.

⁵⁹ *Shiji*, j. 27, p. 26b.

⁶⁰ *Jingshi biming huikao*, j. 7, p. 109.

⁶¹ Chen Yuan 1958, p. 72.

⁶² *Hanshu*, j. 26, p. 16b.

⁶³ Chen Yuan 1958, p. 74.

⁶⁴ Wang Jian 2002, p. 41.

As noted, the rule of the *Records of Ritual (Liji)* that “homonyms do not have to be tabooed”⁶⁵ is also an indirect indication that such practice did exist if it had to be prohibited. But in fact we have no concrete instances of such practices. On the contrary, there are examples, in which a taboo character is exchanged for another one with the same pronunciation. For example, the family name Yu 渝 was changed to Yu 喻 (with different tone) because of the name of Empress Bo 薄.⁶⁶ What is certain is that the avoidance of homonyms, if it was practised in that period, was not very strict.

Much more evident is the practice of avoiding characters with a taboo component. We find, for example, a sentence with the character *ying* 楹 in the *Tradition of Zuo (Zuozhuan)*,⁶⁷ which is quoted with the character *zhu* 柱 in the *Records of the Historian (Shiji)*.⁶⁸ The character *ying* 楹 is apparently avoided because of the name of the Emperor Hui (Ying 盈). As the taboo character was a part of the character *ying* 楹, it was replaced. This example is considered by some scholars as the beginning of this way of tabooing.⁶⁹ In fact it can also be explained as avoidance of homonyms, because *ying* 楹 is a homonym of the taboo character *ying* 盈. However, we know that “the differentiation of variant forms (of characters) based on their structure ... was not significant” for people at that time.⁷⁰ Originally it was possibly the same character and was avoided for that reason, and not as a homonym.

5.1.2.4. Practice of Tabooing

From the Han on the influence of name tabooing was very apparent. There are already relatively many examples of tabooing known from this period, including the complete change of names. For instance, Wei Ziqi 微子啟 changed his name to Wei Zikai 微子開,⁷¹ and Kuai Che 蒯徹 to Kuai Tong 蒯通 (see 9.1.1.1).⁷² The same was done with family names (e.g., the surname Qing 慶 was changed to He 賀)⁷³ and geographical names (e.g.,

⁶⁵ *Liji*, j. 1, p. 39a.

⁶⁶ *Gujin xingshi shu bianzheng*, j. 30, p. 413: The family name Yu 渝 was changed to Yu 喻 in the year 148 BC because of the courtesy name Ayu 阿渝 of Empress Bo of Jingdi (cf. 3.4.2).

⁶⁷ *Chunqiu zuozhuan*, j. 36, p. 4a.

⁶⁸ *Shiji*, j. 32, p. 14b.

⁶⁹ Cf. *Jingshi biming huikao*, j. 6, p. 100.

⁷⁰ Cf. Galambos 2006, pp. 2 and 78-87.

⁷¹ *Shiji*, j. 38, p. 1a.

⁷² *Hanshu*, j. 45, p. 1a.

⁷³ *Sanguozhi*, “Wuzhi”, j. 15, p. 1a.

Hengshan 恒山 was changed to Changshan 常山).⁷⁴ We also know that common words were affected by taboo custom. For example the word *zhi* 雉 (pheasant) was changed to *yeji* 野雞 (wild chicken, see 5 and 5.1.1),⁷⁵ and *xiucai* 秀才 (scholar) to *maocai* 茂才.⁷⁶

Characters which were state taboos in speech or writing were promulgated in public, in a special decree of the emperor (see, e.g., the Decree of the Emperor Xuan in 5.1.1).⁷⁷ Taboos which had to be preserved within the palace confines were announced and supervised by special officials of the emperor (*dashi* 大史 and *xiaoshi* 小史). One had to ask about other taboos of family or territory when visiting. Tabooing of names in the Han period was present in everyday life and was considered an important part of the social system.

5.2. Three Kingdoms

Domeyko's and Doweyko's adverse feelings came,
Strange to say, from resemblance between name and name,
Inconvenient to both men.⁷⁸

This passage coming from one of the greatest masterpieces of Polish literature and the national epic of Poland *Pan Tadeusz* (by Adam Mickiewicz, 1834) is the introduction to the anecdote of the two neighbours Domeyko's and Doweyko's argument about who should get the credit for killing a bear during a hunt. The similarity of names had already been a frequent source of inconvenience and misunderstanding. Finally they solve their conflict by marriage to the sister of each other and a merging of enterprises. That is how it was done in Poland.

For the same problem, the Chinese found their own solution. It was one thousand five hundred years earlier in the period of Three Kingdoms. Teng Mi 滕密 – the father of the Empress Teng (滕皇后) and Ding Mi 丁密 – the Minister of the Interior (*situ* 司徒)⁷⁹ in the time of the last Emperor of the Wu state, Sun Hao (r. 264–280) – both had the same name Mi 密, which caused inconveniences. Therefore, they decided to avoid each other's

⁷⁴ *Hanshu*, j. 28 shang, p. 23b.

⁷⁵ *Shiji*, j. 28, p. 3b.

⁷⁶ *Xuelin*, j. 3, p. 68.

⁷⁷ *Hanshu*, j. 8, p. 12a

⁷⁸ Transl. from: www.antoranz.net/BIBLIOTEKA/PT051225/PanTad-eng/PT-books/BOOK04.HTM (access 26.7.2011).

⁷⁹ According to the *Sanguozhi*, “Wuzhi”, j. 3, p. 15a Ding Mi / Ding Gu was a Minister of the Interior (*situ*). Only in the *Taiping huanyuji*, j. 94, p. 14b he appears as Minister of Public Works (*sikong* 司空) and later also in Chen Yuan 1958, p. 133. It is obviously a mistake.

taboo and both changed their name to their courtesy name (*zi*): Teng Mi to Teng Mu 滕牧 and Ding Mi to Ding Gu 丁固.⁸⁰ This custom of mutual tabooing of each other's names is considered a specific custom of this period. It seems that it was not continued later.

5.2.1. Sources

The division of China into Three Kingdoms: Wei, Wu and Shu caused probably some differences in the taboo practice. The three states, however, all had similar instances of name tabooing, in addition to their own features, even though their rule was relatively short. The best known examples of taboo are preserved in the *Records of the Three Kingdoms* (*Sanguozhi*) – the basic source of that period,⁸¹ divided into three books: “The Book of Wei”, “The Book of Wu” and “The Book of Shu.” Most cases come from Wu, fewer from Wei, and the least from Shu.⁸² A possible explanation is – as we suppose – that there was no chronicle preserved in Shu, and Chen Shou 陳壽 (233–297) – the author of the *Records of the Three Kingdoms*, could use only his own memory to record its history.⁸³ Another explanation could be that he still observed taboos of Shu and did not want to write about them. Chen Shou was born in the Shu state and served as an official there. The *Records of the Three Kingdoms* was compiled 285–297 AD, but some taboo instances were mentioned only in the commentary to it, made by Pei Songzhi 裴松之 (372–451) one century later.⁸⁴

As already mentioned, there are relatively numerous instances of tabooing concerning the Wu state. For example, we can find information about the change of the geographical name Hexing 禾興 to Jiaying 嘉興, because of the name of the crown prince of the Emperor Sun Quan – Sun He 孫和 (223–253): “In spring, the first month of the fifth year (of the Chiwu Era 赤烏, i.e. 241 AD), he established his son He 和 as the crown

⁸⁰ *Sanguozhi*, “Wuzhi”, j. 3, p. 10b: “(Teng) Mu’s original name was Mi 密. He tabooed the name of Ding Mi and changed it to Mu. Likewise Ding Mi tabooed the name of (Teng) Mu and changed his name to Gu.” The same case is repeated later in the *Sanguozhi*, “Wuzhi”, j. 12, p. 5b, but here only Ding Mi tabooed the name of Teng Mu: “The son of (Ding) Lan 丁覽 was (Ding) Gu 丁固, courtesy name Zijian 子賤. His original name was Mi 密, but he tabooed the name of Teng Mi and changed it to Gu.” Both fragments are commentaries of Pei Songzhi 裴松之 (372–451).

⁸¹ For English translation of the *Sanguozhi* see Luo Guangzhong 1999.

⁸² Wang Xinhua 2007, pp. 257.

⁸³ Cf. *Cihai* 1999, p. 1429. For a contrary opinion and the controversy about the historical records of the state of Shu see De Crespigny 1990, ch. 9, p. 6, Fn. 20.

⁸⁴ Cf. Wilkinson 2000, pp. 503 and 810.

prince, (and announced) a big amnesty. The name of Hexing was changed therefore to Jiaxing”.⁸⁵

In another example we can see that people's names were changed because of the courtesy name of the Emperor Sun Hao – Yuanzong 元宗.⁸⁶ “The Minister of public works Meng Ren 孟仁 died... His original name was Meng Zong 孟宗. He tabooed the courtesy name of (Sun) Hao and changed it”.⁸⁷ This explanation is from the commentary of Pei Songzhi. There are also other individual characters supposed to be equivalents of taboo characters of the Wu emperors. For example, the characters *bing* 柄 and *shi* 勢 in two fragments of the *Records of the Three Kingdoms (Sanguozhi)*⁸⁸ are presumed to have been used in place of the character *quan* 權 – the taboo name of the Emperor Sun Quan (r. 222–252).⁸⁹

From the state of Wei, we can mention the case of tabooing the geographical name Fanglin garden 芳林園 because of the taboo name of the Prince of Qi 齊 – Cao Fang 曹芳 (r. 239–254). “The Fanglin garden is the Hualin garden 華林園 of today. It was changed to Hualin as the Prince of Qi Fang ascended to the throne.” (*Fanglinyuan ji jin Hualinyuan, Qi wang Fang jiwei, gai wei Hualin* 即今華林園,齊王芳即位,改為華林).⁹⁰

Later sources for the tabooing of names in this period are: *A New Account of Tales of the World (Shishuo xinyu 世說新語)* written by Liu Yiqing (403–444),⁹¹ and the *Gazetteer of the World during the Taiping Period (Taiping huanyuji 太平寰宇記)* written around 976–983.⁹² The first has the phrase *zhuodao* 捉刀 (hold a knife) in a sentence,⁹³ which is supposed to be the phrase *caodao* 操刀 (grasp a knife) from the *Records of the Three Kingdoms (Sanguozhi)*,⁹⁴ changed because of the taboo of the father of the Emperor Wen – the famous late Han warlord Cao Cao 曹操 (d. 220).⁹⁵ In the second source, we can find a fragment about tabooing the name of Xiuyang county 休陽縣 in the Wu state,

⁸⁵ *Sanguozhi*, “Wuzhi”, j. 2, p. 23b.

⁸⁶ It was a courtesy name, though it looks similar (because of the character *zong* 宗) to most temple names of emperors.

⁸⁷ *Sanguozhi*, “Wuzhi”, j. 3, p. 14b.

⁸⁸ *Sanguozhi*, “Wuzhi”, j. 7, p. 12b and j. 20, p. 4a.

⁸⁹ According to the commentary in *Jingshi biming huikao*, j. 9, p. 140.

⁹⁰ *Sanguozhi*, “Weizhi”, j. 2, p. 18b. The explanation is the commentary made by a Chen Song 臣松.

⁹¹ For more information see Wilkinson 2000, pp. 812–813.

⁹² Wilkinson 2000, p. 823.

⁹³ *Shishuo xinyu*, j. xia shang, p. 1a.

⁹⁴ *Sanguozhi*, “Wuzhi”, j. 1, p. 1a and j. 9, p. 11a.

⁹⁵ Cf. *Jingshi biming huikao*, j. 9, p. 137.

because of the name of the Emperor Jing (r. 258-264) – Xiu 休. “Xiuyang county ... Wu tabooed the name of Sun Xiu 孫休 and changed it to Haiyang 海陽.” (*Xiuyangxian ... Wu bi Sun Xiu ming gai wei Haiyangxian* 休陽縣 ... 吳避孫休名改為海陽縣).⁹⁶ This source is late, but it is quoting in this place a much older text entitled the *Map of Counties* or *Yitu* 邑圖. Finally we will mention the *Encyclopaedic History of Institutions* (*Tongdian* 通典), compiled in 801 AD by Du You 杜佑 (735–812).⁹⁷ This late source has a special discussion about taboo in the period of the Three Kingdoms,⁹⁸ and, though it is late, it is considered the most important source for the practice of taboo at that time. I will discuss it extensively below (see 5.2.3).

5.2.2. Decrees on Names Tabooing

The practice of proclaiming official imperial decrees about name tabooing, as already known from Han time (cf. above the decree of Emperor Xuan, 64 BC), was continued in the Three Kingdoms period. Two edicts of emperors from the Wei and the Wu states are known to deal with the problem of taboo avoidance. The first of them, concerning the Wei state, is recorded in the *Records of the Three Kingdoms*:

In the sixth month (of 260 AD) an edict was issued: “In antiquity the personal name of the ruler was difficult to offend against and easy to avoid. Now the taboo character of the Duke of Changdaoxiang 常道鄉 (260–265) is very difficult to avoid; it is ordered that extensive deliberations be held about a change of the name and a detailed report be presented.”⁹⁹

The Duke of Changdaoxiang 常道鄉公 (or Prince of Chenliu 陳留王) originally had the given name Huang 璜. The character *huang* referred to a curved jade probably often used at that time in rituals such as sacrifices and funerals, and also as jewel, and was therefore difficult to avoid. Hence at the time of his accession to the Wei throne (about 260 AD), his name was changed to the less common Huan 奂.¹⁰⁰

Two years later (AD 262) another edict of Emperor Sun Xiu of the competing Wu state is recorded in the *Records of the Three Kingdoms* (*Sanguozhi*) as a quotation from the

⁹⁶ *Taiping huanyuji*, j. 104, p. 4a.

⁹⁷ Cf. Wilkinson 2000, p. 525.

⁹⁸ Cf. *Tongdian*, j. 104, pp. 549-555.

⁹⁹ *Sanguozhi*, “Weizhi”, j. 4, p. 23b. Cf. Chen Yuan 1958, p. 133.

¹⁰⁰ Cf. Wang Jian 2002, p. 66.

Records of Wu (Wulu 吳錄)¹⁰¹:

According to the rites, names ought to be difficult to offend against and easy to avoid ... (accordingly) I now create new names for my four sons: the eldest is to have the name 韋, pronounced like *wan* 灣, with the courtesy name 蒯, pronounced like *qi* 迄. The second is given the name 龔, to be pronounced *gong* 觥, and the courtesy name 羿, pronounced *xian* 殲. The next is to have the name 鉅, pronounced *mang* 莽, with the courtesy name 晁, pronounced *ju* 舉. The next is given the name 寇, pronounced *bao* 褒, and the courtesy name 熒, pronounced *yong* 擁. These are all different from those in common use.¹⁰²

The new names chosen by the Emperor Sun Xiu were a unique and even somewhat strange invention. All Chinese historians from the first commentator Pei Songzhi 裴松之¹⁰³ up to the modern scholar Wang Jian 王建 have laughed at this edict, because “it did not follow rules of Chinese characters and pronunciation”.¹⁰⁴ The emperor’s idea was, however, only to make tabooing easier. His plans had no future, because, as we know, two years later – after his death – his nephew Sun Hao was enthroned and two of the elder sons were later executed. But the basic principle of picking rare names was not abandoned. Both decrees of the Wei and Wu emperors show that they were lenient in their taboo practices. The controversial attitude of the last emperor of the Wu state Sun Hao, considered as extremely cruel, will be discussed below (see 5.2.5).

5.2.3. Discussions about Tabooing

From the time of the Three Kingdoms, the first abstract discussions of scholars about the tabooing of names are reported from the states of Wei and Wu. In the *Records of the Three Kingdoms*, we find the polemics of a Wu official Zhang Zhao 張昭 (156–236) against a late Han scholar Ying Shao 應劭 (d. ca. 204 AD). Ying Shao is quoted as saying that there were altogether 56 “former rulers” (*jiujun* 舊君) whose names had been tabooed (since the

¹⁰¹ Lost work of Zhang Bo 張勃 (ca.225-266 AD), reconstructed from quotations in the Commentary to *Sanguozhi* made by Pei Songzhi 裴松之. Cf. *Zhongguo congshu zonglu*, Vol. 2, pp. 278–279.

¹⁰² *Sanguozhi*, “Wuzhi”, j. 3, p. 7b-8a. Perhaps these pronunciations make more sense with historical pronunciations.

¹⁰³ *Sanguozhi*, “Wuzhi”, j. 3, p. 8a.

¹⁰⁴ Cf. Wang Jian 2002, p. 68.

beginning of the Han period¹⁰⁵ and that the taboos of all these emperors of the past should be avoided. Zhang Zhao argued in his treatise against Ying Shao's opinion. He said that the blood-relationship gradually decreased, and if it was extinct, one was no longer obliged to taboo these names and can have the same name.¹⁰⁶ Apparently, the practice that was common for the Han subject Ying Shao was not so significant for the Wu subject Zhang Zhao.

Much later, in the Tang dynasty's *Tongdian* 通典, there are recorded different topics related to *bihui* in the Wei state of the Three Kingdoms period, in the chapter dealing with posthumous names and rules of tabooing. In particular, the commentary of a Wei scholar Wang Su 王肅 (195–256 AD) is mentioned, who reports about discussions on concrete themes related to the tabooing of names. According to him, imperial taboo did not have to be avoided in memorials to the throne, in the study of classics, in literary compositions, and in temple services, but should be avoided in names.¹⁰⁷

5.2.4. The Tabooing of Courtesy Names

The most of tabooed names in this period were, as usual, given names (*ming*), but there is also a relatively large number of examples for name changes because of one's courtesy name (*zi* 字), which was new in the history of Chinese name tabooing. The first known example of that practice, noted in the *Records of the Three Kingdoms* can probably be dated to the late Han times. It says that: “When (Sima) Lang 司馬朗 (171-217 AD) was nine years of age, a guest asked him about his father, using his courtesy name *zi*. The boy answered that such a question is disrespectful to his father and the guest apologized to him.”¹⁰⁸

Another example from the *Records of the Three Kingdoms* says that a boy named Changlin 常林 had the courtesy name Bokui 伯槐. When he was seven years old his father used this name (i.e., Bokui) when talking to him. The boy protested and his reaction was approved.¹⁰⁹ These two examples tell about children, but they show that already in the last years of the Han period, calling one's courtesy name was perceived as disrespectful: Sima

¹⁰⁵ Perhaps taboo names of the Han emperors and their ancestors.

¹⁰⁶ *Sanguozhi*, “Wuzhi”, j. 7, p. 1a. The polemics is mentioned in the commentary of Pei Songzhi.

¹⁰⁷ *Tongdian*, j. 104, p. 554.

¹⁰⁸ *Sanguozhi*, “Weizhi”, j. 15, p. 3a.

¹⁰⁹ *Sanguozhi*, “Weizhi”, j. 23, p. 3b.

Lang and Chang Lin were aware of the new custom and the criticised guests acknowledged their *faux pas*.

We can observe this change of custom in the case of the general Ma Chao 馬超 (176–222 AD), written down in the *Records of the Three Kingdoms*. Ma Chao used with respect the courtesy name of Liu Bei 劉備 (the founding emperor of the state of Shu, r. 221–223) in order to observe the taboo of his name. But officials were irritated and demanded his execution. Finally they forgave the unconscious “affront” of Ma Chao.¹¹⁰ We can see from this that the courtesy name, which was originally used just for protection of one’s personal name, could now also be tabooed. It became a peculiar custom in the Three Kingdoms period. There are more known examples of such practice. Meng Zong 孟宗 changed his name to Meng Ren 孟仁, because of the courtesy name Yuanzong 元宗 of Sun Hao 孫皓 (the last emperor of the Wu state, r. 264–280), and Mengda 孟達, with the courtesy name Zijing 子敬, who changed his own courtesy (!) name to Zidu 子度 (because of the identical courtesy name Zijing 子敬 of the uncle of Liu Bei).¹¹¹

5.2.5. Status of Tabooing in Wu: Problems of Homonyms and Punishment

The taboos of Wu were apparently the strictest¹¹² and are the best known of the Three Kingdoms period. It is certainly odd that it was not Wei, the cultural heart-land and former political center of the Han, but the Wu state that had the most of known cases of name tabooing in that period.

There are examples of avoiding names for almost every emperor of Wu,¹¹³ names of their ancestors (e.g. Sun Jian 孫堅)¹¹⁴ and crown princes (e.g., Sun He 孫和). The avoidance of homonyms (only one example) is also announced in Wu: As it was mentioned before (see 5.2.1), when Sun He 孫和 was nominated heir apparent, the name of Hexing 禾興 county was changed to Jiaying 嘉興.¹¹⁵ Chen Yuan calls it the first recorded instance of

¹¹⁰ *Sanguozhi*, “Shuzhi”, j. 6, p. 6b. Cf. Wang Jian 2002, p. 63.

¹¹¹ Cf. Chen Yuan 1958, p. 133–134.

¹¹² Wang Jian 2002, p. 66.

¹¹³ As far as we know there is only no instance known for the tabooing of the name of the emperor Sun Liang 孫亮 (r. 252–258).

¹¹⁴ Sun Jian 孫堅 (d. 191 AD) was the father of the first emperor of the Wu state – Sun Quan (r. 222–252). The character *lao* 牢 (firm) in a sentence of the *Records of the Three Kingdoms* (*Sanguozhi*, “Wuzhi”, j. 13, p. 4b) is commented as the equivalent of the taboo character *jian* 堅 by *Jingshi biming huikao*, j. 9, p. 142.

¹¹⁵ *Sanguozhi*, “Wuzhi”, j. 2, p. 23b.

homonym avoidance in Chinese history.¹¹⁶ As we already discussed before (see 5.1.2.3), possible examples of homonym avoidance were claimed to be found for times long before, and one isolated instance in this period is also unconvincing as evidence of a real and lasting change.

Another problem is the punishment practice of the Three Kingdoms period, practiced mainly by the last emperor of Wu – Sun Hao 孫皓 (r. 264–280). We find a note in the *Records of the Three Kingdoms*, stating that “those who inadvertently violated taboos of Sun Hao were arrested and sometimes even executed.”¹¹⁷ One could think, for this reason, that taboo prohibitions were particularly severe. But as it was explained by Chen Yuan, this is not necessarily an indication for a strict prohibition of taboos, but only the description of Sun Hao’s aversions,¹¹⁸ and was limited to the period of his personal reign. There are also no records about concrete punishments because of a violation of taboo in that time in even one of the three states.

5.2.6. Tabooing in Wei

Sources of tabooing in the state of Wei are much more limited than for Wu.¹¹⁹ From the *Records of the Three Kingdoms*, we know about the problem of the taboo of the Duke of Changdaoxiang 常道鄉 (260 – 265) and the issue of an imperial edict, as noted above (see 5.2.2). We also know about the tabooing the name of the Prince of Yan 燕王 – Cao Yu 曹宇 (d. 278 AD), who was not an emperor, by his son – Emperor Cao Huan 曹奂 (r. 260–265).¹²⁰ The Prince of Yan had special privileges because of the power of his son, and his name had to be tabooed in every place except the temple. There are also examples of the substitution of names as a way of tabooing in the *Records of the Three Kingdoms*. The taboo characters of Wei rulers were replaced, for example, in this way: *fang* 芳 (fragrant grass) by *hua* 華 (flower), *cao* 操 (grasp) by *zhuo* 捉 (hold, see 5.2.1).

More information can be gleaned from later sources. *Tongdian* 通典 of the Tang dynasty, mention the opinion about the tabooing of names of an official Wang Su 王肅 (195–256). When the Emperor Cao Rui 曹叡 (r. 226–239) died, his soul tablet had to be moved to the ancestral temple, therefore according to ritual the soul tablet of the Emperor

¹¹⁶ Chen Yuan 1958, p. 72.

¹¹⁷ *Sanguozhi*, “Wuzhi”, j. 20, p. 8a.

¹¹⁸ Chen Yuan 1958, p. 134. It is maybe just an example of a “last bad emperor” in historical sources.

¹¹⁹ Cf. Wang Jian 2002, p. 64.

¹²⁰ *Sanguozhi*, “Weizhi”, j. 4, p. 24b.

Gao (Cao Teng 曹騰, adoptive grandfather of Cao Cao 曹操) had to be moved out from it. There were five generations from Cao Teng to the Emperor Cao Fang 曹芳 (r. 239–254). One minister came to Wang Su and asked whether the name of Emperor Gao should be still tabooed. The answer was that “names of princes (*zhuhou* 諸侯) need not to be tabooed after five generations, and emperors (*tianzi* 天子) could also be treated that way.” Therefore the names of distant ancestors of the emperor need not be tabooed.¹²¹

Wang Su also regarded as incorrect the attitude of Fan Xianzi 范獻子 (see 4.3.1.4), who felt ashamed because he violated the taboo of Prince Xian and Prince Wu after 300 years.¹²² The most important thing was not to use names of former rulers in names of subjects. According to the modern scholar Wang Jian, this attitude of Wang Su is near to an abolition of *bihui*.¹²³ Perhaps it is also an explanation of why we find relatively few cases of taboo in the Wei state. The statement of Wang Su from the *Tongdian* explicitly supports the possibility that the Wei used less taboo.

5.2.7. Tabooing in the Shu

There is little information about the practice of name taboos in the state of Shu. We know from the *Records of the Three Kingdoms* that not only the name of ruler Liu Bei 劉備 (r. 221–223) was tabooed, but also that of his uncle (his father’s younger brother) Liu Zijing 劉子敬. Liu Bei had an adoptive son Liu Feng 劉封 (d. 220), who provoked his anger. Meng Da 孟達 proposed to Liu Feng to flee to Wei, but he refused. Later he was sentenced to death, and said: “Why have I not listened to Meng Zidu 孟子度”.¹²⁴ The real courtesy name of Meng Da was Zijing 子敬, but it was tabooed by Liu Feng because of the name of his uncle.¹²⁵

There is also an example of not tabooing the name of the Emperor Liu Bei. More than ten persons requested the enthronement of Liu Bei, quoting old books in order to support him, although his taboo character *bei* 備 appeared in these quotations. Liu Bei did not protest.¹²⁶ This case can be explained as not tabooing books. But it is also possible that the reason for non-observance of taboo was the fact that the character *bei* had to be used on

¹²¹ *Tongdian*, j. 104, p. 554.

¹²² *Guoyu*, j. 15, p. 2ab.

¹²³ Wang Jian 2002, p. 65.

¹²⁴ *Sanguozhi*, “Shuzhi”, j. 10, p. 3b.

¹²⁵ Wang Jian 2002, p. 64.

¹²⁶ *Sanguozhi*, “Shuzhi”, j. 2, p. 13ab.

purpose in order to convince people of their own legitimation. The choice between legitimation and etiquette was made in favour of legitimation.¹²⁷ We can presume that the practice of tabooing names, its intensity and methods of tabooing depended on the respective ruler.

5.2.8. Mutual Avoidance of Name Taboos

Although China was divided into three parts, people (at least in diplomacy) apparently respected taboos from other states, according to the old custom from the *Book of Rituals*: “If you come to a country you should ask about taboo”.¹²⁸ This is explicit in the diplomatic relations. When Sun Quan 孫權 (r.222-252) became emperor of the Wu state (222 AD), a chancellor of the Shu state – Zhuge Liang 諸葛亮 (181–234) – sent congratulations to him through an envoy, Chen Zhen 陳震. Chen Zhen asked about taboos using the words of Fan Xianzi 范獻子 as mentioned above (see 4.3.1.4), showed his sense of propriety, and his mission could be fulfilled.¹²⁹ Later (265 AD), the Emperor Sun Hao 孫皓 (264-280) sent two envoys to the Wei state. “As they entered, they asked about taboos.”¹³⁰

Perhaps there is also an instance of taboo in the answer of Liu Bei (Emperor of Shu state) to Sun Quan (Emperor of the Wu state), quoted in the *Records of the Three Kingdoms*. Sun Quan wanted to persuade Liu Bei to attack Shu, but Liu Bei did not want to. In his reply, he used the sentence “in the past the ‘center’ (power) was with (Cao) Cao” (*jie shu yu Cao* 借樞於操).¹³¹ The character *shu* 樞 in the sentence can be perhaps seen a substitute character for the taboo character *quan* 權 – the taboo name of Emperor Sun Quan. This way, Liu Bei could avoid saying his name directly.¹³² On the other side he did infringe on the taboo for Cao Cao’s personal name.

5.3. Jin and Sixteen Kingdoms (265–420)

Zheng Achun 鄭阿春 was the wife of the Emperor Yuan 元帝 (r. 317–322) of Jin. She was born probably about 290 AD, but very soon, she lost her parents and became an orphan. Later she married one Mr. Tian 田 and bore him one son, but the man died shortly after. In

¹²⁷ Wang Jian 2002, p. 64.

¹²⁸ *Liji*, j. 1, p. 40a.

¹²⁹ *Sanguozhi*, “Shuzhi”, j. 9, p. 5a.

¹³⁰ *Sanguozhi*, “Wuzhi”, j. 3, p. 11b. *Liji*, j. 1, p. 40a.

¹³¹ *Sanguozhi*, “Shuzhi”, j. 2, p. 7b (in the commentary of Pei Songzhi).

¹³² Cf. *Jingshi biming huikao*, j. 9, p. 140.

312 Achun met the Prince of Langye 琅邪王 – Sima Rui 司馬睿 – by chance and he chose her as his wife. A few years later, in 317, Rui became Emperor Yuan – the first Emperor of Eastern Jin. Achun bore him three children, but already in 322 Rui died. In 326, the life story of Achun also came to an end, but the story of her name just started.¹³³

Forty five years later, after the reign of sons from other wives and grandchildren of Rui, eventually one of the sons of Achun, Sima Yu 司馬昱, also became for one year the emperor of Jin (as Emperor Jianwen 簡文帝, r. 371–372), and after him, his son and her grandson Sima Yao 司馬曜 (Emperor Xiaowu 孝武帝, r. 372–396). They wanted to venerate Achun as their ancestor and to express this by tabooing her name. The practice of tabooing the name of an empress would have been acceptable at that time. A few empresses had already been venerated in such a way already, in the Eastern Jin dynasty. For example the name of the Empress Du Lingyang 杜陵陽 (321–341), the wife of the Emperor Cheng 成帝 (r. 326–342) was tabooed and therefore Lingyang county 陵陽縣 was changed to Guangyang 廣陽,¹³⁴ which is regarded as the first example of changing a geographical name because of an empress' taboo.¹³⁵ The name of Empress Wang Muzhi 王穆之 (d. 365) was also tabooed. Because of that, the general Mao Muzhi 毛穆之 had to change his name and use only his childhood name (*xiaozi* 小子) Wusheng 武生.¹³⁶ Du and Wang were also empresses, and the tabooing of their names met with no objections. But Achun had not achieved this high status. She was legally only a concubine of the Emperor Yuan, as he had had another wife before (already deceased), who had been an empress. Should her name be tabooed nonetheless?

As the official tabooing of Achun's name was proposed during the reign of the Emperor Xiaowu, the result was a long debate in the court. At least this is the version presented in the *Tongdian* 通典 written in the Tang period. According to it, a high official

¹³³ For the biography of Zheng Achun see *Jinshu*, j. 32, pp. 5a-6a; *Zhongguo lidai renming da cidian*, Vol. 1, p. 1581.

¹³⁴ Cf. *Jinshu*, j. 32, p. 2a. The fact that the character *yang* 陽 of her name was not changed here and in other places can be explained by the fact that her real name was Ling and was only expanded in the *Jinshu* to Lingyang (cf. Wang Jian 2002, p. 77). Another possibility would be that her real name was Lingchun 陵春 and the character *chun* was later replaced by *yang* 陽, because of taboo of Zheng Achun. It is also possible that the name Lingyang was perceived by the Chinese in terms of words, not of characters. Hence changing the place name Lingyang to Guangyang was enough.

¹³⁵ Wang Xinhua 2007, p. 260.

¹³⁶ *Jinshu*, j. 81, p. 9b. Mao Muzhi changed his name to his courtesy name Xianzu 憲祖 at first, but later, because of the mother's name Xuan 憲 of the general Huan Wen 桓溫 (312–373) changed it once more to his childhood name.

ordered Wang Biao 王彪 to ask other ministers for their opinions about this tabooing. Their opinions varied. The official Wang Shao 王劭 said that only the primary wife of an emperor and maybe his other wives can be tabooed, if they are empresses. Achun was not an empress, her name was not on the taboo list (*huibang* 諱榜), and there was no similar custom before, therefore there was no need for tabooing. The Second Assistant Minister Dai Mi 戴謐 opposed him and pointed out that, in common practice, the taboo observed by a father is also observed by his son. In the same manner, names tabooed by a ruler should also be taboo for subjects. After all, the name of “the small ruler” (*xiaojun* 小君) – the mother of an emperor – should be taboo. Thereupon Wang Biao showed the difference between the relation of father – son (relatives, with the same family name), and the relation of ruler – subject. He thought that this difference disoblged the need for tabooing and he supported the opinion of the official Wang Shao.¹³⁷

Apparently, the objections of some officials were ignored and the name of Achun became taboo. In 394 AD, 68 years after the death of Achun, her grandson Emperor Xiaowu issued a decree, and promoted Achun to Empress Dowager.¹³⁸ The character *chun* 春 in names and titles had to be changed, usually to *yang* 陽. Many examples are recorded. For example in the *Book of the Song* (*Songshu*), we read that “Fuyang 富陽 in the Hanjiu 漢舊 county was originally called Fuchun 富春 ... but was changed in the time of the Emperor Xiaowu to Fuyang, due to the taboo Chun of the Empress Dowager Zheng of the Emperor Jianwen of the Jin dynasty.”¹³⁹ The same happened to Yichun county 宜春縣 (changed to Yiyang 宜陽) and to Chungu county 春穀縣 (changed to Yanggu 陽穀).¹⁴⁰ Also books related to the *Spring and Autumn Annals* (*Chunqiu*) met the same fate.¹⁴¹ The reader should not be surprised if he or she still finds books with the title *Yangqiu* 陽秋 in the next 800 years after the Jin dynasty. It was also the case with such books as the *Jin Yangqiu* 晉陽秋 of Sun Sheng 孫盛 and the *Yunyu yangqiu* 韻語陽秋 compiled of Ge Lifang 葛立方.¹⁴² The last title was evidently used because of established custom, not directly because of taboo.

¹³⁷ *Tongdian*, j. 104, p. 553.

¹³⁸ *Jinshu*, j. 32, pp. 5b-6a.

¹³⁹ *Songshu*, j. 35, p. 4a.

¹⁴⁰ *Songshu*, j. 36, p. 12a; *Shijia zhai yangxin lu*, j. 11, p. 9a.

¹⁴¹ Cf. *Qidongyeyu*, j. 4, p. 41: “The taboo name of empress Zheng of Emperor Jianwen was Achun, therefore *Chunqiu* was changed to *Yangqiu*.”

¹⁴² *Lishaobian*, j. 40, p. 10a. Cf. also De Crespigny 1970, p. 54.

5.3.1. Sources and General View

During the time (265–420) of both the Eastern and Western Jin dynasties, which included Sixteen Kingdoms, the observance of taboo became very diversified in matters of taboo persons and taboo methods. The main source for knowing about tabooing of that period is the *Book of the Jin (Jinshu)* written in 644 by Fang Xuanling 房玄齡 (578–648), which covers the years 265–419. For the first period of Jin the *Records of the Three Kingdoms (Sanguozhi)* can be used, the author of which, Chen Shou (233–297), lived in the time of the Western Jin. Many other topics and discussions about taboo were also recorded in the above-mentioned *Encyclopaedic History of Institutions (Tongdian)* written in 801 AD. Although this source is much younger and for that reason needs to be regarded with caution, it is still valuable material assembling many disparate and now lost sources.¹⁴³

A peculiar custom of this period was the special attention for the observance of taboo names of empresses, with the greatest amount of such examples in Chinese history. It testifies to the importance of women in that period. Names of empresses were in that time put on the official list of taboos. One other feature is the inclusion of private taboos of the emperor in the imperial taboo: all taboos observed by emperor, as, e.g., the taboo of the emperor's mother, now had to be avoided by ministers and subjects as well.

5.3.2. Western Jin

Although the traditional period of the Western Jin dynasty (265–316) starts from Emperor Wu 武帝 (r. 265–290), it can be helpful to mention the tabooing practices of his ancestors. The grandfather of the Emperor Wu – Sima Yi 司馬懿 (179–251) – had been a minister during the Wei dynasty and gradually obtained the highest political power in the state. As recorded in the *Han Wei chungqiu* 漢魏春秋 of Kong Yan 孔衍 (268–320), a decree was issued, ordering his name to be tabooed, especially by other ministers presenting a memorial to the throne.¹⁴⁴ When Sima Yi died in 251, political power was inherited by his sons Sima Shi 司馬師 (208–255) and Sima Zhao 司馬昭 (211–265). And as before, it was ordered in 256 that the name of Sima Zhao “not to be spoken in memorials to the throne.”¹⁴⁵ It should be mentioned that the principle “not to use a personal name in a memorial to the emperor” (*zoushi buming* 奏事不名) had been established by Liu Bang of

¹⁴³ For more about *Tongdian* see Wilkinson 2000, p. 525.

¹⁴⁴ *Sanguozhi*, “Weizhi”, j. 4, p. 6a.

¹⁴⁵ *Jinshu*, j. 2, p. 5b.

the Han dynasty as the highest privilege of the prime minister.¹⁴⁶ In the case of Sima Yi and Sima Zhao, we can see the strong relation between the real political power and the tabooing of names. In 265 AD this power was complete when the son of Sima Zhao – Sima Yan 司馬炎 – coerced the last Wei emperor to abdicate and became the Emperor Wu of Jin.

In the beginning of the Jin dynasty the observance of taboo was still limited. The tabooing of ancestors was restricted to three generations and started from Sima Yi. The *Encyclopaedic History of Institutions (Tongdian)* records a memorial of Sun Yu 孫毓, responsible for the tabooing practice, who postulated in his memorial *Qimiao huizi yi* 七廟諱字議 the return to the old tradition of tabooing for seven generations.¹⁴⁷ The *Book of the Jin (Jinshu)* also noted that the minister “proposed the tabooing of seven temples,” but the Emperor has not allowed it.¹⁴⁸ Interestingly enough, Sun Yu, who regarded tabooing as an instrument for social order and a clear indication of status, at the end of his memorial used the taboo character *fang* 防 – the name of the great-grandfather of the Emperor.¹⁴⁹ It can be interpreted as his irritation about the failure of the project.¹⁵⁰

Another topic of tabooing discussed in the Jin period and recorded in the *Encyclopaedic History of Institutions (Tongdian)* was tabooing of characters in quotations from classical works. The problem was noticed in two terms of the *Rites of Zhou (Zhouli)*: *fengshi* 風師 and *yushi* 雨師,¹⁵¹ which contained the taboo character of the name of the uncle of the Emperor Wu – Sima Shi 司馬師 (208–255). The Emperor ordered in his decree in 275 AD that the character *shi* 師 should be tabooed, and written without the upper stroke, i.e., as *shuai* 帥.¹⁵² Scholar Shu Xi 束皙 (261–300), in his treatise *Discussion about what should not be tabooed (Bu dei bihui yi)* 不得避諱議 disapproved of such changes in the classics.¹⁵³

The case of Kong Chao 孔晁 can serve as evidence for a relative tolerance in observing taboos in that period. According to the *Encyclopaedic History of Institutions (Tongdian)*, he offended apparently two times the taboo of Emperor Wu in a memorial, and explained it with the principle of not tabooing classical works. Since a memorial is hardly a

¹⁴⁶ *Hanshu*, j. 99 shang, p. 13b. Cf. Wang Jian 2002, p. 69.

¹⁴⁷ *Tongdian*, j. 104, p. 553.

¹⁴⁸ *Jinshu*, j. 3, p. 3b.

¹⁴⁹ *Tongdian*, j. 104, p. 553.

¹⁵⁰ Wang Jian 2002, p. 71.

¹⁵¹ *Zhouli*, j. 5, p. 10b. The character *feng* 風 is written in *Zhouli* as *feng* 飗.

¹⁵² Wang Jian 2002, p. 71.

¹⁵³ *Tongdian*, j. 104, p. 553.

classical work, a few ministers were irritated, but the Emperor himself did not persecute Kong Chao. He only issued a decree and reordered the observance of taboo.¹⁵⁴ Most examples of name tabooing in this first period of Jin, as we can find in the historical documents, are the names of the “three emperors” Sima Yi, Sima Shi, and Sima Zhao, who never actually ascended the throne.

5.3.3. A New Method of Tabooing – “Situational Equivalents” and others

A new tendency can be seen in the Western Jin in the method of tabooing. If we compare this period to the Han dynasty and the Three Kingdoms period, we can see that the number of equivalents for taboo characters considerably increased. This was due to the new principle that came into use, which can be called the method of “situational equivalents” of tabooing (*linshi xunbi* 臨時訓避).¹⁵⁵ The equivalent character replacing the taboo character was no longer fixed, but was chosen corresponding to the situation.

If we examine the tabooing of the name of Sima Yi, we can find at least five different equivalents for his taboo character *yi* 懿 (perfect): *yi* 壹 (one), *mao* 茂 (luxuriant), *mi* 密 (close), *mu* 睦 (harmonious), and *mao* 懋 (luxuriant).¹⁵⁶ Most of these characters have meanings related to the character *yi* 懿 and to the emperor. They were specially chosen for tabooing, according to the actual situation. The character *yi* 壹, which does not have a similar meaning (unless as one, united, which is perfect), is a part of the taboo character. It was perhaps another method of tabooing or just a mistake.

The author of the *Records of the Three Kingdoms* (*Sanguozhi*) Chen Shou (233–297), who lived in the time of the Western Jin, also tabooed the name of Sima Yi. For example Wu Yi 吳懿 (d. 237) from the gazetteer *Records of Huayang Country* (*Huayang guozhi* 華陽國志)¹⁵⁷ is recorded by him as Wu Yi 吳壹,¹⁵⁸ and Zhang Yi 張懿 from the *Book of the Later Han* (*Hou Hanshu*)¹⁵⁹ is recorded as Zhang Yi 張壹.¹⁶⁰

In the case of Sima Shi, there were more than ten characters being used as equivalents of the taboo name. The change of the character *shi* 師 to *shuai* 帥 (by omission of one stroke) was used in tabooing not only for the already mentioned classic works (see

¹⁵⁴ *Tongdian*, j. 104, p. 553.

¹⁵⁵ *Tongdian*, j. 104, p. 553.

¹⁵⁶ *Jingshi biming huikao*, j. 10, pp. 147–148.

¹⁵⁷ *Huayang guozhi*, j. 7, p. 5a. More about *Huayang guozhi* see Wilkinson 2000, p. 812.

¹⁵⁸ *Sanguozhi*, “Shuzhi”, j. 3, p. 3b.

¹⁵⁹ *Hou Hanshu*, j. 105, p. 1a.

¹⁶⁰ *Sanguozhi* (b), j. 30, p. 1b. *SBBY* records the name as Zhang Yi 張益 (*Sanguozhi*, “Shuzhi”, j. 1, p. 1b).

5.3.2), but also in names: there are examples that people with the family name Shi 師 changed it to Shuai 帥.¹⁶¹ According to Zhou Guangye, all characters *bing* 兵, *jun* 軍, *zhong* 眾 in the *Records of Three Kingdoms* are equivalents of the character *shi*.¹⁶² The *Book of the Jin* (*Jinshu*) recorded that in the beginning of the Jin period, because of the taboo of Emperor Jing 景帝 (i.e. Sima Shi), the title “Grand Preceptor” (*taishi* 太師)¹⁶³ was not used, but instead *taizai* 太宰.¹⁶⁴ It is interesting that according to the *Tongdian* the same title was exchanged for *taishuai* 太帥.¹⁶⁵ The same *Book of the Jin* said that the title “Mentor” *shi* 師 was changed in the Jin times to *fu* 傅.¹⁶⁶ Other examples of tabooing of *shi* 師 are the change of the title “Army Supervisor” (*junshi* 軍師)¹⁶⁷ into *junsi* 軍司,¹⁶⁸ *tianshi* 天師 into *tianguan* 天官,¹⁶⁹ and Metropolitan Area (*jingshi* 京師) into *jingdu* 京都.¹⁷⁰ Chen Yuan also notes (but without giving sources), that the title *jingshi* was sometimes changed to *jingyi* 京邑.¹⁷¹

As for the reasons for the method of situational equivalents in tabooing, the scholar Wang Jian alluded to two factors:

- only taboo characters were announced in public, but not equivalents, as had been the custom in Han times;
- Chinese characters have many meanings, and therefore they should be replaced by different equivalents.¹⁷²

The character *shi* 師, for example, can denote a military troop, and then can be changed to *bing* 兵 or *jun* 軍; as a group of people to *zhong* 眾; as a commander of the army to *shuai* 帥; as an official to *zai* 宰 or *si* 司; as a gentleman to *fu* 傅; or as a capital to *du* 都 or *yi* 邑.¹⁷³

¹⁶¹ *Tongzhi*, j. 28, p. 468.

¹⁶² *Jingshi biming huikao*, j. 10, p. 149.

¹⁶³ Hucker 1985, p. 481.

¹⁶⁴ *Jinshu*, j. 24, p. 2a. Cf. Hucker 1985, p. 483.

¹⁶⁵ *Tongdian*, j. 30, p. 171.

¹⁶⁶ *Jinshu*, j. 24, p. 13a. For title *shi* see Hucker 1985, p. 421. For title *fu* see Hucker 1985, p. 216.

¹⁶⁷ Hucker 1985, p. 202.

¹⁶⁸ *Tongdian*, j. 29, p. 168; Hucker 1985, p. 203.

¹⁶⁹ *Jingshi biming huikao*, j. 10, p. 152. Cf. Hucker 1985, p. 509.

¹⁷⁰ *Jingshi biming huikao*, j. 10, p. 152. Cf. Hucker 1985, p. 172.

¹⁷¹ Chen Yuan 1958, p. 22.

¹⁷² Wang Jian 2002, pp. 73-74.

¹⁷³ Wang Jian 2002, p. 74.

Apparently there was also another, less common method of tabooing – omitting the taboo character altogether. It is noted for example that the title *junjijiu* 軍祭酒¹⁷⁴ should be in fact *junshijijiu* 軍師祭酒,¹⁷⁵ and the character *shi* 師 was deleted because of the taboo for the name of Emperor Jing.¹⁷⁶

The method of situational equivalents was also used for tabooing the name of Sima Zhao. The most used equivalent character was *ming* 明. The character *zhao* 昭 means “clear,” and therefore it was changed to *ming* 明 (bright), with a similar meaning. For example, in the *Book of the Jin (Jinshu)* there are the characters *minggao* 明告 in the speech of the Emperor Wu.¹⁷⁷ Apparently this term has the meaning of *zhaogao* 昭告 (proclaim publicly).¹⁷⁸ Also the famous Wang Zhaojun 王昭君 from the Han time (1st century BC) – one of the Four Beauties, who had been sent to marry the Xiongnu ruler Huhanye 呼韓邪 – appears as Wang Mingjun 王明君. The writer Shi Chong 石崇 (249–300) wrote in the introduction to the *Poetry about Wang Mingjun (Wang Mingjun ci 王明君辭)* that the name of Wang Zhaojun was changed because of the taboo of Sima Zhao.¹⁷⁹ But the character *zhao* could also be changed to *xian* 顯. For example, after the title *xianminggong* 顯明宮 of Sun Haozhuan in the *Records of the Three Kingdoms (Sanguozhi)*, Pei Songzhi 裴松之 wrote in his commentary: “(It should be) *zhaominggong* 昭明宮 ... but was changed because of the taboo of Jin dynasty”.¹⁸⁰ Still another equivalent character was *yao* 曜, for example Wei Yao’s 韋曜 original name was Zhao 昭, but he changed it, when it became taboo.¹⁸¹ The characters *ming* 明, *xian* 顯, and *yao* 曜 have the similar meaning as the taboo character *zhao* 昭 – this way of tabooing was known in China already in the Han period (though before usually limited to one character) and is called in Chinese research “the method of equivalent characters” (*tongxun daihuan* 同訓代換, see 5.1.2.1).

The situational equivalents, however, were an innovation of the Western Jin or, more precisely, of the period of the Emperor Wu’s reign. This custom was not present in the Han period. Different characters (with a similar meaning) such as *shu* 樞, *bing* 柄, and

¹⁷⁴ For example, in *Sanguozhi*, „Weizhi“, j. 4, p. 25a.

¹⁷⁵ For the title *junshi* see Hucker 1985, p. 202, for *jijiu* p. 130.

¹⁷⁶ *Gangmu dingwu*, j. 1, pp. 3b-4a.

¹⁷⁷ *Jinshu*, j. 3, p. 2a.

¹⁷⁸ *Jingshi biming huikao*, j. 10, p. 153.

¹⁷⁹ *Xuelin*, j. 4, pp. 107-108.

¹⁸⁰ *Sanguozhi*, “Wuzhi”, j. 3, p. 13a.

¹⁸¹ *Sanguozhi*, “Wuzhi”, j. 20, p. 6a.

shi 勢 were already used for tabooing the name of Emperor Sun Quan 孫權 (r. 222–252) of the Three Kingdoms period (see 5.2.1 and 5.2.8). In fact, however, the custom of situational equivalents in the Jin time was limited practically to the rule period of one emperor (for the tabooing the name of him and of his ancestors). After the Emperor Wu this method also disappeared, perhaps because of the weakening of political power and the temporary dwindling of tabooing practices more generally. The use of various characters for tabooing in different situations complicated the recognition of taboo for the next generations.

Another method of tabooing which became very popular in the Jin times is the use of the courtesy name *zi* 字. The tabooing of the courtesy name (as “beautiful name” *meicheng* 美稱)¹⁸² from the Three Kingdoms period disappeared again in the Jin times. With this the courtesy name, already used earlier as a substitute for the personal name, could once more reclaim its function as one of the important and practical methods of tabooing. One example of such custom is recorded in the *History of the Southern Dynasties (Nanshi)*. As the names of two brothers, Wang Rui 王睿 and Wang Yi 王懿 from Taiyuan 太原, who entered the state of Eastern Jin, violated the taboos of Sima Yi 司馬懿 and Sima Rui 司馬睿, they were changed to their courtesy names Wang Yuande 王元德 and Wang Zhongde 王仲德.¹⁸³ Zhou Guangye calls it the first case in the Jin period.¹⁸⁴ This method became a very popular way for tabooing names and was continued later on.

5.3.4. The Tabooing of Names of Empresses and the Eastern Jin

A few examples and problems connected with the topic and related to the Empress Zheng Achun were already discussed before (see 5.3). We can further mention that apparently the idea of tabooing the names of empresses was present already in the Western Jin time, although it was still not codified. As early as 266 AD, according to the *Encyclopaedic History of Institutions (Tongdian 通典)*, a proposal was made in a memorial to the throne for tabooing their names together with the taboo of the emperor, but Emperor Wu had not approved it. Moreover, he criticized the existence of this practice in his decree and said that

¹⁸² Wang Jian 2002, p. 88.

¹⁸³ *Nanshi*, j. 25, p. 1ab.

¹⁸⁴ *Jingshi biming huikao*, j. 10, p. 147.

“according to the *Records of Ritual (Liji)* the inner taboo (*neihui* 內諱) is limited only to the court.”¹⁸⁵

As the Western Jin ended and the Eastern Jin started, the political power of emperors decreased further, and perhaps because of that there are not too many examples of taboos of emperors from that period. Wang Jian found only 13 taboo examples of emperors during more than one hundred years of the Eastern Jin: there are taboo examples of only 5 of 11 emperors: Kang 康帝 (r. 342–344) – 7, Yuan 元帝 (r. 317–322) – 3, Ming 明帝 (322–325), Mu 穆帝 (r. 345–361), and Jianwen 簡文帝 (r. 371–372) – 1. In contrast he found 69 examples of taboo in the much shorter period of the Western Jin,¹⁸⁶ which is, of course, remarkable.

Although examples of emperors’ taboo were very limited in the Eastern Jin, there were relatively numerous instances of taboo of the empress, “more than in all other dynasties.”¹⁸⁷ In that period, the names of empresses were put on the imperial taboo lists (*huibang* 諱榜).¹⁸⁸ The possible reason for that new tendency was the growth of political power of empresses in the time of regency.¹⁸⁹ Empress Yuwen Jun 庾文君 (297–328) was a regent only for a few years, but Empress Chu Suanzi 褚蒜子 (324–384) controlled the political situation mostly as a regent for ca. 40 years. These two empresses together had the political power for almost half of the period that the Eastern Jin lasted. A connection between authority and tabooing can be presumed, though concrete examples of these two empresses’ taboo are lacking.¹⁹⁰

5.3.5. The Tabooing of the Crown Prince’s Name

Apart from the tabooing of the names of empresses, there are other customs and vivid discussions in the Eastern Jin period, which indicate that tabooing was important for the elites of that time. One of them was the theme of tabooing the name of the crown prince. The problem, according to the *Tongdian*, emerged 394 AD, as the name of the Crown Prince Sima Dezong 司馬德宗 (382–419, later Emperor An 安帝) was openly used by Chu

¹⁸⁵ *Tongdian*, j. 104, p. 555.

¹⁸⁶ Wang Jian 2002, p. 76.

¹⁸⁷ Chen Yuan 1958, p. 136.

¹⁸⁸ Cf. *Tongdian*, j. 104, p. 553.

¹⁸⁹ About the further evolution of that phenomenon see Eisenberg 2008, pp. 61-91.

¹⁹⁰ There is, however, an example of the taboo of Yuwen Jun’s mother in the *Jinshu*. Yu Yu’s 虞預 original name Mao 茂 violated the taboo of Yuwen Jun’s mother, therefore he changed it to Yu (*Jinshu*, j. 82, p. 4b).

Shuang 褚爽 (governor and father of the Empress Chu Lingyuan 褚靈媛, 384–436) in a memorial to the emperor. In the discussion about that case, all opinions (e.g., of an official Zang Tao 臧燾, 353–422) remain ambiguous without taking a concrete position. It is pointed out that classical works are against tabooing the crown prince, but it is also mentioned that the avoidance of his name is safer and the calling of it disrespectful, because he would be the future emperor.¹⁹¹

5.3.6. Conflict between Family Taboo and the Name of Office and Officials

The conflict between a family taboo and a name of office was a serious problem for people of that time. During the Western Jin, Jiang Chun 江春 became an official in Yichun 宜春, and his nephew Jiang Tong 江統 described his dilemma: if petitioners called him as was custom by the name of office, they would disrespectfully violate his taboo. The name of office could not be changed, because it would confuse the administration system, and the name would not correspond to reality.¹⁹²

Cases are reported from the time of the Eastern Jin concerning the problem of names of offices and officials that were identical to their ancestors' names. Already in the *Spring and Autumn Annals* (*Chunqiu*), there was an admonition not to take names of offices as one's personal name,¹⁹³ but only in the Jin time did it become a real problem. There was, for example, an official Liu Tan 劉曇, whose father's name was Xia 遐. He liked his job until a new superior Wang Xia 王遐 was appointed. Through this new situation, he was constantly confronted with the character *xia* 遐. The stress was insufferable for him and finally he resigned from office.¹⁹⁴

In the discussion about this case in the *Tongdian*, his attitude was supported by the scholar Xie Quan 謝銓, who pointed out that “the reverence for one's father is the most important in the world.”¹⁹⁵ On the other hand, the result of the tension between a family taboo and the name of office was not always resignation. Take for example the case of a Palace Attendant Kong Anguo 孔安國 (4 c. AD), whose father's name was Kong Yu 孔愉. Since he had many public dealings with Wang Yu 王愉 because of his office, and often had to hear the family taboo character, he asked for dismissal. But his petition was refused with

¹⁹¹ *Tongdian*, j. 104, p. 554.

¹⁹² *Jinshu*, j. 56, p. 4ab. Cf. also Wang Jian 2002, 84–85.

¹⁹³ *Chunqiu Zuo zhuan*, j. 5, p. 16ab.

¹⁹⁴ *Tongdian*, j. 104, p. 554.

¹⁹⁵ *Tongdian*, j. 104, p. 554.

the statement: If everybody follows his sense of family taboo and resigns from office it would have bad consequences for the legal and political system of the state.¹⁹⁶

We can see that the observance of a concrete case of tabooing custom sometimes depended on a decision of the superior. Similar examples can be found related to the toponyms in the name of office, when they were identical with one's father's name. Wang Shu 王舒 was appointed Interior Minister (*neishi* 內史)¹⁹⁷ of Kuaiji 會稽 (in today's Zhejiang province), but he did not accept it because his father had the name Wang Hui 王會. However, other ministers persuaded him that the character *kuai/hui* 會 in these two names had different pronunciations, and they finally changed the name of the location to Kuai 郛. In that situation Wang Shu had to accept the office.¹⁹⁸ The story had its continuation when, in 342 AD, the emperor appointed Wang Yunzhi 王允之, the son of Wang Shu, to the same office. Then Wang Yunzhi asked for a change because of the taboo name, the emperor and ministers answered that he should not mix private and public affairs and that an order of the emperor is more important than his father's taboo.¹⁹⁹ Finally Wang Yunzhi was coerced to accept the office, but before that happened, he died (sic!).²⁰⁰

Some modern scholars, as for example Wang Jian, criticize the Jin people for only changing names or offices, but still continuing the “malpractice” of *bihui*, which was used by rulers for political aims.²⁰¹ The tabooing of names was, however, perceived in Jin times as a psychological necessity: it was the expression of filial piety, the basis of respect and also of political power. Even if the tabooing complicated the everyday life of people, it was an important part of their culture, especially of the Chinese elite, and should not be condemned too hastily.

5.3.7. Tabooing of Posthumous and Era Names

Emperors and illustrious people received a posthumous name (*shihao* 謚號) after their death as a kind of appraisal of their lives. In the beginning, it was a panegyric name, tabooing the real name, and it was of course not itself tabooed. But in Jin times it began to be perceived as a respectful name for emperors and illustrious people, and sometimes tabooed

¹⁹⁶ *Jinshu*, j. 20, p. 20a.

¹⁹⁷ Hucker 1985, p. 350.

¹⁹⁸ *Jinshu*, j. 76, p. 1b.

¹⁹⁹ *Tongdian*, j. 104, p. 555.

²⁰⁰ Wang Jian 2002, p. 84.

²⁰¹ Wang Jian 2002, p. 85.

as well. The first example of such tabooing can be seen already in the practice of the father of the first Emperor of Jin – Sima Zhao. As his father Sima Yi and his brother Sima Shi obtained the posthumous names Wenhou 文侯 and Wuhou 武侯, similar to those of rulers of the Wei state Cao Cao (Wudi 武帝) and Cao Pi (Wendi 文帝), he considered them discourteous and changed them to Xuanwen 宣文 and Zhongwu 忠武, and later to Xuanwang 宣王 and Jingwang 景王.²⁰² It is possible that the real reason for the change was not respect for the rulers of Wei or the tabooing of their name, but rather a reluctance to have the same names as a rival, a kind of battle for political power, expressed in the tabooing of names of one's own family. However, the change from one character (Wen) to a two-character name (Xuanwen) also stresses a higher position.

In 287 AD the posthumous name Jinghou 景侯 was given to the official Guo Yi 郭奕. This choice was criticised in a report to the throne by one of the ministers because the posthumous name of Guo Yi was identical to that of the “Emperor” Sima Shi (Jingdi 景帝), which should be taboo. The character Mu 穆 had to be taken as a replacement. Other ministers such as Wang Qi 王濟 or Yang Ye 羊璞 thought that such tabooing was not required, because the posthumous name was not the same as a personal name. Cheng Can 成粲 and Wu Mao 武茂 also suggested that, for example, the character *wen* 文 was often used for different emperors and was not tabooed. Nevertheless, the Emperor Wu ordered a change in this posthumous name: “It is not true that subjects can not have the same posthumous name as the ruler, but the name Jing 景 for Guo Yi is inappropriate. He should be called Jian 簡.” His order was carried out.²⁰³ In 368 AD, when the minister Wang Shu 王述 died, the name Mu 穆 was bestowed upon him, but shortly after it was changed to Jian 簡 in order to taboo the posthumous name of the Emperor Mu 穆帝 (r. 345–361).²⁰⁴ It shows that tabooing of posthumous names had already become a custom.

There are also disputed examples of tabooing the Era name (*nianhao* 年號). The first example of such tabooing can be seen probably in the *Records of Wukang county* (*Wukang xianzhi* 武隸縣志): “Yong'an county 永安 was changed to Yongkang 永康 and shortly later to Wukang 武康. The (second) change was made because of the Era name Yongkang 永康

²⁰² *Jinshu*, j. 20, p. 19a.

²⁰³ *Jinshu*, j. 20, p. 19a.

²⁰⁴ *Jinshu*, j. 75, p. 4a.

(300–301) of Emperor Hui 惠帝.”²⁰⁵ This custom of tabooing the posthumous and Era names can be explained through the unstable political power of Jin rulers. Emperors probably tried to use additional kinds of tabooing in order to stress their status.

5.4. Southern and Northern Dynasties (420–589)

The observance of name taboos in the period of the Southern and Northern Dynasties (*Nanbeichao* 南北朝, 420–589) seems to vary per person and dynasty. There were no uniform practices in that time. The situations in the South and the North were quite different: the North was occupied by non-Chinese tribes, who gradually merged into the Han Chinese culture. This period can be called “an interim period” between the Jin and Tang dynasties, in which many inherited customs become formalized.²⁰⁶

5.4.1. Sources

We possess a number of works recording instances of the tabooing of names in that time. The most important sources are again the dynastic histories: in the South there were the *Book of the Song* (*Songshu* 宋書, composed 492–493 by Shen Yue 沈約), *Book of the Southern Qi* (*Nan Qishu* 南齊書, by Xiao Zixian 蕭子顯 in 489–537), *Book of the Liang* (*Liangshu* 梁書, composed in 628–635 by Yao Silian 姚思廉), *Book of the Chen* (*Chenshu* 陳書, composed in 622–629 by the same author), and *History of the Southern Dynasties* (*Nanshi* 南史, composed in 630–650 by Li Yanshou 李延壽) – the last three were written already during the Tang dynasty. In the North we have *Book of the Wei* (*Weishu* 魏書, composed in 551–554 by Wei Shou 魏收), *Book of the Northern Qi* (*Bei Qishu* 北齊書, composed in 627–636 by Li Boyao 李百藥), *Book of the Zhou* (*Zhoushu* 周書, composed ca. 629 by Linghu Defen 令狐德棻) and *History of the Northern Dynasties* (*Beishi* 北史, composed in 630–650 by Li Yanshou 李延壽) – again, the last three being written in the Tang period.²⁰⁷ Important materials for studying name tabooing of that time can be found also in the *Family Instructions for the Yan Clan* (*Yanshi jiaxun* 顏氏家訓) – the first extant “family instructions” composed by Yan Zhitui 顏之推 (531–591).²⁰⁸ It is remarkable that the *Encyclopaedic History of Institutions* (*Tongdian* 通典) with its many historical materials

²⁰⁵ *Jingshi biming huikao*, j. 10, p. 155.

²⁰⁶ Cf. Wang Jian 2002, p. 91.

²⁰⁷ Cf. Wilkinson 2000, pp. 810–811.

²⁰⁸ Cf. Wilkinson 2000, pp. 116–117. For translation see Teng Ssu-yü 1968.

on the Three Kingdoms and Jin periods, and later also on the Tang dynasty remains totally silent about the 169 years of the Southern and Northern Dynasties period.

5.4.2. Southern Dynasties and Lists of Taboo

Generally, as already said, there was no consistent system in the time of the Southern and Northern Dynasties. We can presume that in the South, especially in the beginning of that period, practice and methods of tabooing would have been similar to those of the Jin time. We know about a petition to the emperor written by Sima Daojing 司馬道敬 in the beginning of the Liu Song dynasty (420–479), also known as Former Song dynasty. The petition suggested that the taboo of an ancestor of Emperor Wu (r. 420–422) – Liu Jing 劉靖 – should be recorded on the list of taboos (*huibang* 諱榜) and avoided by all subjects. The result is not known, but the project was criticised by the astronomer He Chengtian 何承天 (370–447).²⁰⁹

One other petition is also noted in the *History of the Southern Qi* in the first year of this new dynasty of Southern Qi (479 AD). One official had proposed the following:

- official tabooing of names of empresses and recording them on the list of taboos;
- official tabooing, proclaiming and recording of names of ancestors.

This petition was opposed by Wang Jian 王儉 (452–489). In his memorial to the throne, he was against the tabooing of the name of the empress and wrote about the old principle of the *Records of Ritual* that the “taboos of women should be not observed outside of court”.²¹⁰ He accepted only the tabooing of ancestors, but without recording it on the list of taboos.²¹¹

The discussion was continued by a cousin of Wang Jian – Wang Ci 王慈 (451–491) – who was even more radical. He condemned all lists of taboos, showed that the custom was rather new and in conflict with the tradition. According to him, empresses of former dynasties were of noble character and high prestige, and there was no need for lists of taboos, only posthumous names were to be announced. But apparently such opposition to the custom of tabooing was the exception rather than the rule. Scholars such as Li Hui 李攜 and Wang Xian 王憫, for example, supported the practice and lists of taboo. Wang Xian stated that lists helped people to notice taboos which should be observed. Ren Fang 任昉 went even further and stressed that lists of taboo not only helped, but were also a deeper

²⁰⁹ *Nan Qishu*, j. 9, p. 19a.

²¹⁰ *Liji*, j. 1, pp. 38b–40a

²¹¹ *Nan Qishu*, j. 9, p. 19a.

expression of subjects' veneration for the emperor.²¹² Lists of taboos were a new phenomenon. Therefore the distinction was made between observing taboos and recording them in a list.

We do not know too much about the form, content, place and time in which lists of taboo were posted. There are no direct records about that. From the memorial of Ren Fang, we can learn that the antecedent of taboo lists was probably the (oral) "promulgation of taboo" (*banhui* 班諱/頒諱) of the Han dynasty.²¹³ At that time, when the new emperor was enthroned, his taboo was announced, but not recorded. Together with the taboo characters, its equivalents were designated. Wang Jian assumed that written lists of taboo appeared probably in the Jin period, without equivalents, related to the custom of situational (*linshi xunbi* 臨時訓避, see 5.3.3) or arbitrary avoidance (*suiyi gaiyi* 隨宜改易) of that time. He supposed that in the first Liu Song dynasty lists of taboo were similar to those of Jin and changed only in the Southern Qi time.²¹⁴ From memorials of Ren Fang and Wang Ci, we still can learn that lists were put inside the court and were accessible only for higher officials, not for everybody. These lists could be seen every day, without time limits.

Concrete examples of tabooing can be found, e.g., in the *Book of the Southern Qi*, recording the case of the Crown Prince Xiao Zhangmao 蕭長懋 (458–493), who did not accept the post of the Vice Director of the Palace Library (*bishucheng* 秘書丞)²¹⁵ because its homonym Cheng 成 was the name of the father of Emperor Gao of the Southern Qi – Xiao Daocheng 蕭道成 (479–482).²¹⁶ Yet in many other places of this work this taboo is not avoided.²¹⁷ Other examples of exaggerated observance of taboo are recorded in the *Family instructions of Master Yan* (*Yanshi jiaxun* 顏氏家訓). According to this source, Xie Ju 謝舉 of the Liang dynasty (502–557) kept in good memory the words of the *Records of Ritual* (*Liji*), that "if a good son sees a face similar to those of his ancestors or hears their names, he feels sadness (literally: fright)."²¹⁸ Therefore, Xie Ju cried every time he heard (sic!) names similar to those of his ancestors.²¹⁹ In another one, the supervisor Zang Fengshi 臧逢世, whose father had the name Yan 嚴, often saw characters *yanhan* 嚴寒 (bitter cold) in

²¹² *Nan Qishu*, j. 46, pp. 2b-3a; Cf. also Wang Jian 2002, pp. 93-95.

²¹³ Cf. *Jingshi biming huikao*, j. 24, p. 382.

²¹⁴ Wang Jian 2002, p. 95.

²¹⁵ Hucker 1985, p. 376.

²¹⁶ *Nan Qishu*, j. 21, p. 1a.

²¹⁷ Cf. *Nan Qishu*, j. 1, p. 1a; Chen Yuan 1958, p. 139.

²¹⁸ *Liji*, j. 7, p. 75a and 83b.

²¹⁹ *Yanshi jiaxun*, j. 2, pp. 1b-2a.

the correspondence. He cried every time, was late with his work and got into trouble.²²⁰ There was also a man whose friend was called Shen 審, and he therefore never wrote his family name Shen 沈 in a letter.²²¹ Somebody else tabooed the character *tong* 桐 and called the Chinese parasol tree (*wutongshu* 梧桐樹) a “tree of galvanized iron” (*baitieshu* 白鐵樹).²²²

One other case concerns two brothers from the Liang dynasty: Liu Tao 劉綽 and Liu Huan 劉緩. Because of the name of their father Zhao 昭, they did not use the character *zhao* 照 in their whole life, and if its use was unavoidable they changed it to *zhao* 炤.²²³ This last case is commented upon by author, who thinks that there was no need for such an overstatement. Tabooing should be limited, according to him, to real names (*zhengming* 正名). Avoidance of homonyms was absurd: e.g., consistent tabooing of the characters *zhao* 昭 would cause the avoidance of both brothers’ own family name (Liu 劉), which has also a character *zhao* 釗 inside. Such tabooing would make it impossible to write books. In this way the son of Lü Shang 呂尚 would be unable to use the character “over” (*shang* 上), and the son of Zhao Yi 趙壹 unable to use the character “one” (*yi* 一).²²⁴

5.4.3. Northern Dynasties

The situation in the north was quite different from the south. The territory had been occupied since the beginning of the 4th century by various tribes with their own customs (and probably own taboo practices). Many Han Chinese fled to the South.²²⁵ Gradually, the newcomers in the north adopted Chinese culture with its elaborate taboo system.

The first example of such adaptation can be seen already in the Later Zhao dynasty (319–351) of the Sixteen Kingdoms. The Emperor Ming 明帝 (Shile 石勒, r. 319–333) from one of the tribes of Xiongnu (Jie 羯) undertook the Chinese system of administration and many Chinese customs. His name Le 勒 was tabooed and other characters were used in its place. Apparently for this reason, the name (probably transcription) of coriander/parsley (*luole* 羅勒) was changed to “fragrant of orchid” (*lanxiang* 蘭香).²²⁶ Also the medicine

²²⁰ *Yanshi jiaxun*, j. 2, p. 2a.

²²¹ *Yanshi jiaxun*, j. 2, p. 2a.

²²² *Yanshi jiaxun*, j. 2, p. 2b.

²²³ *Yanshi jiaxun*, j. 2, p. 13a.

²²⁴ *Yanshi jiaxun*, j. 2, p. 13a.

²²⁵ For the situation in the period of Southern and Northern Dynasties see Dien 2007, pp. 4–14.

²²⁶ *Qimin yaoshu*, j. 3, p. 8b.

helile 訶梨勒 was changed because of a taboo to *hezi* 訶子.²²⁷ We also know that the name Hu 虎 of the nephew of the Emperor Ming was tabooed (probably after he was enthroned), and all names with that character were changed.²²⁸

In the period of the Northern dynasties, the first of them – Northern Wei (386–535) – already knew the tabooing of names. In the *Book of the Wei* we find the biography of Yuwen Mohuai 宇文莫槐 (a chieftain of the Yuwen tribe in the North-East China, d. 293) with a note: “His original name violated the taboo of Taizu 太祖 (i.e. Emperor Daowu 道武帝 – Toba Gui 拓拔珪, r. 386–409 – the founder of the Wei dynasty) and was changed.”²²⁹ Probably the former name was Gui 珪 and was changed to *huai* 槐.²³⁰ The homonyms of the name of this emperor were sometimes apparently also tabooed. The Shanggui county 上邽縣 in the prefecture Tianshui 天水 was changed to Shangfeng 上封 because it violated the homonym of the taboo name of the Emperor. The name of Xiagui county 下邽縣 of Huazhou 華州 was also changed because of this taboo to Xiafeng 夏封.²³¹

On the other hand, the tabooing of homonyms is questionable considering that the Emperor Xianwen 獻文帝 (Toba Hong 拓拔弘, r. 466–471) had no objections to giving the homonym of his given name – Hong 宏 – to his son (the son later changed his family name to Yuan 元, in Chinese manner, and became the Emperor Xiaowen 孝文帝, r. 471–499). At the same time, a similar example could be seen in the South: the Emperor Ming 明帝 (Liu Yu 劉彧, r. 465–472) of Former Song (Liu Song) had a son with the name Yu 昱 (later Emperor Houfei 後廢帝, r. 473–477). Since numerous instances of the same name of father and son can be seen, the tabooing of homonyms seems to be probably exceptional or at least infrequent. It would mean that there was practically no taboo on sound in this period.

From the North, there is also a record in the *Book of the Northern Qi* (*Bei Qishu*) reporting the case of Xin Ziyan 辛子炎, who read in his petition to the general Gao Huan 高歡 (the father of the first Emperor of the Northern Qi dynasty, later honored with the temple name Gaozu 高祖, 496–547) one of the characters as *shu* 樹 (Gao Shusheng 高樹生 was the name of his father, 472–526).²³² Gao Huan was infuriated. He did not accept (or did

²²⁷ *Shiwu jiyuan*, j. 10, p. 34a.

²²⁸ *Tianzhongji*, j. 46, p. 29a.

²²⁹ *Weishu*, j. 103, p. 10a.

²³⁰ Cf. Wang Jian 2002, p. 97.

²³¹ *Jingshi biming huikao*, j. 13, p. 189.

²³² For him see *Zhongguo lidai renming da cidian* 1999, Vol. 2, p. 2000.

not understand as a foreigner) the argument from the *Records of Ritual (Liji)* of not avoiding two-character names separately,²³³ and considered the case to be an infringement of the taboo. Xin was therefore flogged.²³⁴ Besides, in the North, an occasional practice of tabooing the courtesy name *zi* 字 is reported.²³⁵ This practice, which could be noticed earlier in the Three Kingdoms period (see 5.2.4), is not found in the South.²³⁶ It is also criticised by the scholar Yan Zhitui 顏之推 as erroneous and not corresponding to tradition.²³⁷

5.4.4. Shared Names in the Family

A special custom of this period was the use of the same names as ancestors, without feeling a sense of taboo violation. There are many examples of such practice. The most famous are probably the case (still from the Jin period) of the family of the famous Chinese calligrapher Wang Xizhi 王羲之 (303–361, with the same name character Zhi 之 in three generations),²³⁸ or the case of the family of Wang Biaozi 王彪之 (305–377) – with the same character in their name in six generations (up to Wang Jinzhi 王進之, 5–6 c.).²³⁹

It seems strange when we consider how important was the tabooing of the name of one's father for the Chinese before that time and until modern times, and that the practice of the same name was not an episode, but was continued in many generations of that period. On the other hand, it seems to be parallel to the European practice of the last centuries, where the name of an ancestor was not called directly, but was used as a name in the next generations just as a sign of veneration for him.

5.4.5. Genealogical Records

The observance of taboo in the period of the Southern and Northern Dynasties was apparently not uniform and sometimes inconsistent. Sometimes it seems that the tabooing of names was not very important for some dynasties, as there are no known taboo examples from the ruling time of many emperors. But on the other hand, we know, that the tabooing of names was important for people in that time. For example, the Grand Guardian (*taibao*

²³³ *Liji*, j. 1, pp. 38b–40a

²³⁴ *Bei Qishu*, j. 24, p. 4b.

²³⁵ Cf. Wang Xinhua 2007, pp. 263–264.

²³⁶ *Yanshi jiaxun*, j. 2, p. 9a.

²³⁷ *Yanshi jiaxun*, j. 2, p. 8b.

²³⁸ Chen Yuan 1958, pp. 91–93.

²³⁹ Wang Jian 2002, p. 103.

太保)²⁴⁰ of the Emperor of Former Song (Liu Song) dynasty – Wang Hong 王弘 (379–432) – met every day more than a thousand clients without a violation of their taboos.²⁴¹ It was possible only because of the development of written genealogy.

It was precisely in that period that genealogical records developed, with personal and posthumous names, the date of birth and death, rank and office, sometimes also spouse and friends.²⁴² Especially officials of Ministry of Personnel (*libu* 吏部)²⁴³ were specialists of genealogy. The genealogy became more and more important and gradually almost every family had its genealogical book. The connection between the development of genealogy and tabooing of names was disclosed by Hu Yinglin 胡應麟 (1551–1602) from the Ming dynasty.²⁴⁴ Before that, only lists of taboos of emperors were published, now every family had its own written genealogy. This is a crucial change in the practice of name tabooing.²⁴⁵

5.4.6. Intentional Violation of Taboo

At this time, we also find instances of the intentional use of taboo words in order to insult somebody. The tabooing of names had already become an expression of respect and courtesy between people, used not only for superiors, but also for people in inferior positions. We read, for example, that the Emperor Xiaozhao 孝昭帝 (r. 560–561) of Northern Qi (550–577) “did not violate family taboos of other people, if he knew about them.”²⁴⁶

Inversely, the direct use of a taboo name became a way of defamation. Many examples can be found in this period. In one case, when governor Wang Liang 王亮 from the Liu Song period wanted to dismiss a rough official – Shen Cuan 沈攸 – who often violated his name, Shen Cuan said ironically: “I, low official, am being transferred for offending against your taboo. But I do not really know your taboo name. If it is the word *you* 攸 (place), should it be written as a legless *zun*-vessel (𩚑) with a dog (犬) at its side (*you* 猷)? Or as a dog with legless vessel at its side (*you* 猶)? Is it a character *you* 攸 with a heart 心 (*you* 悠), or without a heart? Please instruct me”.²⁴⁷ In fact, Shen Cuan ironically

²⁴⁰ Hucker 1985, p. 480.

²⁴¹ *Nanshi*, j. 59, p. 9b.

²⁴² For more about Chinese genealogy see Stockwell 2004, pp. 41–42.

²⁴³ Hucker 1985, p. 306.

²⁴⁴ *Shaoshi shanfang bicong*, “Gengbu” (庚部), “Hualin boyi xia” (華林博議下), p. 1b.

²⁴⁵ Wang Jian 2002, p. 108–111.

²⁴⁶ *Beishi*, j. 6, p. 1a.

²⁴⁷ *Nanshi*, j. 23, p. 4ab.

used four characters with the same pronunciation as the name of Wang Liang's father – You 攸, as a payback. He repeatedly violated his taboo and insulted him by adding “a dog” to the pretended equivalent characters.²⁴⁸

In conclusion, it is important to stress the evolution that took place between the Han period and the period of the Southern and Northern Dynasties. During this period, the custom of name taboo was given a definitive shape for the next periods. Concrete rules of taboo, such as the principle of interior taboo (3.5.3), were established and concrete methods of tabooing, such as the method of equivalent characters (*tongxun daihuan* 同訓代換) were developed in that period.

The tabooing of the emperor's name was very important in this time. Edicts of the emperor regulated and stressed the tabooing of the emperor's name. But it was also a period of an evolution in the tabooing of distant ancestors, near relatives and officials. Particularly in the Three Kingdoms era, there are instances of tabooing the name of (living) relatives of the emperors and empresses, as for example, the father of the empress (see 5.2.1) and the uncle of the emperor (see 5.2.4).

Still more, the tabooing of women's names was practiced and discussed in this period. The first example of tabooing of the empress' name is recorded for the Han period (see 5.1.1). In the Jin time, we find even a discussion about the tabooing of the name of the physical (not legal) mother of an emperor. Gradually, family taboos of people (probably literati in particular) also became more and more important. A big impact must have come from the increasing use of paper (originated in China during the Han dynasty),²⁴⁹ which allowed an increase in literacy and in the status of writing. Literati started to write themselves, and genealogical records became important.²⁵⁰ The result was also a changing availability of sources from the time that affected the custom of name tabooing.

²⁴⁸ Cf. Chen Yuan 1958, p. 128.

²⁴⁹ Needham 1996, p. 13.

²⁵⁰ For the medieval Chinese oligarchy see Johnson 1977.

CHAPTER SIX: CULMINATION OF CUSTOM

The violation of a taboo name was considered to be a big offence and there were continuously persons trying to use it for their own intrigues. There were for instance two officials at the turn of the 9th and 10th centuries in China who disliked each other: Lu Wenji 盧文紀 and Cui Xie 崔協 (d. 929). Cui Xie knew the taboo name of the father of Lu Wenji – Siye 嗣業 – and he managed to use it against Lu. He appointed Yu Ye 於鄴 as a subsidiary clerk of Lu Wenji. The names of the clerk and the father of Lu had the same pronunciation and similar notation. Lu was of course infuriated, often hearing his taboo name in his office. He gave Yu Ye a hard time and coerced him to resign. In the end Yu Ye could not bear up under the pressure and committed suicide. Lu was subsequently demoted.¹ In such a way the tabooing of name determined the life of people.

6.1. Sui

6.1.1. Sources

The main source for the Sui period (581–618) is the *Book of the Sui* (*Suishu* 隋書). It was composed by Wei Zheng 魏徵 *et al.* shortly after the fall of the Sui dynasty in 629–636.² In addition numerous interpretations of possible taboo instances in the Sui time were made later by Wang Guanguo 王觀國 in the Song period,³ and by Zhou Guangye 周廣業 and Qian Daxin 錢大昕 of Qing times.⁴

6.1.2. Brief Characteristics of the Period

In Chinese historiography, the Sui dynasty is regarded as a turning point. The long time of disunion was finished and the new ruler, best known to us under his posthumous name of Emperor Wen 文帝 (r. 581–604), made many political, economic, military and educational reforms, which unified China and influenced the next generations. The same is also true with regard to name tabooing. Sui restored order to the disunity in taboo practices of the Southern and Northern dynasties period, and there were no more discussions about lists of

¹ *Xin Wudaishi*, j. 55, p. 2ab.

² Wilkinson 2000, p. 504.

³ *Xuelin*, j. 3, p. 69.

⁴ *Jingshi biming huikao*, j. 13, pp. 200–206; *Nian'er shi kaoyi*, j. 33, pp. 628–630; j. 34, pp. 650–652.

taboo or tabooing of courtesy names.⁵ There are examples of the use of the equivalency system *tongxun daihuan* 同訓代換 (“replace and exchange by the same model”, see 5.1.2.1), but also of other methods. During the rule of Emperor Yang (r. 605–617), many titles and geographical names were changed because of tabooing.

6.1.3. Taboos of Rulers and Their Ancestors

A clear change in the period of Sui is the greater number of taboo examples. There are quite a few instances of the tabooing of names in such a short period – more than in all other dynasties. Statistically speaking, there are 141 examples known from this time.⁶ Even if we take into account that there are more preserved written materials from the time of Sui than before, the large increase of taboo instances compared to former periods is still remarkable. The practice was also surely influenced by rulers, for whom tabooing was important. It is also interesting that most of the examples (81) are connected with the taboo name of the father of the first Emperor of Sui – Zhong 忠, and most of the others (53) with the taboo of the Second Emperor – Emperor Yang – Guang 廣. There are only a few known instances of tabooing the name of the (First) Emperor Wen – Jian 堅 (5 examples), and his other ancestors: his grandfather Zhen 禎 (1) and another ancestor five generations back, Yuanshou 元壽 (1). Even though the taboo character of Yang Zhong and its homonyms were very popular, and that its tabooing was specially supported by his son Emperor Wen, such a huge difference with the tabooing of Emperor Wen’s own name is hard to explain. The scholar Wang Jian has suggested that the discrepancy has come about because of the similarity in meaning of the taboo character *jian* 堅 and its equivalent *gu* 固 (both meaning solid). Because of the lack of case in which the replacement character is used in inappropriate ways, many examples of the taboo for *jian* have simply not been noticed by later authors.⁷ In other words, the replacement of Emperor Wen’s personal name of *jian* was most likely widespread, but we have no way of establishing with certainty that each and every instance of its equivalent *gu* was inspired by the need of tabooing, rather than just a different choice of words.

As already said, most taboo instances concern Yang Zhong, who was the father of the first Emperor. His name was tabooed and often changed to *cheng* 誠. We can find this

⁵ Wang Jian 2002, p. 116.

⁶ Wang Jian 2002, p. 120.

⁷ Wang Jian 2002, pp. 120-121.

character in two edicts of the Emperor Wen, issued in 583 AD and 602 AD.⁸ According to Wang Jian, the expression *chengjie* 誠節 of the first edict should in fact be *zhongjie* 忠節 (faithful), and *chengxiao* 誠孝 in the second one – *zhongxiao* 忠孝 (filial piety), but they both were changed because of taboo. He also gives other examples of such alterations in the *Book of the Sui*.⁹

Still more frequent was the tabooing of the homonym of the name of Yang Zhong – the very popular character *zhong* 中 (middle). It was changed to *nei* 內 (inside), because of its similar meaning. This method was described by Wang Guanguo of the Song dynasty in his *Xuelin*: “During the Sui dynasty the name of Secretariat *zhongshusheng* 中書省¹⁰ was changed because of taboo to *neishusheng* 內書省.¹¹ The character *zhong* was changed to *nei*.”¹² There are many examples of similar changes in geographical names from that period: *Zhongguo* 中國 to *Neiguo* 內國, *Zhongmou* 中牟 to *Neimou* 內牟, *Zhongxiang* 中鄉 to *Neixiang* 內鄉, *Langzhong* 閬中 to *Langnei* 閬內, *Zhongjiang* 中江 to *Neijiang* 內江, *Zhongqiu* 中丘 to *Neiqiu* 內丘, *Yunzhong* 雲中 to *Yunnei* 雲內, and *Baozhong* 褒中 to *Baonei* 褒內.¹³ A similar list of examples can be made with names of offices changed because of taboo in that time: Palace Attendant-in-ordinary (*zhongchangshi* 中常侍)¹⁴ to *neichangshi* 內常侍, Section for Inner Troops (*zhongbingcao* 中兵曹)¹⁵ to *neibingcao* 內兵曹, Secretariat Supervisor (*zhongshujian* 中書監)¹⁶ to *neishujian* 內書監, Secretary (*zhongsheren* 中舍人)¹⁷ to *neisheren* 內舍人, *zhongshi* 中侍 to *neishi* 內侍, Grand master of Palace Leisure (*zhongsan dafu* 中散大夫)¹⁸ to *neisan dafu* 內散大夫, *dianzhong jiangjun* 殿中將軍 to *diannei jiangjun* 殿內將軍, *dianzhong shiyu* 殿中侍御 to *diannei shiyu* 殿內侍御.¹⁹ Luckily, a term like the modern Chinese word for China, *Zhongguo* 中國, was changed back again, or Chinese would today have called their country *Neiguo* 內國.

⁸ *Suishu*, j. 1, p. 11a and j. 48, p. 4b.

⁹ Wang Jian 2002, p. 117.

¹⁰ One of the „Three Departments and Six Ministries” (三省六部), which was the main central administrative system of China. Cf. Hucker 1985, p. 194; Xu Lianda 2010, p. 108.

¹¹ For *neishusheng* see Hucker 1985, p. 352; Xu Lianda 2010, p. 108. Hucker mentioned “some confusion about this in the sources.” Xu Lianda noticed the change of name because of taboo of Sui.

¹² *Xuelin*, j. 3, p. 69; Cf. also *Nian'er shi kaoyi*, j. 33, p. 628.

¹³ Wang Jian 2002, p. 118. Cf. *Jingshi biming huikao*, j. 13, p. 205; *Lidai huiming kao*, j. 1, p. 6a.

¹⁴ Hucker 1985, p. 188.

¹⁵ Hucker 1985, p. 192.

¹⁶ Hucker 1985, p. 193.

¹⁷ Hucker 1985, p. 192.

¹⁸ Hucker 1985, p. 192.

¹⁹ Wang Jian 2002, p. 117.

In the five instances of tabooing his personal name that we do know, the name Jian 堅 of Emperor Wen was changed to *gu* 固. These examples were discovered in the *Book of the Sui* by the Qing author Zhou Guangye.²⁰ According to him, the character *gu* 固 in such expressions in *Book of the Sui* as *zhizhi migu* 執志彌固²¹ should be read in fact as *jian* 堅. Also the name of the son of the Emperor Wucheng (r. 561–565) of the Northern Qi dynasty, written as Rengu 仁固 in the *History of the Northern Dynasties (Beishi)*,²² was actually Renjian 仁堅.²³

The taboo character of the name of Emperor Yang – Guang 廣 (meaning great, expanded) – had several equivalents with similar meaning: *da* 大 (large), *bo* 博 (extensive) and *kuo* 闊 (wide). The first one was often used in geographical names, as for example, Guang'an 廣安 was changed to Da'an 大安, Guangliang 廣梁 to Daliang 大梁, Guangxian 廣縣 to Daxian 大縣, Guangde 廣德 to Dade 大德, Guangwei 廣威 to Dawei 大威 and Guangzhi 廣至 to Dazhi 大至.²⁴ In other cases, the character *bo* 博 was often used as the equivalent. For example, in the Sui period the famous dictionary *Guangya* 廣雅 was called by Cao Xian 曹憲 as *Boya* 博雅.²⁵ Similarly, the expression “expand all around” (*guangsi* 廣四) from the *Records of Examination of Craftsman (Kaogongji* 考工記)²⁶ is quoted in the petition to the emperor in the *Book of the Sui* as *bosi* 博四,²⁷ because of this taboo.

The replacement of the taboo character *guang* with *kuo* 闊 in the same *Book of the Sui*²⁸ was also reported by Zhou Guangye.²⁹ Three further examples of tabooing with the equivalent method and a list of 30 other changes because of the taboo character *guang* can be found in the work of Qian Daxin.³⁰ In addition, the Qing author Liu Xixin 劉錫信 recorded in his *Lidai huimingkao* 歷代諱名考 the change of geographical names Guangling

²⁰ Cf. *Jingshi biming huikao*, j. 13, p. 202.

²¹ *Suishu*, j. 71, p. 11a.

²² *Beishi*, j. 8, p. 4b. Cf. also *Bei Qishu*, j. 8, p. 1b.

²³ Wang Yankun 1997, p. 216.

²⁴ Wang Jian 2002, p. 118.

²⁵ *Jiu Tangshu*, j. 46, p. 14a.

²⁶ *Zhouli*, j. 12, p. 16a.

²⁷ *Suishu*, j. 68, p. 2a. Interesting that the same quotation of *Kaogongji* with the character *guang* 廣 is recorded also in one of former chapters of the *Suishu*, j. 49, p. 3a.

²⁸ *Suishu*, j. 12, p. 13a. Cf. Wang Yankun 1997, p. 130.

²⁹ *Jingshi biming huikao*, j. 13, p. 202.

³⁰ *Shijia zhai yangxin lu*, j. 11, p. 9b.

廣陵 to Jiangdu 江都, Guangle 廣樂 to Changle 長樂 and Guangfeng 廣豐 to Fengcheng 豐城, because of the tabooing of names.³¹

6.1.4. “Unsystematic” Tabooing Methods

In the last mentioned group of taboo instances no prescribed method was used, especially in geographical names. They can be seen as “unsystematic” changes, but some of them still follow a concrete custom and can be explained. A name could be, for example, changed to one of the old names, if it had existed before. For example present-day Canton (Guangzhou 廣州) was changed to its former name Panzhou 番州 (in the past actually Panyu 番禺) in the period of Sui, and at the same time Guangyang county 廣陽 in Sichuan restored its name from the past – Wenshan 汶山 (today Maowen 茂汶 county). Similarly Guangchang 廣長 (today near Lüeyang 略陽 in Shaanxi) turned back to its former name Xiucheng 修城 in the Sui time.³²

Another method of changing a name because of taboo was to use names of rivers and mountains around a place. In this way, Guangdu 廣都 in Sichuan was changed to Shuangliu 雙流 during the Sui period, because of its two rivers, and Guangchuan county 廣川 in Hebei was changed to Changhe 長河,³³ since the river Changhe passed through the county. Nevertheless, there are still instances without a clear rule explaining the change. The character *guang* was sometimes simply deleted and another put in its place, as for example in the case of Guangzong 廣宗 county in Hebei which was changed to Zongcheng 宗城, or Guangfu 廣福 county in Hubei which was changed to Anfu 安福.³⁴

6.2. Tang

6.2.1. Sources

Thanks to the flourishing of culture and the increased usage of paper, more sources are extant from this period, which also means abundant evidence on the practice of *bihui*. The most important historical sources for us are the *Old Book of the Tang* (*Jiu Tangshu*) composed in 940–945 amongst others by Liu Xu 劉煦 (sometimes written as 劉煦, 887–946)

³¹ *Lidai huimingkao*, j. 1, p. 6a.

³² *Shijia zhai yangxin lu*, j. 11, p. 9b.

³³ *Jingshi biming huikao*, j. 26, p. 202.

³⁴ *Shijia zhai yangxin lu*, j. 11, p. 9b.

and the *New Book of the Tang* (*Xin Tangshu*) composed in 1043–1060 amongst others by Ouyang Xiu 歐陽修 (1007–1072) and Song Qi 宋祁 (998–1061). The *Old Book of the Tang* is more reliable and the *New Book of the Tang* contains many errors.³⁵ There are also historical works composed in the Tang period (*Book of the Jin*, *Book of the Liang*, *Book of the Chen*, *Book of the Northern Qi*, *Book of the Zhou*, *Book of the Sui*, *History of the Southern Dynasties*, *History of the Northern Dynasties*) or commented by Tang scholars (*Records of the Historian*, *Book of the Han*, *Book of the Later Han*) where changes have been made because of Tang taboos.

The first Chinese penal code – the *Tang Code with Commentaries* (*Tanglü shuyi* 唐律疏議) – was composed in 624 AD and enhanced in 653 AD with a commentary. It included the punishment for violation of taboo names, which was a basis for regulations for subsequent Chinese legal codes. From the Tang, we also have the first “collection of important documents” (*huiyao*) – *Important Documents of the Tang* (*Tanghuiyao* 唐會要) compiled by Wang Pu 王溥 (922–982), the already mentioned *Encyclopaedic History of Institutions* (*Tongdian* 通典) composed in 801 by Du You 杜佑 (735–812) and the *Outstanding Models from the Storehouse of Literature* (*Cefu yuangui* 冊府元龜) edited in 1013 AD by Wang Qinruo *et al.* All these works discussed the topic of name taboos. In addition, the geographical work the *Gazetteer of the World During the Taiping Period* (*Taiping huanyu jizhi* 太平寰宇記志), compiled by Yue Shi 樂史 (930–1007) writes about changes in place names because of taboo. Stone inscriptions known from the Tang period are discussed here only in a very limited way and more research is still necessary on Dunhuang manuscripts as well.³⁶

6.2.2. Brief Characteristics of the Period

The Tang and the Song periods was the time, when the custom of the tabooing of names most flourished.³⁷ The Tang dynasty is considered (especially in the Chinese historiography) one of the most successful periods in the history of China. Though modern research is more critical, the period it is still regarded as one of progress and stability. In that time the flourishing of Chinese culture and the blossoms of tabooing came together. This shows once

³⁵ Cf. Wilkinson 2000, pp. 819–820.

³⁶ Dunhuang manuscripts can be dated to the period of the 5th – 11th centuries. The cave in Dunhuang was sealed off in 1035 AD. Cf. Wilkinson 2000, pp. 797–798, 826–829.

³⁷ Cf. Chen Yuan 1958, p. 1.

more that the tabooing of names should not only be seen as a strange, negative and marginal custom, but on the contrary as an essential part of Chinese culture.

Many important changes in the system and the practice of tabooing were made especially in the beginning of the Tang dynasty. New edicts standardised rules of tabooing. Concrete punishment was prescribed for violation of taboo. New methods of tabooing were developed, among them a new method of omitting a stroke, i.e., a visual solution which allowed the original character to be preserved more or less intact, or at least to reduce the change. This can be attributed to the increasing importance of written characters in relation to the spoken word (reading over oral culture). All that brought an immense increase of examples of tabooing and the widening of its spectrum.

6.2.3. The Method of a Missing Stroke

One of the most important changes in practice from the period of Tang was a new method of tabooing: one stroke (usually the last one) was not written. In this way, on the one hand the tabooing was assured, while on the other hand the original character could be recognized (in most cases). The method of a missing stroke can be seen for the first time in the Tang period, during the ruling time of Gaozong (650-683). We know this from an imperial edict issued in 660 AD that ordered the omission of the last stroke of a taboo character or its replacement with another character if classical works are copied.³⁸

In practice, other methods such as replacement of the characters (during the Tang still by characters with a different sound, which had been the main method before already), the use of “empty” characters, etc. were also continued. It seems that various methods were used in different situations, but further research is still needed on this topic. What we do know is that there are many characters with missing strokes (more than replaced characters)³⁹ in the classical texts, especially in stone inscriptions of Tang.

For example in the inscription of *Zengtai shikong xuangongbei* 贈泰師孔宣公碑 in the year 666 AD, the character *min* 泯 is written as *zhi* 沚.⁴⁰ The case is regarded as the first known example of the method of a missing stroke.⁴¹ Similar instances can also be found in the *Zhiningbei* 志寧碑 (666 AD) – *shi* 世 is written as *sa* 卅 in the expression *shiwu* 世武, and on the *Stone Stele of Li He* 李賀碑 (677 AD) – there is the *sa* 卅 character put in place

³⁸ *Cefuyuangui*, j. 3, p. 11a.

³⁹ Cf. Chen Yuan 1958, p. 146.

⁴⁰ *Jinshi cuibian*, j. 55, p. 2b.

⁴¹ Chen Yuan 1958, p. 6.

of *shi* 世 in the name of Wang Shichong 王世充.⁴² Moreover, the texts found in Dunhuang seem to make a distinction in writing: taboo characters of Tang in quotations from classical works are written without the last stroke, but in explanations and compilations other equivalent characters are used.⁴³

6.2.4. Principles of Name Tabooing

The tabooing of the names of the living (*shenghui* 生諱) was already an undisputable standard, and the old principle of tabooing after the mourning time (i.e., taboo only for the names of the dead, see 3.5.1) was apparently fully forgotten. But three other old problems of name tabooing appeared again in the Tang time: tabooing of single characters of composite given names (e.g., *shi* and *min* in the name of Li Shimin 李世民, see 3.5.8), tabooing of homonyms (3.5.7) and tabooing of names of distant ancestors (3.5.5).

As we remember, the “traditional” rule of the *Records of Ritual* (*Liji*) was that in these three cases single characters should not be tabooed.⁴⁴ In imperial edicts of 626 (double names) and 660 (homonyms), this principle was still supported. In practice, however, tabooing was often observed in the three cases above, too. It is supposed by some scholars that until the death of Taizong (649) characters of double names were still not commonly avoided.⁴⁵ There are evidently few examples of the tabooing of the name of this emperor – Shimin 世民 – during his life time (his father, the founder of the Tang dynasty, had a one-character name), but it seems that some people practiced the tabooing of double names,⁴⁶ even if there was no punishment for violation of them.⁴⁷

We know, for example, that in 630 AD the work *Deng cisi tajiming* 等慈寺塔記銘 of Yan Shigu 顏師古 (581–645) called the name of Wang Shichong 王世充 as Wang Chong 王充.⁴⁸ On the other hand, the Ministry of Revenue (*minbu* 民部)⁴⁹ was still called in this manner, and such people as Li Shiji 李世勣 (594–669) and Yu Shinan 虞世南 (558–638)

⁴² *Jinshi cuibian*, j. 42, p. 3b.

⁴³ Wang Xinhua 2007, p. 271.

⁴⁴ Cf. *Liji*, j. 1, pp. 38b–40a.

⁴⁵ *Laoxue anbijì*, j. 10, p. 94; Wang Xinhua 2007, p. 267.

⁴⁶ This popular practice is mentioned in the edict of 626: “Many people taboo singular characters of double-names ... the characters *min* and *shi* should not be read together, but there is no need to taboo them separately.” This edict is recorded in *Cefu yuangui*, j. 3, p. 10b.

⁴⁷ *Tanglü yishu* 唐律疏議 compiled in the ruling period of Gaozu has the principle: “those who have violated the tabooing of homonyms or of characters from a double-name should not be punished” (*Tanglü yishu*, j. 10, p. 219–220).

⁴⁸ *Jinshi cuibian*, j. 42, p. 1b (text) ; j. 52, p. 5b (comments).

⁴⁹ Hucker 1985, p. 332.

did not yet taboo their names.⁵⁰ But during the reign period of Gaozong (650-683), the name of the Ministry of Revenue was changed to *hubu* 户部,⁵¹ and Li Shiji had to delete the character *shi* from his name and was called Li Ji. Yu Shinan was already dead.⁵² Many other instances of tabooing are known from that time.⁵³ Besides, in the three examples alluded to above, characters of double names were avoided: 666 AD the character *min* 民 was replaced by *ren* 人 in the quotation *shengmin yilai* 生民以来, and the character *min* 泯 by *zhi* 泚 in the quotation *zhiyu qimin* 智愚齊泚 of the stone inscription *Zengtai shikong xuangongbei* 贈泰師孔宣公碑 (the first example of tabooing by the method of leaving a stroke out in inscriptions).⁵⁴

The expression *shiwu* 世武 in the same year – 666 AD – was written as *sa* 卅 (thirty) in the inscription of *Zhiningbei* 志寧碑. In the year 677 AD, the middle stroke was missing in the character *shi* of the name of Wang Shicong 王世充 on the inscription of Li He (*Li He bei* 李賀碑).⁵⁵ As one can see, the tabooing of characters of double given names seemed to be common and accepted.

A similar remark can be made about the tabooing of homonyms. Even if the practice existed in the beginning of Tang, it was not sanctioned by the emperor, as we can see still in the edict of 660 AD and earlier in the *Tang Code with Commentaries* (*Tanglü shuyi*).⁵⁶ Yet, the custom of tabooing of homonyms seemed to be used with increasing frequency.

One interesting example is the curious case of tabooing the name Li Chun 李淳 (778-820, later Emperor Xianzong, r. 806-820), described in the *Tanghuiyao* 唐會要. As he was established in 805 AD as the crown prince, the minister Wang Chun 王純 wanted to change his own name to Shao 紹, but the ruler refused it. Furthermore, the crown prince himself changed his name to Chun 純.⁵⁷ But a bit later, in case of an official Investigating

⁵⁰ According to the Song source *Rongzhai sanbi*, j. 11, p. 2a.

⁵¹ *Jiu Tangshu*, j. 4, p. 1b: [649 AD] “*minbu* 民部 was changed to *hubu* 户部”.

⁵² *Laoxue anbijì*, j. 10, p. 94.

⁵³ There are, for example, many cases in which the taboo character *shi* 世 in the name of Emperor Taizong was replaced by the character *dai* 代. In the Nestorian Stele (erected in 781), the expression *chudai* 出代 was used twice in place of *chushi* 出世 (leave the world, epiphany of Buddha, here: incarnation of Jesus Christ). Cf. Xu Longfei 2004, p. 128. Of course, all taboo characters of Tang emperors were avoided in the stele, too,

⁵⁴ *Jinshi cuibian*, j. 55, p. 2b.

⁵⁵ *Jinshi cuibian*, j. 42, p. 3b.

⁵⁶ *Tanglü yishu*, j. 10, p. 219-220

⁵⁷ It is not clear if the petition of Wang Chun occurred before or after the name change of the crown prince.

Censor (*jiancha yushi* 監察御史)⁵⁸ Lu Chun 陸淳 (d. 806) who had no wish to change his name (perhaps because of a homonym of the actual name of the emperor, but more probably because of his former name), a special decree was issued, ordering him to change his name to Zhi 質.⁵⁹ It can be presumed therefore that the tabooing of homonyms was perceived in an ambivalent way during the whole Tang dynasty. However, it is also quite possible that the avoidance of homonyms of a taboo name was not the main cause for changing his name. No explanation could be found as to why the crown prince decided to change his name (it is interesting that both names have a very similar meaning and pronunciation). The name change by Lu Chun was done most probably because of the former name of the crown prince.

The problem of the tabooing the names of distant ancestors was also a topic in the Tang period. As one might recall, the “traditional” principle (see 3.5.5) was to taboo names of the dynasty’s founder and the last seven ancestors (“seven temples”)⁶⁰ as it was once more stressed in the *Tongdian*.⁶¹ Yet in the Sui dynasty, another system of tabooing of four ancestors was introduced.⁶² This system, probably continued in the beginning of the Tang dynasty, was successively extended by the next emperors: to seven ancestors by the Emperor Taizong (r. 627–649), nine ancestors by Xuanzong (r. 712–756), and “nine generations with eleven places” by Wuzong (r. 840–846).⁶³

This extension generated discussions about the limit of tabooing. Already in the ruling time of Gaozong (r. 650–683) a petition to the throne was made (in 651 AD) not to taboo distant ancestors.⁶⁴ Later in the time of the Emperor Xianzong (806–820), as his father was entombed, the soul tablets of Gaozong and Zhongzong were moved from the ancestral temple and were no longer tabooed.⁶⁵ The practice of tabooing in the times of the Empress Wu Zetian (r. 690–705) is also interesting. The Empress, who founded a new dynasty with her own ancestors, erected “seven temples” for her ancestors in Dongdu 東都 (today’s Luoyang) and ordered people to taboo their names as state taboo (*guohui* 國諱).⁶⁶

⁵⁸ Hucker 1985, pp. 145–146.

⁵⁹ *Tanghuiyao*, j. 23, p. 453. Cf. also *Yeke congshu*, j. 9, p. 84.

⁶⁰ About rituals of Tang dynasty see McMullen 1987, pp. 181–236.

⁶¹ *Tongdian*, j. 104, p. 552.

⁶² Cf. Xiong 2006, pp. 128–129. It was believed that this system was a Western Zhou tradition.

⁶³ *Jiu Tangshu*, j. 25, p. 12a.

⁶⁴ *Tanghuiyao*, j. 23, p. 452.

⁶⁵ *Cefu yuangui*, j. 591, p. 10a.

⁶⁶ About the time of the Empress Wu Zetian see Forte 1976.

From the same period during the reign of Empress Wu Zetian, a case of avoiding parts of a character (*pianpang* 偏旁) is known. Cui Yuanye 崔元暉 was forced to change his name to Yuanwei 元暉, because the lower part of the character *ye* was identical with the taboo name Hua 華 of an ancestor of the Empress.⁶⁷ The case already reflects the increasing impact of writing in her period.

6.2.5. Penalties

For the first time, as far as we know, the tabooing of names was codified in law. Concrete penalties were now prescribed for the violation of taboos, which were later also adopted in the legal codes of subsequent dynasties. The *Tang Code with Commentaries* (*Tanglü shuyi*) determined that: “All cases of violating ancestral temple name taboos in documents or petitions on affairs submitted to the emperor are punishable by eighty blows with a heavy stick. If such errors are made orally, or used in other official documents, the punishment is fifty blows with a light stick.”⁶⁸ Even stronger is the next prescription: “Cases of offending by using the emperor’s name are punishable by three years of penal servitude.”⁶⁹

In the concrete case of Song Ang 宋昂, he was eventually demoted by two degrees since he had used the same name as Emperor Wenzong (Li Ang 李昂, r. 826–840) for ten years.⁷⁰ Nothing is said in the sources about imprisonment, as he should have been according to law. This therefore indicates that taboo practice may have differed from taboo rules.

The penalty in the case of a name of office violating the taboo name of one’s father was comparatively strong in the *Tang Code*: “All cases involving those who hold posts whose administrative designations or official titles violate their fathers’ or paternal grandfathers’ name taboos ... are punishable by one year of penal servitude.”⁷¹

It is interesting that the legal prescriptions of Tang were not only to the imperial taboo, but also included the family taboo. It shows that the tabooing of names was not considered merely as an internal expression of courtesy, or as an external instrument of power and legitimacy of the emperor. On the contrary – it was an essential part of the right culture for all strata of Chinese society.

⁶⁷ *Cefuyuangui*, j. 825, p. 3b.

⁶⁸ *Tanglü shuyi*, j. 10, p. 219. For translation see *The T’ang Code* 1997, Vol. II, p. 83.

⁶⁹ *Tanglü shuyi*, j. 10, p. 220. For translation see *The T’ang Code* 1997, Vol. II, p. 83.

⁷⁰ *Tanghuiyao*, j. 23, p. 453.

⁷¹ *Tanglü shuyi*, j. 10, p. 224. For translation see *The T’ang Code* 1997, Vol. II, p. 91.

The Tang dynasty can be called a turning point, not only in the codification of law, but also in the sense of tabooing. Until that time, tabooing had not only been the obligation of subjects, but the emperor or tabooed person himself often tried to make his name easier for tabooing. In the Tang dynasty there are still examples of a ruler's name change for this purpose. Later this custom disappeared and the ruler executed the law without thinking of common people.⁷²

In the *Tang Code*, the use of single characters of double names and of homonyms was not punished, and what we find in practice seems to confirm this. There is, for example, the case of Li Xi 李谿 (d. 895) who in 871 wrote the character *song* 訟 (homonym of the taboo name Song 誦 of the Emperor Shunzong, r. 805) in a petition to the emperor and was punished with reduction in salary, but acquitted after he protested.⁷³

6.2.6. Diffusion of Custom to Other Countries

Chinese culture had, of course, influence on the surrounding countries. The flourishing of the Tang dynasty also brought many international contacts and cultural impact, amongst others in the culture of name tabooing. Many foreign students studied in China, and after their studies took up the practice of tabooing of names in their home countries. The research about the effect of the Chinese system of tabooing in other countries is still scant.⁷⁴ Still, it can be supposed that neighbouring countries of China also had their own customs of tabooing, and we will briefly discuss the avoidance of taboo names in Korea and Japan later on (see 10.5).

Further research on the Chinese impact of taboo in Japanese and Korean documents is still needed. Here it should only be pointed out that foreigners coming to China were obliged to observe Chinese taboo. We know, for example, about the Japanese monk Ennin (Yuan Ren 圓仁, 794–864),⁷⁵ who came for studies in the Tang period. He was instructed by a monk from the Ximing Temple 西明寺 in Chang'an, who listed for him all taboo characters of the Tang dynasty and prohibited him from using their homonyms.⁷⁶

⁷² Wang Xinhua 2007, p. 278.

⁷³ *Tanghuiyao*, j. 23, p. 453.

⁷⁴ Cf. Wang Xinhua 2007, pp. 129-136.

⁷⁵ In Japan known by his posthumous name Jikaku Daishi (慈覺大師), a monk of the Buddhist Tendai-shū school. For more about Ennin see Groner 2002, pp. 305-308; Repp 2005, pp. 150-151;

⁷⁶ *Rutang qiufa xunli xingji*, j. 1, p. 19. For translation of this work see Reischauer 1955.

6.2.7. Naming Taboo for Relatives of the Emperor

The custom of name tabooing was practiced also in relation to relatives of the emperor. For example, during the reign of the Empress Wu Zetian (r. 690–705), not only her name, but also those of her father, mother, crown prince, emperor's son-in-law etc. were taboo (cf. 10.1.2).⁷⁷ The *Taiping huaiyuji* reports that the name of Xincheng county 新城縣 was changed because of the name Jiancheng 建成 of the crown prince Yin (隱太子, 589–626) into Xinzheng county 新政縣.⁷⁸ When Hong 弘 became the crown prince in 656 AD, the Gate of the Broad Teachings (*hongjiaomen* 弘教門) was changed into the Gate of Respecting the Teachings (*chongjiaomen* 崇教門). Later, when Xian 賢 became the crown prince in 675 AD, the Hall of Respecting the Sages (*chongxianguan* 崇賢館) was replaced by the Hall of Respecting Culture (*chongwenguan* 崇文館).⁷⁹

6.2.8. Family Taboo

There are many examples illustrating the importance of family taboo, which was commonly observed, at least in higher classes of Chinese society. The best known instance of that time is probably that of the famous poet Li He 李賀 (790–816), who was not allowed to attend the highest civil service examination of the Advanced Scholars (*jinshi* 進士) and sank into poverty, because one character of this title conflicted (as homonym) with the name of his father – Jinsu 晉肅.⁸⁰

The case was criticized by the poet Han Yu 韓愈 (768–824) in his work *Against Taboos* (*Huibian* 諱辨) as exaggerated: contrary to the rules of the *Records of Ritual* (cf. 3.5) a single character of double given name Jinsu was tabooed and its homonym avoided. He asked as a rhetorical question: If somebody whose father's name was Ren 仁 still would be allowed to remain a man (*ren* 人).⁸¹

6.2.9. Tabooing in Practice

Tabooing in social relations was widely practiced in the Tang period, not only within one's own family. The avoidance of superiors' taboo was accepted. Especially powerful officials

⁷⁷ Chen Yuan 1958, p. 28.

⁷⁸ *Taiping huaiyuji*, j. 86, pp. 10b-11a.

⁷⁹ *Tongdian*, j. 104, p. 554. Note that the last stroke is omitted in the character *hong* 弘.

⁸⁰ *Jiu Tangshu*, j. 137, p. 7b; *Rongzhai xubi*, j. 11, p. 3.

⁸¹ *Quan Tangwen*, j. 558, 1a–2a.

demanded the tabooing of their own names in the whole country and regarded its violation as a sign of disloyalty. On the other hand, avoiding the names and taboos of friends and neighbours became a norm of respect and courtesy. This was, for example, the practice between scholars of the Hanlin Academy 翰林院 founded in the beginning of Tang dynasty in 718 AD⁸² by Emperor Xuanzong.⁸³

The spectrum of tabooing became much larger than before. At least a lot more facts are known from this period, suggesting that there was indeed a spread in the practice of tabooing. Not only was the name of the Emperor tabooed, but also his era names (*nianhao* 年號), temple name (*miaohao* 廟號) and tomb name (*lingming* 陵名). The changes because of tabooing now included not only people and geographical names, but also Heavenly Stems and Earthly Branches, liturgical vessels, and names of Taoist temples. The practice of tabooing appeared in petitions to the throne, official documents, historical works, stone inscriptions, and in the imperial civil-service examination.⁸⁴ In fact, in Tang dynasty China tabooing penetrated already all situations of social life.

6.3. Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms (907–960)

6.3.1. Sources

There are few historical sources for this period between two dynasties that have survived to this day. The most important for us are as always the standard histories: the *Old History of the Five Dynasties* (*Jiu Wudaishi* 舊五代史) written by Xue Juzheng 薛居正 (912–981) and the *New History of the Five Dynasties* (*Xin Wudaishi* 新五代史) written by Ouyang Xiu 歐陽修 (1007–1072).⁸⁵ Materials of this period can be found, too, in the *History of the Southern Tang* (*Nan Tangshu* 南唐書) – about the history of Southern Tang Kingdom, compiled in 1184 by Lu You 陸游 (1125–1210). Much later another work about that period was written, the *Spring and Autumn of Ten Kingdoms* (*Shiguo chunqiu* 十國春秋), composed in 1669 by Wu Renchen 吳任臣. Additional information can be found in the

⁸² Twitchett 1979, p. 378.

⁸³ *Quan Tangwenjishi*, j. 1, p. 11ab.

⁸⁴ Wang Xinhua 2007, p. 278.

⁸⁵ Translated completely by Richard L. Davis. See Ouyang Xiu 2004.

Outstanding Models from the Storehouse of Literature (*Cefu yuangui* 冊府元龜) edited in 1013 AD by Wang Qinruo *et al.*⁸⁶

6.3.2. Brief Characteristics

The period of the Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms (907–960) was relatively short and turbulent. The former territory of the Tang Empire was now divided into numerous political units, which often fought each other. Later historians (to be specific, Ouyang Xiu – the author of the *New History of the Five Dynasties*)⁸⁷ invented a distinction between the Five Dynasties which, in their view, legitimately succeeded the Tang, and the Ten Kingdoms which did not. However, at the time, all these states saw themselves as legitimate rulers and practically all of them practiced the taboo system. Specific practices varied between the different states. Whereas it remained strict in most dynasties, the rules of taboo seem a bit relaxed especially in the non-Chinese dynasties (Later Tang, Later Jin, Later Han). Many imperial edicts etc. are known from this period and we can trace the practices in some detail.

6.3.3. Later Liang 後梁 (907–923)

The Tang dynasty came to a formal end in 907 when the last Emperor Ai 哀帝 (r. 904–907) abdicated (and was later murdered, in 908) in favour of the first emperor of Later Liang, Zhu Quanzhong 朱全忠 (r. 907–912). The new ruler considered the tabooing of names a highly important custom. He used political prophecies in which writing played an important role.⁸⁸

Even before Zhu Quanzhong started to reign as an emperor instead of the warlord that he originally was, the last Emperor of Tang was forced by him to issue six edicts about the tabooing of the names of him and his ancestors (Cheng 誠, Xin 信, Maolin 茂林) within only a few months in 905 AD. The edicts ordered taboo characters in all names to be changed.⁸⁹ Similar edicts were repeated after the accession of Zhu to the throne.

Because of Zhu's father Zhu Cheng 朱誠, the character *cheng* 城 in all names of counties was removed and names changed to one-character names. The temple for King

⁸⁶ Wilkinson 2000, pp. 822-823.

⁸⁷ Cf. *Xin Wudaishi*, j. 71, p. 1a.

⁸⁸ Cf. ter Haar 2004, pp. 26-27.

⁸⁹ *Jiu Tangshu*, j. 20, pp. 9a, 10a, 11a; Chen Yuan 1958, p. 149.

Wucheng 武成王 was renamed the temple of King Wuming 武明王.⁹⁰ The military commandery *Zhaoxin* 昭信 was renamed *Rongzhaog* 戎昭.⁹¹ Numerous changes were made because of the taboo of the grandfather of Zhu, which was Maolin 茂林. Maozhou 茂州 was changed to Wenzhou 汶州, Maoming county 茂名 to Yueshang 越裳.⁹² It is worth mentioning that the changes were not consistent. There was apparently no central prescription on how to solve the problem, but only a proclamation of several names as taboo.

Furthermore, as the character *wu* 戊 was a constituent part of *mao* 茂, this character was also prohibited and had to be replaced by *wu* 武. Therefore, for example, the combination *wuchen* 戊辰 from the Heavenly Stems and Earthly Branches was changed to *wuchen* 武辰.⁹³ Because of the taboo name of Zhu Quanzhong himself,⁹⁴ the place Xuchang 許昌, called Zhongwu 忠武 in the Tang period, was changed to Kuangguo 匡國.⁹⁵

When in 912 AD Zhu Quanzhong, and in 913 AD his son Yougui 友珪 were murdered, Zhu Youzhen 朱友瑱 (r. 913–923) became the new ruler. His former name was Zhen 貞, and he tabooed it as well. Therefore, for example, Kang Huaizhen 康懷貞 had to change his name to Huaiying 懷英.⁹⁶

6.3.4. Later Tang 後唐 (923–936)

In 923 the Shatuo Turks headed by Li Cunxu 李存勖 (r. 923–926) destroyed the Later Liang dynasty. Li founded – or as he expressed it, “restored” – the (Later) Tang dynasty.⁹⁷ Although the period of his reign was very short, we have numerous instances of name tabooing – a custom he strongly accented as an important legacy of the Tang dynasty. Apparently he wanted to be regarded as Chinese or rather as an inhabitant or possessor of a long-established imperial culture.

⁹⁰ *Jiu Tangshu*, j. 20, p. 10a.

⁹¹ *Jiu Tangshu*, j. 20, p. 10a.

⁹² *Jiu Wudaishi*, j. 3, p. 4a.

⁹³ *Lüyuan conghua*, j. 9, p. 17.

⁹⁴ Zhu Quanzhong was called originally Wen 溫 and received the name Quanzhong 全忠 in 882 from the Emperor Xizong of Tang. Zhu hated later the name because it stressed his loyalty to the Tang dynasty. This may have been a reason for tabooing the name. Later he changed his name to 晃 (bright).

⁹⁵ *Xin Wudaishi*, j. 60, p. 13a.

⁹⁶ *Jiu Wudaishi*, j. 23, p. 5a.

⁹⁷ Note that Tang Emperors were half-Turkish, too. Cf. Twitchett 2000, pp. 122–126.

Most cases are examples of avoiding the name of Li's grandfather – Guochang 國昌. Thirty seven place names were ordered to be changed in 924 AD according to the *Cefu yuangui* because they contained the character *chang* 昌.⁹⁸ For example, the name of Yanchang county 延昌縣 was changed to its old name Yantang 延唐 (which indicates that the memory or record of former names was preserved), Yichang county 義昌縣 to Yizhang 義彰, and Changjiang county 昌江 to Pingjiang 平江 (in today's Hunan province).⁹⁹ Besides, Gao Jichang 高季昌 (858–929) – later the founder of Nanping (one of Ten Kingdoms in south-central China, see 6.3.7) changed his original name to Gao Jixing 高季興 because of the taboo of the Later Tang.¹⁰⁰

Compared with the number of examples of tabooing the name of Li Cunxu's grandfather, there are hardly any instances known for the tabooing of his own name in historical works. Actually, only one case is known. The name of Li Gui 李瓌 from the *Old History of the Five Dynasties (Jiu Wudaishi)*¹⁰¹ is explained in the *Comprehensive Mirror for Aid in Government (Zizhi tongjian 資治通鑑)* as Li Cungui 李存瓌.¹⁰² The name was apparently changed in the Later Tang period because of taboo. The character *cun* 存 was omitted and restored again by Sima Guang in his *Comprehensive Mirror*.

Li Siyuan 李嗣源 (r. 926–933) became the second ruler of the Later Tang in 926, after his father Li Cunxu was killed during a rebellion. He also stressed the importance of name tabooing as a legacy of the Tang dynasty, and issued a few edicts. The edict of 926 AD imitated that of Taizong of Tang.¹⁰³ The edict of the following year changed the taboo name of the Emperor to the single name Dan 亶.¹⁰⁴ Another edict of 928 ordered the omission of strokes in taboo characters in petitions to the throne.¹⁰⁵ Shortly afterwards the regional military governor from Jingzhou – Yang Tan 楊檀 – changed his name to Yang Guangyuan 楊光遠, and the geographical names of Tanzhou 檀州 and Jintan 金壇 were

⁹⁸ *Cefuyuangui*, j. 31, p. 6a.

⁹⁹ *Cefuyuangui*, j. 31, pp. 6b-7a. The author of this dissertation is not sure if the last two names were former names of these localities, or if another method of tabooing was used.

¹⁰⁰ *Xin Wudaishi*, j. 69, p. 1a.

¹⁰¹ *Jiu Wudaishi*, j. 43, p. 4a-5a.

¹⁰² *Zizhi tongjian*, j. 278, pp. 1a-1b. It was compiled by Sima Guang (1019–1086), cf. Wilkinson 2000, p. 499.

¹⁰³ *Jiu Wudaishi*, j. 36, p. 4a. Cf. *Jiu Tangshu*, j. 2, p. 6a.

¹⁰⁴ *Jiu Wudaishi*, j. 38, p. 1a. The author of this dissertation could not find an explanation for the cause of this change.

¹⁰⁵ Recorded in *Wudai huiyao*, j.4, p. 47.

altered.¹⁰⁶ Interestingly, in these last few cases the problem characters are slightly different and even have a slightly different pronunciation.

6.3.5. Later Jin 後晉 (936–947)

The Later Tang dynasty ended in 936 when the son-in-law of Li Siyuan – Shi Jingtang 石敬瑭 (r. 936–942) – deposed him, in collusion with the Khitan people. His new dynasty was named (Later) Jin. Although Shi Jingtang was largely under control of the Khitan, he nevertheless held name tabooing in particularly high regard. In 938 AD his edict was issued, announcing the adoption of the proper ritual of name tabooing according to the rules of the Tang period.¹⁰⁷ Homonyms of taboo characters and parts of taboo characters (*pianpang* 偏旁) also had to be avoided.

In practice, the following methods were used: people who had as their family name Jing 敬 wrote it as Wengou 文苟 since that time,¹⁰⁸ and those with the family name Tang 唐 changed it to Tao 陶.¹⁰⁹ Later, in 942 AD – the last year of the rule of Shi Jingtang – an imperial letter was issued, which mandated in even greater detail that all names of palaces, prefectures, counties and offices offending the taboo name of the Emperor had to be changed. Twenty seven concrete examples are given, where names with the characters *tang* 唐, *tang* 堂, *jing* 竟 and *jing* 鏡 were changed.¹¹⁰ Similarly, all family names violating taboo also had to be changed.¹¹¹

The successor of Shi Jingtang – Shi Chonggui (r. 942–947) – continued the taboo policy of his father and in 942 AD issued a new imperial letter about it. He further widened and intensified the regulations. No wonder that when Liu Xu 劉昫 (887–946) finished the compilation of his *Old Book of the Tang (Jiu Tangshu)* in 945 AD, he could not use this name directly and originally named his work the *Book of Li Clan (Lishishu 李氏書)*.¹¹² Next to the tabooing of Shi Jingtang, we also know about the avoidance of his father's name, Shi

¹⁰⁶ *Jiu Wudaishi*, j. 47, p. 3b.

¹⁰⁷ *Jiu Wudaishi*, j. 77, p. 1b.

¹⁰⁸ *Qidong yeyu*, j. 4, p. 40. Note that *pu* 父 and *wen* 文 are different radicals.

¹⁰⁹ *Songshi*, j. 269, p. 1a.

¹¹⁰ It is interesting that the last two characters were changed to the homonym *jing* 景, which probably entails only a change of tone.

¹¹¹ *Cefu yuangui*, j. 3, p. 16ab.

¹¹² *Cefu yuangui*, j. 554, p. 37a; *Rizhilu*, j. 26, p. 18b–19a.

Shaoyong 石紹雍. Because of that, the name of the building *Yongxilou* 雍熙樓 was changed to *Zhanghelou* 章和樓.¹¹³

6.3.6. Later Han 後漢 (947–950) and Later Zhou 後周 (951–960)

The custom of tabooing was so common that we have examples of taboo even from periods of very short dynasties, such as the Later Han. The founder of this dynasty – Liu Zhiyuan 劉知遠 – reigned only about one year (947–948 AD), and his dynasty was finished two years later. We know that the military governor of Binzhou 邠州 – Zhe Congyuan 折從遠 – changed his name in 947 AD because of the imperial taboo to Zhe Congruan 折從阮.¹¹⁴ The minister Zhang Zhaoyuan 張昭遠 changed his name to Zhang Zhao 張昭,¹¹⁵ and Zhao Yuan 趙遠 (895–961) to Zhao Shangjiao 趙上交 (it was his courtesy name).¹¹⁶

According to later historiographers of the *History of the Song* (*Songshi*), they found 214 replaced characters in old works because of the taboos of this extremely brief period.¹¹⁷ An edict of Liu Zhiyuan from the year 948 is known, which changed his personal name to the monosyllabic and more easily avoidable Gao 高.¹¹⁸ Probably people had been complaining, because the characters of his original name were extremely common.

Paradoxically, materials about tabooing in the slightly longer dynasty of Later Zhou (951–960), started by Guo Wei 郭威 (951–954), are much fewer. But the tabooing of names was apparently no less strict, and examples of avoiding names of emperors and nobility are available.¹¹⁹ We know that in 951 AD the commander Cao Wei 曹威 changed his name, because of the taboo of the emperor, to Cao Ying 曹英, Ma Lingwei 馬令威 to Ma Lingzong 馬令琮, and Guo Yanwei 郭彥威 to Guo Yanqin 郭彥欽. Geographical names were also changed, such as Weishengjun 威勝軍 to Wushengjun 武勝軍, Weizhou 威州 to Huanzhou 環州, and the name of the office *zuoyou weiwei* 左右威衛 to *zuoyou tunwei* 左右屯衛.¹²⁰ Analogical names of successors of Guo Wei – Chai Rong 柴榮 (r. 954–959) and

¹¹³ *Jiu Wudaishi*, j. 77, p. 2a.

¹¹⁴ *Cefu yuangui*, j. 3, p. 16b.

¹¹⁵ *Jingshi biming huikao*, j. 17, p. 273.

¹¹⁶ *Songshi*, j. 262, p. 8b. The name of Zhang Shangjiao is also a nice pun, as its meaning is “to seek contact with a higher authority.”

¹¹⁷ *Songshi*, j. 264, p. 5a.

¹¹⁸ *Cefu yuangui*, j. 3, p. 17a.

¹¹⁹ In 956 AD in works of the Hanlin Academy, these names and their homonyms were tabooed. Cf. *Wudai huiyao*, j. 13, p. 175.

¹²⁰ Cf. *Cefu yuangui*, j. 3, p. 17ab. The name of office is not included in Hucker 1985 and Xu Lianda 2010.

Chai Zongxun 柴宗訓 (r. 959–960) were also tabooed: we know about one Li Rong 李榮 who changed his name to Li Yun 李筠,¹²¹ Xiang Xun 向訓 whose name was changed to Xiang Gong 向拱¹²² and Zhang Chongxun 張崇訓 changed to Zhang Chonggu 張崇誥¹²³ because of the taboo name of the emperor.

6.3.7. Ten Kingdoms

The tabooing of names in the kingdoms in the south of China outside the Five Dynasties area is less known, which is strange given that these areas were well within the Chinese cultural heartland. The materials which we do have show that all rulers regarded name taboos as an essential part of culture and the basis of their power. We still have examples of taboo in all kingdoms except for the Northern Han 北漢 (951–979). But we know that the founder of this dynasty, Liu Min 劉旻 (original name Liu Chong 劉崇, r. 951–954), was the brother of Liu Zhiyuan 劉知遠, founder of the Later Han dynasty, whose strict practice of tabooing has just been described (see 6.3.6). Therefore, a similar practice can be assumed in the Northern Han kingdom as well.

The Wu kingdom 吳國 (904–937) was founded by Yang Xingmi 楊行密 (r. 904–905) in the territory of what is today Anhui and Jiangsu province, with its capital in Yangzhou 揚州. According to Ouyang Xiu 歐陽修 (1007–1072), the name of the first ruler of Wu was a common taboo, and because of that, the Xingxi river 荇溪 (with a homonym of his name)¹²⁴ was changed to Lingxi 菱溪.¹²⁵ Furthermore, the word for apricot – *xing* 杏 – was prohibited in the Wu kingdom and replaced by the words *tianli* 甜李 (sweet plum) or *tianmei* 甜梅 (sweet Chinese plum).¹²⁶ Besides, another character of the name of Yang Xingmi was tabooed: the name for honey *fengmi* 蜂蜜 was changed to *fengtang* 蜂糖 (bee sugar).¹²⁷ This name is, it seems, used until the present day.¹²⁸

¹²¹ *Songshi*, j. 484, p. 5a.

¹²² *Songshi*, j. 255, p. 4b.

¹²³ *Songshi*, j. 484, p. 7b.

¹²⁴ Note that the taboo character *xing* 行 is also a component (*pianpang* 偏旁) of the character *xing* 荇.

¹²⁵ According to an analysis of the name of the river, done by Ouyang Xiu in *Jushiji*, j. 40, p. 1a.

¹²⁶ *Lidai huiming kao*, j. 1, p. 8a.

¹²⁷ *Yeke congshu*, j. 9, p. 85.

¹²⁸ Cf. Wang Jian 2002, p. 162.

The founder of the Wuyue kingdom 吳越國 (904–978) in today's Jiangsu and Zhejiang provinces (with the capital in Qiantang 錢塘,¹²⁹ i.e. modern Hangzhou) was Qian Liu 錢鏐 (r. 904–932). The people of Wuyue tabooed the homonym of his name – the character *liu* 劉, and everybody having this character as their family name changed it to Jin 金.¹³⁰ It can be mentioned that the character *jin* 金 is actually a component of the taboo character Liu 鏐, but here the pronunciation was apparently more important for people than the written form. It is known, for example, that the name of the Chinese poet and scholar Liu Ling 劉伶 (221–300) was changed in historical works to Jin Ling 金伶.¹³¹ Furthermore, the name of the pomegranate – *shiliu* 石榴 – was forbidden and changed to *jinying* 金櫻 (golden cherry).¹³²

There are also examples of tabooing in both kingdoms that existed in what is now Sichuan, namely the (Former) Shu 前蜀 (907–925) founded by Wang Jian 王建 (r. 907–918) and the (Later) Shu 後蜀 (934–965) founded by Meng Zhixiang 孟知祥 (r. 934). The personal name of the first ruler was tabooed in the case of the military governor Wang Jianzhao 王建肇, who because of that changed his name to Wang Zhao 王肇.¹³³ Similarly, because of the taboo name of Meng Zhixiang, Zhang Zhiye 張知業 changed his name to Zhang Ye 張業.¹³⁴

The ruler of the Chu kingdom 楚國 (897–951) in present-day Hunan was Ma Yin 馬殷 (r. 897–930). He tabooed the name of his father Ma Yuanfeng 馬元豐 and therefore an official called Tuoba Yuan 拓跋元 had to change his name to Tuoba Heng 拓跋恆.¹³⁵ The eastern neighbour of the Chu kingdom was the Min kingdom 閩國 (909–945) in the today's Fujian.¹³⁶ Its founder was Wang Shen zhi 王審知 (r. 909–925). Because of his name the family name Shen 沈 – as a homonym of the taboo name of the ruler – could not be used anymore, and was changed to You 尤 (the water radical was cut).¹³⁷

¹²⁹ The name was changed from Qiantang 錢唐 to Qiantang 錢塘 in the Tang period, in order to taboo the name of the dynasty. *Jingshi biming huikao*, j. 14, p. 208.

¹³⁰ *Liangxi manzhi*, ch. 3, p. 6b.

¹³¹ Cf. *Jingshi biming huikao*, j. 18, p. 285.

¹³² *Yekecongshu*, ch. 9, p. 85.

¹³³ Chen Yuan 1958, p. 14.

¹³⁴ *Shiguo chunqiu*, j. 51, p. 5b.

¹³⁵ *Shiguo chunqiu*, j. 73, p. 4b.

¹³⁶ For more about the Min kingdom see Schafer 2006.

¹³⁷ The form of both characters is also different. *Liangximanzhi*, j. 3, p. 6b; *Shiguo chunqiu*, j. 102, p. 16b.

At the end of this section, three examples can be given to illustrate the custom of tabooing in the remaining three kingdoms: the Southern Han Kingdom 南漢 (917–971, the territory of Guangdong, Guangxi and Hainan), the Southern Tang Kingdom 南唐 (937–975, largely located in modern Jiangxi) and the smallest kingdom Nanping 南平 or Jingnan 荆南 Kingdom (924–963, located in modern Hubei). Because Liu Yan 劉龔 (before 926 Liu Yan 劉巖, r. 917–941), the founder of the Southern Han, had an ancestor named Liu Anren 劉安仁, a certain Wang An 王安 had to change his name to Wang Hui 王會.¹³⁸

The favourite bird of the last emperor of Southern Tang 南唐¹³⁹ – Li Yu 李煜 (r. 961–975) – was the myna bird, called *quyu* 鸚鵡 in Chinese. This popular name was unfortunately similar in sound to the name of the Emperor and therefore was changed to *bage* 八哥, and is used to this day in the vernacular language.¹⁴⁰ As we can see here and above, southern taboos were still strongly sound-oriented. In the Nanping Kingdom, the name of Anxing county 安興 and Anxing river was changed to Anqing 安慶, because the name of the kingdom's founder was Gao Jixing 高季興 (r. 909–928).¹⁴¹

6.4. Song

The period of Song and Southern Song (960–1279) is considered, together with the Tang times, as the apogee in the development of name tabooing custom.¹⁴² The Song dynasty was able to establish a strong central government and ensured administrative stability. Song China became “the most prosperous and highly developed society on the earth” at the time.¹⁴³ It was also a period of complex social organization. However, problems inside the country (a separatist regime of military governors that limited the central authority) as well as abroad (wars with the Khitans, Tanguts, Jurchens and Mongols) caused finally the decline of the Song dynasty.¹⁴⁴

The strong accent on imperial taboo was to support the central power.¹⁴⁵ Therefore, during the Song we find quite an extensive system of taboo with severe rules, meticulous

¹³⁸ *Nan Tangshu*, j. 6, p. 128.

¹³⁹ For more about Southern Tang dynasty see Kurz 2011, p. 93.

¹⁴⁰ *Tianzhongji*, j. 59, p. 21b; Cf. also the article of Ptak 2007, pp. 450–451.

¹⁴¹ *Jingshi biming huikao*, j.18, p. 289.

¹⁴² Cf. Chen Yuan 1958, p. 1.

¹⁴³ Ropp 2010, p. 75.

¹⁴⁴ For more about the Song dynasty see Twitchett 2009. For the Neo-Confucian culture of Song period see Hu Hong 2009; Van Ess 2009; Bol 2010.

¹⁴⁵ Cf. Wang Xinhua 2007, p. 280.

discussions and hundreds of taboo characters. The large number of them was the result of avoiding homonyms: some taboo names additionally involved more than fifty tabooed homonym-characters (see 6.4.3).

The Song emperors tried to emphasize the legitimacy and the genealogy of their own power by tabooing of names of their – real and legendary – ancestors: for example their legendary forebear (taboo name Xuanlang 玄朗), or a legendary sovereign – the Yellow Emperor (given name Xuan Yuan 軒轅). They were proclaimed to be “distant ancestors” of Song rulers in a direct blood relationship (see 6.4.4). For that purpose, the system of emperors’ temples (the *zhaomu* 昭穆 system) was also newly conceived.

One of frequently used method of tabooing was omitting a stroke¹⁴⁶ or replacing the taboo character with another one. Taboo characters were also sometimes covered with yellow paper. Name tabooing was an important part of the culture of the Song dynasty, and also a part of the courtesy observed in its interstate relations.

6.4.1. Sources

Many examples of tabooing can be found in the *History of Song* (*Songshi* 宋史), compiled in 1343–1345 by officials of the chancellor Tuotuo 脫脫 and from the Yuan Historiography Academy.¹⁴⁷ There are also taboo instances in other Standard Histories written in the period of Song, such as the *Old History of the Five Dynasties* (*Jiu Wudaishi*) (see 5.3.1). Another textual source is the *Gazetteer of the Nine Regions during the Yuanfeng Period* 1078–1086 (*Yuanfeng jiuyu zhi*) 元豐九域志 by Wang Cun 王存, published in 1085.¹⁴⁸

6.4.2. Taboo of Emperors

The name of the First Emperor of Song – Kuangyin 匡胤 (Emperor Taizu, r. 960–976) – was taboo. Therefore, two weeks after his enthronement, his younger brother Kuangyi 匡義 had to change his name to Guangyi 光義, as was recorded in the *History of Song* (*Songshi*).¹⁴⁹ Brothers used the same character in their name, according to the order of

¹⁴⁶ Note, for example, that in the Song edition of the *Nan Qishu* (*Baina benjing yin Song Shu daziben* 百衲本景印宋蜀大字本), the character *jing* 竟 is always written without the last stroke because of the taboo name of the grandfather of the Song Emperor Taizu – Jing 敬. Cf., e.g., *Nan Qishu* (b), j. 54, p. 21a.

¹⁴⁷ Wilkinson 2000, p. 847.

¹⁴⁸ Wilkinson 2000, p. 849.

¹⁴⁹ *Songshi*, j. 1, p. 3b.

seniority (*paihang* 排行 system).¹⁵⁰ The avoidance of a taboo name by a brother here shows the connection between the tabooing of names and the change of status. The promptness of this change of name demonstrates, too, the significance of tabooing for the emperor and suggests a continuation of the existing practice.

Very soon, other names of people and geographical names were also changed to avoid violating the imperial taboo: for example, Lu Kuangfu 陸匡符 (of Southern Tang) to Lu Zhaofu 陸昭符, Zhao Kuangzan 趙匡贊 (of Later Shu) to Zhao Zan 趙贊,¹⁵¹ military prefecture Kuangguo 匡國軍 (in Shaanxi) to Dingguo 定國,¹⁵² Hankuang 浹涯 (in Guangdong) to Hanguang 含光, Kuangcheng county 匡成縣 (in Henan) to Changyuan 長垣, Kuanglu Mountain 匡廬山 (in Jiangxi) to Lu 廬.¹⁵³ The *History of Song* (*Songshi*), quoting the same work of Liao Kuangtu 廖匡圖 (952–1003), some time called him Liao Guangtu 廖光圖,¹⁵⁴ and another time Liao Zhengtu 廖正圖.¹⁵⁵ These are two different characters used for tabooing *kuang* 匡.¹⁵⁶

Similarly, the second character of the name of the First Emperor of Song – *yin* 胤 – was taboo, even if used separately. Therefore, many personal names were changed, as for example Lü Yin 呂胤 – whose name was changed to his courtesy name (*zi* 字) Yuqing 餘慶,¹⁵⁷ Li Chongyin 李重胤 – to Chongyi 重裔,¹⁵⁸ or Cheng Changyin 程昌胤 – to Changyi 昌裔.¹⁵⁹ The same change was made in geographical names, too, for example the name of Yinshan county 胤山縣 was changed to Pingshu 平蜀.¹⁶⁰

In 976 AD the brother of the First Emperor of Song – Zhao Guangyi 趙光義 (Emperor Taizong, r. 976–997) – came to power. After his death his name had to be taboo. In this regard, the name of the younger brother of both first emperors is interesting. His

¹⁵⁰ For more about *paihang* system see Bauer 1959, pp. 147–222.

¹⁵¹ *Jingshi biming huikao*, j. 19, p. 293.

¹⁵² *Nien'ershi kaoyi*, j. 69, p. 1149. Note that the new name was also with meaning (*dingguojun* 定國軍 means “to fix the military of the state”). In the period of early Song, like also before in the time of the Five Dynasties, playing on the names of persons and localities was a kind of political prophecy.

¹⁵³ *Jingshi biming huikao*, j. 19, p. 295.

¹⁵⁴ *Songshi*, j. 208, p. 6b.

¹⁵⁵ *Songshi*, j. 208, p. 9a.

¹⁵⁶ Cf. Wang Yankun 1997, p. 255–256.

¹⁵⁷ *Songshi*, j. 263, p. 8a.

¹⁵⁸ *Jiu wudaishi* (b), j. 19, p. 10b. Note that the *SBBY* edition of *Jiu Wudaishi* has Li Chongyun 李重允 in that place (*Jiu wudaishi*, j. 19, p. 6a). The character *yin* 胤 restored in the Ming time was once more tabooed in the Qing period and changed to *yun* 允, because of the taboo name of the Emperor Yongzheng (Yinzhen 胤禛, r. 1722–1735).

¹⁵⁹ *Nien'ershi kaoyi*, j. 51, p. 889.

¹⁶⁰ *Shuzhong guangji*, j. 54, p. 3b.

original name, Zhao Kuangmei 趙匡美, was already changed in 960 to Guangmei 光美 when his brother became emperor. Then he had to change his name once again to Tingmei 廷美, because the new name of his second brother also became taboo.¹⁶¹ Numerous other personal and geographical names were changed, too, as for example: Yang Guangmei 楊光美 to Yang Mei 楊美, Yang Yi 楊義 to Yang Xin 楊信 and Li Huaiyi 李懷義 to Huaizhong 懷忠.¹⁶²

Besides, the names of later emperors were tabooed and replaced. Because of the name Heng 恆 of Emperor Zhenzong (r. 997–1022), the Mountain Heng 恆山 was changed to Mountain Chang 常山 (see 10.4.2). There are many instances of taboo of Emperor Renzong (r. 1023–1064). Because of his name Zhen 禎, the Daoist Heavenly Fortune Festival (*tianzhen* 天禎) was changed to *tianqi* 天祺,¹⁶³ the famous Daoist monk Sima Chengzhen 司馬承禎 (647–735) was called Chengxiang 承祥,¹⁶⁴ and the Era name (*nianhao*) Zhenguan 貞觀 (627–649) of Taizong of the Tang dynasty was changed to Zhengguan 正觀.¹⁶⁵ Some scholars think that because of the same reason, the name of the steamed cake *zhengbing* 蒸餅 in the famous Chinese novel *Water margin* (*Shuihuzhuan* 水滸傳) is written as *chuibing* 炊餅.¹⁶⁶ However, both these characters *zhen* 禎 and *zheng* 蒸 seem rather too different for tabooing.

During the rule of Yingzong (r. 1063–1067), whose given name was Shu 曙, this character and its homonyms *shu* 署 and *shu* 薯 were forbidden. One case is described by Zhu Xi 朱熹 (1130–1200) in the *Thematic discourses of Master Zhu* (*Zhuzi yulei* 朱子語類): “What is now called Area Commander-in-chief (*zongguang* 總管),¹⁶⁷ was named Administrator (*bushu* 部署)¹⁶⁸ in the beginning of the dynasty. Later it was changed in order to taboo the name of the Emperor Yingzong.”¹⁶⁹ Furthermore, in the Song collection of

¹⁶¹ *Jingshi biming huikao*, j. 19, p. 310.

¹⁶² *Jingshi biming huikao*, j. 19, p. 310.

¹⁶³ *Songshi xinbian*, j. 28, p. 5b. For more about the Heavenly Fortune Festival see *Daojiao dacidian*, p. 187.

¹⁶⁴ Cf. *Chongren zongmu*, j. 4, p. 278.

¹⁶⁵ *Jingshi biming huikao*, j. 20, p. 315. Note that even though these characters have a different radical, they were avoided too, as the pronunciation must still have mattered.

¹⁶⁶ *Qingxiang nanji*, j. 2, p. 8a; *Jingshi biming huikao*, j. 20, p. 317. The text of *Water margin* is probably from the 14th century, but written on the basis of former stories. The action takes place in China of the Song dynasty. Characters *chuibing* 炊餅 for “cakes” are used sixteen times in *Shuihuzhuan* (for example, j. 24, p. 2b). For translation see Buck 1933, p. 429.

¹⁶⁷ Hucker 1985, p. 531.

¹⁶⁸ Hucker 1985, p. 393.

¹⁶⁹ *Zhuzi yulei*, j. 128, p. 13a.

Tang poems *Wanshou Tangren jueju* 萬首唐人絕句, the word *shuji* 曙雞 (morning bird) in the poem *Mancheng* 漫成 of Li Shangyin 李商隱 was changed to *xiaoji* 曉雞.¹⁷⁰ The names of emperors Shenzong (Xu 瑱, r. 1067–1085), Zhezong (Xu 煦, r. 1085–1100), Huizong (Ji 佖, r. 1100–1125) and Qinzong (Huan 桓, r. 1126–1127) – and their homonyms were also tabooed. In the *Dream Pool Essays* (*Mengxi bitan* 夢溪筆談) of Shen Kuo 沈括 (1031–1095), the name of the Vietnamese king Lê Hoàn (Li Huan 黎桓, r. 980–1005) was therefore written as Li Wei 威.¹⁷¹

After northern China was conquered by the Jurchen and the Song capital was moved in 1127 to Lin'an 臨安 (today's Hangzhou) in the south, the new ruler of the Southern Song empire became the Emperor Gaozong (r. 1127–1162), son of the Emperor Huizong. During his reign, the tabooing of homonyms reached a peak in Chinese history. According to the *Chunxi chongxiu wenshushi* 淳熙重修文書式, more than 50 characters had to be avoided because of the Emperor's name, Gou 構.¹⁷² For example, a general Chen Gou 陳遘 (1090–1127) changed his name to his courtesy name Heng Bo 亨伯, because of taboo of the Emperor.¹⁷³

Emperors Xiaozong (Shen 昀, r. 1162–1189), Guangzong (Dun 惇, 1189–1194) and Ningzong (Kuo 擴, 1194–1224) continued the practice of name tabooing, though the number of tabooed characters¹⁷⁴ was apparently reduced. We know for certain that the name of Ma Kuo 馬擴 was changed to Ma Guang 馬廣 because of the taboo of the Emperor Ningzong.¹⁷⁵ The imperial decree of 1190 AD ordered commoners not to adopt new names that violated taboos of distant ancestors, and they had to change existing ones.¹⁷⁶

Sources are very scant about name tabooing in the following period. Even so, a few instances of taboo of the name Yun 昀 of the Emperor Linzong (r. 1224–1264) are known. Because of his name, the place Yunzhou 筠州 was changed to Ruizhou 瑞州.¹⁷⁷ Because of the name Zi 孜 of the Emperor Duzong (r. 1264–1274), this character and its homonym zi

¹⁷⁰ *Wanshou Tangren juejushi*, j. 41, p. 16a. Cf. *Quan Tangshi*, j. 540, p. 44b.

¹⁷¹ *Mengxi bitan*, j. 25, p. 11b.

¹⁷² *Jingshi biming huikao*, j. 21, p. 331. Cf. Wang Yankun 1997, p. 121.

¹⁷³ *Dongdu shilüe*, j. 109, p. 3a.

¹⁷⁴ Cf. the list of taboo characters of *Chunxi chongxiu wenshushi* 淳熙重修文書式 in *Jingshi biming huikao*, j. 21, pp. 335, 338, 341, 342.

¹⁷⁵ Wang Yankun 1997, p. 262.

¹⁷⁶ *Songshi*, j. 108, p. 10b.

¹⁷⁷ *Songshi*, j. 41, p. 3a.

咨 were also avoided.¹⁷⁸ We have no materials about possible taboo customs during the reign of the three last, short-living emperors (1274–1279).

6.4.3. A Large Number of Taboo Characters

One of the most important characteristics of tabooing during the Song dynasty was a large number of homonyms of taboo characters, which also had to be avoided. There were many characters to be avoided – more than ever before and after. The bureaucracy was very strong in that period. Many taboo names involved about fifty tabooed homonym-characters. Lists of them can be found in such works as the afore-mentioned *Chunxi chongxiu wenshushi* 淳熙重修文書式.¹⁷⁹ Though there were so many taboo characters, there were still officials who wanted to increase the number of them.¹⁸⁰

Rules for replacement of taboo characters were not clearly defined and no concrete equivalents were fixed. Therefore, different characters are used for this purpose. For example characters *zheng* 正, *guang* 光, *fu* 輔, *kan* 刊, *jiu* 糾 and *xing* 興 were used for the taboo character *kuang* 匡, and *yi* 裔 and *si* 嗣 for the taboo character *yin* 胤, both being characters of the name of the first emperor of Song – Kuangyin 匡胤.¹⁸¹

Knowing that so many characters were taboo and had to be avoided, it seems strange that the principle “difficult to offend and easy to avoid” (*nanzhi er yibi* 難知而易避, see 5.1.1 and 5.2.2) would still apply for tabooing, at least in the beginning of that dynasty. The second emperor of Song, Taizong, issued a decree which refers to this rule leading him to change his name Guangyi 光義 (with popular characters) to (the less used) Gui 炁. The characters of the former name did not need to be avoided anymore. Only names of counties, offices and people that had already been changed because of this former taboo had to be preserved in their new form.¹⁸² In any event, taboo names of many emperors were often rare characters.

¹⁷⁸ *Jingshi biming huikao*, j. 21, p. 343.

¹⁷⁹ Quoted partly in the section of every Song emperor in *Jingshi biming huikao*, j. 19, p. 291 - j. 21, p. j. 21, p. 343. For more about *Chunxi chongxiu wenshushi* see Wang Jian 2002, 185-188.

¹⁸⁰ Cf. *Rongzhai sanbi*, j. 11, p. 2b.

¹⁸¹ Cf. examples of such replacement in Wang Yankun 1997, pp. 253-259 and 551-553.

¹⁸² *Songchao shishi*, j. 1, p. 9ab.

6.4.4. Ancestors

Extension of ancestor worship and tabooing of distant ancestors were also special features of Song times. The tabooing of their names was, on the one hand, an expression of reverence for deceased relatives, and on the other hand a way to strengthen one's own authority and mythologisation of one's own genealogy. In the beginning of the Song dynasty, the first emperor established the system of four ancestors. They received a special temple name, were worshiped in the ancestral temple, and their names were taboo.¹⁸³ These four tabooed ancestors were: the father of the first emperor Hongyin 弘殷, his grandfather Jing 敬, great grandfather Ting 珽, and great great grandfather Tiao 眺.

We know, for example, that the name of the poet Xie Tiao 謝眺 (464–499) was changed retrospectively to *tiao* 眺,¹⁸⁴ and later once again to *liao* 瞭, because of taboo. The second change was made, perhaps, because the character *tiao* 眺 was too similar to the taboo character as its homonym, and sound taboo was still important in Song. We know that Mi Fei 米芾 (1051–1107), when quoting *Qianziwen* 千子文, wrote the character *liao* 瞭 instead of *yao* 眺.¹⁸⁵ According to the *Songchao shishi* 宋朝事實, there were twenty one characters avoided as taboo because of the name of the imperial ancestor Ting 珽.¹⁸⁶ Furthermore, the taboo character *jing* 敬 (the name of an ancestor as well) was replaced by *gong* 恭, *jin* 謹 and *jing* 景, or *qin* 欽.¹⁸⁷ All family names Jing 敬 had to be changed to Gong 恭.¹⁸⁸

Tabooing the names of the last few ancestors had been a normal practice also before the Song dynasty and was therefore nothing special. But other changes made by the third Emperor Zhenzong were more curious. Trying to mythologize his genealogy, he created the First Ancestor (*shizu* 始祖). His name, Xuanlang 玄朗, was tabooed,¹⁸⁹ together with more than 40 other homonym characters connected to it.¹⁹⁰ Because of that, general Yang Yanlang 楊延朗 (958–1014) had to change his name to Yang Yanzhao 楊延昭.¹⁹¹ Besides, the

¹⁸³ Wang Jian 2002, p. 173.

¹⁸⁴ Cf., for example, Xie Tiao 謝眺 in *Mengxi bitan* (b), j. 2, p. 2b. In the *CSJC* already revised to Xie Tiao 謝眺 (*Mengxi bitan*, j. 2, p. 10).

¹⁸⁵ Cf. *Jingshi biming huikao*, j. 19, p. 301. Wang Yankun 1997, p. 448.

¹⁸⁶ *Songchao shishi*, j. 1, p. 1b.

¹⁸⁷ Wang Yankun, pp. 236–238.

¹⁸⁸ *Gujin xingshi shu bianzheng*, j. 3, p. 32.

¹⁸⁹ Cf. *Xuzizhi tongjian*, j. 30, p. 13a; *Xuzizhi tongjian changbian*, j. 79, p. 12a. Note that the character 玄 was tabooed in both sources in different way: replaced by the character *yuan* 元 and omitting one stroke.

¹⁹⁰ Cf. *Jingshi biming huikao*, j. 19, pp. 296–297.

¹⁹¹ *Dongdu shilue*, j. 34, p. 5a.

temple name Xuanzong 玄宗 of an Emperor from the Tang dynasty (r. 712–756) had to be changed to Minghuang 明皇 during the Song period (the same name was used again in the Qing period when the name of the Kangxi Emperor – Xuan 玄 – had to be tabooed).¹⁹²

Furthermore, the legendary ancestor of the Chinese – the Yellow Emperor – was proclaimed the ancestor of Song in 1014 AD, and the characters of his taboo name Xuanyuan 軒轅 were prohibited from use.¹⁹³ Although we also know past cases, in which emperors used legendary ancestors to support their own power – for example the Emperor Xuanzong of Tang in 741 AD saw Laozi in his dream, claimed him as the imperial ancestor and honored him as Emperor Xuanyuan 玄元¹⁹⁴ – but this mythologisation of one's own genealogy created by the Emperor Zhenzong was unparalleled. It was perhaps in part inspired by competition with the Western Xia and Liao dynasties.

6.4.5. Tabooing of distant ancestors

The tabooing of names was a very important topic for Song society. Discussions and decisions about the system of ancestral temples and rules for tabooing the imperial name have been recorded,¹⁹⁵ initiated by the Minister of Rites (*liguan* 禮官).¹⁹⁶ The Song dynasty followed at first the system of the Tang dynasty and its principle of “non-tabooing of distant ancestors” (*yitiao buhui* 已祧不諱).¹⁹⁷ According to this principle, in the beginning of the reign of Zhezong (r. 1085–1100), the tablet of Shenzong 神宗 (r. 1067–1085) was placed in the ancestral temple and the tablet of Zhao Jing 趙敬 (grandfather of the Emperor Taizu) was moved into the room with tablets of distant ancestors (*jiashi* 夾室).¹⁹⁸ This traditionally implied that the character *jing* 敬 should no longer be taboo and we can assume that this was probably also promulgated.

But we know that later in the time of Zhezong's brother – the Emperor Huizong (r. 1100–1125), the tablet of Zhao Jing was moved back from the temple of distant ancestors to the main ancestral temple.¹⁹⁹ Only in 1162 AD, when the tablet of Qinzong (1126–1127) entered the ancestral temple, was the tablet of Zhao Jing finally moved to the distant

¹⁹² Liang Chen 2006, pp. 31-32.

¹⁹³ *Songshi*, j. 8, p. 5b.

¹⁹⁴ *Jiu Tangshu*, j. 24, p. 10ab. See also Wechsler 1985, pp. 69-71.

¹⁹⁵ Cf., for example, *Songshi*, j. 106, p. 4b.

¹⁹⁶ Hucker 1985, p. 305; Wang Xinhua 2007, p. 281.

¹⁹⁷ *Rizhilu*, j. 23, p. 21b.

¹⁹⁸ *Songshi*, j. 106, p. 7a.

¹⁹⁹ *Jingshi buming huikao*, j. 19, p. 302. Wang Xinhua 2001, p. 182.

ancestors' room and his name no longer tabooed. We read about this in the *History of Song*: “(In 1162 AD), in the first month, Ministry of Rites and Court of Imperial Sacrifice (*taichangsi* 太常寺)²⁰⁰ decided that Qinzong will enter the ancestral temple, and therefore Yizu 翼祖 (temple name of Zhao Jing) will be moved. On the ninth day of the first month, Zhao Jing and Empress Jianmu 簡穆皇后 (his spouse) were moved to the distant ancestors, and their names is no longer taboo.”²⁰¹

Besides, names of distant ancestors were later also tabooed. At least in the decree of Emperor Guangzong 1190 AD, he writes that “commoners, when choosing a new name, should not violate the taboo of distant ancestors, and already existing names with such characters should be changed”.²⁰² It was only limited to the real taboo characters (*zhenghui* 正諱), not involving their homonyms.

6.4.6. Imperial Examination

Tabooing was strictly observed during the state exams (see 8.2.2). From the Sui period onwards, people had to pass civil service examinations (*keju* 科舉) in order to be eligible for a civil service post.²⁰³ Exams expanded under the Song dynasty. They were held every three years and had several stages from local to palace exams. The core texts used in the examination were mainly poems and classics.²⁰⁴ The candidate not only had to know these texts, but also to learn various taboo characters of the emperor and examiners (see 7.2.2).

The candidates using taboo characters during these exams were secretly eliminated. Therefore, candidates avoided many characters in order to be safe from the accusation of violating taboo. We read for example in the *History of Song* (*Songshu*) in the biography of the Southern Song official Lou Yue 樓鑰 (1137–1213) about a case when a candidate in the Advanced Scholar examination accidentally violated a former name of the emperor, and causing those in charge to place him into the last class of candidates.²⁰⁵

²⁰⁰ Hucker 1985, p. 476.

²⁰¹ *Songshi*, j. 123, p. 14ab.

²⁰² *Songshi*, j. 108, p. 10b.

²⁰³ For more about the civil service examinations see Elman 2000. Taboo cases are mentioned in Elman 2000, pp. 206 and 211.

²⁰⁴ Cf. *China: Five thousand years* 2007, p. 552.

²⁰⁵ *Songshu*, j. 395, p. 1a; Shiba Yoshinobu 1976, pp. 668–672. See also Walton 2002, pp. 1–38. Note that Lou Yue's collected works (in SKQS) are extant.

6.4.7. Name Tabooing in the States of Liao, Western Xia and Jin

In a comparable period of time, apart from the Song dynasty, three other non-Chinese dynasties were known to be established in the north of China: the Liao dynasty of Khitans (907–1125), the Jin dynasty of Jurchens (1115–1234) and the Western Xia dynasty of Tanguts (1038–1227). We know less about possible taboo practices in these countries. But on the basis of Chinese sources, the influence of Chinese name tabooing can be noticed there.²⁰⁶ The idea of name taboo was regarded as an important part of their cultures and was used outside of China, especially in political and cultural relations, but also as a basis of the ruler's power. The fact that the taboo custom reached its apogee during the Song dynasty certainly influenced its growing implementation abroad. On the other hand, there are only Chinese sources used for this dissertation, so that this research is principally limited to taboos connected with China itself. We know about the tabooing of Chinese names of rulers of states in diplomacy and in formal use, but practically nothing about taboo of other people, about the ritual aspect of taboo, and about private taboo custom in these countries.

6.4.7.1. Liao 遼 and Western Xia 西夏

Examples of name tabooing are very rare in these two dynasties. We know nothing about tabooing of Khitan and Tangut names. Therefore, some scholars have assumed there was no taboo custom before the Chinese writing system was introduced.²⁰⁷ Opinions to the contrary are also only hypothetical.²⁰⁸ Concretely, numerous names of Liao rulers were tabooed by the Chinese. An envoy Han Yi 韓億 (11th c. AD) was sent in 1026 to Liao with congratulations for the birthday of the empress. As his name was identical with the (Chinese!) taboo name of the Emperor Taizu of Liao (r. 907–926) – Yi 億 – he changed it to Yi 意.²⁰⁹ The same thing happened when, another envoy Ding Yi 丁億 was sent to Liao. He also had to change his name to Yi 意.²¹⁰ Ninety years later, the story was repeated once more: Zhang Yi 張億 was sent with New Year greetings and changed his name to Yi

²⁰⁶ About description of the Liao dynasty in Chinese sources see Standen 2011, p. 147-197. For more about Liao dynasty see Twitchett – Tietze 1994, pp. 43-153. For more about Western Xia see Dnnel 1994, pp. 154-214; Dnnel 1996. For more about Jin dynasty see Franke 1994a, pp. 215-320.

²⁰⁷ Chen Yuan 1958, p. 158; Wang Xinhua 2007, p. 286.

²⁰⁸ Cf. For example Wang Jian 2002, p. 220.

²⁰⁹ *Xuzizhi tongjian changbian*, j. 104, p. 19b.

²¹⁰ *Xuzizhi tongjian changbian*, j. 142, p. 32b.

易 because of the taboo of Emperor Taizu.²¹¹ It is symptomatic that the avoidance of taboo is unilateral: Only Song envoys tabooed names of Liao rulers, but there is no known example of the observance of Song taboo by Liao. A possible explanation is the weakness of the Song dynasty and Liao's lack of esteem for it,²¹² but it seems equally likely that Liao rulers just had little awareness of Chinese name taboos.

Examples of taboos of other Liao rulers can be given, too. We know about two other envoys sent to Liao: Li Weixian 李惟賢 changed his name in 1043 to his courtesy name Baochen 寶臣, because of the taboo name Xian 賢 of Emperor Jingzong of Liao (r. 969–982).²¹³ This change was certainly only temporary for the time of his mission. It was different in the case of Wang Deji 王德基, who eleven years before, in 1032, was sent for the birthday of the empress dowager of Liao. In all likelihood he had no need for changing his name, but in the *History of Liao (Liaoshi)*, his name is recorded as Wang Deben 王德本, in order to observe the taboo of Emperor Daozong (Hongji 洪基, r. 1055–1101).²¹⁴ Of course, this avoidance of the taboo of Daozong could not happen before the period of his reign, but the change was made by later writers.

The only direct mention of name tabooing in the *Liaoshi* is the case of the Court of Imperial Entertainments (*guanglusi* 光祿寺). We can read there that the Court was originally called *chonglusi* 崇祿寺, and that its name was changed because of the taboo of Emperor Taizong (given name Deguang 德光, r. 926–947).²¹⁵ For the same reason, names such as Fan Yanguang 范延光 (the envoy of the last emperor of the Later Tang dynasty in 936)²¹⁶ or Song Guangye 宋光業 (an official from Later Jin)²¹⁷ were written as Fan Yanguang 范延廣 and Song Huiye 宋暉業 in the same *Liaoshi*.²¹⁸

A bit curious is the story about avoiding the era name. One of two Era names of the Emperor Xingzong of Liao (r. 1031–1055) was the Chongxi 重熙 period (1032–1055). After the enthronement of the Emperor Tianzuo 天祚 (r. 1101–1125), whose name was Yanxi 延禧, the Era name Chongxi started to be written as Chonghe 重和, in order to avoid

²¹¹ *Liaoshi*, j. 17, p. 4b; *Nian'ershi kaoyi*, j. 83, p. 1350. It is also possible that the name of Zhang Yi 張億 was only tabooed in the *Liaoshi*.

²¹² Wang Jian 2002, p. 222.

²¹³ *Xuzizhi tongjian changbian*, j. 142, p. 32b.

²¹⁴ Wang Xinhua 2007, p. 287.

²¹⁵ *Liaoshi*, j. 47, p. 9b.

²¹⁶ Cf. *Xin wudaishi*, j. 51, pp. 2b–5a.

²¹⁷ Cf. *Jiu wudaishi*, j. 76, pp. 10b.

²¹⁸ *Liaoshi*, j. 3, p. 7a; *Liaoshi*, j. 4, p. 5a.

the homonym of the emperor's name. The same Era name Chonghe 重和 (1118–1119) appeared a few years later in the Song dynasty under the reign of the Emperor Huizong (r. 1100–1125), but it was very soon changed to Xuanhe 宣和 (1119–1125). Thus the reason for tabooing by Song was not the original taboo of a Liao emperor (which would have been *xi* 禧), but only to avoid a year title of the Liao dynasty that had itself been the subject of tabooing.²¹⁹

A similar incident is reported for the year 1031: The Era name Mingdao 明道 (1032–1033) of the Song dynasty had to be quickly changed to another one – Jingyou 景祐 (1034–1038) – after someone discovered that the name (*xiaozi* 小字) of Emperor Jingzong (r. 969–982) of Liao was Mingyi 明宸.²²⁰ We may wonder why the Song thought it prudent to keep in mind Liao taboos, but the difficult peace of Shanyuan in 1004 was probably still fresh in people's minds.²²¹ We should also note that, according to Chinese sources, there is also an example of taboo of Liao by Korea as its vassal state at the time. King Sukjong (real name Wang Hee, Wang Xi 王熙, r. 1095–1105) apparently changed his name to Yong 顥 because of the taboo personal name Yanxi 延禧 of Emperor Tianzuo of Liao.²²²

Only a short note can be made about the Western Xia dynasty in the Northwest of China, because its taboo customs are still unexplored. Chinese taboo customs were apparently known, but it is only documented for us in formal relations with the Song dynasty. A few examples describe the tabooing of Song emperors by Western Xia subjects. From Chinese sources, we know about Yi Yin 彝殷, who changed his name to Xing 興 because of the taboo name Hongyin 弘殷 of the father of the first Emperor of the Song.²²³ Similarly, Li Guangrui 李光睿 avoided the taboo name of Emperor Taizong of the Song and changed it to Kerui 克睿.²²⁴ Furthermore, it is presumed that the first Era name of Western Xia – Xiandao 顯道 (1032–1034) – was the tabooed version of the Era name of Song – Mingdao 明道 (1032–1033) – at the same time. The character *ming* 明 had to be avoided because of the taboo name of the father of the Emperor Jingzong – Li Deming 李德明 (981–1031).²²⁵ In the work *Lunyu quanjie* 論語全解, compiled in Western Xia by Chen

²¹⁹ *Tieweishan congkan*, j. 1, p. 6a; *Laoxue anbij*, j. 1, p. 5; *Jingshi buming huikao*, j. 22, p. 349.

²²⁰ *Songchao shishi*, j. 2, p. 14a; *Guitianlu*, j. 1, p. 7b; *Jingshi buming huikao*, j. 22, p. 349.

²²¹ For more about the treaty of Shanyuan see Twitchett – Tietze 1994, pp. 108–110.

²²² *Songshi*, j. 487, p. 7b.

²²³ *Songshi*, j. 485, p. 1b.

²²⁴ *Songshi*, j. 485, p. 2a.

²²⁵ Cf. Wang Xinhua 2007, p. 288.

Xiangdao 陳祥道 (11 c.), strokes are missing in the character for *xiao* 孝, as this was a part of the name Renxiao 仁孝 of the Emperor Renzong of Western Xia (r. 1139–1193).²²⁶

6.4.7.2. Jin 金

The tabooing custom was also present in the Jin dynasty of the Jurchen. We do not have materials about taboos of Jurchens themselves, but examples of avoiding Chinese taboo are known from the beginning of the dynasty. After conquest of the Liao state (1125), and the invasion and occupation of North China that immediately followed, the process of sinicization of the Jurchens was further intensified. They started to use two names: the Jurchen one – for everyday life, and the Chinese one – for official decrees,²²⁷ and only the Chinese name was tabooed if it was written in Chinese, as the Jurchen name had no standard transcription. Already the first Emperor of the Jin dynasty – Emperor Taizu (Wanyan Aguda 完顏阿骨打, r. 1115–1123) had adopted another Chinese name – Min 旻. Later on homonyms of this name such as *min* 憫, *min* 閔, *min* 岷 were tabooed.²²⁸ Therefore, for example, Minzhou county 岷州 in today's Gansu province was changed to Xihe 西和 in 1143.²²⁹ But the tabooing practice during the reign of the first three emperors: Taizu, Taizong (r. 1123–1134), and Xizong (r. 1135–1149) is still vague for us.

The first decisive change was the provision of taboo information to neighboring countries of Jin – to Song, Korea and Western Xia. This announcement made in 1150 shows that name tabooing was considered important in diplomatic relations.²³⁰ Later, mutual avoidance of taboos in diplomatic relationships confirmed this intention. The tabooing of names was approved as a part of culture, first in international relations and later also within the Jin state. Then, in 1169, a memorandum about tabooing of homonyms was issued, on the basis of the practice of the Tang dynasty:

In the *Tanghuiyao* 唐會要 we find that old homonyms of taboo names were not avoided..., but in later ages there was a large-scale avoidance. Hence now homonyms are taboo. ... We have already promulgated a list of homonyms of the name of the emperor (Shizong, r. 1161–1189)...., altogether 28 homonym characters

²²⁶ Wang Xinhua 2007, p. 288. The author of this dissertation has only seen the SKQS edition of *Lunyu quanjie*, but there, all *xiao* characters are written without curtailment.

²²⁷ *Nianer shi zaji*, j. 28, pp. 6a-7b.

²²⁸ *Songmo jiwen*, j. xia, p. 16a.

²²⁹ *Songshi*, j. 89, p. 10a.

²³⁰ *Jinshi*, j. 60, p. 14a.

of the character *you* 褒 (which was the original name of the Emperor), to be avoided.²³¹

The work *Da Jin jili* 大金集禮 (compiled by Zhang Wei 張瑋 in 1195) did not note here the taboo name You 褒 directly, but avoided it by using the Chinese method *fanqie* 反切 (two characters representing the initial consonant and the final) to indicate its pronunciation. Apparently, name tabooing was intensified during the time of Emperor Shizong. It should also be noted that his reign was also the period of the strongest impact of the Chinese in the Jin state, and a time of increased adaptation of Chinese culture.²³²

The high point of taboo avoidance in the Jin dynasty was the period of Emperor Zhangzong (r. 1190–1208). He obviously admired Chinese culture, including its taboo customs. In his emulation of the Chinese taboo, he went even further than the Song dynasty. It is interesting to consider that “external” nations, such as the Jurchens or Koreans, were even stricter in the “Chinese” taboo practice after their sinicization. They wanted perhaps to accent in this way their affiliation with the “cultured” world. Directly after the enthronement of Zhangzong in 1191, a special, unprecedented prescript for officials was issued on how to avoid names of former dynasties:

Liao 遼 had to be changed to Heng 恆, Song 宋 to Bian 汧, Qin 秦 to Hao 鎬, Jin 晉 to Bing 并, Han 漢 to Yi 益, Liang 梁 to Shao 邵, Qi 齊 to Peng 彭, Yin 殷 to Qiao 譙, Tang 唐 to Jiang 絳, Wu 吳 to E 鄂, Shu 蜀 to Nao 夔, Chen 陳 to Yuan 宛, Sui 隋 to Jing 涇, Yu 虞 to Ze 澤.²³³

One year later, in 1192, an imperial edict for all subjects was announced, which ordered the tabooing of names of “former emperors” and of Confucius and the Duke of Zhou (Dan 旦, 11 c.).²³⁴ The regulation about the taboo of Confucius was repeated yet again in 1205 for Advanced Scholars (*jinshi* 進士).²³⁵ Furthermore, the tabooing of imperial names was extended: In 1201 an edict prescribed that all taboo names and childhood names of all Jin emperors (including their ancestors) should be avoided, starting from the “First Emperor” (Shizu 始祖) – Wanyan Hanpu 完顏函普 (r. 941–960 as an overall Jurchen leader).²³⁶

²³¹ *Da Jin jili*, j. 23, p. 203.

²³² For the process of sinicization of the Jurchen see also Tao Jing-shen 1977.

²³³ *Jinshi*, j. 9, p. 6b.

²³⁴ *Jinshi*, j. 9, p. 11a.

²³⁵ *Jinshi*, j. 12, p. 3a.

²³⁶ *Jinshi*, j. 11, p. 5b.

The importance of taboos for the emperor can be seen in the precise analysis of taboo characters made for him by deputy imperial censor Sun Jikang 孫即康. The names of six Jin emperors were discussed. For example, the character *sheng/cheng* 晟 (taboo of Emperor Taizong, r. 1123–1134) had to be tabooed by omitting strokes only if it had pronunciation *sheng* and not if it was pronounced *cheng*. The first character of the taboo name Zongyao 宗堯 of Ruizong (1096–1135, leader of the Jurchens) had to be written as *chong* 崇, with the lower part written as 耒. By tabooing of the first character of the name of Xianzong – Yungong 允恭 (1146–1185) – omitting strokes was appropriate, for example, in the character *chong* 充, but was not needed if it appeared in more complex characters, such as *tong* 統. Additionally, the design of totally new forms of characters was proposed (using the example of the Tang dynasty) as equivalents for taboo characters.²³⁷ As we can see, the appreciation of Chinese taboo customs reached a climax in the period of Emperor Zhangzong (r. 1190–1208).

The avoidance of taboo names was not only a highbrow idea, but affected also the life of common people, as for example in cases of Wanyan Kuang 完顏匡 (12th c.) and Zhang Yuansu 張元素 (1151–1234). For the first, it had only a temporary impact. When he became an envoy to the Song state in 1193, he had to change his name to Bi 弼 in order to avoid the taboo name of Emperor Taizong of Song.²³⁸ But for Zhang Yuansu, name taboos determined the further course of his career in a crucial way. That is to say that in the Jin the custom was especially observed during civil examinations, just as in the Song dynasty. Those who violated an imperial taboo name were dismissed. Zhang wanted to become an Advanced Scholar and prepared for his exams in 1196. But he made one big mistake – he used a character that was an imperial taboo and automatically failed the civil-service exam. Because of this disappointment, he started to study medicine, became a famous doctor, and wrote many important medical works.²³⁹ At least in his case a mistake in taboo avoidance also bore a positive outcome, at least for posterity.

A bit curious is the case of the posthumous name of Wulinda 烏林答 (d. 1151). The story of her life is very romantic and tragic. She was the wife of the later Emperor Shizong of Jin (r. 1161–1189), and was very devoted to him. The Emperor Hailingwang (r. 1149–1161) admired her and ordered her to leave her husband and come to his inner court. She

²³⁷ *Jinshi*, j. 99, p. 7a; cf. also Wang Jian 2002, p. 226.

²³⁸ *Jinshi*, j. 10, p. 2b.

²³⁹ *Jinshi*, j. 131, p. 3ab.

went there in order not to bring danger to Shizong, but committed suicide immediately after her arrival. After Shizong finally raised a rebellion ten years later, murdered Hailingwang and became emperor in 1161, he honored his faithful wife with the posthumous title Empress Zhaode 昭德. In contrast, Hailingwang received no temple name. But the problem started later during the reign of Zhangzong (r. 1190–1208), when somebody discovered that both of the characters in her posthumous title were already included in the long posthumous name of the Emperor Taizu. It was then decided that the posthumous name of the Emperor should be tabooed and the faithful wife then received the new posthumous name Mingde 明德.²⁴⁰

In the time of the aforementioned Emperor Hailingwang, an example of tabooing the name of the crown prince is known. When Guangying 光英 (1150–1161) was appointed to crown prince in 1152, a certain Yang Boying 楊伯英 tabooed his name and changed his own name to Boren 伯仁.²⁴¹ Furthermore, the name for eagle (*ying* 鷹) was apparently changed, and therefore falcon cage (*yingfang* 鷹坊)²⁴² was called “domesticated eagle cage” (*xunzhifang* 馴鷲坊). Moreover, geographical names such as Guangzhou 光州 were changed to Jiangzhou 蔣州, Guangshan county 光山縣 to Qisi 期思, Yingguo 英國 to Shouguo 壽國, and Yingguo 應國 to Qiguo 杞國. The military prefecture Guanghua 光化 was also changed to Tonghua 通化.²⁴³

In last years of the Jin dynasty, taboo customs may have become less strict. We learn at least about the practice of non-avoidance of the first character of the name of an emperor, which was in fact used jointly by all the male relatives of his generation as to mark their generation within the descent line. The emperor in question, Aizong 哀宗 (Shouxu 守緒, r. 1224–1234), was practically the last emperor of the Jin dynasty. The last one, Emperor Mo, was killed after ruling for shorter than one day, which marks the shortest reign in Chinese history. During the reign of Aizong, there was a man with the name Li Shoujie 李守節. After Aizong was enthroned, Shoujie dropped the first character of his name. The Emperor thought it was not necessary and sent a courtier with words “I do

²⁴⁰ *Jinshi*, j. 64, pp. 2a–3b.

²⁴¹ *Jinshi*, j. 125, p. 6a.

²⁴² One of the Five Cages of animals used in imperial hunts under the supervision of the Palace Administration (cf. Hucker 1985, p. 583).

²⁴³ *Jinshi*, j. 82, p. 10b.

not want you to avoid the first character of your name. Why do you (Li Shoujie) avoid it?" The answer was that it was necessary if a subject respects the ruler.²⁴⁴

In conclusion, the period between the Sui and Song dynasties can be called the golden age for the custom of name tabooing. Certainly we can mention different aspects of the practice of name tabooing having their pinnacle in other periods of Chinese history. In this period the tabooing custom was applied in just about every sphere of life of the people. In this period, the avoidance of names was officially included in the penal system and concrete punishments were henceforth prescribed. From the Tang to the Song, many discussions about different topics related to name tabooing are reported. There is also no other period during which such a multitude of characters had to be tabooed.

The main taboo person in this period was clearly the emperor, and the tabooing of his name was often a matter of discussion for the Board of Rites. Imperial taboos had to support central power. The taboo on the names of relatives from within one's own kinship group was also flourishing. A very important role was played by the taboo of officialdom. Probably the observance and inconsistent nature of the taboos depended on the quality (or lack thereof) of bureaucratic control.

An important change in the taboo custom was made at the end of the period. Until the Song dynasty, the practice of reading aloud was prevalent, and therefore the sound of a taboo character was the most important thing. In the Northern Song, we find many avoided homonyms of taboo characters. In the Southern Song, the practice of silent reading started, and therefore the written form of taboo character became decisive.²⁴⁵

²⁴⁴ *Zhongzhouji*, j. 7, p. 2a; *Jingshi biming huikao*, j. 22, p. 357.

²⁴⁵ The development of print culture in the Song period played an important role in this change. More about the popular printing in the Song see Chia 1996, pp. 10-48.

CHAPTER SEVEN: LAST CENTURIES OF NAME TABOOING

7.1. Yuan

Our knowledge about the tabooing of personal names during the Yuan dynasty (1279–1368) period is very limited. In the research done by Chinese scholars, it is frequently remarked that this period did “not have taboos.”¹ We do know that there is a large and abrupt change in sources from the abundant and numerous examples of taboo practice of the preceding Song dynasty to the virtual absence of them in the Mongolian dynasty. We also know that the Mongols had their own taboo customs, including perhaps the custom of tabooing Mongolian names. This last practice has not yet been studied and will not be discussed here.²

Gradually the Mongols, especially emperors and their families, started to use Chinese phonetic transliteration of their names for communication with their Chinese subjects. The reason why maintaining a name taboo for Mongolian emperors would have been difficult, is that their names were transcribed into Chinese with many characters, while each individual character would not carry the full name’s meaning. Since individual characters would not remind anyone of the full Mongolian name, there was no need for (Chinese) name taboos as far as the names of emperors and their close relatives were concerned.³

But even if the Mongol rulers did not practice the avoidance of Chinese characters, it is hard to accept that the custom of tabooing names in the family and office was simply abolished in the beginning of Yuan, to reappear again in the beginning of the Ming dynasty. We have to remember that what happened at the state level (and thus can be found in official sources) in the Yuan period does not reflect all levels of political power. It is hard to believe that ordinary Chinese people did not continue practising the taboo custom.

¹ Fan Zhixin 2006, p. 455.

² Wang Jian 2002, p. 230 writes that Mongolians had no taboo names, but this claim seems unfounded or only true with regard to their Chinese names. About Mongolian taboo see Sárközi 1995, pp. 446-447 (women have to taboo the names of their husbands’ mother and father and of their brothers in law, and to avoid identical words, too. Names of relatives are taboo for children). About Mongolian emperors in China see Franke 1994.

³ Similar to the double or full names of the Chinese in the early period (for example, the name Sikong 司空 was tabooed, *si* 司 or *kong* 空 were not, cf. 4.3.1.2).

7.1.1. Sources

The “modern historian’s essential resource for the study of Yuan period”⁴ is the *History of the Yuan* (*Yuanshi* 元史) composed in 1369–1370 by Song Lian 宋濂 *et al.*⁵ One other important work is the *Compendium of Statutes and Substatutes of the Yuan* (*Yuan dianzhang* 元典章) collected in 1322⁶ and the *Legislative Articles from the Comprehensive Regulations* (*Tongzhi tiaoge* 通制條格).⁷ Other sources are *Caomuzi* 草木子 composed by Ye Ziqi 葉子奇 (1327–1390), and later *Draft Arranged in Seven Categories* (*Qixiu leigao* 七修類稿) of Lang Ying 郎瑛 (1487–1566).⁸

7.1.2. Name Taboo

There is only one example of name tabooing in the Yuan period quoted in Chinese sources and research of today. In the *History of the Yuan* (Biography of Cheng Jufu 程鉅夫), the following has been recorded: “Cheng Jufu’s name was Wenhai 文海. He avoided the taboo (*miaohui* 廟諱) of the Emperor Wuzong 武宗 and used his courtesy name”.⁹ The original name of Cheng Jufu (1239–1318, an official from Jinshan county 京山縣 in Hubei province) was changed in order to taboo the given name of the Emperor Wuzong (Bo’erzhijin Haishan 孛兒只斤海山, r. 1308–1311).¹⁰

Since Chen Yuan, this has been explained as an extension of taboo practice of the Southern Song dynasty,¹¹ although the change (if it really happened) was made a long time after its fall. Many counter-examples using of the character *hai* 海 can be found in the *History of the Yuan* (Annals of Wuzong), and even in the decrees of the Emperor Wuzong himself.¹² Therefore, Chinese scholars have since concluded that there was no real

⁴ Mote 1994, p. 689.

⁵ Wilkinson 2000, p. 871.

⁶ Wilkinson writes about an expanded 1303 edition. This is probably a mistake. Wilkinson 2000, p. 873.

⁷ *Legislative Articles from the Comprehensive Regulations* (*Tongzhi tiaoge* 通制條格) are a collection of jurisdictional edicts and laws from the Yuan period.

⁸ Further material for more precise research can be the *New Talk From a Mountain Dwelling* (*Shanju xinhua* 山居新話), compiled by Yang Yu 楊瑀 (1285–1361), trsl. by Herbert Franke – see Franke 1956, cf. especially the story criticizing the Mongol general Bayan of the Baarin (Baiyan 伯顏, 1236–1295) for the adoption of the same honorary title (in Mongolian) Xiechan 薛禪 – the Wise (pp. 107–109).

⁹ *Yuanshi*, j. 172, p. 1a; *Jingshi biming huikao*, j. 22, p. 359.

¹⁰ Note that collected works of Cheng Jufu are extant in the SKQS.

¹¹ Chen Yuan 1958, p. 162.

¹² Cf. *Yuanshi*, j. 22–23 passim. For the decree announcing the accession of Wuzong containing the character *hai* 海 see *Yuanshi*, j. 22, p. 2a.

avoidance of single characters from the names of emperors at that time and that the custom of tabooing of names was very lax.¹³

There are still a few records and facts that need to be clarified. In the *Compendium of Statutes and Substatutes of the Yuan* (*Yuan dianzhang* 元典章) a note has been found about a request for name tabooing sent to the Board of Rites in AD 1314, and a proposal made by the Board of Rites and scholars of the Hanlin Academy. It was suggested that there are too many taboo characters that have to be observed in petitions to the throne, and proposed that only the full name of deceased emperors and “evil” characters should be avoided. Characters such as *xiu* 休, *xiang* 祥, *ji* 極 and *hua* 化 would not have to be avoided.¹⁴ Tabooing the full name of emperors is characterized as something done out of consideration, and this would mean that tabooing the names (at least a full name) of emperors was the usual custom.

According to the *Caomuzi* 草木子 by Ye Ziqi 葉子奇 (1327–1390), composed shortly after the fall of the Yuan dynasty, the tabooing of names during that time was much looser than before, and subjects (probably only other Mongols) often had similar names to those of their rulers.¹⁵ The *Qixiu leigao* 七修類稿 of Lang Ying 郎瑛 (1487–1566) records that there was a practice of omitting strokes in writing at the time: “The rulers of Yuan were simple and illiterate. Many taboos were not observed. Therefore, there are many examples of the same names of rulers and subjects. Later, even if the taboo law was prescribed, the omission of strokes can be seen in written works”.¹⁶

The total absence of name tabooing in the time of the Mongols is unlikely, as we know how important this custom was for similar states at the time – e.g., the Western Xia and Jin (see 6.4.7). The Mongols entered North China and defeated these two empires already in 1227 and 1234. In this way, the contact of Mongols with “Chinese” name taboo has lasted much longer than merely since the fall of the Southern Song dynasty, as is usually assumed by Chinese scholars on the basis of Chinese sources.

Certainly Mongolian rulers also gradually learned the Chinese custom of tabooing. They were sensitive to the tabooing of names, because, as we know, they hated the direct use of their names. It was perceived as an insult, and because of that people were

¹³ Wang Jian 2002, p. 234. Cf. also the article in *Nian’ershi zhaji* “None of the personal names of the Yuan (emperors and) empresses was eschewed” (*Nian’ershi zhaji*, j. 29, p. 28ab).

¹⁴ Cf. *Yuan dianzhang*, j. 28, pp. 4b–5a.

¹⁵ *Caomuzi*, j. 3, p. 22b.

¹⁶ *Qixiu leigao*, j. 26, p. 399.

executed.¹⁷ Chinese researchers, as Wang Jian, have pointed out that taboo names were often violated, because in the decree of 1335 recorded in the *History of the Yuan* there was once again an explicit reminder that “the violation of the imperial name is prohibited” (*jin fan yuming* 禁犯御名).¹⁸ But the issue of such a decree also implies that taboo practice existed and the very fact of the reiteration of this prohibition stresses its importance for Yuan emperors.

It can be supposed that all emperors of Yuan, in contrast to those of the Western Xia or Jin, had only Mongolian given names. The Mongolian name was also written in Chinese characters as a phonetic equivalent. There was not, however, one unified way of transcription, and sometimes many variants of writing were possible. It can be plausible that such a name written in Chinese was not necessarily perceived as the real name. On the other hand, all these names in the biographies of every emperor (except for the last one) in the *Yuanshi* are designated as *hui* 諱 (taboo name).¹⁹

7.1.3. Inauspicious Characters

The strangest peculiarity in the tabooing of names in the Yuan period is the existence of lists of numerous inauspicious characters, apparently avoided as taboo. The following list of 159 characters prepared in 1266²⁰ by the Board of Rites was recorded as “Biaozhang huibiziyang” 表章迴避字樣 in the *Compendium of Statutes and Substatutes of the Yuan*.²¹ The original text includes the following characters (small characters included as commentary in the original edition are put in brackets):

表章迴避字樣

極²²盡歸化忘(亡妄望同)

Characters avoided in the report to the emperor

ji, jin, gui, hua, wang (the same for *wang, wang, wang*)

¹⁷ Wang Jian 2002, p. 230.

¹⁸ *Yuanshi*, j. 38, p. 7b. Wang Jian 2002, p. 230.

¹⁹ The last emperor of Yuan – Huizong (r. 1333–1370) – the character *ming* 名 (given name) is used. Cf. *Yuanshi*, j. 38, p. 1a. The designations of emperor’s names as *hui* 諱 could also come from the authors of the *Yuanshi* who are Ming-Chinese.

²⁰ Or perhaps a bit later. The list has no concrete dating. 1266 is the date of the document placed immediately before it. The commentary was probably made 1322, as the final edition of this book was prepared and all the texts were compiled.

²¹ *Yuan dianzhang*, j. 28, p. 4ab; *Yuandianzhang* (b), j. 28, p. 3ab. See also the quotation in *Jingzhiju shihua*, j. 2, p. 15ab of the Qing time with 167 taboo characters.

²² In the text with the component 才 .

播晏征(祚同)靄(哀愛同) ²³	<i>bo, yan, zheng</i> (the same for <i>zuo</i>), <i>ai</i> (the same for <i>ai</i> and <i>ai</i>)
奄昧駕遐仙斯(司四死同)	<i>yan, mei, jia, xia, xian, si</i> (the same for <i>si, si, si</i>)
病苦沒泯滅	<i>bing, ku, mei/mo, min, mie</i>
凶禍傾頹毀(偃仆同)	<i>xiong, huo, qing, tui, hui</i> (the same for <i>yan, pu</i>). ²⁴
壞破晦刑傷	<i>huai, po, hui, xing, shang</i>
孤墜墮服布	<i>gu, zhui, duo, fu, bu</i>
孝短夭折災(要同)	<i>xiao, duan, yao, zhe, zai</i> (the same for <i>yao</i>) ²⁵
困危亂暴虐	<i>kun, wei, luan, bao, nüe</i>
昏迷遇耄過	<i>hun, mi, yu, mao, guo</i>
改替敗廢寢	<i>gai, ti, bai, fei, qin</i>
殺絕忌憂切(激切辱營係舊式)	<i>sha, jue, ji, you, qie</i> ('to excite' <i>qie</i> with insult is the old style)
患衰囚往棄	<i>huan, shuai, qiu, wang, qi</i>
喪戾空陷厄	<i>sang, li, kong, xian/xuan, e</i>
艱忽除掃擯(奸同) ²⁶	<i>jian, hu, chu, sao, bin</i> (the same for <i>jian</i>). ²⁷
缺落典憲法(典字近用不駁)	<i>que, luo, dian, xian, fa</i> (the character <i>dian</i> is recently used again, this is no longer disproved of)
奔崩推殄隕	<i>ben, beng, tui, tian, yun</i>
墓稿出祭奠(饗享同)	<i>?, gao, chu, ji, dian</i> (the same with <i>xiang</i> and <i>xiang</i>) ²⁸
鬼狂藏怪漸	<i>gui, kuang, cang/zang, guai, jian</i>
愁夢幻弊疾	<i>chou, meng, huan, bi, ji</i>
遷塵亢蒙隔	<i>qian, chen, kang, meng, ge</i>
離去辭追考	<i>li, qu, ci, zhui, kao</i>
板蕩荒右逆	<i>ban, dang, huang, you, ni</i>

²³ This is the only line with 4 characters, supposedly one got lost.

²⁴ 毀(偃仆同): *hui* 毀 also has the pronunciation *fui, pu* 仆 also has a similar pronunciation *fu*. The author of this dissertation could not explain the presence of the character *yan* 偃 (or perhaps other, because it is not clear) in this group. An explanation could be possibly shared meanings of characters *hui* 毀 and *yan* 偃.

²⁵ Because it is a homonym with *yao* 夭.

²⁶ Similarity not explained.

²⁷ Because it is a homonym with *jian* 艱.

²⁸ No explanation for the presence of the character *xiang* 享 could be found.

師剝革聯達(尸同)	<i>shi, bo/bao, ge/ji, kui, wei</i> (the same for <i>shi</i>) ²⁹
叛散慘恐尅(反逆同) ³⁰	<i>pan, san, can, kong, ke/kei</i> (the same for the two words for rebel) ³¹
害戕殘偏枯	<i>hai, qiang, can, pian, ku</i>
眇靈幽沉埋	<i>miao, ling, you, chen, mai/man</i>
挽升退換移(非字近用不駁)	<i>wan, sheng, tui, huan, yi</i> (the character <i>fei</i> is recently used again, this is no longer disproved of)
暗了休罷覆	<i>an, le/liao, xiu, ba, fu</i>
弔斷收誅厭	<i>diao, duan, shou, zhu, yan</i>
諱恤罪辜愆	<i>hui, xu, zui, xin, gu, qian</i>
土別逝(誓同)眾陵(土字近用不駁)	<i>tu, bie, shi</i> (the same for <i>shi</i>) <i>zhong, ling</i> (the character <i>tu</i> is recently used again, this is no longer disproved of)

After the list a commentary was added:

“The more than 160 characters in this list had to be either avoided, if it was the character itself, or partly avoided according to its specific pronunciation. Besides, the names of former emperors are not to be used. Characters of days also should not be used too often. All imperial names and temple taboos have to be avoided.”

The original text was composed in 32 lines with 5 characters (one has only four characters as one character has been apparently lost). It seems very probable that the list was made for memorization through recitation. The editor's note about more than 160 characters is not precise. There are 159 characters (and one missing) in the list and about twenty in the comments. Later, the list of Yuan taboos reappeared during the Qing dynasty (sometimes incorrectly copied), first probably in *Zaiyuan zazhi* 在園雜誌,³² and later in many other works, for example in *Jiahe zhengxianlu* 嘉禾徵獻錄,³³ *Dengchuan conglu* 鐙窗叢錄,³⁴ *Siyi tangrizha* 思益堂日札,³⁵ *Siyi tangji* 思益堂集,³⁶ *Jingzhiju shihua* 靜志居詩

²⁹ Because it is a homonym with *shi* 師.

³⁰ This and following two lines are only preserved in the “Yuankeben 元刻本” Edition. Cf. *Yuandianzhang* (b), j. 28, p. 3ab.

³¹ Because they both mean the same as *pan* 叛.

³² *Zaiyuan zazhi*, j. 2, p. 47ab.

³³ *Jiahe zhengxianlu*, j. 39, p. 4b. It is interesting that the problem of tabooing names is placed in the chapter about *ruxue* (Confucianism).

³⁴ *Dengchuan conglu*, j. 1, p. 3ab.

³⁵ *Siyi tangrizha*, j. 5, p. 16a.

話,³⁷ *Jingshi biming huikao*,³⁸ and *Xin Yuanshi* 新元史.³⁹ All these works listed 167 characters. For the most part, these copied lists are identical with the original list, including a few characters from the commentary and some different characters. One text named *Guochao wenlu jibian* 國朝文錄續編 writes about 166 taboo characters, listing only the first four of them.⁴⁰ According to the note in the *Siyi tangrizha*, the list of 167 taboo characters was made in 1314 AD, but sources closer to Yuan apparently give no clear record about the date of the list.⁴¹

The characters of the list are important, insofar as there are almost no other taboo instances in that period. The tabooing of ominous characters was known in China long before the Yuan dynasty, but their number here is especially large. This custom is usually offered by Chinese scholars as the main evidence of taboo avoidance of the Yuan period, perhaps because of the shortage of other evidence from that time. On the other hand, as observed by Chen Yuan,⁴² this taboo list could have been continued from the Jin, and might not even have been composed by Yuan. The comments certainly indicate that the list was older and then amended or partly expanded. We simply cannot be sure about its exact date.

The topic of tabooing inauspicious characters still needs more research. It is very possible that the number of such taboo instances in the Yuan period was not bigger than in other dynasties. The practice of avoiding inauspicious characters existed probably before, and was mixed during the Yuan period with other “imperial” or “family” taboo characters in the list. At least afore-mentioned commentary of the *Yuandianzhang* introduces the characters as taboos of former emperors, although most of them cannot be found among taboos of former dynasties. Such a mix of different groups of taboo characters would probably explain the problem of why there are not only inauspicious characters on the list, but also “good” characters, such as *fu* 服, *bu* 布, *xiao* 孝, *xian* 憲, *fa* 法, *shi* 師, for example. No proposal has been found as yet for this phenomenon.⁴³

³⁶ *Siyi tangji*, j. 5, p. 16a.

³⁷ *Jingzhiju shihua*, j. 2, p. 25ab.

³⁸ *Jingshi biming huikao*, j. 46, p. 643.

³⁹ *Xin Yuanshi*, j. 88, p. 938.

⁴⁰ *Guochao wenlu jibian*, “Meizhuang wenlu” 梅莊文錄, j. 1, p. 2b.

⁴¹ The first known quotation is very late (19th c.): *Siyi tangrizha*, j. 5, p. 16a. The author of this dissertation could not find the original list in Yuan sources.

⁴² Chen Yuan 1958, p. 163.

⁴³ Perhaps some of these characters were used for names and became ominous as taboo names.

7.1.4. Law and Exams

Several legal compilations were composed in the Yuan period, such as the *Zhiyuan xing* 至元新格, *Fengxian honggang* 風憲宏綱, and the *Comprehensive Regulations and Statutes of Yuan* (*Dayuan tongzhi* 大元通制). In the law of Yuan, name tabooing was also one of the topics.⁴⁴ This fact is recorded in the *History of the Yuan*, where the violation of taboo names (*miaohui* 廟諱) and of imperial names is prohibited.⁴⁵ No concrete penalty is designated, but we can read in the *Tongzhi tiaoge* and *Yuandianzhang* that: “the mouth of people violating names of superiors... should be pasted with soil.”⁴⁶

The importance of tabooing names and the practice of observance can be seen even more during the imperial exams. There were always strong rules about avoiding imperial taboo, and according to the *History of the Yuan*, candidates who violate such taboos were rejected and failed automatically.⁴⁷

7.1.5. Perspectives of Research on Yuan Dynasty Taboos

Research on Yuan taboo has largely concentrated on taboos of the names of emperors and on inauspicious characters. There is no known reference to taboos of religious or philosophical figures, or to taboo practices in families (family taboo) and offices, which was in all likelihood continued after the conquest of the Mongols. There is also not much information about tabooing the names of an emperor's relatives, but we know that, for example, the Board of Rites at the time of Emperor Renzong (1311–1320) suggested proclaiming the name of the empress as taboo, on the grounds that she was “the mother of the All-under-heaven.”⁴⁸ It all shows that taboo practice in the Yuan period may have been much more colorful than we know now.

7.2. Ming

According to folk customs in the beginning of the Ming dynasty, recorded by Lu Rong 陸容 in his *Shuyuan zaji* 菽園雜記, the word *zhu* 豬 (pig) was considered a taboo. The reason for this prohibition was the similarity of the pronunciation of this character to the family name of the Ming imperial family name Zhu 朱 – they were homonyms. The Chinese Alligator

⁴⁴ Wang Jian 2002, pp. 230-231.

⁴⁵ *Yuanshi*, j. 102, p. 8b.

⁴⁶ *Tongzhitiaoge*, j. 8, p. 2b; *Yuandianzhang*, j. 53, p. 28a.

⁴⁷ *Yuanshi*, j. 81, p. 4b.

⁴⁸ *Yuanshi*, j. 116, pp. 1b-2a.

living on the riverbank of Yangtze River was called *zhupolong* 豬婆龍 (sow dragon)⁴⁹ before the Ming. But as the Zhu family started to rule, this word could not be used any more. Instead, people spoke about *yuan* 鼃 (soft-shelled turtle) if they talked about the alligator.⁵⁰ They wanted perhaps also to express their contempt for the Yuan 元 dynasty.

According to the *Yang Wenzhong sanlu* 楊文忠三錄 written by one of the highest ministers Yang Tinghe 楊廷和 (1459–1529), it was claimed at the time that Emperor Zhengde 正德 (r. 1505–1521) in his edict prohibited the raising of pigs. “In the winter of the fourteenth year (late 1519–early 1520), the emperor in Yangzhou issued an edict which prohibited ordinary people from raising pigs. It said that when you ate pork, you would suffer from infestations. It also said that *zhu* 豬 (pig) sounded the same as Zhu 朱, the family name of the imperial house.” As a result, people in the whole country slaughtered or drowned their pigs.⁵¹

7.2.1. Taboo Words

The avoidance of inauspicious words and those that were unpleasant for the emperor seem to have been very popular in the Ming period, especially during the reign of the first emperor of Ming. Many examples of taboo words and stories about such words can be found in the history of Ming dynasty.⁵² Some of them are connected with the emperor, but

⁴⁹ The word *zhupolong* 豬婆龍 can have two meanings: “Chinese alligator” and “giant tortoise.” Cf. *Hanyu dacidian*, Vol. 10, p. 37.

⁵⁰ *Shuyuan zaji*, j. 3, p. 28. Cf. also Wang Jian 2002, p. 240.

⁵¹ *Yang Wenzhong sanlu*, j. 3, p. 36b. For the translation and a discussion about the authenticity of the edict and the context of rumors about pigs, see ter Haar 2006, pp. 3–7. It is interesting that a pun with homophones of the word for “pig” was used later in the 19th century in the criticism about Catholics in China. The Chinese name for Catholic Christianity “the Teachings of the Lord of Heaven” (*tianzhujiao* 天主教) was mocked at as “the Teachings of the Pig of Heaven” (*tianzhujiao* 天豬教) with explicit pictures. Cf. ter Haar 2006, p. 6; Cohen 1963, illustrations after p. 140.

⁵² There are numerous sources useful for doing research on the tabooing of names in the Ming period. The first is, as in former dynasties, the *History of the Ming* (*Mingshi* 明史) composed in 1739 by Zhang Tingyu 張廷玉 (1672–1755). Some important sources for institutional history of that time are *Collected Statutes of the Great Ming* (*Da Ming huidian* 大明會典) with two extant editions: *Zhengde huidian* 正德會典 – completed in 1503 (printed in 1511), and *Wanli huidian* 萬曆會典 – printed in 1587. For this dissertation, a few additional records were used, such as *Idle Talk With Guests* (*Kezuo zhuiyu* 客座贅語) composed in 1617 by Gu Qiyuan 顧起元 (1565–1628), *Draft Arranged in Seven Categories* (*Qixiu leigao* 七修類稿) written by Lang Ying 郎瑛 (1487–1566), and the *Harvested in the Wilds During the Wanli Period* (*Wanli Yehuobian* 萬歷野獲編) composed by Shen Defu 沈德符 (1578–1642). Other works are the *Small History of the Ming Dynasty* (*Mingchao xiaoshi* 明朝小史) composed by Lü Bi 呂毖 in the time of Emperor Chongzhen, *Miscellaneous Records from the Shu Garden* (*Shuyuan zaji* 菽園雜記) written by Lu Rong 陸容 (1436–1494), *Historical Materials from Yanzhou* (*Yanzhou shiliao* 弇州史料) prepared by Wang Shizhen 王世貞 (1526–1590), *Right Sounds from the Hongwu Period* (*Hongwu zhengyun* 洪武正韻) compiled inter alia by Yue Shaofeng 樂韶鳳 in the beginning of Ming. In addition, works of the Qing

there are also reports of the customs of common people. The increased number of them correlates probably with the general increase in sources for this period, as the custom was also known before.

Strictly speaking, taboo words/characters are of course not necessarily taboo names. But on the other hand the taboo of many words, as for example in the afore-mentioned case of pig (*zhu* 豬), was strengthened by the widespread nature of the name taboo and vice versa. Moreover, in Chinese historiography taboo names and other taboo characters are always treated together. Therefore, we describe here also the practice of tabooing other words than names, since this was a very popular custom during the Ming period.

The first emperor of Ming – Zhu Yuanzhang 朱元璋⁵³ – seems to have been very superstitious. There were many characters, as it will be described below, he did not use and did not want to see or hear. Born in a poor family in 1328 AD, he lost his whole family in the plague after the flood of the Yellow River in 1344. After that, he was a monk in a Buddhist monastery and later joined the Red Turban Movement against the Mongolian dynasty. Apparently, after becoming an emperor, he hated to be reminded of his poor past and was also suspicious about the intentions of others. One story about him, described in several sources, should be enough to illustrate this character trait of his. A monk came to the first emperor of Ming giving thanks for his favors. He used a poem to express his gratitude, saying *inter alia* such words as *shuyu* 殊域 (strange lands) and *wude song Taotang* 無德頌陶唐 (no virtue is enough to praise the Taotang – the clan name of Yao). But the emperor was irritated and suspected that the word *shu* 殊 express the combination *dai Zhu* 歹朱 (evil Zhu – the family name of the emperor). The second quotation meant, according to the emperor, that he had no virtue and it was not possible to praise him as the Yao emperor. The monk was beheaded.⁵⁴

The custom like the one described above was called “splitting characters” (*chaizi*) and was used for fortune-telling. Stories like the one above are no exception. The early Ming period is rife with stories about political fortune-telling. It is not always clear whether

period describing the tabooing of names during the Ming time were used: *Yingnan suibi* 柳南隨筆 by Wang Yinggui 王應奎 (born in 1732), *Siyitang rizha* 思益堂日札 of Zhou Shouchang 周壽昌 (1814–1884), *Nian’ershi zhaji* 廿二史札記 of Zhao Yi 趙翼 (1727–1814), and the encyclopedia *Complete Collection of Pictures and Books of Old and New Times* (*Gujin tushu jicheng* 古今圖書集成) finished in 1725.

⁵³ For more about him see Teng Ssu-yü 1976, pp. 381–392.

⁵⁴ *Qixiu leigao*, j. 47, p. 688; *Mingchao xiaoshi*, j. 1, p. 55b–56a.

we are facing somewhat later stories or contemporary rumours and events. This might also be a problem in this particular story.⁵⁵

There are, for example, lists of many people who were beheaded because they used characters hated by the emperor in his presence, such as *zei* 賊 (perpetrator – the emperor was called this by officials of Yuan), *dao* 盜 (robber, also its homonym *dao* 道), *seng* 僧 (monk), *ze* 則 (rule, similar to *zei* 賊), *fa* 法 (law, similar to *fa* 髮 hair), *sheng* 生 (student, similar to *seng* 僧). The aversion to the last three characters is explained by scholars as a shame because of the emperor's poor education. But since we know that some characters, such as e.g. *fa* 法, can also be found in the taboo list of Yuan mentioned earlier (see 7.1.3), a more general custom can be presumed. A list of “Confucian Study Officials who submitted memorials and were executed for mistakes” (*jìn biaojiān rúxuéguān yǐ guāwú zhū* 進表箋儒學官以詿誤誅) was published in *Yanzhou shiliao* 弇州史料 of the Ming period, which we quote partially below:⁵⁶

Name	Unfortunate sentence	Inauspicious association
Lin Yuanliang 林元亮	<i>zuoze chuixian</i> 作則垂憲 make it and then hang down the law	<i>zei</i> 賊 (perpetrator)
Zhao Boning 趙伯寧	<i>chuizisun erzuoze</i> 垂子孫而作則 let fall your descendants and make a rule	<i>zei</i> 賊 (perpetrator)
Lin Bojing 林伯璟	<i>yize tianxia</i> 儀則天下 to practice rites and rules over the world	<i>zei</i> 賊 (perpetrator)
Jiang Zhi 蔣質	<i>jianzhong zuoze</i> 建中作則 establish the center and make a rule	<i>zei</i> 賊 (perpetrator)
Jiang Zhen 蔣鎮	<i>ruixing shengzhi</i> 睿性生知 farsighted nature gives birth to understanding/knowledge	<i>seng</i> 僧 (monk)

⁵⁵ For later stories see also Chan Hok-lam 1995, ter Haar 1992. Later stories which reflect negatively on the emperor are not necessary true. Nonetheless, even when not true, they show something of how people thought that reality might have been.

⁵⁶ Cf. *Yanzhou shiliao*, j. 31, pp. 14b-15b.

Men Qing 孟清	<i>shengde zaiqiu</i> 聖德在秋 holy virtue at fall	<i>qiu</i> 囚?
Zhou Mian 周冕	<i>shouyu qianqiu</i> 壽域千秋 long life of thousand years	<i>qiu</i> 囚?
Lü Rui 呂睿	<i>yaozhan difei</i> 遙瞻帝扉 from the distance see the door/ way of emperor	<i>difei</i> 帝非 (emperor is wrong)
Jia Zhu 賈翥	<i>qufa xiangwei</i> 取法象魏 adopt the law like the state of Wei	<i>qufa</i> 去髮 (shave off the hair)
Lin Yun 林雲	<i>shijunfu yiban jue</i> 式君父以班爵祿 to model oneself on the ruler in order to have the salary for nobility (?)	<i>shijunfu</i> 失君父 (lost the father of ruler)
Xu Xuan 許玄	<i>leizhen tianxia</i> 雷震天下 thunder shakes the world	?
Ji Deng 汲登	<i>yongshao yinian</i> 永紹億年 perpetual continuation for hundred million years (?)	?
Lin Bojing 林伯璟 ⁵⁷	<i>tiqian fakun</i> 體乾法坤 to model oneself on heaven, to take earth as one's model	<i>fakun</i> 髮髡 (shave off the hair)
Lin Bojing 林伯璟	<i>zaoshi taiping</i> 藻飾太平 to “adorn” splendidly the great peace	<i>zaoshi</i> 早失 (early lost)
Wu Xian 吳憲	<i>tianxia youdao</i> 天下有道 there is a way In the all-under- heaven under heaven	<i>dao</i> 盜 (robber)

⁵⁷ Note that two scholars are listed two and three times for “mistakes” in various compositions. According to the list the sentence was each time: “executed (*zhu* 誅).” The inauspicious associations between some characters are probably more pronounced in southern dialects. Apparently, for the administration the most important thing was the sound, rather than the way of writing. Alternatively, these were originally oral stories or gossip, which made the oral dimension more relevant than the actual Chinese characters.

Yanzhou shiliao comments that all of these beheaded scholars used characters which sounded the same as or similar to words with possibly rebellious or insulting connotations.⁵⁸

A related story is written a few pages below the list in the *Mingchao xiaoshi* 明朝小史⁵⁹, and copied later together with the list by authors of the Qing period.⁶⁰ A scholar from Hangzhou prefecture, Xu Yikui 徐一夔, included in his composition *Hebiao* (贺表) the following two sentences: “under the bright heaven” (*guangtian zhixia* 光天之下) and “heaven gives birth for the holy man as a model/norm for society” (*tiansheng shengren weishi zuoze* 天生聖人為世作則). The emperor was irritated, and pointed out the similarity of the pronunciation of the characters *sheng* 生 to *seng* 僧 (monk), *guang* 光 to *guangtou* 光頭 (shaven head), and *ze* 則 to *zei* 賊 (perpetrator). The unlucky scholar was beheaded.

There are still many stories related to words tabooed by Zhu Yuanzhang.⁶¹ One of them was recorded in the *Liunan suibi* 柳南隨筆. According to it, Zhu Yuanzhang wanted to forget his past and avoided all characters connected with Buddhism and monkhood, as for example *shi* 釋 (Budda Sakyamuni), *he* 和 and *shang* 尚 (*heshang* means monk). One day, the emperor commanded his officials to write a poem. One composed by Shi Mengwei 施孟微 included among others the sentence: “When the sun arises, splendor shines everywhere” (*richu guanghua zhao sifang* 日出光華照四方). As only the emperor heard the character *guang*, he condemned it and ordered to dismiss Shi Mengwei. The character *guang*, which means not only “light, splendor,” but also “bare,” reminded him of the shaven heads of monks.⁶²

Most examples of taboo words are connected with the reign of the first emperor of Ming. But there are also cases from later times. For example, the Emperor Jiajing 嘉靖 (r. 1521–1566) was afraid of death and avoided the character *si* 死 (death).⁶³ However, here we have to remember that the Jiajing Emperor, similarly to Zhu Yuanzhang, had a very bad

⁵⁸ *Yanzhou shiliao*, j. 31, p. 15b. It is interesting that in the Qing text *Nian’ershi zhaji*, one of the unclear cases from the table mentioned above (*shengde zaiqiu* 聖德在秋) is written as *shengde zuoze* 聖德作則 (*Nian’ershi zhaji*, j. 32, p. 4b). This shows that these were maybe not necessarily historical accounts, but literati gossip. They may not tell too much about what really happened, but they reflect on popular views of the first emperor of the Ming dynasty and on the larger custom of name taboos.

⁵⁹ *Mingchao xiaoshi*, j. 1, p. 25

⁶⁰ *Siyi tangrizha*, j. 5, p. 18b; *Nian’ershi zhaji*, j. 32, pp. 4b-5a.

⁶¹ Cf. Wang Jian 2002, pp. 241-242.

⁶² *Liunan suibi*, j. 6, p. 105. Note that it is a late source.

⁶³ *Jingshi biming huikao*, j. 46, p. 645.

press among literati, i.e. also the authors of our sources. Thus it is possible that they made up some of the stories.

7.2.2. Taboo of the First Emperor of Ming

Generally, the tabooing of imperial names in the Ming period is considered very loose. There were examples of avoiding taboo names, but also many instances where a taboo character was used openly.⁶⁴ Probably the most avoided character of the founding emperor's name was *yuan* 元. We know, for example, that the poet Wang Yuancai 王元采 (1363–1402) always used only his courtesy name Shuying 叔英 during the reign of Zhu Yuanzhang 朱元璋, because of this taboo. It was the same in the case of Song Yuanxi 宋元禧. He deleted, because of taboo, the middle character of his name and used only the form Song Xi 宋禧.⁶⁵

Apparently, due to the taboo of Zhu Yuanzhang, during his reign the “first year” *yuannian* 元年 was written as *yuannian* 原年, and the “first scholar” *yuanshi* 元士, as *yuanshi* 原士.⁶⁶ Furthermore, in contrast to the former dynasties Tang, Song and Yuan,⁶⁷ which distributed both bronze coins (*tongbao* 通寶) and sycee (*yuanbao* 元寶 – silver ingot used as money) as currency – in the beginning of Ming, both kinds of metal currency were called *Hongwu tongbao* 洪武通寶, in order not to violate the taboo of the emperor.⁶⁸ Admittedly, it could also be that the avoidance of the character *yuan* 元 was based on the Chinese people's hatred of the Mongolian Yuan dynasty, which would be a very traditional nationalist interpretation.⁶⁹

If we accept all of the material presented above as historical evidence, than the practice of tabooing names was much more pervasive than is commonly presumed among scholars.⁷⁰ It would also imply that name tabooing had been continued among the Chinese in the supposedly “taboo-free” Yuan period (cf. 7.1), or this custom could not have been reinstituted so fast. It is interesting that we have not only examples of tabooing the given

⁶⁴ Chen Yuan 1958, pp. 164-165.

⁶⁵ *Jingshi biming huikao*, j. 23, p. 364.

⁶⁶ *Zaolin zazu*, „Zhiji“ 智集, p. 2a.

⁶⁷ For the currency in the Yuan period see Franke 1949, pp. 34-119 (mainly about paper money).

⁶⁸ Cf. Wang Xinhua 2007, p. 300.

⁶⁹ The Ming coins had apparently in fact no *yuan* 元 characters (Cf. Hartill 2005, pp. 237-262). However the name *tongbao* (universal currency) was commonly used already for the currency of Tang, Song and Yuan (Cf. Hartill 2005, pp. 103-236).

⁷⁰ Cf. Chen Yuan 1958, p. 164.

name of the first emperor, but also instances of tabooing his courtesy name, Guorui 國瑞. The general Hu Tingrui 胡廷瑞 (d. 1384)⁷¹ changed his name to Hu Tingmei 廷美 (and later once more to Hu Mei 胡美), because of this taboo. Ding Guozhen 丁國珍 changed his name to Ding Yu 丁玉, Wu Guoxing 吳國興 to Wu Liang 吳良, Wu Guobao 吳國寶 to Wu Zhen 吳禎.⁷² As we know, the avoidance of courtesy names was quite rare in the practice of tabooing names, and usually was an indication of a very strict taboo custom (see 5.2.4). This strict observance was connected with the powerful founder of the dynasty.

7.2.3. Imperial Name taboos in the Ming Dynasty

The name of the third (and again very strong) emperor of Ming – Emperor Yongle (given name Di 棣, r. 1402–1424) – was also tabooed. In 1402, the names of two counties were changed because of his taboo: Wudi county 無棣縣 to Qingyun 慶云 (located in Cangzhou prefecture 滄州, today Qingyun in Shandong), and Wudi county 無棣縣 (different from the former one, located in Le'an prefecture 樂安州) to Haifeng 海豐 (today Wudi in Shandong).⁷³ Le'an prefecture 樂安州 was called Dizhou 棣州 before the reign of Yongle, and its name was also changed because of the taboo on Yongle's name.⁷⁴ Similarly, in the work of Yang Dong 楊東 the word *tangdi* 堂欂 was written instead of *tangdi* 堂棣 (bush cherry).⁷⁵

During the reign of the Emperor Zhengtong 正統 (given name Qizhen 祁鎮, r. 1435–1449, and with the era name Tianshun 天順 1457–1464), one Sun Zhen 孫鎮 had to change his name to Ming 銘, because of the taboo of the Emperor.⁷⁶ Sometimes the taboo character *zhen* 鎮 was exchanged to *zhen* 真 (different tone) or *tian* 填. For example, such words as *zhenfusi* 鎮撫司 (prison)⁷⁷ or *zhenshouguan* 鎮守官 (Grand Defender)⁷⁸ were written as *tianfusi* 填撫司 or *tianshouguan* 填守官.⁷⁹ Moreover, during the imperial exams in 1460, the best student of the year – Qi Shun 祁順 – was degraded to the end of the list of

⁷¹ For more about him, see Dreyer–Hok-lam Chan 1976, p. 1278.

⁷² *Jingshi biming huikao*, j. 23, p. 364. Cf. *Mingshi*, j. 134, p. 7a; j. 130, p. 1a; j. 131, p. 1b.

⁷³ *Shijia zhaiyang xinlu*, j. 11, p. 13b; *Lidai huiming kao*, j. 1, p. 35a. Two counties with the same name seem to be strange. Between Qingyun and Wudi of today there are only about 20 km.

⁷⁴ (*Jiajing*) *Shandong tongzhi*, j. 2, p. 19b.

⁷⁵ *Shuyuan zaji*, j. 4, p. 44.

⁷⁶ *Jingshi biming huikao*, j. 23, p. 369.

⁷⁷ Hucker 1985, p. 121.

⁷⁸ Hucker 1985, p. 122.

⁷⁹ *Jingshi biming huikao*, j. 23, p. 369.

examinees, only because it was noticed that his family name was identical with the imperial taboo.⁸⁰

Later, during the reign of Jiajing 嘉靖 (1521–1566, given name Houcong 厚聰), we have a case of a scholar of the Hanlin Academy, Zhang Cong 張聰,⁸¹ who was highly favored by the emperor and was promoted to grand secretary in repayment for the latter's support of the emperor during the Great Ritual Controversy.⁸² According to the *History of the Ming (Mingshi)*, Zhang Cong asked the emperor for a change of name in 1531 because of its similarity to the imperial name, and received a new name from the emperor – Fujing 孚敬.⁸³ The fact that the change was made only ten years after the enthronement was commented on by scholars as neglect of tabooing.⁸⁴ It may be suggested, however, that it also shows the very opposite, i.e. that the taboo custom was still present. It is also a good example of post-facto value judgments by historians (i.e., not always relevant for the original custom of tabooing), since later historians since the later sixteenth century hated Zhang Cong for his support of the Emperor Jiajing in the Great Ritual Controversy.⁸⁵

The severity of name tabooing can be seen during the reign of the next Emperor Longqing 隆慶 (1566–1572). The imperial censor Zhan Yangbi 詹仰庇 wrote a petition to the throne, in which he used words: “repeated illumination of sovereign” (*zaizhao renzhu* 再照人主). The character *zhao* 照 that he used was the taboo name of the former Emperor Zhengde (Zhu Houzhao 朱厚照, r. 1505–1521). His mistake would perhaps have gone unnoticed, if he had not had enemies among the ministers, who wanted to avenge themselves for a conflict from the past. They accused Zhan of a big transgression. The emperor was irritated, condemned him in a decree, and penalized him by flogging with 100 sticks and banishment. Zhan could not avoid the punishment despite petitions of some ministers.⁸⁶ The episode might be connected to the above mentioned Great Ritual Controversy. The Longqing period was a time in which animosities from the preceding reign of Longqing's father Jiajing (whom he hated) were settled.

⁸⁰ *Jingshi biming huikao*, j. 23, p. 368.

⁸¹ For more about him, see Chou Tao-chi 1976, pp. 67-70.

⁸² The Great Ritual Controversy (*Daliyi* 大禮議) was a power controversy between the Emperor Jiajing, who demanded the title of emperor for his father, and his court. Jiajing wanted to legitimize in such a way his claim to the throne. For more about the Great Ritual Controversy see Taylor 1998, pp. 861-872.

⁸³ *Mingshi*, j. 196, p. 4a.

⁸⁴ Cf. Wang Jian 2002, p. 245.

⁸⁵ See more about the reign of the Emperor Jiajing in Fisher 1990.

⁸⁶ *Mingshi*, j. 215, p. 4b.

7.2.4. Intensification of Tabooing at the End of the Dynasty

There are more examples of tabooing the emperor's name at the end of the Ming period, during the reign of emperors Tianqi 天啓 (r. 1620–1627, with the given name Youjiao 由校) and Chongzhen 崇禎 (r. 1627–1644, with the given name Youjian 由檢). Many of them concern the taboo of the father of the Tianqi Emperor—Emperor Taichang 泰昌 (with the given name Changluo 常洛, r. 1620). He only reigned for a month and then died, but his taboo continued to be observed in the ruling time of his son.

For example, according to the *History of the Ming*, the Board of Rites wrote in a petition to the throne that everybody having “drops of water (𣶒) with the character *ge* 各 (every),” i.e., the taboo character *luo* 洛, in his name should change it to *luo* 雒. Those having “wood (木) and the character *jiao* 交 (meet),” i.e., the taboo character *jiao/xiao* 校, in their names should change it to *jiao* 較.⁸⁷ In contrast, it was not suitable for an educational inspector to be called *jiao* 較 (in place of the usual *jiao* 校). He should be named *xuezheng* 學政.⁸⁸

All officials of the prince's residence, both civil and military, also had to change their names if they offended the imperial name (*yuming* 御名) or temple taboo (*miaohui* 廟諱).⁸⁹ At the same time, many geographical names were changed because of the taboo name (Changluo 常洛) of the deceased Emperor Taichang. For example, Luonan 洛南 was changed to Luonan 雒南, Luoyang 洛陽 to Luoyang 雒陽. In the same way (i.e., by the exchange of the character *luo* 洛 for *luo* 雒) the names of Luorong 洛容, Luochuan 洛川, Luoshui 洛水, Yiluo 宜洛 were changed. The ancient *Book of Luo* (*Luoshu* 洛書) also had to be written as *Luoshu* 雒書.⁹⁰

The first character in the name of Emperor – *chang* 常 – was tabooed, too, and usually changed to *chang* 嘗. For example, names of people such as Chang Daoli 常道立 – a circuit inspector in Henan, and general Chang Guoan 常國安 were written with the character *chang* 嘗. In the same way, geographical names such as Changzhou 常州 and Changshu 常熟 were changed. Words such as *taichangsi* 太常寺 (Ministry of Worship), *lunchang* 倫常 (human relationship), *gangchang* 綱常 (The Three Cardinal Guides and Five

⁸⁷ Note that this description is also a way for tabooing, as taboo characters are not called directly, but only through their parts.

⁸⁸ *Mingshi*, j. 51, p. 9b.

⁸⁹ *Mingshi*, j. 51, p. 9b.

⁹⁰ *Jingshi biming huikao*, j. 23, pp. 372–373.

Constant Virtues), *xunchang* 尋常 (common) were also written with the character *chang* 嘗.⁹¹

In order to taboo the name of the Emperor Tianqi (Youjiao 由校), the character *jiao/xiao* 校 was usually changed to *jiao* 較. The change was made, for example, in words such as *jiangxiao* 將校 (general officers) and *xiaowei* 校尉 (field officer).⁹² Please note that the change was made apparently because of the visual appearance of the characters, as the pronunciation was different. There were also other methods for tabooing the character *jiao/xiao* 校, for instance by exchanging it with the character *jiao* 教 (e.g., Education Official *xiaoguan* 校官⁹³ to *jiaoguan* 教官),⁹⁴ or changing a radical in the character, i.e., to *shou* 扌, and writing it as *jiao* 攵.⁹⁵

There are further examples for tabooing the name of the last emperor of the Ming – Chongzhen 崇禎 (with the given name Youjian 由檢). The character *jian* 檢 was often changed to *jian* 簡.⁹⁶ According to the *Zhengzitong* 正字通, words such as *jiantao* 檢討 (self-criticism) were written as *jiantao* 簡討, and *jianjiao* 檢校 (evaluate) as *jianjiao* 簡校⁹⁷ (in these cases it was again the taboo of a character and not of pronunciation).

The character indicating a generation (*paihang* 排行) in the emperor's name was usually less tabooed than the other characters. But there are examples in the Ming dynasty, especially in its last period where these characters were avoided, too. The character *you* 由, as a part of the names of the last two emperors, who were brothers, was replaced in printed books of that time with the character *you* 繇. For example, in the sentence of the *Zhou Changes* (*Zhouyi* 周易),⁹⁸ the character *you* 由 is written in the Maojin Jiguge edition (毛晉汲古閣刻本, the first half of the 17th c.) of *Thirteen Classics* as *you* 繇.⁹⁹ Sometimes the character *you* 由 could also change its form and be written as 𠂔 (i.e., the appearance of the character was important, rather than its pronunciation), as in the work *Xiaojing* of the same

⁹¹ *Jingshi biming huikao*, j. 23, pp. 372-373. Wang Yankun 1997, p. 46.

⁹² *Jingshi biming huikao*, j. 23, p. 375.

⁹³ Hucker 1985, p. 236.

⁹⁴ *Jingshi biming huikao*, j. 23, p. 375.

⁹⁵ *Zhengzitong*, „Shoubu 手部“, p. 36b.

⁹⁶ Wang Jian 2002, p. 246.

⁹⁷ *Zhengzitong*, „Mubu 木部“, p. 119b.

⁹⁸ *Zhouyi*, j. 10, p. 79.

⁹⁹ According to Wang Jian 2002, p. 246.

edition, in the sentence: “why not to wait for Zengzi to ask” (*he you budai zengzi wen* 何由不待曾子問)?¹⁰⁰

The impact of tabooing on everyday practice is interesting. The character *you* 油 (oil), having the taboo character as a part, was apparently taboo, too – at least in the imperial palace. No words with this character could be used there, and they were replaced with other expressions. For example, sesame oil (*zhimayou* 芝麻油) was called *zhimashui* 芝麻水, and oil or lacquer based paint (*youqi* 油漆) was called *qizuo* 漆作.¹⁰¹

Numerous examples from the last period of Ming are interpreted by researchers as an intensification of the observance of name taboos.¹⁰² The reason for it could be the attempt to strengthen the emperor’s image in a time of his weakness. Support for such statement is also the order issued in 1630 by Board of Rites, with instructions to observe taboos of the first emperor, Emperor Yongle and the last seven emperors.¹⁰³ We do not know if this order and similar ones were really practiced, though it is very possible, because there is more information extant on this period than on earlier periods.

7.2.5. Other Taboo Examples

Similar to other periods, we do not have much information about taboo names of persons other than the emperor. Anyway, most examples of this kind that we have are about name taboos of imperial relatives. The only instance of a taboo on the crown prince’s name from the Ming dynasty is from the year 1630. In that year, the last emperor of Ming – Chongzhen – appointed his one-year-old son, Cilang 慈烺, to be his successor, and because of this taboo an official, He Lang 賀烺, changed his name to Shishou 世壽.¹⁰⁴

Yet the tabooing of names of other princes of the blood is recorded. Already during the reign of the first emperor, we read in the *History of the Ming* that “Xu Huizu’s 徐輝祖 (1368–1407) original name was Yungong 允恭 ... and his current name was granted to him in order to taboo the name of the emperor’s grandson (with the given name Yunwen 允文).”¹⁰⁵ Yunwen of course later succeeded as the Emperor Jianwen (r. 1398–1402) and was

¹⁰⁰ According to Wang Jian 2002, p. 246. Cf. *Xiaojing zhushu*, p. 1 (here written as *you* 由).

¹⁰¹ *Zhuozhongzhi*, j. 22, p. 4a.

¹⁰² Wang Xinhua 2007, p. 301; Wang Jian 2002, p. 245.

¹⁰³ *Rizhilu*, j. 23, p. 22b.

¹⁰⁴ *Zhuozhongzhi*, j. 11, p. 3b.

¹⁰⁵ *Mingshi*, j. 125, p. 5b.

then deposed by the Emperor Yongle (r. 1402–1424), after a bloody civil war.¹⁰⁶ In fact, it should be noted that already in 1392, Yunwen was appointed crown prince, and the change of name could have been related to it.¹⁰⁷

In 1447, an incident happened during the imperial exams in the province of Shanxi when the sentence *wei zhou zhi zhen* 維周之禎 from the *Classic of Poetry (Shijing)*¹⁰⁸ was chosen as the theme for the official essay. It was realized later that the last character of the sentence occurred also in the name of King Zhao of Chu 楚昭王 (1364–1424, Zhu Zhen 朱禎) – the brother of the great grandfather of Emperor Zhengtong of that time. The examiners were punished by loss of one month's salary.¹⁰⁹ The incident is strange, because there are many years and generations between both relatives, the name was only a private and not a state taboo, and other examples of taboos of relatives are not known from that time. Some modern scholars think it is a sign of increase of taboo practice.¹¹⁰ But we can also presume that the connection of the taboo character *zhen* 禎 with the second character of Emperor Zhengtong's name (Qizhen 祁鎮) could have played a role in the event, if it did really happen. The sources about this event all date from the Qing dynasty.

One case of avoiding the names of high officials is known. In the *Yujing xintan* 玉鏡新譚, written in the Ming dynasty, a note is recorded about a eunuch, Wei Zhongxian 魏忠賢 (1568–1627),¹¹¹ who was so powerful that ministers did not dare to pronounce his name in the petition to the throne. They said Changchen 廠臣 (Minister of the Workshop, indirectly referring to the offices of the eunuchs) instead of that.¹¹² However, we have to distinguish the tabooing of someone's name as a whole, and the tabooing of a character from this name. The case mentioned above is the common practice of avoiding the names of respected persons by using their courtesy name or their title.

Unfortunately, not much can be found about family taboos in the period of the Ming dynasty. We can only presume that they were important for the people of that time. Taboo names were recorded in the family genealogies (*jiapu* 家譜), and were avoided in the

¹⁰⁶ More about the usurpation of 1402 see Ditmanson 2007, pp. 110–158.

¹⁰⁷ It is possible that name taboos of his name did not become *lèse-majesté* after his deposal by the Emperor Yongle.

¹⁰⁸ *Shijing*, j. 16, p. 1b.

¹⁰⁹ *Rizhilu*, j. 23, p. 24a.

¹¹⁰ Wang Jian 2002, p. 244.

¹¹¹ For more about him see Fang Chaoying – Lee Hwa-chou 1976, p. 130.

¹¹² *Yujing xintan*, j. 3, p. 22b. Cf. also *Mingshi*, j. 305, p. 14b.

naming of children.¹¹³ Among the principles of genealogy, we found one that discusses directly the avoidance of names:

If a living lineage member's name is offensive because it contains the same word as an elder member's name, he should change it. If he is dead, then when his name is recorded in the genealogy, another word with similar pronunciation is substituted.¹¹⁴

We know from the *History of the Ming* that one official, Zhu Xizhou 朱希周 (1473–1557), shortly before his death, considered it important to request not to be given a posthumous name with the character *wen* 文, as it was the taboo name of his father.¹¹⁵ According to Zhou Guangye, the Assistant Minister of the Board of Rites, Cui Xian 崔銑 (1478–1541)¹¹⁶ did not use the word *sheng* 陞 (ascend) in his work *Words From Huan* (*Huanci* 洹詞), since this was the given name of his father. He replaced it with the words *zhi* 陟 or *sheng* 升, both with the same meaning “to ascend”.¹¹⁷

7.2.6. Decrees and Examples of non-tabooing

Generally, name tabooing during the Ming period is commented on by scholars as rather weak and loose.¹¹⁸ There are statements about the neglectful attitude of *dafu* 大夫 and *shi* 士, *inter alia* in literary works.¹¹⁹ Even the first emperor of Ming, who was said to be extremely sensitive in this matter, restored in his decree the old principles of non-tabooing of homonyms and single characters of composite names. Besides, strokes did not need to be omitted in taboo characters of literary works.¹²⁰ Later, the *Great Ming Code* (*Da Ming lü* 大明律, completed in 1397) determined, too, that people using single characters of composite taboo names should not be punished.¹²¹

In a few works of his time, such as the *Hongwu zhengyun* 洪武正韻 (compiled by, among others, Yue Shaofeng 樂韶鳳¹²² in 1375) or the *History of the Yuan* (*Yuanshi*,

¹¹³ About genealogical rules in the Ming and Qing periods, see Buckley Ebrey 1981, pp. 237–239.

¹¹⁴ Buckley Ebrey 1981, p. 238. These rules were published in the Qing times (in 1870), but they used the standard model of genealogy of Ouyang Xiu and Su Shi from the Song period, used during the later dynasties.

¹¹⁵ *Mingshi*, j. 191, p. 7b; Wang Jian 2002, p. 247.

¹¹⁶ He is mentioned in Fang Chaoying 1976, p. 1431.

¹¹⁷ *Jingshi biming huikao*, j. 39, p. 582.

¹¹⁸ Cf., e.g., Chen Yuan 1958, p. 164.

¹¹⁹ *Shuyuan zaji*, j. 4, p. 44.

¹²⁰ *Hongwu lizhi*, pp. 2b–3a. This could also suggest that stories about the taboo of the First Emperor, quoted in 7.2.1 and 7.2.2, were just gossip.

¹²¹ *The Great Ming Code* 2005, p. 61.

¹²² For more about him see Chan Hok-lam 1976, pp. 1641–1642.

compiled in 1369), the taboo characters of the name of the first emperor – *yuan* 元 and *zhang* 璋 – were written openly.¹²³ Many other examples of non-observance of taboo are known. For example, the Era name Jianwen 建文 (Establishment of civil virtue, 1398–1402) chosen by Emperor Yunwen 允炆, offended his own name, and he also had no problem giving his sons the names Wenkui 文奎 (born in 1396) and Wengui 文圭 (1401–1457) with almost the same character.¹²⁴ Admittedly, we should note that the character *wen* 文 formally was only a homonym of the taboo character *wen* 炆, and did not need to be avoided according to the decree of the first emperor. Thus, this is perhaps better understood as an example of tabooing becoming a written practice (i.e., pronunciation no longer mattered).

Chen Yuan also gives further examples of not avoiding taboo during the reign of Emperor Wanli (r. 1572–1620), quoted predominantly from Shen Defu's *Wanli yehuobian* 萬歷野獲編. For example, the palace of the imperial concubine Zheng 鄭 was called *yikungong* 翊坤宮 at that time, although it violated the taboo name of the current emperor (Yijun 翊鈞).¹²⁵

The tabooing of the Ming period had its own characteristics. The first character of a name was often common for brothers of the emperor (as a *paihang* character) and was not avoided after his enthronement.¹²⁶ It would explain the limited number of taboo examples, because most of the Ming emperors had double names. The tabooing custom does not always seem to be consistent in this period. For example, the omission of a stroke in the imperial name was prescribed in state exams of the year 1477,¹²⁷ but twenty years later, in the state exams of the year 1494, the non-omission of strokes in taboo characters was valid.¹²⁸

If we take both the principles and the disorder in the taboo practices of that time, the custom of name tabooing cannot be called lax. This is all the more apparent, if we read the edict of the first emperor in 1370, in which he ordered the avoidance of the names of former sages, emperors and virtuous persons, as e.g., characters *guo* 國, *bao* 寶, *tian* 天, *jun* 君, *chen* 臣, *sheng* 聖, *shen* 神, *yao* 堯, *shun* 舜, *yu* 禹, *tang* 湯, *wen* 文, *wu* 武, *zhou*

¹²³ See, for example, *Hongwu zhengyun*, j. 2, p. 11b; *Yuanshi*, j. 5, p. 12a.

¹²⁴ *Wanli yehuobian*, j. 1, p. 7.

¹²⁵ *Wanli yehuobian*, “Buyi 補遺”, j. 3, p. 901; Chen Yuan 1958, p. 165.

¹²⁶ *Rizhilu*, j. 23, pp. 34b–35a. Cf. also names of brothers of Ming emperors.

¹²⁷ *Da Ming huidian*, j. 77, p. 14b.

¹²⁸ *Jingshi biming huikao*, j. 23, p. 370.

周, *han* 漢, *jin* 晉, *tang* 唐. Existing names had to be changed and new names avoided.¹²⁹ In 1397, it was prohibited to use titles as “*taizu* 太祖, *shengsun* 聖孫, *longsun* 龍孫, *huangsun* 黃孫, *wangsun* 王孫, *taishu* 太叔, *taixiong* 太兄, *taidi* 太弟, *taishi* 太師, *taifu* 太傅, *taibao* 太保, *dafu* 大夫, *daizhao boshi* 待詔博士, *taiyi* 太醫, *taijian* 太監, *daguanlang* 大官郎.”¹³⁰ Penalties for violation of taboo, as one might remember from examples at the beginning of this chapter, could be cruel and immoderate, depending on the emperor. This could be seen especially during the reign of the first emperor of Ming (cf. 7.2.1). Therefore, the Ming period cannot be called “a spent force” period in the history of name tabooing in China.¹³¹ The custom changed and became less regular than it had been in the Tang and Song periods, but it was continued.

7.3. Qing

There was a provincial Education Commissioner from Hunan province named Hu Zhongzao 胡中藻.¹³² In 1755, he composed a poem – a simple, non-political poem. Unfortunately, he included the sentence “to distinguish with the heart what is misty and what is clear” (一把心腸論濁清). It was not prudent to put the character *zhuo* 濁 (misty, dirty) before the character used as the name (*guohao* 國號) of the dynasty Qing. When the Qianlong Emperor read the poem, he interpreted it as a political declaration. After the court trial, Hu Zhongzao and the members of his family were beheaded. Later, even the soul tablet with Hu’s name was removed from his ancestral temple.¹³³

In the Qing period, the tabooing of imperial names reached a last high point. It became a part of a “literary inquisition,” called *wenziyu* 文字獄 (imprisonment due to writings).¹³⁴ Although this censorship was present also in former dynasties, it expanded considerably especially in the time of the Qianlong emperor. As a result, not only the violation of a taboo name, but even suspicion of it could lead to a very severe punishment.

¹²⁹ *Ming Taizu shilu*, j. 52, p. 1ab.

¹³⁰ *Kezuo zhuiyu*, j.10, p. 40a.

¹³¹ Wang Xinhua 2007, p. 307.

¹³² For more about him, see Hummel 1943, p. 602.

¹³³ *Guitian suoji*, j. 5, p. 59. Cf. also Guy 1987, pp. 32-33.

¹³⁴ For more about the “literary inquisition” see Guy 1987. The “literary inquisition” was supported not only by the emperor, but also by scholars who wanted to climb up the social ladder. We should note an increased availability of sources in the Qing period, and an increasing importance of written culture. They made for a predisposition towards this “literary inquisition,” and in certain ways also towards a more restrictive tabooing of imperial names.

When the poet Cai Xian 蔡顯 (1697–1767)¹³⁵ wrote his poem “Purple Peony” (*Zi mudan shi* 紫牡丹詩), he will not have expected that it would be a big political mistake. He wanted to express his preference for red peonies and wrote the sentence “(the color of peony) competing with the red one is not the real color, different kinds are all called princes (of flowers)” (*duozhu fei zhengse, yizhong jin cheng wang* 奪朱非正色, 異種盡稱王). The choice of the word *zhu* 朱 for “red color,” however, was unfortunate, as it was the family name of the emperors of the preceding Ming dynasty. Apparently, the main problem was the expression *duozhu* 奪朱 – which could be read as “robbing Zhu”. The poem was interpreted by the Qianlong Emperor as praise for the Ming dynasty, and a refusal of acknowledging the legitimacy of the Qing dynasty. The poet was accused and beheaded.¹³⁶ In the case like that, however, it is sometimes very difficult to say whether the “violation” of a taboo was accidental and or intentional.

On the other hand, Chinese historians of that time used to look for taboo words themselves. For example, in 1725, the Advanced Scholar (*jinshi*) Wang Jingqi 王景祺¹³⁷ attacked the character *zheng* 正 as an ominous one. He realized the bad fortune of emperors with such a name, seriously analyzed it in his work *Discourse about Reign Titles of Successive Dynasties* (*Lidai nianhao lun* 歷代年號論) and argued that the cause is due to the structure of the character *zheng* itself, which is the combination of the characters *yi* 一 (one) and *zhi* 止 (to stop).¹³⁸ This belief is interesting, since it tells us about common superstitions and about the way in which (even high cultural) scholars (Wang Jingqi was an Advanced Scholar no less) still shared basic ideas of fortune-telling through character splitting.¹³⁹

¹³⁵ For him see *Zhongguo lidai renming da cidian* 1999, p. 2443.

¹³⁶ *Qingshi jishi benmo*, j. 20, p. 3b; *Zhongguo lidai renming da cidian* 1999, p. 2443.

¹³⁷ For more about him see Fang Chao-ying 1943, pp. 812–813. Later, he became a victim of the “literary inquisition” and was executed.

¹³⁸ *Yongzheng shangyu neige*, j. 48, p. 23ab. Explicitly mentioned was the fate of such emperors as: Hailingwang of Jin (Era name Zhenglong 正隆 1156–1161), who was killed by one of his officers; Aizong of Jin (Era name Zhengda 正大 1224–1232), who later, in 1234, committed suicide; Huizong of Yuan (Era name Zhizheng 至正 1341–1368), who lost control over China; Zhengde 正德 of Ming (1505–1521), who died after an accident and illness at the age of 30; and Zhengtong 正統 (his first Era name 1436–1449), who was imprisoned and only years later was reinstalled as emperor with the new Era name Tianshun 天順 (1457–1464).

¹³⁹ See also Smith 1994.

7.3.1. Taboo of Emperor's Name

We would expect similarities between the tabooing of the names of emperors from the Qing and Yuan dynasties. The Manchurian and Mongolian people, both with their own culture, invaded China and gradually assimilated with the local population. But while we have only very limited information about taboos of the Yuan dynasty, there was a strong taboo custom during the Qing dynasty. It started at the latest from the period of Kangxi. Of course, as recent scholarship has demonstrated,¹⁴⁰ these Manchus were already at least partially sinicized.¹⁴¹ Thus, to see the Qing only as a Manchurian dynasty would be an oversimplification.

The Manchurian language¹⁴² differs greatly from Chinese in structure and script. Therefore, in the beginning, when no fixed Chinese characters were used yet for the transcription of Manchurian names, the tabooing of characters of names was very limited. Some scholars think there was no such custom until the Kangxi times.¹⁴³ It is possible that the Manchurian people had their own Manchurian system of tabooing, but this has not yet been studied. The use of Chinese characters was of course well-known, since already since the time of Nurhaci (1559–1626) in the late sixteenth century these Jürchen leaders had been earning money in the ginseng trade with Ming-China.¹⁴⁴ It is noticeable in the change of the dynasty's name in 1636 from Jin 金 to Qing 清 by Emperor Huang Taiji (r. 1636–1643). Even before the Manchus invaded China, they apparently wanted to avoid the animosity of Chinese people towards the former Jin dynasty (1115–1234), or show their independency. Moreover, according to the modern scholar Wang Xinhua, they even understood the symbolism of the Chinese expression “the red color (and the imperial family name Zhu) of the Ming dynasty has fire” (*ming zhu you huo* 明朱有火) and used the water element – *shui* 水 – in the new character (*qing* 清) in order to overwhelm fire.¹⁴⁵

Not much is known about tabooing the emperor's name before the time of Kangxi. Scholars have observed no taboo examples prior to his reign (not even during the rule of the first Qing emperor in China itself, the Shunzhi emperor, r. 1644–1661).¹⁴⁶ For some time it was prohibited for Manchus to have Chinese names. But very soon, Chinese customs were

¹⁴⁰ See Elliott 2001; Crossley 1990; Crossley 2006.

¹⁴¹ Note that the concept of “sinicization” is a problematic one. For debate about Manchu sinicization see Crossley 1990, pp. 223–224.

¹⁴² Manchurian is a Tungusic language spoken in Northeast China.

¹⁴³ Chen Yuan 1958, p. 168.

¹⁴⁴ Crossley 1990, p. 5; Elliott 2001, p. 50.

¹⁴⁵ Wang Xinhua 2007, p. 307.

¹⁴⁶ Chen Yuan 1958, p. 168.

adopted more and more, and people – especially those from the upper echelons of the Manchurian army – gradually changed their names to the Chinese manner.¹⁴⁷ However, members of the imperial family changed their family name from Manchurian Aisin Gioro to the Chinese Jin 金 only after the end of the dynasty.¹⁴⁸

Many examples of name tabooing during the period of the Emperor Kangxi (1661–1722, with the given name 玄燁 Xuanye) are probably best considered as an element of his policy of combining Chinese and Manchu customs. In order to avoid his taboo character *xuan* 玄, the names of prominent figures from the past were also changed, as for example Liu Zixuan 劉子玄 (661–721), whose name had already been changed once in the past because of the taboo of Tang, who now called again by his original name Liu Zhiji 劉知幾.¹⁴⁹ Furthermore, the name of a city gate in Peking was changed from Xuanwumen 玄武門 to Shenwumen 神武門 because of taboo.¹⁵⁰

The character *xuan* was often tabooed by using its equivalents *yuan* 元, *yuan* 圓 or *xi* 系, or by dropping one line from the character. For example, according to the *Compilation of State Regulations* (*Huidian* 會典), recorded in *Wuxuelu chubian* 吾學錄初編, all taboo characters *xuan* 玄 were changed to *yuan* 元.¹⁵¹ The *Quan Tangwen* 全唐文, edited in 1815, wrote them as *yuan* 圓.¹⁵² Liu Zongyuan 劉宗元, the author of the *Zhixiao qiuxi xiaoshi tanji* 至小丘西小石潭記 from the Tang period,¹⁵³ had a younger brother, Zongxuan 宗玄. His name could not be replaced with the character *yuan* 元, as their names would become indistinguishable. Therefore, the character *yuan* 圓 was written instead (again, only the character was changed, and not the pronunciation).¹⁵⁴

Yet another taboo equivalent can be seen in the *Hanliu nianpu* 韓柳年譜. The name Zongxuan 宗玄 was written as Zongxi 宗系. The taboo character *xuan* 玄 was probably written in a different way (as 𤣥) and was later mistakenly copied as *xi*.¹⁵⁵ In addition, the

¹⁴⁷ Wang Xinhua 2007, p. 308.

¹⁴⁸ Qigong 2004, p. 6.

¹⁴⁹ Wang Yankun 1997, p. 514.

¹⁵⁰ Wang Yankun 1997, p. 514. It was also the name of the deity Xuanwu who had given his name to the gate (Cf. Chen Xuelin 1997, pp. 89-94).

¹⁵¹ *Wuxuelu chubian*, j. 4, p. 5b.

¹⁵² Chen Yuan 1958, p. 65.

¹⁵³ See *Tangwen cui*, j. 71, p. 7ab.

¹⁵⁴ Chen Yuan 1958, p. 65.

¹⁵⁵ Chen Yuan 1958, p. 65.

practice of tabooing with new characters as equivalents, and tabooing of characters having *xuan* 玄 as a constituent part was known in that time.¹⁵⁶

The character *ye* 燁 was also taboo as a part of the imperial name. The character *yu* 煜 was usually used as an equivalent, as for example in the *Compilation of State Regulations (Huidian)*.¹⁵⁷ Its homonym *ye* 曄 was tabooed, too, and changed to *yu* 煜. Therefore, the name of the Tang emperor Zhaozong (r. 888–904) – Ye 曄 – was adapted to Yu 煜.¹⁵⁸ The name of Fan Ye 范曄 (398–445), the author of the *History of the Later Han*, was changed to his courtesy name Fan Weizong.¹⁵⁹

7.3.2 Apogee of Tabooing in Qing

The apogee of the tabooing of imperial names in the last dynasty of China (according to the number of known cases) can be placed in the reign periods of Emperors Yongzheng (1722–1735) and Qianlong (1735–1796).¹⁶⁰ The custom became very restrictive and was a mandatory evidence of loyalty. We can see here a certain similarity to the reign periods of the emperors Zhu Yuanzhang and Yongle in the Ming dynasty (see 7.2.2 and 7.2.3), who were strong autocratic rulers, too. The observance of name tabooing was especially monitored in the composition of essays for the civil service examinations. New rules for naming the imperial family in the Chinese way had already been drawn up in the time of Emperor Yongzheng: fourteen “generation” characters were fixed which had to be used for the names of the next emperors. In fact, only seven of them were required until the end of the dynasty.¹⁶¹ Of course, this supported primarily the imperial succession and was not inspired by any need for characters without taboos implications, but rather the fact that there had been many rumors concerning his ascent to the throne.

The given name of the Emperor Yongzheng – Yinzhen 胤禛 – was tabooed. According to the the *Da Qing huidian shili* 大清會典事例, the Emperor Qianlong determined in 1760 that “the first character of the holy taboo name of the Emperor Shizong (i.e., Yongzheng) should be written as *yun* 允, and the second character as *zheng* 正.”¹⁶² The *Wuxuelu chubian* 吾學錄初編 also quotes a record from the *Huidian* 會典, which ordered the change of the

¹⁵⁶ Wang Yankun 1997, pp. 514–515. Note three strange equivalent characters in Wang Yankun 1997, p. 514.

¹⁵⁷ *Wuxuelu chubian*, j. 4, p. 5b.

¹⁵⁸ *Lidai diwang miaoshi nianhui pu*, p. 12a.

¹⁵⁹ Wang Yankun 1997, p. 535.

¹⁶⁰ About the period of the Emperor Qianlong see Guy 1987; Spence 2001.

¹⁶¹ Wang Xinhua 2007, p. 308.

¹⁶² *Qinding Da Qing huidian shili*, j. 344, p. 4a.

first taboo character to *yun* 允, but the second one to a different character – *zhen* 禎.¹⁶³ As observed by Chen Yuan, the names Zhang Jiayun 張佳允, Shen Jiayun 申佳允, Du Yunxi 堵允錫 from the *History of Ming (Mingshi)* on the *Stone Tablets With Names of Successful Candidates in the Highest Imperial Examinations (jinshi timing bei 進士題名碑)* were in fact the names of Zhang Jiayin 張佳胤, Shen Jiayin 申佳胤 and Du Yinxi 堵胤錫, modified because of taboo.¹⁶⁴ Also the name of a famous poet, Wang Shizhen 王士禎 (1634–1711), was changed ten years after his death to Shizheng 士正, and later to Shizhen 士禎 (this last name was determined by the Emperor Qianlong).¹⁶⁵

The names of former rulers were similarly treated: the name of the last emperor of the Ming dynasty – Chongzhen 崇禎 – was changed to Chongzheng 崇正,¹⁶⁶ and the name of the first emperor of Song – Zhao Kuangyin 趙匡胤 (r. 960–976) – became Zhao Kuangyun 趙匡允.¹⁶⁷ In 1723, the name of Zhending 真定府 (near Shijiazhuang in Hebei) was renamed as Zhengding 正定, because of the taboo of Yongzheng. Furthermore, other geographical names such as Zhenyang 真陽 and Zhenning 真寧 were changed in that way.¹⁶⁸

The long period of the Qianlong Emperor's reign (reigned officially 1735–1796) brought many cases of taboo, and even stronger persecution. Qing emperors wanted to become “more Chinese” and supported the Chinese custom of tabooing names. An important role in the amplification of taboo observance was played by the “literary inquisition”.¹⁶⁹ However, we should be careful not to blame the emperor too much, as there might well be an underlying indigenous current of tabooing as well. Recent scholarship has argued that many of the cases of “literary inquisition” were generally shared and used by Chinese scholars for their own aims.¹⁷⁰

The first taboo character of the name of the Emperor Qianlong – Hongli 弘曆 – was usually changed to *hong* 宏. This fact is recorded in the *Huidian* (quoted by the *Nansheng gongyulu*), with the additional comment that, if the character *hong* 弘 was part of another

¹⁶³ *Wuxuelu chubian*, j. 4, p. 5b.

¹⁶⁴ Chen Yuan 1958, p. 169.

¹⁶⁵ *Qingwen xiantongkao*, j. 221, p. 31ab.

¹⁶⁶ *Lidai huizipu*, j. 1, p. 15b.

¹⁶⁷ *Jingshi biming huikao*, j. 19, p. 291. Zhou Guangye wrote here his name as “Zhao Kuangyun” and commented: “I have changed the original character because of taboo”.

¹⁶⁸ *Lidai huizipu*, j. 2, p. 44a.

¹⁶⁹ Cf. Guy 1987, pp. 166–200. See also 7.3, Fn. 134.

¹⁷⁰ Guy 1987, p. 179.

character (so called *pianpang* 偏旁), it should be written unchanged but without the last stroke. The same source said that the second character of the taboo name (*li* 曆) should be written with the parts *lin* 林 and *xin* 心 inside.¹⁷¹ Therefore, the Era name of the Emperor Hongzhi 弘治 (1487–1505) was changed to Hongzhi 宏治, and the astronomical *Calendar of the Conformity of Time* (*Shixianli* 時憲曆, composed in 1645 by the Jesuit Adam Schall) to *Shixianshu* 時憲書.¹⁷²

Not only the given name of the Emperor Qianlong had to be tabooed, but also the names of his ancestors. Moreover, when his eldest son, Yonglian 永璉 (1730–1738), died young, it was decided to taboo his name. When later his eighth son Yongxuan 永璇 (1746–1832) in 1752 mistakenly wrote the taboo character *lian* 璉, his princely salary was stopped for three years as a penalty.¹⁷³ Besides, the sentence with the word *hulian* 瑚璉 (coral vessel) from the *Analects* (*Lunyu*)¹⁷⁴ was not approved for the state examination, because it conflicted with the taboo name of Yonglian.¹⁷⁵

Sometimes even taboos of former dynasties were avoided. One interesting case involved tabooing the name of the Han dynasty Emperor Wu (with the given name Liu Che 劉徹, 140–87 BC), who had lived almost two thousand years earlier. Proofreaders of the *Imperial Collection of Four* (*Siku quanshu*) got a strong reprimand as they tolerated the sentence “Che of Han imitated the Qin rule” (*Han Che fang Qinzheng* 漢徹方秦政) in the *Ji’nanji* 濟南集¹⁷⁶ of Li Jian 李薦 and the sentence “Che of Han fluttering up and down” (*xiehang Han Che* 頡頏漢徹) in the *Beishi* 北史 (Wen Yuan zhuan 文苑傳).¹⁷⁷ Both quotations were ordered to be changed to Han Wu 漢武, as a sign of respect for an emperor.¹⁷⁸ It should be mentioned that this tabooing was done out of respect for a great ruler who (supposedly) conquered a great territory, like the Emperor Qianlong, and not just for any emperor.

¹⁷¹ *Wuxuelu chubian*, j. 4, pp. 5b-6a.

¹⁷² Chen Yuan 1958, p. 170.

¹⁷³ *Qinshi*, j. 222, p. 3568.

¹⁷⁴ *Lunyu*, j. 5, p. 1b.

¹⁷⁵ Chen Yuan 1958, p. 170.

¹⁷⁶ *Jinanjì*, j. 1, p. 7a.

¹⁷⁷ *Beishi*, j. 83, p. 2a.

¹⁷⁸ Chen Yuan 1958, p. 169.

7.3.3. The Last Century of Qing

In the 19th century, the number of taboo cases seems to have gone down (at least according to the materials we have) and the observance of taboos was apparently relaxed. Since the number of extant sources for the recent past only increases, this is probably not the result of changes in the survival of historical evidence. Some scholars presume it was an effect of the weakness of the imperial state in that time.¹⁷⁹ Judged from the past, the opposite was often the case: weak emperors often used taboos precisely to emphasize their deficient authority. A more likely cause for this relaxation must have been the fact that at the time of the Emperor Daoguang 道光 (1820-1850), the principles of tabooing changed. The first “generation” character of the imperial name, common for all princes, was no longer taboo, as before. Since then only the last character of a name was taboo.¹⁸⁰ Besides, persecution due to violation of taboo seems to have calmed down.

Even so, there are still examples of taboo during the last century of Qing. The name of the Jiaqing Emperor 嘉慶 (r. 1796–1820) – Yongyan 顥琰 – was tabooed, and therefore the character *yan* 琰 was changed to *jian* 儉. This change was made, for example, in the *Yunmu* 韻目. Furthermore, the name of a scholar of Daoism – Yu Yan 俞琰 (ca. 1253–1314) – was changed to Yu Wan 俞琬 in the *Jianming mulu* 簡明目錄.¹⁸¹

Similarly, the second character of the name Minning 旻寧 of the Emperor Daoguang (r. 1820–1850) was tabooed and changed to *ning* 甯 or *ning* 寧 (all apparently old forms of 寧). In the *Da Qing huidian shili*, we can read about it in an edict of 1853 which said that the taboo name of Emperor Xuanzong (i.e., Daoguang) should be written “with omitted strokes” as *ning* 寧, or “totally changed” to *ning* 甯.¹⁸² On the other hand, it is known that, for example, palaces and gates inside the Forbidden City (as e.g. the Palace of Tranquil Longevity Ningshougong 寧壽宮 or Palace of Earthly Tranquility Kunninggong 坤寧宮) were not changed, though the names of a few of them included the character *ning* 寧 which should have been considered as taboo.¹⁸³

¹⁷⁹ Wang Xinhua 2007, p. 308.

¹⁸⁰ Chen Yuan 1958, p. 169.

¹⁸¹ Chen Yuan 1958, p. 170. Cf. also the taboo prescription of *Huidian*: “In the first (taboo) character two last strokes should be omitted. In the second one the right part of character should be replaced by *you* 又 (*Wuxuelu chubian*, j. 4, p. 6a).

¹⁸² *Qinding Da Qing huidian shili*, j. 344, p. 15a.

¹⁸³ Chen Yuan 1958, p. 169.

No instance of taboo during the reign of Emperor Xianfeng 咸豐 (r. 1850–1861, original given name Yizhu 奕訢) is known at the moment. Nonetheless, there are examples of tabooing the name of the Xianfeng Emperor's successor – the Emperor Tongzhi 同治 (r. 1861–1875, original given name Zaichun 載淳). According to the *Da Qing huidian shili*, an edict in 1861 prescribed that officials who would find the second character of the imperial name in petitions to the emperor should change it to *chun* 淳, and that normally there is no need for omitting strokes.¹⁸⁴

Not much is known about tabooing the name of the Emperor Guangxu 光緒 (r. 1875–1908, original given name Zaitian 載湉).¹⁸⁵ But from the time of the last Qing emperor – Puyi 溥儀 (r. 1908–1911) – numerous examples of the observance of his taboo are known. Names of people were changed, as that of the politician and scholar Tang Shaoyi 唐紹儀 (1862–1938), who changed his name in 1908 to Shaoyi 紹怡 (after the revolution of 1911 he returned to his original name).¹⁸⁶ Furthermore, titles of offices were changed as, for example, that of the Office of Palace Ceremonial (*zhangyisi* 掌儀司)¹⁸⁷ into *zhangli* 掌禮.¹⁸⁸ Besides, names of counties and buildings were changed for five years between 1908 and 1912, e.g. Yizheng county 儀征縣 to Yangzi 揚子縣 (in the Jiangsu province), and the door of a government office (*yimen* 儀門)¹⁸⁹ to *yimen* 宜門.¹⁹⁰ It seems, however, that in all these cases, changes were reversed immediately after the fall of the Qing dynasty, as was also common in earlier dynasties.

7.3.4. Further Examples of Naming Taboo

Incidents of the tabooing names of officials, especially those having power, are quite common in the Qing period. An example can be the person of Wu Sangui 吳三桂 (1612–1678), who virtually ruled Yunnan in 1659–1673.¹⁹¹ Because the name of his father was Xiang 襄, he changed many names containing this character to *xiang* 廂. Furthermore, his own name was tabooed in a manner similar to the imperial taboo custom: *san* 三 was

¹⁸⁴ *Qinding Da Qing huidian shili*, j. 344, p. 15a.

¹⁸⁵ Cf. Wang Yankun 1997, p. 447.

¹⁸⁶ Chen Yuan 1958, p. 170.

¹⁸⁷ Hucker 1985, p. 109.

¹⁸⁸ *Qingshi*, j. 119, p. 1422.

¹⁸⁹ *Cihai* 1999, p. 2008.

¹⁹⁰ Wang Yankun 1997, p. 536.

¹⁹¹ For more about him, see Fang Chao-ying 1943a, pp. 877–880.

exchanged to *can* 參, and *gui* 桂 to *gui* 貴. Many geographical names were changed in this way during that time. For example, Guilin 桂林 was called Jianlin 建林, Guiyang 桂陽 – Nanping 南平, Guidong 桂東 – Yichang 義昌, Xiangyang 襄陽 – Hannan 漢南.¹⁹² Name tabooing was apparently a part of the political propaganda of Wu Sangui during the rebellion.

During the reign of the Emperor Yongzheng, the names of Confucius and Mencius became taboo again.¹⁹³ According to the *Qiaoxi zaji* 橋西雜記 of Ye Mingfei 葉名澧, in 1724 an edict of the Emperor was issued about tabooing the name of Confucius (Qiu 丘). The character *qiu* 丘 had to be written with the part *yi* 卩 (as *qiu* 邱).¹⁹⁴ Similarly, in the *Shuowen jiezi* 說文解字 there is a comment by Duan Yucai 段玉裁 (1735–1815) under the heading of the character *qiu* 邱 that this character is used according to the present system for tabooing the name of Confucius.¹⁹⁵

It seems, however, that taboo customs were not always taken seriously in China, and were also often an object of jokes. As we know, jokes often play with the sound and appearance of characters and thus are an interesting source of information.¹⁹⁶ There is, for example, an anecdote of Wu Jian 吳趼 recorded in his *Xin xiao shi* 新笑史 about a gift from Yunnan donated to the industrialist Sheng Xuanhuai 盛宣懷 (1849–1916).¹⁹⁷ The content of the packet was described on the outside as “Xuan tui” 宣腿 (ham from Xuanwei). The servant could not pronounce the taboo character and giving over the packet omitted it and said to the official: “Somebody has bestowed a leg (*tui* 腿) upon You”.¹⁹⁸

7.3.5. Law and Punishment

There are different opinions regarding the intensity of the imperial tabooing custom during the Qing times.¹⁹⁹ In fact, a peak of severity can be seen during the reigns of Emperors Yongzheng and Qianlong. At that time, punishment for the violation of taboos was often extremely harsh, as we could see in the cases described before (see section 1): the official

¹⁹² Chen Yuan 1958, p. 18.

¹⁹³ Wang Xinhua 2007, p. 317.

¹⁹⁴ *Qiaoxi zaji*, p. 33b–34b.

¹⁹⁵ *Shuowen jiezizhu*, j. 6 xia, p. 55a.

¹⁹⁶ For more about Chinese jokes and tales see Nienhauser 1986, pp. 78–81; Schmidt-Glintzer 1990, pp. 458–459.

¹⁹⁷ See the note about him in Cameron 1943, p. 29.

¹⁹⁸ *Xin xiao shi*, p. 25.

¹⁹⁹ Cf. Wang Xinhua 2007, p. 309.

Zha Siting 查嗣庭 (1664–1727) died in prison, and the scholar Wang Xihou 王錫侯 (1713–1777) was executed. In both cases, their families and competent officials were also penalized. There are, however, other examples where the imperial taboo practice was apparently much more loosely monitored. We know, for example, that in 1767 Chen Hongmou 陳宏某 (1696–1771)²⁰⁰ had already been using a taboo name for many years without changing it, and was not punished.²⁰¹

The taboo law of the Qing dynasty was very similar to that of the Ming. In the Code of the Qing *Da Qing lüli* 大清律例, it was written that every person who mistakenly violated the imperial name (*yuming* 御名) or temple taboo name (*miaohui* 廟諱) in a petition or a report to the emperor would be punished with 80 blows with the stick (*zhang* 杖), and if the violation happened in connection with other documents or works – 40 blows with the bamboo stick (*chi* 笞). A person whose given name violated a taboo would be punished with 100 *zhang*.²⁰² The last punishment was stronger, according to the commentary in law, because such naming is considered not as a mistake but a misdoing, and causes violation of taboo each time that someone would use that person's name. The Qing law also said that homonyms and characters of composite names are not taboo and are not punished. But in contrast to the taboo custom of the Song dynasty, the Ministry of Rites was no longer asked and the classics (as the *Records of Ritual*) were no longer decisive for taboo practice.²⁰³ It was the ruler whose opinion decided about taboo law, though his advisors, of course, might have consulted traditional handbooks or officials from the Ministry of Rites nonetheless.

7.3.6. Names of Barbarians

A peculiarity of taboo custom in the Qing time was the tabooing of barbarians' names. It can be presumed that this practice was intended to conceal the “barbarian” origin of the Qing dynasty, or – on the contrary – to show respect to related tribes and cultures. Especially avoided were those characters with mostly derogative meanings such as *hu* 胡 (north-western barbarians), *lu* 虜 (captive), *yi* 夷 (eastern barbarians) and *di* 狄 (northern barbarians). These characters were often exchanged for their homonyms (*yi* 夷 was written

²⁰⁰ For more about him see the biographical study by Rowe 2001; Suter 1943, pp. 86–87.

²⁰¹ *Chaxiangshi xuchao*, j. 8, p. 5b.

²⁰² *Da Qing lüli*, j. 7, p. 6a; *The Great Qing Code* 1994, p. 91.

²⁰³ Wang Xinhua 2007, pp. 309–310.

as *yi* 彝, *lu* 虜 as *lu* 鹵, *di* 狄 as *di* 敵), or an empty place was left instead.²⁰⁴ It seems to have been a very common custom.

The tabooing of the names of barbarians survived even the decree of the Emperor Yongzheng in 1733 who denounced that practice as wrong and punishable, and ordered revisions of relevant texts.²⁰⁵ The effect was that forty years later, when the Emperor Qianlong read two works – the *Collection of Ancestral Benevolence* (*Zongzeji* 宗澤集) and *Collected Essays of Yang Jisheng* (*Yang Jisheng ji* 楊繼盛集) – he found both works puzzling and only partially corrected.²⁰⁶ When the compilation of the *Imperial Collection of Four Treasuries* (*Siku quanshu*) was undertaken, the emperor issued a special order in 1777 which prescribed the revision of all books and penalties for bad revisers.²⁰⁷ Nevertheless, when 150 years later, in 1933, Chen Yuan analyzed the *Old History of the Five Dynasties* (*Jiu wudai shi* 舊五代史), which was lost and reconstructed from quotes of the *Yongle dadian* 永樂大典 in ca. 1775,²⁰⁸ he found many “barbarian” characters exchanged or deleted in the text.²⁰⁹ Therefore, it can be presumed that emperors preferred “barbarian” names to be tabooed, though they condemned this practice officially, and officials satisfied their wishes, or the officials were too scared not to taboo these terms, even though the emperor claimed to be tolerant of the custom.

7.4. Taboo in Modern China

The common opinion of Chinese scholars on name taboos is that the tabooing of names or *bihui* 避諱 were unique to traditional China and no longer maintained after 1911.²¹⁰ But what has happened with the custom of name tabooing after the “old China” was gone? Did the signing of abdication by the last Emperor of the Qing dynasty on 12 February 1912 really mean the immediate extinction of the practice? Of course not. As far the author of this dissertation knows, however, all works about name tabooing in China stop the description of the custom with the end of that dynasty.²¹¹ This is understandable, since it is

²⁰⁴ Wang Yankun 1997, pp. 85-86; Chen Yuan 1958, pp. 32-33.

²⁰⁵ *Yongzheng shangyu neige*, j. 130, pp. 10b-11a.

²⁰⁶ *Guochao gongshi xubian*, j. 83, p. 23b.

²⁰⁷ *Guochao gongshi xubian*, j. 83, pp. 23b-24a.

²⁰⁸ Wilkinson 2000, p. 285.

²⁰⁹ Chen Yuan 1937a, pp. 1b-2b; Wang Xinhua 2007, p. 315. About Qing editions of Song works against the Liao and Jin see Franke 1987.

²¹⁰ Lin Shimou 2008, p. 53.

²¹¹ Cf. Chen Yuan 1958; Wang Jian 2002; Fan Zhixin 2006. Wang Xinhua 2007, p. 317 mentioned shortly taboos of Yuan Shikai.

not easy to write systematically about name tabooing or its extant forms in modern time, but we will make an attempt here nonetheless.

7.4.1. State Taboo

The attentive reader will have noticed that most of the cases of name tabooing described in this study are related to the name of the emperor. This is rather understandable, because it was precisely this taboo that was mostly recorded and had to be avoided by everybody. After the increase and tragic peak of this custom in the time of Emperor Qianlong in the 18th century, the tabooing of imperial names was gradually relaxed. But even in the last years of the Qing dynasty, there were still concrete examples of the practice for the name of the last emperor Puyi 溥儀 (r. 1908–1911, see 7.3.3).²¹² Since there was no longer an emperor in modern China with the abrogation of the imperial system, we can surely say that tabooing of imperial name was as good as finished. The Xinhai Revolution, and later the establishment of the Republic of China in 1912, was a turning point in Chinese history with far-reaching consequences for the custom of *bihui*. Names altered before because of taboo custom were changed back to the original ones. Indeed, this change back was still made according to principles of tabooing which prescribed not avoiding taboo names after abdication.

How fragile the new practice was, however, could be seen three years later, as the general Yuan Shikai 袁世凱 (1859–1916)²¹³ proclaimed a restoration of monarchy in 1915 with the Era name Hongxian (洪憲). This short living dynasty (12 December 1915 – 22 March 1916) had its own taboos. Yuan Shikai implemented name tabooing on a large scale.²¹⁴ We could not find cases that his personal name was avoided, but two other examples are indicative. Apparently when the Lantern Festival (*yuanxiaojie* 元宵節, on the fifteenth day of the first month after the Chinese New Year) of 1916 came, merchants shouted *yuanxiao* on the streets of Peking in order to sell their sweet dumplings of rice. These dumpling had the same name as the Festival. Yuan Shikai believed that he heard “Yuan *xiao* (袁消 – Yuan disappeared) and ordered to execute them all. Only after an

²¹² No information could be found about a possible tabooing of name in the time as Puyi was the Emperor Kangde 康德皇帝 of the puppet state of Manchukuo (1934-1945). We have found only a notice that he avoided the character *huang* 皇 (emperor) as related to the Japanese Emperor (*tianhuang* 天皇) and because of that the name of his Imperial Palace (usually called *huanggong* 皇宮) was changed to *digong* 帝宮 (Cf. Jia Yinghua 2004, p. 268).

²¹³ For more about Yuan Shikai see “Yuan Shih-k’ai” 1971, pp. 78-89; Ch’en 1972.

²¹⁴ Wang Xinhua 2007, p. 317.

explanation by his minister did he amend the order and merely commanded to replace the name *yuanxiao* with *tangyuan* 湯圓. This name became perpetuated and is used to this day.²¹⁵ A very similar story is told about coal. It is said that all wall inscriptions of “*yuanmei* 元煤” (raw coal) – often on shops selling coal briquettes in Peking – should be erased, because their pronunciation was similar to “Yuan *mei*” 袁沒 (Yuan is out).²¹⁶ Both stories can only be found in the anecdotal literature and we cannot be sure that they went back to actual proclamations or statements by the historical Yuan Shikai.²¹⁷ They show, however, that the custom of avoiding an inauspicious name (or on the contrary – an intentional usage of it) was continued in modern China. This was not a “classical” example of the tabooing of name, but a part of *bihui* custom, similar to, for example, taboos of Zhu Yuanzhang (see 7.2.1).

The most important change for the custom of name tabooing was initiated by the New Culture Movement (*xin wenhua yundong* 新文化運動) of the 1910s and 1920s. It was an intellectual turning point in Chinese culture. It started a break with the traditional social order and traditional customs, to be continued in another way after 1949 in communist China. The subsequent transformation process was described in 1959 by Wolfgang Bauer: “In modern times, the total *paihang* system (with generation names) is dissolving very fast and obviously, together with the disintegration of the Chinese extended family. The same can be said about magical naming – its cosmological foundations are being abolished by the new world view.”²¹⁸ Gradually, given names were openly used, but many practices of avoiding name and courtesy forms were present for a long time. Some of them remain until now and some have returned again in the last decades since family has become more important as well.

It is remarkable that many names of main actors in 20th century Chinese history that we know are not their first names. The first great leader of modern China, Sun Yat-sen (1866–1925), had indeed the name (*ming*) Wen 文. Only after his stay in Japan, in 1897, did he take a new conspiratorial name, Zhongshanqiao 中山樵, which later became Zhongshan 中山 – his best-known name in China. The name Yat-sen, that is known currently in the West, is the Cantonese pronunciation of his cognomen Yixian 逸仙, and in

²¹⁵ Lin Shimou 2008, p. 55–56.

²¹⁶ Wang Xinhua 2007, p. 317.

²¹⁷ Ch'en 1972, p. 159 ascribes them to Yuan Shikai's purported superstitiousness, but this judgment seems more due to the general historians' dislike of him, than being based on historical facts.

²¹⁸ Bauer 1959, p. 249 [translation PA].

addition he also had the courtesy name Zaizhi 載之. It can be also noticed that his name was intentionally changed by Qing officials to Wen 汶 when he was about to be arrested.²¹⁹

The name Chiang Kai-shek (1887–1975) of China's second important leader was in fact his courtesy name Jiang Jieshi 蔣介石 in Cantonese transcription. His original given name, recorded in genealogy books, was Zhoutai 周泰, although he also had the milk name (*xiaoming*) Ruiyuan 瑞元, known only to his close family. Later he used another name – Zhiqing 志清. Only when he started a new period of his life in ca. 1917 did he change his name to Zhongzheng 中正. In that way he designated a relation with Sun Yat-sen (through the similarity of his name to the latter's most common Chinese name Zhongshan) and positioned himself as his legitimate heir (by the meaning of name – “central uprightness”). That is why this name was never accepted in communist China.²²⁰

Even communist leaders had their own stories with names. Mao Zedong 毛澤東 (1893–1976) normally used his given name, although he also had a courtesy name, Runzhi 潤之, in the beginning. Apparently, when he left Yan'an in 1947 in order to defeat the army of Jiang Jieshi and to become the sole ruler of China, he used Li Desheng 李德勝 as his name. It was supposed to be a good omen, because the pronunciation was almost identical to *li desheng* 離得勝 (leave and win).²²¹

The communist reformer Deng Xiaoping 鄧小平 (1904–1997) took this name only in 1927 when he entered the Communist Party of China. His original given name was Xiansheng 先聖. Later, his teacher thought it was inopportune, as only Confucius could be called *sheng* (holy) and so gave him the name Xixian 希賢 (of rare virtue), which he used until 1927.²²²

Often titles were used instead of names, when addressing or referring to leaders of 20th century China. Jiang Jieshi was called Lord Chiang (Jiang *gong* 蔣公), Mao Zedong – Chairman Mao (Mao *zhuxi* 毛主席), Zhou Enlai 周恩來 (1898–1976, Premier of the People's Republic of China) – Premier Zhou (Zhou *zongli* 周總理). The personal names of leaders could not be spoken. Such violation would be considered not only as a discourtesy and offence, but perhaps also as non-acceptance of their power as ruler.

²¹⁹ Su Man 2000, p. 38.

²²⁰ Wang Shunqi 2003, p. 56; Cun You 2010, p. 41.

²²¹ Wang Shuren 2010, pp. 48–50.

²²² Xiang Rong 2007, p. 63. About the practice of avoidance by naming in the Communist time see Zhang Xiao 2006, pp. 92–93.

Another phenomenon that needs special discussion here is the practice of “raising the head” (*taitou* 抬頭) in the 20th century, as an expression of reverence to one’s name. The name of a person was shifted to the head of the next line (“level raising” *pingtai* 平抬), or at least one character space (or more) was left before the name (“shift raising” *nuotai* 挪抬). The practice existed probably since the Qin dynasty,²²³ and was always the expression of special reverence for the person and his name, and also a sign of power. Thus it is strongly related to the custom of name tabooing. The second form of *nuotai* was still often used in the 20th century, especially in Taiwan, and only in the last years lost its popularity.²²⁴ According to this custom, Sun Yat-sen and Chiang Kai-shek after their deaths were addressed as “Father of the Nation (space) Mr. Sun Yat-sen” (*guofu Sun Zhongshan xiansheng* 國父 孫中山先生) and “Former Reverent President (space) Lord Chiang” (*xian zongtong Jiang gong* 先總統 蔣公).²²⁵ It is also interesting that a Christian (Baptist) translation of Bible used this method and put empty characters everywhere in the front of the character *shen* 神 (God).²²⁶ But here the cause was the need for formatting the *Shangdi* version of Bible (with two characters for God) into the *Shen* version (with one character).²²⁷

7.4.2. Private Taboo

In spite of the impact of “Western customs,” Chinese people cultivate to this day a courteous and discreet attitude to names, especially to names of former generations. This practice is related to the old custom of tabooing names. Even today it is still unusual to directly address parents or older people by their given name (as often heard in America and Europe). Especially in villages, but also in cities, titles such as “mother,” “father,” “elder brother,” etc. are used as applicable within the family. In order to speak about somebody, a description is used, as for example “father of (name of child)” – out of respect for one’s own husband. The original name is normally acceptable only between people of the same

²²³ Lei Rongguang 2006, pp. 53-54.

²²⁴ Personal conversation with Jiang Ryh-Shin and Pan Feng-Chuan, Sankt Augustin, 9.10.2009.

²²⁵ For example, on the entrance gate of his Mausoleum in Qihu.

²²⁶ Cf. *Xinjiuyue quanshu* 1965 (passim).

²²⁷ The *nuotai* practice can be seen in many Chinese Christian sources. On the Nestorian stele, a two-character space is left before the temple names of Tang emperors, and in front of the expression “Lord” (*zhu* 主) “Our Triune (God)” (*wo sanyi* 我三一). Similarly, in works of Jesuits and Franciscans of the 17th cent., an empty space is left in front of the name of Jesus, and the words “Lord,” “God,” etc. Cf. the work *Shengxi guiyi* 聖洗規儀 of Mu Diwo 穆迪我 (Jacques Motel SJ, 1619-1692) and the work *Jinjiao lingxi jielu* 進教領洗捷錄 of Bian Fangshi 卞芳世 (Francisco Peris de la Concepción OFM, d. 1701) with the *nuotai* practice on almost every page. See the reproduction in Standaert 2009, Vol. 18, pp. 33-136.

generation, if they are relatives or good friends. Names of ancestors cannot be used as long as there is still somebody alive from the family who remembers the names. But they are acceptable, for example, in official registries, etc.²²⁸ There is also no longer any problem in using characters from names of the older generation in everyday life and in writing.

Names of ancestors are sometimes unfamiliar to Chinese people. Especially names of female ancestors are affected so that it is possible for one to not know, for example, the name of one's own grandmother.²²⁹ As these names are not used normally, people learn it only incidentally, for example when they have to write down an address. Some Chinese families still have their genealogy book (*jiapu* 家譜), but many others have lost it and can rely only on their memory.

Knowledge about the names of older generations is especially important for the naming of a new child. To this day, it is not possible for Chinese to take names of the older generation for the names of their children, contrary to what is commonly seen, for instance, in Europe. Names of parents, grandparents and their brothers and sisters, and also homonyms of them, are taboo.²³⁰ The process of naming is complex, as the choice of an appropriate name is still considered to be very important nowadays.²³¹ Numerous popular websites can be found offering help in choosing a name.²³² One important piece of information required here is the "taboos of the family" (*jiazu minghui* 家族名諱) explained as "taboos (*jihui*) of family and prohibited characters of former generations."²³³ Grandparents of a newborn child are naturally involved in the naming process, and give information about the taboo names of the family.

Besides, there are cases known today in which names have to be changed because of the (taboo) name of another person in the family. The situation of similar names is normally prevented within one's own family, but marriage into another family can cause unexpected problems. To this day, a daughter-in-law has to change her name if it is similar to the name of her mother-in-law in traditional families in Taiwan.²³⁴ In mainland China (Xianxian County), newly-married people cannot have names analogous to relatives of their spouse. Such names are revised and cannot be used any longer, at least within the new family. The

²²⁸ Personal conversation with Joseph Xue, Sankt Augustin, 20.11.2010.

²²⁹ Personal conversation with Johanna Zhang, Sankt Augustin, 19.3.2010.

²³⁰ Personal conversation with Joseph Gao, Sankt Augustin, 20.11.2010.

²³¹ A top specialist takes 10000 RMB (1000 €) for devising a new name. Cf. www.babynome.cn/apply (access 21.11.2010).

²³² Cf., for example, www.name104.com; www.chinammw.com; www.nameworkshop.cn; www.babynome.cn.

²³³ Cf. www.babynome.cn/apply (access 21.11.2010).

²³⁴ Personal conversation with Jiang Ryh-Shin and Pan Feng-Chuan, Sankt Augustin, 9.10.2009.

young woman interviewed by me explained that she does not know the former name of her aunt (the sister of her father). The aunt changed her name after marriage, because of the name of one of her husband's relatives, and the old name was not used any more. On the other hand, the mother of the woman uses two names until now: one in her original family and the new one in the present family.²³⁵

Furthermore, special reverence is expected for names of deceased people. In fact, it is usual today to write the full name on the tomb tablet or memorial tablet (also called spirit tablet, *paiwei* 牌位), but it is not appropriate to speak it. It can be often seen that the characters *gong* 公 (Lord) or *hui* 諱 (taboo) are put between the family name and the given name on the tablet.²³⁶ There are numerous questions about “how to write a memorial tablet” on bulletin boards on the Internet.²³⁷ Both forms mentioned above are given very often as an adequate design, e.g. “Spirit tablet of Revered Ancestor (family name) Lord *taboo name* (given name)” (*xianyan* [*xing*] *gonghui* [*ming*] *laodaren zhi lingwei* 先嚴 [姓] 公諱 [名] 老大人之靈位).²³⁸ During the mourning ceremony (memorial meeting, *zhuidaohui* 追悼會) in Handan County, the name of the deceased person is written with white characters on a black cloth. After the given name in the text, an empty space is left out of reverence for the dead person, for example “Mr. (space) (family and given name)” (姓名 [space] 先生).²³⁹

The name has preserved until today its special importance in Chinese society, especially in traditional rural regions. Children still sometimes receive a second name (nickname – *waihao* 外號 or *chuohao* 綽號), as a means of protection from “danger” or ghosts. In contrast, the original given name should be used even recently in popular belief in Xianxian County if a child is ill and crying. In that case, a slip of paper with a text should be hung out at the crossroads. Following this text with a spell should expel ghosts and heal the child:

“(Real name of the child)

Gods, Kings of Heaven and Earth / In my house there is a child crying in the night

You gentlemen passing by, please, read it out three times

And the child will be able to sleep until morning”

²³⁵ Personal conversation with Anna Zhang, Sankt Augustin, 8.3.2010.

²³⁶ For example, in Zhejiang. Talking to Joseph Xue, Sankt Augustin, 20.11.2010.

²³⁷ Cf. for example: tieba.baidu.com/f?kz=716652709; www.wanrm.com/article/bf/3221.html; zhidao.baidu.com/question/188772157.html?push=ql (all access 21.11.2010).

²³⁸ Cf. wenwen.soso.com/z/q179684221.htm (access 21.11.2010).

²³⁹ Personal conversation with Josef Gao, Sankt Augustin, 20.11.2010.

(*ming* 名)

tianhuanghuang dihuanghuang 天皇皇地皇皇

wojia you ge ye kulang 我家有个夜哭郎

xinglude junzi nian sanbian 行路的君子念三遍

yijiao shuidao datianliang 一覺睡到大天亮²⁴⁰

To directly use the names of parents of an antagonist in a quarrel between children is regarded as a big offense²⁴¹ (we can recall the tabooing of hatred in the old times, see 5.4.6). And finally, even today, new names are received, if someone's life is fundamentally changed. Some Catholic sisters in Hebei province have a special ritual in which they receive a new Chinese religious name (*huiming* 會名),²⁴² different from their Christian name (a patron saint). After a prayer, they read a passage of the Bible (or a litany) and choose first one character identical for the whole group of sisters (note the similarity to the *paihang* system). After that, a second individual character is chosen from the Bible. In the perception of the sisters, a kind of new life comes with this new name, which is always used from then on as the proper one.²⁴³

In this chapter, we have looked at taboo customs in the last centuries. In conclusion, we can observe that also in the Yuan, Ming and Qing dynasties various kinds of name tabooing were still practiced. Furthermore, they were important for both emperors and commoners.

When the reader compares the taboo practice in the Yuan or Ming periods with the custom in the Tang and Song times, the first two seem to exert a rather casual monitoring of taboos. There are not so many equivalents of one taboo character as in the Song, and far fewer taboo cases. In fact, it seems that there were not always strict rules on how to avoid taboos. However, the practice of tabooing changed later and became even stronger. Probably no other periods saw so many executions because of violation of taboo as the Qing period.

The tabooing of names was also connected with the practice of censorship and even “literary inquisition.” The official tabooing of the emperor's name stressed mainly the legitimacy of his power. Starting from the Yuan dynasty, plenty of prohibited inauspicious

²⁴⁰ According to a conversation with Anna Zhang, Sankt Augustin, 8.3.2010.

²⁴¹ Talking to Anna Zhang, Sankt Augustin, 8.3.2010.

²⁴² The choice of a new religious name is an old Christian monastic custom.

²⁴³ Cf. E-mail from Elisabeth Guo 11.11.2010; E-mail from Teresa Li and Maria Guan 10.11.2010.

words and words of power also became tabooed. This custom was already prevailing as a common practice, but only in the last three dynasties in Chinese history was it elevated to official taboo (*hui* 諱) and extensively incorporated into literary works.

After the fall of the Qing dynasty, the tabooing of the emperor's name was officially ended (with the exception of Yuan Shikai). Other kinds of name tabooing have been continued, as shown by the examples of tabooing the names of state leaders throughout the last century. Furthermore, the tabooing of relatives' names (increasingly out of courtesy or respect) is present until today. Similarly, the tabooing of inauspicious words in names can be found nowadays, too.

After chronological chapters presenting various cases, situations and customs in the whole history of China, we shall have a look at the impact and consequences of tabooing of names in the everyday lives of Chinese people.

CHAPTER EIGHT: CONSEQUENCES FOR PEOPLE

The custom of name tabooing was present in all periods of Chinese history. It affected not only the emperor and intellectuals, but also all other social strata, and had a big influence on everyday life of all Chinese. We can imagine many such situations: First, one had to know the taboo names of one's own family. They were often recorded in family genealogies and avoided, for example, in the naming a newborn child. Secondly, one had to ask about the taboos of other people, in order not to hurt.¹ Especially taboos of people with power (and their family members) had to be learnt, such as those of emperors and officials.

Avoiding taboo names caused numerous changes in the language on the level of vocabulary and names. Especially names of people, geographical names and titles of offices were changed. There were also many other words, such as names of daily things and other common expressions, for new words had to be invented. Avoiding names also influenced people's lives on a daily level, sometimes in a very troublesome way. Anecdotic stories of people avoiding stones or music because of association with the names of their fathers, such as given at the outset of this work (see Chapter One), may be regarded as extreme. But there were many other, less spectacular connections of name tabooing with an individual's everyday life.

Name tabooing had a big impact on the life of the literati who stressed the observance of taboo and at the same time were monitored for possible violations. A taboo name in their family could compel them to renounce exams or resign from office. If they accidentally used a taboo name of the examiner during an exam – they could fail the exam. If they used an imperial name – they could be punished, sometimes with the capital punishment. The research on the influence of name tabooing for the lives of people is still underdeveloped and needs to be continued further. This section will show the reader the impact that name tabooing had for the lives of people.

8.1. Changes in Language

The clearest impact of name tabooing can be seen on a linguistic level. Names and words were changed in order to avoid a taboo name. Examples of the change of names can already be seen in the Zhou period, and perhaps even earlier.

¹ Cf. *Caomuzi*, j. 3, p. 22ab: "First you should ask about the taboo name of ancestors" (*xian wen fuzu hui* 先問父祖諱).

8.1.1. Given Name (*ming* 名)

The usage of the same name as somebody else, especially the emperor or a man with power, was apparently seen as an insult, usurpation of power and a kind of harassment. It is possible that given names were changed to temple names or replaced by the character *mou* 某 as early as the Shang and the beginning of the Zhou period. But usually the incident in the *Han Feizi* (as noticed briefly in section 4.3.1.4) is considered the first known record of a name change because of taboo:

Once, the Feudal Lord (*zhuhou* 諸侯) of Wei was paying a visit to the court of Zhou. The official usher of Zhou asked his pen-name. “The Feudal Lord of Wei, Land-Extender (*bijiang* 辟疆)” was the reply. The usher, refusing his admission, said, “No Feudal Lord is supposed to have the same name as the Son of Heaven (*tianzi* 天子).” Thereupon the Ruler of Wei changed his pen-name and said, “The Feudal Lord of Wei, Hui 燬” Thereafter he was ushered into the court.²

In fact, Hui was the given name of Duke Wen of Wei (衛文公, 659–635 BC) and the title “Land-Extender” was reserved only for the king (*wang* 王). Thus it was more a kind of usurpation. Furthermore, it was not the given name, but the title that was replaced.

Many examples of changing a given name because of taboo can be found from the Han period. Chen Yuan divided them into three groups, according to three methods of change: assuming a new name, replacing the name with a courtesy name and dropping a character of the given name.³ As already described, there were many more methods for changing it. It seems that normally it was enough to use someone’s title or function instead of his given name for observing private taboos. But for characters of the emperor’s name, a special type of veneration and tabooing was prescribed, resulting in the change of one’s own name.

A given name could be changed temporarily, if it was necessary for some occasion or until the cause for tabooing was gone. This was, for example, often the case if a crown prince died or the dynasty ended (see, e.g., the tabooing of the name of the last Qing emperor in 7.3.3). In the *Xumo kehuixi* 續墨客揮犀 of Peng Cheng 彭乘 (985–1049), we find also the example of an official (Court Gentleman, *fenglang* 奉郎)⁴, named Wang Sengyan 王僧彥, who renamed the ink-stone (*yan* 硯) as ink-pond (*mochi* 墨池) in order to

² *Han Feizi*, j.14, p. 7b. Translation according to Liao 1959, p. 132.

³ Chen Yuan 1958, pp. 12-14.

⁴ Cf. Hucker 1985, pp. 214-215; Xu Lianda 2010, pp. 327-328.

taboo his own name, and drum (*gu* 鼓) as “skin quivers” (*pibing* 皮棚) in order to taboo the name of his father (Shigu 師古). Other people apparently often violated his taboos. But one time, a soldier, whose name was Li Yangu 李彥古, came to him. Probably knowing about the taboo names of Wang Sengyan, he changed his name for this occasion and reported himself as “Li Mochi Pibing 李墨池皮棚.” After this introduction words, the official was very happy and grateful, and mentioned his words as an example for others.⁵

There are examples of repeated changes of given names because of taboo throughout history. This was, for example, the case with the historian Liu Zixuan 劉子玄 (661–721) who changed his former name Zhiji 知幾 to his courtesy name because of a homonym with the taboo name of Emperor Xuanzong of Tang (Longji 隆基, r. 712–756). Later, his former name was restored by Qing scholars, as the name of Emperor Kangxi (Xuanye 玄燁) had to be tabooed.⁶

Furthermore, names were also changed because of taboo words in general, as the examples of Song Jiao 宋郊 (996–1066) and Wang Deyuan 王德元 (10th c.) prove. The first person changed his given name to Song Xiang 宋庠 because the character *jiao* 郊 was considered inauspicious (similar to *jiao* 交 – decline).⁷ The second person was the son of Wang Yan 王晏 (890–966) and was originally called Dan 湛. But then the Emperor called Wang Yan and said to him: “Liu Dan 劉湛 (392–440) and Jiang Dan 江湛 (408–453) did not die a natural death.”⁸ The name Dan is not auspicious. You have to change it.”⁹ Thereafter, Wang Yan changed the name of his son.

8.1.2. Other Names and Titles of People

There are also cases in which name tabooing caused a change of other names and titles, including even family names (*xing* 姓), Era names (*nianhao* 年號), and posthumous names (*shihao* 諡號). There are many examples that because of name tabooing family names were changed. In the Song work the *Tongzhi* 通志, there is a list of such changes during the Han, Jin and Liu-Song dynasties.¹⁰ It was copied by Chen Yuan and can be found in his work

⁵ *Xumo kehuixi*, j. 6, p. 6ab. Interesting that the character *shi* 師 is written without the first stroke.

⁶ *Lidai huizipu*, j. 1, p. 11b.

⁷ In *Songshi*, j. 284, p. 6ab.

⁸ Secretary Liu Dan 劉湛 and official Jiang Dan 江湛 were both killed. See *Zhongguo lidai renming da cidian* 1999, Vol. I, pp. 647 and 714.

⁹ *Nan Qishu*, j. 42, p. 2b.

¹⁰ *Tongzhi*, j. 30, p. 484.

together with a few further examples.¹¹ Other examples are included in the *Shiguo chunqiu* 十國春秋 and *Old History of the Five Dynasties* (*Jiu wudai shi* 舊五代史) for a slightly later period. Cheng Ji 成及 (847-913) changed his family name to Xian 咸, because of the taboo name (homonym) of Zhu Cheng 朱誠 – the father of the first Emperor of the Liang dynasty.¹² A certain Cheng Rui 成汭 (d. 903) changed his family name for the same reason to Zhou 周.¹³

Era names and posthumous names were sometimes changed retrospectively, especially during the Tang and Song dynasties. Most of them concerned names of the distant past and therefore affected normally only historians, and not people in their current lives. Yet in some cases, they still could be relevant for people, as for example the posthumous name Zhong 忠 of an official of the Northern Zhou dynasty, Li Yuan 李遠 (507–557), which was changed only a relatively short time after his death to Huai 懷, because of the given name of the father of Emperor Wen of Sui – Yang Zhong 楊忠 (507–568).¹⁴ Similar is the case of the honorific title of Empress Dowager (太后 *taihou*) which was to be bestowed in 961 upon Empress Zhong (鍾皇后, d. 965) of the Southern Tang dynasty. Because the taboo name of her father was Taizhang 太章, the title was changed to “Eminent Respected Empress” (*shengzunhou* 聖尊后).¹⁵

8.1.3. Names of Offices

As has been pointed out in the historical analysis (Chapters Four–Seven), changes of office names were common in many periods. Since they were highly visible in administrative discourse, taboos mattered mostly in this sphere of life. The first known case is reported in the *Tradition of Zuo* (*Zuozhuan*): the titles of the Minister of Education (*situ* 司徒)¹⁶ and Minister of Works (*sikong* 司空)¹⁷ were changed to *zhongjun* 中軍¹⁸ and *sicheng* 司城,¹⁹ because of the names of former kings.²⁰

¹¹ Chen Yuan 1958, p. 11-12.

¹² *Shiguo chunqiu*, j. 84, p. 10a.

¹³ *Jiu wudai shi*, j. 3, p. 6a.

¹⁴ *Zhoushu*, j. 25, p. 6b.

¹⁵ *Nan Tangshu*, j. 16, pp. 354-355.

¹⁶ Hucker 1985, p. 458; Xu Lianda 2010, p. 214.

¹⁷ Hucker 1985, p. 450; Xu Lianda 2010, p. 213.

¹⁸ Cf. Hucker 1985, p. 189; Xu Lianda 2010, p. 105.

¹⁹ Cf. Hucker 1985, p. 442; Xu Lianda 2010, p. 213.

²⁰ Cf. *Chunqiu zuozhuan*, j. 5, pp. 16b, 18a. Explanation in brackets was made by Du Yu 杜預 (222–285). See also 4.3.1.2.

Most cases were related to changes because of the taboo name of an emperor. For example, because of the imperial name of Sima Shi 司馬師 (208-255, the uncle of the first emperor of the Jin dynasty 晉, posthumously honored as Emperor Jing 景帝), titles of offices such as *taishi* 太師 or *junshi* 軍師 were changed to *taizai* 太宰²¹ and *junsi* 軍司.²² Similarly, in the Jin dynasty 金, the title *biyan chengfeng* 筆硯承奉, already changed in 1163 to *biyan gongfeng* 筆硯供奉, was restored soon after because of the taboo name Yungong 允恭 of the father of the Emperor Zhangzong (章宗, r. 1190-1208).²³ Because of the name Youjian 由檢 of the last Ming emperor, the title of offices with such characters were changed, e.g. *jiantao* 檢討 to *jiantao* 簡討 and *jianxiao* 檢校 to *jianxiao* 簡校.²⁴ In his *Shihui juli* Chen Yuan provides further examples of such changes.²⁵

Sometimes names of offices were also changed because of the taboos of officials (private taboo). We find such a situation in the *Old Book of Tang (Jiu Tangshu)*, in the account of the appointment of the official Xiao Fu 蕭復 to Army Aide (*hang/xingjun zhangshi* 行軍長史).²⁶ But as his father had the given name Heng 衡 (apparently in that time a homonym to *hang*),²⁷ the name of office was changed to *tongjun zhangshi* 統軍長史.²⁸ According to the *Old History of the Five Dynasties (Jiu Wudaishi)*, Feng Yun 馮贇, whose father's given name was Zhang 章, himself changed the name of his office from Manager of Affairs (*pingzhangshi* 平章事)²⁹ to “Cooperating with Second Rank Officials of the Secretariat-Chancellery” (*tongerpin* 同二品).³⁰ It seems, however, that such “private” changes of names were rather uncommon or unofficial and rather restricted to one's own use.

8.1.4. Geographical Names

Innumerable changes of geographical names are known from almost every period of Chinese history because of the tabooing of names. Mountains, rivers, but especially names

²¹ *Tang liudian*, j. 1, p. 2b; *Tongdian*, j. 20, p. 114; *Jingshi biming huikao*, j. 10, p. 149.

²² *Tongdian*, j. 29, p. 168; *Jingshi biming huikao*, j. 10, p. 150.

²³ *Jinshi*, j. 53, p. 7a.

²⁴ *Zhengzitong*, j. 5, p. 109b.

²⁵ See Chen Yuan 1958, pp. 16-17.

²⁶ Cf. Hucker 1985, p. 244.

²⁷ Cf. Wang Xinhua 2007, p. 234.

²⁸ *Jiu Tangshu*, j. 125, p. 4b.

²⁹ Hucker 1985, p. 386; Xu Lianda 2010, p. 178.

³⁰ *Jiu Wudaishi*, j. 44, p. 4a. For the title *tongerpin* cf. Xu Lianda 2010, p. 247; Hucker 1985, pp. 554-555 (*tongsanpin* 同三品).

of counties and villages, and even of buildings, were changed whenever they violated the taboo name of the current emperor. Therefore, already in the *Tradition of Zuo* (*Zuozhuan*) and *Records of Ritual* (*Liji*), we find the instructions not to name people after rivers, states, offices, mountains, maladies, animals, ceremonial utensils etc.³¹ A similar statement is made in the *Sayings of the states* (*Guoyu*), where we also find the first example of changing geographical names – of two mountains.³² Nevertheless, in every period of history places can be found with a taboo character in their name. It would be impossible to name all of these cases, because of their sheer number and because research on it is still in progress.

Josef Chiao writing 40 years ago already identified 229 cases of such changes in Shanxi and Sichuan provinces alone.³³ For example, Longshan 隆山 in Sichuan was changed during the Tang dynasty to Pengshan 彭山, because of the name of the Tang Emperor Xuanzong (given name Longji 隆基, r. 712–756) and Zhongjiang 中江 in the same province was changed to Neijiang 内江, because of the name of the father of the Sui Emperor Wen – Zhong 忠 (d. 568). Similarly, Xiaoyi 孝義 in Shanxi province was changed to Zhongyang 中陽, for the name of Taizong of Song (r. 976–997) was Guangyi 光義, and Heiling 黑嶺 to Wuling 烏嶺, because the character *hei* was part of the nickname of Yu Wentai 宇文泰 (507–556) – Heita 黑獺 (Black beaver), the father of the Emperor Xiaomin 孝閔 (r. 557) of Northern Zhou.³⁴

In fact, many other changes are also known in geographical names, which must have been confusing for people of that time. Also here, similarly to the change of given names, the change was usually made in order to avoid the taboo name of an emperor, often directly after his enthronement. Besides the few examples given by Chen Yuan,³⁵ we can further note the change of Heng Mountain (Hengshan 恒山) to Chang Mountain (Changshan 常山), made because of the name of Emperor Wen of the Han (r. 179–157 BC),³⁶ or the name change of Longqing 隆慶 county to Yanqing 延慶 (today a part of the municipality of Peking) because of the Era name of the Emperor Longqing 隆慶 of Ming (r. 1566–1572).³⁷

³¹ *Chunqiu zuozhuan*, j. 5, p. 16b; *Liji*, j. 1, p. 21b.

³² *Guoyu*, j. 15, p. 2ab.

³³ Chiao 1970, p. 129.

³⁴ Chiao 1970, pp. 105–106.

³⁵ Cf. Chen Yuan 1958, pp. 17–18.

³⁶ *Hanshu*, j. 28 shang, p. 23b. Cf. also *Hanshu*, j. 3, p. 1b.

³⁷ *Mingshi*, j. 40, p. 8a.

It was also possible (though rare) that geographical names were changed because of the taboo of an important official. The change could be made by the emperor himself, but also by an official. We know, for example, the case of Dong Si'an 董思安 from the end of the Tang period, who was appointed prefect (*cishi* 刺史) of Zhang prefecture 漳州, but refused this post because of the taboo name of his father Zhang 章. Thereafter the emperor changed the name of the prefecture to Nanzhou 南州.³⁸

It is important, however, for readers to remember that the tabooing of names was admittedly the most important, but not the only motive for changing geographical names. Such names were also changed if a new dynasty started or a new Era name (*nianhao* 年號) was announced, and occasionally after a military success or mysterious incident.³⁹ For the present work, it is relevant to mention that some changes of toponyms were made because of taboo words that were not names, but words with inauspicious connotations. In this way, the name of the Imperial Garden “Jiao Pond” (*jiaochi* 教池) in Bianjing 汴京 (today Kaifeng) was changed to *shangchi* 上池, after somebody recognized the dangerous connection of the name with the similarly sounding word *jiaochi* 較遲 meaning “quite late”.⁴⁰ We should always keep in mind that the name of a place was connected in the people’s perception with their fate (see 2.2.2). Names were an omen and should be changed if they were “harmful”.

8.1.5. Other Words and Terms

Names of people, titles of offices and toponyms are perhaps the most extensively recorded changes made because of taboo of name. There are, however, other words that were changed too, if they conflicted with a taboo name or taboo character. Many examples of changes made in names of animals, plants or things have been collected by Chen Yuan in his *Shihui juli*, such as the words for pheasant, tiger, shellfish, pomegranate, or even musical instruments.⁴¹ Probably in every sphere of life, numerous examples of change due to taboo can be found.

We want to give here a few examples related to taboo cases in medicinal herbs. According to Li Shizhen 李時珍 (1518–1593), author of the famous *Compendium of*

³⁸ *Zizhi tongjian*, j. 285, p. 12b.

³⁹ Cf. Chiao 1970, pp. 104–105.

⁴⁰ Wang Yankun 1997, p. 225; Feng Jiahua 2005, pp. 38–42.

⁴¹ Chen Yuan 1958, pp. 25–26.

Materia Medica (*Bencao gangmu* 本草綱目, compiled in 1578, published in 1596) the herb *changshan* (常山) is identical with *hengshan* (恆山).⁴² It apparently grew originally in the mountains of the same name. When the name of the mountain was changed because of the taboo of Emperor Wen of Han (Heng 恆, r. 179-157 BC), the name of the herb was also changed to *changshan* and was recorded in this way in the book on medicinal plants *Shennong bencaojing* 神農本草經.⁴³ Later, the old name was probably partly restored, but the new name was also used interchangeably.⁴⁴

The same *Compendium of Materia Medica* (*Bencao gangmu*) identifies *hugua* 胡瓜 as *huanggua* 黃瓜 (both mean cucumber, also used for medical purposes). The original name should be *hugua*, as it was brought from the Western regions of the Hu 胡 tribes. Apparently, the Emperor Ming (r. 319–333) of the Later Zhao dynasty prohibited use of the character *hu*, and the name was changed to *huanggua*. A possible cause for the tabooing may have been that it was a homonym (with another tone) of the name Hu 虎 of the nephew of the Emperor Ming (see 5.4.3) or the fact that the emperor originated from the Hujie 胡羯 tribe and was a believer of the “barbarian heaven” religion (*hutian jiao* 胡天教), probably Zoroastrianism.⁴⁵

The original name of the Chinese yam (*shuyu* 薯蕷) sounded similar to the name of Emperor Daizong of the Tang – Li Yu 李豫 (r. 762–779). Therefore it was changed to *shuyao* 薯藥. Still later, the first part of the name became ominous because of the taboo of the Emperor Yingzong of Song (Shu 曙, r. 1063–1067) and the name was changed to *shanyao* 山藥. The original name seems to have been extensively forgotten.⁴⁶

Other names of medicaments of traditional Chinese medicine were changed for having the character *xuan* 玄 in the name, which was the taboo of legendary First Ancestor of the Song dynasty Zhao Xuanlang 趙玄朗 (see 6.4.4), and later of Emperor Kangxi of the Qing dynasty (cf. 7.3.1.). Especially during the Song dynasty, after the decree of the Emperor Zhenzong (r. 997–1022) in 1014, names such as Corydalis (*xuanhusuo* 玄胡索) were changed to *yanhusuo* 延胡索.⁴⁷

⁴² *Bencao gangmu*, j. 17, p. 26.

⁴³ Cf. *Shennong bencaojing*, j. 2, p. 3b.

⁴⁴ Cf. Shi Xinjian 2009, p. 21.

⁴⁵ Shi Xinjian 2009, p. 21. One other cause could also be perhaps the taboo of fox immortals (called *hu* 狐).

⁴⁶ *Bencao gangmu*, j. 27, p. 119.

⁴⁷ *Bencao gangmu*, j. 13, pp. 57-58.

The medical prescription “Zhenwu broth” *zhenwutang* 真武湯 is generally not known by its original name anymore. Its first name was connected with the name of the guardian spirit of the north *xuanwushen* 玄武神, and was “Xuanwu broth” *xuanwutang* 玄武湯. As the name of spirit was changed because of the taboo of an ancestor of Zhenzong of Song, the name of prescription was also changed. Although after the end of the Song dynasty, the official taboo for the character *xuan* was rescinded, people probably continued to use it.⁴⁸

The names of the Ten Heavenly Stems, used commonly for many purposes such as time measurement, were often changed, too, if they conflicted with taboo names. The best known changes concern the characters *bing* 丙 and *wu* 戊. The first one was changed to *jing* 景, and used in that form during the Tang dynasty (618–907) because of the taboo of Li Bing (李昞) – the father of the first emperor. We learn about that because many books compiled from that period, such as the *Book of the Jin* (*Jinshu*), *Book of the Liang* (*Liangshu*), *Book of the Sui* (*Suishu*) etc., use the character *jing* instead of *bing*.⁴⁹ In this case both sound and appearance of the taboo character were changed.

Similarly, the character *wu* 戊 was changed to *wu* 武 during the Later Liang dynasty because of the taboo of the grandfather of the first emperor of the Later Liang (r. 907–912) – Zhu Maolin 朱茂琳.⁵⁰ Other changes were made by the Taiping Rebellion in the system of the Twelve Earthly Branches (see 10.3.1). They considered the characters *hai* 亥, *chou* 丑 and *mao* 卯 as inauspicious, because of their similarity in sound to *hai* 害 (harmful), *chou* 丑 (ugly) and *mao* 冇 (Cantonese: not to have, to lack). Therefore, new names for years were chosen: *xinkai* 新開 instead of *xinhai* 辛亥 (1851), *guihao* 癸好 instead of *guichou* 癸丑 (1853), *yirong* 乙榮 instead of *yimao* 乙卯 (1855). Many other changes in the language of people in common expressions can be found.⁵¹ We can hardly imagine what kinds of problems this might have caused for people.

⁴⁸ *Zhangshi yitong*, j. 16, p. 28b. Cf. *Shiqishi shangque*, j. 94, p. 1067.

⁴⁹ Cf. *Jinshu*, j. 20, p. 16b; *Liangshu* (b), j. 48, p. 10b (Note that the SBBY edition the character was changed to *bing* 丙. Cf. *Liangshu*, j. 48, p. 4b); *Suishu*, j. 9, p. 6a. The character *jing* 景 is used also in the work of a Song scholar Hong Mai 洪邁 (1123–1202) for numbering of chapters in his work *Yijianzhi* 夷堅志. Cf. *Yijianzhi* (b), Vol. 2, p. 879. In Qing editions (for example, in *Shiwan juanlou congshu* 十萬卷樓叢書, published in 1879) the numbers of chapters were changed to *bing* 丙. Cf. *Yijianzhi*, Vol. 29, p. 1.

⁵⁰ *Xuelin*, j. 3, p. 70.

⁵¹ For more examples see Chen Yuan 1958, pp. 21–23.

8.2. Consequences of Tabooing in People's Lives

Undoubtedly, the biggest impact of name tabooing can be seen in changes of names and characters or words. We should, however, not forget that language is used in every part of human life, and affects almost all situations encountered in life. In fact, Chinese people used their principles of name tabooing intentionally and automatically every day. Taboo names and words were avoided first of all in one's own family. Other taboos had to be observed when meeting neighbours or officials. One had to ask about unknown taboos. State taboos and the name changes they caused had to be known and observed by everybody. In all likelihood, people became accustomed quickly to new taboo names and could live with them.

Problems started if a taboo name, usually a family taboo name, conflicted with one's job, career or intended action. Such conflicts, together with drastic punishments, although numerically not as common as the actual linguistic changes, had the most perceptible consequences for people, and are the most spectacular for us to read about. In many cases, the tabooing of names determined the whole life of a person. Examples of people afraid to step on stone (*shi* 石), or taking flight in order not to hear music (*yue* 樂), because of their father's name (see Chapter One), can be safely regarded as anecdotic and extreme.⁵² But we know for certain that most people took name tabooing seriously. The rules of tabooing made a disproportionate impact on intellectuals who were especially expected to observe them. Many cases are known about a resignation from office or career because of actual or potential taboo violations.

8.2.1. Resignation from Office or Function

A person's career path could be closed if the name of his ancestor conflicted with the name of an office. This taboo was observed by the man affected and also enforced by the administration. Numerous examples of such conflicts are known and some of them have already been described earlier in this work. The *History of the Song* (*Songshi*) features stories such as that of Lü Xichun 呂希純 (11 c.), who was appointed to be Editorial

⁵² Further similar examples are recorded. For example, if your grand-father was called An 安 you could not accept an office in the prefecture Chang'an 長安. If your father's name was Jun 軍, son could not become a general (*jiangjun* 將軍). Cf. Alleton 1993, p. 93.

Director (*zhuzuolang* 著作郎).⁵³ Because of the taboo name of his father Gongzhu 公著, he had to refuse.⁵⁴

Li Ruozhuo 李若拙 refused to take the government post of Left Grand Master Admonisher (*zuozanshan dafu* 左贊善大夫),⁵⁵ because of a conflict with the name of his father Guangzan 光贊.⁵⁶ Another official Li Jianzhong 李建中 (945–1013), could not accept work in the Institute for the Glorification of Literature (*zhaowenguan* 昭文館),⁵⁷ because the name of his father Zhaowen 昭文 was written with the very same characters.⁵⁸

Numerous examples of such situations can also be found in other sources. Hu Yuan 胡瑗 (993–1059) was asked to become the State Historiographer (*xiuguoshi* 修國史).⁵⁹ Unfortunately, he had a father named Xiuji 修己, and could not accept this office.⁶⁰ The *History of the Jin (Jinshi)* mentions the story of Xu Ding 胥鼎 (d. 1224). He refused to take the function of Manager of Governmental Affairs (*pingzhang zhengshi* 平章政事),⁶¹ because it was in conflict with the given name of his father Zhang 章.⁶² And the *History of the Ming (Mingshi)* writes about a Zeng Lu 曾魯 (1319–1372), who, because of the name of his father Shun 順, refused to become the Grand Master of Palace Accord (*zhongshun dafu* 中順大夫).⁶³

In all these examples, there was a direct conflict between the names of offices and the name of a potential official's father. But there are known cases in which homonyms of taboos in the name of office were avoided, though this was criticized.⁶⁴ Most people straightforwardly and honestly refused a problematic office themselves. For those who tried to conceal it, the prescription made in the *Tang Code* was, that “those who hold posts whose administrative designation or official titles violate their father's or paternal grandfather's name taboos ... are punished by one year of penal servitude.”⁶⁵ The same penalty was designated for officers and generals in the army.

⁵³ Hucker 1985, p. 184; Xu Lianda 2010, p. 532.

⁵⁴ *Songshi*, j. 336, p. 13a.

⁵⁵ Cf. Hucker 1985, p. 516.

⁵⁶ *Songshi*, j. 307, p. 9b.

⁵⁷ Hucker 1985, p. 118.

⁵⁸ *Songshi*, j. 441, p. 9b.

⁵⁹ Cf. Hucker 1985, p. 248.

⁶⁰ *Daoshan qinghua*, p. 21ab. For Hu Yuan and his family see van Ess 2003; Hon Tze-ki 2000, pp. 67–92.

⁶¹ Cf. Hucker 1985, pp. 385–386.

⁶² *Jinshi*, j. 108, p. 4b.

⁶³ *Mingshi*, j. 136, p. 6b. Cf. Hucker 1985, p. 194.

⁶⁴ In some cases the custom of tabooing of names was perhaps used in order to avoid a certain appointment.

⁶⁵ *The T'ang Code* 1979, Vol. II, p. 91.

Sometimes it was not possible to enter a school or to reach a specific level of education, if the taboo of an ancestor interfered with it. The most famous case is probably that of Li He 李賀 (790–816), described earlier (see 6.2.8). As one might remember, he could not attend the Presented Scholar (*jinsshi* 進士) exams because the name of his father was Jinsu 晉肅. Similarly, the Tang poet Bai Juyi 白居易 (772–846)⁶⁶ could not attend the exams of “Broad learning and extensive scholarship” (*boxue hongcike* 博學宏詞科)⁶⁷ because the name of his grandfather was *huang* 鎰.⁶⁸

There is one further example of a scholar, Bi Shi'an 畢士安 (938–1005), recruited in 992 to the Hanlin Academy (翰林). When he discovered that the name of the Academy contained a character of the name of his father Yilin 乂林, he changed his mind and did not enter. Others urged him that there is no need to taboo single characters of composite names and in the end he could be convinced to join the academy.⁶⁹

8.2.2. Taboo during Imperial Exams

The tabooing of names could determine, as already seen, whether somebody was allowed to participate in exams or not. Therefore, many taboos had to be observed during state exams, much more than usual. From the Tang dynasty onwards, we have examples for such cases (see 6.4.5). The avoidance of taboo was expected from both the examiner and students.

Examiners should verify precisely the themes of examination, in order to avoid imperial taboos, inauspicious words, and words which could be interpreted as criticism against the ruling dynasty. Examples of such faults were found especially during the Ming and Qing dynasties. In the already mentioned incident in 1447 during the imperial exams in Shanxi, the examiners did not notice that the sentence they chose from the *Classic of Poetry* (*Shijing*) (*wei zhou zhi zhen* 維周之禎),⁷⁰ contained the taboo character of the brother of the great grandfather of the current Emperor Zhengtong – Zhu Zhen 朱楨 (1364–1424). They lost a month's salary as punishment (see 7.2.5).⁷¹ Similar cases in the Qing dynasty were even punished with the death penalty (see section 1).

⁶⁶ About him see *Zhongguo lidai renming da cidian* 1999, Vol. I, p. 447.

⁶⁷ Cf. Hucker 1985, pp. 265 and 388. The name of exams was changed later in the ruling time of the Emperor Qianlong of Qing to *boxue hongcike* 博學鴻詞科, because of his taboo name (*Cihai* 1999, p. 134).

⁶⁸ *Huang* 鎰 and *hong* 宏 were apparently homonyms at that time. Cf. *Jingshi biming huikao*, p. 555; Pulleyblank 1991, p. 124.

⁶⁹ *Songshi*, j. 281, p. 4a. NB *jin* sounds the same, but even *su* could be similar to *shi* in local dialects!

⁷⁰ *Shijing*, j. 16, p. 1b.

⁷¹ *Rizhilu*, j. 23, p. 24a.

Imperial exams also proved to be a challenge for students. Besides the necessary academic knowledge, they had to think about imperial taboos, taboos of the examiner (of him and his ancestors), and of course their own taboos.⁷² If somebody used such a name by mistake, he could be secretly eliminated and put in the last class of candidates. There are known cases, such as that of Lou Yue 樓鑰 (1137–1213), who accidentally violated a former name of the emperor during exams in 1163 and was placed at the end of the list,⁷³ or that of Qi Shun 祁順 – who was declared the best student in 1460 and later degraded because his name was the same as that of the emperor (see 7.2.3). Little wonder that students tried to avoid many characters, even if there was just the slightest suspicion that they could be problematic. Their career and life depended on these taboo words. It was even a greater misfortune when they detected on the day of the exam, after a long preparation, that there was a (family) taboo word in the theme of the examination. In this case, they could only resign and wait for the next time.⁷⁴

8.2.3. Penalties and Codes

Violation of taboo, regardless of whether it was accidental or intentional, was usually punished. Not much is known about penalties prior to the Tang dynasty. Perhaps the psychological aspect of tabooing was of greater significance then. Because of the lack of good documentation, we can only speculate what the custom was. Possible violation of taboo was punished mainly by disapproval and shame. It could be recompensed by the rectification of names, after which no further penalties would be given. In this way, Fan Xianzi 范獻子 (recorded in the *Sayings of the states* and treating an event that took place in 384–336 BC, see 4.3.1.4) felt shame after he violated the taboo of local people,⁷⁵ and the Feudal Lord of Wei (see 8.1.1) was allowed to enter Zhou country after he corrected his answer to avoid taboo words.⁷⁶ Probably the oldest information on punishment practices comes from the Three Kingdoms period (see 5.2.5). The ruler of the Wu state, Sun Hao, arrested and sometimes executed people who violated his taboo by accident.⁷⁷ The

⁷² Cf. also the note about using names (and avoiding prohibited names) during imperial exams in: Zi (Siu) 1894, p. 25-27. The author of this dissertation found no notes about the tabooing of names in two other works related to the topic: des Retours 1932 and Ichisada Miyazaki 1976.

⁷³ *Songshu*, j. 395, p. 1a; Shiba Yoshinobu 1976, pp. 668-672. See 6.4.5.

⁷⁴ Cf. *Nanbu xinshu*, j. 3 (*bing*), p. 24.

⁷⁵ *Guoyu*, j. 15, p. 2ab.

⁷⁶ *Han Feizi*, j. 14, p. 7b.

⁷⁷ *Sanguozhi*, “Wuzhi”, j. 20, p. 8a.

peculiarity of this penalty, and the apparent lack of such a practice in other states, shows that punishment often depended on a ruler's whim.

The lack of clearly defined penalties is also related to the statutes which did not prescribe concrete punishments until the Tang period. As already presented in the historical part (chapters 4-7), the first lists of taboo prohibitions in naming are known from the *Tradition of Zuo (Zuozhuan)*.⁷⁸ Expanded prescriptions and rules of tabooing were recorded in the *Records of Ritual (Liji)*.⁷⁹ Additionally, many emperors issued their own decrees and edicts in order to determine concrete rules or refer back to an old one. The first known decree of Emperor Xuan (64 BC),⁸⁰ was followed by many others, as e.g. that of the Wei state in 260 AD⁸¹ or of Emperor Sun Xiu of the Wu state in 262 AD (see 5.2.2).⁸² But they all prescribed rules and did not designate any penalties. Only since the Tang period there were concrete penalisation included in the Codes and thus we also find the first recorded cases of punishments since that period.

The *Tang Code*, issued in 653, made concrete rules of punishment for violation of taboo. Rules and penalties concerning taboo appear in three places and describe treatments for violating name taboos in documents or petitions submitted to the Emperor and in administrative designations and official titles:

All cases of violating ancestral temple name taboos in documents or petitions on affairs submitted to the emperor are punished by eighty blows of the heavy stick. If such errors are spoken, or used in other official documents, the punishment is fifty blows with the light stick. Cases of offending by using the emperor's name are punished by three years of penal servitude. With regard to taboo names, the use of words that sound the same but are written differently or the use of only one of two taboo words is not punished.⁸³

The tabooing of family taboos in official titles is discussed in two fragments:

All cases involving those who hold posts whose administrative designations or official titles violate their paternal ancestor's name taboos ... are punished by dismissal from the occupied office.⁸⁴

⁷⁸ *Chunqiu zuozhuan*, j. 5, p. 16b.

⁷⁹ *Liji*, j. 1, p. 21b, p. 39a, p. 46b.

⁸⁰ *Hanshu*, j. 8, p. 12a.

⁸¹ *Sanguozhi*, "Weizhi", j. 4, p. 23b.

⁸² *Sanguozhi*, "Wuzhi", j. 3, p. 7b-8a.

⁸³ *The T'ang Code* 1979, Vol.II, p. 83-84.

⁸⁴ *The T'ang Code* 1979, Vol. I, p. 129, 132.

All cases involving those who hold posts whose administrative designation or official titles violate their father's or paternal grandfather's name taboos ... are punished by one year of penal servitude.⁸⁵

In the sub-commentary to the first fragment, the necessity of tabooing was extended to the great-grandfather. On the other hand, dismissal from office meant no job for one year and the reduction of rank by one degree.⁸⁶

These rules from the *Tang Code* influenced all punishments because of taboo in later dynasties. The author of this dissertation could not find rules of taboo in the *Yuan Code*,⁸⁷ but the codes of the Song,⁸⁸ Ming and Qing repeat the *Tang Code* almost literally, with only minor changes:

In all cases where people violate imperial names or imperial ancestral temple title taboos in petitions or statements to the throne, they shall be punished by 80 strokes of beating with the heavy stick. If they mistakenly violate the taboos in other documents, they shall be punished by 40 strokes of beating with the light stick. If they use [these characters] as personal names and thus violate [the taboos] they shall be punished by 100 strokes of beating with the heavy stick. However, if [the characters by which they violate the taboos] have similar sounds but different forms from the imperial names or imperial ancestral temple title taboos, or there are two characters but only one is used, in all cases there shall be no punishment.⁸⁹

In every written communication to the Emperor, if there is a violation of the prohibition against mentioning the imperial name or the name of a deceased ancestor, the punishment is 80 strokes of the heavy bamboo. If the same error is committed in another text, the penalty is 40 strokes of the light bamboo. If this word is used as a [personal] name, and thus constitutes an offence (*this does not refer to something momentary, but to using it as a name that others use to call one by*),⁹⁰ the penalty is 100 strokes of the heavy bamboo. If the offence [against the prohibition of the use of the] imperial name or that of the deceased ancestor consists in using [a character whose] sound is similar but whose form is different, or if there are two

⁸⁵ *The T'ang Code* 1979, Vol.II, p. 91.

⁸⁶ Cf. *The T'ang Code* 1979, Vol. I, p. 132.

⁸⁷ Ratchnevsky 1937.

⁸⁸ *Lü*, j. 3, p. 5a.

⁸⁹ *The Great Ming Code* 2005, p. 61.

⁹⁰ The commentary indicated by italics was made by William C. Jones.

characters [to the imperial name] and one is used, there is, in both cases, no punishment.⁹¹

The author of this dissertation could find no prescription about resignation from office because of taboo in the available Song, Yuan and Ming codes.

These three codes (including the Code of Song) laid the foundation for penal practice during the last thousand years. They were supported by further decrees of emperors, determining taboos and deciding authoritatively about concrete cases. For example, Emperor Taizong of Song (r. 976-997) changed his taboo name by decree;⁹² Emperor Guangzong of Song (r. 1189-1194) reminded commoners in 1190 AD not to violate taboos of distant imperial ancestors;⁹³ and a Yuan decree of 1335 prohibited the use of words of the imperial name.⁹⁴

In fact, penalties from the dynastic codes were implemented in many known cases, though not always exactly as laid down in the statutes/law. As we remember, Song Ang 宋昂, who had the same name as the emperor, was demoted by two grades (see 6.2.5).⁹⁵ The Imperial Censor (*yushi* 御史)⁹⁶ Zhan Yangbi 詹仰庇, who used the taboo character *zhao* 照 of the former Emperor Zhengde in his petition to the throne in the reign of Emperor Longqing (1566-1572), was penalized by flogging with 100 sticks and banishment, because his act was interpreted as intentional (see 7.2.3).⁹⁷ During the reign of the Emperor Qianlong, his eighth son Wang Yongxuan 王永璇 mistakenly wrote the taboo character of his older brother Wang Yonglian 王永璉, who had died young. Thereafter, his princely salary was stopped for three years as penalty (see 7.3.2).⁹⁸ The final decision about punishment was in the hands of the emperors, and sometimes they dodged the rules as well.

Although the use of homonyms was not punishable in all codes, there are relatively many cases of people being accused of that offense. Usually, they were freed in the end, as in the case of Li Xi 李谿 (d. 895) who was punished in 871 with the reduction of his salary for using the character *song* 訟 (homonym of the taboo name Song 誦 of Emperor Shunzong

⁹¹ *The Great Qing Code* 1994, p. 91. Cf. also Boulais 1966, p. 141.

⁹² *Songchao shishi*, j. 1, p. 9ab. See 6.4.3.

⁹³ *Songshi*, j. 108, p. 10b.

⁹⁴ *Yuanshi*, j. 38, p. 7b.

⁹⁵ *Tanghuiyao*, j. 23, p. 453.

⁹⁶ Hucker 1985, p. 592.

⁹⁷ *Mingshi*, j. 215, p. 4b.

⁹⁸ *Qingshi*, j. 222, p. 3568.

of Tang, r. 805) in a petition. Fortunately, he was finally acquitted.⁹⁹ In another case, Xin Ziyan 辛子炎 was to be flogged, as he used the word *shu* 署 – a homonym of the taboo name Shu 樹 (of the grandfather of the Emperor Wenxuan of Northern Qi). Eventually he could be absolved, too.¹⁰⁰

Of course, the most drastic measure for transgression of name tabooing was capital punishment, used by the emperor in special cases, if he suspected (with or without reason) an intentional violation of taboo. Tragic stories such as that of Zha Siting 查嗣庭 (1664–1727) – an examiner from the time of Emperor Yongzheng 雍正 – who was held responsible for using “dangerous” characters of the *Classic of Poetry (Shijing)* as the subject of an exam in 1726 (see section 1), were the most terrible outcomes of name tabooing for the lives of people. They affected not only the “sinner” (who in this case died in prison and whose corpse was dismembered), but also his family (imprisoned and exiled) and the whole province (cancelation of exams for a few years). However, such severe punishments are known only in very specific circumstances of the Qing dynasty during the 18th century.

The violation of private taboos was not treated in the codes (except if they were related to the name of office), but it could of course still affect massively someone’s friendships and political networks. For example, Xi Ang 郗昂 living in the time of Tang dynasty accidentally violated the taboo name of his friend Wei Zhi 韋陟. The result was the breaking-off of the relationship and emotional inquietude of Xi Ang.¹⁰¹ Even more dangerous was the violation of private taboos of powerful people. They sometimes had the means to punish one with flogging and banishment, as in case of an actor who intentionally violated the name of Shi Mijian 史彌堅 (1166–1232) – official and brother of a chancellor of the Song dynasty.¹⁰²

Even cases with a fatal conclusion are known, as in the example mentioned before (see section 6) from the Later Tang. At the time the Chancellor appointed out of spite a new subordinate of the Minister of Works, Lu Wenji 盧文紀 (876–951), with intention of using taboo custom to hurt him. The new subordinate’s name was Yu Ye 于鄴 and his name violated (as a homonym) the taboo name of the father of Lu Wenji – Siye 嗣業. Therefore,

⁹⁹ *Tanghuiyao*, j. 23, p. 453.

¹⁰⁰ *Bei Qishu*, j. 24, p. 4b.

¹⁰¹ *Tangguo shibu*, j. 1, p. 11b-12a.

¹⁰² *Xihu youlan zhiyu*, j.5, p. 4b.

Lu Wenji refused to receive Yu Ye when he came. After some time, Lu Wenji asked about Yu Ye and found that he had committed suicide – he could not suffer the disgrace caused by his superior.¹⁰³ This last example once more demonstrates that the tabooing of names and its consequences had an immense impact on the lives of people. The whole problem of name tabooing is difficult to understand for present-day people. We tend to see in it only aspects of language or courtesy. In fact, the crucial aspect of name tabooing was a psychological one.

In concluding, we can see that the custom of name tabooing was a pivotal factor in the lives of people. Names, words and terms were changed. People had to resign from office or failed in exams because of taboo. Sometimes even capital punishment was prescribed for intentional or accidental violation of taboo custom. However, as will be shown in the next chapter, equally important was the influence of name tabooing on Chinese literature and Chinese historiography.

¹⁰³ *Xin Wudaishi*, j. 55, p. 2ab.

CHAPTER NINE: HISTORIOGRAPHICAL CONSEQUENCES AND THE BASICS OF THE DISCIPLINE OF NAME TABOOING

So far this work has discussed at great length the general phenomenon of name tabooing through the centuries and its enormous impact on Chinese people in their history. Of course, it has had and still has an equally important impact on modern historical scholarship as well. In order to be able to use original Chinese sources, the historian needs a full awareness of this phenomenon and its implications, such as the fact that names of people, places and titles were often changed for a shorter or longer period of time because of the practice of name taboos. Knowledge of these changes will enable the historian to get more information out of the sources, so this chapter begins with a brief typology of the kind of name changes that we encounter in historical evidence. On the other hand, name taboos can usually be dated very precisely in time, because they were inspired by concrete events, such as the name of an emperor or of his relative. This means that we can also use name taboos to date texts or manuscript copies more precisely. Therefore, the second part of this chapter will be devoted to the use of name taboos in textual criticism.

9.1. Historiographical Consequences of Name Tabooing

First it is appropriate to present to the reader examples of the negative influence of tabooing for Chinese historiography. There are numerous changes of texts, facts and names: primary changes – made by an author for tabooing, and secondary changes – made by revisers, copyists and later historiographers.

The custom of name tabooing had an enormous impact on written documents. We should bear in mind that practically every author had to observe the official taboos of his time in addition to his personal taboos. Although we can find the principle that “in (reading) the (classic) books of ‘poetry and history,’ there need not be any avoidance of names, nor in writing compositions” (cf. 3.5.9) already in the *Records of Ritual (Liji)*,¹ this principle was in fact virtually forgotten and changes because of taboo names were very common. Probably only a small fraction of the most evident cases of tabooing is known until now. Usually, it is not easy to determine for sure the presence of a change caused by taboos in a given text. It is still more difficult if the method used for tabooing was the concealment of certain words.

¹ *Liji*, j. 1, p. 39b. Translation according to Legge 1968, Part III, p. 93.

We can only speculate why, for example, the great Chinese poet Du Fu 杜甫 (712–770) did not use the character *xian* 閑 even once in all of his 3000 poems and also never wrote about flowers of the crab apple tree *haitanghua* 海棠花, which were very popular in China.² If we believe Chinese historians, this could be attributed to the taboo names of the father (Xian 閑) and mother (Haitang 海棠) of Du Fu.³ Yet, there are still numerous cases considered as verified which show how important the consequences of name tabooing were for historiography. As we will discover in this chapter, because of that custom, not only new texts were written observing taboos, but also thousands of existing texts were copied with changes made to them. In that process many historical facts were modified, names and titles of people changed, and geographical names replaced. As later historiographers of subsequent dynasties tried to correct the modified texts, they often caused still more confusion, making many mistakes because of ignorance. This was the destructive impact of name tabooing.

On the other hand, taboo examples and later mistakes can be an important help for historians. We can use concrete taboo instances to reconstruct facts, determine original names and old pronunciations reveal later editions and forgeries as well as date texts more precisely. If we learn more about the tabooing of names, this will be a significant advantage we can have in researching Chinese historiography. Therefore, the discipline of name tabooing (*biHuixue* 避諱學) was established by Chen Yuan,⁴ who compiled a list of basic principles to try to understand numerous aspects of that custom. After a renewal of research in the last twenty years, this discipline is today considered an important part of Chinese historiography and applied in many other fields, such as Dunhuang studies (*dunhuangxue* 敦煌學) or Hongloulou studies (*hongxue* 紅學).⁵

9.1.1. Historiographical Changes because of Taboo

So what happened if historical names of persons or of places were written using the taboo character of an author or his time, or if such a character was discovered in an older text? They were often changed. There was, for example, a Zhen prefecture (禪州 in the Guangdong province of today) in the Southern Han Kingdom (917–971). When the *New*

² Cf. Wang Zhongyong 1992, pp. 6–12.

³ For the taboo name of Du Fu's father see *Qidong yeyu*, j. 4, p. 43. For the taboo name of Du Fu's mother see *Xianjulu*, p. 3.

⁴ Chen Yuan 1958, p. 1.

⁵ Fan Zhixin 2006, p. III.

History of the Five Dynasties (Xin Wudaishi) was written by Ouyang Xiu 歐陽修 (1007–1072) about that period, he had to observe the taboo of Emperor Renzong (Zhao Zhen 趙禎, r. 1022–1063). Therefore, he used the name of the prefecture of his time, and wrote about a fictitious Hui prefecture 惠州 of the Southern Han dynasty which did not exist at that time.⁶ Cases, like this alteration of historical facts, caused much confusion for later historiographers, and are often a problem to this day.

9.1.1.1. Change of People's Names and Titles

The names of historical persons form the largest group of words changed in historical records and documents because of taboo. Numerous examples of such changes in given names, family names, and official titles of people can be found in historical sources, composed during every period of Chinese history. Who would have known that a certain Kuai Tong 蒯通 from the *Book of Han (Hanshu)* was, in fact, Kuai Che 蒯徹 (3–2 c. BC), whose name became later the taboo name of Emperor Wu of Han? Fortunately, the case was explained later by Yan Shigu 顏師古 (581–645).⁷ It is also impossible (without research or advice) to recognize that Wei Yao 韋曜 from the *Records of the Three Kingdoms (Sanguozhi)*⁸ means Wei Zhao 韋昭 (204–273), tabooed because of the name of the father of Emperor Wu of Jin (Sima Zhao 司馬昭, 211–265). Wei Yanquan 魏彥泉 from *The Old Book of Tang (Jiu Tangshu)*⁹ was, in fact, Wei Yanyuan 魏彥淵 (6–7 c.), tabooed because of the name of Emperor Gaozu of Tang, who lived long after him. The real name of a Li Zun 李遵, quoted as such in the *Songshi*¹⁰ was Li Zunxu 李遵勗 (988–1038), tabooed because of the name Xu 頊 of the Emperor Shenzong of Song (r. 1067–1085). Many further examples of such changes can be derived from the sources.¹¹

Changes similar to those in given names of people of the past were also made in their family names. Therefore, Shang Zhongmao 商仲茂 and Shang Fan 商璠 from the *Songshi*,¹² should be written Yin Zhongmao 殷仲茂 and Yin Fan 殷璠 (*yin* was the taboo of

⁶ Cf. *Xin Wudaishi*, j. 60, p. 12b; *Shiguo chunqiu*, j. 112, p. 1b.

⁷ *Hanshu*, j. 45, p. 1a. For Kuai Tong see Loewe 2000, pp. 212–213.

⁸ *Sanguozhi*, “Wuzhi”, j. 20, p. 6a. For Wei Zhao see de Crespigny 2007, p. 859.

⁹ *Jiu Tangshu*, j. 193, p. 5b. Cf. Chen Yuan 1958, p. 38.

¹⁰ *Songshi*, j. 205, p. 5b

¹¹ For further examples see Chen Yuan 1958, pp. 37–40.

¹² *Songshi*, j. 204, p. 6b; j. 208, p. 2b.

the father of Taizu of Song).¹³ And the strange Yanzi 嚴子 from the *Book of Han (Hanshu)*¹⁴ was, in fact, the well known Zhuangzi, whose name was changed because of the taboo name of Emperor Ming of Han.¹⁵

Official titles of people in the past, their functions, posthumous names and Era names of emperors were changed in written sources if they contained a taboo character. Among numerous instances,¹⁶ it is worth mentioning a case from the *History of the Northern Dynasties (Beishi)*, in which the original title Secretariat Supervisor (*zhongshujian* 中書監)¹⁷ of Xun Xu 荀勗 (d. 289), used in the Jin dynasty, was recorded as *bishujian* 祕書監, because of a taboo of the Sui dynasty.¹⁸ In another case, Zhang Chengye 張承業 (846–922) was granted the posthumous name Zhenxian 貞憲, as recorded in the *Old History of the Five Dynasties (Jiu Wudaishi)*.¹⁹ But a later source on the same period from the Song, the *New History of the Five Dynasties (Xin Wudaishi)* noted his name differently, as Zhengxian 正憲, because this time they had to taboo the name of Emperor Renzong of Song (r. 1022–1063).²⁰ We also have to know that such unusual Era names as Chong'an 崇安,²¹ Mingqing 明慶,²² or Yongchong 永崇,²³ are in fact the familiar Era names of Long'an 隆安 (397–402), Xianqing 顯慶 (656–661), and Yonglong 永隆 (680–681), changed by later historiographers because of taboos of later dynasties.

9.1.1.2. Change of Geographical Names and those of Former Books

The tabooing of names affected, of course, not only names and titles of persons of the past, but also many other historical terms, which were therefore modified, and later confused or forgotten. Probably the greater part of these words were former toponyms containing characters which became tabooed later. This was, for example, the case from the *History of the Northern Dynasties (Beishi)*, where it was said that the homeland of a scholar Zhang

¹³ The name Yin Fan is written in such way in *Songshi*, j. 209, p. 2b.

¹⁴ *Hanshu*, j. 100 shang, p. 5b.

¹⁵ Cf. also Chen Yuan 1958, pp. 36–37.

¹⁶ Numerous instances can be found in Chen Yuan 1958, pp. 41–43 and 47–49.

¹⁷ Cf. Hucker 1985, p. 193.

¹⁸ *Beishi*, j. 72, p. 4b (taboo of the father of the Emperor Wen).

¹⁹ *Jiu Wudaishi*, j. 72, p. 3a.

²⁰ *Xin Wudaishi*, j. 38, p. 2a.

²¹ *Jiu Tangshu*, j. 46, p. 22a.

²² *Jiu Tangshu*, j. 30, p. 24a.

²³ *Jiu Tangshu*, j. 76, p. 11a.

Zhan 張湛 was Shenquan 深泉.²⁴ The author of the *History of the Northern Dynasties* certainly knew that Zhang Zhan came from Yuanquan 淵泉, but had to avoid the taboo of Emperor Gaozu of Tang.²⁵ The same taboo character *yuan* 淵 was the reason that the *Old Book of Tang* (*Jiu Tangshu*, composed in 940–945) declared that Linqing county 臨清縣 was called Qingquan 清泉 in the Han time.²⁶ As known today, the original name of the county in the Han times was Qingyuan 清淵. It was called Linqing between 330 and 497 AD, then was divided in two – Qinyuan and Linqing – and finally became one Linqing county in the Tang period.²⁷

There are titles of former books that were changed because of later taboos. Therefore, the reader need not be puzzled to see quotations from the strange *Sun and Autumn Annals* (*Yangqiu* 陽秋) in the *Book of the Jin* (*Jinshu*).²⁸ It was really just the *Spring and Autumn Annals* (*Chunqiu* 春秋), changed because of the taboo of Empress Zheng Achun 鄭阿春 (about 290–326) of the Jin dynasty. Such examples can be found also in other periods. *Longkan shoujian* 龍龕手鑑, mentioned in the *Songshi*,²⁹ is in fact *Longkan shoujing* 龍龕手鏡, changed for tabooing the homonym of the name of the grandfather Jing 敬 of Emperor Taizu from the Song dynasty.³⁰

Modification of texts also affected the Five Classics as shown by the example of the *Spring and Autumn Annals* (*Chunqiu* 春秋) mentioned above. The same was also done with other canonical texts even if they were written or engraved in stone. While it is true that the principle of not tabooing the classics was often alluded to, and that characters in these works were often (especially in the Song dynasty) tabooed by just omitting a stroke, there are still many cases in which certain quotations were altered because of taboo. Examples given by Chen Yuan show that e.g. the character *bang* 邦 was changed to *guo* 國 in fragments of the *Classic of Documents* (*Shangshu*) of the Han stone classics, and the character *shi* 世 in the quotation from the *Classic of Poetry* (*Shijing*) was replaced by *dai* 代 in the *Book of the Liang* (*Liangshu*).³¹

²⁴ *Beishi*, j. 34, p. 8a.

²⁵ Cf. Wang Yankun 1997, p. 582.

²⁶ *Jiu Tangshu*, j. 39, p. 14b.

²⁷ Cf. Chen Yuan 1958, p. 45.

²⁸ *Jinshu*, j. 88, p. 4b.

²⁹ *Songshi*, j. 202, p. 16b.

³⁰ Further examples see Chen Yuan 1958, pp. 46–47.

³¹ Chen Yuan 1958, p. 20.

9.1.2. Problems and Mistakes of Later Historiographers and Copyists

Historiographical changes made because of taboo caused many difficulties for copyists and historiographers of later periods, and often resulted in mistakes. Copyists created errors as they tried to repair texts changed because of taboo, and historiographers sometimes drew the wrong conclusions and were confused due to cases of taboo observance. Their mistakes became fixed in the texts and consequently became a problem for modern scholars.

9.1.2.1. Mistakes Caused by Various Methods of Tabooing

Different problems can be identified corresponding to various methods used for tabooing. We can take, for example, the case of tabooing with the help of a substitute character: There was a book called the (*Zhenyuan*) *Report to the Throne about Imperial Orders and Edicts* (*Zhenyuan zhichi shuzou* 貞元制敕書奏, written at the end of the Tang period), which was recorded as *Zhengyuan zhichi shuzou* 正元制敕書奏 in the *Chongwen zongmu* 崇文總目³² (composed about 1031–1041), because of the taboo of Emperor Renzong. When historiographers compiled the Encyclopedia *Tongzhi* 通志 about 120 years later (published in 1161), they apparently did not understand this substitution and copied the title with an additional mistake as *Wangyuan zhichi shuzou* 王元制敕書奏.³³

Another method of tabooing as well as source of errors in identification was the omission of strokes. There is, for example, the work *Treasured-up Explanations of the Book of the Han* (*Hanshu shaoxun* 漢書紹訓), written by Yao Ting 姚珽 (641–714),³⁴ mentioned in the *Old Book of Tang* (*Jiu Tangshu*). His name was written (or perhaps rewritten) without the last stroke because of the taboo of the great grandfather Ting 珽 of Emperor Taizu of Song, in the Song and Ming editions.³⁵ Compilers of the Qing edition read this “deviant” character as *ban* 班.³⁶ In that way, the name of the author was changed to Yao Ban 姚班, and was adopted as such in other works.³⁷

If a name was concealed because of a taboo, and substituted by an empty place or a universal character – such as an empty frame □, and the characters *mou* 某 (a certain...) or *hui* 諱 (taboo), this could generate confusion, too. There is in the *Book of the Southern Qi*

³² *Chongwen zongmu*, j. 5, p. 327.

³³ *Tongzhi*, j. 70, p. 826.

³⁴ For Yao Ting see *Zhongguo lidai renming da cidian* 1999, Vol. II, p. 1799.

³⁵ *Jiu Tangshu* (b), j. 89 („Liezhuàn”, j. 39), p. 15a.

³⁶ *Jiu Tangshu*, j. 89, p. 13b.

³⁷ Cf. Chen Yuan 1958, p. 52.

(*Nan Qishu*) a note about general Xiao hui 蕭諱, where the given name was tabooed.³⁸ We are told in an explanation in the *Sibu beiyao* edition of that work that his full name was Xiao Luan 蕭鸞 (i.e., Emperor Ming of the Southern Qi dynasty, r. 494–498).³⁹ But this attribution was false. In fact, the name of the general was Xiao Shunzhi 蕭順之, father of Emperor Wu of the Southern Liang dynasty (502–557).⁴⁰ The confusion was caused by the taboo character. The blank place left because of taboo could also be overlooked or ignored when copying.⁴¹

Still another kind of confusion could be generated by annotations made in texts to explain taboo. There was, for instance, the now-lost work of Sun Sheng 孫盛 (302–373)⁴² called *Jin Yangqiu* 晉陽秋 – a title given instead of *Jin Chunqiu* 晉春秋 (*Spring and Autumn Annals of the Jin*) in order to avoid the taboo of Empress Zheng Achun (see 5.3).⁴³ But in the collection of Chinese poetry entitled *Selected Literature* (*Wenxuan* 文選, compiled around 520), and later in the *Songshi*, we find it written as *Jin Yang Chunqiu* 晉陽春秋.⁴⁴ Chen Yuan presumes correctly that the character *chun* 春 was noted down in order to signalize the originally intended title, and was then reinserted into the main text by copyists without eliminating the taboo character *yang* 陽.⁴⁵

9.1.2.2. Names and Titles Lost or Falsely Identified

The ignorance and inaccuracies of historiographers and copyists, when confronted with taboo instances of the past, has caused much confusion and damage. Additionally, they had to observe their own taboos which brought about even more problems. Numerous cases are known in which the names of persons, places or books have been lost, or they appear with two different names.

It is practically impossible to understand why, according to the *Cefu yuangui* 冊府元龜, geographical names such as Changyue 嘗岳 or Changzhou 嘗州 were changed to Zhenyue 鎮岳 and Zhenzhou 鎮州 because of the taboo of Emperor Muzong of Tang (r.

³⁸ *Nan Qishu* (b), j. 24, p. 6a.

³⁹ *Nan Qishu*, j. 24, p. 3a. For Xiao Luan see *Zhongguo lidai renming da cidian* 1999, Vol. I, p. 702.

⁴⁰ This can be also proved by cross-checking with the *Songshu*, j. 74, p. 16a; Chen Yuan 1958, p. 54.

⁴¹ See examples of such changes in Chen Yuan 1958, pp. 54–56.

⁴² For Sun Sheng see *Zhongguo lidai renming da cidian* 1999, Vol. I, p. 775.

⁴³ *Jingshi biming huikao*, j. 24, p. 389.

⁴⁴ *Wenxuan*, j. 38, p. 838; *Songshi*, j. 203, p. 2a.

⁴⁵ Cf. Chen Yuan 1958, p. 57.

821-824), which was Heng 恆.⁴⁶ Only after cumbersome deduction can we recognize that the original names of these places in the beginning of the Tang period were Hengyue 恆岳 and Hengzhou 恆州 and thus they would have been changed in the time of the Emperor Muzong to Zhenyue and Zhenzhou. Unfortunately, at the time when the *Cefu yuangui* was compiled (1013 AD), the character *heng* 恆 was once more taboo and was replaced by *chang* 常. Therefore, the names of the Tang period were written as Changyue 常岳 and Changzhou 常州, in order to taboo the name of Zhenzong of Song (r. 997–1022). When a new printed edition was prepared at the end of the Ming period, this character *chang* 常 also had to be avoided as the taboo of Emperor Taichang (r. 1620), and was replaced by *chang* 嘗. In this way, original names of places, repeatedly rewritten because of subsequent taboos, were finally lost and can only be restored with great difficulty today.⁴⁷

Different cases are also known in texts where the same person is referred to by different names in different works, or even in the same book, because of the consequences of taboo. Such differences are caused by local (not complete) restitutions of taboo characters by later copyists. We can see, for example, two names: Zhao Shi 趙世⁴⁸ and Zhao Dai 趙代⁴⁹ in the same *Book of the Later Han (Hou Hanshu)*. The taboo character *shi* 世 was probably changed to *dai* 代 in the beginning of the Tang dynasty, when the *Book of Later Han* was commented on. And only in the first fragment was it corrected by later revisers.⁵⁰ In the example from the *Book of the Sui (Suishu)*, there are two different names for the same man: Xu Yemin 徐野民 and Xu Guang 徐廣.⁵¹ The original name was Xu Guang (352–425).⁵² When the taboo name Guang 廣 of the Emperor Yangdi (r. 605–617) of Sui was avoided, his name was changed to his courtesy name, Yemin. When the character *min* 民 also became taboo as the name of the Emperor Taizong of Tang (r. 627–649), this courtesy name was changed once more to Yeren 徐野人.⁵³

As consequence of these various changes related to taboo, different names, persons, places and books have been mixed and confused. One of many examples of such mistakes can be found, for example, in the work *Collection from the Pavilion of Book Exposition*

⁴⁶ *Cefu yuangui*, j. 3, p. 13a. Note that the last stroke is omitted in the character *zhen* 鎮.

⁴⁷ Cf. Chen Yuan 1958, p. 71. See other examples of such cases in Chen Yuan 1958, pp. 68–71.

⁴⁸ *Hou Hanshu*, j. 4, p. 10a.

⁴⁹ *Hou Hanshu*, j. 117, p. 10b. For Zhao Dai see *Zhongguo lidai renming da cidian* 1999, Vol. II, p. 1626.

⁵⁰ Cf. Chen Yuan 1958, p. 61.

⁵¹ *Suishu*, j. 33, p. 1a; j. 32, p. 8a;

⁵² For Xu Guang see *Zhongguo lidai renming da cidian* 1999, Vol. II, p. 1925.

⁵³ Chen Yuan 1958, p. 63. More examples see Chen Yuan 1958, pp. 57–64.

(*Pushu tingji* 曝書亭集) of Zhu Yizun 朱彝尊 (1629–1709).⁵⁴ He wrote in a passage on the work *Extended Description of Stone Inscriptions* (*Shike puxu* 石刻鋪敘) about its author, Zeng Hongfu 曾宏父, from the time of Southern Song, who – according to him – was also Administrative Clerk (*zhishi* 知事)⁵⁵ of Taizhou. Moreover, he explained that the original given name of Zeng was Dun 惇, and was changed to his courtesy name Hongfu 宏父 because of the taboo of the Emperor Guangzong of Song (r. 1189–1194).⁵⁶ In fact, there were two persons: the Administrative Clerk of Taizhou Zeng Dun with the courtesy name Hongfu, and the author Zeng Hongfu with the courtesy name Youqing 幼卿. Zhu Yizun’s misunderstanding was caused by ignorance in the discipline of taboo observance.⁵⁷

As we can see, the custom of tabooing of names has had many historiographical consequences. Numerous changes in texts were caused by the observance of taboo. Numerous additional mistakes were made by revisers and historians trying to recover the original text.

9.2. Basics and Implementation of the Discipline of Name Tabooing

After the impact of name tabooing on the lives of people (see 8), and historiographical consequences (9.1), the reader can surely understand how dangerous ignorance in the field of the tabooing of names can be, and how important it is to possess knowledge about taboo and its principles. This is especially important for the fields of historiography and textual criticism. Acquisition of the basics of name tabooing is really an essential and indispensable aid for research on Chinese history. Therefore, the formation of a new “discipline of name tabooing” (*bihuixue*) was proclaimed by Chen Yuan in his work *Shihui juli*, and this field was significantly developed in the last twenty years in China. Below, in a short outline, the basics, principles and utilisation of this discipline shall be summarized. With the help of the “discipline of name tabooing,” errors and confusions can be avoided and eliminated. Moreover, it can be used as a valuable aid for verification of authenticity, determination of age, uncovering of additions, omissions, changes and errors, identification of names, persons, facts and different editions, and also for analysis of old meanings and pronunciations.

⁵⁴ For Zhu Yizun see *Zhongguo lidai renming da cidian* 1999, Vol. I, p. 575.

⁵⁵ Hucker 1985, p. 162.

⁵⁶ *Pushu tingji*, j. 43, p. 10a.

⁵⁷ Chen Yuan 1958, pp. 64–65. Further examples of such errors see Chen Yuan 1958, pp. 64–67.

9.2.1. Recognition of Taboo

The fundamental problem of the “discipline of name tabooing” and the first step in this field is to determine whether or not taboo observance was applied in a concrete case or in a fragment of text. We have to remember that fragments of texts can have different stories: Taboo characters could have been avoided or not. They could have been incompletely observed (especially until the Three Kingdoms period). They could have been restored or not, and they could have been incompletely changed back (see 9.1.2).⁵⁸ In order to recognize a taboo instance, we should be aware of the methods and principles used in a concrete period.

The diagnosis of a potential taboo case should not be made hastily. We should not judge too fast whether a character was tabooed, but the presence of a taboo character should also not be, on the other hand, too quickly rejected. The general principle which should be followed is that supposed instances of taboo should not be isolated. The occurrence of only one taboo character in a text is suspicious. If there are many similar cases of taboo, the recognition of the practice of taboo can be more reliable. Furthermore, methods and principles used in a supposed example of taboo should be appropriate for the concrete period under research (for example, omission of strokes was practiced as a method of tabooing only since the 7th century AD (cf. 3.4.3)).

9.2.1.1. Problems Related to Methods of Applying Taboo

If it is assumed that tabooing was observed by a concrete method, problems related to these methods should be considered and confusions checked and avoided.

For example, in the method of omitting strokes, a presumed “taboo character” without strokes can sometimes be revealed as a lapse by chance, or a mix-up of parts of characters. Mistakes are, of course, not the same thing as taboos. Especially in texts engraved in stone during Northern and Southern Dynasties, but also in the Tang period, numerous characters are often confused, such as e.g. *xiu* 脩 and *xun* 循.⁵⁹ Lapses made in the past (e.g. in the Tang period) could have been continued later, and are not necessarily examples of name tabooing. Thus, we should take great care to distinguish taboo characters from erroneous characters.

⁵⁸ Cf. Chen Yuan 1958, pp. 84-91.

⁵⁹ The *Bei Qishu*, j. 20, p. 6b used the character *xun* in the name of Xue Xunyi 薛循義. The *Beishi*, j. 53, p. 9b in the same passage has the character *xiu* (Xue Xiuyi 薛脩義, 478–554, for him see *Zhongguo lidai renming da cidian* 1999, Vol. II, p. 2545). The case was described in the *Nienershi kaoyi*, j. 31, p. 599.

Different parts of characters were used interchangeably, such as *cao* 艸 and *zhu* 竹, *mu* 木 and *shou* 才, *ren* 亻 and *chi* 彳, *shi* 礻 and *yi* 礻. There are cases, e.g., in stone inscriptions of Northern Wei (386–535) with characters written as 師 and 裕, or 校 in place of ordinary *shi* 師, *yu* 裕 and *jiao* 校,⁶⁰ where it seems that one stroke is missing. However, these characters are in fact not cases of observing the taboos of Sima Shi 司馬師 (d. 255, see 5.3.2), Liu Yu 劉裕 (Emperor Wu of Song, r. 420–422), and of course not of Zhu Youjiao 朱由校 (Emperor Tianqi of Ming, r. 1620–1627, see 7.2.4) but variants of commonly known forms of these characters. Besides, characters such as *xiu* 秀, *zhuang* 莊, *long* 隆, *zhi* 志 in the monuments of Han dynasty, written in a different way, were not changed because of taboo.⁶¹

Sometimes a “character with a missing stroke,” assumed to be a taboo, is in fact another character. This is so especially if more than one stroke is omitted. Thus, characters changed because of taboo can become undistinguishable from other “normal” characters. This needs special proof. We know, for example, that the last character of the name of the Emperor Xuanzong of Tang (r. 712–756) – Li Longji 李隆基 – was tabooed by omitting three strokes and was written as *qi* 其. In the edition of the *Records of Ritual (Liji)* from that time, we find the sentence “Night and day he enlarged its foundations by his deep and silent virtue” (*suye qiming youmi* 夙夜其命宥密).⁶² Here the character *qi* is the tabooed form of the character *ji*. Similarly, the character *li* 曆 was tabooed in the Qing period because of the name of the Emperor Qianlong (given name Hongli 弘曆): two *he* 禾 elements were written without the top stroke, as *mu* 木 (曆, cf. 7.3.2). But when we find similar truncated characters in the editions of the *Records of the Historian*, *Records of the Three Kingdoms* and *Book of the Southern Qi*, published during the reign of the Emperor Wanli 萬曆⁶³ (r. 1572–1620) of the Ming dynasty, they cannot be considered as taboo.⁶⁴

If a given taboo method is through substitution by words such as *hui* 諱, *mou* 某, *moujia* 某甲, or an empty spot □ – a wide range of taboo words can be presumed. Every case should be carefully re-examined, because there can be numerous men or women with

⁶⁰ Cf. texts of the Tomb Epitaph of Yuan Huan (*Yuan Huan muzhi* 元煥墓誌) and the Tomb Epitaph of Li Rui (*Lirui muzhi* 李蕤墓誌) quoted in Fan Zhixin 2006, p. 181.

⁶¹ Fan Zhixin 2006, p. 180–181. The taboo avoidance of these characters in the monuments of Han dynasty was erroneously presumed by Huang Benji 黃本驥 in his *Bihuilu* 避諱錄.

⁶² *Liji* (b), j. 15, p. 12a.

⁶³ Era name Wanli was not tabooed.

⁶⁴ Fan Zhixin 2006, p. 182.

the same family name and there will therefore be different possible candidates. There are many examples of historiographers drawing erroneous conclusions. We can see, for example, in the *History of the Northern Dynasties* (*Beishi*) a few fragments with the name Li hui 李諱.⁶⁵ Most of them designate the grandfather of the Emperor Gaozu of Tang – Li Hu 李虎. Because of this editors of the *Jiguge* edition of *Book of the Zhou* (*Zhoushu*) hastily changed all “Li hui” instances in identical passages to Li Hu.⁶⁶ In fact, one of them designated somebody else: the father of Emperor Gaozu – Li Bing 李昺.⁶⁷

If it is assumed that the words *mou* 某 or *moujia* 某甲 could be used as a substitute for tabooed names, it should be checked if this is not a manner of writing or a rhetorical structure. This is the case when we find, for example, in the anthology *Selections of Refined Literature* (*Wenxuan* 文選) by Xiao Tong 蕭統 (501–531) a sentence like “Now I send You my envoys (with such-and-such names and titles) together with a hundred lower officials” (*jīn qiān mǒuwei mǒujiā dēng lǚ zǐ bǎi bīren* 今遣某位某甲等率茲百辟人)⁶⁸ Such cases are not examples of tabooing.⁶⁹

Furthermore, if there is a character covered with ink or an empty frame □ in the inscription, it should be precisely checked to see if it is really a taboo instance. Such indications could also mark illegible characters, and do not necessarily mark taboos.

In analysing the pronunciation of taboo characters as a reason for tabooing, we should note that the homonyms of taboo characters can have a few pronunciations,⁷⁰ and only the character with the same pronunciation as a taboo character is tabooed.⁷¹ The same character with different pronunciation is not a violation of taboo. This principle is also noted explicitly in the taboo prescriptions, e.g., in the prescription from the *Pattern for Revision of Documents of the Chunxi Period* (1174–1189) (*Chunxi chongxiu wenshushi* 淳熙重修文書式): Because of the taboo name of Emperor Guangzong of Song – Dun 惇 – the

⁶⁵ Cf., for example, *Beishi*, j. 9, p. 5b; j. 9, p. 7b.

⁶⁶ The Bainaben Edition 百衲本的 *Book of the Zhou* (*Zhoushu*) has “Li hui” (*Zhoushu* (b), j. 5, p. 17a). *SKQS* has already “Li Bing” (*Zhoushu*, j. 5, p. 8a).

⁶⁷ *Beishi*, j. 10, p. 5a. See Chen Yuan 1958, p. 54.

⁶⁸ *Wenxuan*, j. 36, p. 823. For translation see Zach 1935, p. 115. The fragment is not translated in Knechtges 1982.

⁶⁹ Fan Zhixin 2006, p. 180.

⁷⁰ For the phenomenon of “broken sound characters” (*po yin zi* 破音字) or “polyphonic characters” (*duo yin zi* 多音字), where a given character has more than one reading, see Hannas 1996, p. 214; Wilkinson 2000, pp. 423–424.

⁷¹ Of course, we should first recognize the exact phonetic value of characters in the concrete historical time. It is not allowed to do this from present-day pronunciation.

character 鶉 had to be tabooed if it was pronounced as *dun* and was not tabooed in cases where it would be pronounced as *chun*.⁷²

One other issue which should be considered is that specific characters could have had an identical or similar pronunciation to taboo characters in the past. If we read that in the 9th century AD, the pronunciation of the character 戊 was changed to *wu* for observing the taboo name of an ancestor of Zhu Quanzhong 朱全忠 of the Later Liang dynasty – Maolin 茂琳 (852–912)⁷³ – we understand that the change was made because the pronunciation of the character 戊 at that time was *mou*,⁷⁴ and was a homonym of the taboo name Mao 茂.⁷⁵ The pronunciation of today can be quite different. The same was the case with the tabooing of the character 許, which is pronounced today as *xu*. It is quite difficult, for example, to understand why the town Xushi 許市 was tabooed because of the taboo name Hu 虎 (grandfather of Gaozu of Tang), if we do not know that its former pronunciation was *hu*.⁷⁶

If there is an assumption that one character of a composite name was cut because of a taboo, we should check it and distinguish it from the old stylistic custom of writing only one character of a name. For example, in the *Youtongfu* 幽通賦 of Ban Gu (32–92 AD) we can find the following sentence: “Ju defied Heaven and destroyed the dynasty” (*Ju tao tian er min Xia xi* 巨滔天而泯夏兮).⁷⁷ While there is only one character *ju* 巨 instead of the courtesy name of Wang Mang 王莽 (emperor of the short-lived Xin dynasty, r. 9–23 AD) – Jujun 巨君, it is still not a taboo instance, only a stylistic custom.⁷⁸

Finally, if the method of replacing characters is assumed, it should be considered that in old writings, especially in popular texts, homophone characters were often used interchangeably, because texts were read aloud, not silently, and are thus not necessarily chosen on account of taboo.⁷⁹

⁷² *Jingshi biming huikao*, j. 21, p. 338.

⁷³ *Shiqishi shangque*, j. 94, p. 1067.

⁷⁴ Cf. *Kangxi zidian*, p. 339.

⁷⁵ Also pronounced at that time as *mou* (Cf. *Kangxi zidian*, p. 953–954).

⁷⁶ Cf. *Kangxi zidian*, p. 1079; Fan Zhixin 2006, p. 184.

⁷⁷ Cf. *Wenxuan*, j. 14, p. 253; For translation see Knechtges 1982, Vol. 3, p. 83.

⁷⁸ Fan Zhixin 2006, p. 184.

⁷⁹ Fan Zhixin 2006, p. 180.

9.2.1.2. Other Problems in Recognizing Taboo

During the process of identifying taboos, various other problems and contradictions can be encountered. Texts, originally written observing contemporary taboos, were often “detabooed” by later dynasties. But such editorial changes were often done incompletely, or were affected by the current dynasty’s own taboo practices. In this way, the original text became deformed, facts were changed and the reconstruction of tabooing practice becomes very difficult or even impossible.

It is confusing to discover, for example, in the *Records of the Three Kingdoms* (*Sanguozhi*) these two characters in one sentence: *yao* 曜 (the standard equivalent character of *zhao* 昭 at the time) followed almost immediately by the taboo character *zhao* itself.⁸⁰ We may be uncertain as to whether the text is tabooed or not, unless we assume that later editors changed the second character back, but obviously forgot to replace the first one.

The practice of changing back (or trying to reconstruct) tabooed characters probably started in the Jin dynasty and flourished especially in the Tang period.⁸¹ If the original text was copied in successive epochs, the relevant taboos of that period were observed, which sometimes deformed the text in another way. But the opposite situation was also possible and should be considered: compilers could have left the taboo characters of the past, or even taboo characters of their own dynasty, if they were a part of a quotation, out of respect, especially for classic texts. It can be confusing, particularly if the quotation is not marked.

For example, the *Book of the Jin* (*Jinshu*) mentions a “grandson of the Commander-in-chief Wang Yifu” (*taiwei Wang Yifu waisun* 太尉王夷甫外孫).⁸² In this case, the given name of Wang Yan 王衍 (256–311) was tabooed and changed to his courtesy name Wang Yifu 王夷甫. We could ask why the author of the *Book of the Jin* (*Jinshu*), Fang Xuanling 房玄齡 (578–648) of the Tang period, tabooed the given name of the Emperor Cheng of Jin (r. 325–342) – Yan 衍. Fortunately, we know that the author/compiler of the *Book of the Jin* used an old chronicle of that time, where the courtesy name was used intentionally in order to observe a taboo. He left the tabooed form in the text apparently out of the respect for the original.⁸³

⁸⁰ *Sanguozhi*, “Wuzhi”, j. 8, p. 10b.

⁸¹ Cf. Fan Zhixin 2006, p. 187.

⁸² *Jinshu*, j. 32, p. 2b.

⁸³ *Nianershi kaoyi*, j. 21, p. 413.

Every text with taboo instances should be read in consideration of its historical context and the prevailing tradition of the period. We know, for example, that the tabooing practice in the Qin and Han periods was relatively inconsistent and partial. In the *Records of the Historian*, *Book of Han* and *Book of Later Han*, taboo characters were sometimes avoided and sometimes not (see 4.4.2 and 5.1.2.1). In the Three Kingdoms period (for example in the *Records of the Three Kingdoms*), however, titles were often used instead of a name. Both Sima Yi 司馬懿 and Sima Zhao 司馬昭 are called King (*wang* 王),⁸⁴ and only once the name of Sima Yi was used directly.⁸⁵ In the latter case, the taboo character was used because the text was a direct quotation of the Emperor's words, and therefore could not be changed.⁸⁶

Finally, we should also know that a taboo character could be left untabooed, if the composition of the text did not allow such a change. There is, for example, the character *heng* 恒 left untabooed in the *Records of the Historian* in the phrase “in order to establish constant procedures” (*yili hengchang* 以立恒常).⁸⁷ Normally this character *heng* should have been changed to *chang* 常, but then the expression *changchang* 常常 would not have suited stylistic rules. Therefore, it was left unchanged.⁸⁸

9.2.2. The Verification of the Authenticity of Texts

Changes caused by name tabooing can be used in order to scrutinize the authenticity of a text, and knowledge about these processes may serve to correct former erroneous opinions. It was used, for example, by Zhou Guangye in order to check and criticize the historical analysis of Song Minqiu 宋敏求 (1019–1079) concerning an old tile. The latter described and analyzed a tile found in the region of what is today Xi'an. He wrote in his *Chang'an zhi* 長安志 that the character *chu* 楚 engraved in it indicated that the tile came from the Qin period. He thought the character *chu* was used to distinguish palaces of different regions of the Qin state. But Zhou Guangye analyzed the taboo system of Qin and recognized that it was impossible in that period to use openly this particular taboo character because its appearance in the given name Zichu of the father of the First Emperor (see 4.4.1). Therefore, he concluded that the tile was not made in the Qin time, but came from the

⁸⁴ Cf., for example, *Sanguozhi*, “Weishu”, j. 3, p. 9b: “Sima Prince Xuan” (*Sima Xuanwang* 司馬宣王).

⁸⁵ *Sanguozhi*, “Weishu”, j. 3, p. 16b.

⁸⁶ Fan Zhixin 2006, p. 190.

⁸⁷ *Shiji*, j. 6, p. 22a. For translation see Watson 1993, p. 60.

⁸⁸ Fan Zhixin 2006, p. 190.

(early) Han period, when taboos of the Qin were no longer observed.⁸⁹ He used the tabooing of name in order to verify the authenticity of the tile.

A similar example is described in the *Tingshi* 程史 by Yue Ke 岳珂 (ca.1183–1243),⁹⁰ in the story of a cither called Bingqing (*bingqing guqin* 冰清古琴). It was presumed to have been carved in 768 and repaired in the 11th year of the period Zhenyuan 貞元 (795), according to the inscription made on the lute. The forgery would have remained undiscovered were it not for a small detail, detected by Yue Ke: the character *zhen* 貞 was written without the last stroke, which was a clear example of tabooing with respect to the Emperor Renzong of Song (r. 1022–1063). Because of that, he concluded that the inscription on the cither had to have been made during his rule or later.⁹¹

If we analyze taboo characters in order to determine forgery or the authenticity of a text, it is also important to be aware of some additional problems. One of them is a potential change made in the text by later generations. Thus we find, for example, in the text of the *Book of the Liang* (*Liangshu*), composed in 628–635, the character *dai* 代 instead of *shi* 世, which was for tabooing the given name of the Emperor Taizong (r. 627–649).⁹² If we presume that his name probably became a real taboo only after his death (as discussed in 6.2.4), the copy from which the extant edition of this text was made must postdate the year 649.⁹³

In the analysis of a text, we should avoid overly hasty judgments as to whether the text is an original or an erroneous copy. There are many examples in which an alleged equivalent of taboo characters can be explained as an “innocent” one. For example, the first character of the name of the Chinese goddess of the moon Chang’e 嫦娥 has been interpreted as changed from original *heng* 姮 (hence the name Heng’e 姮娥 can be seen),⁹⁴ because of the taboo (Heng 恒) of the Emperor Wen of Han. Only the Ming scholar Yang Shen 楊慎 (1488–1559) realized in his *Danqian zonglu* 丹鉛總錄 that the original name of woman (and later goddess) was Changyi 常儀.⁹⁵ The characters *yi* 儀 and *e* 娥 were

⁸⁹ *Jingshi biming huikao*, j. 5, p. 86.

⁹⁰ For him see *Zhongguo lidai renming da cidian* 1999, Vol. II, p. 1502.

⁹¹ *Tingshi*, j. 13, pp. 10a–11b. For further examples of the use of name tabooing for verification of texts’ authenticity see Chen Yuan 1958, pp. 120–125.

⁹² *Liangshu*, j. 35, p. 1b.

⁹³ *Nianershi kaoyi*, j. 26, p. 516.

⁹⁴ Cf., for example, *Dushu conglu*, j. 16, p. 5b. For Heng E see *Zhongguo lidai renming da cidian* 1999, Vol. II, p. 1797.

⁹⁵ For Chang Yi see *Zhongguo lidai renming da cidian* 1999, Vol. II, p. 2150.

apparently homonyms in the past⁹⁶ and it is very possible that the name we have today (Chang'e 嫦娥) is just a mistaken notation of Changyi, later perpetuated, and not a case of taboo.⁹⁷

Changes in toponyms can have many reasons and are not necessarily related to the tabooing of names. Some instances of name tabooing are connected with a concrete time and their observance has concrete limits. We have to think, for example, about the end of the tabooing period for distant ancestors and after abdication. Especially during the Song dynasty, there are examples in which the names of distant rulers were temporally not avoided and later tabooed again (e.g. the period of the Emperor Zhezong, see 6.4.6). We should also be cautious if there are examples of a continuation of tabooing after the end of a dynasty, bearing in mind that few dynasties shared the same taboo (see 10.4.2).

9.2.3. Determining the Age of a Text

Analysis of examples of name tabooing in the text of stele inscriptions or old works can also help in dating this text. Often, it is possible to establish the concrete period and sometimes even to pinpoint the specific month. Using this method in order to date a text was already done during the Song period, as indicated in the examples of Song Minqiu (although he was later corrected by Zhong Guangye) or Yue Ke (discussed in 9.2.2).

However, the first systematic application of numerous taboo cases to this aim can most probably be seen first in the works of the scholar Qian Daxin 錢大昕 (1728–1804).⁹⁸ He analyzed, for example, stone monuments of the Tang and Jin dynasties, and found an inscription about the poem *Shilin ting shi* 石林亭詩 by Liu Chang 劉敞 (1019–1068). According to the inscription, it was erected on the 15th day of the 12th month of the 7th year Jiayou 嘉祐 (i.e. January 20, 1063). But Qian Daxin noticed that the title of Su Shi 蘇軾 mentioned in the text was *qianshu* 簽書,⁹⁹ and not the usually used *qianshu* 簽署. It means that the character *shu* 署, similar in structure and homophonous (present-day third tone) with the taboo name of Emperor Yingzong (Shu 曙), was avoided in the inscription. The time of creation of this inscription could therefore be dated at the 3rd month of the next year (March–April 1064, the time of Yingzong's accession) or even later.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁶ *Zhongguo lidai renming da cidian* 1999, Vol. II, p. 2150.

⁹⁷ *Danqian zonglu*, j. 13, p. 5a; *Jingshi biming huikao*, j. 7, p. 103. Wang Yankun 1997, p. 148.

⁹⁸ For him see *Zhongguo lidai renming da cidian* 1999, Vol. II, p. 1911.

⁹⁹ Hucker 1985, p. 154.

¹⁰⁰ *Qian Yantang jinshiwen bawei*, j. 13 according to Chen Yuan 1958, p. 113.

Similarly, we can deduce the period when the work *Baoke leibian* 寶刻類編, being a list of stone inscriptions, is most likely to have been published/composed. Lacking any clues as to its author, we can only presume that if the content of the list ends in the Five Dynasties time, it should be a work from the Song period. We can determine the time more precisely, though, if we apply our knowledge of name tabooing. We find namely there the geographical term Ruizhou 瑞州 (in Jiangnan),¹⁰¹ and we know that only in the beginning of the reign of the Emperor Lizong 理宗 of Song (r. 1224–1264) was the name of Yunzhou 筠州 changed to Ruizhou 瑞州, because of the homophone of his taboo name Yun 昀 (both present-day second tone). Therefore, the list was probably compiled after 1224.¹⁰²

9.2.4. Identification of a Person

One more useful application of precise knowledge about the tabooing of name is the identification of persons. As it was mentioned above, many names of individuals were changed because of taboo observances, and therefore one person could have been recorded with various names. However, we are able to identify a person if we know the principles of tabooing. There are, for example, two names recorded in different sources: Qian Rang 錢讓 mentioned in the *Old Family Genealogy of the Qian* (*Qianshi jiupu* 錢氏舊譜) and Qian Xun 錢遜 in the *Tongzhi* 通志 of Zheng Qiao 鄭樵 (1104–1162).¹⁰³ We know that they both were Governor of Guangling 廣陵 in the Eastern Han time. But only by considering name tabooing will we become aware of the fact that in the time of Zheng Qiao the name of the great-great-grandfather of Emperor Gaozong of Song (who reigned 1127–1162) – Zhao Yunrang 趙允讓 (995–1059) – was taboo. Furthermore one of the methods of its avoidance was to replace the character *rang* 讓 with the character *xun* 遜.¹⁰⁴ After that, it is plausible that there was only one historical person called Qian Rang in the first century AD whose name was changed to Qian Xun during the Southern Song.¹⁰⁵

We read the story of a certain Zhang Huan 張歡 in the *Book of the Zhou* (*Zhoushu*), who married a sister of Emperor Xiaowu of Northern Wei (r. 499–515) and was later executed by him.¹⁰⁶ After that we read the story of Zhang Qiong 張瓊 in the *History of the*

¹⁰¹ *Baoke leibian*, j. 5, p. 1b.

¹⁰² *Qian Yantang ji*, j. 25, p. 1a; Chen Yuan 1958, p. 112.

¹⁰³ *Tongzhi*, j. 28, p. 468.

¹⁰⁴ Cf. Wang Yankun 1997, p. 358.

¹⁰⁵ Cf. *Shijia zhai yangxin lu*, j. 19, p. 277.

¹⁰⁶ *Zhoushu*, j. 9, p. 1b.

Northern Dynasties (Beishi) that his son Zhang Xin 張欣 was married to the Princess of Wei and subsequently injured by Emperor Xiaowu.¹⁰⁷ The same story is repeated in the *Book of the Northern Qi (Bei Qishu)*, this time referring to Zhang Xin 張忻.¹⁰⁸ Thus, we have the same story for three different names. Knowing from the discipline of name tabooing that the character *huan* 歡 was changed to *xin* 欣 or *xin* 忻 in the Northern Qi period, because of the taboo name of the father of Emperor Wenxuan (r. 550–559) – Gao Huan 高歡. Thus, we can identify all of these three names as those of one person – Zhang Huan, modified because of tabooing.¹⁰⁹

9.2.5. Identification of an Edition

Taboo characters can help us to distinguish and determine various editions of a work. For that, we need to check the age and authenticity of every edition. The verification of the authenticity of an edition is different from that of the authenticity of the work itself. We do not need to check the relation of a text to a certain author, but only to the copyist or engraver who made this edition.

Let us take a look at the case described by Fan Zhixin about an edition of the *Wudu wencui* 吳都文粹 compiled by Zheng Huchen 鄭虎臣 in the Song period.¹¹⁰ For a long time, the extant version was considered a copy from the time of Emperor Kangxi (r. 1661–1722). Only after discovering that all *li* 曆 characters were written without the lower part (as *li* 麻), could the edition be identified as the much later *Muhuozi* edition (*muhuozi ben* 木活字本), made in the period of the Emperor Qianlong (r. 1735–1796), whose given name Hongli 弘曆 was taboo.

If we analyze a text, it is also possible to identify on the basis of a firm knowledge of taboo customs, fragments from older and newer editions integrated into the same text. Furthermore, fragments of text which were added later and changes made in printing can be thus distinguished. There are, for example, two almost identical editions of the *Hengyun shanren mingshi liezhuangao* 橫雲山人明史列傳稿 of Wang Hongxu 王鴻緒 (1645–1723) from the beginning of the Qing dynasty, done in 1714 and 1723. The only difference between them is the character *shen* 慎 in the expression *jingshentang* 敬慎堂 written on the

¹⁰⁷ *Beishi*, j. 53, p. 7ab.

¹⁰⁸ *Bei Qishu*, j. 20, p. 1a.

¹⁰⁹ Cf. Chen Yuan 1958, p. 114.

¹¹⁰ Fan Zhixin 2006, p. 223.

cover page. In the first edition, the character is unchanged and in the second the last stroke is omitted. It is an explicit case of tabooing the name of Emperor Yongzheng – Yinzhen 胤禛 (r. 1722–1735), which helps to place the second edition during the time of his reign.¹¹¹

However, the dating of an edition with the help of taboo studies needs special attention. We should avoid focusing on isolated evidence of taboo, and rather take all characteristics of the text and period into account. The original publication of a concrete edition should be distinguished from later additions. It means that we have to determine the original's authenticity first. We should also keep in mind that additions may, but do not necessarily have to observe the taboos of the original, e.g. additions to texts of Song from the Yuan times usually do not observe taboos of Song, but those from the Ming period often preserved old Song taboo.¹¹²

Furthermore, taboo characters can be very inconsistently tabooed or untabooed in privately published books (while official books were subject to a higher degree of state control).¹¹³ In such cases, we cannot rely on taboo custom only. The span of the real taboo period for concrete characters (ruling periods of specific emperors) should be determined. Therefore, the presence of taboo characters of the preceding and following emperors should be checked. Especially in texts of the Tang and Song periods, an analysis of taboos of distant ancestors can help, because the end of tabooing a distant ancestor marked the starting point of the taboo period for a new emperor.¹¹⁴

9.2.6. Analysis of Old Meanings and Pronunciations

Name tabooing is intricately connected with the form, sound and meaning of characters. Therefore, the analysis of works from this perspective can reveal new material for explaining old pronunciations, which is important for philological studies.¹¹⁵

If we read, for example, the biography of Wei Gao 韋皋 in the *New Book of Tang* (*Xin Tangshu*), we hear about his brother Yu 聿, who was appointed to the office of Assistant in the Palace Library (*bishulang* 秘書郎).¹¹⁶ As the title contained a homonym of the taboo name of his father, he could not accept it and later his appointment was

¹¹¹ Fan Zhixin 2006, p. 226.

¹¹² Fan Zhixin 2006, p. 234.

¹¹³ About literary censorship in China see Guy 1987; Chan Hok-Lam 1995, pp. 1-60. Cf. also 7.3.

¹¹⁴ Fan Zhixin 2006, p. 235.

¹¹⁵ With the reconstruction of previous pronunciation in Chinese one has, of course, to be very cautious.

¹¹⁶ Cf. Hucker 1985, p. 377.

changed.¹¹⁷ Yet, we know from analysis of Chen Yuan that the name of his father was written as the character 賁,¹¹⁸ which is nowadays usually pronounced also as *ben* or *fen*. But in the period of Tang, the pronunciation of that character must have been in all likelihood similar to *bi*,¹¹⁹ and was in that way the homonym of *bi/mi* 秘. This old pronunciation can here be determined with the help of name tabooing.¹²⁰

Similarly, in the *Old Book of Tang (Jiu Tangshu)* we can read about a certain Xiao Fu 蕭復 who was nominated to the office of “General Administrator” (*tongjun zhangshi* 統軍長史).¹²¹ This new title of office was created by a special imperial decree in order to avoid the name Heng 衡 of his father.¹²² We do not know the former name of this office, but can presume that it was the Army Aide, usually pronounced as *hang/xingjun changshi* 行軍長史.¹²³ In the Tang period, the character 行 was apparently pronounced as *heng*, and was therefore the homophone of 衡 (cf. 8.1.3).¹²⁴

9.2.7. Textual Criticism and Exposure of Additions, Omissions, Changes and Errors

Knowledge about the tabooing of names and its principles is of invaluable help for the analysis of a text, if we want to identify changes made in a work. Practice of taboo observance caused many intentional and unconscious modifications in texts such as erroneous, superfluous, omitted and changed characters. They can be exposed if we compare the text with its original. Therefore, the discipline of name tabooing is an important ancillary science of Chinese textual criticism.

Practically, we can compare taboo observances on the level of singular characters, sentences or even chapters. If we analyze a text, then erroneous, omitted or added characters can be determined and corrected. Such is the case of the title *shu shiyushi* 書侍御史 used consistently in the *History of the Northern Dynasties (Beishi)*.¹²⁵ Only in one of the last chapters, the “Biography of Liu Fang 劉昉,” is the title written in its full form *zhishu*

¹¹⁷ *Xin Tangshu*, j. 158, p. 3a.

¹¹⁸ Cf. *Tangwen cui*, j. 60, p. 2a.

¹¹⁹ Cf. also *Kangxi zidian*, p. 1135.

¹²⁰ Chen Yuan 1958, p. 128. For more examples of analysis of old meanings and pronunciations, see Chen Yuan 1958, p. 127-128.

¹²¹ Cf. Hucker 1985, pp. 112 and 554.

¹²² *Jiu Tangshu*, j. 125, p. 4b.

¹²³ Cf. Hucker 1985, p. 244.

¹²⁴ *Jingshi biming huikao*, j. 37, p. 553.

¹²⁵ Cf., for example, *Beishi*, j. 70, p. 13b.

shiyushi 治書侍御史.¹²⁶ Originally, the author of the *History of the Northern Dynasties* observed the taboo of Emperor Gaozong's given name, Zhi 治. The additional character *zhi* in the case above seems to be an amendment by later compilers – a correction that was not made in the other occurrences of this title.

We can also compare fragments or chapters of a text in order to expose in this way deleted parts of an original text or passages inserted later, ascertain the sequence of fragments, and distinguish the original from the later version of a text. There are many cases in which a commentary was written by scholars of the past right into the main text. Later copyists did not differentiate between them and erroneously transcribed it as one text. It is often possible to reveal this type of mistake if we apply taboo principles.

For example, in a case from *Book of Later Han (Hou Hanshu)*, at the end of the biography of Guo Tai 郭太, we can find the following fragment:

When Tai had first come to Nanzhou 南州, he passed by the house of Yuan Fenggao 袁奉高, but went on without spending the night there. When he visited Shudu 叔度, however, he stayed for a number of days without leaving. Somebody asked Tai for the reason. Tai said: “The vessel of Yuan Fenggao is like an overflowing cup – though clear, it can easily be poured empty. The vessel of Shudu is wide like (water within) an embankment of a thousand *qing*.¹²⁷ Though it is clarified, it will not become clear. Though it is stirred, it will not become muddy, it is immeasurable. Soon, events confirmed his appraisal, and Tai's name became, therefore, famous in the whole empire.¹²⁸

When we compare this fragment with other parts of the biography, we discover that only here was the name Tai 太 of Guo Tai used openly – otherwise he is referred to by his courtesy name Linzong 林宗.¹²⁹ The name Linzong was used because the author of the *Book of Later Han (Hou Hanshu)* – Fan Ye – tabooed the name of his father (Tai 泰). Why not in this fragment? This case was explained by Qian Daxin in his *Nianershi kaoyi* 廿二史考異. He found out that this fragment is a quotation from the *Book of Later Han* which includes the commentary of Prince Zhanghuai (654–684). In all present editions, the passage has been interpolated into the main text, only in the Fujian edition its original form – without

¹²⁶ Cf. *Beishi*, j. 74, p. 1b. For the title *zhishu shiyushi* see Hucker 1985, p. 163.

¹²⁷ *Qing* 頃 is a unit of area equal to 6,667 hectares.

¹²⁸ Cf. *Hou Hanshu*, j. 98, p. 2ab.

¹²⁹ For example, *Hou Hanshu*, j. 98, p. 1ab.

commentary – has been preserved.¹³⁰ In that way, textual criticism reveals an inconsistency in the observance of taboo and helps us to detect a small fragment of commentary inserted by mistake into the main text. The original text can thus be restored.¹³¹

There are a few principles that should be followed if the taboo practice is used in textual criticism. Stylistic rules and specific rules of taboo observance in a specific period and work should be checked. We know, for example, that there is no avoidance of taboo from the Jin dynasty in the *Records of the Three Kingdoms* (*Sanguozhi*), or that taboos of the Tang dynasty were observed in the *Old Book of Tang* (*Jiu Tangshu*), but not in the *New Book of Tang* (*Xin Tangshu*). Similarly, the *History of the Northern Dynasties* (*Beishi*) avoided taboo characters of emperors of the Tang dynasty, but there is no taboo of characters of the name of the Emperor Taizong (Shimin 世民). It is because two-character names were not tabooed in that time.¹³²

The original text has to be distinct from later changes in order to avoid confusions such as that in the *Old History of the Five Dynasties* (*Jiu Wudaishi*), which was compiled for the *Imperial Collection of Four* (*Siku quanshu*). The compilers saw the sentence: “Shi ... yi, courtesy name Jimei, from Daijun. His original name violated the temple taboo of (the Emperor) Taizu and was therefore changed” (*Shi ... yi, zi Jimei, Daijunren ye. Benming fan Taizu miaohui, gu gai yan* 史口懿，字繼美，代郡人也。本名犯太祖廟諱，故改焉)¹³³ and it was hastily decided that the name of the Emperor Taizu of Song – Kuang 匡 – was avoided, and that the original name of the person was Kuangyi 匡懿. In fact, this part of the *Old History of the Five Dynasties* was taken from the *Zhoushilu* 周實錄 without any change, and avoided the taboo of the Emperor Taizu of Later Zhou (r. 951-954) – Wei 威.¹³⁴

In textual criticism we should make certain to refer to the original text. Otherwise, mistakes are inevitable. We can take, for example, the above mentioned case of “Xiao hui” 蕭緯 of the *Book of the Southern Qi* (*Nan Qishu*)¹³⁵, explained as Xiao Luan 蕭鸞 of Southern Qi (r. 494–498) in the *Sibu beiyao* edition (see 9.1.2.1). Only after seeing the same fragment in the *Book of the Song* (*Songshu*),¹³⁶ which contains the original text

¹³⁰ *Nianer shi kaoyi*, j. 12, p. 258.

¹³¹ For other examples, where the analysis of a text is made with help of the knowledge about the tabooing of names see Chen Yuan 1958, pp. 107-111 and 115-126.

¹³² Fan Zhixin 2006, p. 219-220.

¹³³ *Jiu Wudaishi*, j. 124, p. 4a.

¹³⁴ Chen Yuan 1937, p. 58ab; Fan Zhixin 2006, p. 219-220.

¹³⁵ *Nan Qishu* (b), j. 24, p. 6a.

¹³⁶ *Songshu*, j. 74, p. 16a.

adopted by the *Book of the Southern Qi*, can we determine that the person mentioned was Xiao Shunzhi, the father of Emperor Wu of Liang.

In conclusion, the historiographical consequences of taboo custom are many, and their impact on Chinese sources has been immense. Not only were there numerous changes according to complex principles, but also mistakes and confusions in copying and reediting texts. Luckily, on the other hand, the application of knowledge about name tabooing in texts can also help us. On the basis of our knowledge about name taboos, we can verify the authenticity of a text, determine its age, identify persons and facts more exactly and distinguish additions and omissions in a text. We can also identify different editions of a given text.

CHAPTER TEN: SPECIAL TOPICS OF NAME TABOOING

10.1. Women and Taboo

It is a truism to say that despite the “patriarchal” nature of Chinese history, women played a vital role. Although Chinese society was a male-centred one, there were many examples of women enjoying a high social status and having an extraordinary impact on Chinese society and policy. Yet, although we have numerous works about women in China,¹ the topic of women’s names and especially of their tabooing has been neglected in most research.² It can be said generally that the name of a woman was perceived as important and tabooed in the same manner as the name of a man. The difference was the extension of taboo practice, which depended usually in the case of women on the position of her husband and sons. There are some cases of women’s names being tabooed because of their own power, but most examples are taboos of women on account of their social roles as mothers and wives. Even if taboo cases of men’s names are surely the majority, the number of taboo examples of women is still impressive.

There was no basic difference in the structure of male and female names. They all had their childhood name *xiaoming*, a grown-up given name *ming* and courtesy name *zi*, although all these three names were often similar to each other.³ The childhood name and given name were usually known only to the girl’s or woman’s own family.⁴ Because of the patriarchal outlook of Chinese society, a boy occupied a higher social status and a girl was destined to leave her original family after marriage. Therefore, she was not considered to be a permanent member of her own lineage and her name was not recorded in a family’s genealogical book.⁵ In her new family, the names of her ancestors were of no interest, and her own name was usually recorded, if at all, as “one from ‘such and such’ clan (*shi* 氏),” without her given name.⁶ Patrilineal taboos were important. Matrilineal taboos were degraded as interior taboos (*neihui*).

¹ There are various works about women in China, for example: *Chinese Women in the Imperial Past* 1999; *Women in Chinese Society* 1975; *Frauenstudien* 1992 (all three with various contributions); Ayscough 1937; Linck 1988; Schilling – Kralle 2002.

² The problem of women’s names is mentioned in Bauer 1959, pp. 363-374, Wilkinson 2000, pp. 101-102.

³ Bauer 1959, p. 363.

⁴ Kałużyńska 2008, p. 100.

⁵ Chao 1983, p. 57.

⁶ Bauer 1959, p. 363.

10.1.1. Interior Taboo

Traditionally, the social roles of men and women were divided in China: a man should be a caretaker of the family in public life, and a woman within the family (*nanzhuwai nüzhunei* 男主外女主内).⁷ Correspondingly, taboo names connected with a woman and her ancestors should be avoided, but only inside of her “kingdom”: i.e., her family or the palace (for empresses). Hence, such taboos were called “interior taboos” (*neihui* 內諱), or “women’s taboos” (*nühui* 女諱 or *fuhui* 婦諱).

The principle of interior taboo is mentioned in the *Records of Ritual*. At first it is explained that the names of both parents – mother and father – have to be tabooed after the wailing ceremony, and the names of both grandparents, if the parents are alive. But a few sentences later, a caveat is added: “The names to be avoided by a wife need not be unspoken outside the door.”⁸ In fact, the interior taboo was observed in the family and in the palace by personal attendants. We know about actors and singers who asked about the taboo of the empress in order to avoid it in a spectacle.⁹ But normally, the interior taboo was known only to people living within the family or palace. Other people did not need to know interior taboos, and of course did not avoid them. Because of that, examples of actual interior taboos were not normally recorded. If we know numerous cases of them, it is because many interior taboos “went out” and were then commonly avoided and recorded. Some empresses gained great political power of their own or enjoyed the special favor of the emperor. Often, it was the emperor ordering the avoidance of the name of his mother or female ancestors (see 10.1.3).

10.1.2. Powerful Women and Taboo

Although men usually took the position of power, there were numerous women with high status in China. In general, they became powerful as empresses, especially as regents of underage emperors, or empresses dowagers – the mother of the emperor. Their names became taboo and were often avoided after their death, due to their fame.

Perhaps the name of Empress Fu Hao 婦好 of the Shang dynasty (d. ca. 1200 BC) was already tabooed. She was a queen consort of King Wuding 武丁 (presumably 1250–1192 BC), but also a high priestess, and probably the mightiest military leader of her time.

⁷ Cf. *Songwenjian*, j. 103, p. 2b.

⁸ *Liji*, j. 1, p. 38b–40a. Translation according to Legge 1968, Part III, p. 93.

⁹ *Caomuzi*, j. 3, p. 22a; Yi Fan 2009, p. 37.

We do not know too much about names of that time, but it is remarkable that the Empress is sometimes called in oracle bones inscriptions by her title (most likely a ritual name) as Mother Xin (*muxin* 母辛). The presumed original name of Fu Hao (the actual role of this name is disputed)¹⁰ was apparently concealed (see 4.2.2).

Empress Lü Zhi 呂雉 (241–180 BC) was a powerful person of the Han dynasty. After the death of Emperor Gaozu in 195 BC, she became Empress Dowager and regent of the young Emperor Hui (210 BC–188 BC). She controlled him and his infant sons – Emperor Qianshao (188–184 BC) and Emperor Houshao (184–180 BC) and de facto kept power in her hands for sixteen years. Apparently, she introduced the avoidance of her given name Zhi 雉, which became taboo. People were not allowed to use it directly in speech or writing. Moreover, as the meaning of *zhi* is “pheasant,” this bird’s name had to be changed. A new expression “wild chicken” (*yeji* 野雞) became popular and is used to this day in some Chinese local language variants.¹¹

In the Eastern Jin period, we also find women of considerable might and influence. It was not only their names that became taboo, but also the names of their parents, including their mothers. Besides, names of empresses were placed in the imperial taboo lists. Empress Chu Suanzi 褚蒜子 (324–384) ruled China as a regent for ca. 40 years. Empress Yu Wenjun 庾文君 (297–328) was a regent for only a few years, but we know that a certain Yu Mao 虞茂 (285–340) had to change his name to Yu Yu 虞預 in order to taboo the name of Yu Wenjun’s mother.¹²

Probably the highest status a woman ever reached in China was that of Empress (strictly speaking “Emperor”) Wu Zetian (r. 690–705).¹³ She was not only the powerful mother or wife of one emperor, but also became the only non-male emperor (which does not have a female form in Chinese, the word Empress always refers to wives and mothers of emperors) of Chinese history. She founded a new dynasty and proclaimed her name and the names of her ancestors as state taboos. Therefore, for example the Crown Prince Li Chongzhao 李重照 (682–701) had to change his given name to Chong Run 重潤, because the name of Empress was Zhao 曁. He was executed nevertheless.¹⁴ Similarly, because of

¹⁰ Besides taboo custom, a ritual renaming is perhaps also possible.

¹¹ Cf. Künstler 1994, p. 130.

¹² Cf. *Jinshu*, j. 82, p. 4b.

¹³ More about the Empress Wu Zetian and her time see Forte 1976.

¹⁴ *Jiu Tangshu*, j. 86, p. 7b.

the name of the grandfather of Empress – Wu Hua 武華, the chancellor Cui Ye 崔暉 (638–706) had to change his given name to Xuanwei 玄暉.¹⁵

The title of honour of the preeminent Empress Dowager Cixi 慈禧 of the Qing dynasty (1835–1908), who was the virtual sovereign of the Chinese empire for the last thirty-nine years of her life, was perhaps tabooed. We know at least that the eunuch Li Jinxi 李進喜 changed his name to Li Lianying 李連英 (or 李蓮英, 1848–1911), after he started his career in the palace. However, the author of this dissertation could not find examples of tabooing of her original name Xingzhen 杏貞.¹⁶

10.1.3. Mothers and Female Ancestors of Emperors

There are cases of women's names being taboo, if they were female ancestors of the ruling emperor, especially as his mother. Even if they did not have high political power, or were already dead by that time, their name became state taboo because of the status of their descendants. Usually, they were titled Empress Dowager (*huangtaihou* 皇太后, wife of the emperor after his death) or Grand Empress Dowager (*taihuangtaihou* 太皇太后, wife of the former emperor).

This kind of taboo of the empress dowager, as the respected mother of the ruling emperor, was perhaps self-evident. Nonetheless, it seems strange that the author of this dissertation could not find a single case in the documents of taboos for an empress dowager who did not exert at least some political influence. But we do find names of them listed as temple taboos, which means that their names were really tabooed in certain contexts. There are, for example, the names of the mother of emperor Shizong of Jin and of one more empress, recorded this way in the *Collected Rites of the Great Jin Dynasty* (*Da Jin jili* 大金集禮).¹⁷ There were different opinions in various dynasties whether private taboos of the

¹⁵ *Jiu Tangshu*, j. 91, p. 5a. In the Song edition of the same work (reproduced in the *Bainaben* edition) 百衲本 *Jiu Tangshu* (b), j. 91, („Liezhuàn”, j. 39), p. 5b last stroke is omitted in the character *xuan*. Cf. also *Cefu yuangui*, j. 825, p. 3b and *Jingshi biming huikao*, j. 29, p. 463. In both last sources the name is noticed as Yuanwei 元暉: in the first one, because of taboo of the “first ancestor” of Song (6.4.4); *Jingshi biming huikao* tabooed apparently the name of the Qing Emperor Kangxi, as he wrote his own comment below: “the original character was changed because of taboo.” For Cui family see Buckley Ebrey 1978.

¹⁶ Mao Haijian 2002, p. 152, Fn. 1. We know numerous examples of taboo related to the Empress Dowager Cixi. Actors playing for her had not only to observe her name taboo, but could not use the word *yang* 羊 (sheep), too, being her sign in the Chinese zodiac. Because of that some plays, as for example *Dragon Lady Tending Sheep* (*Longnü muyang* 龍女牧羊), were prohibited, and the character *yang* in other plays was exchanged, for example, to *yu* 魚 (fish). Similarly inauspicious characters as *sha* 殺 (to kill), *si* 死 (death), *wang* 亡 (to lose, to die) had to be avoided. Cf. Yi Fan 2009, p. 37.

¹⁷ *Da Jin jili*, j. 23, p. 203.

emperor (as for example the taboo of the emperor's mother) were an imperial taboo which should be avoided by everybody (see 3.5.3 and 5.4.2).

A specific taboo instance was the avoidance of the taboo name of the father, Taizhang 太章, of an Empress Dowager – Empress Zhong (鍾皇后, d. 965) of the Southern Tang dynasty. When she became a widow in 961, after the death of Emperor Yuanzong of Southern Tang (r. 943–961), she did not receive the usual title of *huangtaihou* 皇太后 because of her “internal taboo” (the taboo name of her father). A special new title was created for her and she was called “Saintly respected queen” (*shengzunhou* 聖尊后).¹⁸

Symptomatic for relations between the taboo name of the deceased empress and the power of the emperor is the story of Zheng Achun 鄭阿春 (290–326). She was not the legal wife of Emperor Yuan, but only his concubine, and her name was not in all likelihood an official taboo during her lifetime. But she was the mother of Sima Yu 司馬昱 – later Emperor Jianwen of Jin (r. 371–372), and the grandmother of Sima Yao 司馬曜 – Emperor Xiaowu (r. 372–396). Though they only became rulers many years after the death of Achun, they both wanted her name to be avoided as a state taboo. It was not seen as a matter of course, because normally only empresses could be put in the taboo list (*huibang* 諱榜). After a long discussion, it was stated that the mother of the emperor was “the small ruler” (*xiaojun* 小君), and names of rulers should be taboo for everybody (see 5.3).¹⁹ Finally, in 394 the title of Empress Dowager was bestowed upon Achun by her grandson Emperor Xiaowu in his decree.²⁰ Later, because of her name, many geographical names were changed, as for example Fuchun 富春 to Fuyang 富陽, Yichun county 宜春縣 to Yiyang 宜陽 and Chungu county 春穀縣 to Yanggu 陽穀.²¹ It also is assumed that because of this taboo many books related to the *Spring and Autumn Annals* (*Chunqiu*) were changed to the *Yangqiu*²² (cf., e.g., works as Sun Sheng 孫盛. *Jin Yangqiu* 晉陽秋; Ge Lifang 葛立方. *Yiyu yangqiu* 韻語陽秋).²³

¹⁸ *Nan Tangshu*, j. 16, pp. 354–355. Cf. also Kurz 2011, p. 93. Saint (*sheng* 聖) was the appellation of an emperor as well.

¹⁹ *Tongdian*, j. 104, p. 553.

²⁰ *Jinshu*, j. 32, pp. 5b–6a.

²¹ *Shijia zhai yangxin lu*, j. 11, p. 9a.

²² *Qidongyeyu*, j. 4, p. 41.

²³ *Lishaobian*, j. 40, p. 10a.

10.1.4. Taboo of the Empress – Wife of the Emperor

Tabooing the names of queen consorts (*huanghou* 皇后) was also practiced, but not as a matter of course. The first examples of such tabooing were recorded in the Han period. In 148 BC an official, Yu Mi 渝彌, had to change his name to Yu 喻 because his name was identical to the courtesy name of Empress Bo of the Han dynasty – Ayu 阿渝.²⁴ However, the case happened after the death of the Empress herself (in 147 BC), though still during the lifetime of her husband, Emperor Jing of Han (r. 156-141 BC). Its facticity can be questioned, for the extant sources reporting the example come only from the Song dynasty.²⁵

Taboos for the Empress were a problem that was the subject of political debates in a few dynasties. In 266, an official of the Emperor Wudi of Jin suggested that the taboo of the queen consort should be observed out of respect, together with the taboo of the emperor, but his proposal was rejected.²⁶ However, later, names of empresses did appear in lists of imperial taboos. Tabooing the names of empresses peaked during Eastern Jin, and remained largely a peculiarity of that period.

Empress Du Lingyang 杜陵陽 (321–341) was the wife of the Emperor Cheng of Jin (r. 326–342). Due to the taboo of her name, Lingyang county 陵陽縣 was changed to Guangyang 廣陽.²⁷ Similarly, Empress Wang Muzhi 王穆之 (d. 365) was the wife of the Emperor Ai of Jin (r. 361–365). Her taboo affected the name of a general, Mao Muzhi 毛穆之 (d. ca. 379), who changed his name because of that to Wusheng 武生 – his childhood name (*xiaozi* 小字).²⁸

A serious discussion about tabooing the names of empresses is known from the Southern Qi (479–502) (see 5.4.2). One official proposed in 479 that the names of empresses ought to be tabooed and recorded in the lists of taboos. In the following controversy, the principle that the “taboo of women is effective only inside the court” of the *Records of Ritual (Liji)* was used as an argument. However, opponents to this line of reasoning argued that avoiding the name of empresses would help to better express the reverence of subjects towards the emperor. Names of empresses should therefore be

²⁴ *Gujin xingshi shu bianzheng*, j. 30, p. 413

²⁵ This story is not included in the *Book of the Han (Hanshu)* and the *Records of the Historian (Shiji)*.

²⁶ *Tongdian*, j. 104, p. 555.

²⁷ Cf. *Jinshu*, j. 32, p. 2a.

²⁸ He could not change his name to his courtesy name, Xianzu 憲祖, because of the mother's name of another famous general of Jin – Huan Wen 桓溫 (312–373), which was Xian 憲. Therefore he changed it to his childhood name. Cf. *Jinshu*, j. 81, p. 9b.

recorded on lists of imperial taboo in order to help people notice words that should be avoided. Although some officials thought that it would suffice to announce posthumous names of empresses after their death and to use the rank or family name for living queen consorts, many names of empresses were still tabooed and put on the taboo list.²⁹

The names of empresses remained the subject of discussion in later dynasties, but it seems that they were normally taboo. At least we know that the name of Empress Li Fengniang 李鳳娘 (1144–1200) – the wife of the Guangzong Emperor of the Song dynasty – was tabooed, and because of that the word for a type of flower – *impatiens cyathiflora* (*jinfenghua* 金鳳花) – had to be changed to *hao nüer hua* 好女儿花.³⁰ It is interesting that even during the Yuan dynasty, in the time of Emperor Renzong (1311–1320), the Board of Rites argued that the queen consort is “the mother of *tianxia*,” and recommended to announce the name of the empress as taboo.³¹

Other taboos of an empress, for example of her ancestors, were seldom made public. But there are examples for the tabooing of the names of the parents of the queen consort, the family on the mother’s side of the emperor, the emperor’s son-in-law, or even the whole distant royal family.³² We know, for example, that in the time of the Three Kingdoms, the Minister of the Interior (*situ* 司徒) Ding Mi 丁密 (3rd c.) changed his name because of the name of the father of Empress Teng (the wife of Emperor Sun Hao of Wu) – Teng Mi 滕密. In fact, the change was mutual. Ding Mi and Teng Mi avoided each other’s taboo, which caused inconveniences, and both changed their given names to their courtesy names Ding Gu 丁固 and Teng Mu 滕牧.³³

10.1.5. Maternal and Other Private Taboos of Women

The name of one’s own mother was “holy” for everybody, just as that of one’s father. As we can read in the *Records of Ritual (Liji)*, it was prescribed to taboo names of near relatives “after the wailing period,” which meant *inter alia* the names of someone’s mother, grandmother, stepmother, father’s aunts or sisters, husband’s mother and wife.³⁴ Furthermore, the names of female distant ancestors had to be avoided by children, if they

²⁹ *Nan Qishu*, j. 46, pp. 2b-3a; Cf. also Wang Jian 2002, pp. 93-95.

³⁰ *Sichao wenjianlu*, j. 5, p. 44a.

³¹ *Yuanshi*, j. 116, pp. 1b-2a.

³² For concrete examples see Chen Yuan 1958, pp. 28-29; Fan Zhixin 2006, pp. 46-48.

³³ *Sanguozhi*, “Wuzhi”, j. 3, p. 10b.

³⁴ *Liji*, j. 7, p. 83b

were taboo for parents. All taboos avoided by a mother or wife were also taboo for a son or husband, when they were at home.

In the *Records of Ritual* one can also find what is probably the first record about tabooing the name of one's mother – by Confucius: “The name of the Master's mother was Zhengzai 徵在. When he used Zai, he did not at the same time use Zheng; nor Zai, when he used Zheng.”³⁵ This example illustrates the principle of non-tabooing of double names.

A similar tabooing of a mother's name is presumed for the poet Du Fu 杜甫 (712–770), but in this case there is only indirect evidence. Du Fu wrote many poems, but made no mention of the flowers of the crab apple *haitanghua* 海棠花. This fact might have come about by accident, but according to Chinese historians, the cause is deeper: he could not write such a poem because of the name of his mother – Haitang.³⁶ Still more radical and tragic is the case of Cuizi 崔子, whose mother died when he was a child. His stepmother did not respect the taboo of the deceased and often spoke her name. Cuizi could not bear this and committed suicide by jumping into a river.³⁷ This story, whether apocryphal or not, shows that tabooing the name of one's mother was perceived as very important in China.

The examples above concern the taboo of women's names. We can see that their names were respected and avoided, though mostly derived from their own position of power or the one held by a man at her side, or by her relatives. But it is also worth writing a few words about tabooing by women, about taboo names she had to avoid. Our materials on this topic, and especially examples, are very scant. We know that, just like men, women had to avoid states taboos and taboo names of her relatives. As Chinese women were rarely involved in political life, state taboos were perhaps less strictly observed by them. But they had to be all the more careful to respect private taboos, because after marriage, women learned and observed all the taboos of their husbands. We can only speculate how the learning process of tabooing words looked like. Sometimes, apparently, the young woman had to change her name, if it conflicted with a taboo name of her new family. It has remained a custom in traditional Chinese families in Taiwan to this day.³⁸

The following example – the exclusive recording of a woman's feelings on the matter of name taboos – should show how seriously women took the tabooing of names. The story comes from the well-known novel *Dream of the Red Chamber* (*Honglouloumeng* 紅

³⁵ *Liji*, j. 1, p. 39a.

³⁶ *Xianjulu*, p. 3.

³⁷ *Taiping Yulan*, j. 578, p. 7b; *Jingshi biming huikao*, j. 43, p. 619.

³⁸ Personal conversation with Jiang Ryh-Shin and Pan Feng-Chuan, Sankt Augustin, 9.10.2009.

樓夢). Lin Daiyu's 林黛玉 mother's name was Min 敏, and she tabooed her name. Therefore, whenever she "met the character *min* while reading (aloud) a book, she read it every time as *mi* 密 ..., and if she met this character in writing, she omitted one or two strokes."³⁹

10.2. Religion and Taboo

The relation of taboo custom to religiosity seems to be self-evident, but on the contrary, there might as well be no research on tabooing of name pertaining to religion. The reason is, on the one hand, the specific feature of the Chinese concept of religion which does not have, in principle, a differentiation between religion and doctrine (as we know it from Europe),⁴⁰ and this makes a (modern) distinction between religious and non-religious elements difficult. On the other hand, Chinese scholars such as "Confucians" tried in different epochs to distinguish their own customs as "high culture" or orthodoxy, and disparaged customs of popular religiosity as "superstition" or heterodoxy.⁴¹ Although they often mixed them both, they usually were less interested in "religious" taboos. This approach seems to be continued today, as modern Chinese scholars usually negate the common ground occupied by the practice of name taboo as "high culture" (*bihui*) and "primitive" religious or sorcerous taboo (*jinji*).⁴²

Chinese religiosity was often called a "magical religiosity" (the term itself is controversial),⁴³ because of its almost unlimited belief in deities, ghosts, demons and miracles.⁴⁴ Important elements of it included auspicious and inauspicious omens⁴⁵ and different kinds of taboo. Signs, words and names were used in order to bring about an expected result. In the same way as signs, words and names could also be used to prevent or eliminate unwanted objects or avoid such negative events. Different aspects of name tabooing can be seen in various religious practices. Many "religious" aspects can also be found in the official (state) custom of *bihui*.

³⁹ *Honglounmeng*, hui 2, p. 10. For translation see Hawkes 1973, Vol. I, p. 82.

⁴⁰ It was already identified by the sinologist Wilhelm Grube (1855–1908). Cf. Grube 1910, p. 9.

⁴¹ Cf. also Malek 1996, pp. 190–194; Ransdorp 1979, pp. 387–426.

⁴² About the tension between religion and magic, and between *bihui* and *jinji* customs, see 2.1.3 and 2.1.7.

⁴³ Weber 1920, p. 515. The term is sometimes contested by historians as coming from religious studies. The expanded word "ritual" is proposed in place of "magic". The latter one is used in this work, as it is, in the author's opinion, more concrete and highlights the belief in intervention of external powers.

⁴⁴ Cf. Eichhorn 1973, p. 267; Malek 1996a, p. 17.

⁴⁵ More about them see Lippiello 2001.

Using and tabooing names was important in Chinese popular religiosity. Tabooing was perceived not only as a courtesy custom, but also as a real protection for a human being. Many authentic stories are known about curious names or the change of names because of the fear of ghosts. It was, for example, practiced that a “non-real” depreciative name was chosen for a child in order to lead ghosts astray. The new name was written on paper and fastened to the door of a temple in order to announce it to demons. Furthermore, parents exclaimed loudly the new fake name of the child on the way home, and believed that ghosts could thus be deceived. The common popular belief was that they could have power over the child and hurt him or her, if they would come to know its “real name”.⁴⁶

10.2.1. Daoism

The discussion of name tabooing’s contribution to religious culture shall be limited here to Daoism and Buddhism. The intention is not to give a detailed analysis, because that is not yet possible at this stage of research. Some aspects of name tabooing to be mentioned here, and materials collected from different sources, will hopefully serve as a contribution to further research.⁴⁷

Daoists believed that they knew and controlled the “mystical dimension of language”⁴⁸ and “the magic of names.”⁴⁹ The pronunciation or writing of magical names and characters could, according to beliefs in some schools of Daoism, expel bad ghosts from an ill man or, conversely, cause purposeful calamity for enemies.⁵⁰ The knowledge about names of natural spirits such as the spirits of hills, trees, rocks, tigers, snakes and foxes could disarm them and force them to return to their original forms.⁵¹

Special demon-statutes were known, which were supposed to be sent down “by ‘The Most High Great Tao’ in eight scrolls, registering the demons’ family names and given

⁴⁶ Cf. ter Haar 2006, p. 166.

⁴⁷ A short note was found about (common) taboo practice in Daoism in *The Encyclopedia of Taoism* 2008, Vol. I, pp. 576-578. No record about taboo (either *bihui* and *jinji*) seems to be given in the *Zhonghua dao jiao da cidian* 1995. It is interesting that all words with the character *jin* 禁 in the dictionary seem to have an active meaning, as “control”. Cf. for example *jin shehui* 禁蛇虺 or *jinzhou* 禁咒 (p. 673). Examples of names related to Daoism can be found in Bauer 1959, pp. 321-325.

⁴⁸ Kohn 1991, p. 124.

⁴⁹ Strickmann 2002, p. 30. Cf. also Ge Hong 1999, p. 270 and 318, where records with names of demons are mentioned, protecting against them.

⁵⁰ *Zarys dziejów religii* 1988, p.97. For more about the magic of script in China (in Daoism) see Drexler 1994.

⁵¹ Nickerson 2000, p. 267.

names and the auspicious and inauspicious practices associated with them.”⁵² Additionally, special instructions about that were reputed to have been given by Laozi:

(...) Evil demons come to take control over all the men and women of the world. Your priestly officers should therefore consult my writings and discover there the names of the demons. (...) I am now sending down these Statutes afresh, to make known throughout the world the names of the demons. (...) You can thus name the relevant demons according to the various days, and none of them will dare attack you.⁵³

Names were all-important in the healing practices of the Daoist tradition. It was dangerous if demons knew the real names of human beings, and therefore they had to be tabooed and concealed. But this system of taboo could be turned to one's advantage if the healer knew the real name of a demon and used it actively.⁵⁴ Hence, for diagnosis the healer would call demons of the five directions by name, and in this way located them in the body of the patient.⁵⁵ He had to learn the names of demons, and had long repertories of demonic nomenclature at his disposal. Then he could cure the malady. The healing process was as follows: At first, a ritual therapist vocalized a spell against the first names of the father, mother, elder and younger brothers and sisters of the pathogen ghost. After that, the following performative words were used: “I know your family name and given names. I possess your *gong* and *shang* (Chinese basic musical notes). Why don't you go away? What can you hope for by staying on?”⁵⁶ Apparently, after such a spell the demon had no choice but to leave the body of the sick person, which then became healthy again.

Daoists were no exception in Chinese society, and so they too observed name taboo customs. We should remember that the Daoist elite often wielded considerable power in China.⁵⁷ Emperors often supported this religion and one of them – Emperor Xuanzong of Tang (r. 712–756) – even proclaimed Laozi his ancestor in 741, and the special posthumous title of Emperor Xuanyuan (*Xuanyuan huangdi* 玄元皇帝) was bestowed upon him.⁵⁸ Of

⁵² Strickmann 2002, pp. 81-82.

⁵³ Strickmann 2002, pp. 84-85.

⁵⁴ Strickmann 2002, p. 31.

⁵⁵ Strickmann 2002, p. 29.

⁵⁶ Strickmann 2002, p. 30.

⁵⁷ Cf. Baldrian 1987, pp. 293-298; Lagerwey 1987, pp. 306-316; Wang 2009, p. 51-119.

⁵⁸ *Jiu Tangshu*, j. 5, p. 1b; j. 9, p. 5b.

course, the name of Laozi – Li Er 李耳 – could not be used and his titles were used instead.⁵⁹

The name of a Daoist and leader of the Yellow Turbans insurrection in the late Eastern Han Dynasty, Zhang Jue 張角 (d. 184), was reported as taboo. He practised the above-mentioned “demon medicine” and with word, script and gesticulation could cause or prevent injury, expel demons and cure illness.⁶⁰ Therefore later in the Song period his name was avoided by some Daoists and nobody of them dared to speak out the character *jue* 角.⁶¹

The observance of name taboo was also present in rules for Daoist monks - “the most important foundation of the religious organization of Daoism.”⁶² Among various norms, we found four related to our topic:

“Precept 105: Do not be negligent in avoiding taboo (*jihui* 忌諱).”⁶³

“Precept 206: If you reach one place, you have to first ask for local taboos (*jinji* 禁忌).”⁶⁴

“Precept 207: If you come into a house, you should first ask about taboo names (*minghui* 名諱) of elders.”⁶⁵

“Precept 299: You should not speak out the real name (*minghui*) of heaven, which is secret and mysterious.”⁶⁶

As we can see, the custom of name taboos was a part of life for Daoist monks. Names had to be avoided, and titles, as for example *fashi* 法師, or *shifu* 師父, were to be used instead. Local and private taboos had to be observed by a monk, if he went somewhere. If people asked him about somebody’s tabooed name (*hui* 諱), the expression *shangmou xiamou* 上某下某 had to be used.⁶⁷

It is little wonder that examples of name tabooing can be also found in Daoist texts. If we read texts of the Daoist canon (*Daozang* 道藏),⁶⁸ written in the Ming dynasty, we can

⁵⁹ Cf. Wang Xinhua 2007, pp. 41-42.

⁶⁰ Unschuld 1980. p. 88.

⁶¹ *Songshi*, j. 351, p. 5a; *Jingshi biming huikao*, p. 612.

⁶² Schmidt 1985, p. 149.

⁶³ Hackmann 1931, p.15 (*jiezhe, bude wangzuo jihui* 戒者, 不得妄作忌諱).

⁶⁴ Hackmann 1931, p.23 (*jiezhe, suo zhizhi chu bi xianwen qi jinji* 戒者, 所至之處 必先問其禁忌).

⁶⁵ Hackmann 1931, p.23 (*jiezhe, fan ru renjia, bi xianwen qi jia zhong zunzhang minghui* 戒者, 凡入人家, 必先問其家中尊長名諱).

⁶⁶ Hackmann 1931, p.33 (*jiezhe, dang nian yinmi tianzhen minghui, buchou yu kou* 戒者, 當念隱密天真名諱, 不出于口).

⁶⁷ Hackmann 1919, p.166.

⁶⁸ Komjathy 2002; *The Taoist Canon* 2004.

see that there are many taboos of Song, which means that many texts came from that time.⁶⁹ It can be seen, for example, in the *Daozang* edition of *Mozi*, which observes the taboo name Kuang 匡 of Emperor Taizu of the Song (r. 960–976).⁷⁰ There are also numerous other examples of taboo in this edition of *Daozang*,⁷¹ tabooing the names of Song emperors. With the help of taboo practices, we can, for example, determine that the edition on which the version of *Zituan danjing* 紫團丹經 was based most likely comes from the Southern Song period.⁷² Similarly, the avoidance of taboo names helped to date the Daoist *Commentary to the Nine Elixirs of the Yellow Emperor* (*Huangdi jiuding shendan jingjue* 黃帝九鼎神丹經訣) to the latter half of the seventh century.⁷³ Recently, a study on Daoist texts from Dunhuang was undertaken. An analysis of 29 from among ca. 800 texts showed that the taboo custom was observed also in Daoist texts. Numerous tabooed characters of Sui and Tang rulers were found in twelve of them, and various taboo methods (equivalents, omission of strokes) were used.⁷⁴

10.2.2. Buddhism

A description of the tabooing of names in Buddhism seems to be quite complex and challenging. At first glance, the problem of name taboos appears insignificant, for it is hard to find something about name (*ming*) or taboo (*hui*, *bihui*, *jinji*)⁷⁵ in Chinese and Western encyclopedias of Buddhism.⁷⁶ As far as we know, there is also no work treating the

⁶⁹ Cf., for example, *The Taoist Canon* 2004, Vol. 1, p. 32 and 331.

⁷⁰ *The Taoist Canon* 2004, Vol. 1, p. 63.

⁷¹ Cf. *The Taoist Canon* 2004, Vol. 1, pp. 133, 292, 343, 409, 434; Vol. 2, pp. 738, 799, 841, 1124. There is, for example, an illustration of a magic mirror in the text, with the character *jian* 鑑 in the title. Originally, it probably should have been the character *jing* 鏡, but it was changed in deference to the Song taboo (the taboo of the grandfather of Emperor Taizu – Jing 敬). As the character *jing* occurs elsewhere in text, it indicates that part of the text dates from before the Song time (*The Taoist Canon* 2004, Vol. 2, p. 618). Cf. also Chen Yuan 1958, p. 154.

⁷² *The Taoist Canon* 2004, Vol. 2, p. 841.

⁷³ Pregadio 2000, p. 175.

⁷⁴ Dou Huaiyong 2009, pp. 56–62.

⁷⁵ These four characters are very seldom seen in Buddhist terms. The word *jiyue* 忌月 as a Buddhist term (1st, 5th, and 9th lunar month) is mentioned in *Grand Dictionnaire Ricci* 2001, Vol. I, p. 448. The expression *huichen* 諱辰 as the day of taboo, day of fate, day of death is mentioned in *Fojiaoyu da cidian* 1975, vol. 1, p. 214.

⁷⁶ The best treatise on names was probably written in *Foxue da cidian* 2002. There are many entries with the character *ming* (cf. pp. 524–526), but no mentions of tabooing. In *Foxue da cidian* 1961, there is no note about *bihui* and *ming* appears only in connection with *faxing yiming* 法性異名 (p. 1389) and *faming* 法名 (p. 1378). We could find no note about “name” in *A Dictionary of Buddhist Terms* 1991 and in Schumann 2000. Only the expressions *mingse* 名色 and *mingshu* 名數 are given in Kleine – Li Xuetao – Michael Pye 1999, p. 134. The notes about two words with *ming* in Raguin 1985, p. 253 are very scant.

significance of name within this religion.⁷⁷ The concept of “name” occasionally appears in philosophical discourse as *nāman* or *nāma* (Sanskrit, chin. *ming* 名). There the name denotes something unreal and is one of three unrealities (Sanskrit *prajnapti*, chin. *sanjia* 三假): things (*fa* 法), sensations (*shou* 受) and names (*ming* 名).⁷⁸ According to Buddhist philosophy, names are empty and have no real existence, just like other phenomena.⁷⁹ We see here some similarities to the philosophical Daoist view on names.⁸⁰ The term *nāma* (name) also means personality, mentality, and that which is unseen. It is often connected with *rupa* (*xing* 性 – its form, body) as *namarupa* and describes “the complex of mind and matter.”⁸¹ This important concept is also used in Buddhist meditation.

We observe an utmost importance assigned to a name in Buddhist practices. There are numerous oral techniques focused on the various names of the Buddha. These names are to be sung or recited, and it is important for them to be pronounced correctly. Invocation and multiple repetition of the name of Buddha, used often as mantra, have a soteriological effect for believers. Pure Land school of Buddhism focuses on the ritual of reciting the name of the Buddha Amithaba (jap. *nembutsu*, chin. *nianfo* 念佛), and believers are sure that pronouncing this name with sincerity will save them. Calling the name of Amithaba has performative power and makes him present. “The sense is a humble submission to the power of what is named, which is also somehow the name itself.”⁸² But the name can be invoked only in a ritual context and not outside of it. In that respect, it is not so far from the Chinese belief in the power of real names.

A special name is given to a monk or new believer. After somebody decides to become a Buddhist, an initiation ceremony is arranged and he will be proclaimed a follower of Buddha. He obtains from a master a new name, i.e. the Dharma name (*faming* 法名, *fahao* 法號). This name is also called *jieming* 戒名 (forbidden name), or *fahui* 法諱 (taboo of dharma). Originally, and still in Theravada Buddhism, such a name was apparently given only to monks after they “left the family” (*chujia* 出家) or for pious believers after death,

⁷⁷ A short note about the name in Mahayana Buddhism (only about calling the name of Buddha) is in Mathewson Denny 1987, p. 303. In Bauer’s work on Chinese names only a listing of Buddhist names could be found (cf. Bauer 1959, pp. 325-328). No work or paper about names could be found in Reynolds 1981.

⁷⁸ *A Dictionary of Chinese Buddhist Terms* 1937, p. 59.

⁷⁹ *A Dictionary of Chinese Buddhist Terms* 1937, p. 204.

⁸⁰ Cf. *Daodejing*, j. 1, p. 1.

⁸¹ *Encyclopaedia of Buddhism* 2003, vol. VII, p. 125. More about the concept of *namarupa* see *Buddhistisches Wörterbuch* 1976, pp. 132-133; Schumann 1986, pp. 79-80.

⁸² Mathewson Denny 1987, p. 303.

as a kind of posthumous name. But in Chinese Buddhism, every Buddhist was eligible for such a name.⁸³ The new (Buddhist) name constitutes a new human being, a new (Buddhist) personality. No information could be found about a possible practice of taboo of a Buddhist's former name. Apparently it is not used, but there is no concrete evidence of explicit and conscious avoidance. The character *jie* 戒 (forbidden) is often used in Buddhism terms. The expression 戒律 *jielü* is the Chinese translation of the Sanskrit word *śīla*, and describes ethical rules of Buddhist life (there are five, eight or ten precepts [*jie*] in Buddhism). None of these rules has a direct connection with naming or with name tabooing.

Knowledge about the names of demons and deities⁸⁴ was cultivated in Chinese (popular) Buddhism for medical purposes. In the *Memoirs of Eminent Monks* (*Gaosengzhuan* 高僧傳),⁸⁵ we read in the biography of Fotucheng 佛圖澄⁸⁶ that he “was proficient at intoning magic spells and could make the spirits his servants.”⁸⁷ In the *Sutra of Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva about Care for the Sick* of Buddhist Canon, translated into Chinese in 625–650 AD, we find a prescription about the expulsion of demons, with the last sentence: “If after that this person still vocalizes the name (of the appropriate demon), the expulsion is complete.”⁸⁸ Later in the same *sutra*, the name of demon was to be used against the sleeplessness of children: “If a small child cries and cannot sleep at night, the name of demon should be written under his eyes. The spell of expulsion should be recited twenty one times and one should pray three times. It causes expulsion and relaxation.”⁸⁹ The power of names is present in many other works of Chinese Buddhist magical medicine which referred to the words of Buddha: “If you have headache, your eyes are blurred, and chills and fever assail your heart, you should at once utter the names of these two demons, (...) and every one of the various demons will be smashed and defeated.”⁹⁰ By naming the demon, it will be neutralized. By calling or writing names of (positive) spirits, the living human will be protected. Both these aspects of the power of the name in Buddhism can be seen in the following words of the Buddha to Śakra the Monarch of Heaven:

These are the names of the spirit-kings of the five directions. If hereafter, in the last age of the world, there is a day when the four classes of disciples are in danger, they

⁸³ Cf. Huang Kexi 2006, p. 27.

⁸⁴ Cf. Bunce 1994.

⁸⁵ Compiled in ca. 519 by Hui Jiao 慧皎 (497-554).

⁸⁶ Indian monk, ca. 232-348, other names: Buttocho (jap.), Buddhasingha (Sanskrit).

⁸⁷ Wright 1990, p. 46.

⁸⁸ Unschuld 1980, p. 253.

⁸⁹ Unschuld 1980, p. 257.

⁹⁰ Strickmann 2002, pp. 110-111.

should write the names of the spirit-kings and their retinues on a round piece of wood. This is called the mudra rite. (...) Sickness and suffering will be cured and demon-vapours will be destroyed. (...) If you seal a person's house with the names of seven gods on the mudra, these gods will protect that person.⁹¹

Besides, in Buddhism, the names of ghosts should not be mentioned in the presence of a person (especially a sick person), “for fear that this would immediately deliver the patient into the power of the spirit so rashly named.”⁹² Thus this custom is similar to the Daoist practice. Perhaps it can be regarded as a common Chinese practice, rather than a specifically Buddhist one.

We can only presume that, especially in popular Buddhism, believers were – as indeed all Chinese people – affected by the tabooing of names. There is an example of the first emperor of the Ming dynasty – Zhu Yuanzhang, who had been a Buddhist monk in his youth. After he became emperor, he consciously avoided names and words related to Buddhism, such as *shi* 釋 (Śākyamuni) and *heshang* 和尚 (monk). And when the emperor found the character *guang* 光 (light, bare) in a poem of his official Shi Mengwei 施孟微, he ordered his dismissal, because of its similarity to the hairless head of a monk.⁹³ When the characters of the name of Zhu Yuanzhang were tabooed (see 7.2.2), we can also presume that the names of other persons related to Buddhism were avoided, at least in everyday life.⁹⁴

Certainly, the “name” had a strong connection to omens also in Buddhism. This is evident in the story of the *Memoirs of Eminent Monks* (*Gaosengzhuan* 高僧傳), where the monk Fotucheng 佛圖澄 warned the Emperor Shi Le 石勒 (r. 319–333) of the Later Zhao dynasty: “You should order the people not to eat onions (*cong* 蔥).” In fact his words were soon revealed to be prophetic: in 330, the rebellion of Shi Cong (*Shi Cong panluan* 石蔥叛亂) took place, whose name contained this character.⁹⁵

It is not the purpose of this dissertation to analyze taboos in Buddhist texts, but it can be taken as a certainty that these writings, just as any other Chinese texts, were affected by the custom of name tabooing. It is unclear whether changes made because of taboo stem from the Buddhists themselves, but it seems to be very possible in many cases. An article

⁹¹ Strickmann 2002, pp. 134–135.

⁹² Strickmann 2002, p. 277.

⁹³ *Liunan suibi*, j. 6, p. 105.

⁹⁴ Here we can see also one of the psychological mechanisms of taboo origin: fear of one's past.

⁹⁵ *Gaosengzhuan*, j. 9, p. 3–4; Wright 1990, p. 51.

on ancient Buddhist works about ophthalmology reports taboo examples in them. Two different works were found which are respectively attributed to Long Mu (*Yanke Long Mu lun* 眼科龍木論) and Long Shu (*Longshu yanlun* 龍樹眼論)⁹⁶. As the authors of this article have demonstrated, this actually refers to one and the same person – the famous Indian philosopher Nagarjuna (ca. 150–250). Works referring to his names were translated under the name Long Shu during the Tang dynasty. Later, when the name of Emperor Yingzong of Song (Zhao Shu 趙曙, r. 1063–1067) was tabooed, its homonym *shu* 樹 was also changed to *mu* 木 and was perpetuated.⁹⁷ It can be assumed that there are many other taboo characters in yet unstudied Buddhist texts.

Summing up, Buddhist monks in China had to follow the general practice of name tabooing, but as far as we can see, Chinese Buddhist tradition itself did not use taboos for its own divine figures (such as Buddhas and Bodhisattvas). The reason for this is that only by invoking their real names could one hope to make them present.

10.3. Rebellion and the Tabooing of Names

Most known cases of name tabooing are taboos of the emperor. Subjects had to avoid the name of their ruler, sometimes mainly as an expression of loyalty. But what happened if a subject refused such obedience and related taboos? Official documents offer only a sparse record of such cases. We know much about consequences of (often unintended) violations of the taboo name of an emperor. These were often considered as usurpation and *lèse majesté*, and punished in extreme cases with death sentence since every potential rebel had to be eliminated. Such was the end, for example, of the life story of scholar Wang Xihou 王錫侯 (1713–1777), who accidentally published a few imperial names (see 1).

It was prohibited for subjects to use “power characters” that had meanings related to the emperor or political power, such as *jun* 君 (ruler), *long* 龍 (dragon) or *tian* 天 (heaven). In contrast, names demonstrating faithfulness and allegiance were encouraged. Therefore, rebels in China sometimes changed their names in order to obtain legitimacy and an auspicious omen. Very representative of this phenomenon is the person of military governor Zhu Wen 朱溫 (852–912). In his youth, he joined the Huang Chao Rebellion (黃巢之亂, 874–884). When Zhu Wen defected in 882 to the side of Emperor Xizong of Tang (r. 873

⁹⁶ Sometimes, especially in Ming, also called *Long Shu pusa yanlun* 龍樹菩薩眼論. There are about twenty books with both these names (Cf. Yang Hong – He Zhongjun 2009, pp. 12–13).

⁹⁷ Yang Hong – He Zhongjun 2009, pp.12–13.

to 888), the Emperor rewarded him and conferred upon him a new personal name – Quanzhong 全忠 (Wholeheartedly Loyal). By changing his name, the Emperor attempted to underline the subordination of Zhu (see 6.3.3). When Zhu later took political power by imprisoning and killing in 908 the last emperor of the Tang dynasty, the name Quanzhong became for him an onerous burden. As a *de facto* rebel against the Tang dynasty, he needed political legitimacy for his deeds, and his name was an important symbolic weapon in that respect. Therefore, when he proclaimed himself Emperor Taizu of the Later Liang, he changed his name to Zhu Huang 朱晃 (Bright). Furthermore, he issued a special decree which allowed the characters of his former name, Quanzhong, to be used freely in order to show the change.⁹⁸ Since this was no longer his given name, taboos would have made no sense anymore.

Names of rebels were sometimes openly used in order to show disrespect through the violation of their taboos, or on the contrary, avoided in order to conceal a detested name. An example of such a taboo of hatred is the attitude of Emperor Suzong of Tang (r. 756–762). During his whole reign there was the An Lushan Rebellion (755–763), started by general An Lushan 安祿山 (703–757). In order to express his anger, the Emperor tabooed the character *an* 安 and many (especially geographical) names were changed because of that.⁹⁹ It was also a kind of protection of his own power, which would have been offended by the presence of a detested name. Names of rebels were also tabooed by other people, as we know from the case of general An Baoyu 安抱玉 (703–777) of the Tang dynasty, who changed his name, choosing the Tang imperial family name, to Li Baoyu 李抱玉 in order not to have the same family name as An Lushan.¹⁰⁰ Sometimes even words related to a rebel were tabooed, as in the case of *zei* 賊 (bandit, usurper) or *ke* 剋 (to destroy) (see 7.1.3 and 7.2.1).

Rebels did not reject the taboo system as such, but only the taboos of the ruling dynasty. In their stead, insurgents usually put their own “emperor” and started their own taboo customs.¹⁰¹ This was the above mentioned case with Zhu Wen (see above) and also with Wu Sangui 吳三桂 (1612–1678). As the commander of the Qing dynasty and factual ruler in Yunnan since 1659, he started to establish his own taboo system, which he

⁹⁸ Chen Yuan 1958, p. 149.

⁹⁹ Chen Yuan 1958, pp. 33–34.

¹⁰⁰ *Xin Tangshu*, j. 138, p. 3a.

¹⁰¹ Important was, however, the change of the year title of a dynasty. “This signified a rupture with the ruling dynasty and a claim to the cosmological legitimation of the newly adopted name” (Aubin 1987, p. 137).

continued after becoming a rebel in the so-called Revolt of the Three Feudatories (*sanfan zhi luan* 三藩之亂, 1673–1681). He declared himself the First Emperor of the Zhou dynasty in 1678. His name was tabooed and many geographical names were changed, such as Guilin 桂林 (to Jianlin 建林), Guiyang 桂陽 (to Nanping 南平), Guidong 桂東 (to Yichang 義昌). Characters of his name were replaced by others (*san* 三 by *can* 參 and *gui* 桂 by *gui* 貴). The name of his father Xiang 襄 was also tabooed: names with this character were changed to *xiang* 廂. We know that e.g. the name of Xiangyang 襄陽 was changed to Hannan 漢南 for that reason.¹⁰²

10.3.1. Taboo in the Heavenly Kingdom of Transcendent Peace as an Example

A special case of name tabooing by rebels – the customs of Taiping Heavenly Kingdom (Taiping tianguo 太平天國, 1850–1864) – deserves special consideration and serves here as an eminent example.¹⁰³ At least since the seizure of Nanjing in 1853, when Hong Xiuquan 洪秀全 was established as a King with divine power in the same year, the tabooing of names was introduced as an important rule of the state, in many aspects similar to the taboo system of the Qing dynasty. In 1862, the Taipings issued the *List of Characters to be Reverently Avoided* (*Qinding jingbi ziyang* 欽定敬避字樣) – a collection of taboo characters and otherwise prohibited characters and words.¹⁰⁴ In fact, there were many more tabooed characters which had to be observed.¹⁰⁵

The Taiping leaders (Hong Xiuquan, Yang Xiuqing 楊秀清, Feng Yunshan 馮雲山, Xiao Chaogui 蕭朝貴) stressed their political power which was also expressed clearly in the taboo system of their names. Many examples of that can be found. In fact, the name of Hong Xiuquan itself was already the result of tabooing. His milk name was Hong Huoxiu 洪火秀, and he changed it to Xiuquan in about 1842. The secret meaning of this new name is often given as a reason for the change: elements of both characters put together compose the sentence “I am the King of the people” (*he nai ren wang* 禾乃人王). The new name legitimated the new leader as the ruler of the whole world. But there was still another reason for the change: the name Huoxiu would have offended the taboo name of God,

¹⁰² Chen Yuan 1958, p. 18.

¹⁰³ More about the Taiping Rebellion see Kuhn 1978, pp. 264–317. For the custom of the tabooing of name in that time see Wang Jian 2002, pp. 265–270; Wang Xinhua 2007, p. 318–330.

¹⁰⁴ *Qinding jingbi ziyang*, pp. 698–700. For translation see Michael 1971, Vol. III, pp. 1001–1008.

¹⁰⁵ There were more than 160 characters tabooed by Taipings, according to Wu Liangzuo 1993, p. 105.

Yahweh (*Yehuohua* 爺火華). Thus, the character *huo* in the name of Hong Huoxiu had to be changed in any event.¹⁰⁶

Every character of the Taiping leaders' names should be avoided. When the character *xiu* 秀 became taboo, it was replaced by *xiu* 繡 or *you* 莠.¹⁰⁷ The *xiucai* 秀才 was called *youshi* 莠士.¹⁰⁸ The character *quan* 全 was changed to *quan* 銓 or *quan* 詮, *qing* 清 to *jing* 菁, *yun* 雲 to *yun* 蓁, *shan* 山 to *shan* 珊, *gui* 貴 to *gui* 桂.¹⁰⁹ It is interesting to note that apparently (modified) given names were used as a form of address to rulers. If somebody wanted to address Yang Xiuqing 楊秀清, he used the form Henai 禾乃.¹¹⁰

Similarly to the emperors of the Qing dynasty, rulers of the Taipings ordered the taboo of “power names.” During the Taiping Rebellion, the title *wang* 王 was especially tabooed and could be used only for rulers of the Taiping – correspondingly “Heavenly King” *tianwang* 天王 (Hong Xiuquan), “Eastern King” *dongwang* 東王 (Yang Xiuqing), “Western King” *xiwang* 西王 (Xiao Chaogui), “Southern King” *nanwang* 南王 (Feng Yunshan), “Northern King” *beiwang* 北王 (Wei Changhui), “King in the Wings” *yiwang* 翼王 (Shi Dakai 石達開).¹¹¹ In other cases, the use of the character *wang* 王 was prohibited.

There are many other “power” taboo characters recorded in the already mentioned *List of Characters to be Reverently Avoided*. Characters such as *tian* 天 (heaven), *sheng* 聖 (holy), *jun* 君 (monarch), *guo* 國 (state), *jing* 京 (capital), *du* 都 (capital), *huangdi* 皇帝 (emperor) and *fu* 府 (seat of government) were all tabooed. The character *jun* 君 was replaced by *jun* 鈞 (you) and *guo* 國 by *guo* 郭 (city wall).¹¹² Peking (Beijing) was called Beiyan 北燕.¹¹³ Especially in religious texts, *tian* (heaven) was changed to *tian* 添 (add).¹¹⁴

The character *huang* 皇 was written as *huang* 黃.¹¹⁵ The character *long* 龍 (dragon), as a symbol of the emperor, was taboo, and was changed to *long* 隆 (prosperous, flourishing).¹¹⁶ Therefore, the province Heilongjiang 黑龍江 was called Wulongjiang 烏隆

¹⁰⁶ Wu Liangzuo 1993, p. 101; Spence 1994, p. 39. See also Wagner 1982.

¹⁰⁷ *Qinding jingbi ziyang*, p. 698.

¹⁰⁸ *Nanzhongji*, p. 641.

¹⁰⁹ *Qinding jingbi ziyang*, pp. 698-699.

¹¹⁰ Cf. *Taiping jiushige*, p. 240.

¹¹¹ Wang Xinhua 2007, pp. 320-321.

¹¹² *Qinding jingbi ziyang*, pp. 698-699.

¹¹³ Liu Hongwei 2010, p. 32.

¹¹⁴ *Zeiqing huizuan*, j. 8, p. 242.

¹¹⁵ *Zeiqing huizuan*, j. 8, p. 242.

¹¹⁶ *Zeiqing huizuan*, j. 8, p. 243.

江.¹¹⁷ Only the Taiping rulers could use the symbol of the dragon. Other taboo words were titles such as *hou* 后 (empress) and *chen* 臣 (minister).¹¹⁸

Even stronger were the regulations for using the *wang* 王 (king) character in the names of other kings and deities. The character could not be used to refer to emperors of the Qing dynasty, as antagonists of the Taiping. The common way of tabooing their names (as taboo of hate, see 3.8.3) was to add the dog radical to the character and to write *kuang* 狂 (wild, mad, unrestrained).¹¹⁹ In this way, for example, names of ancient Chinese kings, such as King Wen and King Wu of the Zhou dynasty, were written as *wenkuang* 文狂 and *wukuang* 武狂.¹²⁰ Similarly, the name of a Chinese deity like the Dragon King of the Eastern Sea (*donghai longwang* 東海龍王) – was changed to *donghai longyao* 東海龍妖 (Dragon Demon of the Eastern Sea).¹²¹

The Taiping preferred to change the titles of former rulers. If only God can be called “emperor,” then another ruler could be named at most as “marquis” (*hou* 侯).¹²² The mythological period of the Three Sovereigns and Five Emperors (*sanhuang wudi* 三皇五帝) was changed to Three Directions and Five Clans (*sanfang wushi* 三方五氏).¹²³ The antagonists of the Taipings – members of the Qing dynasty’s government – were called demons. We know, for example, that high officials were called “big head of demons” (*dayaotou* 大妖頭),¹²⁴ and the capital of the Qing was called “demon’s den” *yaoxue* 妖穴.¹²⁵ The characters of the Era name of the Qing Emperor Xianfeng 咸豐 were written with the “dog” part 犭 on their left side.¹²⁶

One peculiarity of the Taiping Rebellion was an extremely strong connection between taboo custom and religion. Among the taboo names, many were related to Christianity. The names of the Christian God Yahweh (Jehovah, *Yehuohua* 爺火華), and of Jesus Christ (*Yesu Jidu* 耶穌基督) were taboo.¹²⁷ In the *List of Characters to be Reverently Avoided* we can find characters that were supposed to be used instead. The character *huo* 火

¹¹⁷ Liu Hongwei 2010, p. 32.

¹¹⁸ Wu Liangzuo 1987, pp. 122-123.

¹¹⁹ *Zeiqing huizuan*, j. 8, p. 242; Chen Peirong 1994, p. 89.

¹²⁰ *Jinling shengnan jilue*, p. 718.

¹²¹ Liu Hongwei 2010, p. 32.

¹²² Michael 1971, p. 809.

¹²³ Wu Liangzuo 1988, p. 106.

¹²⁴ *Zeiqing huizuan*, j. 6, p. 181.

¹²⁵ Liu Hongwei 2010, p. 32.

¹²⁶ Wu Liangzuo 1993, p. 102.

¹²⁷ *Tianwang zhaozhi*, p. 685. Michael 1971, p. 946.

could not be used anymore. It had to be changed to *huo* 燒, *huo* 伙, *huo* 夥, or *yan* 炎.¹²⁸ Because of that, for example, *shenghuo* 生火 (make a fire) was changed to *duihuo* 堆燒, *fahuo* 發火 (catch fire, detonate, get angry) to *chonghuo* 沖燒, and fire as one of five elements became *yan* 炎.¹²⁹ Moreover, fire as a component of characters was also taboo because of God's name, and so, for example, the character *ying* 營 was written in a reduced form as *ying* 营 (like the simplified character we know today).¹³⁰ Similarly, the character *hua* 華 was tabooed and changed to *hua* 花, for example *huaren* 華人 (Chinese) became 花人.¹³¹

Other words, related to religion, were taboo, as for example Lord (*zhu* 主) and God (*shangdi* 上帝). According to the *List of Characters to be Reverently Avoided*, the form of the character *zhu* 主 had to be changed to *si* 司 (commander), *zhuan* 專 (expert) or *zhu* 柱 (pillar).¹³² Therefore “daughters” of Hong Xiuquan were not called *gongzhu* 公主 (Princess), but “palace city women” (*gongchengnü* 宮城女).¹³³ Because Jesus Christ was the Son of God, the character “son” *zi* 子 was taboo. Only Jesus could be called “Son of Man” *renzi* 人子 and only God could call people “my people” *zimin* 子民 (literally: people as sons). The texts of that time, especially those from the *Bible*, but also other annunciations, had the expression *liangmin* 良民 (good people) instead of that.¹³⁴ Such words as “my son” (*wuzi* 吾子), “small son” (*xiaozi* 小子), “beloved son” (*qinzi* 親子, *aizi* 愛子), were all changed to “my younger brother” *wudi* 吾弟, *xiaodi* 小弟, etc. The address *ersanzi* 二子 (all of you) was also changed to *ersandi* 二三弟.¹³⁵

A character that was especially avoided was *gui* 鬼 (ghost). All characters with the part *gui* – such as soul (*hun* 魂, *po* 魄), a surname or state name Wei 魏, or “to be ashamed” (*kui* 愧) – were changed by replacing this part with *ren* 人 (human).¹³⁶ The *guixiu* 鬼宿 (Ghost mansion – one of the Chinese constellations), however, was called *kuixiu* 魁宿

¹²⁸ Cf. *Qinding jingbi ziyang*, p. 698.

¹²⁹ Wang Xinhua 2007, p. 320.

¹³⁰ Xu Jiu 1990, p. 87.

¹³¹ *Qinding jingbi ziyang*, p. 698.

¹³² *Qinding jingbi ziyang*, p. 698.

¹³³ Wang Xinhua 2007, p. 322.

¹³⁴ *Qinding jingbi ziyang*, p. 699; Wu Liangzuo 1987, p. 123.

¹³⁵ Wu Liangzuo 1987, p. 123.

¹³⁶ *Qinding jingbi ziyang*, p. 699.

(eminent mansion).¹³⁷ Also the word *shen* 神 (deity) was taboo and thus changed to *shen* 申.¹³⁸ Buddhist terms were disgraced and changed. The Buddha was called the “dead demon” (*siyao* 死妖).¹³⁹ The word for Bodhisatwa (*pusa* 菩薩) was changed to *gaisha* 該殺 (should be killed).¹⁴⁰

Characters of the Twelve Earthly Branches, used in the Chinese calendar, were also tabooed. But it seems that most of the changes were made because of inauspicious pronunciations. Names of years and days were repeatedly changed by Taiping: the year 1851, called in Chinese *xinhai* 辛亥, was renamed to *xinkai* 辛開, as the second character had a pronunciation similar to *hai* 害 (injury). Two years later, the name of the year 1853, *guichou* 癸丑, had to be changed to *guihao* 癸好 in order to avoid a bad omen – the character *chou* 醜 means “ugly”. Besides, the year *yimao* 乙卯 (1855) was revised, because the pronunciation in Southern Chinese dialects is similar to *mao* 冇 (not have). The new name of the year was *yirong* 乙榮.¹⁴¹

Another peculiarity is the large number of “evil” or “dangerous words” (*ehui* 惡諱), perhaps because of the rejection of tradition by the Taiping rebels, or because most people were from the lower strata of society. Inauspicious words were tabooed and changed. It is possible that some of the “new words” were just terms used according to local custom. The word “death” *si* 死 was written and pronounced as *shang tiantang* 上天堂 (go to the heaven).¹⁴² Similarly, the word *shuai* 衰 (decline) was written as *shuai* 帥 (handsome), and *li* 離 (leave) as *li* 利 (profit). The character *bai* 敗 (lose) could be changed to *sheng* 勝 (win).¹⁴³ The character *shang* 傷 (injury) in the word *shangyuan* 傷員 (the wounded) was changed to *nengren* 能人 (able persons),¹⁴⁴ and *shangbing* 傷兵 (wounded soldiers) to *rongjun* 榮軍 (glorious army).¹⁴⁵ Words related to sex and toilet were tabooed as impure. For example, the words *dabian* 大便 (defecate) and *xiaobian* 小便 (urinate) were

¹³⁷ *Zeiqing huizuan*, j. 8, p. 243.

¹³⁸ *Jinling shengnan jilue*, p. 718.

¹³⁹ *Huxuesheng huanji*, p. 738; *Jinling shengnan jilue*, p. 722.

¹⁴⁰ Liu Hongwei 2010, p. 32.

¹⁴¹ *Qinding jingbi ziyang*, p. 699; *Zeiqing huizuan*, j. 8, p. 242; *Banxing lishu*, pp. 172 and 195-200; Wang Jian 2002, p. 268.

¹⁴² *Jinling shengnan jilue*, p. 722.

¹⁴³ Liu Hongwei 2010, p. 32.

¹⁴⁴ Wu Liangzuo 1993, p. 101.

¹⁴⁵ Wu Liangzuo 1987, pp. 123-124.

euphemized as respectively *runhua* 潤化 (moisturisation) or as *runquan* 潤泉.¹⁴⁶ The word *jianying* 姦淫 (adultery) was changed to *dashuipao* 打水礮 (play water cannon). Sodomy (*jijian* 雞姦, homosexual rape) was called *datonggu* 打銅鼓 (play copper drum).¹⁴⁷

The same character could be tabooed as a courtesy taboo (*jinghui* 敬諱) and as a “bad word” taboo (*ehui*), e.g. all people with the family name Wang 王 had to change it to Wang 汪 out of reverence for the Heavenly King (*Tianwang* 天王),¹⁴⁸ and in contrast, the title of the Northern King (*Beiwang* 北王) of one of the Taiping leaders – Wei Changhui 韋昌輝 – was changed retrospectively to “to carry soil” *beitu* 背土), after his execution.¹⁴⁹

Even though most rebels were commoners, the tabooing was not limited to the pronunciation of taboo words. Taboo was also specially observed in writing. In fact, taboo characters recorded during the Taiping Rebellion went even further than regular taboos, showing the importance of writing in this rebellion. For example, the Taiping changed words, such as that for a musical instrument, *pipa* 琵琶, to *biba* 比巴 and the Chinese zither *qinse* 琴瑟 to *jinbi* 今必 – because they contained the character *wang* 王.¹⁵⁰

10.4. Specific Historical Conditions

10.4.1. Avoidance of Taboos from Past Dynasties

The standard rules of taboo custom determined that (in the case of the emperor) observance should stop after seven generations. But we know that sometimes the practice of taboo avoidance was continued after that period, too, and even in the following dynasties. There was, for example, an officer and tactician called Yang Fu 楊阜 (3rd c. AD), in the time of the Three Kingdoms, who still avoided the taboo of the first Emperor of Han, Liu Bang (206 – 195 BC). When he wrote in a petition to the throne this sentence from the *Classic of Documents* (*Shangshu*): “he united and brought into harmony ten thousand states” (*xiehe*

¹⁴⁶ *Jinling shengnan jilue*, p. 722.

¹⁴⁷ *Jinling chengwai xinyuefu*, p. 745.

¹⁴⁸ Cf. *Qinding jingbi ziyang*, p. 698. The “water” component is written above the character *wang* 王 in the original.

¹⁴⁹ Wu Liangzuo 1987, pp. 120-121.

¹⁵⁰ Xu Jiu 1990, p. 88.

wanbang 協和萬邦),¹⁵¹ he replaced the taboo character *bang* with *guo* 國, as it had been prescribed before.¹⁵²

Such a continuation of taboo practice after the end of a dynasty could have various motives. The case above shows that names of past persons, especially emperors, were sometimes venerated for a long time and therefore tabooed. Examples of such practices can be observed in particular at the time when subjects of a past dynasty were still living. Besides the aforementioned one, we also know about a certain Wei Zhao 韋昭 (204-273) from the Three Kingdoms period who changed all the characters *zhuang* 莊 to *yan* 嚴 in his *Commentary to the Sayings of the states* (*Guoyu zhu* 國語注) in order to taboo the name of Emperor Ming of the Eastern Han (r. 58–75 AD).¹⁵³ A similar case was reported from the Tang period. When the *Book of the Sui* (*Suishu*) was compiled (629–636 AD) *inter alia* by Wei Zheng 魏徵, shortly after the decline of the Sui dynasty, all the *zhong* 忠 characters were changed to *cheng* 誠 because of the taboo of the father of Emperor Wen of Sui (d. 568). For example, the title of biographies about loyalty and moral integrity (*zhongjie* 忠節) was written as *chengjie* 誠節.¹⁵⁴ Furthermore, Fu Jian 苻堅 (338-385) was called by his courtesy name Fu Yonggu 苻永固 in order to taboo the name of Emperor Wen of the Sui.¹⁵⁵

In addition, we can see many instances of avoiding taboos out of habit, though the dynasty had already perished. We should remember that the tabooing of an emperor's name was often practiced for a long time and many generations. People became accustomed to using some names and characters, regarded them as normal, non-tabooed words, and continued this custom sometimes for centuries. We can find direct information about that in the text of Wang Su 王肅 (464–501) from the Northern Wei period (386–535 AD). He wrote that the name *shengzhong* 省中, used before as the taboo equivalent of *jinzhong* 禁中 (Forbidden Palace), was preserved and used until his time.¹⁵⁶ The character *jin* 禁 had become taboo half a millennium before, as the name of the father of the Empress Wang Zhengjun 王政君 (71 BC–13 AD). People used the new “tabooed” name out of habit, not because of special reverence.

¹⁵¹ *Shangshu*, j. 1, p. 2a.

¹⁵² *Rizhilu*, j. 23, p. 28a.

¹⁵³ *Rizhilu*, j. 23, p. 28a.

¹⁵⁴ *Suishu*, j. 71, p. 1a.

¹⁵⁵ *Suishu*, j. 15, p. 1b; *Rizhilu*, j. 23, p. 28a.

¹⁵⁶ *Tongdian*, j. 104, p. 554.

Similarly, it is possible that the writing of characters was perpetuated in the tabooed way, especially if revisers copied an original tabooed text and neglected to correct it. The *Shihui juli* gives many examples from the *Stone classics of Later Shu* (*Hou Shu shijing* 後蜀石經, 934–965),¹⁵⁷ where strokes are omitted as taboo in the characters *shi* 世, *min* 民, *min* 岷, *hun* 緡, *yuan* 淵, *qi* 棄, *xie* 泄 and *ye* 葉.¹⁵⁸ In fact, the original text was written in the Tang period and tabooed Tang names. Most probably, the avoidance of Tang taboo in the stone classics was no longer the expression of respect, but rather an unconscious borrowing. The same happened with the characters *xuan* 玄, *hong* 弘, *ning* 寧, or *zhu* 貯 (taboo names of Qing emperors) which even in Republican times were still written in the tabooed way without a stroke, as they were considered to be the original form.¹⁵⁹ Such “avoidance of taboo name” is of course not a real taboo case, but it does belong to a complete picture of the overall cultural practice.

There was also the (seldom) practiced custom that rulers coerced subjects to observe taboos of past dynasties in order to show their own power or strengthen loyalty. We can read about such a policy in the time of Emperor Qianlong of the Qing dynasty (r. 1735–1796). The Emperor was furious when he discovered that the taboo character of Emperor Wu of Han (140–87 BC) – *che* 徹 – was left untabooed by compilers of the *Imperial Collection of Four* (*Siku Quanshu*). Both sentences: “Che of Han imitated the Qin rule” (*Han Che fang Qinzheng* 漢徹方秦政) of *Ji’nanji* 濟南集¹⁶⁰ and “Che of Han fluttering up and down” (*xiehang Han Che* 頡頏漢徹) of the *Beishi* 北史¹⁶¹ – should have been changed and replaced by Han Wu 漢武.¹⁶² Here, the reason for taboo was to show that respect for an emperor should be obligatory, even after a long time. This possible avoidance of past taboo names should be considered if we want to determine the age of a text or its origin.

10.4.2. Identical Taboos in Different States and Periods

An interesting, but sometimes also confusing, phenomenon of taboo customs is the occurrence of the same taboos in different periods. It is plausible that people had identical names, and there are numerous cases that such names were tabooed in various times.

¹⁵⁷ Cf. *Zhongguo congshu zonglu*, Vol. 2, p. 185.

¹⁵⁸ Chen Yuan 1958, p. 80.

¹⁵⁹ Chen Yuan 1958, p. 80.

¹⁶⁰ *Ji’nanji*, j. 1, p. 7a.

¹⁶¹ *Beishi*, j. 83, p. 2a.

¹⁶² Chen Yuan 1958, p. 169.

Usually, a taboo for someone is apparent. But sometimes the same characters being tabooed in many periods can also cause problems.

The most famous two cases are recorded by Chen Yuan: The name of the place Hengshan 恆山 (today Zhengding 正定 in the Hebei province), established in the beginning of the Han period, was tabooed and changed to Changshan 常山 in the time of Emperor Wen of Han (Liu Heng 劉恆, r. 179–157 BC). After the old name was re-established in the Sui period (as Hengshan 恆山 and later changed to Hengzhou 恆州), the character *heng* was again tabooed in the time of Emperor Muzong of Tang (Li Heng 李恆, r. 821–824) and Hengzhou was changed in 820 to Zhenzhou 鎮州. Fortunately, the original name was apparently not changed back after the fall of the Tang dynasty, and therefore did not need to be tabooed during the Song time, since Emperor Zhenzong (997–1022) also had the given name Heng 恆. But later, the name of Zhenzhou (in the meantime already changed to Zhending 真定) was tabooed once more, because of the name Yinzhen 胤禛 of the Emperor Yongzheng of Qing. Consequently, it has been called Zhengding 正定 since 1723 until now.¹⁶³

The relations of identical characters with different epochs would be still more interesting, if we knew that taboo characters of one period were used as equivalents of taboos in an earlier one. The already mentioned character *heng* 恆 was often used, for example, as a replacement for the taboo character *hong* 弘. There is the name Hongnong 弘農, established in the Han period and changed to Hengnong 恆農 during the reign of Emperor Xianwen (Tuoba Hong 拓拔弘 r. 466–471) of Northern Wei. The reestablishment as Hongnong in the Sui period was preserved for one century, when a new change was made back to Hengnong in 705, because of the taboo name of Crown Prince Li Hong 李弘 (652–675) of the Tang dynasty. The tabooed name was used until 728, and was then restored to Hongnong, until a new need for tabooing the *hong* 弘 character arose in the Song period in 960 – the father of the Emperor Taizu was called Hongyin 弘殷. Hongnong was renamed once more as Hengnong, which was changed thereafter, in 997, to Guolüe 號略 because of the taboo of Emperor Zhenzong of Song.¹⁶⁴

Numerous other characters became taboo in different periods. For example, the taboo names of the Han dynasty, such as Hong 宏 (Emperor Ling Di of Han, r. 168–189)

¹⁶³ Chen Yuan 1958, pp. 81–82.

¹⁶⁴ Chen Yuan 1958, p. 82.

or Long 隆 (Emperor Shang of Han, r. 106), became taboo repeatedly in the period of the Northern and Southern dynasties (Hong 宏 was Emperor Xiaowen of Northern Wei, r. 471–499) and the Tang dynasty (Long 隆 was Emperor Xuanzong of Tang, r. 712–756). Similarly, an identical taboo name (Hu 虎) belonged to the Emperor Wu of Later Zhao (Shi Hu 石虎, r. 334–349) and the grandfather of Emperor Gaozu of Tang (r. 618–626) – Li Hu 李虎. Characters such as *jing* 敬 (taboo of the Emperor Gaozu of Later Jin, r. 936–942, and of the grandfather of Taizu of Song, r. 960–976), *zhen* 禎 (taboo of an ancestor of the Emperor Taizu of Sui, r. 581–604 – Yang Zhen 楊禎 – and of the Emperor Renzong of Song, r. 1022–1063), *zhong* 忠 (taboo of the father of the Emperor Taizu of Sui, r. 581–604 – Yang Zhong 楊忠, and of the Crown Prince Li Hong 李忠 of the Tang, 643–665), and many others, also were identical in different dynasties.

Such cases of the same names and characters used in different periods can cause great confusion. Toponyms were changed many times, not only because of taboo. Names were abolished and re-introduced. Sometimes they ceased to exist and became forgotten. We should also remember that not only imperial taboos, but also many similar private taboos were observed in various periods. This makes the list of possible identical taboo characters much longer. If we add problems with the incomplete restoration of taboos to their original characters by later revisers, identical taboo characters can really be considered as a potential source of mistakes. Sometimes it can be difficult to determine the time and reason for a taboo, if there are various possible tabooed persons. Fortunately, in concrete cases and contexts there is normally only a limited range of alternatives. Additional help here can also be found by the determination of the method of tabooing – which usually differs in various periods.

10.4.3. Mutual Avoidance of Taboos from Different States

At times when the Chinese territory was divided into several states, the custom of name tabooing was of course continued. Every state had its own distinctive imperial taboos. Yet, there are cases in which taboos of one state were also observed in another one. This mutual avoidance was usually connected with concrete situations. Since ancient times, the taboo of another state was observed in diplomatic relations and during visits to other countries. The old rule of the *Records of Ritual (Liji)* determined: “If you come to a country, you should

ask about the taboos”¹⁶⁵ (see 4.3.1.3) Therefore Fan Xianzi 范獻子 mentioned already in the *Sayings of the states* (*Guoyu*), blushed when he unknowingly used taboo names of the Lu state during his visit to this country (see 8.2.3.).¹⁶⁶ Another incident, recorded in the *Hanfeizi*, happened when the ruler of Wei wanted to visit Zhou. At the border, he was asked for his name by the guard, and used the title Land-Extender (*bijiang* 辟疆), reserved only for *wang*. He was not admitted until he changed this usurper title (see 4.3.1.4).¹⁶⁷

Examples of “taboo culture” or “taboo diplomacy” between different countries can be also found in the Three Kingdoms period. As the envoy Chen Zhen 陳震 of the Shu state went with congratulations to Emperor Sun Quan of the Wu state, he asked about its taboos.¹⁶⁸ When the Emperor Sun Hao of the Wu state later sent two envoys to Wei, their first question upon entrance was about taboos (see 5.2.8).¹⁶⁹ But in that time we still have no evidence of name changing because of external taboos. No examples of a mutual observance of taboo customs are known from the time of the Northern and Southern Dynasties (420–589).

The custom of respecting the taboos of other states prevailed in the Tang times and the Five Dynasties period, and especially in the Song period. From the Tang period, we know about the avoidance of Tang taboos by the Nanzhao state 南詔 (8–9th c.).¹⁷⁰ In the time of the Five Dynasties, there was a poet, Wang An 王安 (869–941), in the Southern Tang state. He lived on the border of the Southern Han state, and many envoys came to see him. This was confusing, because *an* 安 was a taboo character of the Southern Han – it was the name of an ancestor (Liu Anren 劉安仁) of Emperor Liu Yan 劉龔 (r. 917–925). Therefore, a new name – Wang Hui 王會 was bestowed on him.¹⁷¹ Similar records are also known in connection with the Later Zhou Dynasty (951–960).¹⁷²

Numerous cases of mutual avoidance of taboo between Song, Liao, Jin, Western Xia and the Tibetan Empire (Tufan, Tobo) can be found. For example, chieftains of the Tanguts – Li Yiyin 李彝殷 (d. 967) and his son Li Guangrui 李光睿 (d. 978) – tabooed the names of Song emperors and therefore changed their names to Li Yixing 李彝興 and Li

¹⁶⁵ Cf. *Liji*, j. 1, p. 40a.

¹⁶⁶ *Guoyu*, j. 15, p. 2ab.

¹⁶⁷ *Han Feizi*, j. 14, p. 7b.

¹⁶⁸ *Sanguozhi*, “Shuzhi”, j. 9, p. 5a.

¹⁶⁹ *Sanguozhi*, “Wuzhi”, j. 3, p. 11b.

¹⁷⁰ *Tangyulin*, j. 2, p. 5b.

¹⁷¹ *Nan Tangshu*, j. 6, p. 128.

¹⁷² Wang Xinhua 2007, pp. 135–136.

Kerui 李克睿. The characters *yin* 殷 and *guang* 光 were taboos of the father of Emperor Taizu (Zhao Hongyin 趙弘殷, 899-956) and of Emperor Taizong (Zhao Guangyi 趙光義) respectively. This was still before the Tangut state of Western Xia was established.¹⁷³ *Vice versa*, Song people avoided taboo names of the Western Xia. For example, the Song official Fan Zhongyan 范仲淹 (989-1052) avoided them in his letter to Jingzong 景宗 – the first Emperor of Western Xia 1032-1048. As the taboo name of the emperor's father was Deming 德明, he changed the name of Emperor Mingzong 明宗 (926-932) of Later Tang to Xianzong 顯宗.¹⁷⁴

When, in 1043 two Song officials - Ding Yi 丁億 and Li Weixian 李惟賢 – were sent as envoys with congratulations to the Liao, they had to temporarily change their names to Ding Yi 丁意 and Li Baochen 李寶臣. It was because the characters *yi* 億 (the name of Emperor Taizu, r. 907-926) and *xian* 賢 (the name of Emperor Jingzong, r. 969-982) were taboo.¹⁷⁵ The same thing happened when, in 1193, Wanyan Kuang 完顏匡 was sent as an envoy from the Jin state to Song. In order to avoid a Song taboo (the name of Emperor Taizong), he changed his given name to Bi 弼.¹⁷⁶ Most likely, such changes were only temporary, and the former name was used again after the end of the mission.

It was also possible, though there are only few known examples, that toponyms were changed because of the taboo of another country. Thus, Guangzhou 光州 and Guangshan county 光山縣 on the Song territory, in 1158 were changed to Jiangzhou 蔣州 and Qisi 期思, as they violated the taboo name of Wanyan Guangying 完顏光英 – heir apparent of Jin.¹⁷⁷ The reason for the change was probably to promote good relationships. A very different case is reported about avoiding Tibetan taboos by the Song dynasty. According to the *Fengshi wenjianji* 封氏聞見記, the Tufan (Tibetans) tabooed “dog” (*gou* 狗). Therefore, when a certain Gou Zeng 苟曾 was to be sent on a diplomatic mission to them, he had to change his surname to Xun 荀, and continued to use it after his return.¹⁷⁸ In this example, a Tibetan taboo was not related to a name, but to tabooed animals in the Chinese pronunciation.

¹⁷³ *Songshi*, j. 485, pp. 1b-2a.

¹⁷⁴ Chen Yuan 1958, p. 30.

¹⁷⁵ *Xuzizhi tongjian changbian*, j. 142, p. 32b.

¹⁷⁶ *Jinshi*, j. 10, p. 2b; j. 98, p. 2b.

¹⁷⁷ *Songshi*, j. 88, p. 7a.

¹⁷⁸ *Fengshi wenjianji*, j. 10, p. 133.

The aura of a strong dynasty could also influence taboo practice of other countries for some time. We know at least, from the *Rongzhai suibi* 蓉齋隨筆, that the founding emperor of the Former Shu kingdom, Wang Jian 王建 (r. 907–918), tabooed the names of emperors from the Tang dynasty, and that all taboo names of the Tang dynasty were written with the omission of strokes in the stone inscriptions of his time.¹⁷⁹ But in fact, we can presume that Wang Jian (and his clerks), as a former military governor of Sichuan by the Tang court, just prolonged the Tang custom after the fall of the dynasty out of habit.

10.5. Impact on Neighbouring Countries

Mutual avoidance of taboos between different states, as has just been reported, shows that not only Han Chinese countries were affected by “Chinese taboo customs.” Taboo practice was transferred as a part of Chinese culture (i.e. the culture) to other countries, and became one of its characteristics there. Certainly the influence was especially strong in the states bordering on China, connected by the political and cultural relations. This was the case, for example, in the Liao State of the Khitan people (907–1125), the Western Xia State of the Tangut people (1032–1227), the Jin State of the Jurchen people (1115–1234), the Kingdom of Nanzhao, the Tibetan Empire or the states on the Korean peninsula. The “Chinese taboo customs” can also be found in Japan, and it can be presumed in Vietnam, although this topic needs further research. No material of such impact could be found in Chinese sources. Available records of Chinese sources on taboos in other countries are practically limited to the period between the 7th and 13th centuries. No notes could be found about later taboo practice outside of China. Probably it is also because the golden time of the custom in China itself was already gone, and the taboo practice less restrictive after the Song period.

An important indication that non-Han Chinese states adopted a taboo culture as their own is the fact that they avoided taboo names not only in contacts with the Chinese court, but also between each other. We know, for example, cases of taboo between Liao, Jin and the states of Korea.¹⁸⁰ Information about taboo customs was apparently spread to neighboring countries. A record from the *Standard History of Jin (Jinshi)*, made in 1150, confirmed, for example, that “name taboos” of the Jin were conveyed to the Song, Western Xia and Goryeo (Korea).¹⁸¹ It seems that the non-Chinese states observed the taboo customs

¹⁷⁹ *Rongzhai suibi*, j. 4, p. 5a.

¹⁸⁰ See examples of such cases in Wang Xinhua 2007, p. 134.

¹⁸¹ *Jinshi*, j. 60, p. 14a.

sometimes even more strictly than was the case in China proper. It is little wonder, if we know that they considered it a fundamental part of being cultured.

As the taboo practice in Liao, Western Xia and Jin states have already been discussed before (see 6.4.7), only a short review of the situation of these customs in Korea and Japan will be included here.

10.5.1. “Chinese Taboo” in Korea

Korea had a strong relationship with China in many periods of its history and was often regarded as a tributary of “the Middle Kingdom.” The impact of Chinese culture is visible to this day – Korea is called “the most Confucian country on earth.”¹⁸² Besides, the Chinese naming culture affected Korean practice, and personal names (*ming* 名), courtesy names (*zi* 字), pen names (*hao* 號) and posthumous names (*shi* 謚) were distinguished.¹⁸³ Not surprisingly, the Chinese taboo customs were also adopted in Korean culture, and the personal name was avoided.

Chinese sources write about the observance of Chinese imperial taboos (*guohui* 國諱) in Korea. Apparently, the impact of the Tang dynasty was extremely powerful, for there are many examples of such tabooing from that period. In particular, geographical names were changed, for example Changyuan county 長淵縣 and Chanyuan county 澶淵縣 were changed to Changshui 長水 and Chanshui 澶水 respectively, and Jinyuan prefecture 金淵郡 and Jinyuan county 金淵縣 were both changed to Jinquan 金泉, because of the taboo of Emperor Gaozu of Tang.¹⁸⁴ Similarly, Jiuyuan County 酒淵縣¹⁸⁵ was changed by King Gyeongdeok (r. 742–765) of Silla to Jiuquan 酒泉 in the Tang times.¹⁸⁶

But the custom of name tabooing was not only limited to names of Chinese emperors. Names of Korean rulers were also tabooed which means that it became integrated into Korean culture. Zhangzhou 漳州 and Zhangde County 章德縣 were changed to Lianzhou 漣州 (today in Gyeonggi-do Province of South Korea) and Xingde 興德 (today Xingde in the North-Jeolla Province of South Korea), because they contained homonyms of the character Zhang 璋 – the given name of Chungseon – King of the Goryeo dynasty (r. 1308–

¹⁸² Cf. www.bookrags.com/research/confucianismkorea-ema-02 (Access 15.10.2011).

¹⁸³ For further information about naming customs in Korea see *A Handbook of Korea*, p. 346.

¹⁸⁴ Wang Xinhua 2007, pp. 296–297.

¹⁸⁵ Today Jiuquan Township 酒泉面 in Yeongwol County of Gangwon Province of South Korea.

¹⁸⁶ *Sanguo shiji*, j. 35, p. 10b.

1313).¹⁸⁷ Furthermore, Wuzhen 武珍 was changed to Huaping 化平 in 1310, and to Maozhen 茂珍 in 1362. The reason was the taboo name Wu 武 of King Hyejong 惠宗 (r.943–945).¹⁸⁸ Today it is one of the biggest cities of South Korea – Gwangju City 光州.

The name of Confucius Qiu 丘 was also taboo in Korea. There was a Daqiu County 大丘縣 recorded in many works.¹⁸⁹ But later, the second character of the city's name was changed to *qiu* 邱, which was a standard equivalent character for the taboo name of Confucius in China during the Qing dynasty.¹⁹⁰ The name is used to this day – it is Daegu City in South Korea. We also know about the tabooing the names of the rulers of the Liao dynasty. There is a record in the *Songshi*: “Xi 熙 avoided later the taboo of Liao and changed his name to Ke 顙.”¹⁹¹ This was Sukjong of Goryeo dynasty of Korea (r. 1095–1105), with the personal name Xi 熙 who avoided the homonym of the name of the last Emperor of the Liao dynasty Tianzuo – Yelüyanxi 耶律延禧 (r. 1101–1125). Even before that, in 1056, because of the character *zhen* 真 of the name Yelüzongzhen 耶律宗真 of Emperor Xingzong (r. 1031–1055 of Liao), toponyms with *zhen* 鎮 were changed to *cheng* 城, for example Ningdezhen 寧德鎮 was changed to Ningdecheng 寧德城.¹⁹²

10.5.2. “Chinese Taboo” in Japan

A special relationship between a name and a human being can be discovered in Japan from ancient times on. The Japanese, like the Chinese people, considered the “real name” of a human being or deity as its soul. The recitation of such a name was called *kotodama* 言靈 (word soul, chin. *yanling* 言靈), and had a performative effect. It should be used only in a ritual context, otherwise its articulation could injure and control the name's owner.¹⁹³ *Kotodama*, as a mystical power dwelling in words and names, was a central concept in Japanese religiosity.

The original name was called in Japan *imina*, and was often only known within the family. It had to be protected and avoided, hence its connections with the words *imi* (taboo)

¹⁸⁷ *Gaolishi*, j. 33, p. 26a.

¹⁸⁸ *Gaolishi*, j. 57, pp. 52a–53a.

¹⁸⁹ Cf., for example, *Gaolishi*, j. 8, p. 34a.

¹⁹⁰ Wang Xinhua 2007, p. 298.

¹⁹¹ *Songshi*, j. 487, p. 7b.

¹⁹² *Gaolishi*, j. 58, p. 38b.

¹⁹³ Plutschow 1990, p. 75.

and *imu* (to avoid).¹⁹⁴ Normally, other names were used, as we also saw in China: *azana* 字 (courtesy name) and *gō* 号 (pen name). After a person's death, the posthumous name *okurina* 諡 was bestowed in order to prevent the use of the original name.¹⁹⁵ Names were written in Chinese characters (*kanji*) with Japanese pronunciation.¹⁹⁶

The avoidance of people's names was common and the revelation of them was often part of a special ritual as a sign of trust. For example, in the wedding ceremony in ancient Japan, the mutual ritual pronouncement of the couple's original name was an important part. Before marriage, the name of a young girl was often only known to her and her parents.¹⁹⁷ In the oldest existing collection of Japanese poetry, *Collection of Ten Thousand Leaves* (*Man'yōshū* 万葉集), compiled ca. 759, we find poems about name as taboo, as for example: "Unable to keep to myself / The name of someone I love / I spoke her name / Breaking a taboo."¹⁹⁸

The original name of the emperor was also taboo in Japan, and was called a state taboo (*kokki* 國忌). According to Herbert Plutschow, the title "Emperor of ..." (with locations they ruled), was used instead. This was, for example, the most common way to avoid imperial names applied in the oldest extant chronicle of Japan – *Record of Ancient Matters* (*Kojiki* 古事記), from the 8th century. Besides, the posthumous name of an emperor could be used.¹⁹⁹

Although taboo practices were probably also part of ancient Japanese culture, there is no doubt that the later taboo custom was received from China and was sometimes observed very strictly. Transfer of Chinese script from the 4th–5th centuries had a big impact on the acceptance of the practice of "Chinese taboo".²⁰⁰ Recorded examples of taboo avoidance in Japan start from the 8th century, when in 757 a person from the Fujiwara 藤原 clan had to change his name because of the name of an ancestor of the emperor.²⁰¹ From the

¹⁹⁴ Hara Kazuya 2001, p. 280.

¹⁹⁵ For Buddhist commoners, a posthumous name or religious name *kaimyo* 戒名 was given by a Buddhist priest after death. It was inscribed on the ancestral tablet and on the grave-stone in order to avoid the personal name (cf. Harada 1917, vol. 9, p. 168).

¹⁹⁶ For further information about name in Japan see: Gamo 1981, pp. 1969-1970; *Japan-Handbuch* 1941, pp. 420-422.

¹⁹⁷ Plutschow 1990, p. 83.

¹⁹⁸ Plutschow 1990, p. 83.

¹⁹⁹ Plutschow 1995, p. 35.

²⁰⁰ Lewin 1981, p. 1754.

²⁰¹ Cf. Plutschow 1995, p. 38. The original source could not be seen. The author describes "powerful Fujiwara" (which is a clan name), who had to change his name in 757 to Kusuharabe, because of the name Fujiwara of the mother of "Emperor Kogen". In fact, the Empress (!) Kōken was ruling at that time (r. 749–758 and 764–770 as Empress Shōtoku).

year 823, there are two reports of name changes because of an imperial taboo: a certain Kiyowara Shigeno changed his name to Natsuno due to one of the imperial princes, Shigeno, and the Ōtomo clan had to change its name to Ban because of the name of Emperor Junna (r. 823–833) – Ōtomo (大伴), according to the *Ruiju Kokushi* 類聚国史.²⁰² In a later edition of a Japanese collection of poems *Tales of Ise* (*Ise monogatari* 伊勢物語) from the 10th century, the name Yonohito was used in order to avoid the name Yohito of an emperor.²⁰³

Many edicts were issued with instructions for tabooing the imperial name and observance of taboo was mandatory. We can find, in a Japanese historical tale called *Imakagami* 今鏡 (written in 1170), a story about an anthology of poetry, *Collection of Golden Leaves* (*Kinyo Wakashu* 金葉和歌集), compiled about 1126–1127. The anthology was sent to the Retired Emperor Shirakawa (1053–1129), but was soon returned by him for correction, as the taboo name of a princess was listed in it. Only after the name Sannomiya (Third Princess) was used instead of that could the anthology be published.²⁰⁴ There were also many emperors changing their names in order to avoid taboo violations. Hence, for example, Emperor Uda changed his name Sadakami to Sadami, and Emperor Daigo Koreki to Atsugimi. Furthermore, Emperor Gohorikawa changed the pronunciation of his name from Yutahito to Toyohito, Emperor Gomizunoo – from Tadahito to Kotohito, Emperor Gosakuramachi – from Satoko to Toshiko, and Emperor Antoku – from Kotohito to Tokihito.²⁰⁵

Imperial taboo had political meaning in Japan, and was a sign of power and its avoidance was a sign of allegiance and loyalty. On the other hand, to openly use a taboo name was regarded as usurpation. Apparently, opponents to the emperor would sometimes use the same names as the emperor exactly for that purpose, especially during turbulent periods, as for example in the South and North courts period (Nanboku-chō period 南北朝時代, 1336–1392). There must have been many names with the parts *taka* and *haru* during the reign of Emperor Godaigo (r. 1318–1339), whose name was Takaharu 尊治. But later, after the conflict had been resolved, this name of the emperor continued to be tabooed even centuries later. We know that, because of this, in 1472 a certain Takaharu changed his name to Tametaka, and in 1727, Shijo Takaharu changed his to Takafumi.²⁰⁶

²⁰² Plutschow 1995, p. 38.

²⁰³ Plutschow, p. 39. Yohito is the given name of the Emperor Go-Uda (r. 1274–1287).

²⁰⁴ Plutschow 1995, p. 36.

²⁰⁵ Cf. Plutschow, p. 39.

²⁰⁶ Plutschow 1995, pp. 38–39.

Several discussions about rules of taboo in Japan are known. One of them took place at the court of Emperor Yōzei (r. 876–884), around the question whether the Retired Emperor Seiwa (r. 858–876) could use his original name, Korehito, in letters to his son. Such a revelation of a secret name was considered dangerous by the Grand Council Dajokan. Finally it was allowed after a sentence from the *Records of Ritual (Liji)* was quoted by Oe Otondo (811–877), which accepted the use of the name between father and son.²⁰⁷ Furthermore, the avoidance of former taboo names in choosing an Era name was also a subject of discussion.²⁰⁸

²⁰⁷ Plutschow 1995, p. 36.

²⁰⁸ See examples in Plutschow 1995, p. 38–39.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The custom of name tabooing was an important element of Chinese culture through the ages. It was present in every period of Chinese history. The reader could see the continuous development of the practice of *bihui* from its beginning until now, which was described in successive chapters (3-6). In various periods of China's long history, name tabooing developed into different forms and methods of avoidance, and an elaborate system of taboo principles came into being.

However, the tabooing of names in China was more than one of many customs. It was applied unconsciously or intentionally in order to enforce social values. From the beginning, the tabooing of names was never merely a private custom, but a social one. It always involved relationships with other people, or sometimes with ghosts (the supernatural world). A person's own taboo name was violated if other people used it, especially if they used it without reverence. The violation of other people's taboo was considered not only a breach of ritual, but also an assault on the whole society.

The taboo custom in China was observed very solemnly. We read about the impact of name tabooing on social life, for example in the *Caomuzi* 草木子. It describes the preparation of a banquet in the Song time. The invited guests were deliberately asked beforehand about their family taboos (*hui*) over three generations. Actors and musicians performing during the banquet then had to check all their texts and delete all taboo characters. Only after that could the performance be staged. Moreover, guests entering the banquet asked about taboo names of the inviting family in order not to violate them by accident.²⁰⁹

The tabooing of names was more than just a kind of *savoir-vivre* or courtesy in Chinese society. It was used intentionally in the political culture and likewise had a great impact on it. The tabooing of names designated a person's position in society and his rank, and distinguished a superior from his subject. Especially the names of emperors, officials and teachers were tabooed. The emperor used the custom in order to legitimate his power. Name tabooing was, in many periods, the litmus test to determine whether the ruler was accepted or not. People were killed when they used the emperor's name openly. On the other hand, the deliberate violation of a name taboo was a way to express one's irritation or disapproval of a ruler. Similarly, the name of one's parents and ancestors were avoided to emphasize their status.

²⁰⁹ *Caomuzi*, j. 3, p. 22a.

The practice of tabooing names changed together with Chinese culture, and it itself also changed Chinese culture. With its roots in the very distant past the customs of “taboo of the dead” (*sihui* 死諱) and reverence for names of the living (*buming* 不名 or *shenghui* 生諱) (see 4.1.1) gradually merged and were unified between the end of Zhou and the beginning of Han period under the overall label of “name tabooing” (*hui* 諱 or *bihui* 避諱) (see 4.3.2.1). This custom evolved then subsequently from a “religious” practice of tabooing into a more or less “secular” practice, but in both cases the use of taboos created relationships of respect between the people involved, often of a very hierarchical nature.

Very influential in this process was the authority of emperor and state. The Emperors – from the First Emperor of the Qin (see 4.4.3) to Emperor Qianlong of the Qing (see 7.3.2) – often used the tabooing of names in order to demonstrate their political power and to legitimize their authority. Generally it seems that the weakening of political power often caused a temporary dwindling of tabooing practices, at least regarding the emperor. There are, however, also relatively weak rulers using or even increasing the custom of name tabooing (for example, the tabooing of posthumous names in the Jin period) in order to stress their political status (see 5.3.7).

In different periods of the history of tabooing of names in China various specific customs can be pointed out, related to the political and social situation. The Three Kingdoms period tabooed courtesy names (*zi* 字) (see 5.2.4) and sometimes taboo names were mutually avoided (see 5.2.8). In the Eastern Jin time the tabooing of names of empresses reached its peak (see 5.3.4) and also posthumous and era names were tabooed (see 5.3.7). This proved rather extreme and was not continued. Since the period of Southern and Northern Dynasties lists of taboos (*huibang* 諱榜) (see 5.4.2) and genealogical records (see 5.4.5) appeared, showing the ongoing institutionalization of the custom and the increasing importance of written records. The Tang time elaborated the *Tang Code* with concrete rules of punishment for violation of taboo, which were adopted in the legal codes of subsequent dynasties (see 6.2.5). The particularity of the Song period was an excessive tabooing of distant and legendary ancestors (see 6.4.4 and 6.4.5), perhaps because of the increasing concern of literati of that time with the distant past of Chinese culture as apparent in the rise of epigraphy. The Yuan and Ming dynasties stressed the avoiding of inauspicious characters and words (see 7.1.3 and 7.2.1) in addition to names, although little else is known of tabooing under the Yuan. The Qing time saw the return of the persecution of

people violating the taboo name of emperor, related to the “literary inquisition” (see 7.3.2).

Roughly approximately since the Eastern Jin we also see the spread of the custom outside of an imperial context, spreading among literati and later also common people. Here the difficulties of finding enough sources do make it difficult to gauge the precise impact of the custom statistically. Moreover neighbor countries of China perceived the “Chinese tabooing of names” as a significant part of Chinese culture (i.e. the culture) and transferred it to their own countries, as is for instance the case in Korea or Japan (see 10.5).

Significant changes can be observed over time in the methods used for tabooing. In the Han the most popular was “the method of equivalent characters” (*tongxun daihuan* 同訓代換), replacing the taboo character with another one with a similar meaning and a different pronunciation (see 5.1.2.1). In the Jin period this method was extended to that of “situational equivalents” (*linshi xunbi* 臨時訓避), enabling the use of numerous equivalent characters in different situations (5.3.3). Tang period established the method of a missing stroke, which permitted (in most cases) the recognition of the original character (see 6.2.3).

There is also a visible change in the avoidance of homonyms of taboo characters. Individual examples are known since the Three Kingdom period (see 5.2.5), but only in the Tang time did they became more numerous, with a culmination in the Song time, when sometimes more than 50 homonyms of a taboo character had to be avoided for the emperor alone. By the end of the period of Southern Song the avoidance of homonyms abruptly weakened, perhaps because of the change in reading practices from loud to silent in that time (see 3.3). Still, homonyms of inauspicious taboo characters continued to be avoided in the Yuan and Ming time (7.1.3 and 7.2.1).

The impact of name tabooing was pervasive throughout society, within the family, in public life and in the life of the emperor. It had both positive (e.g., expression of respect and courtesy) and negative (e.g., resignation from office or severe punishments) consequences for life in China. Both these aspects of *bihui*’s impact were always apparent and have affected Chinese culture. Name tabooing impacted public life, but also the production of texts, since name taboos had to be followed through in writing as well. Many texts were changed and proper names, words or single characters in them were replaced. By determining taboo characters, we can distinguish different editions, to determine the age of a given text, etc. It is very important for Chinese historiography and a necessary tool in historical research.

This dissertation has been an attempt to determine the place of name tabooing in Chinese culture and to depict its various aspects. In the beginning, many questions related to the topic of name tabooing were posed: about the origin of the custom and its evolution, about its social and religious aspects, about its meaning and motivation, about its impact on Chinese culture. Many other problems related to the tabooing of names were addressed in the research. An attempt was made to find answers in a detailed, systematic and historical description of name taboo practices. Especially the textual dimension of taboo practice was pointed out. The additional historical-anthropological analysis helped to understand the social, political and ideological contexts of taboo practice.

Surely not every question could be answered. The tabooing of names in China remains as a very complex phenomenon with many topics. The study of this phenomenon is still in its early stages. The sources used for this research – basically Chinese historical works – allowed only a partial elaboration of some themes. Many aspects of the tabooing of names (as, for example, its significance in religious and popular culture, its impact on other countries, etc.) could be mentioned only in a limited way. It is the nature of this dissertation that its contribution is more on the level of detail than in presenting a radically new interpretation of China's cultural past. Nonetheless, the custom of name tabooing was deeply influential and pervaded all realms of society.

Although the topic of name tabooing appears as a very important aspect of Chinese culture, it has only recently been “rediscovered” in China, and until now has been rather neglected in Western research. This contribution endeavours to stimulate more systematic research in Western sinology dealing with this subject. It is hoped that it could provide for the reader a systematic overall view, by means of a first survey of name tabooing through time and its numerous aspects.

The tabooing of name in China is not a marginal or unimportant problem, but touches upon a central aspect of Chinese culture. The taboo principle of the *Records of Ritual*, quoted in the title of this dissertation, prescribing for a good son to be sad (literally: frightened) if he hears the name of his father²¹⁰ is reflected in its many aspects in the whole history of China. Actually, Chinese culture cannot be thoroughly understood without understanding the phenomenon of name tabooing. In Chinese society, the tabooing of names was the way to implement social values and to legitimize the political hierarchy.

²¹⁰ *Liji*, j. 7, p. 83b.

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In writing of this dissertation the author used numerous ancient Chinese texts and modern Chinese articles. A part of the historical sources were consulted online through the CAB (China Ancient Books 中國基本古籍庫) and part of the secondary research in Chinese was consulted in the modern articles in the CAJ (China Academic Journals Full-text Database), both of them available through Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin.

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In compiling a bibliography of Chinese language secondary sources, there is always the dilemma of choosing abbreviated or full characters. I have decided to write the names of authors and the titles of their works in the type of character in which they were originally published. If an author has been published in both types of characters, as for instance in the case of Chen Yuan himself, I will still stick to this principle.

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**Appendix 1: List of taboo characters and words, mentioned in the dissertation,
including avoided homonyms**

ai 哀	89, 207	che 徹	125, 127, 133-134, 231, 265, 312
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bao 暴	207	chu 除	207
bei 備	143	chu 楚	58, 65, 97, 118-120, 122, 277
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bi 弊	207	cong 蔥	302
bi 辟	91	cong 燧	218
bijiang 辟疆	112, 246, 315	cong 聰	218
bie 別	208	cong 從	183
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bing 丙	253	daming 大明	91
bing 炳	128	dan 亶	181
bing 病	207	dan 旦	199
bingyi 病已	129	dan 淡	63
bo 剝	208	dan 湛	247
bo 播	207	dang 蕩	207
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Appendix 2

Chronological Index of Taboo Names of Emperors and Other Famous Persons

1. Qin Dynasty (Family name Ying) 嬴氏秦朝 (221 BC – 207 BC)

Period of Reigns	Person	Taboo Name	Taboo Equivalent
221 – 210 BC	First Emperor 始皇帝	Zheng 政	duan 端
209–207 BC	Second Emperor 二世皇帝	Huhai 胡亥	yi 夷
207 BC	Third Emperor 三世皇帝	Ziying 子嬰	-----
d. 247 BC	King Zhuangxiang 莊襄王, father of the First Emperor)	Zichu 子楚	jing 荆

2. Western Han (Family name Liu) 劉氏漢朝 (206 BC – 9 AD), Xin dynasty 9 – 23 AD, Eastern Han dynasty 25 – 220 AD

Period of Reigns	Person	Taboo Name	Taboo Equivalent
Western Han			
206 – 195 BC	Emperor Gaozu 高祖	Bang 邦	guo 國, feng 封, yu 域
194 – 188 BC	Emperor Hui 惠帝	Ying 盈	man 滿, cheng 逞
188 – 184 BC	Emperor Qianshao 少帝	Gong 恭	-----
184 – 180 BC	Emperor Houshao 少帝	Hong 弘	-----
179 – 157 BC	Emperor Wen 文帝	Heng 恆	chang 常
156 – 141 BC	Emperor Jing 景帝	Qi 啟	kai 開, jing 驚
140 – 87 BC	Emperor Wu 武帝	Che 徹	tong 通
86 – 74 BC	Emperor Zhao 昭帝	Fu(ling) 弗(陵)	bu 不
74 BC	Prince of Changyi 昌邑王	He 賀	-----
73 – 49 BC	Emperor Xuan 宣帝	Xun 詢 ¹	mou 謀
48 – 33 BC	Emperor Yuan 元帝	Shi 奭	sheng 盛
32 – 7 BC	Emperor Cheng 成帝	Ao 驁	jun 俊
6 – 1 BC	Emperor Ai 哀帝	Xin 欣	xi 喜
1 BC – 5 AD	Emperor Ping 平帝	Kan 衍 ²	yue 樂
6 – 8 AD	Emperor Ruzi 孺子	Ying 嬰	-----
Xin			
9 – 23 AD	Wang Mang 王莽	Mang 莽	-----
Eastern Han			
23 – 25	Emperor Gengshi 更始帝	Xuan 玄	-----
25 – 57	Emperor Guangwu 光武帝	Xiu 秀	mao 茂
57 – 75	Emperor Ming 明帝	Zhuang 莊	yan 嚴
76 – 88	Emperor Zhang 章帝	Da 烜	zhu 著, zhao 昭
88–105	Emperor He 和帝	Zhao 肇	shi 始
105–106	Emperor Shang 殤帝	Long 隆	sheng 盛

¹ Former name Bingyi 病已 changed in 64 BC.

² Former name Jizi 箕子 changed in 2 AD.

106-125	Emperor An 安帝	Hu 祜	fu 福
125	Marquis of Bei Xiang 北鄉侯	Yi 懿	-----
125-144	Emperor Shun 順帝	Bao 保	shou 守
144-145	Emperor Chong 冲帝	Bing 炳	ming 明
145-146	Emperor Zhi 質帝	Zuan 纘	ji 繼
146-167	Emperor Huan 桓帝	Zhi 志	yi 意
167-188	Emperor Ling 靈帝	Hong 宏	da 大
189	Prince of Hongnong 弘農王	Bian 辯	-----
189-220	Emperor Xian 獻帝	Xie 協	he 合

d.180 BC	Empress Dowager Lü 呂太后, wife of the Emperor Gaozu	Zhi 雉	yeji 野雞
d.174 BC	Liu Chang 劉長, father of Liu An 劉安, author of <i>Huainanzi</i>	Chang 長	xiu 修
d.147 BC	Empress Bo 薄皇后 of the Emperor Jing	Ayu 阿渝	yu 喻
d.110 BC	Sima Tan 司馬談, father of Sima Qian, author of <i>Shiji</i>	Tan 談	tong 同
d. 42 BC	Wang Jin, father of Empress Wang Zhengjun	Jin 禁	xing 省
d. 40 AD	Prince Zhao 趙王, uncle of the Emperor Guangwu	Liang 良	zhang 張, liang 梁
d.106 AD	Prince Xiao of Qinghe 清河孝王, Crown Prince of Emperor Zhang	Qing 慶	he 賀

3. Three Kingdoms

State of Wei (Family Name Cao) 曹氏魏國 220-265 AD

Period of Reigns	Person	Taboo Name	Taboo Equivalent
220-226	Cao Pi, Emperor Wen 文帝	Pi 丕	-----
226-239	Cao Rui, Emperor Ming 明帝	Rui 叡	-----
239-254	Cao Fang, Prince of Qi 齊王	Fang 芳	hua 華
254-260	Cao Mao, Duke of Gaoguixiang 高貴鄉公	Mao 髦	-----
260-265	Cao Huan, Emperor Yuandi 元帝	Huan 奂	-----
d. 220	Cao Cao, father of Emperor Wen	Cao 操	zhuo 捉
d. 193	Cao Song, adoptive father of Cao Cao	Song 嵩	-----

State of Shu Han (Family Name Liu) 劉氏蜀漢國 221-263 AD

Period of Reigns	Person	Taboo Name
221-223	Liu Bei, Emperor Zhaolie 昭烈帝	Bei 備
223-263	Liu Shan, Duke Si of Anle 安樂思公	Shan 禪

State of Wu (Family name Sun) 孫氏吳國 222-280 AD

Period of Reigns	Person	Taboo Name	Taboo Equivalent
222-252	Sun Quan, Emperor Da 大帝	Quan 權	bing 柄, shi 勢
252-258	Sun Liang, Prince of Kuaiji 會稽王	Liang 亮	-----
258-264	Emperor Jing 景帝	Xiu 休	hai 海
264-280	Sun Hao, Marquess of Wucheng 烏程侯	Hao 皓	-----
d. 191	Sun Jian, father of Sun Quan	Jian 堅	-----
d. 200	Sun Ce, brother of Sun Quan	Ce 策	-----
d. 253	Sun He, father of Sun Hao	He 和	jia 嘉
d. 266	Teng Mu 滕牧, father of Empress Teng of Sun Hao	Mi 密	mu 牧
3 c.	Ding Gu 丁固, Minister of the Interior of Sun Hao	Mi 密	gu 固

4. Jin Dynasty (Family Name Sima) 司馬氏晉朝 (265-420)**Western Jin**

Period of Reigns	Person	Taboo Name
265-290	Emperor Wu 武帝	Yan 炎
290-306	Emperor Hui 惠帝	Zhong 衷
307-311	Emperor Huai 懷帝	Chi 熾
313-317	Emperor Min 愍帝	Ye 鄴
d.251	Sima Yi, grandfather of Emperor Wu	Yi 懿
d.255	Sima Shi, older brother of Sima Zhao	Shi 師
d.265	Sima Zhao, father of Emperor Wu	Zhao 昭

Eastern Jin

Period of Reigns	Person	Taboo Name
317-322	Emperor Yuan 元帝	Rui 睿
322-325	Emperor Ming 明帝	Shao 紹
325-342	Emperor Cheng 成帝	Yan 衍
342-344	Emperor Kang 康帝	Yue 岳
345-361	Emperor Mu 穆帝	Dan 聃
361-365	Emperor Ai 哀帝	Pi 丕
365-371	Emperor Fei 廢帝	Yi 奕
371-372	Emperor Jianwen 簡文帝	Yu 昱
372-396	Emperor Xiaowu 孝武帝	Yao 曜
396-418	Emperor An 安帝	Dezong 德宗
419-420	Emperor Gong 恭帝	Dewen 德文

5. Sixteen Kingdoms (304-439)

Han Zhao Empire (Family Name Liu) 劉氏漢趙 (304-329)

Han Empire 漢國 304-318

Period of Reigns	Person	Taboo Name
304-310	Emperor Guangwen 光文帝	Yuan 淵
310	Prince of Liang 梁王	He 和
310-318	Emperor Zhaowu 昭武帝	Cong 聰
318	Emperor Yin 隱帝	Can 粲

Former Zhao Empire 前趙國 (318-329)

Period of Reigns	Person	Taboo Name
318-329	Liu Yao, Emperor	Yao 曜
3 c.	Liu Lü 劉綠, father of Liu Yao	Lü 綠

Later Zhao Empire (Family Name Shi) 石氏後趙國 (319 – 351)

Period of Reigns	Person	Taboo Name
319-333	Emperor Ming 明帝	Le 勒
333-334	Prince of Haiyang 海陽王	Hong 弘
334-349	Emperor Wu 武帝	Hu 虎
349	Prince of Qiao 譙王	Shi 世
349	Prince of Pengcheng 彭城王	Zun 遵
349-350	Prince of Yiyang 義陽王	Jian 鑒
350-351	Prince of Xinxing 新興王	Zhi 祗

Cheng Han Empire (Family Name Li) 李氏成漢國 (303-347)

Cheng Empire 303-338

Period of Reigns	Person	Taboo Name
303	Li Te, Emperor Jingi 景帝	Te 特
303	Li Liu, Prince of Qinwen 秦文王	Liu 流
303-334	Emperor Wu 武帝	Xiong 雄
334	Emperor Ai 哀帝	Ban 班
334-338	Duke You 幽公	Qi 期

Han Empire 338-347

Period of Reigns	Person	Taboo Name
338-343	Emperor Zhaowen 昭文帝	Shou 壽
343-347	Li Shi, Marquess of Guiyi 歸義侯	Shi 勢

Former Yan Empire (Family Name Murong) 慕容氏前燕國 (337-370)

Period of Reigns	Person	Taboo Name
337-348	Emperor Wenming 文明帝	Huang 皝

348-360	Emperor Jingzhao 景昭帝	Jun 儁
360-370	Emperor You 幽帝	Wei 暉

Later Yan Empire (Family Name Murong) 慕容氏後燕國 (384-407)

Period of Reigns	Person	Taboo name
384-396	Emperor Wucheng 武成帝	Chui 垂
396-398	Emperor Huimin 惠愍帝	Bao 寶
398-401	Emperor Zhaowu 昭武帝	Sheng 盛
401-407	Emperor Zhaowen 昭文帝	Xi 熙

Southern Yan Empire (Family Name Murong) 慕容氏南燕國 (398-410)

Period of Reigns	Person	Taboo Name
398-405	Emperor Xianwu 獻武帝	De 德
405-410	Murong Chao	Chao 超

Northern Yan Empire (Family Name Feng) 馮氏北燕國 (407-436)

Period of Reigns	Person	Taboo Name
407-409	Gao Yun 高雲, Emperor Huiyi 惠懿帝	Yun 雲
409-430	Emperor Wencheng 文成帝	Ba 跋
430-436	Emperor Zhaocheng 昭成帝	Hong 弘

Former Liang Kingdom (Family Name Zhang) 張氏前涼國 (320-376)

Period of Reigns	Person	Taboo Name
320-324	Duke Cheng 成公	Mao 茂
324-346	Duke Zhongcheng 忠成公	Jun 駿
346-353	Duke Huan 桓公	Chonghua 重華
353	Duke Ai 哀公	Yaoling 曜靈
353-355	Prince Wei 威王	Zuo 祚
355-363	Duke Chong 沖公	Xuanjing 玄靚
364-376	Duke Dao 悼公	Tianxi 天錫

Hou (Later) Liang Kingdom (Family Name Lü) 呂氏後涼國 (386-403)

Period of Reigns	Person	Taboo Name
386-399	Emperor Yiwu 懿武帝	Guang 光
399	Prince Yin 隱王	Shao 紹
399-401	Emperor Ling 靈帝	Zuan 纂
401-403	Duke Shangshu 尚書公	Long 隆

Southern Liang Kingdom (Family Name Tufa) 秃髮氏南凉國 (397-414)

Period of Reigns	Person	Taboo Name
397-399	Tufa Wugu, Prince Wu 武王	Wugu 烏孤
399-402	Prince Kang 康王	Lilugu 利鹿孤
402-414	Prince Jing 景王	Rutan 儁檀

Northern Liang Kingdom (Family Name Juqu) 沮渠氏北凉國 397-439 (as Kings of Gao Chang 高昌 442-460)

Period of Reigns	Person	Taboo Name
397-401	Duan Ye 段業	Ye 業
401-433	Juqu Mengxun	Mengxun 蒙遜
433-439	Juqu Mujian, Prince Ai 哀王	Mujian 牧犍
442-444	Juqu Wuhui	Wuhui 無諱
444-460	Juqu Anzhou	Anzhou 安周

Western Liang Kingdom (Family Name Li) 李氏西凉國 (400-421)

Period of Reigns	Person	Taboo Name
400-417	Prince Wuzhao 武昭王	Gao 暄
417-420	Li Xin	Xin 歆
420-421	Li Xun	Xun 恂

Former Qin Empire (Family Name Fu) 符氏前秦國 (351-394)

Period of Reigns	Person	Taboo Name
351-355	Emperor Jingming 景明帝	Jian 健
355-357	Prince Li 厲王	Sheng 生
357-385	Emperor Xuanzhao 宣昭皇帝	Jian 堅
385-386	Emperor Aiping 哀平帝	Pi 丕
386-394	Emperor Gao 高帝	Deng 登
394	Fu Chong	Chong 崇

Later Qin Empire (Family Name Yao) 姚氏後秦國 (384-417)

Period of Reigns	Person	Taboo Name
384-393	Emperor Wuzhao 武昭帝	Chang 萇
394-416	Emperor Wenhuan 文恒帝	Xing 興
416-417	Yao Hong	Hong 泓

Western Qin Kingdom (Family Name Qifu) 乞伏氏西秦國 (385-400, 409-431)

Period of Reigns	Person	Taboo Name
385-388	Qifu Guoren, Prince Xuanlie 宣烈王	Guoren 國仁
388-400, 409-412	Prince Wuyuan 武元王	Gangui 乾歸

412-428	Prince Wenzhao 文昭王	Chipan 熾磐
428-431	Qifu Mumu	Mumu 暮末

Xia Empire (Family Name Helian) 赫連氏夏國 (407-431)

Period of Reigns	Person	Taboo Name
407-425	Helian Bobo, Emperor Wulie 武烈帝	Bobo 勃勃
425-428	Helian Chang	Chang 昌
428-431	Helian Ding	Ding 定

6. Northern and Southern Dynasties 420-589

Southern Dynasties

Liu Song Dynasty (Family Name Liu) 劉氏宋國 (Former Song) 420-479

Period of Reigns	Person	Taboo Name
420-422	Emperor Wu 武帝	Yu 裕
423-424	Emperor Shao 少帝	Yifu 義符
424-453	Emperor Wen 文帝	Yilong 義隆
453	Liu Shao 劉劭	Shao 劭
453-464	Emperor Xiaowu 孝武帝	Jun 駿
465	Emperor Qianfei 前廢帝	Ziye 子業
465-472	Emperor Ming 明帝	Yu 彧
473-477	Emperor Houfei 後廢帝	Yu 昱
477-479	Emperor Shun 順帝	Zhun 準

Southern Qi Dynasty (Family Name Xiao) 蕭氏南齊國 479-502

Period of Reigns	Person	Taboo Name
479-482	Emperor Gao 高帝	Daocheng 道成
482-493	Emperor Wu 武帝	Ze 嶺
493-494	Prince of Yulin 鬱林王	Zhaoye 昭業
494	Prince of Hailing 海陵王	Zhaowen 昭文
494-498	Emperor Ming 明帝	Luan 鸞
499-501	Marquess of Donghun 東昏侯	Baojuan 寶卷
501-502	Emperor He 和帝	Baorong 寶融

Liang Dynasty (Family Name Xiao) 蕭氏南梁國 (Southern Liang) 502-557

Period of Reigns	Person	Taboo Name
502-549	Emperor Wu 武帝	Yan 衍
549-551	Emperor Jianwen 簡文帝	Gang 綱
551-552	Prince of Yuzhang 豫章王	Dong 棟
552-555	Emperor Yuan 元帝	Yi 繹

555	Marquess of Zhenyang 貞陽侯	Yuanming 淵明
555-557	Emperor Jing 敬帝	Fangzhi 方智
5 c.	Xiao Shunzhi 蕭順之, father of Emperor Wu	Shunzhi 順之

Western Liang Dynasty (Family Name Xiao) 蕭氏西梁國 (also Later Liang 后梁) 555-587

Period of Reigns	Person	Taboo Name
555-562	Emperor Xuan 宣帝	Cha 瞿
562-585	Emperor Ming 明帝	Kui 歸
585-587	Emperor Jing 靖帝	Cong 琮

Chen Dynasty (Family Name Chen) 陳氏陳國 557-589

Period of Reigns	Person	Taboo Name
557-559	Emperor Wu 武帝	Baxian 霸先
559-566	Emperor Wen 文帝	Qian 蒯
566-568	Emperor Fei 廢帝	Bozong 伯宗
569-582	Emperor Xuan 宣帝	Xu 頊
583-589	Houzhu 後主	Shubao 叔寶
6 c.	Chen Wenzan 陳文讚, father of Emperor Wu	Wenzan 文讚

Northern Dynasties

Northern Wei Dynasty (Family Name Tuoba 拓拔 and Yuan 元)³ 北魏國 386-534

Period of Reigns	Person	Taboo Name	Taboo Equivalent
386-409	Emperor Daowu 道武帝	(Tuoba) Gui 珪	feng 封
409-423	Emperor Mingyuan 明元帝	Si 嗣	-----
424-452	Emperor Taiwu 太武帝	Tao 燾	-----
452	Prince Yin of Nan'an 南安隱王	Yu 余	-----
452-465	Emperor Wencheng 文成帝	Jun 濬	-----
466-471	Emperor Xianwen 獻文帝	Hong 弘	hong 洪
471-499	Emperor Xiaowen 孝文帝	Hong 宏	rong 容, heng 橫
499-515	Emperor Xuanwu 宣武帝	(Yuan) Ke 恪	-----
516-528	Emperor Xiaoming 孝明帝	Xu 詡	yu 羽
528	Youzhu 幼主	Zhao 釗	-----
528-530	Emperor Xiaozhuang 孝莊帝	Ziyu 子攸	-----
530-531	Prince of Changguang 長廣王	Ye 曄	-----
531-532	Emperor Jiemin 節閔帝	Gong 恭	-----
531-532	Prince of Anding 安定王	Lang 朗	-----
532-535	Emperor Xiaowu 孝武帝	Xiu 脩	-----
d. 451	Tuoba Huang 拓拔晃, father of Emperor Wencheng	Huang 晃	guang 光

³ In 496 the family name was changed from Tuoba to Yuan.

Eastern Wei Dynasty (Family Name Yuan) 元氏東魏國 (535-556)

Period of Reigns	Person	Taboo Name
534-550	Emperor Xiaojing 孝靜帝	Shanjian 善見

Western Wei Dynasty (Family Name Yuan) 元氏西魏國 (534-550)

Period of Reigns	Person	Taboo Name
535-551	Emperor Wen 文帝	Baoju 寶炬
552-554	Emperor Fei 廢帝	Qin 欽
554-556	Emperor Gong 恭帝	Kuo 廓

Northern Qi Dynasty(Family Name Gao) 高氏北齊國 (550-577)

Period of Reigns	Person	Taboo Name	Taboo Equivalent
550-559	Emperor Wenxuan 文宣帝	Yang 洋	-----
559-560	Emperor Fei 廢帝	Yin 殷	-----
560-561	Emperor Xiaozhao 孝昭帝	Yan 演	-----
561-565	Emperor Wucheng 武成帝	Dan 湛	-----
565-577	Hou Zhu 後主	Wei 緯	-----
577	You Zhu 幼主	Heng 恆	-----
577-579	Prince of Fanyang 范陽王	Shaoyi 紹義	-----
d. 547	Gao Huan 高歡, father of the Emperor Wenxuan	Huan 歡	xin 欣, xin 忻, quan 勸
6 c.	Gao Shu 高樹, grandfather of the Emperor Wenxuan	Shu 樹	shu 殊
d. 549	Gao Cheng 高澄, older brother of the Emperor Wenxuan	Cheng 澄	-----

Northern Zhou Dynasty(Family Name Yuwen) 宇文氏北周國 (557-581)

Period of Reigns	Person	Taboo Name	Taboo Equivalent
557	Emperor Xiaomin 孝閔帝	Jue 覺	-----
557-560	Emperor Ming 明帝	Yu 毓	-----
561-578	Emperor Wu 武帝	Yong 邕	he 和
578-579	Emperor Xuan 宣帝	Yun 贇	-----
579-581	Emperor Jing 靜帝	Chan 闡	-----
d. 556	Yuwen Tai 宇文泰, father of the Emperor Xiaomin	Tai 泰	tai 太

7. Sui Dynasty (Family Name Yang) 楊氏隋朝 (581 – 618)

Period of Reigns	Person	Taboo name	Taboo Equivalent
581-604	Emperor Wen 文帝	Jian 堅	xian 賢, gu 固
605-617	Emperor Yang 煬帝	Guang 廣	da 大, bo 博
617-618	Emperor Gong 恭帝	You 侑	-----

618	Yang Hao 楊浩	Hao 浩	-----
618-619	Emperor Gong 恭帝	Tong 侗	-----
d. 568	Yang Zhong 楊忠, father of the Emperor Wen	Zhong 忠	cheng 誠
6 c.	Yang Zhen 楊禎, grandfather of the Emperor Wen	Zhen 禎	-----

8. Tang Dynasty (Family Name Li) 李氏唐朝 (618 – 690, 705 – 907), Zhou Dynasty (Family Name Wu) 武氏周朝 (690 – 705)

Period of Reigns	Person	Taboo Name
Tang dynasty		
618-626	Emperor Gaozu 高祖	Yuan 淵
627-649	Emperor Taizong 太宗	Shimin 世民
650-683	Emperor Gaozong 高宗	Zhi 治
684, 705-710	Emperor Zhongzong 中宗	Xian 顯, Zhe 哲
684-690, 710-712	Emperor Ruizong 睿宗	Dan 旦
Zhou dynasty		
690-705	Wu Zetian 武則天	Zhao 曌
Tang dynasty		
712-756	Xuanzong	Longji 隆基
756-762	Suzong	Heng 亨
762-779	Daizong	Yu 豫
780-805	Dezong 德宗	Gua 适
805	Shunzong	Song 誦
806-820	Xianzong	Chun 純
821-824	Muzong	Heng 恆
824-826	Jingzong	Zhan 湛
826-840	Wenzong	Ang 昂
840-846	Wuzong	Yan 炎
846-859	Xuanzong	Chen 忱
859-873	Yizong 懿宗	Cui 漼
873-888	Xizong 僖宗	Xuan 僊
888-904	Zhaozong	Ye 曄
904-907	Aidi/Zhaoxuandi	Zhu 杲
d. 573	Li Bing 李昉, father of Emperor Gaozu	Bing 昉
d. 551	Li Hu 李虎, grandfather of Emperor Gaozu	Hu 虎
d. 626	Li Jiancheng 李建成, Crown Prince of Emperor Gaozu	Jiancheng 建成

9. Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms (907-960)

Later Liang (Family Name Zhu) 朱氏後梁朝 (907-923)

Period of Reigns	Person	Taboo Name
907-912	Zhu Quanzhong 朱全忠	Wen 溫 / Quanzhong 全忠 / Guang 晃
912-913	Zhu Yougui 朱友珪	Yougui 友珪
913-923	Zhu Zhen 朱貞	Youzhen 友貞 / Zhen 瑱

Later Tang (Family Name Li) 李氏後唐朝 (923-936)

Period of Reigns	Person	Taboo Name
923-926	Li Cunxu 李存勖	Cunxu 存勖
926-933	Li Siyuan 李嗣源	Siyuan 嗣源 / Dan 亶
933-934	Li Conghou 李從厚	Conghou 從厚
934-936	Li Conghe 李從珂	Conghe 從珂

Later Jin (Family Name Shi) 石氏後晉朝 (936-947)

Period of Reigns	Person	Taboo Name
936-942	Shi Jingtang 石敬瑭	Jingtang 敬瑭
942-947	Shi Chonggui 石重貴	Chonggui 重貴

Later Han (Family Name Liu) 劉氏後漢朝 (947-950)

Period of Reigns	Person	Taboo Name
947-948	Liu Zhiyuan 劉知遠	Zhiyuan 知遠
948-950	Liu Chengyou 劉承祐	Chengyou 承祐

Later Zhou (Family Name Chai) 柴氏後周朝 (951-960)

Period of Reigns	Person	Taboo Name
951-954	Guo Wei 郭威	Wei 威
954-959	Chai Rong 柴榮	Rong 榮
959-960	Chai Zongxun 柴宗訓	Zongxun 宗訓

Wu Kingdom (Family Name Yang) 楊氏吳國 (904-937)

Period of Reigns	Person	Taboo Name
904-905	Yang Xingmi 楊行密 (Taizu)	Xingmi 行密
905-908	Yang Wo 楊渥	Wo 渥
908-921	Yang Longyan 楊隆演	Longyan 隆演
921-937	Yang Pu 楊溥	Pu 溥

Wuyue Kingdom (Family Name Qian) 錢氏吳越國 (904-978)

Period of Reigns	Person	Taboo Name
904-932	Qian Liu 錢鏐 (Taizu)	Liu 鏐
932-941	Qian Yuanguan 錢元瓘	Yuanguan 元瓘
941-947	Qian Hongzuo 錢弘佐	Hongzuo 弘佐
947	Qian Hongzong 錢弘倧	Hongzong 弘倧
947-978	Qian Hongchu 錢弘俶	Hongchu 弘俶

Former Shu Kingdom (Family Name Wang) 王氏前蜀國 (907-925)

Period of Reigns	Person	Taboo Name
907-918	Wang Jian 王建	Jian 建
918-925	Wang Yan 王衍	Yan 衍

Later Shu Kingdom (Family Name Meng) 孟氏後蜀國 (934-965)

Period of Reigns	Person	Taboo Name
934	Meng Zhixiang 孟知祥	Zhixiang 知祥
938-965	Meng Chang 孟昶	Chang 昶

Chu Kingdom (Family Name Li) 馬氏楚國 (897-951)

Period of Reigns	Person	Taboo Name
897-930	Ma Yin 馬殷	Yin 殷
930-932	Ma Xisheng 馬希聲	Xisheng 希聲
932-947	Ma Xifan 馬希範	Xifan 希範
947-950	Ma Xiguang 馬希廣	Xiguang 希廣
950	Ma Xi'e 馬希萼	Xi'e 希萼
950-951	Ma Xichong 馬希崇	Xichong 希崇

Min Kingdom (Family Name Li) 王氏閩國 (909-945)

Period of Reigns	Person	Taboo Name
909-925	Wang Shen zhi 王審知	Shen zhi 審知
925-926	Wang Yan han 王延翰	Yan han 延翰
926-935	Wang Yan jun 王延鈞	Yan jun 延鈞
935-939	Wang Jipeng 王繼鵬	Jipeng 繼鵬 / Chang 昶
939-944	Wang Yan xi 王延羲	Yan xi 延 / Xi 曦 / Xi 羲
943-945	Wang Yan zheng 王延政	Yan zheng 延政

Southern Han Kingdom (Family Name Liu) 劉氏南漢國 (917-971)

Period of Reigns	Person	Taboo Name
917-942	Liu Yan 劉龔	Yan 龔 / Yan 巖 / Zhi 陟
942-943	Liu Fen 劉玢	Fen 玢
943-958	Liu Cheng 劉晟	Cheng 晟
958-971	Liu Chang 劉鋹	Chang 鋹

Northern Han Kingdom (Family Name Liu) 劉氏北漢國 (951-979)

Period of Reigns	Person	Taboo Name
951-954	Liu Min 劉旻	Min 旻
954-970	Liu Chengjun 劉承鈞	Chengjun 承鈞
970	Liu Ji'en 劉繼恩	Ji'en 繼恩
970-982	Liu Jiyuan 劉繼元	Jiyuan 繼元

Nanping Kingdom (Family Name Gao) 高氏南平國 (924-963)

Period of Reigns	Person	Taboo Name
924-928	Gao Jixing 高季興	Jixing 季興
928-948	Gao Conghui 高從誨	Conghui 從誨
948-960	Gao Baorong 高寶融	Baorong 寶融
960-962	Gao Baoxu 高寶勗	Baoxu 寶勗
962-963	Gao Jichong 高繼沖	Jichong 繼沖

Southern Tang Kingdom (Family Name Li) 李氏南唐國 (937-975)

Period of Reigns	Person	Taboo Name
937-943	Li Bian 李昇	Bian 昇
943-961	Li Jing 李璟	Jing 璟
961-975	Li Yu 李煜	Yu 煜

10. Song, Southern Song, Liao, Western Xia and Jin Dynasty

Song Dynasty (Family Name Zhao) 趙氏宋朝 (960-1127)

Period of Reigns	Person	Taboo Name	Some Other Tabooed Characters
960-976	Emperor Taizu 太祖	Kuangyin 匡胤	kuang 筐, kuang 漚, kuang 眶, kuang 恇, kuang 劓, kuang 眶, kuang 軒, yin 靦, yin 引, yin 釧, yin 醢
976-997	Emperor Taizong 太宗	Kuangyi 匡義 / Guangyi 光義 / Gui 炅	jiong 頰, jiong 炯, geng 耿, jiong 局, jing 憬, ying 穎, xiao 晁
997-1022	Emperor Zhenzong 真宗	Heng 恆	heng 恒, huan 峘, heng 姁, heng 偃, kan 侃
1022-1063	Emperor Renzong 仁宗	Zhen 禎	zhen 禎, zhen 貞, zhen 偵, zhen 寘, zhen 嬪, zheng 徵, zhen 瀋, jing 旌, zheng 癥
1063-1067	Emperor Yingzong 英宗	Shu 曙	shu 署, shu 抒, shu 蓐, shu 討, shu 裋, shu 樹, shu 櫨, shu 澍, shu 屬, shu 贖, shu 豎, shu 墅, shu 紓, shu 豎
1067-1085	Emperor Shenzong 神宗	Xu 頊	xu 勛, xu 勗, qu 胸, xu 旭, xu 珣

1085-1100	Emperor Zhezong 哲宗	Xu 煦	xu 煦, qu 胸, qu 蚰, xu 酗, xu 姁, xu 响, xu 歆, xiu 休, xiu 咻
1100-1125	Emperor Huizong 徽宗	Ji 佖	ji 姑, zhi 郅, jie 鮎, qi 芑, ji 赳, ji 吉, ji 咭, ji 狴
1126-1127	Emperor Qinzong 欽宗	Huan 桓	kuan 椀, huan 璫, huan 掄, wan 完, huan 貍, wan 丸, yuan 院, huan 峘, wan 紬, yuan 垸, wan 茺, guan 藿, huan 鸛, huan 琰, huan 獮, huan 獮, huan 荳, wan 腕, wan 皖, huan 狽, yuan 垣, huan 洹, wan 洑, huan 蓀, wan 莞
	Legendary “first ancestor” Xuanlang 玄朗	Xuanlang 玄朗	xuan 懸, xian 縣, xuan 眴, xuan 洊, hong 訇, xuan 肱, xuan 眩, xuan 玆, xuan 佗, xuan 謚, xian 蜃, xuan 玆, juan 獯, lang 佯, lang 崑, liang 恨, lang 諠, lang 烺, lang 礪, lang 狼, lang 簞, lang 閭, lang 浪, lang 闐, lang 琅
d. 956	Father of Emperor Taizu	Hongyin 弘殷	hong 宏
d. 933	Grandfather of Emperor Taizu	Jing 敬	jing 鏡, jing 竟, jing 境
d. 928	Great grandfather of Emperor Taizu	Ting 玘	ting 頰
	Great great grandfather of Emperor Taizu	Tiao 眇	tiao 眇, tao 洮

Southern Song Dynasty (1127-1279)

Period of Reigns	Person	Taboo Name	Some Other Tabooed Characters
1127-1162	Emperor Gaozong 高宗	Gou 構	gou 葍, gou 媾, gou 覲, gou 購, gou 構, gou 篝, gou 鞫, hou 逅, gou 遘, gou 姤, gou 詬, qu 鵠, ju 句, gou 鞫, gou 恂, gou 佺, gou 雛, gou 夠, gou 鉤, gou 响, gou 徇, gou 峘, gou 穀, gu 穀, gou 構, hu 穀, kou 穀, gou 穀, tui 蛻
1162-1189	Emperor Xiaozong 孝宗	Shen 昫	shen 慎, shen 蜃, shen 娠, shen 釗, shen 脈, shen 鉅, yin 螾, yin 軛, yin 戴
1189-1194	Emperor Guangzong 光宗	Dun 惇	dun 敦, dun 墩, dun 鐫, dun 墩, chun 鶉, dun 蜉, chun 鏹, dun 擎
1194-1224	Emperor Ningzong 寧宗	Kuo 擴	kuo 廓, guo 郭, kuo 漈, kuo 霏, kuo 鞞, kuo 籊, kuo 穢, cheng 蛭
1224-1264	Emperor Lizong 理宗	Yun 昀	yun 勻, yun 昀, xun 馴, xun 巡
1264-1274	Emperor Duzong 度宗	Mengqi 孟启 / Zi 孜	rui 叢, rui 睿, zi 咨

		/ Qi 禩 ⁴	
1274-1276	Emperor Gongzong 恭宗	Xian 顯	-----
1276-1278	Emperor Duanzong 端宗	Shi 昞	-----
1278-1279	Zhao Bing 趙昞	Bing 昞	-----

Liao Dynasty (Family Name Yelü) 耶律氏遼朝 (907-1125)

Period of Reigns	Person	(Chinese) Taboo Name
907-926	Taizu 太祖	Yi 億
926-947	Taizong 太宗	Deguang 德光
947-951	Shizong 世宗	Ruan 阮
951-969	Muzong 穆宗	Jing 璟
969-982	Jingzong 景宗	Xian 賢
982-1031	Shengzong 聖宗	Longxu 隆緒
1031-1055	Xingzong 興宗	Zongzhen 宗真
1055-1101	Daozong 道宗	Hongji 洪基
1101-1125	Emperor Tianzuo 天祚帝	Yanxi 延禧

Western Xia Dynasty (Family Name Li) 李氏西夏朝 (1032-1227)

Period of Reigns	Person	(Chinese) Taboo Name
1032-1048	Jingzong 景宗	Yuanhao 元昊
1048-1067	Yizong 毅宗	Liangzuo 諒祚
1067-1086	Huizong 惠宗	Bingchang 秉常
1086-1139	Chongzong 崇宗	Qianshun 乾順
1139-1193	Renzong 仁宗	Renxiao 仁孝
1193-1206	Huanzong 桓宗	Chunyou 純佑
1206-1211	Xiangzong 襄宗	Anquan 安全
1211-1223	Shenzong 神宗	Zunxu 遵頊
1223-1226	Xianzong 獻宗	Dewang 德旺
1226-1227	Mozhu 末主	Xian 睨
11 c.	Father of Emperor Jingzong	Deming 德明

Jin Dynasty (Family Name Wanyan) 完顏氏金朝 (1115-1234)

Period of Reigns	Person	(Chinese) Taboo Name
1115-1123	Taizu 太祖	Min 旻
1123-1134	Taizong 太宗	Sheng 晟
1135-1149	Xizong 熙宗	Dan 亶
1149-1161	King Haili 海陵王	Liang 亮
1161-1189	Shizong 世宗	Yong 雍
1190-1208	Zhangzong 章宗	Jing 璟

⁴ Original name Mengqi 孟昶 was changed in 1251 to Zi 孜 and in 1253 to Qi 禩.

1209-1213	King Weishao 衛紹王	Yongji 永濟
1213-1223	Xuanzong 宣宗	Xun 珣
1224-1234	Aizong 哀宗	Shouxu 守緒
1234	Emperor Mo 末帝	Chenglin 承麟

11. Yuan Dynasty (Family Name Borjigin) 孛兒只斤氏元朝 (1271-1368)

Period of Reigns	Person	Taboo Name
1260-1294	Kublai Khan / Shizu 世祖	Hubilie 忽必烈
1294-1307	Chengzong 成宗	Tiemuer 鐵穆耳
1308-1311	Wuzong 武宗	Haishan 海山
1311-1320	Renzong 仁宗	Aiyulibalibada 愛育黎拔力八達
1321-1323	Yingzong 英宗	Shuodebala 碩德八剌
1323-1328	Taiding Emperor 泰定帝	Yesuntiemuer 也孫鐵木兒
1328	Tianshun Emperor 天順帝	Asujiba 阿速吉八
1328-1329/ 1329-1332	Wenzong 文宗	Tutiemuer 圖帖睦爾
1329	Mingzong 明宗	Heshila 和世剌
1332	Ningzong 寧宗	Yilinzhiban 懿璘質班
1333-1370	Huizong 惠宗	Tuohantiemuer 妥懽帖睦爾

12. Ming Dynasty (Family name Zhu) 朱氏明朝 (1368-1644)

Period of Reigns	Person	Taboo Name
1368-1398	Emperor Hongwu 洪武	Yuanzhang 元璋
1398-1402	Emperor Jianwen 建文	Yunwen 允炆
1402-1424	Emperor Yongle 永樂	Di 棣
1424-1425	Emperor Hongxi 洪熙	Gaochi 高熾
1425-1435	Emperor Xuande 宣德	Zhanji 瞻基
1435-1449, 1457-1464	Emperor Zhengtong 正統 ⁵	Qizhen 祁鎮
1449-1457	Emperor Jingtai 景泰	Qiyu 祁鈺
1464-1487	Emperor Chenghua 成化	Jianshen 見深
1487-1505	Emperor Hongzhi 弘治	Youtang 祐樞
1505-1521	Emperor Zhengde 正德	Houzhao 厚照
1521-1566	Emperor Jiajing 嘉靖	Houcong 厚聰
1566-1572	Emperor Longqing 隆慶	Zaihou 載堉
1572-1620	Emperor Wanli 萬曆	Yijun 翊鈞
1620	Emperor Taichang 泰昌	Changluo 常洛
1620-1627	Emperor Tianqi 天啟	Youjiao 由校
1627-1644	Emperor Chongzhen 崇禎	Youjian 由檢

⁵ In 1449 the Emperor was captured and kept in the Mongolian captivity. After his comeback, he was kept in prison. Only in 1457 after the death of his brother Emperor Jingtai came again into power with a new Era name Tianshun 天順.

13. Qing Dynasty (Family Name Aisin Gioro) 愛新覺羅氏清朝 (1368-1644)

Period of Reigns	Person	Taboo Name
(1616-1626)	Nurhaci 努爾哈赤	Nuerhachi 努爾哈赤
(1626-1643)	Huangtaiji 皇太極	Huangtaiji 皇太極
1643-1661	Emperor Shunzhi 順治	Fulin 福臨
1661-1722	Emperor Kangxi 康熙	Xuanye 玄燁
1722-1735	Emperor Yongzheng 雍正	Yinzhen 胤禛
1735-1796	Emperor Qianlong 乾隆	Hongli 弘曆
1796-1820	Emperor Jiaqing 嘉慶	Yongyan 顥琰
1820-1850	Emperor Daoguang 道光	Minning 旻寧
1850-1861	Emperor Xianfeng 咸豐	Yizhu 奕訢
1861-1875	Emperor Tongzhi 同治	Zaichun 載淳
1875-1908	Emperor Guangxu 光緒	Zaitian 載湉
1908-1911	Emperor Xuantong 宣統	Puyi 溥儀
d. 1951	The 2nd Prince Chun 醇親王, Father of Puyi	載沣 Zaifeng

Summary

A GOOD SON IS SAD IF HE HEARS THE NAME OF HIS FATHER. THE TABOOING OF NAMES IN CHINA AS A WAY OF IMPLEMENTING SOCIAL VALUES

PIOTR ADAMEK

This dissertation deals with the tabooing of names in China, or *bihui* 避諱. The names of sovereigns, ancestors, officials, teachers, etc. were taboo, meaning that it was prohibited to pronounce or record them. This custom had an enormous impact on Chinese culture and serious consequences for the daily lives of many Chinese, as well as for Chinese historiography. Because of such name taboos, not only many given names, titles and geographical names were changed, but also the names of plants, things of daily life, common expressions, and even the Heavenly Stems used for naming days, months and years in the calendar. People had to stop their careers or change their style of life in order to maintain a naming taboo. Some of them were even killed in connection with the tabooing of names.

The first systematic research on the tabooing of names in China was done by Chen Yuan in his very significant work *Examples of Taboo Names in Historical Writings* (*Shihui juli* 史諱舉例). Since the 1980s intensive research on this topic started in China and soon attained the status of an independent interdisciplinary field of research, *biuixue* 避諱學. This knowledge about the tabooing of names not only helps us to understand the cultural practice of *bihui* and determine taboo characters, but also date editions of books and manuscripts, to determine the age of a text, to reconstruct old names, meanings and pronunciations, and so on. At present it is not possible in China to imagine the historiography or literary criticism without a deep knowledge of *bihui*.

In the long history of the tabooing of names, numerous changes of taboo practice have taken place. Various methods and a complex system of rules were created. The tabooing of names was an expression of courtesy and respect, fear and anger, legitimization of power and protection. It existed as an important element of Chinese culture and was perceived as significant cultural and social factor by the Chinese and the cultures that surrounded them, such as Korea and Japan. Chinese traditional culture cannot be contemplated without taking into account the tabooing of names. The impact and various social and cultural aspects of the tabooing of names in Chinese history are described and evaluated in my doctoral dissertation.

Curriculum Vitae

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2. Education

1991 Abitur
1993-1995 Philosophical and Theological Studies (Pre-degree) in the Wyższe Seminarium Duchowne Nysa, Poland
1995-1999 Theological Studies in the Philosophisch-Theologische Hochschule Sankt Augustin (degree: Diplomtheologe)
1999 Diplom Thesis: “Die Wiederentdeckung des Religiösen in der chinesischen Literatur dargestellt am Beispiel des Romans von Li Ping *Zur Stunde des verblässenden Abendrots*”
2000-2001 Language Course Russian at Moscow State University
2001-2005 Sinological Studies at Moscow State University (degree: Bachelor)
2005 Diplom Thesis: “The conception of soul in China and in Europe”
2005-2006 Language Course Chinese at Fugen University, Taiwan
2006-2007 Language Course Chinese at North-West University, Xi’an, China
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