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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Tracing Controversies of Understanding in Traditional Commentaries to "Lord Amidst Clouds" from the *Songs of Chu*

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Using the example of the song "Lord Amidst Clouds" (*Yunzhong jun*) from the "Nine Songs" (*Jiuge*) chapter of the *Songs of Chu* (*Chuci*), this study examines how commentators from the Han to the Qing dynasty engaged with interpretations of their predecessors at the micro level of their commentaries in a non-canonical textual environment. To go beyond the macro level overviews provided by commentary histories of the *Chuci*, the interpretations of Wang Yi (2nd cent.), the Five Ministers (7th–8th cent.), Zhu Xi (1130–1200), Wang Yuan (d. 1565), and Lin Yunming (1628?–1697) are compared line by line in chronological order to better understand their motives for writing new commentaries, their exegetical techniques, and their exegetical decisions. The broader question underlying this study is whether it is possible to determine which parts of the understanding of the song remained controversial as opposed to what was accepted as understanding over the period of commentary production.

本研究以《楚辭．九歌》中的《雲中君》為例，探討從漢代到清代評注者在非經典語境中如何辯證地看待前代評注，並對《雲中君》進行微觀層面的細緻解讀。為突破現有《楚辭》學史提供的宏觀敘事框架，本文按照時間順序對王逸（2 世紀）、五臣（7 – 8 世紀）、朱熹（1130 – 1200 年）、汪瑗（卒於 1565 年）以及林雲銘（約 1628 – 1697）的解讀進行逐行比對，深入分析其新詮釋的動機、釋文技巧及釋經決策。本研究旨在探討在時代變遷中，《雲中君》某些內容的解讀是否持續存在爭議，還是逐漸形成了較為一致的詮釋傾向。這一研究不僅為理解《楚辭》評注傳統的歷史演變提供新的見解，同時也為古代文學作品的詮釋研究提供了新的方法論視角。

Keywords: Ancient Chinese literature, *Chuci*, Qu Yuan, commentary history, textual interpretation, hermeneutics, translation, poetry

關鍵詞： 中國古代文學，楚辭，屈原，楚辭學史，文本詮釋，闡釋學，翻譯，詩

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> "The shared assumption that these texts were authoritative but compressed and coded statements by the Sages that no effort could ever completely translate into the fixed terms of regular mortals created a triple bind: authoritative statements had to be derived from a reading of these authoritative texts of old; the reading had to be plausible and convincing to other readers who might want to derive other conclusions from these canonical texts; and any reading was open to challenge due to the inexhaustibility *in principle* of these texts" (Wagner 2000, 4–5).

To preface an article about the commentaries on a short poem from the *Chuci* 楚辭 (Songs of Chu) with a statement about the commentarial tradition surrounding the Chinese classics may seem overblown. Aside from a debate during the Han dynasty to grant "Lisao" 離騷 (Parting from Forlornness) the status of a canonical text (*jing* 經), only indirect evidence suggests the extent to which other parts of the *Chuci* were viewed as authoritative (Li Daming 1993; Schimmelpfennig 2004). Among this evidence is the tradition of commentaries to other parts of the anthology like the "Jiuge" 九歌 (Nine Songs), the second chapter in the transmitted version of the *Chuci*. Following its earliest commentator Wang Yi 王逸 (2nd cent. CE), most commentators regarded the poems in this chapter as part of Qu Yuan's oeuvre and provided readings of its songs.[1] In doing so they resorted to an authoritative version of the text, entered an existing exegetical discourse of these songs,[2] required plausible conclusions to convince readers of the validity of their own understanding, and by defying the "inexhaustibility *in principle* of these texts", strove to convince their audience of the true limits of possible interpretation accomplished by their own reading. On these counts commentators of the *Chuci* are by no means dissimilar to the exegetes of the Classics.

The suggestion that interpretational controversies involving the *Chuci* have much in common with those over Chinese canonical texts raises a number of questions about the specific nature of these controversies: First, what was it that motivated commentators to challenge an existing reading in a non-canonical textual setting? Second, which empirical findings or exegetical techniques did they use to arrive at these different interpretations? Third, did these commentators perceive their own distinct interpretations as a conscious reversal of existing understandings, or did they view this as enhancing an existing understanding in some way other than through a sub-commentary? Finally, is it possible to identify specific passages in a main text that repeatedly triggered comments? In other words, is it possible to identify what remained controversial in the understanding of a text as opposed to what was taken for granted over longer periods of commentary production?

To answer these questions, I will select a more commonly known song from the "Jiuge" chapter entitled "Yunzhong jun" 雲中君 (The Lord Amidst Clouds). I will use a combined approach to examine

[1] For a recent discussion of the question of authorship of the *Chuci*, see Du (2019).

[2] "As Confucianism came to be identified over the course of the imperial period with the Chinese cultural tradition par excellence, the writing of interlinear commentary on the canon of texts became a standard, even dominant mode of scholarly and philosophical discourse for Chinese literati" (Gardner 1998, 397).

the specific commentarial engagement surrounding this work: at a macro level, I will survey commentary histories of the *Chuci* to provide information about the authors of the commentaries, their pretexts for producing these works, and their general intentions.[3] In contrast to existing commentary histories and studies of individual commentaries, the emphasis of my contribution lies at the micro level of commentarial modifications over time.[4] To better understand the mechanics that generate specific readings, the impact established understandings have on subsequent readings, and the connectivity between commentaries, this article compares a sequence of commentaries to "Yunzhong jun" line by line, taking the detail of annotations and their exegetical subtlety as indicators for connectivity as well as controversy.

It may rightly be argued that the "Lisao" as the core text of the *Chuci* anthology would be the appropriate candidate for such an analysis. But its length, combined with the substantial amount of commentary written to it, make the poem unsuitable for presentation in an article. I therefore choose "Yunzhong jun" as a case study instead.[5] The poem is rather well known in Chinese literature albeit as an easily recognisable part of the *Chuci* tradition. Its visibility expanded in the 20th century due to its central role in Arthur Waley's (1889–1966) anthropological reconstruction and translation of the "Jiuge" (Waley 1955). We can assume, however, that for traditional Chinese commentators "Yunzhong jun" was one poem among others in the "Jiuge" and in this sense did not stand out like the "Lisao" giving rise to discussions about its canonical status. "Yunzhong jun" is therefore a welcome candidate if we want to understand how commentators have dealt with examples of the *Chuci* tradition that have historically been of lesser renown. In addition, its briefness — of only eighty-three characters in fourteen lines — helps make nuances of interpretational modification immediately obvious.

The song describes a sacrificial ritual involving a deity referred to as *yun jun* 雲君 (Cloud Lord) in various other sources. While transmitted sources associate the deity with rituals performed in the state of Jin, bamboo texts unearthed from a tomb near the ancient capital of Chu prove that the deity was worshipped there too.[6]

This study is limited to six major commentaries to "Yunzhong jun" from the Eastern Han to the early Qing dynasty, a period of roughly 1500 years:[7]

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[3] The commentary histories consulted for the present study are Yi (1991), Li and Zhu (1996), and Liao (2008). Broader overviews are presented in Schneider (1980) and Nailer (1980). An early example of a comparative study of commentaries to "Jiuge" is Waters (1985).

[4] Many existing studies of Chinese commentary either focus entirely on a single commentary or examine a sequence of commentaries as separate elements. While commentary histories such as those in the preceding note provide information about reactions to predecessors and what a later commentator did differently, they rarely address the minute connections between readings at a micro level.

[5] Another legitimate point of criticism would be the objection to a random selection of a song out of a group of eleven works included in the "Jiuge" chapter. Since there are no sources other than the "bracket" of the chapter's preface or parallel titles that indicate the purpose behind the arrangement of the poems, an exploration of how the exegetical development unfolds in one case can serve as a preliminary step towards comparing commentaries to other songs throughout the chapter and beyond.

[6] Tomb 1 at Jiangling Tianxing guan 江陵天星觀 excavated in 1977, has been dated to the middle of the 4th century BCE. See Tang Zhangping (2004, 27f; 113).

[7] Here by "major commentaries" I mean that their commentators emphasised the relevance of their interpretation by commenting on all or a selection of chapters of the *Chuci*. The Variorum of Commentaries by the Five Ministers is included because it is the only existing commentary from the Tang dynasty. Later commentaries in the "evidential scholarship" (*kaozheng* 考證) field were excluded due to

1 *Chuci zhangju* 楚辭章句 (Section and Sentence Commentary to the Songs of Chu) by Wang Yi 王逸 (2nd cent. CE).

2 *Wu chen zhu* 五臣注 (Commentaries by the Five Ministers) by Liu Liang 劉良, Zhang Xian 張銑, Lü Xiang 呂向, Li Zhouhan 李周翰, and Lü Yanji 呂延濟 (7th–8th cent.).

3 *Chuci jizhu* 楚辭集注 (Variorum of Commentaries to the Songs of Chu) by Zhu Xi 朱熹 (1130–1200).

4 *Chuci jijie* 楚辭集解 (Variorum of Explanations to the Songs of Chu) by Wang Yuan 汪瑗 (d. 1565).

5 *Chuci deng* 楚辭燈 (The Songs of Chu Illumined) by Lin Yunming 林雲銘 (1628?–1697).

My reasons for this selection are the prominence of these commentaries in exegetical history, the cross section of insight these commentaries provide over a long period of time, and the fact that Lin Yunming's final example can be seen as a kind of capstone to the preceding tradition.

In each of the following sections I will present the work of one commentator. A brief description of the author's background and motivation for writing the commentary is followed by a more detailed analysis of the particularities of his understanding and how his reading of "Yunzhong jun" relates to that of his predecessors. To make the exegetical operations of each commentator more understandable, I use the method of extrapolative translation.[8] A synopsis that reflects more broadly on the overall commentarial development, the question of connectivity between commentaries, the dynamics of the interpretational controversy, and its possible impact on modern research concludes the study.

1. Setting the Scene — Wang Yi's Preface and Commentary

Not much is known about Wang Yi. A very short entry in *Hou Hanshu* 後漢書 (The Dynastic History of the Eastern Han) states that he was born in the Southern commandery town of Yicheng 宜城 in the region of the former state of Chu (Tan 1982, II: 49–50). He held two positions under the emperors An 安帝 (r. 114–120 CE) and Shun 順帝 (r. 125–144 CE) that lack a precise date. Aside from his commentary to the *Chuci* he wrote a substantial number of other works including rhapsodies, treatises, and poems (*Hou Hanshu* 70.2618). Other sources add that he later advanced to the office of inspector of Yuzhou 豫州刺史 followed by the position of prefect of Yuzhang 豫章太守.[9] He also participated

limitations in space. A subsequent study will examine them in comparison to their predecessors in order to take into account early modern reactions to traditional exegesis.

[8] For this approach that attempts to recapture the reader's experience of texts with interlinear commentary through rendering the main text in the understanding of a respective interpretation while maintaining the commentary's explicatory function see Wagner (2003, 112–116) For a broader reflection by Wagner on the function and usefulness of "commentary translation" see (Li 2015, 491ff).

[9] Yuzhou designates a region shared by Honan, Anhui, and Jiangsu province. Yuzhang is the Han administrative name for the capital city of

in the compilation of the *Dongguan Hanji* 東觀漢記 (Records of the Han from the Eastern Repository).[10] These additional data suggest that, contrary to his short biography in *Hou Hanshu*, Wang did achieve high ranks within the Han bureaucracy that involved various compilation projects, part of which may have been the composition of his *Chuci zhangju*.

Wang Yi explains his motivation for extending his commentary to include other works from the *Chuci* in his postface to "Lisao" (*Soji sakuin* 1979, 20–21 [7–83]).[11] He argues that an interpretation of "Lisao" established by Liu An 劉安 (?178–122 BCE) was later distorted by the Section and Sentence Commentaries to "Lisao" written by Ban Gu 班固 (32–92 CE) and Jia Kui 賈逵 (30–100 CE).[12] Wang further criticises their complete disregard of the additional fifteen chapters of works either written or related to Qu Yuan that Liu Xiang 劉向 (77–6 BCE) had included in his *Chuci* anthology. In an attempt to refute Ban Gu's Qu Yuan critique,[13] Wang Yi examined the old chapters, combined them into a "classic with commentaries" (*jingzhuan* 經傳), and made a Section and Sentence commentary in sixteen chapters (*Soji sakuin* 1979, 20 [79]).

Based on his statement, the commentaries and prefaces to all chapters of the received version of *Chuci zhangju*, even including a seventeenth chapter attributed to Wang Yi himself, have been thought to be written by him. Modern research has rightly called this editorial history into doubt.[14] The *Wenxuan* 文選 (Selections of Refined Literature) though attests that a chapter entitled "Jiuge" existed at the time of Xiao Tong's 蕭統 (501–531 CE) compilation. It contains "Yunzhong jun" and three other songs from this chapter included in transmitted editions of the *Chuci zhangju*. This selection is preceded by a preface that appears to be quite literally an abridged version of the preface to "Jiuge" contained in *Chuci zhangju*, as exemplified by the highlighted characters in the citation below (*Wenxuan* 1981, 464).[15] The preface to "Jiuge" has been essential in providing the background against which "Yunzhong jun" and the other works contained in the chapter were read:

> The Nine Songs were created by Qu Yuan. In ancient times, in the Southern capital of Ying of the State of Chu, between the rivers Yuan and Xiang, its common people believed in ghosts and consequently were fond of sacrifices. For their sacrifices, they needed to perform songs,

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Jiangxi province, Nanchang (Tan 1982, II: 49–50).

[10] For additional information see Jiang (1982, 105f); Li (1988, 414f); Xu (2011, 4f). A critical summary of existing research on Wang Yi is contained in Schimmelpfennig (2005, 28–40).

[11] For a complete translation and analysis of the postface see Schimmelpfennig (2005, 339–374).

[12] Indicators for the existence of such a work are the prefaces by Ban Gu preserved in *Chuci buzhu* with the sub-commentary by Hong Xingzu. Compare *Soji sakuin* (1979, 21–22 [83–87]). There is no other evidence apart from Wang Yi that Ban Gu's contribution had the form of a Section and Sentence commentary.

[13] Jia Kui appears only once in the postface. Wang's criticism is entirely directed against the position of Ban Gu.

[14] Later editorial interventions into the original *Chuci zhangju* have been significant. These include the re-arrangement of chapters chronologically by author and the repositioning of the prefaces which had originally appeared at the end of each chapter. Compare Yu (1980, 1228). The discovery that a substantial portion of commentaries to chapters attributed to Han authors in *Chuci zhangju* do not follow the typical pattern of section and sentence commentaries has given rise to a discussion about the authorship of these commentaries. Compare Miyano (1987); Schimmelpfennig (2005, 650–751); Liao Dongliang (2008, 365–415); Chen (2021, 107–147).

[15] It is assumed that the redaction goes back to the commentator Li Shan 李善 (630–689 CE).

music, drums, and dance to please all spirits. Qu Yuan was exiled, and hid in their regions, stricken by bitter poison with bouts of anxiety surging up strongly within him. Going out, he faced the locals' sacrificial rites and music accompanying the songs and dances, the lyrics of which were crude and vulgar. Owing to this [Qu Yuan] created the tunes of the Nine Songs. On their surface he praised the respectfulness in serving the spirits while underneath he revealed his own resentment against injustice suffered, entrusting the tunes with admonition. For this reason, their lyrics and their message are not the same, their stanzas and the lines of verses are uneven in length, and they set forth distinct meanings.

《九歌》者，屈原之所作也。昔楚國南郢之邑，沅、湘之間，其俗信鬼而好祠。其祠，必作歌樂鼓舞以樂諸神。屈原放逐，竄伏其域，懷憂苦毒，愁思沸鬱。出見俗人祭祀之禮，歌舞之樂，其詞鄙陋，因為作《九歌》之曲。上陳事神之敬，下見己之冤結，託之以風諫[也]。故其文意不同，章句雜錯，而廣異義焉。 (*Chuci zhangju shuzheng* 2007, 742–746). [16]

The preface can be divided into four parts: an author attribution that is followed by a general setting of scene in the southern part of the ancient state of Chu. Into this scene the famous poet and author Qu Yuan is inserted as an exile in hiding, who, triggered by the crude sacrificial customs of the indigenous people living there, acts as a bringer of ritual reform. The final two sentences focus on the nature of the songs. The first claims that a surface reading needs to be distinguished from an underlying reading. The latter reveals the poet's resentment against his unjust treatment which results in the songs serving as remonstrances. The second sentence justifies the unevenness of the textual material gathered in the "Jiuge" chapter, the varying length of individual songs, and the differences in lyrics and messages. The author of the preface, most probably Wang Yi,[17] apparently felt it necessary to justify the heterogenous nature of the eleven works contained in the chapter, attributing this heterogeneity to the circumstances of their creation. As will become clear in the commentary survey below, the preface played a normative role in shaping all commentators' overall understanding of the "Jiuge".[18] More

[16] For an indexed version of the preface in the *Sibu beiyao* 四部備要 edition see *Soji sakuin* (1979, 24–25 [96–97]). The characters in grey colour represent the exact sequence of characters of the preface contained in *Wenxuan*. I will refer to it when addressing the commentary of the Five Ministers.

[17] Tim Chan, based on research by Lin Weichun 林维春, suggests that the prefaces to sixteen of the now seventeen chapters in the *Chuci* were created as part of the compilation reports Liu Xiang handed in with the newly compiled editions of texts (Chan 1998, 306f). However, it is evident from the form and content of the prefaces contained in *Chuci zhangju* that their author emulated the small prefaces (*xiao xu* 小序) of the *Shijing* 詩經 (Canon of Songs). This modelling coincides with Wang Yi's intention to present Qu Yuan as an equal to the poets of the *Shijing* who, according to tradition, had been selected by Confucius. In addition, Wang Yi's postface and the shorter preface to the "Lisao" contain interpretative patterns that are crucial for understanding Wang Yi's approach. For an analysis of these patterns see Schimmelpfennig (2005, 362–395).

[18] While Arthur Waley joined the criticism of the misleading and moralising nature of traditional "Confucian" commentaries that arose in China in the late 1920s and subsequently in the West, in his translation of the *Dao De jing* 道德經, the information provided in the preface clearly does lend support to his theory that the remnants of an ancient form of Chinese shamanism underlie the majority of the "Jiuge".

importantly, assuming its origin in Wang Yi, the preface provides us with a blueprint of how its earliest commentator conceived "Yunzhong jun".

In order to gain an idea of the contents of "Yunzhong jun" itself and of what may distinguish Wang Yi's understanding from that of others, let us compare the rendering by Arthur Waley with my own translation of the song's main text extrapolated from the commentary of Wang Yi.[19] There is no specific reason for choosing Arthur Waley's translation over any other aside from its renown and Waley's own conviction that he represented the song detached from traditional interpretations. The point of this initial parallel presentation without Wang Yi's commentary will become obvious immediately:

The Lord amid the Clouds	The Lord amidst Clouds
I have washed in a brew of orchid, bathed in sweet scents,	Bathe in orchid broth, purify yourself with fragrances,
Many-coloured are my garments; I am like a flower.	and richly adorn your coloured clothes with ginger petals!
Now in long curves the spirit has come down.	The Spirit master still bends and turns when it lingers,
In a blaze of brightness unending.	its glare so bright and garish without end.
Chien! "He is coming to rest at the Abode of Life;	Lo! It desires to be soothed in the Temple of Longevity,
As a sun, as a moonbeam glows his light.	where it matches sun and moon in radiance.
In dragon chariot and the vestment of a god,	Carried by a dragon and in Sovereigns' dress,
Hither and thither a little while he moves.	for the moment it hovers and floats around.
	The spirit in great majesty came down.
The spirit, brilliant and dazzling, descended.	In a dash it lifts into the distance amidst the clouds.
Now he soars up swiftly amid the clouds.	It overlooks the region of Ji and what lies beyond.
He looks down on the province of Chi and far beyond;	It cuts across the Four Seas. Where are its limits?
He traverses the Four Seas; endless his flight.	Longing for its majesty, I heave weary sighs.
Longing for that lord I heave a deep sigh;	My worn-out heart, pounding, pounding.[20]
My heart is greatly troubled; I am very sad.	
(Waley 1955, 27).	

From Arthur Waley's anthropological angle (left column), a shamaness herself conducts a purification ritual that entices the spirit to descend into a place he renders as "Abode of Life".[21] After hovering there briefly as brightly shining light, the spirit swiftly ascends back into the clouds. The end of their meeting is indicated by a break between lines. It is followed by observations of the spirit's movements and capabilities, and it concludes with the gloomy final statement of the left-behind shamaness. Waley even notes the quality of a love affair in these encounters.[22]

In Wang Yi's understanding (right column), the agent cannot be the shaman. The commentary confirms the situation described in the preface to the "Jiuge". It is Qu Yuan who orders a "spirit master" — rather a medium than a shaman — to purify him- or herself. In line with Wang Yi's preface, Qu

[19] A full translation of the text with Wang Yi's commentary follows below.

[20] My own translation will be presented in detail with the text in Chinese below.

[21] "I take the speaker throughout to be the shaman, presumably in this case a woman" (Waley 1955, 28).

[22] "In these songs, shamanism assumes a particular form, I think, not known in the classic shamanistic areas—Siberia, Manchuria, Central Asia. The shaman's relation with the Spirit is represented as a kind of love-affair" (Waley 1955, 13).

Yuan brings ritual order to this remote place. In Wang Yi's understanding it is the purified and adorned "spirit master" whose movements announce the presence of the spirit. The light the spirit emanates matches that of sun and moon. The spirit's attire seems to foreshadow Qu Yuan's implied association of the spirit with his king, one underlying meaning that is expressed in the commentary to the final lines of the song, where again it is Qu Yuan, not the medium, who is left in despair.

The juxtaposition with Waley's rendering highlights some of Wang Yi's principal exegetical decisions: Waley assumed that by stripping the song off its supposedly misleading traditional commentary, he would look at a depiction of an ancient shamanic ritual, albeit in literary form. What he may not have realised, however, was that Wang Yi's preface itself provided him with the initial idea of the shamanic origin of the songs contained in "Jiuge".[23] Wang Yi's starting point was different: Due to a lack of any further information about the pre-history of the poem, we can only assume that by the time Liu Xiang compiled the earliest version of what became the *Chuci*, "Yunzhong jun" was regarded as part of Qu Yuan's oeuvre. When Wang Yi wrote his Section and Sentence commentary, he had only what was known about the poet-minister's biography, the "Lisao" and other works attributed to the Chu poet to go by.[24] Judging from the sources available, Wang Yi retrieved the deeper meaning and established the assumed subtext of the "Jiuge" by himself.[25] "Yunzhong jun" thus became part of his effort to show that Qu Yuan's other literary creations shared the characteristics that proved that the "Lisao" and its poet were worthy of canonisation.

Let us now consider the full text of "Yunzhong jun" with Wang Yi's complete commentary in order to distinguish the commentator's main exegetical moves and to present the reading that all later commentators addressed in this article take as their starting point:

> [1–2] 'Bathe in orchid broth, purify yourself with fragrances, and richly adorn your coloured clothes with ginger petals!' 浴蘭湯兮沐芳，華采衣兮若英。
>
> > [Orchid is a fragrant plant.] [26] To richly adorn means to adorn in five colours.[27] [Ginger] means the galangal plant.[28] [Qu Yuan] says: I am about to offer a food offering in service to the cloud spirit for which I have a spirit medium first bathe in orchid broth, clean himself with fragrances, dress in five colours and adorn his clothes and attire richly with ginger petals to purify himself. 蘭

[23] There is a striking similarity between his approach and that of August Conrady (1864–1925) to the "Tianwen" 天問 (Heavenly Questions), the third chapter of the *Chuci*, Conrady (1931). Conrady's idea of reconstructing the images on a temple's walls supposedly described by Qu Yuan in the poem were clearly drawn from the preface to the poem.

[24] Compare Sima Qian's 司馬遷 (ca. 145–ca. 86 BCE) biography of Qu Yuan in *Shiji* (1982, 84: 2481–2491). On other sources pertaining to Qu Yuan and "Lisao" during the Han see Schimmelpfennig (2004, 112–137).

[25] This is suggested by Wang's critique that Ban Gu and Jia Kui did not engage with the other fifteen chapters in Liu Xiang's compilation. See Wang Yi's postface to "Lisao" in Jiang (1993, 20).

[26] Only *Chuci buzhu* contains this gloss. *Soji sakuin* (1979, 26 [101]). Verse lines 1 and 2 of the main text are combined in all other editions. See *Chuci zhangju shuzheng* (2007, 775). In the edition of the Six Ministers even the first four lines are combined. This edition arranges the entire text into sets of four lines. Compare *Liu Chen* (1999, 598).

[27] This annotation is problematic. Compare Jiang (1985, 3: 567).

[28] The type of ginger cannot be defined (Jiang 1985, 3: 564–567).

香草也。華采，五色采也。若，杜若也。言己將脩饗祭，以事雲神，乃使靈巫先浴蘭湯，沐香芷，衣五采華衣，飾以杜若之英，以自潔清也。[29]

[3] The spirit master still bends and turns when it lingers, 靈連蜷兮既留，

Spirit master means a medium. The people of Chu call mediums spirit masters. [Bends and turns] serves as an illustration for [the movement of] guiding when receiving the spirit. [When] means already. [Linger] means to pause. 靈，巫也，楚人名巫爲靈子。連蜷，巫迎神導引貌也。既，已也。留，止也。

[4] its glare so bright and garish, never ending. 爛昭昭兮未央。

Glare serves as an illustration for radiance. So bright and garish means brilliant. Never ending means infinite.[30] [Qu Yuan] says: The mediator carries the insignia in a respectful and reverent manner, greeting the spirit politely while leading it. His facial expression is sincere, his body bending and turning, whereupon the spirit is so delighted that it must linger and pause. Looking at its radiant appearance, it is glaringly bright and brilliant, its extent without any limits. 爛光貌也。昭昭，明也。未央，未已也。言巫執事肅敬，奉迎導引，顏貌矜莊，形體連蜷，神則歡喜，必留而止。見其光容爛然昭明，長無極已也。 (*Chuci zhangju shuzheng* 2007, 774–781).

Employing the division into glosses and paraphrases typical for Section and Sentence commentaries, Wang Yi introduces the agent immediately at the beginning of his paraphrase to line 1.[31] The first person pronoun *ji* 己[32] establishes Qu Yuan as the proponent of what is to follow and the song as the description of the ensuing action.[33] Glosses supply information about the fragrance of plants, their purifying role, and their colourfulness, suggesting the cleanliness and good scents that serve both as a reference to what attracts the spirit as expressed in the paraphrase to line 4, and the pure nature of the initiator of the ritual. Wang Yi further points out the presence of terminology specific to the region of Chu, employed here to avoid a reader mistaking *ling* 靈 as another designation for the spirit as in line

[29] In similar endings of paraphrases in the commentary to "Lisao" *zi* 自 always refer to Qu Yuan. Accordingly, it would be Qu Yuan purifying himself by means of ginger leaves. Here, however, the statement at the beginning of the paraphrase is clear that it is Qu Yuan causing the medium to do the purifying.

[30] Hong Xingzu gives the gloss in abbreviated form as *yang, ji ye* 央已也, *Soji sakuin* (1979, 101).

[31] In using a Section and Sentence commentary, Wang Yi intentionally opted for the standard form of commentary on the Classics at the time. For a description of the genre and the development of Section and Sentence commentaries during the Han dynasty see Schimmelpfennig (2002).

[32] The use of this pronoun as a reference to Qu Yuan is established in Wang Yi's commentary to the "Lisao", Schimmelpfennig (2005, 232 [note 22]).

[33] In Wang Yi's commentary the character *yan* 言 initiates each paraphrase. It is not a technical term that is often rendered as "[In the text above] it says" or simply "it is said" in translation of other commentaries, but a placeholder for the paraphrased statements of the poet, rendered here as "[Qu Yuan] says".

9. The ritual manner of the medium is refined, which may be taken as another hint at the beneficial influence of Qu Yuan on the ritual practices of the locals.

[5] Lo! It desires[34] to be soothed in the Temple of Longevity, 蹇將憺兮壽宮，

Lo is an exclamation.[35] To soothe means to calm down. The Temple of Longevity is a place for offering sacrifices to spirits. All who perform sacrifices there intend to reach longevity. That is why it is called the Temple of Longevity. [Qu Yuan] says: As soon as the cloud spirit has reached the Temple of Longevity, it happily absorbs the scent and feeds on wine and food, which calms and delights it soothingly to such an extent that it is without intention to leave. 蹇，詞也。憺，安也。壽宮，供神之處也，祠祀皆欲得壽，故名爲壽宮也。言雲神既至於壽宮，歆饗酒食，憺然安樂，無有去意也。

[6] it matches sun and moon in radiance. 與日月兮齊光。

To match means to be alike. Radiance means brightness. [Qu Yuan] says: The position of the cloud spirit Fenglong is so venerable and lofty that it equals the brightness of the sun and moon. Basically, when clouds rise, the sun and moon will be covered; when clouds hide, the sun and moon will be bright. That is why the text says: "matches in radiance". 齊，同也。光，明也。言雲神豐隆爵位尊高，乃與日月同光明也。夫雲興而日月闇，雲藏而日月明，故言「齊光」也。

[7] Carried by a dragon in Sovereigns' attire, 龍駕兮帝服，

Carried by a dragon means the cloud spirit rides on a dragon. That is why it is said in the *Book of Changes*: "The clouds follow the dragon".[36] Sovereign designates the sovereigns of the five cardinal directions. [Attire] means adornment.[37] [Qu Yuan] says: Heaven venerates the cloud spirit, letting it ride a dragon, wearing a thick blue-green and yellow dress with five exquisite colours, attired similar to the sovereigns of the five cardinal directions. 龍駕言雲神駕龍也。故易曰「雲從龍」也。帝謂五方之帝。服，飾也。言天尊雲神，使之乘龍，兼衣青黃五采之色，與五方帝同服也。

[8] for the moment it hovers and floats around. 聊翱游兮周章。

For the moment means for the time being. To float around is like circulating. [Qu Yuan] says: The cloud spirit will not stay in any place for long. Moving, it hovers, goes around in circles, goes

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[34] The character is understood to read *qiang* here in accordance with the paraphrase to line 5.

[35] This expression occurs rather often at the beginning of lines in the *Chuci*, which led Jiang Liangfu to render it as "then" or "thereupon" (Jiang 1985, 4: 392–393). Since these translations are unable to adequately reproduce Wang Yi's understanding of this as an exclamation, note that I take the character as an expression of incredulous astonishment at the lingering time of the spirit whose fickle nature becomes obvious in the following lines.

[36] Citation from the *Wenyan* 文言 commentary to the *yang* line in the 5th position in the Qian 乾 hexagram (*Shisanjing* 1980, 16).

[37] Only *Chuci buzhu* does not contain this gloss (*Soji sakuin* 1979, 102). In Wang Yi's paraphrase, the gloss is not taken up.

> away, comes back, both wandering around and hovering.[38] 聊，且也。周章猶周流也。言雲神居無常處，動則翱翔，周流往來，且遊戲也。 (*Chuci zhangju shuzheng* 2007, 781–786).

To line 5 Wang Yi adds an explanation for the name of the temple at which the ritual takes place, explaining its function as a site for sacrifices to the spirit of longevity.[39] Here we can only assume that we are looking at a cross reference to Qu Yuan's statements about the passing of time and the shortness of lifespan in "Lisao". Wang's addition at the end paraphrases that the spirit, once appeased by the steam of food and wine has no intention of leaving, which posits a special connection between the one sacrificing and the spirit. At the same time, it creates tension about what will happen next.

By adding that the cloud spirit is Fenglong, Wang Yi inserts a cross-reference to the spirit mentioned in "Lisao". There, Qu Yuan commands Fenglong to ride on clouds in search of the goddess Lady Fei (*Soji sakuin* 1979, 13 [51–52]). The rank of the spirit is not only underlined by its attributes in the paraphrase. Wang Yi adds a general rule of the ability of clouds to block the light of sun and moon to further highlight the song's juxtaposition of the spirit's brightness with that of sun and moon. Following his glosses to line 7, Wang Yi cites the *Yijing* 易經 (Canon of Changes). In his commentary to "Lisao" Wang Yi links these citations to characters in the main text to suggest the poet's deliberate and meaningful reference to canonised texts (Schimmelpfennig 2005, 460–485). As the sole citation in the entire commentary to "Yunzhong jun" the reference is evidently significant. The passage deals with correspondences between entities. Accordingly, clouds and dragons have an immutable relationship with one another.[40] Especially with citations from the *Yijing* it is not always easy to understand the implied connection. The point made here, however, seems rather obvious: the nature of the relationship between clouds and dragons is emblematic of the relationship between Qu Yuan and the cloud spirit, or at least the ideal nature of this relationship. Readers of Wang Yi's commentary who knew the *Wenyan* commentary by heart would have immediately remembered its concluding statement: "What originates in heaven is related to what is above, what originates from earth is related to what is below, each following its kind" 本乎天者親上，本乎地者親下，則各從其類也 (*Shisanjing zhushu* 1980, 16). Qu Yuan's implicit reference to a statement by Confucius, inserted by Wang Yi, points to a natural separation of belonging that was upended by the poet-minister's banishment to a place not of "his kind". The following paraphrase elaborates on this point by postulating the cloud spirit's equality with the rulers of the five cardinal directions, expressed in the colours worn. This mention of colours points to the medium in line 1–2, who, almost in anticipation of what is to come, has been dressed by Qu Yuan in "sovereign colours" corresponding to those of the spirit. Wang Yi elevates the status of the

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[38] In editions of *Wenxuan*, the end of the paraphrase is different: "... both wandering and hovering" 且遊且翱也. See *Liu Chen* (1999, 598); *Wenxuan* (1981, 464).

[39] For other sources on the existence of such temples during the Han and earlier compare Jiang (1985, 1: 181).

[40] Compare Richard Wilhelm's rendering: "The nine in the fifth position means, 'Flying dragon in the sky. It is beneficial to see the great man'. What does that mean? The Master said: 'Whatever corresponds in tone resonates with one another; what is congenial in the innermost being seeks one another'. Water flows towards the damp; fire turns to dryness; clouds follow the dragon; winds follow the tiger. The wise man arises, and all beings look to him. What comes from heaven feels related to what is above. What comes from the earth feels related to what is below. Each one follows its kind" (Wilhelm 1976, 352f, translated into English by author).

cloud spirit further by suggesting its veneration by heaven itself. We may not push our interpretation too far in suggesting that Wang Yi appears to conceive Qu Yuan's words as sublime associations of the cloud spirit with a ruler.

[9] The spirit, brilliant and dazzling, descended. 靈皇皇兮既降，

> Spirit refers to the cloud spirit. Brilliant and dazzling serves here as an illustration of beauty. To descend means to come down.[41] [Qu Yuan] says: The cloud spirit has come down, his appearance brilliant and dazzling, possessing a radiant pattern. 靈謂雲神也。皇皇，美貌也。降，下也。言雲神來下，其貌皇皇而美，有光文也。

[10] In a dash, it lifts into the distance amidst the clouds. 猋遠舉兮雲中。

> In a dash serves here as an illustration for leaving in great hurry. In the midst of clouds is where the cloud spirit resides. [Qu Yuan] says: The cloud spirit's coming and going away takes place in great haste, no sooner has it satisfied itself with drinks and food then it dashingly lifts into the distance again returning to its residence. 猋去疾貌也。雲中，雲神所居也。言雲神往來急疾，飲食既飽，猋然遠舉，復還其處也。

[11] It overlooks the region of Ji and what lies beyond. 覽冀州兮有餘，

> To overlook means to gaze into the distance. The region between the two rivers is called Region of Ji.[42] What lies beyond is [to be understood here] like other areas.[43] [Qu Yuan] says: The place where the cloud spirit is located is so high and remote that it looks [not merely] into the distance at the region of Ji but it even sees the other realms beyond. 覽，望也。兩河之間曰冀州。餘猶他方也。言雲神所在高邈，乃望於冀州，尚復見他方也。

[12] It cuts across the four seas. How could it be limited? 橫四海兮焉窮。

> Limit means endpoint. [Qu Yuan] says: The cloud spirit comes and goes in an instant; within a moment it moves horizontally across the four seas. How could there be ultimate endpoints [to its movement]? 窮，極也。言雲神出入奄忽，須臾之間，橫行四海，安有窮極也。 (*Chuci zhangju shuzheng* 2007, 786–791).

The glosses and paraphrases to lines 9 to 12 expand on the abruptness of the spirit's return, its "regular location" which became part of the song's title, and the oversight this elevated position allows that goes way beyond the region associated with Chu. Note that Wang Yi employs glosses like that on the Region of Ji and others in his commentary that also appear in the *Erya* 爾雅 (The Glossary) (Schimmelpfennig

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[41] This gloss is contained in *Erya* 爾雅 and *Shuowen jiezi* 說文解字 (*Shisanjing zhushu* 1980, 2582.3; Xu 1981, 732, respectively). The possibly deliberate use of Xu Shen's dictionary by Wang Yi is discussed in Schimmelpfennig (2005, 403–407).

[42] This statement is contained in *Erya*. Compare *Shisanjing zhushu* (1980, 2614.3). In the *Shang shu* 尚書 (Venerable Records), the expression denotes the northernmost of the Nine Regions into which the empire was divided under the legendary Great Yu 大禹 (*Shisanjing zhushu* 1980, 146, 2). The region is located north of the Yellow River.

[43] The *Chuci buzhu* edition does not contain the character fang 方 (*Soji sakuin* 1979, 102).

2005, 402–403). While the status of this work canonised later during the Han is unclear, its use may indicate another technique that points at the relationship between Qu Yuan's poetry and the *Shijing*. Wang Yi understands line 12 as Qu Yuan's statement on the ultimately capricious and indeterminable movement of the cloud spirit that triggers the pain described in the last lines of the song.

[13] Longing for His Majesty, I heave weary sighs. 思夫君兮太息，

His majesty refers to the cloud spirit. 君謂雲神也。

[14] My worn-out heart, pounding, pounding. 極勞心兮忡忡。

Pounding, pounding serves as an illustration of a troubled heart. When Qu Yuan becomes aware that once moved, the clouds travel thousand leagues and circle the [area of] the four seas, he imagines succeeding in following them to gaze at [the areas in] the four cardinal directions to forget his melancholy longings, but, when he realises that he can never achieve it, he (thus) heaves weary sighs and the inside of his heart,[44] afflicted and worn, pounds and pounds. (Someone else said: His Majesty refers to King Huai. Qu Yuan arranged his presentation of the cloud spirit in a way that his sorrowful thoughts reach him again as the words near the end. He bemoans King Huai's dark delusion and incomprehension, which is why he consequently heaves weary sighs and moans, unable to stop his heart from frequently pounding and pounding.)[45] 忡忡，憂心貌。屈原見雲一動千里，周遍四海，想得隨從，觀望四方，以忘己憂思，而念之終不可得，故太息而歎，心中煩勞而忡忡也。或曰，君謂懷王也。屈原陳敘雲神，文義略訖，愁思復至。哀念懷王暗昧不明，則太息歎喟，心每忡忡而不能已也。 (*Chuci zhangju shuzheng* 2007, 791–793).

While the only gloss to line 13 clearly states that "His Majesty" (*fujun* 夫君) refers to the cloud spirit, the second paraphrase to line 14 highlights the idea triggered by the preface to the "Jiuge" to understand *jun* as a reference to King Huai of Chu, the king who banished Qu Yuan. However, it stands to question whether this second paraphrase was part of Wang Yi's original commentary, and if so, where Wang Yi could have sourced this alternative reading from. Its initial character *huo* would generally imply that someone else presented an alternative reading. However, with a gloss of identical syntax with the gloss to line 13 at its beginning that contradicts the previous annotation, the second paraphrase gives the impression of an alternative version of the final paraphrase added by a later editor.

Both paraphrases are distinct from the previous commentary. Suddenly there is an interlocutor telling the reader how the poet's emotional reaction at the end of the song should be understood. Though the first paraphrase speaks about clouds and not a cloud spirit, its interpretation is striking. It leaves Qu Yuan as the initiator of a sacrifice in exile, who upon contemplating the spirit's rapid departure

[44] In *Wenxuan* editions the characters 心中 appear in reverse order (*zhong xin* 中心). While Wang Yi uses this expression in his commentary to "Lisao", its meaning of "impartial mind" does not make sense in the context of this commentary to line 14. Compare *Liu Chen* (1999, 617); *Wenxuan* (1981, 465).

[45] This part is absent in *Wenxuan* editions.

into the clouds — or rather the rapid movement of clouds into which the spirit disappeared — develops a longing to go elsewhere, followed by the realisation that he can't leave, which makes his heart pound heavily. Understood in this way, "Yunzhong jun" echos "Lisao". Though the paraphrasing does not specify King Huai, the poem nevertheless becomes a protest of Qu Yuan against his wrongful treatment by the king, whom he nevertheless cannot leave.

The second paraphrase which takes His Majesty in line 13 as a reference to King Huai seems twice removed in that it claims to know why the poet arranged the work in the manner he did. Here Qu Yuan's heavy sighs triggered by his longing for King Huai are understood as returning thoughts that criticise the king's delusion and foolishness. This understanding is less convincing because it rests on a reading that essentially disconnects the last two lines from the rest of the poem.[46] It may therefore be no accident that the editors of the *Wenxuan* did not include this second paraphrase in their text, provided they were aware of its existence at the time.[47]

Wang Yi's commentary to "Yunzhong jun" is a complex and sophisticated reading that posits the work firmly within the "historical" context claimed by the preface to the "Jiuge". The historicising alignment of his reading of the poem with the preface follows the conventions established by the Mao commentarial tradition to the *Shijing* (Zoeren 1991). It supports Wang Yi's claim in the postface that Qu Yuan's other poetry beyond "Lisao" must be included in any evaluation of him, as it attests to his true status as the poet equal to those of the Songs in the *Shijing* (*Soji sakuin* 1979, 110 [79]).

2. Revision of Wang Yi — the Five Ministers

The following commentary is an oddity regarding its composition. In the year 718 Lü Yanzuo 呂延祚 (n.d.), vice president of the board of public works, submitted a commentary to the *Wenxuan* to the Tang emperor Xuanzong 玄宗 (r. 712–756). It consisted of the "notes" of five scholars about whom we hardly know anything beside their names. These commentaries by Liu Liang 劉良, Zhang Xian 張銑, Lü Xiang 呂向, Li Zhouhan 李周翰, Lü Yanji 呂延濟 were supposed to supplement an earlier commentary to the anthology by Li Shan 李善 (630–689 CE). Li Shan's commentary was considered tedious because it mainly consisted of citations from other texts including terms that appeared in the *Wenxuan* with a similar meaning (Knechtges 1982, 52f). According to scholars Li Zhonghua and Zhu Bingxiang, Li Shan abbreviated Wang Yi's prefaces, introduced some errors and misunderstandings, and apparently also cut short some of Wang Yi's commentaries (Li and Zhu 1996,

[46] A slightly more sophisticated version of this interpretation can be found in the sub-commentary by Hong Xingzu 洪興祖 (1090–1155 CE). Accordingly, with the cloud spirit Qu Yuan hinted at King Huai. In saying that its virtue equalled that of sun and moon in brightness and enabled it to overlook the entire realm, he compared it to King Huai who would never be like this and consequently felt deeply sad. Compare *Soji sakuin* (1979, 103).

[47] The comment of one of the Five Ministers contains an interpretation that *jun* 君 also refers to the lord, namely King Huai. *Liu Chen zhu wenxuan* 1999, 617. Perhaps this is an indication that this commentator knew of the other interpretation.

81–86). Against this background it is difficult to imagine the editorial process that led to *Wu chen zhu* 五臣注 (Commentary of the Five Ministers). Could Lü Yanzuo have chosen from five different commentaries? Or are we to think of the Five Ministers as members of a literary salon who jotted down notes during discussions which went on to be compiled by Lü? Remarkably, in some versions of the text their commentaries precede Wang Yi's reading (*Riben zuli xuexiao Liu Chen zhu Wenxuan* 2014, 508 [2030–2032]). In others they follow his reading, resembling a sub-commentary. Something all editions have in common is that their commentaries follow each couplet of a song, rather than each line. The Five Ministers even comment on the first two couplets of "Yunzhong jun" as one unit, doubling down on Wang Yi's arrangement which had affixed a joint annotation to the first two lines as a couplet but to each individual line of "Yunzhong jun" thereafter. Judging from the sporadic nature of their entries, each of the annotations by the Five Ministers seem almost like independent commentaries. It is evident that many of their annotations aimed to clarify and shorten the commentary of their predecessor. Though Li and Zhu regard Li Shan's and their work as somewhat flawed attempts to make Wang Yi's commentary more readily understandable to a wider reading audience, their claim that the Five Ministers did not divert from Wang Yi's understanding is incorrect (Li and Zhu 1996, 83f).

A comparison of the preface to the "Jiuge" in *Chuci zhangju* with the *Wenxuan* version illustrates the considerable degree of redaction.[48] The commentators kept the authorial attribution, cut short the geographical description but retained the statement that Qu Yuan made the "Jiuge" to improve the ritual customs of the locals. They further removed all information pertaining to Qu Yuan's emotional state as well as the sentence on surface and subtext understandings, leaving only the final remark that Qu Yuan "entrusted the tunes with admonition" (Liu Chen 1999, 597). The fact that neither the sequence nor the position of any character was changed, and that the remaining excerpts were merely strung together, is indeed indicative of a process of redaction seeking to shorten the text.

Possibly owing to the fact that the *Wenxuan* contains only a selection of songs from the "Jiuge" chapter, the Five Ministers supply comments to individual song titles. Lü Yanji's annotation to the first song "Donghuang Taiyi" (東皇太一) refers to all of them:

> [In the notes by Lü Yan] ji it is said: The title of each of the pieces are all designations of spirits of Chu. The reason the titles follow each song at the end, is yet again like the preference in title arrangement of the Mao version of the *Book of Songs.* 濟曰：每篇之目皆楚之神名；所以列於篇後者，亦猶毛詩題章之趣。 (*Liu Chen* 1999, 597).[49]

[48] The characters highlighted in grey in the citation of the "Jiuge" preface in *Chuci zhangju* represent Li's redacted version. Compare citation linked to note 16.

[49] The combination of Li Shan's commentary with that of the Five Ministers *Wu chen zhu* 五臣注 occurred only during the Song dynasty. Editions that solely contain the commentaries by the Five Ministers like the Chen Balang 陳八郎 edition of 1161 are very rare (Knechtges and Chang 2014, 1322–1323; 1335). The version used for the present study is a photomechanical reprint of *Liu Chen zhu Wen xuan* 六臣注文選 from *Sibu congkan* 四部叢刊.

All titles are identified as the names of spirits or deities in Chu. The statement about the position of the titles demonstrates the commentator's awareness of Wang Yi's intention to present the *Chuci* in the format of the *Shijing*. The statement can also serve as indirect evidence for the layout of Wang Yi's commentary used by Lü Yanji. The *Wenxuan* commentators preferred to place the titles at the beginning of each song instead.

To the title of "Yunzhong jun" Liu Liang adds that the deity with this name is the Cloud master Bingyi" 雲中君，雲師屏翳也. [50] This may be another reference to Wang Yi's annotation to a deity by the name of Fenglong 豐隆 in line 112 of "Lisao" which mentions Bingyi as an alternative designation for the cloud deity. We may wonder though why Wang Yi should have added her alternative name, since Bingyi is not mentioned elsewhere in the *Chuci*. It is clear, however, that historically the gloss triggered an endless debate about the possible role of the deity, ranging from its association with clouds, rain, or thunder, that has continued up to the present day.[51]

Liu Liang's next commentary follows line 4 of the song. He reuses a range of glosses from Wang Yi's commentary:

> [3/4] "Spirit master, bend and turn very carefully, for [the spirit's] glare is bright and garish without end!" 靈連蜷兮既留，爛昭昭兮未央。
>
> > [According to] Liu Liang [(Spirit) master] means mediator. [Bend and turn] serves as an illustration for [the movement of] guiding the spirit. Glare means radiance. [Bright and garish] means brilliant. End means limit. [Qu Yuan] says: During the preparations for a coming sacrificial offering, [I] first make the spirit mediator bathe in orchid fragrance, dress in garments of five colours, and striving to make his scent pure, further adorn him with ginger petals. Regarding guiding the Lord Amidst Clouds, [I] let the [spirit mediator] go about this very carefully, [for] the spirit's radiance is glaring, shining so bright it is limitless. 劉良：靈，巫也。連蜷，導引神貌。爛，光也。昭昭，明也。央，極也。言將祭祀之事，先使靈巫沐浴蘭芳，衣五色之服，務其芳潔，又飾若英也。導引也雲中君，使留心與此，神光爛然，明明無極。 (*Liu Chen* 1999, 558).

A comparison of the glosses with those from Wang Yi's commentary shows that Liu Liang copied the glosses from Wang Yi but redacted most of them in a similar fashion to what we have observed in the preface. Information that he considered redundant or that could be integrated in the following paraphrase is left out. Liu's paraphrase reproduces the understanding of Wang Yi but disagrees as to the interpretation of the final character of line 3. Wang Yi had understood the meaning of *liu* 留 as expressing the spirit's lingering. This reading would require a change of subject within one line of verse. Liu Liang instead understands the character to refer to the spirit master's going about his business

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[50] In *Wenxuan* editions this annotation appears at the end of Liu Liang's commentary to line 3. Compare *Liu Chen* (1999, 598).

[51] *Chuci jijiao jizhu* (2003, 1: 743–745). Jiang Liangfu has demonstrated that both spirits are mentioned in relation to clouds, thunder, and rain (Jiang 1985, 1:245–246).

carefully. He thus maintains the subject and conceives the second half to be about the danger posed by the spirit's radiance.

The commentary by Zhang Xian to the next couplet (lines 5–6) follows a similar pattern. The glosses from Wang Yi are either quoted verbatim or slightly modified. Zhang avoids Wang Yi's obvious additions like his mention of the spirit's nourishment or the explanation of the aim of the sacrifices performed at the temple of longevity. He also modifies the reading of Wang Yi, arguing that the pacification of the spirit in the temple is responsible for an even brighter display of its innate power (*de* 德) and that this leads to its matching sun and moon in brightness.

In his annotation to lines 7 and 8 Lü Xiang discards Wang Yi's complex rendering based on a reference to *Yijing* which appeared to be a cornerstone for Wang's interpretation. It stands to question whether Lü was aware of Wang Yi's rationale behind adding that citation. Later commentaries note that dragons ride on clouds and not the other way around as Wang Yi suggested, which may explain Lü's decision. Lü's own reading of both lines consists of one short paraphrase that introduces the dragon-pulled vehicle in which the spirit is driven, reduces Wang's complex colour explanation to the colours of the rulers of the five directions, and adds swiftness to the movement of the spirit: "This means: the spirit rides in a cloud dragon chariot, draped in the attire of the emperors of the five directions, it hovers and floats around in a swift come-and-go manner" 言神駕雲龍之車，為五方帝服，翱游，周章，往來迅疾貌. In comparison it is evident that Lü intends to "rationalise" Wang Yi's understanding, aiming at a plainer reading of these lines.

Liu Liang's understanding of carefulness in engaging with the spirit as well as Zhang Xian's remark about the spirit's increased brightness lays groundwork for the interpretation of the final lines of "Yunzhong jun". The paraphrases by Lü and Liu are complex and merit a detailed examination:

> [11/12] Looking over the region of Ji to what lies beyond, [its view] goes straight across the four seas to the realms' limits. 覽冀州兮有餘，橫四海兮焉窮。
>
> > [Lü Yan] ji [comments]: [Limit] 窮 means endpoint 極. [Qu Yuan] says: The place where the spirit abides is high and separated, below it looks over the region of Ji, gazes across the [region between the] Four Seas, and all which lies beyond that is without end. The region of Ji is the space which [Emperor] Yao oversaw. Since he longed for a lord with principles, he looked over it. 濟：窮，極也。言神所居高絕，下覽冀州，橫望四海，皆有餘而無極也。冀州，堯所都也。思有道之君，故覽之。 (*Liu Chen* 1999, 598).

The spirit as the subject from line 10 is maintained in lines 11 and 12. Its exalted position in the clouds allows it to have a view of the entire realm. Here the paraphrase is followed by another gloss explaining the name Jizhou. It suggests that Qu Yuan used the name Jizhou deliberately. Lü's annotation points to an analogy between the cloud spirit, Emperor Yao, and Qu Yuan who, as evidenced by the "Lisao", has been searching everywhere for a principled lord. This understanding is corroborated by Liu Liang's following paraphrase to lines 13 and 14. Employing an opening which is syntactically similar to the previous paraphrase by Lü, Liu conceives the last lines as an implicit analogy:

[13/14] "Out of longing for Your Majesty, I heave weary sighs, as my worn-out heart is pounding sorrowfully. 思夫君兮太息，極勞心兮忡忡。

> [Liu] Liang says: Your Majesty refers to the spirit. With it [Qu Yuan] hints at [his] lord. Pounding and pounding means to grieve. [Qu Yuan] says: [The place] where His Majesty abides is high and distant, below he establishes those in charge of the state. My yearning for the lord [revolves around] never [to be permitted] to have an audience with him again. For this reason, I heave weary sighs being deeply distressed. 良曰：夫君，謂靈神，以喻君也。忡忡，憂也。言夫君所居高遠，下制有國。我之思君，終不可見，故歎息而憂心也。 (*Liu Chen* 1999, 598)

Liu Liang infers the carefulness necessitated when dealing with the spirit's radiance as the first indicator of a subtext. Zhang Xian takes up this topic when he understands the display of the cloud spirit's glare that matches sun and moon as a display of virtue or innate power. Only the commentary to the final couplet by Lü Yanji and Liu Liang reveals that Qu Yuan conceived the cloud spirit as a representation of a ruler, first as an analogy between its divine abilities with those of the legendary emperor Yao, then in Qu Yuan's distance to the spirit that returned into the clouds, and finally in the reaction of the banished poet to the distance between him and his king that is ultimately as insurmountable as the distance between him and the spirit or the sky. The loftiness of the spirit denotes the distance between the king who is in control of those he appoints to oversee the state and Qu Yuan who, facing his final banishment, will not be considered for office again.

It should be noted that Liu Liang avails himself of a technical term for implicit readings "to hint at" (*yiyu* 以喻), which is employed frequently in Wang Yi's commentary to "Lisao". Whether Liu's use of this technical term might suggest that in the source material available to him, Wang Yi's paraphrasing of these final lines differed from the two paraphrases that presently conclude his commentary remains an open question. What can be said is that the Five Ministers made explicit a connection between the Cloud Spirit and the king of Chu that was only hinted at in Wang Yi's commentary.

Even though the Five Ministers make frequent use of Wang Yi's annotations, the composition of their commentaries to "Yunzhong jun" suggests that their readings would not necessarily need to appear in tandem with Wang Yi's commentary. According to David Knechtges, in distinction from Li Shan, the Tang commentators "wrote a new commentary that consists of a paraphrase that in effect 'translates' *Wenxuan* into Tang Chinese. (Knechtges and Chang 2014, 1322) However, the above example reveals that they did much more. In contrast to what Stephen Owen observed for Music Bureau poetry when he argued that there is good evidence that the literary men at the Qi and Liang dynasty courts at Jiankang "'fixed' texts according to their own standards of taste",[52] the interventions of the Five Ministers, in addition to a clear incentive to reduce the verbosity of *Chuci zhangju*, represent a thorough revision of Wang Yi's interpretation, expressing their own understanding of the song.

[52] Compare Owen (2006, 4–5). Owen attributes their approach instead to the quality of the manuscripts they were copying.

3. Against Over-Interpretation – Zhu Xi

Zhu Xi's *Chuci jizhu* (Variorum of Commentaries on the *Songs of Chu*) represents a new stage in the commentary history of the *Chuci*. By the time he engaged with the anthology, Zhu Xi had spent a lifetime on the re-interpretation of the *Shijing* and other Classics. He had founded his own school within the Song philosophical tradition of True Way Learning (*Dao xue* 道學), and he had developed his own reading techniques of texts that, put simply, aimed to achieve an intuitive understanding through repeat and out-loud reading, a technique he also used in his re-assessment of the understanding of earlier commentators. Though Zhu Xi appears to have developed an interest in the *Chuci* at an early age, he came back to the anthology late in life. Sources suggest that he began his work during the period of fierce factional struggle at the late Southern Song court, shortly before he was ousted and stripped of his official titles when his teachings were declared heretic in 1197.[53] Scholars have argued that given this backdrop his return to the *Chuci* can hardly be coincidental: the anthology and the lore of its presumed author Qu Yuan provided a mirror image of the happenings at the imperial court, the treatment of Zhu Xi himself, and a platform for implicit critique.[54] We should, however, not misconceive Zhu Xi's engagement with the *Chuci* as a straightforward act of protest. Rather, Zhu Xi's commentary aimed to position Qu Yuan and the poems ascribed to him within the history of Chinese poetry.[55] He decided to achieve this through a critique of the approach of Wang Yi and Hong Xingzu 洪興祖 (1090–1155 CE), the author of a sub-commentary on Wang Yi's interpretation.[56] By showing that his own reading techniques of "tasting" and "emphatic recreation" could retrieve the meaning of poems without construing underlying allegorical meanings, Zhu Xi not only demonstrated the superiority of his own approach, but also claimed that he truly understood that Qu Yuan's "aspiration and conduct ... altogether arose from a sincere heart-mind [of a man] loyal to his sovereign and patriot of his country".[57] Thus if we want to conceive of *Chuci jizhu* as a work of protest against the desolate state of the Southern Song government or his own demise, Zhu Xi takes the rather subtle approach of letting Qu Yuan speak for himself instead of having the poems serve to vent his own grievances.

Zhu Xi's criticism of the previous commentators is straightforward:

> "When I look at what Wang [Yi's] book accepts and rejects in combination to what it points out in between [the poet's] separations and reunions,[58] there is a lot that can be debated, and

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[53] See the introduction by Jiang Lifu to *Chuci jizhu* (2001, II).

[54] Introduction by Jiang Lifu 蔣立甫 in *Chuci jizhu* (2001, II–III). The most detailed engagement with the question of Zhu Xi's possible motivations for writing his commentary is contained in Yi (1991, 292–298). See also Li and Zhu (1996, 119–122).

[55] According to Zhu Xi, Qu Yuan's effusive behaviour and unrestrained expressiveness made him unsuitable as a model. However, the power of his poetic works to improve relations and thus foster the bonds between superiors and inferiors in families and beyond, distinguished the poet from the rhapsodes of the *fu* 賦 tradition. Compare *Chuci jizhu* (2001, II–III). Another rendering of this passage is contained in Lynn (1986, 347).

[56] For information about Hong Xingzu and his commentarial approach see Li and Zhu (1996, 111–118).

[57] "At a quick glance, [Qu] Yuan as a person was someone who, even though his aspirations and conduct at times transgressed the right mean and must not be taken as a model, they altogether arose from a sincere heart-mind [of a man] loyal to his sovereign and patriot of his country" 竊嘗論之，原之為人，其志行雖或滴於中庸而不可以為法，然皆出於忠君愛國之誠心 (*Chuci jizhu* 2001, 2).

[58] Reference to an expression twice used in the "Lisao" for Qu Yuan's failing matches (*Soji sakuin* 1979, 49, 52).

> even Hong [Xingzu] has been unable to revise at least some of that. When it comes to the overall meaning, again both never thoroughly pondered, sighingly lamented,[59] and intoned [the poems] in song to find out where hints to the meaning become apparent, but they hurriedly wished to fetch allusions to make up their own explanations, to quote copiously and provide detailed evidence to forcefully attach them to events construed by them. This is whereby they, either by being insensitive, distanced themselves from human nature and feelings, or, by their urging of points, did harm to [the poems'] reasoned argumentation, failing to express to their contemporaries what is unique about [Qu] Yuan's melancholy, and further obscuring it so that it remained unclear for later generations. I have been increasingly troubled by this! 顧王書之所取舍，與其題號離合之間，多可議者，而洪皆不能有所是正。至其大義，則又皆未嘗沈潛反復，嗟歎咏歌，以尋其文詞指意之所出，而遽欲取喻立說，旁引曲證，以強附於其事之已然。是以或以迂澤而遠於性情，或以迫切而害於義理，使原之所為壹鬱而不得申於當年者，又晦昧而不見白於後世。予於是益有感焉。 (*Chuci jizhu* 2001, 3).

Zhu Xi maintains that Wang Yi twisted the meaning of Qu Yuan's poetry by construing allegorical readings where there were none and by combining these with other evidence to attach it to events that did not take place. He further holds that even the sub-commentator and contemporary of Zhu Xi, Hong Xingzu, had been unable to correct at least some of Wang Yi's bias. With his reference to *Liji*, Zhu Xi suggests in passing that if both exegetes had used its technique of deep reflection combined with repeat-recitation — a shorthand for Zhu Xi's approach — they could have avoided such over-distancing and overinterpretation. His most scathing critique is that both commentators failed to express what is unique about Qu Yuan's melancholy, implying that his own re-reading would deliver precisely that.

Despite his strong criticism of Wang and Hong, Zhu Xi's own interpretation draws largely on the work of both predecessors. One reason for this approach appears to be Zhu's own deteriorating health at the time.[60] Zhu Xi maintains the order of the works attributed to Qu Yuan in *Chuci zhangju* and organises them into five chapters, with "Lisao" being the classic (*jing* 經) and the rest relegated to being a part of its tradition, labelled as "Lisao Jiuge 離騷九歌", etc. Following these is a selection of works attributed to other authors, called "Continuations of Lisao" (續離騷九辯), etc., which he combined into three chapters (*Chuci jizhu* 2001, I–II). For additional observations that would have bloated the commentary and distracted the reader from its essential meaning,[61] Zhu added another chapter of investigations and verifications "Chuci bianzheng" 楚辭辯證 in two parts. He completed his anthology

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[59] Reference to the "Yue ji" 樂記 (Record on Music) chapter in the *Li ji* 禮記 (Records of Rites) (*Shisanjing zhushu* 1980, 1545.3). James Legge renders the expression as "sigh and exclamation".

[60] "During a period of leisure caused by an agonizing disease, merely relying on the old chapters, I crudely bent and drew together what I lay down as the Variorum of Commentaries in eight chapters" 疾病呻吟之暇，聊據舊篇，粗加檃括，定為集注八卷 (*Chuci jizhu* 2001, 3).

[61] The initial remark to the chapter paraphrased here is dated to April 1199 (*Chuci jizhu* 2001, 167).

with a selection of 52 later works in the *Chuci* tradition based on a now-lost collection of rhapsodic poetry compiled by Chao Buzhi 晁補之 (1053–1110).[62]

In "Chuci bianzheng" Zhu Xi presents his general understanding of "Jiuge". He states that Qu Yuan had indeed literarily refined now lost, crude sacrificial songs (*wen zhi* 文之), whose derogatory and lascivious words would have been unspeakable, by lightly and tenderly imbuing them with his loyalty to his lord and his patriotism to the state (*Chuci jizhu* 2001, 180). He repeats this point of light and tender imbuement when he argues that, taking the correct relationship between lord and minister into consideration, Qu Yuan took the act of serving the spirits in "Jiuge" as a way of comparison (*bi* 比) and did not confuse it with any other form of poetic expression. While he did make accurate use of all three poetic forms of expression (*fu* 賦, *bi* 比, *xing* 興) befitting each song, later readers, i.e. the earlier commentators, missed the main intention (*ben zhi* 本旨) of the songs, imposing comparisons or forced meanings onto them (*Chuci jizhu* 2001, 180).

Zhu Xi arranged his commentary to the "Jiuge" to principally follow each couplet of the songs. In keeping with his emphasis on correctly pronouncing and repeat-reciting the text, each commentary begins with phonetic glosses, either of the reverse cutting (*fanqie* 反切) or the pronunciation (*yin* 音) type. Glosses, mostly selected from the commentaries by Wang Yi and Hong Xingzu, follow. Zhu Xi partly modified these and combined them with paraphrases, at times adding further explanations at their end:

> [1–4] "Bathe in orchid broth, cleanse yourself with fragrance, colourfully variegate your dress like flower petals!" The possessed stretches and flexes when it rests, glaringly bright and garish without end. 浴蘭湯兮沐芳，華採衣兮若英。靈連蜷兮既留，爛昭昭兮未央。
>
> > *Hua* [is pronounced like] the initial sound of [the character] *hu* and the final sound of [the character] *hua*.[63] Flower petal means leaf. It [is pronounced like] the initial sound of [the character] *yu* and the final sound of [the character] *jiang*. *Quan* is pronounced [like the character] *quan*. Fragrance means scent of Angelica. To colourfully adorn means to adorn in the Five Colours. The showy part of the flower that is not the ovary, is called the petal.[64]
> >
> > In other words: I [Qu Yuan] first let a spirit medium bathe in orchid broth, wash himself with fragrant aromas, dress in a composite dress like the petals of flowers to purify himself. A medium is that which the spirit descends into. The people of Chu designate mediums as spirit children, as if calling them descendants of spirits. [Stretch and flex] serves as an illustration for extending and bending. Due to his dress and ornament having been purified, the spirit delights in him and descends to rely on his body as if staying for long. In a Music Bureau song from the Han dynasty, it is said: "The spirit rests calmly". This is also expressed to refer to a spirit. Glaring is an illustration of radiance. [Bright and garish] means brilliant. 華，戶花反。英，葉，於姜反。

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[62] On Chao Buzhi and his anthology see Li and Zhu (1996, 104–111).

[63] Phonetic gloss also contained in *Chuci buzhu* (*Soji sakuin* 1979, 101).

[64] Explanation from the *Erya* contained in *Chuci buzhu* (*Soji sakuin* 1979, 101).

蜷，音拳。芳，芷也。華採，五色採也。榮而不實者謂之英。言使靈巫先浴蘭湯，沐香芷，衣採衣，如草木之英，以自潔清也。靈，神所降也。楚人名巫為靈子，若曰神之子也。連蜷，長曲貌。既留，則以其服飾潔清，故神悅之，而降依其身，留連之久也。漢樂歌言「靈安留」，亦指神而言也。爛，光貌。昭昭，明也。 (*Chuci jizhu* 2001, 33).

Zhu Xi's phonetic glosses either support his different understandings of individual characters or clarify the rhyme scheme. Following his idea that Wang Yi's commentary is an over-interpretation, Zhu Xi conceives Qu Yuan's use of a spirit medium and its embellishment and purification as a catalyst for the willingness of the spirit to descend into it. In support of his reading, he adds historical information like the designation for media in Chu.[65] He also uses textual parallels like a line from a Music Bureau poem.[66] The movement of the medium in combination with the expression *jiliu* 既留 becomes central for his understanding that the spirit has already descended and is willing to stay. For the last line of the second verse above, Zhu Xi only provides the reader with an existing set of glosses without further elaboration. It seems that in such cases Zhu Xi recommends readers to resort to Wang Yi's reading or rely on their own understanding. In fact, Zhu Xi's preceding interpretation and the deliberate omission of Wang Yi's interpretation that it refers to the appearance of the spirit leaves the reader with the more natural choice of maintaining the medium as the subject of the entire verse and, consequently, associating the radiance and brilliance with their sophisticated dress.

[5–8] Lo! Soothed in the Temple of Longevity, it matches sun and moon in radiance. In a dragon rider, draped in a deity's attire, for the moment it hovers and circulates. 蹇將憺兮壽宮，與日月兮齊光。龍駕兮帝服，聊翱游兮周章。

Dan [is pronounced like] the initial sound of [the character] *tu* and the final sound of [the character] *lan*. *Gong* [is pronounced like] the initial sound of [the character] *gu* and the final sound of [the character] *huang*. One edition of the text has [the character] *zheng* (to compete) instead of *qi* (to match). [Lo] *jian* is an exclamation. [To soothe] means to calm down. The Temple of Longevity is a place for offering sacrifices to spirits. In the era of the Han emperor Wu, a Shrine of Longevity for the spirit lords was erected. It also belonged to this kind. In other words: The spirit has already arrived, still and happy in a soothed manner, it has no intention to leave. Dragon rider is a carriage drawn by dragons. Deity refers to the Supreme Deity. [For the moment] means for the time being. To circulate is like floating around. 憺，徒濫反。宮，葉古荒反。齊，一作爭。蹇，詞也。憺，安也。壽宮，供神之處，漢武帝時置壽宮神君，亦此類也。言

[65] In "Chuci bianzheng" Zhu Xi adds that explaining the character *ling* 靈 as medium *wu* 巫 in earlier commentaries ignores the fact that it receives its name from the spirit that descended into it. That is to say, *ling* means spirit, not medium. He adds though that conceiving it as solely designating a medium in the song's context of its beauty and attire is reasonable (*Chuci jizhu* 2001, 180). The rendering as "possessed" above tries to capture the ambivalence of the expression.

[66] Also cited in "Chuci bianzheng", but there stating that it refers to a medium (*Chuci jizhu* 2001, 180).

> 神既至，憺然安樂，無有去意也。龍駕，以龍引車也。帝，謂上帝也。聊，且也。周章，猶周流也。 (*Chuci jizhu* 2001, 33).

Here the section on phonetics also includes an indication of a textual variant. Five contextual glosses in Zhu's annotations to lines 5 to 8 are from Wang Yi.[67] Zhu Xi replaces Wang Yi's explanation of the use of the Temple of Longevity with a reference to Han emperor Wu who erected a palace by that name for the worship of a range of deities mentioned in "Jiuge".[68] He re-uses Wang Yi's paraphrase except the part that describes the spirit's feeding. He also replaces Wang Yi's annotation on the spirit riding a dragon including the reference to the *Yijing* with a gloss from the Five Ministers from Hong Xingzu's sub-commentary claiming that the line speaks of a carriage drawn by dragons (*Soji sakuin* 1979, 102). The gloss on the supreme deity replaces Wang Yi's statement about the colours of the deities of the five directions.[69] The last two glosses come from Wang Yi's commentary.

Both examples show that Zhu Xi essentially retains those glosses by Wang Yi that support a plainer understanding of the text. He removes explanations he finds baseless or farfetched, and offers corrections supported by additional information from historical or literary sources. He delegates further elaborations and arguments for some of these corrections to his "Chuci bianzheng" chapter.

His commentary to lines 9 to 14 is not presented in full because it almost restates Wang Yi's reading that once the spirit is replete, it returns hurriedly to its abode in the clouds where he generally resides. The spirit's coming and going happens in an instant. Zhu Xi slightly deviates by defining Jizhou as the region between the Yellow River and the Yangzi but makes the same point that the spirit's gaze oversees the region between the Four Seas without any ultimate limits. His final annotations provide evidence for *fujun* 夫君 referring to the spirit and define "pounding, pounding" as an onomatopoetic expression for the heartbeat, removing the element of fear or even panic suggested by his predecessors.

Zhu Xi leaves the explanation of the song's implied meaning to the song title positioned at the end of the song:

> [Yunzhong jun] refers to the cloud spirit. For another mention see the "Treatise on Suburban Sacrifices" in the *Dynastic History of the Han*. This piece speaks about a spirit that, once it descends and stays, enters in close relation with a human being, so that, once it leaves, he longs for it, unable to forget it. This suffices to make evident the profound demeanour of the fond regard of our minister [Qu Yuan] for his lord. 謂云神也。亦見漢書郊祀志。此篇言神既降而久留，與人視接，故既去而思之不能忘也，足以見臣子慕君之深意矣。 (*Chuci jizhu* 2001, 33).

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[67] The first three and the last two glosses. Compare section on Wang Yi.

[68] Emperor Wu granted an amnesty and built a shrine for the veneration of these deities after recovering from a serious illness. Compare *Shiji* (1982, 12: 459–460). The deities also addressed in the "Jiuge" are Taiyi 太一 (Supreme Unity) and Siming 司命 (Arbiter of Fate).

[69] In "Chuci bianzheng" Zhu Xi adds that he doesn't see a need for this explanation (*Chuci jizhu* 2001, 180).

For Zhu Xi the meaning imbued is captured in the relation between the purified medium and the spirit. Once the spirit leaves, the sadness about the separation from this venerated and ephemeral higher being alludes to the situation between the poet and his overlord. Zhu Xi's summary of "Yunzhong jun" confirms his general point made in "Chuci bianzheng" that Qu Yuan only "lightly and tenderly imbued [the songs] with his loyalty to his lord and his patriotism to the state" (*Chuci jizhu* 2001, 180). Zhu Xi adds in his own words why he felt the need to amend the readings of his predecessors:

> Regarding "Yunzhong jun", ancient commentaries maintain that once the services to the spirit have been completed, [Qu Yuan] sighs and agonizes when he remembers King Huai's incompetence. Hong's sub-commentary opines that the cloud spirit implicitly refers to virtue of rulers, and due to King Huai's incompetence, his heart is broken. These are all externally added and superfluous explanations that damage the main idea of this piece. Destroying its meaning by twisting what is intrinsic [to the poem] they distorted the true intent of the original text. Moreover, their eying of the lord, isn't that already too forced? 雲中君，舊說以為事神已訖，復念懷王不明，而太息憂勞。補注又謂以雲神喻君德， 而懷王不能，故心以為憂。皆外增贅說，以害全篇之大指；曲生碎義，以亂本文之正意。且其目君不亦太迫矣乎。 (*Chuci jizhu*, 2001, 181).

Zhu Xi not only challenged his predecessors' reading at the micro level, but he also disputed their basic assumption that each of the "Jiuge" contained a veiled message from Qu Yuan to his king. On the contrary, and perhaps aided by his different way of reading, Zhu Xi extracts the implied message from the depiction of the sacrifice itself, namely in the description of the relationship between the spirit and the one making the sacrifice. For Zhu Xi though, this implied message is neither one of Qu Yuan's agony about his banishment nor of his despair about the foolishness of his king. It is, quite telling for the Song dynastic order of the world Zhu Xi lives in, rather the expression of the fond regard of a minister for his lord.

4. Determining the Song's Ancient Past – Wang Yuan

It is perhaps no coincidence that the title of *Chuci jijie* 楚辭集解 (Variorum of Explanations to the Songs of Chu) differs by only one character from the title of Zhu Xi's commentary. Wang Yuan 汪瑗 (d. 1565) continued a tradition of commentary writing that revised existing readings through re-evaluating parts of earlier commentaries and gathering additional materials to arrive at a new understanding. Although this kind of commentary can be traced way back to *Lunyu jijie* 論語集解 (Variorum of Explanations to the *Analects*) by He Yan 何宴 (ca. 195–249 CE), by choosing *Chuci jijie* Wang Yuan positioned himself within a line of interpretation of the *Chuci* that rested on Zhu Xi, while still discreetly setting himself apart from his influential predecessor.

Wang Yuan was an exceptional student from a young age. He was taught alongside his younger brother Wang Ke 汪珂 (n.d.) by Gui Youguang 歸有光 (1507–1571), an expert in the Classics and *Chuci*, who during his lifetime attracted more than a hundred students. Gui lauded the accomplishments of Wang Yuan in understanding the classics, literature, writing poetry, and as a commentator (Li and Zhu 1996, 143–144). The breadth of his knowledge is immediately apparent in the variety of sources used in *Chuci jijie*. In addition to other commentaries, he often makes use of the classics, glossaries, historical works, and lines from renowned poets (Li and Zhu 1996, 144; Yi 1991, 384). Remarkably, he has no biographical entry in *Ming shi* 明史 (Dynastic History of the Ming) and only one other work authored by himself exists. Whether this dearth of sources may be related to a quite unfavourable review of his commentary by the editors of *Siku quanshu congmu* 四庫全書叢目 (Bibliographical Summaries of the Complete Writings of the Four Repositories) is unclear.

Wang Yuan appears to have been associated with Wang Shizhen 王世貞 (1526–1590) and Li Panlong 李攀龍 (1514–1570), members of the so-called Later Seven Masters (*hou qizi* 後七子). Together they were part of a movement of archaism or nativism (*fugu* 復古), which advocated a return to the literary practices of the ancients and the Han dynasty and limited the significant influence of Zhu Xi's ideas on their own era. Apparently, the movement's approach to literature and history endowed Wang Yuan with an unprecedented level of scepticism. This led him to go beyond Zhu Xi and question the supposed background of the creation of Qu Yuan's poetry as well as the supposedly implicit criticism of King Huai in his works, culminating in an assertion that Qu Yuan had not committed suicide by drowning. The editors' concluding comment in *Siku quanshu congmu*, a citation from a commentary by Li Bi 李壁 (1159–1222) to a poem by Wang Anshi 王安石 (1021–1086), well illustrates the extent to which Wang Yuan challenged paradigms that had become well-established by the Qing dynasty: "[He] doubts that which must not be doubted and trusts that which must not be trusted" 疑所不當疑，信所不當信 (*Siku quanshu congmu* 1983, 1269.3).

Contrary to that judgement, his detailed commentary, although never widely published, left its mark. Renowned commentators like Wang Fuzhi 王夫之 (1619–1692) and Jiang Ji 蔣驥 (1678–1745) claimed discoveries as their own that actually go back to Wang Yuan (Yi 1991, 388–389). In his own preface to *Chuci jijie*, Wang Yuan mentions that the commentary was a co-production together with his brother. Wang Ke gathered the materials, Wang Yuan revised them, and Gui Youguang contributed another preface. The commentary was completed in 1548.[70] *Chuci jijie* consists of eight chapters, excluding works not attributed to Qu Yuan. These are followed by two chapters, one entitled "*mengyin*" 蒙引, which contains further explanations to more than 240 names, objects, and expressions from "Lisao", and the other listing textual variants.[71]

[70] Jiang Liangfu states that the first edition was only published by Wang Yuan's son Wang Ke (cognomen Wenying 文英) with a commentary of "Tianwen" 天問 (Questions to Heaven) by Zhu Xi with annotations by Wang Yuan written above his commentary (Jiang 1993, 72f). A reprint of the oldest existing edition dated 1615 is contained in *Chuci wenxian jicheng* (2008).

[71] For a summary of existing editions see Jiang (1993, 75f). The modern edition employed is *Chuci jijie* 2017.

While Wang Yuan's "Lisao" commentary follows Zhu Xi's arrangement of the main text in couplets, Wang Yuan divided the commentary to the "Jiuge" into chunks of text that follow groups of couplets of each song. Aside from the annotation to the title, his commentary to "Yunzhong jun" as well as short line-by-line annotations is divided into two large elaborations which follow line 8 and line 14 of the song. The division supports Wang Yuan's idea that the song consists of two parts, the first describing the descent and the second the farewell of the spirit. Although the commentary proceeds line by line in each unit, it also contains portions that relate to couplets or entire sections which makes it more difficult to assign content to specific lines.[72] The following sample is my assemblage of Wang Yuan's commentary containing all annotations pertinent to the first two lines of "Yunzhong jun": [73]

1–2 I bathe it in orchid broth, cleanse it with fragrances. Its richly coloured dress matches petals of blossoms 浴蘭湯兮沐芳，華采衣兮若英.

> Bathe means to wash a body. Orchid is a designation for a fragrant plant. Broth means boiling water, it means to wash its [the effigy's] body with a boiling broth of fragrant plants. Cleanse means to rinse its hair and clean its face. This is not speaking about broth; it continues the previous text. Fragrance is said to generally denote fragrant plants. Someone said: it is mentioned in continuation of orchid flower above, is also coherent. The old explanation [by Wang Yi] that takes scent to be White Angelica is wrong. This [point] rests on [the fact] that most single occurrences of the character for scent in the *Chuci* are general designations. The lines above are also created as inversions, they basically mean to cleanse it with a broth of fragrant plants from scented orchids. [1] Richly coloured speaks about the gorgeous beauty of its colours. To match means to be like. Petals of blossoms is a general way of designating the flowers of grasses and trees. For its colours of gorgeous beauty there is nothing like the flowers of grasses and trees, and this is why they are used in comparison with the dress of the spirit. [2] The sentence from "Bathe it in orchid broth" to "cleanse with scents" speaks about the fragrant purity of the venerated body of the spirit. The sentence from "Richly coloured" to "flower petals" speaks of the bright shine of the magnificent dress of the spirit. [1–2] Since the sacrifices towards spirits in ancient times already involved a shrine where the sacrificial offers took place, it must have been that carved effigies of the spirits served as representations, so that when someone was about to offer a sacrifice, he presented its representation by cleansing and adorning it. In his commentary to "Zhaohun" (Calling back the Soul) Master Zhu says: Upon someone's death it was a custom in Chu to set up their physical remains in a chamber to offer sacrifices to them. Looking at it from expressions like "Yielding a sword" and "gird with Jade" in "Dong huang Taiyi" up to the acts of cleansing, dressing, and adorning, [the fact that] for all the various spirits there were representations [in the form] of carved effigies set up like those made by today's commoners, is evident. The old explanations that all assume that [the lines] are about a medium cleaning and dressing are very misleading. 浴，澡身

[72] The arrangement of Wang Yuan's commentary in the otherwise very useful comparative commentary collection by Cui Fuzhang and Li Daming can thus be misleading (Cui and Li 2003, 743ff).

[73] Numbers in brackets follow the text to indicate to which line the preceding annotations refer.

> 也。蘭，香草名。湯，沸水也。浴蘭湯，謂以香草煎湯而澡其身也。沐，濯髮而醮面也。不言湯者，承上文也。芳，泛指香草而言。一曰承上蘭草而言，亦通。舊說以芳為白芷，非也。按：楚辭中凡單用芳字，多泛言也。此句亦相錯成文，本謂以芳蘭香草之湯而沐浴也。[1] 華彩，言其色之灩麗也。若，如也。 英，凡言草木之花也。 其色之豔麗者，莫如草木之花，故以之比神之衣也。[2] 浴蘭沐芳，言神尊體之香潔。華彩若英，言神盛服之鮮明也。[1–2] 蓋古之祠神，既有宮堂供祀之處所，則必有雕塑之神像以為之尸，故將祭之時而奉其尸以洗飾之也。朱子注招魂曰：「楚俗，人死則設其形貌於室而祀之也。」由東皇言撫劒佩玉及此沐浴衣飾之事觀之，則諸神皆有所設雕塑之尸，如今俗之所為者明矣。舊說俱以為巫祝沐浴而衣也，甚謬。 (*Chuci jijie* 2017, 99–100).

The length of this commentary is substantial, amounting to roughly one third of Wang Yuan's entire annotations to lines 1 to 8. Its length is related to his goal to present a groundbreakingly different view of the ritual practice that, in his opinion, underlies not only this song but all other songs of the "Jiuge", except for "Guoshang", which he conceived as its coda.

Wang Yuan structures his commentary in such a way that annotations to each line are followed by a recapitulative statement of the general meaning of a verse before he turns to an empirical, yet text-based examination of the ritual practice itself. He rejects Wang Yi's idea of the involvement of a shaman. Based on the song's mention of a shrine, a comment by Zhu Xi on the veneration of deceased persons in ancient Chu, and repeated acts of purification and adorning mentioned in "Jiuge", he suggests that the ritual practices associated with the poems involve the use of effigies as representations of spirits.

In advance of his re-conception Wang Yuan uses glosses from both Wang Yi and Zhu Xi, accepting some of their readings while explicitly rejecting others, sometimes by comparison with their general usage in *Chuci* as above in the use of *fang* 芳 (fragrance). My translation of the final sentence of the excerpt above understands *ju* 俱 (all) as a reference to all predecessors of Wang Yuan's commentary who followed the interpretation of Wang Yi regarding the involvement of a medium, Zhu Xi included. In general, Wang Yuan differs from his predecessors in his explicit rejection of previous readings in his commentary (*Chuci jijie* 2017, 99–100).

This different understanding of the ritual process allows Wang Yuan to regard the following lines 3 to 8 as descriptions of the cloud spirit. It is the spirit (*ling* 靈) that has already come to rest in the effigy as indicated by the limitless brightness of the clouds (3–4). The exclamation at the beginning of line 5 becomes an expression of the spirit's intention to rest in the shrine, the shrine's designation as palace of long life an embellishment in praise of the spirit. In contrast to the limitless brightness in line 4, Wang Yuan understands the comparison of the cloud spirit's radiance with sun and moon as pointing to the continued presence of the clouds' brightness. In his commentary to line 6, Wang Yuan further highlights the poet's technique of interlocking lines of the spirit's movement with its effect of bright radiance, suggesting their basic arrangement as line 3 followed by line 5, and line 4 by line 6:

> The four lines above (3–6) form a stanza by inversion. In a smoother arrangement, the lines would read: 'The spirit curls up in it. How it wishes to rest in the palace of longevity! Its glare of brilliant brightness without end, its radiance matching that of sun and moon. 此上四句相錯成章。若順言之， 本謂「靈連蜷兮既留，蹇將憺兮壽宮。爛昭昭兮未央，與日月兮齊光」也。

This point is notable because if it is not just another way of making his reading more understandable, it shows Wang Yuan's consideration of the poet's craft.

For lines 7 to 8, "Driven by dragons in virtue of its sovereign dress, it keeps hovering and going round for the moment" 龍駕兮帝服，聊翱游兮周章, Wang Yuan cites Zhu Xi's correction of Wang Yi — actually going back to Lü Xiang — that since it is dragons that ride on clouds, the line must mean that the spirit is moving in a carriage drawn by dragons, wearing the dress of a sovereign. He further adds that the language used here is an exaggeration.[74] He repeats this point in his comments to line 8 that follow existing understandings of the hovering of the spirit with two additional observations. First, the lines serve as a summary of what has been said before. Second, since this entire section serves as the welcoming part of the song, it is written in an overstated fashion, indicating the joy in and thankfulness for the presence of the cloud spirit (*Chuci jijie* 2017, 100).

The second portion of his elaboration following line 14 begins by reiterating the connection between the second and the first section of "Yunzhong jun" which Wang Yuan sees in the transition from line 9 to line 10. Accordingly, line 9 repeats the brilliantly shining appearance of the cloud spirit that has continued since its descent, "The spirit, brilliant and dazzling, since it descended" 靈皇皇兮既降, to contrast it with its sudden departure in line 10, "In a dash, lifts up into the distant midst of clouds" 猋遠舉兮雲中. An additional explanation for line 10 suggests that by making an offering to the clouds and then speaking of ascending amidst clouds, Qu Yuan is using clouds to hint at (*yu* 喻) the loftiness or grandeur of his own ambitions. In support of his view Wang Yuan cites "Dong jun" 東君 (Lord of the East). He argues that this song is about a sacrifice to the sun and that it contains a line about a spirit covering the sun which he also conceives as an expression of this loftiness. He adds that Wang Yi's conceptualisation of the verse as swift return to the cloud spirit's abode is also correct, an example of an explicitly positive evaluation of an earlier interpretation by Wang Yuan.

In the commentator's understanding of line 11, it is the spirit who oversees the realm. Using a definition from *Huainanzi* 淮南子 for Jizhou as the central region, Wang Yuan argues that with Chu situated in the extreme south and Jizhou in the extreme north the inhabitants of Chu called the central region Jizhou to stress the enormous size of the area. The cloud spirit's radiance reaches beyond even Jizhou. I take his summarizing comment that this line speaks about "the extent of the illumination of the radiance of the clouds" 此句言雲光輝照臨之遠也 (*Chuci jijie* 2017, 101) as pointing at the ambivalence of speaking about a cloud spirit versus clouds as an observable phenomenon or a visible

[74] Zhu Xi got this idea from Hong Xingzu who mentioned Lü Xiang's divergent understanding in his sub-commentary (*Soji sakuin* 1979, 102).

representation of the spirit. This is confirmed by Wang's comment to line 12. It points out the different perspectives presented by the couplet. Accordingly, line 11 "It overlooks the central region of Ji and what lies beyond" 覽冀州兮有餘 is "particular straightforward in expressing the spirit's outlook" 專而直言之也", whereas line 12 "It expands across the four seas. Where are its limits?" 橫四海兮焉窮 is "expressing it from an encompassing and transverse kind of view" 統而橫言之也 (*Chuci jijie* 2017, 101). The reason for his detailed analysis only becomes clear in the commentary on the last lines 13 and 14. Here Wang Yuan argues that the pounding of the troubled heart serves to reveal the extreme degree of the poet's longing: "Since this section of the song is about sending off the spirit, it therefore goes to extremes in its expressions of loftiness and its idea of admiration" 此段蓋送神之曲，故極其高遠之詞，思慕之意也 (*Chuci jijie* 2017, 101).

The concluding remark to his commentary to "Yunzhong jun" first reiterates the structure of the song (*Chuci jijie* 2017, 102). Accordingly, the first two lines describe the setting up and adorning of the effigy, the next six lines welcome the spirit's arrival, and the last six lines, presented from the spirit's point of view, relatively speaking, send it off. Wang Yuan then cites Zhu Xi's core evaluation of "Yunzhong jun" as expressing Qu Yuan's mindset of loyalty to his sovereign and patriotism to his country through depicting his yearning and his inability to forget the intimate relation between spirit and man.[75] He characterises Zhu's standpoint as pervasive adding that there is no need to trivialise its meaning by expressing the poet's reverence for his king. He also rejects an unnamed critic's claim that "Yunzhong jun" is an occasional work without any deeper meaning, arguing instead that the song and the "Jiuge" follow in the tradition of Music Bureau poetry which by virtue of its genre is imbued with deeper meaning. As proof he restates some lines from "Yunzhong jun" and points to a parallel in "Beihuifeng" 悲回風 that likens Qu Yuan's ambition and moral fortitude to the loftiness of floating clouds. This leads to his final suggestion that "Yunzhong jun" might be modelled on this idea, possibly an imitation of Xunzi's Cloud Rhapsody (*Chuci jijie* 2017, 102).

In his second elaboration at the end of "Yunzhong jun" Wang Yuan draws attention to the specific use of expressions and how these serve to create a certain effect. Compared to Zhu Xi, his approach to disclose the song's inherent message is almost surgical. Wang Yuan's commentary differs from that of his predecessor in his keen attention to the structure of the poem, the consistent construction of his annotations, the justification for many of his deductions, and his openly expressed rejection or acceptance of previous interpretations. While Zhu Xi attempted to persuade readers through his eminence, coupled with the supposed superiority of his reading techniques compared to those of his predecessors, Wang Yuan, as evident from the length of his annotations, tried to convince his audience with a carefully arranged series of observations and conclusions. Sharing Zhu Xi's disdain for allegorical readings, he looks instead for intertextual or external evidence related to the supposed origin of the song. But unlike Zhu Xi, his conclusions suggest that he even begins to question the alleged background for the creation of "Jiuge" as described in Wang Yi's preface. Ultimately, it is Wang Yuan's interest in establishing the past of these works, coupled with his extensive knowledge and scepticism,

[75] Compare Zhu Xi's statement in note 50 in this article.

that allows him to reach a new level of interpretive depth. His mention of an unnamed critic who claimed "Yunzhong jun" to be devoid of any deeper meaning is significant, because it indicates that the discussions at Wang Yuan's time had already gone further than the commentaries analysed here would suggest.

5. Clearing the Fog of Misleading Interpretations – Lin Yunming

The title of Lin Yunming's commentary *Chuci deng* 楚辭燈 (The Songs of Chu Illumined) could probably do with a more emphatic translation because Lin described reading through existing "Lisao" commentaries as "like sitting in a dark room for long nights with absolutely nothing to see" 如長夜坐暗室，茫無所睹 (*Chuci deng* 2012, 2). In contrast Lin intended "to be lucid like seeing fire, to give the reader back a text that has a beginning and an end and provides leads and clues" 洞如觀火，還他一部有首有尾，有端有緒之文 (*Chuci deng* 2012, 2).

Lin Yunming 林雲銘 (ca. 1628–1697) was well educated from an early age. He is described as an avid reader in his youth, forgetting to eat while reading and being ridiculed as a bookworm when he didn't take off his clothes while bathing with his siblings (Li and Zhu 1996, 205). Lin received his *jinshi* degree in 1658, took up a post in Huizhou 徽州 (modern Huangshan, Anhui province), but his concern for commoners coupled with difficulties in adjusting to the new Qing administration led to his dismissal. He did not find another appointment until being expelled in 1667. During a rebellion against Qing rule led by the quasi-independent ruler of Fujian, Geng Jingzhong 耿精忠 (d. 1681) that began in 1674, he was imprisoned for eighteen months in Fuzhou 福州 (Yi 1991, 495). Released, he moved to Hangzhou 杭州 where he became a scribe for hire. His introduction to *Chuci deng* indicates that he was an ardent admirer of Qu Yuan and the *Chuci*, and that he identified with the fate of the poet in later life (*Chuci deng* 2012, 1–2).

Two drafts of his commentary were lost to flames during the suppression of the rebellion in Fuzhou and later in Hangzhou; the earliest existing version was not completed until 1697 (Yi 1991, 497). *Chuci deng* consists of four chapters. Focussing exclusively on works attributed to Qu Yuan, Lin Yunming argued that the other authors lacked the poet's skill and ambition (*zhi* 志), essentially producing copies bereft of any spirit or emotion (*Chuci deng* 2012, 4). To these he added "Zhaohun" and "Dazhao" 大招 (The Great Summons) maintaining that the poet created the former as a call to himself, and the latter, as indicated by "great" in the title, to call back the soul of King Huai.[76] Attempting to "date" the poems by Qu Yuan, Lin included the biography of Qu Yuan by Sima Qian followed by a section on the Chu kings Huai and Xiang 襄. He also argued that the last three songs in "Jiuge" referred not to

[76] Lin Yunming was keenly observant and noticed that, for Sima Qian, Qu Yuan and not Song Yu 宋玉 was the author of "Zhaohun". Compare *Shiji* (1982, 84: 2503).

spirits but to ghosts or recently deceased persons. This allowed him to consider them as one set and not only bring the number of songs down to nine as indicated by the chapter's title, but also to arrive at a total number of twenty-five works, equivalent to the number of scrolls listed in the "Yiwen zhi" 藝文志 catalogue of the *Han shu* under Qu Yuan *fu* 屈原賦 (*Han shu* 1982, 30: 1747). Lin Yunming thus addressed questions that have preoccupied *Chuci* scholars ever since.

Lin Yunming divides his annotations into three steps. A highly economical interlinear commentary is punctuated with supporting explanations to each section of a text which are marked by a circle at the beginning (*Chuci wenxian jicheng* 2008, 7427–7428). These are followed by an overview of the entire text, coupled with a review that straightens each poem out (*Chuci deng* 2012, 5). Here follows the overview provided at the end of "Yunzhong jun". I have divided this lengthy text into three parts:

> Lin Xizhong said: in their distribution across the sky, there is no distance clouds cannot reach, sometimes moving, sometimes resting, they can all be observed by man but not reached, and it is just like this with them as spirits. The two lines in which hands open gently to go out and greet the spirit in a sincere and respectful manner are meant to say that the entering spirit stops in the sky and does not move, and this extends to the conditions that when it moves, it does not come down and when it comes down it does not stay. [If that is the case] then the sincere and respectful manner with which the spirit is greeted cannot but be conveyed as the exhaustion from longing for the spirit, the gist [of the song] is already exhaustively [present], and the many twists and turns entirely evident. 林西仲曰：雲之為章於天，無遠不到，或行或止，皆使人可望而不可即，其為神亦猶是也。開手輕輕提出迎神誠敬二句，即說入[77]神之止於天而不行，及行而不降與降而不留之景。則迎神之誠敬，不得不轉為思神之勞瘁，大旨已盡，層折甚明也 (*Chuci deng* 2012, 35–36).

The overview's first section states Lin Yunming's understanding that, though clouds can be venerated, they should not be conceived as a moving spirit-entity that can be enticed to descend to enter a medium or partake in a sacrifice. Thus understood, he maintains, the song more immediately conveys the distance as cause for the poet's yearning and exhaustion. His viewpoint rests on a variety of observations. In general, he questions the context for the creation of the "Jiuge" as alleged by Wang Yi's preface. He also tries to dissociate Qu Yuan's craft from the desolate situation it was supposedly created in. More specifically, he goes on to question several key assumptions made by his predecessors, which sometimes led them to add information not found in the lyrics of the song.

> The first two lines that begin with "Bathe in orchid broth" are spoken by the man in charge of the sacrifice, but older annotations conceive them as orders given to a shaman.[78] If that is the case,

[77] The Huadong shifan daxue version of *Chuci deng* has *ren* here instead of *ru* which makes no sense (Lin 2012, 35). The *Chuci wenxian jicheng* edition of the text has *ru* (*Chuci wenxian jicheng* 2008, 7428).

[78] The translation of shaman for medium in this instance better represents what Lin associates with people of this trade.

> should all those in charge of sacrifices have filthy bodies, messy hair, and wear shabby clothes when conducting rituals?[79] What is expressed as "bending and extending it already rests" means nothing else than remain in the sky above, like the meaning of "resting on the sandbank in the middle" from the song "The Lord of the Xiang River", and yet older annotations take it to mean to stay in the body of a medium. If it would stay in the body of a medium, why would it be able to glare so brilliantly as to compete with sun and moon in brightness? And who is it again that hovers and floats around? Moreover, the two characters "already came down" in the following text border on repetition, the word for flame at the beginning of the line including "raised into the distance" should not be used. 其所云「浴蘭湯」二句就主祭言，而舊註以為命巫之詞。然則主祭皆當垢身蓬頭，着敝衣以為禮耶？所云「連蜷既留」，乃留於天上，即《湘君》「留中洲」之義。而舊註以為留于巫身。若留巫身，何以能爛昭昭與日月爭光？其「翱遊周章」者又是誰耶？且下文「既降」二字，涉於重複。即「遠舉」句亦用不得「焱」字矣 (*Chuci deng* 2012, 36).

The second section essentially highlights contradictions in the readings of earlier commentators like the need for purification of ritual specialists, the meaning of bending and extending that had been either associated with the guiding movements of the medium or its physical reaction after being possessed, or the question of what shines or moves around when the spirit is thought to rest in the body of the medium. Why Lin even critiques parts of the poem itself or whether these criticisms also refer to earlier explanations of these characters is unclear.

> From the piece's beginning to its end their never occur characters of a liquor and delicacies kind, and yet the old explanations largely increase them with sayings like "no sooner has it satisfied itself with drinks and food then it dashingly lifts into the distance". If it had been like that, this spirit would have come down for a long time and on top of that got his pleasure out of it. After a daredevil banquet by world standards, why would the poet yearn and sigh, letting his heart rate go to extremes? This is all absolutely clear and easily intelligible, it also should have been passed down unchanged and not be amended like this, I honestly don't know the reason for this. 篇中自首至尾總未嘗通出酒肴字樣而舊註碩添「飲食既飽」，「焱然遠舉」等語。若然是神降既久，而又得其歡矣。世間無不敢之筵席，何必思而歎，極其心之勞乎？此皆最明白易曉者，亦相沿不改如此，余誠不知其何故也 (*Chuci deng* 2012, 36).

The polemics in the final section are obvious. Lin juxtaposes Wang Yi's additions of sacrificial items, which were essential for his explanation of the sacrificial process and the movement of the spirit, with his own understanding, which is also coherent without them, since he understands all movements as

[79] The sentence could also mean: should all those in charge of sacrifices consider filthy bodies, messy hair, and wearing shabby clothes as ceremonially appropriate?

descriptions of passing clouds. At its end Lin even questions the rationale of the entire exegetical process.

In Lin Yunming's interlinear commentary to "Yunzhong jun", it is Qu Yuan himself, purified not by actual flowers but by their odem (*qi* 氣), who is in charge of the ritual (lines 1–2). He greets the cloud spirit looking up, observing its movement and its borderless brilliance (lines 3–4). The palace of long life becomes the spirit's abode in the sky. The performer of the ritual rejoices in the spirit's glare which contrasts with the shine of the sun and moon and is understood by Lin as that which is at rest and does not move (lines 5–6). The cloud spirit is escorted by dragons as if drawn by a carriage. It displays five colours as if clad in a deity's dress, only moving around in the sky and not descending (lines 7–8). To line 8 Lin adds his first supporting explanation. It says that in the lines "above the poet relates how he greets the spirit by observing what corresponds to his descent" 已上敘迎神而望其降之切 (*Chuci deng* 2012, 35). Its meaning becomes clearer when read in conjunction with his supporting comment to line 12. Accordingly, "[Qu Yuan's] own account of the tardiness of the spirit's descent and the speed of its departure above is not concerned with the [literal] greeting of a spirit by a man" 已上敘神降之遲而去之速，不以人之迎神為念 (*Chuci deng* 2012, 35). Lin's comment to line 11 that the spirit is not ready to stay for even a short time (不肯暫留), once more underlines his idea that though Qu Yuan conceived "Yunzhong jun" as a description of him performing a sacrifice to the cloud spirit, notions of the spirit's descent and return, though part of these rituals, cannot be meant literally. At the end of the song Lin purports that in the final analysis the performer of the ritual was unable to exhaustively display his sincerity during the ritual which is why he expresses his longing with deep sighs and extreme exhaustion, as indicated by his pounding heart (lines 13–14). Lin concludes with a final supplementary explanation: "Due to losing what he observed after receiving the spirit, he is concerned that his longing will never be released from the bond formed" 以迎神既失所望而繫思終不釋作結 (*Chuci deng* 2012, 35). With his final comment Lin Yunming reinforces the idea of the bond between Qu Yuan and this higher being. While Zhu Xi described it as Qu Yuan's inability to forget, Lin understands it as the poet's fear of not being able to free himself from this connection, which takes the inviolability of this bond to an even higher level.

It should be evident that Lin Yunming took the interpretation of "Yunzhong jun" to another level. His final comments at the end of the overview as cited above are particularly striking because he questions the rationale for a complex exegetical process of 1500 years, anticipating criticisms that are generally associated with the critique of the Confucian commentary tradition following the May Fourth Movement in the early 20th century. And yet it was not long before he was criticised by contemporaries such as Zhu Ji 朱冀 (no precise dates) and others,[80] continuing a process of interpretation that lasts to this day.

[80] For his criticism, which is primarily directed against Lin's view of Qu Yuan's behaviour, see Li and Zhu (1996, 210–212); Yi (1919, 501–504).

Conclusion

From the selection of commentaries above, it is evident that the *Chuci* commentators, like their colleagues who interpreted canonical texts, were engaged in an ongoing endeavour to make sense of texts. Under their hands "Yunzhong jun" underwent an astonishing transformation as its interpretation evolved. The commentators gradually, at times involuntarily, detached the poem from the contextual framework provided by Wang Yi's preface to the "Jiuge", with the attribution to the author, the idea of the song's autobiographical nature, the description of a ritual involving a deity, and the poet's emotional response at the end arguably the only pillars still standing.

Their motivations for challenging existing readings varied. They ranged from raising the status of Qu Yuan's poetry in the face of prominent critics (Wang Yi), adapting a commentary to a different format, and partly revising it (Five Ministers), or applying new philosophical ideas that came with new reading techniques to a review of existing commentaries (Zhu Xi). Triggered by another philosophical paradigm they attempted to reach even beyond the earliest commentaries (Wang Yuan), or they were personally motivated to enter the challenge (Lin Yunming), as they, like so many officials in China before them, identified personally with Qu Yuan, and disagreed with the interpretations of others.

None of these commentators ignored existing readings. To the contrary, they mostly rested their understandings on a modification or refutation of older interpretations. To disprove earlier understandings, they used a variety of techniques as well as "new" evidence. However, it is not always clear whether the discovery of such evidence — like the effigy that replaced the medium in Wang Yuan's commentary — was prompted by actual research or should rather be viewed as a reflection of an understanding of the past of their own time. While the toolset of glosses hardly changed over time, different reading techniques heightened the awareness of the relation between sound, rhythm, word-order, and meaning in the main text. Beginning with Zhu Xi and taken to new levels by Wang Yuan and Lin Yunming, the introduction of different arrangements of in-text commentaries and structured levels of interpretational engagement allowed commentators to bolster their exegesis from various angles. Not only did this approach require consistency, but it most likely also increased consistency.

Most commentators, except perhaps the Five Ministers, perceived their different interpretations, if not as significant improvements (Zhu Xi), then as conscious reversals of existing understandings (Wang Yuan, Lin Yunming). As demonstrated by their commentaries, Wang and Lin went to great lengths to prove the validity of their claims. The commentary of the Five Ministers came as a surprise. Perhaps this was because their annotations in the mainstream editions of the *Wenxuan* follow Wang Yi's commentary, so their contributions were rarely considered more than a sub-commentary. A close reading of their commentaries to "Yunzhong jun" suggests that not only did they offer their own understanding of the song, but that their commentaries may not even have originally been intended to be combined with Wang Yi's commentary in one work.

My final question, namely whether it is possible to identify what remained controversial in the understanding of this poem, as opposed to what was taken for granted over longer periods of commentary production, requires an answer on the micro level of the text and the macro level of commentary discourse. The idea that the continued use of Wang Yi's annotations by later commentators indicates

acceptance of his readings, but their modifications or replacements indicate controversy, is refuted by the fact that glosses often produce meaning only in combination. Even when certain glosses are retained, their explanations may gradually change in meaning, pending on the context of the surrounding annotations. However, glosses to certain independent characters, distinct by position or meaning compared to the rest of a line in the main text, may retain their meaning. One example is the exclamation at the beginning of line 5, the other the initial character (*liao* 聊) of line 8. Later commentators, however, may also presuppose understandings without further reference that were previously indicated by glosses.

At the macro-level of debate among commentators, there is more controversy than agreement. What most commentators agreed on about "Yunzhong jun" up until the early Qing dynasty was its authorship, the autobiographical nature of its content, its description of a ritual, and the poet's desolation at its end. What most commentators disagreed on arose from the question of how the action described in the song could be reconciled with the commentators' specific image of Qu Yuan. This ties in with the discussion of how commentators used their commentaries to portray and evaluate Qu Yuan's moral qualities. The question of the extent to which controversies at the level of "Yunzhong jun" reflect broader controversies, such as those over the status of Qu Yuan and his poetry or the issue of loyalty and patriotism, awaits further investigation.

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