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► **To cite this version:**

Grégoire Espeset. Erudition and Reasoning Versus Prophecy in Pseudo-Confucian Discourse. Matthias Schumann; Philip Clart. Divination in Chinese Religions, Brill, In press, Prognostication in History. <hal-03467265>

HAL Id: hal-03467265

<https://hal.science/hal-03467265v1>

Submitted on 14 Jan 2024

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Erudition and Reasoning versus Prophecy in Pseudo-Confucian Discourse

Grégoire Espeset

The focus of this study is the figure of “Pseudo-Confucius,” that is, the representation of Confucius (traditional dates: 551–479 BCE) in a textual corpus I call the “Confucian Pseudepigraphs” (see below). After clarifying the analytical categories covered by the European-language terms “prophet” and “prophecy,” I survey a cluster of materials containing instances of Pseudo-Confucian discourse suggestive of clairvoyance or prescience, especially in relation to the political future of the Chinese realm in its transition from the royal to early imperial era. Next I discuss the modes of Pseudo-Confucian cognitive acquisition, which leads to a closing reassessment of his modern Western representation as a “prophet.”

1. Basic Definitions

Among a number of existing reference works, *The Cambridge Dictionary of Christian Theology*, published in 2011, contains this concise definition of “prophecy”:

Prophecy is essentially *speech on behalf of God* (though many prophets perform actions on behalf of God also).¹

By contrast, here is a synthetic paraphrase of how a more general, neutral term such as “prediction” is defined in standard English dictionaries: “A statement about what one thinks

¹ Moberly, “Prophecy,” 413. Italics from the original.

will happen in the future, or the process of making such a statement.” Importantly, the latter definition omits any reference to “God” or any superhuman entity.

In turn, “prophecy” logically implies the agency of a speaker called a “prophet.” As the multidisciplinary *Encyclopedia of Religion*, inspired by Mircea Eliade (1907–1986),² explains, the English lexical unit is derived from a Greek term, which the encyclopedia defines as follows:

The indigenous Greek *prophētēs* was a cultic functionary who “spoke for” a god; that is, the *prophētēs* delivered divine messages in association with a sanctuary where the god had made its presence known.³

Even though the reference to the polytheistic ancient Greece requires that any prophetic act be connected with a particular religious site, this definition confirms that a prophet is first and foremost a spokesperson for the superhuman realm. Returning to prophecy, the *Encyclopedia* article concludes by opposing “comparative theorists working with modern evidence,” who “have not yet established a single dominant interpretation of prophecy” but “[apply] consistent evaluative criteria to both the ancient evidence and the modern anthropological data without elevating the status of any one religious tradition over another,” to “canonical views, which persist in granting special recognition to the prophet(s) of a single confessional tradition.”⁴

In sum, it would seem that a blurring of the semiotic relationship between signifier and signified has taken place to the point that, like other Western categories applied to non-Western contexts, the substantives “prophet” and “prophecy” and the verb “to prophesy”

² On the background and history of that editorial project, see Iricinschi, “Mircea Eliade and the Making of the *Encyclopedia of Religion*.”

³ Sheppard and Herbrechtsmeier, “Prophecy,” 7424.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 7428.

ultimately risk meaning anything, and thereby nothing. To avoid the excesses of the semantic vagueness that leads to the proliferation of over-interpretative representations, let us temporarily, if only within the limits of this chapter, keep in mind a single criterion for both the act and the agent: “to speak on behalf of a divine entity.” Needless to say, perhaps, in the Chinese case, “heaven” as superhuman agency *does* count as a divine entity.

In addition, prophecy is characterized by what I would call “historical uniqueness,” in the sense that any prophetic occurrence is anchored in history by being located in time and space—even if such rooting proves to be factually unhistorical and to serve mostly rhetorical or symbolical purposes. By contrast, divinatory techniques in the broadest sense are basically free from historical determination; they may happen at any point in time; and they may be repeated, though not necessarily with the same unvarying result. Of course, as we shall see, besides cases of prophecy, sources may also report historical instances of divination similarly anchored in history.⁵

2. The Source Corpus

An early, enduring tradition associates Confucius with the constitution of a corpus of “Classics” (in Chinese *jing* 經, literally the “warp” in woven fabric), also known as the “Confucian Classics” in English.⁶ For more than two thousand years, the Classics have been revered and commented upon by literati in China and the neighboring countries of the Sinicized world. Later on, they became the focus of the Jesuit missionaries operating in China, and they remain at the core of the Jesuits’ cultural posterity: the academic discipline of Sinology. But to Confucius another early and enduring tradition ascribes the writing of

⁵ For a study of mantic practices recorded in pre-imperial chronicles, see Kalinowski, “La rhétorique oraculaire dans les chroniques anciennes de la Chine.”

⁶ For the ascription of these texts to Confucius and the mid-Han 漢 dynasty (206 BCE–9 CE) sudden interest in them, see Nylan, *The Five “Confucian” Classics*, 1–10 and 31–41.

“secret” (*mi* 祕) or “hidden” (*yin* 隱) books to complement the Classics. In Chinese, these books have been called, among other names, *wei* 緯 (literally the “weft” in woven fabric), *weishu* 緯書 (weft documents) and, by association with the genre of “prediction” (*chen* 讖),⁷ *tuchen* 圖讖 (charts and predictions), and *chenwei* 讖緯 (predictive weft). Here is how, soon after the beginning of the Tang 唐 dynasty (618–907), the *Sui shu* 隋書 (Sui documents), completed in 636, explains the ascription of both corpora to Confucius:

Master Kong, having arranged the Six Classics⁸ to enlighten the way of heaven and humans, knew that later generations would not be able to conform to their intent. Therefore [he] separately established the Weft as well as predictions, which [he] bequeathed to generations to come.

孔子既敍六經，以明天人之道，知後世不能稽同其意。故別立緯及讖，以遺來世。⁹

For (at least) the last seventy years, these books have been known in English as “Confucian Apocrypha,” “Han Apocrypha,” or simply “Apocrypha.”¹⁰ Itself a transliteration of a Greek neuter plural adjective meaning “hidden, concealed,” the term “Apocrypha” has been used in the first place to denote “hidden esoteric secrets,” then “to name a category of discarded,

⁷ On the “prediction” genre, see Lu, *Power of the Word*. Some modern scholars consider all these terms, and a few others such as *lu* 錄 (register) and *fu* 符 (symbol, token, tally), to be exchangeable. In modern times, these views may have been first expressed by Ch’ên P’an 陳槃 (1905–1999); see his volume of collected revised papers with publication dates spanning the years 1948–1988, *Gu chenwei yantao ji qi shulu jieti*, 171–77. See also the note by Max Kaltenmark (1910–2002) simply titled “Les Tch’an-wei.”

⁸ *Liu jing* 六經, here the *Shi* 詩 (Odes), *Shu* 書 (Documents), *Li* 禮 (Rites), *Yue* 樂 (Music), *Yi* 易 (Changes) and the *Chunqiu* 春秋 (Spring and Autumn) chronicle. See Kim, “*Liu jing* (The Six Classics).”

⁹ *Sui shu*, “Jingji zhi 經籍志,” 32.941.

¹⁰ The earliest such occurrence that I could find is Tjan, *Po Hu T’ung*, 100: “We may call the [*chenwei* 讖緯] Apocrypha, in contrast to the [*jing* 經], Classics or Canons.” Even though Kramers, “The Development of the Confucian Schools,” 759, criticized this use, the term became prevalent among Sinologists. See the discussions in Di Giacinto, *The Chenwei Riddle*, 1–5; Zhao, *In Pursuit of the Great Peace*, 213–15.

heretical books” or “extracanonical documents.”¹¹ The adjective also conveys pejorative undertones: in common usage, something “apocryphal” is often perceived to be of doubtful authenticity, if not outright fake. Considering that what is “apocryphal” about the corpus under consideration is much less the books themselves than their fictional ascription to Confucius, a better descriptive candidate could be “Confucian Pseudepigraphs.” Also derived from Greek root words, sometimes treated as a subcategory of apocrypha, “pseudepigraph” only implies that the ascription of a given text to an author is known to be *not* historical, regardless of its contents and other textual features.¹²

These Pseudepigraphs, however, met with a fate completely different from that of the Classics. Rooted in pre- and early imperial culture and fueled by political, philosophical, and cosmological debates, the Pseudepigraphs bloomed around the beginning of our era, in a context of contested dynastic legitimacy and competition for supreme power. They were given an official edition upon imperial command in 56 CE. Though related by name to the Classics, the Pseudepigraphs had their own agenda, concerned with cosmic mechanisms, political legitimacy, and world order. As potential propaganda tools, they became the target of repeated official prohibition and physical destruction. Before the passage quoted above, the same historiography records both its own inventory of Pseudepigraphs—13 titles amounting to 92 volumes (*juan* 卷)—and the inventory of the Liang 梁 dynasty (502–557)—32 titles amounting to 232 volumes—, which reveals a significant loss of material (about 60 percent) within a single century.¹³ Nearly extinct by Song 宋 times (960–1279), the Confucian Pseudepigraphs survived mainly as citations in third-party sources, with commentary by

¹¹ Charlesworth, “Biblical Literature,” 896.

¹² See Hammam, “Pseudepigraphy,” 346: “Pseudepigraphy in the strict sense of the term is a literary falsification concerning the author of a work. One must therefore distinguish it from the falsification of the text.” See also Grelot, “Apocryphes (ou Pseudépigraphes) de l’Ancien Testament,” 96: “*Pseudépigraphes* ... littéralement: attribués faussement à leurs auteurs prétendus.”

¹³ *Sui shu*, “Jingji zhi,” 32.940.

Zheng Xuan 鄭玄 (127–200) and his pupil Song Jun 宋均 (180s–after 266).¹⁴ Exceptionally, four Pseudepigraphs related to the *Yijing* 易經 (Classic of changes) appear to be complete, according to the *Song shi* 宋史 (Song history) completed in 1345.¹⁵ In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Chinese bibliophiles and scholars collected these remnants into a number of compendia. In post-World War II Japan, Yasui Kōzan 安居香山 (1921–1989) and Nakamura Shōhachi 中村璋八 (1926–2015) used one of these compendia, Qiao Songnian’s 喬松年 (1815–1875) *Weijun* 緯攬 (Weft garnered), published posthumously in 1877, in addition to the composite *Yiwei bazhong* 易緯八種 (Eight wefts of the *Changes*), as their primary source to compile the first-ever critical edition of the Pseudepigraphs.¹⁶ Materials selected for discussion in this chapter come from this critical edition, despite its intrinsic limitations and known defects.¹⁷

3. Temporality in Pseudo-Confucian Discourse

We can affirm without any reserve that Confucius is one of the figures, mythical or historical or both, most frequently appearing in the Pseudepigraphs. Using the index appended to the Japanese edition, I could isolate about 230 mentions (including commentaries and duplicates) of Confucius, mostly under the appellation “Master Kong,” Kong *zi* 孔子, but also of his

¹⁴ On the former figure, see Knechtges and Chang, *Ancient and Early Medieval Chinese Literature*, 2236–39; on the latter, Li, “Song Jun shengping zhushu kaolun.”

¹⁵ See *Song shi*, “Yiwen zhi 藝文志,” 202.5041; Nielsen, *A Companion to Yi jing Numerology and Cosmology*, 304–7.

¹⁶ Originally handwritten and mimeographed, the 6-volume *Isho shūsei*, published from 1959 to 1964, was expanded, corrected, typeset and reissued as the *Jūshū isho shūsei* from 1971 to 1992. In 1994, the People’s Press of Hebei (Shijiazhuang) published a Chinese version of the latter, also titled *Weishu jicheng*, in 3 volumes.

¹⁷ These include mistyped logograms, undetected citation duplicates, unreliable punctuation marks, and sequences of citations questionably organized. The Chinese 1994 edition includes a number of corrections, but newly mistyped logograms may have worked their way into it.

surname alone, Kong 孔, the two variant graphs for his personal name (*ming* 名) Qiu (丘 and 邱),¹⁸ his courtesy name (*zi* 字) Zhongni 仲尼 and, albeit rarely, Kong Qiu 孔丘. Expectedly, he is also found called “the Master,” *fuzi* 夫子 or simply *zi* 子. The Pseudepigraphs also exalt him as the Unadorned King (*suwang* 素王), that is, a figure of kingly stature, yet who never ruled in effect, but laid out the foundations of the future Han 漢 dynasty (206 BCE–220 CE), as we shall see.¹⁹

Confucius in the Pseudepigraphs is not an entirely new topic in Western Sinology. More than half a century ago, Tjan Tjoe Som 曾珠森 (1903–1969) and Jack L. Dull (1930–1995) already wrote overviews of “apocryphal” representations concerning the ancestry, conception, birth and physical appearance of Confucius, his political role and status as sage, and his special capacity as Unadorned King. Recently, Zhao Lu 趙璐 covered the same ground again, in slightly more detail and with reference to extraneous materials.²⁰

In view of the topics covered by the present volume, it seems fitting to study how the unknown authors of the Pseudepigraphs retrospectively formulated Pseudo-Confucian discourse related to things unknown in the broadest sense. With at least sixty occurrences of the phrase “Master Kong says (or said)” (*Kongzi yue* 孔子曰) in the corpus, the role of Pseudo-Confucius is primarily that of a speaking instance (or enunciator). More than half of these occurrences are found in the *Yiwei Qian zuo du* 易緯乾鑿度 (Weft of the *Changes*: Measures chiseled by Qian) or simply *Qian zuo du*, one of the rare Weft books integrally

¹⁸ On the rule of avoidance of Confucius’ personal name, see Zhang, *Lidai huizi pu*, A.21a.

¹⁹ For an overview of relevant passages in the Pseudepigraphs, see Zeng, “Chenwei zhong de Kong zi.” Recent European-language studies of the theme outside the Pseudepigraphs include Nylan, “Kongzi, the Uncrowned King”; Chan, “From Uncrowned King to the Sage of Profound Greatness”; Zhao, *In Pursuit of the Great Peace*, 85–89.

²⁰ See Tjan, *Po Hu T’ung*, 112–17; Dull, “A Historical Introduction to the Apocryphal (*Ch’an-wei*) Texts of the Han Dynasty,” 516–27; Zhao, “Representations of Confucius in Apocrypha of the First Century CE.”

preserved, which Bent Nielsen has extensively studied.²¹ In that particular case, such repeated occurrences squarely place the contents of the entire book in the mouth of Confucius. This feature seems to be unique in the extant Pseudepigraphs, but it may have been also the case with other Weft books today incomplete or fragmentary.

In his commentary to the *Weft of the Changes: Measures Chiseled by Qian*, Zheng Xuan notes that Confucius “made thirty-six volumes of predictions” (作讖三十六卷).²² Indeed, a number of Weft passages may be interpreted as containing predictive Pseudo-Confucian discourse. But the fact that the Chinese language is generally considered to be tenseless makes it difficult to situate some of these utterances along the basic categories of Western grammatical tense expressing temporal reference—past, present, and future. Two passages from the main text of the same *Measures Chiseled by Qian* aptly illustrate this difficulty. In them, Pseudo-Confucius discusses the *River Chart* (*He tu* 河圖) and the *Luo Writ* (*Luo shu* 洛書), two documents of superhuman origin whose appearance was believed to confirm the legitimacy of rulers favored by heaven.²³ Here is the first passage:

Master Kong says: “The auspicious augury that heaven is about to send down in response [is] the waters of the [Yellow] River being clear for three days, [then] green for four days, [then] green transforming into red, red transforming into black, and black transforming into yellow, each [color lasting for] three days. [When] the waters

²¹ See Nielsen, “The *Qian zuo du*,” “Calculating the Fall of a Dynasty,” and “Hexagrams and Prognostication in the *Weishu* Literature.” Nielsen also compiled *A Concordance to the Qian zuo du*.

²² *Yiwei Qian zuodu*, vol. 2, in *Jūshū isho shūsei*, vol. 1, *Eki* 易, 1:51, col. 13. The context of that commentary suggests that these “predictions” concerned toponyms, sages, and the rise and fall of dynasties and rulers.

²³ Traditionally, the *River Chart* and *Luo Writ* were respectively brought out of the Yellow River by a dragon and of the Luo River by a turtle. See Saso, “What is the *Ho-t'u*?”; Nielsen, *A Companion to Yi jing Numerology and Cosmology*, 103–5 and 169–71. In late medieval times, both phrases came to designate numerological diagrams; “*Luo shu*,” in particular, a magic square of the third order. See Granet, *La pensée chinoise*, 146–73.

in the middle of the River are quiet and immobile,²⁴ then the heavens are clear and bright, and the [River] *Chart* appears. [When] appearing [it] must face south, speak heavenwards.”

孔子曰：“天之將降嘉瑞應，河水清三日，青四日，青變為赤，赤變為黑，黑變為黃，各各三日。河中水安井，天乃清明，圖乃見。見必南向，仰天言。”²⁵

The commentary ascribed to Zheng Xuan ends with this explanation: “What faces the heavens in the South is a dragon. The *Chart* having been received then to speak, it means the arising one” (南之向天者，龍也。圖有受而言，謂乎興者也).²⁶ Perhaps does “the arising one” refer to the recipient of the *Chart*. Here is the second passage:

Master Kong says: “In response to the virtue of the emperor, the waters of the [River] Luo are first hot, then after nine days cold, [then] for five days transform into the five colors. The cerulean and the yellow—heaven and earth—are clear and immobile, the [Luo] *Writ* appears.”

孔子曰：“帝德之應，洛水先溫，九日後（乃寒），五日變為五色。<元>（玄）黃天地<之>（清）靜，書見矣。”²⁷

²⁴ According to Zhang Huiyan 張惠言 (1761–1802), whose *Yiwei lüeyi* 易緯略義 (Meaning of the wefts of the *Changes* in summary) is cited in the marginalia of the Japanese edition, *jing* 井 was equivalent to *jing* 靜 in ancient times. See *Yiwei Qian zuodu*, vol. 2, in *Jūshū isho shūsei*, vol. 1, 1:56, n. 104.

²⁵ *Yiwei Qian zuodu*, vol. 2, in *Jūshū isho shūsei*, vol. 1, 1:55, col. 14–16.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, col. 19–20. My translation of Zheng Xuan’s commentary remains tentative.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 56, col. 9–10. Variant readings derive from the marginalia of the Japanese edition. My punctuation is tentative. Substituting *yuan* 元 for *xuan* 玄 reflects common Song era and Qing dynasty avoidances. For the Song case, see Zhang, *Lidai huizi pu*, A.11b–12a. For the Qing case, see Vissière, “Traité des caractères chinois que l’on évite par respect,” 330–36.

Although I render both excerpts in the present tense, they could as well be translated in the past or future tense. The temporal marker *jiang* 將 occurs at the beginning of the first passage, which situates in time the utterance ahead of the described event. Does this allow the modern Western interpreter to understand both passages as being “predictive”? We remember that the entire text is placed in the mouth of Confucius by means of the repeated “*Kong zi yue*” tag, a rhetorical device intended less to report what the historical Confucius may have said than to bestow an aura of authority on the text. Moreover, the supernatural appearance of the *River Chart* and *Luo Writ* is a recurring motif of political legitimization in ancient Chinese narratives, including in the Pseudepigraphs, but Confucius is only one of several figures involved in these accounts.²⁸ In sum, I feel that both passages read better as timeless rules or authoritative statements, rather than as instances of “predictive” discourse properly.

Some Pseudepigraphs involve Confucius in milfoil divination (*shi* 筮). Such is the case in two passages that feature his compatriot and disciple Shang Qu 商瞿 who, according to the canonical tradition, received the *Changes* from Confucius.²⁹ But in the first passage below, which is a citation from the transmitted *Yiwei Qian Kun zuo du* 易緯乾坤鑿度 (Weft of the *Changes*: Measures chiseled by Qian and Kun),³⁰ it is the Master instead who turns to Shang Qu on the occasion of a chance milfoil divination practice:

²⁸ See the cluster of fragments surveyed in Espeset, “Epiphanies of Sovereignty and the Rite of Jade Disc Immersion in Weft Narratives,” 407–8, 413–20, and 431.

²⁹ According to Sima Qian’s 司馬遷 (c. 145–86 BCE) account in the bibliographical section of the *Shiji* 史記 (Records of the historiographer), completed in 91 BCE, Shang Qu (born 523 BCE), courtesy name Zimu 子木, was a first-generation disciple, twenty-nine years younger than Confucius. See *Shiji*, “Liezhuan 列傳,” 67.2211; translated in Nienhauser, *The Grand Scribe’s Records*, 79.

³⁰ Possibly a late Song fabrication, according to Nielsen, “Hexagrams and Prognostication in the *Weishu* Literature,” 48–49, n. 10. The title evidently results from the insertion of Kun 坤 (earth) into the better-known title *Qian zuodu*, where Qian 乾 represents heaven.

Zhongni, a person from Lu,³¹ was unacquainted with the *Changes* and did not understand its basis. Fortuitously he divined about his destiny using milfoil and got the Wanderer hexagram.³² He asked Mister Shang Qu for advice, who said: “You have the wisdom of a sage, but no position.” Master Kong said, weeping: “Heaven! Destiny! The phoenix bird comes not, [from] the [Yellow] River no *Chart* arrives. Alas, that heaven has thus mandated!” After [he] finished lamenting, [Confucius] forfeited ambition, ceased to read the *Rites*, and stopped historical emendations. [When aged] fifty, [he] delved into the *Changes* and made the Ten Wings³³ [to] shed light on [them]. 仲尼魯人，生不知易本。偶筮其命，得旅。請益於商瞿氏，曰：“子有聖智而無位。”孔子泣而曰：“天也，命也！鳳鳥不來，河無圖至。嗚呼，天命之也！”嘆訖而後息志，停讀禮，止史削。五十究易，作十翼明也。³⁴

In this excerpt, the lament by Pseudo-Confucius does not disclose anything about the future specifically, but rather expresses vividly a sudden understanding of his ongoing personal condition—lack of an official position—as reflecting the Mandate of Heaven (*tianming* 天命), twice alluded to in the passage, where the English substantive “destiny” and verb “to mandate” both translate the logogram *ming* 命. This sudden realization results from divinatory practice confirmed by a double negative observational interpretation: the non-observation of a phoenix bird and the non-appearance of the *River Chart*. (More on the theme of observational interpretation below.)

³¹ Lu 魯, a state in the area corresponding to modern Western Shandong, ruled by the Ji 姬 clan. Its capital city was Qufu 曲阜 (south of modern Ji'nan 濟南 city).

³² *Lü* 旅, the fifty-sixth hexagram, means to have gone astray and have no fixed abode. See Lynn, *The Classic of Changes*, 494–500.

³³ *Shiyi* 十翼, here presumably not the homonymous appendices to the *Changes*, but a variant cluster of texts, including, among unknown titles, the *Xici* 繫辭 (Attached statements). For details, see *Yiwei Qian Kun zuodu*, vol. 2, in *Jūshū isho shūsei*, vol. 1, 1:111, col. 16–17. Compare Nielsen, *A Companion to Yi jing Numerology and Cosmology*, 211.

³⁴ *Yiwei Qian Kun zuodu*, vol. 2, in *Jūshū isho shūsei*, vol. 1, 1:111, col. 6–13.

If, in this first instance of hexagram divination, Pseudo-Confucius must ask a disciple for advice on the interpretation of the hexagram obtained, in the second instance, by contrast, he himself performs the divination, demonstrating his mastery of the technique. That anecdote appears in a quotation from the *Yiwei bian zhong bei* 易緯辨終備 (Weft of the *Changes*: Managing final completion), a Pseudepigraph apparently not attested before Tang times.³⁵ Shang Qu being aged forty therein, Confucius, logically, is now sixty-nine:

Shang Qu, a person from Lu, was sent to the state of Qi.³⁶ Qu, aged forty, thenceforth sent traveling on distant roads, dreaded apprehensively that he would never have children. On the normative month,³⁷ the Master performed milfoil divination with Qu's mother, and reported: "Later [Shang Qu] will have five sons." Zigong³⁸ said: "How do you know?"

魯人商瞿使向齊國。瞿年四十，今後使行遠路，畏慮恐絕無子。夫子正月與瞿母筮，告曰：“後有五丈夫子。”子貢曰：“何以知？”³⁹

In answer to his disciple, Pseudo-Confucius exposes in detail (45 logograms) how he has interpreted the Great Domestication (Daxu 大畜) hexagram,⁴⁰ ending with the statement that

³⁵ One of the earliest mentions of this Pseudepigraphic title could be Li Shan's 李善 (630–689) commentary, completed in 658, to the *Wenxuan* 文選 (Literary selections), compiled under the editorship of Xiao Tong 蕭統 (501–531). See *Wenxuan*, "Wuse 物色," 13.16b. The titles *Bian zhong bei* 辨中備 (Managing median completion), *Zhong bei* 終備 (Final completion), and *Zhong bei* 中備 (Median completion), are probably variants of the same title.

³⁶ Qi 齊, a state in the area corresponding to modern Eastern Shandong. In Confucian times, it was ruled by the Jiang 姜 clan and its capital city was Linzi 臨淄 (in modern Zibo 淄博 city).

³⁷ *Zhengyue* 正月, the first month of the official calendar, which determines the congruence between each successive month and the fixed astronomical cycle. The (unchanging) first astronomical month (*yi Yue* 一月) always contains the winter solstice (*dongzhi* 冬至).

³⁸ According to Sima Qian, Duanmu Si 端木賜 (or 沐) 賜 (520–456 BCE), courtesy name Zigong 子貢, was one of the favorite disciples of Confucius and thirty-one years younger than him. See *Shiji*, "Liezhuan," 67.2195–2201; translated in Nienhauser, *The Grand Scribe's Records*, 70–74.

³⁹ *Yiwei bian zhong bei*, in *Jūshū isho shūsei*, vol. 1, 2:21, 3rd dotted item.

one of the five sons will have a short life.⁴¹ The occurrence of the logogram *hou* 後 (here “later”) clearly marks the utterance as concerning a future event, hence the grammatical future tense in my English rendering. This is an unquestionable instance of proper hexagram-based prediction by Pseudo-Confucius. Read together, these two fragments suggest that the Master overcame a traumatizing initial experience to learn and eventually master the manipulative and interpretative techniques of milfoil divination.

In some instances of Pseudo-Confucian discourse, the predictive function is made manifest by the commentary. Such is the case in the following citation, which has been ascribed to two different yet comparably early Pseudepigraphs, the *Li ji ming zheng* 禮稽命徵 (*Rites: Examining evidences of the mandate*) and the *Yue ji yao jia* 樂稽耀嘉 (*Music: Examining the resplendent auspices*)⁴²:

Master Kong told Zixia:⁴³ “Multitudes of mynas⁴⁴ have arrived. It is not a bird of the central states.”

Song Jun’s commentary says: “Hole-dwelling birds come nesting, leaving tranquility for danger. Duke Zhao⁴⁵ is about to leave the state and wander all around. Now consequently [mynas] are everywhere.”

孔子謂子夏曰：“群鵠至。非中國之禽也。”

宋均注云：“穴處之鳥而來巢，去安就危。昭公將去國周流也。今則處處皆有。”⁴⁶

⁴⁰ The twenty-sixth hexagram. See Lynn, *The Classic of Changes*, 299–304.

⁴¹ See *Jūshū isho shūsei*, vol. 1, 2:21, 3rd dotted item.

⁴² Both are mentioned in the *Baihu tong* 白虎通 (Comprehensive discussions in the White Tiger [Pavilion]), ascribed to Ban Gu 班固 (32–92); see Tjan, *Po Hu T’ung*, 192–93. The received version of Ban Gu’s text, however, is estimated to date to the early third century (see Loewe, “*Bai hu t’ung*”).

⁴³ According to Sima Qian, Bu Shang 卜商 (507–425 BCE), courtesy name Zixia 子夏, was a first-generation disciple, born forty-four years after Confucius. See *Shiji*, “Liezhuan,” 67.2202–3; translated in Nienhauser, *The Grand Scribe’s Records*, 74–75.

⁴⁴ *Yu* 鵠 (*Acridotheres*), a genus of starlings.

⁴⁵ *Zhao gong* 昭公 of Lu (r. 541–510 BCE), who fled into exile after the ducal host was defeated by the forces of three powerful allied clans of Shusun 叔孫, Jisun 季孫, and Mengsun 孟孫.

This citation corresponds to an entry in the *Spring and Autumn* (*Chunqiu* 春秋) chronicle, even though the canonical tradition does not put the utterance in the mouth of Confucius. The chronicle for the summer of the twenty-fifth year of Duke Zhao of Lu (517 BCE), during the lifetime of Confucius, reads: “Crested mynas have come nesting” (有鸛鵒來巢).⁴⁷ The three main *Spring and Autumn* exegetical traditions (*zhuan* 傳) deal with that short entry differently.⁴⁸

The Zuo 左 tradition considers that the fact was recorded because it was observed for the first time and appends to the entry the note: “which is not in the documents” (書所無也).⁴⁹ The Gongyang 公羊 tradition regards the event as being “abnormal” (*yi* 異) because the crested myna (as in the Pseudepigraph fragment) “is not a bird of the central states” (非中國之禽也). He Xiu 何休 (129–182), in his commentary (*zhu* 注), adds that it is “the image of a state in impending peril of collapsing” (國將危亡之象) and that a powerful vassal (someone in inferior position) craves for authority (to occupy an upper position). The sub-commentary (*shu* 疏), perhaps by Xu Yan 徐彥 of the Tang, first cites the *Spring and Autumn* Pseudepigraph *Yun dou shu* 運斗樞 (Axis of the rotating Dipper) as giving: “Crested mynas have come nesting in elms” (有鸛鵒來巢于榆), then interprets the occurrence as a sign

⁴⁶ *Li ji ming zheng*, in *Jūshū isho shūsei*, vol. 3, *Shi / Rai / Gaku* 詩·禮·樂, 65, 2nd dotted item and commentary.

⁴⁷ *Quanyu* 鸛鵒 (*Acridotheres cristatellus*). As birds native of Indochina and South-East China, crested mynas must have been very rare in the Lu area in the time of Confucius, if ever observed before. The *Yue ji yao jia*, in *Jūshū isho shūsei*, vol. 3, 97, last dotted item, and 98, col. 1–2, commentary (without the last six logograms of the *Li ji ming zheng* citation), reads *yingyu* 鸛鵒 (a variant name of the same *Acridotheres*). Both variant readings lack the explicitly plural implication of *qun yu* 群鵒 (multitudes of mynas).

⁴⁸ On the three main exegetical traditions attached to the *Spring and Autumn* chronicle and for a survey of the debates concerning their origin, the dates of the received versions and their diachronic relationship, see Cheng, “*Ch’un ch’iu, Kung yang, Ku liang and Tso chuan*”; Nylan, *The Five “Confucian” Classics*, 253–62.

⁴⁹ See *Chunqiu Zuo zhuan zhengyi*, 31.31a–b. This version of the Zuo tradition was completed in 653 under the editorship of Kong Yingda 孔穎達 (574–648).

meaning (as in the Pseudepigraphic fragment) that “[Duke] Zhao is about to depart beyond distant regions” (昭將去遠域之外).⁵⁰ The Guliang 穀梁 tradition also notes the foreignness of the bird, then a gloss by Fan Ning 范甯 (339–401) cites Liu Xiang 劉向 (79–8 BCE) in these terms: “Leaving holes for nests, this is the image of Yin occupying a Yang position, of vassals chasing away [their] lord” (去穴而巢, 此陰居陽位, 臣逐君之象也).⁵¹ Indeed Ban Gu 班固 (32–92), in a passage of the *Han Documents* (*Han shu* 漢書) discussing the same *Spring and Autumn* entry, cites and ascribes to Liu Xiang a similar statement.⁵²

Song Jun’s Pseudepigraphic commentary, the Gongyang exegesis, and the citation from Liu Xiang, all use the temporal marker *jiang* 將. Again, this term legitimates our retrospective interpretation of the Pseudo-Confucian utterance as coming under the Western category of “prediction.”

4. The Pseudo-Confucian “Prophecy” of Han Rule

In all the interpretations of the avian observation above, the determinative in the interpreted sign is the foreignness of the animal. This motif parallels how the *Spring and Autumn* Gongyang exegesis comments the appearance of a unicorn (*lin* 麟) in the year 481 BCE: “It is

⁵⁰ See *Chunqiu Gongyang zhuan zhushu*, “Qi Zhao gong ershisan nian jin sanshier nian 起昭公二十三年盡三十二年,” 24.8a–b. This version of the Gongyang tradition was completed in 1775 by Lufei Chi 陸費墀 (1731–1790). Translated (without sub-commentary) in Miller, *The Gongyang Commentary on the Spring and Autumn Annals*, 237.

⁵¹ See *Chunqiu Guliang zhuan zhushu*, “Qi Zhao gong shisi nian jin sanshier nian 起昭公十四年盡三十二年,” 18.15a–b. This version of the Guliang tradition was also completed in 1775 by Lufei Chi.

⁵² See *Han shu*, “Wuxing zhi 五行志,” 27BB.1414: “Not [dwelling in] holes but nesting, [this is] Yin dwelling in a Yang position, in the image of the Ji clan about to chase away Duke Zhao, [who will] leave the Palace and dwell in outer country” (不穴而巢, 陰居陽位, 象季氏將逐昭公, 去宮室而居外野也). (This is a short excerpt from Liu Xiang’s interpretation.) Instances of Yin (especially women and hierarchical inferiors) occupying a Yang position (that of men or hierarchical superiors) were seen as expressing Yin’s dominion over Yang, which was one of the worst sign of cosmic imbalance; see Espeset, “Portents in Early Imperial China,” 280–81.

not a beast of the central states” (非中國之獸也).⁵³ Famously, this is the last event entered in the received *Spring and Autumn* chronicle, and Confucius reportedly passed away two years later. What Confucius is claimed to have said upon seeing the beast is probably the best candidate for a case of “Confucian prophecy.” The most detailed source in this respect seems to be a Pseudepigraphic account of which several versions exist, citing two different *Classic of Filial Piety* (*Xiaojing* 孝經) Pseudepigraphs, the *Xiaojing yuan shen qi* 孝經援神契 (Taking hold of the divine tally)⁵⁴ and the *Xiaojing you qi* 孝經右契 (Right tally).⁵⁵ Even though the passage is well known, I give it here in full:

Duke Ai of Lu,⁵⁶ fourteenth year. Master Kong dreamt one night that, among three *Sophoras*,⁵⁷ in the domain of Feng in Pei,⁵⁸ red smoke had been rising. Then he called Yan Yuan⁵⁹ and Zixia, and [all three] went to look at it. They hurried by carriage to

⁵³ *Chunqiu Gongyang zhuan zhushu*, “Ai gong 哀公,” 28.11b. Translated in Miller, *The Gongyang Commentary on the Spring and Autumn Annals*, 275–76.

⁵⁴ This Pseudepigraph is cited five times in the main text of the *Comprehensive Discussions in the White Tiger [Pavilion]* (see Tjan, *Po Hu T'ung*, 193). It is also cited in a “sealed matter” (*fengshi* 封事) memorialized in 169 by Xie Bi 謝弼 (died 169) and preserved in the *Hou Han shu* 後漢書 (Later Han documents), completed in 445; see *Hou Han shu*, “Liezhuan,” 57.1859. On Xie Bi and his memorial submission, see de Crespigny, *A Biographical Dictionary of Later Han to the Three Kingdoms*, 892.

⁵⁵ The earliest mention of this Pseudepigraph that I could find is in Xu Jian’s 徐堅 (659–729) *Chuxue ji* 初學記 (Records for primary studies), compiled in the first half of the seventh century; see *Chuxue ji*, “Shou bu 獸部” (Beasts section), 29.700, under what I assume to be a variant title, *Xiaojing gu qi* 孝經古契 (*Classic of Filial Piety*: Ancient tally). According to the *Sui Documents*, the Liang dynasty had a *Xiaojing zuoyou qi tu* 孝經左右契圖 (*Classic of Filial Piety*: Chart of the left and right tallies), in 1 volume, perhaps related to the same Pseudepigraph (see *Sui shu*, “Jingji zhi,” 32.940).

⁵⁶ *Ai gong* 哀公 (r. 494–467 BCE), the last Duke of Lu covered in the *Spring and Autumn* chronicle.

⁵⁷ *Huai* 槐. By metonymy, the three *Sophoras* refer to the Three Dukes (*sangong* 三公), the highest dignitaries of the Zhou regime (see Hucker, *A Dictionary of Official Titles in Imperial China*, 399, no. 4871). During their audience with the king, the Three Dukes would face three *Sophoras* planted outside the Zhou royal residence.

⁵⁸ Feng 豐 was a township (*xian* 縣) in Pei 沛 Commandery (*jun* 郡), in present-day Anhui province, and the birthplace of the founder of the Han dynasty.

⁵⁹ According to Sima Qian, Yan Yuan 顏淵, that is, Yan Hui 顏回 (521–490/481 BCE), courtesy name Ziyuan 子淵, was the favorite disciple of Confucius, thirty years younger than him. See *Shiji*, “Liezhuan,” 67.2187–88; translated in Nienhauser, *The Grand Scribe’s Records*, 64–65.

the neighborhood of the Fan clan,⁶⁰ in the North-West of Chu,⁶¹ [where they] saw a boy straw-gatherer, who had captured a unicorn whose left forepaw was injured and had covered it with firewood. Master Kong said: “Come, boy. What is your surname?” The boy said: “My surname is Chisong,⁶² my personal name Ziqiao,⁶³ and my courtesy name Shouji.”⁶⁴ Master Kong said: “What did you see?” The boy said: “[I] saw a beast, big as a lamb, with atop its head a horn, on the end of which there is flesh.” Master Kong said: “The realm already has a ruler, it is Liu the Red. Chen and Xiang [will] be [his] bulwarks.⁶⁵ The Five Planets [will] enter the Well,⁶⁶ following after the Year Star.”⁶⁷ The boy produced the unicorn beneath the firewood and showed [it] to Master Kong. Master Kong approached in haste. The unicorn drooped its ears and spewed out three volumes of charts, three inches broad and eight inches long, each volume [displaying] twenty-four words which told that Liu the Red shall rise, reading: “The

⁶⁰ Fan *shi* 范氏. According to the “appraisal” (*zan* 贊) appended to Liu Bang’s biography in the *Han shu*, the Liu traced their ancestry to Emperor Yao (Di Yao 帝堯) via the Zhou-era Fan 范 clan. See *Han shu*, “Gaozu ji 高祖紀,” 1B.81–82; translated in Dubs, *The History of the Former Han Dynasty*, 146–50.

⁶¹ Chu 楚, one of the largest states of the pre-imperial era, which occupied an area centered on the middle Changjiang 長江 (Yangzi River) region.

⁶² Chisong 赤誦, literally “Red Chanting.” Variants give Chisong 赤松 (Red Pine) and even Chisong zi 赤松子 (Master Red Pine), an ancient Chinese mythical figure that Taoist hagiography would later integrate; see Raz, “Chisong zi.”

⁶³ Ziqiao (or Shiqiao) 子 (時) 喬 (or 僑). The name is reminiscent of another mythical figure, Wang Ziqiao (or Wangzi Qiao) 王子喬, often found together with Master Red Pine; see Raz, “Wangzi Qiao.”

⁶⁴ Shouji 受紀, literally “Receiving the Annals,” likely an allusion to accession to power. Variants of the citation exchange the youth’s name and courtesy name.

⁶⁵ The warlords Chen Sheng 陳勝 (died 208 BCE) and Xiang Yu 項羽 (232–202 BCE) respectively. The former was among the earliest rebels who took up arms against the Qin, the latter a warlord who turned from objective ally of the future founder of the Han to rival. On these figures, see Loewe, *A Biographical Dictionary of the Qin, Former Han and Xin Periods*, 38–39 and 599–602. Several warlords surnamed Chen 陳 took part in the uprising that brought about the end of the Qin.

⁶⁶ Jing 井, also called Eastern Well (Dongjing 東井), the first southern Lodge.

⁶⁷ Suixing 歲星, Jupiter. Classically, the Five Planets are Suixing (Jupiter), Yinghuo 熒惑 (“Dazzling Deluder,” Mars), Taibai 太白 (“Great White,” Venus), Chenxing 辰星 (“Indicator Star,” Mercury), and Zhenxing 填 (or 鎮) 星 (“Quelling Star,” Saturn).

Zhou⁶⁸ [shall] collapse, red pneuma arise and the fiery incandescence ascend; Qiu the Cerulean [shall] design the mandate and the emperor [shall be] Opening Metal.”

魯哀公十四年。孔子夜夢，三槐之間，沛豐之邦，有赤烟氣起。乃呼顏淵，子夏，往視之。驅車到楚西北范氏街，見芻兒捕麟，傷其前左足，薪而覆之。孔子曰：“兒，來。汝姓為誰？”兒曰：“吾姓為赤誦，名子喬，字受紀。”孔子曰：“汝豈有所見耶？”兒曰：“見一獸，巨如羔羊，頭上有角，其末有肉。”孔子曰：“天下已有主也，為赤劉；陳，項為輔。五星入井，從歲星。”兒發薪下麟示孔子。孔子趨而往。麟蒙其耳，吐書三卷，廣三寸，長八寸，每卷二十四字，其言赤劉當起，曰：“周亡，赤氣起，火耀興；玄丘制命，帝卯金。”⁶⁹

Qiu “the Cerulean” (*xuan* 玄) is Confucius, who, according to the Pseudepigraphs, had been conceived by a woman and the Black Emperor, and therefore was endowed with black draconic essence.⁷⁰ The phrase “Opening Metal” (*mao jin* 卯金) spells the surname “Liu” 劉. “Domain” translates *bang* 邦, and the phrase “in the domain of Feng in Pei” (沛豐之邦) also conveys the subtext “[Liu] Bang of Feng in Pei.”⁷¹ All this naturally points to Liu Bang 劉邦

⁶⁸ The royal Zhou 周 dynasty (1049/1045–256 BCE), whose political decline was witnessed by Confucius, and whose ritual order would be idealized from the Han era onwards.

⁶⁹ *Xiaojing yuan shen qi*, in *Jūshū isho shūsei*, vol. 5, *Kōkyō / Rongo* 孝經·論語, 58, 1st dotted item; compare *Xiaojing you qi*, in *Jūshū isho shūsei*, vol. 5, 63, 3rd and 4th dotted items. Translated in Dull, “A Historical Introduction to the Apocryphal (*Ch’an-wei*) Texts of the Han Dynasty,” 525; Cheng, *Étude sur le confucianisme Han*, 264–65, n. 42.

⁷⁰ For details, see Tjan, *Po Hu T’ung*, 112–13; Dull, “A Historical Introduction to the Apocryphal (*Ch’an-wei*) Texts of the Han Dynasty,” 517; Zhao, “Representations of Confucius in Apocrypha of the First Century CE,” 80–81. Cerulean (*xuan*) and black (*hei* 黑) are here paradigmatic equivalents.

⁷¹ As already noted in Dull, “A Historical Introduction to the Apocryphal (*Ch’an-wei*) Texts of the Han Dynasty,” 525.

(256/247–195 BCE), the founder of the Han, who adopted red (*chi* 赤) as emblematic color during his war against the Qin 秦 (221–207 BCE) dynasty.⁷²

Early imperial historiography records a Five-Planet conjunction in the constellation of the Well around the beginning of the Han era (which, incidentally, indicates the approximate incipience time of the narrative).⁷³ This conjunction is dealt with only briefly in the *Records of the Historiographer* (*Shiji* 史記), but the *Han Documents*, like the Pseudepigraph just cited, add that Jupiter led the planetary motion.⁷⁴ In both sources, a Five-Planet conjunction marks a change in the dominating agent (*xing* 行), blessings for the virtuous, who rule the world and whose posterity proliferate, and calamities for the wicked, who become extinct.⁷⁵ The planetary conjunction being set to happen some two hundred and seventy-five years after the Pseudo-Confucian utterance (hence the future tense in my translation), this is clearly a case of (retrospective) announcement.

When compared to the three main *Spring and Autumn* exegetical traditions, what characterizes the Pseudepigraph is that the story originates in a dream by Pseudo-Confucius.⁷⁶ As the plot develops, the dream turns out to be premonitory: the color and movement of the smoke, the trees, the geographical location of the scene—all these “signs” announce what Pseudo-Confucius says when he meets the young straw-gatherer (an utterance that I render in the grammatical future tense). The citation ends with a transcription of the contents of the document produced by the unicorn, marking a third irruption of the future in the narrative present (contents which I also render in the future tense).

⁷² On Liu Bang, see Loewe, *A Biographical Dictionary of the Qin, Former Han and Xin Periods*, 253–59. The Han used three different emblematic colors in the course of their rule. See Loewe, “Water, Earth and Fire.”

⁷³ A date for the conjunction has been proposed in Dubs, “The Conjunction of May 205 B.C.”

⁷⁴ See *Shiji*, “Tianguan shu 天官書,” 27.1348; translated in Pankenier, *Astrology and Cosmology in Early China*, 507. Compare *Han shu*, “Tianwen zhi 天文志,” 26.1301.

⁷⁵ See *Shiji*, “Tianguan shu,” 27.1321; translated in Pankenier, *Astrology and Cosmology in Early China*, 480. Compare *Han shu*, “Tianwen zhi,” 26.1287.

⁷⁶ For a translation of He Xiu’s and the Gongyang exegetical treatment of that chronicle entry, see Cheng, *Étude sur le confucianisme Han*, 244–51.

While the premonitory dream may evoke the Western analytical category of “miracle” (in the sense of an unusual event interpreted as manifesting superhuman agency),⁷⁷ the Pseudo-Confucian declamation does not come close to a “prophecy” as defined above. The Master’s foreknowledge of the Liu ascension is one of the recurring Pseudepigraphic motifs. Some fragments, such as the following single surviving citation from the *Shangshu zhonghou rijiao* 尚書中候日角 (*Venerable documents: Accurate observations: Sun horn*),⁷⁸ clarify the cognitive processes of the Pseudo-Confucian mind in relation to the theme:

The Master was used to referring to charts and registers, and knew that the commoner Liu Ji should succeed the Zhou [dynasty].⁷⁹ Seeing the firewood-gatherer catch the unicorn, [Confucius] knew the purpose of its appearance. How? Unicorns are the essence of [agent] Wood; a firewood-gatherer means that a commoner lights a fire. This is the Red Emperor about to succeed the Zhou.

夫子素案圖錄，知庶姓劉季當代周。見薪采者獲麟，知為其出。何者？麟者，木精；薪采者，庶人燃火之意。此赤帝將代周。⁸⁰

Here again, Pseudo-Confucius is said to have known the reasons for the unicorn’s appearance (an event both recent and in progress) and foreknown that the Han would succeed the Zhou (a future event). Parenthetically, this succession order seems to imply that, at this point, the Qin dynasty is either unforeseen or deliberately ignored. The common verb *zhi* 知 (to know)

⁷⁷ See Waida, “Miracles”; McFarland, “Miracles.”

⁷⁸ Perhaps should the phrase be read as marking a citation from a section with the heading “Rijiao 日角” (Sun horn) in the better known *Shangshu zhonghou* 尚書中候 (*Venerable Documents: Accurate observations*), a Pseudepigraph commented by Zheng Xuan, which had eight volumes under the Liang dynasty (see *Sui shu*, “Jingji zhi,” 32.940). Zheng Xuan explains in his commentary: “Sun horn refers to a bone raised in the centre of the forehead, in the figure of the sun” (日角謂庭中骨起，狀如日), likely a glabella; see *Shangshu zhonghou*, in *Jūshū isho shūsei*, vol. 2, *Sho / Chūkō* 書・中候, 91, 9th item.

⁷⁹ Ji 季 was Liu Bang’s courtesy name.

⁸⁰ *Shangshu zhonghou rijiao*, in *Jūshū isho shūsei*, vol. 2, 110, 1st dotted item.

marks the cognitive function twice. The source of that knowledge, however, is not superhuman inspiration,⁸¹ but “charts and registers” (*tulu* 圖錄), a phrase that modern dictionaries define as documents more or less identical with the Pseudepigraphs themselves. Mentions of the interacting agents Wood (*mu* 木) and Fire (*huo* 火), and of the latter’s emblematic color red (*chi*), unambiguously connect the knowledge derived from these documents with what Sinologists often call the “technical” lore of pre- and early imperial China and its cosmological theories. In the same way, it is by consulting “registers and documents” (*lushu* 錄書) that Pseudo-Confucius knows that Ji Chang 姬昌, alias King Wen 文王 (r. 1099–1050 BCE) of the Zhou, is “the essence of the Verdant Emperor” (蒼帝精) of agent Wood and the eastern cardinal direction.⁸²

A more detailed version of the unicorn-based deduction features in the Gongyang exegesis, without any Pseudepigraphic ascription.⁸³ In typical Gongyang fashion, the exegete discusses the reason for the inclusion of the event in the chronicle and how the entry was composed, speculating on the logics behind the Master’s interpretation. How could Confucius foresee the Han rise simply by seeing the wounded beast and a young firewood-gatherer? The interpretative elements put forth by the exegete point to a process of “rational” deduction by Confucius, involving his knowledge of historical precedents, of historiography and its codes, and of the Five Agents framework, but also of seasonal cycles, the calendar, logographic

⁸¹ For a religious definition of “inspiration,” see Carpenter, “Inspiration,” 4509: “a spiritual influence that occurs spontaneously and renders a person capable of thinking, speaking, or acting in ways that transcend ordinary human capacities.” Compare Abraham, “Revelation,” 445: “the claim that particular communicative events (e.g., the production of biblical texts) are a matter of divine rather than human will.”

⁸² See *Chunqiu gan jing fu* 春秋感精符, in *Jūshū isho shūsei*, vol. 4, *Shunjū* 春秋, 1:186, 8th dotted item. For the first- or second-century date of this text, see Espeset, “Epiphanies of Sovereignty and the Rite of Jade Disc Immersion in Weft Narratives,” 441, no. 4.

⁸³ See *Gongyang zhuan zhushu*, “Ai gong,” 28.15b, commentary.

interpretation, and even zoology—in sum, mainly fields of organized knowledge, in other words: ancient science or sciences.⁸⁴

More fragments of Pseudepigraphs dealing with the aftermath of the unicorn narrative deserve consideration due to their involving some forms of religious experience. The first one below, cited from the *Chunqiu yan Kong tu* 春秋演孔圖 (*Spring and Autumn: Elaborating Kong's chart*), a Pseudepigraph dating to the second century CE at the latest,⁸⁵ substantiates the special relationship existing between Pseudo-Confucius and the superhuman realm:

After the unicorn was found, heaven sent a blood writ down to the Gate of Exactness in Lu,⁸⁶ reading: “In haste make exemplars! Sage Kong is vanishing, the Ji [clan] of the Zhou is collapsing and a sweeping [star]⁸⁷ has appeared in the East. Zheng⁸⁸ of Qin [will] rise, Hu⁸⁹ [will] destroy the arts,⁹⁰ documents and annals [will] be scattered, [but the teachings of] Kong [will] not be interrupted.” On the morrow, [as] Zixia went to look at it, the blood writ flew into a red crow [that] transformed into a white writ. [Its] title read “Elaborating Kong's Chart,” and inside were figures for making charts and designing exemplars.

⁸⁴ For the notion of “ancient science,” see the remarks in Lloyd and Sivin, *The Way and the Word*, 4–6.

⁸⁵ This book is cited in a “response” (*dui* 對) to the emperor, dated 178, by Cai Yong 蔡邕 (133–192). See *Hou Han shu*, “Zhi 志,” “Wuxing 五行,” 17.3352.

⁸⁶ *Duanmen* 端門, one of the gates of the walled capital of Lu.

⁸⁷ *Hui* 彗 (for *huixing* 彗星), a type of comet. Song Jun's commentary adds that, in the winter of the thirteenth year of Duke Ai, that is, shortly before the unicorn event (hence the past tense in my translation), a comet was observed in Major Indicator (*dachen* 大辰), here either Antares (α Scorpionis) or the three eastern Lodges Chamber (Fang 房), Heart (Xin 心), and Tail (Wei 尾) altogether (Scorpio).

⁸⁸ Ying Zheng 嬴政 or Zhao Zheng 趙政 (259–210 BCE), King of Qin (r. 246–221 BCE), then First emperor (Shi huangdi 始皇帝, r. 221–210 BCE) of the Qin dynasty. See Loewe, *A Biographical Dictionary of the Qin, Former Han and Xin Periods*, 654–56.

⁸⁹ Huhai 胡亥, second and last emperor (r. 210–207 BCE) of the Qin dynasty. See Loewe, *A Biographical Dictionary of the Qin, Former Han and Xin Periods*, 652–53.

⁹⁰ *Shu* 術, here traditional erudition, rather than the technical knowledge later implied by the term.

得麟之後，天下血書魯端門，曰：“趨作法！孔聖沒，周姬亡，彗東出。秦政起，胡破術，書紀散，孔不絕。”子夏明日往視之，血書飛為赤烏，化為白書。署曰：“演孔圖，”中有作圖制法之狀。⁹¹

The manifestation of the “blood” (perhaps meaning “blood-red”) writing confirms the sense of the unicorn’s appearance as regards future Han emperorship, but supplements it with a disclosure of the two intervening Qin rules and their inherent perils. How does the Master react to this superhuman divulcation and warning? Not by uttering speech on behalf of a superhuman entity, but by launching an interstate editorial project in historiography with the assistance of his disciples, as a citation from the *Chunqiu gan jing fu* 春秋感精符 (*Spring and Autumn: Token of the bestirred essence*) recounts:

Master Kong received the mandate of the Gate of Exactness and designed the meaning of the *Spring and Autumn*. He sent fourteen persons—Zixia and others—to look for the historical records of the Zhou and find the treasured documents of a hundred and twenty states. In nine months the Classic was established.

孔子受端門之命，制春秋之義。使子夏等十四人求周史記，得百二十國寶書。九月經立。⁹²

⁹¹ *Chunqiu yan Kong tu*, in *Jūshū Isho shūsei*, vol. 4, 1:14, 4th dotted item. Worthy of note, the fragment implies that the lost Pseudepigraph, named after Confucius, both recounted its own origin and described its own contents.

⁹² *Chunqiu gan jing fu*, in *Jūshū Isho shūsei*, vol. 4, 1:190, 10th dotted item. Compare *Chunqiu kao yi you* 春秋考異郵, *ibid.*, 2:29, 4th dotted item; and *Chunqiu shuo ti ci* 春秋說題辭, *ibid.*, 99, 1st item. The *Kao yi you* is cited twice by Wang Fan 王蕃 (228–266) in a disquisition on astronomy (c. 250) reported in the *Jin shu* 晉書 (Jin documents), completed in 648; see *Jin shu*, “Tianwen zhi,” 11.286 and 287; translated in Ho, *The Astronomical Chapters of the Chin Shu*, 64 and 65. The earliest citations of the *Shuo ti ci* seem to appear in Li Daoyuan’s 酈道元 (466/472–527) *Shuijing zhu* 水經注 (Classic of the waterways, [with] commentary), completed around 520; see, for instance, *Shuijing zhu*, “He shui 河水,” 1.2b.

According to the *Spring and Autumn: Elaborating Kong's Chart*, the title of the resulting chronicle reflects the fact that work started in spring of the fourteenth year of Duke Ai of Lu (481 BCE) and was completed in autumn of the same year.⁹³ Work being over, the source adds, Pseudo-Confucius “performed turtle plastron divination and got the hexagram of Yang Contentment” (卜之, 得陽豫之卦). This fragment confirms the Master’s proficiency in the technique and his reliance on it.⁹⁴ But Pseudo-Confucius also reported (*gao* 告) to the heavenly authorities, according to the *Classic of Filial Piety: Right Tally* already cited:

[Confucius] reported the completion to heaven, saying: “The *Classic of Filial Piety* in four volumes, the *Spring and Autumn*, the *River [Chart]* and the *Luo [Writ]*, in all eighty-one volumes, are already completed carefully.” [In] the heavens massive vapor then rose and white mist carpeted the earth. A red rainbow went down from above and transformed into a yellow jade, three spans long,⁹⁵ on which was engraved text. Kneeling, Master Kong accepted it and said, reading: “The treasured text has appeared, Liu Ji [will] hold [power. To] Opening Metal Knife, who [will] be north of Chassis,⁹⁶ courtesy name Grain Child,⁹⁷ the realm [will] submit.”

⁹³ See *Chunqiu yan Kong tu*, in *Jūshū isho shūsei*, vol. 4, 1:14, item marked ※.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 2nd dotted item. Song Jun’s commentary explains that “Yang Yu 陽豫” denotes a hexagram from the version of the *Changes* that was used by the Xia 夏 and Shang/Yin 商殷 dynasties. But the phrase might refer to the fourth and sole Yang 陽 (unbroken) line in the sixteenth hexagram, Contentment (Yu 豫), which means fully realized ambition; see Lynn, *The Classic of Changes*, 235–41.

⁹⁵ About 69.3 cm. The span (*chi* 尺) was about 23.1 cm in early imperial times.

⁹⁶ Zhen 軫, seventh and last Lodge of the Southern Palace. The Allocated Fields (*fenye* 分野) system of the time correlated Chassis with Jing Province 荊州 and the Chu polity (see Pankenier, *Astrology and Cosmology in Early China*, 269). The place whence Liu Bang originated was located in the northern part of Chu.

⁹⁷ “Opening Metal Knife” (*mao jin dao* 卯金刀) spells the surname Liu 劉 and “Grain Child” (*he zi* 禾子), Ji 季, Liu Bang’s courtesy name, as we have seen.

告備於天曰：“孝經四卷，春秋河洛凡八十一卷，謹已備。”天乃洪鬱起，白霧摩地。赤虹自上下，化為黃玉，長三尺，上有刻文。孔子跪受而讀之曰：“寶文出，劉季握。卯金刀，在軫北，字禾子，天下服。”⁹⁸

If the fragment includes, next to the *Spring and Autumn* chronicle, more compilation work by Pseudo-Confucius, that last superhuman manifestation only confirms the validity of the earlier deduction—the identity and geographical origin of the future ruler of the realm. Thus read in sequence, the fragments above lead from the Master’s initial realization of the political future of the realm to his being urged by heavenly instances to produce a multivalent cultural object—ethical, political, institutional—for future generations to use as blueprint.

Confucius’ alleged authorship or editorship of the *Spring and Autumn* chronicle is indeed a classical motif, which almost certainly predates the emergence of the earliest Pseudepigraphs.⁹⁹ But, in addition to the chronicle and the works mentioned in the preceding excerpt, historical expertise also enabled Confucius to compile the *Venerable Documents* (*Shangshu* 尚書) Classic and its correlated Pseudepigraph, the *Accurate Observations* (*Zhonghou* 中候).¹⁰⁰ The following fragment is a citation from the *Shangshu wei* 尚書緯 (*Weft of the Venerable Documents*)¹⁰¹:

⁹⁸ *Xiaojing you qi*, in *Jūshū Isho shūsei*, vol. 5, 64, 2nd dotted item.

⁹⁹ The motif is attested in the *Master Meng* (*Mengzi* 孟子), named after Meng Ke 孟軻 (c. 372–c. 289 BCE). See Lau, *A Concordance to the Mengzi*, “Teng Wen gong xia 滕文公下” [Duke Wen of Teng, Latter (part)], 6.9/34/26–28 and 6.9/35/7–8; translated in Legge, *The Life and Works of Mencius*, 228 and 229. For the dates of Meng Ke and the work, see Cheng, “Mengzi,” and “*Mengzi* (The Book of Mengzi).”

¹⁰⁰ On the *Accurate Observations* and their connection with the *Venerable Documents*, see Yasui and Nakamura, *Isho no kisoteki kenkyū*, 414–26.

¹⁰¹ The phrase “*Shangshu wei*” may either refer to a Weft class or to an individual book title. According to the *Sui Documents*, the Liang dynasty had six volumes of *Shangshu wei*, with commentary by Zheng Xuan (see *Sui shu*, “Jingji zhi,” 32.940). Both the Pseudepigraph and Zheng’s commentary are cited a number of times in Li Shan’s commentary (658) to the *Wenxuan*, for instance, in “Haifu 海賦” (Marine rhapsodies), 12.9b.

Master Kong looked for documents and got the documents of the Yellow Emperor's great-great-grandson, Emperor Kui,¹⁰² down to Duke Mu of Qin,¹⁰³ three thousand two hundred and forty chapters in all. Cutting off the distant and choosing the near, [he] fixed a hundred and twenty chapters that may serve as exemplars for generations. [He] made a hundred and two chapters into the *Venerable Documents* and eighteen chapters into the *Accurate Observations*.

孔子求書，得黃帝玄孫帝魁之書，迄於秦穆公，凡三千二百四十篇。斷遠取近，定可以為世法者，百二十篇。以百二篇為尚書，十八篇為中候。¹⁰⁴

Based on proximity (probably both chronological and geographical) and exemplarity as criteria, the careful editing performed by Master Kong leads him to retain about 3.7 percent of the collected material, with which in turn he compiles the *Venerable Documents* Classic (3.15 percent of the total material) and *Accurate Observations* (0.55 percent).

5. The Knowledgeable Sage

How did Pseudo-Confucius develop his unique understanding of processes underlying ongoing situations (knowledge) and awareness of future events (foreknowledge)? Whence and how did he learn what he knew? All the fragments above enable us to assemble the cognitive profile of Confucius in the Pseudepigraphs.

Firstly, Pseudo-Confucius has developed a mastery in the manipulative and interpretative techniques of hexagram divination, using either milfoil or turtle plastron.

¹⁰² Di Kui 帝魁, also said to be the name of the Divine Farmer (Shennong 神農). See *Wenxuan*, “Jingdu 京都,” 3.43a, commentary.

¹⁰³ Mu gong 穆公 of Qin 秦 (r. 659–621 BCE), usually included among the Five Overlords (*wuba* 五霸) of the Spring and Autumn era.

¹⁰⁴ *Shangshu wei*, in *Jūshū Isho shūsei*, vol. 2, 68, 5th dotted item.

Secondly, he exercises scientific (in the sense of systematized) phenomenal observation, which includes the interpretation of events occurring in the natural world, in particular the appearance of uncommon animals and beasts. This also includes “celestial signs” (*tianwen* 天文), an ancient science consisting in observation, description, interpretation, and speculation that fall only partly under the Western categories of cosmography, astronomy, meteorology, and astrology.¹⁰⁵ According to the *Chunqiu wo cheng tu* 春秋握誠圖 (*Spring and Autumn: Holding the chart of sincerity*), a Pseudepigraph of early medieval date at the latest:¹⁰⁶

Master Kong understood celestial signs, prognosticated unlucky and lucky omens. If [he] reported [his prognosis] not to the right person, then, even though [he] uttered it, [the prognosis] was not clear.

孔子明天文，占妖祥。若告非其人，則雖言之，不著。¹⁰⁷

Hexagram divination and phenomenal observation both come under the category of “inductive” methods. In turn, these imply knowledge of mantic reference frameworks such as the Five Agents and logographic components analysis—the latter being close to, yet not entirely identical with, the Western analytical category of “glyphomancy.”¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁵ Western-language publications render *tianwen* as “celestial (or ‘heavenly’) signs (or ‘patterns’),” “astronomy,” “astrology,” “cosmography,” and “judicial astrology,” usually with minimal terminological or semiotic discussion, if any. For the nomenclature of the observed phenomena coming under the *tianwen* category in the early imperial era, see the overview in Espeset, “Sketching out Portent Classification and Logic in the Monographs of Han Official Historiography,” 6–7 and 33–34 (table 1).

¹⁰⁶ The earliest citation I could find of this Weft book is in a “memorial” (*zou* 奏), dated 550, by Song Jingye 宋景業, quoted in *Sui shu*, “Lüli zhi 律曆志,” 17.417. The title *Chunqiu wo cheng tu* 春秋握成圖 (*Spring and Autumn: Holding the chart of accomplishment*), cited by Sima Zhen 司馬貞 (679–732) and Zhang Shoujie 張守節 (fl. 725–735) in their commentaries to the *Shiji*, “Gaozu benji 高祖本紀” (Basic annals of [Emperor] Gaozu), 8.342, nn. 4 and 5, presumably refers to the same book.

¹⁰⁷ *Chunqiu wo cheng tu*, in *Jūshū isho shūsei*, vol. 4, 2:71, 2nd dotted item. Although the text lacks precision, syntactical order suggests that the prognostications are based on observed celestial signs. My translation of *zhu* 著 (clear) follows Song Jun, whose commentary explains that the term is to be understood as *ming* 明.

¹⁰⁸ See Needham with Wang, *Science and Civilisation in China*, 364, no. 9; Schmiedl, *Chinese Character*

Thirdly, Pseudo-Confucius also relies on “intuitive” methods, insofar as the dream motif that triggers the whole unicorn narrative may evoke dream interpretation. But the fact that we encountered such an instance only once in the materials surveyed above suggests that intuitive methods only play a marginal part in Pseudo-Confucian knowledge acquisition.

A fourth, much more important method is archival and documentary analysis, alluded to as “historical emendations” (*shixue* 史削) in one of the early excerpts cited above, then fully exemplified in later excerpts. It is this seasoned acquaintance with ancient documents that, combined with uranic observation, provides the epistemic matter enabling him to lay the foundations of Han rule, as the *Spring and Autumn: Elaborating Kong’s Chart* explains:

“[I], Qiu, selected historical records, adduced ancient charts, deduced from collected celestial transformations and, for the Han emperor, [I] designed exemplars and laid out charts and registers.”

“邱攬史記，援引古圖，推集天變，為漢帝制法陳紱圖錄。”¹⁰⁹

In this fragment (which may as well be translated in the present or future tense) as in the preceding ones, the profound archival learning of Master Kong encompasses “charts” (*tu* 圖), “registers” (*lu* 錄), “documents” (*shu* 書), and “historical records” (*shiji* 史記)—the latter

Manipulation in Literature and Divination, 12–56.

¹⁰⁹ *Chunqiu yan Kong tu*, in *Jūshū Isho shūsei*, vol. 4, 1:15, 3rd item. Compare *Chunqiu wei* 春秋緯, *ibid.*, 2:136, 8th item. For the date of the *Chunqiu wei*, see the earliest mentions and citations noted in Espeset, “Epiphanies of Sovereignty and the Rite of Jade Disc Immersion in Weft Narratives,” 442, no. 11. The subject position of the personal name suggests a first-person direct speech, and indeed, a longer variant of the passage is put in the mouth of Confucius; see *Chunqiu Han han zi* 春秋漢含孳, in *Jūshū Isho shūsei*, vol. 4, 2:61, 1st dotted item. This Pseudepigraph is cited by the Wei scholar Xu Zhi 許芝 (fl. 220–230) in a memorial dated to 220 and transcribed in the *Wei shu* 魏書 (Wei documents) section of Chen Shou’s 陳壽 (233–297/300) *Sanguo zhi* 三國志 (Memoirs of the Three Kingdoms), completed in 297. See *Sanguo zhi*, *Wei shu*, “Wendi ji 文帝紀,” 2.64, commentary by Pei Songzhi 裴松之 (370–449).

here designating generic government records, just as the phrase “spring and autumn” (*chunqiu* 春秋) would have different meanings according to context in early imperial sources.¹¹⁰

Lastly, a fifth method may be defined as reliance on the purposeful appearance of tangible documents of superhuman origin—such as the *River Chart* and *Luo Writ*—conveyed to humankind by the nonhuman intermediation of often metamorphic birds and beasts (phoenix, unicorn). Indeed, stories abound in the Pseudepigraphs of manifestations usually assuming the form of dragon, turtle, bird, or fish, that confer upon chosen human recipients epistemic divulgations written on tangible mediums that confirm their political legitimacy.¹¹¹ A fragment from the *Spring and Autumn* Pseudepigraph *Elaborating Kong’s Chart*, which reports two consecutive animal transformations and reads like a conflation of some of the excerpts cited in the preceding section, provides a further illustration of this group:

[As] Master Kong was discussing the Classics, there was a crow [that] transformed into a writ. Master Kong reverently reported it to heaven. A red sparrow perched on the writ and transformed into a jade, [on which] an engraving read: “Kong takes in hand the mandate and makes the corresponding exemplars for the red regime.”

孔子論經，有鳥化為書。孔子奉以告天。赤爵集書上，化為玉，刻曰：“孔提命，作應法，為赤制。”¹¹²

Typically, when confronted with such manifestations, Pseudo-Confucius does not utter anything like superhuman-inspired speech, but (for the added benefit of the reader) he reads

¹¹⁰ Including the Lu chronicle itself, its three main exegetical traditions, and other historical sources adopting the chronicle format. See Cai, “Who Said, ‘Confucius Composed the *Chunqiu*’?”

¹¹¹ For a study of this topic, see Espeset, “Epiphanies of Sovereignty and the Rite of Jade Disc Immersion in Weft Narratives,” 413–32.

¹¹² *Chunqiu yan Kong tu*, in *Jūshū Isho shūsei*, vol. 4, 1:14, 5th dotted item. For *yu* 玉 (jade), a variant of the fragment (ibid., 15, 1st item) reads *huangyu* 黃玉 (yellow jade).

the contents of the tangible divulgation. In the case of his prescience of Han rule, this mediated communication mode between the superhuman and human realms serves two purposes: first, to confirm what Pseudo-Confucius has already deducted and thereby lift any remaining doubts; second, to urge him to take action in response, especially by deriving ample textual production from this-worldly documents, mainly historical and archival in nature. This contrasts sharply from what “prophecy” proper is about.

All the means of knowledge and foreknowledge acquisition surveyed above radically differ from direct inspiration by any superhuman authority. It is unquestionable that the motif of Pseudo-Confucius announcing Han rule matches what I have called prophecy’s “historical uniqueness,” and that the anonymous authors of the Pseudepigraphs imagined the purpose of Confucius as a sage making manifest what the heavenly instances have in mind, as another fragment from *Elaborating Kong’s Chart* states:

“Sage persons¹¹³ are not born in vain—they must have something designed in order to manifest the heart of heaven. [I], Qiu, being the wooden[-tongued] bell,¹¹⁴ design exemplars for the realm.”

“聖人不空生，必有所制，以顯天心。丘為木鐸，制天下法。”¹¹⁵

But, firstly, both Confucian and Pseudo-Confucian discourses are teeming with references to heaven, itself a rather common feature in ancient Chinese literature. Secondly, and more

¹¹³ *Shengren* 聖人, which Zhao, *In Pursuit of the Great Peace*, 83, translates as “the sage” in direct reference to Confucius. Though dictionaries include this specific meaning, here I take the first thirteen logograms to state a general rule, the last eight ones to instantiate that rule.

¹¹⁴ *Muduo* 木鐸, an allusion to the *Analects*. See Lau, *A Concordance to the Lunyu*, “Bayi 八佾,” 3.24/6/28–29; translated in Lau, *Confucius*, 27. In ancient China, a bronze bell with a wooden tongue was ringed to attract people’s attention to public proclamations; metaphorically, it denotes a civilizing personage.

¹¹⁵ *Chunqiu yan Kong tu*, in *Jūshū Isho shūsei*, vol. 4, 1:16, 3rd dotted item. Here again I take the subject position of the personal name Qiu as marking direct speech. In the *Analects*, the passage that mentions the wooden-tongued bell metaphor is put in somebody else’s mouth and has *fuzi* 夫子 (the Master).

importantly, how the authors of the Pseudepigraphs pictured Confucius acting out this role stands in direct continuity with the historiography and scientific lore of pre- and early imperial times. In addition to Master Kong's expertise in historiography and archival analysis, they represented Pseudo-Confucius so that he would also be perceived as being well versed in the sciences of his time. Consequently, it is inaccurate and misleading to describe Pseudo-Confucius as a "prophet" and his prediction of Han rule as a "prophecy" in the proper sense of these terms.

Why a number of authors call Pseudo-Confucius' prescience of Han rule "prophecy" is in part explained by the use of the term in the derivative, common sense of "prediction" or other terms more or less synonymous.¹¹⁶ These authors never define "prophet" or "prophecy" and use both as if their meaning were unambiguous and self-evident.¹¹⁷ But "prophecy" is only one situation in the rich taxonomy of transcendent experience involving forms of contact between the human and superhuman realms, which modern Western humanities have derived from European theology and Enlightenment philosophy.¹¹⁸ In addition, I suspect another reason to be that this religious terminology rings a sensationalist bell in European languages, while more factual terms—such as "prediction," "prognostication," and "prescience," none of which implies any speech act on behalf of a superhuman entity—risk sounding too neutral and therefore being less appealing to the targeted audience.

¹¹⁶ Examples include: Tjan, *Po Hu T'ung*, 119 ("Confucius was exalted to the position of a prophet"); Di Giacinto, *The Chenwei Riddle*, 250 ("the tale of the unicorn with Confucius turning into the prophet of the Han"); Zhao, "To Become Confucius," 143 ("apocryphal texts seem to depict Confucius not so much as a moral philosopher but more as a prophet"); Zhao, "Representations of Confucius in Apocrypha of the First Century CE," 80–82 (section titled "Confucius as Prophet"); Zhao, *In Pursuit of the Great Peace*, 54 ("heavenly prophecy" in connection to the unicorn episode).

¹¹⁷ An exception, Zongli Lu, in his monograph that marginally refers to the Pseudepigraphs, defines *chen* 讖 as "prophetic words" or "subtle, esoteric, and portentous words that [usually] foretell future [political] events" (Lu, *Power of the Word*, 13–15), but then his discussion of *chen* as being "on the whole anonymous or collective [prophecies]" that "[do] not require a prophet" (ibid., 21–24) proves that the relevant Western category mismatches the Chinese term, thereby weakening his argument.

¹¹⁸ This taxonomy cannot be examined here. The entry by Taves, "Religious Experience," illustrates how difficult delineating that category can be, whatever the analytical framework used—theology, religious philosophy, epistemology, anthropology, phenomenology, or psychoanalysis.

6. Epilogue

Needless to say, in all likelihood all the stories just surveyed are apocryphal, and Confucian discourse therein is an entirely retrospective construction. Nevertheless, these stories and their discourse contribute to our understanding of some of the representations of Confucius in the first centuries of our era, of early imperial political ideology and of the commentarial strategies conceived in the context of epistemic construction, competing worldviews, and political contestation. The recurrence of some of these narrative motifs shows how the Pseudepigraphs retained literary and ideological influence in subsequent eras. The milfoil divination episode about Shang Qu's fatherhood has been retold in the *School Sayings of Master Kong* (*Kong zi jia yu* 孔子家語), a work written or edited by Wang Su 王肅 (195?–256), but that version reports no divination practice.¹¹⁹ Later versions of the famous dream and unicorn episode, outside both the Classics and Pseudepigraphs, retain the triggering dream motif. Such is the case in the *Records on the Search for Spirits* (*Soushen ji* 搜神記), a collection, originally compiled by Gan Bao 干寶 (d. 336), of the “reported anomalies” (*zhiguai* 志怪) genre.¹²⁰ The collection also features the metamorphic rainbow manifestation following Confucius' report to heaven of his textual accomplishment.¹²¹ On the official side, Shen Yue 沈約 (441–513) also included the story in the “Furui zhi” 符瑞志 (Monograph on

¹¹⁹ See *Kong zi jia yu*, “Qishier dizi jie 七十二弟子解,” 9.6a. In that version, Shang Qu is said to be aged thirty-eight at the time, and Confucius does not mention the premature death of one of the five sons.

¹²⁰ See *Soushen ji*, 8.1b–2a; translated in DeWoskin and Crump, *In Search of the Supernatural*, 107–8. On the received version (regarded by most scholars as a Ming reconstruction) and the *zhiguai* genre, see Campany, *Strange Writing*, especially 55–62.

¹²¹ See *Soushen ji*, 8.2a–b; translated in DeWoskin and Crump, *In Search of the Supernatural*, 108. That version actually amalgamates parts from two *Xiaojing you qi* fragments; compare *Jūshū Isho shūsei*, vol. 5, 64, 1st and 2nd dotted item.

auspicious signs as tokens) that he contributed to his *Song shu* 宋書 (Song documents), completed in 488.¹²²

Remnants of the Pseudepigraphs contain representations of Confucius that are less familiar to us than those associated with the Chinese Master *par excellence* of the literate (*ru* 儒) tradition.¹²³ Pseudo-Confucius does not shy away from a range of divinatory practices whose performance is not directly ascribed to him in the received *Analects* (*Lunyu* 論語). True, the *Analects* Confucius seems to know about the contents of the *Classic of Changes*,¹²⁴ but he is not portrayed in the course of performing hexagram divination. The *Analects* do report Confucius' lament about the non-appearance of the phoenix and the *River Chart*, but that version is entirely devoid of narrative context and milfoil divination is not involved in it.¹²⁵ The dream and unicorn episode has no equivalent in the *Analects*, which allude to “oneiric visions” (*meng jian* 夢見) only once, furthermore in a context not suggestive of oneiromancy.¹²⁶ The opposition is much less between a “rational” Confucius and an “irrational” (“religious” or “prophetic”) Pseudo-Confucius, than between a Confucius obsessed with the here and now of propriety and its various social, political and ritual applications (*li* 禮), and a Pseudo-Confucius more inclined to investigate the cosmic

¹²² See *Song shu*, “Furui zhi,” 27.766. Translated in Lippiello, *Auspicious Omens and Miracles in Ancient China*, 281–82.

¹²³ For a survey of some representations of Confucius outside mainstream Confucianism, see Weingarten, “The Unorthodox Master.” Disappointingly, in a section titled “Apocrypha, Prognostication Manuals, and Records of the Strange” (60), Weingarten quotes the Pseudepigraphs only once (a six-logogram excerpt cited after Di Giacinto, *The Chenwei Riddle*, 176–77).

¹²⁴ The *Analects* cite a comment upon a hexagram but once, in a passage that also contains the single occurrence of *zhan* 占 in the entire work. See Lau, *A Concordance to the Lunyu*, “Zilu 子路,” 13.22/36/8–9. Translated in Lau, *Confucius*, 129.

¹²⁵ See Lau, *A Concordance to the Lunyu*, “Zi han 子罕,” 9.9/20/29. Translated in Lau, *Confucius*, 79.

¹²⁶ Confucius saw as a sign of his decline the fact that he no longer dreamt of the Duke of Zhou (Zhou *gong* 周公), the paragon of sovereign virtue. See Lau, *A Concordance to the Lunyu*, “Shu er 述而,” 7.5/15/1; translated in Lau, *Confucius*, 57. On the Duke of Zhou, see Shaughnessy, “Western Zhou History,” 310–17.

mechanisms beneath ongoing processes and to ponder over unseen matters and events yet to unfold.

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