

Observing Chinese Excavated Materials from a Perspective of Life and Death Studies: “Image Reversal of the Dead” during the Zhanguo, Qin, and Han periods

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This article describes the representation of death and the dead as seen in excavated materials during the late Zhanguo to Eastern Han periods. These periods lasted only about 500 years (from the 3rd century BCE to the 2nd century CE), but are important historically because, during these periods, people’s ideas towards death changed from that of ancient times (the Yin, Zhou, Chunqiu periods) to that of medieval times (the Six-Dynasty, Sui, Tang periods). I focus on excavated materials because, although not all were excavated from graves, a large part of these materials were burial objects, deeply related to the idea of death. It is not rare to unearth political or philosophical documents from these graves; however, burying these items with the dead would have been a form of ritual based on the idea of the people who did it for death and posthumous life. In fact, a number of materials buried with the dead as a part of funeral ceremonies have been found, even though they have not drawn as much attention by scholars as the political or philosophical documents have. As I have previously published several papers related to these materials,¹ and, due to the limitation

1. Ikezawa, Masaru, “Matsurareru kami to matsurarenu kami 祭られる神と祭られぬ神 : Sen-

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of space, I would like to focus on the overall course of events, rather than exhaustively discussing individual materials, references, and prior studies.

Another issue to be noted is the reason why I have chosen the concept “the images of the dead” as the subtitle of this article. “The view of death and life” is a common expression to describe the overall concept, representation, and practices for death and the dead. It is, however, more suitable to use the term “the view of the posthumous world” to describe the state of the dead in particular. However, rather than touching on the overall state of death as represented by the term “the view of death and life,” this article focuses on how people during these periods actually conceived, received, and acted towards the dead: that is, others whom they used to coexist with or might have known. This does not necessarily mean that people in the said periods conceived that the dead would manifest into actual beings such as in a posthumous existence or as spirits. Perhaps, conceiving the dead as physical beings constitutes the salient feature of such concepts as “the view of the soul” and “the view of the posthumous world.” However, as is commonly known, posthumous existence is not necessarily posited in the tradition of Confucianism. Hence, assuming the existence of spirits in

goku jidai no so no bokuzei saitou kiroku chikukan ni miru reiteki sonzai no kouzou ni kansuru oboegaki 戦國時代の楚の『卜筮祭禱記録』竹簡に見る靈的存在の構造に関する覺書 (Deities who are propitiated and those who are not propitiated: an essay on the structure of spiritual beings found in the “Divination/prayer Records” of the Chu bamboo manuscripts in the fourth century BCE China,” *Chugoku Shutsudo Shiryo Kenkyu* 中國出土資料研究 (The Studies on Chinese Excavated Materials), Vol.1, 1997; “Shi no saki ni aru mirai 死の先にある未來: Shukyo-teki shumatsu ron ni okeru horobi to nozomi 宗教的終末論における滅びと望み (The future after death: mortality and hopes in ancient Chinese eschatology),” *Mirai* 未來 (Future), Tokyo Daigaku Shuppankai, 2002; “Futatsu no inochi to iu senryaku to kansei “二つのいのち”という戦略と陷穽: Chugoku no shiseikan no shiten kara 中國の死生觀の視點から (The strategy of two kinds of life and its trap: from the Chinese views on death),” *Gendai Shukyo* 現代宗教 (Contemporary Religions) 2003; “Chogoku chusei ni okeru shisha-sei no tentou 中國中世における“死者性”の轉倒: Rikucho shikai wo chushin ni 六朝志怪を中心に (“Image Reversal of the Dead” in medieval China: centered on ghost stories in the Six-dynasty period)” Kazuo Matsumura 松村一男 ed. *Sei to Shi no Shinwa* 生と死の神話 (Myths of Life and Death), LITHON, 2004; “Ko no bunka-teki igi 孝の文化的意義: Kandai ni okeru seija shisha kankei wo chushin ni 漢代における生者 — 死者關係を中心に (The cultural significance of filial piety: the relation between the living and the dead in the Han period), Yoshihiro Watanabe 渡邊義浩 ed. *Ryokan no Jukyo to Seiji Kenryoku* 兩漢の儒教と政治權力 (Confucianism and Political Authority in the Han Period), Kyuko Shoin, 2005; “Chugoku kodai chusei ni okeru higo no shi no toraekata no sho ruikai 中國古代・中世における“非業の死”の捉え方の諸類型 (How “unnatural death” was recognized in ancient and medieval China)” *Shiseigaku Kenkyu* 死生學研究 (Death and Life Studies) 2006 autumn.

a religious way, in this context, may lead to a misunderstanding of the overall understanding of death and the dead during a given period. The concept of “the images of the dead” assumes the ambiguous feelings of how people consider the dead being of a past existence and life as of the present existence. This constitutes the fundament of conceptions such as “the view of the soul” and “the view of the posthumous world”. Moreover, this concept assumes that the way people conceive their lives is reflected in how they treat the dead.

1. Chinese Images of the dead in the ancient and medieval periods

There is a notable difference between the description of the dead in the Chinese ancient (before the Qin period) and medieval (the Six-Dynasty period) periods. To understand this difference, I would first like to compare the bronze inscriptions of the Western Zhou period and inscriptions for sculptured deities of the Six-Dynasty period to confirm some basic facts.

Bronze inscriptions are scripts cast on ritual vessels, made of bronze (mainly used to enshrine ancestors), which first emerged during the late Shang Dynasty (from 15th to 11th century BCE) and this custom flourished up until the Chunqiu period (from 8th to 5th century BCE). One of the purposes of the inscriptions was to transmit and promote the king’s power to his vassals according to the political structure of the time. Also, the fact that the inscriptions were cast on ritual vessels to enshrine ancestors implies that ancestors were of great import in the relationship between “Heaven” (Heavenly Emperor), the ultimate ground for the king’s power, and the “Son of Heaven” (king), who received “heavenly mandates” that justified the king’s right to rule. The ancestors (the dead) are described as living “somewhere above,” “in Heaven,” and “on the left and right sides of the Heavenly Emperor.” For example, this is described in the bronze inscription on the *Jing Renning zhong* 井人妥鐘：

Renning of the Jing state says; his brilliant, respectful, and refined grandfather and august father demonstrated their virtues, acquired pure and beautiful [fortunes], had long lives, and had auspicious

deaths. [Ren]ning never fails to follow the beautiful virtues of the refined grandfather and august father. He is intelligent and brilliant, stays at the origin room (that is, the direct line of descent), and makes a set of great bells, to further respect and please his ancestors. Preceding refined men, existing in Heaven with dignity, plentifully and abundantly, send unlimited and abundant fortune to me (i.e., Renning). [Ren]ning and his descendants will use them (i.e., bells) as a treasure for ten thousand years, to give offerings [to their ancestors] perpetually.

With “virtue”—more specifically, through great achievement—the dead (ancestor) not only received provenance from Heaven but also conferred high status to his descendants. In other words, the status that his descendants’ received was a “mandate” given by “Heaven” thanks to the ancestors’ “virtue.” They can receive provenance (eternal mandates, longevity, and descendants of their own) from Heaven by following their ancestors’ “virtue”: more specifically, by enshrining their ancestors. In the inscription, the phrase describing that the dead (“preceding refined man”) exist in the world above (“existed in Heaven with dignity”) is inserted between the description of the descendants’ manner of enshrining their ancestors and the description of the corresponding provenance bestowed by the dead, allowing us to interpret that the dead can give provenance to their descendants only by rising to Heaven. It can also be interpreted that only Heaven was the ultimate source of power in establishing the order of the lower world, and the role of the dead, making them so important, was to work as mediators delivering this power to the world. Needless to say, this was the reason why people enshrined their ancestors. It should be noted that there are two important aspects of the dead thereof: First, they are powerful beings that made this world as it is now and hold the proactive power to create the future. Second, although they have such great power, they can use it only when they are positioned in the overall structure of the world (that is, Heaven), not with their own arbitrary will.

On the other hand, the inscriptions for sculptured deities, which emerged after the 3rd century CE when people started to built stone or copper Buddhist and Taoist statues, were carved on the side, back, or on

seat of the statue, noting when and by whom and why the statue was made. This custom flourished from the late Six-Dynasty (5th and 6th century CE) to Sui and Tang periods (7th to 10th century CE). As a typical example, I would like to introduce *Bian Dingguang's dedication for Buddha statues* 邊定光造像記 of the 14th year of the Taihe 太和 era (490):

On the *guiyou* 癸酉 day, that is the seventh day of the eighth month, the first date of which is *dingmao* 丁卯, of the fourteenth year of the Taihe era, when Jupiter pointed in the *gengwu* 庚午 direction, Bian Dingguang, a pure pious believer, built a statue while in a deep contemplation. I wish my fathers and mothers who begot me when I was reborn seven times, father and mother who begot me at the present time, and relatives and kinsfolk are all born on the left or right sides of Buddhas in Heaven, or are born as nobles or the rich in the human world. If they are reborn in the Three Hells, I hope that they reach their enlightenment promptly. I show my humble hope in order for this, as was stated above. Descendants will follow and continue forever. (The rest is omitted.)

The inscription implies that the dead (ancestor) are suffering because of the bad deeds they had committed when they were alive, and building a statue is considered to be a good deed by the descendants for saving the dead. Statues were originally built to commemorate buddhas, but also came to indirectly commemorate the dead, while merit (a prosperous life and good reincarnation after death) would be given to a wide range of people, from emperor, kinsfolk of the same family, to all sentient beings including those who built the statue (the bereaved of the dead). The concept of the living receiving productive power from the dead is similar to the case of ancestor worship during the Western Zhou period, however, the dead were characterized as something completely opposite: that is, the descendants save their ancestors from suffering in the afterworld. Needless to say, this is a soteriology of the dead.

Therefore, these two scripts from two different eras separated by more than 1,000 years (bronze inscriptions in the Western Zhou period and inscriptions for sculptured deities in the Six-Dynasty period), represented

“images of the dead” in a completely opposite way. Such difference can be expressed as being a “reversal.” As inscriptions for sculptured deities were generated within the concepts of Buddhism (or Taoism), it is reasonable to believe that religious doctrines changed (reversed) attitudes towards the dead. However, I do not support the assumption that “the reversal of images of the dead” was caused by Buddhism and Taoism. Whereas the origin of the reversal was seen around late the Zhanguo period, developed in the Han period, and was already established in the Three-State/Six-Dynasty periods, Buddhism came to China around the late Western Han period, early Taoist sects formed around the 2nd century (their influence become apparent in the 3rd century), and it was only after the 5th century that they had a great impact on Chinese thought. I believe that Buddhism and Taoism gave certain forms to these ongoing changes, rather than directly causing such a reversal. The excavated materials related to the “images of the dead” during the Zhanguo, Qin, and Han periods, will be reviewed below in order to trace the orientation of the changes before the influence of Buddhism and Taoism.

2. Two types of dead: Divination/prayer manuscripts, the *jie* 詰 chapter of the *Rishu* 日書 excavated at *Shuihudi* 睡虎地, the *Shisang* 士喪 chapter of the *Yili* 儀禮 during the Zhanguo period

The above-mentioned bronze inscription from the Western Zhou described the dead as ancestors bestowing merit to the present world through Heaven. The divination/prayer manuscripts from the late Zhanguo period indicate that there was another, completely different way of describing the dead in ancient China. Divination/prayer manuscripts are sets of records of divination and offerings found in the territory of Chu (one of the states in the Zhanguo period) excavated from Chu tomb No.1 at Tianxingguan 天星觀, Jiangling 江陵, Hubei 湖北 province (built around the late 4th century BCE); Chu tomb No.1 at Wangshan 望山 (the early 3rd century BCE); Chu tomb No.2 at Baoshan 包山, Jingmen 荊門 (316BCE). and the Chu tomb at Geling 葛陵, Xincui 新蔡, Henan 河南 province (built around 370BCE) etc. Divination was performed to foresee any troubles during a certain period of time (for example, one year) or to find out the cause of a misfortune

(such as sickness). Once diviners found any curse causing the misfortune, he proposed the way of enshrining deities and ancestors in order to undo the curse, and then people performed a part of their suggestions. These documents describe two clearly different categories of the dead: one is “ancestors” and another is that which is other than ancestors such as *bugu* 不辜 (those who were [killed] although innocent), *bugu hong (qiang) si zhe* 不辜弘(強)死者 (innocent victims who died unnatural deaths), *hong (qiang) si zhe* 弘(強)死 (those who died unnatural deaths), *bingsi* 兵死 (the war dead), *shuishang* 水上 ([those who died] on the water), *moren* 没人 (the drowned), and *xia zhi ren bu zhuangsi* 下之人不壯死 (low-ranked people who died young). Both categories of the dead were thought to have the power of causing misfortune, but the ways of dealing them were completely different: the former was a subject of “prayer” (*dao* 禱) and offerings, while the latter was a subject of purification (*jie* 解 or *gong* 攻), a form of a ritual to remove impurities. (However, the latter was not seen in the manuscripts excavated at Xincai, one of the earliest divination/prayer manuscripts).

A quite similar type of dead, described as those other than the ancestors in divination/sacrifice documents, also appeared in the *jie* chapter of the *Rishu A* 日書甲, excavated from Qin tomb No.11 at Shuihudi, Yunmeng, Hubei province (built around 217BCE in the Qin period). The *Rishu* or “Almanac” are a form of manuals used to foresee the fortune of individual future dates. Some were found from several graves constructed between the Zhanguo and Han periods. The almanac of the *jie* chapter of Shuihudi lists 70 kinds of specters and ghosts, and describes what kind of misfortunes they bring and how to get rid of them. Specters and ghosts causing the curses listed therein could be categorized as follows: the dead, animals, natural phenomenon, the ones who call themselves god, and excessive emotions of human beings. The following are specters and ghosts clearly described as the dead: “*aigui* 哀鬼” (the dead who do not have anyone to enshrine them—they are also referred to as “no relatives”), “*jigui* 棘鬼,” “*zigui* 匄鬼” (the dead whose bodies were never buried and are referred to as “buried upside down” and “buried there,” respectively), “*airu zhi gui* 哀乳之鬼” (those who died young and whose bodies were abandoned are referred to as “the dead whose bones are outside”), “*bugugui* 不辜鬼” (the dead who were killed without any crimes), “*egui* 餓鬼” (the dead who starved to death crawling to

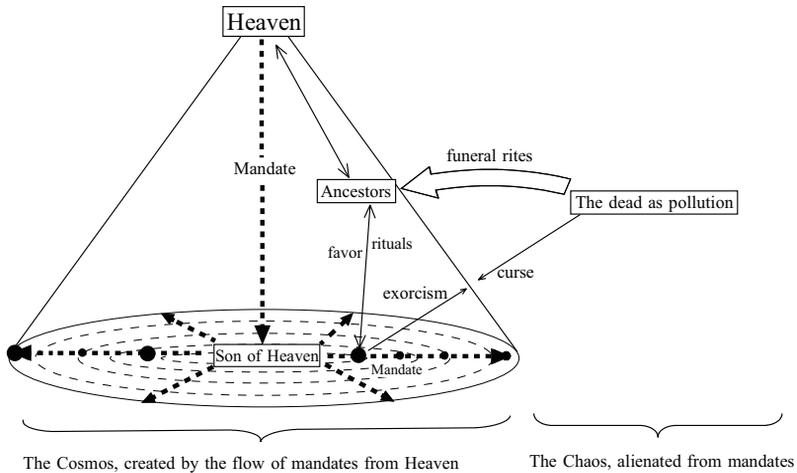
the living people craving for food), “*shuiwang shang* 水亡殤” (the drowned), and “*youshang si buzang* 幼殤死不葬” (the dead who experienced premature death and were never buried). Most of those types of dead were ghosts who — because of their violent deaths (unnatural death, the bodies abandoned, and no enshrinement, etc.) — haunted unrelated people. This allows us to assume that they were considered to be a form of pollution. Simply stated, the way of getting rid of curses of those impure ghosts was a ritual removal (exorcism). For example, it is said in this manuscript that the ways of undoing the curses of “*aigui*” and “*jigui*” would be to “beat its heart with the trunk of roses, pasanias, or peach trees” and “unearth the body and the curse will cease.” This means that there was no relationship established between the living and the dead, therefore, the living did not provide offerings and prayer, as they did so for their ancestors to receive merit from the posthumous world. Instead, they tried to get rid of or eliminate the impure dead. This could also mean that, although having the power to curse the living, those types of the dead were weak enough to be easily removed through the ways specified in this manuscript.

In summary, there were two types of dead in the ancient China. One is the powerful ancestors connected to Heaven, who served as a mediator to send its great power to the present world. The other is the dead considered to be weak and impure beings, who were alienated from the power of Heaven due to their violent deaths. The basic concept was that the living received merit from the former dead through enshrinement, and mercilessly eliminated the latter. During the late Zhanguo period, conventional ancestor worship gradually ceased to function properly, and the impure dead started to be written about in various documents. Although this was a substantial transition in the idea of the dead, it would be unreasonable to conclude that the idea of the impure dead had emerged during this period due to the following reason. Pollution of the dead was a very important element in funerals, and constitutes an essential prerequisite for the dead to become ancestors. The mediator who had efficacious power, as the *Yili* or *Rituals*, which includes the oldest information concerning Chinese funerals, suggests this was so.

The *Yili* is one of the scriptures of Confucianism and refers to rites of ceremonial functions. The scripture is thought to have been created dur-

ing the mid to the late Zhanguo period. However, considering the fact that ceremonial functions are generally hard to change, it can be assumed that the contents of the scripture reflected the rites for much older, traditional ceremonial functions, even though Confucian principles may have had a significant impact on it. According to the *Shisang*, *Jixi* 既夕, and *Shiyu* 士虞 chapters of the *Yili*, which particularly refers to funeral ceremonies, a funeral consisted of two moments: one is the tentative burial of the body during the first three days after death, and the other is the final burial on the third month after death. On the first day “*xi* 襲 (dressing the dead with burial clothes),” second day “lesser *lian* 斂 (enshrouding),” and third day “major *lian*,” “*bin* 殯” (temporary burial), the body was wrapped several times with clothes and placed in a coffin to be buried temporarily in the residence of the deceased. During these three days, the representation of the destructive power of death (pollution) fills the atmosphere of the premise. The dead body, the source of pollution, was hidden out of sight and gradually moved from the inside to the outside of the residence. The body was kept there for about three months and the bereaved family would spend their most agonizing mourning period. When such a period is over, the removal of the dead body is finally completed through the process of burying the body in a distant grave. During this process, the ceremony also highlights that the dead transformed into something else and came back to the residence. First, the bereaved family take the dead body to the grave along with his/her clothes and bring back only the clothes (“*zang* 葬” or formal burial). Next, the family comes back to their residence to further mourn the loss of the dead, and then an impersonator (“*shi* 尸”), who wears the clothes to act as the dead, enters into the residence. After the ritual of “*yu* 虞 (offerings for settling a dead spirit down)” is held three times to calm the spirit of the dead, the dead sets off for the afterworld (“*zuku* 卒哭” or the rites of finishing wail), and becomes an ancestor (“*fuji* 祔祭” or the rite of offering for attaching a dead spirit to his precedent ancestors). In other words, the funeral rites represent two aspects which the dead fundamentally have. First, the pollution of death is represented, and then the dead come back as an ancestor with great powers. Therefore, the bereaved family must bury the impure dead body within the residence, though temporally, so that they may keep contact with the deceased. Or it can be interpreted that

the power of death is first destructive, but by taking the steps of the rite, it will turn into something productive. It is quite clear that the idea of the dead bodies as impure and as the target of deportation in the funeral rite corresponds to the impure dead in the *jie* chapter of the *Rishu* excavated at Shuihudi. Death fundamentally has two opposing sides: a destructive side (pollution) and a productive side. With proper funerary rites, destructiveness was supposed to be turned into productiveness. The only dead who did not go through this proper process would remain as impure beings with destructive powers. What has been discussed above can be summarized as the following chart. The problem is how this chart was transformed under the social and cultural changes in the Zhanguo, Qin, and Han periods.



3. The *Record of the Interred* from Qin tomb No.1 at Fangmatan, Tianshui, Gansu province

Perhaps, the first description of the dead, different from the dual nature (suffering, impure dead and powerful ancestors) mentioned above, can be seen in the *Records of the Interred* from Qin tomb No.1 at Fangmatan 放馬灘, Tianshui 天水, Gansu 甘肅 province. The precise year in which this document was written is not clear, but it could be assumed it is between the late Zhanguo and Qin periods. The document was named the *Record of the*

Interred since it was first thought to be the personal history of the person who were buried in the grave. However, it was later found out that the contents of the document are related to resurrection such as seen in ghost tales in the Six-Dynasty period. A summary of the tale is as follows: The main character is Dan 丹, who came from Daliang 大梁, the capitol of the Wei 魏 state, and committed suicide after injuring someone. He was a subordinate officer of a general of Wei named Xi Wu 犀武, and the general offered his opinion to *Siming Shi* 司命史 (the subordinate officer of the *Siming* deity who is in charge of deciding the duration of people's lives), Gongsun Qiang 公孫強, to tell that "Dan should not have died (so young)." Three years later, Gongsun Qiang had a white dog exhume Dan's grave and resurrected Dan. After staying on his grave for three days, Dan went to the northern country of Zhao along with Gongsun Qiang and became able to eat like living people (after staying there for four years). Later on, Dan instructed people concerning notices for enshrinement of the dead, imploring that it is no use burying the dead with clothes, the grave must be kept clean, and soups should not be spilled in offerings, and so on.

From the perspective of death and life, this tale indicates the following points: First, the *Siming* deity (who has the power of defining the duration of life) was described in the *Huanzi Mengjiang hu* 洹子孟姜壺 (written in mid 6th century BCE in the state of Qi 齊), the bronze inscription from the late Chunqiu period, divination/prayer manuscripts of Chu (discussed in the previous section), and the *Chuci* verse. It was also enshrined in imperial ceremonies of the Qin and Han periods (the *Fengshan* chapter 封禪書 of the *Shiji*). In the Han period, people worshiped it as the deity that increases or decreases the duration of people's lives according to their deeds. Therefore, *Siming* was a deity of the afterworld that administrated the dead, and the descriptions in those documents indicates that the image of that world was much more clearly apprehended than something vaguely understood in the bronze inscriptions, such as "Heaven" or "side of the Heavenly Emperor." Secondly, the existence of *Siming Shi*, the subordinate officer of *Siming*, indicates that he has a sort of bureaucratic administration. Also the fact that he has a human name, Gongsun Qiang, means that he used to be human, and it can be assumed that each dead person would be given a certain position in such a bureaucracy in the posthumous world as Donald Harper sug-

gests (“Resurrection in Warring States Popular Religion,” *Taoist Resources* 5-2, 1994). Thirdly, the fact that Xi Wu, an authority of the present world, has undertaken the resurrection of Dan means that there was a sort of connection between the bureaucracy in the present world and that in the posthumous world, and that the living may ask favors of the latter by appealing to the former. The point that the living bureaucrat could be involved in the process of death is common to the contents of the tablets for notifying the underworld (*gaodi ce* 告地策) discussed in the next section. Finally, although the main point of this tale is that those who died once could obtain information from the posthumous world, then disclose the way to interact with the dead, it never refers to the merit bestowed by the dead. Obviously, as the document refers to the offerings to the dead at graves, there has to be respect for them. However, the phrase “those who give offerings at the graves should not vomit; otherwise, the dead will be frightened and go away” implies that the dead were weak beings that would easily “be bewildered and run away.”

4. The locations of posthumous world in the Western Han period: Mount Kunlun 崑崙山 and the Underworld

Iconographic and textual studies have demonstrated that the idea of the dead ascending to Mount Kunlun, a path to heaven, was common during the late Zhanguo to Han periods. Mount Kunlun was regarded as a cosmic axis which connected the present world with the world of the gods, as well as a “paradise” governed by the Queen Mother of the West 西王母, who had a holy medicine that could make people immortal. Hence, the dead may receive eternal life by ascending the mountain. Despite the fact that this place was in the mountains, not in Heaven, this could be regarded as similar to the idea of the posthumous world before the Qin period when the posthumous world was thought to exist in Heaven and that the dead rise to “the sides of the Heavenly Emperor” to become powerful beings which mediate the power of Heaven in the present world.

On the other hand, several documents unearthed from graves of the Western Han period imply that the dead would descend to the underworld after death. These documents are commonly known as *gaodi ce*, or

tablets for notifying the underworld, unearthed from Han tomb No.18 at Gaotai 高台, Jiangling, Hubei province (173BCE); Han tomb No.168 at Fenghuang 鳳凰山, Jiangling (167BCE); Han Tomb No.10 (153BCE); Han tomb No.8 at Kongjiapo 孔家坡, Suizhou 隨州 (142BCE); and Han tomb No.5 at Huchang 胡場, Ganjiang 邗江, Jiangsu 江蘇 province (71BCE). For example, the tablets from No.18 tomb at Gaotai consist of four pieces of wooden slips found in the space by the side of the head of the dead. The first slip was equivalent to a cover address of an envelope; the address (*Andu* 安都) was shown on the top and the name of the sender (seal by the governor of Jiangling prefecture) was written underneath. In the second slip, the governor of Jiangling prefecture informed the governor of *Andu* that a woman called Yan 燕 (the dead) was moving to *Andu* along with servants Jia 甲, Yi 乙, and a maid Fang 妨, and asked to report the completion of the procedure to him when Yan declared the number of her party at *Andu*. The third slip included information regarding the family register of Yan and her exemption from taxation, and the 4th slip listed burial objects such as pots and grails (belongings). Obviously, *Andu*, which literally means a “City of Peace,” was a posthumous world where the dead were supposed to go after his or her death, and these *gaodi ce* tablets were a set of official documents (or something in a similar format) issued by officers in the living world to inform the officers in the posthumous world that a person was dead and to ask them to register him or her there.

The view of the posthumous world found in this document during the Western Han period could be summarized as follows. First, since the destination of this document was “Governor of the underground,” “Lord of the underground,” or “Lord of the earth,” we can see that people at the time held the idea that the posthumous world was located underground and governed by officers who were as powerful as governors in the present world. The fact that the standard expression in the official documents of the Han period, “govern as the administrative code”, existed in these documents indicates that the posthumous world was ruled by law in a bureaucratic system and hence, tax was collected just as in the present world. Second, people of the time considered that “death” was the action of going to the underground posthumous world. This action was interpreted as a transfer of his or her family register in the present world to the posthumous world.

The process of death was completed when the dead visited the government office in the posthumous world with a certificate, published by officers in the present world, to do registration procedures. Third, since the *gaodi ce* tablets refer to burial goods and were always unearthed with belongings, one of their purposes seems to claim the property rights of the dead in the posthumous world. For instance, in the example of the tablet from the 18th tomb at Gaotai, “the adult manservant Jia, the adult manservant Yi, and the adult maid Fang” were mentioned while wooden puppets were found along with the wood tablet. Such wooden puppets were supposed to serve the dead in the posthumous world. Hence, the above phrase gives claim to the ownership of these puppets. In other words, people buried the *gaodi ce* in hopes that the bureaucratic system in the posthumous world would protect the property rights of the dead. However, this also indicates that the bureaucrats in the present world were involved even in the process of death, which keeps the dead regulated by the same bureaucratic system as in the present world.

Another purpose of the *gaodi ce* tablet found at Gaotai would be tax exemption in the posthumous world. The tablet found at the 5th tomb of Huchang, on the other hand, included the phrase “punishment is over; no further penalties.” The person buried in this grave must have committed a crime and died in prison (the evidence of torture remained on the body), hence the purpose of the *gaodi ce* tablet was to make sure that the punishment will not be continued in the afterlife. The wood tablet was excavated at Qin tomb No.6 at Longgang 龍崗, Yunmeng 雲夢, and although it is not a *gaodi ce*, it has a similar content. In this wooden slip, it is said that the one buried in the grave committed a crime and was sentenced to *chengdan* 城旦, a punishment of working at the great walls all day long, (according to the excavation report, the body had no lower legs, implying that he was also sentenced to *yuexing* 剕刑, cutting off of the legs; however, he was later proven innocent in reexamination and regained his rights as a citizen). Thus he needed to carry this document all the time to prove his innocence. Again, this document was buried with the dead person to assure that he was innocent and would not be punished anymore in the afterlife. The idea that the posthumous world was bureaucratic (as in the present world) already existed in the period when the *Records of the Interred* from the Qin

tomb at Fangmatan were written, as discussed above. The people buried in Longgang and Hucheng were both government officials who were deeply involved in the bureaucratic system and punished by it. It is easy to imagine that they must have feared that their status as a criminal would continue after their death. Therefore, the idea of the bureaucratic system existing in the posthumous world strongly appealed the most to such mid-to low-class bureaucrats. In other words, in the *gaodi ce*, the dead were considered to be heteronomous beings that are dependent on the bureaucratic system (as they were in the present world). They were also manifest beings controlled by the official family-registry and subject to punishment in the posthumous world. Obviously, the bureaucratic system in the posthumous world protects the property rights of the dead, however, this can also be interpreted such that people need such protection even after death.

How should we understand that people in the same historical period had two contradictory perspectives on the posthumous world (paradise on Mount Kunlun and the underground posthumous bureaucracy)? Since the *gaodi ce* tablets were unearthed only in Hubei and Jiangsu, the latter could be considered to have been a local belief. Or, since the *gaodi ce* were never found in the graves of nobles—granted, the status of those buried with the *gaodi ce* was not low—it also could be assumed that one's fate after death might differ according to personal status.² However, this ambivalent nature is also commonly seen in the documents discussed below, and is the most notable image of the dead in the Han period. I will focus on this fact in the following.

5. The *Xuning manuscript*, owned by the Chinese University of Hong Kong

The *Xuning manuscript* 序寧簡 was purchased by the Chinese University of Hong Kong during the period from 1989 to 1994. Where or how it

2. If the wood tablet of Han tomb No.3 at Mawangdui 馬王堆 was a tablet for notifying the underworld, this cannot be true. However, it is more likely not to be so. (Chen Songchang 陳松長's "Mawangdui Sanhaomu Mu 馬王堆三號墓木牘散論" (Concerning wood tablets of Han tomb No.3 at Mawangdui), in *Wenwu* 文物, 1994-6. Liu Xiaolu 劉曉路's "Cong Wawangdui Sankuai Jiandu Kan Muzhu he Changsha de Guanxi 從馬王堆三塊簡牘看墓主和長沙王的關係" (Discussing the relation between the king of Changsha and the person buried at Mawangdui, based on its three tablets), the *Study on Chinese Excavated Materials* 中國出土資料研究 Vol. 2, 1998).

was excavated is unknown. It is sure that, judging from the contents, the manuscript was written in the 4th year of the Jianchu 建初 era (79CE) of the Eastern Han period and excavated from a single location. It consists of six wood tablets and eight wooden strips, which can be sorted into four categories based on the calendrical order: July 1st to 12th (article 1, 2), July 12th (Article 3 to 6), July 20th (Article 7 to 13), and August 18th (Article 14). The context of the document can be interpreted as follows: on July 1st of the 4th year of the Jianchu era, the Tian family's mother, Xuning, became ill. Tian enshrined the deities of the hearth and a *she* 社 altar (the god of the earth), and prayed for the cure of her illness. Although the divination turned out to be auspicious, meaning that provenance was bestowed, Xuning died on July 12th. After her death, offerings were made to deities like the *she* altar. Also on July 20th and August 18th, "shamans" (*wu* 巫) were hired to offer food and wine to the deities of the *she* altar and to *Sim-ing*. Since the document ends here, it is not clear whether there were any further offerings or not.

The purpose of the enshrinement on July 1st was to cure the illness of Xuning. However, rituals carried out after her death had a different meaning. As written in Article 2, "the bereaved family prayed for no further punishment for the dead and no guilt for the living," the offerings were made to honor the soul of the dead and pray for the happiness of the bereaved family. There are similar expressions such as "no further punishment for the dead and no guilt for the living" (or "the living should have no guilt, and the dead will not be punished") found in the tomb-purifying documents (*Chenmuwen* 鎮墓文) discussed in the next section. In the tomb-purifying documents, the destiny of the living was thought to be linked to the destiny of the dead, and no "punishment" for the dead was understood to be desirable for the happiness of the living. This phrase also suggests that the dead could be subject to punishment in the posthumous world. The phrase "descends to the Yellow Spring and ascends to the Blue Heaven" used to describe the death of Xuning, is also seen frequently in the tomb-purifying documents. This expression shows that there were two locations for the dead: above and under ground, and that one person belonged to both of the locations at the same time, which also corresponds to the dualistic view of the soul (*hun* 魂 and *pohu* 魄). However, the following phrase, "What

the August Man and the August Wife [offered] on behalf of Xuning in the prayer for favor to the Stove Lord, Xuning takes it all to go to Tiangong 天公 (or the Heavenly Prince)'s place to report," implies that the dead are summoned by Tiangong to undergo some sort of trial. It is not absolutely clear as to whether Tiangong is the supreme god or not, but he was the one in Heaven that Xuning brought the prayer to. Hence, in this context, he had the ultimate authority to determine the dead's prosperity. Note, however, that Tiangong was not a subject of offering. The uniqueness of the *Xuning manuscript* is that the process of enshrinement was completed when the prayer was "taken to Tiangong" by the dead herself. That is, she brings the prayer of her family, "no further punishment for the dead," to Tiangong to avoid any risk of being accused as a criminal in the afterlife, while, for the living, it means that they use the dead as a messenger to convey their wish of no guilty for the living to Tiangong. The document concludes with the phrase, "The contract writ (or contract record) is clear." This shows the intention to make the prayer brought by the dead effective in the form of a contract.

According to the discussion above, the idea that the dead would be tried, and that in some cases be judged as a sinner in the posthumous world, already existed in the 1st century CE. Thus the enshrinement of various deities was successively conducted after the prayer for cure (probably in parallel with the funeral). In this context, the dead are manifest and subject to punishment even after their death; however, she is also considered to be a very powerful being who works as a mediator carrying the prayer for happiness of the living to Heaven. Therefore, the dead described in the *Xuning manuscript* had both aspects: that of the "impure dead" and that of "a powerful ancestor." This image of the dead is basically the same as the logic seen in the funeral in the *Yili*: Since the destructive power of death could also be the power of production to lead the future, the present world could be connected to the source of power through death. However, almost no examples with the same content as the *Xuning manuscript* have been found. (There is a wood plate found from Han tomb No.6 at Dongyang 東陽, Xuyi 盱眙, Jiangsu province, written in the mid or late Western Han period, saying that the dead will bring the coins buried with them to perform a thanksgiving prayer to deities in the posthumous world and deliver the

prayers of the living.³) Regarding this point, the tomb-purifying documents discussed in the next section seem to be more common.

6. The *Maimuquan* 買墓券 or tomb-purchasing inscriptions and the *Chenmuwen* 鎮墓文 or tomb-purifying documents from the Eastern Han period

The Xuning manuscript expresses two contradictory visions of the dead: the “impure dead” and the “powerful ancestor,” while the bereaved family’s attitude towards the dead is consistent throughout the manuscript, pursuing both peace for the dead and happiness in the present world at the same time. In the tomb-purifying documents, which were popular during the late Eastern Han period, however, two contradictory attitudes of the bereaved family towards the dead co-exist in the same document.

The tomb-purifying document (*chenmuwen*) was named by Luo Zhenyu 羅振玉 who created the foundation for studies of the excavated materials of ancient China, but no clear definition has been made. As far as the Eastern Han period is concerned, the tomb-purifying documents generally include the following materials: One is called *maimuquan* or *maidiquan* 買地券 (or land-purchasing inscription), a land sales bill made of lead, marble, or brick with a text proving the official purchase of burial ground (sometimes written in red). The oldest specimen of *maidiquan* is *Wu Miying’s maidiquan* 武靡英買地券 made in the 6th year of the Jianchu 建初 era (81CE) in the reign of Emperor Zhang of Eastern Han. The custom of burying these sorts of bills along with the dead continued into the Ming and Qing periods. For example, the *Fang Taozhi’s maidiqua* 房桃枝買地券, written in the 5th year of the Zhongping 中平 era (188CE), is as follows:

On the *wuwu** 戊午 day, that is the seventh day of the third month, the first day of which is the *renwu* 壬午 day, in the Zhongping era, Fang Taozhi, an adult woman of Loyang, purchased from Zhao Jing 趙敬, an adult woman of the same prefecture, a piece of land of one *mu* 畝,

3. Grandfather and Grandmother Fang 范! You should offer thanksgiving by yourselves, with the money [buried together], to [the late] Wu 吳 Kings of Gaoling Li 高陵里, Yuanshan 園山, and the salt-tax collecting deities of Huiji 會稽, to make them bring the prayers to [other high-ranked deities]. (*Kaogu* 考古, 1979-5).

which was situated to the west of the intersection(?) of Guangde-ting 廣德亭, and stretched to the east of the Buling 步兵 street. The price was 3,000 *qian* 錢, and [the payment of] the money was finished. If there are buried corpses in the field, they should be male or female servants [of Fang Taozhi]. In the east, west, and south, the field adjoins that of Jiu Di 舊狄, and in the north it adjoins that of Fan Hanchang 樊漢昌. At the moment [of the contract], the neighbors, both of Fan Hanchang and Wang Ashun 王阿順, recognized the contract writ. [The cost of] the wine [celebrating the contract] was paid equally [by Fang Taozhi and Zhao Jing]. Its sum amount was 50 short of 1,000 [that is 950 *qian*]. (**Wuwu* is a spelling mistake for *wuzi* 戊子.)

The text includes: date; names and addresses of the buyer and the seller; location, square footage, perimeter of the property; price and confirmation of the purchase; abuttal of the property, statement of oath (the part “If there are buried corpses in the field, ...” confirms that, even if another grave was already built within the property, the buyer’s right to build their grave will not be restricted); extent of the buyer’s rights; witnesses (neighbors at the moment); the purchased wine (a ceremony held after the contract is completed. The buyer and the seller share the cost of liquor and drink together). It is obvious that this document was created to claim the official ownership of the burial ground to protect the posthumous life of the dead. Hence, it can be considered as an advanced version of the tablets for notifying the underworld (*gaodi ce*) yet with the same basic characteristics. However, examples from the late Eastern Han period show a slightly different aspect. For example, in some examples, the sellers of the ground were deities, and, like in the tomb-purifying jars (*zhenmu ping* 鎮墓瓶) discussed below, the bereaved family’s prayers for the peace of the dead and their long survival was included in the text.

The tomb-purifying jars (*zhenmu ping*) are documents with prayers for the security of the sepulcher, exorcism, and happiness of the dead and bereaved family, written in black or red on earthenware jars, which were buried in a grave with the dead. Since some documents have magical spells (a sort of a talisman including graphs which cannot be read) on them—which are quite similar to those in later Taoism—the relation between these jars

and early Taoism is currently a topic under discussion. Some documents are inscribed on the wall of grave (made of stone or brick), tombstone, or even on a stone statue in front of the graveyard. The oldest example of the tomb-purifying jars yet found was the one made in the 3rd year of the Yongping 永平 era (60CE) but the custom started to be flourishing in the late Eastern Han period (i.e. the second century CE). After the Han period, except for Dunhuang 敦煌 in Gansu, only a few examples have been. Here I show an example, the *Zhang Shujing's zhenmu ping* 張叔敬鎮墓瓶 made in the 2nd year of the Xiping 熹平 era (173CE) :

On the *gengshen* 庚申 day, that is the sixteenth day of the twelfth month, the first day of which is the *yisi* 乙巳 day, in the second year of the Xiping era, the envoy of the Heavenly Emperor notifies the dead of left, right, and center tombs of the Zhang family's graveyards, governors and directors of tombs, commanders who supervise tombs, heads of inns in the spirit gate, and commanders of tombs (the dead spirits and low-class deities who are in charge of the graveyard); you should transmit the following mandate to the governor of mounds, the count of tombs, high-ranking officials of the underground, the marquis of east tombs, the count of west tombs, the chief commander of the underground, and the corporal at Haoli 耗里 (high-ranking deities of the other world). It is so auspicious today, and the mandate is none other than that concerned with the late Zhang Shujing, who died young because of his little fortune and came down to the grave mound. The Yellow Deity (*huangshen* 黃神), begetting the five deities of the sacred mountains, supervises the records of the dead, calls their *hun* and *bo* souls [to the underground], and administers their registration.⁴ While the living build multistory buildings [to live there], the dead are destined to come down and be buried in the deep ground,

4. This article was excavated in 1935, during the railway construction work in the Tongpu 同蒲 street in the Shanxi province, however the original one was lost. Hence this is from the transcription in Page 94 of Guo Moruo 郭沫若's the *Nuli zhi Shidai* 奴隸制時代. It should be noted that, "*siren lu* 死人錄 (records of the dead)" was created in the "*shengren lu* 生人錄 (records of the living)" in the Guo's transcription, but this was modified in the copy made by Ma Jianzhen 馬鑒臣, included in Zong Mingan 宗鳴安's *Handai Wenzhi Kaoshi yu Xinshang* 漢代文字考釋與欣賞, 2003.

lose their heirs and mustaches, and decay to become soil and dust. Therefore, here, I present medicine for restoration and exemption to the living, so that there is no death again in the future. Besides, nine carrots of Shangdang 上黨 (not clear), which the dead have, will substitute for the living, lead puppets will substitute for the dead, and yellow beans and melons will be allotted to tax payment in the underground. I hope to control male demons (not clear) and remove faults made for soil, so that misfortunes may not prevail. As soon as you receive my mandate, you should command underground officers not to disturb the Zhang family any more. Hurry! Hurry! Carry this out, as the laws require!

In the tomb-purifying jars, the Heavenly Emperor, the supreme god of the universe, gives an order of making peace for the dead and happiness of the bereaved family to various deities in the posthumous world directly or through the “envoy of the Heavenly Emperor (*Tiandi Shizhe* 天帝使者),” “Spiritual Master of the Heavenly Emperor (*Tiandi Shenshi* 天帝神師),” “envoy of Heaven and Earth (*Tiandi Shizhe* 天地使者),” “envoy of the Heavenly Emperor, Yellow Deity Yuezhang (*Tiandi Shizhe Huangshen Yuezhang* 天帝使者黃神越章),” “the Yellow Deity Big Dipper (*Huangshen Beidou* 黃神北斗),” or “the Yellow Emperor (*Huangdi* 黃帝).” In the above example, the messenger delivers the order first to lower class deities, who inform the order to the higher class deities. In some cases, the order is sent directly to the higher-class gods. This implies that the posthumous world is governed by the Heavenly Emperor, and composed of deities in different official ranks. The posthumous world was also ruled by the bureaucratic system and in several jurisdictions. (A person’s life duration is determined by the Yellow Deity). The tomb-purifying jars aim to, by taking advantage of the top-down communication of the bureaucratic system, pretend to be a messenger of the Heavenly Emperor (the supreme god), and send the order to the higher-class deities in the posthumous world to realize the people’s intention. The writers of the documents must have been religious specialists who proceeded the funeral rituals, and who identified themselves as messengers of the Heavenly Emperor.

As the deities in the posthumous world are expressed with the phrase “the governor of mounds, the count of tombs, high-ranking officials of the underground...”, this world is basically located underground (sepulcher), however, this is not all together clear. There are some examples to show other ideas, for example, the *Liu Gong’s maimuquan* 劉公買墓券, written in the 5th year of the Guanghe 光和 era (182), which describes that the grave “descends to the Yellow Spring and ascends to the Blue Heaven,” the *Liu Boping’s tomb-purifying texts* 劉伯平鎮墓券 and *Xu Wentai’s tomb-purifying jar* 胥文台鎮墓瓶 written in the 4th year of the Xiping era (175), referring to Mount Taishan 太山, which is reminiscent of the popular posthumous world of Mt. Taishan 泰山 in the Six-Dynasty period. Therefore, celestial and terrestrial posthumous worlds coexisted here as well. In addition, like in the tablets for notifying the underworld, as long as the posthumous world is governed by the bureaucratic system, the dead must pay taxes and may become prisoners if they have committed any sins. Moreover, like in the *Xuning manuscript*, there is an expression including “inspection”: that is, some sort of trial is carried out on Mount Taishan (*Xu Wentai’s jar*). It is clear that the posthumous world described in the tomb-purifying jars restricted and repressed the dead. As one of the typical phrases in the tomb-purifying jars, “Purge punishment for the dead, remove sins for the living,” shows, people included “soy beans/melon seeds” as a tax the dead would pay to remove potential pain, and “lead puppets” which assume labor work on the dead’s behalf (lead puppets were actually found in the *Yang family’s tomb-purifying jar* 楊氏鎮墓瓶, excavated at Zhangwan 張灣 of Lingbao 靈寶 prefecture, Henan), and an elixir called “*wushi* 五石” (five kinds of medical minerals), to save the suffering dead. (In *Wang Huanmu’s tomb-purifying jar* 王黃母鎮墓瓶 of the 4th year of the Chuping 中平 era (193), white stones were actually found.) The phrase “Purge punishment for the dead, remove sins for the living” also indicates that the peace of the dead was considered to be successively linked to the happiness and prosperity of the living (the bereaved family). In short, though the exact mechanism is not shown, it is implied that people during such periods believed that saving the dead would lead to good consequences for the descendents.

However, there is another typical phrase on tomb-purifying jars, “Life and death do not share the same route” (*Cao Bolu’s tomb-purifying jar* 曹伯

魯鎮墓瓶, *Chen Shujing's tomb-purifying jar* 陳叔敬鎮墓瓶 of the 1st year of the Xiping era (172), and *Liu Gong's maimuquan*). Also as shown in *Zhang Shujing's jar* above—“While the living build multistory buildings (to live there), the dead are destined to come down and be buried in the deep ground”—people sought for a clear separation between the living and the dead. There are several reasons for such separation, including;

1. Death was thought to be an infectious pollution, which resulted in *zhu* 注 or successive contagion, causing another death (successively) as long as the living had a connection with the dead (the *Jiazhu ja* 解注瓶, excavated in the west suburb of Loyang). Hence the living needs to exorcise death pollution.

2. It was thought that the risk of mistakes in the official family-registry of the posthumous world or confusion between the register list of the dead and that of the living might lead to the death of those people who were not supposed to die (*Cheng Taozhui's tomb-purifying jar* 成桃椎鎮墓瓶 in the 2nd year of the Yongshou 永壽 era (156), the *wife of the Jia family's tomb-purifying jar* 加氏婦鎮墓瓶 in the 1st year of the Jianhe era (147)).

3. The earth god's anger caused by the burial of the dead body was believed to curse bereaved families (*Zhang Shujing's tomb-purifying jar*, *Ju Fang's tomb-purifying jar* 雒方鎮墓瓶).

In any cases, the living and the dead must be separated from each other so that death/the dead cannot spread misfortune with their destructive power.

The image of the dead described in these documents seems more like the idea of the “impure dead.” In the posthumous world ruled by the bureaucracy, the status of the dead is extremely unstable and they are always subject to punishment. Therefore, people considered the power of the dead to be destructive rather than proactive. This image formed the basic character of the tomb-purifying jars: refusal and disconnection from the dead. However, although the separation from the dead was expressed on the jars, the intention to ask for peace and salvation for the dead, leading to the happiness of the living, can be also seen here. How should we consider this dual nature of the tomb-purifying jars? With this regard, you may refer to Gou Yuko 江優子's discussion (“Kanbo Shutsudo no Chinbo Hei ni Tsuite: Meibun to Bonai Haichi ni Mieru Shiseikan 漢墓出土の鎮墓瓶について——銘

文と墓内配置に見える死生観 (Tomb-purifying jar unearthed from Han tomb: the ideas of death seen from the inscriptions and layouts of the tombs,” *Oryo Shigaku* 鷹陵史学, No.29, 2003), which examined the installed location of the tomb-purifying jars. To summarize and revise the conclusion of her discussion, there were three proper places to install the tomb-purifying jars; (a) around the entrance of a tomb or a sepulcher where the body was placed, as if the jar blocked communication to the outside; (b) the four corners or/and at the center of the sepulcher, as if they were protecting the sepulcher and; (c) on the side of the coffin or at the foot of the body. Type (a) and (b) were popular in western (Shanxi) and eastern (Henan) China respectively, and both can be interpreted to have intended to separate the sepulcher and the present world. The problem is whether it was to protect the dead from intruders from the outside, or to prevent the dead from breaking free from the sepulcher and coming back to the present world. This is directly linked to the way we understand the two contradictory natures: connection or separation of life and death expressed in the tomb-purifying jars. In particular, regarding the layout in Type (b), when the tomb consists of more than one room (for example, front, middle, and back rooms), the jars were placed so as to enclose the middle room, that is a living room for the spirit of the dead, not in the back room where the dead body was placed (the *Zhao family's tomb-purifying jar* 趙氏鎮墓瓶, excavated at Shaogou 燒溝 tomb No.1037, Loyang, the *Yang family's tomb-purifying jar*, excavated at Zhangwan Tomb No.5 of Lingbao, the “*sanren zhi jing*” jar 「三人之精」鎮墓瓶, excavated at Donghuatan 東花壇, Loyang). In general, the source of pollution of the dead was thought to be in their bodies, so it is hard to assume that the tomb-purifying jars were buried to block the dead. Instead, it must have been placed there to secure a peaceful space for the dead. Of course, there are some examples that express the notion of elimination and confinement of the dead. For example, the tomb epigraph of the 5th year of the Yonghe 永和 era (140), unearthed from Jiulongdi 九壠地, Gaixian 蓋泉, Liaoning 遼寧 province, expresses it quite bluntly, as “The souls of the dead should return to their coffins. Never fly away arbitrarily. [After] passing away, they will have no worry, and meet with the living again after ten thousand years.” Therefore, the logic to be assumed here is that people buried and placed the tomb-purifying documents in the tomb

to ensure safety and a comfortable space for the dead (or make the dead rest in peace in the posthumous world), and this makes the dead satisfied to stay in the sepulcher and not wander around in the present world (or cease to be an evil being and send provenance to the living).

Although some tomb-purchasing inscriptions (*maidiquan*) have the same phrases used in the tomb-purifying jars, they were arranged in a different location, which is basically the same as that of the tablets for notifying the underworld (*gaodi ce*), side of the body (*Wang Dang's maidiquan* 王當買地券 of the 2nd year of the Guanghe era (179)) along with other burial goods (*Liu Gong's maidiquan brick tablet*), except for Han tomb No.107 at Liujiacqu 劉家渠, Shanxian 陝縣, Henan province. This implies that the tomb-purchasing inscriptions were buried so that the dead can bring them to the posthumous world as a certificate of ownership of their burial grounds, while it is also possible to assume that the purpose was to realize the peace of the dead and happiness of the living included in them, when the dead submitted them to the posthumous world, just as in the *Xuning manuscript*. Type (c)'s placement of the tomb-purifying jars might have had the same ritual function, though it also could be explained in a different way.

7. Conclusion

As mentioned above, the contradictory nature of the images of the dead in the tomb-purifying jars, that is the connection or separation of life and death (or coexistence of elimination of the dead and prayer for them), seems to not be substantially contradicted. First, death/the dead were separated from life/the present world to enclose the former (destructive power) in an area clearly distinguished from the latter (the world of proactive power) in order to avoid an uncontrollable state caused by a confliction of the two powers, and also to secure a peaceful place for the dead. By receiving peace, the dead can be transformed from destructive and impure beings into proactive and powerful beings which connect the living to the circulation of this proactive power. Therefore, in order to connect with the dead, the living first had to remove the dead, and prayers for the peace of the dead were given so as to prevent the dead from freely wandering

around in the present world, bringing misfortune to the living. (For example, the idea that the dead rise to the paradise of the Mount Kunlun and become satisfied to stay there can be interpreted as a sort of trap to keep the dead from coming back to the present world.)

In a wider sense, as mentioned in Section Two of this article, the dead were described in two different ways in ancient China: “weak and impure beings” and “powerful ancestors.” People tried to receive power from Heaven by eliminating the former through purifying rituals and enshrining the latter. These two aspects basically co-existed in all of the dead; thus, the “powerful ancestors” could be brought only by an elimination of “impureness” through funeral rituals. Therefore, the logic that a well-ordered connection between the present world and posthumous world could be secured by separating these two worlds is consistent with this basic structure of funerals. The changes seen in images of the dead after the late Zhanguo period could be interpreted as a disordering of the function in the mechanism for transforming “impure beings” into “powerful ancestors” for the following reasons: First, imperial domination of the Qin and Han dynasties and the family-registry system had people of the time think that the bureaucratic system would still continue after death, and the dead kept suffering in the posthumous world even after the prescribed funeral rites. Second, as indicated by Ichiro Kominami 小南一郎 (“Kandai no Sorei Kannen 漢代の祖靈觀念” (the concepts about the dead spirits in the Han period), *Toho Gakuho* 東方學報 Vol.66 1994), the kinship system (paternal kinship groups) behind the conventional funeral rites and ancestor worship had become loose and even collapsed during the Zhanguo period. As a consequence, individuals could become autonomous, but at the same time they could not be dependent on kinship groups. This brought about the anxiety of isolation, and this anxiety was reflected in the idea of punishment after death and the dead as insecure and impure beings, bringing misfortune to the living. Therefore, while the classical method (a ritual elimination against “the impure dead”) was still used, people gradually started to accept the logic of securing peace for the dead to transform them to “the powerful ancestors.” (Kominami indicates that it was around 170CE that priority of the rite shifted from praying for the separation of death and life and peace of only the living, to requiring peace for both the living and the

dead). In other words, the tomb-purifying jars were an additional item for complementing and promoting the traditional funeral rites in order to turn “the impure dead” into “powerful ancestors” when the funeral rites were not functioning well.

Actually, such a feeling was also expressed in another document related to death written in the Eastern Han period: stone epitaphs, including epitaphs for small shrines with stone reliefs (small shrines built on the side of a tomb to enshrine the dead). As there is not enough space left, the details cannot be included here. However, one of the purposes of these epitaphs was as follows; people performed funeral rites and enshrined the dead to make up for their loss, but such rites were not enough to keep the connection with the dead forever. Therefore, these epitaphs were carved on graves to perpetuate the memory of the dead. In this regard, since the prescribed rites were not enough to restore the connection between the dead and the living (or this might have been an excuse to eliminate the dead), further rites, such as building monuments and perpetuating memory, were required.

It is said that elaborate funerals were mainstream during the Han period. It was not just for vanity but was based on people’s feeling that it is hard for the dead to be peaceful ancestors; thus, further funeral rites must be required. Of course, such a feeling was connected to the idea that people in the present world were unstable and subject to pain. I consider that the shift from ancient ancestor worship to medieval funeral rites, mentioned in the opening paragraphs of this article, was caused due to people’s reaction to improve such a harsh reality.