

Ritual Fasts and Spirit Visions in the *Liji*

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In discussing Chinese ceremonial *zhai* 齋 ‘fasting; abstinence; purification,’ Sinologist R. F. Johnston (played by Peter O’Toole in *The Last Emperor*) wrote:

There are several references in ancient Chinese religious literature to a curious belief that, when the rites of strict purification had been scrupulously fulfilled, the purified worshipper would see the spirits to whom his sacrifice was to be offered and on whom his thoughts had been concentrated (see, e.g., *SBE* xxvii. 448, xxviii. 211). This rather startling statement should not be taken as the expression of a literal belief that spirits would present themselves before the worshipper’s bodily eyes. (1927: 472)

Johnston suggests these Chinese chronicles about fasting indicate either “the survival of prehistoric beliefs” similar to guardian-spirits of Native Americans or “psychical disturbances which resulted in ‘visions’” similar to many Christian sects. The present article¹ reconsiders these “curious” fast-induced spirit manifestations through six steps: I. checking Johnston’s

1. This article is dedicated in loving memory of Terry and Jay’s parents, Jimmie E. Reardon (1903-1992) and James H. Reardon, Jr. (1906-1995). Thanks go to Matthew Hanley, Pei Zhun, and Peter Richter for correcting mistakes in earlier versions.

SBE [*Sacred Books of the East*] quotes from Legge's *Liji* translation, II. rechecking the original Chinese *Liji* 禮記 [Record of Rituals/Rites] source, III. comparing Legge's with other translations, IV. looking into what Johnston calls "several references," V. elucidating the meaning of *zhai* 'ritual fasting,' and VI. putting *Liji* fasts into cross-cultural perspective.

I. The first step is to investigate Johnston's references from Legge's (1885) *Liji* translation. Chapter 9, *Jiao Tesheng* 郊特牲 [Suburban Sacrifice of a Single Victim], finishes with:

The dark-coloured robes worn during vigil and purification had reference to the occupation of the thoughts with the dark and unseen. Hence after the three days of purification, the superior man was sure (to seem) to see those to whom his sacrifice was to be offered. (tr. Legge I: 448)

The beginning of chapter 24, *Jiyi* 祭義 [Meanings of Sacrifice], discusses sacrificing at proper times² and says:

The severest vigil and purification is maintained and carried on inwardly; while a looser vigil is maintained externally. During the day of such vigil, the mourner thinks of his departed, how and where they sat, how they smiled and spoke, what were their aims and views, what they delighted in, and what things they desired and enjoyed. On the third day of such exercise he will see those for whom it is employed.

On the day of sacrifice, when he enters the apartment (of the

2. For example [tr. Legge II: 210], "In spring ... he cannot avoid [i.e., *biyou* 必有, see p. 104] being moved by a feeling as if he were seeing his departed friends."

temple), he will seem to see (the deceased) in the place (where his spirit-tablet is). After he has moved about (and performed his operations), and is leaving at the door, he will seem to be arrested by hearing the sounds of his movements, and will sigh as he seems to hear the sound of his sighing. (tr. Legge II: 210-211)

Are these statements, which Johnston found “rather startling,” accurately translated?

II. Step two is to verify by consulting Legge’s original Chinese source. The canonical *Liji* text is the (1815) *Shisanjing zhushu* 十三經注疏 [Thirteen Classics with Commentary and Sub-commentary] edited by Ruan Yuan 阮元 (1764-1849), which includes early annotations by Zheng Xuan 鄭玄 (127-200), Lu Deming 陸德明 (556-627), and Kong Yingda 孔穎達 (574-648). To analyze how the *Liji* describes these fast-induced spirit manifestations, the following will quote the original classical Chinese text, give a literal English translation,³ paraphrase these four commentators (and others), and linguistically discuss the vocabulary.

The *Jiyi* description contrasts two stages of *zhai* 齋 (or 齋) ‘fasting; abstinence; ritual purification’ that are *zhi* 致 ‘caused; achieved, transmitted; utmost; devoted’ and *san* 散 ‘dispersed, scattered; random; spread out;

3. Within the lapidary syntax of classical Chinese, subjects are usually omitted when understandable from context. For instance, this *Jiyi* (47/2a) passage literally says 齊三日乃見其所為齋者 ‘fast three days, then see those for whom fasted.’ English language sexism customarily renders understood Chinese third-person subjects as *he*; e.g., Legge’s “he will see.” However, the *Liji* (e.g., 49/5a, p. 116) specifies both men and women carrying out ritual fasts. The following translations will employ non-sexist *one* subjects; thus, ‘[after] fasting three days, [one] then sees those for whom [one] fasted.’

relaxed'; lists five topics to think/meditate about (the deceased's 居處 'lifestyle, daily life,' 笑語 'jokes; stories,' 志意 'aspirations; intentions,' 所樂 'what they enjoyed, pleasures,' and 所嗜 'what they desired, fondnesses'); and describes two visual and two auditory spirit materializations. The original Chinese, and literal translation, is:

致齊於內散齊於外 齊之日思其居處思其笑語思其志意思其所樂思其所嗜
齊三日乃見其所為齊者 祭之日入室儼然必有見乎其位 周還出戶肅然必
有聞乎其容聲 出戶而聽愴然必有聞乎其嘆息之聲 (47/2a-2b)

Devoted fasting is inside; dissipated fasting is outside. On fast-days, [one] thinks about their [one's deceased parent's] lifestyle, their jokes, their aspirations, their pleasures, and their fondnesses.

[After] fasting three days, then [one] sees those [spirits] for whom [one] fasted. On the day of the sacrifice, when [one] enters the temple, apparently [one] must see them at the spirit-tablets. When [one] returns to go out the door [after making sacrifices], solemnly [one] must hear sounds of their appearance. When [one] goes out the door and listens, emotionally [one] must hear sounds of their sighing breath. (tr. auth.)

'Devoted' and 'dissipated' *zhizhai* 致齊 and *sanzhai* 散齊 fasts (Legge's "severest vigil and purification" and "looser vigil") are described as *nei* 內 'inside; inner' and *wai* 外 'outside; outer' — but for unspecified locations (Legge's "inwardly ... externally"). Commentaries to corresponding *Liji* ritual fasting descriptions (e.g., 7/9a, p. 116) specify 'inside/outside' the faster's usual living quarters. However, Wang Kaiyun 王闢運 (1832-1916) figuratively interprets *nei* and *wai* to mean 'inner' *xin* 心 'heart; mind' and 'outer' *xing* 形 'body; form,' which Karlgren (1971, no. 453) translates, "The (achieved:) complete purification is in the heart, the slacker purification is in the body." Zheng notes *zhizhai* 'devoted fasting'

means the three days when one thinks about the deceased parent's 'lifestyle, jokes, aspirations, pleasures, and fondnesses (esp. foods and drinks),' while *sanzhai* 'dispersed fasting' means the preceding seven days when one abstains from sex, music, and condolence visits (cf. *Liji* 2/26a, 3/2a). In counterpoint, Kong believes the three days of fasting were in preparation for the *mingji* 明祭 'bright/spirit sacrifice'⁴ and says *zhizhai* means the filial person concentrating on the deceased parent's 居處 'lifestyle' that is primary among the five, while *sanzhai* means the subsequent four 'jokes, ...' meditations.

This remarkable *Liji* context describes four spirit manifestations, one seen after three days of preparatory *zhizhai* fasting, the others seen and heard on the sacrifice day. The former description (1) says one 齊三日 'fasts three days' and *nai* 乃 'then, only then; after that, afterwards; so, therefore' 見其所為齊者 'sees those for whom [one] fasted.' Zheng explains these spirit visualizations in terms of the faster's 思 'thoughts, thinking' becoming 熟 'ripe; experienced; intimate, well acquainted, accustomed' with the deceased. Kong reiterates that if one sufficiently 思念 'thinks about' one's parental spirits to the point of becoming 鈍熟 'intimate, harmonious; practiced, well-versed,' they will be 目想之若見 'as if seen/visible in the expression of the [one's] eyes.'

The latter *Jiyi* passage describes spiritisms when the fasters (2) enter, (3) leave, and (4) depart the ancestral temple with grammatically

4. *Ming* 明 'bright; enlightened; pure; clear, manifest' has a special sense of 'spirit; soul; reverent,' e.g., inexpensive symbolic grave goods were called *mingqi* 明器 'bright/spirit things.'

identical phrases: *-ran* 然 suffixed adverb + *biyou* 必有 ‘necessarily/certainly have; must be’ + *jian/wen hu qi* 見/聞乎其 ‘sight/hearing of their ...’; that is, in translation, ‘ADV-ly [one] must see/hear their ...’

(2) The apparition that one ‘must see’ at the *wei* 位 ‘spirit-tablet; place; position’ after entering the temple is adverbially modified with *ai* 僂 (the “person radical/signific” 亻 and the *ai* 愛 ‘love’ phonetic) ‘apparently, indistinct, obscure; short of breath, pant.’ Lu glosses *airan* 僂然 as 微見貌 ‘slightly visible’ and Kong as *aiai* ‘obscured; hidden’ or 髣髴見 ‘see/appear indistinctly; seem to, as if; resemble.’ Which Karlgren (1971, no. 451) translates: “Appearing indistinctly, as if he (the dead father) certainly were to be seen in his place.” Kong says on the morning of the sacrifice day, filial people 想念 ‘think about; remember, miss’ their parents, and upon entering the temple, 想象 ‘imagine, visualize’ the spirits during the 陰厭 ‘dark sacrifice of satisfaction.’⁵ Kong explains visualizing parental spirits with classical citations from the *Shijing* 詩經 [Book of Poetry] (42.1) 愛而不見 “loved/hidden and not seen” — taking *ai* 愛 ‘love’ as a graphic loan (Karlgren 1964, no. 115) for *ai* 薹 (the “plant radical” 艸 and this *ai* 愛 phonetic) ‘hide, hidden’ — and the Confucian *Lunyu* 論語 [Analects] (3.12) recommendation that one should 祭如存 ‘sacrifice as if

5. Chinese ancestral sacrifices involved a *shi* 尸 ‘personator of the dead’ (Carr 1985), especially when someone died prematurely and left no descendant to present offerings. The *Liji* (19/14b) quotes Confucius 孔子 (551-479 B.C.E.) and his disciple Zengzi 曾子 (505-436?), the exemplar of filial piety (see p. 121), discussing whether sacrifices require personators. Confucius distinguishes between 陰 *yin* ‘dark’ and 陽 *yang* ‘light’ offerings of *yan* 厭 ‘satisfaction, satiation’ (tr. Legge I: 338): “There is the offering of satisfaction made in the dark chamber, and that made in the brighter place.” He explains that eldest sons who died young would be given the full 陰厭 ‘dark offering’ of ‘satisfaction’; and others would be given the partial 陽厭 ‘light offering.’

[spirits] are present.’

(3) The apparition that one ‘must hear’ when leaving is adverbially described with *su* 肅 ‘solemn, majestic; respectful, reverent; eager, hurried; severe (esp. cold); shrink, shrivel; beating (sounds).’ Kong once again explains through reduplication, saying that after making the sacrificial offerings, one *susuran* ‘solemnly, reverently; eagerly, hurriedly; throbbingly’ gives a 悚息 ‘frightened breath; gasp’ (cf. 嘆息 ‘sighing breath’ on p. 102). Chen Hao 陳浩 (1261–1341) glosses the sensory contradiction of hearing the 舉動 ‘motion; activity’ of a spirit’s 容 ‘appearance, looks; face, countenance’; Karlgren (1971, no. 455) translates: “There is certainly something to hear of the sounds of his (apparition:) configuration,” i.e., not English, but French *configuration* ‘outline, profile; form, shape.’

(4) The final spiritism that one ‘must hear’ when departing the temple is recounted with adverbial *kai* 愾 ‘filled with feeling, highly emotional; exasperated; angry, wrathful.’ Lu specifies reading *kai* 愾 instead of *xi* 愴 ‘sigh; groan,’ and explains *kairan* as listening outside the door quietly and *kaikairan* ‘emotionally; exasperatingly.’ Zheng infers that ‘returns to go out the door’ means waiting sufficient time to 薦設 ‘make sacrificial settings’; which Kong explains as the meat and vegetable offerings set forth in ceremonies like the 特牲 Sacrifice with Single Victim (made to a parent or grandparent) or 少牢 Sacrifice with Secondary Victim (to a progenitor). Zheng adds that whenever there is no *shi* ‘personator of the dead,’ one should wait 若食間 ‘as if time for eating’ before exiting and hearing the spirit; which Kong astutely traces back to Zheng’s *Yili* 儀禮 [Etiquette and Ritual] commentary for a passage using these same *Liji* 還 ‘return’ and 出戶 ‘go out the door’ words. The *Yili*

(43/2b, cf. Steele 1917, 2: 119) says one should present sacrificial offerings in the same manner whether or not personators are present, and describes (43/3b) men and women wailing thrice 如食間 ‘as if time for eating,’ where Zheng notes long enough for a personator to 九飯 ‘drink nine times.’ Kong quotes Huang Kan 皇侃 (488–545) doubting that the same procedures were followed in both 陰厭 ‘dark’ and 陽厭 ‘light satisfaction’ sacrifices with and without personators.

These *Liji* adverbs *airan* 儼然 ‘apparently,’ *suran* 肅然 ‘solemnly,’ and *kairan* 愾然 ‘emotionally’ are linguistic keys to the (2)–(4) spirit visions or hallucinations. Prime semantic insights come from the earliest dictionary that defines them, Xu Shen 許慎’s (ca. 100 C.E.) *Shuowen jiezi* 說文解字, especially since its principal commentary, by Duan Yucai 段玉裁 (1735–1815), quotes these *Liji* usages of *ai* and *kai*.

First, the *Shuowen jiezi* (8A/12a) defines *ai* 儼 ‘apparent’ as *fangfu* 仿佛 (the following 8A/12b 仿 and 佛 definitions) ‘seem/be like; seeming, as if; resembling, similar to; indistinct, unclear,’ logographically analyzes it as the “human radical” 亻 plus the *ai* 愛 ‘love’ phonetic;⁶ and quotes a graphic variant for *Shijing* (42.1, p. 104) 儼而不見 ‘hidden and not seen.’ Duan cites the *Liji* ‘On the day of the sacrifice, when [one] enters the temple, apparently [one] must see them at the spirit-tablets,’ paraphrases 見如見 ‘see as if seeing’ one’s parent at the spirit-tablet, quotes the *Erya*

6. Chinese *ai* “love” is “obscure.” Besides the “plant radical” 艸 in *ai* 薹 ‘hide,’ this *ai* 愛 ‘love’ phonetic is logographically combined with the “sun” 日, “eye” 目, and “cloud” 雨 radicals in these ‘obscured’ cognates: *ai* 曖 ‘cloudy, dim; obscure,’ *ai* 曖 ‘obscure; hidden,’ and *ai* 霏 ‘cloudy; obscure’ (cf. *ai* 靄 ‘cloudy’).

爾雅 (2/74, 2/75) definitions of *ai* 夔 ‘hidden’ and *ai* 僂 ‘short of breath,’ and the *Shijing* (257.6) 如彼遡風亦孔之僂 ‘Like that headwind that completely makes [one] breathless.’

Second, it (3B/21b) defines *su* 肅 ‘solemn; reverent’ as 持事振敬 ‘holding with shaking reverence’; analyzes 肅 ‘caution; restraint’ as an ideograph combining 聿 ‘manual dexterity’ over ‘eddy, whirlpool; abyss’ (usually written *yuán* 淵 with the “water radical”); quotes from *Shijing* (195.6) 戰戰兢兢如臨深淵 ‘trembling and cautious, as if approaching a deep abyss’; and notes 肅 was anciently written with 心 ‘heart, mind’ and 卩 ‘kneeling’ instead of ‘eddy’ at the bottom. Duan quotes the *Guangyun* 廣韻 (心覽) multiple definition of *su* as *gong* 恭 ‘reverence; respect,’ *jing* 敬 ‘respect; honor,’ *jie* 戒 ‘abstain; avoid,’ *jin* 進 ‘advance; lead forward,’ and *ji* 疾 ‘disease, pain; speed’; and claims the *Liji* uses *jin* as a graphic loan for *xiu* 羞 ‘shame; bashfulness,’ and *ji* as one for *su* 速 ‘fast, speed’ (Karlgren 1968, nos. 1350, 1788, 1983).

Third, the *Shuowen jiezi* (10B/44b) defines *xi* 愾 (not *kai* 愾 ‘emotional’) as 大息 ‘big sigh’; analyzes 愾 as a logograph with the “heart radical” 心 and the *qi* 氣 ‘breath; life-force’ phonetic; and quotes the *Shijing* (153.1) 愾我寤嘆 ‘moaning, I awake and sigh.’ Duan notes some *Shuowen jiezi* editions miscopy 太息 ‘great sigh’ (which is the 2A/25b definition of 嘆 ‘sigh’), and quotes the (p. 102) *Liji* ‘When [one] goes out the door and listens, emotionally [one] must hear sounds of their sighing breath’ (miswriting 入 ‘go in’ instead of 出 ‘go out’ the door).

It is fascinating to consider why centuries before the *Liji* used *ai* 僂 ‘apparent; indistinct’ and *kai* 愾 ‘emotional; exasperated,’ the *Shijing* (257,

153) used *ai* 僂 ‘pant; stifled’ and *xi* 愴 ‘sigh; groan,’ both of which share a common ‘exhale’ meaning. Since shallow breathing typifies visionary experiences (Goodman 1986: 282), this unusual *Liji* vocabulary hints at ancient yogic origins for ritual fasting visions.

The *Jiao Tesheng* description, Johnston’s other quote from Legge, links two Chinese customs about *zhai* 齋 ‘fasting; purification’ with the conjunction *gu* 故 ‘thus, hence; therefore, consequently.’

齋之玄也以陰幽思也 故君子三日齋必見其所為祭者 (26/24a)

Fasting [clothing] is dark because of [sacrificers’] dark and ghostly thoughts. Thus, Superior People [undergo] three days fasting and must see those for whom they sacrificed. (tr. auth.)

This 必見其所為祭者 ‘must see those for whom they sacrificed’ closely resembles the *Jiyi*’s (p. 104) 必有見 ‘must have sight of; must see’ and 乃見其所為齋者 ‘then see those for whom [one] fasted,’ to which the commentators refer. Zheng explains 三日齋 ‘three days fast[ing]’ by quoting the *Jiyi*’s 齋三日 ‘fast three days’ and meditation descriptions 思其居處 ... ‘think about [their] lifestyle ...,’ and resolves ‘thus ... must see those’ as 則見之 ‘then see them’ with a near-synonym of the conjunction *gu*: *ze* 則 ‘then, thus; only.’ Kong defines *zhai* 齋 ‘fasting’ as the *zhiji* 至祭 ‘utmost sacrifice,’ discusses semantic ‘dark’/‘ghost’ connections between *yin* 陰 ‘dark, shade, cloudy; quiescent’ and *you* 幽 ‘dark, dim; solitary; hidden; serene’ (cf. English *shade* ‘ghost’); a color he says is ceremonially represented by *xuan* 玄 ‘dark, black; mysterious’ fasting garments (e.g., *Liji* 29/17a 玄冠 ‘dark cap’). Kong interprets ‘three days’ to mean the *Jiyi* period of *zhizhai* 致齋, glosses ‘those for whom they sacrificed’ as one’s 親 ‘parents,’ and describes 如見 ‘as if seeing’ them.

III. Step three is to cross-linguistically parallel Legge's *Jiyi* translations for the visual (1), (2) and auditory (3), (4) spirit manifestations. In what follows, the key portions of his (1885 II: 210–211) English *Liji* will be contrasted with the French, German, and Japanese versions {translated within brackets} by Couvreur (1913 II: 273–4), Wilhelm (1930: 264), and Takeuchi (1979: 701). This polyglot overview demonstrates the scope of appraisals. For instance, the ambiguous Chinese *nei* 内 'inside' and *wai* 外 'outside' (Legge's "inwardly ... externally") can be interpreted literally as rooms (Couvreur's "*l'intérieur de ses appartements ... hors de ses appartements*" {inside ... outside of his apartments/rooms}, Wilhelm's "*innere Abteilung des Hauses ... äusseren Abteilung*" {inner ... outer rooms/sections of the houses}) or figuratively as the faster's mental states (Takeuchi's "*kokoro no uchi* 心の内 ... *gaibutsu ni taisuru* 外物に対する" {inside the heart/mind ... as opposed to external/material things}).

Compared with translating Chinese into Western languages, Japanese has the lexical advantage of Sino-Japanese loanwords. For the pivotal Chinese terms *sanzhai* 散齋/*zhizhai* 致齋 'dissipated/devoted fasting,' Takeuchi uses the common Japanese word "*saikai* 齋戒" {purification, ablution; (ritual) fasting} and the rare literary term "*sansai* 散齋" {dissipated fasting}—borrowed from Chinese *zhaijie* (p.122) and *sanzhai*.⁷ The European language translations are: "*the severest vigil and purification ... a looser vigil*" (Legge), "*se purifiait rigoureusement ...*

7. Chinese-Japanese dictionaries define *zhizhai* 致齋 and *sanzhai* 散齋 (pronounced *chisai* and *sansai* in Japanese) as *ma-imi* 眞忌み and *ara-imi* 荒忌み—kinds of *imi* 'abstinence, fasting; mourning; death anniversary' that are *ma-* 'genuine, true, complete, full; sincere, serious' and *ara-* 'coarse; unrestrained; rough, crude.'

s'être purifié d'une manière moins rigoureuse" {rigorously/strictly purify oneself ... be purified/cleansed less rigorously/strictly} (Couvreur), and "*Zum strengen Fasten ... zum vorbereitenden Fasten*" {severe/stringent ... preparatory/preliminary fasting/abstention} (Wilhelm).

The former visual description (1) that after fasting three days, 乃見其所為齋者 'then [one] sees those [spirits] for whom [one] fasted' translates:

he will see those for whom it is employed [Legge]⁸

(son esprit. était tellement absorbé par ces pensées qu'il croyait) voir ceux pour lesquels il se purifiait [Couvreur] {(his mind will be so absorbed by these thoughts that he will believe that) he sees those for whom he fasted}

so erblickte er die, für die er fastete [Wilhelm] {so he saw those for whom he was fasting}

ついに故人のおもかげが絶えず目先に浮かんでいるようになる [Takeuchi] {finally the face/shadow of the deceased will always come to be floating before one's eyes}

Semantics of this Japanese word *omokage* 面影 (lit. "face shadow") range across 'face, visage; shadow; trace, vestige; memory.'

The translators give diverse readings for the visual description (2) that on the sacrifice day, after entering the temple, 儼然必有見乎其位 'apparently [one] must see them at the spirit-tablets':

8. Legge notes a more figurative *Liji* paraphrase in his *Shijing* (1871: 631) translation: "he would have a complete image of him [his ancestor] in his mind's eye."

he will seem to see (the deceased) in the place (where his spirit-tablet is) [Legge]

il avait l'air de voir le défunt à sa place (à la place où était sa tablette) [Couvreur] {it will seem as if he sees the deceased in his place (where his tablet is)}

war er gespannt darauf, daß er sie sicher an ihrem Ahnensitz erblicken werde [Wilhelm] {he was curious, whether he certainly saw them on their ancestral seat/place}

必ず、さながら故人の霊がその位置に着いているように感ぜられるのであり [Takeuchi] {without fail, one will feel as if the ghost of the deceased haunts his place}

With the exception of Couvreur's parenthetical "*qu'il croyait*" {he will believe}, the translators all treat vision (1) with *nai* 乃 'then' more factually than (2) with *airan* 儼然 'apparently.'

The former auditory description (3) that after returning to go back out the door, 肅然必有聞乎其容聲 'solemnly [one] must hear sounds of their appearance' translates:

he will seem to be arrested by hearing the sounds of his movements [Legge]

il éprouvait un sentiment de crainte respectueuse, comme s'il avait entendu le défunt se mouvoir [Couvreur] {he will experience a feeling of awe, as if he heard the deceased moving}

als werde er sicher hören, wie sie sich bewegen oder reden [Wilhelm] {as he certainly would hear, how they stirred or talked}

必ず、厳かな気分に打たれて故人の声音を聞く心地がするのであり [Takeuchi] {without fail, while being moved by feelings of dignity, one will have the impression of hearing the voice of the

deceased}

Contrast the auditory description (4) that after going out the door and listening, 愴然必有聞乎其嘆息之聲 ‘emotionally [one] must hear sounds of their sighing breath’:

will sigh as he seems to hear the sound of his sighing [Legge]

il écoutait, et semblait soupirer, comme s’il avait entendu les soupirs du défunt [Couvreur] {he listens, and seems to sigh, as if he heard the sighs of the deceased}

lauschte er mit verhaltenem Atem, als hörte er sie seufzen [Wilhelm] {he listens with breath held, as he would hear their/them sighing}

必ず、室の奥からはっきりと故人の嘆息が聞こえて来るのである [Takeuchi] {without fail, from the depths of the room it will be as if the sighs of the deceased are heard clearly/distinctly}

These translations crucially differ over the ambiguities of *biyou* 必有 ‘must be/have; sure to be, inevitably do (something); necessarily/certainly have’ (2), (3), (4). Two translators are consonant with the original — Wilhelm’s *sicher* {certainly; securely; surely, definitely, positively} (2), (3); and Takeuchi’s *kanarazu* 必ず {without fail; certainly, definitely, surely; always, invariably} (2), (3), (4); cf. Karlgren’s *certainly* for (2) and (3). The other two ignore it, and extend readings of *airan* 儼然 ‘apparently’ (2) — Legge’s *he will seem to* (2), (3) and *as he seems to* (4); and Couvreur’s *il avait l’air de* {it will seem as if he} (2) and *comme s’il avait* {as if he} (3), (4).

One way of illuminating *biyou*’s meaning is through analogy with

other texts. Probably the best classical precedent is the *Lunyu* (10.7) similarly using *biyou* ‘must have’ and *bi* ‘must’ in discussing ceremonial *zhai* fasts: 齊必有明衣布齊必變食居必遷坐 ‘When fasting, [one] must have the bright/spirit robe of linen. When fasting, [one] must alter [one’s] diet, and must change the place where [one] usually sits.’ Another kind of semantic illumination comes from intratextual contrast. The *Liji*’s numerous *biyou* 必有 usages can be divided into three semantic categories: necessity (e.g., ancient kings 必有禮以哀之 ‘had to have ritual in order to express sorrow’ ... 必有禮以樂之 ‘had to have ritual in order to express joy’ 38/4a), prediction (e.g., spring thunder warns that 必有凶災 ‘there are sure to be evils and disasters’ 15/5a) [cf. Legge II: 107, II: 234, I: 260], and recommendation (e.g., a filial son preparing for sacrifice 必有齊莊之心 ‘must have a [*qi* 齊] well-adjusted and somber heart/mind’ 48/15b).

This last passage (48/15b) provides a more “rational” *Liji* balance for the *Jiyi*’s highly specific language (2), (3), (4) that one *biyou* 必有 ‘must have’ visual and aural spirit manifestations. It uses *biyou* and *bi* 必 ‘must’ along with *ru* 如 ‘as if/though; like, as’ (synonymous with *ruo* 若 ‘as if/though; similar to, like,’ cf. pp. 103 and 105):

When a filial son was about to sacrifice, [必有] the rule was that he should have his mind well adjusted and grave, to fit him for giving to all matters their full consideration, for providing the robes and other things, for repairing the temple and its fanes, and for regulating everything. When the day of sacrifice arrived, [必] the rule was that his countenance should be mild, and [必] his movements show an anxious dread, as if he feared his love were not sufficient. When he put down his offerings, [必] it was required that his demeanour should be mild, and [必] his body bent, [如] as if (his parents) would

speak (to him) and had not yet done so; when the officers assisting had all gone out, he stood lowly and still, though correct and straight, [如] as if he were about to lose the sight (of his parents). After the sacrifice, he looked pleased and expectant, [如] as if they would enter again. (tr. Legge II: 234)

Legge translates *biyou* 必有 “the rule was,” *bi* 必 “the rule was” and “it was required,” and *ru* 如 “as if.” Three commentaries above use *ru* ‘as if, like’ to paraphrase *Liji* statements about spiritual rituals: Duan’s *Shuowen jiezi* 見如見 ‘see as if seeing’ (p. 106), Kong’s 如見 ‘as if seeing’ (p. 108), and Zheng’s *Yili* 如食間 ‘as if time for eating’ (p. 106). From the traditional world-view of Chinese scholars as well as from the modern Western perspective, it makes more sense to talk about “as if” spirits are manifesting than “must”; but the original language should not be ignored.

IV. Step four is searching the *Liji* to locate what Johnston called Legge’s “several references” to Chinese ritual fasting and abstinence. Although few contexts mention spirit manifestations,⁹ five *Liji* passages refer to *zhizhai* 致齋 ‘devoted fasting’ and/or *sanzhai* 散齋 ‘dissipated fasting.’ One major context (49/4b-5a) gives specific details about fast rituals (like *Jiyi*, p. 101 ff.). It etymologizes that to *zhai* 齋 ‘ritually fast’ means to make one’s thoughts *qi* 齊 ‘adjusted,’ and twice describes 散齋七日 ‘dissipated fasting for seven days’ and 致齋三日 ‘devoted fasting for three days.’ Four less-detailed minor ones incidentally mention fasts

9. For example, the *Yueling* 月令 [Monthly Commands] chapter (*Liji* 16/6a, 17/19a; tr. Legge I: 275, 304) says *zhaijie* should be carried out during summer and winter solstices when, 君子齋戒 “Superior men give themselves to vigil [or “to self-adjustment” 304] and fasting.”

(like *Jiao Tesheng*, p. 100). Two (24/2b, 51/19a) give nearly identical references to 七日戒三日齋~宿 'seven days abstention, and three days fasting'; two other contexts mention 三日齋 'three days fasting' (25/19a) and 致齋 'devoted fasting' (7/9a).

The major passage, in chapter 25 *Jitong* 祭統 [Summary of Sacrifices — following 24 *Jiyi*], logographically explains *zhai* 齋 'fasting' means making one's thoughts *qi* 齊 'adjusted; arranged; regulated.' The *Liji*, like various other Chinese classics, uses *qi* 齊 (or 齊) 'to even, make uniform; align, equalize; unite, regulate, put in order; arrange, adjust' as shorthand to write *zhai* 齋 (or 齋, clarified with the "sacrifice radical" 示) 'fasting; abstinence; religious purification.' This *Jitong* context defines *zhiqi* 致齊 'perfect/devoted adjustment' (cf. *zhizhai* 致齋 'devoted fasting') in these terms: 齊不齊以致齊者也 'perfect adjustment is that which adjusts the unadjusted [mind],' which Legge translates below "it was the giving uniformity ... was realised":

When the time came for offering a sacrifice, the man wisely gave himself to the work of purification. That purification meant the production of uniformity (in all the thoughts); — it was the giving uniformity to all that was not uniform, till a uniform direction of the thoughts was realised. Hence a superior man, unless for a great occasion, and unless he were animated by a great reverence, did not attempt this purification. While it was not attained, he did not take precautions against the influence of (outward) things, nor did he cease from all (internal) desires. But when he was about to attempt it, he guarded against all things of an evil nature, and suppressed all his desires. His ears did not listen to music; — as it is said in the Record, 'People occupied with purification have no music,' meaning

that they did not venture to allow its dissipation of their minds. He allowed no vain thoughts in his heart, but kept them in a strict adherence to what was right. He allowed no reckless movement of his hands or feet, but kept them firmly in the way of propriety. Thus the superior man, in his purification, devotes himself to carrying to its utmost extent his refined and intelligent virtue. (49/4b-5a, tr. Legge II: 239-240)

The subsequent passage describes the psychological purpose of *sanzhai* as to *ding* 定 'settle; fix, establish; determine' and that of *zhizhai* as to *qi* 齊 'arrange; adjust; regulate' (cf. p. 113): 散齊七日以定之 'dissipated fasting for seven days to regulate it' (Zheng says one's 志意 'will; mind') and 致齊三日以齊之 'devoted fasting for three days to adjust/arrange it.' The description of a ruler and his wife undertaking *zhizhai* 'devoted fasting' in different rooms clarifies the *Jiyi*'s ambiguous *wai* 外 'outside' and *nei* 內 'inside.' Kong says a husband fasts in the 路寢 'outer (men's) chamber' (cf. *Shijing* 300.9) and a wife in the 正寢 'inner (women's) chamber.'

Therefore there was the looser ordering of the mind for seven days, to bring it to a state of fixed determination; and the complete ordering of it for three days, to effect the uniformity of all the thoughts. That determination is what is called purification; the final attainment is when the highest degree of refined intelligence is reached. After this it was possible to enter into communion with the spiritual intelligences.

Moreover, on the eleventh day, before that appointed for the sacrifice, the governor of the palace gave warning to the wife of the ruler, and she also conducted that looser ordering of her thoughts for seven days, and that more complete ordering of them for three. The ruler accomplished his purification in the outer apartment, and the

wife her purification in the inner. After this they met in the grand temple. (49/5a, tr. Legge II: 240)

Legge's "gave warning to" is one of many semantic ramifications from reading this *Liji* 夙 'stay overnight, lodge' as a graphic loan (Karlsgren 1969, no. 1350; 1971, no. 63) for 肅 'solemnity, reverence, awe; respect; warn, admonish, exhort; hurry, urge on, speed up; inborn, innate.'¹⁰ Zheng glosses 夙 as pronounced like 肅 and meaning 戒 'abstain, avoid, fast; guard against, be attentive; take care, prepare; admonish, warn'; and he differentiates between light/unimportant 戒 and heavy/serious 夙 fasting.

The first two minor contexts differ in *zhai* 齋 and *su* 夙 graphic variations: 七日戒 'seven days of 戒 abstention' and 三日齋/夙 'three days *zhai/su* fasting.' The following discussion of sacrifices explains the

10. Two other *Liji* fasting contexts using the 夙 logograph as a loan for 肅 'fast' (cf. 肅然 'solemnly' in *Jiyi*) are a one-day *suzhai* 夙齋 'ritual fast' (28/12a, Karlsgren 1971, no. 325; tr. Legge I: 477) "kept a vigil"; and an obscure *suzhe* 夙者 'faster' (48/15b, cf. p. 113; Karlsgren 1971, no. 468), which Zheng notes to mean 實助祭者 'those who truly assisted in the sacrifice,' (tr. Legge II: 234, calling the phrase "difficult") "the officers assisting." In a similar *Zhouli* (26/14a) context about reading ritual books to officials during 戒及夙之日 'days of abstinence and fasting,' the commentary of Jia Gongyan 賈公彥 (fl. 650) notes 戒 戒 means seven days of *sanzhai* 'dissipated fasting' and 夙 夙 three days of *zhizhai* 'devoted fasting.' The *Mengzi* 孟子 (2B/11) mentions a 弟子齋夙而後敢言 'visitor who fasted before daring to speak'; and Zhao Qi 趙岐 (d. 201) comments that *zhai* 齋 means *jing* 敬 'respect; honor' and *su* 夙 means *su* 素 'always, usually.'

11. Within traditional numerology, Eberhard (1986: 288) explains three was "a very important number in Chinese thought," for instance, the *sancai* 三才 "three powers" 'heaven, earth, and people.' Preparations for sacrifice strongly resemble mourning rituals; the *Liji* (63/16a, Legge II: 469) advises sacrificers to fast and lament for three days, not to wash the head for three months, and to wear mourning clothes for three years after a parent's death.

numerological significance of three¹¹:

Moreover, the keeping of the victims (for the altar of Heaven) for three months (in the stable); the abstinence (of the worshippers) for seven days; and the vigil of three days: — all showed the extreme degree of (preparatory) care (for the service). (24/2b, tr. Legge I: 407)

Confucius quoted the *Yijing* and *Shijing* to explain sacrifice rituals, and: The Master said, 'There are the seven days of fasting, and the three days of vigil and adjustment of the thoughts; there is the appointment of the one man to act as the personator of the dead, in passing whom it is required to adopt a hurried pace: — all to teach reverence (for the departed).' (51/19a, tr. Legge II: 292)

In the former passage, Zheng notes *jie* 戒 'abstinence' refers to *sanzhai* 'dissipated fasting' and *su* 宿 'reverence' to *zhizhai* 'devoted fasting,' which Kong says began ten and three days before the ancestral sacrifice.¹² In the latter, Zheng likewise notes *jie* means *sanzhai* 'dissipated fasting,' and Kong mentions the three day period.

The third minor *Liji* context, like the second, quotes Confucius discussing 72-hour *zhizhai* fasts:

Confucius said, 'There are three days' fasting on hand. If one fasts for the first day, he should still be afraid of not being (sufficiently) reverent. What are we to think of it, if on the second day he beat his

12. The total Chinese ritual fasting period was ten days: seven of *sanzhai* 'dissipated fasting' concurrent with three of *zhizhai* 'devoted fasting.' The *Zhuangzi* (19/35) tells a story about a priest, trying to convince a pig which is unwilling to be sacrificed, who argues that he will have to undergo 十日戒 三日齋 'ten days of abstinence and three days of fasting.'

drums?' (25/19a, tr. Legge I: 424)

Kong notes music (cf. *Jitong*, p. 115) was forbidden during the week of *sanzhai* 'dissipated fasting.' The fourth minor passage elucidates the ritual significance of fasting 内 'inside' and 外 'outside' one's usual 室 'room, chamber' (cf. *Jiyi* and *Jitong*, pp. 102 and 116). Etiquette holds *zhizhai* fasting and sickness as exceptions to rules:

When a man stops during the daytime in his inner (chamber), it is allowable to come and ask about his illness. When he stops outside during the night, it is allowable to come and condole with him. Hence a superior man, except for some great cause, does not pass the night outside (his chamber); and unless he is carrying out a fast or is ill, he does not day and night stop inside. (7/9a, tr. Legge I: 136)

Zheng says 大故 'great cause' means mourning, and 内 'inside' describes the 正寢 'inner (women's) chamber' mentioned on p. 116.

V. Step five is re-examining what kind of *zhai* 'ritual fasting' the *Liji* records. What exactly were *sanzhai* 散齋 'dissipated fasting' and *zhizhai* 致齋 'devoted fasting'? The present article begins with a quote from Johnston, who also said:

Of this purificatory process there were two stages. The lower stage, known as [sanzhai], 'lax purification,' lasted for seven days; the higher, known as [zhizhai] 'strict purification,' occupied the three days immediately preceding the performance of the sacrificial ceremony. The process involved bathing ([*muyu* 沐浴]), the wearing of clean raiment, restriction to the simplest food, and abstinence from sexual relations. The person undergoing 'strict' [*zhai*] separated himself from his family, and lived by himself in apartments other than those which he usually occupied. He wore unadorned garments

of a black colour, because these were regarded as consonant with, or symbolical of, the solemn nature of his thoughts, which should be concentrated on the unseen world. (1927: 470)

The Chinese word *zhai* 齋 is as ambiguous as English *fast* meaning 'to abstain from all food and drink' (e.g., *total fast*), 'to abstain from solid food' (*liquid fast*), 'to eat sparingly' (*fast on bread and water*), 'not eat at certain times' (*Ramadan fast*), or 'not eat certain foods' (*Lenten fast*). Rather than 'total fast,' *Liji* ritual fasting generally meant 'eat sparingly,' in particular, a meager diet restricted to water and *zhou* 粥 'gruel; congee' or *shushi* 蔬食 'plain food; esp. grains.' In ancient China, grain was the lowest dietary limit; Chang (1977: 41) explains, "a minimum meal consisted of some grain (usually millet) and some water."

The *Liji* repeatedly stresses moderate fasts and warns against excessive ones (e.g., 7/8a, 9/15b, 44/23b; Legge I: 135, I: 170, II: 185). It especially uses *hui* 毀 'destroy, ruin; damage, injure' to mean 'harm oneself through excessive fasting' when mourning. Four examples: (10/16b, Legge I: 192) 毀不危身 'emaciation should not endanger one's life'; (42/15a, Legge II: 160) a Superior Person should not 毀瘠為病 'become ill from emaciation' because to die from fasting would be unfilial (i.e., not leaving descendants); (63/13a, Legge II: 466) 毀不滅性 'emaciation should not destroy the living'; and (3/2a, Legge I: 87) fasting should neither cause 毀瘠 'becoming so emaciated that bones appear' nor affect 視聽 'seeing and hearing.' This last example echoes another *Liji* (42/14b, Legge II: 159) passage warning against fasts making one's 視不明聽不聰 'sight unclear [or] hearing dull.' These contexts rule out extreme ritual fasts as a means of inducing visual or auditory hallucinations.

To describe fasting more extreme than *zhai*, the *Liji* uses *bushi* ‘not eat’ and *shuijiang buru yu kou* ‘liquids do not enter the mouth.’ *Bushi* 不食 ‘not eat’ means ‘not eat regular foods’ rather than ‘not eat any food.’ One passage (44/23a, Legge II: 184) lists the 三不食 ‘three [times when mourners] do not eat’: not eating fruits or vegetables while fasting on grain and water, not [privately] consuming meat or wine until three months after the burial, and not [publicly] until after the one year mourning period. Another (44/21b, II:183) says at the mourning rites for a ruler, his sons and high officers are supposed to 三日不食 ‘not eat for three days,’ meaning a diet restricted to eating rice 粥 ‘gruel’ twice a day, preferably not at regular mealtimes; and his wives and lower officials are supposed to consume only 疏食水 ‘grain and water.’ *Shuijiang* 水漿 ‘water and broth/soup; liquids’ that *buru yu kou* 不入於口 ‘do not enter the mouth’ describes the most extreme fasting. The *Liji* says when Zengzi mourned for his parents (7/6a-b, Legge I: 133-4), 水漿不入於口者七日 ‘liquids did not enter his mouth for seven days’ (which commentators say violated ritual); thus when a Superior Person mourns, 水漿不入於口者三日杖而后能起 ‘liquids do not enter the mouth for three days, until only able to rise with the aid of a staff.’ According to ritual, fasting should never be extended beyond 72 hours — and even then, rules were interpretable with various loopholes. Although mourners are nominally expected to (56/14a, Legge II: 375) 水漿不入口三日不舉火 ‘not put liquids into the mouth for three days, and not kindle a [cooking] fire’; their neighbors are supposed to provide hot 糜粥 ‘rice gruel’ for nourishment.

VI. The final step is to put Chinese *Liji* ritual fasts into historical and cultural perspectives. Further research is needed to clarify the early developments of Chinese ritual fasting, abstinence, and purification.

While early texts (e.g., *Shijing*, *Yijing*, *Lunyu*) use *zhai* 齊 ‘ritual fasting,’ the *Liji* is the first to record *sanzhai* ‘dissipated’ and *zhizhai* ‘devoted fasting.’ However, this text cannot be accurately dated. “The date of each section and its provenance are subjects of considerable dispute,” writes Riegel (1993: 293), “just as the date and origin of the [*Liji*] as a whole have proved to be controversial throughout Chinese intellectual history.”

Several pre-*Liji* classics mention 72-hour fasts. For instance, the phrase *sanri bushi* 三日不食 ‘not eat for three days’ occurs in the *Yijing* (36 *Mingyi*; quoted in *Zuozhuan* Zhao 5) saying a Superior Person on a journey does not eat for three days; and the *Mengzi* (3B.10) describes Chen Zhongzi 陳仲子 (fl. 4th cent. B.C.E.) who fasted for three days until he could neither see nor hear, only to recover his senses ironically after eating a wormy peach.

Origins of the word *zhaijie* 齋戒 ‘fasting and abstinence’ are a key issue. A hypothetical *zhaijie* etymology could be an early Chinese integration of ten days from different (native and foreign?, ancient and modern?) three and seven day fasting customs of *zhai* 齊 (or *zhizhai*) and *jie* 戒 (or *sanzhai*). The earliest recorded usage is the (c. 300 B.C.E.) *Mengzi* (4B.25) arguing that even wicked people can sacrifice to god if they 齋戒沐浴 ‘fast and bathe.’

The cross-cultural perspectives of Chinese ritual fasts are a concluding topic. Fasting is practically universal among Eastern and Western cultures, and is a venerable means of altering consciousness for spiritual purposes. Bourguignon ethnographically analyzed 488 cultures

and concluded (1974: 241): “religious institutionalization of altered states is very widespread among the societies of mankind, being present in 90% of our worldwide sample of societies.”

Among all the *Liji* descriptions presented, the *Jiyi* passage is most intriguing because it specifies meditating as part of ritual fasting and abstinence. (And it uses cryptic terminology like *ai* 僣 ‘pant; apparently see.’) In reference to the *Jiyi*’s list of ‘lifestyle, jokes, aspirations, pleasures, and fondnesses’ fast-meditations, MacCulloch suggests:

The connexion between fasting and other disciplinary methods, and dreams, visions, or revelations, is well established everywhere. ... The Chinese custom of fasting before a sacrifice to the ancestral spirits may have had the intention of causing communion with them through visions, as the person had at the same time to fill his mind with thoughts of them. (1927: 762)

Did such “thoughts” result in holy visions, fast-induced hallucinations, or wishful reveries? Were these allegedly perceived parental spiritisms due to imagination, pseudoperception, or misperception? Could the *Jiyi* have been describing hallucinatory trance states? Although the vision (1) of parental spirits after three days of fasting can be physiologically explained away as a hallucination, clearly the other phenomena cannot because they were seen and heard when walking in (2), out (3), and from (4) the ancestral temple.

Answering questions about *Liji* ritual fasts is complicated by differences among ancient/modern Chinese/Western psychology, culture, and language. Goodman (1986: 282) psychologically dichotomizes “hallucinations” associated with insanity from “visions” that “can be induced

and terminated ritually.” On the one hand, the English lexicon divides between a false or delusional *hallucination* (< Latin *hallūcināri* < *ālūcināri* ‘to wander in mind/thought; talk idly, prate’) and a supernatural or religious *vision* (< Latin *visiōn-* < *visio* ‘seeing; sight, thing seen’). On the other hand, English-Chinese dictionaries regularly translate both words as *huanjue* 幻覺 ‘hallucination, delusion; vision; illusion, fantasy; phantasm,’ which Chinese contrasts from *huanxiang* 幻想 ‘vision; mirage, illusion; fantasy, fancy; daydream, reverie’ and *huanying* 幻影 ‘vision; unreal image, illusion; phantasm; phantom, ghost.’ Analyzing the sometimes difficult classical language of the *Liji* can be rewarding. For instance, the polysemous etymon for these Chinese words is *huan* 幻 ‘hallucination; vision; illusion, magic; fantasy, phantom; deceit, delusion; bewitchery; illusory, imaginary; unreal, insubstantial; deceptive; constantly changing, changeable.’ The earliest 幻 ‘hallucinate; deceive’ graphs obscurely pictured a 纟 ‘piece of thread’ on a stick, which paleographers believe delineated a shuttle, a magic trick, or a prayer stick.

Owing to the present article’s limited scope of *zhai* ritual fasts in the *Liji*, it concludes with more questions than answers, but they can contribute towards future studies. This ancient Chinese text opens up a window looking back two thousand years and revealing a primal method of spiritualism.

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