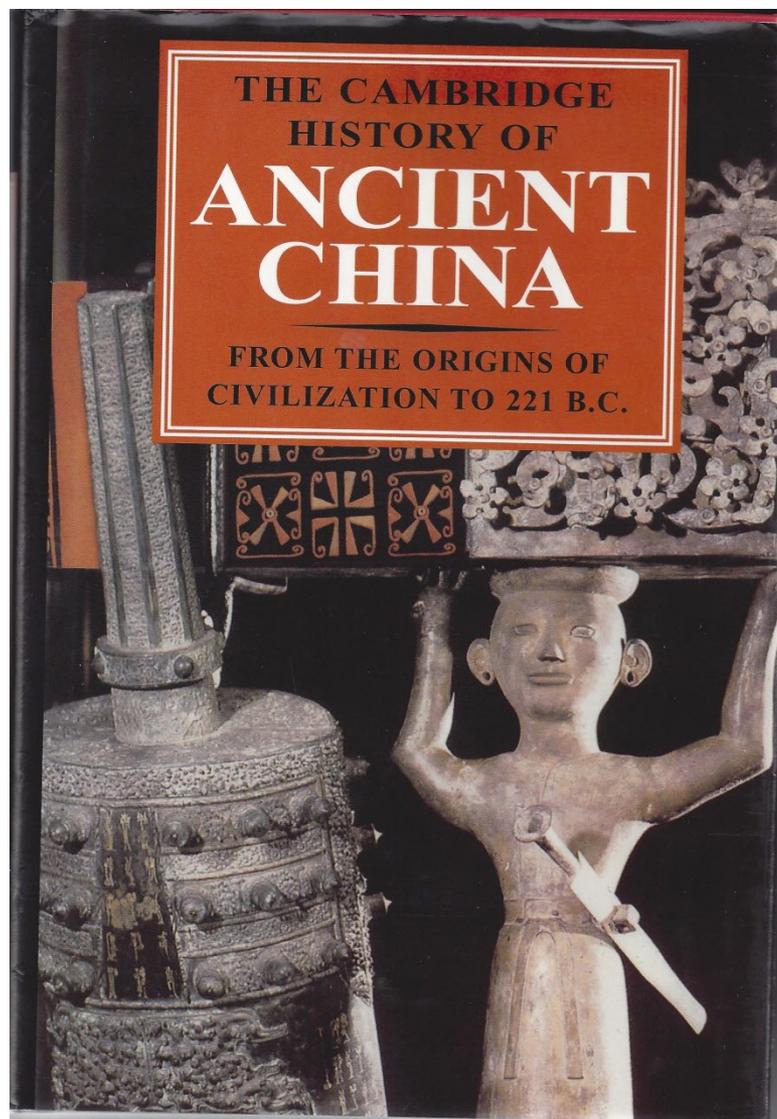


The NEI JING

Giovanni Maciocia
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Loewe M, The Cambridge History of Ancient China, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1999, p. 876.

Before we start:

Throughout the Warring States Period and the Qin and Han dynasty, there was a competition among doctors and shamans. Although the Nei Jing contains a few references to shamans, the Nei Jing is the representative book of medicine and doctors as opposed to shamanism: it is all based on Yin-Yang, Qi and 5 Elements and diseases are caused by external agents and life-style (as opposed to evil spirits).

The Lü Shi Chun Qiu is solidly against shamanism: *“The current age elevates turtle and yarrow divination, prayers and sacrificial offerings. Thus illness and ailment come in ever greater numbers. By analogy it is like the archer who when he fails to hit the target adjusts the target. Thus to purge illness with the poisonous drugs of the shaman-doctors [wu yi 巫 医] – people of antiquity disparaged it because it was inconsequential.”*

By contrast, the Ma Wang Dui texts represent a completely different tradition than that of the Nei Jing: the Ma Wan Dui texts combine exorcisms and herbs some of which possessed magical and exorcistic properties.





Shang dynasty altar set



神

SHEN. Mind, spirit, consciousness, vitality, expression, soul, energy, god, God, psychic, numinous.

示 = 示

Shi “Influx from heaven; auspicious or inauspicious signs by which the will of Heaven is known to mankind.” Altar (for sacrifices), spirit tablet.

示

The two lines at the top are the old form of *Shang* 上 (superior, above, high, hence “Heaven”)

The three vertical lines represent what is hanging from Heaven, i.e. the sun, the moon and the stars, the mutations of which reveal to people transcendent things.

申

Shen = to state, express, explain, to stretch, **extend**, the 9th Earthly Branch

示

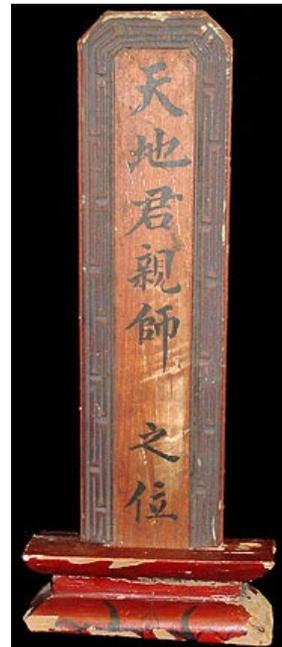
Originally, *Shi* could refer to both an altar (where sacrifices were made) and to a spirit tablet. This goes back to the Shang dynasty (1570-1045 BC).

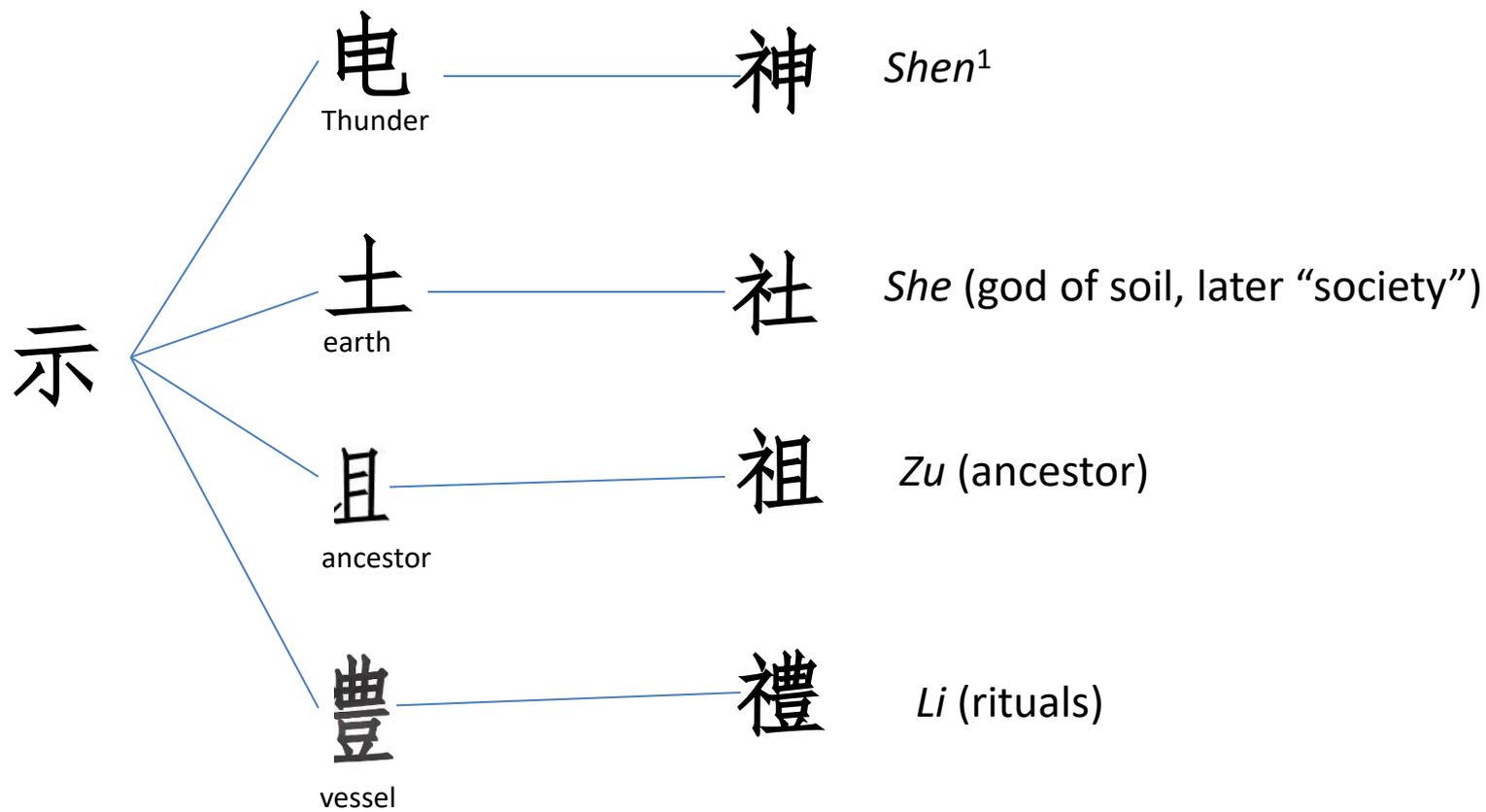
After ceremonies, the spirit of a dead ancestor would return to the spirit tablet. Indeed, the character for “ancestor” (*zong*) depicts a roof over a spirit tablet [宗].



“The great number of characters with the radical shi as their classifier, demonstrated the feelings of reverence and awe that the ancient Chinese had for the world of the unknown, mysterious experiences and the gods and spirits. Only with this reverence and awe could they have produced so many characters related to the gods, sacrificial ceremonies and methods of communicating with the spirits of their dead ancestors.”

Ge Zhao Guang, *An Intellectual History of China*, Brill, Leiden, 1950, p. 106.





1. Please note that *Shen* may also derive from *Shi* plus *shen* 申

Five characteristics of the Ma Wang Dui texts:

- 1) A lot of shamanistic practices, exorcisms, magic.
- 2) 11 channels, not named after organs but after parts of body reached (e.g. arm channel of ear = Triple Burner)
- 3) Only moxibustion, no acupuncture.
- 4) No mention of 5 Elements at all.
- 5) Many references to Qi Gong practices called “guiding and pulling” [*dao yin* 导引].

Harper thinks that moxibustion preceded acupuncture as a channel treatment.



SU WEN CHAPTER 38 ON COUGH

This chapter describes the clinical manifestations of cough according to the 5 Zang and 6 Fu. An interesting aspect of this is that it gives symptoms and signs distinguishing types of cough according to organ: this is nothing but a form of *Bian Zheng* [辨证] which most people say is a modern invention.

Lung cough: cough, breathlessness, wheezing, coughing blood.

Heart cough: cough, chest pain, feeling of obstruction of the throat as if there was a stick, swollen gullet, blocked throat.

Liver cough: cough, hypochondrial pain, difficulty in turning waist, feeling of fullness in flanks.

Spleen cough: cough, ache below right flank, pain shoulders and back, cannot move, violent cough.

Kidney cough: cough, lower backache, coughing of saliva.

Stomach cough: cough, vomiting.

Gall-Bladder cough: cough, vomiting of bile.

Large Intestine cough: cough with release of stools.

Small Intestine cough: cough with release of gas.

Bladder cough: cough with incontinence of urine.

Triple Burner cough: cough with abdominal fullness,
no desire to eat or drink.