

Probability and the Gwōdyèn Dàu/Dv̄ Jīng

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Introduction. Statistics can be useful to text philology. Here is a case in point.

Theory. I proposed in 1990¹ that the first half of the Dàu/Dv̄ Jīng 道德經 text, the so-called Dàu-jīng (DDJ 1-37), grew symmetrically around a DDJ 14 core down to c0300, and that the second half, the Dv̄ Jīng (DDJ 38-81), grew by linear accretion from c0300 to c0249. If that were true, then a text of the DDJ dating between c0300 and c0249 *should lack the highest-numbered chapters*. An empirical test of that hypothesis arose when Tomb #1 at Gwōdyèn 郭店 proved to contain three sets of passages which are part of our DDJ. Details were first made public at a May 1998 conference. The organizers supplied me with the numbers of the DDJ chapters found at Gwōdyèn. They totaled 32 out of 81 DDJ chapters, all within the range DDJ 2-66 inclusive. I submitted a paper in absentia, pointing out that the Gwōdyèn DDJ limits matched the prediction inherent in the 1990 theory, and so confirmed that theory.

Conference. The paper was not circulated at the Conference,² which deadlocked between two other views: (1) the DDJ was a cloud of unorganized oral sayings, or (2) it had the full 81 chapters. The former (favored by the international scholars) readily refutes itself: How did the Gwōdyèn scribe select from the oral cloud *only* what would later figure in our DDJ?³ The latter (favored by the Chinese scholars) is refuted below.

Date. Li Xueqin proposed (Allan **Guodian** p246), and Liu Zuxin agreed (p29), that a cup found in Gwōdyèn 1 identifies the tomb occupant as the Tutor of a Chǔ Heir Apparent. A tutor will most likely be named early in a king's reign. Chǔ Hwái-wáng (r 0326-) predates Bāushān 2 (c0316), which in turn archaeologically predates Gwōdyèn 1.⁴ More probable is Hwái-wáng's successor Chǐng-syāng-wáng (r 0298-).⁵ Assuming the immediate death of the Tutor gives 0298 as the earliest possible date for his interment in Gwōdyèn 1. The *latest* possible date is the 0278 abandonment of the Chǔ capital. A reasonable estimate would be the midpoint of that range: c0288. The texts buried with him will be at least slightly earlier, say c0290.

¹At the Third New England Symposium on Chinese Thought; for later statements of the theory, see Brooks **Prospects** (1994), Brooks **Formation** (based on a 2002 lecture).

²Attention was however called to it; see Allan **Guodian** 239.

³For mixed anthologies, see rather the Gwōdyèn Yǎ Tsúng 語叢 ("Sayings") texts, where (for example) bits of pre- and post-Analects sayings mingle with other material.

⁴For a number of reasons in archaeological parallelism, Xu Shaohua is inclined to put the possible range of dates for Gwōdyèn 1 at c0300/0278 (personal communication, 1998).

⁵So Li Xueqin (Allan **Guodian** 246, with others agreeing); this identification was repeated by Li Xueqin at a 22 Oct 1998 lecture at Dartmouth College, attended by the present author.

