HOLY MOTHERS OF ANCIENT CHINA
A New Approach to the Hsi-wang-mu Problem.*

BY
RICCARDO FRACASSO

Part I. Hsi-wang-mu in pre- and early Han literature.
1.1. Hsi-wang-mu and Hsi-wang-kuo as geographical names.
1.2. Hsi-wang-mu as a sovereign.
1.3. Early Taoist traditions.
1.4. Hsi-wang-mu as a demon.

Part II. The cult of Hsi-mu and Tung-mu in oracle bone inscriptions.
II.1. The inscriptions.
II.2. Critical opinions.

Part III. Some conclusions.

Appendix I. Chinese texts

Very few members of the Chinese pantheon have received (and still receive) the attention paid to Hsi-wang-mu—usually translated as Queen Mother of the West and hereafter abbreviated as HWM—but, in spite of all efforts,¹ many questions are still awaiting an answer. As far as the Han period is concerned, a big step forward was made with the publication of the extensive study included by Michael Loewe in his Ways to Paradise (Loewe (1979), ch. IV); however, much still remains to be said on the origins and early development of the different traditions existing in early literature, thus conveniently summarized by Loewe (op. cit., p. 89):

¹ Archaic pronunciations are from GSR, unless stated otherwise.

Abbreviations and editions of the classical works are listed in the Bibliography; Chinese texts are given in a separate appendix. My warmest remerciements go to J.A. Lefeuvre, who kindly shared his library, his knowledge and so many of his afternoons introducing me into the world of Shang inscriptions; were it not for his friendship, Part II would never have been written. My gratitude goes also to Michael Loewe, Alfredo Cadonna and Mary Heerin for kindly reading through the typescript.

... we hear first of the Queen as a timeless being who has attained the Tao. She is described as a hybrid, semi-human figure, possibly possessing power to control some of the constellations. Soon she is associated with Mount K'un-lun, although she is sometimes said to reside within a cave. Her realm possesses numinous qualities and boasts material pleasures which, together with her own magical powers, are sufficient to attract an earthly ruler to seek meetings or contemplate taking up his abode in her domains. The Queen's powers are such that she can enjoy, or even confer, the gift of deathlessness, and she may be able to disrupt the even operation of the universe."

The aim of this study is to analyze separately all the elements used (and overlooked) by Loewe in building up his highly suggestive, but perhaps too syncretic, portrait of the Queen, and to see which of these elements actually came to coalesce and, if possible, to decide how and when this happened. The study has been divided into three parts.

Part one is a short exposition of the data supplied by Chan-kuo and Western Han sources, organized into four separate paragraphs. Needless to say, this work of "recompilation" is intended not as a mere repetition of well-known data but rather as a necessary step for introducing, and possibly proving, some new theories.

Part two is focused on the problem of the possible identification of the HWM of later times with the Hsi-mu mentioned in oracle-bone inscriptions, a crucial issue usually neglected or covered in a few words, but certainly worth a deeper examination.

Part three consists of a general summary of parts one and two and of some tentative hypotheses and conclusions.

Part I. Hsi-wang-mu in pre- and early Han literature

I.1. Hsi-wang-mu and Hsi-wang-kuo 西王國 as geographical names

In a number of pre-Han and Han sources the name HWM is used to indicate a territory, and is sometimes written Hsi-wang-kuo.

According to Hsin-tzu, XIX, 5–6 (text 1):

"Yao studied under Ch'tn Ch'ou, Shun studied under Wu Ch'eng-chao and Yu studied under [the ruler of] Hsi-wang-kuo."

Even more explicit is a famous passage in Erh-ya, VI, 6r (text 4), where we read:

Sin/Si-en'nu, the Sumerian/Accadian moon goddess.

The last sentence can also be rendered as "Yu studied in the State of the Western King." More or less extensive lists of sovereigns and masters are to be found in several works from Han to Sung times. See, e.g., the list of seventeen sovereigns included in LSCC, IV. iii, 4v–5r (Hsi-wang-mu and Wang-mu are absent) and the other long list in the fifth ch. of the Han Shih wai-chuan 韓詩外傳 by Han Ying 韓嬰 (W. Han) (text 2): "Tzu Hsia said: 'I have heard that Huang-
"Ku-chu ('Square-bamboo'), Pei-hu ('Northern-gate'), Hsi-wang-mu and Jih-hsia ('Sundown'). These are called the Ssu-huang ('The Four Wildernesses')."3

Basing himself on this and further evidence, B. Karlgren was able to conclude that "all the pre-Han sources give the tradition of Si Wang Mu as a far-away western state, and at the same time this state name serves as a designation for its ruler."4 The conclusion is

3 Kuo P'u's comm. adds that "Ku-chu is to the north, Pei-hu is to the south, Hsi-wang-mu is to the west and Jih-hsia is to the east; they are all dark and wild lands, beyond the four ends of the earth" (text 5); the placement of the "Northern Gate" at the very south and of "Sundown" at the very east of the earth looks quite contradictory and Jih-hsia probably is a mistake for jih-shang. Ku-chu was the name of a state in Ch'un-ch'iu times, placed to the north of Ch'i and located by Ch'en P'an in present Ho-pei. See Ch'en P'an (1970), pp. 28v-31r; see also W. Eberhard (1942), pp. 41-43.

4 See LCAC, p. 271. Karlgren also quotes (ib., p. 270) Ta Tai li-ch'i, LXXVI (text 6) saying that: "Ta Tai: Shao hien tells us how Shun had an enormous realm; Shuo-fang and Yu-tu in the north came and submitted to him, in the south he conquered K'iao-ch'i; Si Wang Mu came and presented white (i.e. jade) flutes."
too hasty as Karlgren overlooks the reference to HWM in Chuang-tzu, VI (see infra, I.3.) and considers the whole of the Shan-hai ching as "a product of the Han era, in parts not even of the early Han."\(^5\) What Karlgren adds afterwards is far more interesting:

"There is in fact no reason to conclude from the *mu* "mother" which forms part of the name that ancient tradition made this ruler a lady, a queen; on the contrary the legend about Yu just quoted: that he studied under Si Wang Kuo, (the ruler of) the Si Wang state, just as Yao and Shun had studied under two other sage gentlemen, suggests a male ruler (Yu would not have had a female teacher). I am therefore inclined to believe that the character *meg/meg/mu* is a short form for "acre, farmed field"—if this far-western state was situated (according to the legend) on the border of the "Floating Sands" (the desert, see B below), it would be quite natural to call it 'the Acres, farmed lands (the oasis) of the Western King':\(^6\)

Although not fully proved and insufficient to explain all the occurrences of the name Hsi-wang-mu, Karlgren's theory remains very interesting and could be correct in some instances.

I.2. HWM as a sovereign

The visit paid by King Mu to HWM on the top of Mt. K'ung-lun, the ensuing banquet by the Jasper Pond, the exchange of verses between the two sovereigns, and the return visit (according to some sources) by HWM\(^7\) are a well-known story, and the exposition of
the related texts (such as Mu T’ien-tzu chuan, Chu-shu chi-nien, Shih-chi, Lieh-tzu) recently presented by M. Loewe makes further retelling superfluous.

校訂稿. Taipei, 1976, p. 27. The passage in Ku-zen Chu-shu chi-nien (text 8) is thus translated in Loewe (1979), p. 92: "In the seventeenth year (985 or 946 BC) the king set out on a journey to the west; he reached the heights of K’un-lun and was received by the Queen Mother of the West. The Queen Mother of the West detained him, saying "There are birds...mankind". The Queen Mother of the West came to the king’s court and was received as a visitor in the Chao Palace".

The current text of CSCN (see SPPY ed., ch. II, p. 5r/text 9a) is thus translated by Legge: “In his 17th year, he went on a punishing expedition (cheng 徵) to Mount K’un-lun; and saw the western Wang-moo. That year the chief of Wang-moo came to court, and was lodged in the palace of Ch’aou.” (See Chinese Classics, III, pp. 150-151). Legge’s rendering of cheng as 'to go on a military expedition' is perfectly legitimate and throws a completely different light on the event and on the purpose of the two encounters. On the character cheng—whose meaning is strictly related to military affairs—see S., 70.4, 71.3 and 73.3-4; Li II, 504-5; CWP, II, 21r; GSR, 833 o-q ("* tieng/tsiang/cheng ('to correct') go on a military expedition against (Shi); to punish, attack (Shi); to go, to progress (Shi); levy taxes (Meng)...”).

The Chin-zen Chu-shu chi-nien also records a visit paid by HWM to Shun during the ninth year of his reign (see Wang Kuo-wei (1917), b: 5r/51). The passage (text 10) is similar to that in Ta Tai Li-chi (see above, note 4/text 6) but the presents brought by HWM are different: “In the ninth year Hsi-wang-mu came to court. Hsi-wang-mu came to court presenting white (jade) rings and jade chüeh (i.e. jade rings lacking a small segment and used as girdle pendants)”.

8 Loewe (1979), pp. 92–93. The texts referred to are CSCN (quoted in the preceding note); MTTC, III, 1r-v; Shih-chi, XLIII, 4–5 (MH, V, 9–10) and V, 6 (MH, II, 6ff.); Lieh-tzu, III, 4r-v. The text of MTTC is thus translated by Mathieu (1978), pp. 44–49 (text 11):

“Au jour faste jiazi (287ème), le fils du ciel fut l’hôte de Xiwangmu. Alors, il se saisit d’une tablette d’investiture en jade blanc et d’une autre circulaire et noire pour son entrevue avec Xiwangmu. En signe d’amitié, il lui offrit mille cinq cents pieds de soie tissée de différentes couleurs et quatre mille cinq cents pieds de soie... Xiwangmu salua par deux fois et les reçut... Au jour yichou (288ème), le fils du ciel offrit un banquet à Xiwangmu sur (une berge du) lac Yao. Xiwangmu exécuta pour le fils du ciel un chant en solo, les paroles en étant: “Blanc le nuage dans le ciel/Sortant de derrière les monts/Chemins et routes nous éloignent/Monts et rivières nous séparent,/Je voudrais que point ne mourriez/J’espère que vous nous reviendrez.” Le fils du ciel lui répondit: “Je reviens dans mes terres d’Orient/Gouverner la Chine dans l’harmonie./Le peuple y vit calme et en paix,/De nouveau, je viendrai vous voir,/Mais c’est au bout de trois années,/Que dans vos campagnes nous irons.” Xiwangmu chanta de nouveau une ode pour le fils du ciel un chant en solo, les paroles en étant: “Blanc le nuage dans le ciel/Sortant de derrière les monts/Chemins et routes nous séparent,/Je voudrais que point ne mourriez/J’espère que vous nous reviendrez.” Le fils du ciel lui répondit: “Je reviens dans mes terres d’Orient/Gouverner la Chine dans l’harmonie./Le peuple y vit calme et en paix,/De nouveau, je viendrai vous voir,/Mais c’est au bout de trois années,/Que dans vos campagnes nous irons.” Xiwangmu chanta de nouveau une ode pour le fils du ciel, les vers en étaient: “Venu dans ces terres d’Occident,/Vous êtes demeuré chez nous;/Tigres et léopards abondent, corbeaux et pies ensemble y vivent;/L’honorable décret, j’y veille;/Je pense à vous, divin empereur,/Mathieu’s transl. is unacceptable and I would rather render this obscure verse (我惟帝女) as “I am the woman of Ti 帝 (上帝 Shang-ti)”, i.e. “I am acting on behalf of Ti”—TPYL, 921 quotes the verse as “wei wei wei ni 唯惟惟女” i.e. “It’s (only) me, it’s (only)
The main point in all these texts is that HWM appears as a sovereign living on the top of the western mountains of K’un-lun; as a person capable of improvising a sophisticated dialogue in verses, and whose company is sufficiently charming to make King Mu forget both his return and his royal duties; this last fact, more than the character mu in the name, provides the best clue for guessing HWM’s sex—considered by some scholars to be undetermined (e.g. MH, II, p. 7, note).

It is, of course, possible to regard HWM both as the name of a far-western territory (as done by Karlgren) and, at the same time, as that of its ruler, but it must be noted that whereas the texts mentioned in section I.1. provide more evidence in support of the first possibility, the second interpretation is no doubt the most suitable for the texts in this section.

I.3. Early Taoist traditions

M. Loewe thinks that “the earliest reference to the Queen Mother of the West is probably to be found in the Chuang-tzu.” This reference appears in a long list of those who obtained the Tao in former times and the passage itself deserves to be quoted in extenso to place the reference in its proper context (text 13):

“*The Way has kindness, it has trustworthiness, it has no action, it has no shape; it can be transmitted (caused to be felt) but it cannot be received (grasped); it can be obtained, but it cannot be seen; it has its root, its fundament in itself. When there still were no Heaven and Earth, from primeval times it securely existed. It made the souls of the dead, and the Sovereigns divine, it bore Heaven

a woman (who stays here fulfilling the august commitment received from Ti)”]

/Comment fera le petit peuple?/De nouveau, vous allez nous quitter, les flûtes jouent, les anches vibrent,/Mais mon coeur est triste et blessé,/Seigneur de ce petit peuple,/Je regarde au loin vers le ciel. “Le fils du ciel continua sa route et se hâta d’escalader le mont Yan. Alors, il fit graver un stèle sur une pierre du mont Yan pour y marquer son passage, puis il y planta une sophora. En haut (de la stèle) était inscrit: “Mont de Xiwangmu”.” On this passage see also Dubs (1942), pp. 227–229.

The account given by Lieh-tzu (text 12) is thus rendered by A.C. Graham, The Book of Lieh-tzu, London, 1960, p. 64:

“Then he [King Mu] was the guest of the Western Queen Mother who gave a banquet for him on Jasper Lake. The Western Queen Mother sang for the King, who sang in answer; but the words of his song were melancholy. He looked westward at Mount Yen, where the sun goes down after its daily journey of ten thousand miles. Then he sighed and said: “Alas! I, who am King, have neglected virtue for pleasure. Will not future generations look back and blame me for my errors?”
and Earth; it was before the great extreme, but it was not high, it was below the six extreme points, but it was not deep; it was before the birth of Heaven and Earth but it was not more longeval than the high antiquity, but it was not old.* Hsi-wei obtained it and thereby led Heaven and Earth. Fu Hsi obtained it and could thereby unite himself with the 'mother of the (primordial) ch'i. The Polar Star obtained it and was thereby able to keep its place since highest antiquity. The sun and the moon obtained it and thereby never stopped since highest antiquity. Ku-an Pi obtained it and thereby gained access to the Ku'un-lun mountains. Feng I obtained it and could thereby travel in the big river. Chien Wu obtained it and thereby dwelt on 'the great mountain' (t'ai-shan). Huang-ti obtained it and thereby ascended to the cloudy sky. Chuan Hsti obtained it and thereby dwelt in the Mysterious Palace (hsuan-kung). Yu Chi'ang obtained it and established himself at the Northern Pole. Hsi-wang-mu obtained it and took up her seat in Shao-kuang; nobody knows her beginning, nobody knows her end. P'eng-tsu obtained it and lived from the time of the Lord of Yu (i.e. Shun) down to the time of the five po (those of Hsia, Shang and Chou). Fu Yu'e obtained it and thereby became minister of Wu-ting ruling over all the T'ien-hsia; he then ascended to the eastern part of the Milky Way where he rides the constellations Chi and Wei (Sagittarius and Scorpion) and is similar to the stars."9

A detailed examination of this long passage would quite easily become an article in itself and cannot be undertaken here. It should be noted, however, that the position assigned to HWM appears to have been fairly important (at least for the author of the passage), and this is also emphasized by the fact that—together with P'eng-tsu and Fu Yu'e—HWM is dealt with in more than the two parallel lines, that are allotted to all those preceding her in the list. The timelessness attributed to the Queen Mother is intimately related to the theme of immortality10—more and more elaborated in later Taoist literature—but remains here a personal endowment of the goddess. A first direct allusion to HWM as a bestower of im-

9 Cf. Loewe (1979), p. 89; Chuang-tzu (SPTK), VI, 2a; Ma Hsu-lun 马叙倫, Chuang-tzu i-cheng 莊子義證, repr. Taipei, 1970, pp. 196–201; Kuo Ch'ing-fan 郭慶藩 (Ch'ing), Chuang-tzu chi-shih 莊子集釋, Taipei, Mu-t'o, 1982, pp. 246–251. The first part of the passage (between the two asterisks) is quoted from B. Karl-gren, "Notes on Lao-tse", BMFEA, XLVII (1975), p. 15; the rest is my personal translation.

mortality is only to be found in Western Han times, viz. in *Huai-nan tzu*, VI, 16v (text 15):

“We may compare I’s request for the drug of deathlessness from the Queen Mother of he West and Heng O’s theft and flight with it to the moon”. (tr. M. Loewe)

Another passage in the *Huai-nan tzu* (VI, 13r), where HWM is referred to as *Hsi-lao* 西老 (‘the old person in the west’) and as being capable of affecting the cosmic order (text 16), is also of great significance:

“(When) Hsi-lao breaks her sheng12 the ‘Divine Yellow’ (i.e. Huang-ti) sighs; flying birds let their wings fall and walking beasts start to walk lame; mountains stop producing valuable timber and ponds and marshes are devoided of fresh water; foxes draw near to their dens and horses and oxen are let free and neglected; no crops are planted in the fields and there is no so-fan grass (kind of sedge used for making raincoats) along the roads...”13

Taoist traditions came to be absolutely predominant in Eastern and post-Han times, when HWM rose to the highest position of the pantheon as queen of the immortals of the Western Paradise, but this is too long and too late a chapter of her story to be dealt with here.14 It seems sufficiently clear, however, and this will suffice for the present, that no sure link—besides the name *Hsiwang-mu*—exists between a) the traditions quoted in this paragraph and b) the texts quoted in sections I.1 and I.2, and that any association between a) and b) remains for the most part speculative.

I.4. *HWM as a demon*

I.4.1. Evidence in the SHC

Two famous passages in the SHC stand quite apart from the materials listed above, being the only ones where HWM exhibits monstrous features and is described as an evil demon. The first

---

12 On this peculiar headdress see Loewe (1979), pp. 103-105. For different translations of the term sheng see note 10 above.
13 See Loewe (1979), p. 95; Dubs (1942), p. 232. Following the Kuang-yün 廣韻, Sun I-jang 孫詮譯 (quoted in Liu Wen-tien’s comm.) reads lao 老 as equivalent to 爺, which is read mu and is equivalent to mu 爺 and mu 爺; see K‘ang-hsi tzu-tien, sub voce 爺.
passage is in book II (Book of the Western Mountains), 19r\textsuperscript{15} (text 17):

"Three hundred and fifty li further west, the place where the Queen Mother of the West resides is termed the "Mountains of Jade". The form of the Queen Mother of the West is human, with the tail of a leopard and the teeth of a tiger. She is skilled at whistling; and over her dishevelled hair she wears the sheng. It is she who commands the li and wu-ts'an of the heavens." (tr. M. Loewe).

The interpretation of the terms T'ien chih li 天之厲 and wu-ts'an 五殞 is extremely controversial. Kuo P'u 郭璞 interprets li as 'calamity' and wu-ts'an as "the spirits of those who died under the five types of punishments" (text 17), but Hao I-hsing 郝懿行 interprets both of them as names of stars and constellations,\textsuperscript{16} and Loewe is much interested in his view (he calls it 'of considerable importance').\textsuperscript{17} Maspero regards both li and wu-ts'an as evil influences and called HWM "deesse des épidémies",\textsuperscript{18} but Karlgren more cautiously comments:

\textsuperscript{15} See also SHCKC, II, 29r–v; SHCHCC, p. 65; Yuan K'o (1980), pp. 50–51.
\textsuperscript{16} As noted by Mathieu (1983), p. 102, note 1: "li est en effet le nom de la lune dans la mansion mou 夔; quant à wu can, ce terme apparaît dans le Shiji (MH, t. III, p. 390) où il désigne une étoile qui apparaît à l'est et la région qui lui correspond est l'Est, alors que Xiwangmu réside à l'Ouest...". Mathieu (ibid.) also adds "Guo n'indique pas exactement ce que sont ces cinq nuisances can... Ce passage sur Xiwangmu est assez vraisemblablement interposé, selon moi. Il démontre en tout cas l'emprise idéologique du système dit des cinq éléments dans la pensée de l'auteur de cette dernière phrase." I do not agree with any of these last three statements: a) Kuo P'u explicitly states that the five ts'an are the ch'i of people died under the five punishments (i.e. the wu-hsing 五刑; see Chou-li, XXXVI, 1r/Biot (1851), vol. III, p. 354: "... marque noire sur le visage... amputation du nez... réclusion dans le palais... amputation des pieds... exécution capitale"); b) apart from the number five I can see no relationship between the passage in the SHC and the wu-hsing system (五行); c) on the possible interpolation of the passage see infra, note 27.
\textsuperscript{17} Loewe (1979), p. 90. Loewe also writes that Hao's opinion is accepted also by Karlgren and Kominami, but as far as Karlgren is concerned he simply says that "Ho is right in stating that Si Wang Mu has some connection with the heavenly bodies" and seems to refer to the three-legged raven living on the sun (parallelled with the three birds said to gather food for HWM; see infra). With regard to li and wu-ts'an Karlgren writes: "Wu ts'an, sure enough, is a star mentioned in Shiki: T'ien kuan shu. But when Ho would identify Li with Mao 麩 (basing himself on a gloss by Cheng Huan) he is less convincing." On the importance of the astronomical interpretation see Loewe (1979), pp. 112ff.
\textsuperscript{18} Maspero (1924), p. 35 and 88–89; see also H. Maspero, "The Mythology of Modern China", (tr. by F.A. Kierman Jr.), in H. Maspero, Taoism and Chinese Religion, Amherst, Un. of Mass. Press, 1981 (or. publ. in Mythologie asiatique illustreé, Libr. de France, 1928), p. 195: "Hsi-wang-mu... is a very ancient divinity: she was originally the goddess of epidemics, living to the west of the world and commanding the demons of pestilence. From the Han period on, she became
“In fact, \( li \) (sometimes for \( j \)) serves in this sense (e.g. in \( Li: T' an \ kung \)), but the character has many other meanings, and its sense here is very uncertain; it can mean ‘ugly, cruel, noxious, demon’, and it is here combined with \( ts' an \) which means ‘cruel, noxious, to hurt’. It would be more reasonable to think that Si Wang Mu directed the ‘cruel ones (demons) of Heaven’ and the ‘five noxious ones’, i.e. on the whole the malignant Spirits.”

H.H. Dubs first translated the sentence as, “She has charge of Heaven’s calamities upon the five [types of] crimes” but later on changed his translation into “She has charge of Heaven’s evil spirits and [the comet]’ Destruction by Half” , thus going back to an astronomically based interpretation.

In his translation of the SHC, Mathieu renders the sentence as follows: “C’est elle qui prédie aux calamités du ciel et aux cinq nuisances”.

A general agreement on this troublesome question is still out of reach, but it is, in any case, evident that both \( li \) and \( wu-ts'an \) have evil connotations and that it is quite safe to render \( li \) as ‘epidemics’. The importance of this point will be shown presently.

A second noteworthy passage is in SHC, XVI (\textit{Book of the Western Great Wilderness}), 5v–6v (text 18):

“South of the Western Sea, on the shore of the Flowing Sands, past the Red River and before the Black River there is a huge mountain called ‘the heights of K’un-lun’. There is a \textit{shen} (there are \textit{shen}) there with human face, the body of a tiger, striped and with tail, uniformly white. Below there are the abysses of the Weak

the goddess who protects from epidemics and cures them.” See also H. Maspero, \textit{Le Taoisme, (Mélanges Posthumes . . . , vol. II)}, Paris, 1950, p. 127 (p. 355 in Kierman’s tr.).

19 See LCAC, p. 272. On the character \( *liad/\text{liäi} \) see GSR, 340a, where no less than fifteen meanings are indicated; among the most interesting are ‘oppressive, cruel, evil’ (Shih-ching), ‘dangerous’ (I-ching), ‘ugly’ (Chuang-tzu), ‘demon’ (Tso-chuan), ‘epidemic’ (Shu-ching); in Li-chi, III, 9r (SPPY ed.) it stands for \( *li/\text{liad}/\text{liäi} \) (GSR, 340d: “epidemic, calamity (Tso); leper (Li); destroy (Kuan)”); the original meaning of \( li \) was ‘whetstone/to polish’ as found in Shih-ching, Tso-chuan and SW, IX/2, 19v. On the character \( ts'an \) see GSR, 155c (* \text{dz'an}/ \text{dz'an}/ts'an \) where the following meanings are given: ‘kill’ (Chouli), ‘cruel’ (Shih-ching), ‘damage/hurt’ (Chao-kuo ts'e), ‘oppress’ (Meng-tzu), ‘fragment/remainder’ (LSGC). The SW, IV/2, 12r explains as ‘Thief/criminal’ (賊也) and this is probably the origin of Kuo’s explanation.


Waters that encircle the mountain. Without, there is the mountain ‘of the flaming fire’. When any object is thrown therein it is immediately consumed by fire. There is a human-like being wearing a sheng on the head and having the teeth of a tiger and the tail of a leopard. [This being] lives in a cave and is named Hsi-wang-mu. All the ‘ten-thousand creatures’ (wan-wu) can be found on this mountain.” (tr. M. Loewe).23

The two passages quoted above are in contrast to a third one: in the SHC (book XII, “Book [of the Countries] within the Northern Sea”, Ir) HWM is always described without any terrifying or evil feature (text 19):

“The Queen Mother of the West wears the sheng, leaning on a stool. To the south there are the three green birds, who collect food for the Queen Mother of the West, north of the wastes of K’un-lun.” (tr. M. Loewe).24

23 Cf. Loewe (1979), p. 91. See also SHCKC, XVI, 9r–10v; SHCHCC, p. 132; Yuan K’o (1980), pp. 407–9; Mathieu (1983), pp. 587–8. As can be noticed HWM is not placed on Mt. K’un-lun but on the neighbouring Yen-shan (Mt. of the Flaming Fire).

24 Cf. Loewe (1979), p. 90. See also SHCKC, XII, 1v; SHCHCC, p. 116; Yuan K’o (1980), pp. 306–7; Mathieu (1983), pp. 481–2. Wang-mu or, with a slight textual variation, Hsi-wang-mu is also the name of a mountain mentioned is SHC, XVI, 3r (SHCKC, XVI, 5r; SHCHCC, p. 131; Yuan K’o (1980), p. 397; Mathieu (1983), p. 575), that Loewe (1979), pp. 91–2 identifies with the Land of Fertility (Wo chih kuo), described immediately after (SHC, XVI, 3r–v; SHCKC, XVI, 5r–6r; SHCHCC, p. 131; Yuan K’o (1980), 397–9; Mathieu (1983), pp. 375–7; Fracasso (1981), p. 203), but his identification is doubtful. The passage runs as follows (text 20):

“On the west there are Mount Wang-mu, Mount Ho and Mount Hai (inverting the first two characters the sentence is “There are the mountain of HWM, mount Ho and Mount Hai”). There is the State of Fertility and the Wo people dwelling in the plain of Wo (‘of Fertility’). The eggs of the phoenix are their food and sweet dew is their drink. Everything they desire (to taste) is fully found in their taste [i.e. “eggs and dew taste as whatever they want them to taste like’”]. Moreover, there are sweet flowers, sweet kan trees, white willows, shih-jou [animal resembling a bovine liver with two eyes and whose meat regenerates itself if cut down (comm. of Kuo P’u)], the three sorts of dappled horses, precious stones of the hsiian, wei, yao and pi varieties, white trees, lang-kan stones, white and green cinnabar and plenty of silver and iron. Luan-birds and phoenixes spontaneously sing and phoenixes spontaneously dance. There are the hundred sorts of quadrupeds gathering together in this land. This is what is called the land of Wo (‘of Fertility’). There are three green birds with red heads, and black eyes. One is called Big Li, the second is called Small Li, the third is called Ch’ing-niao (‘Green Bird’).”

As noticed by Mathieu (1983), p. 575, note 1, the inversion of the first two characters of the passage (i.e. hsi yu : yu hsi) proposed by Hao I-hsing on the basis of a quotation in the TPYL, ch. 928 (see also the Tao-tsang ed. of the SHC) is certainly plausible but not necessary, for Wang-mu is sometimes a short form for Hsi-wang-mu. The three birds mentioned at the end are identified by Kuo P’u with those serving as food gatherers for HWM in book XII, but the text, if we accept Kuo’s hypothesis, looks somewhat disarranged, and it would perhaps be better to move
These three passages place HWM in the western regions (north-western in the case of book XII), but the abode of the deity is, so to speak, drifting further westwards, moving through the textual layers of the SHC from the central mountains to the lands within, and then onwards to those without, the Western Sea.\textsuperscript{25}

A highly controversial issue is the dating and chronological sequence of the three passages (with special reference to that in book XVI), each of which belongs to one of the three main textual layers that build up the present editions of the SHC. Loewe places the date of books I-V (also separately known as \textit{Wu-tsang shan-ching} 五藏山經) somewhere within the Chankuo period, that of books VI-XIII at some time in Western Han times (the passage in book XII is placed ‘before 6 BC’), and that of books XIV-XVIII around the III/IV century AD.\textsuperscript{26} Although I am in general agreement with him, I have some doubts about the date of the passage in book XVI, regarded by Loewe as an addition made by Kuo P’u at the time of his rearrangement of the work (first quarter of the IV century AD), but regarded by Dubs as containing “quite ancient material”, by Yuan K’o as belonging to the earliest part of the SHC (IV century BC), and by Mathieu as being anterior to the passage in book II.\textsuperscript{27}

___

the description of the birds to before that of the Land of Wo. Moreover, the simple fact that the three mountains in the beginning, and the Land of Wo are mentioned one after the other, is not enough to equal the Mt. of Wang-mu to the Land of Wo, not to mention the fact that a full description of HWM and of her/its dwelling place (i.e. a cave)—without any mention of material delights—is given only three pages later.

\textsuperscript{25} For a visualization of the world conception expressed in the SHC see the map in Fracasso (1983), fig. 1.


\textsuperscript{27} Cf. Dubs (1942), p. 226; on Yuan K’o’s opinions see infra, note 28. Mathieu (1983), p. 482, note, writes:

“Il est curieux de constater que les descriptions qu’en donne successivement le SHJ sont toutes plus complètes que celle que nous révèle le grand poète des Han [: Ssu-ma Hsiang-ju, see text 14]. On peut penser que cet auteur aurait facilement incorporé à son poème des fioritures littéraires s’il les avait connues, or il n’en est rien. On est donc amené à conclure que les ch. 12 et 16 qui traitent de Xiwang-mu sont postérieurs aux environs de −125 et que le passage de 2–23b (SPPY ed.: 2, 19a) est une interpolation basée sur les leçons de ces chapitres 12 et 16. Car paraodoxalement, c’est le passage du texte de 2–23b qui est le plus complet, \textit{ergo} le plus tardif... Ce passage de 2–23b tient peu compte de ces lignes de 12–1a... ce qui prouve que l’interpolation du ch. 2 est de peu postérieure au ch. 16, mais qu’elle l’est notablement par rapport au ch. 12 considéré comme ‘dépassé’ donc peu plagiable.” (Cf. also ib., p. 588, n. 1.).
There is at the moment no way to settle the question, but it is, to my mind, clear that the passages in books II and XVI are closely related and seem to represent a separate tradition, different from that referred to in book XII, and from all the texts listed above—a tradition in which HWM was a terrifying demon associated with calamities, evil influences and possibly epidemics and traceable as far back as the III or IV century BC.  

I.4.2. Some possible parallels

When looking back at all the texts quoted above, one will easily realize that the legends and traditions on HWM which were current in China during the last four centuries BC were far from being uniform and that the two accounts in SHC, II, 19r and SHC, XVI, 6r stand apart and cannot be easily fitted into any kind of

---

**Note 28** Revising a previous theory by Meng Wen-t'ung (see *infra*, note 44), Yuan K'o has recently upset what can be called the 'official' chronology (as well as all his own previous theories) by now regarding the last five books of the SHC as the earliest ones (Yuan places their date of composition in the first half of the Warring States period, i.e. in the V/IV c. B.C.). The evidence adduced by Yuan, such as the absence of Ch'in and Han geographical names from books XIV-XVIII, is inconclusive but very interesting and deserves careful examination; if proved to be correct, it would probably help Mathieu in substantiating his theory about the derivation of II, 19r from XVI, 6r. This evolution of Yuan's ideas—after some thirty years—is, in any case, useful as it helps to demonstrate the extreme uncertainty of all the theories formulated up to now about the SHC. See Yuan K'o, *Shan-hai ching hsieh-tso ti shih-chi p'en-mu k'ao 山海經考證時地及篇目考*, (1978), in *Shen-hua lun-wen chi 神話論文集*, Shanghai, 1982, pp. 10–20 (the author also regards books I–V as composed in the IV/III c. B.C. and books VI–XIII as Western Han products).
comprehensive evolutionary sequence which tries to include all the extant materials.\textsuperscript{29} Under such conditions it would perhaps seem more reasonable—instead of further forcing our evidence—to start

\textsuperscript{29} See f.e. Hst\u{u}an Chu (Mao Tun), (1928), pp. 26–31. His evolutive sequence is thus conceived:

\begin{itemize}
  \item[a)] High antiquity (?): HWM is a monstrous, terrific and evil demon (SHC, II and XVI);
  \item[b)] Warring States period: HWM becomes the name of a western sovereign (MTTC);
  \item[c)] Western Han period: HWM becomes a benevolent deity having the power of bestowing the drug of immortality (HNT, VI, 16v);
  \item[d)] Eastern Han period: HWM is a Taoist goddess often associated with emperor Wu; the herbal drug of immortality becomes the famous peaches that ripen every 3000 (or every 5000) years (on emp. Wu and HWM see K.M. Schipper, \textit{L'Empereur Wu des Han dans la l\'egende taoiste des Han. Wou-ti nei-ichouan}, Paris, EFEQ, 1965);
  \item[e)] Wei/Chin period: HWM definitely becomes a young and beautiful woman ruling over the immortals on mt. K'\textsuperscript{u}-lun.
\end{itemize}

Placing the accounts in the SHC in an undetermined period of 'high antiquity', simply because of HWM's monstrousy is, of course, unacceptable from any point of view (Mao Tun also overlooks the passage in \textit{Chuang-tzu}). A different sort of possible evolution is suggested by Hervouet (1964), p. 308 ('(HWM) \text{\textit{etait a l}}\text{'origine un territoire, puis le nom du roi de ce territoire, \ldots\ devenu sous les Han un dieu-démon du sexe feminin . . .}}') and by Chavannes:

\begin{quote}
"Je tiens HWM pour être à l'origine le nom d'une tribu barbare de l'Ouest" (MH, V, 482); "A une époque plus tardive, le nom de HWM ne fut plus compris que comme une simple transcription phonétique d'un mot étranger; on interpréta chacun des caractères qui le composent et on en fit 'la mère reine d'Occident' \ldots" (MH, II, p. 8, note); "\ldots dès l'époque des Han, HWM était devenue une divinité du sexe féminin qui présidait à l'Occident; nous en avons la preuve dans les miroirs des Han . . . où la HWM 'mère reine d'Occident' est soit représentée, soit mentionnée, en compagnie du Tung-wang-fu 'père roi d'Orient'." (MH, IV, p. 9–p. 10, note).
\end{quote}

Dubs (1942), p. 234 traces HWM's evolution in these terms: "This Mother Queen is delineated as a very ancient divinity, living in the far west on a mountain. She was a person who sends calamities, thereby punishing the wicked. We may speculate that she was originally similar to the Ainu "aunt of the marshes", who sends disasters—a malevolent being, responsible for calamities, called "a mother" by euphemism. Her moral character may have only been acquired in the last half millennium B.C., when the Chinese moralized their gods. By Han times, however, any malevolent character she may have had was forgotten. She had become an immortal goddess, kindly disposed to mankind, who could make her favourites immortal and give them a life of eternal happiness in her palace on top of the K'un-lun Mountains in the far west. . . ."

For Maspero's opinion see above, note 18. Mathieu's theories will be discussed in part III (note 74).
beating some new tracks, e.g. by regarding some of the evidence in the SHC as the remnants of a different corpus of traditions and then trying to explain these differences not only in terms of cultural and literary evolution, but also in terms of different cultural and geographical origins.30

If one looks for a western-originated, hybrid (and properly tiger-or leopard-like), ferocious goddess—possibly associated with ill-omened events and epidemics—Tibet and its pre-Buddhist pantheon prove to be an extremely fruitful field of enquiry.31 One of the most impressive deities in this pantheon is no doubt the goddess Kha la me 'bar ma, thus described by the late René de Nebesky-Wojkowitz (my italics):

"... Her limbs are said to be extremely thin, but her belly is 'big like a pond'. Her body is white, her eyes are red, the hair is bristled, and in her widely gaping mouth, from which a mist of illnesses and epidemics issues, her sharp teeth are visible. She is accompanied by the "masters of illnesses" (nad bdag) and the "masters of epidemics" (rims bdag)."

Other examples of tiger-related and/or epidemic-related deities can be easily found as, for instance, in the case of the ma-mo goddesses—usually depicted as "ugly and ferocious female figures of a black colour, half-naked, with emaciated breasts and tangled hair" and armed with a sack full of diseases—or of the klu 'brog (mo) queens, one of which is described as having the head of "a cross-breed between a tiger and a leopard."34

With the exception of the sheng headdress (possibly a Han addition), all the features attributed to HWM in the SHC are also found in these Tibetan descriptions, and the fact is certainly worth noticing. Contacts between Tibetans and Chinese have been numer-

30 The idea seems to be partly shared by Mathieu (1983), pp. 100–101, n. 4, who regards the passage in SHC, II, 19r as "la description d'une chamane en transe" and adds: "Cette question sera étudiée ailleurs, dans un développement consacré aux prodromes du chamanisme altaïen. Son nom même est typique de la nomenclature spirituelle mongole: comparer avec la 'mère-reine du foyer' (ralayiqan åkâ)."

31 As noted by Eberhard (1942), Tibet can be extremely interesting also for non-religious evidence, as in the case of matriarchal clans, whose existence can help to explain the appearance of HWM as a sovereign in the texts of part I. 2. On Eberhard's opinions see infra, note 58.


34 See Nebesky-Wojkowitz (1977), p. 303; see also the five Nad kyi bu mo spun Inga (ib., p. 307) and the picture of the sa bdag (class of malevolent deities held responsible for several diseases) rGyal po'i nor bsrgun se byi, that has the head of a tiger and the tail of a leopard (ib., p. 295, fig. 3).
ous since the highest antiquity and the conditions for the migration of mythico-religious belief from Tibet into China certainly existed at different periods, but when thinking about this possibility one is also faced by an enormous gap of some ten centuries, stretching from the late Chan-kuo period—when the earliest parts of the SHC were probably compiled—and the appearance of the first written documents in Tibet (ca. VII century AD). Even if it is conceivable and legitimate to push the oral traditions relating to Bon deities back some centuries, one will never be able to go beyond mere speculation.

Things would be easier in terms of temporal gap, if we adopted Mathieu’s theory about SHC, II, 19r having been interpolated after SHC, XVI, 6r, and if we choose to attribute SHC, XVI to Kuo P’u (276–324 AD), but in such a case no sure evidence can be adduced to prove the date of composition of the first passage and the date of the subsequent interpolation.

To attempt any conclusion on such grounds would be too risky, and it must simply be hoped that more evidence will become available in the future. For the time being, clues about a possible western derivation of our particular variant of the HWM theme can be gathered by paying attention to the ancient cultures of Szechwan, a region that, because of its strategic position, could have easily acted as a bridge between the western regions and China proper, (especially with the state of Ch’u 楚, regarded by a number of scholars as the place of composition of the SHC).

As stated by Chang Kwang-chih, Szechwan was occupied in the Chan-kuo period by three main groups of metal cultures whose location and main features can be summed up as follows:

a) A culture centered in eastern and central Szechwan, with main sites in the Chia-ling chiang valley, i.e. an area roughly corresponding with the state of Pa 巴, whose inhabitants were intimately related—both racially and culturally—with the people of Ch’u. Of particular significance in this cultural area is the

---

38 The people of Pa were also known as Pa I or as Pa Man (巴族·巴蠻) and were linguistically associated with the Miao-Yao group; see Ch’en P’an (1969) vol. III, p. 218v and Pulleyblank (1983), p. 427. The clan affiliation of the ruling clan of Pa is unclear, but we know that a branch of the Chi 姜 clan was enfeoffed in Pa with the title of baron (tsu) by king Wu of the Chou after defeating the Shang; these new feudatories probably subdued the original population (whose
HOLY MOTHERS OF ANCIENT CHINA

The dominant role played by the tiger both in art—where it was the prevalent motif in decorations—and in mythico-religious beliefs and related cults. The people of Pa in fact, traced their origins back to a were-tiger ancestor, that was worshipped both as ancestor of the ruling clan and as mountain-god, and whose cult consisted of human sacrifices and blood-offerings.

The main branch was named Ying (嬴) that traced its ancestry back to T’ai Hao 太皞 (Fu Hsi) according to SHC, XVIII, 4r (Yuan K’o (1980), pp. 453–4), or also to Kao Yang 高陽 (Ti K’u 帝嚳) and Huang-ti; see Ch’en P’an (1969), pp. 218v–220r. On the culture of Pa see Eberhard’s monograph in Eberhard (1942), pp. 321–391.

An interesting and well-known legend on the origin of these cults is in HHS, LXXXVI, 8v–9v (1014–1015) (text 21):

"The Man people of the Pa and Nan prefectures were originally divided into five clans, named Pa-shih, Fan-shih, Shen-shih, Hsiang-shih and Cheng-shih, all originated on Mt. Wu-lo-chung-li. On this mountain there were a red and a black cave and all the sons of the Pa group were born in the red cave, whereas those of the other four groups were born in the black one. Having no chief, they collectively paid respect to the spiritual beings and then threw a sword into one of the stone caves, agreeing that the one of them who could get it back would be made their chief. Wu Hsiang, a member of the Pa group was the only one to succeed and everybody had words of praise [for him]. After this, it was ordered to everyone to build a clay-boat, agreeing that the one who could float in it would have become their chief. Again only Wu Hsiang remained afloat, whereas all the others sank down. He was therefore jointly named chief, with the name of Prince Lin. He then re-entered his clay-boat and sailed from the river I to Yen-yang. A goddess who dwelt in the Salty River (Yen shui) spoke to Prince Lin saying: “This land is vast and produces salt and fishes; I hope we will keep on living together [in peace].” Prince Lin did not agree. At sunset the goddess hastily looked for a shelter and at dawn changed herself into an insect and flew high leading all the insects [living there], covering the sunlight and bringing darkness over sky and earth. For more than ten days Prince Lin waited for an opportunity and finally shot her down. After that, Prince Lin ruled over the town of the I people and all the four clans served him. When he died his soul (ling-hun) became a white tiger. The people of Pa believe that the tiger drinks human blood and consequently offer her human sacrifices."

Other versions of this legend taken from Shih-pen 世本, Ching-chou t’u 荊州圖 and Lu-i chi 錄異記 are quoted in the comm. by Li Hsien and Wang Hsien-ch’ien. The story appears also—with some variants and additions—in the Shui-ching chu, ch. 37 (see Cheng Te-k’un, Shui-ching chu ku-shih ch’ao 水經注古事編, Taipei: I-wen, 1974, p. 188). For tiger cults and on the legend of Prince Lin see also Eberhard (1942), pp. 344–350. The descendants of Lin were also ‘tigranthropes’ (i.e. had the power of changing themselves into tigers) according to a passage in the Sou-shen chi 搜神記, ch. XII (quoted in TPYL, 892 and T’ai-p’ing kuang-chi, 426; translated by De Groot, The Religious System of China, vol. IV, p. 168). See also Pulleyblank (1983), pp. 426–7.
b) A culture centered in central-western Szechwan (Ch’eng-tu 成都 area), roughly corresponding with the state of Shu 蜀. Though exhibiting some distinctive features, both a. and b. (i.e. Pa and Shu) seem to have been part of a single cultural tradition.\footnote{On the state of Shu see Ch’en P’an (1970), 17r–23v. A territory named Shu 蜀 appears on oracle bone inscriptions and has been located in south-eastern Shan-hsi by Shima (1958), pp. 378–9 and by Ch’en Meng-chia (1956), pp. 295–6, though at different places (Shima indicates the district of Ho-chin 河津 but Ch’en prefers the district of Hsin-chiang 新绛; both are near the eastward bend of the Yellow River); see also S. 106.4; Li, XIII, 3911–3912. As noted by Pulleyblank (1983), p. 422, there is no way to connect the two names (Shu was also a place name in Shantung during the Ch’un-ch’iu period) but the possibility of a southward migration of Tibeto-Burmans between Shang and Eastern Chou times is plausible. With regard to the name Pa, no sure identification with bone graphs is possible at the moment.}

c) A culture localized in westernmost Szechwan, in “the region that begins to climb uphill towards the Tibetan plateau”, with its main sites at Li-fan 理番 (slab-tombs) and at Kan-tzu 甘孜. Influences from China proper (from Eastern Chou times to the Western Han period) are discernible together with Kansu and Ordos bronze features. The finding of glass beads also suggests the possibility of indirect contacts with Western Asia via the steppe nomads, and many decorative motifs and implement types are shared with the Tien and Dongson cultures of Yunnan.\footnote{Chang Kwang-chih (1977) pp. 450–1; KKHP, 1973/2, pp. 41–59.}

On the basis of current evidence, Chang Kwang-chih concludes that “it is evident that these three groups of Warring States period cultures in Szechwan represent two principal cultural traditions”, but also that the east/west subdivision was not clearly demarcated and that “Szechwan civilization, as a whole, shared with both the Ch’u and the Tien many stylistic characteristics”.\footnote{Chang Kwang-chih (1977), p. 453.}

Given such cultural and geographical conditions, and considering that the influences between central China, Ch’u and Szechwan were certainly reciprocal, the hypothesis that a Tibetan or (to be less specific) a western belief “migrated” into Chinese literature via Shu, Pa\footnote{Meng Wen-t’ung (1962) has tried to demonstrate that the SHC was a product of the cultures of Shu and Pa, but his evidence is mostly geographical and, in general, extremely unconvincing (a detailed criticism is of course impossible here). The A. places the date of composition of the SHC before the IV c. B.C. and divides the text into three parts:} and Ch’u (i.e. along the Yangtze Chiang)
sounds plausible and deserves further examination in the future.

Part II. The cult of Hsi-mu (Western Mother) and Tung-mu (Eastern Mother) in oracle bone inscriptions

"The identity of Tung-mu and Hsi-mu is unknown, but they are possibly part of the mythology of the Yin people. Both SHC and MTTC refer to HWM, whose abode is on mt. K'un-lun in the western lands."

Thus wrote Ch'en Meng-chia in a famous article published in 1936, and since then these two—not necessarily related—sentences have been interpreted by several persons as a statement of identity between Hsi-mu and HWM.45 A hypothesis which pushes the origins of the belief in HWM so far back is certainly tempting, but the number of objections to it is unfortunately as large and discouraging as the lack of sure evidence to support it; the impossibility (at least at the moment) of demonstrating that the two deities are identical will, I think, be self-evident after considering the materials assembled in the following two paragraphs.

II.1. The inscriptions46

The name Hsi-mu/*siər mag appears only once in oracle bone

b) Books XIV-XVIII (Ta-huang/Hai-nei ching), regarded as a possible product of Pa;
c) Books I-V and VI-IX (Wu-tsang shan-ching/Hai-wai ching), regarded as a Ch'u product influenced by Pa and Shu.

See pp. 55-56 and passim.

45 For the passage in question see Ch'en Meng-chia (1936), p. 131. Loewe (1979), p. 88 simply writes that "the expression Hsi wang mu has been identified with the term Hsi mu of the oracle bone inscriptions" and quotes (p. 148, n. 6) Ch'en's opinion after Kominami (1974), p. 75, n. 11. Mathieu (1983), p. 101 writes that "le culte de Xiwangmu remonte très probablement aux Yin, si l'on en croit les inscriptions oraculaires de cette époque évoquant les sacrifices à la Ximù." Besides Ch'en (1936) Mathieu also quotes Chang Kwang-chih (1976), p. 157 (see infra, note 66); M. Kaltenmark, "Notes à propos du Kao-wei", Annaire de l'École Pratique des Hautes Études/Sect. de Sciences Religieuses, Paris, 1966-67, p. 16 (unavailable to me) and Cheng Te-k'un, (1960), p. 226 (Cheng makes no association between Hsi-mu and HWM and simply says that "the god of the sun was sometimes referred to as Tung-mu or Eastern Mother, whereas the god of the moon was Hsi-mu or Western Mother."). A tentative identification of Hsi-mu (possibly a prehistoric and matriarchal deity) with HWM is made also by Dubs (1942), p. 223.

46 Abbreviations of oracle bone collections are listed in the Bibliography. As a general rule for the non-specialist, it will be remembered that when three numbers are supplied they usually refer to part, page and fragment in that order (thus Hou, I. 28.6 means part I, page 28, fragment no. 6 of Lo Chen-yü's Yin-hsi shu-ch'i
inscriptions, more precisely on *Hou*, I. 28.5 (*T'ung* 770), a period

47 I have been unable to locate any other instance in all the collections published after S.-Shima (1958), p. 234 first regarded the character _IPV in *Ts'ui* 195 (*Ching-Chin* 3955/rubbing incomplete) (fig. 1) as two characters, i.e. _hsi_ (&_hsi_ upper one) and an extended variant of _mu_ (&_mu_) transcribing the whole as _Hsi-mu_ (&_Hsi-mu_). The same opinion is held by Sun Hai-po in CCCKWP, entry 2149 (p. 605) where the character in question is listed among the _ho-wen_ 合文; Kuo Mo-jo's comm. to *Ts'ui* offers no explanation and the character is not even transcribed in the _shih-wen_. Shima apparently changed his mind later, for we find the character listed as a _hapax legomenon_ in S. 46.1, within what we can call the 'kuei/鬼 series'. The top passage of *Ts'ui* 195 can be translated as follows (text 22a): "Day _i-yu_
Fig. 2. a. Kikkà, I.22.2; b. Ts’ui, 77; c. Shih-to, 1.297; d. Hsü, I.53.2 (Fu/Tien, 20); e. Hou, I.23.7.
(Drawings by author)

(22nd of the sexagenary cycle). Divination performed: yu-sacrifice and sui-sacrifice to I (Yin) and to X (Hsi-mu??).” (See fig. 1). I am against the reading Hsi-mu for several reasons, e.g.: a) the association with I Yin instead of with Tung-mu; b) the appearance of the sui (butchering) sacrifice, whereas in all the other instances of sacrifices offered to Hsi-mu and Tung-mu we always find only the yu (meat offerings; see infra, n. 50) and the liao (see note 53) sacrifices; c) the fact that Ts’ui 195 belongs to period IV, whereas all the other fragments dealing with Tung-mu and Hsi-mu belong to period I (on periodization see the following note).
Fig. 3. a. Pu, 12; b. T'ieh, 142.2 (T'ieh-hsin, 100); c. Hai, 3; d. Bergen, 37.
(Drawings by author)

I48 shell fragment where it is symmetrically associated with that of Tung-mu/*dung mag (see fig. 1). The text can be rendered as follows (text 22):

The question remains, of course, open. On I Yin 伊尹 see S. 365.2–4; Li VIII, 2621–2; Shima (1958), pp. 247–252; Jimbun shakubun, fr. 1833, p. 473.

48 On the periodization of Shang Inscriptions see Keightley (1978), pp. 92–94, tables 14, 37, 38 and the titles quoted therein. See also Yen I-p'ing 董一萍, Chia-ku
"Pyromantic crack-making on the day jen-shen (the 9th). Divination performed\textsuperscript{49}: "Yu-sacrifice\textsuperscript{50} to the Eastern Mother and to the Western Mother. This will be found agreeable."

Apart from this fragment, the name Tung-mu also appears in another eleven oracular texts (S. 433. 1–2), all belonging to period I. Of these eleven fragments one (\textit{Ch’ien}, VII. 11.1) is uncertain for it contains only the character tung 東, and three others—\textit{Hai}, 2, \textit{Bergen}, 37 (fig. 3)\textsuperscript{51} (both not indexed in S) and \textit{Skih-to}, I. 297 (fig. 2)—contain only the name Tung-mu and need no translation. The remaining seven fragments include the following texts:

1. \textit{Kikko}, I.22.2: "Divination performed: To Tung-mu \textit{yu-sacrifice} ..." (text 23, fig. 2);
2. \textit{Ts’iü}, 77: "Divination performed: \textit{Yu-sacrifice to Tung?-mu?}." (text 24/fig. 2);
3. \textit{Hsii}, I.53.2 (\textit{Fu/Tien}, 20): "Pyromantic crack-making on the day chi-yu (46th of the cycle). Diviner K’o (Ch‘üeh) performed the \textit[following] divination: Liao-sacrifice\textsuperscript{53} to Tung-mu nine oxen." (text 25/fig.2)
4. \textit{Hou}, I.23.7: "Divination performed: Liao-sacrifice to Tung-mu nine oxen." (text 26/fig. 2)\textsuperscript{54}

\textit{hsueh} 甲骨學 vol. II, pp. 1087–1345 (Taipei, 1978), The dates of period I, i.e. of the reign of King Wu-ting 武丁, are a very controversial matter, being strictly related to the \textit{vexatissima quaestio} of the establishment of the Chou dynasty. Tung Tso-pin places the reign of Wu-ting between the years 1339–1281 B.C., but Ch’en Meng-chia prefers the dates 1238–1180, and Keightley’s revised short chronology places it in the years 1200–1181.

\textsuperscript{49} The rendering of \textit{pu}/\textit{puk} \textit{卜} and \textit{chen}/\textit{tieng} 諏 is one of the most controversial issues in the field of oracle bone inscriptions and my renderings “pyromantic crack-making” for \textit{pu} and “divination performed” or “performed [the following] divination” for \textit{chen} are tentative. The most recent review of the different positions on the subject is in Lefeuvre (1985), where \textit{pu} is rendered as “one performed the pyromancy” and \textit{chen} is written ting/\textit{tieng} 諏 and rendered as “one celebrated the divination”.


\textsuperscript{51} Menzies’ hypothesis, i.e. that Tung-mu and Hsi-mu may have indicated “the “mothers” [royal consorts?] living in the eastern and western chambers (of the royal palace)”, is highly questionable. See Yen I-p’ıng, \textit{Pai-ken shih chiu-ts’ang chia-ku wen-tzu k’ao-shih} 柏根氏舊藏甲骨文字考釋, Taipei, I-wen, 1978, p. 45r. Yen quotes Ch’en (1936) but gives no personal ideas on the subject.

\textsuperscript{52} Kuo Mo-jo offers no comm. for this text. The characters tung and \textit{mu} are not perfectly recognizable.


\textsuperscript{54} Ikeda Suetoshi 池田末利, \textit{Inoko shokei kohen shakubun ko} 股虚書契後編釋文稿,
5. *T’ieh*, 142.2 (*T’ieh-hsin*, 100): “...liao-sacrifice to Tung-mu three pigs, three dogs...” (text 27/fig. 3);
6. *Hai*, 3: “Divination performed: Liao-sacrifice to Tung-mu three oxen.” (text 28/fig. 3);
7. *Pu*, 12: “Divination performed: Liao-sacrifice to Tung-mu three pigs (dogs?)...”. (text 30/fig. 3).

The evidence we possess is, as can be easily seen, very scanty, and one single piece of shell is most decidedly not enough to identify the Shang Western Mother with the Eastern Chou Queen Mother of the West or to bridge the gap of some nine to ten blank centuries separating the disappearance of the first one from oracle bones and the appearance of the second one in later literary sources. The question will be resumed in part III, but before coming to any conclusion it will be interesting to offer a detailed *resumé* of all the theories advanced on Tung-mu and Hsi-mu, starting from Ch’en Meng-chia (1936).

II.2 Critical opinions

After risking the extremely vague association between Hsi-mu and HWM quoted before, Ch’en goes on to say (text 31):

“Tung-mu does not appear in literary texts, but in the *Shih-chi* (*Feng-shan shu*) and in the *Ch’u tz’u* (*Nine Songs, ‘Ode to the Lord of the East’*) we find a deity called *Tung-ch’un* (Lord of the East). The *Kuang-ya* identifies Tung-ch’un with the sun, and I suspect his being identical with Tung-mu. The Yin people paid homage to their female lineage as well as they worshiped their male lineage; therefore they called the sun deity Western Mother; after the Yin, the male lineage became predominant, and the solar deity was granted the title of ‘Lord’.”

The crucial point in this passage is the meaning of the expression

---

55 Jao Tsung-i states in his commentary (*Hai*, p. 3) that the Yin people sacrificed to the Four Quarters (*Ssu Fang*) and that the eastern and the western ones were (sometimes) associated with the names of Tung-mu and Hsi-mu. Jao also quotes *Hsü*, I. 52.6 (*Fu/Tien*, 17) but arbitrarily adds the character mu to the text, that simply says (text 29): “Diviner K’o performed the following divination: Liao-sacrifice to the Eastern Quarter five pigs, five rams, five...”. Jao’s reference to *Hou*, I. 28.5 is misprinted as *Hsü*, I. 2.8.5.

56 Jung Keng (*Pu*, comm., p. 7v) regards Tung-mu as “possibly indicating a Yin ancestress”, but adds no further explanation.

57 See Ch’en Meng-chia (1936), p. 131. It should be noted, however, as does K. Schipper, that in mythology “le mot *kiun* est plutôt réservé aux divinités féminines” (*Le corps taoiste*, Paris, Fayard, 1982, p. 168).
mu-hsi 母系, which can also be rendered as ‘matriarchy’ (as it is understood by Mathieu); this does not seem to be the case here, where the expression is coupled with nan-hsi 男系 (‘male lineage’ or ‘patriarchy’) to indicate a sort of egalitarian treatment of ancestors and ancestresses in sacrificial matters during the Yin period. This statement is correct (in part), only if applied to the times of Wu-ting (period I) but cannot be extended to the whole of the dynasty. The society reflected in oracle bone inscriptions was clearly and unmistakably male-centered and male-dominated and nothing more than ‘possibly matriarchal vestiges’ can be recognized in Shang times; if a matriarchal stage ever existed in Chinese civilization, its floruit cannot be reasonably placed after the third millennium B.C.

58 Mathieu (1983), pp. 101 and 533, n. 8, relies on this passage and on Eberhard (1968), pp. 109 and 116 to state that “le matriarcat est attesté au Tibet et sous les Shang en Chine”, but Eberhard simply writes that “matriarchal and matrilineal traits were particularly strong in the Shang culture” and adds: “During Shang time the patriarchal North Culture had not yet succeeded in making its way to the extent that it did in later times. Therefore one finds in the Shang culture certain traits evidencing the equality of rights of women... but the Shang culture was not purely matriarchal or matrilineal, just as this was not so in the southern Local Cultures.” The difference is evident. Eberhard (1942), pp. 253–4, after giving a brief list of the different sources dealing with HWM, concluded the paragraph (Reihe 21.6) by suggesting a link between HWM and the Herrscherinnen of Tibetan matriarchal clans: “Aber außer als Göttin tritt die Hsi-wang-mu mehrfach so auf, dass man sie für einen Volksstamm des Westens halten muss (Shih-chi=Mem. Hist. II, 7), und in diesem Fall kommt nur ein tibetisches Volk in Frage, da nur für solche Völker berichtet ist, dass sie Frauen als Herrscherinnen hatten und ein Matriarchat. Das passt sehr gut zu der Gegend, in die die Hsi-wang-mu lokalisert wird, und zu dem K’un-lun, zu dem sie Beziehungen hat.” Later on he also adds (p. 278/Reihe 24.1): “... Matriarchat für die Tibeter überhaupt typisch ist. Die Hsi-wang-mu ist ursprünglich nur eine Personifikation der Tibeter und ihres Herrscherstems.”

59 Some royal consorts enjoyed a fairly high position both in Shang and in Western Chou times and Fu Hao (one of the spouses of King Wu-ting) is known to have played a leading role in some major military campaigns, but facts like these obviously do not allow us to speak of “Shang matriarchy.” On Fu Hao see Chao Lin (1982), pp. 3–4 and Yen I-p’ing, “Fu Hao lich chuan 媳好列傳”, in CKWT, N.S., III (1981), pp. 1–104. On the status of Western Chou queens see Creel (1970), p. 395.

60 The fact that Shang society was male-dominated is expressed by several situations, e.g.: a) the king was a man and the ancestral cults were male-centered; b) the character indicating both ‘woman’ and ‘mother’ indicates a kneeling position (跽 ) and the same position is found in 150 of the characters having that character as radical (in total 162; see S. 132.2–145.3); c) “To give birth to a boy was chia 孙, good, while to bear a girl was not chia” (Chao Lin (1982), p. 3). Chao
Coming back to Ch’en’s article, the possible association (suggested on p. 131) between Tung-mu and the mother of the ten suns (Hsi Ho) and between Hsi-mu and the mother of the twelve moons (Ch’ang Hsi) is far more interesting. Both are mentioned in the SHC.

Hsi Ho is mentioned in SHC, XV, 5r-v (text 32): 61

Lin’s assumption is based on Hu (1944), pp. 22r–23r, who based himself on Kuo Mo-jo’s *Ku-tai ming-k’e hui-k’ao hsü-pien* 古代銘刻彙考續編 (unavailable to me). See in any case the comm. to Ts’ui 1233, where the character 企 is transcribed as 企, and is taken for a short form of 高 and read chia/*ka*. See also Li, XII, 3625–3628 (Li Hsiao-ting agrees with Kuo Mo-jo, as do all the specialists). Points a) and b) were pointed out during a conversation with J.A. Lefeuvre (4/1/1985). On point b) see also Ho Ping-ti (1975), p. 249, where the character 企 is described as a “simplified picture of a human figure, which, because it is squatting and at work, means woman”; see also Keightley’s objections (Keightley (1977), p. 393): “My objection concerns the significance Professor Ho attaches to “squatting” (or, more accurately, kneeling with the weight on the heels). There were no chairs in Shang China. Everybody knelt down at some point. The fact that the Shang graphs for settlement (ji; S42.3), prayer (chu; S44.1), order (ling; S46.3), approval (jo; S47.2), feast (hsiang; S51.1), and so forth, contain a kneeling figure, indicates the difficulties involved in attempting to relate the kneeling posture to the feminine sex at work. It is more likely that the graph was used to write the word for woman because it depicted the breasts; it was a figure of nurture, perhaps . . .”. Keightley’s objections are correct, but if in the case of settlement, prayer, order, approval or banquet the kneeling posture is quite natural and implicit, this is not the case for ‘woman’, unless supposing a specific reason; to convey the sense of ‘submission’ is perhaps a better reason than to convey the sense of ‘nurture’, but both are plausible. On matriarchy see Eberhard (1968), pp. 109–118; Ho Ping-ti (1975), p. 274: “. . . mainland Chinese scholars are generally of the opinion that the Yang-shao period represented a stage in which ‘matrilineal society reached its height of prosperity’ . . .” (see also ibid., pp. 273–281). The situation in Shang and Western Chou times has been conveniently summed up in Chao Lin (1982), pp. 3–4: “. . . although the position of women perhaps was higher in the Shang dynasty than in later times, they still were considered to be inferior . . . After the conquest of Chou, Chou royal wives continued to enjoy their places in public affairs . . . but such situation was severely criticized and condemned around the end of the Western Chou period as being one of the main factors contributing to the downfall of the royal Chou house. By the end of the Western Chou period, their position declined greatly.”

To express this decline Chao Lin correctly quotes the ode Chan-ang 嘉宴 from the Shih-ching (ode 264; Legge, pp. 559–564), where the idea of major disasters being provoked by women’s interference in public affairs is strongly upheld (see also B. Karlgren, *The Book of Odes*, Stockholm, 1950, pp. 235–238).

61 See SHCKC, XV, 8v; SHCHCC, p. 129–130; Yuan K’o (1980), pp. 381–4; Mathieu (1983), p. 565. For a convenient treatment of the many problems concerning Hsi Ho, the splitting of the name into two in the *Shang-shu ta-chuan* 向書大傳 and later sources, and its appearance as a single name in works later than the SHC, see LCAC, 262–267.
Beyond the south-eastern sea, in the middle of the Sweet River, there is the country of Hsi Ho. There is a woman called Hsi Ho that baths the suns in the Abyss of Kan (‘of the Sweet River’). Hsi Ho is the wife of Ti Chün. She gave birth to the ten suns.”

Ch’ang Hsi is mentioned in SHC, XVI, 5r (text 33):62

“There is a woman that baths the moons. [She is] the wife of Ti Chün, Ch’ang Hsi. She gave birth to twelve moons and started bathing them.”

Commenting on the first passage, Hao I-hsing quotes a passage from the Shih-chi cheng-i (but the passage is actually in the Shih-chi so-yin; see infra, note 64/text 35) where it is said that Ti K’u married a woman called Ch’ang I 常儀, and regards Ch’ang I, Ch’ang Hsi and Hsi Ho as a single person.63 This fusion is unacceptable —see Yüan K’o (1980) p. 382—but, on the other hand, we can quite safely agree with Karlgren, when he writes that “Ch’ang Hsi is obviously identical with the Shang Yi of Lü and Ch’ang Yi of Shi pen (shang 尚 and ch’ang 常, graphically cognate, were both *diang, though in different tones; hsi 譡 was *xia and yi 偶 was *ngia).”64

What is of extreme importance for our present enquiry is the fact that both Hsi Ho and Ch’ang Hsi are referred to as “wives of Ti Chün”65 and that Ti Chün has been identified, inter alia, with Ti K’u, i.e. with the mythical ancestor of the Shang.65

---

63 Mathieu (1983), p. 565, note 3, quotes Hao’s identification without any comment and adds: “Le ch. 16, p. 6a, nous apprendra que la femme de l’empeur Jun se nomme Changxi . . . ce qui prouve au moins que l’auteur du ch. 15 n’est pas celui du ch. 16”. To my eyes this simply proves that Ti Chün had more than one wife.
64 On Shang Yi see LSCC, XVII, pp. 8v–9r. The passage (text 34) is thus translated by Karlgren (LCAC, 263): “Ta Nao made the kie-tsi (time cycle) . . . Jung Ch’eng made the calendar; Hi Ho prognosticated (by means of) the sun; Shang Yi prognosticated (by means of) the moon; Hou Yi prognosticated (by means of) the Sui star . . .”.
65 A Ch’ang I is explicitly referred to as wife of Ti K’u by the Ti-wang (shih- chi 帝王) 纪, quoted by Chang Shou-chieh 張守節 in his cheng-i 正義 comm. to the Shih-chi (I, 21):

“Ti K’u had four concubines, and divination foretold that all their sons were to rule the T’ien-hsia. The first concubine was a woman of the Yu T’ai clan; her name was Chiang Yuan and she gave birth to Hou-chi. The second one belonged to the Yu Sung clan; her name was Chien Ti and she gave birth to Hsieh. The third one belonged to the Ch’en-shou clan; her name was Ch’ing Tu and she gave birth to Fang Hsin. The fourth one belonged to the Ch’ü-tsi clan; her name was Ch’ang I, and she gave birth to Ti Chih.” (text 35).
66 Ti Chün (* Tieg Tsiwen) is more an honorary title than a real name, for it simply means ‘Great Emperor’, an appellation easily applied to different per-
The association between Tung-mu/Hsi-mu and Hsi Ho/Ch’ang Hsi—and consequently also with Ti Chün and Ti K’u—has been emphasized by Chang Tsung-tung (1970), pp. 201–202:

“... richtunggebunden waren die östliche und die westliche Muttergöttin ...”

Die Orakelinschriften geben leider keine nähere Auskunft über diese Muttergötinnen. Im Shan-hai-ching wird erzählt, daß eine Frau des Ti-chün, namens Hsi-ho zehn Sonnen und eine andere Frau von ihm, namens Ch’ang-hsi, zwölf Monde geboren hätte. ... Zusammenfassend darf geschlossen werden, daß man zur Shang-Zeit unter der “östlichen” und der “westlichen Mutter” die mythischen Muttergötinnen der zehn Sonnen und der zwölf Monde verstand. Sehr aufschlußreich für den Kult dieser Muttergötinnen ist die Tatsache, daß ihr Ehemann Ti Chün mit Ti-k’u, dem Ehemann der mythischen Urahne der Shang, identisch war.”

Chang is perhaps too positive and leaves aside all the most trouble-
some problems concerning the real identity of Ti Chün, but his
theory still remains the most reasonable at the moment. Neverthe-
less, it must always be kept in mind that any correspondence be-
tween Tung Mu/Hsi-mu and any deity or mythological figure
mentioned in Eastern Chou, and later literature is neither definitely
ascertainable nor strictly necessary.

The other theories advanced on Tung-mu and Hsi-mu can be
summed up in three groups:

a) In the same article quoted above (1936) (p. 132), Ch’en Meng-
chia also made a vague allusion to a possible evolution of Tung-mu
into the Tung-wang-kung 東王公 of Han lore, and he made the
same vague suggestion twenty years later (see Ch’en (1956), p. 574)
within a paragraph thus concluded (text 37):

“From the mythological traditions about Lord-in-Heaven (T’ien-Ti), the sun
and the moon collected above, we can suppose that the Ti of the Yin people
probably indicated Shang-Ti or the August Heaven, and that Tung-mu and
Hsi-mu were probably the deities associated with the sun and the moon as well
as the mates of T’ien-Ti.”

b) A possible transformation of Tung-mu into a male deity and
namely into the Tung-wang-kung of Han times has been proposed
also by Akatsuka (1977), p. 452, who explains the change of sex
as due to the rise and development of the yin-yang theory in Eastern
Chou times: according to the theory the solar deity had to be male,
but no change of sex was necessary for the lunar counterpart (Hsi-
mu/HWM).68

c) A completely different interpretation of the terms Tung-mu
and Hsi-mu has been advanced by Shima Kunio.69 In his opinion
the character mu/*mag 母 ought to be read as fu/*b’iug 妇 and
would thus be equivalent to the character 亁, interpreted as the
archaic form of uu/*miwo 彦 by the great majority of specialists,
but interpreted by Shima as equivalent in sound to fu/*biug and in
meaning to the character 亁, used in the Chou-li70 as the name of a
sacrifice and read alternatively as p’i/*p’iok or as po/pek (GSR,

68 Akatsuka (1977), p. 451 also regards Tung-mu as a uu-hsien 巫先 or deified
shamaness/ancestress charged with assisting the daily birth of the child-sun; at
p. 452 he also regards both Tung-mu and Hsi-mu as functionaries—instead of
concubines, as done by Ch’en Meng-chia—of (Shang) Ti.


70 See Chou-li, XVIII, 1v–2r; Biot (1851), p. 422: “En ouvrant et découplant
la victime, on sacrifie aux quatre régions, aux cent objets”. On the character
亁 see Li, V, 1595–1600; S. 418. 2–3 and 361.4–362.1. See also the recent article
by Chou Ts’e-tsung 周策綽, “Wu tzu ch’u-i t’an-yüan 巫字初義探源”, Ta-lu tsa-
Table I. Chronological arrangement of the earliest sources on Hsi-wang-mu

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Date of Composition</th>
<th>Appellation</th>
<th>Localization</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>MTTC, III</td>
<td>V-III c. BC</td>
<td>Hsi-wang-mu</td>
<td>Mt. K’un-lun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>SHC, II</td>
<td>V-II c. BC</td>
<td>Hsi-wang-mu</td>
<td>Mt. Yü</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>CSCN</td>
<td>IV-III c. BC</td>
<td>Hsi-wang-mu</td>
<td>Mt. K’un-lun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Chuang-tzu, VI</td>
<td>IV-III c. BC</td>
<td>Hsi-wang-mu</td>
<td>Shao-kuang</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>SHC, XVI</td>
<td>IV-III c. BC?</td>
<td>Hsi-wang-mu</td>
<td>Mt. Yen-huo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Hsin-tzu, XIX</td>
<td>III c. BC</td>
<td>Hsi-wang-kuo</td>
<td>West/n.s.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Erh-ya, VI</td>
<td>III-II c. BC</td>
<td>Hsi-wang-mu</td>
<td>Extreme West</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>TTLC, LXXVI</td>
<td>III-II c. BC</td>
<td>Hsi-wang-mu</td>
<td>West/n.s.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>HNT, VI, 16v</td>
<td>II c. BC</td>
<td>Hsi-wang-mu</td>
<td>n.s.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>HNT, VI, 13r</td>
<td>II c. BC</td>
<td>Hsi-lao</td>
<td>n.s.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Ta-jen fu</td>
<td>II c. BC</td>
<td>Hsi-wang-mu</td>
<td>Mt. K’un-lun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Shih-chi, V/XLIII</td>
<td>II c. BC</td>
<td>Hsi-wang-mu</td>
<td>Mt. K’un-lun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Han-shih wai-chuan</td>
<td>II c. BC</td>
<td>Hsi-wang-kuo</td>
<td>West/n.s.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Lieh-tzu, III</td>
<td>II c. BC (?)</td>
<td>Hsi-wang-mu</td>
<td>Mt. K’un-lun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>SHC, XII</td>
<td>II-I c. BC (?)</td>
<td>Hsi-wang-mu</td>
<td>North-west of Mt. K’un-lun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Hsin-hsi</td>
<td>I c. BC</td>
<td>Hsi-wang-kuo</td>
<td>West/n.s.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Hsin-shu</td>
<td>I c. BC</td>
<td>Hsi-wang-mu</td>
<td>West (beyond Wang-mu)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

933q: ‘split’, ‘cut open’). According to this fanciful interpretation Hou, I.28.5 (text 22) ought to be rendered as “Yu-sacrifice to the East; cut open [a victim]. To the West cut open [a victim]. This will be found agreeable”. The deity supposed/expected to find the offering agreeable is identified by Shima as none other than Shang-ti himself, simply because the character jo/*niak 若 must (my italics) refer to him. For obvious reasons both this assumption and the quadruple chia-chieh mentioned above remain totally unacceptable.\(^7\)

Part III. Some conclusions

Before attempting some conclusions, it will be convenient to sum up once again the chronology of the sources mentioned above (see also table I).

\(^7\) For examples of the different occurrences of the character jo see S. 47.2–50–2. In oracle bone inscriptions mention is made also of a Chung-mu or ‘Central Mother’; in his review of Akatsuka (197 “Akatsuka Kiyoshi and the Culture of Early China: A Study in Historical Method”, Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies, XLII/1 (June 1982), p. 287, note 45) David N. Keightley quotes a paper by
Coupled with Tung-mu, the name Hsi-mu appears once on a shell fragment of period I (i.e. around the beginning of the XII century BC at the latest) but after this occurrence no similar name is to be found either in the inscriptions of periods II-V, in Shang and Chou bronze inscriptions or in Western Chou and Ch’un-ch’iu literary sources.

The real nature of both Tung-mu and Hsi-mu, and their role in the Shang pantheon, is not completely clear, but to say that they were natural deities, associated with the birth of the sun (Tung-mu) and of the moon (Hsi-mu), is maybe not far from the truth.

Then, after a long blank period of some eight or nine centuries —too long to suggest any possible continuity—the names Hsi-wang-mu, Hsi-wang-kuo and Wang-mu (but never Hsi-mu) start to appear in some texts of the Warring States period and later.72 Which of these texts should be regarded as the earliest is a problem open to controversy: as mentioned above, Loewe [(1979), p. 89] is inclined to choose Chuang-tzu and he could be right in doing so, but we must remember that parts of MTTC and SHC are at least contemporaneous and possibly earlier (especially in the case of the MTTC). Be this as it may, it is my opinion that these three texts must represent three different (and supposedly independent) traditions current in China between the V and the III centuries BC and having in common only the name Hsi-wang-mu, an appellation generic enough to be shared by various and not necessarily identical personages in different contexts and at different times.73

Dessa Bucksbaum ("A study of the word Fang ㄆ in the oracle bone inscriptions", Berkeley, Dec. 1978, typescript) where Tung-mu, Hsi-mu and Chung-mu are said to “trace the course of the sun’s path”. The statement is unwarranted, Chung-mu being simply an ancestral appellation devoid of any cosmological implication. On the subject see Jean A. Lefeuvre, “An Oracle Bone in the Hong Kong Museum of History and the Shang Standard of the Centre”, Journal of the Hong Kong Archaeological Society, VII (1976–78), p. 52:

“This graph is also used in the appellation of ancestor queens like chung-mu 中母, the ‘middle’ mother, chung-pi 中妣, the ‘middle’ grandmother. It appears in some cases in the appellation of a deceased noble lady to indicate her rank, chung being added after the clan name and before the personal name. Chung seems to have the same connotation as ya 亞, ‘second’, also used for the appellation of deceased queens. It indicates the rank, coming after Kao 高, high, and before hsiao 小, small”.

On Chung-mu see S. 133.4.

72 If we look for the mention of HWM being worshipped, the gap widens to more than twelve centuries, i.e. from the reign of Wu-ting to the soteriological movement of the year 3 BC related in the Han-shu (see Loewe (1979), pp. 98–101; Dubs (1942), pp. 235–239).

73 See table I. On the date of the MTTC see Maspero (1924), p. 582; Chang
Each one of these three traditions represented by MTTC, *Chuang-tzu* and SHC (the exact origins of which remain unknown) may be associated with a specific area and offers a different portrait of the 'Queen':

a) According to the MTTC (northern tradition) HWM was the name of the sovereign of a western clan/territory centered around Mt. K'un-lun; similar information is to be found in CSCN, *Lieh-tzu*, *Shih-chi*, TTLC and *Hsin-shu* (these last two texts do not mention Mt. K'un-lun). In *Hsün-tzu*, *Erh-ya*, *Han-shih wai-chuan* and *Hsin-hsü*, Hsi-wang-mu and Hsi-wang-kuo (*Hsün-tzu* and *Hsin-hsü*) appear as the name of a territory, and are probably identical with that of its ruler. CSCN also suggests the possibility that the contact between King Mu and HWM may have been military rather than diplomatic. The character mu/’mother’ in the name of HWM may have been a variant of mu/’acres’ (as suggested by Karlgren) but it is also possible that it really meant ‘mother’ or ‘woman’ and that HWM was originally the chieftainess of a matriarchal Tibetan clan.

b) In *Chuang-tzu* (southern tradition) HWM appears as a time-less Taoist deity said to have attained the Tao since time immemorial.

c) Two passages in the SHC (the only texts of this kind) depict HWM as a feline-like and malignant demon related to epidemics and dwelling in a cave. This tradition was possibly of western or south-western (possibly Tibetan) origin and may have entered China via the states of Shu, Pa and Ch'ü.

Thus, during a process started in the early Warring States period (or slightly earlier) and completed in Eastern and immediately post- Han times, (c) disappeared and (b) became absolutely predominant and absorbed parts of (a), developing into the highly fantastical Taoist traditions of the Wei-Chin, Nan-pei, and subsequent dynasties, in which HWM definitely became the young, powerful and charming Queen of the Western Paradise.

Such a tripartition of the sources raises some new problems (not all of which can be solved) and may add some obstacles to our research, but it also points to unbeaten tracks and appears to give a truer representation of the complex process that led to the crea-
tion of the personage HWM in its early stages.\textsuperscript{74}

It seems, therefore, more promising to work on the restoration of three different pictures even though they may remain incomplete, than to try by all means to obtain a complete picture, which will have to include some heterogeneous and unrelated fragments. This is the working hypothesis advanced in this paper. It may, of course, prove to be wrong, but in any case much work remains to be done; collaboration and criticism are sincerely expected and needed.

**BIBLIOGRAPHY AND ABBREVIATIONS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author/Title</th>
<th>Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CCCKWP</td>
<td>Sun Hai-po, <em>Chiao-cheng chia-ku-wen pien</em>, Taipei: Yee-wen, 1975 (or. ed. Peking, 1934, with the title <em>Chia-ku-wen pien</em>).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\textsuperscript{74} The existence of more than one tradition in Eastern Chou times has been suggested also by Mathieu (1978), p. 181:


Mathieu's exposition of the facts is not satisfactory, especially for what concerns the association made between *Chuang-tzu*, HNT, and the SHC (where HWM is not at all associated with immortality).


Ch'en P'an  (1970) —, *Pu chien yü Ch'un-ch'iu ta-shih-piao chih Ch'un-ch'iu fang-kwo kao*, Nankang, 1970 (Li-shih yü-yen yen-chiu-so chuan-k'an, no. 59) (2nd ed. 1983). [The ch. on the state of Shu has been also separately publ. in *Ta-lu tsa-chih*, XXXII/6 (March 1966) with the title “Ch'un-ch'iu Shu kuo 春秋蜀國”, pp. 167–169].


**Ching-Chin**


Chuang-tzu

See note 9.

Chou-li

*Chou-li Cheng-chu*, comm. by Cheng Hsiüan (Han), SPPY ed.

Ch'ü Wan-li (1983)


CKWT

Chung-kuo wen-tzu

中國文字。

Creel (1970)


CSCN

Chu-shu chi-nien, SPPY ed.

CWP


Eberhard (1942)


Eberhard (1942)


Eberhard (1968)


Erh-ya

Erh-ya Kuo-chu, comm. by Kuo P'u (Chin), SPPY ed.

Fracasso (1981)


Fracasso (1983)


Fu/Tien


GSR


Hai


Hervouet (1964)


Hervouet (1972)

RICCARDO FRACASSO

HHS

HNT

Ho Ping-ti (1975)

Hou

Hsü

Hsüan Chu (Mao Tun) (1928)

Hsün-tzu

Hu Hou-hsüan (1944)
—, “Yin-tai chia-tsu hun-yin tsung-fa sheng-yu chih-tu k’ao”, in *Chia-ku-hsi-lieh Shang-shih lun-t’ung ch’u-chi*, Ch’eng-tu, 1944.


Ku Shih (1934)

Kwiln
see HNT.

Kojinpo

Keightley (1977)

Keightley (1978)

KKHP
*K’ai-ku hsüeh-pao*

Kominami (1974)

Ku Shih (1934)

36
HCAC

Lefeuvre (1985)

Legge

Li
Li Hsiao-ting, Chia-ku wen-tzu chi-shih, Nankang, 1965, 8 vols. (Chung-yang yen-chiu-yuan li-shih yü-yen yen-chiu-so chuan-k'an, no. 50).

Liu-tzu
ed. SPPY, comm. by Chang Chan.

Loewe (1979)

LSCC

Maspero (1924)

Mathieu (1978)

Mathieu (1983)

Meng Wen-t’ung (1962)

MH

MTTC

Nebesky-Wojkowitz (1977)

Ogawa (1970)
Ogawa Takuji, “Mu T’ien-tzu chuan k’ao” (Ch. tr.) in Chiang Hsiao-an, Hisen-Ch’ in ching-chi k’ao, Taipei: Hsin-hsin, 1970 (or. publ. in

Pu Jung Keng/Ch’u Jun-min, Yin-ch’i pu-tz’u, Peking, 1933; repr. Taipei: Yee-wen, 1970.


Shan-hai ching


SHC Shan-hai ching chien-shu, SPPY ed.; comm. by Kuo P’u (Chin) and Hao (Ho) I-hsing (Ch’ing). Or. ed. 1809.

SHCHCC Shan-hai ching hsin chiao-cheng, comm. by Pi Yüan (Ch’ing), publ. in 1791; repr. Taipei, Hsin-hsing, 1958.

SHCKC Shan-hai ching kuang-chu, comm. by Wu Jen-ch’en (Ch’ing), in Ch’in-ting ssu-k’u ch’uan-shu, repr. Taipei: Comm. Press, 1st series, vols. 221–222.

Shih-chi Takigawa Kametara, Shiki kaichiu kosho, Tokyo, 1932–4.


SPPY Ssu-pu pei-yao

SPTK Ssu-pu tsung-k’an
SW

T'ieh

T'ieh-hsin

TPYL

Ts'ui

TTLC
Kuo Mo-jo, Pu-tzu t'ung-tsun, Tokyo, 1933.

Wang Hsien-ch'ien
See Hsin-tzu, HHS.

Wang Kuo-wei (1917)
—
  a. Ku-pen Chu-shu chi-nien chi-chiao;
  b. Chin-pen Chu-shu chi-nien shu-cheng,

Yüan K'o (1980)

Yüan K'o (1982)
Appendix I. Chinese texts

1. 喬學於君疇，舜學於務成昭，禹學於西王國。（荀子，大略篇）。

2. 子夏曰：臣聞黃帝學乎大荒，顓頊學乎 recommand "允" 圖。帝嚳學乎赤松子，堯學乎務成則附，舜學乎君壽。禹學乎西王國，湯學乎負乎（子）相，文王學乎錫疇子於斯。武王學乎太公，周公學乎號叔。仲尼學乎老聃。（韓詩外傳卷五）。

2 b 臣聞黃帝學乎（王先謙引此語作學于）大荒（王氏引作大填）。顓頊學乎錄圖（王氏作錄圖）。帝嚳學乎赤松子，堯學乎尹壽，舜學乎務成則。禹學乎西王國。（王注：大禹生於西羌。西王國西羌之賢人也。）湯學乎威子伯（王氏引作威子伯）。文王學乎斜時子於斯（王氏引此語無斜字）。武王學乎郭叔。周公學乎太公。仲尼學乎老聃。（新序，雜事第五）。

3. （堯）身涉流沙，封獨山；見西王母。（新書，修政語上）。

4. 觸竹，北戶，西王母，日下：謂之四荒。（爾雅，釋地）。

5. 觸竹在北，北戶在南，西王母在西，日下在東。皆四方昏荒之國，次四極者。（爾雅釋地，郭璞注）。
6. 昔虞舜以天下德嗣堯，布功散德制禮。朔方幽都來服；南撫交趾，出入日月，莫不率俾，西王母來獻其白璜。（大戴禮記，少聞）。

6. a 舜之時，西王母來獻其白玉璜。（風俗通義聲音第六；說文解字五篇上）。

7. 六尺為步，步百為畝。秦田二百四十步為畝。從田、每畝。（說文解字注，十三篇下）。

8. 十七年西征崑崙邱，見西王母。西王母止之曰：有鳥騕人。西王母來見，賔于昭宮。（古本竹書紀年輯校）。

9. 十七年王西征崑崙邱，見西王母。其年西王母來朝，賔于昭宮。（今本竹書紀年疏證）。

9. a 十七年王西征至崑侖邱，見西王母。其年西王母來朝，賔于昭宮。（竹書紀年，卷下）。

10. 九年西王母來朝。西王母之來朝獻白璜，玉玦。（古本竹書紀年輯校）。

11. 吉日甲子，天子賔于西王母。乃執玄圭、白璧以見西王母。好獻錦組百純⋯組三百純。西王母再拜受之⋯乙丑，天子犒西王母于瑶池之上。西王母為天子謙曰：白雲在天，丘陵自出。道里悠遠，山川謹之。將子無死，尚能復來。天子答之曰：予歸東土，和治諸夏。萬民平均
12 (穆王) 逐賓于西王母。觴于瑤池之上。西王母為王謳，其辭哀焉。逰觀日之所入，一日行萬里。王乃歎曰：於乎！子一人不盈于德而謳於樂。後世其追數吾過乎？（列子，周穆第三）。

13. 夫道有情有信，無為无形；可傳而不可受。可得而不可見。自本自根。未有天地，自古以固存。神鬼神帝，生天生地。在太極之先而不為高。在六極之下而不為深。先天地生而不為久。長於上古而不為老。稀韋氏得之，以擎天地。伏羲氏得之以襲氣母。織斗得之，終古不殆。日月得之，終古不息。堪坏得之，以襲混沌。顓頊得之，以遊大川。肩吾得之，以處大山。黃帝得之，以登雲天。顓頊得之，以處玄宮。禹強得之，立乎北極。西王母得之，坐乎少廣。莫知其始，莫知其終。彭祖得之，上及有虞，下及五伯。傳說得之，以相武丁。奄有天下，乘東維騎箕尾而比於列星。 (莊子，大宗師)。

14. 吾乃今目睹西王母顕然白首。戴勝而穴處兮，
HOLY MOTHERS OF ANCIENT CHINA

其幸有三足烏為之使，必長生若此而不死兮，
雖濟萬世不足以喜。（史記，司馬相如列傳）•

15. 萬若羿請不死之藥於西王母，姮娥竊以奔月…
（淮南子，覽冥訓）。

16. 西老折勝，黃神嘯吟，飛鳥銘翼，走獸廢腳；
山無峻幹，澤無涸水；狐為首穴，馬牛放失；
田無立禾，路無莎穗 ……（淮南子，覽冥訓）。

17. 又西三百五十里曰玉山，是西王母所居也。西
王母，其狀如人，豹尾，虎齒而善嘯；縛髮，
戴勝。是司天之厲及五刑。（郭注：主知災厲
，五刑殘殺之氣也。）（山海經，西山經）。

18. 西海之南，流沙之濱，赤水之後，黑水之前，
有大山名曰昆侖丘。有神，人面，虎身，有文
，有尾皆白處之。其下有弱水之淵環之。其外
有炎火之山；投物輒然。有人戴勝，虎齒，有
豹尾，穴處。曰西王母。此山萬物盡有。（山
海經，大荒西經）。

19. 西王母梯几而戴勝（杖）。其南有三青鳥，為
西王母取食。在昆侖虛北。（山海經，海內北
經）。

20. 西有王母之山，壑山，海山。有沃之國。沃民
是處沃之野。鳶鳥之卵是食。甘露是飲。凡其


所欲其味盡存，爰有甘華，甘樸，白柳，視肉，三雕，瓊，瑰，瑶，碧，白木，浪汗，白丹，青丹，多銀，鐵。鸞鳳自歌，鳳鳥自舞。爰有百獸相群是處，是謂沃之野。有三青鳥，赤首黑目，一名曰大鵰，一名曰少鵰，一名曰青鳥。（山海經，大荒西經）。

21. 巴郡南郡蠻，本有五姓：巴氏，樊氏，黼氏，相氏，鄭氏。皆出於武落鍾離山。其山有赤黑二穴，巴氏之子生於赤穴，四姓之子皆生黑穴。未有君長，俱事鬼神，乃共櫛棘於石穴，約能中者，奉以為君。巴氏子務相乃獨中之，衆皆歎，又令各乘土船，約能浮者，當以爲君。餘姓悉沈，唯務相獨浮。因共立之，是爲蠻君。乃乘土船，從夷水至鹽陽。鹽水有神女，謂蠻君曰：「此地廣大，魚鹽所出，願留共居。」蠻君不許，鹽神暮操來取宿，旦即化爲臭，與諸蟲群飛，掩蔽日光，天地晦冥。積十餘日，蠻君（思）［伺］其便，因射殺之；天乃開明。蠻君於是君乎夷城，四姓皆臣之。蠻君死，魂魄世爲白虎。巴氏以虎飲人血，遂以人祠焉。（後漢書，南蠻西南夷列傳）。

22. 壬申卜，貞：（于）東母，西母。若。《後上，28. 5；通 770》。

22 a 乙酉貞：又（于）歲于伊（王）（《釋，195；京本 3955》）。

23. 貞：於東母（于）…（《林，1. 22. 2》）。
24. 貞：出于東母⋯（粹，77）。

25. 己酉卜，殼貞：察于東母九牛。（續，1.53 · 2；典20）。

26. 貞：察于東母三牛。（後上，23.7）。

27.⋯察于東母豕三，犬三⋯（鐵，142.2）。

28. 貞：察于東母三牛。（海，1.3）。

29. 貞：察于東五犬，五羊，五⋯⋯（續，1.52·6；典17）。

30. 貞：察于東母三犬。（豕？）。（卜，12）。

31. 未見載籍，惟史記封禪書，楚辭九歌東君篇並有“東君”之神，廣雅釋天曰“東君，日也”疑即東母，殷人尊母系，祀典與男系等，故稱日神為東母，殷以後男系專權遂將日神以君名。（陳夢家，古文字中之商周祭祀）。

32. 東南海之外，甘水之間，有義和之國。有女子名曰義和，方日浴于甘淵。義和者帝俊之妻，生十日。（山海經，大荒南經）。

33. 有女子方浴月：帝俊妻常羲。生月十有二。此始浴之。（山海經，大荒西經）。

34. 大橅作甲子⋯⋯容成作歷。義和作占日。尚羲
作占月．后益作占歲……（呂氏春秋，勿躬）

35.帝僅有四妃，卜其子皆有天下．元妃有邰氏女，曰姜嫄，生后稷．次妃有娀氏女，曰簡狄，生高．次妃陳豐氏女，曰慶都，生放勛．次妃娵訾氏女，曰常羲，生帝嚳．（史記索隱引帝王紀）

36.靈帝俊乃為日月之行……（楚繙書）

37.由上所述天帝日月的神話傳，可推想殷人的帝或上帝或指昊天，東母，西母可能是日月之神而天帝的配偶．（陳夢家，殷虛卜辭綜述）．