

MAQIAN KE

馬前課

A PROPHETIC TEXT ATTRIBUTED TO
ZHUGE LIANG

諸葛亮



PRELIMINARY TRANSLATION AND COMMENTARY

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PREFACE: ABOUT THIS TRANSLATION

The following work was originally intended to be the third of an occasional series of *Oracle Papers* that I began publishing in 2005, and was largely complete by 2006; but unfortunately changed personal circumstances meant that I was unable either to continue publishing the series, or to put the finishing touches to this particular project. As a result, the work lay neglected for several years, and it's only recently that I've felt inspired to return to it, primarily because the translation and commentary had been taken to a near-finished state and I didn't wish the work to be entirely lost; but also for the sake of completing a challenging recreation that has no practical utility to anyone whatever. Since the first work was undertaken, the published English translations of Am-Chi and Ruan Pui-hua (apparently the same person under differing names) have come to my attention; a discovery I greeted, perhaps unsurprisingly, somewhat wryly. However, as discussed in the introduction, these translations are rather less than scholarly and the commentaries far from exhaustive. And so, for what it's worth, my own 'preliminary' version is presented here ...

I'd like to emphasise the tentativeness of the following translation and commentary. I'm an amateur translator and the *Maqian ke*, with its complex wordplay and obscure references is hardly the sort of work that any sensible beginner would attempt to undertake; that I did so at all is to be attributed to my continuing fascination with the text's putative author, Zhuge Liang. Furthermore, in attempting to provide a commentary to a work that refers to nearly 2,000 years of Chinese history, I find myself seeking explanations in areas that are not among my primary interests. This brings me to a second reason for making the work available: I'd very much appreciate any corrections, comments or additions that readers might be able to make, and for this reason I include the primary Chinese texts that I've translated, along with the translation itself. Besides this, it would appear that there are questions about the text that could only be settled by consulting early editions that are not currently available to me, but may be to others.

I'm extremely grateful to several friends and associates for their assistance: to Harmen Mesker for providing me with a copy of the **Seven Prophecies** from which the translation was made; to Steve Marshall for technical assistance in publishing the material on the internet; and to Luis Andrade, Stephen Field, Edward Hacker, Stephen Karcher, Allan Lian and Richard J. Smith for supplementary material and suggestions. Additional feedback would be welcome, and would be fully credited if there should be a further revised version of the work at a later date.

Steve Moore

Title-page illustration: Zhuge Liang, from the 19th century (?) album *Ming Jiang Tuce* 名將圖冊 (*Portraits of Famous Generals*). Author's collection.

Maqian ke. Version 4. August 2012.

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INTRODUCTION

THE TEXT, ITS HISTORY, AND ITS VARIANTS

The basic text of the *Maqian ke* 馬前課 that I've translated here comes from the third edition of *Zhongguo yuyan qizhong* 中國預言七種 or *Seven Chinese Prophecies* (listed in the bibliography as **Seven Prophecies**), published in Taiwan by Wu ling chu ban she 武陵出版社 (a.k.a. Woolin) in 1995. This collects seven prophetic texts, attributed to various personages who were famously associated with divination, such as Shao Yong 邵雍, Liu Ji 劉基 (Liu Bowen 劉伯溫) and Zhuge Liang 諸葛亮, several of which are related to, or make use of elements from, the *Yijing*. The collection appears to be a reprint of material from various former editions, as typefaces and page layouts vary widely from one text to the next, though all are in metal type, and thus appear to be from 20th century printings. The book is padded out with a collection of various divinatory texts of the sort frequently found in popular almanacs.

Throughout history, such prophetic texts have always found an eager readership in China, while usually being regarded by the reigning government of the day as subversive, their apocalyptic predictions possibly providing pretexts for the overthrow of the dynasty. Texts similar to the *Maqian ke* or the more well-known *Tui bei tu* 推背圖 were particularly notable during the Manchu Qing dynasty (1644-1911), and were often associated with secret societies. Although modern scholarship (**ter Haar (2) p.222**), has placed rather less emphasis on the idea that such societies were truly politically motivated to overthrow the Qing and restore the native Ming dynasty (as their own propaganda had it), such an aim undoubtedly formed a strong part of their mythic and ritual lore, along with a strong millenarian element (**ter Haar (2) passim**), causing them to be viewed as a continual threat by the imperial authorities. It is perhaps unsurprising, then, that prophetic texts of an apocalyptic nature such as those included in **Seven Prophecies** found a ready readership among society members. For example, we know that Liu Bowen's Shaobing ge (燒餅歌, 'Biscuit Poem' or 'Pancake Song') was associated with the Heaven and Earth Society in the Qing (see **ter Haar (1) pp.156-158**, who also emphasises the overlap of character-manipulation [see below] in both prophetic texts and secret society documents), while the *Tui bei tu* (in whatever form it may have existed at such an early period) was associated with the White Lotus Society during the Yuan dynasty (1271-1368) (**Shih, p.187, Seiwert, p.188**). I have yet to find any evidence relating the *Maqian ke* to a specific secret society, but it shares common traits with writings that were. For more general historical background on such texts, see **Bauer (2) pp.224-225; Smith (1) pp.325-339; Smith (2) pp.216-219; Yang pp.232-239**.

As discussed in **Moore**, it was a common Chinese practice to increase the credibility of such prophetic texts (and, no doubt, to disguise their true authorship) by fathering them on ancient worthies, such as Zhuge Liang, Liu Bowen and Shao Yong, who were reputed to have supreme wisdom or predictive skills. Texts such as the *Maqian ke* are frequently 'coded' and use a large amount of wordplay, pun, character-manipulation and multiple meanings in their construction (for background on this sort of graphic analysis, which can be dated at least as early as the Han dynasty, see **De Groot and Führer**); when decoded, the apparently obscure verses reveal a 'miraculous' hidden meaning referring to events occurring long after the supposed author's death. The sheer cleverness of the construction goes some way to justifying the author's reputation for omniscient wisdom; at the same time, that justification

makes the reader potentially more receptive to and easily impressed by the verses referring to incidents that have not yet occurred. Events have every appearance of being predestined and predictable, if only one has the supernatural foresight of a Zhuge Liang or a Liu Bowen.

In general, the basic structure for prophetic texts such as the *Maqian ke* is as follows. A series of ‘predictions’ are attributed to an apparently prescient early sage; a considerable number of these, *appearing* to have been composed centuries ago, refer to events occurring after the author’s death but prior to the actual publication, thus seeming to prove the texts’ ‘infallible’ track record; passages referring to the immediate future after publication (predictions 11-14 in the *Maqian ke*) are usually of an apocalyptic nature, predicting some sort of vaguely-intimated catastrophe or overthrow of the current order (the crucial element in the text’s use for political, revolutionary or religious-millenarian purposes); and this is usually followed by a message of hope and Utopian salvation.

Few people in the western world would pay any attention to the traditional attribution of this text to Zhuge Liang 諸葛亮, courtesy name Kongming 孔明 (181-234), the famous strategist and minister of Shu Han in the Three Kingdoms period, though interestingly this is exactly the period in which Chinese apocalyptic and millenarian traditions first manifested (**Ownby**, *passim*). It has to be pointed out, though, that the *Maqian ke* does not appear in Zhuge Liang’s ‘Collected Works’, the *Zhuge Liang ji* 諸葛亮集 (**Zhuge (1)**), nor in the more expansive *Zhuge Liang Quanshu* 諸葛亮全書 (**Zhuge (2)**), even though the latter contains a number of apocryphal works. Similarly, there is no mention in the biography of Zhuge Liang, written a mere 40 years after his death by Chen Shou 陳壽 and contained in the official *History of the Three Kingdoms* (*San Guo Zhi* 三國志), of Zhuge being responsible for any works of prophecy or divination (**Chen**, pp.911-937). Such connections are the result of later tradition and folklore, reaching their most powerful expression in the 14th century novel, *The Romance of the Three Kingdoms* (*San Gou Yanyi* 三國演義), by Luo Guanzhong (羅貫中), and the various prophetic texts and divination manuals bearing Zhuge Liang’s name, along with a large number of other works, can only be regarded as apocryphal. However, a considerably more ‘face-value’ attitude still seems to prevail in China, especially at the popular level, and a survey of the many Chinese websites devoted to reproducing the text of the *Maqian ke* and commenting upon it suggests that, without visible exception, the work is always treated as authentically prophetic. Such is also the attitude of Allan Lian, whose work we will return to below (p.12).

Only the first of the prophecies in our text refer to events occurring during Zhuge’s life-time, the remainder ranging through the various dynasties and regimes between then and the present day, and beyond into the future. One would, of course, be delighted to find a 3rd century manuscript containing the *Maqian ke* in the same form as we have it today, but a more rational approach to dating texts such as these would be to look at the latest prediction that appears to have definitively ‘come true’ (in this case, the period 1911-1949), and date the text to some time after that. However, this is by no means the end of the problem as, without a definitive history of the text and its publication, we have little idea of what the ‘original’ form may have been like, what evolutions it may have passed through, or whether it has acquired additional, interpolated passages over time. In a country like China, where the structure of history is viewed in terms of successive dynasties and political periods, it would hardly be surprising if old texts were updated when the ‘Mandate of Heaven’

passed from one dynasty or ruling elite to another. This may well be the case here. Indeed, the structure of the *Maqian ke* and similar texts, including others reproduced in **Seven Prophecies**, seem to invite such revisions.

The majority of the text of the *Maqian ke* given in **Seven Prophecies**, pp.9-15 is accompanied by a commentary and colophon under the name of the Buddhist monk Shou Yuan 守元 which, as may be seen from the translation, bears a date which, if correct, would presumably be an indication of the commentary's date of composition. It's tempting to consider the possibility that the basic text may also be this old, and possibly even that Shou Yuan may, in fact, be the author not only of the commentary, but also of the text commented upon besides. However, there are various problems raised by this date. The colophon appears immediately after prediction No. 9 and, in the **Seven Prophecies** text, states that Shou Yuan was born in 'Jiajing 10th year' (嘉靖十年) and had now reached 86 years old. Thus he was born in the 10th year of the reign of Ming Emperor Jiajing, 1522-1567, *i.e.*, 1531, and so the colophon would date to 1617, in the reign of Wanli. Taken at face value, this would imply that the text of the *Maqian ke* was in existence as early as 1617, or at least those nine predictions to which Shou Yuan has provided a commentary. The difficulty with this is that prediction No. 8 specifically refers to the total of 16 emperors reigning in the Ming period between 1368 and 1644, of whom Jiajing was the 11th and Wanli the 13th, while prediction No. 9 refers to the Qing dynasty (1644-1911) and No. 10 to the Republican period (1911-1949). Even if no more than the first nine predictions existed when Shou Yuan wrote, this would still mean that all 16 emperors of the Ming dynasty, as well as the ten emperors of the Qing, were being predicted by 1617, and that Shou Yuan was capable of interpreting the predictions. Among the alternatives we have to consider would be that both Zhuge Liang (or whoever in fact authored the text) and Shou Yuan shared the same sort of prescience and the *Maqian ke* is truly predictive, which most would consider unlikely; that the commentary, or at least the dating of the colophon, is a later forgery, and that both this and the *Maqian ke* itself are much later productions; or that there is an error in the colophon's date.

This last possibility is raised by the alternative text found on the internet, of which one example is referred to in the bibliography as **Web1**. This provides the same text of the colophon, except that *Jiajing* 嘉靖 is replaced by *Jiaqing* 嘉慶, thus referring to the Jiaqing reign period of the Qing dynasty, 1796-1820; the tenth year of which was 1805. If Shou Yuan was 86 when he wrote his colophon, this would date it to 1891, in the reign of the 9th Qing emperor, Guangxu. This would at least strain our credibility rather less, and perhaps make Shou Yuan's possible composition of both text and commentary a little more feasible. It would also eliminate the problem with the apparent foreknowledge of the end of the Ming dynasty, but a 19th century date of composition for either the main *Maqian ke* text or Shou Yuan's commentary still presents us with the problems of prediction No. 9 referring to the ten emperors of the Qing dynasty and apparently to Xuanton, whose reign period did not begin until 1908; and also of No. 10 referring to the Republic. As will become apparent below, in the discussion of Xu Ke's *Qingbai Leichao* (p.8), we know that the text of prediction No. 9 was in existence as early as 1917, but with regards to prediction No. 10 one has to suspect that the text may have been tampered with in some way, and that at least this latter prophecy may have been interpolated at a date following 1949. As I have been unable to locate an unquestionably pre-1949 copy of the *Maqian ke* at the time of writing it is, of course, impossible to make a definitive comment here.

If, for the moment, we assume that prediction No. 10 is interpolated, and that the 'original' *Maqian ke* consisted of those sections which are now numbered as

predictions 1-9 (the historical section) and 11-14 (the apocalyptic section), there is another possibility to consider, which is that the commentary (and indeed Shou Yuan himself) may actually be 'fictional', and was written as an integral part of the text: the 'mysterious text' of the *Maqian ke* and the 'key to its understanding' being written by the same, unknown, hand. In this case, the question of Shou Yuan's dating would become fairly irrelevant, for the dates themselves may, in fact, be fictional.

Apart from the edition of the **Seven Prophecies** listed in the bibliography, I have so far found only two other editions of the *Zhongguo yuyan qizhong* in western academic libraries; copies do not appear to be held either by the British Library or the Library of Congress. The first is in the Chicago Public Library (Call Number: CHINESE BF 1790.C481987), which, while I haven't examined it personally, is quite obviously a 1987 edition of the same work as **Seven Prophecies**, being also published by Wu ling chu ban she (Woolin) and containing the same number of pages, 147.

The other edition is in the National Library of Australia (Call Number: OC 1739.3 5610), from which I obtained photocopies of both the text of the *Maqian ke* and the cover and prolegomena. This is plainly a different edition from the **Seven Prophecies**, consisting of only 94 pages plus 4 pages of prolegomena and printed on double-leaves. The cover and prolegomena obviously differ from the opening pages of **Seven Prophecies**. These prolegomena contain a preface attributed to a certain Li Zhong 李中 of Tiaoxi 苕溪 (both in Chinese and with a translation into English by a certain 'Macon', bearing a date of 1867), although it is unclear to me whether this preface should be attached only to the *Tui bei tu*, a prophetic text also included in all editions of the *Zhongguo yuyan qizhong*, or to the collection overall (**Chan, p.150**, while expressing doubts as to the preface's veracity, appears to believe it refers to the *Zhongguo yuyan qizhong* as a whole, and thus credits Li Zhong as the compiler of the collection). According to this preface, the volume to which it is attached (whichever work that refers to) was held by the Qing court, but looted from the Summer Palace in Beijing when it was burned by English and French troops in 1859 (*sic*; actually 1860). **Lee, pp.11-12** (admittedly translating only the *Tui bei tu* from an unspecified source), recounts the same story and appears to believe it refers only to the *Tui bei tu*; and as the preface states that the book 'contains pictures' (which applies only to the *Tui bei tu*; none of the other texts in the *Zhongguo yuyan qizhong* are illustrated), my instinct would be to agree with him. This would, of course, argue against Chan's identification of Li Zhong as the compiler of the *Zhongguo yuyan qizhong*; and it has to be pointed out that Li Zhong's name doesn't appear on the **Seven Prophecies**.

When I first came across the work in the NLA catalogue, it was listed as 'Min Kuo 1-19, *i.e.*, between 1912 and 1930', the date allegedly deriving from a postscript. However, email correspondence with the librarian, Di Ouyang (19 January 2009) established that no such postscript existed, and that the book contained no publication place or date whatever; the catalogue record was therefore amended. While plainly earlier than the Woolin printings, the only date that can be established for this edition is that it was earlier than April 1968, the date the NLA acquired it. The pages of the *Maqian ke* are exactly the same in both this and the **Seven Prophecies** edition, and it's quite obvious that the latter is photographically reproduced either from the edition held by the NLA, or that both have reproduced it from a common source. One might further speculate that, as the *Zhongguo yuyan qizhong* material in **Seven Prophecies** runs to 94 pages (the remainder of the book being devoted to other divinatory texts, as mentioned above), which is exactly the same page count as the NLA edition (prolegomena apart), the one is probably a complete reprint of the other.

Earlier versions of the text undoubtedly exist: as pointed out by **Smith (2) pp.217, 334** there is a reference to the *Maqian ke* in the *Qingbai leichao* 清稗類鈔, by Xu Ke 徐珂 (1869-1928), published in Shanghai with a date variously given as 1916 or 1917. This is a vast collection of anecdotes concerning the Qing dynasty, and the reference to the *Maqian ke* is contained in the chapter titled *Fangji* (方伎) or ‘Divination’, which also discusses a number of the other prophetic texts collected in the **Seven Prophecies**. I have not seen the printed volume, but the entire, punctuated text is available online (URL listed in the bibliography under **Xu**). The complete section on the *Maqian ke* is as follows:

馬前課

蜀漢諸葛亮有《馬前課》，每一課指一朝，白鶴山僧守元解釋之。
其論本朝者為第九課，○●○○●●●，中上。水月有主，古月為君。
。十傳絕統，相敬若賓。證曰：「陽陰陽，陰陰陰，在卦為晉。」
解曰：「水月有主，清也；古月，胡也。」

The first section of this reads:

Maqian ke

Zhuge Liang of Shu Han (wrote) *Maqian ke*, each prediction referring to a single dynasty, with commentary by the Buddhist priest Shou Yuan of White Crane Mountain (*Bai He Shan*). The discussion of the present dynasty (*i.e.*, the Qing dynasty) appears in the ninth prediction: [*there then follows, succeeding the row of circles, the text of prediction No. 9, exactly as it appears in Seven Prophecies; this is translated below, p.23*].

This obviously tells us very little about the book itself or its origin, but we can learn one or two things. The first is that the *Maqian ke* quite obviously existed by 1917; however, we have no idea when Xu Ke actually wrote this passage. We might imagine that his reference to the present (Qing) dynasty implies that it was prior to 1911; but as the entire book is a collection of anecdotes about the Qing period Xu may have been a little flexible about his dating, and ‘present dynasty’ may simply refer to ‘the dynasty under discussion’. We can see from Xu’s quotation, though, that the text of prediction No. 9 existed in exactly the same form, when he wrote, as it appears in **Seven Prophecies**. As this appears to refer to the name of the last Qing emperor, Xuan Tong, in a context suggesting that he was the last of his line, and that that line consisted of ten emperors (see the main translation and commentary, pp.23-24), we are once again presented with some problematical alternatives. We may conjecture perhaps that the *Maqian ke*’s text was written, or at least tampered with, after 1911, to include the reference to Xuan Tong; or that it was written before 1911 and the reference is politically intended to imply the imminent overthrow of Xuan Tong; or if it was written before 1911, that the apparent reference to Xuan Tong is surprising but coincidental; or that the text is truly prophetic. In the absence of a securely dated early copy of the *Maqian ke*, these problems remain insoluble. However, the most logical solution would appear to be that the ‘original *Maqian ke*’, prior to the presumed interpolation of the Republican prediction No. 10 and possibly including Shou Yuan’s commentary, was written sometime between the fall of the Qing in 1911 and the publication of Xu Ke’s work in 1916/1917. As such, the work’s apparent political character might be considered less important, the Qing dynasty having been overthrown, with greater emphasis placed on its millenarian and apocalyptic aspects; and if the work is late, it’s possible that it may have been written ‘in imitation’ of more classical works such as the *Tui bei tu* and the *Shaobing ge*,

complete with commentary and *Yijing* hexagrams. I would, of course, emphasise the extreme tentativeness of this proposal, in the absence of further evidence.

Such a proposal would not, though, conflict with what we know of the publishing history of the *Zhongguo yuyan qizhong* (which appears to have been one of several similar books, some containing five or eight prophetic texts). **Chan p.150** gives a first publication date of ‘the 1930s’, with successive reprints in China, Hong Kong and Taiwan. I greatly regret not having seen any of these early editions, as they would certainly solve the problem of prediction No. 10, mentioned above.

While questions as to the precise form and date of an ‘original text’ of the *Maqian ke* are of considerable interest in themselves, it seems possible that the work has continued to evolve until the present day, with new verses being added to the text reflecting current events and concerns. For a claimed 20-verse version of the *Maqian ke* (rather than the 14-verse version translated here), see the Appendix, below, p.30; however, it should be pointed out that every version of the text I have found on Chinese websites (and there are many) number only 14 verses.

These questions aside, in 2005 I primarily consulted three other Chinese texts of the *Maqian ke* that can be found on the web, and the URLs for these are listed in the bibliography under the headings **Web1**, **Web2** and **Web3**, while the texts are reproduced here on pp.41-54. As of 2012, there are many more Chinese-language texts and commentaries available on the internet, but time has not permitted more than a cursory glance at these. **Web1** is in traditional characters, and appears to follow the **Seven Prophecies** text most closely, as it includes Shou Yuan’s commentary and colophons, as well as the second of the two ‘editorial notes’ contained in **Seven Prophecies**. However, there are occasions where the odd word is given in a variant form, while there are substantial variants to the commentary to prediction no. 2, and to the text of prediction No. 3. These variants are examined in the notes to the main translation.

Web2 and **Web3** are both in simplified characters. If **Seven Prophecies** and **Web1** derive from a common source, the same may be said for **Web2** and **Web3**, as the texts they reproduce have a great deal in common; however, alike as they are to each other, they seem to indicate a variant descent from that of **Web1** and **Seven Prophecies** (though ultimately all four undoubtedly derive from a common source). There are more variants in the text, though these are often very minor (such as interchanging *wu* 無 and *wu* 无, both meaning ‘not’); such variants are shared between **Web2** and **Web3**, but not with the other texts. **Web2** has a commentary that is similar to and overlaps with certain parts of that by Shou Yuan, but also contains substantial variations, and Shou Yuan’s colophons and personal remarks are not reproduced. **Web3**, which only prints the first 10 prophecies anyway (*i.e.*, those relating to historical periods, and not extending beyond 1949) does away with traditional commentary altogether and provides a much longer and more elaborate historical commentary, newly written by the author, ‘Taiping’ 太平. Variants to the text (except the most minor), and **Web2**’s variants to the commentary, are discussed in notes to the translation. **Web3**’s commentary is only referred to when there is a particular need to do so, it being so prolix as to strike this writer as frequently rambling rather far from the point. **Web2** omits the ‘Editorial Comments’ from **Seven Prophecies**, though some similar material is presented in a short new introduction. **Web3**, besides its own extensive commentary, only reproduces the ‘prophetic verses’ contained in the text; all references to the hexagrams, and their visual representations, have been stripped out along with the traditional commentary. And, indeed, none of

the commentaries, modern or traditional, make any reference to the hexagrams accompanying the text.

As mentioned in the preface, the majority of the work on this project was completed in 2006, at which point I was unaware of the English translations of **Am-chi** and **Ruan**. These are plainly the work of the same hand, though the later edition credited to **Ruan** has extended commentary compared to the earlier one. The translations are not particularly close and the explanations lack detail, while the commentaries are written with a charmingly naïve literalism very similar to those found on the internet. These editions have been checked against my own version, but are only referenced in what follows at particular points of interest.

Ruan also reproduces the Chinese text, which is for the most part identical to that of **Seven Prophecies**, though curiously the text of prediction 3, and the first half of prediction 4, is replaced by a rather dark, murky and presumably photocopied page from another edition, with variant text for prediction 3 (**Ruan p.125**); a copy of this is included here on p.40. This quite plainly indicates another, otherwise unknown printed lineage for the *Maqianke*, outside the *Zhongguo yuyan qizhong* tradition, which may be the source for the text of the web versions. Regrettably, with such a small fragment of the text to examine, it is impossible to be certain about this.

TITLE AND DIVINATORY ASPECTS

The title, *Maqian ke* 馬前課, is most commonly read as ‘Before 前 the Horse 馬 Prophecies 課’ (**Smith (2) p.217**, and various Chinese websites), but this may be over-literal. A clue is to be found in another passage from the *Qingbai Leichao*, also mentioned by **Smith (2) p.217**, who refers to the printed volume’s *Fangji* 方伎 chapter, p.61. Again, I have only been able to see the online version. The passage appears under the heading *Maqian shu* 馬前數, ‘*Maqian* reckoning’, and reads:

馬前數

馬前數為占法之一種，俗傳以筆作圈，中書馬字，四周任意作畫，以奇偶定吉凶。其法最簡，立刻可成，故曰馬前數。

This can be translated as follows:

Maqian shu

Maqianshu is a common divination method where one draws a circle with a brush, then writes the character *ma* [horse] inside it. Round this random marks are made, and whether the number of these is odd or even decides fortune or misfortune. The method is very simple and quick, and thus is called *Maqian* reckoning.

As there seems to be no logical connection between a horse and this divination method, one would have to assume that *ma* is here being used in a punning sense, referring to the swiftness and immediacy of the method, an interpretation that would seem to be confirmed by the final sentence. From this we might infer that, in the same way that the phrase *ma shang* 馬上, ‘on the horse’, means ‘without delay’, the meaning of *maqian* 馬前 is to be taken as ‘quick’ or ‘speedy’ and, indeed, the Wenlin computerised dictionary program gives this as a compound word meaning ‘post-haste’ or ‘very speedily’ (although the compound doesn’t appear in **Mathews**). Perhaps there’s an implication here that the method is ‘quicker than (ahead of) a horse’.

It would appear, then, that *Maqian shu* 馬前數 means ‘quick calculation/divination’, while *Maqian ke* 馬前課 means ‘quick predictions’ and that, as far as the latter is concerned, both the literalistic meaning ‘before the horse(s)’ and its associated story of Zhuge Liang divining in front of the army, (given in the

commentary below, p.14, from **Web2**) are fabrications based on a misunderstanding of 馬前.

Perhaps because of its extreme simplicity, there appears to be virtually no literature on *Maqian shu*, and a search of Chinese websites (17 April 2012) revealed only references to the *Qingbai Leichao* passage, and listings of the title in catalogues of various divination methods. The question remains, of course, whether the *Maqian shu* has any relationship with the *Maqian ke*.

On the ‘yes’ side, there’s the very obvious fact that both share the element 馬前, but there appears to be no other supporting evidence. On the ‘no’ side, the *Maqian shu* is a stroke-counting divination method that is completely different to the prophetic verse of the *Maqian ke* which, if it has any divinatory connection at all, would appear to be with the hexagrams of the *Yijing*, one of which is attached to each prediction. Again, there appears to be no sign of a connection between the *Maqian shu* and Zhuge Liang. And lastly, the two sections on *Maqian ke* and *Maqian shu* have separate sub-headings in the *Fangji* chapter of *Qingbai Leichao* and are many pages distant from one another, the first appearing in a discussion of prophetic texts, the second among a selection of divination methods. On balance, the only connection would appear to be that both are ‘quick’ varieties of either prophecy or divination.

Finally, there is the question of whether the hexagrams and indications of good or ill fortune attached to each prediction in the current version of the *Maqian ke* were part of the original text. Essentially, the *Maqian ke* is a simple prophetic poem, similar to Shao Yong’s *Plum Blossom Poem* (*Meihuashi shi zhang* 梅花詩十章, see **Liu, pp.103-110, Seven Prophecies, pp.85-87**) or Liu Bowen’s *Shaobing ge* (燒餅歌, see **Palmer, pp.70-75, Seven Prophecies pp.89-94**), neither of which have hexagrams attached to them. Beyond the occasional thematic similarity between the prophecies and the hexagram texts, pointed out in the commentary below, it is difficult to see any systematic method by which the hexagrams have been attached to the verses of the *Maqian ke* and, indeed, hexagram No. 30, *Li*, corresponds to two very different predictions, Nos. 2 and 11, in the first case linking via the structure of the hexagram, in the latter the text. As one would imagine the use of the same hexagram would produce similar texts, this would seem to suggest that the verses are capable of independently standing alone, and may thus have priority; and that the hexagrams have then been added to the text to match the wording of the verses, rather than the verses deriving from the hexagrams. Admittedly, the last prediction contains a line reading ‘the *yi* 易 calculations come to an end’, but whether *yi* should be read here as referring to the *Yijing*, or to the ‘easy’ calculations of the ‘quick predictions’ is perhaps debatable. However we read this, though, it still provides us with no clues as to how the hexagrams are attached to the text.

We may have a parallel situation here to that of the *Tui bei tu* 推背圖 where 20th century printed versions, such as that in **Seven Prophecies, pp.17-76**, include hexagrams as well as the text and illustrations, while the Qing dynasty manuscript versions collected by **Bauer (1)** contain only the text and illustrations. We have seen above that when Xu Ke composed the *Qingbai Leichao*, prior to 1917, the hexagrams and fortune indications were already in place, and unless a very early version of the *Maqian ke* comes to light, it remains a moot point as to whether these were original features or later additions; but the question at least seems worthy of consideration. If, though, there is any value to our speculation that the *Maqian ke* is, effectively, a ‘forgery’ from the period between 1911 and 1917, such features may have been

included in the text simply in imitation of 20th century editions of the *Tui bei tu*, which might explain their apparent lack of systemisation and inconsistency.

At this point, the work of Allan Lian may be of some interest. Mr. Lian apparently only became aware of the *Maqian ke* when the third version of this article was made available online and, despite the argument put forward here to the contrary, appears to believe that the text is actually the work of Zhuge Liang himself, who is treated as a prescient Daoist sage. If I interpret Mr. Lian's view correctly, he seems to believe that Zhuge Liang consulted the *Yijing* about the future, receiving the hexagrams included here in the text, and then wrote the *Maqian ke* prophecies on the basis of this material. Lian has since written a number of short pieces on the subject, critiquing the various Chinese commentaries translated here, adding further commentary of his own, and providing two 'hexagram-based interpretations' of prediction Nos. 1 and 10 (as well as a 'cryptic commentary' on prediction No. 12 that, regrettably, appears to require further explication). I'm grateful to Allan Lian for allowing me to include the first of these interpretations here in the commentary to the translation, and interested readers should certainly consult his blog under the dates listed in the bibliography for further material (**Lian**). In my view, though, Lian, who is a lively and combative writer, rarely helps his case by a continuing refusal to disclose the actual interpretive methods by which he arrives at his conclusions.

It appears to me that Lian is assuming that the predictive verse derives from the accompanying hexagram (which some may think a somewhat fragile assumption), and is then selectively seeking elements in the hexagram text and structure that seem to confirm this. This is a very attractive exercise in itself, but hardly provides actual proof, in academically acceptable terms, of a connection between the two, nor does it demonstrate any systematic means by which the hexagrams are associated with the verses. Indeed, Lian's commentary on the first prediction requires a specific reading of the verse which some may find arguable, and it would be fascinating to see how he interpreted the differing texts of predictions 2 and 11, both of which, as mentioned above, are connected with the same hexagram, No. 30, *Li*. Nonetheless, there is much of interest here, as will be seen below (pp.16-17), and I'd be delighted to see Allan Lian produce similar interpretations for all the predictions contained in the text, if such were possible, which would certainly increase the literature on the *Maqian ke*.

THE ARRANGEMENT OF THE TEXT AND TRANSLATION

The text appearing in **Seven Prophecies** contains fourteen separate prophecies, each in four sections, generally taking up five columns of print, as follows, from right to left:

Section one: The number of the prediction, a representation, in the form of six circles, of a hexagram from the *Yijing*, and a two-character indication of the 'fortune', though whether this applies specifically to the hexagram, or to the overall prophecy, or both, is far from clear.

Section two: a verse (the actual prophetic text) in four lines of four characters each, sometimes rhyming, sometimes not. This verse is split up over two columns of the printed text, two lines of verse per column.

Section three: a description in words, as yang and yin lines, of the 'image' of the hexagram, followed by its name.

Section four: the commentary, by Shou Yuan (this is only present for prophecies 1-9).

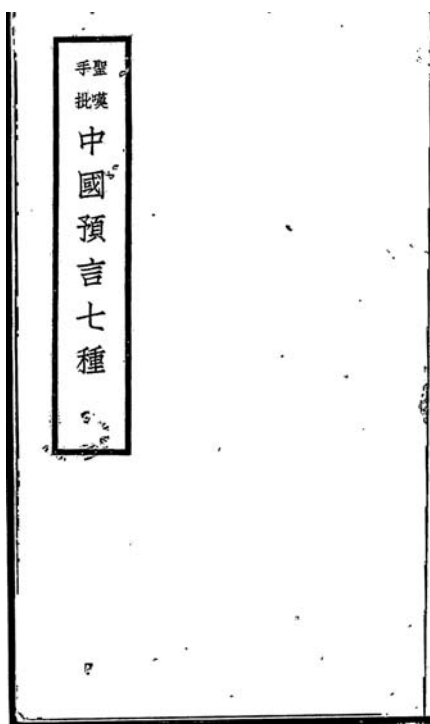
There are also two 'editor's notes' appended to predictions 11 and 14.

All the text translated from **Seven Prophecies** (including Shou Yuan's commentary) is printed here in roman type; I have also provided a pinyin transliteration of the prophetic verses themselves in a sans serif typeface to make it easier to see the rhyme scheme, where present. Prediction headings, in bold-italic type and giving the dynasty referred to and simplified dates, are not in the original.

Commentary (apart from that of Shou Yuan, which is included among the material translated in roman type), both my own and that derived from **Web1-3**, is presented interlineally and in italics.

I have relied heavily on the commentaries available to me, both by Shou Yuan and **Web1-3**, only rarely (and, I hope, obviously) adding interpretations of my own. A more formal publication than this would require rather more expansive annotation of the historical background to some of the events mentioned in the prophecies than that presented here; however, I hope the commentary is sufficiently detailed to make sense of what is being referred to. Direct quotations from the *Yijing*, and the names of hexagrams, are Englished as per the **Wilhelm** edition, as being probably the most familiar edition available.

The main problem with such a riddling text as the *Maqian ke*, of course, is that its wordplay and allusions are susceptible to differing or even multiple interpretations. The commentaries I have consulted, while frequently in broad agreement, quite as frequently differ, or offer explanations for different parts of the text; while some verses simply have no commentary at all. The latter is particularly true of those prophecies that refer to events that have not yet happened; in this case little interpretation is possible beyond an attempt to clarify the meaning of the verses as they stand. However, as mentioned above, the 'future events' referred to undoubtedly have an inbuilt flexibility to them, allowing them to be manipulated for apocalyptic or political purposes. Any correlation with such a mutable future is hardly possible ... unless, of course, one has the predictive power of a Zhuge Liang.



Cover of the undated *Zhongguo yuyan qizhong* in the National Library of Australia.

TRANSLATION AND COMMENTARY

TITLE

The ‘quick predictions’ of Prime Minister Zhuge of Shu Han.

*The translation of Maqian ke as ‘quick predictions’ follows the argument presented above in the introduction, on p.10. The more usual reading, ‘Before the Horse’ is given by **Smith (2) p.217**, and is obviously followed by **Web2**, which provides an introduction, as follows:*

‘Tradition has it that when Zhuge Liang was with the army, he wrote the Maqian ke in his leisure time, a book predicting all the great affairs of the world. Literally speaking, when he was leading out the army, he made these predictions “before the horse(s)”, meaning he drew up the hexagrams.¹ Zhuge Liang’s Maqian ke is extraordinarily well-coded, each dynasty having one hexagram, this pattern appearing throughout the order. Yet numerous other prophetic books have appeared throughout Chinese history that are relatively difficult to interpret because, telling of great affairs throughout history, in some dynasties [they mention] many great events, [while] some dynasties [seem to] have very few important affairs, without following any logic.’

*Without further corroborative evidence for this ‘before the horse’ explanation, one can only suspect it originates in a naïvely literal reading of the work’s title, as discussed above. No such introduction occurs in **Web1**, or our main text. **Web3** has a similar, modern introduction stating again that each dynasty or period has only one prediction attached to it. It also states that the first ten predictions have already occurred (i.e., not the 11th, which **Web1** and **Web2** interpret as referring to the Second World War).*

SUB-TITLE

Elucidated by the Buddhist priest Shou Yuan of Baihe Shan (*White Crane Mountain*).

That is, with commentary by Shou Yuan, who appears to have lived either during the Ming or Qing dynasty (see the introduction, p.6, for varying dates of composition for this commentary, of 1617 or 1891; and commentary to prediction 9, below). I have been unable to discover any further details of this gentleman or his place of origin. There is a Baihe Shan at Wuzhou City in Guangxi, and another in west Sichuan, but whether either of these is the mountain referred to here remains uncertain.

¹ Curiously, a very similar story ‘explains’ the title of another divination system associated with horses, the *Kongzi matou bufa* 孔子馬頭卜法 (Divination Method of the Head of Confucius’ Horse), of which several versions were among the manuscripts found at Dunhuang, dating from the 9th and 10th centuries. The title is explained as follows: Confucius was on the way to settle a pressing affair when he was seized by doubt. Thus, his foot on the stirrup and leaning on the neck of his horse, he had recourse to this mantic procedure; as a result of which he gave it the name ‘method of the horse’s head’ in memory of the episode. Authorship of the *Kongzi matou bufa* is credited to Lin Xiaogong 臨孝恭 of the Sui dynasty (589-618). The technique is similar to an early and simple form of the *lingqian* 靈籤 (spirit-stick) system, using only nine sticks, and once more the story appears to have no relevance to the method itself. Again, one is tempted to see an original usage of the word *ma* to mean ‘quick’, rather than ‘horse’, followed by a later, over-literalistic ‘explanation’. It’s perhaps noteworthy how persistent this type of explanatory story appears to be. **Kalinowski pp.318-319, Strickmann p.140.**

[No.1: Three Kingdoms, 220-265]

Prediction No. 1 ○ ● ● ● ● ○ middle lower.

The sets of six circles at the beginning of each prediction symbolically represent hexagrams of the Yijing, ○ representing a yang line, ● a yin line. The hexagram image and the verbal description of it below are given according to Chinese ‘reading order’, i.e., reading from top to bottom in a vertical column [horizontally reproduced here as left to right]. Thus, the top line of the hexagram is here given first, the bottom line last, contrary to the normal order in which a hexagram is constructed, where the first line is placed at the bottom. As stated in the text below, the hexagram represented here is No. 27, Yi, ‘Corners of the Mouth’ or ‘Nourishment’. The term *zhongxia* (middle lower) appears to represent a brief assessment of the ‘fortune’ of the hexagram and/or the attached verse (if it is actually possible to separate them), in this case ‘moderately bad’. Similar assessments are given in the interpretive texts for *lingqian* 靈籤 (spirit-stick) divination [Smith (2) pp.239-240], and also for the ‘Five Coin’ divination system attributed to Zhuge Liang [Kermadec pp.6-40]. The assessments are based on combinations of three terms: *shang* 上, ‘upper’, *zhong* 中, ‘middle’, and *xia* 下, ‘lower’. The 14 hexagrams/verses given here are classified as follows:

Phrase	Translation	Meaning	No. of Appearances
Shangshang	Upper-upper	Extremely good	1
Shangzhong	Upper-middle	Good	3
Zhongshang	Middle-upper	Moderately good	2
Zhongzhong	Middle-middle	Moderate	1
Zhongxia	Middle-lower	Moderately bad	5
Xiazhong	Lower-middle	Bad	1
Xiaxia	Lower-lower	Extremely bad	1

There appears to be no direct correspondence between the three terms *shang*, *zhong* and *xia*, and the individual trigrams composing the hexagrams (i.e., taking the first term in the pair to refer to the upper trigram, the second to the lower trigram, or vice-versa). For example, the trigram *Kun* appears variously associated with all three: *shang*, *zhong* and *xia*. The terms are thus presumably attributed to the hexagrams or texts by meaning, rather than structure.

Wu li hui tian Ju gong jin cui
Yin ju yang fu Ba qian nu gui

Powerless to restore the nation Bowed down I exhaust my energy
Dwelling in yin, opposing yang Eight thousand female ghosts

A four-line verse, each line of four characters, lines 2 and 4 being in rhyme form. The verse appears to refer to Zhuge Liang himself (see below, commentary to this prediction), who was unable to ‘restore the nation’ (more literally, ‘return heaven’: i.e., ‘restore the mandate of heaven’) in that he failed to lead the state of Shu to victory over the other contending states of the Three Kingdoms period. As the Emperors of Shu (also known as Shu Han) were of the Liu family, and claimed descent from the imperial family of the preceding Han dynasty, a triumph for Shu would, indeed, have restored the Han imperium. ‘Bowed down I exhaust my energy’ is a partial version of a famous quotation attributed to Zhuge Liang: ‘Bowed down I

*exhaust my energy (in the public service; only with death does my course end).’ See **Chang p.75**. ‘Dwelling in yin, opposing yang’ may refer to opposing a superior enemy with weak resources. Line 4 of the verse, while meaningless at face value, is an example of word-play: the Chinese characters for Ba qian nu gui 八千女鬼 when assembled together, form the character 魏, Wei, the name of the state which conquered the Shu Han kingdom in 265, after Zhuge Liang’s death.*

The image yang yin yin yin yang is of the hexagram Yi (No. 27: ‘Corners of the Mouth’).

Again, the verbal description of the hexagram is given according to Chinese ‘reading order’. The connection between the hexagram and the ‘prophetic verse’ is perhaps tenuous, unless one takes the more literal meaning of the hexagram name, ‘to nourish’, as referring to Zhuge Liang’s attempts to ‘nourish his state’. But see Allan Lian’s commentary, below.

The commentary says: Zhuge’s descendants later had to submit to the rule of Wei.

*This commentary is that of Shou Yuan. **Web1** gives variant commentary here: ‘[Zhuge’s descendants’] glorious merit was brought down by Wei.’*

***Web2**’s commentary reads: ‘Zhuge died, “bowed down and exhausting his energy”; later the ruler of Shu Han surrendered to Wei.’*

*Allan Lian (see above, p.12) has provided a commentary on this verse (**Lian**), although this requires a reading of the first line of the verse that differs from my own. As will be seen above, I have translated this line, wu li hui tian, as referring to Zhuge’s inability to restore the mandate of heaven to the Shu Han dynasty, and I partly base this reading on the fact that the second line, being a well-known quotation about his service to the throne, would appear to suggest a political context. **Ruan p.131**, translates this line, perhaps a little clumsily, as ‘No ability to reverse the heavenly mandate’, which suggests a similar interpretation. Lian, however, believes not only that Zhuge Liang was the actual author of the verse, but also that he was a practicing Daoist, and thus reads the first line, as ‘unable to return to heaven’, which he believes Zhuge Liang, as a Daoist, would desire to do. His comments, correlating the predictive verse with Hexagram 27, then run as follows:²*

In this very first prophecy or omen of the Maqian ke, the Book of Changes foretold Zhuge Liang a number of important things including his various illnesses (tumours and ulcers) and that of his impending death (signified by Daoist priests and graves).

In line with Heaven and Earth, Zhuge Liang, the holy man was to provide nourishment for persons of worth and thus reaches the whole people. Probably, arising from this guidance, he proceeded to provide thirteen more prophecies on the destiny of China, so that persons of worth down the respective ages would correctly interpret his prophecies and provide the proper nourishment (or information on the omens) to the populace.

On seeing his return blocked by a mountain and with his energy exhausted because of illnesses, he bowed down to lament his powerlessness to return to Heaven. (Wu li hui tian) (Ju gong jin cui)

² My thanks to Allan Lian for permission to quote this material.

The doubling of Kun confirms his impending death for whence ever has a person shrouded by double yin (death) escape to yang (life)? From the hexagram and trigrams, he perceived that tens of years after his death, the power of Wei, his sworn enemy based in the North East of Shu, was destined to ascend. Therefore in a play on words he cryptically wrote Wei's name down as eight thousand female ghosts, forewarning his Shu people and hoping to keep the enemy ignorant. (Yin ju yang fu) (Ba qian nu gui)

While some of this is plain enough (the upper trigram of hexagram 27 is gen, signifying both a mountain and the north-east), there remain some parts where one could wish for a little more exposition.

[No.2: Jin Dynasty, 265-420]

Prediction No. 2 ○ ● ○ ○ ● ○ middle lower.

The assessment is again given as 'moderately bad'.

Huo shang you huo Guang zhu zhong tu
Cheng ming bu zheng Jiangdong you hu

There is fire above fire Illuminating the central territory

The name is not correct In Jiangdong is a tiger

*The verse follows the usual four-line format, with lines 2 and 4 rhyming. 'Fire above Fire': when the character for fire, (huo) 火, is 'doubled', by placing one character above the other, we get the word Yan 炎, referring to the General Sima Yan 司馬炎, the founder of the Jin dynasty. Yan itself means 'a flame, to blaze, brilliant', while zhong tu is a poetical allusion to the land of China (see below, commentary under **Web1**). 'The name is not correct' is a very literal translation; the proper implication is probably 'His reputation is undeserved'. Jiangdong, literally 'east of the river Yangzi', is a name for the province of Jiangsu; in this case, however, it may refer to the kingdom of Wu, still unconquered when Sima Yan came to power. The last line may equally be translated 'In Jiangdong are tigers', but I am unable to pin down the exact reference. 'Tiger Cavalry' are referred to as a division of the Wu army in a memorial quoted in **Fang Vol. 2, p.296**. Again, the 'tigers' may also refer to the frequent rebellions of the Eastern Jin period; see **Till & Swart p.14**.*

*However, there may be another interpretation, more directly relevant to Zhuge Liang himself. Shou Yuan's commentary, translated below, ties 'Jiangdong' specifically to the city of Jiangkang, which was later renamed Nanjing (Nanking), but was also known as Jinling. Of this, Zhuge Liang is said to have remarked: 'Jinling, with Mount Zhong looking like a "coiling dragon" and Mount Shitou a "crouching tiger", is the site of a ruler's residence.' (Chinese text in **Zhuge (1), p.178**; translation by **Chan, p.88**, with his 'coiling lion' corrected here to 'coiling dragon'). It's thus possible that the last line of this prophecy refers to the area as the proper site for a capital city; however, see below, regarding the commentary.*

Web1 has a variant for line 2 of the text: instead of tu 土 we have yuan 原, the term zhong yuan 中原 being another name for China. This is, perhaps an 'ignorant correction': zhong yuan is indeed a more common name for China, but zhong tu is necessary for the rhyme scheme. It's also possible that other verses reproduced here which fail to rhyme properly may be the result of similar 'ignorant corrections'.

The image yang yin yang yin yang is of the hexagram *Li* (No. 30, ‘The Clinging’).

In this case the relevance of the hexagram to the prophetic verse is immediately apparent. Hexagram 30 consists of the trigram Li, ‘fire’, doubled. Thus it represents ‘fire above fire’, and refers directly both to the opening verse, and to the name of Sima Yan.

The commentary says: Sima Yan usurped (*the throne of*) Wei Yuandi; the city of Jiankang was in Jiangdong.

*In translating thus, I follow the text of the commentary given in **Web2**, which I believe more likely to be correct than the **Seven Prophecies** text generally translated here. The latter half of the commentary given in **Seven Prophecies** reads: du jiankang jiankang shu jiangdong 都建康建康屬江東. This duplication of jiankang would require a translation that took one pair of characters to be the name of the place, the other to give its self-evident meaning, along the lines: ‘The commentary says: Sima Yan usurped (*the throne of*) Wei Yuandi; the city of Jiankang, (meaning) “Establishing Peace” (jian kang) was in Jiangdong.’ **Web2**’s commentary omits the second instance of the place name ‘Jiankang’, presumably believing it to be an erroneous duplication. I tend to agree.*

Web1’s commentary reads: ‘Sima usurped the throne. Mindi’s capital was Jiankang (Nanjing). Jiankang was in Jiangdong’

*This appears to be at least partially erroneous. Sima Yan was the first emperor of Western Jin, capital Chang’an, while Mindi was the last. Only after Mindi was killed did the Eastern Jin transfer the capital to Nanjing. See **Paludan pp.66, 68.***

[No. 3: Five Dynasties, 420-589]

Prediction No. 3 ○ ● ● ● ● ● lower lower.

This assessment is ‘extremely bad’.

Rao rao zhong yuan Shan he wu zhu
Er san qi wei Yang zhong ma shi

Many troubles in the central lands Mountains and rivers have no lord
A divided situation Sheep at the end, horses at the start

*A non-rhyming verse. The translation of er san qi wei in line 3 as ‘a divided situation’ takes er san 二三 (‘two, three’) in the sense of ‘divided’. A more literal reading is ‘two or three types’. **Web3** suggests that ‘2 3’ may refer to the ‘Five Hu’ 五胡, the five barbarian tribes who contended for the northern parts of China and established many of the Five Dynasty (or Northern and Southern Dynasties) states: Xiongnu, Xianbei, Jie, Di and Qiang. However, it is also quite likely that ‘2 3’ should simply be added together to make five, the reference being directly to the Five Dynasties period. It’s probably no more than an interesting coincidence that 二三 could also be read as ‘23’ (though the more normal form would be 二十三); 23 being the number of the hexagram attached to this prediction. However, as the Chinese didn’t number the hexagrams before the advent of Western influence in the 20th century, this correspondence would seem unlikely to be more than chance.*

Web1 has a different text for line 4: ‘mu zhong cao shi’ 木終草始. ‘Trees at the end, herbs at the start’.

The image yang yin yin yin yin yin is of the hexagram *Bo* (No. 23: ‘Splitting Apart’)

The name of the hexagram, while literally ‘to flay’ or ‘to strip’, would seem here to carry its more usual, Yijing-related meaning of ‘splitting’, and would refer to the troubled and ‘divided situation’.

The commentary says: The Five Dynasties began with Sima and ended with the Yang family.

This commentary refers to the last verse of the prophecy, ‘Sheep at the end, horses at the start’. The Ma 馬 of ‘Sima’ means ‘horse’. The Yang 楊 of ‘Yang family’, while actually meaning ‘willow’, is a pun with yang 羊, ‘sheep’.

Web1, in line with its variant text, has a different commentary: ‘The Five Dynasties began with the Xiao family, and ended with the Yang family.’ This takes the Five Dynasties as beginning with the Liang Dynasty, the rulers of which had the family name Xiao 瀟, also meaning ‘artemisia’ or ‘southernwood’, which are herbs. Mu 木, ‘trees’ is taken as a reference to the Yang family, whose name meant ‘willow’, as above. **Am-Chi** and **Ruan** also include this variant text, along with the variant commentary, which is reproduced in the Chinese text of **Ruan**, p.125. As mentioned in the introduction, the page of **Ruan**’s text containing Prediction No. 3 appears to come from a different source to the rest of his text, and is scanned and included here at the end of the Chinese text reproduced from **Seven Prophecies**, on p.40.

[No.4: Tang Dynasty, 618-907]

Prediction No. 4 ☉ ☉ ○ ☉ ○ ☉ middle lower.

This assessment is ‘moderately bad’.

Shi ba nan er Qi yu Taiyuan
Dong ze de jie Ri yue li tian

Eighteen men Arising from Taiyuan
Starting to understand the rule The times depend on Heaven

*A more-or-less rhyming verse. The opening of this verse (‘Eighteen men arising from Taiyuan, starting to understand the rule’) appears to be fairly transparent on the surface. As will be seen from Shou Yuan’s commentary, below, the subject of this verse is Li Shimin, who became the second emperor of the Tang dynasty under the name Tang Taizong (r.626-649), though it was his martial prowess that was largely responsible for establishing the dynasty in the first place. The rebellion that overthrew the brief Sui dynasty (589-618) was begun from Taiyuan by Li Shimin and his father Li Yuan, who was local administrator there: thus Shou Yuan’s comment below that Taizong ‘raised troops at Taiyuan’. **Macgowan p.289** tells us that at the same period Li also devoted himself to scholarship, and that ‘He had a building of his own, which was especially devoted to this one object. Here were gathered eighteen famous scholars, whose names have been recorded in history, because of their erudition, and scholarly men besides were invited to attend to assist in the discussions that were held between this famous man and his learned friends in their search for truth.’ This discussion with the ‘eighteen men’ could well be seen as ‘starting to understand the rule’. These eighteen scholars were also the subject of a painting by Yan Liben 閻立本 (c.600-673), and became a common subject in later art (**Cultural China**).*

*However, **Web3**, referring to the ‘18 men’ of the first line 十八男兒, suggests*

that if one puts together ten 十 and eight 八 one gets mu 木 ('wood'), while nan er 男兒 ('a son, man, men') is equivalent to zi 子 ('a son, a gentleman'). When mu 木 and zi 子 are combined, one gets Li 李, the family name of the Tang emperors. It is, perhaps, remarkable that the line can be interpreted in two separate and complimentary ways, both as a historic reference and by graphic manipulation.

The phrase ri yue 日月 translated as 'the times' here is literally 'Sun and Moon', although this can just as easily be read 'days and months', thus 'the times'; a literal reading of 'Sun and Moon depend on Heaven' would be equally possible. This line, Ri yue li tian, is identical to the first line of prediction No. 8 (p.23); however, the interpretation seems to be quite different (see below, commentary provided by **Web2**).

The image yin yin yang yin yang yin is of the hexagram Xie (No. 40: 'Deliverance')

In that the Tang dynasty might be seen as a 'deliverance' from the chaos of the Five Dynasties period, the hexagram may have some apparent connection here.

The commentary says: (The Emperor) Tang Taizong raised troops at Taiyuan.

Web2 has an alternative commentary: 'The Li (house) of Tang began with Taizong; (Empress)³ Wu (changed the) name to "Zhou".' For Empress Wu (Wu Zetian 武則天) generally, and the change of dynastic name to Zhou 周, see **Mayers p.274-276**. Presumably the notion here is that riyue 日月 (the times) refers to zhou 周, meaning 'a cycle' or (perhaps a more modern meaning) a week; 'depends on heaven (tian 天)' presumably being a reference to Wu Ze-tian.

There also seems to be the possibility that, in the 4th line, li 麗 ('beautiful' or 'to depend on') is being taken as a pun for Li 李. In this case, the reading for this line might be something like 'the times have beautiful days', referring to the glories of life under the Tang dynasty.

[No.5: Later Five Dynasties, 907-960]

Prediction No. 5 ○ ○ ○ ● ● ● lower middle.

The assessment is 'bad'.

Wu shi nian zhong Qi shu yu ba
Xiao ren dao chang Sheng ling tu du

Within fifty years Their number is eight
The way of the inferior man is waxing Sorrows for all who live

Strictly, a non-rhyming verse, although both sets of line-endings are somewhat assonant. 'The way of the inferior man is waxing' (literally 'inferior man's dao increases') is a direct quotation from the Tuan zhuan ('Commentary on the Decision') to hexagram 12. My translation here follows **Wilhelm**.

The image yang yang yang yin yin yin is of the hexagram Pi (No. 12: 'Standstill').

As noted above, the third line of the prophecy has a direct connection with this hexagram.

The commentary says: The 53 years of the Later Five Dynasties (period) was shared by eight surnames.

³ **Web2** lacks a character and reads 武 □, presumably 武后.

That is, the rulers of the Later Five Dynasties came from eight different families.

Web3 points out that a special feature of the Later Five Dynasties period was that the various rulers all honoured the Jidan (Khitan) Liao dynasty to the north of China, ceding territory and paying tribute; they also called the Jidan emperor ‘father’, while calling themselves ‘son’, so people called them ‘child emperors’. The ruler of Later Han also honoured the Jidan, and so was called the ‘Foolish Emperor’. This explains ‘The way of the inferior [literally ‘small’ or ‘young’] man is waxing’.

[No.6: Song Dynasty, 960-1279]

Prediction No. 6 ☉ ○ ○ ☉ ○ ○ upper middle.

The assessment is ‘good’.

Wei tian sheng shui Shun tian ying ren
Gang zhong rou wai Tu nai sheng jin

Only heaven produces water Man should follow Heaven
Hard within and soft without Earth, however, produces gold (*metal*)

Strictly, a non-rhyming verse, although the line-endings are somewhat assonant. ‘Jin’ 金 (gold/metal) is here identical to the name of the Nuzhen Tartar Jin 金 dynasty, conquerors of northern China during the Song dynasty in 1127. That the country was then divided between Song and Jin explains the dual nature of this prediction.

Web1 Text: line 1 has a presumably erroneous character-reversal. For our main text’s wei tian sheng shui (‘Only heaven produces water’), **Web1** has wei sheng tian shui (‘only produces heavenly water’).

The image yin yang yang yin yang yang is of the hexagram *Dui* (No. 58: ‘The Joyous’).

The name of the hexagram, Dui, may also be translated as ‘The Lake’, a possible reference to the heavenly water mentioned in the first line of the verse. The hexagram Dui consists of the Dui trigram doubled: the element attributed to the trigram Dui is metal (Jin).

The commentary says: The Zhao Song’s flourishing world transformed by the invasion of the Jin army is the image of ‘hard within and soft without’.

Zhao is the family name of the Song emperors.

Web2 Commentary: ‘The yellow (imperial) robe of the Zhao Song stood firm in resisting the (gold) Jin.’

Web3 Here the commentary states that, at the beginning of the Song dynasty ‘the common people longed for peace and tranquillity (tai ping 太平, the name of the regnal era established in 976) to be achieved. The ancients said “Heaven gives birth to virtue” and “water’s nature is yielding”. This is the source of the prediction’s opening sentence: “Only heaven produces water; Man should follow heaven”.’

Regarding the third line of this prediction: as **Paludan p.129** points out, the Song border wars caused a large increase in the army, spiralling taxes and hardship at home; which can be taken as ‘hard within’. **Web3** goes on to point out that: ‘In 1038 Li Yuanhao established the state of Western Xia. The Song dynasty lost almost every battle with the Western Xia, and could only offer yearly tribute to the Western Xia of 130,000 rolls of silk, 50,000 ounces of silver and 20,000 catties of tea. One

may say that this is being soft to the outside.’

It then states: ‘The first line of the prediction is: ‘Only heaven produces water’, indicating the Song dynasty. According to Wuxing theory, Earth subdues Water, while the Earth (also = ‘territory’) that gives birth to the Jin (= Metal) dynasty is the Song dynasty’s conquering star.’

[No. 7: Yuan Dynasty, 1271-1368]

Prediction No. 7 ☉ ○ ☉ ○ ○ ☉ middle middle.

The assessment is ‘moderate’.

Yi yuan fu shi Yi gang chu zhong
Wu wu xiang chuan Er xi wo dong

A chief returns to his origin Hard punishment for the Chinese
Five five ministers recorded Your West, my East

A rhyming verse. ‘A chief’ translates yi yuan, where yuan 元 is identical to the Yuan 元 of the invading Mongol Yuan Dynasty. There may be further wordplay involved here, as yi yuan fu shi might also be read as ‘First first returns to the first’.

The image yin yang yin yang yang yin is of the hexagram *Jing* (No. 48: ‘The Well’).

The connection between this hexagram and the prophetic text is not immediately apparent.

The commentary says: In the Yuan dynasty entire families rose to prominence and were later cut down. This entirely fits the image of ‘your West, my East’.

Web2 *Commentary: ‘(In the) Yuan dynasty all (or 10) ruling Khans rent the country asunder.’ This is perhaps adding ‘five five’ to give a total referring to the 10 Khans, though according to Paludan, p.148, there were actually only 9 Yuan emperors. Perhaps Genghis Khan is also being included in the dynasty.*

Web3 *‘This prediction talks of the Yuan dynasty. Yi yuan fu shi (‘A chief returns to his origin’) obscurely indicates the country of the Yuan dynasty’.*

This sounds like the commentator has little to offer here. The commentary continues: ‘The Mongolians ruled the Han people very strictly. The Mongolians classified the Han people into three or four types (the first class nationality was the Mongolians, the second the Chinese as an inferior people).’ And so on. The thrust of this is the severity of the Mongolian rule, culminating in an explanation of the phrase Yi gang chu zhong as: ‘Hard punishment for the Chinese’. Perhaps the ‘first’ class Mongols are referred to in yi yuan fu shi, with its multiple references to ‘first’.

“‘Five Five Ministers recorded” indicates the Yuan dynasty, from Yuan Shizu (Kublai)’s majestic beginning to Yuan Shundi (last emperor, 1333-1368)’s overthrow – from the beginning to the end – in all there are ten emperors; five five ministers added together are ten.’

‘From Genghis Khan onward the Mongols spread out from the east and conquered the west, founding an (empire) stretching across Eurasia with an area of 30 million square kilometres ... (much omitted, referring to the Mongol conquest of China and the founding of the Yuan) ... At the overthrow of the Yuan dynasty, all the Khanates disintegrated, and before long all were destroyed. Thus it’s said: “Your West, my East”.’

Am-Chi and **Ruan** explain ‘Your West, my East’ by ‘During the later part of their rule, different rulers had their spheres of influence.’

[No.8: Ming Dynasty, 1368-1644]

Prediction No. 8 ○ ○ ● ● ● ○ upper upper.

The assessment is 'extremely good'.

Ri yue li tian Qi se ruo chi
Mian mian yan yan Fan shi liu ye

The times depend on heaven The colour being red
Long-continuing Sixteen generations in all

Unusually, it's the first and third lines that rhyme here. 'The times' is literally 'sun 日 and moon 月'; combined together, the characters make Ming 明. As the commentary also points out, chi 赤 has the same meaning, 'red', as Zhu 朱, the family name of the Ming Emperors. Red was also the dynastic colour chosen by the Ming. Both mian and yan mean 'prolonged' or 'drawn out': mian mian yan yan reiterates the meaning, rather as 'double double length'. There were sixteen Ming Emperors in all.

The first line, Ri yue li tian, is identical to the fourth line of prediction No. 4 (above, p.20); however, here the interpretation seems to be quite different.

The image yang yang yin yin yin yang is of the hexagram Yi (No. 42: 'Increase').

As the last native Chinese dynasty, the Ming acquired an aura of the 'golden age', particularly under the ensuing Qing dynasty. This may be reflected by the choice of hexagram here.

The commentary says: sun and moon make Ming. Chi (red) is Zhu (red), who in the Ming dynasty produced sixteen rulers.

For this commentary, see the note on the verse, given above.

Web2 Commentary: 'The name Zhu (red) 朱 is indicated by chi (red) 赤. Sun-Moon ('the times') is Ming, with altogether 16 rulers.'

[No. 9: Qing Dynasty, 1644-1911]

Prediction No. 9 ○ ● ○ ● ● ● middle upper.

The assessment is 'moderately good'.

Shui yue you zhu Gu yue wei jun
Shi chuan jue tong Xiang jing ruo bin

The water moon is lord The ancient moon is ruler
The succession of ten ends as one Give reverence to the guest

*Strictly, a non-rhyming verse, although the line-endings are somewhat assonant (though rather less than elsewhere). As the commentary points out, 'water moon', shui yue 水月 and 'lord' zhu 主, when combined together, make Qing 清, the name of the invading Manchu dynasty that overthrew the Ming. 'Ancient moon', gu yue 古月, combined together, makes hu 胡, '(northern) barbarian', referring to the Manchus' northern, non-Chinese origin. This interpretation is also found in **Smith (2) p.217**. Shi chuan jue tong could equally be translated as the 'entire succession is broken off', in which case it might be possible to take this as referring to the Ming, the last native Chinese imperial dynasty; the 'guest' being the incoming Manchu dynasty after the succession of native Chinese dynasties had ended. However, it would*

be equally valid to translate shi chuan 十傳 as ‘the succession of ten’, which is how **Web2** and **Web3** obviously read the text, taking it to refer to the 10 emperors of the Qing dynasty, and I have translated accordingly, particularly as tong 統 (‘unity’) is part of the name of the last Qing emperor, Xuan Tong 宣統.

However, this would cause problems for any conjecture that the main text of the Maqian ke was written during the Qing, as an author writing before 1911 could not know the exact number of emperors in the dynasty. Of course, if the text of the Maqian ke is later than the Qing, then ‘succession of ten’ would be the more likely reading, and the following web-based comments then become more relevant. See above, p.8, and below, under the Commentary to this prediction.

The image yang yin yang yin yin yin is of the hexagram Jin (No. 35: ‘Progress’).

Perhaps a surprising choice of hexagram to link with this prophecy, the Qing dynasty generally being regarded as an oppressive period of foreign rule; particularly surprising if one were positing a date in the Qing period for the production of an ‘original’ Maqian ke, perhaps later modified.

The commentary says: ‘water moon is lord’ is ‘Qing’; ‘ancient moon’ is ‘Hu’ (barbarian). Barbarians are the rulers: danger. However, fate cannot be overturned! This old (Buddhist) monk was born in the tenth year of Jiajing and this year reached 86; hereafter he dares not make reckless proposals.

As discussed in the introduction (p.6), there are considerable problems about this date. Reading **Seven Prophecies** as the text stands (with Jiajing 嘉靖) gives a composition date of 1617. **Web1**, however, apart from replacing the yu 于 after ‘old monk’ with yu 於 (a normal substitution), then replaces Jiajing with Jiaqing 嘉慶, giving a date of 1891. Even so, if Shou Yuan’s commentary was actually written in 1891, one would still have to wonder whether using the phrase ‘Barbarians are the rulers: danger’ during the Qing dynasty would have been considered seditious.

For **Seven Prophecies’** ba you liu, **Web1** has ba shi you liu; both mean 86, though **Web1** is probably the more correct form.

An additional note in **Web1** (apparently by the hand of the modern web-master) reads: ‘You have to laugh, baby. The Qing Dynasty lasted 10 generations (rulers), yet when (emperor) Xuan Tong abdicated and the Republic came in, he still lived in the old palace, with the government honouring him as a guest.’

Web2 adds: ‘The Manchu Qing dynasty had ten emperors in all, but perished with (emperor) Xuan Tong.’

Web3 This gives the same explanation for Qing and Hu as the other commentaries. Shi chuan 十傳 is again taken as ‘the succession of ten’, i.e., the ten emperors of the Qing dynasty, which was ‘broken off’ in 1911. ‘Give reverence to the guest’ is then taken to refer to the ‘guest’ (i.e., ‘foreign’) rulers of China. It’s perhaps possible, however, that the ‘guests’ referred to are the foreign powers that increasingly interfered in China’s sovereignty toward the end of the Qing dynasty, ‘reverence’ then being taken more in terms of ‘submission’.

The remaining predictions are presented without commentary in the **Seven Prophecies** edition, and with progressively less comment in the web-based sources. This means that translation becomes much more difficult, and interpretation even more so. The tenth prediction would seem to refer to the Republican period, but thereafter the predictions become rather less specific. Any translation and

explanation here, then, can only be tentative at best.

[No. 10: Republican Period, 1911-1949]

As discussed in the introduction (p.6), this verse may well be a post-1949 interpolation. Further commentary on this verse may be found in Lian.

Prediction No. 10 ◎ ○ ◎ ○ ◎ ◎ middle lower.

The assessment is ‘moderately bad’.

Shi hou niu qian

Qian ren yi ge

Wu er dao zhi

Peng lai wu jiu

A pig behind, an ox in front

A thousand men with one voice

Five two reversed

Friends come without blame

A non-rhyming verse. The pig is the animal associated with the cyclical sign of the sexagenary cycle, xinhai 辛亥, which corresponds to the year 1911; the ox is the animal associated with jichou 己丑, which corresponds to 1949. These years span the Republican Period, from the overthrow of the Qing dynasty to the foundation of the People’s Republic. It’s notable that this prediction differs from the others in naming specific dates. ‘A thousand men with one voice’ may also be read as ‘everyone is unanimous’. ‘Five (times) two’ makes ten, meaning complete; the third verse thus may be read as ‘everything is reversed (or overturned)’; but see below. Although the phrase peng lai, ‘friends come’ appears in the fifth line of Hexagram 39 (the hexagram associated with this verse), peng lai wu jiu ‘friends come without blame’ is actually a quotation from the judgement text to hexagram 24, Fu, ‘Return’. The Republican era was, of course, a period of considerable chaos, beginning with the Nationalist government fighting various warlords, repeated outbreaks of civil war between Nationalists and Communists, the Sino-Japanese War, which merged eventually into World War Two, and the final overthrow of the Nationalist government by the Communists in 1949. The second and third lines might thus be read as saying ‘everyone is unanimous that everything is overturned’. As for the friends who come without blame, this might perhaps refer to Allied assistance to China during World War Two, or to the eventual Communist triumph, depending on one’s point of view.

The fact that the quotation comes from the ‘wrong’ hexagram (24 instead of 39, though there are close correspondences) may suggest that there is some particular reason why this quotation has been chosen; perhaps because the entire quotation was necessary to get the meaning across, in a way that the line from hexagram 39 would not. It should be emphasised that the following interpretation is highly speculative. ‘Friends come’, peng lai 朋來 with both words pronounced in the second tone, could possibly be read as a pun for Peng Lai 蓬萊 (again, both words pronounced in the second tone) the name of the mythical island paradise in the Eastern Sea. If Peng Lai were to be taken as a coded reference to Taiwan, the phrase might then be read as (Those who flee to) ‘Taiwan’ (are) without blame, a reference to the Nationalist withdrawal to the island in 1949. This would, of course, imply the possibility that the Nationalists produced or interfered with the text for propaganda purposes. See the introduction for more discussion of the possibility of post-dated interpolations in the text. Even so, it should be re-emphasised that this interpretation is undoubtedly what Shou Yuan would call a ‘reckless proposal’.

The image yin yang yin yang yin yin is of the hexagram *Jian* (No. 39: 'Obstruction').
For discussion of the hexagram's connection with the text, see above.

Web1 (Lacks commentary; following note presumably by the modern site-owner): 'Note: In xinhai 辛亥(1911) was the Revolution; the year renzi 壬子(1912) was the dawning of the first year of the Republic. Qian ren yi kou 千人一口 (combined) are the word he 和 (i.e., "Japanese"). In the same way we recognise "five two", in an inverted arrangement, indicates "double five": five fives (are) twenty-five, namely the 25th year of the Republic (1937, when the Japanese invaded China). "Friends come without blame": (what this) indicates raises numerous difficulties, but not to be too much of a mess.' In other words, he appears to have nothing to offer on 'Friends come without blame'.

Web2 Commentary: "'Pig behind, ox in front" is the same as the year xinhai 辛亥, qian ren yi kou makes he ("Japanese"); "Five two reversed" is the people and also the friends from foreign nations.' This commentary does not make much sense in the second half. Presumably the commentator has missed the significance of 'five two reversed'. See **Web1** for this.

Web3 "'Friends come without blame" indicates the Republic of China having control of the land during this period, resulting in continual poverty and weakness; the Republic being so, was bullied at the borders, being subjected to Japanese invasion. "Friends" are foreign nations.'

Am-Chi and **Ruan** put Qian ren yi kou 千人一口 together as xiang 香 (Cantonese hong) and take this as referring to Hong Kong 香港. The sequence of animal signs in the Chinese calendar running directly through pig, rat and ox, 'a pig behind, and ox in front' is thus taken to refer to a rat year, in this case 1996, when on the 5th day of the 2nd month ('Five two reversed'), the first presidential election was held in Taiwan, while just over a year later Hong Kong was returned to China. The connection between an election in Taiwan and negotiations between Britain and the People's Republic of China about Hong Kong is perhaps somewhat tenuous, but this is a fine example of the sort of convoluted interpretation that is possible if one naïvely accepts the prophetic nature of the text; which is obviously the case here, as our authors express amazement that Zhuge Liang could have known of the existence of Hong Kong, which, of course, did not exist in his day.

[No. 11: Undated]

Prediction No. 11 ○ ● ○ ○ ● ○ middle lower.

The assessment is 'moderately bad'.

Si men zha pi
Chen ji yi sheng

Tu ru qi lai
Qi dao da shuai

Four gates suddenly burst open Its coming is sudden
At dawn the cocks have one voice Its dao is greatly decayed

A rhyming verse. 'Its coming is sudden' is a quotation from Hexagram 30, line 4. My translation follows **Wilhelm**. This prediction would presumably refer either to the contemporary era of the People's Republic (and the separate Republic of China on Taiwan), as **Ruan p.141** would have it, or to a future era. However, this may be too literalist an interpretation. As mentioned in the introduction (pp.4-6), it seems equally possible that predictions 11-13 form an apocalyptic triplet, referring to the

'overthrow of the current order', followed by the appearance of 'the sage who brings salvation' and, ultimately, the 'era of great peace' that will follow. As such, they form the heart of the prophetic and political 'message' of the Maqian ke, and there is no need to think they refer to actual historical events, but rather to a non-specific 'troubled-present-becoming-the-untroubled-future'. Coming immediately after the predictions that have already been shown to be 'true' (i.e., those referring to events in the past), they'd be equally easy to interpret as indicating 'today and tomorrow' whether they were read in the Qing dynasty, the Republic, or the People's Republic.

The image yang yin yang yang yin yang is of the hexagram *Li* (No. 30: *'The Clinging, Fire'*).

The same hexagram was attached to prophecy No.2, though with a difference of emphasis: there, the connection to the text was made via the hexagram's constituent trigrams and their position; here, through a quoted line from the hexagram's text.

Editor's note: compare this prediction with prediction No. 2; the recurrence is also unlucky.

Who the 'editor' making this anomalous intervention might be is far from clear. One might assume it to be the editor of the printed pages that this edition reprints. Both predictions are assessed as 'moderately bad', but this would not be a reason to pick out the second prediction for special comparison: five predictions in all carry a 'moderately bad' assessment. The comparison then, would presumably be with the text of the second prediction. As this may possibly refer to a situation where the Jin dynasty held most of China, while the kingdom of Wu remained unconquered, there may be a reference to the division between the People's Republic on the mainland, and the Republic of China on Taiwan.

Web1 What is given as an 'Editor's note' in the main text is here given under the heading 'Commentary'.

Additional note (presumably by the modern site owner): 'This indicates Japan's seizing of China('s territory). Only when we arrive at the 34th year of the Republic, yiyou 乙酉 (Cock Year, 1945) (did they) surrender.

This is possible, but would be out of character with the general run of predictions, where there is usually only one per dynasty or period. If this is once again a reference to the Sino-Japanese war, we would have two on the same subject.

Web2 *Commentary: 'This period's image of "Four gates burst open" refers to the gateway to liberation. The you 酉 year (1945) was a time when no one believed in the old principles.' Once more, the commentary seems to be groping for meaning, unless it refers to the visual similarity between you 酉 and si 四, 'four'. Again, if this prediction does refer to 1945, it violates the rule set out in the introduction that 'each period has only one hexagram'.*

[No. 12: Undated]

Prediction No. 12 ☉ ○ ○ ○ ○ ● upper middle.

The assessment is 'good'.

Zheng huan jiu nan
Yang fu er chi

Shi wei sheng ren
Hui ji sheng ming

Saving from calamity and distress This (can) only (be the work of) a sage
The yang returns and restores order The utmost darkness brings forth light

A non-rhyming verse. Again, a literal interpretation would presume that this prediction was referring to the period of the People's Republic, if the previous prediction does, in fact, refer to the defeat of the Japanese; or to a period subsequent to the People's Republic, if that was what was referred to in prediction 11. However, see the commentary to prediction No. 11. The last phrase, hui ji sheng ming is couched in terms of the light returning after the period of darkness at the New Moon.

The image yin yang yang yang yang yin is of the hexagram *Da Guo* (No. 28, 'Preponderance of the Great').

As the Zagua ('Miscellaneous Notes') commentary to the Yijing remarks: 'Preponderance of the Great is the peak.' Wilhelm, p.525. This would seem an appropriate hexagram for the apocalyptic nature of the prophecy.

Web2 Commentary: *'Then comes the image of catastrophe, reaching its utmost point. In these times a sage appears to rescue from sorrow and suffering.'*

Ruan p.142, with a charming naïvety, describes this verse as referring to the 'Last 1/3 of 21st through early 33rd century.'

[No.13: Undated]

Prediction No. 13 ○ ● ● ○ ○ ○ upper middle.

The assessment is 'good'.

Xian bu yi ye

Tian xia yi jia

Wu ming wu de

Guang yao zhong hua

The worthy don't neglect the uncultured All under heaven are one family
Disregarding reputation and virtue The brilliance of China

A verse in double rhyme form. Here we have arrived at the predicted future Utopia. Wu ming wu de is literally 'without name, without virtue'. I assume the implication to be that such concepts have been transcended.

The image yang yin yin yang yang yang is of the hexagram *Da Chu* (No. 26, 'Taming Power of the Great').

The line 'The worthy don't neglect the uncultured' might be seen as having some resonance with the line from the Judgement of hexagram No. 26, 'Not eating at home brings good fortune', to which the Tuan zhuan ('Commentary on the Decision') adds: 'for people of worth are nourished.'

Web2 Commentary: *'The image of a world of universal harmony.'*

Ruan p.143 takes this verse as referring to 'Early 33rd to early 41st century.'

[No.14: Undated]

Prediction No. 14 ○ ● ○ ● ○ ● middle lower.

The assessment is 'moderately bad'.

Zhan de ci ke

Yi shu nai zhong

Qian gu hou jin

Qi dao wu qiong

Divining to obtain this prophecy The Yi calculations also end
From antiquity to the present Its *dao* is inexhaustible

A rhyming verse. One assumes here that yi 易 is to be taken as a reference to the Yijing; however, it would also be possible to read this as 'the easy calculations (i.e., the "quick predictions" of the Maqian ke) come to an end.' Hexagram 64, being the last hexagram in the Yijing, is an appropriate match for this prediction, which appears to be rather more of a valedictory tail-piece than a prophecy.

The image yang yin yang yin yang yin is of the hexagram Wei Ji (No 64, 'Before Completion').

Being the last hexagram in the Yijing, No. 64 is the obvious choice to link to the final prophecy of the Maqian ke. Besides this, the meaning of the hexagram, 'Before Completion', very much reflects the ideas presented in the prophetic text.

Editor's note: Kongming's *Maqian ke* was composed among the army, during periods of leisure, so as to make known to posterity the waxing and waning (*of events, or perhaps, the Dao*). Among the fourteen predictions of *Maqian ke*, each one distinguishes and points toward the rules by which growth and decline are governed, if one penetrates the hidden meanings. On only two occasions do the fourteen prophecies indicate a fixed date, but they have not yet arrived at completion and reached their end. The way of heaven clearly proceeds in order, now clear and now obscure (*or 'light and dark'*), and how may the causes be assigned?

These three lines of Chinese text are entirely unpunctuated. This is admittedly a fairly free translation, but Chinese sentence construction differs so much from English that the word-order necessarily has to be reconstructed. Nonetheless, I believe this gives a reasonable indication of the meaning of this passage.

*It's not entirely clear what the 'two occasions' with 'fixed dates' refer to. They may be the 'pig' and 'ox' years (1911 & 1949) of prediction No.10. If that were the case, the interpretations of prediction No. 11 offered by **Web1** and **Web2**, that the 'cocks with one voice' refer to the Cock Year, yiyou (1945) would seem rather forced (either that, or we have to conjecture that there are three occasions with 'fixed dates'). However, as argued above, it seems unlikely prediction No. 11 is intended to refer to specific historical events. Alternatively, the 'two occasions' may simply refer to predictions 10 & 11.*

Ruan p.144 takes this verse as referring to 'Beyond 41st century.'

Recorded by Shou Yuan, the 86-year-old (*Buddhist*) monk of White Crane Mountain.

APPENDIX

In 2006, at a late stage in the first period of preparing this manuscript, I came across a further mention of the *Maqian ke* on the web, on a curious American New Age site called *ZetaTalk*. This purports to relay teachings from an apparently alien race called the ‘Zetas’, from the star system Zeta Reticuli, channelled through a lady called Nancy Lieder who, among other things, predicted the arrival of a rogue planet in our solar system in May 2003, with cataclysmic consequences. An excellent summary of Lieder’s predictions and activities can be found in **Pilkington**, and a flavour of the *ZetaTalk* site may perhaps be gathered from the following quotation from its homepage:

ZetaTalk leads you through the vast amount of information being relayed by the Zetas in answer to questions posed by their emissary, Nancy. The ZetaTalk answers cover such subjects as portents of a Pole Shift and how this relates to the Transformation in process; how life in the Aftertime following this shift will be different from today; the self-centered or service-minded spiritual Orientation of humans as well as aliens from other worlds and how inadvertently giving the Call to aliens can put you in touch with one group or the other ... [etc., etc.].

Obviously this is far from an academic source, but the relevant web-page listed in the bibliography as **ZetaTalk** has a certain interest here. It is headed *ZetaTalk: Zhuge Liang. Written Aug 4, 2006* and begins as follows [sic throughout]:

Zhuce Liang wrote a set of Prophecy in the form of poems, 20 or more poems. The 15th poem wrote about the sudden rise of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and the last sentence of that poem clearly refers that in 2005 the CCP will meet a great debacle. In fact, it was in the spring of 2005 that a book ‘Nine comments on CCP’ was released and caused a trend in China to resign from the CCP. Now there has been over a hundred million former party members resigned from the CCP. So the poems have a track record. In the 16th poem Zhuge Liang wrote that the world will face a great danger. The red flood will destroy the land and many people will die. At this time a saint will emerge and lead people to overcome the hardship. Finally China will be a land of light and love. Since his prophecy indicated the demise of CCP, any information referring to his prophecy has been blocked in China.

The poems after the one that described the pole shift talk about a kind of transformation process that China will enter, a new kind of era. The 18th and 19th mainly describe that after the saint’s salvation, all different kinds of people, all different races of people will get rid of any misunderstandings or obstacles and unite with each other. The whole world will become one. People will not care too much about fame or individual interests. The saints or holy people will get off the stage and won’t let people worship them. All the lands in the world will enjoy light and love. I sense that in Zetataalk, most information is largely about the US and the western world. So I hope the Zeta can comment on the Eastern Prophecy and give more concern about the Eastern World. Ma Qian Ke.

There follow some 400 to 500 words of rather naïve commentary, presumably by Ms Lieder, from which it is apparent that she takes the authorship of Zhuge Liang (who is described as ‘not a mere mortal’) at face value. There is no mention of the *Maqian ke* verses referring to events before the present day, which may suggest that she is unfamiliar with the text herself; and the last two sentences of the passage given above may suggest that the entire *Maqian ke* quotation is most probably taken directly from correspondence sent by a Chinese source.

I emailed Nancy Lieder enquiring about her source for this material, pointing out that the 20-verse version mentioned differs from the 14-verse edition translated here, and enquiring as to the origin of her quotation, in the hope of being able to see the additional verses. I received the following reply, reproduced here in its entirety:

My understanding is that some of the verses are suppressed, so web research does not bring them up. I got this information from inside China, and cannot tell you more than that. For the safety of the provider, etc. [email: 16 August 2006]

This reply strengthens my suspicion that Ms Lieder is merely quoting a Chinese source, rather than having any familiarity with, or access to, the original text concerned. Assuming this 20-verse text not to be simply a fantasy of Ms Lieder or her Chinese correspondent, our first question, then, has to be: where and under what circumstances did it originate? A clue to this may be found in the first paragraph of the quotation given above, where it mentions the ‘Nine comments on CCP’. The work referred to is actually entitled *The Nine Commentaries on the Communist Party*, published in November 2004 by *The Epoch Times*, a newspaper linked with the Falun Gong movement (**Epoch Times**); the same newspaper is also responsible for the apparently dubious claims of mass resignations from the Chinese Communist Party. This is of some interest, as it suggests that a version of the *Maqian ke* is being used by a movement that, in former times, would have been considered a ‘secret society’ intent on overthrowing the current ruling regime, and perhaps still is. The parallels with a possible 19th century anti-Qing dynasty purpose for such texts as the *Maqian ke*, mentioned above in the Introduction (p.4), are quite startling: new verses appear to be being ‘manufactured’, relevant to contemporary times and with an anti-establishment agenda. From this one might infer that the *Maqian ke* appears to be an evolving text, expanding and adapting to fit with current concerns; however, every Chinese text I’ve discovered on the internet contains no more than 14 verses.

It’s regrettable that the supposed new material contained in the 20-verse edition of the *Maqian ke* has not become available for examination at the time of writing. From what the quotation above suggests as to the nature of the 18th and 19th verses, it would appear that these more or less correspond with the 12th and 13th verses translated here. One assumes, then, that the 20th verse would be equivalent to the concluding, 14th verse of our text. One has to imagine that the 15th and 16th verses, mentioned in the quotation, are new material, as there is nothing in our text suggestive of a ‘great debacle’ occurring to the CCP, nor mention of a ‘red flood’ (which Ms Lieder takes to refer to incessant rains and falls of red dust accompanying a putative pole-shift; one suspects that this may not have been an interpretation intended by the original author[s] of the text). Of the remaining added verses, we have no information. Nonetheless, the overall structure of the text (series of ‘predictions’ that have already come to fruition; apocalyptic warning of imminent disasters; message of hope and salvation for the future), would appear to remain intact.

CHINESE TEXTS

On the following pages will be found the basic text of the *Maqian ke* 馬前課 translated here, appearing on pp.9-15 of the third edition of *Zhongguo yuyan qizhong* 中國預言七種 or *Seven Chinese Prophecies* (listed in the bibliography as **Seven Prophecies**), published in Taiwan by Wu ling chu ban she 武陵出版社 in 1995. As is normal in traditional Chinese books, the text runs in vertical columns, arranged from right to left. The original page numbers are also reproduced here. For discussion of this text, see the Introduction.

A variant text of Prediction No. 3, from **Ruan, p.125**, is included after the pages from **Seven Prophecies**.

Internet URLs for the three variant Chinese texts and commentaries are listed in the bibliography as **Web1-3**. However, as these pages are no longer available online, the texts of these have been scanned from printouts and are included here, following the main text. Being modern productions the text reads horizontally, from left to right.



Cover of the *Zhongguo yuyan qizhong* published by Wu ling chu ban she of Taipei. 3rd Edition, 1995.

蜀漢諸葛丞相馬前課

白鶴山僧守元解釋

第一課 ○●●●○ 中下

無力回天 鞠躬盡瘁

陰居陽拂 八千女鬼

證曰陽陰陰陰陰陽在卦爲頤

解曰諸葛卒後後主降于魏

第二課 ○●○○○ 中下

火上有火 光燭中土

稱名不正 江東有虎

證曰陽陰陽陽陰陽在卦爲離

解曰司馬炎篡魏元帝都建康建康屬江東

第三課 ○●●●●●●● 下下

擾擾中原 山河無主

二三其位 羊終馬始

證曰陽陰陰陰陰陰在卦為剝

解曰五代始于司馬終于楊氏

第四課 ●●●●●●●● 中上

十八男兒 起于太原

動則得解 日月麗天

證曰陰陰陽陰陽陰在卦為解

解曰唐太宗起兵太原

第五課 ○○○●●●●● 下中

五十年中 其數有八

小人道長 生靈荼毒

證曰陽陽陽陰陰陰在卦爲否

解曰後五代八姓共五十三年

第六課 ●○○●○○○ 上中

惟天生水 順天應人

剛中柔外 土乃生金

證曰陰陽陽陰陽陽在卦爲兌

解曰趙宋聿興天下化成金兵入寇是剛中柔外之象

第七課 ●○○●○○● 中中

一元復始 以剛處中

五五相傳 爾西我東

證曰陰陽陰陽陽陰在卦爲井

解曰有元一代凡十世至正以後割據者衆有爾西我東之象

第八課 ○○○●○○○ 上上

日月麗天 其色若赤

綿綿延延 凡十六葉

證曰陽陽陰陰陰陽在卦爲益

解曰日月爲明赤者朱有明一代凡十六主

第九課 ○●○○●○○● 中上

水月有主 古月爲君

十傳絕統 相敬若賓

證曰陽陰陽陰陰陰在卦爲晉

解曰水月有主清也古月胡也胡人爲君殆亦天數不可強欺老僧生于嘉靖十年今年八

有六過此以後不敢妄議

第十課 ●○○●●● 中下

豕後牛前 千人一口

五二倒置 朋來无咎

證曰陰陽陰陽陰陰在卦爲蹇

第十一課 ○●○○●○ 中下

四門乍闢 突如其來

晨雞一聲 其道大衰

證曰陽陰陽陽陰陽在卦爲離

按此課與第二課重出非吉兆也

第十二課

●○○○○●

上中

拯愚救難

是唯聖人

陽復而治

晦極生明

證曰 陰陽陽陽陽陰在卦爲大過

第十三課

○●●○○○

上中

賢不遺野

天下一家

無名無德

光耀中華

證曰陽陰陰陽陽陽在卦爲大畜

第十四課

○●○○○○

中下

占得此課

易數乃終

前古後今 其道無窮

證曰陽陰陽陰陽陰在卦爲未濟

按孔明馬前課乃軍中閒暇之時作此以示後人趨避之方此十四課爲馬前課中之別裁每一課指一朝其興衰治亂可得諸言外至十四課止者兩次來復之期也殿以未濟以見此後又一元矣天道循環明者自明昧者自昧又烏可以坐而致哉

八六老僧白鶴山守元誌

第三課 ○●●●●● 下下

靈臺中原。山河無主。

一三其位。木終車始。

解曰。陽陽陰陰陰。在卦為巽。

解曰。五代始于蕭氏。終于楊氏。

靈西課 ●●●○●● 中上

十八男兒。燬于太原。

靈財得解。日月麗天。

Variant text of Prophecy No. 3, from Ruan, p.125.

蜀漢諸葛丞相「馬前課」

第一課 ○○○○○○ 中下

無力回天 鞠躬盡瘁

陰居陽拂 八千女鬼

【證曰】陽陰陰陰陰陽在卦為頤

【解曰】諸葛卒後，昌烈降於魏。

第二課 ○○○○○○ 中下

火上有火 光燭中原

稱名不正 江東有虎

【證曰】陽陰陽陽陰陽在卦為離

【解曰】司馬篡位，愍帝都建康，建康屬江東。

第三課 ○○○○○○ 下下

擾擾中原 山河無主

二三其位 木終草始

【證曰】陽陰陰陰陰陰在卦為剝

【解曰】五代始於蕭氏，終於楊氏。

第四課 ○○○○○○ 中上

十八男兒 起于太原

動則得解 日月麗天

Web1

【證曰】陰陰陽陰陽陰在卦為解

【解曰】唐太宗起兵太原。

第五課 ○○○◎○○ 下中

五十年中 其數有八

小人道長 生靈荼毒

【證曰】陽陽陽陰陰陰在卦為否

【解曰】後五代八姓，共五十三年。

第六課 ◎○○◎○○ 上中

惟生天水 順天應人

剛中柔外 土乃生金

【證曰】陰陽陽陰陽陽在卦為兌

【解曰】趙宋聿興，天下化成，金兵入寇，是剛中柔外之象。

第七課 ◎○○○○◎ 中中

一元復始 以剛處中

五五相傳 爾西我東

【證曰】陰陽陰陽陽陰在卦為井

【解曰】有元一代，凡十世，至正以後，割據者眾，有爾西我東之象。

第八課 ○○○◎○○ 上上

日月麗天 其色若赤

綿綿延延 凡十六葉

【證曰】陽陽陰陰陰陽在卦為益

【解曰】日月為明，赤者，朱有明一代凡十六主。

第九課 ○○○○○○ 中上

水月有主 古月為君

十傳絕統 相敬若賓

【證曰】陽陰陽陰陰陰在卦為晉

【解曰】水月有主清也，古月胡也，胡人為君，殆亦天數不可強歟？老僧生於嘉慶十年，今年八十有六，過此後不敢妄議。

【搞笑寶寶】清朝傳了十世，到宣統退位，進入民國，但是仍居故宮，與新政府相敬若賓。

第十課 ◎○○○○○ 中下

豕後牛前 千人一口

五二倒置 朋來無咎

【證曰】陰陽陰陽陰陰在卦為蹇

辛亥革命，壬子年元旦為民國元年。千人一口是和字。一般認為，五二倒置是指二五，五五二十五，也就是到民國二十五年，朋來無咎，是指雖有很多問題，但不致太糟糕。

第十一課 ○○○○○○ 中下

四門乍開 突如其來

晨雞一聲 其道大衰

【證曰】陽陰陽陽陰陽在卦為離

【解曰】按此課與第二課重出非吉兆也

這指日本侵略中國，至民國三十四年乙酉年才投降。

第十二課 ◎○○○○○ 上中

拯患救難 是唯聖人

陽復而治 晦極生明

【證曰】陰陽陽陽陽陰在卦為大過

第十三課 ○◎◎○○○

賢不遺野 天下一家

無名無德 光耀中華

【證曰】陽陰陰陽陽陽在卦為大畜

第十四課 ○◎○○◎○○ 中下

占得此課 易數乃終

前古後今 其道無窮

【證曰】陽陰陽陰陽陰在卦為未濟

按孔明馬前課，乃軍中間暇之時，作此以示後人，趨避之方，此十四課為馬前課中之別裁，每一課指一朝其興衰治亂可得言諸外，至十四課止者，兩次來復之期也，殿以未濟，以見此後又一元矣。天道循環，明者自明，昧者自昧，又烏可以坐而致哉？

八六老僧白鶴山守元誌

诸葛亮预言《马前课》

作者：马前课

相传为诸葛亮于军中闲暇时写了一个《马前课》，是预测天下大事的书。从字面上讲，就是在出兵之前，在马前面占卜一课，即起卦的意思。诸葛亮的《马前课》非常好破译，每个朝代就一卦，这样往下排就是了。而中国历史上出现的其他很多预言书比较难破译，因为它讲历史大事，有的时候一个朝代可能有很多大事，有的朝代大事要少一些，不规律。

《马前课》

第一课 ○●●●●○ 中下

无力回天 鞠躬尽瘁

阴居阳拂 八千女鬼

证曰：阴阴阴阴阴阳在卦为颐

解曰：诸葛鞠躬尽瘁而死，后蜀汉后主降于魏

第二课 ○●○○●○ 中下

火上有火 光烛中土

称名不正 江东有虎

证曰：阳阴阳阳阴阴在卦为离

解曰：司马炎篡魏元帝都建康属江东

第三课 ○●●●●● 下下

扰扰中原 山河无主

二三其位 手终马始

证曰：阳阴阴阴阴阴在卦为剥

解曰：五代始于司马终于杨氏

第四课 ●●○●○● 中上

十八男儿 起于太原

动则得解 日月丽天

证曰：阴阴阳阴阴阴在卦为解

解曰：李唐起于太原武口称周

第五课 ○○○●●● 下中

五十年中 其数有八

小人道长 生灵荼毒

证曰：阳阳阳阴阴阴在卦为否

解曰：五代八姓共五十三年

第六课 ●○○●○○ 上中

惟天生水 顺天应人

刚中柔外 土乃生金

证曰：阴阳阳阴阳阳在卦为兑

解曰：赵宋黄袍加身而立敌为金

第七课 ●○●○○● 中中

一元复始 以刚处中

五五相传 尔西我东

证曰：阴阳阴阳阳阴在卦为井

解曰：元代共十主后各汗国分裂

第八课 ○○●●●○ 上上

日月丽天 其色若赤
绵绵延延 凡十六叶
证曰：阳阳阴阴阴在卦为益
解曰：朱即赤日月是明共十六主

第九课 ○●○○●● 中上
水月有主 古月为君
十传绝统 相敬若宾
证曰：阳阴阴阴阴在卦为晋
解曰：水月有主是清也，古月是胡也，满清十皇朝最后亡于宣统

第十课 ●○○●●● 中下
豕后牛前 千人一口
五二倒置 朋来无咎
证曰：阴阴阴阴阴在卦为蹇
解曰：豕后牛前辛亥也千人一口为和，五二倒置是民也朋者外邦也

第十一课 ○●○○●○ 中下
四门乍辟 突如其来
晨鸡一声 其道大衰
证曰：阳阴阳阴阴在卦为离
解曰：当朝之象也四门乍辟谓为门户开放，酉年当期时无人再相信其道理故

第十二课 ●○○○○● 上中
拯患救难 是唯圣人
阳复而治 晦极生明
证曰：阴阳阳阳阴在卦为大过
解曰：当来之象也灾难当头之极，其时圣人出现救苦救难故

第十三课 ○●●○○○ 上中
贤不遗野 天下一家
无名无德 光耀中华
证曰：阳阴阴阳阳在卦为大畜
解曰：世界大同之象

第十四课 ○●○○●● 中下
占得此课 易数乃终
前古后今 其道无穷
证曰：阳阴阴阴阴在卦为未济

诸葛亮《马前课》

诸葛亮预言《马前课》详解（1-4）

作者：太平

《马前课》是中国历史上最有名的几部预言之一，传说是三国时蜀汉丞相诸葛亮所留下的。这部预言非常简洁明了，只有十四课，每一课预言一个历史时代，而且每一课都按顺序排列。每一个历史时代过去后，人们回头一看就会发现诸葛亮的预言惊人地准确。《马前课》的前十课已经发生。现在我从第一课起为大家详细解析这部预言。

第一课

无力回天 鞠躬尽瘁
阴居阳拂 八千女鬼

这一课是诸葛亮对他自己的预言，诸葛亮早已知道汉朝气数已尽，一切努力都是“无力回天”，但他还是要尽己之力辅佐蜀汉，不负刘备三顾之情，托孤之义，完成自己的历史使命。

诸葛亮于公元227、228、229、231、234年共五次北伐曹魏，力图恢复中原，再兴大汉江山。结果在第五次北伐时，诸葛亮病逝于陕西渭水南岸五丈原。就如他在《出师表》中写的那样，为了再兴汉室耗尽心血“鞠躬尽瘁，死而后已”了。

诸葛亮逝世后，大奸臣宦官黄皓在后主刘禅身边掌握大权，国事日乱，小人当道，可谓“阴居阳拂”。大将姜维也只能维持残局。

公元263年，曹魏大将钟会大举南征，姜维据守剑门关（四川剑阁北），战事胶着。曹魏的另一位大将邓艾却从阴平郡（甘肃文县），深入万山，直取蜀汉重镇江油（四川江油），进入成都平原。后主刘禅听说敌军已距成都不远，根本没有想到抵抗，也没有想到姜维大军仍完整的屯在前方，就迫不及待地投降曹魏，蜀汉至此终结。“八千女鬼”和起来就是一个“魏”字。

第二课

火上有火 光烛中土

Web3

称名不正 江东有虎

这一课是预言晋朝。司马家族在曹魏掌握大权，宰相司马昭已成为实质上的统治者。公元265年宰相司马昭逝世，他的儿子司马炎立即下令让曹魏最后一任皇帝魏元帝曹奂禅让。司马炎建立晋朝，首都设在洛阳。“火上有火”就是“炎”字，指司马炎。

公元280年，晋朝军队攻陷建业（江苏南京），把东吴最后一任皇帝孙皓活捉。晋朝一统天下，可谓“光烛中土”。因为司马炎的晋朝实质上是篡夺曹魏而建立的，因此“称名不正”。

公元291年，八王之乱开始，中原被少数民族占据。公元317年镇守建康（江苏南京）的亲王司马睿，宣布继位称帝，建都建康（江苏南京），史称“东晋”。建康地处江东，故曰“江东有虎”

第三课

扰扰中原 山河无主
二三其位 羊终马始

这一课是预言八王之乱和五胡十九国及南北朝时代的。时间跨度达298年（公元291年到公元589年）。

公元290年，司马炎逝世，司马炎的嫡子司马衷继位。司马衷，是一个白痴，听说有人饿死，他大惊说：“为什么不吃肉？”司马衷继位的第二年，爆发八王之乱。

八王之乱，是八个司马家族的亲王为了权力和皇位而互相残杀，中原从此大乱。从公元291年第一个亲王司马亮被杀，到公元311年第八个亲王司马越死去，历时21年，结束了晋王朝刚刚建立起来的统一局面。

公元304年，八王之乱正高潮时，五胡十九国（又称五胡乱华）时代来临。“胡”是古代汉人对汉民族以外，尤其是北方少数民族的总称。五胡，当时指的是：匈奴族、鲜卑族、羯族、氐族、羌族。羯是匈奴的一支，氐是羌的一支，实质上也可以说只有三胡。五胡乱华期间，除东晋外，各政权按建立时间排列如下（灭亡时间标于括号中）：

公元304年，氐族人李雄在成都宣布建立成汉（亡于347年）；公元304年，匈奴族人刘渊建立汉赵定都平阳（山西临汾）（亡于329年）。

公元319年，羯族人石勒建立后赵（亡于351年）。

公元320年，汉人张茂在凉州（甘肃武威）称王建立前凉（亡于376年）。

公元337年，鲜卑族人慕容就在棘城（辽宁义县）建立前燕（亡于370年）。

公元350年，汉人冉闵建立冉魏（亡于352年）。

公元351年，氐族人苻健建立前秦，定都长安（亡于394年）。

公元384年，鲜卑族人慕容垂建立后燕（亡于407年）；公元384年，鲜卑族人慕容泓建立西燕（亡于394年）；公元384年，羌族人姚萇建立后秦（亡于417年）。

公元385年，鲜卑族人乞伏国仁在勇士堡（甘肃榆中），建立西秦（亡于400年）。

公元386年，氐族人吕光建立后凉（亡于403年）；公元386年，鲜卑族人拓拔珪建立北魏，定都盛乐（内蒙古和林格尔）（亡于534年）。

公元397年，鲜卑族建立南凉（亡于414年）；公元397年，匈奴族建立北凉（亡于439年）。

公元398年，鲜卑族人慕容德在滑台（河南滑县）建立南燕（亡于410年）。

公元400年，西凉建立（亡于421年），定都敦煌（甘肃敦煌）。

公元405年，东晋的益州（四川）兵变，谯纵建立西蜀王国（亡于413年）。

公元407年，匈奴族人赫连勃勃在朔方地区（河套）建立胡夏（亡于431年）；公元407年，高句丽人高云建立北燕（亡于436年）。

公元409年，西秦复国（亡于431年）。

南北朝时代各朝按南北顺序排列如下：

公元420年，东晋大将把皇帝司马德文罢黜。刘裕当了皇帝，建立刘宋。公元439年，北魏统一北中国，南北朝时代拉开序幕。

在南中国，公元479年，萧道成篡夺刘宋建立南齐；公元502年，萧衍篡夺南齐建立南梁；公元557年，南梁大将陈霸先篡夺南梁建立南陈。

在北中国，北魏在公元534年分为东魏和西魏两朝。公元550年，东魏被高洋篡夺，建立北齐。公元557年，西魏被宇文觉篡夺，建立北周。公元577年，北齐被北周吞并。公元581年，北周被国舅杨坚篡夺，改称隋。公元589年，隋灭南陈。南北朝时代结束。

从以上排列可以看出在这298年中，无论五胡十九国还是南北朝，各朝、各国国运都很短，长的几十年，短的才几年（“二三其位”）。只有北魏国运稍长一点，也

就只有148年。真是“扰扰中原 山河无主 二三其位”。“马始”指天下大乱起于司马家族的晋朝，“羊终”指大乱结束于杨坚建立的隋朝。

第四课

十八男儿 起于太原

动则得解 日月丽天

这一课是预言隋朝末年，李唐起于太原。公元604年杨广弑父继位，称为隋炀帝。杨广残暴无德，公元611年起，天下始乱。反王一十八，烟尘三十六，天下大乱，群雄并起。

公元617年，太原留守李渊见天下大乱，隋朝国运将终，决意起兵平定天下。“十八男儿”就是李字（十八合起来是木字，男儿就是子，木子合起来是李字）。“起于太原”指李渊是太原留守，起兵平天下也是始于太原。

李渊因为和杨广是表亲，所以不愿起兵。当时有谣言说姓“李”的将代替姓“杨”的君临天下，杨广对他很忌讳，太原又是兵家必争之地，李渊当时如不起兵则很有可能被李密、杜伏威等反王消灭，起兵则生，不起兵则死，李渊当时面对的形势真可谓“动则得解”。所以李渊不得不冒险起兵，死中求生。

李渊次子李世民是一代英雄，先后击败了薛仁杲、刘武周、窦建德、王世充等反王，打下了大唐江山。公元626年，李渊传位给李世民，自己退居为太上皇。李世民继位后，重用房玄龄、杜如晦、魏征等贤臣，政治廉洁，风调雨顺，农业上每年都是大丰收，公元630年，一斗米只值三四个钱，社会安定而繁荣。公元632年全国判处死刑的囚犯共390人，年终，李世民准许他们回家办理后事，第二年秋天再回来受死（古时秋天行刑）。公元633年9月，390人全部回狱，无一人逃亡。社会秩序安定，夜不闭户。天下大治，可谓“日月丽天”，这段历史被称为“贞观之治”。

不过“日月丽天”也可理解为武则天当政。因为武则天为自己造了一个新字作为自己的名。该字上半截是明字，即日月，下半截是空字，即天，含义为日月当空。

诸葛亮确实是奇人，用不完的锦囊妙计。设个坛就能呼风唤雨，火烧连营。木牛流马，运送粮草。。。

中国几千年文化，博大精深，灿烂丰富。在这个越来越快速发展的时代，我们需要不太落伍，但主要的历史东西，是不能不知的。

诸葛亮预言《马前课》详解(5-8)

第五课

五十年中 其数有八

小人道长 生灵荼毒

这一课是预言大唐末年藩镇割据演变来的五代大乱。

公元907年，军阀朱温篡夺皇位，建立后梁，为中国带来黄金时代的大唐王朝，终于走下了历史的舞台。从朱温篡唐到赵匡胤于公元960年黄袍加身、建立宋朝之间约有五十年的时间，故曰“五十年中”。

在这“五十年中”，中原地区先后有朱温建立的后梁（907年-923年）；李存勖建立的后唐（923年-936年）；石敬瑭建立的后晋（936年-946年）；刘知远建立的后汉（946年-979年）（后汉950年以后只局限在太原一带）；郭威建立的后周（951年-960年）这5个短命王朝，故曰“五代”。

“五代”共有8个姓氏（家族）的人当上了皇帝：后梁皇帝姓朱；后唐就复杂了，李存勖是唐朝大将李克用的儿子，李克用还有一个干儿子李嗣源，李存勖死于兵变，全族被屠，李嗣源就当上了皇帝。李嗣源死后由他的儿子李从厚继承皇位。不久，李从厚的义兄李从珂起兵杀掉了李从厚，自己当上了皇帝。这样一来，李存勖、李嗣源、李从珂虽然都姓李，可实质上一点血缘关系都没有，算下来后唐就有三个李姓家族的人当皇帝；后晋皇帝姓石；后汉皇帝姓刘；后周也复杂，后周开国皇帝郭威全家都被后汉皇帝所杀，郭威只得将柴荣收为养子，改姓为郭，后周实质上就是郭、柴二姓。这就恰好应了“其数有八”这句话。

五代都是短命王朝，5个朝代加一起才53年（公元907到公元960年），很多大臣都是今日保这个皇上、明天保那位皇上，古时那种大臣忠心无二、一朝天子一朝臣的忠义都不再被人推崇了。比如后唐有个大臣叫冯道，可算后唐开国元老。石敬瑭灭了后唐，冯道毫不畏惧，打了个包就投奔了后晋。不久契丹大军压境而来，攻入开封，擒了后晋皇帝，冯道又去归附契丹。刘知远建立后汉，冯道又归附了后汉，后来又归附后周，不以为耻，反以为荣。五代的皇帝几乎全是昏君，所以国运都不长。特别是石敬瑭为称帝向契丹国（辽国）割让燕云十六州的土地作为报酬，还称契丹皇帝为“父”，自称为“儿”，人称“儿皇帝”；后汉的皇帝也要依靠契丹，称“侄皇帝”。故曰“小人道长”。

五代大乱，兵连祸结，其结果自然是“生灵荼毒”。

第六课

惟天生水 顺天应人
刚中柔外 土乃生金

这一课是预言宋朝。

赵匡胤于公元960年黄袍加身，结束五代，创立大宋，赵光义于公元979年一统天下。公元961年，赵匡胤“杯酒释兵权”根绝了兵变之源。大宋创立以来对前代各朝各国的皇帝、大臣均未大加杀戮，对平民百姓也能实行仁政，修生养息，怀柔以安

天下。平民百姓渴望的天下太平得以实现。古人云“上天有好生之德”，“水性至柔”，故而本课首句为“惟天生水 顺天应人”。天心民心皆大快。

但到了北宋末年时，对平民的赋税日益加重，皇帝昏庸，早已不复宋朝初年太平景象。宋徽宗常常微服出宫，夜宿娼门，还在宫中设小市场，宫女们扮成商贩卖酒卖茶，徽宗扮成乞丐挨门行乞，大家取乐，昏君心中早已不存大宋二百年家国，数千里锦绣河山。徽宗时大兴花石纲、生辰纲等这纲，那纲（纲就是民间向皇上进贡的财物）弄得民不聊生，反抗四起，例如那梁山好汉智取生辰纲，替天行道。民间出现了因为百姓们无法忍受花石纲的搜刮劫掠而导致的方腊大起义，徽宗命军队残酷镇压了这次起义，而不是使用怀柔政策。可谓对内用刚（纲）。

在军事上，宋朝从创立以来一直就力量薄弱。文职人员担任军队统帅，负责实际作战的将领则是临时委派，兵不知将，将不知兵。公元1004年辽国南征，辽宋达成“澶渊之盟”，宋朝居然要向辽国每年进贡十万两白银，二十四万匹绸缎。公元1038年党项人李元昊建立西夏。宋朝与西夏几乎每战必败，只好每年向西夏缴纳绸缎十三万匹，白银五万两，茶叶二万斤。可谓对外用柔。宋朝内外政策可用“刚中柔外”来形容。

本课首句为“惟天生水”指代宋朝，按五行学说土克水，那么土所生的金朝就是宋朝的克星，故曰“土乃生金”。

公元1120年，金、宋达成对辽国的夹击密约。在金、宋的夹击下辽灭亡。公元1125年，金灭辽后对宋发动总攻，公元1126年，北宋灭亡，金军把宋徽宗、宋钦宗逮捕，废为平民，赵姓全体皇族三千余人被劫往金朝。这就是靖康之耻，在历史上被视为汉民族的奇耻大辱。唯一漏网的皇族康王赵构逃往临安（浙江杭州）建立南宋。

第七课

一元复始 以刚处中

五五相传 尔西我东

这一课是预言元朝。“一元复始”暗指元朝的国号。

蒙古人对汉人的统治是很严厉的。蒙古人把汉人列为三等和四等的国民（一等的国民是蒙古人，二等的国民是色目人即中亚人）。元朝规定每二十家编为一“甲”，首长称“甲主”，由蒙古人充当。严厉规定：禁止汉人打猎，禁止汉人学习武术，禁止汉人持有兵器，禁止汉人集会拜神，禁止汉人赶集赶场作买卖，禁止汉人夜间走路。故曰“以刚处中”。

“五五相传”是指元朝从元世祖忽必烈开始到元顺帝脱欢帖木儿为止，共有十位皇帝，五五相加即为十。

蒙古人从成吉思汗开始东征西讨，建立了一个横跨欧亚大陆、面积有三千万平方公里、空前巨大的蒙古帝国，由于太巨大了，只好分成各个汗国，由蒙古大汗总辖。蒙古大汗忽必烈把蒙古帝国总部迁到中国，并起国号为“元”，兼任中国皇帝。元朝灭亡，各个汗国也分崩离析，不久各自消亡。故曰“尔西我东”。

第八课

日月丽天 其色若赤
绵绵延延 凡十六叶

这一课是预言明朝。

“日月丽天”是指明朝国号，日月合起来就是“明”字。“其色若赤”暗指明朝皇帝的姓氏为“朱”，“赤”就是红色，“朱”也有红色的意思。

明朝从太祖朱元璋到思宗朱由检共有16位皇帝，排列如下：

1. 明太祖（1328年—1398年）
2. 惠帝（1399年—1402年）
3. 成祖（1403年—1424年）
4. 仁宗（1425年）
5. 宣宗（1426年—1435年）
6. 英宗（1436年—1449年，1457年—1464年）
7. 景帝（1450年—1456年）
8. 宪宗（1465年—1487年）
9. 孝宗（1488年—1505年）
10. 武宗（1506年—1521年）
11. 世宗（1522年—1566年）
12. 穆宗（1567年—1572年）
13. 神宗（1573年—1620年）
14. 光宗（1620年）
15. 熹宗（1621年—1627年）
16. 思宗（1628年—1644年）

明朝在李自成攻克北京，思宗朱由检自杀后，残余力量南逃江南，一连串出了三个皇帝，但都不计算在内，因为此时下一个正统王朝清朝已经开始。

大明王朝16位皇帝，正好应了“绵绵延延 凡十六叶”这句话

诸葛亮预言马前课详解（9-10）

作者：太平

第九课

水月有主 古月为君
十传绝统 相敬若宾

这一课是预言清朝。“水月有主”就好像是一个字谜，谜底为“清”字，清朝的国号。“水”为“清”字的水字傍（三点水）；“月”为“清”字右半边的“青”字的下半截；“主”字形就如“清”字右半边的“青”字的上半截。“古月”合起来就是一个“胡”字，“胡”是古代对少数民族的统称。“古月为君”是指清朝是少数民族建立的王朝，清朝也确是东北的满族建立的。

清朝入关以来共有十位皇帝，按其年号依次排列如下：顺治（1644年-1661年）、康熙（1662年-1722年）、雍正（1723年-1735年）、乾隆（1736年-1796年）、嘉庆（1797年-1820年）、道光（1821年-1850年）、咸丰（1851年-1861年）、同治（1862年-1874年）、光绪（1875年-1908年）、宣统（1909年-1911年）。“十传”就是指这十位皇帝，“绝统”指清朝最后一位皇帝年号是“宣统”。

1912年2月13日宣统正式颁布退位诏书，大清王朝正式落下了历史的帷幕。新的国民政府宣布优待清朝王室成员，允许退位的清帝依然住在皇宫里面，给其访华的外国元首待遇，而且全国上下对满族人民也没有歧视，宣布中华民国是汉、满、蒙、回、藏五族共和。故曰“相敬若宾”。

第十课

豕后牛前 千人一口
五二倒置 朋来无咎

这一课是预言中华民国。

1911年10月10日革命党人发动的武装起义，黎元洪被推举为都督，声势越来越浩大，波及全国：10月29日山西太原新军起义，阎锡山被推举为军政府都督；10月30日，昆明新军起义，成立了以蔡锷为总督的军政府；10月31日，南昌新军起义，也成立了军政府；其它各地也纷纷通电独立。大清王朝四面楚歌，摇摇欲坠。1912年2月13日清帝正式退位，大清王朝结束。“豕后牛前”就是指这件事：1911年是辛亥年，是猪年，“豕”即猪也，1913年是牛年，那么，1912年清帝退位之年就是“豕后牛前”之年。

“千人一口”是个字谜，“千、人、口”三字合起来就是共和的“和”字。中华民国是共和国，推行民主制度。

“五二倒置”是形容共和国的国体和制度，在共和国里一切权力是属于人民的，共和国的国家元首叫总统，总统是民选的，人民不满意了还可以弹劾他，这一切和君主制的国家是倒过来的。君主在过去被形容为“九五之尊”，故诸葛亮用“五二倒置”来描绘这一切。

“朋来无咎”是指中华民国在统治大陆期间，因积贫积弱，民国草创，故而在国际上受欺负，受到了日本等国的侵略。“朋”，外邦也。

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