

RIDING THE WAVES OF CHANGE



OVERVIEW

HEAVEN IS ROUND

Heaven is Round

- a Chinese theory of cyclical change -

Cover: Commissioned artwork by [Thyme Leng](#)

Dedication

To my mother, Penny, and my daughter, Maia,
two golden dragons
who steady the gait of a fire horse

Riding the Waves of Change

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Overview - Guidance Notes

I write as a storyteller; I am not a historian. To keep the story flowing and light-hearted, sources are acknowledged in the Notes at the end.

- If you are reading on a device, hover over the number at the end of a paragraph and its requisite note will pop up.
- Online sources are linked and underlined.
- A cross-referencing system connects themes across different articles: e.g. Foundation Series, Issue Two, page 7 is abbreviated to (F2, 7).
- Characters and tone marks are included as a footnote or an illustration when a word or phrase is first used.
- I use the Chinese name, *wuxing*, when I refer to the traditional theory. I use one of its translations, the five phases, for the new perspectives.
- I use lower case for the natural resources (e.g., water) and upper case for the abstract processes / phases (e.g., Water).
- I use 'ancient China' for the Bronze Age and prehistoric times, and 'early China' from c. 500 BC through to the Common Era.

Early Chinese dynasties

Xia	c. 2070 - 1600		
Shang	c. 1600 – 1046 BC		
Zhou	1046 – 256 BC	Western Zhou	c. 1046 – 771 BC
		Eastern Zhou	771 – 256 BC
			Spring & Autumn 771 – 481 BC
			Warring States 481 - 221 BC
Qin	221 – 206 BC		
Han	206 BC – 220	Western Han	202 BC – 9
		Eastern Han	25 – 220
Xin	9 – 23		

RIDING THE WAVES OF CHANGE

Heaven's Encyclicals

In China, 250 BC, no one was the Son of Heaven. The position had lacked a worthy candidate for some time. The Zhou dynasty, which had risen to power eight centuries earlier had all but lost its political might and divine right to reign. The race to become the illustrious founder of a new dynasty had turned into a marathon. Worse still, it was an arms race.

Noble warriors lay wasted on the battlefields of the Art of War. Countless conscripts coerced into the cause kept falling along the Way. For every ten thousand days of war there were seven days of peace. For five long centuries. If Chinese philosophy waxes lyrical about balance and harmony, perhaps it is because the opposite was closer to reality.¹

The Zhou dynasty origins were steeped in a creed that Heaven, the sky as a supreme deity, had bestowed a mandate upon its founders to rule in place of the former Shang dynasty, whose kings had grown too corrupt to remain worthy of Heaven's favour. Or so went the rhetoric. As time wore on, however, the royal suits of armour began to lose their invincible sheen of stardust. As battles were lost and droughts brought famine, royal authority slowly but surely paled to insignificance. Into the power vacuum flowed the ambitions of regional lords wishing to adorn themselves with the mantle of supreme rule. The incessant rivalry gave rise to those five centuries of warfare.

Yet, surely, Heaven's favour could not be won by military might. Sages set out to define divine right. Ideals of best practice abounded amid the worst of practices as the job description for the vacant position was forged alongside the furnaces churning out weapons. The Art of War, the Way and Power, and the Book of Changes all took shape during this era. As for *wuxing*, it was one among a burgeoning number of theories about how the world works. Or how it should work if it did work at all.²

The five components of the theory—water, fire, wood, metal and earth—were first grouped together as essential resources for daily life. As the theory evolved, they were reconceived as five types of action which wax and wane in successive phases. For instance, Metal is the phase of decay and severance. Echoing a sharpened blade, Metal elicits pangs of grief that cut you in two or sighs of relief once a leaden weight is lifted. While Metal is busy issuing redundancy packages, the impetus of Wood is to grow and evolve. Growth rarely follows a straight path, however, reflecting the warp of timber as the myriad things (life on earth) wend their way through complex webs of interaction.

According to one weighty tome on the art of ruling even dynasties rose and fell by its lore. The radiant power of Fire which governed the Zhou dynasty had lost its spark. Water was due to rush in and take its place. Whoever could get on their surfboard and ride the waves of change could become that illustrious founder of a new dynasty. Any provincial powermonger suffering from delusions of grandeur would do well to heed Heaven's next encyclical.³

Regional lords consulted spiritual hackers to crack the codes of Heaven's Order. They drew up charts of lucky and unlucky days; interpreted omens; studied the stars; and brewed elixirs of immortality. *Wuxing* formed part of their code-breaking arsenal: 'The Five Phases of Building a Successful Dynasty'; it would have been hot off the shelves! All you have to do is face the right direction, on the right day, eat the right food, wear the right coloured robes, give the right command to the right people, and have sex the right number of times in the right positions. If that gives you an edge on the competition, surely, it's worth a try? But did the wannabe emperor's new robes offer genuine efficacy? Or were they figments of his political imagination that were unlikely to withstand any real bullets of change.

Frankly, any semblance of order was welcome when uncertainty was rife, and a nasty death was much more likely than everlasting life. Yet so many rules to follow and rituals to enact led to a busy schedule

土 EARTH
Fabled era of the Yellow Emperor
木 WOOD
Xia dynasty
金 METAL
Shang dynasty
火 FIRE
Zhou dynasty
水 WATER
Next dynasty?

for a harassed lord trying to keep his head above water. Or at least not get it chopped off. Should he really wear green, in spring, eat sour food and issue prohibitions against tree-felling to harness the waxing power of Wood? The year planner was already full of sacrifices to the ancestors. Keeping the dead in good spirits involved inordinate degrees of time and expense. Could he follow the latest trends in power dressing as well? Apparently, green has become so last season.

The rise and fall of dynasties according to Heaven's encyclicals is long gone, but *wuxing* is still used today to track the ups and downs of daily life. In Chinese medicine, astrology, *fengshui* and fortune telling, your health and prospects are gauged through the dynamic interactions of Water, Fire, Wood, Metal and Earth. You too can ride the rip tides of change and avoid getting wiped out. As for this work, Heaven is Round, I barely visit the theory in its familiar haunts. I offer no counsel on how to improve domestic harmony by adding the warm yellow tones of Earth to your kitchen makeover. Or should the harmony project fail to deliver, relationship counselling for fire horses and water rats. There is plenty of material on the use of *wuxing* in traditional arts from self-help guides to detailed textbooks for practitioners. My focus is different.

Early Chinese teachers and statesmen lived amid constant battles for power. They were concerned about how to increase state resources, persuade rulers to have a semblance of morality, and how ostentatious displays of wealth contrasted with many people struggling to survive. Such concerns still loom large. I think the five phases can shed light on similar issues, but to do so I divest the theory of its colour-coordinated robes of cosmic harmony. No wearing green, in spring, and eating sour food, although prohibitions on tree-felling could do to stay in place. Nor do I wax lyrical about going with the flow or other soundbites of sagacity forged during centuries of warfare.

I still use the premise of natural self-regulating processes which wax and wane in successive phases, but how do such processes underlie what we think, feel and do? How we form groups; divide into factions; worry about security; share cherished beliefs and face moral dilemmas. I explore a cycle of individual and social behaviour through psychology, human evolution, the historical era when the theory was formulated, as well as the complex challenges we face nowadays.

Backstory

New insights into the five phases came during a difficult time of my life. I had returned home to the UK after two years studying movement and percussion in Indonesia. A fascinating experience, but my mental health suffered. The times when we crash are often when we open up to new possibilities. The insights came to me out of the blue, I didn't decide to have this particular stream of consciousness, but there was a context.

I already knew about *wuxing* through years of practising Shiatsu, a style of bodywork which draws on the diagnostic systems of Chinese medicine. I knew the taste of Wood was sour, the organ of Fire was the heart, the colour of Metal was white; all standard fare of classical texts. I had attended courses with Bill Palmer, founder of Movement Shiatsu, who explored the organ systems of Chinese medicine as states of well-being. If the negative emotion of Water is fear, for instance, its positive state is curiosity, excitement, wonder. We used not only bodywork but also movement, rhythm, and voice to explore those systems.⁴

When I returned home from Indonesia, Bill asked me to teach a Foundation Course for new students. At the same time, I started to work with colleagues whose expertise lay in organisational development and conflict resolution. How do we work? Not only together in organisations but also the internal organisation of our bodies and brains. It was during this time that waves of insights started lapping at the shores of my mind.

I gave a talk on how different models of organisational change and conflict resolution, such as Open Space Technology and NonViolent Communication, can be illuminated through the five phases. Afterwards, a colleague, Jenny Edwards, asked me if I had thought of writing a book. I had not, but why not? A brief opening chapter on the historical context could be followed by contemporary case studies. I knew the five phases as a practitioner, however, so to write the opening chapter I would need to delve into history books. That decision turned out to be a deep dive.⁵

Initially, I would look up *wuxing* or its various translations in the index and read those specific paragraphs or pages. Often enough, there only were a few paragraphs or pages; hardly any books had *wuxing* as

the principal focus. Moreover, getting to grips with early Chinese history felt like doing a jigsaw puzzle with an ever-expanding number of pieces.

Bewildered by the mirage of an emerging picture, as historians kept turning the kaleidoscope to reveal new patterns, I found myself using my own ideas about the five phases to piece together the puzzle. I became absorbed in a kind of meta-analysis. Plus, mission creep spread backwards to earlier eras of human history. Two decades later, I ended up millions of years from my starting point of the five phases as a system of organisational change.

I've amassed voluminous drafts, but I remain shy about sharing my musings. I have a mercurial nature, quick to learn and quick to act, but Heaven is Round proceeds at a snail's pace. Whenever I lament the tale of the snail perambulating around the cosmos, my husband, Tony, asks, "Who are you writing for?" I don't know. He concedes, "At the end of the day, we write for ourselves." Alice in Wonderland. Curiouser and curiouser. The human story as told through the quirky lens of an ancient Chinese theory about how the world works. Or how it should work if it does work at all.

We like books. We like to hold them. There's a tactile pleasure in taking a book down from a shelf and opening it. Given the scope and rate of progress, however, I will focus on writing series of articles: one episode at a time of an unfolding story. In this way, you can read and listen at your own snail's pace. I anticipate 6 – 8 issues per theme. We are practising long form, as your Tai Chi teacher might tell you.

Foundation	This series is the brief account of the historical context, albeit not as brief as I once imagined.
Psychology	The new perspectives with a focus on the five phases as cycles of thought, feeling, and action.
Evolution	The mission creep that spread backwards to earlier eras of human history.
Philosophy	The meta-analysis in which the new perspectives are the lens to study the era when the theory arose.
Society	The initial idea to apply the five phases to contemporary organisational practices and social issues.

Foundation

The first two issues of this series address one issue: anyone who writes about *wuxing* faces the conundrum of which, if any, translation to use – five elements, phases, processes, agents, forces etc.

- F1 | **Rules of Conduct at a Crossroads**
Wu means five; what does *xing* mean?
- F2 | **Mission of the Five Elements**
The Five Elements is the oldest translation of *wuxing*;
a missionary agenda lay behind this choice.

The next three issues explore the historical context which gave rise to *wuxing*. I start in prehistoric times long before the theory appears in texts. I frame this exploration around two simple questions: why five? What's special about number five in Chinese cosmology. And why those five natural resources? Spoiler alert: there are no definitive answers.

- F3 | **Long Live the Ancestors**
Myths and rituals of water, fire, wood, metal and earth, and the significance of five on the Shang dynasty oracle bones.
- F4 | **Celestial Configurations**
The sun, moon, planets and stars in ancient China.
- F5 | **Heaven's Order**
From the Mandate of Heaven to the theory of *wuxing*: a political and cosmological journey through the Zhou dynasty.

The last two issues introduce an overarching premise of early Chinese cosmology: celestial, terrestrial, and human action are interconnected. Events in the sky, on earth, and in daily life spontaneously resonate like cosmic musical strings. This resonance is orchestrated by ensembles of quintets – five tastes, colours, planets, organs, and so on – which in turn form the prognostic and diagnostic use of *wuxing* in the traditional arts.

- F6 | **Balancing Act**
How this overarching premise also underlay *yin-yang*.
- F7 | **Royal Resonance**
How *wuxing* was applied to the art of ruling.

Psychology

I will start this series by explaining what I do not use from the traditional theory, namely, the premise of cosmic resonance and the ensembles of quintets. Then I explain what I keep, namely, the two principal cycles by which the five phases generate and regulate each other. I describe these cycles in brief in Foundation Two, Mission of the Five Elements, but through the eyes of a 16th century Jesuit priest (F2, 9 – 11). I will update them to suit a 21st century perspective.

I also keep *yin-yang* as a sister theory. The black and white double act is well known in the west. For this reason, initially, I had no interest in *yin-yang*. Its cosmic chessboard of mystical moves held little appeal. Yet the more I wrote about the five phases the more *yin-yang* appeared spontaneously in my train of thought. And as a train of thought, because the complements which came to mind were states of mind. Typical *yin-yang* complements are inner and outer, lunar and solar, lower and higher, whereas I envisaged risk and security, novelty and familiarity, difference and indifference. These cyclical dualities, as I call them, form a spectrum of consciousness - a cycle of transformative states of mind. We do not have to see our lives in black and white.

I'll then shift focus to human needs. Needs are survival drivers. If we do not meet a need we will die or suffer ill-health. If we are unable to breathe, we will not last long. If we lack autonomy in the workplace or validation in our social group, we will not die but our nervous system can still react as if our life is under threat. As a social species, we evolved to meet our needs through social bonds. If you are ostracized from your group, you are more likely to get mauled by a predator. That might not be the case nowadays, but if a teenager does not receive a response to their social media post within a few minutes, or if an employee is micro-managed—a sign of low status—our nervous system will elicit stress responses which undermine our health. I'll place a range of needs across the five phases including how our needs wax and wane in cycles. We do not have to meet all our needs all the time save for breathing in and out.

I do not use the dichotomy of needs and wants. I prefer to think of strategies, resources, and threats. Briefly, a strategy is how you meet a need; a resource is what meets a need, and a threat thwarts meeting a need. Depending on the context and proportion, many things are both resources and threats: a parent or carer, for example, or fire and water.

Most animals have a limited range of strategies—what they do to survive and thrive—to get food, water, shelter, safety, and a mate. A hungry cougar stalks a herd of alpacas; she does not open a café on the shores of Lake Titicaca serving fair trade quinoa burgers to eco-tourists. Most animals also rely on a specific range of resources. Giant pandas evolved to eat a diet that is 99% bamboo and struggle to branch out.

The human capacity to generate new strategies and resources is key to our success story as a species. The catch of the creative brain is that it consumes a lot of energy, so I will frame meeting needs in light of how our brains save energy through habitual perceptions and actions.

Habitual behaviours are useful. They help us cycle safely through heavy traffic or use a kitchen knife without chopping our fingers off, but they can work against us. Strategies we adopt as children, let's say, to stay safe in a dangerous situation can become life-limiting as adults. We survive, we get by, but we struggle to thrive.

Resources change; threats change; our strategies must change. However, our nervous system embodies our identity, the feeling of who we are. Habitual perceptions and actions become synonymous with that feeling—the comfort zone of your familiar sense of self—and the people, objects, or beliefs which shore up your known world. Ironically, once we settle into a particular niche—a family, a profession, a type of person we find attractive—we can become as fixated on one thing as pandas eating bamboo. To undo an outdated strategy, to let go of a precious resource, to update your brain's guide to the world of threats even when you know the benefits of doing so is nevertheless disorienting and overwhelming. Therapeutic practices aim to support these rituals of transition.

This series is written in draft, but it would be great to include your stories, anonymously and with your permission, of course. Feel free to get in touch with me and we'll set up a series of conversations online or even in person: alice@heavenisround.com

Evolution

Human evolution is as vogue as meeting needs, and the two are closely related. I think my interest in human evolution was sparked by reading a modern classic: Jared Diamond's *'Guns, Germs, and Steel'*. One citation led to another as I kept coming across broader anthropological themes which reflected myths of leadership in early Chinese texts.⁶

In the blink of an evolutionary eye, I found myself reading about how the northern and southern banks of the Congo River had delineated the behavioural traits of chimpanzees and bonobos. Human evolution is fascinating, but it's also very long. How could I wend my way back to the fertile floodplains of the Yellow River, home to China's first dynasties? ⁷

As I became engrossed in scholarly articles in scientific journals, with the attendant pedantry of which fragment of bone fits which part of the anatomical jigsaw puzzle of evolution, I started to think in simpler terms about how our use of fire reflected the phase of Fire.

At this point, I need to stress that the natural resource of fire and the phase of Fire are not the same. I see the phase of Fire as one stage of a cyclical pattern of activity in living systems. In human behaviour it is the phase of maximum social complexity. Fire is thus a useful angle to explore the evolution of speaking and listening, of shared stories and values which create social bonds within and among communities.

The phase of Earth will likewise be a guide to the significance of soil and ceramics as the domestication of plants and animals changed our relationship to food and settlements in the Neolithic era. The phase of Metal will mirror how metal objects became status symbols, as well as of course weapons, as social hierarchies developed in the Bronze Age.

In preparation to work my way back to ancient China, I'll track key themes: power, leadership, methods of social control; religious beliefs and rituals; cooking and sharing food. The themes will be framed in light of how we evolved to meet needs through social organisation.

We'll also explore the five phases as a cycle of cultural evolution, that is, how we acquire and transmit skills, knowledge, and beliefs down the generations and through professional bodies and peer groups. There is but one species of human nowadays: Homo Sapiens are the so-called

‘wise humans’ (we wish...). However, human cultures are as diverse as if we were ten thousand species each with their own adaptive niche.

The key to understanding how humans evolved and why we are so different from other animals is to recognize that we are a *cultural species*. Probably over a million years ago members of our evolutionary lineage began learning from each other in such a way that culture became cumulative... hunting practices, tool-making skills, tracking know-how, edible-plant knowledge began to improve and aggregate.⁸

Compared to other animals we operate on an accelerated learning curve. And the brake is proving elusive in the advent of AI.

Drawing on this collective know-how, I’ll start with the driver of natural selection which reflects the transition from Water to Wood. The phase of Water is not only a good diving point into the primordial soup of single-celled organisms but also how chance and randomness shape the game of life. Several million years ago, selective pressures led some apes to make short journeys from one patch of woodland to another on two legs rather than four.

Philosophy

The final period of the Zhou dynasty is called the Warring States (5th – 3rd c. BC). Towards the end of this era *wuxing* begins to appear in texts. As mentioned earlier, living amid constant battles for power, Warring States thinkers were concerned about how to increase state resources, dissuade rulers from swallowing magic bullets peddled by charlatans and the exorbitant costs of keeping the dead in good spirits. I’ll use the five phases as the lens of analysis to frame their concerns.

From a baseline of human needs, we’ll explore the strategies they proposed to increase resources and reduce threats for individuals, for lineages, for rulers and states. We’ll keep referring to those key themes of power, leadership, methods of social control; religious beliefs and rituals; the etiquette of feasts as well as cultural transmission.

We’ll start by returning to the waning authority of the Zhou kings and waxing might of their regional lords. I’ll introduce the nuances of *de*, another key word which belies a simple translation. I’ll begin with *de* as

the charismatic power of lineage founders. I'll bring in a closely related word, *ming*; this is the 'Mandate' of Heaven. *Ming* is typically translated as fate or destiny, but it can also mean a command. To fulfil Heaven's Command you'll need charismatic power. I'll use the five phases to look at how *de* and *ming* could be passed down generations and accumulate spiritual and political kudos for a lineage.

The loss of charismatic power in the Zhou royal lineage, and if not a waning, then certainly a changing perception of Heaven's Mandate led to the burgeoning ideas of the Warring States. These ideas were often expressed as *dao* (*tao*) or the Way. As Warring States thinkers sought to court regional lords, to gain employment and preferably prestige as well, they endeavoured to persuade the lords that their Dao, their Way, was the correct one, the one which would lead to success in some shape or form. Follow this Way and you'll attain the mantle of supreme rule. Part of their persuasive tactics was to deride the improper or hopeless Ways of rivals who were clearly heading down the wrong path.

Dao, the Way, can also imply a method, a way of doing something skilfully such as the Way of Archery. Zhou archers learnt how to shoot arrows while standing in a chariot moving across bumpy terrain. Well, that's one way to practise leading a balanced life! We'll explore skilful action in light of how our brain saves energy through learned behaviours. The difference between habitual and spontaneous action was one of the Warring States debates. Indeed, the people I have been calling 'thinkers' were also practitioners: of rituals and ceremonies, meditation, exercises to promote longevity, music, craftsmanship, and archery.

These ideas and practices eventually become known in the West as Confucianism, Daoism (Taoism), and other 'schools' such as Legalism. Scholars balk at these labels, especially projected backwards onto the Warring States. Seeds were sown, but the labels were retrospectively applied, for example, as a classification system for the imperial library. Which scroll about which *Dao* should go on which shelf? By analysing the ideas and practices through the five phases, I do not rely on the labels. Nor do I use a categorical approach in which Daoism corresponds

to Water or Legalism to Metal. A more nuanced study emerges if the myriad Ways reflect all five phases and their cyclical interactions.⁹

The Zhou dynasty ended in 256 BC when the last Zhou king died in prison. During the next thirty years, the state of Qin conquered all the remaining states unifying China under the rule of the illustrious founder of a new dynasty, Qínshǐhuángdì, the First Emperor of China. His tomb, found by farmers in the 1970s, contained over 8000 terracotta soldiers created to defend him against his many enemies in the afterlife. The Qin dynasty, China's first empire, was a formative period but it didn't last long. After fifteen years it collapsed under heavy rebellions. The ensuing Han dynasty lasted for four centuries albeit with the equally short-lived Xin dynasty half-way through. While seeds of *wuxing* were sown during the Warring States the theory took root during this early imperial era.

Society

How to increase state resources, persuade rulers to have a semblance of morality, and how ostentatious displays of wealth contrast with many people struggling to survive. Sounds familiar? A fruitful dialogue could emerge if the Philosophy and Society series are written in tandem; I am thinking. The Philosophy series would not become too abstruse, and the Society series would benefit from historical context. Besides, applying ancient Chinese wisdom to 21st century dilemmas is in vogue.

For example, a thinker called Master Mo (*Mozi*) was preoccupied by the ethics of larger states invading and annexing smaller neighbours. Russia's actions in Ukraine come to mind. Another theme from early China is whether a civil servant should speak truth to power, especially as power veers in autocratic directions. Do you remonstrate with your leader at the risk of losing your job, or do you keep your head down and collect your salary? Complacency can set in during the phase of Earth.

Whose needs should take priority was another Warring States debate. Having worked in the voluntary (nonprofit) sector, I am aware of the tensions of priority. Many nonprofits are set up to address needs which are being overlooked or contributions which are undervalued. A rare species is surviving but a targeted campaign could help it to thrive. Many nonprofits have insecure funding sources, yet they aim to deliver

sustainable solutions for their clients and their cause. The balance sheet of 'too much - not enough' is also indicative of the phase of Earth.

Another possible parallel is the lucrative business of consultancy. As the Zhou kingdom fractured into numerous warring states, one path to kudos and financial gain was to advise regional rulers on the correct *Dao*. In a modern context, how much should a company outsource work to consultants? Is there a pragmatic reason to do so or do you assume your staff are too set in their ways to think outside the box? Because to equate thinking outside the box with consulting outsiders is still thinking inside the box. New ideas, fresh perspectives, are indicative of the phase of Water but another aspect of Water is untapped resources, the ones hiding in plain sight. Other topical themes will no doubt emerge.

Brief Eulogy

Seventeen years ago, by chance, I met an eminent historian of China's early empires. We were regular visitors at a care home in Cambridge. Following a respectful period after the death of his beloved wife I got in touch. He remembered me and invited me to lunch at his college.

Michael Loewe (1922 – 2025) has been a generous mentor and a cherished friend. Quickly realising that I was not attached to a scholarly institution, rather than dismissing me out of hand, he wrote letters of recommendation so I could access specialist libraries. When I lamented that I was struggling to write a brief account of the historical context of *wuxing*, because brevity was not possible, he replied with characteristic aplomb, "I should think not!"

In the last few years of his life, he lost his sight. His routine of a morning walk followed by six hours work in his library, even into his mid-nineties, was no longer possible. When I visited his home, I would read him excerpts from journals and books. I was one of several visitors who enjoyed his company in this way. Often, he seemed to be asleep, but as I was about to tiptoe out of the door, he would say, "Go on..." No longer able to use his extensive private library, he also let me borrow his books. I read extracts of my voluminous drafts, but I could see he was struggling with the style. "You do know what an encyclical is?" I replied, "Yes, it's

a letter from the Pope to the bishops of the Catholic Church.” Arguably, still heaven-sent, but I had a feeling he did not want to say, “Go on.”

Certainly, I would not have tried so hard to piece together the jigsaw puzzle of early China had I not met him. His counsel on the mirage of an emerging picture was usually, “We know so little.” (I think he said that when I was jumping to conclusions). Perhaps so, but anyone who has come across a smidgen of early Chinese history will see more of that picture as a result of his formative influence on the field. I merely graze at the side by the electric fence, but Michael Loewe sowed seeds which will bear fruit for many generations to come.

Notes

¹ From 722 – 222 BCE there were only 127 non-consecutive days when no battles took place, rounded to 10 000 : 7 days or 26 000 : 18 weeks.

Cho-yun Hsu, *Ancient China in Transition, An Analysis of Social Mobility, 722 – 222 B.C.* (Stanford University Press, 1965), 56 – 64.

² The *Dàodéjīng* (Way and Power 道德经) is also called the *Lǎozǐ* (Old Master 老子), its traditional author. Likewise, the *Sūnzǐ* (Master Sun 孙子) for the Art of War. The Book of Changes is the *Yījīng* (I Ching 易经).

³ The ‘weighty tome on the art of ruling’ refers to the *Lǚshì chūnqiū* (Annals of Lu Buwei 呂氏春秋) dated to 239 BCE. (See also F1, 16, n.25)

John Knoblock & Jeffrey Riegel, *The Annals of Lu Buwei, A Complete Translation and Study* (Stanford University Press, 2000), 283.

⁴ For Bill Palmer’s work, see the [School for Experiential Education](#)

⁵ If you would like a copy of this talk, please get in touch.

⁶ Jared Diamond, *Guns, Germs and Steel: A Short History of Everybody for the last 13, 000 Years* (Vintage 1998).

⁷ Richard Wrangham & Dale Peterson, *Demonic Males, Apes and the Origins of Human Violence* (Bloomsbury, 1997), 220 - 226.

⁸ Joseph Henrich, *The Secret of Our Success* (Princeton University Press, 2016), 3.

⁹ Kidder Smith and Sima Tan, “Sima Tan and the Invention of Daoism, “Legalism,” “et cetera””, *The Journal of Asian Studies*, **62**, (1) February 2003, 129 – 156.