

## Dì 禘

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The Aryan invasion of northern India was so effective that the language of the invaders (Sanskrit) replaced that of the indigenous people. The words in the Rg Veda which have no Indo-Iranian pedigree mostly concern agriculture,<sup>1</sup> that having been the livelihood of the indigenous population – now the subject population.

In China, the opposite occurred. Of the language of the invaders, there survived in Chinese only a few words connected with their war gear or characteristic possessions. Thus Chinese mǎ 馬 “horse” is cognate to Old High German marah and English mare. Of two classical Chinese words for “dog,” chywǎn 犬 (with its primary graph and ancient initial k-) is cognate to Latin canis, and thus of foreign origin, whereas gǒu 狗 (with its composite graph, also meaning “dog,”), is the native term.<sup>2</sup>

## Phonology

Another Indo-Aryan survival in Chinese is dì 帝 “god,” cognate to Skt dyaus and Latin deus. To this equation, it might be objected that the initial of Skt dyaus is voiced, but that of Chinese dì is not. This follows the principle that sound laws (Lautgesetze) admit of no exceptions. It would be convenient if this were true, but it is not. Among the common exceptions are personal and place names, which tend to be phonetically conservative. Karlgren’s GSR 877 group includes 帝 “god” (Karlgren’s tieg) and also the name of a sacrifice, 禘 (Karlgren’s d’ieg). It is obvious that the two are related. The name of the god will have been in general as well as ritual usage, while the name of the sacrifice would be a priestly technical term, and thus more likely conservative. We might then posit a Stage One where the two were identical,

帝 d’ieg “God” / 禘 d’ieg “sacrifice to God”

then a Stage Two, a sound change affecting only the former, giving GSR group 877:

帝 tieg “God” / 禘 d’ieg “sacrifice to God”

The later loss of voiced initial stops and of all final stops in Mandarin gives the present Stage Three, where the two again happen to be identical.<sup>3</sup> In Karlgren’s notation:

帝 ti “God” / 禘 ti “sacrifice to God”

both in the falling tone.

<sup>1</sup>See Brereton and Jamison **Rigveda** (Oxford 2020) 31.

<sup>2</sup>The two languages began to merge in the late 04th century, producing a doublet: two words for “dog.” Synonyms are a problem for lexicography, and the Shwō-wǎn dictionary of AD 100 assigned the meaning “puppy” to the native term 狗. That was not correct, but the native term (which alone now survives) does sometimes have a diminutive force; see Mathews #1650.

<sup>3</sup>For Cantonese, Meyers (tai, #2976-2977); for Mandarin, Mathews (ti, #6204 and 6206).

## The Sacrifice

A *dì* sacrifice occurs twice in the Lǚ chronicle. The death of Jwāng-gūng touched off a succession dispute. After his burial, his legitimate successor, his son Bān, died. Next year, a son by a different mother succeeded as Mǐn-gūng. The following year, Mǐn-gūng performed a *dì* sacrifice “to Jwāng-gūng,” to register his legitimacy as heir. Only 16 days later, he too died, and was succeeded by another son of Jwāng-gūng, who then reigned as Syī-gūng. Syī-gūng was not the son of just *any* different mother; his mother, Chǔng, was a concubine from the native Fǔng people. In his eighth year, he sacrificed “to Jwāng-gūng.” That *dì* sacrifice was offered at the Great Shrine, on behalf of a “lady” (fū-rén 夫人), Chǔng Fǔng. On this occasion her tablet was placed in the ancestral shrine, making her a valid ancestor, and putting on the sacred record Syī-gūng’s legitimate right to succeed his father Jwāng-gūng.

These sacrifices were not made solely to an ancestor, but also to the higher power which oversees the ancestral line – and everything else. Centuries later, someone asked “Confucius” about the meaning of the *dì* sacrifice (Analects 3:11). He replied:

“I do not know. One who *did* know would be to All Under Heaven like one holding something here.” And he pointed to his palm.

Tyēn-syà 天下 “All Under Heaven” is not the specific Jōu territory, it is *everything*. In the Chūn/Chyōu chronicle, the Jōu King is called wáng 王 in his personal role, but tyēn-wáng 天王 “King under Heaven” when acting as ruler of the Empire. The idea, embodied in the concept of the Mandate of Heaven (tyēn-mìng 天命), is that rulers have that role at the command, and retain it at the pleasure, of God. Thus Shī 255a1-2:

Mighty is God on High,  
Ruler of his people below

Shàng-dì 上帝 “God on High,” or Heaven, gives, or withholds, rain. Shī 258a5-6:  
Heaven rains down death and disorder;  
Hunger and famine, year after year.

This is reminiscent of Zeus as Jupiter Pluvius, the sky god, giver of storms and rain.

Syī-gūng went on to become the greatest ruler of Lǚ. A poem composed in his honor (once the concluding poem in the Shī) depicts Syī-gūng sitting in state, with Chǔng Fǔng, fully acknowledged as his mother, sitting beside him. Shī 300g5-6:

Let the Lord of Lǚ feast and rejoice,  
with his noble wife, *his aged mother* . . .

She outlived him. When she died, at about the age of 70, under Syī-gūng’s son and legitimate successor<sup>4</sup> Wǔn-gūng, the entry for her burial (CC 6/4:7, 0632) read:

夫人風氏薨 Our Lady, Madame Fǔng, was buried.

This treats her as the proper *wife* (夫人), not a *concubine*, of Jwāng-gūng.

It thus turns out that the only two occasions when the *dì* sacrifice was offered were part of the same extended succession dispute. They were meant to legitimize first one, and then the other, of two claimants to replace the true legitimate heir of Jwāng-gūng.

<sup>4</sup>Only three of the twelve Lǚ rulers in the Chūn/Chyōu chronicle met the Jōu test of legitimacy: the eldest son of the previous ruler by his proper wife. Wǔn-gūng, in the first year of his reign, received that acknowledgement from the Jōu King in his role as the Tyēn-wáng, the Heavenly King. It formally transferred, from his father to himself, the mandate 命 to rule.