

A Bamboo Event 2: Reading and Understanding the “Heng Xian”

Hosted by Erica Brindley



The newly published excavated text from the Shanghai Museum manuscript cache, titled “Heng Xian,” which translates into “That Which Precedes the Constant,” is a major example of a genesis story in ancient China. Aside from the fact that it was never transmitted and everything in it is new, this text also provides an altogether novel version of the spontaneous generation of all things in the cosmos—one that enhances significantly our understandings of the many flavors of early Chinese religious and philosophical beliefs. In addition, the text’s account of “names and affairs” appears to fit right into the Warring States and early imperial obsession with the impact of naming and using language so as to aid in government control. The “Heng Xian” is therefore not merely a text of abstruse metaphysical importance; it seeks a place in the realm of political thought and policy as well.

Penn State’s Bamboo Event 2 is a follow-up workshop to Bamboo Event 1, which discussed four different excavated texts. Making use of the methodological insights expressed in Bamboo Event 1, this workshop will focus on a single text—the “Heng Xian”—providing a forum for scholars to come together to read through it in a line-by-line, word-by-word fashion. Scholars may choose to provide their own tentative translations, which will be discussed and commented on by everyone working in collaboration. Upon completion of the workshop, some participants will be asked to submit short articles to appear in a special issue of the journal *Dao* dedicated to the proceedings of this workshop.

November 13, 2010



November 14, 2010

On both days, events will be held in 101 Old Botany Building, Penn State, University Park, PA 16802.

This workshop is sponsored by Penn State’s Asian Studies Program. Please contact Erica Brindley for more information: efb12@psu.edu.

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