The Question of Pangxing 旁行 and Xieshang 邪上 in the “Sandai shibiao” 三代世表 (Genealogical Tables of the Three Dynasties) of the Shiji 史記 (The Grand Clerk’s Records)*

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Abstract: Han scholar Huan Tan 桓譚 (c. 40 BC-32 AD) has attached two characteristic features to “Sandai shibiao” type historical tables that Sima Qian (c. 145 or 135–86 BC) inserted in his Shiji (The Grand Clerk’s Records): according to him, they are pangxing 旁行 and xieshang 邪上. For many centuries, scholars have not made the meaning of these features clear. The author relies on a typological analysis of writing style of excavated sources from early imperial China to offer his own interpretation. He suggests that

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the expression *xieshang* has two meanings. Narrowly speaking, it designates a writing style where characters are written along oblique lines, whereas, more broadly, it refers to forms or methods of computation relying on tools for divination (diagrams in the form of a tortoise or human figure, *shipan* 式盤 divination board and so on). Accordingly, *pangxing* ‘sideways’ would designate the horizontal writing style of documents that recorded the results of computations obtained in this way, in a tabular “Sandai shibiao” layout.

The entry “biao 表” in the *Cihai* 辭海 dictionary reads as follows: “Writing compiled using the form of a table, like the ‘Sandai shibiao’ 三代世表, or ‘Shi’er zhuhou nianbiao’ 十二諸侯年表, in the *Shiji*.” Indeed, the “Sandai shibiao” 三代世表 (Genealogical Tables of the Three Dynasties), also called a *shibiao* 史表 ‘historical table,’ that Sima Qian’s 司馬遷 (c. 145 or 135–86 BC) *Shiji* 史記 (The Grand Clerk’s Records) contains, are easy-to-read, easy-to-search textual forms comprised of text and lines, which deal with historical time, figures, and events, after these have been arranged into particular sequences (see Fig. 1). In this article, I intend to rely on excavated documents to attempt to formulate an answer to questions about the form and the methods of production of these historical tables that scholars have long since failed to entirely clarify.

1. The Issue of *Pangxing* 旁行 and *Xieshang* 𨳯 on in the Historical Tables

1.1 The Definition of *Biao* 表 and *Shibiao* 史表 (Historical Tables) in Ancient Texts

Throughout history, tables have been an important form of writing. They are texts characterized by being a text of a certain format, which derives from bringing two or more things into relation with each other. This will be the definition of *biao* 表 or ‘table’ that this article adopts.

The original meaning of *biao* appears to have been ‘exterior,’ designating in particular the outside of fur outerwear. In his *Shuowen jiezi* 說文解字 (Explaining Graphs and Analyzing Characters), Xu Shen 許慎 (c. 58-c. 147) thus gives us the following gloss:

表，上衣也。從衣，從毛。古者衣表，以毛為表。
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"Biao" 表: outerwear. Derived from *yi* 衣 ‘clothing’ and *mao* 毛 ‘fur.’ The ancients wore fur jackets, thus they took ‘fur’ for ‘exterior.’

As an extension of the original meaning ‘exterior,’ *biao* also came to mean ‘emblem’ and ‘display.’ Ancient Chinese documents have put forward the idea that the “Sandai shibiao” 三代世表, which is the first of the ten tables of the *Shiji* (The Grand Clerk’s Records), is the model of the *shibiao* 史表 ‘historical tables.’ In his *Suoyin* 索隄 commentary to the “Sandai shibiao,” Sima Zhen 司馬貞 (c. 656-720) offers us the following explanation:

> 應劭云：「表者，録其事而見之。」案：禮有表記，而鄭玄云「表，明也」。謂事微而不著，須表明也，故言表也。

Ying Shao 應劭 [ca. 153-196] says, “*biao*: to record matters for display.” Note: the *Rites* has a “Biao ji” 表記 [chapter], and Zheng Xuan 鄭玄 [127-200] says [of this] that “*biao*: 明 ‘illustrate.’” This is to say that a matter is subtle and intangible, and it requires *biaoming* 表明 ‘illustration’—thus do we say *biao*.

In other words, *biao* were not so much ‘tables’ as they were, if you will, ‘illustrations.’ What makes the *Shiji* tables *biao*, then, is not that they are tables per se, but that, when recording these “subtle and intangible” historical phenomena, the tables organize and display the relations that scattered and subtle events (including historical characters) have with each other. In this way, the *Shiji* achieves the result that these historical phenomena—otherwise difficult to establish for lack of sources—are relatively fixed in regards to their position in time and the relationships between historical figures. In this lies the relevance of setting up historical tables.

### 1.2 Remaining Problems in the Scholarship about Historical Tables

Scholarship on the contents and function of historical tables has its own ample history, especially in the Qing. Because they had little or no access to Qin-Han realia, however, early scholars made little headway into issues of style. On the question of style, primary sources offer us only brief and fragmentary descriptions. Within the century, for example, Huan Tan 樑謙 (ca. 40 BC-32 AD) mentions the fact that Sima Qian’s “Sandai shibiao” has

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1 *Shuowen jiezi zhu* 説文解字注 (Commentary on Explaining Graphs and Analyzing Characters), 8A.50b.
2 *Shiji*, 13.487 commentary.
the distinct characteristics of *pangxing* and *xieshang*. His comment reads as follows:

The Grand Clerk’s “Sandai shibiao” is *pangxing* and *xieshang*, both [our emphasis] of which are in imitation of Zhou genealogies.³

Huan Tan thus underlines that these two distinct characteristics of the “Sandai shibiao” created by Sima Qian derives from the fact that they emulate different Zhou dynasty texts. However, at the latest from the Song dynasty (960-1279) onwards, the form to which the expression “*pangxing* and *xieshang*” referred was no longer clear. In the preface to his *Tongzhi* olithic (Comprehensive Treatises), for example, Zheng Qiao 鄭樵 (1104-1162) likewise summarizes the *biao* as something of the form “*pangxing* and *xieshang*” (*Tongzhi*, iii-a). The Qing scholar Li Dou 李斗 (fl. 1764-1795) comments that “though the volume is not broad, its entries are complete; it takes yearly and monthly chronicles as its warp and *pangxing* and *xieshang* as its weft.”⁴

Likewise, in more recent times Naitō Torajirō 内藤虎次郎 considers the form “*pangxing* and *xieshang*” as “a method for filling out, between them, facts according to states and events and according to periods and years, so that they can be apprehended at a single glance.”⁵ These scholars discuss Qin-Han *biao* in terms of form (*pangxing* and *xieshang*), contents (“filling out facts according to states and events and according to periods and events”) and function (looking up events “at a single glance” and placing them on a “weft”), but nowhere do they explain what form is implied by *xieshang* ‘oblique’.

Recently, the Taiwanese scholar Huang Rener 黃人二, on the other hand, recognized a conceptual distinction between *pangxing* and *xieshang*, offering that:

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³ *Xinlun* 新論 (New Discussions), cited in *Liangshu* 梁書 (History of the Liang [Dynasty]), 50.716. In the autobiographical chapter of the *Shiji*, Sima Qian further describes himself as working from “past events from genealogies.” More precisely, he writes: “The Three Dynasties are too far away from us. We cannot investigate their chronological records. We can on the whole derive them from past events and from genealogies that were handed down. Relying on these, I thus computed them coarsely to make the first table, ‘Sandai shibiao.’” 維三代尚矣，年紀不可考，蓋取之譜牒旧聞，本于茲，於是略推，作三代世表第一。 *Shiji*, 130.3303.
⁴ 巻帙不廣。條目悉具。編年紀月以經之。旁行斜上以締之。 See *Yangzhou huafang lu* 揚州畫舫錄 (The Painted Barges of Yangzhou), 1.12-13.
⁵ Cf. Naitō Torajirō (2008), chap. 6, p. 103: “*Hanshu* 漢書.”
**1.3 The Relationship between Pangxing and Xieshang**

There are, however, two things that we may say for certain about Huan Tan’s statement. First, this pangxing must be understood in relation to the premise that Chinese writing was perceived as flowing ‘straight down,’ and not as referring to the horizontal direction of foreign scripts at the time. Indeed, what for the third century figure Wei Zhao, for example, typified Chinese writing was the vertical (zhixia ‘straight down’), rather than horizontal (pangxing ‘sideways’), flow of text. Wei Zhao’s identifica-
tion of horizontal writing with “foreign yi [barbarians]” is quite absolute, so we can conclude that, although in Huan Tan’s statement, pangxing refers to a way of writing, it is not to a horizontal direction of writing. The expression must thus rather refer to a style, that is, to a right-left flow of vertical script.

The second thing of which we may be certain is that the word bing ‘both/all’ in Huan Tan’s description implies that pangxing and xieshang are distinct concepts. In other words, they refer to two different forms, or two different methods. The reason why I suggest both “form” and “method” relates to the following part of the quotation: “both of which are in imitation of Zhou genealogies.” We can thus surmise that the “Sandai shibiao” relied on these former writings either from the viewpoint of the form, in which it

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6 Huang Rener (2009), p. 15.
7 Here ‘straight down’ refers to the vertical flow of Chinese script. The „Dayuan liezhuang“ 大宛列傳 chapter of the Shi ji notes that “Anxi 安息 [Arsacid Parthia] is several thousand li to the west of the Great Yuezhi 月氏... for their written records, they write pangxing ‘sideways’ on hides.” Anxi is in the area of modern Afghanistan. ... 畫書亦行以為書記。 See Shi ji, 123.3162. This clearly refers to the custom in the Iranian highlands of writing horizontally (right-to-left) on parchment. Similarly, in explaining the difference between Han and foreign writing styles, Wei Zhao 魏昭 (204-273 AD) tells us that “foreign yi [barbarians] all write pangxing, but the Funan 扶南 [Phnom Penh] of today is like the Middle Kingdom in that [they write] zhixia 直下 ‘straight down.’ 外夷書皆平行，今扶南猶中國，直下也。 See Shi ji, 123.3163 commentary.
was written down, or from that of the method used to design it, or else in both respects. As I explain below, I think that *pangxing* refers to the layout of the historical tables, whereas *xieshang* refers to the method of designing them.

In brief, the former is thus apparently easier to understand, since it would refer to the layout that the “Sandai shibiao” found in the *Shiji* displays. However, after all, the present-day editions of the *Shiji* do not have the form of the book made of bamboo slips (or “bookmat”) that Sima Qian composed at the time.

### 2. Textual Criticism on the Pangxing Form of the Historical Tables

**2.1 Pangxing for the “Sandai shibiao”**

Let us begin with the purported *pangxing* style of the *Shiji* “Sandai shibiao.” As shown on Fig. 1, from top to bottom, the “Sandai shibiao” is divided into eight rows (or ‘registers’) assigned to the Five Thearchs (Huangdi, Zhuanxu, Ku, Yao, and Shun) and the Three Dynasties (Xia, Yin-Shang, and Zhou). Indeed, this represents a form of *pangxing* ‘sideways’ writing different from the common vertical flow of Chinese script. To the left of each name runs a (horizontal) row recording heirs and events in the lineage’s history.

In the past, scholars did not know whether records of times, figures and events even existed before Sima Qian composed his historical tables, and if they did exist, what layout they had. On this point, Sima Zhen points out that Liu Yao (479-528 AD) stated:

> “The ‘Sandai shibiao’ is *pangxing* and *xieshang*, both of which are in imitation of Zhou genealogies.” Genealogy began in the Zhou dynasty, and the [Hanshu bibliographic treatise] “Yiwen zhi” 藝文志 records a *Gu diwang pu* 古帝王譜 (Genealogy of the Thearchs and Kings of Antiquity). Moreover, scholars of the *Spring and Autumn Annals* going all the way back to antiquity had doctrines concerning calendars and genealogies. Thus it was that Du Yuankai [杜元凱; 222-285 AD] made the
Spring and Autumn Long Astronomical system and the Ducal Genealogy—this was all based on old theories, which is how the Grand Clerk [Sima Qian] had access to them.8 In other words, Sima Qian must have read historical tables in “calendars” and “genealogies,” which recorded historical events and historical characters. This hint Sima Zhen gives suggests to me the following remark. Among excavated documents, on bamboo slips or wood boards, there are at least several types of documents (biannian ji 續年記 ‘annals,’ lipu 眀譜 ‘calendars,’ and rishu 日書 ‘daybooks’) that present common points with Sima Qian’s historical tables not only from the view point of content, but also in their layout, since they display the so-called pangxing form of tables.

2.2 Biannian ji 續年記 ‘Annals’

Biannian ji ‘annals’ are tables of major historical events, e.g. the Shiji “Liuguo nianbiao 六國年表 (Six Kingdoms Year-by-Year Table), which covers the affairs of Zhou 周, Qin 秦, Wei 魏, Han 韓, Zhao 趙, Chu 楚, Yan 燕, and Qi 齊 from 476-207 BC. The Qin Biannian ji from Shuihudi 睡虎地 tomb 11 is comprised of 53 slips divided into upper and lower registers (Fig. 2). It records major events from the reign of four kings over a period of 90 years stretching from 306 to 217 BC. It is unclear whether this table was authored or simply collected by the tomb occupant, but it is noteworthy that it features two types of contents: the national and international affairs of the state of Qin and the private family affairs of a county clerk named Xi 邢. In terms of layout, the upper register covers the 53 year from 306 to 254 BC, and the lower register covers the 37 years from 253 to 217 BC. The calligraphy betrays two separate hands: one responsible for the affairs of state up to 236 BC and one, writing in chunkier characters at an obviously later date, responsible for both state and family matters from 235 BC onward. Similar in form—and its characteristic ease of reference and comparison—the Biannian ji and “Liuguo nianbiao” differ only in terms of vertical (subject matter) and horizontal (time-scale) scope: while the Biannian ji divides the annals of a single state into two registers, the “Liuguo nianbiao” parses the affairs of eight different states among individual registers; and while the Biannian ji records things like the birth and naming of children, the “Liuguo nianbiao” restricts itself to affairs of state.

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8 Shiji, 14.510 commentary.
2.3 Lipu ‘Calendars’ on Bamboo Slips and Boards

Lipu ‘calendars’ are documents recording years, months, days, seasons, seasonal nodes, etc. of the civil calendar as worked out through lifa ‘calendro-astronomy.’ Archeology has provided us with a great number of calendars from the period, but scholars have yet to agree on a single rubric for these materials. Whatever we call them, excavated Qin-Han calendars are written without exception with a tabular layout. For example, Zhoujiatai tomb 30 preserves a wood board upon which is written the sexagenary dates of the civil shuo ‘new moons’ for 209 BC, with the recto divided into two registers, and the verso, six. This table allows the user to look up a particular month’s first day and size (big/small, i.e. 30/29 days), e.g. to find the date of New Year’s Day. The same tomb also provides us with a complete bamboo bookmat sexagenary date table for 213 BC, which the editors have dubbed Lipu. Like the modern calendar, this lipu not only marks the days of each month, it provides the user space enough to write notes below each date. Whether or not Qin-Han people had the custom of marking the dates of predetermined affairs (holidays, etc.) in advance is not entirely clear; what is clear, however, is that the way that the contents of slip 49 reg. 2 continue upside down into reg. 1 suggests that annotations were added to calendars post-production.

2.4 Rishu ‘Daybooks’ on Bamboo Slips and Boards

Rishu ‘daybook’ is an emic manuscript genre devoted to hemerology, the divination of calendar time. A daybook is a manual for selecting auspicious/inauspicious days for various daily life activities, its contents covering topics like birth, aging, illness, death, clothing, food, shelter, and travel. The Qin daybook A from Shuihudi tomb 11 (Fig. 3) instructs us, for example, that when giving birth on a gengyin 43 day, “the girl will be a merchant; the boy will be noble, fond of clothing and ornament” (nü wei jia, nan hao yipei er gui; slip 146r., reg. 2). The Qin daybook from Fangmatan also teaches us to “select a day for leaving the city gate” (ze ri chu yimen; slip 66).

Coming down to us only in manuscript form, daybooks are invariably written in a multi-register tabular layout. Where daybooks are like calendars—the calendars typical to modern East Asia, that is—is that they annotate the civil calendar (with its basis in astronomy) with matters of concern for daily life (all manifestations of correlative thought). Where daybooks differ from the calendars examined in the previous section, however, is that the daybook is a calendar of the days and months of the year, but not of any one year in particular. It is a general enumeration of what should and should not be done on particular dates every year, which pro-
vides perennial life guidance based on the stars. Another difference between the two is that daybook biao are provided with sets of instructions integral to their contents. The complete daybook biao is thus comprised of two elements: text organized spatially around lines or bullets and an accompanying set of instructions. For the sake of clarity, then, it is important that we distinguish between biao in the narrow sense, as we see with annals and calendars, and biao in the broad sense, which pair biao (in the narrow sense) with their instructions.

In terms of structure, one could say that daybook biao take calendro-astronomy as its warp (vertical coordinates) and everyday life as its weft (horizontal coordinates). These biao take two principle forms: yuehui 月諺 ‘month taboos’ and rijn 日禁 ‘date prohibitions.’ ‘Month taboos’ are blanket prohibitions for each month of the year, like we see in the Chu Silk Manuscript from Zidanku 子彈庫. More typical of the daybook genre, ‘date prohibitions,’ on the other hand, note auspicious/inauspicious activities for each sexagenary day. With these, the daybook biao allow the user to plan his/her life and work months and years in advance according to the qualities of specific day- and month-numbers.

As was explained in the first section of this article, scholars have always understood Huan Tan’s “pangxing and xieshang” to refer to the style of writing in separate registers within the lattice of vertical and horizontal lines itself.⁹ What makes the “Sandai shibiao” a biao, however, is that it displays the vertical relationship between the Huangdi, Xia, Yin, and Zhou, for example, and the horizontal (diachronic) genealogies of their houses. This function of the table permits the user to, in Sima Qian’s words, “investigate their ends and beginnings” (cha qi zhongshi 談其終始).¹⁰ However, we do not actually see Sima Qian use this table to illustrate any xieshang relationship between the characters mentioned. Whatever the case may be, one does not see any oblique lines among the straight lines of the table. How can we account for this fact? It is precisely for this reason that most scholars of the past have disregarded this distinction, glossing pangxing-xieshang as shibiao ‘historical table;’ those who have acknowledged it, however, have found themselves unable to come up with an explanation.

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⁹ See above the reference to Zheng Qiao, Li Dou and Naitō Torajirō.
¹⁰ Shiji, 13.488.
3. Critical Analysis of Characteristic Features of Xieshang for the Historical Tables

3.1 Sima Qian on the Historical Discourse “Following the Order of the Years and Months”

Let us then turn to the Zhou pu 周譜 ‘Zhou genealogies’ that the “Sandai shibiao” supposedly “imitates.” The Xin Tang shu 新唐書 (New History of the Tang [Dynasty]) tells us that “at the rise of the Han, Sima Qian [and his father Tan 諧 (c. 165-110 BC)] abridged the Shiben 世本 (Generational Records) and compiled the Shiji, following the Zhou genealogies to elucidate (ming) the hereditary families, by which they made known the origins of the various surname clans” 漢興，司馬遷父子乃約《世本》，脩《史記》，因周譜明世家，乃知姓氏之所由出 (Xin Tang shu, 199.5677).

The “Sandai shibiao” preface lays out Sima Qian’s intention and methodology vis-a-vis biao:

I have read the genealogical records, and though they all have year-numbers from the time of Huangdi, upon examining calendars, chronologies, genealogies, and the tradition of the succession of the Five Virtues, I have found that ancient texts are all different [to the point of] contradiction. The Master [Confucius] did not treat [early history] in the order of the years and months, boy is that right! It is for this reason that I based my hereditary table [here] on the generations between Huangdi and Gong He 共和 (r. 841-828 BC) chronicled in the sequence and genealogies of the Five Thearchs, as well as the collected generations of the Book of Documents.11 Sima Qian makes clear to the reader that he has consulted genealogies and chronologies and writings about the cycles of the Five Virtues such as the Zhongshipian 終始篇 (Chapters on Ends and Beginnings) that Zou Yan 鄭衍 (c. first half of the third century BC) composed. Boldly, he states his intention here to accomplish what Confucius ultimately failed to do: to comb through the contradictory morass of records and bring some semblance of order to ancient history. Further, Sima Qian will use the biao form,

11 *Shiji*, 13.488.
that is, precisely *shibiao* ‘historical tables,’ to carry out this task of ordering according to years and months. But how did he go about resolving the “contradictions” (*guaiyi*) between his sources?

An investigation into either Sima Qian’s *biao* design or the meaning of Huan Tan’s *xieshang* must, in my opinion, begin with the very sources from which Sima Qian was working—“calendars, chronologies, genealogies, and the tradition of the succession of the Five Virtues”—and there is no better way to familiarize ourselves with the writing style and uses of these sources than through period realia. In the typological analysis of excavated sources that follows I aim to show how, in terms of writing style and use, early *biao* fall into one of two categories: ‘sideways’ table-*biao* for the sake of looking up information (i.e. tables drawn of cells) and ‘oblique’ diagram-*biao* for the sake of calculation (i.e. tables with appended diagrams).

### 3.2 Xieshang Layouts on Bamboo Slips and Wood Boards

To the present day, the *xieshang* character of the “Sandai shibiao,” for example, has remained unclear. There is a consensus that *xie* 銜 ‘heterodox’ should be read as *xie* 斜 ‘diagonal,’ and Qing scholars directly referred to Sima Qian’s historical tables as *pangxing xieshang.*

On the other hand, no one has yet to offer an explanation for what *shang* 上 ‘top/up/upward’ is doing here. I believe that the latter should be read as a directional auxiliary, something like ‘up’ or ‘forward’ as in the modern expressions *chong shang* 農 rush up, *zou shang qian* 走上前 walk forward, or *gen shang* 擇前 catch up. *Zhanguo ce* 戰國策 (Stratagems of the Warring States), for example, tells us that “when Gan Mao 十茂 attacked Yiyang 惕, he signaled the drums thrice, but the troops did not *shang* capitalists 三鼓之而卒不上, which Bao Biao 魯彪 (fl. 1128-1155) glosses as “like advance” (*you qian* 走前). In contrast to *pangxing*, which refers to a horizontal progression, *xieshang* seems to imply some sort of oblique or diagonal progression. If we accept this interpretation of *pangxing*, we should then

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12 In the *Siku quanshu zongmu tiyao* 皕庫全書總目提要 (General Catalogue of the *Siku quanshu*, with Descriptive Notes), for example, Yong Rong 永瑢 (1744-1790) et al. say of Kong Shangzhi’s 孔尚質 (Qing) *Shiliu guo nianbiao* 十六國年表 (Year Table of the Sixteen States) that “though this was compiled under the rubric ‘year-by-year *biao’, it is in fact not in the genre of Sima Qian’s *pangxing-xieshang*” (其體雖以年表為名，而實非司馬遷兮行斜之體 (Siku quanshu zongmu tiyao, vol. 14, p. 24). Of Chen Houyao’s 陳厚堯 (1648-1722) *Chunqiu shizu pu* 春秋世族譜 (Genealogies of the Chunqiu Period), they also say that “its style is in complete imitation of examples of *pangxing-xieshang*” 營體皆仿兮行斜之例 (ibid., vol. 6, p. 75).

13 Baoshi Zhanguo ce zhu 魯氏戰國策注 (Mr. Bao [Biao]’s Stratagems of the Warring States with Commentary), 3.24a.
interpret *xieshang* as an oblique progression through a written text. It is somewhat more difficult to see what sort of ‘oblique’ progression could exist between the figures arranged in Sima Qian’s tables—nor, if we must explain it in terms of design, are there any diagonal lines—so we can only speculate about what this means for the “Sandai shibiao.”

A key reason why for such a long time scholars could only interpret *pangxing* and had no way of understanding *xieshang* relates to the fact that the only *biao* that classical writings contained had the *pangxing* form of progression through a written text. No *biao* occurred in them with a writing style illustrating *xieshang*. Fortunately, among excavated bamboo slips and boards, we find several types of written layout with an “oblique progression” through characters.

Supported by the broad, flat surface of a wood board or bookmat, this type of layout is written/read ‘diagonally’ according to some sequence stipulated according to the form of a natural object (e.g. a tortoise or human figure), often for the purpose of aiding calculation. In what follows, I shall mention some examples.

### 3.2.1 The Human Figure Divination Diagram

The Qin human-figure divination diagrams from the Shuihudi daybook (Fig. 4 a and b) are divinatory diagrams in human form for calculating the fate of one’s son or daughter from his/her date of birth. The instructions read:

入字其日在首富難勝財

Human Birth: if the day is on the head, its wealth will be difficult to surpass.

夾頸者貴

Either side of the neck: noble.

在盡者富

On the crotch: wealthy.

在腋者愛

On the armpits: beloved.

在手者巧盜

On the hands: adept at thieving.
The text introducing the diagram did not explain the method of computation. However, from the diagram itself and the heavenly stems on each diagram we may deduce that Fig. 4a should be read clockwise from the left leg (right from the viewpoint of the person drawn), while Fig. 4b should be read clockwise from the left hand (again, right from the viewpoint of the person drawn). The upper and lower diagrams would seem to represent male and female, respectively.  

3.2.2 Astrology Diagram

Utterly uninhibited by the physical disjointedness of the material support, the Zhoujiatai lodge-hour diagram dating from the Qin time period (Fig. 5) is a diagram formed of twenty-eight cells drawn radiating outward from the center of a circle. The manuscript itself is untitled, but the editors have identified it as a daybook based on the presence of mantic schemes involving the twenty-eight lodges, five times of day, features of the rongmo 彌磨 divination method, and Five Phases. The diagram is similar in form to the Western Han shipan 式盤 divination board, which also starts from month VIII and is marked with characters written outward from the center. It is important to note, however, that this derivation of the shipan form features wedge-shaped cells filled with oblique text. Fate calculation requires a calculator, and this type of diagram functions as something of a ready reckoner.

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14 Shuihudi Qin mu zhujian 睡虎地秦墓竹簡 (Shuihudi Qin Tomb Bamboo Slips), slips 150r. reg. 2 - 154r. reg. 3.
15 I would like to thank Professor Ru Qihe 汝金和 of Beijing Normal University for his help in elucidating the divination techniques covered in this section.
16 Guanju Qin Han mu jiandu 関沮秦漢墓簡牀 (The Guanju Qin-Han Tomb Slip and Board [Manuscripts]), p. 109.
3.2.3 The Tortoise Figure Divination Diagram

The Han Shen guì zhān (Divination by Numinous Tortoise Shells) found at Yinwan 尹灣 tomb 6 (Fig. 6 a and b) is a *shushu* 數術 'number-technique' in the form of a tortoise for divining about thieves based on day-order. The method of divination is as follows: the tortoise is divided into eight sections beginning from the lower left leg; one counts off the number of days ‘to the right’ 右行 (counterclockwise) from new moon to the day of divination; having produced an omen, one interprets it with the aid of the appended text, calculating the time, position, surname, and chance of success. In other words, the tortoise diagram is itself nothing more than a means for producing an omen, the interpretation of which requires instructions.

3.2.4 Game Board Divination Diagram

Last but not least is the game board divination diagram from the Han tomb at Yinwan (Fig. 7). The diagram is divided into six registers, with reg. 1 featuring a *liubo* 陸博 board-diagram, and regs. 2-6 giving predictive divinations on topics such as “divining taking a wife” (zhàn qu à fū jià nǚ 取婦嫁女), “inquiries about travel” (wèn xíngzhé 問行者), “inquiries about incarceration” (wèn jízhé 問獄逸者), “inquiries about disease” (wèn bìngzhé 問病者), and “inquiries about loss” (wèn wángzhé 問亡者). The method of divination is not perfectly understood, but it appears that the position on which the sexagenary day in question falls provides the omen, which is then interpreted by means of the accompanying text. However it works, it is clear that divination relies upon the oblique lines of the diagram-biao for calculating one’s fate.

3.3 Xieshang Refers to a Method of Computation

It is interesting to note that in the writings mentioned above, particular as they are recently excavated materials from the Warring States, Qin, and Han, textual diagrams occur, with reading progressing along oblique lines. Moreover, this type of diagram corresponds without exception to the *Shiji*’s rubric of “the tradition of the succession of the Five Virtues,” to which the “Sandai shibiao” preface refers, as opposed to “calendars” or “genealogies” (above).

In this section I have enumerated only a handful of divinatory diagram-biao; their typicality within period manuscripts, however, speaks to the purposes to which diagrammatic tables were put in early Chinese divination culture. At this point, the use and function of figures in the context of

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hemerology should be quite clear, one point about their meaning, however, bears special reiteration. The “Wang dao” (Escaping Robbers) from Fangmatan daybook A (slips 22-41) provides twenty-two articles on the hemerology of capturing thieves. The head of each slip is marked, in order, with the celestial stems and earthly branches, the latter of which are correlated with the twelve animal signs. The text that follows notes the perpetrator’s direction of escape, looks, physical characteristics, sex, place of hiding, distance, his/her number of accomplices, their state of life/death, whether or not the stolen goods have been hidden, and whether or not the perpetrator can be caught. The “Six Jia Orphan-empty Method” from the Zhoujiatai daybook (slips 255-260) provides a divinatory scheme to the same end. Its different methods, however, employ different diagrams: some articles involve only the numerical manipulation of a table composed of rectilinear cells (table-biao), while others rely upon figures for the calculation of numbers (diagram-biao).

In brief, figures are no more than divinatory aids. In other words, they are merely methods of calculation. Be they tortoises, human, shipan, or game board, it doesn’t really matter what the figures are. They are simply the records of a method of calculation. Clearly the sentences written between the diagrams all embody writing progressing oblique-wise. I suggest that this set of writings used for calculating was called xieshang. When Sima Qian composed the historical table of the “Sandai shibiao,” he needed to use these xieshang methods of calculation.

To recap, this article argues that pangxing ‘sideways’ were a form of expression of the shibiao ‘historical tables,’ whereas xieshang ‘oblique’ were a way of calculating them. In terms of writing style, pangxing were tables that embodied the results of computations, whereas xieshang referred to methods of calculation expressed using a chart. The two can appear alongside one another in slip and board manuscripts—Fangmatan daybook B, for example, is itself simply a composite biao (Fig. 8); but ‘oblique’ biao can also be omitted after use, since they do not provide results in and of themselves. It is my conjecture, therefore, that it is only Sima Qian’s ‘sideways’ biao that have come down to us, and that any ‘oblique’ (astronomical and Five Phases) biao that he may have used to calculate the genealogies of the Three Dynasties were omitted. All of this goes a considerable way towards helping us understand Huan Tan’s statement that “The Grand Clerk’s ‘Sandai shibiao’ is pangxing and xieshang, both of which are in imitation of Zhou genealogies.”
Figures

Figure 1: The Form Pangxing of the Table in the “Sandai shibiao”

SOURCE: Shiji 13, 488-489.
Figure 2: Shuihudi M11 Biannian ji (Transcription)

SOURCE: Shuihudi Qin mu zhujian (Shuihudi Qin Tomb Bamboo Slips), pp. 5, 7.
Figure 3: Shuihudi Daybook Biao within Biao

SOURCE: Rao Zongyi (Jao Tsung-i) and Zeng Xiantong (1982), plate 22.
Figure 4: Shuihudi Daybook Human Figure Divination Diagram

SOURCE: Shuihudi Qin mu zhujian, p. 206.

Figure 5: Zhoujiatai Daybook Lodge-Hour Diagram (Transcription)

SOURCE: Guanju Qin Han mu jiandu, p. 107.
Figure 6: Yinwan Shen gui zhan (Transcription)

SOURCE: Yinwan Han mu jiandu (The Yinwan Han Tomb Slip and Board [Manuscripts]), p. 123.
Figure 7: Yinwan Liubo Board-Diagram (Transcription)
SOURCE: Yinwan Han mu jiandu, pp. 125-126.
Figure 8: Fangmatan Daybook B Compound Biao (Transcription)

SOURCE: Tianshui Fangmatan Qin jian 天水放馬灘秦簡 (Tianshui Fangmatan Qin Slips), p. 94.
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