

L é o DUBAL

Sooth-Dreaming
on
Chinese
Characters

Algorithmic Oneirocriticism after
"The Memories of the Jade Box"

汉
字
和
梦

玉
匣
记

The Yù xiá jì revisited ...

Premonition, the too long prevailing obscurantist interpretation of "*sooth-dreaming*" is rejected without appeal. In its place, a rational analysis of the mental process involved is spelt out.

At night, the dreamer disguises with his best language skills the coveted resolution to his sorrows of the previous day. The next morning, though he still does not dare, alone by himself, to openly confront the latent content of his dream, he will *unconsciously* direct his neighbours or counsellors in a kind of drama ending with the revelation of the concealed meaning of it.

About the author

He obtained his PhD in 1968, at CERN, the European Centre for Nuclear Research in Geneva. Since then Léo DUBAL has been active in a wide spectrum of research activities ranging from high tech to semiology.

cont@act

/

25.1.2005

Extended revised version in French: <http://www.archaeometry.org/rv.htm>

Table

| | |
|---|----|
| YÙ XIÁJÌ Chronological references | 2 |
| The key to dreaming | 3 |
| The spoken word | 3 |
| Key-word, dream-word | 3 |
| Foretelling or directing | 4 |
| Sinographic dreams | 5 |
| Notes | 5 |
| <i>Dreams of power with sinograms</i> | |
| The dot on the forehead | 6 |
| To plant a beard | 7 |
| A pine tree grows | 8 |
| The three knives | 9 |
| The conquest of the ram | 10 |
| <i>Compensatory dreams with sinograms</i> | |
| Two mountains | 11 |
| To pierce the sky | 12 |
| The lucky star | 13 |
| The lost ear of wheat | 14 |
| The unsolicited alms | 15 |
| The river dries up | 16 |

Yù Xiáji^{*)} Chronological References

| | <i>Epoch</i> | <i>Location</i> | <i>Dream #</i> |
|------------------------|--------------|------------------------|----------------|
| Western Hàn | -206 à 24 | Péi ⁺⁾ | 5 |
| Wú | 220 à 280 | | 3 |
| Xǔ Zhèn ^{**)} | born in 239 | | |
| Northern Qí | 550 à 577 | | 1 |
| Later Hàn | 947 à 950 | | 9 |
| Sòng | 960 à 1279 | | 11 |
| Northern Sòng | 960 à 1127 | | 2 |
| Southern Sòng | 1127 à 1279 | Liǔzhòu ⁺⁺⁾ | 6 |

The dreams n° 4, 7, 8 et 10 could not be classified

^{*)} "Memories of the Jade Box"

^{**)} Yù xiá jì's first author

⁺⁾ at the NW of the Jiāngsū province

⁺⁺⁾ at the centre of the Guǎnxī province

The key to a dream

The mathematician Roger PENROSE ¹⁾ has been the first to postulate that there "seems to be *something non-algorithmic* about our conscious thinking". This bold hypothesis inspires another, that of the algorithmic structure of our unconscious mind, and therefore of our dreams.

In our sleep, we are impelled to brood over our most recent worries, and to "play upon words" in order to enhance the *coveted, but inadmissible issues* ²⁾, which, when awake the next morning, inevitably puzzle our conscious, self-declared-rational mind.

The spoken word

Language has been invented in order to channel our sensations, emotions and feelings. My father liked to remind me that, up to the age of two, I used to cry every evening, when I was put to bed and hugged and he was leaving my room. But the day I succeeded, by a "*daddy leaves*" to put into words the event, to ward off its violence, my tears stopped.

Once humankind invented speech, the *unconscious* mind found itself captive of this very language which structures it. This stereotyped mode of thinking is particularly explicit in the absence of censorship, such as in the case in our dreams.

Key-word, dream-word

The *encoding of our dreams* calls for the most appropriate keyword of our language. Enigmatic dreams are structured on **ciphers**, **homophones**, or even **Chinese ideograms**.

"**Number 14**" is a ciphered dream: During the course of a psycho-analysis, a woman dreamt that she was going alone to a party at some friends'. After a while she decided to call her husband to join her. The unexpected shape of the phone-booth reminded her of her own sex. She began to dial the number which was ending with "14", but, despite repeated efforts, she did not succeeded to dial the number to the end.

This woman was suffering under her husband's misunderstanding for her femininity. Despite her attempts to entice him (the invitation to join her at the party), her femininity (the number 14, i.e., the 14th day of her menstrual cycle) does not reach him.

Then follow two examples of *homophonic* dreams:

"**The uncle's dough**" is an enigmatic dream in German: A young woman, dealing with financial worries, dreamt of one of her hated rich uncles. She went with him in his woodshed where he wanted to give her some trunks covered with moss ("*moos*" in German means also "*dough*", i.e.: money).

This is a prototype of a *compensatory dream*: on an apparently anodyne way, what one does not dare to wish while being awake is expressed.

"**The satyr**" is a poliorcetic dream in Greek, a prototype of *power dream*: In 332 BC, after having besieged Tyre for seven months, ALEXANDER the Great decided one day to raise the siege. He believed he had lost all chance. Nevertheless, during the following night he dreamt he saw a "*satyr*" dancing on a meadow. The next morning his counsellor explained to him: "sa" ("to you" in Greek) and "tyr", means. "*Tyre is yours*".

Indeed, after having dared to dream his victory, he came into Tyre without resistance from the besieged people who, after seven months, could endure no longer.

Foretelling or directing

The "inadmissible" content of dreams, such as the one of Alexander, will be often perceived - at first glance - as "*premonitory*". Nevertheless, a closer look forces us to admit that the encoding of our dreams is only the first act of an *unconscious directing*, where, in a second act, we trust others with the responsibility to reveal to us its meaning.

Among the so-called premonitory dreams, a large category is the one with *dreams of power*: there, the acquisition of phallic symbols (such as a dot on the forehead, or tufts of hair on the chin) can alternate with the castration of the father or of one of his representations, such as the ram.

Another category is the one of *compensatory dreams*: an intense frustration can force us to find an issue, at least when dreaming, to compensate hard reality by something less depressing.

Inversely, one man, ready to succeed in his action, but lacking in self-confidence, manages to torture himself with dreams full of unpalatable scenes, simulating a failure. The oncoming success is nevertheless there, hidden in the latent content of the dream. When one dreams the worst, it is always that one still hopes - at least unconsciously - to succeed or to heal.

Sinographic dreams

The particular interest of the Chinese language is to offer to the dreamers not only the opportunity to play with words, but also with the pictures out of which are built the Chinese ideograms. This oniric game should not be confused with the etymology of the sinograms.

We revised and completed the selection of sinogram-based dream-omens translated by G. SOULIE DE MORANT and annotated by Marie BONAPARTE^{3]}. Those ancient Chinese dreams are compiled in the **Yùxiáji** (*Memories of the Jade box*)^{4]}, a work initiated by Xǔ Zhèn (born in 239) and later enlarged several times.

Notes

- 1] Roger PENROSE, *The New Emperors' Mind*, 1990, p.532, Ed. Vintage, London, ISBN 0 09 977170 5
- 2] "The usual forgetting of dreams has the same cause as their production: the censorship of our desires", George DUBAL, *Rêves de trains*, 1974, p. 69. Self-publishing, Geneva.
- 3] G.SOULIE DE MORANT, *Les Rêves étudiés par les Chinois*, Rev. franç. de psychanalyse, #4, 1927, pp.733-749, Ed. Doin, Paris
- 4] Based on the pocket book reedition of the *Yù xiá jì* , Ed. Haiyang, 1993, Beijing, ISBN-5027-1607-9/E20

梦笔点额兆

Mèng bǐ diǎn é zhào

北齐文宣将受禅，梦人以笔点

Bèi Qí Wén xuān jiāng shòu chán mèng rén yǐ bǐ diǎn

额，王昙哲曰：“王上加点为

é Wáng tán zhé yuē Wáng shàng jiā diǎn wéi

主，当进位也。”

zhǔ dāng jìn wèi yě



The dot on the forehead

Wén Xuān, the king of the Northern Qí, was on the verge of attaining power when he dreamt that a man was painting a dot on his forehead:

王 + 丶 → 主
wáng zhǔ

Wáng Tán-zhé (minister of the Qí empire) said: "On the character **wáng**: king, if one adds a point, this gives **zhǔ**: emperor; you will certainly attain power".

Indeed, Wén Xuān became emperor in 550 AC, then died.

梦添须兆

Mèng tián xū zhào

吕蒙正祖上极富，因代民输纳
Lǚ méngzhèng zǔ shàng jí fù yīn dài mǐn shū nà
郡粮，被累致贫，蒙正故居破
jùn liáng bèi lěi zhì pín Méngzhèng gù jū pò
窑，一日往庙求神，拾得遗金
yáo yī rì wǎng miào qiú shén shí dé yí jīn
百两，随还失主，丝毫不取，
bǎi liǎng suí huán shī zhǔ sī háo bù qǔ
是夜梦神栽须三茎，后遂及
shì yè mèng shén zāi xū sān jīng hòu suí jí
第，为参政，谥文穆公。
dì wéi cān zhèng yì wén mù gōng

To plant a beard

Lǚ Méng-zhèng emerged from a very rich and powerful family. They used their vassals to launch campaigns against their neighbours, used up their resources and became very poor. Lǚ Méng-zhèng was living in a cottage in ruins. One day, while he was on his way to the temple to implore the spirits, he found a golden bar weighting one hundred ounces. He gave it back to the one who lost it without keeping back anything. The same evening, he dreamt that a spirit *planted three tufts of hair on his chin*. He became *Counsellor* (and minister of the Song Empire from 990 to 1015), in Chinese:

cān

The character **cān** has precisely *3 hairs* in its lowest part. Compensation for lost fortune and reward for honesty.

梦松生腹上兆

Mèng sōng shēng fù shàng zhào

丁固梦松生于腹上，因拆松字

Dīng Gù mèng sōng shēng yú fù shàng yīn chāi sōng zì

是十八公，后十八年果为三公

shì shí bā gōng hòu shí bā nián guǒ wéi sān gōng

A pine tree grows

Ding Gù, dreamt that a *pine tree* was growing on his belly :

松 → 十 + 八 + 公
sōng shí bā gōng

He discerned the character **sōng**:: *pine tree*, which is composed of three parts; to the left **shí**: *ten* and **bā**: *eight*, which gives eighteen, and to the right, **gōng** *official* (but also *great minister*).

Evidently, Ding Gù worked hard *during 18 years* to become a minister, and as he made every effort to become one, he became one of the three regents of Wu; as people do to whom the fortune-teller predicts something feasible such as a marriage, or a journey.

梦刀悬梁上兆

Mèng dāo xuán liáng shàng zhào

王容梦悬二刀于梁上，须臾又

Wángróng mèng xuán èr dāo yú liáng shàng xū yú yòu

益一刀。李毅曰：“三刀为

yì yì dāo Lǐ yì yuē sān dāo wéi

州，汝入府也。”后果还益州

zhōu rǔ rù fǔ yě Hòu guǒ hái yì zhōu

刺史。

cì shǐ

州

The three knives

Wáng Róng dreamt that two, and then a third, knives were nailed into the roof beam. Master Li Yi explained to him:

刀 刀 + 刀 → 州

2 dāo dāo zhōu

"The character **dāo**: knife, repeated three times gives the character **zhōu** (chief of) province, so you will enter the Prefecture". Soon after that, he became Governor of a province.

As Wáng Róng had, without doubt, plotted to become governor, the "Damocles knife" was only in appearance hanging over his head (though the goodwill of the emperor is always a two-edged sword, as suggested by the first part of the dream).

梦拔羊角兆

Méng bā yáng jiǎo zhào

浦公为亭长时，梦逐一羊拔其

Pǔ gōng wéi tíng zhǎng shí mèng zhú yì yáng bá qí

角，尾且落。解曰：羊去角尾

jiǎo wěi qiè luò jiě yuē yáng qù jiǎo wěi

乃王字也。后果为汉王以应此

nǎi wáng zì yě hòu guǒ wéi hàn wáng yǐ yìng cǐ

兆也。

zhào yě



The conquest of the ram

While Pǔ Gōng (alias Líu Bāng) was still street warden of the town of Péi, he dreamt that he was *running after a ram and that he pulled off its horns and tail*:



It was explained to him the following: **yáng**: *ram*, whose horns and tail are pulled off, gives **wáng**: *king*.

Indeed, after having defended the town of Péi, Líu Bāng became Duke of Péi, then in 202 BC, emperor, under the name of Gāo zǔ and founded the Hàn dynasty.

梦奔二山兆

Mèng bēn èr shān zhào

杨文广征战，被兵所困在柳州

Yáng wén guǎng zhēng zhàn bèi bīng suǒ kùn zài Liǔ zhōu

三个月，夜梦奔二山，将士

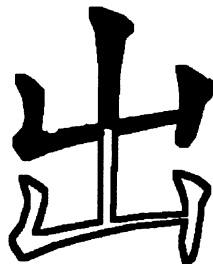
sān gè yuè yè mèng bēn èr shān jiāng shì

曰：“二山乃出字。”次日果

yuē Èr shān nǎi chū zì Cì rì guǒ

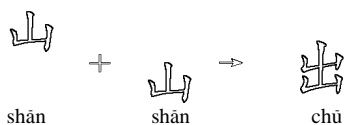
觥

chū



Two mountains

Yáng Wénguǎng, while involved in a military campaign, was besieged by the enemy for three months within Liǔzhǒu. He dreamt one night that he was running toward *two mountains*:



His officers and soldiers explained to him: "Two mountains: **shān** (written the Chinese way, from top to bottom), this gives **chū**: to get out". The next day, they indeed managed to break the siege.

Considering that between two mountains there is an opening, an issue to an unbearable situation, the dream can be easily understood: no alternative was left to Yáng Wénguǎng other than to dare it.

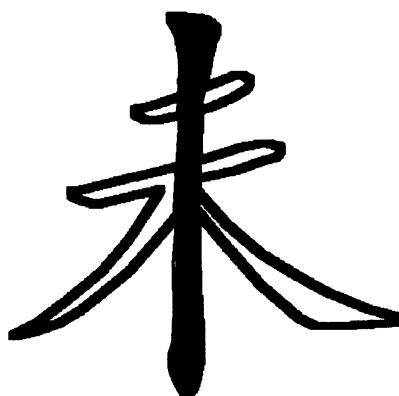
梦木上破天兆

Mèng mù shàng pò tiān zhào

王敦谋反，梦将一木上破天，
Wángdūn móu fǎn mèng jiāng yí mù shàng pò tiān

许负解曰：“此是未字，言未
xǔ fù jiě yuē cǐ shì wèi zì yán wèi

可动也。”
kě dòng yě



To pierce the sky

While Wáng Dūn was weaving a plot, he dreamt that *he pierced the sky with a tree*. Master Xǔ Fù explained to him:

天 + 木 → 未
tiān mù wèi

"If one superimposes on the character **tiān**: *sky*, the character **mù**: *tree*, then one gets **wèi** which means *not yet*".

Thus, despite the apparent ardour of Wáng Dūn to transpierce everything, sky included, the latent content of his dream is *a call for prudence*: "one should think before acting" concluded Xǔ Fù.

梦魁星兆

Mèng kuí xīng zhào

方林登第时前一日，梦一鬼戏
Fāng lín dēng dì shí qián yì rì mèng yì guǐ xì

以斗，寝而想之曰：“鬼傍一
yǐ dòu qǐn ér xiǎng zhī yuē Guǐ bàng yì

斗，是魁也”。后果大魁。
dòu shì kuí yě Hòu guǒ dà kuí

魁

The lucky star

Fāng Lín, the day before going to the official examinations, dreamt that *a ghost was playing with a bushel*. Stretched on his bed, he analysed:

鬼 + 斗 → 魁
guǐ dòu kuí

The character **guǐ**: *ghost*, and the character **dòu**: *bushel* (but also in “bēi dòu xīng”: the Great Bear), these give the character **kuí**: the *first place*, (but also used in “kuí xīng”: the star α of the Great Bear and *the God of literature*); indeed, he came out *first at the literary examinations*.

The ghost is Fāng Lín's *memory* on which he knows he can rely as he is playing with it - under his lucky star - *to gauge it* (with the help of the bushel). To measure one's memory is the allegory - by excellence - of literary examinations.

梦得失禾兆

Mèng dé shī hé zhào

后汉蔡茅，梦得穗中禾，复失

Hòu hàn Cài mào mèng dé suǐ zhōng hé fù shī

之。郭乔卿曰：“禾失为秩”

zhī Guō qiáo qīng yuē Hé shī wéi zhì

得禾失之乃“秩”字，必得禄

dé hé shī zhī nǎi zhì zì bì dé lù

秩也，旬日之间征为司徒。

zhì yě xún rì zhī jiān zhēng wéi sī tú

秩

The lost ear of wheat

Cài Mào dreamt that *he* picked up an ear of wheat, and then lost it:

失 + 禾 → 秩
hé shī zhì

Master Guó Qiáoqing told him: “the characters **hé**: ear and **shī**: lost together give **zhì**: official position. You will certainly get an important office“. Indeed, within the next following ten days, the emperor of the Later Hàn appointed him as Minister.

To pick up an ear and to lose it, this is to pick up an official position. It is to be noticed that he first loses the picked-up ear (phallic symbol) as a tax to the position he coveted, but not in a perspective of failure, as at the latent level, he felt he was ripe for it.

梦赐狗肉兆

Mèng cì gǒu ròu zhào

梁灏未入试前十日，梦一人赐
Liáng hào wèi rù shì qián shí rì mèng yì rén cì

狗肉一片，次日闷闷不悦，解
gǒu ròu yì piàn cì rì mèn mèn bù yuè jiě

曰：“狗即犬也，今添一片，
yuè gǒu jí quǎn yě jīn tiān yì piàn

乃“状”字，必矣。
nǎi zhuàng zì bì yǐ

The unsolicited alms

Líang Hào, ten days before presenting himself for the literary examinations, dreamt that a man was giving him alms: a *slice of dog meat*. The next day, as he was sad and unhappy, his dream was explained in this way:

片 + 犬 → 状
piàn quǎn zhuàng

“**Gǒu**: dog, can also be written with the character **quǎn**, and **piàn**: slice, can be written inverted. Their combination gives the character **zhuàng**: first in the literary examinations (in the expression *zhuàng yuán*); you will certainly come out first”.

He did, in reality. If one is prepared to succeed, one will dream of failure: Líang Hào feels himself treated as a beggar, but the latent content is not deceptive and the reward, the slice of dog meat is (in China) a very good piece: the first prize.

梦河水干兆

Mèng hé shuǐ gān zhào

宋帝有病，夜梦河水干，忧形
Sòng dì yǒu bìng yè mèng hé shuǐ gān yōu xíng

于色，以为人群者象也，乃河
yú sè yǐ wéi rén qún zhě xiàng yě nǎi hé

无水是无所居矣，既而问诸宰
wú shuǐ shì wú suǒ jū yǐ jì ér wèn zhū zǎi

辅臣，对曰：“河无水，乃可
fǔ chén duì yuē Hé wú shuǐ nǎi kě

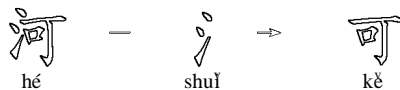
字也，陛下之疾病可痊矣”帝
zì yě bì xià zhī jí bìng kě quán yì Dì

欣然，疾果愈。
xīn rán jí guǒ yù



The river dries up

A Song emperor was sick. He dreamt *one night that the water of the river dried out*. Depressed, he considered, according to the traditional believe, that the emperor is the image of the dragon which lives in the river. If now the River is drying out, the dragon will not have anywhere to live. The emperor gave the interpretation of the manifest content of the dream, but to reveal a latent content the Emperor questioned his ministers, and was told:



"The character **hé**: river, without **shuǐ**: water, this is **kě**: to be able to, but also "rather good". The emperor rejoiced and was healed.

When one is sick, once one decides to recover, one dreams with a latent content implying health and not death.