



# Conquer and Govern: Early Chinese Military Texts from the Yi Zhou shu

*Robin McNeal*

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China's Warring States era (ca. 5th–3rd century BCE) was the setting for an explosion of textual production, and one of the most sophisticated and enduring genres of writing from this period was the military text. Social and political changes were driven in large part by the increasing scope and scale of warfare, and some of the best minds of the day (including Sunzi, whose *Art of War* is still widely read) devoted their attention to the systematic analysis of all factors involved in waging war. *Conquer and Govern* makes available for the first time in any Western language a corpus of military texts from a long neglected Warring States compendium of historical, political, military, and ritual writings known as the *Yi Zhou shu*, or Remainder of the Zhou Documents.

The texts articulate concretely and vividly the relationship between military conquest of an enemy and incorporation of conquered territories into one's civilian government, expressed dynamically through the paired Chinese concept of wen and wu, the civil and the martial. Exploring this conceptual dyad as it evolved across the Warring States era into the early Western Han (ca. 2nd–1st century BCE) provides an alternative view of the social and intellectual history of classical China—one based not primarily on philosophical works but on a complex array of ideological writings concerned with the just, effective, and appropriate use of state power. In addition, this study presents a careful reconstruction of the poetic structure of these texts; analyzes their place in the broader discourse on warfare and governance in early China; introduces the many text historical problems of the *Yi Zhou shu* itself; and offers a synthetic analysis of early Chinese thinking about warfare, strategy, and the early state's use of coercive power.

*Conquer and Govern* will find a ready audience among specialists and students of Chinese philosophy and history, particularly those interested in the history of military thought and practice, and comparative philosophy.

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