



Undergraduate assignment feedback form
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The Logic of Righteous Military Action in *Zuo Zhuan*: From the Character ‘Zhen (貞)’ , ‘Zheng (正)’ and ‘Zheng (征)’

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Module codes: SICH6017

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Date : 7 Oct. 2025



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Zhuan' s Warfare

4. Conclusion



01.

Introduction

Literature Background

I Ching

Classical text (Jingwen 經文): Diagram of the Hexagram,
Commentary on the Hexagram
Commentary on the Lines

Early to middle Western Zhou Dynasty (1046—256)

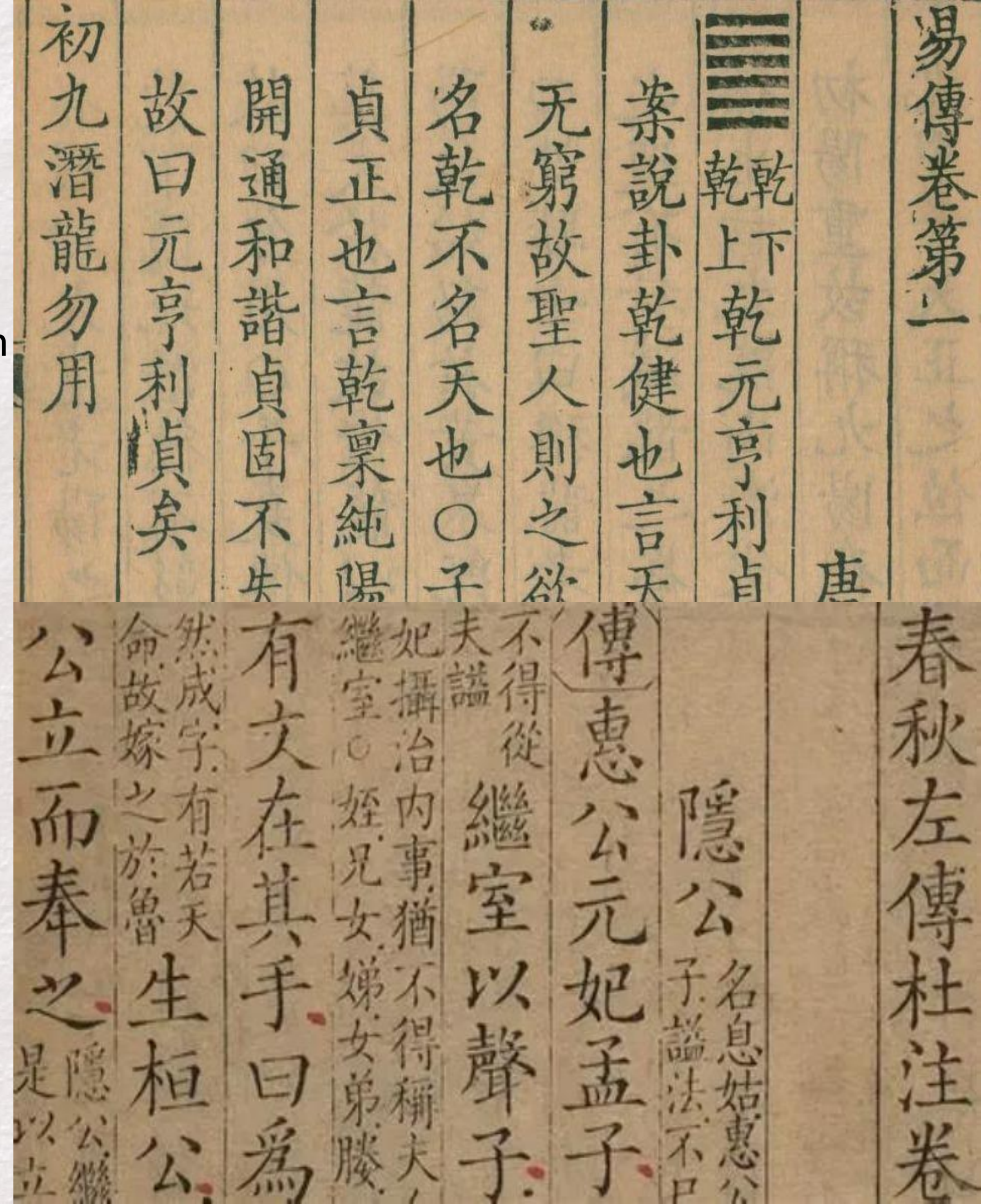
Explanatory text (Zhuanwen 傳文): Ten Wings (Shiyi 十翼)

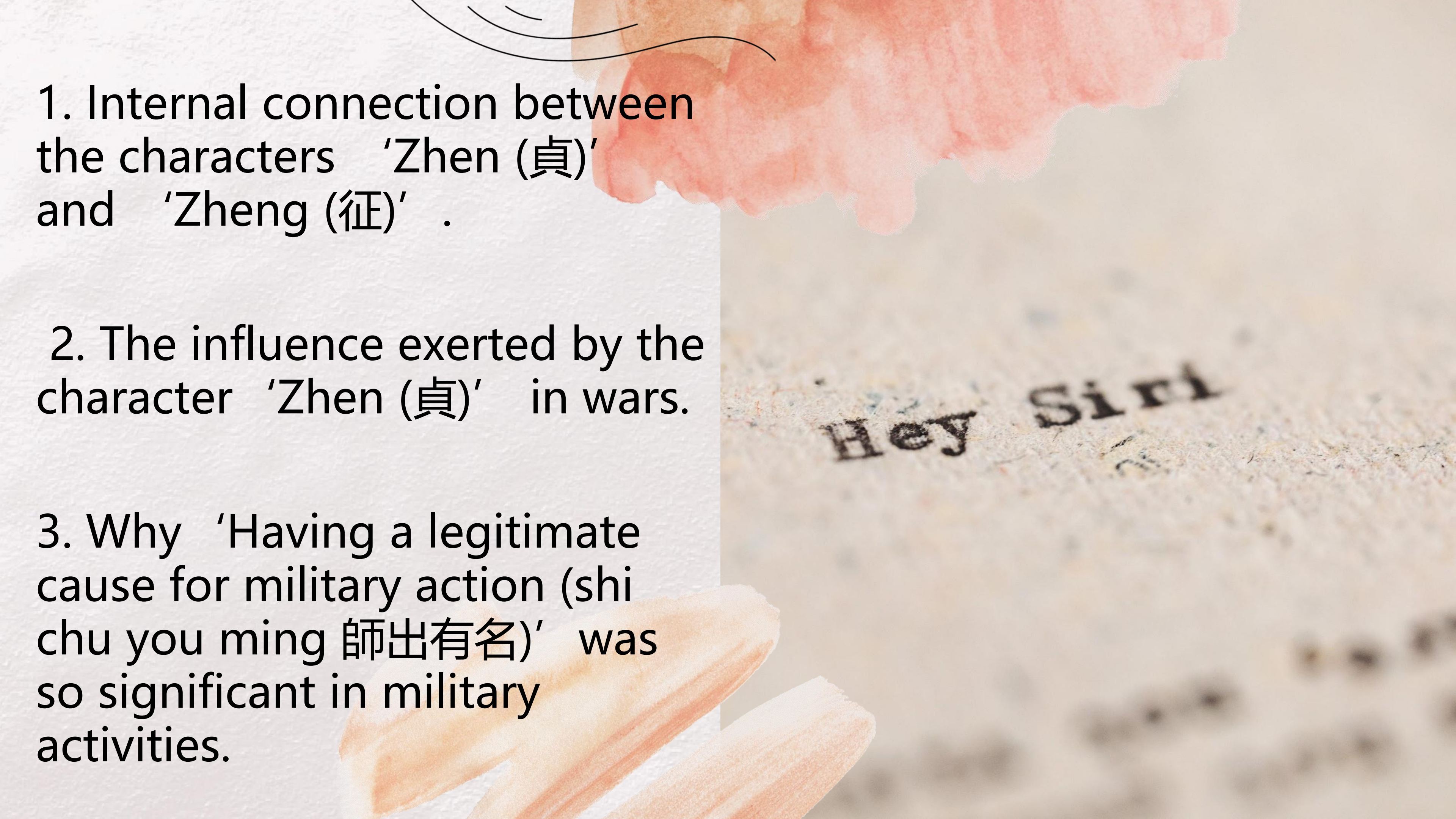
Early Warring States period (475—221)

Zuo Zhuan

Records events of the Spring and Autumn Period

Early Warring States Period (475—221)

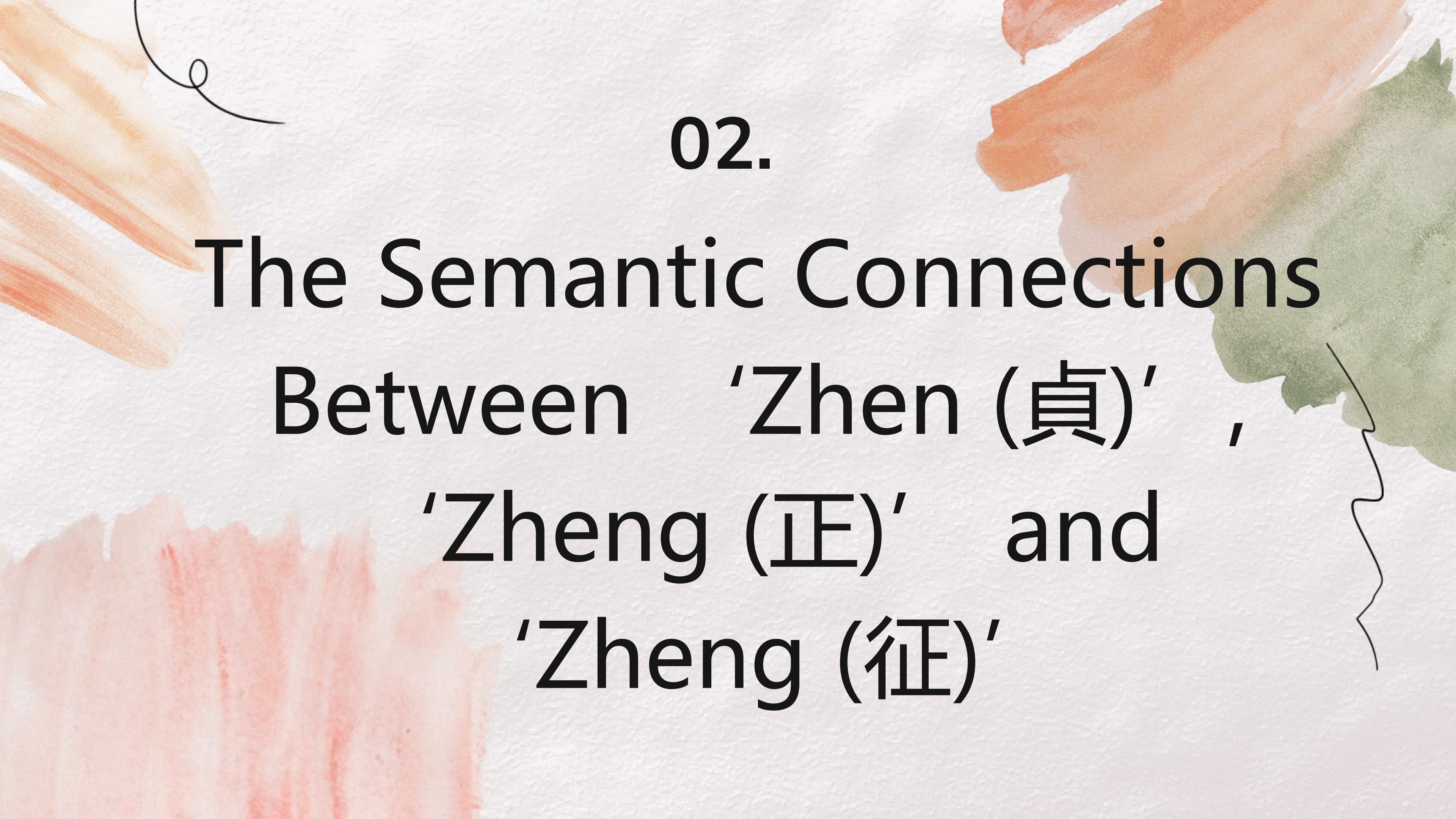




1. Internal connection between the characters 'Zhen (貞)' and 'Zheng (征)' .

2. The influence exerted by the character 'Zhen (貞)' in wars.

3. Why 'Having a legitimate cause for military action (shi chu you ming 師出有名)' was so significant in military activities.



02.

The Semantic Connections Between 'Zhen (貞)', 'Zheng (正)' and 'Zheng (征)'

Shuowen Jiezi



1

To divine²



Seeking answers through
ancient divination practices

1.Xiaoxuetang zixingyanbian 小學堂字形演變 <

<https://xiaoxue.iis.sinica.edu.tw/ImageText2/ShowImage.ashx?text=%e8%b2%9e&font=%e5%8c%97%e5%b8%ab%e5%a4%a7%e8%aa%aa%e6%96%87%e5%b0%8f%e7%af%86&size=48&style=regular&color=%23000000&resolution=96>> [accessed 1 October 2025]

2.Xu Shen and Duan Yucai, Shuowen jiezizhu 說文解字注, (Taipei: Hongyewenhuashiye youxiangongsi, 2013), p
https://tse3.mm.bing.net/th/id/OIP.9WrLqy_9JDmSXoJOLa-l9wAAAA?cb=12&rs=1&pid=ImgDetMain&o=7&rm=3

Shuowen Jiezi



1

Military context

Waging war and
moving troops require
a legitimate reason

「師之道，以正為本。」³

1. Xiaoxuetang zixingyanbian 小學堂字形演變 <

<https://xiaoxue.iis.sinica.edu.tw/ImageText2/ShowImage.ashx?text=%e8%b2%9e&font=%e5%8c%97%e5%b8%ab%e5%a4%a7%e8%aa%aa%e6%96%87%e5%b0%8f%e7%af%86&size=48&style=regular&color=%23000000&resolution=96> > [accessed 1 October 2025]

2. Huang Zhongtian, Zhouyichengzhuan Pingzhu 周易程傳評註 (Gaoxiong: Gaoxiong Fuwen Press, 2014), p71.

Shuowen Jiezi

字	聲調	韻目	字母	上字	下字	又音	又切	先秦李韻部	先秦李聲母	先秦李韻母
貞	平	清	知	陟	盈			耕	t	rjing
正	平	清	章	諸	盈	政		耕	t	jing

1



4



Zhen (貞) means Zheng (正)'

「貞：正也。」⁶

1.Xiaoxuetang zixingyanbian 小學堂字形演變 <

<https://xiaoxue.iis.sinica.edu.tw/ImageText2/ShowImage.ashx?text=%e8%b2%9e&font=%e5%8c%97%e5%b8%ab%e5%a4%a7%e8%aa%aa%e6%96%87%e5%b0%8f%e7%af%86&size=48&style=regular&color=%23000000&resolution=96>> [accessed 1 October 2025]

4.Xiaoxuetang zixingyanbian 小學堂字形演變<

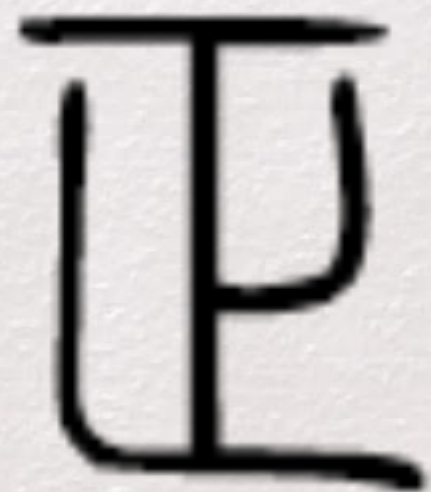
<https://xiaoxue.iis.sinica.edu.tw/ImageText2/ShowImage.ashx?text=%e6%ad%a3&font=%e5%8c%97%e5%b8%ab%e5%a4%a7%e8%aa%aa%e6%96%87%e5%b0%8f%e7%af%86&size=48&style=regular&color=%23000000&resolution=96>> [accessed 1 October 2025]

5.Hanzi Gujinyinziliaoku 漢字古今音資料庫 <<https://xiaoxue.iis.sinica.edu.tw/ccr#>> [accessed 1 October 2025]

6. Wangbi and Kong Yingda, *Zhouyizhengyi* 周易正義, (Beijing: Beijingdaxue Press), p.35.

Connects 'Zhen (貞)' , 'Zheng (正)' and
'Zheng (征)' into the logical chain

Shuowen Jiezi

The image shows the seal script for the character 正 (Zheng). It consists of a vertical line on the left, a horizontal line at the top, and a curved line on the right that ends in a hook.

4

**Being upright and
free from bias**

The image shows the seal script for the character 征 (Zheng). It consists of a vertical line on the right, a horizontal line at the top, and a curved line on the left that ends in a hook.

7

**Being upright
and moving**

4.Xiaoxuetang zixingyanbian 小學堂字形演變<

<https://xiaoxue.iis.sinica.edu.tw/ImageText2/ShowImage.ashx?text=%e6%ad%a3&font=%e5%8c%97%e5%b8%ab%e5%a4%a7%e8%aa%aa%e6%96%87%e5%b0%8f%e7%af%86&size=48&style=regular&color=%23000000&resolution=96>> [accessed 1 October 2025]

7.Xiaoxuetangzixingyanbian 小學堂字形演變<

<https://xiaoxue.iis.sinica.edu.tw/ImageText2/ShowImage.ashx?text=%ee%85%9d&font=%e5%8c%97%e5%b8%ab%e5%a4%a7%e8%aa%aa%e6%96%87%e5%b0%8f%e7%af%86&size=48&style=regular&color=%23000000&resolution=96>> [accessed 1 October 2025]

正

𠂔

8



The city and goal

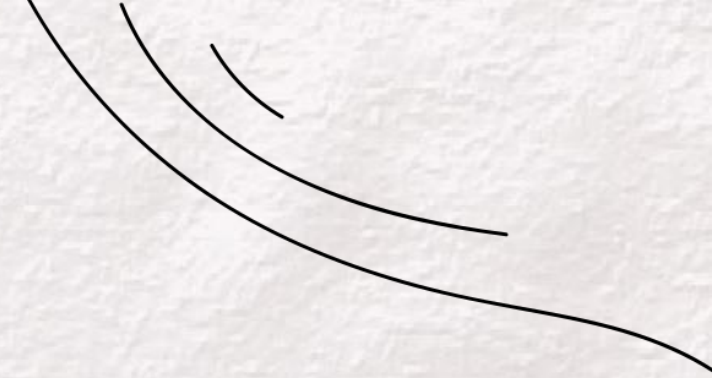


Footstep

征

9
𠂇 𠂇 = 𠂇 + 𠂇

Homologous differentiation



Action

9



Military operations

Distant punitive expeditions



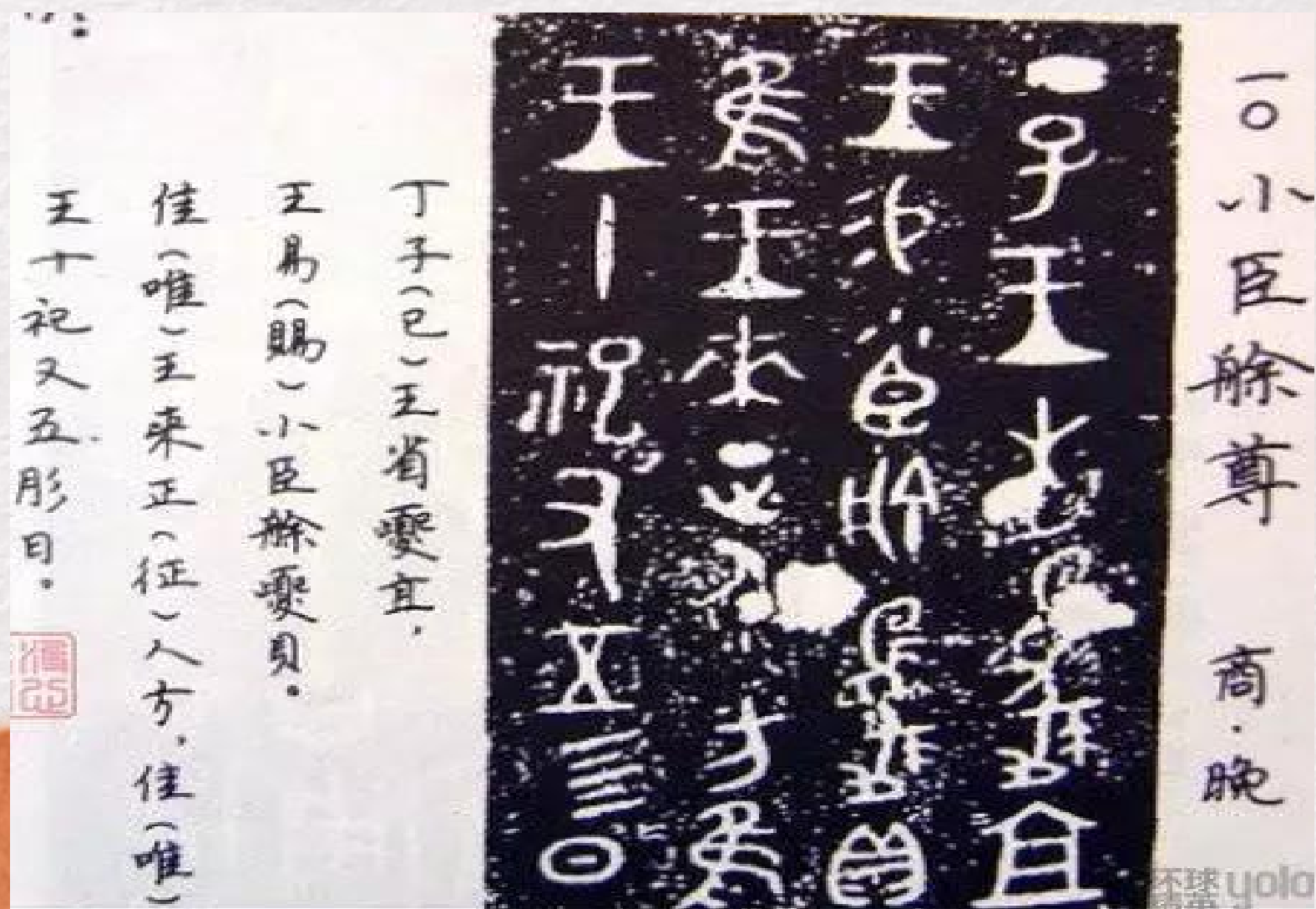


'The King came to campaign against Renfang.'

「王來正人方」

'When the emperors of the Three Dynasties (Xia, Shang and Zhou) of ancient China passed away, the world lost its moral standards, and the feudal lords waged wars against one another rely on military force.'

「逮至昔三代帝王既沒，天下失義，諸侯力正。」¹⁰



https://th.bing.com/th/id/R.c50bfc8ff494af5992e000d782129db1?rik=N%2bOBCMWJSI08Hw&riu=http%3a%2f%2fe0.ifengimg.com%2f04%2f2019%2f0123%2f8ED8420702CC7E141E0E0AF0FBB478A4486B7B64_size38_w640_h487.jpeg&ehk=81R83xJ36FsP1MiolCJI66HvY%2brDhA3fLOakbYMDIUg%3d&risl=&pid=ImgRaw&r=0
https://th.bing.com/th/id/R.4c54eefe65cb803be7702945dc907be1?rik=OAnwfCt%2bVQb%2bsg&riu=http%3a%2f%2fe0.ifengimg.com%2f03%2f2019%2f0123%2f3AC30D0F493821068E5C58875FAB86B194D39937_size43_w451_h432.jpeg&ehk=L%2fToThkoxhg6VJRzV844k%2fK6E5baRChjtn%2bJaLqmv04%3d&risl=&pid=ImgRaw&r=0

10. Tan Jiajian and Sun Zhongyuan, Mozi jinzhujiyi 墨子今注今譯, (Beijing: Sahngwu yinshuguan, 2009), p.171.

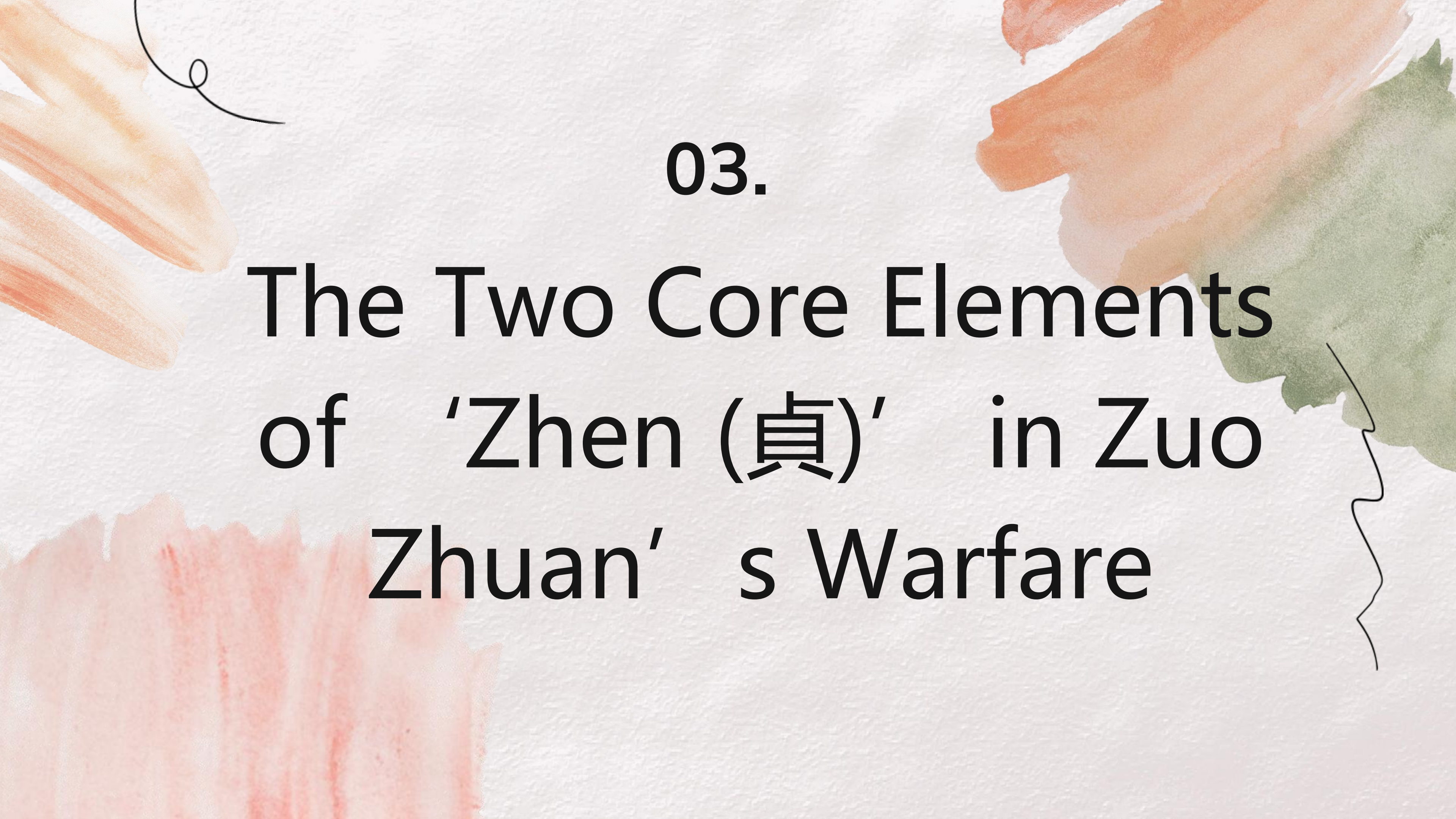
Zhang (章) initial consonants

11

Geng (耕) rhyme group

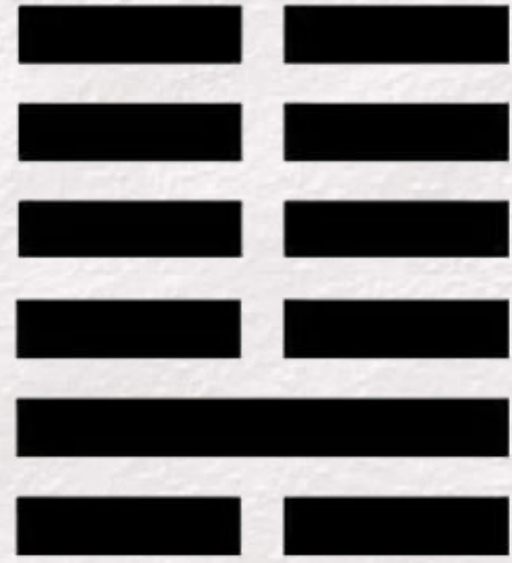
字號	字	董聲母	先秦董韻母	先秦周韻部	先秦周聲母	先秦周韻母	先秦李韻部	先秦李聲母	先秦李韻母
07995	正	jen	耕	t	jien	耕	t	jing	
19254	正	jen	耕	t	jien	耕	t	jingh	
07988	征	jen	耕	t	jien	耕	t	jing	

This imbues military actions of conquest with the connotation of legitimacy inherent in 'Zheng (正)'



03.

The Two Core Elements of 'Zhen (貞)' in Zuo Zhuan's Warfare



Fostering internal cohesion

Gaining the support of the feudal lords

1. Internally: Uniting the Strength of People

Zhen(貞): The True Way

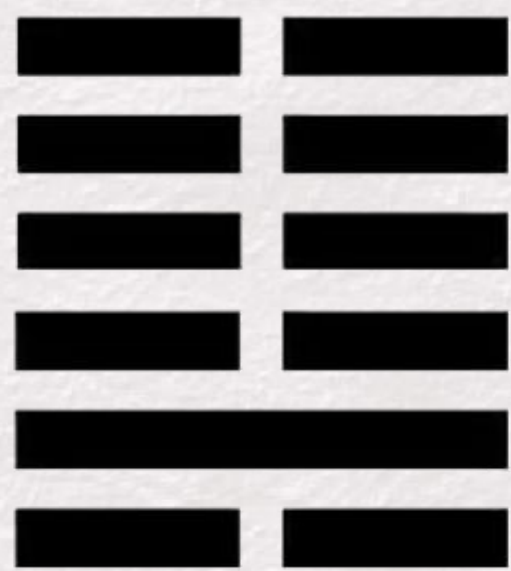
' If one mobilizes troops to attack another country without legitimate reasons, people will not be willingly obedient to their leader' s command, they are merely driven by force.'

「興師動眾以毒天下，而不以正，民弗從也，強趨之耳。」¹¹



- The desire for 'equitable treatment.'
- Got people's support and created a vital bond of trust between the monarch and people.

2. Externally: Gaining the Support of the Feudal Lords



'Game is in the field. It is appropriate to take them. No blame.'

「田有禽，利執言，無咎。」¹²

'Game is in the field' : wild animals invading the fields to eat crops.



External foes

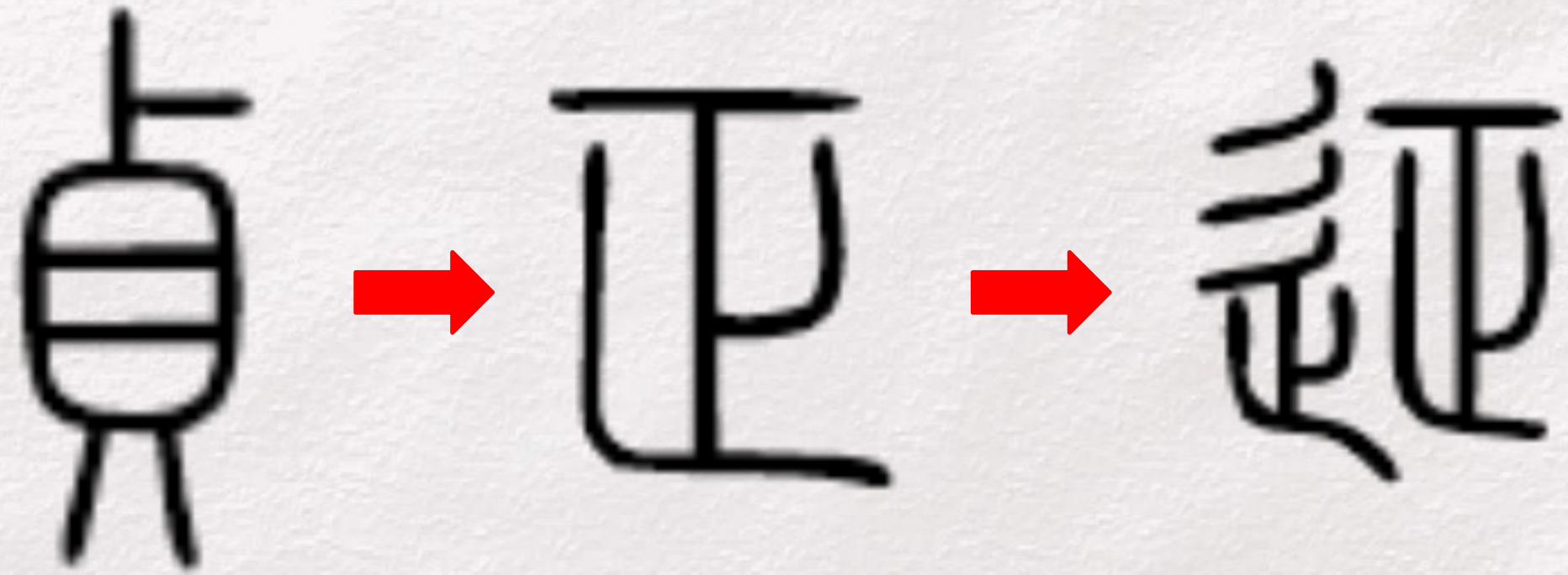
The people
(min 民)

External
support

It is appropriate to take them.' : it is beneficial to declare the enemy's crimes and attack them, thus giving the army a legitimate cause for its operation.



04. Conclusion



The legitimate cause for military action

'Zheng (征)' was premised on 'Zheng (正)' as its internal condition and manifested by 'Zhen (貞)'



**Thank you
for listening!**

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