***zhao-mu* 昭穆, intra-lineage rank system** <http://www.chinaknowledge.de/History/Terms/zhaomu.html>

(Cette fiche de la remarquable encyclopédie en ligne China Knowledge compilée par Ulrich Theobald (U. de Tübingen) décrit le système *zhaomu* dans ses origines et développements, jusqu’ à son application au *système successoral*. J’ai déplacé certains paragraphes, fait quelques ajouts en français marqués JB, et souligné en rouge les passages les plus utiles pour notre propos)

The *zhao-mu* system (*zhao-mu zhidu* 昭穆制度) is mainly known for the arrangement of spirit tablets in an [ancestral temple](http://www.chinaknowledge.de/History/Terms/ancestors.html) (Voir extrait en annexe à cette page JB). It dates from the early [Western Zhou period](http://www.chinaknowledge.de/History/Zhou/zhou-event-xizhou.html) 西周 (11th cent.-770 BCE) and found its major form in the 8th century. It is usually described as an arrangement in which the high ancestor (*taizu* 太祖, *gaozu* 高祖) is placed in the middle, while younger ancestors were placed crosswise to the left and right, but in a turned-U shape. In the original form, each of the seven ancestors venerated by the then-present king of the [Zhou dynasty](http://www.chinaknowledge.de/History/Zhou/zhou.html) 周 (11th cent.-221 BCE) was given a separate building, but from the [Han period](http://www.chinaknowledge.de/History/Han/han.html) 漢 (206 BCE-220 CE) on, ancestors were assembled in one single temple hall.

The chapter "Royal regulations" (*Wangzhi* 王制) in the ritual [Classic](http://www.chinaknowledge.de/Literature/Terms/classics.html) [*Liji*](http://www.chinaknowledge.de/Literature/Classics/liji.html) 禮記 says,

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| Quotation 1. The *zhao-mu* system in ancestral temples | |
| 天子七廟，三昭三穆，與大祖之廟而七。諸侯五廟，二昭二穆，與大祖之廟而五。大夫三廟，一昭一穆，與大祖之廟而三。士一廟，庶人祭於寢。 | (The ancestral temple of) the [Son of Heaven](http://www.chinaknowledge.de/History/Terms/tianzi.html) embraced seven fanes (or smaller temples); three on the left and three on the right, and that of his great ancestor (fronting the south) - in all, seven. (The temple of) the regional rulers embraced five such fanes: those of two on the left, and two on the right, and that of his great ancestor - in all, five. Grand masters had three fanes: one on the left, one on the right, and that of his great ancestor - in all, three. Servicemen had (only) one. The common people presented their offerings in their (principal) apartment. |
| Translation by Legge (1885), slightly changed. | |

Ici, je remplace une illustration peu explicite, par celle d’une autre fiche **le temple ancestral de la dynastie Zhou, modèle de l’ordre zhaomu** <http://www.chinaknowledge.de/History/Terms/ancestors.html>

The seven shrines—which signified the seats of the ancestral souls—of the Son of Heaven included that for the father (*kaomiao* 考廟, *mimiao* 禰廟), the grandfather (*wangkao miao* 王考廟, *zumiao* 祖廟), the great-grandfather (*huangkao miao* 皇考廟, *zengmiao* 曾廟), the great-great-grandfather (*xiankao miao* 顯考廟, *gaomiao* 高廟), and the great-great-great-grandfather (*zu kaomiao* 祖考廟). More distant forefathers (*yuanzu* 遠祖) were venerated in two shrines called *tiaomiao* 祧廟. The temples for the latest seven generations were called "paternal temples" (*qinmiao* 親廟). The *Liji* chapter *Jifa* 祭法 described the seven temples rather as elevated altars (*tan* 壇) with a periphery (*shan* 墠).

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| Figure 1. The seven shrines of the royal ancestors of the Zhou |
| Temple de l’ancêtre fondateur  Génération 1  Génération 2 Tiao : Quadrisaïeul  MU  ZHAO  Tiao : trisaïeul Génération 3  Génération 4 Gao : bisaïeul  Zeng : arrière G-P. Génération 5  Génération 6 Zu : grand-père  Ni : père Génération 7 |
| The High Ancestral Shrine is located in the centre, to the left and right of it the "interspace shrines" of the *zhao* and *mu* generations into which the ancestral tablets of progenitors older than six generations above the presently ruling king were standing. The left and right wings were occupied by the ancestors of the *zhao* and *mu* generations, respectively. This designation was an alternating system. If the father was *mu*, the grandfather must have been *zhao*, and the present king also. The great-grandfather again was *mu*. Such reconstructions of the Zhou ancestral temple are only tentative. |

With the advancement from generation to generation, the seats of the ancestral souls in the temples were exchanged and the older ones shifted to the shrines closer to that of the high ancestor (*qianmiao* 遷廟 "shift the [owner of the] temple", or *huimiao* 毀廟 "give up the [seat] in a temple"). Accordingly, distant forefathers were shifted to two "interspace" shrines (*jiashi* 夾室, *zhao* and *mu*) located left and right of the High Ancestor's shrine. When a king of the *zhao* generation died, the ancestral tablets (*shenzhu paiwei* 神主牌位) of the whole *zhao* wing were moved one position higher, and accordingly, when a king of the *mu* generation died. The only exception of this movement was the spirit tablet of the High Ancestor which remained in his central place. This repositioning of ancestral tablets was only carried out when the three-year long mourning period for a deceased father was finished.

To date none of the ancestral temples of the Zhou dynasty have be found, neither any tomb of a Zhou king. Yet it is possible to demonstrate the application of the *zhao-mu* system in burials of several of the regional rulers.

The ritual Classic [*Zhouli*](http://www.chinaknowledge.de/Literature/Classics/zhouli.html) 周禮 (part *Chunguan* 春官) explains that the grave maker (*zhongren* 冢人) divinated about an ideal place for the "public" tombs (*gongmu* 公墓), and drew a chart, with the former king (*xianwang* 先王) in the middle and his *zhao* and *mu* descendants to the left and right (*zhao-mu wei zuoyou* 昭穆为左右). The [regional rulers](http://www.chinaknowledge.de/History/Terms/zhuhou.html) should be buried in front of the two *zhao-mu* wings (*zhuhou ju zuoyou yi qian* 諸侯居左右以前), and the [ministers](http://www.chinaknowledge.de/History/Terms/qingshidafu.html) and [grand masters](http://www.chinaknowledge.de/History/Terms/qingshidafu.html) behind them (*qing dafu ju hou* 卿大夫居後), each with his kinsmen (*ge yi qi zu* 各以其族). The Han-period commentator [Zheng Xuan](http://www.chinaknowledge.de/History/Han/personszhengxuan.html) 鄭玄 (127-200) added the information that *zhao* was to the left, *mu* to the right, and the interspace extending in east-west direction (?).

This custom pertained not just to the burials of the elite, but also to that of commoners, as Jia Gongyan's commentary on the *Zhouli* chapter "Grand Master of Cemeteries" (*mu dafu* 墓大夫) holds.The practical application of the *zhao-mu* method is attested in the two rows of tombs around M166 in Zhangjiapo 張家坡 close to the ancient residence or "capital" Feng 酆 west of Xi'an 西安, Shaanxi (1996a), as well asin the tombs of the Marquesses of [Jin](http://www.chinaknowledge.de/History/Zhou/rulers-jin.html) 晉 in Zhaocun 趙村 near Quwo 曲沃, Shanxi, and that of the state of [Guo](http://www.chinaknowledge.de/History/Zhou/rulers-guo.html) 虢 in Shangcunling 上村岭 near Sanmenxia 三門峽, Henan. Not all cases perfectly fit with the description in the *Zhouli* (Gao 2002).

Even if the *zhao-mu* system was basically a system of tomb arrangement (Wu 2012), it extends to the arrangement of ancestral temples, sacrifices for them, banquets, and weddings (Li 1990). Only spouses of the right generation could be the mates for young men.

The correct order of the *zhao-mu* system was also respected during banquets and sacrificial rites, for instance, for the ceremony of circulating the wine beaker (*lü chou* 旅酬). The chief sacrificer (*zhuji zhe* 主祭者) handed the cup over (*ci jue* 賜爵) to the assistants (*zhuji zhe* 助祭者), and the latter to the correct group of participants, as the *Liji* chapter *Dazhuan* 大傳 explains.

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| Quotation 3. The *zhao-mu* system during banquets | |
| 上治祖、禰，尊尊也；下治子孫，親親也；旁治昆弟，合族以食，序以昭繆，別 之以禮義，人道竭矣。 | Thus [the king] regulated the services to be rendered to his father and grandfather before him—giving honour to the most honourable. He regulated the places to be given to his sons and grandsons below him—showing his affection to his kindred. He regulated (also) the observances for the collateral branches of his cousins;-associating all their members in the feasting. He defined their places according to their order of descent; and his every distinction was in harmony with what was proper and right. In this way the procedure of human duty was made complete. |
| Translation by Legge (1885). | |

The sense behind the *zhao-mu* system is explained in the *Liji* 禮記 (ch. *Jitong* 祭統):

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| Quotation 2. The *zhao-mu* system during sacrifices | |
| 夫祭有昭穆，昭穆者，所以别父子、遠近、長幼、親疏之序而無亂也。是故，有事于大廟，則群昭群穆咸在而不失其倫。此之謂新疏之殺也。 | At the sacrifice the parties taking part in it were arranged on the left and right, according to their order of descent from the common ancestor, and thus the distinction was maintained between the order of fathers and sons, the near and the distant, the older and the younger, the more nearly related and the more distantly, and there, was no confusion. Therefore, at the services in the grand ancestral temple, all in the two lines of descent were present, and no one failed to receive his proper place in their common relationship. This was what was called (showing) the distance gradually increasing between relatives. |
| Translation by Legge (1885). (JB : 殺shài : 等差, égale différence ; 心疏： nouvel écart ?) | |

From this description it can be seen that *zhao-mu* was an alternating system (*fu zi yi qi hao xu* 父子易其號序; Yan Shigu's 顏師古 commentary on the [*Hanshu*](http://www.chinaknowledge.de/Literature/Historiography/hanshu.html) 漢書) to discern generations: If the father has the position *zhao*, the son has the position *mu*, and the grandson again the position *zhao* (*fu zhao zi mu, sun fu wei zhao* 父昭子穆，孫復為昭). Yan Shigu further explains the term *zhao* 昭 as "brilliant" (*ming* 明), and *mu* 穆 as "beautiful" (*mei* 美), yet in fact, the meaning of the two words does not play a role.

The system was used to clarify the generational position of persons related to the royal house, like Kang Shu 康叔, who was "*zhao* to [King Wen](http://www.chinaknowledge.de/History/Zhou/personszhouwenwang.html)" (*Wen zhi zhao ye* 文之昭也), meaning that he was a generation younger than King Wen.

From the [Tang period](http://www.chinaknowledge.de/History/Tang/tang.html) 唐 (618-907) on, scholars became aware that the system was also used to designate older and younger brothers. Bai (1997) even goes so far to say that the system was originally used to rank brothers before it was applied to the ranking of generations. It was revived during the [Warring States period](http://www.chinaknowledge.de/History/Zhou/zhou-event-zhanguo.html) 戰國 (5th cent.-221 BCE) in the shape of the "older brother system" (*dizhang zhi* 嫡長制), according to which the oldest son of the primary consort inherited all rights of his father. These inheritance rights are actually older and date likewise from the Western Zhou period in the shape of the [lineage system](http://www.chinaknowledge.de/History/Terms/zongfa.html) (*zongfa* 宗法), according to which the oldest son or heir of his father, established a "great lineage" (*dazong* 大宗), while his younger brothers were just founders of "small lineages" (*xiaozong* 小宗) (Li 2016a). (JB. En fait de “older brother”, il faut donc lire “elder”, le premier né de l’épouse légitime, ou « fils de droite ligné » ds Philastre)

It seems that the *zhao-mu* system remained mainly for the arrangement of tombs and fanes or spirit tablets in ancestral temples. It originated in the sphere of burials, and its use in ancestral temples was only an adaption as a convenient mode of transferring the sacrifices from the tomb sites to a temple complex close to the living spaces (Li 2016a).

The book [*Xunzi*](http://www.chinaknowledge.de/Literature/Classics/xunzi.html) 荀子 (ch. *Wangzhi* 王制) sees the *zhao-mu* system as the most basic distinctions if the borders of social classes are not yet fixed (*fen wei ding ye, ze you zhao-mu ye* 分未定也，則有昭繆[=穆]也). The *zhao-mu* ranking was apparently not perceived as a comprehensive system, but rather as a fundamental mode of ranking the status of individuals.

The [posthumous honorific titles](http://www.chinaknowledge.de/History/Terms/titles.html#posthumous) of the Zhou kings Zhao 周昭王 and [Mu](http://www.chinaknowledge.de/History/Zhou/personszhoumuwang.html) 周穆王 have nothing to do with the *zhao-mu* system (Li 1996a). The theory that the *zhao-mu* system originated in a matriarchal system must be discarded (Guo 1986).

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