ABSTRACT

The corpus of literature called *chenwei* (Apocryphal Texts 論繋), was compiled during the Eastern Han dynasty. The image of Confucius in the *chenwei* is different from the historical Confucius. This thesis studies the image of Confucius as portrayed in the *chenwei* with the objective of understanding the political and ideological context of the Han dynasty.

There is the belief that *chenwei* originated from *chen* (讖), a kind of mythological prophecy with strong political overtone. This thesis argues that there are indeed differences between the two. The various *chenwei* texts as transmitted to this day were in fact only being compiled as a body of literature during the time of Emperor Guang Wu, the first emperor of the Eastern Han dynasty. The sources therefore could be seen as a coalescence and transformation of the *tu chen* (圖讖) and *fu ming* (符命) which appeared in the Western Han and the Xin dynasties. The coming into being of this corpus of literature was aimed at proving that the Liu family’s re-establishing their status as the ruling house of China was a choice of the god.

The Confucius as seen in the *chenwei* is a super-human being. The person who has been regarded as the founder of Confucianism in history was
deified as a god of heaven who could foretell the future. Such a construction was mainly motivated by the objective of legitimizing the Eastern Han regime and reinforcing the authority of the state.