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三十輻共一轂	當其無有車之用	Thirty spokes join at one hub whose nothingness gives a cart its use
埴埴以為器	當其無有器之用	Mold clay into vessels to form nothingness to give them their use
鑿戶牖以為室	當其無有室之用	Opening doors and windows of a room to give nothingness its use
故有之以為利		So existence offers advantages
無之以為用		Nonexistence offers uses

Pinyin Transliteration

san-shi-fú	gong-yi-gǔ	dāng-qi-wu	yǒu-chē-zhī-yòng
yán-zhī-yǐ-wéi-qì		dāng-qi-wu	yǒu- qì -zhī-yòng
záo-hù-yǒu-yǐ-wéi-shì		dāng-qi-wu	yǒu-shì-zhī-yòng
gù-yǒu-zhī-yǐ-wéi-lì			
wú-zhī-yǐ-wéi-yòng			

Rhyming Pattern in pre-206BCE Phonetic Rhyme Groups

em 侵-ep 緝-ək 職	oŋ 東-it 質-ok 屋	aŋ 陽-ə 之-a 魚	ə 之-a 魚-ə 之-oŋ 東
an 元-ək 職-ə 之-oi 歌-et 月		aŋ 陽-ə 之-a 魚	ə 之-et 月-ə 之-oŋ 東
uk 幽-a 魚-uk 幽-ə 之-oi 歌-it 質		aŋ 陽-ə 之-a 魚	ə 之-it 質-ə 之-oŋ 東
a 魚-ə 之-ə 之-ə 之-oi 歌-i 脂			
a 魚-ə 之-ə 之-oi 歌-oŋ 東			

Prosody

The first stanza consists of three unusually long lines, with six of the seven characters of the latter halves of the lines remaining unchanged. The word *ləʔ gwaj* 以為 “to form” appears in the front halves of the last two lines to provide an internal rhyme.

The transitional character *kʰaʔ-s* 故 “therefore” begins the second stanza to summarize the verse, contrasting “nonexistence” 無 with its antithesis “existence” 有, as well as comparing “advantage” 利 to “use” 用. The beginning sound *kʰaʔ-s* 故 also rhymes with the first character of the next line *ma* 無. The two lines repeat the sound *tə ləʔ gwaj* 之以為 to provide an internal rhyme.

Annotation:

The theme of this verse is about how existence and nonexistence and how they must relate to each other in a particular way to be advantage. The first line shows us the dynamic between the singular and the multiple. In ancient times the thirty spokes for cartwheels represent the approximate number of days in a lunar cycle. All the spokes of a wheel meet at their hub, which is hollowed out for the axle of the cart. Likewise, the void in a bowl or a room is precisely what gives each its utility. Without emptiness, clay and adobe have no use. This emptiness represents the neutrality at the pivotal center of all polar continua. It can also be the tranquil eye of a storm, where we should dwell.