

Preface

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The studies in the present volume derive from a conference entitled “Ancient Chinese Bronzes from the Shouyang Studio and Elsewhere: An International Conference Commemorating Twenty Years of Discoveries” held at the University of Chicago on 5–7 November 2010. The conference was intended to celebrate the opening of the exhibition “Ancient Chinese Bronzes from the Shouyang Studio: The Katherine and George Fan Collection,” held at the Art Institute of Chicago from 7 November 2010 through 2 January 2011. The Art Institute exhibition marked the third and final showing of Katherine and George Fan’s remarkable collection of ancient Chinese bronzes, the collection having previously been exhibited at the Shanghai Museum (18 October 2008–7 February 2009) and at the Art Museum of The Chinese University of Hong Kong (28 February–2 August 2009).¹

A previous conference had been held at The Chinese University of Hong Kong on 17–18 April 2009, attended primarily—although by no means exclusively—by scholars from China. This conference resulted in a volume of essays, also primarily—though again not exclusively—in Chinese, entitled prosaically enough *Zhongguo gudai qingtongqi guoji yantaohui lunwenji* 中國古代青銅器國際研討會論文集, i.e., Collection of Essays from the International Conference on Ancient Chinese Bronze Vessels.² With the return of the Fan Collection to the United States, we felt that it would be proper that another conference should feature primarily Western scholarship. Moreover, whereas The Chinese University of Hong Kong conference and the attendant conference volume were exclusively focused on pieces in the Fan Collection, we felt that for the purposes of a second conference it would be appropriate to broaden the focus to include all ancient bronze vessels that had appeared in the preceding 20 years—the period during which Mr. Fan had assembled his collection; Mr. Fan

himself was very supportive of this broader focus.

The Chicago conference brought together twenty scholars for three days of presentations and discussions. The scholars came from throughout the Western world, as well as China, Taiwan, and Hong Kong. Since many of the Chinese participants had already contributed to the previous volume, they agreed that the present volume should include only essays in English. From those essays, we decided further to select just those addressing inscriptions on the vessels. Considering these further, it soon became clear that many of them cohered around the common theme of kinship; hence the title of the present volume: *Imprints of Kinship: Studies of Recently Discovered Bronze Inscriptions from Ancient China*.

The volume includes nine essays, of which four address in particular the topic of kinship among bronzes from four significant archaeological sites of the Western Zhou dynasty. Yan Sun examines the early Western Zhou bronzes excavated in the 1980s from the cemetery of the state of Yan 燕 at Liulihe 琉璃河, just outside of Beijing. She describes how individual tombs in this cemetery, located on the periphery of the Zhou political world, reflect donations of different persons and even different cultural backgrounds. Although the rulers of Yan belonged to the highest levels of the Zhou royal family, the state included also a significant population that had lived in the area prior to the Zhou conquest of Shang, and over time came to include as well—through marriage, warfare and other relationships—people from other states in the surrounding area. As Sun says in her conclusion, “vessels in a single tomb represent snapshots of various social connections between the deceased and his or her family and other individuals and lineages.”

Maria Khayutina draws similar conclusions from the cemetery of the state of Peng 棚, first discovered in 2005 in Jiangxian 絳縣, Shanxi, the excavation of which continues to the present day. Unlike the state of Yan, well known from traditional Chinese historical sources, Peng is almost unheard of in those sources. Nevertheless, evidence in both bronze inscriptions and also the archaeological evidence unearthed from the tombs of its rulers show that by the middle of the Western Zhou period, the period of the elite tombs excavated to date, the state enjoyed a high level of cultural production and was fully engaged with the better-known states surrounding it. Nevertheless, there is other evidence linking Peng with indigenous cultures of the area around Jiangxian. Khayutina traces some of these influences to the Lijiaya 李家崖 culture of the Lüliang Mountains of western Shanxi and areas to the west of the north-south

stretch of the Yellow River, and suggests ways in which Peng served as a conduit between these northern cultures and the metropolitan Zhou culture. For instance, she shows that Peng was well represented at the Zhou court, and had close relations with some of the leading figures of that court. In this regard, she demonstrates that the recently excavated Peng bronzes may contribute important information toward resolving the vexed issue of the chronology of the middle Western Zhou kings.

Another remarkable archaeological discovery of the last ten years is the topic of Ch'en Chao-jung's contribution to the volume. Archaeological excavations, ongoing since 2005 at Liangdaicun 梁帶村, Hancheng 韓城, Shaanxi, have unearthed a cemetery of the ruling elite of the state of Rui 芮, a celebrated but apparently minor state that maintained itself over the course of several centuries in the very heart of the Zhou homeland. Rui was implicated in Zhou politics from an early date. Indeed, King Wen (r. 1099–1050 B.C.) is supposed to have come to prominence by virtue of adjudicating a lawsuit between Rui and Yu 虞. However, it was unclear just where Rui was located. Indeed, most scholars had assumed that it was located further east, within what is today Shanxi province, very near to where Peng was located. The excavations at Liangdaicun have now resolved this long-standing debate over the location of Rui. But more than that, as in the cases of Yan and Peng examined by Yan Sun and Maria Khayutina, the bronzes from this cemetery also suggest how Rui engaged with people of other states in the vicinity.

The fourth contribution to address a particular archaeological site is that of Li Feng, who introduces the cemetery and architectural remains at Dabuzishan 大堡子山, Lixian 禮縣, Gansu. This site came to worldwide attention in the early 1990s through the appearance on the international antique market of bronzes commissioned by one or more Qin Gong 秦公, Duke of Qin. Qin, of course, is the important state that would eventually unify all other states to create the Chinese empire, so that its early history is of crucial importance in understanding early Chinese cultural history. The site was originally looted by tomb robbers, but archaeologists have subsequently conducted extensive excavations there. Despite the advances made possible by these excavations, questions remain about the nature of the site and the identity of the dukes buried in its two largest tombs. Through a painstaking analysis of the calligraphy of the inscriptions and of the decor on the 22 bronzes that can be traced to this cemetery, Li argues cogently that the tombs should be those of Dukes Zhuang 莊 (821–778 B.C.) and Xiang 襄 (r. 777–766 B.C.), rulers of the state at the end of

the Western Zhou and the very beginning of the Eastern Zhou period. He further explores the geography of the region to explain the dynamics of Qin's relationship with the Zhou royal house during and just after this period, at which point the Qin lords moved eastward into the Wei River 渭水 valley, filling the void left by the departure of the Zhou kings.

Placed in the middle of these four studies of individual archaeological sites and their bronzes is a lengthy chapter by Edward L. Shaughnessy surveying all of the inscribed Western Zhou bronzes that appeared—both through archaeological excavations and also as a result of tomb robberies—in the first decade of the new century. Shaughnessy notes that with only a couple of exceptions these bronzes attracted almost no attention in the West, perhaps because their appearance coincided with the publication of the remarkable and otherwise unprecedented Warring States manuscripts written on bamboo strips that have excited scholars everywhere. At another time, these discoveries of inscribed bronze vessels surely would have commanded more attention. They span the entire period of the Western Zhou, from the very first years until almost the very last, and come from all of the different regions of the realm. There are bronzes made by lords of states as well as by other individuals who played important roles in the history of the Western Zhou state, as, for instance, He 尙, known already from the early Western Zhou *He zun* 尙尊; Sima Jingbo Lu 嗣馬井白親, known from numerous mid-Western Zhou bronze inscriptions; and Diao Sheng 瑯生, known from the pair of late Western Zhou *Diao Sheng gui* 瑯生簋. In these and in several other cases, these bronzes provide important new information with which to understand such varied issues in Western Zhou history as chronology, warfare, lawsuits, and much more as well.

The periods before and after the Western Zhou are the focus of contributions by Olivier Venture and Guolong Lai. Venture's essay "Shang Emblems in Their Archaeological Context" surveys bronzes excavated from two different cemeteries at Anyang 安陽 (at Yinxu 殷墟 West and at Liujiazhuang 劉家莊) as well as one much farther afield (at Qianzhangda 前掌大) in present-day Shandong province. Although the inscriptions are very short, they are relatively numerous (being found on some twenty percent of the bronze vessels excavated from these cemeteries) and provide important information about the lineage affiliation and, in some cases, about the official status of the persons in whose tombs they were buried. For his part, Lai focuses on statements of genealogy that become a routine part of inscriptions of the Spring and Autumn period. These statements

claim a kinship relationship between the patron of the vessel and one or more ancestors. Sometimes they also state a relationship with other living figures. Lai demonstrates that these genealogies—whether real or fictive—played an important role in the political identity of the patron, both men and women. Intriguingly, there are several notable cases in which these genealogical statements were erased—in antiquity—from the inscription, presumably to account for changes in ownership of the vessel, or perhaps altered family circumstances. Archaeology provides much promise for understanding kinship relations in ancient China, and as both Venture and Lai demonstrate, inscriptions on bronze vessels remain the keys to unlocking many of these relationships.

Sandwiching all of these studies of the places of kinship in ancient China are two remarkable—and remarkably different—studies of the nature of bronze inscriptions. Opening the volume is Wolfgang Behr’s “The Language of the Bronze Inscriptions,” which provides an extraordinarily detailed survey of all linguistic aspects of bronze inscriptions: grammar, phonology, metrical organization, syntax, and lexicon. It seems that there is not a doctoral dissertation too recent nor a journal too obscure to have missed Behr’s reading, but exhaustive though the survey is, the description of these linguistic features is always straightforward and authoritative. In his conclusion, Behr considers some of the outstanding debates in the field, such as the extent to which the inscriptional language parallels the language of received literature, or whether the derivational morphology seen in Tibeto-Burman data can be attested in bronze inscriptions, ending disarmingly with the statement: “Perhaps linguistic approaches to excavated texts simply have not yet looked hard enough behind the intricate veil of the early writing system.” It is clear that Behr has looked very hard indeed, and that his report of this look will do much to lift the veil of the early writing system.

Closing the volume is Robert Eno’s “Reflections on Literary and Devotional Aspects of Western Zhou Memorial Inscriptions.” Eno too seeks to lift the veil of the bronze inscriptions. However, in his case the veil is the formulaic nature of the inscriptions. His goal is to find evidence of “individual expression breaking through the ground of textual convention,” and to use this evidence to explore possible “personal perspectives of members of the elite as authors.” It is not often that such personal expression is to be seen, but sometimes a sympathetic reading such as that which Eno brings to his task suffices to tease out something about the personality of these authors. Consider the case of one Shu Huanfu 叔趯父,

who cast a *you* 卣-bucket with the following poignant exhortation to a younger associate (perhaps his son, perhaps not) named Shu 夔:

Shu Huanfu said, “I am old and unable to manage affairs. You, Shu, should attentively order your person. Do not continue to act as a youth! I give you this small wine vessel. You should use it to feast your ruler the Marquis of Zhi as you receive orders, coming and going in service to his person. Oh, Shu! Be attentive! Let this small vessel never be discarded. Bringing me to mind as you employ it, may it provide you drink.

It is easy to identify with Shu Huanfu’s personality and to imagine sharing with him his *you*-bucket and the wine in it. It is easy too, through reading this study, to identify with Eno’s personality and through it to come to a deeper and more individual reading of these ancient bronze inscriptions.

Inspired by Shu Huanfu’s exhortation to Shu, whoever Shu may have been, to employ his *you*-bucket, may I invite you, dear reader, to employ the present book, and close with the hope that you may drink deeply from it, and that it may provide you inspiration.

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Notes

- 1 A catalog of the exhibition is *Shouyang jijin: Hu Yingying, Fan Jirong cang Zhongguo gudai qingtongqi* 首陽吉金：胡盈瑩·范季融藏中國古代青銅器, ed. Shouyang zhai, Shanghai bowuguan and Xianggang Zhongwen daxue Wenwuguan (Shanghai: Shanghai Guji chubanshe, 2008).
- 2 Shanghai bowuguan and Xianggang Zhongwen daxue Wenwuguan, eds., *Zhongguo gudai qingtongqi guoji yantaohui lunwenji* 中國古代青銅器國際研討會論文集 (Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 2010).