Introduction

The Ritual Texture of Early China

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The study of early China has been pushed into hitherto-uncharted territory both by archaeology and by the increasing awareness that scholars of ancient China are facing issues not entirely specific to their domain but long recognized—and struggled with—in other fields, such as Classics (with all its subfields), Religion, Biblical studies, Near Eastern studies, or European medieval literature, to name just some of the obvious. The combination of newly discovered materials with newly discovered approaches holds particularly strong potential for fresh insights into the culture of early China, as the present volume will help to show. Its double focus on "text" and "ritual," and especially on their manifestations in one another, tries to capture two central aspects of early Chinese cultural history—if not indeed *the* two central aspects of it—and put each of them into a new perspective by relating it to the other. There are, of course, numerous studies devoted to either Chinese texts or various forms of Chinese ritual. What distinguishes the present volume is its consistent focus on the interaction between "text" and "ritual" by looking at the ritual structures of textual composition and textual circulation on the one hand and at the textuality of ritual practices on the other. Meanwhile, as will become clear from each of the following chapters, "text" and "ritual"—especially in their interaction—are among the topics where students of the Chinese tradition can profit greatly from the admirable work done in other fields of the humanities.

For the longer time of Chinese studies, and partly following choices by the Chinese tradition in reflecting upon itself, much of the culture of the Zhou dynasty and the early empire has been discussed in terms of intellectual history. The center of this reception is marked by a slim body of received texts from which cultural constructs like the rise of "Confucianism" and "philosophical Daoism," the struggle of the "Confucians" with the

"Mohists" and the "Legalists," or "Han philosophical syncretism" have been created. Yet it has become abundantly clear that even within the limited social group of ancient practitioners of textual knowledge, the particular circle that Western scholarship usually calls the "philosophers" was a rather small minority.[1] However, beginning in the early empire—notably through measures of canonization and censorship, and supported by the classification of writings after 26 B.C.E.[2]—it was their texts, as a carefully guarded selection, around which the imperial tradition organized itself.

Recent scholarship has moved other aspects into the foreground of what anglophone Sinology now refers to as "early China":[3] the broad spectrum of ancient religious (or, in a more general term: ritual) practice, the *Fachprosa* of various disciplines, the material culture, and, finally, reflections upon the very nature of early Chinese texts from bronze inscriptions to the ancient *Odes* (Shi 詩), from the Five Canons (Wu jing 五經; also Five Classics) to historiography, from the composition of excavated manuscripts to that of the elaborate literary works of the Han *fu* 賦. The scholarship on these topics in Chinese, Japanese, and the European languages is far too extensive to even begin listing here. Much of it has been inspired and continuously fueled by the unprecedented surge of archaeological finds over the last few decades, which have brought to light hundreds of thousands of artifacts. Among these, there are several hundred thousand pieces of oracle bone and plastron inscriptions dating from the Late Shang (ca. 1200–ca. 1045 B.C.E.) period, thousands of inscribed bronze vessels mainly from the Western (ca. 1045–771 B.C.E.) and Eastern (770–256 B.C.E.) Zhou periods, some 15,000 fragments of early–fifth-century B.C.E. covenant texts on stone and jade tablets, thousands of Warring States and early imperial administrative and economic records, and several hundred manuscripts, dating from the fourth century B.C.E. onward, that encompass the broadest variety of subjects.[4]

The Chinese tradition of the last two millennia, and with it the modern scholarly exploration of Chinese antiquity, has always privileged text—and especially those written texts guarded and preserved by the tradition—as the primary medium of early Chinese cultural self-expression and self-representation. Emerging only gradually in late Western (202 B.C.E.–9 C.E.) and then through Eastern Han (25–220 C.E.) times, the imperial discourse on the written text went so far as to use the same word (*wen* 文) for both "culture" and "writing," symbolically collapsing the former into the latter, or making the latter the emblem of the former.[5] Indeed, the amount of recent Chinese, Japanese, and Western scholarship devoted to a very limited number of newly excavated texts vastly exceeds publications on nontextual

artifacts, although these artifacts by far outnumber the texts and are decidedly more stunning in what they reveal about hitherto-unimagined technological and aesthetic accomplishments of the ancient Chinese.[6] The additional fact that most of the work now done on excavated texts is limited to only a small fragment of this newly available corpus, namely, writings that can be related to the received philosophical framework, testifies even more profoundly to the enduring ability of the Chinese tradition to control so much of our imagination. Yet while the tradition has certainly exaggerated the case of the text by envisioning it as the single defining phenomenon in the formation and expression of early Chinese culture, texts of course did enjoy a strong presence in this culture. The earliest bibliography of China, compiled by Liu Xiang 劉向 (79–8 B.C.E.) and preserved in abbreviated form in the "Monograph on Arts and Letters" (Yiwen zhi 藝文志) of Ban Gu's 班固 (32–92) *Hanshu* 漢書, contained thousands of entries—and yet was far from complete, as we now realize through numerous excavated texts that find no counterpart there.

No doubt, the newly available manuscripts confirm the presence and (however undefined) prestige of texts in early China; yet at the same time, they allow us to ask some fundamental questions about the ancient textual culture that have barely been considered: What exactly is a text in early China? What are its boundaries? How do different versions of the same text relate to one another? What is textual authority, and in what does it rest? How were texts composed, preserved, transmitted, and received? How and why do texts change? What is the early canon? What are the specific functions of the written text? How should we imagine the relation and balance between oral and written textual practices? What are the social contexts of texts? Such questions do not replace or reject traditional intellectual history centered on the contents of transmitted (and now also excavated) texts, but they alert us to a host of problematic assumptions about the material and intellectual integrity of what has mostly been taken for granted as a more or less secure corpus of writings and ideas. The manuscripts confirm the early authenticity and relative reliability of certain texts known to the tradition, and they enrich the tradition by an additional body of writings that can be related to the received one. Yet at the same time, if considered with respect to the questions just mentioned, the manuscripts also embody a formidable potential to destabilize at its foundations the all-too-neat construction of early Chinese textuality and intellectual history adopted by the tradition. So far, very little work has been done to explore this problematic aspect of our new materials.

It has, however, not gone unnoticed that oracle bone and plastron inscriptions, bronze inscriptions, covenant texts, and inscribed curses, as well as a substantial number of *Fachprosa* manuscripts in areas like astrology, hemerology, medicine, divination, and exorcism, were created to be used in a broad range of ritual practices. The same is true for early transmitted poetry, from parts of the *Chu ci* 楚辭 to the Qin stele inscriptions and the Western Han state sacrificial hymns. Yet most importantly, the entire body of the Five Canons and the Six Arts (Liu yi 六藝),[7] together with the works immediately attached to them, is in one way or another defined and shaped by the ideal of ritual order (*li* 禮). The notion of *li* 禮 is at the center of three works that at different stages entered the traditional canon: *Zhou li* 周禮, *Yili* 儀禮, and *Liji* 禮記, with the *Yili* (in Han times designated *Shili* 士禮) being already canonized under the Western Han. The hymnic songs from the *Odes* as well as the speeches from the *Documents* (Shu 書) not only epitomize the ideal of ritual order but also on occasion provide elaborate descriptions of ritual acts. The *Changes* (Yi 易) originated as a divination manual, that is, a manual of ritual practice. The *Spring and Autumn Annals* (Chunqiu 春秋) have been—to my mind, persuasively—analyzed as ritual messages communicated to the ancestral spirits and thus are to some extent similar in nature and function to the early bronze inscriptions.[8] Their catechistic explanations in *Gongyang zhuan* 公羊傳 and *Guliang zhuan* 穀梁傳 are organized in a highly formalized "ritual hermeneutic,"[9] while the great historiography of the *Zuo zhuan* 左傳, which toward the end of the Western Han received imperial recognition as another "tradition" (*zhuan* 傳) of the *Spring and Autumn Annals*, is organized around the principle of appropriate ritual order.[10] Finally, the *Music* canon—whatever text or group of texts it may originally have denoted—was devoted to ritual music.

I would not wish to go so far as to suggest that Chinese writing itself emerged for ritual purposes; indeed, there is more than enough circumstantial evidence for other purposes, and probably the origin, of early Chinese writing.[11] But it remains an irreducible fact that of all its manifestations of writing during the Western Zhou period, the Chinese tradition has chosen to preserve only a very limited body of strictly ritualistic texts. Moreover, for their writings, the Late Shang and Western Zhou elites themselves restricted the use of the precious, nonperishable material of bone and bronze to texts concerned with divination and the ancestral sacrifice—a fact that speaks eloquently to the original significance of writing as ritual display.[12] Thus, while one should not exaggerate the centrality of texts from ritual contexts

solely on the basis that ritual has left stronger material traces than other expressions of early Chinese civilization, we also would not wish to undervalue this civilization's extraordinary material expenses and deliberate choices of transmission to lend longevity to ritual texts.

It is therefore not inappropriate to assume that, especially in its display form, the early development of the writing system went hand in hand with its use for ritual purposes. It seems indeed more difficult to argue for a purely bureaucratic or archival nature of the oracle bone and plastron inscriptions or for a primarily documentary and historically oriented function of the bronze texts. After all, the oracle records were carved next to the divination cracks that literally embodied the response from the spirits, and the bronze texts were cast into objects used in religious ceremonies. Such writing materials were both cumbersome and costly; for practical purposes, they were inferior to other surfaces and formats, while their appearance added nothing to the informational substance of the texts. Even if one wanted to preserve certain texts in a nonperishable material like bronze, it would have been easy to design better solutions than inscribing the inside of ritual vessels or running the text in various directions around the outside ornament of bells. Yet no doubt, the bones, plastrons, and bronze paraphernalia were indexical of sheer power (in terms of control over resources, labor, technology, and the cultural tradition), and their use in religious practices documented, before anything else, successful communication with the spirits. Whatever other forms of writing on perishable materials may have existed, the production of divination records and bronze inscriptions in enormous quantities cannot be dissociated from particular ritual functions specific to their media.

The inscriptions do contain—and presumably were meant to help to preserve—historical knowledge. This fact is not diminished by their ritual environment, nor does it erase this environment. We need to avoid positing false alternatives: the question is, not whether bronze inscriptions are historical or religious documents, but how the two functions were mutually related. To the ancient Chinese, historical memory—including what may sometimes look like tedious bureaucratic accounting—was a significant dimension of political identity and expression; yet it also was shaped according to the ritual context. Nothing suggests that we should artificially isolate one from the other. As has been independently observed in both divination and bronze inscriptions, their records were highly tendentious, expressing authority and tight control over historical memory rather than offering an objective account of the bare facts: over the some 150 years of

their documented history, Late Shang oracle records became overwhelmingly optimistic and affirmative,[13] while all known Western Zhou bronze inscriptions related to military matters were exclusively devoted to victories.[14] Thus, in making the best use of the historical information found in bronze inscriptions, one needs to take seriously that they were claims for authority that were expressed in religious and political rituals and were consciously formed and purposefully manipulated by these specific functions and contexts. Would bronze inscriptions, with their highly formalized structure and self-referential gestures toward the donor's merits and purposes, exist at all if not within and because of these circumstances?[15]

Apart from the immediate ritual contexts of early textual practice, there is what one may call a secondary ritual context to texts, namely, the locale where writings were finally placed. Almost all our manuscripts of *Fachprosa* and philosophical orientation have been found in the ritual space of tombs, buried alongside other funerary items. Given that the preservation of texts on perishable materials like bamboo, silk, and wood was largely a matter of accidental environmental happenstance, the archaeological record does not accurately tell us how widespread the practice of placing texts in tombs was, and how it compared to the prevalence of written texts aboveground, in storage pits, or in the ruins of abandoned buildings. All we may be able to say is that certain tombs (mostly in the southern region of the old state of Chu 楚) provided a particularly favorable and protective environment. On the other hand, such a qualified account does nothing to downplay the actual existence of texts in tombs, that is, in a specific social and representational space devoted to the rituals for the dead, and perhaps even to the rituals performed by the dead in the afterlife.[16] Funerary objects enter tombs not by accident but on somebody's purpose; and perhaps more often than not, the purpose was not the disposal but, in a curious sense, the preservation of an object, however far removed from the realm of the living.

Instead of the perspective of the text, one can also choose that of ritual to describe the nexus between the two as a symbiotic relationship: just as texts infused ritual acts with meaning, performances formalized and sacralized texts. Indeed, parallel to the privileging of text, the other prominent discourse in the representation of early Chinese culture is that of ritual. This discourse is not limited to the three early *li* canons; it pervades early Chinese texts in their quest for social, political, and cosmological order, extending from the core of the original canon to the sayings of Confucius, the discussions of Mencius, the *Canon of Filial Piety* (Xiaojing 孝經), the systematic exposition of the principles and functions of ritual in the *Xunzi* 荀子, the encyclopedic syncretism of the *Lüshi chunqiu* 呂氏春秋, and a range of early historiographical and anecdotal works. Not surprisingly, it also is reflected in a string of excavated manuscripts, most prominently in those from Guodian 郭店.[17] And even more than the textual record, it is the archaeological one that brings to light the full extent of ritual practice in early China. Even when considering that the vast majority of buried manuscripts must have perished over the span of two millennia, their presence as tomb-furnishing objects was incomparably surpassed by that of ritual paraphernalia like vessels, bells, weapons, lacquer tableware and coffins, jade implements, earthenware, textiles, and numerous other utensils produced in astounding quantities. Such artifacts certainly enjoyed pragmatic use among the living, but their often elaborate splendor betrays not only exceptional expenditure but also a conscious effort toward aesthetic representation that points beyond the mere functionality of things. It directs us to a sphere of "public display" (to use Michael Nylan's felicitous phrase developed in this volume) that was to some extent governed by sumptuary rules and intended to express the ideal of ritual order and at the same to enforce its regime. Judging from the enormous number of artifacts whose forceful aesthetic expression seems to relegate their basic functionality to a concern of secondary order, ritual was omnipresent in a profound sense texts perhaps never were.

Ritual was often interpreted by early texts, including its own textual voices of hymns, prayers, and inscriptions, yet it decidedly also encompassed large parts of the textual sphere. Deep into early imperial times, the capacious ideal of *wen* 文 was primarily one of ritual order; it could embrace texts, but it was not restricted to them.[18] The canonical text that elaborates by far most extensively on terms like *wen* and *wenzhang* 文章 ("patterned brilliance," a term that only in late Western Han times began to refer to textual compositions) is, unsurprisingly, the *Liji* (Records of ritual), in particular in its essay on music, the "Yueji" 樂記 (Records of music). The dimension of *wen* in early texts included "patterned phrasing" (*wenci* 文辭, an Eastern Zhou term known, for example, from *Zuo zhuan*), yet it also seems to have extended to a visual dimension. Already among the Late Shang oracle bone and plastron inscriptions, we find what David N. Keightley has labeled "display inscriptions," executed in large script that clearly emphasizes the visual appearance of these records; in other cases, they were carefully pigmented or created in series of identical texts.[19] Along with other Western Zhou inscriptions, the famous water basin of Scribe

Qiang 墻, dating from around 900 B.C.E., has its inscribed text arranged in two beautifully symmetric columns. The bells from the tomb of Marquis Yi of Zeng 曾侯乙 carry inscriptions inlaid with gold (as do the bronze tallies discussed by Lothar von Falkenhausen in the present volume). The calligraphy of the Guodian and Shanghai Museum bamboo manuscripts is marked by marvelous clarity and regularity. The Chu silk manuscript displays its writing in a mandala-like format, accompanied by colorful drawings, to reflect its cosmological contents. Textual *wen* cannot be reduced to such features, but it is clear that these added a dimension of expression beyond the propositional information of the words.

Altogether, it is not difficult to show how in early China the aesthetic manifestations of literature and calligraphy emerged directly out of contexts of ritual performances where verbal expression and the display of writing were part of a larger synesthetic whole.[20] The cultural artifact that can be regarded as the emblem of the process through which the discourse of (poetic) text emerged gradually out of the earlier one of music is the "Great Preface" (Daxu 大序) to the *Odes*.[21] Yet the overall shift from ritual to textual coherence[22] that in China began in early imperial times (and parallels similar developments in other ancient civilizations) is beyond the scope of the present volume.

The chapters assembled here illuminate the fusion of text and ritual in Eastern Zhou and Han China. Five of them (Falkenhausen, Gentz, Kern, Csikszentmihalyi, Brashier) were originally prepared for an international conference, "Text and Ritual in Early China," that was held at Princeton University in October 2000, and one (Schaberg) was substituted for a paper presented on that occasion. In addition, I have asked two of the conference participants (Nylan and Boltz) not to submit their—indeed excellent—conference contributions but to present us instead with two anchor chapters that provide the foundation for the other six: Nylan on cultural history, Boltz on philolological method. In what strikes me as a particularly fine example of the mutual support and collaboration that can happen among scholars who are also friends, both have graciously responded to my request by writing entirely new and original contributions. Thus, the volume begins with their two chapters, followed by six case studies on different textual genres in their ritual contexts.

In a tour de force spanning the centuries from the Warring States through the late Eastern Han, Michael Nylan opens the discussion with the call for "an increased readiness to acknowledge our confusions." As things stand right now, the field has been more successful in removing old orthodoxies than in replacing them with new ones—which, in fact, should be taken as a good sign. Archaeology has given us new facts and, perhaps even more importantly, has taught us how little we actually know to put them into perspective. Yet being aware of these limitations also allows us to raise some of the more productive questions. They may not yet, and perhaps never, give us a chance at finally "seeing the entire sky" or "fathoming the sea," but they do get us closer. Nylan identifies three aspects of the text and ritual relation for such inquiry: writing's share in ritual; historical shifts in how textual and ritual classicism is represented in the successive biographies of classical masters in Sima Qian's (ca. 145–ca. 86 B.C.E.) *Shiji* 史記, Ban Gu's *Hanshu*, and Fan Ye's 范曄 (398–445) *Hou Hanshu* 後漢書; and the presence of texts and rituals as edifying spectacles of public display. As Nylan points out, in order to understand the classical period better, "we have little choice but to study texts, ritual sites, and ritual objects together," as text and ritual shared fundamental aspects of their raison d'être: they were "always connected with power, with the past, and with memory," and at every social level "operated in tandem to enhance authority." Furthermore, they both were seen as decreed by some higher authority; they were used in the same ceremonies; they were composite and formulaic in a way that generated cultural stability and fostered a "classical style"; they were not plain images of reality but highly compressed and intensified representations; they were constrained by a limited code of expression; their creation required expert techniques; and their possession was controlled in the service of political and spiritual force.

In her account of the biographies of classical masters, Nylan discusses in detail the changing attitudes and ideals they embodied over time. Her close comparison of the three major sources reveals how over the course of half a millennium, the image of the Ru 儒 scholars developed from exemplary teachers and ritual specialists to masters of written works and their written exegesis. While "the *Shiji* states unequivocally that the best classical masters did not write down their teachings, that they had no use for fine phrasing, and that they were in a few cases not all that adept at explicating written texts, as opposed to transmitting a powerful, suasive example," the fifth-century *Hou Hanshu* "regularly lists the writings composed by its biographical subjects, casting their compositions as a form of patrimony attached at the ends of the biographies proper." It was this new self-representation of the tradition that retrospectively exaggerated the social status of Han canonical learning just as it exaggerated the purported collapse of learning under the Qin and its all the more glorious resurrection under the Han.

In the final section of chapter 1, Nylan offers a strikingly new and original perspective on the interplay of text and ritual by locating both at the core of a system of public display. This system was drawn up in Warring States texts like *Xunzi*, after which it granted relative social stability to the early empire before finally, at the end of the Eastern Han, collapsing under its own weight. The culture of public display was one where gratification and obligation were shared and reciprocated, reinforcing authority, solidarity, and a stable hierarchy of roles. It embraced the human desire for pleasure and social participation by distributing—in manifestly staggering amounts—goods and rewards according to a ritual norm of sumptuary rules, and it sustained the authority of an emperor who governed the world "as the embodiment of all the collectivities operating within the public display culture" by representing the ideal of rulership through codes of text and ritual, the emblems of legitimate pleasure and good order.

In chapter 2, through a meticulous analysis of passages from both excavated and transmitted texts, William G. Boltz raises the fundamental questions of textual authorship, textual boundaries, and modes of textual composition in early China. In a first step, he shows how excavated manuscripts tend to differ from their transmitted counterparts not necessarily in their contents and wording but in their internal textual order. The evidence is compelling that early texts were composed of small "building blocks"—discrete, self-contained textual units—that were arranged in wildly different ways, albeit sometimes maintaining certain clusters. As a consequence, we are now compelled to understand that, in their particular form, the received versions of the classical corpus are likely to represent not so much the integrity of a single authorial composition but the final result of editorial interpretation and rearrangement. The texts we have are fundamentally "composite" in nature, and we are no longer in the position to routinely equate any received text with a particular authorial hand (not to mention the biographical circumstances of an author, which often, in a perfectly circular fashion, have been reconstructed only from the text identified with the person). As Boltz notes, "all of this suggests that lengthy, literary or essay-like texts, authored by a single writer, in the way we typically think of a text in the modern world, do not reflect the norm for early China but were, at best, the exception." Boltz's observation tallies nicely with Nylan's conclusion that in pre-imperial China textual lineages were much less coherent than is assumed in the usual constructs of intellectual history; a received text, especially one that bears the name of a particular "master," is to be recognized as the final product of an editorial

—and very likely also doctrinal—process that easily spanned several generations not merely of disciples but also of the type of editor we find in the figure of Liu Xiang. In Boltz's words, "particular doctrines, philosophies, precepts, belief systems, and so forth that we have come to associate with specific texts we now must recognize might only be properly associated with the *transmitted, received* versions of those texts, and not necessarily with manuscripts that include portions, even large portions, of those same texts."[23]

The significance of this finding extends beyond a new understanding of the composite *structure* of virtually all our texts, excavated and transmitted. As Boltz points out, this structure is the immediate result of a particular mode of composition—one that was not confined to a single moment but one that shows texts in "a performative or *practicum* kind of role." In a very literal sense, the ancient texts were alive; they were not simply handed down from master to disciple but existed within "a framework for maintaining social norms for the performance of ceremonial and religious rites, funeral and ancestral worship practices and customs," where a text "was more than a passive and static record." The continuous recomposing of the text, which could involve both the rearrangement of existing "building blocks" and the introduction of additional material, was as much an act of authorship as any original composition; moreover, "the reordering and revising may easily have been an orally accomplished process, finding its written form only after the fact, if at all." In short, the composition of the ancient texts was not a closed act but one that took shape through acts of intellectual exchange and textual performance (teaching, memorization): "The broader we envision this circulation to have been, the likelier it was to have been oral and associated with practices, rather than written and reflective of scholasticism." Such a conclusion, one might wish to add, seems to apply to the traditional canon, whose presence is documented across vast geographical regions and long periods of time, at least as forcefully as to any other, more locally confined, text.

In chapter 3, in his account of five bronze tallies from Chu that are dated to 323 B.C.E. and probably belonged to a larger set, Lothar von Falkenhausen examines written documents of a seemingly utterly profane function: a group of inscribed texts used to exempt merchants from being taxed when transporting goods along their trading routes. These documents, which Falkenhausen presents in a careful, fully annotated translation, are first of all important witnesses of late–fourth/early–third-century B.C.E. economic history—yet they are also far more than just that. "Tokens of official

authority" intended for display, their outer appearance alone betrays a significance that reaches far beyond the practical use of a document created for plain economic purposes. Their extremely careful calligraphy, cast in bronze (the religiously charged and most prestigious of materials), their golden inlay, and their balanced visual distribution along a fixed number of vertical columns all must have intensified their efficacy by marking the tallies as icons of ritual kingship and indeed religious authority. Likewise, their self-referential naming as "bronze tallies" (*jinjie* 金節), their ritualistic, restricted code of expression, their tripartite textual structure, their reference to the Chu king's calendar and his capital, and the use of the quasi-religious term *wangming* 王命 ("kingly decree") all were explicit references to the hallowed ritual order exemplified in Zhou bronze inscriptions and even Late Shang divination records. In both their linguistic and their aesthetic appearance, the tallies were securely placed into the larger ritual system that governed the exchange with the spirits as well as the distribution of goods as far as the king's authority could be felt (especially including territories only recently acquired). As inscribed bronze vessels were used in ancestral sacrifices to extend the ruler's communication to the realm of the ancestors, the bronze tallies—sharing the aesthetics of the religious paraphernalia—advanced his reach to the outer geography of his realm. Moreover, it is clear that both the ancestral sacrifice and the trade sanctified by the king's authority were part of the same system of *do ut des*, or—in Michael Nylan's concept of public display—the controlled exchange not merely of goods but of obligations, rewards, and the gratification of pleasures. In more than one sense, and again on both the linguistic and the material level, the tallies embodied and exposed a profoundly cosmological ideal of kingship. Needless to say, economic trade was *also*, and in pragmatic terms perhaps primarily, a thoroughly mundane activity. Yet as Falkenhausen's study lucidly shows, in order to understand even the pragmatic nature of economic transactions correctly, one must not reduce the function of the tallies to purely economic terms or ignore their rich display of ritual capital and "awesome, mana-like force." The question is simple: why such expensive display (another economic aspect of the tallies) of ritual prerogative if some plain document, perhaps written on bamboo, would have sufficed? Why inlays of gold in bronze to authorize a tax exemption?

In chapter 4, Joachim Gentz unveils how the text of the *Gongyang zhuan*, in its deep structure, is constructed according to the same principles that guide nontextual ritual practice. Texts themselves were perceived as ritual performances; in the same way as ritual functions as the "outer formal

expression of an invisible ideal order" (and also expresses the realization of that order), the *Gongyang zhuan* operates on the assumption that the text of the *Chunqiu* is based on a strict system of formal rules of how to mimetically represent historical events. In the logic of the *Gongyang zhuan*, wherever Confucius (the purported author of the *Chunqiu*) encountered historical events that deviated from the ritual standards, his historiography was designed to expose them through subtle deviation in linguistic expression. Thus, the *Gongyang zhuan*'s exegetic strategy makes explicit Confucius's ideal of linguistic form together with his choices of deviation from that ideal, serving as a mirror both to the ideal order of history and to the cases where events fail to match it. It shows the *Chunqiu* as a text that through its linguistic choices performs the ideal ritual order even where it criticizes the lack of it in historical reality—indeed, it represents the resurrection of ritual in historiography vis-à-vis its collapse in history.[24] According to the *Gongyang zhuan*, Confucius's composition of the *Chunqiu* "is a ritually correct behavior in its own right because it produces an adequate formal correspondence to every historical situation"; the text, as it "attempts to express an ideal order in which everything has its adequate position and expression, . . . becomes the expression and the textual remains of a ritual act undertaken by Confucius."

If Falkenhausen's study is original and important for bringing economic documents into the realm of ritual, Gentz's is so for doing the same with historiographical writing, another sphere of early textuality whose pervasive ritual framework has only recently begun to become visible. What makes Gentz's structural reading particularly compelling is the fact that it reveals that the *Gongyang zhuan*'s formal reading strategy of the *Chunqiu* is perfectly parallel to other ritual practices. Specifically, the interpretation of linguistic signs as deviations from an implied ideal order is precisely what early astrologers did when "reading" the natural world and interpreting deviations from the natural course as signs of imminent disaster. Thus, from the *Gongyang zhuan* perspective we find that Confucius "expresses himself just as Heaven does in the cosmos." In other words, the exegetical strategy manifest in the *Gongyang zhuan* may well have originated from the principles of astrology, a suggestion that becomes even more attractive when we consider (as Gentz does) that in institutional terms, the office of the historian and that of the astrologer—both *shi* 史—were one and the same.

In chapter 5, I offer a comprehensive account of the appearance of *Odes* fragments and quotations in the six excavated manuscripts from late Warring States and early Western Han times that include substantial traces of the

ancient anthology of songs.[25] Here, the systematic examination of textual variants—which make up 30–40 % of the characters, compared among the manuscripts as well as to the received recension of the *Mao Shi* 毛詩—leads to suggestions concerning the early status of the *Odes* as written versus orally circulating texts as well as to considerations on the performative aspects of the *Odes* in Eastern Zhou and early imperial times. Like Michael Nylan, I hold that the Qin proscription of texts has been much exaggerated and that, in fact, the manuscripts provide clear evidence that the written text of the *Odes* was just "as unstable before the bibliocaust as it was immediately thereafter." In fact, it appears that no two of the six manuscripts under discussion that contain lines from the *Odes* adhere to a common written tradition of these texts, that is, a textual lineage based on the copying and recopying from one manuscript to the next. This conclusion gains strength from the fact that in their overwhelming majority, the textual variants in excavated *Odes* lines are merely graphic, that is, representing the same sound (and word) with a different—graphically unrelated—character. Such an overall situation cannot be explained through a model of copying an existing written text into a new one; instead, it is plain evidence of the interference of oral transmission, where written versions were produced independently from one another, that is, according to a text that was memorized by or recited to a scribe. In the case of the early manuscripts, neither the *Odes* texts proper nor the texts in which their quotations are embedded—for example, the two "Wu xing" 五行 (Five conducts) manuscripts and the two "Zi yi" 緇衣 (Black robes) manuscripts and their counterparts in the received *Liji*—are graphically related in the way that a process of direct copying would manifest itself.

While traditional scholarship has imagined the relatively minor traces of orthographic differences between the four known Western Han exegetical lineages of the *Odes* as an expression of a period of oral transmission following the Qin proscription, I argue that only the manuscripts show us the true extent to which probably *all* early written versions of the *Odes* differed. Moreover, the evidence from the manuscripts suggests that the entire tradition, wherever it includes citations from the *Odes*, is retrospectively normalized to adhere with very little variation to the Mao recension that became dominant only from late Eastern Han times onward. Such observations are in accord with the nature of the early teaching lineages: while written texts certainly played a role in some auxiliary sense, the omnipresence of graphic variants must have rendered the surface of the written texts largely opaque to any uninitiated reader; to correctly identify

the words behind the graphs, one already had to know the text. In other words, written texts were very unlikely to have traveled on their own or to have been studied in quiet isolation. Instead, written versions of traditional texts must have been transmitted in a larger framework of oral teaching and performance. The authoritative text was not any idiosyncratic graphic representation; it was, in a double sense, the *mastered* text, "internalized through memorization and externalized in performance," through which the textual heritage maintained its stability. Thus, "for the late pre-imperial and early imperial period, we witness the double phenomenon of a canonical text that is as stable in its wording as it is unstable in its writing."

In chapter 6, on indirect remonstrance, David Schaberg brings to our attention an early textual genre that is presented as fundamentally theatrical and ritualized in nature. However fictional and anachronistic the early imperial anecdotes surrounding indirect remonstrance may be, as they appear in historiography and in separate anecdote collections, they testify to a dimension of Han court culture that the tradition knows about only in subdued terms: a performative practice of verbal art that continuously oscillated between entertainment and moral admonition. None of our sources tells us how to imagine their verbal presentations, but there is little doubt about the fact that moral admonition as well as court panegyrics were ostentatiously staged.[26] This element is still preserved in the later genre designation of *shelun* 設論—variously translated as "hypothetical discourse" or "staged debate"—that according to the tradition begins with Dongfang Shuo's "Responding to a Guest's Objections" (Da ke nan 答客難), in which Dongfang "used [his disquisition] as an illustration of how he consoled himself about his low position."[27] As Schaberg notes, the later tradition's "association of acting with high-minded critique, by which true theatrical representation was linked to the early historiographical tradition, was an important step in the conceptual preparation for Chinese theater and helped to bolster the status of entertainers in later ages."

What is more, the remonstrant "poses a riddle, sings an obscure song, or wordlessly—as with a sigh or a gesture—defies expectations of court behavior" and thus "performs an act that in one way or another engages the ruler in a game of decoding." To employ Gentz's analysis of the *Gongyang zhuan* exegetical strategy, the remonstrant presents a deviation from the implied ritual code which serves as a mirror to the ruler's own failures. The jester's performance is a ritual act in two senses: it represents a perfect match (just as Confucius did according to the *Gongyang* reading of the *Chunqiu*) of the historical situation, and by doing so, it exerts a transforma-

tive force upon the addressee, who then changes his behavior back to the ritual standards. In Schaberg's words, "through an uplifting anamnesis, the king shakes off his wooziness and dissolution and becomes mindful again of propriety." Thus, to fully appreciate the nature and workings of indirect remonstration, as when "the jester uses all the accoutrements of theater to remind the king of his debts," we must take its engaging performative—and entertaining—nature seriously. Finally, Schaberg points to another important detail in the early imperial records of indirect remonstrance: its reliance not only on coded speech and behavior but also on song, that is, a mode of patterned speech that formally intensifies the crucial message. While anecdotes appear in markedly different versions, their poetic core is usually preserved in all of them. Very likely, the performative nature of song helped to carry the anecdote through its various early channels of oral (and even performative?) transmission; yet it also served the historiographic function of marking the importance of the moment.[28]

In his exploration of the legendary "four faces" of the Yellow Emperor in chapter 7, Mark Csikszentmihalyi suggests that the Mawangdui 馬王堆 silk text "Liming" 立命 (Establishing the mandate)—part of the so-called *Sixteen Classics* (Shiliu jing 十六經) preceding version B of the Mawangdui *Laozi* on the same sheet of silk—was an inscription-style text "composed to evoke a vessel that literally depicted the Yellow Emperor as having four faces." According to late Warring States and Qin–Han sources, various inscribed objects of daily life were created to admonish their owners, to remind them of their duties, or to urge them to take warning. Inscribed figurines were believed to possess magical, especially apotropaic, power. The *Hanshu* "Monograph on Arts and Letters" notes a number of didactic texts that are titled "inscriptions" (i.e., texts purportedly inscribed on actual objects), including a set of "inscriptions" associated with the Yellow Emperor. As Csikszentmihalyi points out, the title "inscription" may often have been rhetorical rather than real. Not every didactic "inscription" mentioned in the *Hanshu* or preserved in transmitted sources was originally inscribed; but as literary texts, they could have mimicked the established compositional patterns of actual inscriptions.

Discussing such "literary inscriptions" that appear in different Han sources, Csikszentmihaly shows how one of them—the "Bronze Man Inscription" (Jinren ming 金人銘) included in Liu Xiang's *Shuiyuan* 說苑 (or *Shuoyuan*) and purportedly originally inscribed on a bronze figurine—is connected to Han perceptions of the Yellow Emperor and may well have been part of the *Yellow Emperor Inscriptions*, which we otherwise know

only by title from the *Hanshu*. Moreover, Csikszentmihalyi argues, the silk text "Liming," which speaks in the voice of the Yellow Emperor, appears to represent just such an inscriptional composition originally placed on a four-faced image of his, or imagined as such. While the literary tradition has preserved the notion of a "four-faced" Yellow Emperor, since Han times this tradition has always interpreted it in mere symbolic terms as referring to the emperor's four ministers sent out to govern the four directions. Yet as Csikszentmihalyi points out, parts of the "Liming" adhere closely to literary conventions (like the intense use of first-person pronouns) characteristic of inscribed admonitions (like the "Bronze Man Inscription") as we know them from literary sources. Specifically, the contents of the "Liming"—and its likely underlying literary or actual inscription—can be related to a set of cosmological images of the four directions that in Han times was both frequently depicted and associated with the Yellow Emperor. Thus, the manuscript allows us to tentatively restore the original ritual medium and context of part of the "Liming" silk text and to reimagine the Yellow Emperor's four faces not only symbolically but in terms of a tangible ritual object bearing specific cosmological imagery. Even if taken as a literary inscription, the respective parts of the "Liming," like other texts of the genre, "lay claim to some aspect of the formal connection to inscriptions on ritual objects found in culturally significant sites (e.g., in the lineage temples from the Zhou period), and in this sense they may be read as attempts to borrow the authority of the ancient."

The composite nature of the "Liming," with a literary or actual inscription likely involved, allows Csikszentmihalyi to extend his analysis to the—in the Mawangdui silk manuscript physically adjacent— *Laozi*. It appears that the *Laozi*, another composite text (as discussed in chapter 2), contains passages reminiscent of the language of the "Bronze Man Inscription." It is thus possible that parts of the *Laozi* "once were connected to an authorizing medium" just like the passages from literary inscriptions, "with which they share some formal similarities." In other words, certain passages from the *Laozi* may well have originated in specific ritual objects and religious contexts, or at least in the mental conception of such objects and contexts, before becoming radically decontextualized, and recontextualized, in the form that is now familiar to us.

Concluding the present volume, K. E. Brashier's chapter on stele inscriptions describes the Eastern Han memorial culture, the core of which was defined by the memorization and recitation of texts. This fact is repeatedly stated in contemporaneous sources; even stele inscriptions them-

selves exhort their readers to memorize and recite the inscribed words. Thus, inscriptions include specific mnemonic devices: set formulae and clichés; exaggeration; the construction of "memory places" where facts and names are organized around well-known models; and versification, ranging "from rhymed medical knowledge . . . to rhymed primers that sorted out general knowledge." As Brashier quotes from Rosalind Thomas, whatever had to be remembered "would be better remembered if it was in verse." The model text of Han memorial culture—and indeed of Chinese cultural memory in general—is the anthology of the *Odes*, on which, accordingly, numerous Eastern Han stele inscriptions draw directly. As Brashier shows, not only do the inscriptions present themselves as a new version of the ancient *Odes*, but their authors also identify themselves as followers of those—very few—named figures that are traditionally seen behind the composition of certain *Odes*. The inscription authors, when imitating those of the *Odes*, thus "had a surprisingly specific image of the textual role they were reenacting." Their texts remembered the person praised in the inscription and at the same time also the earlier model of remembering; and in this vein, they ultimately commended themselves to the memory of later generations of readers and authors of commemorative texts (a topos of self-reference that is explicitly expressed in the *Liji* account concerning the inscription of tripods).[29]

The stele inscriptions' relation to the ancient *Odes*, however, goes much beyond citing their texts or referring to their purported authors. Here, Brashier is able to overturn several traditional assumptions at once: first, although carved into stone, stele inscriptions were meant to be memorized and recited, that is, ritually enacted in oral performance (one inscription even carries an explicit reference to the musical accompaniment of its own text). Second, there is compelling evidence that the rhymed portion at the end of a stele inscription was not some kind of decorative appendix to the historical-biographical record but was itself the core of the inscription, embodying the essence of what was to be remembered in poetic—that is, ritualized—form. And third, tetrasyllabic stele inscriptions were composed by the major scholars and writers of the time and considered monuments of public display—a fact that offers quite a different picture of Eastern Han literary history than does the traditional emphasis on anonymous ballads or pentasyllabic poetry.

Stone inscriptions, as recognized already by Eastern Han times, are the late descendants of bronze inscriptions. Here, Brashier points to a fascinating detail about the stelae: a hole, "regularly positioned roughly one and a half meters above the base," that remained an enigma to earlier scholars. Marshaling an array of sources, Brashier suggests that these holes were used to suspend food offerings to the ancestors—thus making the stelae even more akin in nature to the earlier bronze vessels. Astoundingly, the hole was sometimes added to an already-inscribed stele, destroying parts of its text and suggesting that the ritual performance even overrode the written word (which, ideally, was memorized anyway). Thus, although the inscribed text was itself entirely ritualized, it was not the entire ritual.

Stele inscriptions are monuments of both closure and continuous memory—and the ideal texts to end a volume on "text and ritual." Its introduction shall conclude with a note, less duty than pleasure, of profound gratitude: to the participants of the original conference for their excellent papers and discussions; to the contributors to this volume for their responsiveness, patience, and fine essays; to the Chiang Ching-kuo Foundation for International Scholarly Exchange as the main sponsor of the conference; to Princeton University's East Asian Studies Program and its director, Professor Martin C. Collcutt, for additional support toward both the conference and the preparation of the present volume; to the Princeton University Commitee on Research in the Humanities and Social Sciences for a substantial publication subsidy; to Richard J. Chafey, Manager of Princeton's East Asian Studies Program, and Michael A. Reeve, now Publications Manager for the *Cambridge History of China* Project at Princeton, for their competent and graceful assistance in organizing and helping to manage the conference; to Alexei K. Ditter, Brigitta A. Lee, and Esther Sunkyung Park, all Ph.D. candidates in the university's Department of East Asian Studies, for their meticulous editorial help with the volume; and to the University of Washington Press editors Pamela J. Bruton, Lorri Hagman, Mary C. Ribesky, and Marilyn Trueblood for their exceptionally timely and attentive work in getting the text to our readers!

NOTES

1. Lewis, *Writing and Authority in Early China*, 96. "Philosophers" is the common—and misleading—translation of *zhuzi* 諸子, which refers to a range of intellectual lineages that organized their wisdom retrospectively around the name and selected words of a master. Lewis, who calls the *zhuzi* "schoolmen," has argued (58–59) that the actual "master" (*zi* 子) of such a lineage was not the author of its texts, but on the contrary, his particular stature and image were largely created through these texts that accumulated over generations of

disciples. One may note that from this perspective, textual transmission appears much akin to ancestor worship, ubiquitous in early China, where the descendants turned their forebear into a model (formally designated by a posthumous temple name, *shi* 諡), perpetuated that model's accomplishments, and derived from it their own authority and name (*ming* 名).

2. In 26 B.C.E. Emperor Cheng 成 (r. 33–7 B.C.E.) issued an edict to collect the writings from all over the empire and had Liu Xiang organize them in the catalogue of the imperial library; see *Hanshu* 10.310 and 30.1701.

3. "Early China" is also the name of the journal of record for this field, founded in 1976. "Early China" is a vague and somewhat problematic term, as it is used to denote not only the ancient Chinese tradition but also all civilizational remnants from the earliest times, as long as they have been found within the geographical boundaries of the modern Chinese state. In the present volume, the term is used to refer to the Chinese tradition only, and specifically to the periods of the Warring States and the Qin and Han empires.

4. There are no hard figures for any of these groups of texts, partly because new materials continue to be found. The account given in Shaughnessy, *New Sources of Early Chinese History*, published in 1997, is already dated; see Giele, "Early Chinese Manuscripts." A valuable survey of excavated manuscripts, though also in need of further updates, is Giele, *Database of Early Chinese Manuscripts*.

5. It is, however, anachronistic to project such identity into pre-imperial times; see Kern, "Ritual, Text, and the Formation of the Canon."

6. To illustrate this point, one only needs to compare the incredible artifacts unearthed in 1977 from the mid–fifth-century B.C.E. tomb of Marquis Yi of Zeng 曾侯乙, which number more than 15,000, with the handful of short manuscripts from ca. 300 B.C.E. discovered in Guodian 郭店 tomb 1 in 1993. While some of the earlier artifacts—especially the magnificent set of chime bells—have received due scholarly attention, only the later manuscripts, published in 1998, have by now generated more than 3,000 publications.

7. In Han times, an unknown *Canon of Music* (Yue 樂) was already lost (if it had ever existed as a discrete, self-contained text), leaving the core of five textual canons to be sponsored by the imperial state: the *Yi*, the *Shi*, the *Shu*, the *Li* 禮 (Ritual), and the *Chunqiu* 春秋. The term *Wu jing* itself may be a late Western Han coinage, as argued by Fukui, "Rikukei; rikugei to gokei," "Shin Kan jidai ni okeru hakase seido no tenkai," and "Tō Chūjo no taisaku no kisoteki kenkyū." The manuscripts from Guodian show that by 300 B.C.E. the earlier canon of the Six Arts was already in place. Strips 24–25 of the "Liu de" 六德 manuscript mention all six terms together, while strips 15–16 of the "Xing zi ming chu" 性自命出 manuscript list the *Shi*, *Shu*, *Li*, and *Yue*, and strips 36–41 of the first "Yu cong" 語叢 manuscript discuss the *Yi*, *Shi*, and *Chunqiu*; see Jingmen shi bowuguan, *Guodian Chu mu zhujian*, 179, 188, 194–195.

8. Pines, "Intellectual Change in the Chunqiu Period," 80–86; see also Pines, *Foundations of Confucian Thought*, 17–18, 250 nn. 8–9, for further references.

9. Gentz, *Das Gongyang zhuan*; see also chapter 4 in the present volume.

10. Lewis, *Writing and Authority in Early China*, 132–139; and esp. Schaberg, *A Patterned Past*.

11. See Bagley, "Anyang Writing and the Origin of the Chinese Writing System."

12. See Kern, "The Performance of Writing in Western Zhou China."

13. Keightley, *Sources of Shang History*, 42–44, 117–119.

14. Shaughnessy, *Sources of Western Zhou History*, 176–177.

15. See Falkenhausen, "Issues in Western Zhou Studies," 145–171; Kern, *The Stele Inscriptions of Ch'in Shih huang*, 140–154; Kern, "*Shi jing* Songs as Performance Texts," 58–66.

16. For this hypothesis, see Hayashi, "Concerning the Inscription 'May Sons and Grandsons Eternally Use This [Vessel].'"

17. The ritual discourse also appears prominently in the corpus of bamboo manuscripts now in the possession of the Shanghai Museum. These texts may or may not come from a site closely related to that of Guodian; see Ma Chengyuan, *Shanghai bowuguan cang Zhanguo Chu zhushu (yi)*, 2.

18. Kern, "Ritual, Text, and the Formation of the Canon"; Nylan, "Calligraphy, the Sacred Text and Test of Culture."

19. For these and other aspects of the display character of some of the Shang divination records, see Keightley, *Sources of Shang History*, 46, 54, 56, 76–77, 83–84, 89.

20. Falkenhausen, "Ritual Music in Bronze Age China," 693; Kern, "*Shi jing* Songs as Performance Texts."

21. Van Zoeren, *Poetry and Personality*, 17–115; Owen, *Readings in Chinese Literary Thought*, 37–56.

22. This phrase is borrowed from Assmann, *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis*, 87–89.

23. This matches precisely the observation originally made by Xing Wen, "Chu jian 'Wu xing' shi lun," and also found in Pang, *Zhu bo "Wu xing" pian jiaozhu ji yanjiu*, 92, that the different internal order of the two "Wu xing" manuscripts from Guodian and Mawangdui 馬王堆 reflects different philosophical arguments.

24. In this as well as in other points, Gentz's analysis elegantly dovetails with the one developed by Schaberg in *A Patterned Past* for early narrative historiography (most notably in *Zuo zhuan*).

25. My study includes the manuscripts published in the first volume (2001) of the Shanghai Museum corpus but not those in subsequent volumes. The small number of *Odes* quotations there does not affect the conclusions reached in chapter 5.

26. For an extensive discussion, see Kern, "Western Han Aesthetics and the Genesis of the *Fu*."

27. *Hanshu* 65.2864.

28. See Schaberg, "Song and the Historical Imagination in Early China"; Kern, "The Poetry of Han Historiography."

29. See *Liji zhengyi* 49.378c–379a.

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