

Conceiving the Empire China and Rome Compared

Edited by

FRITZ-HEINER MUTSCHLER
ACHIM MITTAG

OXFORD
UNIVERSITY PRESS

OXFORD

UNIVERSITY PRESS

Great Clarendon Street, Oxford ox2 6DP

Oxford University Press is a department of the University of Oxford.
It furthers the University's objective of excellence in research, scholarship,
and education by publishing worldwide in

Oxford New York

Auckland Cape Town Dar es Salaam Hong Kong Karachi
Kuala Lumpur Madrid Melbourne Mexico City Nairobi
New Delhi Shanghai Taipei Toronto

With offices in

Argentina Austria Brazil Chile Czech Republic France Greece
Guatemala Hungary Italy Japan Poland Portugal Singapore
South Korea Switzerland Thailand Turkey Ukraine Vietnam

Oxford is a registered trade mark of Oxford University Press
in the UK and in certain other countries

Published in the United States
by Oxford University Press Inc., New York

© Oxford University Press 2008

The moral rights of the authors have been asserted
Database right Oxford University Press (maker)

First published 2008

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced,
stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means,
without the prior permission in writing of Oxford University Press,
or as expressly permitted by law, or under terms agreed with the appropriate
reprographics rights organization. Enquiries concerning reproduction
outside the scope of the above should be sent to the Rights Department,
Oxford University Press, at the address above

You must not circulate this book in any other binding or cover
and you must impose the same condition on any acquirer

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data
Data available

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data
Data available

Typeset by SPI Publisher Services, Pondicherry, India
Printed in Great Britain
on acid-free paper by
CPI Antony Rowe, Chippenham, Wiltshire

ISBN 978-0-19-921464-8

1 3 5 7 9 10 8 6 4 2

Announcements from the Mountains

The Stele Inscriptions of the Qin First Emperor

Martin Kern (Princeton)

1. INTRODUCTION

Shortly after completing his final conquest and establishing the unified empire in 221 BC, the Qin First Emperor, accompanied by his court classicists, began to tour the newly conquered eastern regions. Here, he erected a series of stele inscriptions on the top of venerated mountains. The *Shi ji*, which preserves six of the altogether seven inscriptions,¹ provides the following chronology for them: 219 BC on Mt. Yi,² Mt. Tai, and Mt. Langye; 218 BC on Mt. Zhifu and on its 'eastern vista' (Zhifu *dongguan*); 215 BC at the 'gate' of Jieshi (Jieshi *men*); and December 211 or January 210 BC on Mt. Kuaiji. In the First Emperor's 'Basic Annals' in the *Shi ji*, the brief entry on the first inscription, placed on Mt. Yi in 219 BC, reads as follows:

In his twenty-eighth year, the First August (Emperor) went eastward and proceeded through the commanderies and counties. He ascended Mt. Yi in Zou county and erected a stone. He conducted a discussion with the classicists (*rusheng*) from Lu and had them carve the stone to eulogize the virtuous power of Qin. They discussed the matters of the *feng* and *shan* sacrifices and of the *wang* sacrifices to the mountains and rivers.³

The related account in the 'Fengshan shu' (almost verbatim also in the *Han shu* 'Jiaosi zhi')⁴ differs only slightly in mentioning 'seventy classicists and

¹ The six inscriptions are included in *Shi ji*, chap. 6, 'Qin Shihuang benji'; the seventh (and chronologically first) one that was erected on Mt. Yi, although well-known in Tang times, has been transmitted only in later (Yuan dynasty) inscription collections.

² For all mentioned localities, which were identified according to Tan Qixiang 1982-7, see the accompanying map.

³ *Shi ji* 6/242.

⁴ See *Shi ji* 28/1366, *Han shu* 25A/1201.



Fig. 8. The surviving fragment of the Langye inscription

erudites (*boshi*) from Qi and Lu' accompanying the emperor on Mt. Tai. Following such brief remarks in the 'Basic Annals', invariably indicating the specific year of the First Emperor's rule and the destination of his respective tour of inspection, the *Shi ji* presents the inscription texts. The inscription on Mt. Zhifu illustrates the diction of the entire series:⁵

It was in His twenty-ninth year,
According to the season of mid-spring,
The mildness of *Yang* had just arisen.
The August Emperor travelled to the east,

維廿九年
時在中春
陽和方起
皇帝東游

⁵ For the full set of all seven texts, see Kern 2000a, 10–49. The text is in *Shi ji* 6/249 and Rong Geng 1935, 144. The thirty-six lines of the Mt. Zhifu inscription rhyme on every third verse and comprise two rhyme sequences, *zhi* (*-ǝ) and *zhi* (*-ǝk), each of six rhymes. The space after line 18 indicates the rhyme change. For full annotation, see Kern 2000a, 35–7.

On His tour He ascended (Mt.) Zhifu,
Looked down on and illuminated (the lands by) the sea.
The attending officials gazed in admiration,
Traced back and contemplated (His) excellence and
brilliant accomplishments,
Recalled and recited the fundamental beginning:
The Great Sage created His order,
Established and fixed the rules and measures,
Made manifest and visible the line and net (of order).
Abroad He instructed the feudal lords;
Brilliantly He spread culture and grace,
Enlightening them through rightness and principle.
The six kingdoms had been restive and perverse,
Greedy and criminal, insatiable—
Atrociously slaughtering endlessly.

巡登之衆
臨照于海
從臣嘉觀
原念休烈
追誦本始
大聖作治
建定法度
顯著綱紀
外教諸侯
光施文惠
明以義理
六國回辟
貪戾無厭
虐殺不已

The August Emperor felt pity for the multitudes,
And consequently sent out His punitive troops,
Vehemently displaying His martial power.
Just was He in punishment, trustworthy was He in acting,
His awesome influence radiated to all directions,
And there was none who was not respectful and submissive.
He boiled alive and exterminated the violent and cruel,
Succored and saved the black-haired people,
And all around consolidated the four extremities.
He universally promulgated the shining laws,
Gave warp and woof to All-under-Heaven—
Forever to serve as ritual norm and guideline.
Great, indeed, was [...]!
Within the universe and realm
One followed receptively His sage intent.
The multitude of officials recited His merits,
Asked to carve (this text) into stone,
To express and transmit the constant model.

皇帝哀衆
遂發討師
奮揚武德
義誅信行
威燁旁達
莫不賓服
烹滅彊暴
振救黔首
周定四極
普施明法
經緯天下
永為儀則
大矣口哉
宇縣之中
承順聖意
群臣誦功
請刻于石
表垂常式

As exemplified in this text, the seven stele inscriptions are hymns in praise of the Qin unification, created in thirty-six or seventy-two lines of tetrasyllabic meter and rhymed in rigorous adherence to traditional practice. Embedded into a setting of traditional rituals, they present the idealized version of a teleological Qin history, eulogizing the unified rule in juxtaposition to the preceding ages of warfare and chaos. The ideal of order and unification—expressed in the famous measures of unifying the script, weights, and measures, etc.—appears emblematically also in the formal structure of the seven inscriptions. Their perfect composition betrays the involvement of experts in

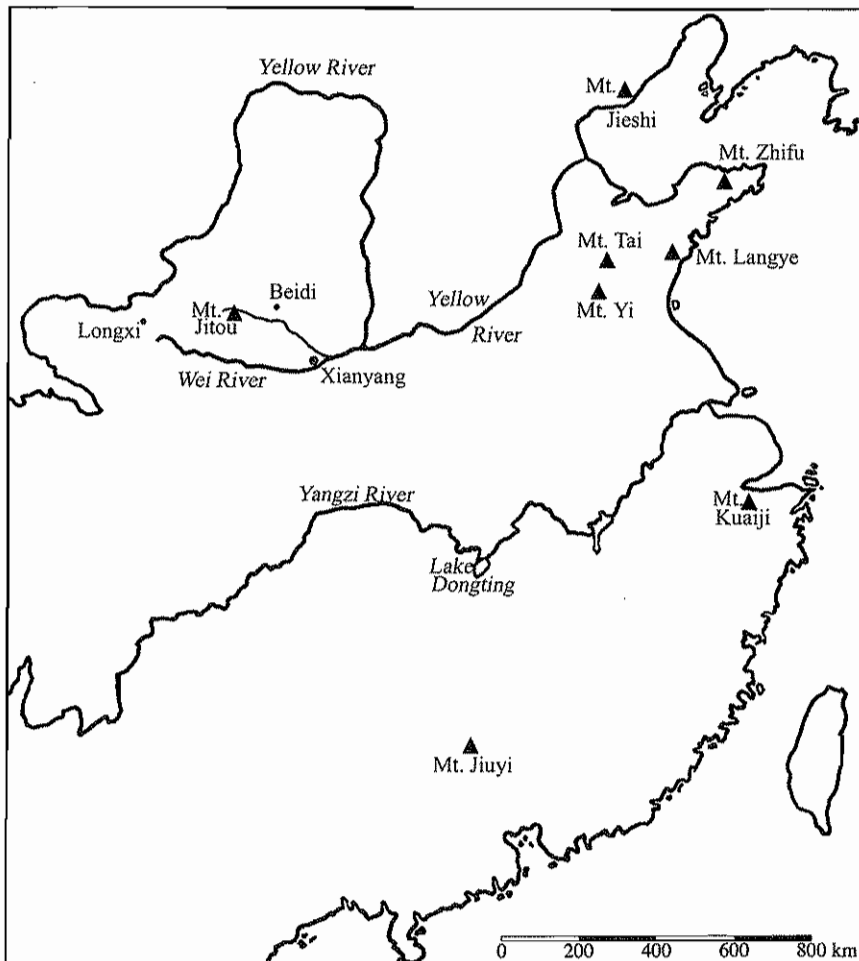


Fig. 9. Map showing the destinations of the First Emperor's journeys, sacrifices, and inscribed stelae

traditional ritual and textual scholarship who served at the Qin imperial court. As registered in the *Shi ji*, the scholars in charge of composing, reciting, and inscribing these political eulogies into stone were the imperial erudites that the new empire had inherited from the former states of Qi and Lu, that is, the old eastern regions of traditional scholarship. As the sources inform us, these professionals held the remarkable specialization of 'comprehending the past and present' (*tong gu jin*). While later sources sometimes regard the Qin

chancellor Li Si as the author of the texts or the writer of their calligraphy,⁶ the notion of an imperial institution in charge of the ritual and textual tradition, where the almost uniform inscriptional texts were most probably drafted well in advance, dissociates the text from its material carrier, from any specific event, and from the participants involved in the latter.

The traditional idea of the imperial Qin state as a mere terror regime devoid of any cultural accomplishment has been discredited in more recent scholarship. Sufficient evidence testifies to the promotion of traditional scholarship at the Qin imperial court—scholarship that certainly contributed to the stabilization of the venerated canon.⁷ The much-debated issue of the 'burning of the books' in 213 BC and the purported mass-execution of scholars in 212 BC has detracted from the fact that the early imperial erudites were professionals of the ritual and textual tradition operating beyond any issues of a specific 'Confucian' philosophy or morality, and that their texts, in particular the *Songs (Shi)* and *Documents (Shu)*, were available to thinkers of various intellectual lineages.⁸ When Li Si proposed to ban and burn the *Songs* and *Documents* circulating outside the imperial court together with the apparently proliferating 'speeches of the hundred lineages' (*baijia yu*) and all historical archives except those of the Qin, he explicitly exempted the *Shi* and *Shu* studied and taught by the court-appointed erudites.⁹ The imperial stele inscriptions corroborate the presence of classical scholarship at the Qin imperial court by displaying an abundance of references to the written tradition. Moreover, with these texts, we not only see the learned erudites at work but also their canon in action, including the *Songs* and *Documents* that were used to learn and to speak about the past. Providing the paradigms for reading the past and discussing the present, these texts needed to be monopolized for the purpose of imperial representation and to be prevented from being exploited to 'use the past to criticize the present' (*yi gu fei jin*), as noted in Li Si's memorial.

A closer analysis of the inscriptions shows them as a coherent textual series: all seven inscriptions adhere to a clearly defined compositional structure, with

⁶ The two earliest known writers ascribing the inscriptions to Li Si are Liu Xie (c.467–522) in *Wenxin diaolong* 21/803 and Li Daoyuan (469–527) in *Shuijing zhu* (see Wang Guowei 1984, 4/130, 25/810, 40/1256). Zhang Shoujie (fl. 725–35) states that both the text and the calligraphy of the final inscription on Mt. Kuaiji were by Li Si (see his commentary in *Shi ji* 6/261); according to *Shi ji* 6/260 and 87/2547, Li Si had accompanied the emperor on his final tour to the southeast. Challenging the traditional view, Chen Zhiliang 1939 (B), 42–3, has argued that the eunuch and later chancellor Zhao Gao (d. 207 BC) is a more likely candidate as the imperial calligrapher. I consider both alternatives as equally flawed.

⁷ See Kanaya 1992, 230–57; Eno 1999; and Kern 2000a, 183–96.

⁸ See Kern 2000a, 164–96.

⁹ *Shi ji* 6/255, 87/2546–7.

particular topics arranged at specific positions of the texts.¹⁰ Their modular design allows portions of a text to be changed or replaced without affecting the overall sequential structure. The individual inscriptions thus appear as variations of a single underlying prototext that most likely was kept in the Qin imperial archives, readily available when needed for any particular occasion. This phenomenon of a textual series can be explained as a traditional device in the context of ritualized political representation. As has been noted for pre-imperial bronze inscriptions, the notion of an 'original' text being attached in a one-to-one relation to a certain situation, place, or material carrier may be misleading in the ritual setting of ancient China.¹¹ Consciously designed repetition and variation may have been a significant part of the message, endowing the text with an aura of standardized, normative expression. On the material and representational level, the stele inscriptions were supported and perpetuated by the stone into which they were carved; yet their true basis and continuity lay in the archival records. Even if we did not know of the Qin archives from the *Shi ji*,¹² we would be able to deduce their existence and function from the diction of the inscriptions themselves.

The cultural memory enshrined in these archives preserved both historical memory and the models of verbal expression. Composing an inscription, the classicist scholars operated in the limited code of the ritual tradition and in this reaffirmed the legitimizing force of the ritual-historical continuum. Based on the blueprint that was maintained in the archives, the individual inscriptions were imposed upon, not developed out of, the concrete natural sites into which they were inscribed. Placing texts very similar to one another—now in the newly standardized script—in a number of localities all over the recently conquered eastern parts of the empire performed and expressed on the linguistic level what the accompanying *wang* sacrifices realized on the level of ritual action: the absorption of the individual natural and historical site into the common suprahistorical frame of the new empire, designed for eternity. In the texts on the stelae we can hardly detect any trace of a historical development that may have taken place between 219 and 210 BC. According to the uniform language of the imperial stelae, history, now inscribed into chosen sites of nature, had reached its final petrification and standstill in 221 BC. The serial manifestations of the prototext as stationary inscriptions served the ritual order of imperial geography: with his inscriptions, the First Emperor recognized each of their locations in its own significance and, by the

¹⁰ See Kern 2000a, 126–39.

¹¹ See Falkenhausen 1993b, 163–4.

¹² For Li Si's request to burn all historical archives except those of the Qin, see *Shi ji* 6/255, 87/2546; for Sima Qian's (c.145–c.90/85 BC) subsequent lament of having nothing but the Qin archives available, see 15/686.

implied prototext, transformed all of them from mutually unrelated sites of formerly separate political entities into defined places within the newly unified spatial organization of the empire.

2. WRITING AS REPRESENTATION

It is clear from these observations that the seven stele inscriptions were not, or not primarily, textual media to circulate or store information. Nothing suggests that members of the political elite took to the mountains in order to read the imperial texts *in situ* and learn about history. Nothing even suggests that the inscriptions were ever intended to be visited for that purpose. So why were they placed there? Why not, for example, in the capital, visible for everyone to see, and for the educated elite to read? Why create monuments out of sight, far removed from the people? No early text provides a ready answer to these questions, but we may look to other instances of pre-imperial display writing for possible explanations. There is no question that at least since Western Zhou times (c.1046–771 BC), and arguably already during the late Shang dynasty (c.1200–c.1046 BC),¹³ writing, embedded in ritual contexts, was used for representational purposes.¹⁴ A prime example is the famous water-basin of Secretary Qiang of c.900 BC (or a generation later) where a royal dignitary espoused not only the royal genealogy but, in a neat parallel arrangement, also his own ancestral lineage of scribes. From the ninth-century BC 'ritual reform' onward, we see an increasingly uniform style not only of bronze vessels but also of their texts and calligraphy that must reflect some sort of centralized control over the production and design of such vessels and inscriptions.¹⁵ These artefacts were, first and foremost, expressive of a mature ritual tradition that spoke to both the living and the dead. Their very appearance of regularity and measured beauty signaled the recourse to established authority and to an authoritative, non-negotiable style of representation. Following the 'ritual reform' that seems to have

¹³ This display nature manifests itself in some instances of unusually large graphs, in a sometimes careful pigmentation of the incised writing, and in the commonly observed approximate symmetry of the text; see Keightley 1978, 46, 54, 56, 76–7, 83–4, 89.

¹⁴ For an extensive discussion of early Chinese writing as representation see Kern 2007.

¹⁵ Rawson 1990, 93, 125; Rawson 1999, 438–9. As noted by Rawson, 'a strong centralized control of ritual seems to have been in place'; for bronze design, a 'static repertoire' came into being, 'limited and reiterated', and of 'persistent sameness'—expressing an aesthetic ideology that embraced the bronze object as well as the wording and calligraphy of the inscription.

marked a shift in emphasis from communication with the ancestral spirits toward one with the living and future folk, bronze inscriptions of later centuries occasionally expose writing as conspicuous display, so as in the gold-inlaid inscriptions of the late fifth century BC bells of the Marquis Yi of Zeng or in the late fourth century BC vessel inscriptions of King Cuo of Zhongshan. Ever since the mid-Western Zhou bronzes, inscriptions not only show an increasingly accentuated use of calligraphy. They also, in a way the Shang oracle carvings and the very early Western Zhou bronze inscriptions do not, mention certain officials in charge of formalized writing, and they give account of the presentation of written texts in contexts of social and political ritual.

However, in referring to such writing as 'public display'—to use Michael Nylan's felicitous phrase¹⁶—we need to keep in mind the limited public sphere in which all these texts played their role. For one, the objects into which they were inscribed were relatively small, with their inscriptions legible only upon close and careful inspection. In fact, as has often been noted, bronze inscriptions were cast on the inside of vessels and thus, when covered with the sacrificial offerings, completely invisible during the ancestral sacrifices.¹⁷ (It is precisely in this feature that the Zhongshan inscriptions differ radically from their predecessors.) Thus, in general, such inscriptions were not read during the sacrifices in which their carriers were used, and no traditional sources suggest that they were displayed or read on other occasions. Furthermore, there was no 'public' audience in early China as it existed, for example, in Athens or Rome. This, however, is not to say that objects and texts had no 'public' representation or were devoid of any display function. The—however limited—'public' was the high-ranking lineage group and its guests, in the case of the royal house also including court officials as well as diplomats from subordinate regions.¹⁸ This audience was an insider audience, but it comprised a cultural and political elite that did not need to inspect a bronze vessel and its inscription up close in order to know about its contents and comprehend its representational nature. What counted was the sheer existence of the artefact. In such contexts, writing transcended its functions of

¹⁶ Nylan 2005.

¹⁷ See e.g. Kane 1982–3. In Western Zhou times, the major exception to this are inscriptions on bells, which are placed on the bells' exterior. But even these inscriptions are too small to be visible from a distance, and their texts are often arranged in a rather irregular fashion—even running in different directions wherever there is space not occupied by ornament—across the body of a bell, including its backside.

¹⁸ I leave aside here the complex question of whether the bronze inscriptions were primarily directed not at the living humans (including their descendants) but at the ancestral spirits; cf. Falkenhausen 1993b, 145–52, and Venture 2002.

storing and circulating knowledge. Or more precisely, the knowledge that was stored in the public inscription and circulated to the community in the form of public display referred not merely to the meaning of its words—the knowledge of which was available otherwise—but to the cultural status and political authority of public calligraphy itself. Such public calligraphy was, and indeed remains to be even in contemporary China, an emblem of both culture and sovereignty. In the First Emperor's seven stone stelae as well as in numerous later inscriptions placed on mountains, often inscribed into the natural rock itself, sovereignty even extended from the human sphere into the cosmic realm, transforming a natural site into a site of civilization and human history.

When the First Emperor, now vested with his divine title 'August Emperor' (*huangdi*), initiated his series of inscriptions, he established a new form of political representation, announcing his historical achievements to the cosmic spirits. While the archaeological record, overwhelmingly rich on the side of inscribed ritual bronzes, does not provide a single direct precedent for these remarkably extensive stone carvings, they were inspired by at least three pre-imperial ritual activities: the performance of political eulogies, highly traditional in their diction, that were presented at banquets and ancestral sacrifices; the inscriptions in bronze; and the royal tour of inspection. Contrary to the still common view of the Qin as anti-traditional, both textual and archaeological evidence testify amply to the presence of traditional ritual at the Qin pre-imperial and imperial courts, including scholarship on the ancient *Odes* and the possession of ancient bronze vessels.¹⁹ One fascinating detail in particular testifies to centuries of ritual continuity: on an inscribed *gui* vessel and its lid, discovered together in 1919 west of Tianshui (Gansu Province) and now dated into the reign of either Lord Gong (r. 609–605 BC) or Lord Huan (r. 605–577 BC), we find engravings concerning the capacity of the vessel: short texts that were most probably carved no earlier than in imperial Qin or even in Han times.²⁰ This means that the vessel had been kept at the Qin pre-imperial and imperial courts for no less than 400 years.

¹⁹ Traditional Qin political ritualism can be traced back through excavated bronzes and chime-stones to around 700 BC, in particular to the set of eight *yongzhong* bells from the reign of Lord Wu (r. 697–678 BC); for a full discussion of these and later pre-imperial Qin bronzes and chime-stones see Kern 2000a, 59–105. Not only is the wording of these inscriptions particularly conservative in their own times, representing Western Zhou rather than Spring and Autumn forms of ritual expression; the *yongzhong* bells are also almost atavistic in their material form, their textual arrangement, and their tone distribution pattern. See So 1982; Falkenhausen 1993a, 167, 236.

²⁰ See Shirakawa vol. xxxiv (1971), 21–2; Wang Hui 1990, 19, 26.

Their different historical and ritual settings notwithstanding, some considerations on the nature of Zhou bronze writings may illuminate the nature of the Qin imperial stele inscriptions as texts that embodied a sacralized representation of history. The bronze inscriptions exhibit a precarious relation to their actual history: by explicitly naming their donor and frequently including a date, they were apparently meant to appear as historical artefacts, made at an important moment in time to commemorate, fix, and finally communicate a specific historical event to the spirits. Yet these texts never developed continuous historical narratives; they were commemorative monuments that captured and defined moments of highest significance, artefacts of history that were true in the sense that myth is true: 'Through remembrance, history turns into myth. By this, it does not become unreal but, on the contrary, and only then, reality in the sense of a continual normative and formative force.'²¹ As Shaughnessy has pointed out, 'more than fifty Western Zhou bronze inscriptions refer, in greater or lesser detail, to military activity... Not one of the inscriptions commemorates a defeat.'²²

In short, pre-imperial bronze inscriptions commemorated and preserved but the sacralized distillate of history, creating a representation of the past that was as radically abbreviated as it was profoundly ideological. Perhaps the early Zhou archives were obliged to keep a more comprehensive, less partial record of history; but this record was not passed on to the ancestors. Not 'What has happened?' was the question answered in the ancestral temple, but 'What do we want to remember?', 'How do we want to remember?', and, implicitly, 'What do we want to forget?' Ideally, the sacralized version of history as it was communicated to the spirits left no options for a second truth and hence no doubts about the first. Bronze inscriptions offered little to ruminate on.

The same is true of the imperial stelae. One aspect that distinguished them from all earlier inscribed artefacts was the plain fact that they no longer competed with other texts. The act of unification, conducted on all levels of the imperial administration and repeatedly praised in these inscriptions by terms like *yi*, *bing*, and *tong* (all meaning 'to unify'), became manifest in the very existence of these stone monuments. The rhetoric of the inscriptions annihilated the multi-perspective records of all the former states and replaced them with the single and central perspective of the universal ruler. They silenced the many voices of history and monopolized memory; now, the normative version of history as promulgated from the sacred mountains of the former independent states was a single and unified one. What the

²¹ Assmann 1992, 52.

²² Shaughnessy 1991, 176–7; cf. also the whole paragraph, 175–82.

chancellor Li Si proposed in administrative terms—to burn all historical records except those of Qin and thus wipe out all competing memories—the stele inscriptions made manifest on the level of ritual representation.

The claim to monopolize memory was expressed in the normative idiom of ritual language. To preclude the potential for negotiation and ambiguity, linguistic propositions were tightly fixed, clear enough to need no explanation, hieratic enough to allow no discussion. The formulaic and tightly intertextual nature of the imperial stone carvings manifests itself both lexically and in the standardized sequence of topics, revealing a modular compositional process: for each part of a text there is a defined and hence restricted repertoire of basically interchangeable expressions at hand. In its totality, the vocabulary used comes from a distinct lexical inventory of traditional political language that fuses the seven inscriptions into a single coherent expression of rulership that was firmly rooted in the ritual tradition.

In addition to the repeated use of words like *yong* ('forever') and *xiu* ('superb') that are almost exclusively reserved for texts used in ritual settings, the inscriptions weave a close rhetorical texture of lexical and syntactical elements that both express and embody the message of normativity and unification. Beyond the above-noted words denoting 'to unify', the terminology of total identity pervades the texts in a way both restricted and redundant. This is indicated, for instance, by the repeated use of words expressing comprehensive inclusion, such as *wang* (or *mo*, *mi*, *wu*) *bu* ('none who does/is not'), or of terms denoting universal rulership through expressions of spatial extension, such as *tianxia* ('All-under-Heaven').

A specific 'ritualized' and 'ritualizing' mode of speech, however, is ultimately not to be traced to the lexical level. What distinguishes a text as ritualized is the linguistic structure above the level of the word that comprises patterns of restriction and redundancy in the choice and arrangement of words, together with the coercive force of stock phrases that govern the syntactic structure proper. The rhetoric of ritual presents an extreme case of paradigmatic and syntagmatic choice. In the case of the stele inscriptions, one registers not only a redundant use of near synonyms from a very limited set of propositions but also particular combinations of words and syntactical patterns that create an idiom where normative ideology is given the form of fixed rhythmic and syntactic form.

The most prominent rhetorical pattern, governing at least one-third of all lines of the inscription series, is the hendiadys, or what one may call 'categorical accumulation': a mode of speech where two semantically closely related—if not synonymous—nouns or verbs are joined together to intensify their common semantic value. These terms are virtually interchangeable

(and thus modular) because they belong to the same set of a semantic category. Moreover, they all belong to the standardized repertoire of political rhetoric that furnishes a limited range of closely guarded expressions. They appear in 'accumulation' first on the level of the word, that is, when two related terms are joined together in a compound; second on the level of the compound when related compounds are arranged to textual sequences; third on the level of the single text which is in large part governed by compounds and sequences of compounds enhancing and complementing each other; and finally on the intertextual level of the whole series of inscriptions where we encounter additional variations and recombinations of the compounds and sequences. Of all the semantic and syntactic features of which the inscriptions are composed, categorical accumulation is the most forceful in creating a normative language that embodies the sense of unified order. The penultimate rhyme of the Mt. Yi inscription may serve to illustrate the effect of this mode of composition:

Disaster and harm are exterminated and erased,
the black-haired people live in peace and stability,
benefits and blessings are long and enduring.

Ten of the twelve characters—the only exception being the term 'the black-haired people' (*qianshou*)—follow the principle of categorical accumulation. In addition, these ten characters embody a complete chronological sequence (past–present–future); and finally, the first and the third line represent a clear antithetical structure. In these three lines, which are entirely composed of stock vocabulary, we see the distillate of what the seven inscriptions are all about: the single and normative version of history in which everybody receives his proper name—hence the officially commanded designation 'the black-haired people'—and proper treatment.

3. HISTORICIZING AND RITUALIZING POLITICAL SPACE

The seven stele inscriptions were erected only at sites in the eastern *new territories* of the Qin empire. From the capital Xianyang, the nearest of these places—all of them mountains, probably with the exception of Jieshi—was Mt. Yi some 800 km linear distance away; Mt. Tai was another 100 km north of this. Mt. Langye was at a distance of more than 1,000 km from Xianyang, Mt. Zhifu about 1,100 km, and both Jieshi and Mt. Kuaiji some 1,200 km. With the exception of Jieshi when the emperor continued his tour for some distance further to the northern borders, the mountains at the

seashore (Langye, Zhifu, Kuaiji) were his final destinations in each region and the outermost points—relative to Xianyang—for him to visit. On separate travels, the emperor also went west and south, albeit without setting up stone inscriptions. His initial tour, which dates from the first year after unification (220 BC), led him from Xianyang some 470 km northwest to the border commandery Longxi, then back east to Beidi (180 km northwest of Xianyang) before he finally—on the same tour (?)—moved westwards to climb Mt. Jitou (270 km northwest of Xianyang); the whole tour was thus kept within the borders of the old state of Qin.²³ To the south, probably down to the area of Lake Dongting (nearly 700 km southeast from Xianyang), the emperor went at least once in 211 BC; from here he proceeded east to Mt. Kuaiji.

Both the first circuit within the old Qin territory and the journey to the south were probably different in purpose from the progress through the newly conquered eastern regions, which may explain why the inscriptions were confined to the latter locations. The tour around the northwest might have served as the initial thanksgiving and announcement of the unification to the people and—more importantly—the cosmic spirits of the old Qin state. The much later tour to the south was of a different character. In 211 BC, the emperor and his entourage traveled to Yunmeng, north of Lake Dongting, where he offered a *wang* ('viewing from the distance') sacrifice to the legendary universal ruler Shun whose spirit was believed to reside at Mt. Jiuyi. He then sailed down the Yangtze River, which he crossed at Danyang. At Qiantang, the famous tidal bore forced him again back west before he could cross the Zhe River (Zhejiang) and finally—after another turn east—reach Mt. Kuaiji.²⁴ The monumental and subtly menacing inscriptions erected in the east were part of a different ritual agenda: the proclamation of the conquest issued towards the conquered people and *their* spirits.

By the sum of his tours, all of them finally directed to mountains, the First Emperor measured out his new empire. In the literal as in the symbolic sense, he went to his limits; any substantial move further would have led him straight into the dangerous *terra incognita* of non-Chinese lands. Especially Mt. Kuaiji, where the capital of the old state of Yue had been located, appears to have been recognized as the borderline between northern Chinese civilization and the unrestrained and uncontrollable world of barbarian people, as the uniquely strict and exhortative inscription of this site betrays: no other text in the series expresses a comparable concern with the social behavior of

²³ *Shi ji* 6/241.

²⁴ See *Shi ji* 28/1370 (cf. also *Han shu* 25A/1205) and 6/260. According to *Shi ji* 6/248, there was another trip to the south as early as 219 BC. However, the itinerary given in *Shi ji*, when placed together with the other tours of 219/218 BC, seems unrealistic, if not indeed impossible.

the common people or imposes similar threats on them. What at first glance appears as 'legalist' (*fā*) harshness was likely the attempt to subjugate the border population of the southeast under the rule of northern Chinese civilization. This kind of 'legalism' was not at all paraded from the north-eastern peaks located in the venerated homelands of 'propriety' (*lǐ*).

To the First Emperor, the sites of his stele inscriptions were both old and new: old in the cultural sense that they belonged either to the northeastern areas of the former Zhou *oikumene* where the ritualist *ru* tradition was at home or, in the case of Kuaiji, represented an important symbol of political mythology (see below); new in the political sense that these territories were now, for the first time in history, conquered by Qin. With their continuous references to both the Zhou tradition and the military success of Qin, the inscriptions conveyed a powerful message: the First Emperor did not put an end to the tradition of the sage kings but, on the contrary, established himself as their true successor. When the 'August Emperor' conducted his progress through the east, he was aware of the traditions attached to his various destinations and to the political act proper of 'touring' newly conquered regions. The inscriptions were performances of political rhetoric not only through their contents, that is, their emphasis on the overall conquest, the foundation of the state, and the enforcement of social order. They also claimed to be the ultimate expression of a well-established demonstration of sovereignty, the tour of inspection.²⁵ In the early empire, the venerated model of a cosmic ruler who had mounted the peaks of the four directions, measured out the empire, and set up an all-embracing order was the cultural hero Shun as he is described in the 'Yao dian' chapter of the *Shangshu*. The significance of this famous passage can be grasped from its inclusion in the monographs on imperial sacrifices in both *Shi ji* and *Han shu*.²⁶ The record of Shun's initial tours of inspection matches all too perfectly what we are told about the First Emperor:

In the second month of the year,²⁷ (Shun) went east to visit (for inspection) those under his protection and arrived at (Mt.) Venerable Tai.²⁸ He made a burnt offering (to Heaven) and performed *wang* sacrifices in the correct sequence to the mountains and streams. Then he gave audience to the lords of the east, regulated the (calendar

²⁵ On the political implications of the imperial tour of inspection, see Wechsler 1985, 161–9.

²⁶ For the whole passage, see *Shangshu*, 'Shun dian' 3/126b–127c; the text is also in *Shi ji* 28/1355–56 and *Han shu* 25A/1191, with some explanatory phrases inserted.

²⁷ Compare the second line of the Mt. Zhifu inscription: 'the season of middle spring.'

²⁸ *Daizong* is another name for Mt. Tai. The formulation 'to visit [for inspection] those under his protection' reflects a traditional understanding of the term *xunshou*, usually translated as 'tour of inspection.'

of the) seasons and months, rectified the (designations of the) days, and made uniform the pitchpipes and the measures of length, capacity, and weight.²⁹

After perfecting the different rites according to the ranks of nobility and hence establishing the correct social order, Shun went home. In the same year he performed the identical set of rites and regulations during subsequent tours to the south, the west, and the north;³⁰ each time, his destination proper was the main peak of the respective direction. Prominent features in the *Shangshu* account are the recurring initial sacrifices to Heaven and to the important mountains and streams of the region. As a prerogative of the universal ruler, the ordered, and ordering, sequence of sacrifices formally structured and demarcated the world under control:

The Son of Heaven sacrifices to the famous mountains and great streams All-under-Heaven, regarding the five peaks as his three high ministers, regarding the four streams as his feudal lords. The feudal lords sacrifice to the famous mountains and great streams within the borders of their territory.³¹

Modern scholarship on the *Shangshu* has established that an originally earlier 'Yao dian' chapter evidently underwent a redaction in Qin imperial times, leading to significant textual changes and additions, among the latter including the account of Shun's tour of inspection. The transmitted Han version of the *Shangshu*—the 'New Text' version provided by the former Qin erudite Fu Sheng (born 260 BC)—was most likely the Qin version of the text, prepared by the officially appointed erudites at the imperial court.³² It is indeed distinctly possible that the First Emperor in both his most solemn representation of political sovereignty, the *feng* and *shan* sacrifices,³³ and in

²⁹ *Shangshu*, 'Shun dian', 3/127b.

³⁰ Shun made his four tours of inspection all in the second month of the respective season: in the second month (spring) of the year to the east, in the fifth month (summer) to the south, in the eighth month (autumn) to the west, and in the eleventh month (winter) to the north. *Baihu tong* 6/290 notes that the second and the eighth months are those of the equinoxes, while the fifth and the eleventh months are those of the solstices; therefore, the ruler undertakes his tours of inspection always during these second months of the respective season. The sequence of Shun's tours also reflects the systematic pairing of seasons and directions according to the cosmology of the Five Phases (*wuxing*), suggesting a late Warring States or early imperial date of composition of this portion of text.

³¹ *Shi ji* 28/1357. The parallel *Han shu* passage (25A/1193–4) extends the enumeration down to the common people who only sacrifice to their ancestors.

³² See Chen Mengjia 1985, 135–46; Jiang 1988, 140–68; for the role of the erudites and their scholarship at the Qin imperial court, see Kanaya 1992, 230–57.

³³ For doubts on the antiquity of the *feng* and *shan* rituals, see Wechsler 1985, 171–2. Although the emperor may have developed his most ambitious ritual out of pre-existing local cults at Mt. Tai, there is no evidence that these had any connection with political representation. I am unable to trace the peak's later political significance to any text substantially predating the unification of the empire. The earliest passage where Mt. Tai appears in a truly exalted position is *Han Feizi* 3/44, that is, in a Qin text almost contemporary with the inscriptions: here, we are

the design of his tours of inspection might have created the very tradition that he purported to revive. Thus, the textual scholarship that furnished references to Shun as well as to the *feng* and *shan* sacrifices of high antiquity may have served to produce an imperial memory in order to traditionalize what was actually without precedent. Nothing would demonstrate more clearly the First Emperor's quest for the sagely tradition than the Qin imperial invention of it.

As is related in the *Shi ji* 'Basic Annals' and 'Book on the *feng* and *shan* Rituals' ('Fengshan shu') for the emperor's visits to Mt. Tai and Mt. Yi,³⁴ the First Emperor, on arrival at a mountain, faithfully emulated the allegedly old pattern and presented sacrifices before the officials inscribed the stele. Although the act of erecting a stele and inscribing it with a eulogy appears to be embedded in a ritual context designed after the model received from (or invented for) Shun, there remains a difference: unlike Shun, the Qin emperor did not transform chaos into cosmos but obtained control over already ordered regions which only had to be reordered to constitute the unified world under heaven. Thus, in choosing the places for the stele inscriptions, the emperor did not attempt to define a whole new set of sacred locations; instead, he purported to revive the sacrifices of old at established sites and to attach himself to the culture heroes of antiquity. Yet this posed a problem: after centuries of political disunion, there was little ritual practice to represent universal rulership. The rhetorical solution to this problem was a simple claim, based on the assumption that the inherent meaning of the rites did not reside in their outward shape: although the forms of the ancient rites had dimmed and faded, their names and supposed meanings were still clear and comprehensible and could be revived by a new or even improvised set of formal devices.³⁵ This was true for the *feng* and *shan* rituals as well as for the sacrifices at Mt. Zhifu and Mt. Langye, the next two localities favored with stele inscriptions: these sites were regarded as links in a chain of eight peaks

told that the legendary Yellow Emperor (Huangdi) once assembled the spirits on the top of Mt. Tai. It seems that the cosmic significance of the mountain developed parallel to, or maybe even together with, the equally recent myth of the Yellow Emperor as a cosmic ruler. The *Guanzi* quotation in *Shi ji* 28/136—likely the source of the corresponding passage in the received *Guanzi*—is anachronistic and must be considered spurious.

³⁴ *Shi ji* 6/242, 28/1366–7, cf. *Han shu* 25A/1201. Disregarding all later definitions of the term *feng* (cf. Wechsler 1985, 170–94), the passage might offer the earliest explanation of what the *feng* ritual meant, at least to the First Emperor: the formula *de feng* used here may be understood literally as 'to receive the fief'—not, of course, a small allotment from the King of Zhou but rather the world, presented by Heaven.

³⁵ It is this image of rough improvisation that the historical records attach to the *feng* and *shan* rituals of both the First Emperor and Emperor Wu of the Han (r. 141–87 BC). See *Shi ji* 28/1366–7, 1397–8, *Han shu* 25A/1201–2, 1233–5.

located in the former state of Qi where the 'eight [cosmic] spirits' (*ba shen*) received their offerings. According to *Shi ji* and *Han shu*, the 'eight spirits' existed of old, but the remote origins of their cults, purportedly dating from the founding of the Zhou dynasty, lay in obscurity after the sacrifices had been discontinued at some point in the past. Allegedly reviving lost tradition, the Qin emperor sacrificed to the spirit of the *Yang* cosmic force at Mt. Zhifu and to the spirit of the four seasons at Mt. Langye,³⁶ integrating the two places into his overall system of cosmic ritual. In sum, of the four mountains on former Qi territory to bear an inscribed stele, it is only Mt. Yi—located in the home county of Mencius and not far from Confucius' birthplace—for which the sources fail to provide us with a significant real or fictive ritual tradition. But they do not fail to note that the emperor actually sacrificed to Mt. Yi, thereby endowing the place with a superior status in the ritual geography of the empire. A location for an inscription was never just somewhere.

The eastern state of Qi had been subjugated in 221 BC as the last of the former six states conquered by Qin. This may explain why the First Emperor concentrated his first series of inscriptions of 219 and 218 BC precisely in this area; in conjunction, he performed a series of different sacrifices to all four mountains and presented additional *wang* offerings to the other 'famous mountains and great streams' (*mingshan dachuan*) of the realm.³⁷ These *wang* sacrifices served to manifest the spatial extension of legitimate sovereignty. They were by definition directed not to outlying regions in general but to the demarcated space under control, and only a universal ruler like Shun enjoyed the prerogative and actual power to perform them during his far-flung tours of inspection.³⁸ That the First Emperor recognized this model, furnished by his own official erudites, appears from the fact that he honored the legendary sage ruler Shun himself with a *wang* sacrifice.³⁹ Against this background, the concentration of stele inscriptions and related sacrifices in the most recently conquered territories must have been self-evident: presenting his offerings to the mountains and rivers of the east and incorporating the former sacrificial sites of Qi into his own cosmic ritual system, the First Emperor integrated the former territories of Qi into the empire. Qi was thus ritually transformed from a subject of its own history into an object of Qin history—which was the fundamental message to be deciphered from the

³⁶ *Shi ji* 28/1367, *Han shu* 25A/1202.

³⁷ *Shi ji* 28/1367–8, *Han shu* 25A/1202.

³⁸ For the changing significance of the *wang* sacrifice, see Bilsky 1975, i. 143–5, ii. 248, *passim*; Zhang Hequan 1989, 40–2.

³⁹ Shun was obviously regarded as a mountain spirit, residing at his supposed burial place on Mt. Jiuyi.

stelae, written in Qin script.⁴⁰ In Lewis's words: 'In placing these inscriptions on peaks in the newly-conquered Eastern states, the First Emperor completed his conquest by inscribing the reality of his power, in the newly created imperial script, into the sacred landscape of his new subjects.'⁴¹

To understand the significance of Jieshi and Mt. Kuaiji as natural sites to inscribe with Qin history, we must turn to a rather late layer of political mythology that we find in the 'Yu gong' chapter of the *Shangshu*. Although under some suspicion of deriving from Qin imperial times, this chapter, which relates the merits of the sagely Yu the Great, might date from the mid-third century BC, that is, some decades before the imperial unification.⁴² It is to Yu's idealized geography of the world that some of the lines of the Langye inscription (61–6) refer, denoting the western and eastern limits of the empire. Mt. Jieshi is part of Yu's geography where it marks the outermost point of the central province Jizhou, apparently the easternmost part of a mountain range that was leading to the sea.⁴³ In the two *Shangshu* passages that refer to Jieshi, its mention closes the initial section of Yu's geographical order. Mt. Kuaiji, on the other hand, denotes an ultimate border of a different kind: 'In the tenth year, Emperor Yu conducted a tour of inspection in the east. He reached Kuaiji and passed away.'⁴⁴

The mythological significance of Mt. Kuaiji in relation to Yu, another legendary sage ruler, is illustrated through a whole string of early references.⁴⁵ Such references were known to the First Emperor and his court erudites. When after a long journey through the south he reached his final destination, he

⁴⁰ On the Qin script, see Qiu Xigui 2000, 89–112; Tsuruta 1989; Narita 1989. Chen Zhaorong 1997 has argued that the unification of the script, initiated by the First Emperor and accomplished through the early decades of the Western Han, was highly effective, rapidly eliminating regional writing styles and character variants.

⁴¹ Lewis 1999, 339.

⁴² See Jiang 1988, 173–99. Jiang argues for a date between 289 BC (the year of Mencius' death) and 239 BC (the year when the *Lüshi chunqiu* was completed). One significant difference between the 'Yu gong' and the 'Yao dian' chapters is the number of provinces into which the realm is divided: nine in 'Yu gong' but twelve in 'Yao dian'. The number twelve may be related to the Qin imperial order.

⁴³ See *Shangshu*, 'Yu gong', 6/147a, 151a, *Shi ji* 2/52, 67. Yu's geography must have troubled the *Shi ji* author: where the *Shangshu* has Jieshi in the first passage leading to the '[Yellow] River' and in the second leading to the '[Eastern] Sea', the *Shi ji* parallel text has in both places 'Sea', relating the location to the one the First Emperor had visited.

⁴⁴ *Shi ji* 2/83.

⁴⁵ In *Guoyu* 5/14a Confucius notes that 'in times of old, Yu summoned the multitude of spirits on Mt. Kuaiji'. According to *Han Feizi* 5/91, Yu held audience with the nobles of the feudal lords on Mt. Kuaiji. According to a spurious *Guanzi* passage of unknown origins that is included in *Shi ji* 28/1361, Yu performed the *feng* sacrifice at Mt. Tai and the *shan* sacrifice at Mt. Kuaiji. Both *Mozi* 6/113 and *Huainanzi* 11/176 mention that Yu was buried here; the *Yue jue shu* 8/1b–2a and especially the *Wu Yue chunqiu* 6/8a–10b, claiming that it was Yu who initially had named Mt. Kuaiji, again elaborate extensively on the circumstances of the grave's location.

'climbed Mount Kuaiji, sacrificed to Yu the Great, gazed over [the land by] the southern sea, and erected an inscribed stone to eulogize the virtuous power of Qin.'⁴⁶

Thus, here again the act of erecting the stele is embedded in a broader religious tradition. Yu the Great, like Shun at Mt. Jiuyi, was as much a part of the cosmos as he was part of history. Sage rulers transformed into nature spirits, Shun and Yu were political ancestors of old who now resided on mountain peaks. In pre-imperial times, ancestral and cosmic sacrifices alike were governed by rules of prerogative: as the ancestral spirits would accept offerings only from their legitimate descendant, a ruler could also address only the spirits of the mountains and rivers of his own domain. In sacrificing to Yu and Shun, the First Emperor, being the one living human endowed with the prerogative to address these legendary rulers as both political ancestors and cosmic powers, expressed and enacted his own universal sovereignty. As human spirits, Yu and Shun represented the political model to emulate; as mountain spirits, they were approachable by the *wang* sacrifice. Thus, through his offerings the First Emperor linked the historical to the cosmic dimension of imperial representation—displaying his accomplishments to the cosmic powers whom at the same time he appropriated as political ancestors.

When the emperor connected himself to the mythical heroes of the past and had his merits recited and inscribed on mountain peaks, he simultaneously historicized his own ritual performance. Here, we turn back to the inscriptions proper as they routinely relate their own situational context. The Mt. Zhifu inscription translated above displays the standard textual structure: in its first nine lines, it mentions the date, the designation of the emperor's tour, his gazing over the new territory, and the officials' recollection of the emperor's achievements. This fixed set of topoi self-referentially presents the situational context of the ritual performance—the very performance that culminated in the carving of the inscription. The following main portion of the inscription relates the actual contents of what the officials are pondering: the previous times of chaos and warfare, the First Emperor's resolute and just elimination of the six former states, the consolidation of the new empire, and the prospect of eternal peace. Then, with its final lines, the text steps again out of this narrative to return, in a closing self-referential gesture, to the situational context:

The multitude of officials recited His merits,
Asked to carve (this text) into stone,
To express and transmit the constant model.

⁴⁶ *Shi ji* 6/260.

Thus, the text frames the historical narrative—the topic proper of the inscriptions—with two self-referential statements that are concerned not with the narrative of the unification but with the appropriate ritual representation of this narrative. Through its final gesture, the ritual act of commemoration itself turns into the closing moment of a sacred history that has reached its ultimate fulfillment. Again, the stele inscriptions operate fully within the ritual tradition: the same kind of self-reference is known as the ‘statement of dedication’ (‘So-and-so has made this vessel’) that Falkenhausen has identified as the core of pre-imperial bronze inscriptions, and it is typical of *Shijing* and early imperial ritual hymns that praise precisely the ritual efforts to which their own performances actually belong.⁴⁷

In this context, it is necessary to pay attention to the performative nature of the seven stele inscriptions. The verb *song* (‘to recite’) employed in the stele inscriptions is perfectly homophonous and therefore likely interchangeable with *song** (‘to eulogize’). The latter is employed several times within the historical narrative of the *Shi ji* when introducing the process of making an inscription; according to these remarks, the officials carved the stones in order ‘to eulogize’ the virtuous power of Qin.⁴⁸ In short, the two characters were perfectly interchangeable for denoting ‘to eulogize by means of recitation’. Considering the inscriptions’ strictly observed formal features of rhyme and meter, there is little doubt that the texts engraved on the stones were actually recited and not just silently carved.⁴⁹

As noted at the beginning of this paper, the panegyric or commemorative ‘stele inscription’ (*bei*) was most probably unknown as a discrete genre of literary expression in the days of the First Emperor; apparently this series of seven texts became the progenitor and model for the respective genre that began to flourish only in Han times. It is therefore anachronistic to perceive of this set of Qin texts within the later notion of a literary genre called ‘stele inscription’; in the first instance, they were poetic eulogies which then were carved and hence turned into ‘inscriptions.’⁵⁰ To inscribe the eulogy into stone enforced its efficacy but did not abandon its original performative nature.

What is achieved by the rhetoric of integrating the situational context of the eulogy—its recitation and carving—into the ritual text itself, which hence

⁴⁷ Falkenhausen 1993b, 152–5; Kern 2000a, 140–7; Kern 2000b, 58–66.

⁴⁸ *Zhou li* 23/158a.

⁴⁹ Tsuruma 1996, 4, even goes so far to speak of the ‘originally musical nature’ of the engraved imperial eulogies.

⁵⁰ This basic character of the Qin stele inscription texts as eulogies was still recognized by Liu Xie who in *Wenxin diaolong* 9/322 and 11/401 discusses these writings under both categories *ming* (‘inscription’) and *song** (‘eulogy’).

becomes self-referential? I would suggest that ritual self-reference is based on the traditional Zhou ideological notion of ritual activity being as much an expression as an instrument of rulership. In other words, to display one’s merits—or those of one’s ancestors—in the appropriate way is itself meritorious and should therefore be included in one’s record of merits. In this sense, the inscription text by its concluding self-referential shift dramatizes and historicizes itself, integrating the ritual act of reciting merit and inscribing the stele into the purview of the foregoing historical narrative and at the same time bringing the narrative to its logical conclusion. At the very moment the inscription is carved it is already turned into a part of its own history—a history to be received by the spirits of the past, the living of the present, and the infinite posterity of those to come.

The concern with permanence and posterity that the stele inscriptions betray in their closing formulae is another feature that places them firmly in the tradition of Zhou bronze texts.⁵¹ In Zhou ancestral sacrifice, governed by the principle of reciprocity, exalting the model ancestors in the appropriate manner was to present oneself as their virtuous and worthy successor. By venerating his ancestors, the pious descendant, speaking simultaneously to the past, present, and future, made himself visible as a model for his own descendants, the future ancestor to be served with the same filial piety. Reflecting on this tradition, the *Li ji* provides an explicit account of the multidirectional purpose of an inscription.⁵²

In short, the First Emperor, by inscribing not only his accomplishments but also the proper way of praising them, had his cake and ate it, too.

CODA

According to the *Shi ji*, the First Emperor’s son, known as the ‘Second Generation [Emperor]’ (Ershi, r. 210–207 BC), also toured the empire in 209 BC to revisit the stelae set up by his father and to add secondary inscriptions to commemorate the original event of erecting the stones.⁵³ The surviving inscription fragment from Mt. Langye indeed contains parts of only this secondary text. However, some modern scholars have argued that at least one or two of the original inscriptions attributed to the First Emperor

⁵¹ Xu Zhongshu 1936, 43, has noted that 70–80 per cent of Zhou bronze inscriptions included the final prayer for longevity and permanence.

⁵² *Li ji* 49/378c.

⁵³ *Shi ji* 6/267.

were altogether retrospective creations by his son to begin with.⁵⁴ The specific evidence for this argument seems inconclusive to me—and yet one might contemplate an even more radical proposal, namely, to consider all seven inscriptions as retrospectively and posthumously commemorating the late First Emperor's unification of the realm. In this scenario, the First Emperor of the inscriptions is no longer a historical actor singing his own praise but a 'figure of memory'.⁵⁵ There is nothing in our sources to support this idea with direct evidence; but reading the inscriptions from such a perspective provides another fascinating, and profoundly different, understanding: of the Second Generation [Emperor] shaping the image of his father, of a consciousness of the unification that developed only in retrospect and at a time of imminent dynastic crisis, and of the inscriptions themselves, in particular of their intrinsic textual frame that celebrates the creation of the stele texts just as much as the historical feats they are singing about.

References

- Assmann, Jan, *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis: Schrift, Erinnerung und politische Identität in frühen Hochkulturen*. München (Beck) 1992.
- *Moses the Egyptian: The Memory of Egypt in Western Monotheism*. Cambridge, Mass. (Harvard University Press) 1997.
- Baihu tong* 白虎通. *Baihu tong shuzheng* 白虎通疏證, by Chen Li 陳立. Beijing (Zhonghua) 1994.
- Bilsky, Lester James, *The State Religion of Ancient China*, 2 vols. Taipei (Chinese Association for Folklore) 1975.
- Chen Mengjia 陳夢家, *Shangshu tonglun* 尚書通論. Beijing (Zhonghua) 1985.
- Chen Zhaorong 陳昭容, 'Qin "shu tong wenzi" xin tan 秦「書同文字」新探', *Bulletin of the Institute of History and Philology, Academia Sinica*, 68: 3 (1997), 589–641.
- Chen Zhiliang 陳志良, 'Taishan keshi kao (shang, xia) 泰山刻石考(上, 下)', *Shuowen yuekan* 說文月刊 1: 2 (1939), 55–61; 1: 3 (1939), 31–43.
- Eno, Robert, 'From Teachers to Texts: Confucian Collaborationism and Qin Encyclopaedism', paper circulated in August 1999 on the Warring States Working Group e-mail list.
- Falkenhausen, Lothar von, *Suspended Music: Chime-Bells in the Culture of Bronze Age China*. Berkeley/Los Angeles (University of California Press) 1993 [= Falkenhausen 1993a].

⁵⁴ See Chen Zhiliang 1939 and Tsuruma 1996 with regard to the inscription on Mt. Tai, and Tsuruma also with regard to the one on Mt. Yi.

⁵⁵ For the concept of a 'figure of memory', developed with regard to Moses, see Assmann 1997, esp. chap. 1.

- 'Issues in Western Zhou Studies: A Review Article', *Early China*, 18 (1993), 139–226 [= Falkenhausen 1993b].
- Fayan 法言. *Fayan yishu* 法言義疏, by Wang Rongbao 汪榮寶. Beijing (Zhonghua) 1987.
- Guoyu 國語. *Sibu congkan* 四部叢刊 edn.
- Inaba Ichirō 稻葉一郎, 'Shin Shikō no junshu to kokuseki 秦始皇の巡狩と刻石', *Shoron* 書論, 25 (1989), 73–100.
- Jiang Shanguo 蔣善國, *Shangshu zongshu* 尚書綜述. Shanghai (Shanghai guji) 1988.
- Kanaya Osamu 金谷治, *Shin Kan shisōshi kenkyū* 秦漢思想史研究. 2nd rev. edn. Kyōto (Heirakuji shoten) 1992.
- Kane, Virginia C., 'Aspects of Western Chou Appointment Inscriptions: The Charge, the Gifts, and the Response', *Early China*, 8 (1982–3), 14–28.
- Keightley, David N., *Sources of Shang History: The Oracle-Bone Inscriptions of Bronze Age China*. Berkeley (University of California Press) 1978.
- Kern, Martin, *The Stele Inscriptions of Ch'in Shih-huang: Text and Ritual in Early Chinese Imperial Representation*. New Haven (American Oriental Society) 2000 [= Kern 2000a].
- 'Shi jing Songs as Performance Texts: A Case Study of "Chu ci" ("Thorny Caltrop")', *Early China*, 25 (2000), 49–111 [= Kern 2000a].
- 'The Performance of Writing in Western Zhou China', in: Sergio La Porta and David Shulman (eds.), *The Poetics of Grammar and the Metaphysics of Sound and Sign*, Leiden (Bril) 2007, 109–76.
- Knechtges, David R., *Wen xuan or Selections of Refined Literature*, vol. ii: *Rhapsodies on Sacrifices, Hunting, Travel, Sightseeing, Palaces and Halls, Rivers and Seas*. Princeton (Princeton University Press) 1987.
- Lewis, Mark Edward, *Writing and Authority in Early China*. Albany (State University of New York Press) 1999.
- Mizusawa Toshitada 水澤利忠, *Shiki kaichū kōshō kōho* 史記會注考證校補. 1st edn. 1957–70; repr. *Shi ji huizhu kaozheng fu jiaobu* 史記會注考證附校補. Shanghai (Shanghai guji), 1986.
- Narita Toshiki 成田年樹, 'Shindai no moji shiryō: Kokuseki o chūshin toshite 秦代の文字資料: 刻石を中心として', *Shoron* 書論, 25 (1989), 114–22.
- Nylan, Michael, 'Toward an Archaeology of Writing: Text, Ritual, and the Culture of Public Display in the Classical Period (475 B.C.E.–220 C.E.)', in: Martin Kern (ed.), *Text and Ritual in Early China*, Seattle (University of Washington Press) 2005, 3–49.
- Petersen, Jens Østergård, 'Which Books Did the First Emperor of Ch'in Burn? On the Meaning of *Pai Chia* in Early Chinese Sources', *Monumenta Serica*, 43 (1995), 1–52.
- Qiu Xigui, *Chinese Writing*. Berkeley (Society for the Study of Early China and The Institute of East Asian Studies, University of California) 2000.
- Rawson, Jessica, *Western Zhou Ritual Bronzes in the Arthur M. Sackler Collections*. Cambridge, Mass. (Harvard University Press) 1990.
- 'Western Zhou Archaeology', in: Michael Loewe and Edward L. Shaughnessy (eds.), *The Cambridge History of Ancient China: From the Origins of Civilization to 221 B.C.*, Cambridge (Cambridge University Press) 1999, 352–449.

- Rong Geng 容庚, 'Qin Shihuang keshi kao 秦始皇刻石考', *Yanjing xuebao* 燕京學報, 17 (1935), 125–171.
- Shaughnessy, Edward L., *Sources of Western Zhou History: Inscribed Bronze Vessels*. Berkeley (University of California Press) 1991.
- Shirakawa Shizuka 白川靜, *Kinbun tsūshaku* 金文通釋, 54 vols. Kōbe (Hakutsuru bijutsukan) 1962–84.
- So, Jenny F. S., 'Early Eastern Chou Bronze Vessels from Ch'in Territory', in: Chan Ping-leung et al. (eds.), *Essays in Commemoration of the Golden Jubilee of the Fung Ping Shan Library*, Hong Kong (Fung Ping Shan Library) 1982, 415–21.
- Takigawa Kametaro 瀧川龜太郎, *Shiki kaichū kōsho* 史記會注考證. 1st edn. 1934; repr. *Shi ji huizhu kaozheng fu jiaobu* 史記會注考證附校補. Shanghai (Shanghai guji) 1986.
- Tan Qixiang 譚其驤, *Zhongguo lishi dituji* 中國歷史地圖集, 8 vols. Shanghai (Ditu chubanshe) 1982–7.
- Tsuruma Kazuyuki 鶴間和幸, 'Shin Shikōtei no tōhō junshu kokuseki ni miru kyokōsei 秦始皇帝の東方巡狩刻石に見る虚構性', *Ibaragi daigaku kyōyōbu kiyō* 茨城大學教養部紀要, 30 (1996), 1–33.
- Tsuruta Kazuo 鶴田一雄, 'Shunjū, Sengoku jidao no Shin no moji ni tsuite 春秋、戰國時代の秦の文字について', *Shoron* 書論, 25 (1989), 101–13.
- Venture, Olivier, 'L'écriture et la communication avec les esprits en Chine ancienne', *Bulletin of the Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities*, 74 (2002), 34–65.
- Wang Guowei 王國維, *Shujing zhu jiao* 水經注校. Shanghai (Shanghai renmin) 1984.
- Wang Hui 王輝, *Qin tongqi mingwen biannian jishi* 秦銅器銘文編年集釋. Xi'an (San Qin) 1990.
- Wang Jingyang 王京陽, 'Guanyu Qin Shihuang jici chuxun luxian di tantao 關於秦始皇幾次出巡路線的探討', *Renwen zazhi* 人文雜誌, 1980: 3, 70–6.
- Wechsler, Howard J., *Offerings of Jade and Silk: Ritual and Symbol in the Legitimation of the T'ang Dynasty*. New Haven (Yale University Press) 1985.
- Wenxin diaolong 文心雕龍. *Wenxin diaolong yizheng* 文心雕龍義證, by Zhan Ying 詹詹. Shanghai (Shanghai guji), 1989.
- Wu Yue chunqiu 吳越春秋. *Sibu congkan* 四部叢刊 edn.
- Xu Zhongshu 徐中舒, 'Qin wen guci shili 金文韻辭釋例', *Academia Sinica, Bulletin of the Institute of History and Philology*, 6: 1 (1936), 1–44.
- Yue jue shu 越絕書. *Sibu congkan* 四部叢刊 edn.
- Zhang Hequan 張鶴泉, *Zhoudai jisi yanjiu* 周代祭祀研究. Taipei (Wenjin), 1989.