

INTRODUCTION

What is early Chinese history?

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In this volume, researchers on three continents join forces to offer a concise but scholarly overview of the foundation of Chinese civilization. The pace of progress in the study of early China has been especially brisk since the reawakening of Chinese academic life at the end of the Cultural Revolution. Mostly because of new discoveries – though new approaches and methodologies have also played a role – what once might have seemed the dustiest and least controversial branch of Chinese studies has recently become one of the most vibrant. The concomitant reemergence of China as one of the world’s leading powers has also engendered considerable interest in the story of its genesis, with diverse viewpoints and values at stake. All of these trends are discussed in the pages that follow.

As any good reference work ought to define its scope at the outset, the task of this introduction is to explain what is meant by “early Chinese history.” For each of the three words, there are pitfalls and ambiguities requiring exposition. To take each one in turn:

Early

For the purposes of this volume, “early” is the easiest of the three words to define: conventionally, the period known as “early China” is said to end with the fall of the Eastern Han dynasty in AD 220 (see “The Latter Han empire and the End of Antiquity,” by Wicky W.K. Tse, Chapter 8). *Early China*, the journal that has lent the field its very name, specifies this as the endpoint of its coverage. The date of 220, however, is one of the most adventitious in Chinese history: it is the year when the great warlord Cao Cao 曹操 (155–220) happened to die, whereupon his son Cao Pi 曹丕 (187–226) decided that the time had come to end the moribund Han dynasty and declare himself the emperor of a new one, which he called Wei 魏. If Cao Cao had died in 219, we would say that the Han dynasty ended in 219; if he had died in 221, we would say that the Han dynasty ended in 221. Still, there are real socioeconomic, political, and intellectual changes underlying the arbitrary date, and thus it serves as a convenient cut-off point. The ensuing period, known as the Six Dynasties (220–589), was marked by social upheaval, political disunion, and the expansion of major religions, including both Daoism and Buddhism. Many scholars have observed that the seeds of these developments were sown in the Eastern Han (e.g., Ebrey 1990; Holcombe 1994), but accounting for their full germination would require the mastery of very different categories of sources. No one would seriously doubt that they belong to a different era.

But when does “early China” *begin*? This is a more difficult question to answer, in part because “China,” as we shall see presently, is not easy to define. There is a patently wrongheaded approach to this question, namely to commence the story of Chinese history with *Homo erectus*, the earliest known hominin in the region, whether in the form of Peking Man (e.g., Tung 1959: 7–8) or even earlier fossils such as Yuanmou Man 元謀猿人 (Yu Weichao *et al.* 1997: I, 12), whose remains were discovered in a county that was not even recognized as part of China until centuries later. But *Homo erectus*’s culture cannot plausibly be called Chinese in any respect, and it is doubtful that anyone in China today is directly descended from such species. Thus it is unproductive at best, and propagandistic at worst, to begin an account of Chinese history with Peking Man (Howells 1983: 298).

For these reasons, this volume begins with the Neolithic cultures whose characteristics, from the perspective of social organization and material culture, demonstrably anticipated those of historical China. As we learn more about such societies with each archaeological discovery, these murky origins are continually reinterpreted (see the chapters by Shelach-Lavi and Pechenkina, Chapters 1 and 2). It must be borne in mind that the people who produced the artifacts that interest us did not necessarily speak an ancestral form of the Chinese language and could not have considered themselves ethnically or culturally Chinese (since neither the word nor the concept yet existed, as we shall see). Thus the phrase “Neolithic China” is a useful fiction: it refers to the complex of cultures in the region that we now identify as China, whose interactions ultimately led to the emergence of states that used written Chinese and displayed other traditional hallmarks of Chinese civilization (e.g., Liu 2005; Liu and Chen 2012; Shelach-Lavi 2015). It is not a concept that would have made sense in the Stone Age itself.

Chinese

This brings us to a more difficult question, namely what is meant by “China” and “Chinese.” The name China is probably (but not assuredly) derived from Qin 秦 (Old Chinese *dzin, according to the system of reconstruction in Baxter and Sagart 2014), which was the dominant Chinese state in the western regions for most of the first millennium BC and went on to establish the first unified Chinese empire in 221 BC under the notorious First Emperor (e.g., Rao Zongyi 1993: 230–35; for a very different suggestion, see Wade 2009). One oft-heard objection to this hypothesis is that Chinese people do not normally identify themselves with Qin, which they have regarded as a brutal and failed regime (see the chapter by Charles Sanft, Chapter 6); rather, they have typically adopted the names of more successful dynasties, such as Han and Tang. Most readers will be familiar with the use of “Han” as an ethnonym (*Hanzu* 漢族 or *Hanren* 漢人在 Modern Mandarin; e.g., Mullaney 2012), and the standard Chinese term for “Chinatown” is *Tangren jie* 唐人街, literally “street [or neighborhood] of the Tang people.” So why do we say “China” and not “Hana” or “Tanga”?

As China has always been an exonym rather than an endonym (apparently first attested in Sanskrit as *āna*), its history has more to do with foreign than with Chinese usage (e.g., Kleine 2008). If we bear in mind that Qin was the westernmost Chinese state, it stands to reason that Central and South Asian travelers would have reached it before any other part of China, and thus the name could have come to stand for the whole subcontinent (Olivelle 2005: 22). Moreover, there is underappreciated evidence that the name Qin was used to refer to Chinese people even after the fall of the Qin dynasty (Krjukov *et al.* 1983: 353–54).¹ Commenting on two such instances, the scholiast Yan Shigu 顏師古 (581–645) wrote: “Referring to Chinese people as ‘Qin people’ was an ancient way of speaking” 謂中國人為秦人，習故言也 and “In Qin times, there were people who fled to the Xiongnu; today, their descendants are still called ‘Qin people’”

秦時有人亡入匈奴者，今其子孫尚號秦人 (Ban Gu *et al.* 1962: 96B.3913 and 94A.3782, respectively). Such locutions were evidently rare enough in Yan Shigu's day that he felt obliged to explain them, but the best scholars were still aware of them.²

Yet more interesting is the term that Yan Shigu used to refer to Chinese people, namely *Zhongguo ren* 中國人, which remains the most common endonym today. *Zhongguo* is often translated as “the Middle Kingdom” (e.g., Pomfret 2016), but in antiquity it would probably have been construed as plural: “the Central States,” i.e. the Chinese domains along the lower Yellow River valley, closest to the royal seat at Luo 洛 and hence presumed to be closest in customs and mores to the ideal of the Sage King. Significantly, the connotations tended to be cultural rather than geographical. For example, in the *Zuo Commentary to the Springs and Autumns* (*Chunqiu Zuo zhuan* 春秋左傳), the designation *zhongguo* is always contrasted with barbarians,³ who are identified by their uncivilized conduct rather than their ethnicity (Pines 2005; Goldin 2011) and are accordingly called *yi* 夷, “the destructive,” *man* 蠻, “the savage,” or *rong* 戎, “the war-like,” rather than by true ethnonyms, in this text. A typical example: “The *zhongguo* are pacified through virtue; the barbarians of the four directions are overawed [only] through punishment” 德以柔中國，刑以威四夷 (Yang Bojun 1990: I, 434 [Xi 僖 25]; compare the translation in Durrant *et al.* 2016: I, 391).⁴ Thus the effective meaning of *zhongguo ren* was “someone who behaves as a virtuous person from the Central States ought to behave,” not necessarily “someone from the Central States” (let alone “an ethnic Chinese person”).

How old is this concept of *zhongguo* as “the place where people know how to behave”? Many Chinese scholars recognize the first use of the phrase in an inscription on a bronze vessel called He *zun* 何尊, cast during the reign of King Cheng 成王 (i.e. 1042–1021 BC). This text tells us that the king established a new capital at Luo and quoted his renowned father, King Wu 武王 (d. 1043 BC), as saying: “Let me dwell in this central territory and from here govern the people” (tr. David W. Pankenier in Cook and Goldin 2016: 18). At issue is the term rendered here as “central territory,” which in the inscription appears with the underdetermined graphs 中 or 或. Most Chinese palaeographers interpret this as *zhongguo* 中國, and some go so far as to call it the first record of “China” as a nation-state. (He Zhenpeng 2011 is a solid review.)

A major unacknowledged problem with this interpretation is that what we call *zhongguo* – whether in the sense of “the Middle Kingdom” or “the Central States” – would probably have been written *zhongbang* 中邦 in the Bronze Age,⁵ because *bang* was systematically replaced by *guo* in received texts in order to avoid the taboo of writing the personal name of Emperor Gao of Han 漢高祖 (r. 202–195 BC), Liu Bang 劉邦 (Yoshimoto 2003: 582–84; for such taboos generally, see Chen Yuan 1928 and Adamek 2015). Palaeographical texts, which routinely write *Bangfeng* 邦風 rather than the familiar *Guofeng* 國風 for the section of the *Odes* known as “The Airs of the States,” or *bangjia* 邦家 rather than *guojia* 國家 for the set phrase “the state and its families,” permit the inference that imperial redactors dutifully changed *bang* to *guo* whenever they encountered it. Consequently, every instance of *guo* in texts that underwent such editing has to be viewed with suspicion.

Since 中 or 或 clearly cannot be *zhongbang* 中邦, what does it mean? There are two possibilities, which amount to nearly the same thing. The original meaning of *guo* 國 is “citadel” (as opposed to *ye* 野, the wilderness beyond the walls), a sense that is preserved in the phrase *guoren* 國人, which originally referred to “the denizens of the capital,” not “the people of the state.” Thus *zhong guo* in the He *zun* inscription could mean “the central citadel,” that is to say, the capital. “The People Toil” (“Minlao” 民勞), No. 253 in the *Odes*, contains the line “We appreciate this *zhongguo*” 惠此中國, for which the canonical Mao 毛 commentary supplies the gloss: “*Zhongguo* is the capital” 中國，京師也 (Li Xueqin *et al.*, 2000: VI, 1338a). Alternatively, 或 could be interpreted as *yu* 域, “region,” yielding *zhongyu* 中域, “the central region.” (*Guo* 國, Old Chinese

*C-q^wək, and *yu* 域, Old Chinese *G^wrək, were near homophones in the archaic language and probably cognate.)⁶ In either case, the king would have been referring to a narrowly delimited geographical area, not a kingdom or cultural “China.”

With the He *zun* inscription eliminated as the source of *Zhongguo* in the sense of *Zhongguo ren*, “Chinese people,” the likeliest conclusion is that the concept is not attested until centuries later – perhaps not much earlier than the examples from the *Zuo Commentary* mentioned earlier. Thus we need to look elsewhere for early Chinese endonyms. These also tended to be cultural rather than geographic, and often self-congratulatory, such as *hua* 華, “luxuriant,” and *xia* 夏, “in full bloom” (Behr 2007) or perhaps “elegant, refined” (if *xia* is interpreted as a phonetic loan for *ya* 雅). One standard contrast is between “destructive” barbarians and “refined” Chinese (*yixia* 夷夏).

What characteristics qualified someone as “luxuriant” or “refined”? One of the most important seems to have been the ability to read, write, and declaim texts in Old Chinese. Since the region was multilingual, and ethnicity still played a relatively minor role in determining cultural membership, this was true regardless of the speaker’s mother tongue, which could be completely unrelated (Pines 2005: 70; Wai-yee Li 2014: 243–46). One consequence is that Chinese was chosen to be the sole written language until at least the fifth century BC, and possibly even several centuries later (Goldin 2017: 125–26). Thus Chinese culture, history, and identity were intertwined, as early as the Bronze Age, with the Chinese language. The prestige accorded to the Chinese language derived in part from its status as the first to be encoded in writing (see the chapter by Luo Xinhui, Chapter 10), but there must have been other reasons, because this pattern – the first language to be written remains the *only* language to be written – is not common elsewhere in the world. The acceptance of Chinese as a marker of cultural attainment must also have had something to do with the acknowledged success of the Shang and Zhou dynasties, both of which used it in their written documents (see the chapters by Bagley and Li Feng, Chapters 3 and 4).⁷

Ancient Chinese thinkers identified “ritual” (*li* 禮) as another prime index of civilization (Creel 1970: 197), as in this famous statement by He Xiu 何休 (AD 129–182): “The Central States are states of ritual and morality” 中國者，禮義之國也 (Li Xueqin *et al.* 2000: XX, 68a [Yin 隱 7]).⁸ The impressive ritual vessels now on display in every major museum attest to the perceived significance of such ceremonies, but we know embarrassingly little about them. There is compelling evidence that they changed over time (e.g., Rawson 1999: 433–40; Falkenhausen 2006: 48–52) and even varied synchronically across regions and communities. In inscriptional literature, often we know that a certain graph must refer to a specific ritual, but can do little more than speculate as to its nature. Likewise, received texts may expatiate on high rituals of state, but we cannot say how closely such accounts reflect true practice, especially since many of them are refracted through poetry (e.g., Kern 2009). Jaded moderns might suspect that a concept as fluid as “ritual” lent itself to chauvinistic attitudes toward aliens (how could “barbarians” ever live up to such a standard if Chinese sources clearly reflect variation, if not outright disagreement?), and no society is completely devoid of xenophobic impulses in search of rationalization, but, at least in surviving texts, an accusation of violating “ritual” was most commonly leveled by one Chinese lord against another (e.g., for the *Zuo Commentary*, Schaberg 2001: 139–48; Pines 2002: 89–118; Wai-yee Li 2007: 295–320).

Geographical and essentialist constructions of Chinese identity were voiced alongside humanistic ones. As civilization came to be associated with the glorious societies of the North Chinese heartland (often called *zhongyuan* 中原, “the central plain”), “China” was plotted spatially: not only the region where people behave as people should, but also the territory at the center of the world (Keightley 2000: 82–6; Ge Zhaoguang 2011, with further

thoughts in 2014; also Zhang Longxi 2015). The association between people's environment and their way of life was so strongly perceived that some sources evince a kind of geographical determinism, attributing specific character traits to inhabitants of different regions (Lewis 2006: 202–12; Goldin 2015: 38–40; Shao-yun Yang 2015). Such notions were hardened by encounters with mounted nomads from the steppe, who, unlike so many previous ethnic groups, proved unwilling to accept the supremacy of Chinese mores (largely because their arid territory was not compatible with Chinese agrarianist assumptions). This process led, in some Chinese writers, to a rigid conception of human nature: Heaven simply created some people differently, and it is foolish to pretend that everyone can be civilized (Goldin 2011: 228–35).

Thus the story of early China is the story of an emerging, constructed, and repeatedly renegotiated Chinese identity. Asking what it means to be Chinese was always connected with asking what it means to be civilized.

I shall close this section by listing seven basic features of Chinese civilization that endured despite regional diversity and historical change: (1) ancestor worship and respect for elders, especially parents; (2) the use of written Chinese as a *lingua franca*; (3) belief in the superiority of Chinese culture and the wisdom of Sinicizing foreigners; (4) a lack of any native tradition of democracy; (5) a preference for civil over military methods of control; (6) openness to religious diversity combined with intolerance of autonomous religious authority on the part of the imperial government; and (7) an imbalanced sex ratio exacerbated by polygyny among the elite, resulting in a large and restive population of unmarried males. Each of these has been the subject of many books and cannot be defended *in extenso* here.

History

Lastly, “history” itself is problematic and contested, not least because it is not a Chinese word. Chinese civilization has always had a profound historical consciousness: the combination of China's large population, which posed unique administrative challenges, and its relatively early invention of writing produced a voluminous historical record that is the envy of the world. “No other ancient nation possesses records of its whole past so voluminous, so continuous, or so accurate,” wrote Charles S. Gardner as early as 1938 (Gardner 1938: 105).

Nevertheless, the classical language does not have a word that is precisely coterminous with “history” in a modern sense. Any other expectation would be anachronistic, after all. The closest word is *shi* 史 (as in modern words like *shixue* 史學, “historical studies”), but that originally denoted court officials with diverse administrative and clerical duties, including the recording of history, but certainly not limited to it (Harbsmeier 1995: 60–6; Vogelsang 2007: 17–91). For the Bronze Age, one scholar has proposed the sensible translation “secretary,” as in our “Secretary of State” (Kern 2007: 115–18), but by the Eastern Zhou, *shi* had come to refer to *éminences grises* at court who served as archivists, diviners, dispensers of wisdom who could be consulted on matters of ritual and strategy – and historiographers, since truthfully recording affairs of state was regarded as crucial to the project of judging rulers fairly and learning from the past.⁹

But what is meant by “truthfully”? Two famous anecdotes from the *Zuo Commentary* confirm that moral truth was prized, even to the extent that factual truth could be sacrificed in its behalf (Schaberg 2001: 262–64).¹⁰ In the first (Yang Bojun 1990: II, 662–63 [Xuan 宣 2]), the tyrannical Lord Ling of Jin 晉靈公 (r. 620–607 BC) plotted to kill his chief minister, Zhao Dun 趙盾, because of the latter's inconvenient remonstrances. Zhao escaped and was on his way out of the country, but had not yet reached the border, when he heard that his cousin had assassinated

Lord Ling, whereupon he returned to the capital and installed a new (and worthier) ruler. At this juncture, we read:

大史書曰：「趙盾弑其君」，以示於朝。

宣子曰：「不然。」

對曰：「子為正卿，亡不越竟，反不討賊，非子而誰？」……

孔子曰：「董狐，古之良史也，書法不隱。趙宣子，古之良大夫也，為法受惡。」

The Grand Historian wrote: “Zhao Dun assassinated his lord,” and displayed it in the court.

Xuanzi [i.e. Zhao Dun] said: “It is not so.”

He replied: “Sir, you are the chief minister. You fled but did not cross the border; when you returned, you did not punish the criminal. If it was not you, who was it?” . . .

Confucius said: “Dong Hu was a fine historian of old; in writing history, his principle was not to conceal. Zhao Xuanzi was a fine grandee of old; he accepted this disgrace for the sake of principle.”

(Compare the translation in Durrant *et al.* 2016: I, 597)

Confucius’s final comment explains that by recording the event as he did, the historian Dong Hu achieved two things that were much more important than settling the pedestrian question of who in fact stabbed Lord Ling. First, he emphasized the principle that a chief minister cannot condone the assassination of the sovereign, even if the sovereign is wicked and deserves to be killed. Second, he afforded Zhao Dun the chance to forbear and let the comment stand, and thereby exhibit his own commitment to such high-minded principles. Although Zhao Dun goes down in history as a regicide, sensitive readers are expected to discern that he must have been a deeply ethical man.

A vastly less ethical man, Cui Zhu 崔杼, occasioned a similar historiographical dilemma (Yang Bojun 1990: III, 1099 [Xiang 襄 25]) when he laid a deadly trap for Lord Zhuang of Qi 齊莊公 (r. 553–548 BC), who had been cuckolding him. At the fateful moment, Cui withdrew, permitting his guards to bring the matter to a close. The narrative then addresses the inevitable problem of historical judgment. When the Grand Historian recorded that “Cui Zhu assassinated his lord” 崔杼弑其君, Cui killed him – as well as his younger brother, who wrote the same thing as soon as he succeeded to the post (a hint that “Grand Historian” was a hereditary position). Only after a *third* brother recorded the same verdict did Cui finally relent. Presumably, Cui was hoping that because he had not in fact killed Lord Zhuang – the fatal arrow was loosed by an unidentified henchman – he could escape the verdict of the historians. In a world where moral correctness counted for more than factual correctness, he was soon to be disabused.¹¹

Even Confucius is said more than once to have declined to correct historical records that he knew were factually incorrect if he could thereby teach readers a more important lesson (Yang Bojun 1990: I, 473 [Xi 28]; Li Xueqin *et al.* 2000: XXI, 567b–69a).¹² There is much to admire in the scrupulousness of this didactic historiography, which one modern scholar has characterized as *ad usum delphini*, that is to say, intended for the instruction of statesmen (Vogelsang 2005: 151; see also Vogelsang 2007: 251–54). But when we read such documents today, how do we know which events were recorded as the historian saw them with his eyes, and which were recorded as he saw them with his heart? We cannot be sure of the answer.

There are further complexities. The two anecdotes about historians’ dilemmas from the *Zuo Commentary* are what might be called meta-historiography: historians writing about

historians writing about history. Consequently, we need to consider not only how Dong Hu and other straitened historians would have chosen to record a messy assassination, but also how an unrelated (and unnamed) set of historians chose to present such instructive anecdotes for posterity. We do not, and probably never will, have Dong Hu's original text; indeed, we take it on faith that there was any such thing. Although there are reasonable differences of opinion (see, e.g., Pines 2002 and Van Auken 2016 for different perspectives), my view is that a large proportion of early Chinese "historical" literature is best interpreted as rhetorical impersonation rather than records of fact. Writers vaguely knew (or had heard – perhaps there was not much difference) that Zhao Dun had been implicated in Lord Ling's assassination by virtue of his position, even though he did not personally participate, and imaginatively reconstructed the quandary facing the court historian as he was obliged to render judgment. The same theory of imaginative reconstruction can be applied to the lengthy and elegant speeches in a similar text, *Discourses of the States* (*Guoyu* 國語). Western authors and orators were trained in comparable rhetorical exercises, which they called *ēthopoeia* (Kennedy 2003). Compounding our interpretive problem is the fact that premodern audiences were undoubtedly more familiar with the circumstances of such events than we are today.

But we can compensate with information that was unavailable to anyone living before the twentieth century: the transformational results of archaeological excavation. (My own reflections in Goldin 2005: 3–6 are already out of date.) These include not only previously unknown texts (or unknown versions of them) but also indispensable evidence relating to habitation, social organization, manufacture, and trade (e.g., Underhill 2013; Campbell 2014; Barnes 2015). A prime example is the Shang dynasty, whose very historicity was questioned before the excavations at Anyang 安陽 revealed not only one of the major bronze-producing civilizations of the ancient world but also thousands of oracle-bone inscriptions that had not seen the light of day in over three millennia (Li Chi 1957 is still informative). With such unprecedented sources at our disposal, it is safe to say that we know more about Shang society and culture than anyone who lived during the many centuries of imperial China. The Anyang archaeological project continues to this day.

Yet even with this expanded inventory, there are many subjects for which we simply do not have adequate sources. Oracle-bone inscriptions provide fascinating details about the royal cult, procedures of divination, conception of the cosmos, and so on, but virtually nothing about the lives of ordinary men and women. Most of what we know about early Chinese history has to do with the activities of elite men. Legal and administrative texts, which yield glimpses of life beyond the royal and noble estates, are an important exception (see the chapter by Kyong-ho Kim and Ming Chiu Lai, Chapter 18).

As we have seen, Chinese historians have been pondering the question of how to document important events for many centuries, and one of the greatest of them, Sima Qian 司馬遷 (145?–86? BC), left behind a work, *Records of the Historian* (*Shiji* 史記), whose format has inspired the present volume. Sima's masterwork is divided into five parts: "basic annals" (*benji* 本紀), or reign-by-reign accounts of the emperors; "tables" (*biao* 表), which arrange genealogical and chronological data in convenient form; "treatises" (*shu* 書), which are essays covering important topics such as ritual and finance; and two final sections, "hereditary houses" (*shijia* 世家) and "arrayed traditions" (*liezhuan* 列傳), which include many biographies of exemplary figures as well as discussions of pre-imperial states and foreign peoples.

The two parts of our book are akin to the "basic annals" and "treatises": we begin with an overview of each major period and then turn to chapters on topics that transcend any particular

era. (It would not have been feasible to reproduce all five of Sima Qian's divisions in a modern work.) This structure allows us to offer both synchronic and diachronic perspectives.

With the meaning and significance of “early Chinese history” now clarified, it is time to let the contributors tell the story from here.

Notes

- 1 Revealingly, Rome was called “Great Qin” (*Da Qin* 大秦) because it was “like China in some respects” (*you lei Zhongguo* 有類中國; Fan Ye *et al.* 1965: 2919).
- 2 Complicating the matter is that “Qin” was sometimes used to refer to the short-lived Later Qin 後秦 dynasty (AD 384–417) or North China in that period more generally (Ji and Zhou 2009). This usage is fundamentally distinct.
- 3 *Zhongguo* and barbarians are also explicitly contrasted in the *Odes* (*Shijing* 詩經) and *Gongyang Commentary* (*Gongyang zhuan* 公羊傳). See Li Xueqin *et al.* 2000: V, 738b (the Minor Preface to “Liyue” 六月); and XXI, 594b (Zhao 昭 23), respectively.
- 4 A similar distinction between virtue and punishment as modes of motivation appears in *Analects* 2.3. The three other appearances of *zhongguo* in *Zuo zhuan* are Yang Bojun 1990: I, 249 (Zhuang 莊 31); II, 832 (Cheng 成 7); and IV, 1309 (Zhao 9). In addition, there are two citations from “Minlao,” a canonical ode that contains the phrase (to be discussed later): Yang Bojun 1990: I, 472; and IV, 1421.
- 5 *Zhongbang* is rare in received literature, but attested. The only well-known instance is from the “Yugong” 禹貢 chapter of *Exalted Documents* (*Shangshu* 尚書): “He established the revenues of the *zhongbang*” 成賦中邦 (Li Xueqin *et al.* 2000: II, 198a). But *Documents on the Excellence of Yue* (*Yuejue shu* 越絕書), neglected until very recently, contains two others (Li Bujia 2013: 81 and 367); for the first, there is a revealing parallel in the *Gongyang Commentary* that reads *zhongguo* instead (Li Xueqin *et al.* 2000: XXI, 644b [Ding 定 4]). Perhaps *Yuejue shu* preserves *zhongbang* because it was not widely transmitted and thus escaped the systematic replacement of *bang* for *guo*.
Incidentally, *bang* (Old Chinese *pʰroŋ) is obviously cognate with *feng* 封 (*pʰroŋ), which refers to establishing the borders of land that has been awarded by the king and consequently became an important administrative term (e.g., Ren Wei 2004). Li Feng 2008: 48n.10 recognizes the semantic connection, but not the phonological one.
- 6 As Schuessler 2007: 268 observes, *xu* 洫/洫 (moat), *yu* 闕 (threshold), and even *you* 囿 (enclosure, ranch), must belong to the same etymon.
- 7 In philosophy and poetics, the supremacy of the Chinese language led to the widespread cultural assumption that objects and concepts with similar-sounding Chinese names or similar-looking Chinese graphs must supervene on some categorical connection in reality (Peterson 1982: 110–16; Pauline Yu 1987: 37–43; Bao 1990). This made rhyme, assonance, and paronomasia especially powerful literary devices (Behr 2005b; Goldin 2005: 14ff.).
- 8 Similarly, after Empress Dowager Lü 呂太后 (d. 180 BC) rejected a marriage proposal from the barbarian chieftain Modu 冒頓 (d. 174 BC), which she considered impertinent, he is reported to have stated: “I have not yet learned the ritual and morality of the Central States” 未嘗聞中國禮義 (Ban Gu *et al.* 1962: 3755). This appears in a Chinese text, naturally.
- 9 N.b.: *Shi* 史 is distinct from *shi* 士, “men of service,” a term discussed in the chapter by Yuri Pines, Chapter 13 (see also Pines 2009a: 115–84; and for a very different view, Yan Buke 1996: 29–72). The two words are cognate (Old Chinese *s-rəʔ and *m-s-rəʔ, respectively; see Behr 2005a: 16–18), but their usage and connotations grew apart. In Modern Mandarin, their pronunciations are distinguished only by tone. (*Shi* 事, “to serve,” Old Chinese *m-s-rəʔ-s, is manifestly cognate too, as was noticed even in antiquity: Jiang Renjie 1996: 78.)
- 10 The following discussion is condensed from Goldin 2008: 86–8.
- 11 Pines (2009b: 329–31) discusses another case of regicide and the historiographical distortions that it occasioned. Not all historians had high-minded motivations.
- 12 On the latter, see Gentz 2001: 96–9. The principle was well understood by premodern readers. For example, Su Xun 蘇洵 (1009–1066) remarked: “In the classics, sometimes false announcements are recorded, and sometimes things are not recorded for reasons of taboo-avoidance; there is a multitude of such cases, which are all merely for the sake of convenience in instruction” 經或從偽赴 [=訃] 而書, 或隱諱而不書, 若此者眾, 皆適於教而已 (Zeng Zaozhuang and Jin Chengli 1993: 230; cf. Klein 2010: 112).

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Introduction

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