

Some Shang Antecedents of Later Chinese Ideology and Culture

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Although the Shang dynasty sometimes seems archaic and alien from the point of view of later periods, there are important elements of Shang culture that persevered in recognizable forms, even after allowing for adaptation to new historical realities, beyond the Zhou conquest in 1045 B.C. These points of continuity being generally underappreciated, five of the most salient are sketched below, in the hope of spurring renewed interest in China's first historical dynasty: the ritual use of writing, particularly as a mode of communication with the spirit world; the status of Chinese as the sole written language; the notion that some days are auspicious and others inauspicious; a patrilocal and patrilineal family structure that nevertheless accommodated mothers within its ritual order; and "the Deity's command" (*di ling*). In keeping with the genre of "brief communication," the examples adduced are illustrative rather than exhaustive; a full study of these themes would require an entire monograph.

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1. THE RITUAL USE OF WRITING, PARTICULARLY AS A MODE OF COMMUNICATION WITH THE SPIRIT WORLD

If the Shang used writing in any connection other than the ancestral cult (especially oracle-bone divination),² there is scant evidence for it. In contrast to Mesopotamia, for example, where writing was used from the start to keep accounts and record debts or transactions,³ for the Shang there are few, if any, examples of mundane applications of writing. Surviving

1. One other crucial point of continuity is not discussed here—the division of space into four quadrants corresponding to the cardinal directions—because it has been treated convincingly by David N. Keightley in *The Ancestral Landscape: Time, Space, and Community in Late Shang China (ca. 1200–1045 B.C.)*, China Research Monograph 53 (Berkeley: Institute of East Asian Studies, Univ. of California, Berkeley, 2000), 86–91. The conception of the center (*zhong* 中) as the hub of civilization and the periphery (*fang* 方) as consisting of various zones of barbarism (*ibid.*, 82–86) also invites a comparison with the concentric circles of "The Levies of Yu" ("Yugong" 禹貢), *Shangshu zhengyi* 尚書正義 (*Shisan jing zhushu* 十三經注疏), 6.153.

2. There are bone and shell inscriptions that are not direct records of divination; these are extensively analyzed in Fang Zhisong 方稚松, *Yinxu jiaguwen wuzhong jishi keci yanjiu* 殷墟甲骨文五種記事刻辭研究, Zhongguo yuyan wenzi yanjiu congkan, 4th series (Beijing: Xianzhuang, 2009). I am indebted to an anonymous referee for this and other helpful references.

3. This was the outstanding insight of Denise Schmandt-Besserat, *Before Writing* (Austin: Univ. of Texas Press, 1992), I, 184–94.

Shang inscriptions on bronze, jade, stone,⁴ and the like are almost always indicative of some ritual use.⁵ Perhaps one could argue that other types of documents would have been committed to perishable materials, unlike the bone and shell used for oracular inscriptions, and consequently that the overwhelmingly hieratic nature of the surviving examples of writing is the result of a selection bias,⁶ but Adam Smith's recent study of scribal training at Anyang shows that the regimen prepared scribes to write oracle-bone inscriptions and oracle-bone inscriptions only.⁷ However commerce was conducted and recorded, it does not seem to have required the participation of cultic scribes.

This evidence supports a general model in which literacy expanded over time from the highly limited sacral milieu at Anyang to the livelier situation in early imperial times, when the state systematically trained legions of scribes to gather and scrutinize administrative data (alongside military personnel who must have received some rudimentary instruction), but gradually lost its exclusive control of literacy, as people with varying degrees of training began to write for private purposes.⁸

But the sacral uses of writing endured. Oracle-bone inscriptions seem to have disappeared as a genre soon after the fall of the Shang,⁹ but a different kind of inscription, cast in ritual bronze vessels, became no less important. There are late Shang bronze inscriptions, but they tend to be short and uninformative; inscriptions on Zhou bronzes, by contrast, can be relatively long—much longer than oracle-bone inscriptions—and were produced in unprecedented numbers. Some scholars suggest that inscriptions were intended not for human audiences, but for the ancestral spirits invoked during the sacrificial rituals in which the bronzes

4. For five representative inscriptions on jade and stone, see Wang Yunzhi 王蘊智, "Zhongyuan chutu Shangdai yushiwen jiqi shidu" 中原出土商代玉石文及其釋讀, *Zhongguo guojia bowuguan guankan* 中國國家博物館館刊 2013.4: 42–50.

5. On the possible ritual significance of the so-called "handle-shaped implements" (*bingxing qi* 柄形器), some of which are inscribed, see, e.g., Ye Shuxian 葉舒憲, "Yu renxiang, yu bingxing qi yu zuling paiwei: Hua-Xia zushen ouxiang yuanliu de da chuantong xin renshi" 玉人像、玉柄形器與祖靈牌位：華夏祖神偶像源流的大傳統新認識, *Minzu yishu* 民族藝術 2013.3: 23–28 and 49; and Wei Jiyin 魏繼印, "Yu bingxing qi gongneng xinshi" 玉柄形器功能新識, *Kaogu yu wenwu* 考古與文物 2013.1: 38–44.

6. Thus Robert W. Bagley, "Anyang Writing and the Origin of the Chinese Writing System," in *The First Writing: Script Invention as History and Process*, ed. Stephen D. Houston (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2004), esp. 217–26.

7. "The Evidence for Scribal Training at Anyang," in *Writing and Literacy in Early China: Studies from the Columbia Early China Seminar*, ed. Li Feng and David Prager Branner (Seattle: Univ. of Washington Press, 2011), 173–205.

8. This is the overall thesis that emerges from the chapters in Li and Branner. For a recent study of private letters, see Enno Giele, "Private Letter Manuscripts from Early Imperial China," in *A History of Chinese Letters and Epistolary Culture*, ed. Antje Richter, *Handbuch der Orientalistik* IV.31 (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 403–74.

9. For Zhou oracle-bone inscriptions, see, e.g., Chu Ki-cheung 朱歧祥, *Zhouyuan jiagu yanjiu* 周原甲骨研究 (Taipei: Xuesheng, 1997); and Xu Xitai 徐錫臺, *Zhouyuan jiaguwen zongshu* 周原甲骨文綜述, (N.p.: San-Qin, 1987). The largely unpublished inscriptions from the Zhougongmiao 周公廟 site in Qishan County, Shaanxi Province 陝西岐山, promise to expand our knowledge considerably. Only four inscriptions have been published so far: Li Xueqin 李學勤, "Zhougongmiao bujia sipian shishi" 周公廟卜甲四片試釋, *Xibe Daxue xuebao* 西北大學學報 2005.3: 89–91. This is not to say that "turtle divination" (*bu* 卜) itself died out, as there are many references to it in received literature. See, e.g., Lisa Raphals, *Divination and Prediction in Early China and Ancient Greece* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2013), 129–31; and Marc Kalinowski, "Diviners and Astrologers under the Eastern Zhou: Transmitted Texts and Recent Archaeological Discoveries," tr. Margaret McIntosh, in *Early Chinese Religion, Part One: Shang through Han (1250 BC–220 AD)*, ed. John Lagerwey and Marc Kalinowski, *Handbuch der Orientalistik* IV.21–1 (Leiden: Brill, 2009), I, 349–54. But it no longer had the state-level significance of oracle-bone divination in the Bronze Age.

would have been used.¹⁰ According to this argument, the main purpose of the inscriptions was to inform the spirits of their living descendants' achievements on earth, even if we know that such reports were sometimes embellished, if not baldly falsified.¹¹ The typical placement of an inscription on the *inside* of a bronze vessel likewise suggests that its message was supposed to be transmitted to the spirit world together with the food or liquor being offered. There can be little doubt that bronze inscriptions were also intended to be read and cherished by future generations, but this is not incompatible with the idea that communication with spirits is secured by means of writing. Even today, it is not uncommon to find a Daoist priest or other medium writing a message from the spirit world in spontaneous spirit writing, which is subsequently deciphered for the benefit of the uninitiated.¹²

2. THE STATUS OF CHINESE AS THE SOLE WRITTEN LANGUAGE

For a patently multi-lingual society like premodern China,¹³ the first written non-Sinitic languages appeared remarkably late. The oldest examples may be the so-called “Ba-Shu scripts” 巴蜀文字 (sometimes called “Ba-Shu pictographs” 巴蜀圖語) of the fifth and fourth centuries B.C., of which there were at least three different kinds, but they remain undeciphered and might not even represent true writing.¹⁴ The next candidates thereafter—probably Prakrit documents from the Kingdom of Shanshan 鄯善, written in the Kharoṣṭhī script¹⁵—do not appear for many centuries. These facts do not by any means permit the inference that Chinese was the sole spoken language; rather, they encourage the historically fascinating inference that Chinese was chosen to be the universal written one.

For the Shang, the exclusive use of Chinese can be partially explained with reference to the ancestral cult. If the Shang kings spoke (an archaic form of) Chinese, then their ancestors presumably spoke Chinese as well, and thus one would have to communicate with them in written Chinese. But oracle-bone inscriptions attest to sacrifices to numerous spirits such as the winds (*feng* 風/鳳),¹⁶ the spirit of the Yellow River (*he* 河), and so on, and it might have been less obvious that such beings communicated exclusively in Chinese too. For Zhou and

10. For a judicious recent overview, see Olivier Venture, “Visibilité et lisibilité dans les inscriptions sur bronze de la Chine archaïque (1250–771 av. notre ère),” in *Du visible au lisible: Texte et image en Chine et au Japon*, ed. Anne Kerlan-Stephens and Cécile Sakai (Arles: Philippe Picquier, 2006), 67–81. See also the trenchant discussion in Lothar von Falkenhausen, “Issues in Western Zhou Studies: A Review Article,” *Early China* 18 (1993): e.g., 152.

11. For the famous case of the Shi Qiang *pan* 史牆盤 inscription, see Edward L. Shaughnessy, *Sources of Western Zhou History: Inscribed Bronze Vessels* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: Univ. of California Press, 1991), 183–92; more recently, Martin Kern, “Poetry and Religion: The Representation of ‘Truth’ in Early Chinese Historiography,” in *Historical Truth, Historical Criticism, and Ideology: Chinese Historiography and Historical Culture from a New Comparative Perspective*, ed. Helwig Schmidt-Glintzer et al., *Leiden Studies in Comparative Historiography*, vol. 1 (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 58–62.

12. See, e.g., Philip Clart, “Moral Mediums: Spirit-Writing and the Cultural Construction of Chinese Spirit-Mediumship,” *Ethnologies* 25.1 (2003): 153–89.

13. Cf. Wolfgang Behr, “‘To Translate’ Is ‘to Exchange’ 譯者言易也: Linguistic Diversity and the Terms for Translation in Ancient China,” in *Mapping Meanings: The Field of New Learning in Late Qing China*, ed. Michael Lackner and Natascha Vittinghoff, *Sinica Leidensia*, vol. 64 (Leiden: Brill, 2004), esp. 200–208.

14. For an overview, see Steven F. Sage, *Ancient Sichuan and the Unification of China*, SUNY Series in Chinese Local Studies (Albany: State Univ. of New York Press, 1992), 73–77; more recently, Feng Shi 馮時, “Ba-Shu yinzhang wenzi kaoshi: Ba-Shu wenzi shidu fangfa tansuo” 巴蜀印章文字考釋: 巴蜀文字釋讀方法探索, *Sichuan wenwu* 四川文物 2015.2: 32–36. I am grateful to Alex K. Y. Cheung for suggesting the Ba-Shu scripts.

15. See, e.g., Christopher Atwood, “Life in Third-Fourth Century Cadh’ota: A Survey of Information Gathered from the Prakrit Documents Found North of Minfeng (Niyä),” *Central Asiatic Journal* 35.3–4 (1991): 161–99.

16. Cf. Wei Cide 魏慈德, *Zhongguo gudai fengshen chongbai* 中國古代風神崇拜, *Chutu sixiang wenwu yu wenxian yanjiu congshu* 8 (Taipei: Taiwan guji, 2002), 97–102.

later periods, moreover, as writing attained other functions, restricting writing to Chinese must have become more and more of a conscious cultural choice,¹⁷ because the possibility of writing some other language would not have been unthinkable. It is well known that the kings of Chu 楚, Wu 吳, Yue 越, and Zhongshan 中山 originally spoke languages other than Chinese, and doubtless there were elites familiar with the concept of writing who spoke some other language at home. But the degree to which one could recite poetry and conduct diplomacy in Chinese was regarded, irrespective of one's mother tongue, as the manifestation of one's cultural attainment.¹⁸ The same does not seem to have been true of any other language. There is, consequently, no directly attested non-Sinitic literature from before modern times.

3. THE NOTION THAT SOME DAYS ARE AUSPICIOUS AND OTHERS INAUSPICIOUS, AND ONLY A SPECIALIST CAN TELL THEM APART

David N. Keightley's tabulation of all days identified in oracle-bone inscriptions as lucky or good reveals a preference for *geng* 庚, *yi* 乙, *xin* 辛, *ding* 丁, and *jia* 甲 days,¹⁹ but the principles underlying these discernible results remain scarcely understood. For example, a famous divination performed for the pregnant Fu Hao 婦好 reads:

其佳丁婉，嘉；其庚，引吉；其佳壬戌，不吉。²⁰

If she gives birth on a *ding* day, it will be excellent; if it is on a *geng* day, there will be prolonged luck; if it is on *renxu* day [i.e., Day 59], it will be inauspicious.

Keightley has observed, moreover, that specific days of the ten-day week (*xun* 旬) were construed as lucky or unlucky, but specific times of day were not. Shang diviners thus practiced what we would call hemeromancy, or divination about auspicious or inauspicious days. Later texts, especially bamboo manuscripts, contain rich material relating to hemeromancy, which was performed by specialists called *rizhe* 日者.²¹ (Even Matteo Ricci commented on such customs.)²² The principles were by no means the same as those that prevailed in Shang times (for example, many later schemes associate days with the Five Phases 五行),²³ but the basic idea that there are auspicious and inauspicious days for momentous events is a distinctive and evidently primeval element of Chinese culture.

17. Tsung-tung Chang (*Der Kult der Shang-Dynastie im Spiegel der Orakelinschriften: Eine paläographische Studie zur Religion im archaischen China*, Veröffentlichungen des Ostasiatischen Seminars der Johann-Wolfgang-Goethe-Universität, Frankfurt/Main B.1 [Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1970], 240), speculates that the Zhou invaders originally spoke a different language, and accepted Chinese over generations.

18. Cf. Yuri Pines, "Beasts or Humans: Pre-Imperial Origins of Sino-Barbarian Dichotomy," in *Mongols, Turks, and Others: Eurasian Nomads and the Sedentary World*, ed. Reuven Amitai and Michal Biran, Brill's Inner Asian Library, vol. 11 (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 70.

19. Ji Dewei 吉德煒 (i.e., David N. Keightley), "Zhongguo gudai de jiri yu miaohao" 中國古代的吉日與廟號, *Yinxu Bowuyuan yuankan* 殷墟博物苑苑刊 1 (1989): 20–32; see also idem, *The Ancestral Landscape*, 33–35. Keightley goes on to argue that the perceived auspiciousness of particular days was related to the practice of assigning each ancestral spirit a fixed day for him or her to receive cult.

20. Guo Moruo 郭沫若 (1892–1978), ed., *Jiaguwen heji* 甲骨文合集 (Beijing: Zhonghua, 1978–83), #14002b (hereafter cited as *Heji*). Transcriptions for each entry in this corpus can be found in Hu Houxuan 胡厚宣 et al., *Jiaguwen heji shiwen* 甲骨文合集釋文, 4 vols. (Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexue, 1999); these sometimes differ slightly from the transcriptions in this paper.

21. Surprisingly, there is no single study covering all the major corpora of *rishu* 日書 (from Shuihudi 睡虎地, Jiudian 九店, Kongjiapo 孔家坡, etc.). For an overview, see Mu-chou Poo, *In Search of Personal Welfare: A View of Ancient Chinese Religion*, SUNY Series in Chinese Philosophy and Culture (Albany: State Univ. of New York Press, 1998), 69–101.

22. Louis J. Gallagher, S.J. (1885–1972), tr., *China in the Sixteenth Century: The Journals of Matteo Ricci, 1583–1610* (New York: Random House, 1953), 82–83.

23. See, e.g., Raphals, *Divination and Prediction*, 346–52.

4. A PATRILOCAL AND PATRILINEAL FAMILY STRUCTURE THAT NEVERTHELESS ACCOMMODATED MOTHERS WITHIN ITS RITUAL ORDER

The Shang was literally a dynasty, that is, a ruling family that remained in power for generations. As the recorded genealogy grew, the cycle of rites on behalf of royal ancestors came to require nearly a year (*si* 祀).²⁴ The ancestors who enjoyed such devotions consisted of all those who had ruled as king and claimed direct descent from the putative lineage founder, Shang Jia 上甲—as well as their consorts who had borne male heirs.²⁵ Royal ancestresses received cult alongside royal ancestors, but the ancestresses were not descendants of Shang Jia themselves; rather, they were the wives of kings who were descendants of Shang Jia. Thus membership in a lineage was determined, for males, by the identity of their fathers, and, for females, by the identity of their husbands. Inevitably, a daughter would have been recognized, upon birth, as destined for a lineage other than that of her male relatives.

This is significant because it is precisely how membership in a lineage was normally reckoned throughout Chinese history.²⁶ Divorce, remarriage, and sometimes sheer financial exigencies could necessitate exceptions to the system,²⁷ but the expected pattern was that a daughter would leave her natal lineage upon marriage and join the lineage of her husband—where a vital ritual role awaited her, and where she would be remembered by her descendants as an honored mother, grandmother, and so on through the generations.

5. “THE DEITY’S COMMAND”

The doctrine of Heaven’s Mandate (*tianming* 天命) is usually presented as a Zhou innovation and a radical break from earlier political discourse: Heaven (*tian*) is said not to appear in Shang oracle-bone inscriptions and to have been a Zhou concept.²⁸ Nevertheless, some oracle-bone inscriptions speak in remarkably similar terms, albeit with “the Deity” (*di* 帝),²⁹ rather than Heaven, as the supreme arbiter:

貞：方裁征，佳帝令作我禍。三月。³⁰

[lacuna] . . . the *fang* [i.e., enemies on the periphery of civilization] are harming and attacking [us] because the Deity commands them to make disasters for us. Third lunation.

24. For a succinct recent discussion, see Keightley, *The Ancestral Landscape*, 47–53.

25. See Michiharu Itō, “Religion and Society,” in Michiharu Itō and Ken-ichi Takashima, *Studies in Early Chinese Civilization: Religion, Society, Language, and Palaeography*, ed. Gary F. Arbuckle (Osaka: Kansai Gaidai Univ., 1996), I, 100–104.

26. Any of the classic studies of Chinese family structure suffices to establish this point; for one among several, see Hugh D. R. Baker, *Chinese Family and Kinship* (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1979).

27. See, e.g., Dong Jiazun 董家遵, *Zhongguo gudai hunyin shi yanjiu* 中國古代婚姻史研究, ed. Bian Encai 卞恩才 (Guangzhou: Guangdong renmin, 1995), 352–55. Matthew H. Sommer (*Polyandry and Wife-Selling in Qing Dynasty China: Survival Strategies and Judicial Interventions* [Oakland: Univ. of California Press, 2015]) discusses many such cases from late imperial times.

28. See esp. Herrlee G. Creel, *The Origins of Statecraft in China* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1970), 493–506; and Guo Moruo, *Xian-Qin tiandaoguan zhi jinzhan* 先秦天道觀之進展 (Shanghai: Shangwu, 1936), 1–18. Sarah Allan (“On the Identity of Shang Di and the Origin of the Concept of a Celestial Mandate,” *Early China* 31 [2007]: 26–29) presents evidence that *tian* might appear in oracle-bone inscriptions after all, but written indistinguishably from *da* 大. Cf. Robert Eno, *The Confucian Creation of Heaven: Philosophy and the Defense of Ritual Mastery*, SUNY Series in Chinese Philosophy and Culture (Albany: State Univ. of New York Press, 1990), 183.

29. Both David W. Pankenier (*Astrology and Cosmology in Early China: Conforming Earth to Heaven* [Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2013], 83–117) and Allan (“On the Identity of Shang Di,” 13 et passim) associate *di* with the Pole Star, though with significantly different implications.

30. *Heji* 39912.

貞：不佳帝令作我禍。³¹

It is not because the Deity commands them to make disasters for us.

It is, in fact, impossible to know whether 帝令 stands for *di ling*, “the Deity commands,”³² or *di ming* 命, “the Deity mandates,” because *ling* and *ming* are not consistently distinguished in palaeographical literature. The phrase is thus very close to *tianming*.

Such inscriptions are uncommon but highly significant, for when we read that the disapproving Deity could command an alien fighting force to attack the Shang,³³ we can only suppose that a notion adumbrating Heaven’s Mandate was already in place.³⁴ Further support for this inference lies in the metaphor chosen to represent the attack. Diverse words for “attack” appear in oracle-bone inscriptions, including *fa* 伐, “to chop, to hew,” *qin* 侵, “to raid, to encroach upon,” and *zai* 栽, “to cause damage” (identical both semantically and phonologically to *zai* 災, “disaster”), but notice in the above inscription that the verb is *zheng* 征 (Old Chinese *teŋ),³⁵ “to correct, to punish.” This word is cognate with *zheng* 正 (Old Chinese *teŋs), “to rectify,” one of the most basic concepts of later moral philosophy. It would be one thing for unnamed barbarians to *raid* or to *harm* the great Shang polity, but if they were construed as *correcting* or *punishing* it, one has to suspect that they could do so, in the Shang imagination, only if the Deity commanded them.³⁶

Thus if it seems difficult to accept, at least at first blush, the pretense in the *Shangshu* 尚書 (and related sources)³⁷ that the vanquished Shang populace heard and then docilely accepted the Zhou conquerors’ self-serving explication of Heaven’s Mandate, perhaps part of the reason was that they themselves held similar convictions about divine command. This is not to say that *di* was simply the Shang name for *tian*, for there were fundamental differences; for instance, there was no “Son of the Deity” analogous to the Zhou concept of “the Son of Heaven” (*tianzi* 天子).³⁸

There were other discontinuities as well. One of the most important has to do with the changing role of the King. At Anyang, the King served as the chief mediator between the

31. *Heji* 6746.

32. For other instances of *di ling* in oracle-bone inscriptions (usually with reference to weather commanded by the Deity, such as “rain” 雨 or “wind” 風), see Chen Mengjia 陳夢家, *Yinxu buci zongshu* 殷墟卜辭綜述 (Beijing: Kexue, 1956), 562–63. *Di* could also “approve” (*ruo* 若, perhaps to be read *nuo* 諾) or “confer favor” (*shouyou* 授又=授祐), though in this respect he was not unlike other powerful spirits. Cf. Itō, “Religion and Society,” 6–7.

33. Cf. Tsung-tung Chang, *Der Kult der Shang-Dynastie*, 215.

34. Cf. K. C. Chang, *Art, Myth, and Ritual: The Path to Political Authority in Ancient China* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1983), 34: “the idea of rulership based on ‘deservedness’—whether from the point of view of God or from the point of view of the governed—goes back at least to the Shang” (though without any documentary support).

35. Old Chinese reconstructions follow the system laid out in William H. Baxter and Laurent Sagart, *Old Chinese: A New Reconstruction* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2014).

36. The moral difference between *zheng*, or righteous war, and *gong* 攻, or war undertaken for the purpose of depredation and conquest, is paramount in Mohist philosophy; only a Sage King can be said to conduct *zheng*. See Wang Huanbiao 王煥鏞, *Mozi jigu* 墨子集詁, *Zhonghua yaoji jishi congshu* (Shanghai: Guji, 2005), 5.19.458–86 (“Feigong xia” 非攻下).

37. These are lucidly surveyed in Luo Xinhui 羅新慧, “Zhou dai tianming guannian de fazhan yu shanbian” 周代天命觀念的發展與嬗變, *Lishi yanjiu* 歷史研究 2012.5: 4–18.

38. For this term, see, e.g., Takeuchi Yasuhiro 內竹康浩, “Sei Shū kimbun chū no ‘tenshi’ ni tsuite” 西周金文中の《天子》について, in *Ronshū Chūgoku kodai no moji to bunka* 論集中國古代の文字と文化 (Tokyo: Kyūko, 1999), 105–30.

human world and the spirit world,³⁹ and the cult underlying the oracle-bone inscriptions was consequently indispensable to his legitimacy. By contrast, the Zhou King's most important functions soon became political: serving as the patriarch of the interconnected territorial lords (*zhuhou* 諸侯), appointing men to fill positions in the expanding bureaucracy, and occasionally leading troops into battle.⁴⁰ I do not wish to overstate this point, because the Shang King may have performed comparable political tasks; our sense of him as primarily a cultic figure may be skewed by the unavoidable reliance on oracle-bone inscriptions as historical sources. Moreover, the Zhou King surely still presided over state rituals, and the *ya* 雅 and *song* 頌 sections of the *Odes* depict a religious environment that still emphasized communication with ancestral spirits.⁴¹ Nevertheless, the extinction of oracle-bone inscriptions soon after the establishment of the Zhou dynasty must be a testament to fundamental changes in the dominant world view. Zhou society was already more complex than Shang society, and as the complexity only increased over time, the old ways no longer sufficed.

39. Whether this qualifies him as a "shaman" has occasioned an unproductive debate. For representative views on each side, see K. C. Chang, "Shang Shamans," in *The Power of Culture: Studies in Chinese Cultural History*, ed. Willard J. Peterson et al. (Hong Kong: Chinese Univ. Press, 1994), 10–36; and David N. Keightley, "Shamanism, Death, and the Ancestors: Religious Mediation in Neolithic and Shang China (ca. 5000–1000 B.C.)," *Asiatische Studien* 52 (1998): 763–831. All participants seem to agree that the King's ability to communicate with the spirit world was crucial; at issue is whether the process is appropriately interpreted as shamanism.

40. Cf. Li Feng, *Bureaucracy and the State in Early China: Governing the Western Zhou* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2008), 60–63.

41. See, e.g., Martin Kern, "Bronze Inscriptions, the *Shijing* and the *Shangshu*: The Evolution of the Ancestral Sacrifice during the Western Zhou," in Lagerwey and Kalinowski, *Early Chinese Religion*, I, 143–200.