

***Origins of Chinese Political Philosophy: Studies in the Composition and Thought of the Shangshu (Classic of Documents).* Edited by Martin KERN and Dirk MEYER. Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2017. Pp. vi+508.**

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The publication of a major English-language book on the *Shang shu* 尚書 (Elevated documents) or *Shu jing* 書經 (Classic of documents), the second of the Chinese classics, should surely count as a major milestone in the Western study of early China. As the editors note in their Introduction, the *Shang shu* has inspired all aspects of Chinese political philosophy for over two thousand years now. Yet, as they also say, “In some kind of reverse—and bizarre—correlation, the *Shangshu* is as important to the Chinese political tradition as it is neglected in Western scholarship” (p. 2). Their claim just above this that “major Western works on the *Shangshu* can be counted on two hands, with fingers to spare” is only a bit exaggerated.¹ In this volume we now have fourteen studies in just over 500 pages, that directly address at least fourteen different chapters of the *Shang shu*, not to mention two chapters of the

1 True, I count only eight or nine such studies listed in the various bibliographies attached at the end of each chapter, but they do not even include mention of such classic studies as Paul Pelliot, “Le *Chou King* en caractères anciens et le *Chang Chou che wen*,” *Mémoires concernant l’Asie Orientale* 2 (1916): 123–77, or Benjamin Elman, “Philosophy (*I-Li*) versus Philology (*K’ao-cheng*): The *Jen-hsin tao-hsin* Debate,” *T’oung Pao* 2nd ser. 69.4–5 (1983):175–222, or even Michael Nylan, “The Many Dukes of Zhou in Early Sources,” in *Statecraft and Classical Learning: The Rituals of Zhou in East Asian History*, eds. Benjamin A. Elman and Martin Kern (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 94–128, a study of the ways that the Duke of Zhou 周公 is represented in the *Shang shu* and the *Yi Zhou shu* and which was published in a book edited by one of the editors of the book under review. Still, the point is well taken.

Yi Zhou shu 逸周書 (Leftover Zhou documents).² The volume is the product of two international conferences, one held at Princeton in 2013 and the second at Oxford in 2014, the published papers revealing considerable revision and strong editorial hands. The fourteen chapters also display the various contributors' different strengths, some engaging in deep reading of the text(s) in question, others soaring over several texts or even whole books. Different readers will come to different evaluations of the relative strengths and weaknesses of these offerings, but taken as a whole the volume surely makes the significant contribution promised in the editors' Introduction. Indeed, to my mind, the only significant failing of the book is the Introduction itself, which is marred by an unappealing self-congratulatory triumphalism, which simultaneously denigrates past scholarship—always without explicit attribution, while also suggesting that all of its contributors speak in a single voice, which is most certainly not the case. In the following remarks, I will first review the contents of the fourteen chapters, which after all constitute the heart of the book, before turning to consider the Introduction itself.

Martin Kern is the author of the first contribution to the book: "Language and the Ideology of Kingship in the 'Canon of Yao,'" a study of the "Yao dian" 堯典. This is a revised version of a study by the same title published just two years earlier.³

- 2 The chapters are (in the order which they appear in the book, with the chapter number and the author of that chapter): "Yao dian" 堯典 (Canon of Yao; 1 Kern and 2 Vogelsang), "Gaoyao mo" 皋陶謨 (Counsel of Gaoyao; 2 Vogelsang), "Lü xing" 呂刑 (Punishments of Lü; 2 Vogelsang and 13 Sanft), "Gu ming" 顧命 (Testamentary charge; 3 Meyer), "Kang Wang zhi gao" 康王之誥 (King Kang's announcement; 3 Meyer), "Duo shi" 多士 (Many sires; 4 Gentz), "Duo fang" 多方 (Many regions; 4 Gentz), "Jin teng" 金縢 (Metal-bound coffer; 5 Gren and 6 Meyer), "Gan shi" 甘誓 (Harangue at Gan; 8 Kern), "Tang shi" 湯誓 (Harangue of Tang; 8 Kern), "Mu shi" 牧誓 (Harangue at Mu; 8 Kern), "Wu yi" 無逸 (Without ease; 10 Pines and 11 Hunter), "Bi shi" 費誓 (Harangue at Bi; 12 Khayutina), and "Yu gong" 禹貢 (Tribute of Yu; 14 McNeal), as well as *Yi Zhou shu* "Shang shi" 商誓 (Harangue at Shang; 4 Gentz) and "Wang hui" 王會 (Royal convocation; 14 McNeal).
- 3 Martin Kern, "Language and the Ideology of Kingship in the 'Canon of Yao,'" in *Ideology of Power and Power of Ideology*, eds. Yuri Pines, Paul R. Goldin, and Martin Kern (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 118–151. It is unclear whether such prompt republication is meant to signal the essay's unique importance or its urgent need for revision. Kern says that this "version now supersedes the earlier one" (p. 23 * note). However, a comparison of the first ten pages of the two versions shows them to be essentially identical—other than formatting changes—with the exception of an added paragraph on page 29 of the book under review, and deleted paragraphs at pages 125 and 126–27 of the previous version (the latter of which, at least, concerns primarily the *Shi jing* 詩經 [Classic of poetry] and thus would be out of place in the present book).

Apparently Brill was more lenient in terms of page number than are most presses, two other chapters in the book also being more or less similar re-publications of studies published within the last three years. However, since the book in which the earlier version of Kern's essay was published is probably no more readily available than the present book and as far as I can tell has not yet been reviewed, the essay deserves introduction here.

Kern makes two principal arguments regarding the "Yao dian": first that the text opens with a "performative speech," and second that the overall effect of the argument was understood in the Qin and Han—and perhaps was created in the Qin and Han—as an argument in favor of a particular view of kingship. He begins with a lengthy revisionist reading of the first sentences of the chapter (here presented without punctuation so as not to prejudice the reading):

曰若稽古帝堯曰放勳欽明文思安安允恭克讓光被四表格于上下

This is usually translated as something like:

Examining into antiquity, Di Yao was called Fangxun. Respecting bright virtue and thinking peacefully, truly respectful he was able to yield, his radiance covered the four exteriors and he caused those above and below to arrive.

Kern argues instead that "Fangxun" 放勳, traditionally said to be the name of Yao 堯, should begin a speech by Yao, and mean something like "imitating [past] merits." In offering this revisionist reading, he admits that he flies in the face of all early readings, which he would date to the Han, as well as explicit evidence in two different passages of the *Mengzi* 孟子 that Fangxun was Yao's name.

In rejecting *fangxun* as Yao's designation, I consider the readings given in *Shiji*, *Da Dai liji*, and other Han sources to be misinterpretations. At the same time, the fact that already the *Mengzi* understands *fangxun* as Yao's personal name raises two possibilities: either this reading, which runs against the structure of the *Shangshu* text itself, was indeed very early, possibly in a separate tradition of the Yao legend, or the two pertinent *Mengzi* passages (5.4 and 9.4) were composed only under the influence of Han sources such as the *Shiji* (p. 28 n. 21).

It is not at all clear what Kern gains from denying all of this evidence. After all, other than the first two sentences, his punctuation, and indeed his

understanding, of the rest of the passage in question is not different from the traditional reading. The price for his suggestion to read this as a “performance text,” a familiar theme in his scholarship, is very high: the discounting of virtually all counter evidence. A less interested reading might find that price too high.

Kern’s distinction between an activist Yao who regularly rejects the advice of his advisers and a more compliant Shun 舜 who is guided by his advisers is interesting and well taken. He finds corroboration of this difference in the “*Guwen*” 古文 (Ancient text) *Shang shu*’s division of the chapter into two separate chapters: “Yao dian” and “Shun dian” 舜典. When he says “Yao and Shun could have been understood as representing two complementary aspects of imperial rule that could be alternately actualized according to the situation” (p. 54), this too rings true. His notice that Wang Mang 王莽 likened himself to Shun when he assumed power, enshrining Shun in the imperial temple as his ancestor, is likewise well taken. But when he goes on to imply—without ever really stating—that this owes to Qin and Han political views, apparently disregarding the possibility that such views may have been debated in earlier times, he again seems to go well beyond where his evidence would take him. After all, the tension between the prerogatives of the sovereign and those of his advisers was perhaps the preeminent debate in Chinese political philosophy, important in the Qin and Han, to be sure, but also just as important in earlier (and later) times.

In his contribution, “Competing Voices in the *Shangshu*,” Kai Vogelsang follows Kern’s lead in seeing two different political philosophies on display in the “Yao dian” (like Kern, he too notes the division of the chapter in the “*Guwen*” *Shang shu* into two separate chapters), but extends a similar analysis also to two other chapters: “Gaoyao mo” 皋陶謨 (Counsel of Gaoyao) and “Lü xing” 呂刑 (Punishments of Lü). Like the “Yao dian,” “Gaoyao mo” is also divided into two separate chapters in the “*Guwen*” *Shang shu*: “Gaoyao mo” proper and “Yi Ji” 益稷 (Yi and Ji), of which “Gaoyao mo” purports to be a speech (or speeches) by Gaoyao 皋陶, the minister of Shun and then Yu 禹 in charge of laws, and “Yi Ji” purports to be a speech (or speeches) by Yu, who would succeed Shun as sovereign (and eventually to be recognized as the founder of the Xia dynasty). Juxtaposing the two parts of the chapter in parallel columns A and B (based on the translation of Bernhard Karlgren), Vogelsang argues that despite their superficial similarity, they reveal different vocabulary and grammatical usages, and, more important, that part A “centers on the virtue of the ruler” (p. 71) whereas part B seems to reverse part A’s arguments (p. 72), though the reversal is hard to follow because of the fragmented nature

of the part. He concludes this analysis by saying “This suggests that in the *Shangshu* we must reckon with chapters that are neither homogeneous units nor composite writings where the different layers complement or reinforce one another, but that actually contain *rival* discourses which may ultimately be incompatible” (p. 78).

After a similar parallel analysis of the “Yao dian,” finding “two distinct parts that differ in vocabulary *and* political theory,” one “centered on the virtue of the ruler” and one “mak[ing] a case for bureaucratic government in which ministers are the most important actors” (p. 88), Vogelsang then moves on to the “Lü xing” chapter. Noting that although it has not been split into separate parts in traditional editions of the *Shang shu*, he again divides it into two separate parts, A and B. However, while his part A has seven separate sub-parts, B is represented by just one passage, which is a “catalogue of ‘procedural law’ and other legal rules.” Whereas part A focuses on “virtue,” the passage identified as part B emphasizes “penalties” (*fa* 罰), a word which Vogelsang notes occurs seventeen times in the passage (without occurring a single time in what he identifies as part A). He proposes two different scenarios to explain this sort of difference: “one may argue that different contexts (e.g., the ‘king’ speaking to different groups) or literary genres (e.g., speeches vs. lists or catalogs) require different styles and vocabulary and that the divergence in content between A2 and B1 may be understood as supplementary rather than contradictory. Or one may take these discrepancies seriously and argue that they betray the work of different authors or editors who held mutually opposed positions on questions of law and government” (p. 99). It is clear which of these two scenarios he favors by his characterization of it as being the one that “takes seriously” the difference, though one might imagine that other interpretations could also take it seriously.

In his concluding section, Vogelsang asks whether these differences he detects in the three different chapters he analyzes might reflect a systematic difference in the creation of the *Shang shu*, one arguing for “charismatic rule” and the other for bureaucratic government. However, combining the vocabulary and grammatical analyses that he brings to bear to the three chapters, he finds “no such perfect division” (p. 102), and concludes “there appear to be no consistent layers that recur in different chapters” (p. 103). From this he concludes “Given the complexity of the text’s history, this picture is not at all surprising; in fact, any degree of uniformity would be a surprise. For modern scholars of the *Shangshu*, this means that they have to analyze not only every chapter but also every paragraph by itself, taking into account the larger contexts to which they may belong and also the numerous

interpolations, glosses that slipped into the text, and so forth. The manifold and perhaps competing voices in the *Shangshu* will continue to puzzle scholars” (p. 103). This is certainly true, though I very much doubt that anyone who has taken the trouble to read the entirety of the *Shang shu* would be puzzled to find competing voices in it.

The third essay in the volume, by Dirk Meyer, examines another chapter that is divided into two chapters by the “*Guwen*” *Shangshu*: the “Gu ming” 顧命 (Testamentary charge) and “Kang Wang zhi gao” 康王之誥 (King Kang’s announcement). “Gu ming” purports to record the deathbed testament of King Cheng of Zhou 周成王 and then the installation of his son Zhao 釗 as his successor, King Kang 康王. However, unlike Kern and Vogelsang, Meyer proposes to follow the “*Jinwen*” 今文 (Modern text) *Shangshu* in reading the two parts together as one consolidated whole, though, somewhat confusingly, he refers to the two parts of the text as A and B and notes that they are very different in nature. Discounting the purported historical context, he argues that “Gu ming” “is not primarily a document that records historical change through events but a multilayered intellectual enterprise where ancient communities come to terms with the changing realities of their social and intellectual experience” (p. 106). In an understanding already familiar from his earlier publications, Meyer goes on to explain that he views the text as existing “primarily in oral form”:

By constructing a narrative that can be understood as giving a reason (the emergency created by the king’s imminent death and, therefore, his need to quickly name a successor) for its physical existence, it thus expresses a sense of unease about, and therefore the need to explain, the event of recording what may well (or should ideally?) exist primarily in oral form (p. 108).

After presenting an annotated translation of King Cheng’s address,⁴ Meyer then

4 It is somewhat disconcerting that Meyer only rarely indicates any debt to previous English translations: those by James Legge and Bernhard Karlgren (the glosses of whom are occasionally noted, especially in the linguistically more challenging second part of the chapter); the extensive translation given by Edward Shaughnessy (“The Role of Grand Protector Shi in the Consolidation of the Zhou Conquest,” *Ars Orientalis* 19 [1989]: 51–77) seems to have avoided Meyer’s bibliographical search altogether, even though its central argument that the “Gu ming” chapter underscores the consolidation of Zhou dynastic rule anticipates Meyer’s main conclusion (as stated, for instance, on p. 137).

compares the text to the recently discovered Tsinghua manuscript **Bao xun* 保訓 (Treasured instruction), for which he also provides a complete translation.⁵

Before then going on to translate the second half of “Gu ming,” Meyer inserts a theoretical interlude, which he terms “Recontextualization and Memory Production.” He says that by having a historical context “the text transmutes the immediacy of the speech, and the communicative event underlying the text is brought to the fore. When speech is recontextualized thus within a historical situation, real or imagined, it is no longer just reenacting the event—the speech now becomes a mediated, archived object. It is no longer performative or addresses the immediate witnesses of the occasion. Thus, the text that includes the speech becomes a reference tool, oral or written, to inform a wider audience across the distance of time. It becomes a *lieu de mémoire*, a place that stores—in fact, constructs—memory” (p. 127). It seems to me that this is just another way to say that the text is a text. Finally, Meyer closes with the following claim:

I do not wish to say that “Gu ming” in its entirety was an Eastern Zhou fabrication, as certain elements of the text may well be of a much older date. But the making of the text as a *lieu de mémoire* to be used in politico-philosophical discourse is clearly indicative of Eastern Zhou textual intervention (p. 138).

This suggestion, which flies in the face of virtually all other datings of the text,⁶ would be more persuasive if it were accompanied by specific evidence, especially linguistic or paleographic evidence.

The fourth essay, by Joachim Gentz, is entitled “One Heaven, One History, One People: Repositioning the Zhou in Royal Addresses to Subdued

5 In the case of this translation, the annotation is much lighter than in the case of Meyer’s “Gu ming” translation, and it is marked by a similar absence of reference to any relevant Western literature on the text, for which one might note Shirley Chan 陳慧, “*Zhong* 中 and Ideal Rulership in the *Baoxun* 保訓 (Instructions for Preservation) Text of the Tsinghua Collection of Bamboo Slip Manuscripts,” *Dao* 11.2 (2012): 129–45, and Chapter Seven of Sarah Allan’s *Buried Ideas: Legends of Abdication and Ideal Government in Early Chinese Bamboo-slip Manuscripts* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2015), 263–314, which presents a complete annotated translation.

6 Chinese tradition, of course, dates the “Gu ming” chapter to the Western Zhou, as does not only almost all modern Chinese scholarship, but also most Western scholarship, including that of both Martin Kern and Kai Vogelsang (for which, see p. 110 n. 17 of Meyer’s essay).

Enemies in the ‘Duo shi’ 多士 and ‘Duo fang’ 多方 Chapters of the *Shangshu* and in the ‘Shang shi’ 商誓 Chapter of the *Yi Zhoushu*”; the title provides a good indication of the contents of the essay. Gentz argues that these three texts are unique in world literature insofar as they seek to persuade conquered foes by force of reason that the “historical rupture” of the conquest is actually defined as “continuity” (p. 174). He also suggests that the three chapters show a similar organization, which he outlines as follows (p. 157):

- Indictments of recent transgressions of the subdued Shang
- Historical precedent: the Xia were likewise overthrown by Shang
- The infamous tyrant Zhou of Shang turned against Heaven’s order
- Heaven thereupon transferred its Mandate to the Zhou
- Indictments of recent transgressions of the subdued Shang (in the form of questions)
- Order to cooperate combined with a threat to exterminate those who do not obey

He then identifies thirty-one different “modules” that go into the making of *Shang shu* chapters (pp. 160–61), many of which he finds to be unique to the *Shang shu*, including both “*Jinwen*” and “*Guwen*” chapters. He notes that the “Duo shi” and the “Duo fang” show a number of parallels with such other *Shang shu* chapters as the “Jun Shi” 君奭 (Lord Shi) and “Jiu gao” 酒誥 (Announcement on wine). Within the chapter he provides translations and analyses of the “Duo shi” and “Duo fang” chapters (and provides a complete translation of the heretofore untranslated “Shang shi” chapter in an appendix, pp. 182–88⁷), paying careful attention to rhetorical elements, suggesting that

7 Gentz’s translation of this difficult text is generally reliable. However, there is one point to note regarding the text that he used, which has important implications for the discussion of *Shang shu* chapter types in both Gentz’s own chapter and also that of Martin Kern, “The ‘Harangues’ (*Shi* 誓) in the *Shangshu*” (for which, see below). As Gentz notes at the beginning of his translation, he uses the *Yi Zhou shu* text given in Huang Huaixin 黃懷信, Zhang Maorong 張懋鎔 and Tian Xudong 田旭東, *Yi Zhou shu huijiao jizhu* 逸周書彙校集注 (Shanghai: Shanghai Guji chubanshe, 1995), 477–94. This edition, revised in 2007, is now generally accepted as the best current critical edition, and so this was a reasonable choice. However, it should be noted that Huang routinely “corrects” the received text whenever he perceives the need, only making mention of any original reading in his discussion. For instance, in three places where the received text of the *Yi Zhou shu* reads “*xian shi wang*” 先誓王, Huang’s text reads “*xian zhe wang*” 先哲王, which Gentz translates as “former wise Shang king(s)” (twice on p. 183 and once on p. 186). There is considerable philological support for this emendation; not only is

the two “Duo” chapters are particularly well structured while the “Shang shi” chapter is rather loose in its organization and rhetoric.

He concludes the chapter with a discussion of the vexed question of the date of the texts. Employing the sort of comparison of the *Shang shu* with

“*xian zhe wang*” a standard phrase seen in such chapters of the *Shang shu* as “Kang gao” 康誥, “Jiu gao” 酒誥, and “Shao gao” 召誥, but more importantly, *shi* 誓 is an attested allograph for *zhe* 哲 “wise” in Western Zhou bronze inscriptions, as shown by the parallel phrases in the following two inscriptions describing ancestors:

Liang Qi *zhong*: [...] was able to make wise his virtue.

梁其鐘：克哲厥德

Pan Sheng *gui*: [...] was able to make wise his virtue.

番生簋：克誓厥德

Thus, Gentz’s translation is almost certainly correct; the graph 誓 in this text was but an early allograph for 哲. However, the reason that this point needs to be noted is, as noted already in the nineteenth century by Zhu Youzeng 朱右曾 (*jinshi* 1838), these three occurrences of the graph 誓 in the text of this chapter doubtless influenced the title of the chapter “Shang shi” 商誓, which Gentz (and also Kern) translates as “Harangue to Shang” (p. 155 and p. 286); for Zhu Youzeng’s suggestion, see Huang Huaixin, Zhang Maorong and Tian Xudong, *Yi Zhou shu huijiao jizhu*, 477. On the same page as this translation, Gentz notes of the text:

Although classified as a *shi* 誓 (harangue), it differs from the harangues in the *Shangshu* in structure and diction but seems close to the two “Duo” chapters there (p. 155).

This too is correct. However, he then goes on to treat all three of the texts as “harangues”:

In addressing this particular group, the “Shang shi” and “Duo” chapters therefore follow a rhetorical and compositional pattern also used in other *Shangshu* harangues when particular groups that are not in line with the king’s commands are admonished (p. 156).

This compositional line is almost identical with the fixed sequence of elements that Martin Kern describes in his analysis of the harangues (*shi* 誓) of the *Shangshu* (p. 158).

For his part, Kern says of the “Shang shi”:

This text presents a speech that King Wu purportedly gave to the captured Shang officers after the Zhou conquest; as such, it is not a battle speech but rather is similar to the “Many Officers” (“Duo shi” 多士) and “Many Regions” (“Duo fang” 多方) chapters in the *Shangshu* (p. 286).

This too is correct. Unfortunately, neither Gentz nor Kern has noted the accidental way that this chapter came to be termed a “*shi*” 誓. The text is actually not a *shi* “harangue” at all, but rather a standard *gao* 誥 “announcement,” as are also both the “Duo shi” and “Duo fang” chapters.

Western Zhou bronze inscriptions previously used by Kai Vogelsang,⁸ and finding a “lack of terminological and conceptual overlap” between them, Gentz suggests “bronze inscriptions do not help in dating the ‘Duo’ chapters” (p. 177). Instead, he turns to what he terms “ideology” to suggest that the texts must have been written about the mid-Western Zhou period, some one hundred years after the events of the conquest. Much of his argumentation in this regard seems to me to be counter-intuitive, as when he says on page 179 “The loyalty and goodwill of the vassals upon which the Shang and early Zhou rulers still depended are superseded by the goodwill of Heaven, which, however, is not reliable.” Indeed, the evidence of bronze inscriptions suggests that by the mid-Western Zhou, the descendants of Shang, to the extent that they can even still be identified in the inscriptional record, had been thoroughly assimilated into the Zhou regime. This being the case, one wonders why the Zhou rulers would have felt any need to try to persuade the Shang descendants to obey them. I would not want to suggest that the received texts of the “Duo shi” and “Duo fang” are among the earliest Zhou documents in the *Shang shu*, but it would be hard to imagine a better historical context for their initial formulation than the immediate aftermath of the Zhou conquest itself.

The fifth and sixth chapters, by Magnus Ribbing Gren and Dirk Meyer respectively, both address the “Jin teng” 金滕 (Metal-bound coffer) chapter of the *Shang shu* and particularly its counterpart among the Tsinghua manuscripts, there entitled *Zhou Wu wang you ji Zhou Gong suo zi yi dai wang zhi zhi* 周武王有疾周公所自以代王之志 (The record of King Wu being ill and the Duke of Zhou substituting himself for the king). Since both of these essays are essentially republications of studies that were previously published in widely available journals,⁹ in Ribbing Gren’s case “with minor modifications,” and in the case of Meyer’s essay with numerous stylistic changes,¹⁰ it seems to me

8 Kai Vogelsang, “Inscriptions and Proclamations: On the Authenticity of the ‘Gao’ Chapters in the *Book of Documents*,” *Bulletin of the Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities* 74 (2002): 138–209.

9 Magnus Ribbing Gren, “The Qinghua ‘Jinteng’ 金滕 Manuscript: What It Does Not Tell Us about the Duke of Zhou,” *T’oung Pao* 102.4–5 (2016): 291–320; Dirk Meyer, “The Art of Narrative and the Rhetoric of Persuasion in the ‘*Jin Téng’ (Metal Bound Casket) from the Tsinghua Collection of Manuscripts,” *Asiatische Studien / Études Asiatiques* 68.4 (2014): 937–68.

10 Aside from ubiquitous rephrasings of essentially the same formulations, the essay in the book under review here, “‘Shu’ Traditions and Text Recomposition: A Reevaluation of ‘Jinteng’ 金滕 and ‘Zhou Wu Wang you ji’ 周武王有疾,” includes one additional section, entitled “Text and Fabula,” and eliminates from the earlier essay several of the sorts of diagrams that Meyer has used in many of his previous publications.

unnecessary to review them in detail here. However, there is one important substantive change in the two versions of Meyer’s essay, to which he himself calls attention,¹¹ which should perhaps be highlighted.

In the conclusion to his 2014 publication, Meyer argued that the form of the *Zhou Wu wang you ji Zhou Gong suo zi yi dai wang zhi zhi* manuscript suggests that it was intended to be circulated widely and read in private by individuals.

Given its presentation of a dramatic narrative, the form of the “Zhōu Wǔwáng yǒu jí” seems suited to private text consumption. In this respect, the opening frame of the text is particularly revealing. It presents a dramatic setting that brings to the fore all the contextual information necessary for an indeterminate audience to confront the text and its message. The assumption that the text was not just produced for a known and limited group of recipients but that it was made available for wider distribution and independent text circulation is further supported by the physical properties of the manuscript that suggest manuscript production on a larger scale and not just for this one instantiation of the text.

Despite my conviction that the “Zhōu Wǔwáng yǒu jí” was read in private by individuals, which has significant implications for our understanding of reading and knowledge transmission in the late Warring States period, I maintain that the text also had a politico-philosophical dimension that goes beyond plain Zhōu propaganda to portray the Duke of Zhōu as a loyal statesman in selfless service to his lord.¹²

On the other hand, the essay in the book under review, published in 2017, presents a completely different context for the production and reception of the text in ancient China.

[...] “Zhou Wu Wang you ji” is more than a narrative: it is performative in the sense that it requires its audience to activate the historical background stored in cultural memory. In its elegant symmetrical brevity, which also constitutes its fundamental incompleteness, the text stages itself as an aesthetic artifact that becomes fully meaningful only in its reception by a community of insiders.

This, to me, is indicative of another feature. The fact that “Zhou

11 See n. 12 below.

12 Meyer, “The Art of Narrative and the Rhetoric of Persuasion in the ‘*Jin Téng,’” 962–63.

Wu Wang you ji” speaks to the meaning community of beholders of hegemonic Zhou culture and memory insinuates that successful text reception requires some degree of acquiescence with regard to the conclusion in “Zhou Wu Wang you ji,” and thus to the values propagated by the Zhou. It thus appears that a community with severe skepticism about the motives of the Duke of Zhou cannot constitute the target audience of “Zhou Wu Wang you ji.” More likely, “Zhou Wu Wang you ji” was “preaching to the converted,” that is, a community that subscribed to orthodox Zhou values while also being aware of, and perhaps even sharing, some of the doubt over the duke’s position in Zhou cultural memory. [...]

The actuality of “Zhou Wu Wang you ji”—a text that embodies the experience of doubt and belief on the part of audiences—thus clearly lies in performance, that is, the formalized reenactment of that incident of disbelief. The structural and visual properties of the text seem well suited to oral performance,¹³ possibly including the marking up of breathing points in the manuscript, which would have facilitated intoning the text aloud (pp. 244–46).

That virtually the same analysis of the text could, within the span of three years, produce such diametrically different conclusions about its social context might cause one to question just how firmly grounded these conclusions might be.

Chapter Seven, “The *Yi Zhoushu* and the *Shangshu*: The Case of Texts with Speeches,” by Yegor Grebnev, attempts to identify analogous groups of texts within the *Yi Zhou shu* and the *Shang shu*, two collections that have traditionally been understood as containing texts of the same genre or genres.¹⁴ Building on his recent Ph.D. dissertation,¹⁵ he focuses on texts that purport to be speeches or predominantly to feature speeches, which as he notes include all but one the chapter of the “*Jinwen*” *Shang shu* (the one chapter that he regards, understandably, as essentially narrative is the “Yu gong” 禹貢 [Tribute of Yu]) and about thirty-four of the fifty-nine extant chapters of the *Yi Zhou shu*. Since this encompasses almost the entirety of the two texts, he proposes further to

¹³ The original here contains a note (n. 61): “Here I correct my earlier remarks in Meyer 2014a.”

¹⁴ Instead of “genres,” Grebnev refers to “textual types,” adding a note (p. 251 n. 9) arguing that his term is “perhaps more suitable for fine-grained analysis of textual structures in their diachronic evolution.” I fail to see the rationale behind this distinction.

¹⁵ Yegor Grebnev, “The Core Chapters of the *Yi Zhou shu*” (Ph.D. diss., University of Oxford 2016).

employ a “formalistic approach” (p. 267), differentiating among “dramatic” speeches (nineteen of the twenty-eight chapters of the *Shang shu* but only three chapters of the *Yi Zhou shu*), which “are emotionally laden and personalized and have a richer repertoire of emphatic devices”; “nondramatic” speeches (only one chapter of the *Shang shu*, i.e. the “Hong fan” 洪範 [Vast plan], but sixteen chapters of the *Yi Zhou shu*), which “appear as treatises superficially furnished by emphatic devices reminiscent of dramatic speeches” (p. 255); “brief speeches related to dream revelations” (three chapters of the *Yi Zhou shu*)(p. 270); “texts with writing-informed contextualization” (one chapter of the *Shang shu* [“Lü xing”] and three chapters of the *Yi Zhou shu*), texts that explicitly mention their own composition (p. 270); “plot-based stories with dialogues” (only the “Jin teng” of the *Shang shu*, as well as two chapters of the *Yi Zhou shu*)(p. 272); and “texts with speeches that are difficult to classify” (five chapters of the *Shang shu* and six chapters of the *Yi Zhou shu*)(p. 273). That this sounds rather like the Borgesian *Celestial Emporium of Benevolent Knowledge* seems not to be lost on Grebnev. In a note expressing his gratitude to Robert Eno, one of the press referees for the book, Grebnev makes the following allowance:

My classification may appear overly mechanical since I prioritize the easily identifiable formal textual features over the more intricate ones and largely disregard the contents of texts. Indeed, it would be possible to make my study more fine-grained by highlighting the important differences in texts that otherwise appear formally similar. This improvement, however, would have required me to rely more on subjective interpretation and would have made my classification lose much of its transparency, which I prefer to avoid. Nonetheless, I acknowledge that a scrutiny of textual intricacies would complement my detached formalistic analysis and perhaps challenge it in important ways (p. 253 n. 13).

In a concluding section entitled “Discussion,” he notes:

All this makes the *Yi Zhoushu* appear very different from the *Shangshu*, which contains predominantly dramatic speech. It therefore seems that in the *Shangshu* an attempt was made to ensure the typological consistency of the collection. At the same time, the *Yi Zhoushu* appears more like an assemblage of very different texts that, if one follows the logic of its last chapter, “Zhoushu xu” 周書序, had only one thing in common: they were believed to be somehow related to the Zhou dynasty (pp. 276–77).

This characterization is certainly unobjectionable, but it is also common knowledge. One might hope that Grebnev will build upon his doctoral dissertation to offer a more subjective “scrutiny of textual intricacies”; even at the risk of sacrificing transparency, this would doubtless show more about the diversity of the *Yi Zhou shu*.

Chapter Eight, “The ‘Harangues’ (*Shi* 誓) in the *Shangshu*,” is a second contribution by Martin Kern. As the title suggests, he examines the six battlefield speeches or “harangues” (*shi* 誓), one of the five genres into which the *Shang shu* chapters have traditionally been divided. Kern focuses in particular on three of these: the “Gan shi” 甘誓 (Harangue at Gan), which purports to be a speech by Yu at the beginning of the Xia dynasty; the “Tang shi” 湯誓 (Harangue of Tang), attributed to Tang 湯, the founder of the Shang dynasty, before his troops attacked Jie 桀, the last of the Xia kings; and the “Mu shi” 牧誓 (Harangue at Mu), said to have been the speech of King Wu of Zhou 周武王 on the morning of the battle at Muye 牧野, in the course of which the Zhou overthrew the Shang. Kern provides complete translations for each of these three short chapters.

Beginning with the observation by Thucydides that his method in recording the battlefield speeches included in his *The Peloponnesian War* is “to make each speaker to say broadly what I supposed would have been needed on any given occasion,”¹⁶ Kern argues throughout the chapter that the battlefield speeches or harangues in the *Shang shu* were also made up retrospectively.

I consider them not to be the actual words spoken but those that were retrospectively imagined (p. 284).

[A]ll of these should be considered not as documentary accounts but as idealizing constructions of “remembered history” (p. 285).

It frees us from the traditional—and methodologically unsustainable—assumption that the received texts are discrete entities that in some inexplicable way survived over centuries in more or less pristine form and that therefore can be dated individually on the basis of their linguistic properties (p. 304).

[A]ll these texts were part of a common repertoire, or possibly of several

16 Thucydides, *The Peloponnesian War*, trans. Martin Hammond (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 12 (1.22), quoted on p. 281.

separate such repertoires, that at some point during the late Warring States gave rise to the formation of the texts in a form recognizably related to their received versions (p. 306).

This argument is also unobjectionable, but it is hardly novel. Already on page 288, Kern notes that virtually all modern scholars have dated the texts to the Eastern Zhou, and again at page 305, with particular respect to the “Mu shi,” which is the focus of the second half of his study, Kern notes that Herrlee G. Creel declared the “Harangue at Mu” “almost certainly not what it purports to be, a speech by King Wu,” and continues by saying “The same conclusion was shared by Chen Mengjia, Zhang Xitang, and Matsumoto Masaaki, who all suspected the text to date from the Warring States.”

A second argument made by Kern is that these texts were performed as part of later Zhou ritual celebrations.

It is very possible that this colorful iconography of King Wu wielding his yellow ax and brandishing his white banner had entered the historical imagination via an early performance tradition. This tradition may have developed in the choreography of the Zhou ancestral sacrifices [...] (p. 300).

In the Zhou ancestral temple, every such reperformance of King Wu’s speech evoked the imagined original harangue as the dynasty’s primordial call into being [...] (p. 308).

Whatever the case, from the fact that Warring States and Han authors knew about both a “Great Harangue” and a “Harangue at Mu,” it appears that more than a single version of King Wu’s battle speech existed, and that these different versions gradually found their way into different written accounts. It is also possible that to the very end of the Zhou state, until 256 BCE, the conquest of 1046 BCE was still remembered in performance (p. 311).

This is certainly possible, but as far as I know there is no evidence, whether textual or artifactual, showing that any of these harangues actually figured in any Zhou ritual. Indeed, Kern himself notes regarding the “Mu shi,” which once again is the main topic of his discussion throughout the second half of his study, “its early reception does not appear to have begun before the Han dynasty” (p. 288). Thus, while rituals certainly took place and performances

may well have been a part of them, one can only imagine a role for the harangues in them.

Chapter Nine, by David Schaberg, “Speaking of Documents: *Shu* Citations in Warring States Texts,” is the odd man out among the chapters of this book in that it does not directly address any chapter or chapters of the *Shang shu*, but rather examines echoes (the sonic metaphor very much intended) of them in Warring States and Qin and Han texts. Since Schaberg revisits topics that he discussed a decade and even two decades ago it would be pointless here—in a review of studies of the *Shang shu per se*—to devote much space to discussing his broader concerns, which to a very great extent are echoes of his own past scholarship.

As in his celebrated *A Patterned Past: Form and Thought in Early Chinese Historiography*,¹⁷ Schaberg writes so beautifully that it is easy to be enticed by his rhetoric. But consider the gulf between the first two sentences of his essay and the last two:

Considered—naively—as a record of linguistic development, the canonical early Chinese texts imply a strikingly discontinuous sort of evolution. Between texts associated with the Western Zhou, such as the older portions of the *Shangshu* 尚書 and of the *Shijing* 詩經, and Warring States texts like the *Zuo zhuan* 左傳, there lies a dark age of change, in which syntax and vocabulary were transformed (p. 320).

The *Shu* had not simply become the *Shangshu*: one can assume that it had, but doing so creates problems rather like those facing Ptolemaic systems of astronomy; one can make the equations work, to be sure, but there is another, simpler way. If this alternative way of proceeding calls into question the status of writing in pre-imperial China, it has the compensatory advantage of evoking a world of living speech in which the sound of antiquity (a sound often enough referred to as if it were silent, an unpronounced *Shu*) was still a part of intellectual discourse (p. 356).

A writer who can write so well must make sense, but I would suggest that no equation that is currently known, no matter how complicated or how simple, is sufficient to bridge the gap between this “dark age of change” and “a world of living speech in which the sound of antiquity was still a part of intellectual

17 David Schaberg, *A Patterned Past: Form and Thought in Early Chinese Historiography* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2001).

discourse.” Elsewhere, Schaberg, like Kern, engages the imagination, imagining some sort of a time machine tape recorder that will allow us to recapture the sound of antiquity:

Just as it may help us to imagine a complete anthology of archaic and archaizing passages, it may help to imagine the possibility—still just barely out of our reach, but perhaps not for long, given the progress being made in historical phonology and in the digital marking of texts—of comparing any given string of sounds (the sounds designated by a series of graphs in a *Shu* citation, for instance) with a large number of other strings within a defined corpus such as the proposed archaistic anthology. The aim of collation would be, not to bypass the written language, but to identify those places where different choices in writing obscure fundamental identity in the words and sentences themselves. Archaism was not, at least in the period under consideration, a phenomenon that took place entirely in writing, without reference to the spoken word. Only collation of the type described here can make sense of Warring States period data, which make it clear that writers knew of some archaic writings, including some of the materials they called *Shu*, primarily through sound rather than through sight” (pp. 322–23).

This may be interesting to imagine, but it is after all, still imaginary.

The next two chapters return us to the *Shang shu* proper. Both Chapter Ten and Chapter Eleven, by Yuri Pines and Michael Hunter respectively, address the “Wu yi” 無逸 (Without ease) chapter. I will consider the two studies separately, though it is curious that whereas Pines notes at the outset of his study that “Wu yi” is usually regarded as one of the less noteworthy of the chapters that purport to date to the early Western Zhou and specifically to report the words of the Duke of Zhou, Hunter instead says “both substantively and formally ‘Wu yi’ is among the most philosophical contributions to the ‘Shu’ tradition” (p. 394).

Pines indicates that his own interest was drawn to the text because of its use of historical precedent as a model for current governmental activity. He begins by providing a complete annotated translation of the text. The text points to four past sovereigns as paragons of good rule: Kings Zhongzong 中宗, Gaozong 高宗, and Zujia 祖甲 of the preceding Shang dynasty, and King Wen of Zhou 周文王, all four of whom were characterized by their care for the common people. Pines stresses that the latter three of these are said to have lived among the common people before coming to power, and that this experience influenced their rule. Although the notion of protecting the

people (*bao min* 保民) is central to most *Shang shu* texts, Pines argues that the “Wu yi” is unique—at least in relation to the nine chapters that are usually regarded as dating to the Western Zhou¹⁸—in that it does not mention any role for ministers or advisers as coming between the king and the people. Another feature of the text makes it unique within the context of Warring States political philosophy: its emphasis on the place of manual labor in the education of the proper sovereign. According to Pines, most Warring States thinkers encouraged rulers to enjoy their ease, so as to allow the bureaucracy to function without interference from them. From this, he concludes this section of his essay with the statement that “contrary to our expectations of a canonical scripture, ‘Wu yi’ appears not as representative of the mainstream ideological orientation of the Eastern Zhou period but rather as a marginal—and in some respects even subversive—text” (p. 381).

Pines concludes his study with what he labels frankly as “conjectures” concerning the date of the “Wu yi” chapter. Failing to find any tell-tale linguistic features marking it as either of Western Zhou or Warring States pedigree, he suggests that the years immediately following the fall of the Western Zhou in 771 B.C., when the royal court was in the process of moving east but had not yet consolidated itself might have provided the sort of historical context that would motivate such a text. In this regard, he notes that the recently published Tsinghua manuscript **Xinian* 繫年 (Annals), of which he has published one of the Western-language studies,¹⁹ might explain why for the “tiny polity” that the Zhou king ruled at the time “the ‘lowly people’ could have been more significant than focusing on officials and on regional lords, who ‘ceased attending the Zhou court’” (p. 386). I am sure that Pines would readily admit to the speculative nature of this conclusion, but as he says in his “Epilogue,” “this short essay suffices to show that a fresh look at the millennia-old documents may bring about new understandings” (p. 388).

Michael Hunter places “Wu yi” within a much broader context than does Pines. Perhaps motivated by the editors’ quotation in the Introduction of Max Müller’s saying “He who knows one [religion], knows none” (p. 10), Hunter

18 Pines regards the “five *gao* 誥” (i.e., “Da *gao*” 大誥 [Great announcement], “Kang *gao*” 康誥 [Announcement to Kang], “Jiu *gao*” 酒誥 [Announcement on wine], *Shao gao* 召誥 [Announcement of Shao] and “Luo *gao*” 洛誥 [Announcement at Luo]), as well as the “Duo *fang*” 多方 (Many regions), “Duo *shi*” 多士 (Many sires), “Zi *cai*” 梓材 (Catalpa timber) and “Jun *Shi*” 君奭 (Lord Shi) as representative of Western Zhou ideology.

19 Yuri Pines, “Zhou History and Historiography: Introducing the Bamboo Manuscript *Xinian*,” *T’oung Pao* 100.4–5 (2014): 287–324.

begins by comparing “Wu yi” (and indeed many other chapters of the *Shang shu* as well) to wisdom literature from throughout the ancient world, especially wisdom literature that takes the form of advice from an older man to a younger man. Other than the probably obvious point that old men have been giving their juniors advice for a long time, I am not sure that the almost ten pages of juxtaposed sayings shed much new light on any of these texts.

When he turns to “Wu yi” itself, Hunter presents a subtly different understanding from that of Pines. Whereas, as we have seen, Pines argues for the virtue of rulers engaging in manual labor early in their lives, Hunter suggests that the text urges instead only that rulers “understand” (*zhi* 知) the labors of others. Both Pines and Hunter explicitly note their disagreement with each other, Pines at page 368 note 29 and Hunter at page 406 note 42; however, despite the great importance that the distinction between knowledge (*zhi*) and action (*xing* 行) would take on in later Confucian philosophy, including in exegesis of the *Shang shu*, in this case the difference between the two interpretations strikes me as superficial rather than crucial.

To me, a more important distinction might be termed historiographical (though also with obvious political implications). Whereas Pines suggests that the sovereigns experienced at labor could serve as examples for their successors, Hunter argues that “idleness is not simply the opposite of hard work but also its indirect result” (p. 405). The “Wu yi” describes active rulers early in the dynasty, each of whom enjoyed lengthy reigns; on the other hand, the more recent rulers toward the end of the dynasty “were idle during their lives [...] some reigned for ten years, some for seven or eight years, some for five or six years, some for four or three years.” This reads like a precursor to the “dynastic cycle” argument that sees dynasties founded by vigorous and virtuous individuals, only to end with weak and willful rulers; just as sons of successful families have a tendency to be indolent, squandering the families’ wealth, so too do successors of vigorous rulers tend to be idle, eventually bringing the dynasty to an end. Hunter concludes his discussion of this point by terming “Wu yi” “a metadiscursive comment”:

In short, I propose that we read “Wu yi” as a metadiscursive comment on one of the core values of the instructions genre. On the one hand, it carves out a rhetorical space for kings and noblemen to justify the pursuit of pleasure. On the other, “Wu yi” highlights a tension within the generic didacticism of the *Shangshu* and related texts: the very virtues that are conducive to the material success of one generation indirectly contribute to the vices of the next (p. 407).

In his conclusion, Hunter uses this characterization to offer the following suggestion, almost in passing, concerning the date of the text:

[...] the metadiscursive qualities of “Wu yi,” a philosophical text in “Shu” clothing, point to a much later date of composition, perhaps in the late Warring States period (p. 413).

If, as Pines suggests (and as noted above), the “Wu yi” betrays no tell-tale linguistic signs of a Warring States composition, one wonders if the form of the text alone is sufficient to support such a broad-reaching conclusion.

With Chapter Twelve, Maria Khayutina’s “‘Bi shi’ 柴誓, Western Zhou Oath Texts, and the Legal Culture of Early China,” the scholarship takes a distinct turn from metadiscursive comment to local history. Khayutina begins with a translation of this short text of only 180 characters, which she later admits poses no linguistic difficulty. She begins her discussion with the problem of the title. She refers to the text as “Bi shi” 柴誓, said to have been the title in the “*Guwen*” version of the text, even though in almost all received editions the title is written as 費誓 (in which case the 費, normally read as *fèi*, is also to be read as *bi*, normally understood to refer to a place name found in present-day Shandong 山東 province), which is the reading of the “*Jinwen*” *Shang shu*. As for the *shi* 誓 of the title, which elsewhere in the *Shang shu* is used for battlefield speeches or harangues (as studied by Martin Kern in Chapter Eight of this volume), she argues on the basis of Western Zhou bronze inscriptional usage that it should be understood instead as an “oath,” noting that unlike other *shi* of the *Shang shu*, in which speakers state that they are making a *shi*, in this case the character appears only in the title. Although it is true that much of the text reads like oaths in those bronze inscriptions (as well as in later texts), it is perhaps understandable that later editors of the *Shang shu* would have regarded it as a battlefield speech, since the text begins by calling troops to march against the Huai Yi 淮夷 and the Xu Rong 徐戎, and then returns at the end to mention the exact date of the campaign. Nevertheless, the question of this title provides the context for Khayutina to provide a detailed discussion of oaths and their role in the early development of penal law in China.

She next notes that there have been at least two and perhaps three different understandings of the text’s historical context: the “Preface to the Documents” (*Shu xu* 書序) attributes it to Bo Qin 伯禽, the eldest son of the Duke of Zhou and the putative founder of the state of Lu 魯, and more specifically to the civil war at the very beginning of the Western Zhou dynasty.

On the other hand, the text’s place in the two different sequences of the *Shang shu* would suggest a later date. In the “*Jinwen*” *Shang shu*, it comes between the “Gu ming” and “Lü xing” chapters, which is to say sometime between the succession of King Kang and the reign of King Mu 穆王, while in the “*Guwen*” *Shang shu*, the text comes in the penultimate position, just before the “Qin shi” 秦誓 (Harangue of Qin), the contents of which date it to the reign of Duke Mu of Qin 秦穆公 (r. 659–621 B.C.). There is nothing in the content of the “Bi shi” that allows this dating to be resolved: the speaker is identified only as a “duke” (*gong* 公), the text later implying that he is a duke of Lu, since it is addressed to “men of Lu” (Lu *ren* 魯人). Attacks on the Huai Yi and Xu Rong are no more helpful in pinpointing a date, since they occurred intermittently throughout the entire Western Zhou dynasty and also into the Spring and Autumn period. Khayutina surveys the evidence for these wars, but noting that “Wars between Lu and the Yi of Huai during the Spring and Autumn period are not attested,” she concludes rather simplistically that “the Spring and Autumn period as a whole does not qualify as the historical setting for ‘Bi shi,’ which supports the traditional view of ‘Bi shi’ as depicting the war under King Cheng” (p. 424). When she turns to an examination of the language of the text, she offers a very different date.

In this examination of the language, Khayutina first compares it to oaths recorded in three different Western Zhou bronze inscriptions, all of which date to the late Western Zhou. While the language of the “Bi shi” is similar to that in these bronze inscriptions, it also differs in two important respects. First, it enjoins the recipients to “listen” (*ting* 聽) to the oath, which is never seen in the inscriptions but which is also mentioned in the “Qin shi,” as well as being regularly mentioned with respect to oaths in such later texts as the *Zuo zhuan* 左傳. Second, it refers to administrative districts *jiao* 郊 (suburbs) and *sui* 遂 (marches), which are never seen in Western Zhou inscriptions and which seem to be distinctly anachronistic for the Western Zhou. She then goes on to compare the chapter to the poem “Bi gong” 閼宮 (Secret palace) in the *Lu song* 魯頌 (Lu liturgies) section of the *Shi jing* 詩經 (Classic of poetry), probably the latest surely datable poem in the *Shi jing* (it is at least implicitly dated to the time of Duke Xi of Lu 魯僖公 [r. 659–627 B.C.]), parallels with which have led many modern scholars to date the “Bi shi” as well to the seventh century B.C. Finally, Khayutina notes the *Zuo zhuan* recounts that the state of Lu first formulated a legal code, or at least a public rationale for when punishments could be used, during the reign of Duke Xi’s grandson, Duke Xuan of Lu 魯宣公 (r. 608–591 B.C.), and that there are also parallels between the language of “Bi shi” and these legal codes. All of this leads her to

conclude, quite reasonably, it seems to me, that the “Bi shi” must have been written about this time, just as its placement in the “*Guwen*” sequence of the *Shang shu* would suggest.

However, not content just to conclude when the “Bi shi” might have been written, she goes on to speculate as to why and even how it may have been written. Without ever explicitly mentioning the work of Jan Assmann (one of whose books is listed in her bibliography²⁰), she frequently resorts to the notion of “cultural memory” for which he is well known, and says that the author or authors of “Bi shi” chose “the ancient form of the ‘oath’ and by introducing some expressions resembling the language of Western Zhou ‘commands,’ they possibly attempted to produce a text that their contemporary readers would recognize as an ancient document” (p. 430). She even goes so far as to give a name to the author—or at least to the circle of authors: Zang Wenzhong 臧文仲 (d. 617 B.C.), famed from his appearances in the *Zuo zhuan* and *Guo yu* 國語, and also as a (negative) paragon for Confucius.

Technically, producing texts similar to “Bi shi” was not a difficult task for learned men of Zang Wen *zhong*’s circle. As a minister, he certainly had access both to the archives of Lu and to the ducal temple where bronze vessels with inscriptions commissioned by former Dukes of Lu were preserved. If these archives or vessels contained some records from the first reigns of Lu, they would be similar to early Western Zhou bronze inscriptions from other places. Thus, they would differ from the current text of “Bi shi” in the ways discussed above. Quite certainly, the archives also contained many more recent command and oath texts, similar to those in middle to late Western Zhou bronze inscriptions. After studying these materials, “ancient documents” could easily be fabricated (p. 438).

It seems to me that there is little doubt that the “Bi shi” is a document of the early Spring and Autumn period, just as Khayutina concludes. However, I see no archaicism—conscious or otherwise—and certainly no “fabrication” in either the language or the ideas of the text. Rather, the author was simply writing in the language of his own day, which, after all, did not yet differ very dramatically from that of the late Western Zhou. Why this occasional text of little apparent historical or philosophical significance should have been included in the *Shang shu* is something of a mystery, but once it was included

20 Jan Assmann, *Cultural Memory and Early Civilization: Writing, Remembrance, and Political Imagination* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

it is not surprising that later editors and scholars should have sought to give it an even more ancient pedigree. It seems to me that if cultural memory explains anything, it would be this later editorial urge.

The penultimate chapter in the volume, “Concepts of Law in the *Shangshu*,” is by Charles Sanft. He starts with the observation that notions of law and legal practice exhibit both consistency and difference throughout the several chapters of the text that are usually referred to in discussions of the law. The two most important of these chapters are surely the “Kang gao” 康誥 (Announcement to Kang) and “Lü xing,” the latter of which is Sanft’s main focus (though he considers concepts of law much more broadly throughout the entire text of the *Shang shu*). He suggests that whereas “Kang gao” presents an idealized view of law as dependent on virtue and the selection of the proper person to decide legal cases, “Lü xing” posits a system of jurisprudence and thus is “the *Shangshu* chapter that best reflects attitudes toward legal practice in China throughout its history” (p. 471), even though such an important traditional commentator as Cai Shen 蔡沈 (1167–1230) dismissed the text as a warning of how not to rule (p. 464).

Sanft explores several different topics in which “Lü xing” may be viewed as exceptional within the context of the *Shang shu*: “the role of legal practice within society” (i.e., whether law and especially punishment are necessary); types of punishment and especially the role of monetary redemption in mitigating those punishments; the place of doubt in legal processes; and intent. With respect to some of these topics, Sanft argues, against traditional commentators, that “Lü xing” is inconsistent with other *Shang shu* chapters, and in other cases, again against traditional commentators, that it is in fact consistent with the other chapters. Although I am not convinced by all of his analysis, it is refreshing to note that the discussion is thoroughly grounded in both the texts and traditional commentaries. I will consider just two of these topics below, one case in which I am unpersuaded by Sanft’s reading and another in which I think he corrects an important misinterpretation of “Lü xing.”

One of the most common early Chinese assumptions about law in general and punishment in particular is that while they are necessary, to be sure, still they are necessary evils. Sanft suggests that “Lü xing” may be an exception to this critical attitude toward punishment. He regards as particularly important in this regard a couple of uses in the “Lü xing” of the apparent oxymoron “*xiang xing*” 祥刑, which he translates as “beneficial punishment.” He considers, but dismisses, Zheng Xuan’s 鄭玄 suggestion that *xiang* 祥 (auspicious) be read as *xiang* 詳 (to examine carefully), arguing that this reading is too easy and renders the sense of the text mundane. Perhaps it is mundane, but it seems to

me to be the reading also of the canonical Pseudo-Kong Anguo commentary as well: *gao ru yi shan yong xing zhi dao* 告汝以善用刑之道, which Sanft cites as support for his reading. Sanft's translation of this sentence as "I will tell you of the way of using punishments well" (p. 455) is certainly unobjectionable, but I would argue that "using punishments well" is something very different from "beneficial punishment."

On the other hand, I think Sanft's discussion of another topic introduces an important corrective to the views of traditional commentators. As noted above, Cai Shen criticized "Lü xing" for explicitly allowing corporal punishments to be reduced against the payment of monetary fines. Commentators throughout history have echoed Cai's criticism of this apparent monetization of the legal process. However, Sanft argues convincingly that "Lü xing" makes such allowance only in cases of doubt, and in this way is consistent with passages elsewhere in the *Shang shu* (such as in the "Da Yu mo" 大禹謨 chapter) that have long been praised as the epitome of fairness. This does not mean that "Lü xing" is invariably consistent with the other chapters (as Sanft notes, it seems to take no notice of intent in the adjudication of cases), but it is surely not exceptional within the *Shang shu*.

The final chapter of the book, Robin McNeal's "Spatial Models of the State in Early Chinese Texts: Tribute Networks and the Articulation of Power and Authority in *Shangshu* 'Yu gong' 禹貢 and *Yi Zhou* 'Wang hui' 王會," takes us back—if not quite to metadiscursive comment—then certainly to big-picture questions. He begins with three such questions:

Recent scholarship has highlighted many of the fundamental uncertainties scholars face when trying to describe the early Chinese state in historical terms. What was the scope and structure of early Chinese states? To what extent can models useful in describing state formation in other parts of the world be applied fruitfully in China? And just how many states were there in the formative period? (p. 475)

He begins his discussion by characterizing traditional historiography as portraying a monolithic civilization, against which he pits the archaeological record, which he suggests "gives us a strikingly different picture," one marked primarily by diversity, especially (but by no means only) geographic in nature. It is geography that is McNeal's primary interest in this chapter, though it is somewhat jarring to note that the two texts on which he focuses, the "Yu gong" 禹貢 (Tribute of Yu) chapter of the *Shang shu* and the "Wang hui" 王會 (Royal convocation) chapter of the *Yi Zhou shu* are the two texts in the early Chinese

literary tradition that positively revel in the abundance of China's geographic diversity.²¹

The "Yu gong" of course has had a central place in modern Chinese study of historical geography, inspiring a journal of the same title, published between the years 1934 and 1937 and edited by Gu Jiegang 顧頡剛 (1893–1980) and Tan Qixiang 譚其驤 (1911–1992), the fathers of modern Chinese historiography and historical-geography respectively. McNeal does not add much to standard introductions to the text, even in recent Western languages.²² His account of the "Wang hui" chapter of the *Yi Zhou shu*, on the other hand, does constitute a real contribution to our understanding of early Chinese literature. This text, Chapter 59 in the *Yi Zhou shu*, is fascinating for all sorts of reasons, not least of which is its description of the flora and fauna purportedly brought to the Zhou court early in the reign of King Cheng of Zhou. Unfortunately, aside from a pair of strange canines (one of which has a face like a man's and is able to talk, and the other that is able to fly and to eat tigers and leopards), none of these is presented here. McNeal's purpose is with bigger issues, as when he concludes:

21 I am delighted to see this English-language introduction to the "Wang hui" chapter, one of the most interesting chapters in the *Yi Zhou shu*, and one that has loomed large in the scholarship on that text. However, it is an unusual choice to compare with the "Yu gong" chapter of the *Shang shu*. The "Wang hui" chapter is usually compared with the *Shan hai jing* 山海經 (Classic of mountains and seas; translated by McNeal as *Itineraries through Mountain Ranges and Waterways*; p. 483) for its descriptions of strange flora and especially fauna from foreign lands. The chapter of the *Yi Zhou shu* usually compared with the "Yu gong" chapter, on the other hand, is the "Zhi fang" 職方 "Officering the regions; Ch. 62), a text unmentioned by McNeal. The "Zhi fang" chapter shares much of its content and language in turn with the "Zhifang shi" 職方氏 (Officers of the regions) entry of the "Xia guan" 夏官 section of the *Zhou li* 周禮; the question of the priority of these two texts is too complicated to treat here, but for a vigorous defense of the *Zhou li*'s priority, see Huang Peirong 黃沛榮, "Zhou shu yanjiu" 周書研究 (Ph.D. diss., National Taiwan University, 1976), 244–64. Like the "Yu gong" chapter, the "Zhi fang" chapter also describes a nine-fold division of the Chinese world, the names of the regions being largely identical (the "Yu gong"'s Xu 徐 and Liang 梁 are replaced with You 幽 and Bing 並 in the "Zhi fang" chapter). What is more, the similarity between the "Yu gong" and the "Zhi fang" chapters extends well beyond the spatial orientation and includes also similar descriptions of local products.

22 See the accounts in Mark Edward Lewis, *The Flood Myths of Early China* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2006), Chapter Five; and Vera Dorofeeva-Lichtmann, "Ritual Practices for Constructing Terrestrial Space (Warring States–Early Han)," in *Early Chinese Religion*, pt. 1, *Shang through Han (1250 BC–220 AD)*, eds. John Lagerwey and Marc Kalinowski (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 595–644.

This vision of imperial power, imagined and projected onto a legendary past, became a model for what we would now call foreign relations, a clear example of how the historical imaginary came to create and maintain a political reality. One of the best measures of the importance the *Shangshu* has had over the last two millennia is precisely its ability to enforce on the future its vision of the past (p. 491).

At the beginning of this review, I noted that the book is marred only by the Introduction, which I characterized as marked by a “self-congratulatory triumphalism,” both denigrating past scholarship and making claims about the scholarship in this book that are well beyond what the book delivers. Consider just the following three statements.

The question of the “forged” *Shangshu* in ancient script deserves further comment, and here—both in this introduction and in the chapters that follow—we go significantly beyond the standard accounts summarized so far (p. 4).

Interestingly, among the three works considered to be the early core of the *Five Classics*, the *Shangshu* is the only one that Western scholars generally do not study on its own: the other two, the *Classic of Poetry* (*Shijing* 詩經) and the *Classic of Changes* (*Yijing* 易經 or *Zhou Yi* 周易), have both received monographic studies (the *Changes* many more than the *Poetry*); only the *Shangshu*, presumably because of its reputation as a mere repository of historical information, has been mostly *used* but not *studied*. But how can one use a text one has not truly studied? One cannot, of course, and many of the flawed ways in which the *Shangshu* is scoured for information are precisely the result of a lack of understanding of the nature, structure, transmission, and rhetoric of the text. Traditional assumptions about all these aspects still guide the seemingly innocuous use of the text as historically reliable for the era it seemingly speaks of—at least with regard to the chapters concerned with the Western Zhou (p. 7).

In this endeavor, we have been happy to trade false certainty for more interesting and productive questions and possibilities. Ours is a collection of essays that rigorously probes the linguistic structures of individual

Shangshu chapters, explores the rhetorical patterns of cultural memory, and examines specific political ideas against a multiplicity of possible historical contexts, from the founding days of the Western Zhou through, nearly a thousand years later, the early empire. Our conclusions are often unexpected to the point of overturning the accumulated wisdom of two millennia [...] (pp. 8–9).

Not one of these claims can withstand scrutiny. The first statement regarding the “forged” *Shangshu* is curious; the matter is disposed of in the Introduction in one sentence, and nothing else in the book engages with the post-Han transmission of the *Shang shu* at all, and certainly not with the debate over the “Ancient Text” (*guwen* 古文) versus the “Modern text” (*jinwen* 今文) versions of the text, for which one would be far better served by re-reading Paul Pelliot’s 1916 article “Le *Chou King* en caractères anciens et le *Chang Chou che wen*.”²³ The second quotation with its accusation that past scholars have used “a text one has not truly studied” can only be said to be shocking. Leaving aside the great many Chinese scholars who devoted very considerable study to the text but who the editors also claim—usually implicitly rather than explicitly—to be mistaken about their use of the *Shang shu*, it is startling that two scholars whose first public engagement with the text seems to have come only in 2012 (just five years before the publication of this book) should question the scholarly integrity of senior colleagues among Western Sinologists. As for the last quotation above, both the attribution of “false certainty” to others and the claim to uniqueness for the multi-disciplinary approach in the book under review suggest that the editors may not know the scholarship of the field anywhere nearly as well as they suggest. Very few scholars who have studied the *Shang shu* have developed much sense of certainty about it. Even Wang Guowei 王國維 (1877–1927), almost universally regarded as the greatest of modern Chinese historians, admitted to understanding only something like half of the text.²⁴ And the disciplinary diversity that has been brought to the study of the texts—by Chinese, Japanese, and even Western scholars—far exceeds

²³ See note 1 above.

²⁴ See the letter “Yu youren lun *Shi Shu* zhong chengyu shu” 與友人論詩書中成語書 (Letter with friends discussing idioms in the *Poetry* and the *Documents*) in Wang Guowei 王國維, *Guantang jilin* 觀堂集林, 2.1a (1923; rpt. Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1983), 1:75, in which he said: “Everyone can recite the *Poetry* and the *Documents*, but they are the hardest to read of all the six classics. Given my ignorance, there’s probably half of the *Documents* that I am unable to explain, and even with respect to the *Poetry* there’s still ten or twenty percent.”

just the study of “linguistic structures” and “political ideas,” and might even be said to go beyond the notion of “cultural memory.”

The editors seem to think that they are the first readers to have discovered that the *Shang shu* is a collection of different types of texts by different authors from different periods, texts moreover that have undergone a complex process of transmission.

[A]s many of our studies here reveal, a *Shangshu* chapter that we read today, or that scholars read as early as in Han times, was often not the result of a singular act of composition but had evolved over time, which turns the entire dating question into something else: not of composition but of recomposition, compilation, and editorship, and of the dynamic processes of textual development over the course of the first millennium BCE. [...] to allow us to accept traditional beliefs about single authorship, the pristine integrity and stability of a chapter purportedly first composed in the Western Zhou, or the primacy of writing over all other forms of textual transmission (mnemonic, performative, etc.) in early China (pp. 6–7)

To quote Captain Renault in the film *Casablanca*, “I am shocked, shocked” to learn that the *Shang shu* is not marked by “pristine integrity and stability.” However, “some scholars” (it is another disagreeable feature of the editors’ writing that over and over again they characterize—or really mischaracterize—the scholarship of anonymous others) have adduced plentiful evidence to show that the earliest texts in the *Shang shu* were written (and, yes, they were written) in a language that is largely comparable to that seen in Western Zhou bronze inscriptions (which, by the way, were also written). The editors seem to be particularly incensed with such evidence-based arguments, which they dismiss pejoratively as “proof” that “leads only to oversimplification and reductionism.”

In short, no matter how invested some scholars may remain in these arguments over “authenticity”—and how unshakable their faith in the continuous, stable *written* transmission of the Western Zhou chapters might be—such arguments are fundamentally bound to fail. [...] In one way or another, almost all our studies speak to questions of dating and textual transmission, but not in traditional terms. Instead, through detailed textual analysis as well as comparison with other early works, the conclusions offered in this volume are strikingly more complex (p. 6).

It is one of the major scholarly fallacies at the core of traditional Chinese philology that “early” gets equated with “reliable” (which too often then inspires an ardent desire to “prove” that something is early) and that, in turn, the demonstrable accuracy of a text is taken to prove its status not only as “true” but also as a “truly early,” if not contemporaneous, witness. [...] We are fundamentally uninterested in such “proof” because it leads only to oversimplification and reductionism (p. 8).

I do not wish to take away anything from the contributors to this volume, several of whom have also adduced bronze inscriptions and “traditional Chinese philology” as evidence with which to discuss the dating of the chapters under discussion. However, there are available within both the Chinese and even the Western scholarly traditions more rigorous philological studies regarding the *Shang shu* than anything on display in this volume. Despite this, and even despite the exaggerated claims made in the Introduction, I am happy to repeat what I said at the beginning of this review: “taken as a whole the volume surely makes the significant contribution promised in the editors’ Introduction” and marks “a major milestone in the Western study of early China.” One hopes that it will be followed by more scholarship addressing the many other chapters of the *Shang shu* still to be examined, or even re-examinations of the chapters addressed here.