

Writing and Rewriting the *Poetry*

Edward L. Shaughnessy
The University of Chicago
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Studies of the *Shi jing* or *Classic of Poetry* have long been primarily concerned with how to read the text (or how the text has been read by others), and many of these discussions have contributed greatly to Chinese notions of reading in general. However, there has been rather less attention to how the *Poetry* may have been written in the first place (or the second or third place). There are several individual poems in the two *Ya* 雅 sections that explicitly mention the “making” (*zuo* 作) of the poem within the poem itself, some of these also mentioning the maker by name,¹ and there are a few other poems that address unique and identifiable historical events in ways that reflect their making.² Some of the *Song* 頌 or Hymns also seem to derive from or comment on particular events at the royal or regional courts, suggesting perhaps that they would have been composed by the contemporary secretaries of the courts.³ However, the more than half of the poems in the *Poetry* collection that are identified as *Feng* 風 or *Airs* are almost all anonymous in their own right, even if later traditions have ascribed them to particular individuals or circumstances, and make little or no mention of any historical context. Other traditions describe these poems as originating among the common people, from whom court officials would collect them, presumably editing them into a common idiom.⁴ Of course, the editor of the entire collection is said to have been none other than Confucius (551-479 B.C.) himself, who is supposed to have selected the 305 extant poems from among more

¹ These poems are “Si mu” 四牡 (Mao 162), “Jie nan shan” 節南山 (Mao 191), “He ren si” 何人斯 (Mao 199), “Xiang bo” 巷伯 (Mao 200), “Si yue” 四月 (Mao 204), “Juan e” 卷阿 (Mao 252), “Sang rou” 桑柔 (Mao 257), “Song gao” 崧高 (Mao 259), and “Zheng min” 烝民 (Mao 260), of which “Jie nan shan,” “Xiang bo,” “Song gao” and “Zheng min” mention their “makers” by name (Jiafu 家父 in the first case, Mengzi 孟子 in the second, and Jifu 吉甫 in the last two cases).

² Particularly illustrative of this are “Jiang Han” 江漢 (Mao 262) and “Chang wu” 常武 (Mao 263), which, as I will demonstrate below in the case of the first of these two poems, can be compared to late Western Zhou bronze inscriptions in both form and motivation, though other “complaint” poems seem also to address specific historical circumstances.

³ See, for instance, the discussion by Fu Sinian 傅斯年 associating the poems “Min yu xiaozi” 閔予小子 (Mao 286), “Fang luo” 訪落 (Mao 287) and “Jing zhi” 敬之 (Mao 288) of the *Zhou Song* section with the installation of Kang Wang (r. 1005/03-978 B.C.) as the Zhou king; *Fu Sinian quanji* 傅斯年全集 (Taipei: Lianjing shuban shiye gongsi, 1980), Vol. 1, pp. 218-20.

⁴ For one expression of this tradition, see the “Record of Arts and Literature” (*Yi wen zhi* 藝文志) chapter of the *Han shu* 漢書 (Zhonghua shuju ed.), 30.1708.

than 3,000 poems available to him.⁵ Nevertheless, despite this evidence and these traditions, I think it can be said that the writing of the *Poetry* has not attracted anywhere nearly the attention that its reading has.

In the following paper, I will examine the writing of the *Poetry* at three different moments: at or near the time of the composition of individual poems; during their early transmission; and at the time of their (more or less) final redaction during the Han dynasty. For each of these three moments, I will draw on what is essentially anecdotal evidence, but evidence that I believe is suggestive of over-all trends. I have touched on most of this evidence in past work, but hope that it will take on greater cogency when brought together in this way.

Part I: Writing and the Composition of the *Poetry*

In the West, the disinterest in the writing of the *Poetry* appears to be motivated, at least in part, by a widely held opinion that the individual poems were originally created and subsequently transmitted for a more or less lengthy part of their early history in an oral context. Many of the finest scholars of Chinese literary history have stated opinions to this effect, as represented by the following examples:

Steven Owen: “The *Shi* probably existed as orally transmitted texts long before they were ever committed to writing, and even after their commitment to writing (when we cannot be sure, but I would guess late Chunqiu at the earliest), their primary mode of transmission was probably oral until (another guess) the late Warring States.”⁶

David Knechtges: “What this means is that the *Shi* text to which we have access is far removed from the time of the original composition of the songs themselves, some of which may date from the early Western Zhou. Furthermore, Zheng Xuan prepared his version of the *Shi* after the regularization of the script, which is clearly in evidence at the time of the compilation of the *Shuowen jiezi* in 100 C.E. The script and text of the received version of the *Shi* have been influenced by the ways in which the Han scholars wrote and pronounced the words of the songs. William R. Baxter, for example, has shown that the phonology of the *Shi jing* has been significantly influenced by Han dynasty pronunciation and script. As Baxter aptly puts it, the *Shi* “as we now have it is a Zhou text in Han clothing; both its script, and, to some extent, its text have been influenced by post-*Shijing* phonology, and are not always reliable guides to the phonology of old Chinese.”

“Baxter’s caution about the unreliability of the received text of the *Shi* as a guide to Old Chinese phonology is important, for it tells us that the versions of the

⁵ The *locus classicus* for this tradition is *Lunyu* 論語 9/15; for an authoritative statement of it, see the “Genealogy of Confucius” (*Kongzi shijia* 孔子世家) chapter of the *Shi ji* 史記 (Zhonghua shuju ed.), 47.1936-7.

⁶ Steven Owen, “Interpreting *Sheng Min*,” in *Ways with Words: Writing about Reading Texts from Early China*, ed. Pauline Yu, Peter Bol, Steven Owen, and Willard Peterson (Berkeley: U. of California Press, 2000), p. 25.

Shi poems that we read today are not the ancient Zhou versions, but late Han recensions of them. The Zhou versions were circulated primarily by means of oral transmission.”⁷

Christoph Harbsmeier: “The *Iliad* was still recited, and for the first time written down in ‘Homeric Greek’, long after anything like ‘Homeric Greek’, if indeed it ever was a current spoken language, had become a matter of the past. Similarly one must assume that the *Book of Songs* of the Chinese was written down at a time when its language already sounded archaic or was at least obsolescent. The crucial point that the Homeric poems and the *Book of Songs* have in common is that both, though written in sometimes formulaic, somewhat artificial language, were evidently based on oral poetry which was only incidentally—almost literally *post festum*—written down and almost certainly first performed by illiterate people. Bards could be blind even after the invention of writing because they did not need to read.

“Indeed, at least as late as the -3rd century it appears that the texts of the *Book of Songs* were known and understood by less learned scribes by their sounds, not their characters, as the phonetic way of writing quotations in the famous *Lao Tzu* manuscripts recently discovered would suggest. In general, the profusion of phonetic loan characters throughout the epigraphic evidence accumulated through archaeological discoveries must indicate that texts were remembered primarily not as graphic form but as spoken sound. The proliferation (and irregularity) of phonetic loans throughout even printed texts is the strongest proof we have of the primacy of the spoken over the written forms of texts. In a predominantly illiterate society this is not in the slightest surprising: indeed anything else would be anthropologically and historically extraordinary.”⁸

The primary evidence adduced by David Knechtges and Christoph Harbsmeier for the oral nature of the *Poetry*—the variation in the way that the poems were transcribed in early sources—probably needs to be reconsidered in the light of recent discoveries of early manuscript materials. Despite Harbsmeier’s statement that “the profusion of phonetic loan characters throughout the epigraphic evidence accumulated through archaeological discoveries must indicate that texts were remembered primarily not as graphic form but as spoken sound,” made on the basis of Han-dynasty manuscripts discovered during the 1970s, manuscripts from the earlier Warring States period discovered over the last two decades do not reflect any appreciable difference in quotations of the *Poetry* as opposed to other early versions of received texts (such as the *Laozi* 老子 or the *Zi yi* 緇衣); all early texts for which received versions are available vary dramatically when compared to those received versions. This would seem to be easily explained: at a time before the forced unification of the various states under the rule of Qin and the attendant regularization of the scripts of those states and circulation of

⁷ David R. Knechtges, “Questions about the Language of *Sheng Min*,” in *Ways with Words: Writing about Reading Texts from Early China*, ed. Pauline Yu, Peter Bol, Steven Owen, and Willard Peterson (Berkeley, Cal.: University of California Press, 2000), pp.15-16.

⁸ Christoph Harbsmeier, *Science and Civilisation in China*, Volume 7, Part 1: *Language and Logic* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 41-42.

dictionaries (especially the *Cang Jie pian* 倉頡篇 credited to Li Si 李斯 [d. 208 B.C.]), there was no commonly agreed upon “correct” way to write each and every character. Not only did transcriptions vary from one scribe to the next; they sometimes varied even within a single text. “The proliferation (and irregularity) of phonetic loans” seen in these manuscripts differs only in degree from what Harbsmeier notes of those found “throughout even printed texts,” and it seems to me to be counter-intuitive to find proof of orality within a flourishing textual context.⁹

I also find myself unpersuaded by Knechtges’s quotation of William Baxter’s assertion that the *Poetry* “as we now have it is a Zhou text in Han clothing.” Every “Zhou” text in the received tradition (with the exception of the *Zhushu jinian* 竹書紀年 and the *Mu tianzi zhuan* 穆天子傳) “is a Zhou text in Han clothing.”¹⁰ We ought not assume that the work done by Han-dynasty editors, including especially the transcription of the archaic script into the standard “clerical script” (*li shu* 隸書) of the Han dynasty, was without important consequences for the nature and contents of the ancient texts. However, the recognition that these texts were transformed does not tell us anything about their textual nature or about their modes of transmission before the Han. For this reason, I find Knechtges’s conclusion that “The Zhou versions were circulated primarily by means of oral transmission” to be something of a non-sequitur; it seems to me that he would have been better advised to admit, as did Steven Owen, that he was essentially guessing. This is not to say that this guess is necessarily wrong; it is just that none of these scholars has presented any evidence to support it.

Another scholar who is recognized as a strong proponent of the oral nature of pre-Han texts, including but by no means limited to the *Poetry*, is David Schaberg. With respect to the *Poetry* at least, he has turned the tables on the sort of critique I have just made of the oral hypothesis, asking that those who assume that the text was written at an early period present evidence that this was at least within the realm of possibility.

At another extreme –and here I would admit my own sympathies—such texts (i.e., the *Shi* and *Shu*) are presumed less than perfectly reliable, and unsuitable for direct citation as historical authorities, until it be demonstrated that they stem from circumstances in which it was possible and desirable to produce highly accurate records of words and deeds.¹¹

⁹ I must admit to being puzzled as well by other evidence Harbsmeier adduces to show that “characters were designed to represent spoken words.” He notes that in written records from England between the thirteenth and fifteenth centuries there were 350 orthographic variants of the English word “through,” “with another 100 or so to be added from various dialect sources”; Harbsmeier, *Science and Civilisation in China*, pp. 32, 33. Again, it seems strange to me to use such widespread evidence of writing to argue for the primacy of oral culture. Of course Chinese characters were designed to represent spoken words and of course oral culture should be regarded as primary in all but a Trappist monastery, but this has nothing necessarily to do with how texts are composed and transmitted, either today or in antiquity.

¹⁰ The *Zhushu jinian* and *Mu tianzi zhuan* were discovered only in A.D. 279 and transcribed in the following two decades; they are thus “Zhou texts in Jin clothing.”

¹¹ David Schaberg, “Texts and Artifacts: A Review of *The Cambridge History of Ancient China*,” *Monumenta Serica* 49 (2001): 507

Of course, short of finding a seventh-century B.C. manuscript of the *Poetry*, it will probably never be possible to prove that the *Poetry* was written by the time that tradition suggests it was. Schaberg does not ask for the unreasonable; he sets the bar of evidence rather lower: simply a demonstration of circumstantial evidence that it could have been written then. This is the demonstration that I propose to take up in the following paragraphs.

It would probably be gratuitous for me to note that none of the four accomplished scholars of Chinese literature cited above has ever demonstrated much if any familiarity with the writings that can be securely dated to the period when the *Poetry* was supposed to have been written: the bronze inscriptions of the Western Zhou and early Spring and Autumn periods. I suspect that it would be hard to find many scholars who have studied these inscriptions who would doubt either that “it was possible and desirable to produce highly accurate records of words and deeds” at the time that they were written or that the language in which they were written was far removed from the language of the *Poetry*.

It has often been noted that the poem “Jiang Han” 江漢 (Mao 262), the composition of which is traditionally dated to the reign of Zhou Xuan Wang (r. 827/25-782 B.C.),¹² is similar both in structure and phrasing with late Western Zhou bronze inscriptions.¹³

“Jiang Han” 江漢 (Mao 262)

江漢浮浮，	The Jiang and Han flow on and on
武夫滔滔。	The martial men stream on and on.
匪安匪遊	Neither resting, nor sporting about,
淮夷來求。	The Yi of Huai we come to seek.
既出我車，	Having sent out our chariots,
既設我旗，	Having set up our battle-flags;
匪安匪舒，	Neither resting, nor relaxing,
淮夷來鋪。	The Yi of Huai we come to press.
江漢湯湯，	The Jiang and Han spread out and out
武夫洸洸。	The martial men shine on and on.
經營四方，	Bringing order to the four quarters,
告成于王。	They announce success to the king.

¹² For the classical assertion of this date, see the Mao Preface to the poem; *Mao Shi Zheng jian* 毛詩鄭箋 (Sibu beiyao ed.), 18.20a.

¹³ Indeed, Arthur Waley treated the poem essentially as the inscription on a bronze vessel, understanding the word *kao* 考 “deceased-father” of the line “*Zuo Shao gong kao*” 作召公考 “Making for father Duke of Shao” to be a mistake for the phonetically similar *gui* 簋 “tureen” (rendered by Waley as “urn”: “He made the Duke of Shao’s urn.”); see Arthur Waley, *The Book of Songs: The Ancient Chinese Classic of Poetry* (1937; New York: Grove Press, 1997), p. 281. I think Waley is probably correct in this reading, but since there is no explicit textual evidence to support the emendation I translate the line as found in the received text.

四方既平，
王國庶定。
時靡有爭，
王心載寧。

The four quarters being at peace,
The royal realm is all settled.
Now that there is no more fighting,
The royal heart can be tranquil.

江漢之滸，
王命召虎，
式辟四方，
徹我疆土。
匪疚匪棘，
王國來極。
于疆于理，
至于南海。

On the banks of the Jiang and Han
The king commanded Hu of Shao:
“Would that you rule the four quarters
All the way to our border lands.
Not ulcerously, not stabbingly,
The royal realm comes to its height.
On the borders, in the hamlets
As far as to the southern sea.”

王命召虎：
來旬來宣；
文武受命，
召公維翰。
無曰：予小子，
召公是似。
肇敏戎公，
用錫爾祉。

The king commanded Hu of Shao:
“Come take control, come show yourself.
When Wen and Wu received the mandate,
The Duke of Shao was their support.
Don't say: 'I am but a young son.'
The Duke of Shao was just like this.
You have opened well the martial work
For which I award you blessings.

釐爾圭瓚，
秬鬯一卣，
告于文人。
錫山土田。
于周受命，
自召祖命。
虎拜稽首，
天子萬年。

“I honor you with a jade ladle,
One bucket of black millet wine.
I announce to the cultured men
I award mountains, lands and fields.
In Zhou's receiving the mandate,
From the Shao ancestor's command.
Hu bowed and touched head to the ground:
The Son of Heaven a myriad years.

虎拜稽首，
對揚王休。
作召公考，
天子萬壽。
明明天子，
令聞不已；
矢其文德，
洽此四國。

Hu bowed and touched his head to the ground,
In response extolled the king's grace
Making for father Duke of Shao
The Son of Heaven myriads long.
Oh so bright the Son of Heaven,
Commanding fame never stopping,
Arraying his cultured virtue
Bringing together these four realms.

Shao Gong Hu 召公虎, the protagonist of this poem, is known from the historical record of the late Western Zhou period, and indeed figures prominently in the inscriptions on the *Zhou Sheng gui* 調生簋 and *Zhou Sheng zun* 調生尊, which can be dated with some confidence to the fifth and sixth years of Zhou Xuan Wang's reign, i.e., 823 and 822 B.C.¹⁴ According to the *Zhushu jinian*, 822 is the year that Shao Gong Hu was commanded to lead the campaign against the Huai Yi 淮夷 apparently commemorated in the poem “Jiang Han.” Another inscription that seems to prefigure the same campaign is recorded on the *Xi Jia pan* 兮甲盤, the full date at the beginning of which corresponds to the year 823 B.C. Even though this inscription is perhaps not the most representative of Western Zhou bronze inscriptions to compare with the form of the poem “Jiang Han,” there is more reason than just its date and similar content to consider it: there is some reason to believe that the patron of the vessel, referred to within the inscription variously as Xi Jia 兮甲 or as Xibo Jifu 兮伯吉父, is the same figure as the Jifu 吉甫 who takes credit for “making” the two *Poetry* poems “Song gao” 崧高 (Mao 259) and “Zheng min” 烝民 (Mao 260).¹⁵

佳五年三月既死霸庚寅， / 王初各伐厥執（獵狃）于鬲虛。兮 / 甲從王，折首執訊，休亡敗。 / 王易兮甲馬四匹駒車。王 / 令甲政辭成周四方責至 / 于南淮戶。淮戶舊我負壽人，毋 / 敢不出其負（帛）其責其進人， / 其賈。毋敢不即市，敢 / 不用令，則即并厥伐。其佳 / 我者侯百生，年賈毋不即 / 市，毋敢或入厥究賈，則亦 / 井。兮白吉父乍般，其壽 / 萬年無疆，子子孫孫永寶用。

It was the fifth year, third month, after the dying brightness, *gengyin* (day 27); the king for the first time went to attack the Xianyun at Tuhu. Xi Jia followed the king, cutting off heads and manacled prisoners, being victorious without defect. The king awarded Xi Jia four horses and a colt chariot. The king commanded Jia to govern and supervise the taxes of the four regions of Chengzhou as far as the Southern Huai Yi. The Huai Yi of old were our tribute money men; they ought not dare not to produce their tribute, their taxes, their presented men, and their wares. They ought not dare not to approach the encampments and approach the markets. If they dare not to use the command, then enact punishments and strike and attack them. If it be the case of our many lords' and hundred families, of their wares they ought not not bring them to market, and they ought not dare then to send in barbarian and illicit wares, for then they are also to be punished. Xibo Jifu makes this basin; may he have long life for ten-thousand years without limit, and sons's sons and grandsons' grandsons eternally to treasure and use it.¹⁶

¹⁴ Waley adds a note to his translation of the line “*Zuo Shao gong kao*” 作召公考 “He made the Duke of Shao's urn” (see, above, n. 12) “Not necessarily the same one as Karlgren, B. 104.” It is not clear to me just what this reference is supposed to mean; I suspect it refers to the two *Zhou Sheng gui* vessels, formerly better known as the *Shaobo Hu gui* 召伯虎簋.

¹⁵ For mention of poems mentioning their “makers,” see, above, n. ?

¹⁶ *Yin Zhou jinwen jicheng* 殷周金文集成, ed. Zhongguo Shehui kexueyuan Kaogu yanjiusuo 18 vols. (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1984-1994), Vol. 16 #10174.

It would be possible here to present a great many Western Zhou bronze inscriptions, especially late Western Zhou bronze inscriptions, that would resemble in one way or another the poem “Jiang Han.” Rather than attempt to this,¹⁷ I propose instead to examine one other poem of the *Da Ya* section of the *Poetry* that has never attracted the sort of attention that “Jiang Han” has, but which, I believe, is best understood only in comparison with certain bronze inscriptions of the mid to late Western Zhou period. According to the *Mao Preface*, the poem “Xia Wu” 下武 (Mao 243) is an encomium to Zhou Wu Wang (r. 1049/45-1043 B.C.), the son of the nominal founder of the Zhou dynasty, Zhou Wen Wang (d. 1050 B.C.), though there has also long been a suggestion that the poem should pertain to Wu Wang’s son Cheng Wang (r. 1042/35-1006 B.C.) or even a later king.¹⁸ The poem includes six stanzas of four phrases each. I present it here with the translation of Arthur Waley following below it:¹⁹

“Xia Wu” 下武 (Mao 243)

下武維周，世有哲王。三后在天，王配于京。
 王配于京，世德作求。永言配命，成王之孚。
 成王之孚，下土之式。永言孝思，孝思維則。
 媚茲一人，應侯順德。永言孝思，昭哉嗣服。
 昭茲來許，繩其祖武。於萬斯年，受天之祜。
 受天之祜，四方來賀。於萬斯年，不遐有佐。

¹⁷In a study that I will have occasion to quote from below, Martin Kern, goes on to translate two Western Zhou bronze inscriptions (the *Fengbo Jufu gui* 豐伯車父簋 and the *Xing Ren Ning zhong* 邢人佞鐘), saying of them: “The two inscriptions betray the regularity of a mature, codified expression. ... In both texts, the basic metrical unit is the tetrasyllabic line; rhyme is used throughout (though in less regular fashion than in the received *Songs*); the bell inscription contains a series of reduplicatives; and there is barely a line that does not have verbatim or near-verbatim counterparts in a host of other inscriptions”; “Bronze Inscriptions, the *Shijing* and the *Shangshu*: The Evolution of the Ancestral Sacrifice during the Western Zhou” in *Early Chinese Religion, Part One: Shang Through Han (1250 BC to 220 AD)*, ed. John Lagerwey and Marc Kalinowski (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2009), p. 196. For a more detailed study of the use of meter and rhyme in Western Zhou bronze inscriptions, see Wolfgang Behr, “Reimende Bronzeinschriften und die Entstehung der chinesischen Endreimdichtung” (Ph.D. diss.: Johann Wolfgang Goethe-Universität, Frankfurt-am-Main, 1996).

¹⁸ The first attestation of this second view comes in Zhu Xi’s 朱熹 *Shi jing ji zhu* 詩經集註, in which he attributes it to “someone’s suspicions” (*huo yi* 或疑), but which he rejects. Arthur Waley is also equivocal, giving the following note: “If we count Wen, Wu, and Cheng as the three kings, then this is Kang (1078-53). But I doubt if the song is as early as that”; *The Book of Songs*, p. 240 n.2. For a modern statement, without any equivocation, that it should pertain to Cheng Wang, see Qu Wanli 屈萬里, *Shi jing shi yi* 詩經釋義 (Taipei: Zhongguo Wenhua daxue chubanshu, 1983), p. 336.

¹⁹ I first presented the following analysis of the poem “Xia Wu” to the conference “Qu Wanli xiansheng bai sui danchen guoji xueshu yantaohui” 屈萬里先生百歲誕辰國際學術研討會 (Taiwan daxue, 15 September 2006), and the paper was published in the conference volume as Xia Hanyi 夏含夷, “You tongqi mingwen chongxin yuedu *Shi Da Ya Xia Wu*” 由銅器銘文重新閱讀《詩大雅下武》, in *Qu Wanli xiansheng bai sui danchen guoji xueshu yantaohui lunweiji* 屈萬里先生百歲誕辰國際學術研討會論文集, ed. Guojia tushuguan, Zhongyang yanjiuyuan Lishi yuyan yanjiusuo, and Guoli Taiwan daxue Zhongguo wenxue (Taipei: n.p., 2006), pp. 65-69. At the conference I learned that Zhao Boxiong 趙伯雄 had previously published a similar analysis: “*Shi Xia Wu* ‘Ying hou shun de’ jie” 《詩下武》應侯順德解, *Guji zhengli yanjiu* 古籍整理研究 June 1998: 1-3.

Zhou it is that continues the footsteps here below.
From generation to generation it has had wise kings.
Three rulers are in Heaven,
And the king is their counterpart in his capital.

He is their counterpart in his capital,
The power of generations he has matched;
Long has he been mated to Heaven's command
And fulfilled what is entrusted to a king.

Has fulfilled what is entrusted to a king,
A model to all on earth below;
Forever pious toward the dead,
A very pattern of piety.

Loved is this One Man,
Meeting only with docile powers;
Forever pious toward the dead,
Gloriously continuing their tasks.

Yes, gloriously he steps forward
Continuing in the footsteps of his ancestors.
“For myriads of years
May you receive Heaven's blessing!

Receive Heaven's blessing!”
So from all sides they come to wish him well.
“For myriads of years
May your luck never fail.”

As have most commentators, Waley understands this poem as a praise of one or another Zhou king. He focuses on the line *San hou zai tian* 三后在天 (“Three rulers are in Heaven,” in his translation) to suggest that it may pertain to Zhou Kang Wang (r. 1005/03-978 B.C.), though he suspects it is later than his time. Others have seen in the last line of the second stanza and first line of the third stanza, *Cheng wang zhi fu* 成王之孚, the title of Zhou Cheng Wang 成王, whereas Waley's translation, “And fulfilled what is entrusted to a king,” which, it should be noted, accords with the traditional reading of the line, takes the word *cheng* 成 as a verb meaning “to complete, to fulfill,” with *wang* 王 “king” as part of its direct object. I think the proper noun (i.e., Cheng Wang) interpretation is by far the easier reading of this line, but it is not, I think, the key to understanding the poem. For that we need to look to its fourth stanza, and especially the second line of it: *ying hou shun de* 應侯順德, which Waley has translated, more or less in accord with the traditional interpretation, as “Meeting only with docile powers.” Here too, it is easy (indeed, far easier, I would suggest) to read the two two graphs *ying hou* 應

侯 as a proper noun, “the lord of Ying,” than as two verbs, as the traditional interpretation does.²⁰ According to the *Mao zhuan* 毛傳, *ying* 應, which usually means “to respond,” here means *dang* 當 “to match; to serve as; to be,” while *hou* 侯, which is almost always a noun indicating a social rank (traditionally translated as “marquis,” though now more commonly rendered as simply “lord”) here is to be understood as *wei* 維 “to be.” As far as I know, there is no support anywhere else in the early Chinese literary tradition for this latter reading, but even if there were the clause as a whole would still not make any sense, either grammatically (the king cannot “be” virtue) or conceptually (it is very strange to describe the king as being “compliant” or “docile” [i.e., *shun* 順]). It is only when we realize that there was a state called Ying 應 that was ruled by “lords” (*hou* 侯), and which had a close and very special relationship with the Zhou royal family, that we can begin to understand this line and, indeed, the entire poem.

Ying was located at the site of present-day Pingdingshan shi 平頂山市, in central Henan. Its founder was a younger brother of Zhou Cheng Wang, and bronze inscriptions show that its rulers continued to have a close relationship with the Zhou kings throughout the Western Zhou dynasty. The *Ying Hou Xiangong zhong* 應侯見工鐘 is a set of mid to late Western Zhou bronze bells that carries an inscription commemorating an award to Xiangong 見工, Lord of Ying 應侯. It is dedicated to Xiangong’s “august ancestor” (*huang zu* 皇祖), a still earlier Ying Hou.

Ying Hou Xiangong zhong 應侯見工鐘

佳正二月初 / 吉，王歸自成周。應（應）侯見工 / 遺王于周。辛 / 未，王各于康。 / 夔白內右 / 侯見工，易一、百、馬 // 四匹。見工敢 / 對揚天子休，用乍朕 / 皇且侯 / 大鐘，用 / 易壽 / 永命，子子孫孫永寶用。

It was the official second month, first auspiciousness, the king returned from Chengzhou. Xiangong, Lord of Ying, escorted the king to Zhou. On *xinwei* (day 8), the king entered into Kang. Rongbo entered at the right of Xiangong, Lord of Ying, who was awarded one black bow, one hundred black arrows, and four horses. Xiangong dares in response to extol the Son of Heaven’s beneficence, herewith making for my august ancestor Ying Hou this great stand of bells, herewith to award me long life and an eternal mandate. May sons’ sons and grandsons’ grandsons eternally treasure and use it.²¹

²⁰ The *Mao zhuan* defines the two words *ying* 應 and *hou* 侯 as *dang* 當 “to match” and *wei* 維 “to be,” while the commentary of Zheng Xuan 鄭玄 (127-200) states: “Wu Wang is able to match this compliant virtue, meaning that he is able to complete his ancestors’ achievements” (Wu wang neng dang ci shun de, wei nengcheng qi zu kao zhi gong ye 武王能當此順德，謂能成其祖考之功也). Waley’s translation suggests that he understands the *wei* 維 “to be” of the *Mao zhuan* to be a loan for the word *wei* 唯 “only,” which is certainly possible graphically but quite awkward grammatically.

²¹ *Yin Zhou jinwen jicheng*, Vol. 1 ##00107, 00108.

An extensive cemetery of the state of Ying has been excavated over the last several decades at Pingdingshan shi, though apparently some of the most important tombs have been looted. A pair of *gui*-tureens has recently been acquired by the Poly Museum of Beijing. Like the *Ying Hou Xiangong zhong*, the inscriptions on these vessels show that they were cast for Xiangong, Lord of Ying, and like the *Ying Hou Xiangong zhong* too, they show Xiangong as having had a very intimate relationship with the Zhou king, here sharing a banquet with him and receiving even more lavish gifts.

Ying Hou Xiangong gui 應侯見工簋

佳正月初吉丁亥，王才黷鄉 / 醜。雁侯見工友，易玉 / 五。穀馬四匹矢三千。見工敢 / 對揚天子休釐，用乍 / 皇考武侯尊簋，用易 / 壽永令，子子孫孫永寶。

It was the first month, first auspiciousness, *dinghai* (day 24), the king was at Mou feasting wine. Xiangong, Lord of Ying, serving as friend, was awarded five items of jade, four horses, and three thousand arrows. Xiangong dares in response to extol the Son of Heaven's beneficent gift, herewith making for my august deceased-father Wu Hou this offertory *gui*-tureen, herewith to award me long life and an eternal mandate. May sons' sons and grandsons' grandsons eternally treasure it.²²

These inscriptions leave no doubt that the lords of Ying (once again, Ying Hou) not only had a close relationship with the Zhou kings, but were fully capable of producing, if not “highly accurate records of words and deeds,” as Schaberg has put it, then certainly reasonably eloquent testimonies of that relationship. I would like to suggest that the poem “Xia Wu” is the same sort of testimony. Before doing so, however, I need to introduce, at least in brief, another two bronze inscriptions.

The *Shi Qiang pan* 史牆盤 was discovered in December, 1975, and is already well known to most people interested in ancient China, even if they have not made any special study of inscribed bronze vessels. This is because the flat surface of the *pan*-basin bears a lengthy inscription (284 graphs) that is neatly divided into two halves, the first half commemorating the achievements of the Zhou kings and the second half the service that Scribe Qiang, for whom the basin was cast, and his ancestors had provided to those kings. The inscription is too lengthy to quote in its entirety. I will cite just the encomia for the first two ancestors, Zhou Wen Wang and the High Ancestor (*Gao zu* 高祖) of Qiang's Wei 微 family.

曰古文王，初 蘇于政，上帝降懿德大粵， / 匍有上下， 受萬邦。
Accordant with antiquity was Wen Wang! He first brought harmony to government. God on High sent down fine virtue and great security. Extending to the high and low, he joined the ten thousand states.

²² *Baoli cang jin xu* 保利藏金續 (Guangzhou: Lingnan meishu chubanshe, 2001), pp. 124-27.

...
青幽高 / 且，才 敢 需處。零武王既 伐 殷， 敢 史刺且 / 還 來見武王，武王則
令周公舍 于周卑處。

Pure and retiring was the High Ancestor, at the numinous place of Wei! When
Wu Wang had already defeated Yin, the Wei scribes and valorous ancestors then
came to present themselves to Wu Wang. Wu Wang then commanded Zhou
Gong to dispense domicile at a low place of Zhou.²³

For nearly three decades after its discovery, the *Shi Qiang pan* remained an exceptional
historiographic document, tracing, at least in sketch, the history of the first seven reigns
of the Western Zhou. In January 2003, the *Shi Qiang pan* lost its claim to exclusivity. In
that month, peasants digging soil in the hamlet of Yangjiacun 楊家村 in Meixian 眉縣,
Shaanxi uncovered a cache of twenty-seven late Western Zhou bronze vessels. All of the
vessels were inscribed, including one *pan*-basin bearing an inscription even lengthier
(373 graphs) than that on the *Shi Qiang pan*. Like the *Shi Qiang pan* inscription, the
inscription on this *Qiu pan* 逯盤 contained a sketch history of the Zhou kings and of the
family of the person for whom it was cast, one Qiu 逯, though in this case the history
extended to the reign of Zhou Xuan Wang, almost to the very end of the Western Zhou
dynasty. Again, I will cite just the portion describing the highest ancestors, in this case
linked into a single entry.

逯曰。不顯朕皇高且單公：征=克明世德，夾救文王武王達殷 受天魯
令，匍有楛方，竝宅畢堇疆土，用配上帝。

Qiu said: “Illustrious was my august high ancestor Shan Gong: So radiant,
capable of making bright and wise his virtue, he accompanied and assisted Wen
Wang and Wu Wang, who pierced the Yin, received Heaven’s fine mandate,
extended it to the four quarters, and widely inhabited the lands that they opened
and bounded, therewith serving as mates to God on High.”²⁴

I cite the inscriptions on the *Shi Qiang pan* and the *Qiu pan* simply to show that
there were precedents in the Western Zhou dynasty for juxtaposing praises of the Zhou
kings and the ancestors of another family. If we look again at the poem “Xia Wu,” this
time looking more carefully at the structure of the poem, I think we may find echoes of
the *Shi Qiang pan*. This time I provide my own translation of the poem.

“Xia Wu” 下武 (Mao 243)

下武維周，	Descending martially is Zhou,
世有哲王。	Generations have had wise kings!
三后在天，	The three lords are up in heaven

²³ *Yin Zhou jinwen jicheng*, Vol. 16 #10175

²⁴ Shaanxi sheng Kaogu yanjiusuo, Baoji shi kaogu gongzuodui and Meixian wehuaguan, “Shaanxi Meixian Yangjia cun Xi Zhou qingtongqi jiaocang fajue jianbao” 陝西眉縣楊家村西周青銅器窖藏發掘簡報, *Wenwu* 2003.6: 4-42.

王配于京。	The king a mate in the capital.
王配于京， 世德作求。 永言配命， 成王之孚。	The king matches in the capital, Worldly virtue being a mate. Eternal the matching mandate The Completing King's trustfulness.
成王之孚， 下土之式。 永言孝思， 孝思維則。	The Completing King's trustfulness A model for the lands below. Eternal the filial thoughts, Filial thoughts are the standard.
媚茲一人， 應侯順德。 永言孝思， 昭哉嗣服。	Beloved is this Unique Man, The Lord of Ying complies in virtue. Eternal the filial thoughts, Radiant the successive service!
昭茲來許， 繩其祖武。 於萬斯年， 受天之祜。	Radiant this coming forward, Extending the ancestor's feats. Oh, ten-thousand should be the years Of receiving Heaven's blessings!
受天之祜， 四方來賀。 於萬斯年， 不遐有佐。	Of receiving Heaven's blessings, The four quarters come in tribute. Oh, ten-thousand should be the years Not putting off their assistance.

Looking at the structure of the poem, the first thing that we might notice is that the last line of the first stanza is repeated as the first line of the second stanza. This is true also the second and third and of the fifth and sixth stanzas, and virtually so for the fourth and fifth stanzas. The only two stanzas that are not linked in this way are the third and fourth, the former ending *Xiao si wei ze* 孝思維則 “Filial thoughts are the standard,” and the latter beginning *Mei si yi ren* 媚茲一人 “Beloved is this Unique Man.” For this reason, I have inserted an extra space between these two stanzas and would like to suggest that the poem breaks into two halves at this point. Now looking more carefully at these two halves of the poem, it can be seen that the word *wang* 王 “king” appears prominently in each of the three stanzas of the first half, but is conspicuously absent in the second half, there replaced by the early mention of the Lord of Ying. Looking still more carefully at the content of the two halves, the first half—the royal half, if you will—is about the king being in his capital, completing his trust, and serving as a model for all the lands of the four quarters—the sorts of things for which the *Shi Qiang pan* and *Qiu pan* praise the Zhou kings. In the second half of the poem, stanzas four through six, on the other hand,

the tenor changes. We now have mention of “compliant virtue” (*shun de* 順德), “service” (*fu* 服) and “assistance” (*zuo* 佐), and the statement that “The four quarters come in tribute” (*Si fang lai he* 四方來賀). These are precisely the sorts of qualities that Ying Hou Xiangong claimed for himself, “escorting” (*yi* 遺 lit. “to leave”) the king to Zhou and “befriending” (*you* 友) him there, and for which Qiang and Qiu praised their own ancestors.

Whatever the literary qualities of my translation of “Xia Wu” vis-à-vis that of Arthur Waley, I am confident that mine better reflects the original structure and purpose of the poem than does his, which, as I have said, is generally consistent with most traditional Chinese commentaries. What has allowed me to improve on these other offerings is an awareness of a range of bronze inscriptions from the Western Zhou dynasty—especially the *Ying Hou Xiangong zhong* and *gui* as well as the *Shi Qiang pan* and *Qiu pan*. Of course, even if I am correct about this context and structure of “Xia Wu,” I have added just one more poem to that of “Jiang Han” to be compared with Western Zhou bronze inscriptions. But this at least shows that some of the *Poetry* does “stem from circumstances in which it was possible and desirable to produce highly accurate records of words and deeds”—the bar that David Schaberg set for regarding them as “reliable” and “suitable for direct citation.” I am confident that other poems could make it across the same bar. Indeed, in closing this portion of this study, allow me to cite the latest statements on this issue by Martin Kern, a scholar who has often been regarded as an adherent of a late date for the composition of the *Poetry* on the basis of oral antecedents.²⁵

The bronze inscriptions of mid- and late Western Zhou times show conscious efforts toward poetic form. Especially in the wake of the ritual reforms, a greater number of inscriptions were guided by the same principles of rhyme and meter familiar from the *Songs*. The great majority of Western Zhou inscriptions include just a few graphs, but the two longest known bronze texts so far come close to 500 characters, and others contain from several dozen to 200-300 characters. All these more extensive texts fall into the range of length of the transmitted hymns. While rhyme and tetrasyllabic meter occur already among the earliest Western Zhou inscriptions, these features become increasingly regular from the periods of kings Gong and Yi onward, as do the calligraphy and overall visual layout (linear arrangement, spacing between graphs, etc.) of the inscriptions. The linguistic regularity never reaches that of the “Major court hymns,” but the overall tendency toward an increased aesthetic control and more rigidly standardized, and hence narrowed, expression is unquestionable. Furthermore, the inscriptions seem to prefer largely the same rhyme categories that also dominate the ritual pieces of the *Songs*. In my opinion, it is not

²⁵ For instance, in the notes to her *The Five “Confucian” Classics* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), Michael Nylan notes: “Martin Kern in two unpublished papers offers the most radical vision of the composition of the Odes, arguing that it may have been composed from standard ritual performance formulae as late as the fourth century BC.”; at <http://yalepress.yale.edu/yupbooks/pdf/nylan2notes.pdf>, accessed 28 August 2009.

inconceivable that the euphonic features of these inscriptions were brought to life through recitation.²⁶

Turning this around to comment on the nature of the *Poetry*, Kern states:

While we cannot date the “Major court hymns” with any certainty, their aesthetic features seem parallel to late Western Zhou ritual bronzes; in the hymns, the standardization of meter and stanzaic structures define the form and boundaries of all hymns in a unified fashion; within these boundaries, one notices the repetition of formulaic expression, continuous syntactic structures (binomes, the “AXAY” pattern, the repetition of specific formulae) and the dense fabric of onomatopoeic binomes and other euphonic features.²⁷

The poems of the *Da Ya* were surely “brought to life through recitation,” and this may also have been true of the inscriptions on the bronze vessels. On the other hand, the bronze inscriptions were even more surely written in the Western Zhou period, and I see no reason why this should not also have been true of most of the poems of the *Da Ya*.

Writing and the Transmission of the *Poetry*

Just as there has been some consensus among Western sinologists regarding the oral context for the original composition of the *Poetry*, so too have some of those who have discussed the early transmission of the *Poetry* argued that it must have been, at least for the most part, an oral process. As noted above, Steven Owen has said that the “primary mode of transmission was probably oral until (another guess) the late Warring States.” Owen’s student Steven van Zoeren has provided this guess with a much more elaborate structure. Examining mentions of the *Poetry* in the *Analects* of Confucius, van Zoeren has argued that the earliest stratum of the *Analects* shows Confucius and his students to have been interested in the *Poetry* primarily for its musicality.²⁸ By the fourth century B.C., the time of the Warring States period mentioned by Owen, quotation of individual lines of the *Poetry* was put into Confucius’s mouth, as well as those of other famous figures of the preceding Spring and Autumn period. According to van Zoeren, the poems of the *Poetry* “were not yet fully texts, but rather ‘pre-texts’ used simply as the vehicles of elegant expression of doctrinal exposition.”²⁹ Finally, toward the end of the Warring States period, within the context of doctrinal debates, both within and outside of the schools that grew up among followers of Confucius, the *Poetry* was transformed into a “strong text,” one the wording of which could be subjected to detailed exegesis.

This is a subtler argument than that adduced, for instance, by Christoph Harbsmeier, also cited above, that finds evidence of oral transmission in phonetic variation in which the *Poetry* was written (“Indeed, at least as late as the -3rd century it

²⁶ Kern, “Bronze Inscriptions, the *Shijing* and the *Shangshu*,” p. 194.

²⁷ Kern, “Bronze Inscriptions, the *Shijing* and the *Shangshu*,” p. 198.

²⁸ Steven van Zoeren, *Poetry and Personality: Reading, exegesis, and Hermeneutics in Traditional China* (Stanford, Cal.: Stanford University Press, 1991), pp. 25-51.

²⁹ van Zoeren, *Poetry and Personality*, p. 44.

appears that the texts of the *Book of Songs* were known and understood by less learned scribes by their sounds, not their characters, as the phonetic way of writing quotations in the famous *Lao Tzu* manuscripts recently discovered would suggest”). However, it is an argument that is not so much concerned with the writing of the *Poetry* itself as with the growth of the hermeneutic tradition devoted to it (the sub-title of van Zoeren’s book is *Reading, Exegesis, and Hermeneutics in Traditional China*). Moreover, it is not at all clear that van Zoeren would discount the textual nature of the *Poetry* even in the earliest stratum of his schema; after all, he defines a “text in the weak sense,” which is how he characterizes the *Poetry* at the time of Confucius, as being “a stable, reiterable discourse, usually although by no means always written.”³⁰ But how can we demonstrate the written nature of the text?

As mentioned above, over the last two decades a large body of manuscripts from the Warring States period (roughly the fourth century B.C., especially that latter part of that century) has been uncovered. Already in the earliest of these manuscripts, we find the *Poetry* cited routinely as a scriptural source, its individual lines used to demonstrate the veracity of one doctrinal point or another. Needless to say, these quotations are written and seem to reflect an already stable text. Of course, they do employ numerous graphic variants, most of which feature different phonetic elements from those used to write characters in the received text of the *Poetry*. However, as mentioned above, these do not seem to vary in either type or quantity from the graphic variants seen in other texts with received counterparts, and thus do not seem—to me, at least—to constitute evidence for oral transmission of the text.

On the other hand, both the manuscripts and also other transmission traditions of the *Poetry* display other sorts of variants whose difference from the reading of the received text can be shown to be due to graphic—and not phonetic—confusion, at least occasionally due to the evolution of graphic shapes from the time of the Western Zhou bronze inscriptions to that of the “clerical script” of the Han dynasty. These graphic variants are, to be sure, a distinct minority of all of the attested variants in the various texts of the *Poetry*, but they are not, for that, inconsiderable in number or in importance. Yu Xingwu 于省吾 (1896-1984), one of the great Chinese paleographers of the twentieth century pioneered the comparison of graphic forms in early excavated materials, especially oracle-bone and bronze inscriptions, with the readings of the transmitted literature, his *Shuang jian chi Shi jing xin zheng* 雙劍詒詩經新證, first published in 1935, serving as the inspiration for numerous recent “*xin zheng*” 新證 studies.³¹ Not all of Yu’s proposals were supported with textual evidence from the transmission of the *Poetry*, but many of them are no less convincing for that. Let me cite just a few among numerous examples of graphic confusions that Yu Xingwu proposed.

³⁰ van Zoeren, *Poetry and Personality*, p. 25.

³¹ Yu Xingwu, *Shuang jian chi Shi jing xin zheng* (1935); rpt. As *Shi jing Chu ci xin zheng* 詩經楚辭新證 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1982). For recent “*xin zheng*” studies modeled upon that of Yu Xingwu, see, for instance, Ji Xusheng 季旭昇, *Shi jing gu yi xin zheng* 詩經古義新證 (1994; rev. 2nd ed. Beijing: Xueyuan chubanshe, 2001); and Feng Shengjun 馮盛君, *Ershi shiji gu wenxian xin zheng yanjiu* 二十世紀古文献新证研究 (Ji’nan: Qi Lu shushe, 2006).

The best known example raised by Yu involves confusion between the two characters and words *zhi* 止 “foot; to stop; appearance” and *zhi* 之 “to go; it.” In his 1935 study, he cited only two similar instances of this confusion in the poem “Gong Liu” 公劉 (Mao 25): “*Zhi ji nai li*” 止基迺理, explained by Zheng Xuan 鄭玄 (127-200) as “Stopping work on the foundation (of the palace), then he drew the boundaries of the wilds,” and “*Zhi lü nai mi*” 止旅乃密, again explained by Zheng Xuan as “Stopping the troops, they were then at rest.” Yu pointed out that in Western Zhou bronze inscriptions, the forms of *zhi* 止/xx and *zhi* 之/xx were very similar, though their pronunciations (*tə□ vs. *tə³²) were different enough so that they should not be confused in speech. Nevertheless, here it makes much more sense to read these lines as beginning with *zhi* 之 in its use as a demonstrative pronoun “this, these”: “This foundation was then drawn up” and “These legions were then massed tightly.”

In a subsequent study, Yu Xingwu provided a detailed accounting of all occurrences of *zhi* 止 in the *Poetry*, demonstrating pervasive confusion between the words “stop; appearance” and “it, these,” especially when the word appears in sentence-final position. Here I will cite just two examples, one from the *Guo Feng* and one from the *Day Ya*:

“Cao chong” 草蟲 (Mao 14)

嘒嘒草蟲，	“Wanting, Wanting,” the cicada,
趯趯阜螽。	Jumping, jumping, the grasshopper.
未見君子，	Not yet having seen the lord-son,
憂心忡忡；	The troubled heart pounding pounding.
亦既見止，	Now at last having seen him,
亦既覯止，	Now at last having met him,
我心則降	My heart then settles down.

Although the *Mao zhuan* says of the *zhi* 止 that end the fifth and sixth lines that they are “particles” (*ci ye* 辭也), apparently (though not necessarily) indicating that they are meaningless, it is clear to see here that they are simple pronouns pointing to the “lord-son” of the third line, and should be written with *zhi* 止 in its standard pronominal sense.³³

“Han yi” 韓奕 (Mao 261)

韓侯取妻，	The Lord of Han takes as a wife:
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³² Reconstructions of archaic pronunciations are taken from Axel Schuessler, *Minimal Old Chinese and Later Han Chinese: A Companion to Grammata Serica Recensa* (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2009). The reconstructions here found at pp. 97 (4-26) and 98 (4-27).

³³ The translations of James Legge, Arthur Waley, and Bernhard Karlgren all agree on this point; see James Legge, *The Chinese Classics*, Vol. 4: *The She King* (1871; rpt. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 1960), p. 22; Waley, *The Book of Songs*, p. 15; Karlgren, *The Book of Odes*, p. 9.

汾王之甥，	The niece of the king at Bin,
蹶父之子。	The daughter of Guifu.
韓侯迎止，	The Lord of Han greeted her
于蹶之里。	In the hamlet of Gui.

In this case, neither the *Mao zhuan* nor Zheng Xuan's commentary makes any mention of the final *zhi* 止 of the fourth line. It seems obvious that it refers to the bride the lord of Han, and should be read as the pronoun *zhi* 止. Yu Xingwu gives nine other similar examples. Innocuous though this example seems, I believe it points toward copyists' errors. More specific examples also abound. In the following, I will present just two of these, examples that depend on different sorts of argumentation to make their case.

The penultimate line of the poem “Wei tian zhi ming” 維天之命 (Mao 267) of the *Zhou Song* section of the *Poetry* reads: “*Jun hui wo Wen wang*” 駿惠我文王 “Greatly kind our King Wen.” Neither the *Mao zhuan* nor Zheng Xuan's commentary comments directly on the first two words here, *jun hui* 駿惠, which are hard to construe in the context. In a one-sentence aside in the introductory remarks to his article on *zhi* 止 and *zhi* 之 in the *Poetry*, Yu noted that the compound *jun zhi* 駿寔 “to rule securely” occurs in the final prayers of the *Qin Gong zhong* 秦公鐘 and *Qin Gong gui* 秦公簋 inscriptions: *yi shou chun lu duo li, mei shou wu jiang, jun zhi zai wei* 以受純魯多釐,眉壽無疆,駿寔在位 “to receive pure aid and many blessings, long life without bound, and to rule securely in position”³⁴ Another example of this usage was discovered well after Yu was writing his study; the late Western Zhou *Hu gui* 鬲簋, ostensibly composed by Zhou Li Wang (r. 857/53-842/28), the reigning Zhou king, contains the following pair of phrases: *jun zai wei, zuo zhi zai xia* 駿在位,作寔在下 “I rule in position, making secure those below.”³⁵ It seems clear, as Yu suggested, that “*jun zhi*” 駿寔 “to rule securely” was in the Western Zhou and early Spring and Autumn periods an idiomatic way of describing a good ruler, certainly fitting for the Wen Wang of the poem “Wei tian zhi ming.” However, it is not found in later literature, suggesting that it may have passed out of use (and perhaps even out of understanding). If we can agree that it fits the context of the poem “Wei tian zhi ming” better than does the easily intelligible but inappropriate *jun hui* 駿惠 “greatly kind,” then we need to ask how the variation came about. Of course, the variation between *zhun* 駿 “swift; great” and *jun* 駿 “overseer; to rule” involves only a change of signfic, and so is textually insignificant. However, the variation between *hui* 惠 (*wis R!) and *zhi* 寔 (*tits) would seem certainly to be a classic case of *lectio facillior*, the substitution of a simpler and well known character for one more difficult (and perhaps, at the time, unintelligible). This could only have happened within a written transmission of the text of the poem.

In the received text of the poem “Huang yi” 皇矣 (Mao 241), we find the following lines describing Wen Wang:

³⁴ *Yin Zhou jinwen jicheng*, Vol. 1 ##00262-00266, Vol. 8 #04315.

³⁵ *Yin Zhou jinwen jicheng*, Vol. 8 #04317.

其德克明，	And his virtue, it could be bright,
克明克類，	It could be bright, could be akin,
克長克君。	He could be head, could be ruler.
王此大邦，	He was king of this great country,
克順克比。	Could be followed, could be allied.

Already in the Qing dynasty, Jiang Yougao 江有誥 (1681-1762) pointed out that *bi* 比 (*pih) falls out of the rhyme scheme of this stanza,³⁶ and suggested that the final line here should be reversed to read *ke bi ke shun* 克比克順 “Could be allied, could be followed,” such that *shun* 順 (*m-luns) “to follow” would rhyme with the final *jun* 君 (*kwən) “ruler” two lines above. However, as Yu Xingwu argues,³⁷ a better solution to this textual problem is to see *bi* 比, the archaic form of which is xx, as a graphic error for *cong* 從 “to follow,” which was written as xx during the Shang and Western Zhou. Elsewhere in the *Poetry*, *cong* (*dzong) rhymes with *bang* 邦 (*prong) “country,”³⁸ with which the rhyme scheme of the poem suggests it should rhyme here as well. As Yu further notes, not only does this resolve the problem of the rhyme, but given the use of synonyms in the preceding lines, *cong* “to follow” makes a better match for *shun* “to follow” than does *bi* “to ally.” Although Yu had no way of knowing this when he was writing in the 1930s, the mistaking of *cong* xx/从 for *bi* 比 must have taken place by the Spring and Autumn period, since by the Warring States period *cong* was almost invariably written as 從.³⁹

Other scholars have followed Yu Xingwu’s lead in pointing out errors in the received text of the *Poetry* that are similarly based on graphic confusion, many of the suggestions being persuasive.⁴⁰ It would perhaps be desirable to provide an exhaustive inventory of all of these different suggestions. However, it seems to me that just the examples presented above should suffice to suggest that copying (and miscopying) from one written text to another was instrumental to the transmission of the *Poetry* even before the Han dynasty (and perhaps well before the Han dynasty). This does not mean that oral

³⁶ Both Bernhard Karlgren (*The Book of Odes: Chinese Text, Transcription and Translation* [1945; rpt. Stockholm: The Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities, 1974], p. 194) and Wang Li (*Shi jing yun du* [Shanghai: Shanghai Guji chubanshe, 1980], p. 342) indicate that *bi* 比 (given as *piər [Karlgrén] or *piei [Wang]) is a cross-rhyme with *lei* 類 (given as *liwəd [Karlgrén] or *liuət [Wang]) three lines ahead.

³⁷ Yu Xingwu, *Shi jing Chu ci xin zheng*, pp. 52-53.

³⁸ See “Cai shu” 采菽 (Mao 222) and “Bi gong” 閼宮 (Mao 300).

³⁹ See, for instance, He Linyi 何琳儀, *Zhanguo guwen zidian* 戰國古文字典 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1998), Vol. 1 p. 429.

⁴⁰ I have had occasion in the past to mention the suggestion of Pang Sunjoo 方善柱 that the famous mention of a tenth-month (*shi yue* 十月) solar eclipse in the poem “Shi yue zhi jiao” 十月之交 (Mao 193) is a graphic error for a “seventh-month” (*qi yue* 七月) eclipse, the archaic character for “seven” (xx) being essentially identical with the clerical script form of the character for “ten” (xx); see Fang Shanzhu, “Xi Zhou niandai xue shang de jige wenti” 西周年代學上的幾個問題, *Dalu zazhi* 大陸雜誌 51.1 (1975): 17-23. The Han dynasty redactors of the *Poetry* could have introduced this error simply by doing nothing other than transcribing the text of the poem exactly in the archaic characters of the Warring States period.

transmission was not also instrumental, but we would lose a great deal if we only listen for the sounds of the *Poetry*. More important for our purposes in this study, we lose even more in terms of understanding the role the *Poetry* played in early China if we imagine that the people of the time were also only hearing the sounds.

Writing and the Redaction of the *Poetry*

As noted above, the *Poetry* is indubitably a “Zhou text in Han clothing,” but it is worth exploring just what that means for the text of the *Poetry* and how it was so clothed. It is commonly assumed that all written copies of the *Poetry* were burned at the time of the Qin proscription of literature in 213 B.C., but that it was reconstituted in its entirety because scholars at the Qin court and elsewhere had committed it to memory, aided in large part by its rhyming nature.⁴¹ I think there can be little doubt that most scholars, whether at court or elsewhere, had indeed committed the *Poetry* to memory, and that this must have played some role in its reconstitution during the Han. However, I think there should be considerable doubt as to just how far the Qin book burning reached. We have at least some empirical evidence with which to explore this question. In 1977, a manuscript copy of the *Poetry*, fragmentary to be sure, was unearthed from Tomb 1 at Shuanggudui 雙古堆, in Fuyang 阜陽, Anhui.⁴² This was the tomb of Xiahou Zao 夏侯竈, lord of Ruyin 汝陰, who died in 165 B.C., which provides a firm early Western Han *terminus ante quem* for this copy. Indeed, some evidence suggests that a copy of the *Zhou Yi* 周易 or *Zhou Changes* that was also found in the same tomb may have been copied already in the Qin period,⁴³ which ended only some forty years before this tomb was closed. There seems to be no way to tell whether the Fuyang *Poetry* manuscript was copied before or after the onset of the Han dynasty (the script is generally similar to that of the *Zhou Yi* manuscript, a form of clerical script common to both the Qin and early Western Han periods), but that a manuscript of the *Poetry* has been found from such an early Han date very far from either the capital or any of the apparent intellectual centers of the realm might suggest that other written copies were also extant.

As for William Baxter’s statement that the *Poetry* “as we now have it is a Zhou text in Han clothing; both its script, and, to some extent, its text have been influenced by

⁴¹ For instance, the “Record of Arts and Literature” chapter of the *Han shu* says of it: “The reason that, having met with Qin, it remained intact is because it was sung and chanted and was not only on bamboo and silk”; *Han shu* 30.1708.

⁴² For this text, see Hu Pingsheng 胡平生 and Han Ziqiang 韓自強, *Fuyang Han jian Shi jing yanjiu* 阜陽漢簡詩經研究 (Shanghai: Shanghai Guji chubanshe, 1988).

⁴³ The evidence is of two sorts, positive and negative. The negative evidence is the clearer: the manuscript freely writes the word *bang* 邦 “country,” and thus does not observe a taboo on the name of Liu Bang 劉邦, the founding emperor of the Han dynasty (r. 202-195 B.C.). The positive evidence is less clear: Hu Pingsheng 胡平生 notes that one of the divination formulas, *lin guan li zhong* 臨官立眾 “to oversee an office and to take governance” is written elsewhere as *lin guan li zheng* 臨官立正 (or 政), and that this may suggest that the scribe was intentionally avoiding the name of Ying Zheng 嬴正, the First Emperor of Qin; Hu Pingsheng, “Fuyang Han jian Zhou Yi gaishu” 阜陽漢簡周易概述, *Jian bo yanjiu* 簡帛研究 3 (1998): .265-66.

post-*Shijing* phonology, and are not always reliable guides to the phonology of old Chinese,”⁴⁴ quotable as it is, it certainly does not entail, as David Knechtges has stated, that “the phonology of the *Shi jing* has been significantly influenced by Han dynasty pronunciation and script.”⁴⁵ It should be noted that Baxter’s caution has not stopped him from relying heavily on the text of the *Poetry* in his reconstructions of Old Chinese phonology. In his paper, Baxter gives eleven examples of characters the phonetic elements of which do not seem to correspond well with rhyme categories as they can be reconstructed from the *Poetry*. This is certainly valuable information about the development of the Chinese language and script. However, it does not demonstrate a thorough-going rewriting of the text during the Han dynasty. Indeed, as Baxter himself notes at certain points in his study, not all of these changes can be ascribed to the Han redaction at all; some of the differences doubtless developed over the course of the preceding four or five centuries.⁴⁶ In any event, as I have also suggested above, I am not at all convinced that the substitution of one character for another has much to do with the question of whether the changes came about in the process of transcribing the sounds of memorized poetry during the Han dynasty.

What would constitute evidence of the process by which the text of the *Poetry* as we have it was achieved? It seems to me that we ought to consider the material nature of texts in antiquity. Almost all manuscripts in ancient China were written on bamboo strips. A good argument can be made that this medium had a profound effect on the way texts were written.⁴⁷ I think an even better argument can be made that it had a profound effect on the way texts were re-written, which is to say, how early manuscripts were re-copied and edited.⁴⁸ Just as we find in the case of manuscripts excavated today from ancient tombs, so too in antiquity did the binding straps of bamboo-strip texts often come undone, occasionally causing the contents of an entire strip of text to be put into the wrong place in a text (or sometimes even into the wrong text). When we find evidence of such “misplaced strips” (*cuo jian* 錯簡), I think we have firm evidence of a process of copying from one written manuscript to another written manuscript.

In my recent *Rewriting Early Chinese Texts*, I compared manuscript versions of the text *Zi yi* 緇衣 (The Black Jacket) with the chapter of the same title found in the received text of the *Li ji* 禮記 (Record of Ritual). The *Zi yi* is one of the texts that makes pervasive use of quotations of the *Poetry* as a sort of scriptural proof text, and most of the quotations found in the two different Warring States manuscripts of the text closely match not only the received text of the “*Zi yi*,” but also the received text of the *Poetry*. However, there is one case where there is a notable discrepancy between a quotation

⁴⁴ William H. Baxter III, “Zhou and Han Phonology in the *Shijing*,” in *Studies in the Historical Phonology of Asian Languages*, ed. William G. Boltz and Michael C. Shapiro, *Current Issues in Linguistic Theory* 77 (1991), pp. 1-34.

⁴⁵ See above, p. 00.

⁴⁶ See, for instance, Baxter, “Zhou and Han Phonology in the *Shijing*,” p. 10, with respect to the graph 廢 for the word *fei* “to abandon.”

⁴⁷ See, for instance, William G. Boltz, “The Composite Nature of Early Chinese texts,” in *Text and Ritual in Early China*, ed. Martin Kern (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2005), pp. 50-78.

⁴⁸ See Edward L. Shaughnessy, *Rewriting Early Chinese Texts* (Albany, N.Y.: SUNY Press, 2006) for my most sustained argument to this effect.

found in the manuscripts and that in the received text, a discrepancy that I think points to an interesting feature in the received text of the *Poetry* itself.

In the ninth pericope of the manuscripts version of the *Zi yi*, the *Poetry* is quoted as follows:

詩云：其容不改，出言又順，黎民所信。

“The *Poetry* says: “His countenance does not change, The words he utters can be followed, He is who the black-haired people trust.””

The corresponding quotation in the received text of the “*Zi yi*” (in the ninth pericope of the *Li ji* version of the text) is similar enough to suggest that it should come from the same poem, and yet different enough so that it should draw our attention:

詩云：彼都人士，狐裘黃黃，其容不改，出言有章，行歸于周，萬民所望。

“The *Poetry* says: “That great sire of the city, A fox robe so yellow. His countenance does not change, The words he utters have a pattern. On his way back to Zhou, The ten-thousand people look to him.””

The six lines quoted by the received text of the “*Zi yi*” (by which I mean the text found in the received text of the *Li ji*) constitute the first stanza of the poem “*Du ren shi*” 都人士 (Mao 225) in the received text of the *Poetry*. In his comment to the quotation in the “*Zi yi*,” Zheng Xuan noted that it is found in the Mao version of the *Poetry*, but not in the three versions of the text that were official in his day: the Qi 齊, Lu 魯 and Han 韓 versions. There are two bits of textual evidence to suggest that those versions, long since lost, were correct about this.

First, the *Zuo zhuan* 左傳 (14th year of Duke Xiang 襄) also quotes the last two phrases of this same stanza, “*Xing gui yu Zhou, Wan ming suo wang* 行歸于周，萬民所望” “On his way back to Zhou, The ten-thousand people look to him.” The *Mao Shi zheng yi* 毛詩正義 edited by Kong Yingda 孔穎達 (574-648) early in the Tang dynasty quotes in turn the *Zuo zhuan* commentary (*Zuo zhuan zhu* 左傳注) of Fu Qian 服虔 (c. A.D. 125-195), a contemporary of Zheng Xuan, as providing the following apparently self-contradictory note: “A lost poem; the first stanza of “*Du ren shi*” has it” (*Yi Shi ye; Du Ren shi shou zhang you zhi* 逸詩也;都人士首章有之).⁴⁹ Second, it is clear that the *Xiping* 熹平 Stone Classics, copied during the lifetime of Zheng Xuan (begun in A.D. 175 and finished in 183), did not include this stanza of the poem *Du ren shi*.⁵⁰

The Qing scholar Wang Xianqian 王先謙 (1842-1918), in a study of the texts of the *Shi* during the Han dynasty, also pointed out that this stanza, although superficially similar to the other stanzas of the poem, really has a different structure, and doubtless

⁴⁹ *Mao Shi zheng yi* 25/2.2a.

⁵⁰ For a demonstration of this, and indeed, for all of the argument that I am making here, see Wu Rongzeng 吳榮曾, “*Zi yi jianben yin Shi kaobian*” 緇衣簡本引詩考辨 *Wenshi* 文史 60 (2002): 15-16.

was an isolated stanza (*gu zhang* 孤章) of some lost poem that was then grafted onto the poem.⁵¹ An examination of the poem shows, I believe, that he was certainly right about this. I provide it here followed by the translation of James Legge.

Du ren shi 都人士 (Mao 225)

彼都人士，狐裘黃黃。其容不改，出言有章。行歸于周，萬民所望。
彼都人士，臺笠緇撮。彼君子女，綢直如髮。我不見兮，我心不說。
彼都人士，充耳琇實。彼君子女，謂之尹吉。我不見兮，我心苑結。
彼都人士，垂帶而厲。彼君子女，捲髮如蠶。我不見兮，言從之邁。
匪伊垂之，帶則有餘。匪伊卷之，髮則有旃。我不見兮，云何盱矣。

Those officers of the [old] capital, With their fox-furs so yellow,
Their deportment unvaryingly [correct], And their speech full of elegance!
If we could go back to [the old] Zhou, They would be admiringly looked up by all
the people.

Those officers of the [old] capital, With their hats of Tai leaves and small black
caps!
Those ladies of noble Houses. With their hair so thick and straight!
I do not see them [now], And my heart is dissatisfied.

Those officers of the [old] capital, With their ear-plugs of *xiu*-stones!
Those ladies of noble Houses, Each fit to be called a Yin or a Ji!
I do not see them [now], And my heart grieves with indissoluble sorrow.

Those officers of the [old] capital, With their girdles hanging elegantly down!
Those ladies of great Houses, With their [side] hair curving up like a scorpion's
tail!
I do not see them [now], [If I could], I would walk along after them.

Not that they purposely let their girdles hang down; The girdles were naturally
long.
Not that they gave their hair that curve; The hair had a natural curl.
I do not see them [now], And how do I long for them!

Whereas “Those officers of the old capital” (*Bi du ren shi* 彼都人士) of the second, third and fourth stanzas (and implicitly also of the fifth stanza) apparently inspire romantic thoughts (“I do not see them [now], And my heart is dissatisfied” [*Wo bu jian xi, Wo xin bu yue* 我不見兮，我心不說], etc.),⁵² those of the first stanza are admired for their (or his) statesmanlike appearance, a paragon of virtue for the people. This brings us back to the quotation found in the *Zi yi* manuscripts: *Qi rong bu gai, Chu yan you shun, Li min*

⁵¹ Wang Xianqian, *Shi san jia yi ji shu* 詩三家義集疏 (??), ??.

⁵² Traditional interpretation is that the traditional clothing of the “officers” inspires nostalgia for the lost capital of old.

suo xin 其容不改，出言又順，黎民所信 “His countenance does not change, The words he utters can be followed, He is who the black-haired people trust.”

This seems to suggest that there were originally two different poems in the *Poetry* both entitled *Du ren shi*, one of which included both the lines quoted in the manuscripts version of the *Zi yi* and also the stanza quoted in the received text of the “*Zi yi*” (i.e., the first stanza of the received text of the poem “*Du ren shi*”), and the second of which was probably composed of the last four stanzas of the poem *Du ren shi* in the received text of the *Poetry*. The differing quotations in the manuscripts and the received text of the “*Zi yi*” have interesting implications for the editing of that text, implications that I was concerned with in my earlier study.⁵³ However, the conflation of the two poems in the received Mao version of the *Poetry* has perhaps even more interesting implications for the editing of that text. The first of these poems must have been lost at some time between the writing of the *Zuo zhuan* and *Zi yi* and the Han redactions of the *Poetry*. However, one stanza of it apparently survived, perhaps written on a single bamboo strip (it is worth noting that the Fuyang manuscript seems to have been copied with one stanza per bamboo strip).⁵⁴ The editor (or editors) of the Mao *Poetry*, recognizing the superficial similarity between this stanza and the four stanzas of the surviving poem “*Du ren shi*,” must have simply grafted this stanza on at the beginning of the other four stanzas. What is important for our purposes here is that this could have happened only in the context of an editor working with a written text (presumably written on bamboo strips). I suppose it is not unimaginable that an editor working from memory might conflate two poems in this way, but it certainly seems unlikely.

Of course, this is but a single instance of the role that written texts played in the Han redaction of the received *Poetry*, but it takes only one instance to demonstrate the point. All of the suppositions about the reconstitution of the *Poetry* based upon some sort of collective memory remain suppositions.

Conclusion

I began this study by citing several leading authorities arguing for the importance of orality in the composition, transmission, and even editing of the *Poetry*. I have attempted to show that at each of these three stages in the creation of the *Poetry* that we have today writing was also very important. Inscriptions on bronze vessels show that a great number of the social elites of the Western Zhou and Spring and Autumn periods were fully capable of writing the sorts of poetry we see in the received *Poetry*. Variants and errors seen in the received text of the *Poetry*, plausibly caused by changes in the

⁵³ As I noted in that study, “Apparently at some time between the writing of the *Zi yi* and the Han dynasty, all but the first stanza of the first of these *Du ren shi* poems was lost; that first stanza was then grafted onto the beginning of the Mao version of the second *Du ren shi* poem. It seems possible that the editor of the *Li ji* version of the *Zi yi*, who surely knew the Mao version of the *Shi* well, realized that the quotation in the *Zi yi* was not found in the received text of the *Shi*, but recognizing the similarity between it and the first stanza of the Mao version of *Du ren shi* simply substituted the one for the other”; *Rewriting Early Chinese Texts*, p. 54 n. 108.

⁵⁴ Hu Pingsheng and Han Ziqiang, *Fuyang Han jian Shi jing yanjiu*, p. 90.

script or in the idiom of usage over the course of the centuries before the common era, suggest that at least some of the transmission the text was accomplished by the copying from one manuscript to another. And the mistaken conflation of two poems in the received Mao version of the *Poetry* suggests that an editor or editors of that text was working with a text written on bamboo strips. None of this evidence should be taken to exclude the role of an oral context at any one of these three moments in the creation of the received *Poetry*. But, it seems to me, that it should suffice to remind readers of the *Poetry* of the very important role that writing played in that creation.