1 AN OUTLINE OF WESTERN STUDIES OF CHINESE PALEOGRAPHY

The purpose of this book is to give a relatively comprehensive survey of western Sinologists’ studies of Chinese unearthed documents from the pre-Qin through Han periods. By “Chinese unearthed documents,” I intend oracle-bone inscriptions, bronze inscriptions, bamboo and silk manuscripts, as well as various types of inscriptions on stone down through the Han dynasty. I must draw the reader’s attention to the temporal limits of this survey. Given my own scholarly limitations, “Chinese unearthed documents” will not include such important topics as Dunhuang 敦煌 silk and paper manuscripts, nor will it include such stone inscriptions as tomb epitaphs after the Han dynasty, much less will it include the numerous non-Chinese language documents found in Gansu and Xinjiang. Oracle-bone inscriptions, bronze and stone inscriptions, and bamboo and silk manuscripts will each have one chapter devoted to them, with each chapter divided into two sections, one section providing a narrative (including brief biographies of individual prominent scholars) and one section comprising a bibliography. However, aside from specialized studies of these three fields, western Sinologists have also produced studies of Chinese writing in general. This chapter will give a general overview of these studies.

This chapter will differ from the following three chapters in two important respects. First, I make no claim that the bibliography appended to this chapter is comprehensive. Although I cannot guarantee that the bibliographies devoted to the fields of oracle-bone and bronze inscriptions and bamboo and silk manuscripts will not have occasional gaps, still they should all be quite comprehensive. By contrast, the bibliography appended to this chapter includes only the most representative and influential works. Second, the narratives devoted to studies of oracle-bone inscriptions, bronze and stone inscriptions, and bamboo and silk manuscripts will be structured chronologically, more or less describing the development of those fields. This chapter will be different. Since there is no way that I can hope to introduce all western studies of Chinese paleography or writing, I will restrict the presentation to just the following topics: general discussions of Chinese paleography and/or unearthed documents; the origins of Chinese writing and its social functions; the nature of Chinese writing; methodo-
logical studies of paleography; and reference works. I should especially emphasize that I will not attempt to introduce studies of ancient Chinese grammar and phonology, notwithstanding their intimate relationship with Chinese writing.\(^1\)

### 1.1 General Discussions of Chinese Paleography and/or Unearthed Documents

As mentioned in the “Preface” to this book, early reports by western missionaries produced great excitement among western scholars in many different areas, but perhaps the most exciting of all was with respect to the nature of Chinese writing. Just at that time, western scholars were also beginning to study Egyptian hieroglyphics, to which they naturally compared Chinese writing. With the departure of Jesuit missionaries from China, although European scholars continued to study traditional Chinese literature and history, the fields of linguistics and grammatical did not see continued progress. After protestant missionaries arrived in

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\(^1\) For studies of Chinese grammar, see Georg von der GABELENTZ (1840-1893), *Chinesische Grammatik, mit Ausschluß des niederen Stils und der heutigen Umgangssprache* (Leipzig: T.O. Weigel, 1881; rpt. Halle: Max Niemeyer, 1960); W.A.C.H. DOBSON (1913-1982), *Early Archaic Chinese: A Descriptive Grammar* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1962); Ulrich UNGER (1930-2006), *Einführung in das klassische Chinesisch* (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1985); Christoph HARBSMEIER, *Aspects of Classical Chinese syntax*, Scandinavian Institute of Asian Studies Monograph Series, No. 45 (London and Malmö; Curzon Press, 1981); Edwin G. PULLEYBLANK (1922-2013), *Outline of Classical Chinese Grammar* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1995); Redouane DJAMOURI, *Collected Essays in Ancient Chinese Grammar*, Collection des Cahiers de linguistique: Asie orientale 6 (Paris: Centre de Recherches Linguistiques sur l’Asie Orientale, 2001). All of these studies have considerable scholarly merit, but only Dobson’s *Early Archaic Chinese* is more or less concerned with unearthed documents. It describes the grammar of the language of the Western Zhou period partially on the basis of chapters of the *Shang shu* 尚書 that are generally accepted to date from that period, and partially on the basis of fourteen important Western Zhou bronze inscriptions. Although the grammatical analysis given in this work is now more or less out of date, it had considerable influence on studies of bronze inscriptions.

China at the beginning of the nineteenth century, their interests were more practical than scholarly, such that linguistic study focused on the *Kangxi Dictionary* 康熙字典 and the *Shuo wen jie zi* 說文解字. By the end of the nineteenth century and beginning of the twentieth century, this field began to undergo a great change. In 1881, **Lionel C. HOPKINS** (1854-1952; see the biography appended to this chapter) translated the book *Rationale of the Six Types of Script* (*Liu shu gu* 六書故) by the Song scholar Dai Tong 戴侗 (1241 jinshi); this was published as *The Six Scripts or the Principles of Chinese Writing* (100010). Hopkins would go on to become a renowned expert on oracle-bone inscriptions. Already at this time, even before any oracle bones had been discovered, he was already paying great attention to the analysis of the “six scripts” or six types of characters (*liushu* 六書) and their historical evolution. As I will describe in the following chapter, after oracle bones were discovered, Hopkins would devote many decades to the study of their inscriptions and to Chinese writing in general, publishing almost fifty articles, including especially the series of articles entitled “Pictographic Reconnaissances: Being Discoveries, Recoveries, and Conjectural Raids in Archaic Chinese Writing,” published between 1917 and 1928 (100110, 1917; 100120, 1918; 100130, 1919; 100140, 1922; 100150, 1923; 100180, 1924; 100190, 1926; 100210, 1927; 100220, 1928). Beginning in 1906, after having read Frank H. CHALFANT’s (1862-1914) *Early Chinese Writing* (100050; 1906), Hopkins struck up an epistolary friendship with Chalfant. Chalfant’s work was western scholars’ first introduction to oracle-bone inscriptions, pointing out in particular the pictographic shapes of the characters. Although Hopkins and Chalfant were both amateur scholars, they both made important contributions to the study of Chinese paleography, establishing the foundation on which western scholarship was to build.

The year before Hopkins began to publish “Pictographic Reconnaissances,” the French Jesuit missionary Léon WIEGER, S.J. (1856-1933), who had long resided in China, published his *Caractères chinois: etymologie, graphies, lexiques* (100100; 1916) there. This work won high praise from Édouard CHAVANNES (1865-1918; see the biography appended to this chapter), who recommended it for the Prix Julien, France’s highest Sinological award. In addition to *Caractères chinois*, Wieger published more than ten other books, including *Bouddhisme chinois: Extraits du Tripitaka, des commentaires, tracts, etc.* (1910), *Taoïsme* (1911), *Histoire des croyances religieuses et des opinions philosophiques en Chine* (1917), and *La Chine à travers les âges* (1924), giving detailed introductions to many dif-

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2 Léon WIEGER, S.J., *Bouddhisme chinois. Extraits du Tripitaka, des commentaires, tracts, etc.* (Sienhsien [Hokienfu]: Impr. De la Mission catholique, 1910); *Taoïsme* (Sienhsien [Hokienfu]:
ferent aspects of Chinese life and history. In *Caractères chinois*, in addition to describing the traditional “six types of characters” analysis of the Chinese script, Wieger also considered evidence from bronze and stone inscriptions. His remarks on stone inscriptions are unproblematic, but his translations of bronze inscriptions are consistently marred by elementary mistakes, revealing the very low state of western scholars’ understanding of Chinese paleography at the time.

At the time that Wieger was writing *Caractères chinois*, Bernhard KARLGREN (1889-1978; see the biography appended to this chapter) was just finishing his doctoral dissertation in Paris: *Études sur la phonologie chinoise*. With the completion of this thesis, Karlgren immediately became one of the most prominent western Sinologists. In addition to essentially establishing the modern field of phonology, over the course of sixty years Karlgren also published outstanding studies in such diverse fields as textual criticism and bronze studies. His doctoral dissertation was translated into Chinese by the prominent Chinese linguists Y.R. CHAO (ZHAO Yuanren 趙元任, 1892-1982), LUO Changpei 羅常培 (1899-1958) and F.K. LI (LI Fanggui 李方桂; 1902-1987), and many other of his works have also been translated into Chinese. There is no need here to introduce his work on Chinese phonology. His other most important contributions were probably his two dictionaries *Analytic Dictionary of Chinese and Sino-Japanese* (1923) and *Grammata Serica Recensa* (1957). *Grammata Serica Recensa*, in particular established the analysis of word families; it will be introduced in the section on Reference Works below. Similarly, his studies of bronze vessels and bronze inscriptions will be introduced in Chapter Three below. In addition to these specialized studies, Karlgren also authored several introductions to the Chinese language, such as *Sound and Symbol in Chinese* (1923), *Philology and Ancient China* (1926), and *The Chinese Language: An Essay on Its Nature and History* (1949). All of these works include at least some mention of paleography.

There are several other works concerned with paleography and unearthed documents that are worthy of mention. The earliest is “An Introduction to Chinese Palaeography” (1913) by CH’EN Meng-chia (CHEN Mengjia 陳夢家; 1911-1966). This was based on the lecture notes for a course on Chinese paleography that he gave while a visiting professor at the University of Chicago between 1945 and 1947. Unfortunately, this work was not published until 2006, and did not...
even circulate before that time. In fact, most scholars did not even know that Professor Ch’en had written this book, which was representative of the finest level of scholarship in the 1940s. If it had been published at that time, it surely would have had great influence. However, given the advances of scholarship over the intervening sixty years, the 2006 publication should be seen as having primarily just historical significance.

Another professor at the University of Chicago who authored a work on Chinese paleography and unearthed documents is Tsuen-hsuin TSIEN (1909-2015; see the biography appended to this chapter). Professor Tsien arrived at the University of Chicago in 1947, becoming the director of the university library’s East Asian Collection. Thereafter, while working full-time in the library, he also undertook graduate studies with Herrlee Glessner CREEL (1905-1994; see the biography appended to Chapter Three). He was awarded a Ph.D. in 1957 for a dissertation entitled “The Pre-Printing Records of China: A Study of the Development of Early Chinese Inscriptions and Books.” Upon revision, this dissertation was published by the University of Chicago Press in 1962 as Written on Bamboo and Silk: The Beginnings of Chinese Books and Inscriptions (100490). The book includes nine chapters: “Introduction,” “Records on Bones and Shells,” “Inscriptions on Metals and Clay,” “Engravings on Stone and Jade,” “Documents on Bamboo and Wood,” “Silk As Writing Material,” “Paper and Paper Manuscripts,” “Implements and Tools for Writing,” and “Conclusion”—and serves as an excellent summation of the unearthed documents available at the time of its publication. The book had an immediate influence on western Sinology, being reprinted three times already in the first years after its publication. However, in the 1970s with the great increase in archaeological discoveries taking place in China, Professor Tsien was no longer able to keep abreast of new materials and for many years the third printing in 1969 was the final edition. In 2004, when Professor Tsien was already 95 years old, together with his colleague at the University of Chicago Edward L. SHAUGHNESSY, it was finally possible to publish a revised edition (101280). Although the original structure of the book could not be changed, it was possible at least to make mention of the many great discoveries of the 1970s and 1980s. Shaughnessy added a “Afterword” (101270) that surveyed contributions that other western scholars had made to these respective fields in the interval.

In 1997 Shaughnessy also edited New Sources of Early Chinese History: An Introduction to the Reading of Inscriptions and Manuscripts (100970), bringing together some of the leading scholars of that period to address China’s unearthed textual record. The book included an Introduction by Shaughnessy (100960), and the following chapters:
David N. KEIGHTLEY, “Shang Oracle-Bone Inscriptions” (202980)
Edward L SHAUGHNESSY, “Western Zhou Bronze Inscriptions” (302140)
Gilbert MATTOS (1939-2002), “Eastern Zhou Bronze Inscriptions” (302120)
Susan WELD, “The Covenant Texts from Houma and Wenxian” (302160)
Michael LOEWE, “Wood and Bamboo Administrative Documents of the Han Per-
iod” (402400)
A.F.P. HULSEWÉ (1910-1993), “Qin and Han Legal Manuscripts” (402380)
Donald HARPER, “Warring States, Qin, and Han Manuscripts Related to Natural
Philosophy and the Occult” (402370)
William G. BOLTZ, “Manuscripts with Transmitted Counterparts” (402350)

Because the book was intended to serve as a handbook for this field, each chapter
includes numerous translations of unearthed texts, so that readers can study for
themselves how to use the texts in their own research.

The final chapter of this New Sources of Early Chinese History was written by
William G. BOLTZ. In 1994, he published a monograph entitled The Origin and
Development of the Chinese Writing System (100780). The book includes three
parts: “Prolegomena,” “The Shang Formation,” and “The Ch’in-Han Reforma-
tion.” In the book, Boltz paid special attention to both the origin of Chinese
writing and also the nature of the script, two topics that will be the focus of spe-
cial attention below; for now, I will just mention the book.

Gilbert MATTOS (1939-2002), another contributor to New Sources of Early Chi-
nese History, also produced another important contribution at the time. Together
with Jerry NORMAN (1936-2012), he translated QIU Xigui’s 裘錫圭 Wenzixue gai-
yao 文字學概要, under the title Chinese Writing (101130; 2000). Chinese readers
will all be familiar with this extremely important book by Professor Qiu, so there
is no need to describe its contents. However, it is noteworthy that the translation
includes several advantages over the original work. First of all, although the
translation was based on the original 1988 Beijing Commercial Press edition of
the work, it was also collated against the 1994 Taiwan Wanjuanlou edition as
well. Since the Wanjuanlou edition includes numerous corrections made by Pro-
fessor Qiu himself, it is a marked improvement over the original edition. How-
ever, because the Wanjuanlou edition was published in Taiwan, it systematically
converted all simplified characters to traditional forms, including also numerous
characters for which Professor Qiu intended the simplified form to illustrate
points. Thus, it is still necessary when using this work also to consult the original
edition. Professors Mattos and Norman were both good friends of Professor Qiu,
and were able to consult with him throughout the translation process, during
which Qiu introduced still further corrections to his own work, corrections not
reflected in either of the Chinese editions. Moreover, because the original *Wenzixue gaiyao* included over one thousand archaic character forms for which there were then no available fonts, the Chinese editions were both handwritten. The English edition of *Chinese Writing*, on the other hand, is completely typeset, including all of the archaic character forms, rendering them easier to see. Finally, and perhaps even more important, the English translation also includes two different indices. One is a bilingual glossary for the very technical vocabulary that Qiu employed in his book, such as *ban jihao ban biaoyizi* 半記號半表意字, translated as “semi-sign semi-semantograph,” *zuming jinwen* 族名金文, translated as “clan emblem,” and so forth. The second index provides references to every individual character discussed in the text. With this index, it is possible to gain control over the entire contents of *Chinese Writing*. This translation was not just a great contribution to western Sinology, but is also considered a standard in all fields of paleography and linguistics.

A work similar in scope to Qiu Xigui’s *Chinese Writing* is *The Orthography of Early Chinese Writing: Evidence from Newly Excavated Manuscripts* (101400; 2006) by Imre GALAMBOS. A native of Hungary, Galambos studied at the University of California at Berkeley, being awarded a Ph.D. in 2002, with a doctoral dissertation on variant characters in the Houma 侯馬 covenant texts. After graduating, Galambos first worked at the British Library editing the Dunhuang manuscripts in its collection. He is now teaching in the Faculty of Oriental Studies at the University of Cambridge. *The Orthography of Early Chinese Writing* addresses unearthed documents of the Warring States period, especially the Houma covenant texts, examining the variant forms of characters, and demonstrating that prior to the Han (in actuality, prior to the Eastern Han) most characters did not yet have a “correct” form; not only could they be written with different forms at different times and in different places, but even a single scribe might use different forms of a character in a single document. The first chapter of this book also introduces prior scholars’ work on the question of correct forms and variant forms, paying special attention to the views of Noel BARNARD (1923-2016; see the biography appended to Chapter Three), CHENG Te-k’un (ZHENG Dekun 鄭德坤; 1907-2001), William G. Boltz, the Japanese scholar MATSUMARU Michio 松丸道雄, and also Qiu Xigui. In evaluating the work of these scholars, Galambos adopts a compromise view, pointing out both good and bad points. His basic premise is that characters are simply symbols of language, and any given word could be represented by any number of characters; in the case of ancient China, rather than using such terms as “correct character” and “mistaken character,” it would be preferable to use a statistical method to determine the incidence with which different forms of characters were written.
The most recent publication by the western scholarly world addressing Chinese paleography and unearthed documents is *Writing & Literacy in Early China; Studies from the Columbia Early China Seminar* (101530), edited by Li Feng and David Prager Branner, and published by the University of Washington Press in 2011. This book is a collection of essays first presented at the Columbia University Early China Seminar. There are eleven essays in all, all revolving around the topic of writing and literacy in early China. Most of the essays have at least some bearing on the topic of paleography. They are presented in the following order:

David W. Pankenier, “Getting ‘Right’ with Heaven and the Origins of Writing in China” (101540)
William G. Boltz, “Literacy and the Emergence of Writing in China” (101510)
David Prager Branner, “Phonology in the Chinese Script and Its Relationship to Early Chinese Literacy”
Ken-ichi Takashima, “Literacy to the South and East of Anyang in Shang China: Zhengzhou and Daxinzhuang” (203770)
Adam Daniel Smith, “The Evidence for Scribal Training at Anyang” (203750)
Matthias Richter, “Textual Identity and the Role of Literacy in the Transmission of Early Chinese Literature” (405740)
Lothar von Falkenhausen, “The Royal Audience and Its Reflections in Western Zhou Bronze Inscriptions” (303390)
Li Feng, “Literacy and the Social Contexts of Literacy in the Western Zhou” (303400)
Constance A. Cook, “Education and the Way of the Former Kings” (303380)
Robin D.S. Yates, “Soldiers, Scribes, and Women: Literacy among the Lower Orders in Early China” (405790)
Anthony J. Barbieri-Low, “Craftsman’s Literacy: Uses of Writing by Male and Female Artisans in Qin and Han China” (405520)

The individual authors are all leading authorities on paleography and unearthed documents, and the essays all underwent repeated discussion and editing. Although there are certainly different viewpoints represented among them, they more or less represent the state of the field in western scholarship. In the following section devoted to the origin of Chinese writing, I will have occasion to introduce the views of William G. Boltz, while many of the other essays will be introduced in the following chapters on oracle-bone inscriptions, bronze and stone inscriptions, and bamboo and silk manuscripts.
1.2 The Origin of Chinese Writing and Its Social Functions

From the earliest scholarly publications to the most recent, the origin of writing in China has always been a topic of great interest to western scholars. For present purposes, we can probably disregard the pan-Babylonian theories of early missionaries and scholars, including some who regarded the Chinese people as a lost tribe of Israel, such as A. Terrien de LACOUPERIE (1844-1894), who in 1887 and 1888 published *The Languages of China before the Chinese: Researches on the Languages Spoken by the Pre-Chinese Races of China Proper Previously to the Chinese Occupation* (100020) and *The Old Babylonian Characters and Their Chinese Derivates* (100030). Perhaps in the greater western world there are still people who accept these sorts of notions, but in the scholarly world they are viewed as being without any basis. The only exception might be the articles “The Chinese Cyclical Signs as Phonograms” (100540), “The Ganzhi as Phonograms and Their Application to the Calendar” (100730) and “The Historical and Prehistorical Relationships of Chinese” (100820) by Edwin G. PULLEYBLANK (1922-2013), which argue that the ten “heavenly stems” (*tiangan* 天干) and twelve “earthly branches” (*dizhi* 地支) were primitive syllables, possibly related—either directly or indirectly—to the Phoenecian alphabet. This theory has not won much support either, and is usually treated separately from Pulleyblank’s other scholarship, such as his work on Chinese grammar and on linguistic relations between China and peoples living on its periphery. For this scholarship, see his articles “The Chinese and their Neighbors in Prehistoric and Early Historic Times” (100570) and “Early Contacts between Indo-Europeans and Chinese” (100910). Pulleyblank was a very careful scholar, originally an historian, but later changing course and working on linguistic topics, making very important contributions to the phonetic reconstruction of ancient Chinese. His suggestions regarding relations between ancient Chinese and other languages are quite persuasive in the cases of certain words, demonstrating that people living in the area of modern China had definite relationships with their neighbors.

Although the great majority of western scholars no longer accept theories regarding the diffusion of writing to China from western Asia, with most people agreeing that there were four indigenous inventions of writing in the ancient world (Mesopotamia, Egypt, China and Meso-America), this is by no means to say that western scholars are now all agreed regarding the origins of writing in China. Just as in China, there are two main schools of thought regarding this question, one espousing a relatively long development process, and one arguing for sudden invention. In the book *The Origins of Chinese Civilization*, published in 1983, CHEUNG Kwong-yue 張光裕 contributed an article entitled “Recent Archaeological Evidence Relating to the Origin of Chinese Characters” (100550), in which he
surveyed marks founds on neolithic pottery. Cheung argued that many of these marks reflect connections with the writing of Shang oracle-bone inscriptions and suggested they should be viewed as the origin of writing in China. This viewpoint has received little support among western scholars, most of whom hold that isolated symbols cannot be treated as writing. Most of these scholars insist that only when there is a stable character form, pronunciation, and meaning, and especially multiple graphs used in a context showing grammar, is it possible to talk about writing. According to this view, the earliest writing in China remains the oracle-bone inscriptions of the late Shang dynasty.

Of course, this is not necessarily to say that the Shang oracle-bone inscriptions were the first writing in China, but only that they are the earliest surviving evidence. For instance, Robert BAGLEY of Princeton University has recently argued for a long-term process of development. In his study “Anyang Writing and the Origin of the Chinese Writing System” (101230) published in 2004, he argued that the language of the Shang oracle-bone inscriptions was already quite mature, and as such should be seen as the crystallization of a long-term process. This study was published in a book entitled *The First Writing: Script Invention as History and Process*, which provided surveys of the inventions of all of the world’s major writing systems. Bagley made considerable use of the evidence for writing in the Ancient Near East in arguing for this developmental process. Western scholars, including also western sinologists, have always paid attention to the evidence of writing in the Ancient Near East, which is to say Mesopotamian cuneiform and Egyptian hieroglyphics. There is now clear evidence that the invention and development of cuneiform took place over a rather long period of time. Already in circa 3400 BCE in the third and fourth phases at Uruk, there are pottery sherds with proto-cuneiform writing that record the number and type of such goods as foodstuffs, oil, alcohol, and domesticated animals, as well as a certain number of names indicating the owner and/or type of the product. The characters depicting the goods are all pictographic in nature. The proper nouns are also essentially pictographic, but they are more abstract than the characters used for products, rather resembling the clan signs found on Chinese bronze vessels of the Shang and Zhou dynasties. The numbers are more abstract still, counting from a certain number of dots. Later, the pictographs gradually became formulaic, and then through the rebus principle came to represent ever more words. There is evidence to suggest that this development extended over the course of six or seven hundred years before cuneiform writing finally reached its mature phase. Bagley hypothesized that the development of writing in China must have undergone a similar process. According to him, since the Shang inscriptions had already reached a relatively mature stage, there must have been a long period of
development prior to them, but that the evidence for it was written on some sort of perishable material that has not survived in the archaeological record.

Related to this question is the role that early writing played. In Mesopotamia, the earliest writing was clearly used for administrative purposes, as accounting records made by scribes at the royal court. The early uses of writing in Egypt and Meso-America are not as clear as those in Mesopotamia, but they too seem to be accounting records. For this reason, Bagley argued that this should be seen as a universal phenomenon, to which China should of course not be an exception. He speculated that these sorts of accounting records would have been written on perishable materials that have not survived. As Bagley often says, the absence of evidence is not evidence of absence. He expects that in the future it is very likely that evidence of writing earlier than the oracle-bone inscriptions will be found.

Holding a very different viewpoint from that of Bagley is William G. Boltz, professor of Chinese at the University of Washington. Over the last two decades, he has published a series of studies such as *The Origin and Development of the Chinese Writing System* (100780; 1994), “Early Chinese Writing” (100870; 1996), “The Invention of Writing in China” (101040; 2000), and “Literacy and the Emergence of Writing in China” (101510; 2011), arguing that it is very possible that writing in China was invented in Anyang itself, or not very much before the time of the late Shang kings who ruled there. Boltz also compares writing in China to that of Mesopotamia and Egypt, but as a linguist he does not pay much attention to archaeological evidence. As I will discuss in more detail below, he frequently resorts to linguistic evidence, arguing that marks must represent shape, sound and meaning before they can be termed writing. Of these qualities, the most important is sound. According to Boltz, a symbol such as  cannot be regarded as writing since different readers could use different sounds to read it, such as “Use of cell phones is not permitted,” “Please turn off cell phones,” or “Use of cell phones prohibited.” Only under the rather limited condition that any given reader would use one and the same sound to characterize the symbol should it be regarded as writing. For example, when speakers of Mandarin Chinese see the mark 人, they all conventionally read it as *ren* with the meaning of “human being”; this is writing.

According to Boltz, primitive writing always featured one phenomenon: polyphony. He argues that Shang dynasty oracle-bone inscriptions also reflect this feature. For instance, he says that the graph 卜 is usually read as *bu* meaning “to divine.” However, he says that the same graph could occasionally also be read as *wai* with the meaning “outside.” Similarly, he says that the oracle-bone graph 禾, which is usually read as *he* meaning “grain,” could also occasionally be read as *nian* and mean “year.” This evidence of polyphony in the oracle-bone inscriptions suggests that Shang dynasty writing was still in its earliest stages, not very
distant from its origins. Because of this, Boltz surmises that Shang oracle-bone inscriptions do in fact represent the earliest writing in China; even if there were some writing before this, it could not be from very much before.

Boltz’s article “Literacy and the Emergence of Writing in China” was published in 2011 in the volume Writing & Literacy in Early China: Studies from the Columbia Early China Seminar mentioned above. Included in the same volume was an article by Adam Smith entitled “The Evidence for Scribal Training at Anyang” (203750). This article also touched on the question of the origin of writing in China. At the beginning of the essay, Smith posited two scenarios concerning writing at Anyang. One scenario envisioned a thousand or more people in the society, both at Anyang and in its environs, who could read and write. These people primarily would have had administrative responsibilities: for the craft industries in the capital as well as for the feeding of the people, registering people from outside of the city, provisioning the army, etc. A very different scenario proposed by Smith holds that there may have been as few as a dozen people at Anyang who could read and write, all of them working at the royal court in charge of recording divination results. According to Smith, the first scenario is in line with the long duration evolution of writing proposed by Bagley, who argued for a more or less widespread literacy based on comparisons with teaching materials found in Level 2 at Uruk in Mesopotamia. Smith’s own understanding, first presented in his doctoral dissertation “Writing at Anyang: The Role of the Divination Record in the Emergence of Chinese Literacy” (203660), holds that there is very little evidence for how diviners and scribes at Anyang learned to read and write. He suggests that Bagley’s comparison of Mesopotamia and Anyang is unfair, that Level 2 at Uruk was more than a thousand years after the first writing in Mesopotamia, so that by then there were certainly many people who were literate. Smith suggests that a fairer comparison would be between Uruk 2 and the Chinese case in the Han dynasty, similarly a thousand or so years after the first attested writing in China.

Smith notes that the oracle-bone inscriptions occasionally mention a character that can be read as either *xue* 学 “to study” or *jiao* 教 “to teach.” Although this word can be read as either a noun or a verb, there is no evidence to suggest that it meant either a place or an activity where students were taught to read and write. For example, *Heji* 3250 can be transcribed as follows:

多子其延學疫，不遘大雨
If the Many Children continue practicing *X*, they will not run into heavy rain.3

Although the meaning of yi 疫, usually meaning something like “epidemic,” is not entirely clear, it is certainly the grammatical object of the verb “to study.” Therefore, there is no reason to think that this inscription has anything to do with learning to write. Similarly, there are several inscriptions from Huayuanzhuang dongdi 花园莊東地 that read “Duo zi xue shang” 多子學商 or “The many sons will study Shang.” According to SONG Zhenhao 宋鎮豪, shang 商 here is the name of a dance, so that what the “many sons” were studying was a type of dance and not anything to do with learning to read. Smith also examines in detail “practice inscriptions” (xi ke 習刻) at Anyang, and argues that many of the students who created them were just learning how to do divinations. This suggests that these students did not already know how to read and write, merely learning the technical vocabulary of divination, but rather that they were novice writers entirely. For this reason, Smith hypothesizes that writing at Anyang was restricted just to the cult of divination, a function very different from the administrative purposes to which it was put in Mesopotamia.

These scholars all adduced quite a bit of evidence in favor of their very different viewpoints, but all of them admit that based on present evidence both viewpoints can only be tentative. Most western sinologists prefer to wait for more evidence before coming to any conclusion about this problem.

A topic intimately related to the origin of writing in China is its earliest social uses. Quite a few scholars have expressed opinions about this topic, which can also basically be divided into two radically opposed views: administrative versus religious uses. Bagley and his student Haicheng WANG note the relatively complete evidence for the administrative uses of writing in the Ancient Near East. In Mesopotamia, the earliest uses of writing are clear; it was originally a form of accounting notation. Although, as noted above, evidence for a similar role is lacking in China, Bagley and Wang both argue that the organization of Anyang’s military and craft industries would have required written records; however, these records must have been written on either wood or bamboo, both of which are unlikely to have survived. It is only an accident of preservation and discovery that oracle bones and inscribed bronze vessels have managed to survive as the only manifestations of writing. According to Bagley and Wang, these artifacts have

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exerted more influence in the modern scholarly world than they ever did in the ancient world.

Tao WANG 汪濤 holds a similar view. In 1995, together with Nicholas POSTGATE and Toby WILKINSON, two archaeologists of the ancient world, he published in the influential journal *Antiquity* an article entitled “The Evidence for Early Writing: Utilitarian or Ceremonial?” (100810), in which they provided a survey of writing in the four civilizations in which it was independently invented. The authors noted that in each of these ancient civilizations, ritual records were inscribed on high prestige artifacts, whereas practical administrative records were normally written on disposable materials. Because the prestige goods were comparatively durable, the records of ritual have survived. On the other hand, the supports carrying the administrative records were usually disposed of as soon as they were no longer needed, and most of them have simply decomposed. Only in the exceptional circumstance of Mesopotamia, in which practical records were impressed into clay, have they survived. Wang and his two co-authors hypothesize that China also had many administrative records, and suggest that the written records that have been found there to date are but “the tip of a much larger iceberg of (principally) utilitarian texts written on less durable substances.”

This viewpoint is not universally held by any means. Numerous western scholars point to oracle-bone and bronze inscriptions as evidence that the invention and early use of writing in China was intimately related with religious rituals. They hold that the primary motivation for the ancients to invent writing was to communicate with their ancestors. Perhaps the most influential proponent of this view is Mark Edward LEWIS. At the outset of his book *Writing and Authority in Early China* (101020), he offered the followed remarks concerning the invention of writing:

> Some scholars speculate that these earliest script forms had been developed for use in daily activities, but that the evidence of this has vanished with the perishable materials to which such writings were committed. In fact, the early graph forms are clearly tied in form and significance to divination through the reading of lines, the brief formulae of the early inscriptions are a radically simplified form of a natural language, and the development of graphs can be directly traced to their role in religious cult. Whatever other roles writing played in Shang times, it was in the inscription of the religious activities of the rulers that

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the graphs found their definitive import, and it was their dual function as link to the spirits and emblem of royal power that first placed them at the center of Chinese civilization.\textsuperscript{7}

Other scholars have also emphasized that almost all evidence of writing in the Shang dynasty was limited to ritual uses, especially directed at communication with the ancestors. Recently, the renowned French sinologist Léon VANDERMEERSCH has published a book entitled \textit{Les deux raisons de la pensée chinoise: Divination et idéographie} (101640; 2013), which is the summation of more than forty years of research on related issues. In this book, he argues that the invention and early uses of writing were exclusively related to the practice of divination. It is important to note that Vandermeersch’s methodology is quite different from that of Mark Edward Lewis, based on his view that Chinese writing is a sort of natural language. Nevertheless, on the question of the ritual uses of writing, the two scholars’ views are similar.

It is generally agreed that by the time of the Shang oracle-bone inscriptions, writing in China had already reached a relatively mature stage. However, because before this time there is no evidence of earlier stages of writing, it seems impossible to determine which of these two views described above regarding the early use of writing is correct. Indeed, it would seem that proponents of both views have been rather too extreme. It is to be hoped that future discoveries may turn up the sprouts of writing prior to the time of Anyang.

\subsection*{1.3 The Nature of Chinese Writing}

For more than a century, western sinologists have vigorously debated the nature of Chinese writing. Simply put, the two sides of the debate have involved epigraphers and linguists (though these terms are of course broad generalizations). Epigraphers tend to emphasize the importance of the “shape” of Chinese characters, while linguists emphasize “sound.” It is well known that most current Chinese characters are phonograms (\textit{xingshengzi 形聲字}), which is to say composed of a signific and a phonetic component. Linguists assert that the phonetic component is the essential feature. However, epigraphers—and especially paleographers (i.e., those who study the ancient forms of characters)—tend to look to the time at which writing was invented, which is to say the oracle-bone inscriptions of the Shang dynasty, arguing that the writing system we see today underwent considerable development after this time. For this reason, they argue that one

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\textsuperscript{7} Mark Edward LEWIS, \textit{Writing and Authority in Early China} (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1999), p. 15.
\end{flushleft}
ought not use the mature writing system in place since the time of the Han dynasty to characterize the earliest stages of the script.

The first western scholar to publish a study of Shang oracle-bone inscriptions was Frank CHALFANT, who, as noted above, published the pamphlet *Early Chinese Writing* (100050) in 1906. This was the first time that a tracing of an oracle-bone inscription appeared in the western scholarly literature. In this article, Chalfant gave a relatively complete description of Chinese writing, introducing the “six types of characters” of the *Shuo wen jie zi* 說文解字. However, because he was particularly interested in the just discovered oracle-bone inscriptions, he paid greatest attention to the category of “pictographs” (*xiangxingzi* 象形字) among Chinese characters. Much of his article consisted of a table presenting 403 different characters, including their present graphic shape, the signific, the seal-script form, any more ancient form, as well as the “probable original form” of the graph. The great majority of these graphs are of animals and natural phenomena, the pictographic nature of which is rather easy to see; however, there are also not a few characters the analysis of which is faulty based on present paleographic standards. Some of these mistakes are based on the *Shuo wen*, such as saying that *zhì* 志 “will” is a combined semantograph (*huiyizi* 會意字) meaning “what the heart expresses.” Others are even more problematic, such as his saying that the archaic character emetery, transcribed as *chang* 鬱, means “the strange shape of a ghost.” However, in general, this essay of Chalfant’s reflected considerable paleographic expertise. Nevertheless, shortly after it was published, the young Henri MASPERO (1882-1945; see the biography appended to Chapter Four) published a review very pointedly critical of it (100070), saying that Chalfant had completely overlooked the phonetic component of Chinese characters. Maspero argued that language refers only to speech, and that speech requires sound and meaning, but does not necessarily require writing. Because of this, writing can only be regarded as secondary, the representation of language. Chalfant did not respond. In fact, he never published another article; having been very seriously injured in a traffic accident in Tianjin 天津 in 1912, he passed away in 1914 at the young age of 52. For his part, Maspero went on to become one of the most famous sinologists, making very important contributions to the study of Chinese linguistics, among several other fields.

As mentioned above, the facsimiles of oracle-bone inscriptions that Chalfant published attracted the interest of Lionel C. HOPKINS. Hopkins was a member of the British foreign service, and by the time he came to know of Chalfant’s oracle bones had already served in China for several decades. Already in 1881 he had published a translation of DAI Tong’s 戴侗 (fl. 1241) *Liu shu gu* 六書故 or *Rationale of the Six Types of Script* (100010). After the two men had become acquainted,
Hopkins purchased numerous oracle bones from Chalfant, and they exchanged a
great many letters discussing various points regarding the transcription of the
characters in them. Hopkins proved to be much more long-lived than Chalfant,
living to the ripe old age of 98; as late as 1947, at the age of 92, he was still pub-
lishing articles on oracle-bone inscriptions.8 He published no fewer than 43 arti-
cles in the Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society alone, most of them having to do
with oracle-bone studies and other topics in paleography. This does not even take
into account articles that he published in other journals, including especially the
series of nine articles entitled “Pictographic Reconnaissances” that he published
between 1917 and 1928, and that were mentioned above. In these articles, he pre-
sented detailed analyses of 240 different characters. As the title of the series indi-
cates, he emphasized the pictographic nature of characters. Despite the impres-
sionistic title of the series, it should be noted that Hopkins’ paleography was by
no means uninformed. In fact, in the first installment of this series, published in
1919, he correctly pointed out on the basis of oracle-bone and early bronze in-
scription forms of the graph 天 “heaven,” i.e., 雲, that the round head is actu-
ally the character 丁, which simultaneously depicts the human head and
also serves as the phonetic component for the character. This is a very impressive
insight regarding an important word and character, which even today is misun-
derstood by many paleographers.

In 1908, after retiring from the British foreign service, Hopkins returned to
his native England, living in the English countryside with very little contact with
the outside world—the very epitome of the amateur English scholar. His writing
style was also quite different from that of professional scholars. For this reason,
there are quite a few people who have discounted the quality of his scholarship.
For example, the famous French sinologist Paul PELLIOT (1878-1945) was the
long-time editor of the important journal T’oung Pao, and was known for his com-
ments on the work of others. In 1922, he published a review of the first issue of
the journal Asia Major, remarking on every article in the issue. With respect to
Hopkins’ article “The Royal Genealogies on the Honan Relics and the Record of
the Shang Dynasty” (200150), he wrote caustically: “I am quite embarrassed to
mention this article; even if some of its contents are not certainly wrong, I do not
believe in the texts that the author uses.”9

One of the most famous debates in western sinology also revolves around the nature of Chinese writing, and also appeared—at least for the most part—in the journal *T'oung Pao*. In 1936, Herrlee Glessner CREEL returned from several years of study in China to take up a teaching position at the University of Chicago. In that year, he published in *T'oung Pao* an article entitled “On the Nature of Chinese Ideography” (100290). In that same year, Creel published his famous *The Birth of China: A Survey of the Formative Period of Chinese Civilization* (200420), introducing western readers to the civilization that was just then being unearthed at Anyang, including especially inscribed oracle bones. In “On the Nature of Chinese Ideography,” Creel used these oracle-bone inscriptions to argue that the original forms of a great many Chinese characters were directly related to their meaning. He also argued that this was true not only of the period of the oracle bones, but has continued to characterize Chinese writing throughout its long history. Because of this, no matter what Chinese dialect a person might speak, as soon as she sees a Chinese character she can understand its meaning. In fact, this holds true for Korean and Japanese people as well. In the writing of the three different languages—Chinese, Korean and Japanese—the pronunciations of characters are very different, but readers can still understand their meaning. Creel enthusiastically praised the pictographic nature of early Chinese writing and termed the characters “ideographs.” He held that in the course of the development of the script different characters were invented to express different related meanings, but that it is still possible to recognize the ideographic core binding them together. For instance, he pointed out that the original shape of the graph *wei* 韋 was 韋. The square in the middle of this character originally expressed a “citadel,” and the two opposed “feet” (zhi 止) around it represented guards marching around it. Creel noted that there is a set of words that all represent extensions of this meaning; adding a *wei* 围 “enclosure” around the outside of the graph (i.e., *wei* 围) gives the meaning “to surround”; adding a *xing* 行 “road” signific (i.e., *wei* 衛) gives the meaning “escort”; adding a *men* 門 “gate” signific (i.e., *wei* 闈) gives the meaning “watchtower”; adding a *jin* 巾 “cloth” signific (i.e., 巾) gives the meaning of a protective curtain. It is easy to see the relationship among these different characters and words. Even the word *wei* 違 featuring the locomotion signific *chuo* 辶, and meaning “to disobey, to contravene,” may well be related, deriving from the two feet in the original character 韋 moving in different directions. A similar explanation might even be given for the character *wei* 緯 which means the “warp” threads of a woven textile, and thus, the threads that “go against” the main thread of the textile, though he admitted in this case that the relationship with the core character is not as easy to discern.
The year after Creel published this article, Peter A. Boodberg (1903-1972), then professor of Chinese at the University of California at Berkeley published an article entitled “Some Proleptical Remarks on the Evolution of Archaic Chinese” (100320) in the newly established *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, in which he severely criticized Creel’s approach to the study of writing. Boodberg opened his article by dismissing the oracle-bone inscriptions for understanding Chinese writing, terming them an “obstacle” rather than aid to its understanding. He said that epigraphers typically emphasize the form of characters, but that this misses the crucial feature of writing, which is their sound. His own writing was very pointed, as can be seen from the second paragraph of the article:

The investigation of the corner-stone problem of Chinese epigraphy, the relation of graph to vocable, has indeed been rather retarded than advanced by the new finds. Most students in the field have chosen to concentrate their efforts on the exotically fascinating questions of ‘graphic semantics’ and the study of the living tissue of the *word* has almost completely been neglected in favor of that of the graphic integument encasing it. As to the later (Chou) forms of the Chinese written language, they continue to be interpreted according to the principles laid down by native didactic and classificatory works, while less orthodox sources and evidence bearing chiefly on the ‘phonetic’ aspects of the script are consistently disregarded.\(^\text{10}\)

Using the vocabulary of linguistics, Boodberg began with the premise that language refers to speech, and that writing is only secondary. He argued that Chinese writing was probably similar to the early writing of Mesopotamia in beginning with pictographs, but such pictographs that do not express their pronunciation cannot be considered as writing. Boodberg pointed to the graph 二 to explain this point. Not only in Chinese but in many other writing systems, this graph expresses the meaning “two.” However, if it does not carry a pronunciation (Boodberg reconstructed the archaic pronunciation of 二 as *nyî*), how would we know that this is not a symbol meaning something like “parallel” or “above and below”? It is not only now that we have to read the graph as 二 before we can understand it as “two,” but it would have been the same for readers in the Shang period. Otherwise, this would not count as “reading.” Because there were many words that could not be expressed pictographically, this period cannot be regarded as having true writing. Before long, writing in China—as did writing in Mesopotamia—discovered the basic principle of writing, which is to use pronun-

ciation to express the word; in other words, to use the pronunciation of some pictograph to express a different word that had the same sound but a different meaning. This is what studies of writing in China refer to as “loan characters” (jiajiezi 假借字). After discovering this basic principle of writing, Chinese writers—just as writers did in Mesopotamia as well as in all other civilizations in which writing was independently invented)—very quickly invented an even more advanced method of creating characters, which was to use one component to represent the basic meaning and to use another component to represent the sound of the word. In studies of Chinese writing, these are termed the “signific” (or “radical”) and the “phonetic,” and the combined character is referred to as a “phonogram” (xingshengzi 形声字). It was only by using loan characters and these phonograms that the sounds of words could be represented, and thus only then that speech (which is to say “language”) could be written down. Only when writing had reached this stage could it be termed true writing.

The year after Boodberg’s article was published, Creel published another article in T’oung Pao, this one entitled “On the Ideographic Element in Ancient Chinese” (100330; 1938). In this article, Creel admitted that the overwhelming majority of Chinese characters found in dictionaries are phonograms. However, he continued to maintain that pictographs represent the core of Chinese writing. He used a statistical method to demonstrate that in terms of incidence of characters used in traditional Chinese literature, pictographs made up a very high percentage. Furthermore, Creel noted that in addition to pictographs, Chinese writing also included a great number of semantographs (huiyizi 會意字), which are formed by combining two semantic components to create a new character. These characters, like pictographs, also do not represent the pronunciation. Creel invited Arno Poebel (1881-1958), an expert on Sumerian language working at the University of Chicago’s Oriental Institute, to provide evidence for similar features in the Ancient Near East, showing that much writing there did not represent the sounds of words, which is to say that it could not directly represent speech.

Two years later Boodberg published, this time also in T’oung Pao, yet another rebuttal entitled “‘Ideography’ or Iconolatry?” (100340; 1940) in which he ridiculed Creel’s knowledge of linguistics, and said that not only Chinese semantographs, but also the Mesopotamian semantographs suggested by Poebel, did not exist. He insisted that many of the characters analyzed in Chinese studies of writing as semantographs actually also represent the sound of the word. After four years of extremely bitter back-and-forth debate (especially in the case of Boodberg’s criticism of Creel), the then editor of T’oung Pao, Paul Pelliot added an ed-
itorial note to Boodberg’s article saying that the debate had already moved beyond the scholarly competence of *T'oung Pao*, and therefore *T'oung Pao* would not continue to publish similar articles. For him, the debate was finished.

In this editorial comment, Pelliot did not express his own views concerning this debate, though many readers assume that since Boodberg had the final word it is clear that Pelliot supported him. In his own scholarship, it is true that Pelliot always stressed the evolution of sounds within a language, and certainly would have had reservations concerning Creel’s two essays. In a short note entitled “Brèves remarques sur le phonétisme dans l’écriture chinoise” appended after Creel’s 1936 article, Pelliot said that the reason he had accepted that article for publication in *T'oung Pao* is because of its “real scientific merit.” He also said that because Creel had used the most recent archaeological evidence, his conclusions would not only replace the traditional explanations based on the *Shuo wen jie zi*, such as those of Dai Suiliang’s *Zhongguo wenzi* 中國文字, but could even correct some mistakes in Bernhard Karlgren’s *Analytic Dictionary of Chinese and Sino-Japanese* (100160; 1923). Nevertheless, he still regarded Creel’s discussion as insufficiently comprehensive, and so felt the need to add his own explanation. Creel had criticized Karlgren for saying that 90% of Chinese characters are phonograms, including both a signific and a phonetic, and said that based on his analysis of characters used in literature, the actual percentage of phonograms did not surpass 44%. Pelliot noted that the two scholars’ statistics were based on different materials, Karlgren analyzing dictionary entries while Creel surveyed literature. In reality, based on all characters, including those not found in dictionaries, he said that the incidence of phonograms (which he referred to as “phonosemantic characters”) should be well above 90%. However, Pelliot also pointed out that the real question is just what sort of character a phonogram is.

But what seems to me to be lacking especially in Creel’s article is a precise definition of what we mean by a character composed of a radical and a phonetic, or as I would abbreviate it, a phonosemantic character. It is evident that heretofore this term has covered two very different categories.

In one category, the phonetic contributes only the sound of the word but nothing to the meaning. For example, 赖 *lai* “to rely upon,” serves purely as a phonetic in 痘 *lai* “scabies,” or 箫 *lai* “type of flute.” Pelliot urged that in this category, the sound and the meaning of the word were not at all related, the signific supplying

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12 PELLIOIT, “Brèves remarques sur le phonétisme dans l’écriture chinoise,” 162.
only semantic information for the word. On the other hand, traditional analyses of Chinese writing also term another type of character as phonograms. These characters also have both a signific and a phonetic, but the phonetic component obviously also contributes to the basic meaning of the word, while the signific only limits its definition. Pelliot pointed to the series of words based on *wei* 韋 that Creel had cited in his article. The problem with this, said Pelliot, is that with a word such as *wei* 閠, Creel denied that the 韋 component provided the pronunciation. This is clearly mistaken. Unfortunately, Pelliot’s essay was very short, and he did not subsequently pursue this line of analysis, nor did the essay gain much attention.

When Paul Pelliot announced that *T’oung Pao* would not continue to publish further articles on this topic, it seemed to signal that the debate was over. Scholars inclined toward linguistics all believe that Boodberg was the winner of the debate. This was especially true of Boodberg’s own students, while Creel essentially had no students to support him. It was not until several decades had passed that people began to take up the debate again. In the 1980s, the prominent scholar of Chinese linguistics John DeFRANCIS (1911-2009) published two books in which he set out to introduce the Chinese language and Chinese writing. The first of these books was published in 1984: *The Chinese Language: Fact and Fantasy* (100580), at the beginning of which he provided the following definition:

Take the word “language.” Linguists—not polyglots but scholars concerned with linguistics, the science of language—generally use the term in the restricted meaning of speech. In their view language must be clearly distinguished from writing. Speech is primary, writing secondary. ... The attempts by linguists to reserve the term “language” as a designation solely for speech is part of their persistent but largely unsuccessful battle against the confusion resulting from the popular use of the term to encompass diverse forms of communication without distinguishing the properties specific to each.13

In his *Visible Speech: The Diverse Oneness of Writing Systems* (100680), published in 1989, he announced:

The primacy of speech and the primacy of the graphic principle based on speech need to receive the categorical support of scholars concerned with the nature of writing and the progress of linguistic science.14

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According to DeFrancis, and also to the majority of scholars of linguistics, this debate has already been settled; there is no need for further discussion. However, DeFrancis’s hardline linguistic approach seems to have awakened those scholars who understand Chinese characters as “ideographs” (biaoyi wenzi 表意文字). Within a few years, this debate suddenly exploded again, this time on the pages of the Journal of Asian Studies. Chad HANSEN, a scholar of Chinese intellectual history, published an essay entitled “Chinese Ideographs and Western Ideas” (100750; 1993). He said that for fifty years linguists had refused to allow the use of the term “ideograph,” but from his own standpoint as a philosopher, traditional Chinese theories of writing were not unrelated to western philosophy. Hansen pointed out that certain scientific experiments had shown that some Japanese readers who had suffered strokes variably lost their ability to read either kanji or kana, suggesting that these kinds of writing are processed in different parts of the brain. This would demonstrate that shapes and sounds are differentiated. After this article was published, it immediately drew a “letter to the editor” from J. Marshall UNGER (100770; 1993), a professor of Japanese linguistics at Ohio State University, criticizing the editors of the Journal of Asian Studies for having published this “creationist” essay, saying that the nature of Chinese writing had already been settled, that language is speech and that writing is nothing more than a means for expressing speech. Thereupon, Hansen gave his own reply (100760; 1993), saying that linguists and philosophers had two radically different approaches, and it was almost as if there was not a common language between them. He quoted the Zhuangzi 莊子 to the effect that two people engaged in a debate would find it very difficult to agree upon a standard of evidence.\footnote{Chad HANSEN, “A Reply to Unger,” Journal of Asian Studies 52.4 (1993): 954-957. The translation of Zhuangzi here is taken from Burton WATSON, The Complete Works of Chuang Tzu (New York: Columbia University Press, 1970), p. 48.}

既使我與若辯矣，若勝我，我不若勝，若果是也，我果非也邪？我勝若，若不吾勝，我果是也，而果非也邪？其或是也，其俱是也邪？其俱非也邪？我與若不能相知也，則人固受其黮闇。吾誰使正之？使同乎若者正之？既與若同矣，惡能正之！使同乎我者正之？既同乎我矣，惡能正之！使異乎我與若者正之？既異乎我與若矣，惡能正之！使同乎我與若者正之？既同乎我與若矣，惡能正之！然則我與若與人俱不能相知也，而待彼也邪？Suppose you and I have had an argument. If you have beaten me instead of my beating you, then are you necessarily right and am I necessarily wrong? If I have beaten you instead of your beating me, then am I necessarily right and are you necessarily wrong? Is one of us right and the other wrong? Are both of us right or are both of us wrong? If you and I don’t know the answer, then other people are bound to be even more in the dark. Whom shall we get to decide what is right? Shall we get someone who agrees with you to decide? But if he
already agrees with you, how can he decide fairly? Shall we get someone who agrees with me? But if he already agrees with me, how can he decide? Shall we get someone who disagrees with both of us? But if he already disagrees with both of us, how can he decide? Shall we get someone who agrees with both of us? But if he already agrees with both of us, how can he decide? Obviously, then, neither you nor I nor anyone else can decide for each other. Shall we wait for still another person?

It would seem from this that if two people hold different views, then there is no standard with which to settle the debate. However, Hansen did not quote the entirety of this passage from the Zhuangzi. As is often the case in the Zhuangzi, this passage continues with an ironic twist. The irony is hard to understand, but it is certainly the case that Zhuangzi was not being negative, that as long as one “lodges in no-man’s land” it is possible to reach a suitable conclusion.

化聲之相待, 若其不相待。和之以天倪, 因之以曼衍, 所以窮年也。何謂和之以天倪？曰: 是不是, 然不然。是若果是也, 則是之異乎不是也亦無辯; 然若果然也, 則然之異乎不然也亦無辯。忘年忘義, 振於無竟, 故寓諸無竟。

But waiting for one shifting voice [to pass judgment on] another is the same as waiting for none of them. Harmonize them all with the Heavenly Equality, leave them to their endless changes, and so live out your years. What do I mean by harmonizing them with the Heavenly Equality? Right is not right; so is not so. If right were really right, it would differ so clearly from not right that there would be no need for argument. If so were really so, it would differ so clearly from not so that there would be no need for argument. Forget the years; forget the distinctions. Leap into the boundless and make it your home.16

The final manifestations of this debate came shortly after Hansen and Unger’s exchange in the Journal of Asian Studies, in the form of two books: William G. Boltz’s The Origin and Development of the Chinese Writing System, published in 1994, and the translation of Qiu Xigui’s book Wenzixue gaiyao, Chinese Writing, which was published in 2000. These have certainly been the most in-depth studies concerning this topic. Boltz had also been involved in the debate over the origin of Chinese writing, described above. He was Peter Boodberg’s last student, and has completely accepted Boodberg’s theories regarding writing. He has espoused these theories in numerous articles, but his most mature expression of them, as well as his most pointed expression of them, can be seen in this book The Origin and Development of the Chinese Writing System.

In the Preface to The Origin and Development of the Chinese Writing System, Boltz says that he hoped to adopt a “linguistic view of writing,”17 which is to say

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a viewpoint that does not consider anything other than how writing expresses speech. Thus, he was not concerned with such topics as the supports for writing or its social context. In the first half of the book, Boltz discussed the origin of writing, arguing that the invention of writing proper should have taken place very rapidly. As do other scholars, Boltz hypothesized that it originated with pictographic symbols, but—like Boodberg—he insisted that these symbols cannot be considered writing. Once the pictographic symbols came to have definite sounds attached to them, they would have very quickly reached the mature stage of true writing—which is phonograms. Boltz also hypothesized based on the numerous phonetic loans found in the Mawangdui manuscripts that during the Han dynasty Chinese writing had almost reached a turning point, at which time it might have turned away from the use of signifcits and become an entirely phonetic writing system. However, he suggested that the reason Han writers did not do away with traditional characters is probably due to their conservative worldview.

In Boltz’s detailed analysis of writing, he elaborated Peter Boodberg’s core viewpoint, which is that Chinese writing does not have semantograms (i.e., hui-yizi), that any character made up of multiple components must have at least one component that indicates its pronunciation. In this respect, he very easily pointed out the error of the Shuo wen jie zi example of analyzing xin 信念 “sincere” as a semantogram (the Shuo wen defines the word as cheng ye, cong ren cong yan, huiyi 诚也。从人从言。会意 “sincerity, from ‘man’ and from ‘word’, a semantogram”). It is true that joining “man” and “word” together might give the notion of “sincerity,” but we could also imagine many other meanings that such a combination might represent, such as “lecture,” “criticize,” “linguist,” etc. Thus, it seems hard to imagine that “from man, from word” could efficiently represent “sincerity.” Boltz further pointed out that xin is actually a phonogram, that its yan 言 “word” component not only has a pronunciation in the yuan 元 rhyme class, but the Ji yun 集韻 also contains a pronunciation for it in the wen 文 class, and it also has contact with words that rhyme in the zhen 真 class. Xin itself rhymes in the wen class, so that yan could serve as its phonetic.

With respect to other multiple component characters that are not so easy to analyze in this way, Boltz developed Boodberg’s notion of polyphony. For instance, the Shuo wen defines the graph ming 名 “name” as “to command oneself, from ‘mouth’ and from ‘evening’; in the evening, it is dark, and in the darkness you do not see each other and therefore you use your mouth to name yourself” (ming zi ming ye, cong kou cong xi; xi zhe, ming ye; ming bu xiang jian, gu yi kou zi ming 自命也。从口从夕。夕者，冥也。冥不相見，故以口自名). Although the Shuo wen does not specify the character as a semantogram, most scholars analyze it as such. However, Boltz argues that the component □ is a polyphonic graph;
in addition to its normal pronunciation of *kou*, it has another pronunciation, which is *ming*. For this reason, in the characters *ming* 嗚 and *ming* 命, which both include a □ component, it is that □ component that serves as their phonetic.

Different from Boltz, Qiu Xigui maintained the traditional semantogram explanation in his *Chinese Writing*. To give just one example, he notes that three different characters are composed of the component *dao* 刀 “knife” and one other component, and that they should all be semantograms: a “knife” combined with *zi* 自 “nose” (written as 鼻 in Shang oracle-bone inscriptions) gives the character *yi* 劑 “to cut off the nose (as a punishment)”; a “knife” with *ce* 冊 “bamboo strips” gives the character *shan* 削 “to excise; to erase” (written as  in Shang oracle-bone inscriptions); and a “knife” and *yu* 魚 “fish” gives the character *ji* 魚 “to clean fish” (written as 魚 in Shang oracle-bone inscriptions). Qiu could also have added the character *yue* 斬 “to cut off the leg (as a punishment)” to this list; although the character is now a phonogram, it was certainly originally a semantogram, the oracle-bone form being 斬. In all four of these cases, the pronunciation of the word written as a multi-component character has nothing to do with any of the components, at least at the earliest stage of the language; it is unreasonable to imagine that the single component 刀 could have had four different pronunciations associated with it, and it is also unlikely that any of the pairs *zi* 自 and *yi* 劑, *ce* 冊 and *shan* 削, *yu* 魚 and *ji* 労, or *da* 大 and *yue* 斬 could have any phonetic relationship. According to Qiu’s discussion, although Chinese writing began mainly with pictographs (perhaps including pictographic functions), after it had matured, this pictographic function almost never came into play again, and almost all newly created characters were phonograms.

Now, twenty years later, it seems that western scholars have still not reached consensus regarding the nature of Chinese writing. Linguists emphasize the pronunciation of Chinese words, and epigraphers emphasize the shapes of the characters used to write them. In my opinion, perhaps the most reasonable discussion has been given by David B. LURIE, a scholar of Japanese writing, in his article “Language, Writing, and Disciplinarity in the Critique of the ‘Ideographic Myth’: Some Proleptical Remarks” (101420; 2006). Lurie points out that many scholars’ disciplinary background and their scholarly impulses are intimately related. He takes a middle-road attitude, recognizing the relationship between language and speech, but also points to special characteristics of writing. He points to a simple example taken from contemporary Chinese writing: no one would deny that *ta* 他 “he” and *ta* 她 “she” are a single word (not to mention *ta* 它, “it,” *ta* 祂 “He” [i.e., god], etc.), and there is no way to distinguish them in speech, but in writing they are easily differentiable. In the study of Chinese writing, there are numerous similar examples. For instance, in oracle-bone inscriptions the graphs 牛 and 門 are
commonly seen. As far as can be determined based on present evidence, these two graphs were not pronounced differently, and they were both eventually written with the single character lao 牚. In the oracle-bone inscriptions, both graphs refer to “penned animals,” but it is obvious that 牆 referred to a penned ox and 牆 referred to a penned sheep, the form of the graph providing important information. If linguists and epigraphers could cooperate in the future, we might expect important advances with respect to this debate.

1.4 Paleographic Method

Western scholarship has had a long history in studying Ancient Near Eastern archaeology and paleography, and has developed any number of commonly accepted research methods. Because these disciplines developed very early and there was no way for them to make use of mechanical means to reproduce the paleographic records (and this was especially so in the case of the wall inscriptions on Egyptian temples), the paleographers involved developed standards for making precise drawings, striving to record every single graph in exact detail, neither adding nor deleting a single stroke. When western scholars began to study Chinese paleographic materials, they naturally absorbed considerable influence from these Ancient Near Eastern practices; from the outset, they too emphasized the uses of line drawings.

As I will describe in the following chapter, when oracle bones were discovered western scholars began to collect them. Other than Frank Chalfant and Lionel Hopkins, mentioned above, James Mellon MENZIES (1885-1957; see the biography appended to Chapter Two) also made significant contributions to this new field of study. In publishing the oracle bones, and especially their inscriptions, western scholars used a different methodology from that of Chinese scholars. Chinese scholars had studied inscriptions on bronze vessels for several hundred years, and for at least one hundred years were experienced in making ink-squeezes or rubbings of the inscriptions. When these Chinese scholars encountered the inscribed oracle bones, they naturally employed the same technique to reproduce the inscriptions. Western scholars, who did not have the same control over this technique, employed instead the line drawing technique that was familiar to them from western paleographic studies. Even though they employed it to a rather high standard, with the development of the field of oracle bone studies in China, rubbings quickly became the accepted method of reproducing inscriptions. However, scholars now recognize that the ideal way of presenting these materials is to use both rubbings and line drawings, as done, for instance, in the
recent *Yinxu Huayuanzhuang dongdi jiagu* 殷墟花園莊東地甲骨, edited by the Institute of Archaeology of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences. As I will introduce in Chapter Two of this book, the westerners who collected oracle bones were, for the most part, amateur scholars, and never made explicit the scholarly methods that they used. Professional scholars in the West have long held these amateur scholars in disdain, and so it was not until after the Second World War that scholars began to put forth an explicit paleographic methodology.

The first scholar to insist on paleographic methods was Noel BARNARD (1922-2016; see the biography appended to Chapter Three). One of the first scholarly articles that he published was entitled “New Approaches and Research Methods in Chin-Shih-Hsüeh” (300620; 1959). In it, he stated that the greatest problem encountered in the study of bronze and stone inscriptions was the widely scattered nature of their publications, and especially their uneven standards of publication; he suggested the need for a unified system of registration. He was just then in the course of collecting these sorts of materials, and this essay was his first attempt to impose standards. Furthermore, he emphasized that every inscription should be published not only in the form of a rubbing, but also that it should be supplied with an extremely strict transcription. In this article, he used the then just unearthed *Yi Hou Ze gui* 宜候夨簋 inscription (referred to by Barnard *I Hou Nieh kuei*, i.e., *Yi Hou Nie gui*) as an example. The figures below are taken from Barnard’s article: that on the left a rubbing of the inscription, and that on the right Barnard’s own transcription.

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In Barnard’s discussion, he insisted that the graph 要 ought not be transcribed as yang “to raise up,” as is customary in Chinese paleographic studies, but rather should be transcribed literally as 要. Otherwise, one runs the risk of departing too far from the original context of the script. However, Barnard’s work also presents one rather curious anomaly in this respect: he insisted that the transcription should be supplied with an explicit punctuation, saying “I fully realize, of course, that once a Chin Shih Hsüeh specialist starts punctuating inscription texts, he commits himself to the interpretations that result. He becomes open to criticism if his punctuation is not accepted by his colleagues. However, I think you will agree that the time has passed for scholars of ancient texts to hide their ignorance in unpunctuated transcriptions.”

This is certainly different from standard western paleographic practice.

In “New Approaches and Research Methods in Chin-Shih-Hsüeh,” Barnard also espoused what he termed the “principle of constancy of character structure” in studying the script. It was this principle by which he determined that the famous Mao Gong ding 毛公鼎 and many other bronze vessels that had appeared prior to the time of modern archaeological reportage were forgeries. Based on his

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own line drawings, Barnard said that the character zhui 隹 “it is” of the Mao Gong ding reveals the following different structures:

![Hand-drawings of the character zhui 隹 “it is” of the Mao Gong ding](image)

**Fig. 8:** Hand-drawings of the character zhui 隹 “it is” of the Mao Gong ding 毛公鼎; from Noel Barnard, “New Approaches and Research Methods in Chin-Shih-Hsüeh,” Tōyō kenkyūjo kiyō 東洋文化研究所紀要 (Tokyo) 19 (1959), pp. 30.

Barnard said that this sort of inconstancy is never seen in inscriptions on vessels that have been archaeologically excavated, and it was because of this that he determined the Mao Gong ding to be a forgery. In Chapter Three of this book, in which I will discuss the achievements of western scholars in the field of bronze and stone inscriptions, I will have occasion to consider further Barnard’s views on the authenticity of bronze vessels. For now, it will suffice to say that his methodology was grounded in the established western tradition of using line drawings to study paleography.

At the same time that he published this article, Barnard was also pursuing research on the Chu Silk Manuscript (Chu boshu 楚帛書). In 1958, he published the first results of this research: “A Preliminary Study of the Ch‘u Silk Manuscript—A New Reconstruction of the Text” (400310). In this study, he criticized the quality of the line drawing done by JIANG Xuanyi 蔣玄佁 (1903-1977), which
at that time was regarded as the best reproduction of the manuscript. The diagram below compares the transcriptions done by Jiang and by Barnard, with each line written twice, that on the right being Barnard’s transcription and that on the left Jiang Xuanyi’s. Based on Barnard’s understanding, Jiang Xuanyi erred in viewing the original characters through the lens of later standard orthography, and because of this often added strokes to his transcription.

![Diagram comparing transcriptions of the Chu Silk Manuscript done by Noel Barnard (to the right of each double column) and by Jiang Xuanyi (to the left of each double column); from Noel Barnard, “A Preliminary Study of the Ch’u Silk Manuscript—A New Reconstruction of the Text,” Monumenta Serica 17 (1958): following p. 8.](image)

Fifteen years after this article was published, Barnard published the definitive, comprehensive results of his study of the Chu Silk Manuscript: *The Ch’u Silk Manuscript: Translation and Commentary* (400570; 1973). Because his methodol-
ogy seemed to be very scientific, it was quite influential in western scholarly circles. However, a basic problem with it is that it is almost impossible to make sense of his translation; from it, it would seem that the contents of the Chu Silk Manuscript were originally more or less a hodge-podge, without any meaning. In 1986, when LI Ling 李零 published his study Changsha Zidanku Zhanguo Chu boshu yanjiu 長沙子彈庫戰國楚帛書研究 (Study of the Chu Silk Manuscript from Zidanku, Changsha), it was finally possible to make sense of the manuscript, the contents of which turned out not to be mysterious at all.21

Other than Barnard, the western scholar who has made the greatest contribution to paleographic method is doubtless William G. Boltz. In a long series of articles, he has advocated a very strict methodology similar to that of Barnard. The clearest exposition of this methodology is probably to be found in his contribution entitled “The Study of Early Chinese Manuscripts: Methodological Preliminaries” (402780; 2000) to a volume stemming from the May, 1998 conference convened to discuss the then just published Guodian 郭店 Laozi 老子, and subsequently published in the conference proceedings: The Guodian Laozi: Proceedings of the International Conference, Dartmouth College, May 1998. He wrote:

[Manuscripts should be transcribed so as to reveal the exact form of what is written as precisely and unambiguously as possible without introducing any interpolations, alterations or other extraneous material based on assumptions, biases or subjective decisions of the scholar-transcriber or of anyone else. In a nutshell, this means that the transcription should reflect exactly what is written and nothing more.22

Differing with this, Li Ling, Professor of Chinese at Peking University, has suggested that there are Chinese “reading practices,” such that Chinese scholars have traditionally used “exploded readings” (po du 破讀) to interpret texts, by which he means that they freely interpret characters that are written with related characters that they regard as being the intended word, and that these are not at all restricted just to the written word. In his words:

The ancient texts that we read originate from the Han dynasty, and especially the Eastern Han. The Eastern Han texts were amalgams of the modern script and ancient script texts, but regardless of whether they were modern or ancient, they were transcribed into modern

21 LI Ling 李零, Changsha Zidanku Zhanguo Chu boshu yanjiu 長沙子彈庫戰國楚帛書研究 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1986).
script, which is to say the clerical script of the Han dynasty that had evolved out of the Qin script. The ancient texts of that time, which is to say the Warring States texts) were also distinct from the practices of the editors, but they did not have the sorts of parenthetical notes that we use, so no matter what the original text looked like, and no matter how many different texts they joined together, what has been transmitted to today is in all cases a direct joining and a direct transliteration.23

Among those western scholars who have directly discussed these topics, there is probably no one who would agree with Li Ling’s viewpoint; they feel that not only do transcriptions based on such a broad “exploded reading” not reflect the exact nature of the original text, but that it is also often marked by subjective interpretations. Especially with regard to manuscripts written on bamboo and silk, they would argue that these “reading practices” are based on the premise that traditional Chinese interpretations from the Han dynasty are correct; if the Warring States manuscripts differ from these traditional interpretations, it is acceptable, indeed even necessary, to use traditional texts to correct the readings of the manuscripts. The great majority of western scholars doubtless hold just the opposite premise, that if a manuscript and its traditional counterpart contain different readings, the manuscript—as the earliest witness we have for the text—should be regarded as more reliable. Apart from the above-mentioned study “The Study of Early Chinese Manuscripts: Methodological Preliminaries,” Boltz has expressed the same idea in several other studies, especially those concerned with the textual tradition of the Laozi, such as “Textual Criticism and the Ma Wang Tui Lao tzu” (401240; 1984) and “The Fourth-Century B.C. Guodiann Manuscripts from Chuu and the Composition of the Laotzy” (402600; 1999). Other scholars, such as Harold ROTH, Matthias RICHTER and XING Wen 邢文 have expressed more or less the same ideas, as can be seen in Roth’s “Some Methodological Issues in the Study of the Guodian Laozi Parallels” (402980; 2000), Richter’s “Handschrift-enkundliche Probleme beim Lesen altchinesischer Manuskripte” (404120; 2005) and “Towards a Profile of Graphic Variation: On the Distribution of Graphic Variants within the Mawangdui Laozi Manuscripts” (404130; 2005), and Xing’s “Towards a Transparent Transcription” (404200; 2005).

1.5 Paleographic Reference Works Produced by Western Scholars

Chinese scholarship in general has always held reference works in high regard, and the fields of paleography and unearthed documents are certainly no exception to this. Chinese scholars have invested considerable time and energy in producing various dictionaries, concordances and bibliographies, which have been great assets to the scholarly world at large. To a very great extent, the advances that have been made in these fields today are based in large part on these contributions made by past scholars. The conditions under which western scholars and Chinese scholars work are radically different, especially since most of the paleographic materials themselves are physically stored in China. Thus, foreign scholars do not have the primary responsibility to publish these materials. Moreover, there is essentially no market for such reference works in the West, so that there has been relatively less work of this nature. However, it cannot be said that the past decades have been without noteworthy results. Western scholars have edited several specialized dictionaries, of which the most important are doubtless Bernhard Karlgren’s Analytic Dictionary of Chinese and Sino-Japanese (100160; 1923), and his Grammata Serica (100360; 1940) and Grammata Serica Recensa (100460; 1950), all already mentioned above. To this day, most western scholars continue to use Grammata Serica Recensa on a regular basis. This dictionary is different from most other dictionaries in that it is not arranged according to individual characters, but rather is based on word families. Its major organization centers on thirty-eight different rhyme categories into which Karlgren divides these word families. Each rhyme category is further sub-divided according to word families. The diagram below is taken from a single page of Grammata Serica Recensa. The groupings of characters include such paleographic features as the oracle-bone and bronze inscriptive forms, all of which were hand-written by Karlgren himself.
Paleographic Reference Works Produced by Western Scholars —— 43

BERNHARD KARLGREN: GRAMMATICA SERICA RECENSA

49 古 行 古 固 姑 姑 故 固 活 活 活 姑 姑

a b c d e f g h i j k l m n o

p q r s t u v w x y z a' b' c' d' e' f'

棕 棕 棕 棕 棕 棕 棕 棕 棕 棕 棕 棕 棕 棕 棕 棕 棕 棕 棕 棕 棕 棕 棕 棕 棕 棕 棕 棕 棕 棕 棕 棕 棕 棕 棕 棕 棕 棕 棕 棕 棕 棕 棕 棕 棕 棕 棕 棕 棕 棕 棕 棕 棕 棕 棕 棕 棕 棕 棕 棕 棕 棕 棕 棕 棕 棕 棕 棕 棕 棕 棕 棕 棕 棕 棕 棕 棕 棕 棕 棕 棕 棕 棕 棕 棕 棕 棕 棕 棕 棕 棕 棕 棕 棕 棕 棕 棕 棕 棕 棕 棕 棕 棕 棕 棕 棕 棕 棕 棕 棕 棕 棕 棕 棕 棕 棕 棕 棕 棕 棕 棕 棕 棕 棕 棕 棕 棕 棕 棕 棕 棕 棕 棕 棕 棕 棕 棕 棕 棕 棕 棕 棕 棕 棕 棕 棕 棕 棕 棕 棕 棕 棕 棕 棕 棚

"v'—y'. i.d. Shunen says: take (no text) x. is Yin bone (A 5: 37, 5, name); y' is Chou I (inser. 54, sense of particle).

47 a. *zi̤a / jo / ye- place name (Meng); loan for i.d. interrogative particle (Yi); loan for

*xi̤a / ji̤a / ie- away, crooked (Shin); deflected, depraved (Shi); loan for 82 p.

*zi̤o / zi̤o / si̤ slow (Shi). Gl. 114. The Seal has 'tooth' and 'city'. — b. vulgar form of the preceding (Tso). — c. id. oblique, perverse (Chouli), i.e. as a above; phonetic abbreviated.

48 a—b. *si̤a / si̤a- a s h e lodging-house (Chouli); to rest in, stop (Shi); to halt, resting-place, encampment (Tso), a day's stage (Tso); to put down, deposit (Tso); loan for

*si̤a / si̤a- s h e put away, set aside, leave (Shi); let off (Shi); give, bestow (Tso); b.

is Chou I (inser. 148). The graph is a drawing. Gl. 225, 363.

b. *si̤a / si̤a- i a h e give up, let go (Kouyu), cf. the preceding.

c. *si̤a / si̤a- j a h e give up, let go (Kouyu), cf. the preceding.

49 a—c. *ko / kuo / k u ancient (Shi). b. is Yin bone (A 5: 7, 7, sense here uncertain),

c. is Chou I (inser. 54), d. is Chou I (inser. 65, sense of i. below), c. is Chou III/IV (inser.

329, sense of i.). The graph has 'ten' and 'mouth'.

f. *ko / kuo- k u fortified, secure (Li); securely, make sure (Shi); strong, firm (Shu);

obstinate (Lunyu); mean (Lunyu); rude (Tso); old-established (Meng); certainly (Lunyu).

Gl. 1800.

g—h. *ko / kuo / k u father's sister (Shi); mother-in-law (Tso); loan for i.d. now, temporarily, for the present (Shi). b. is Chou I (inser. 95).

i—j. *ko / kuo / k u fact, phenomenon, matter (Meng); cause, reason (Shi); because of (Shi); old intercourse (Shi); old (as opp. to new (Xi). j. is Chou II/III (inser. 265).

k—l. *ko / kuo / k u name of a river (inser. 147); loan for i.d. to buy, sell (Lunyu); for

*ko / kuo / k u summarily, carelessly (Li). l. is Chou II (inser. 147).

m—n. *ko / kuo / k u net (Yi); loan for p. (Shi). Gl. 631. n. is Chou III/IV (inser. 328).

o. *ko / kuo / k u salt (Chouli); salty marsh (Tso); loan for i.d. slack, remiss, defective (Shi). Gl. 301. — r—s. id. a kind of vessel (inser. 165). a. is Chou II (inser. 165, rad. 22 instead of 168 and 121); many scholars read this archaic char. as i u, which is not admissible because of the initial in the phonetic).

Fig. 10: Bernhard KARLGREN, Grammata Serica recensia (Stockholm: Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities, 1972), p. 33.
As the diagram shows, the word family based on the character gu 古 “ancient” also includes such related words as gu 固 “fortified, secure,” gu 姑 “father’s sister,” gu 故 “fact, phenomenon, matter,” gu 汲 “name of a river,” gu 罠 “net,” gu 蟬 “cricket,” and gu 辜 “guilt, crime,” all of which occur in pre-Qin literature. Every character’s form is written as a, b, c, etc., under which Karlgren provides, a reconstruction of the archaic pronunciation and the basic meaning, also listed as a, b, c, etc. In cases of special meanings, he also indicates in what works these meanings are found; Shï indicates the Shi jing 詩經, Li indicates Li ji 禮記, Shu indicates Shu jing 書經, etc. The structure of the 1957 Grammata Serica recensa is the same as that of the 1940 Grammata Serica, but the definitions Karlgren gave are often quite different. It was only after he edited Grammata Serica that he undertook his well-known translations of the Shi jing and Shang shu, on which he worked for many years. Not only did he produce English translations of these important works, but he also published his own notes, in which he surveyed and evaluated the work of the great Qing-dynasty evidential scholars. Karlgren himself pointed out that these notes were all incorporated in Grammata Serica recensa, and thus that this latter work marks a great advance over the previous Grammata Serica.

Although Grammata Serica recensa continues to be used by the great majority of scholars working on ancient Chinese texts, it has never been very convenient to use. Unlike most Chinese dictionaries, which are based on signific (radical) and stroke number, or most western dictionaries, which are based on the alphabet, as noted above the organization of Grammata Serica recensa is based on traditional rhyme classes. Moreover, although the subsequent published form of the dictionary includes an index, the index is by no means complete, basically only listing the head character of any word family. If you want to find the character gu 辜 “guilt, crime,” you have to recognize that it belongs to the word family based on the character gu 古, and is listed under that character.

Moreover, over the last sixty years, studies of ancient Chinese phonology have undergone great advances. Although Karlgren was one of the founders of this field, subsequent scholars have pointed out problems in his phonetic reconstructions, and many contemporary scholars would no longer use them. Because of this, in 2006 and 2009 Axel SCHUESSLER edited two different dictionaries that

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24 The definitions given here are those given in Grammata Serica recensa.
25 Bernhard KARLGREN, “Glosses on the Kuo feng Odes” (100380; 1942); “Glosses on the Siao ya Odes” (100400; 1944); “Glosses on the Da ya and Sung Odes” (100410; 1946); “Glosses on the Book of Documents” (100420; 1948); “Glosses on the Book of Documents II” (100440; 1949).
have received an enthusiastic welcome from contemporary scholars: *ABC Etymological Dictionary of Old Chinese* (101440), and *Minimal Old Chinese and Later Han Chinese: A Companion to Grammata Serica Recens* (101490). Already in 1987, Schuessler had published *A Dictionary of Early Zhou Chinese* (100630), in which he used evidence from oracle-bone and bronze inscriptions as well as traditional Chinese texts (especially the *Shi jing* and *Shang shu*) to produce this dictionary specialized on the language of the Western Zhou period. This dictionary already marked a breakthrough in our understanding of the history of Chinese. However, given the limitations at the time he published that dictionary (all of the materials of which were collected by Schuessler himself) and of the publishing world (the English text was typed by Schuessler himself, and he hand-wrote all of the Chinese characters), this dictionary could only be regarded as an experiment.

The materials included in *ABC Etymological Dictionary of Old Chinese* and *Minimal Old Chinese and Later Han Chinese* are far more extensive than those in Karlgren’s *Grammata Serica recensa*, taking full advantage of discoveries from the fifty years between their respective dates of publication, and it is also far easier to consult; not only is its basic organization alphabetical, but it also has an “English index” that indexes every word’s English meanings and which can therefore serve as a sort of English-Chinese dictionary. In addition, the dictionary also boasts a more than 100-page long preface that provides an overview of linguistics, divided into the following chapters: “Old Chinese and Etymology,” “Morphology and Word Derivation,” “Middle Chinese and Their Old Equivalents,” “Initial Consonants,” “Final Consonants,” as well as four chapters that survey linguistic contacts between archaic Chinese and neighboring languages. Although this preface makes use of technical linguistic terminology, the discussion is quite clear throughout, easily understandable to all readers. *Minimal Old Chinese and Later Han Chinese: A Companion to Grammata Serica Recens* was also conceived of as a companion to the *ABC Etymological Dictionary of Old Chinese*. Like Karlgren’s *Grammata Serica recensa*, this handbook is also organized according to thirty-eight different rhyme categories, and presents only a word’s modern Chinese, middle Chinese, Han Chinese and archaic Chinese pronunciations, but does not include any meanings at all. Therefore, to find both a word’s reconstructed pronunciation and its meaning, it is necessary to consult both *Minimal Old Chinese and Later Han Chinese* and *ABC Etymological Dictionary of Old Chinese*. *Minimal Old Chinese and Later Han Chinese* also includes two appendices, one a comparison table of the entry numbers used for characters in this work and in *Grammata Serica recensa*, and one a pinyin index of all of the words included in the work, making it a very handy dictionary.
1.6 Conclusion

Western scholars have had long experience working with Ancient Near Eastern paleography and unearthed documents, especially with Egyptian hieroglyphics and Egyptian temple and stele inscriptions, and have developed a clear methodology for dealing with these materials. Western sinologists have also produced pioneering research in Chinese linguistics, to the extent that they still stand in the first rank of this field. They have also had over one hundred years of experience researching Chinese paleography and unearthed documents. Although the results of this work cannot be compared with those of Chinese paleographers in terms of either quantity or quality, they have not been negligible by any means. As the following chapters will show, in the various fields of oracle-bone inscriptions, bronze and stone inscriptions, and bamboo and silk manuscript studies, western scholars have made important contributions, spurring Chinese scholars to reconsider many of their traditional notions and methods. With respect to the study of Chinese paleography per se, perhaps the most important contribution has been western scholars’ insistence on methodology. Unlike Chinese paleographers, who have often been content to accept a traditional notion of “reading practices,” western paleographers have emphasized the need for strict transcription of the original text. Chinese scholars often assume that later Chinese orthography represents the “standard” form of characters, and that the archaic forms of the characters seen in unearthed documents merely reflect an incipient stage, the “sprouts” of these standard characters. Perhaps because western scholars have not undergone the same training as Chinese scholars with respect to Chinese writing, they have never had a particularly fixed notion of standards, and consider it natural that different periods can have different standards. Indeed, it is not at all clear that prior to the Han dynasty there was anything like a “standard” way of writing, each different area and each different social group being free to write in its own style, such that copyists at two different times or working under two different conditions might write an individual character very differently. This view entails important consequences for the understanding of paleography itself, but even more so for the understanding of unearthed documents. If unearthed documents differ from received texts, Chinese scholars often seek to smooth the differences, treating them as but two different versions of a single text. They believe that the traditional readings that have developed since the Han dynasty were based on an unbroken transmission, so that they are well grounded. If unearthed documents reveal differences with traditional texts, the traditional texts should be seen as the standard with which they can “correct” the unearthed text. Western scholars who do not share this basic premise of a standard text emphasize instead the value of the unearthed text itself. Needless to say, this difference
should not be exaggerated: Chinese paleographers have very often also used unearthed documents to correct problems in received texts, and western scholars have also often based their readings of unearthed documents on the received tradition. It is just to say that, in general, the two different scholarly backgrounds and methodologies more or less reveal this sort of difference. Of course, there are advantages and disadvantages to both methodologies, and the contributions of Chinese scholars cannot be denied. However, western scholars have also not been without important contributions, and the spirit of western scholarship is certainly to be admired. In the following chapters, we will examine in detail these contributions to the fields of oracle-bone inscriptions, bronze and stone inscriptions, and bamboo and silk manuscript studies.