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978-0-521-85272-2 - Landscape and Power in Early China: The Crisis and Fall of the Western Zhou,
1045-771 BC

Li Feng

Excerpt

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Introduction

In the long Chinese tradition, the Western Zhou dynasty has been held in high esteem as the paradigm of political perfection and social harmony. More than once Confucius (551–479 BC) praised the Zhou institutions, and their founders King Wen, King Wu, and especially the Duke of Zhou,¹ and it is no exaggeration that the entire Confucian tradition was centered on the core texts that were passed down from the Western Zhou period. There was, perhaps, a practical reason for Confucius' love for the Western Zhou dynasty: by his time the reported Xia dynasty, and even the Shang dynasty from which Confucius actually claimed his own ancestry, had already become largely unknowable owing, in the Master's own words, to a lack of historical documents.² It was only about the Western Zhou dynasty that Confucius was apparently confident in recounting some historical details. True enough still today, the Western Zhou is the earliest time for which we can construct informed analyses of the political and social systems characterizing the early Chinese states,³ particularly because of the widely available written evidence from the period including both the transmitted texts and, to an even higher degree, the inscribed texts on bronze vessels.⁴ It is also the first dynasty whose historical development can be firmly and systematically linked to geographical settings on the basis of both written and archaeological records. The Western Zhou was certainly the time during which the fundamental concepts and institutions of the Chinese civilization were constructed, and our understanding of this critical period will inevitably shape the way in which we view pre-imperial China.

¹ See, for instance, *The Analects of Confucius*, trans. Arthur Waley (New York: Vintage Books, 1938), pp. 93, 97, 123, 135, 222.

² See *The Analects of Confucius*, pp. 96–97.

³ By “early Chinese states” I mean pre-imperial states that existed within the geographical confines of modern China and were apparent cultural predecessors to the Qin and Han empires.

⁴ Written evidence exists for the preceding Shang dynasty in the form of oracle-bone inscriptions. However, these inscriptions provide only a limited scope, emerging exclusively as the records of Shang royal divination. Compared with the long texts on Western Zhou bronzes, the oracle-bone inscriptions are often fragmentary and difficult to contextualize. For the value of the Shang oracle-bone inscriptions as historical sources, see David Keightley, *Sources of Shang History: The Oracle-Bone Inscriptions of Bronze Age China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), pp. 134–56.

OUTLINE OF HISTORY

In the first month of 1045 BC, the Zhou and their allies decisively defeated the mighty Shang armies in a battle near the Shang capital in northern Henan, and the once great Shang dynasty went to its fate. From their main base in the Wei River valley in central Shaanxi, the Zhou swiftly moved on to gain control over most of the middle and lower Yellow River regions and a part of the Yangzi River region – from the Yanshan Mountains in the north to the Huai and middle Yangzi Rivers in the south, and from the Liupan Mountains in the west to the Shandong peninsula in the east – the largest geopolitical unity ever achieved by a single power until the time of the First Emperor of Qin (259–210 BC). In this politically configured space, the Zhou capital was not located in its geographical center but was close to its western limit, and therefore the dynasty was referred to by later historians as the “Western Zhou.” At the core of the Western Zhou state there lay the concept of the Mandate of Heaven which gave the Zhou king, literally called the “Son of Heaven” (*tianzi* 天子), a sacred character to preside over the Zhou realm. There were twelve such “Sons of Heaven,” starting with King Wen (r. 1099–1050 BC) and King Wu (r. 1049/45–1043 BC) who actually achieved the conquest, and the royal succession, the central institution of the Western Zhou state, was thoroughly regulated, and normative rules determining the succession of father by son met relatively little challenge. Unlike the Shang who basically left the local groups to rule themselves under presumed Shang jurisdiction, as a result of which the Shang state was an aggregation of self-governing communities,⁵ the Zhou were determined to manage their conquered space by themselves. This was achieved through the extension of the royal lineage over areas of Zhou political dominance where a large number of Zhou royal descendents and close relatives were established as local rulers. These numerous regional states, bound to the Zhou royal court through a unified ancestral cult and by their need of royal support to survive in the new environment, formed the macro-geopolitical structure of the Western Zhou state.⁶

⁵ In Keightley’s view, the Shang were only the most eminent among the numerous local groups; see David Keightley, “The Late Shang State: When, Where, and What?” in *The Origins of Chinese Civilization* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), pp. 527–28. See also Keightley, *The Ancestral Landscape: Time, Space, and Community in Late Shang China (ca. 1200–1045 BC)* (Berkeley: Institute of East Asian Studies, 2000), pp. 56–57. Earlier, Matsumaru suggested that the various groups may have existed in a “hypothetical kin-relationship” with the Shang, in which the local leaders worshiped the Shang ancestors as *their own* ancestors, but no actual kinship can be confirmed between them. See Matsumaru Michio, “In Shū kokka no kōzō,” in *Iwanami kōza: Sekai rekishi* (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1970), pp. 72–79.

⁶ In the present book, the term “state” is used in two ways: the “Western Zhou state” refers to the entirety of political unity of the Western Zhou centered on the Zhou king, while the “regional Zhou states” refers to regional polities such as Qi, Lu, Jin, and Qin. The translation of these polities as “states,” while following the common practice in Sinology, reflects also the fact that, as will be shown later, they performed the same set of functions performed by the Western Zhou state, though at a much smaller scale, and enjoyed the combined rights over both civil and military affairs in their given territories and rights to determine their own domestic and external policies. In other words, they were replicas of the Western Zhou state at the regional level.

Introduction

3

The founding of the regional states was itself a process of further expansion that very much marked the political development throughout the early Western Zhou, particularly in the time of King Cheng (r. 1042/35–1006 BC) and King Kang (r. 1005/3–978 BC). However, when the Zhou turned their focus from the east to the south, they met strong resistance in the middle Yangzi region, and in a major campaign led by the next king, Zhao (r. 977/75–957 BC), nearly half of the Zhou royal armies vanished in the Han River. This disaster served to end the great early Western Zhou expansion, and the loss of military advantage on the borders led subsequently, starting in the reign of King Mu (r. 956–918 BC) and continuing through the mid-Western Zhou, to readjustments in both the internal affairs of the Zhou state and its foreign policy. One of these readjustments apparently took direction in the bureaucratization of the Zhou government when many new offices were created and old ones had become divided and further stratified. But soon Western Zhou society was to see a transition that had its impact on almost every aspect of Zhou culture, from the style of inscriptions to the design of pottery, and from court ritual to burial practice. Outside, while continuing the use of both military force and diplomacy, the Zhou seem to have preferred to reach their political goals through militarily less costly actions. After a major foreign invasion that happened in an early decade of King Mu, striking deeply into the Zhou territory from the Huai River region, the priority for the Western Zhou state was no longer how to expand its space for better security, but how to hold what it had in the face of immediate foreign threat.

As external circumstances changed, internal rifts began to emerge in the infrastructure of the Western Zhou state, threatening the power of the Zhou king. In the first century of the dynasty, royal rule proved effective in keeping the regional states in line with the common goals of the Zhou state. However, during the mid-Western Zhou, disputes between the central court and the localized Zhou elite began to appear, amounting even to the use of royal forces against some of the regional states such as Qi 齊 in Shandong; the very state was attacked by order of King Yi (r. 865–858 BC), a weak king who was once himself denied the right to royal power upon the death of his father King Yih (r. 899/97–873 BC). Internal disorders, whether at the royal court or among the regional states, had their external consequences, and a rebellion led by a former Zhou subject, the Ruler of E (Ehou 噩侯), almost brought the Zhou regime to the verge of collapse. The regime survived this external blow, but the internal conflicts then had to find relief in an uprising that stormed the royal capital and forced the controversial Zhou king, Li (r. 857/53–842 BC), into exile from which he never returned.

The geographical situation also played an important part in accelerating the process of Zhou's weakening. The crisis can be seen first of all as a process of spatial dissolution in which the constituting blocks of the Western Zhou state gradually drifted away from the center. Facing such a situation, the

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Excerpt

[More information](#)

4

Landscape and Power in Early China

location of the Zhou capitals in the Wei River valley, near the western border and separated by mountain ranges from the east, could not help but slow down the royal effort to restore order once a problem broke out. But more significant was that, being isolated from the regional states in the east, the royal forces alone had to fight enemies in the west. It so happened that the fatal and constant threat to the Western Zhou state was from the west, cast by a people known from the bronze inscriptions as the Xianyun 玁狁. From the middle through the late Western Zhou, the Xianyun tribes launched repeated invasions penetrating the Zhou defense, directly threatening the Zhou capital. Thus, the Zhou found themselves striving hopelessly between two strategic goals: the integration of the Zhou state that depended on continuous royal engagement in affairs of the east, and the survival of the dynasty on condition of security of the west. The Zhou could not do both.

A temporary relief to the tension came with the accession of King Xuan (r. 827/25–782 BC), whose government evidently gave the second goal priority. As soon as the threat in the west was held back after a series of campaigns, royal authority was restored for a time in the east. However, the victory of royal power in the first two decades of King Xuan could not reverse the course of the dynastic decline, and even before the death of the king the royal forces had already suffered a number of major defeats in regions not far from the royal domain. Finally, in 771 BC, the eleventh year of King You (r. 781–771 BC), the Quanrong 犬戎, most likely an ethnic group related to the Xianyun, broke into the Zhou capital and killed the last king at the foot of Lishan 驪山 Mountain. The Western Zhou dynasty came to an end. When the royal court was restored by King Ping (r. 770–720 BC), the Zhou capital was relocated in Luoyi 洛邑 (present-day Luoyang) in the east, therefore beginning the Eastern Zhou period.

PURPOSE OF THE BOOK

There have been many ways in history in which a dynasty could reach its end; for instance, foreign invasion, power usurpation, revolution, and peasant rebellion as more often in later Chinese history, are all forces that could terminate a dynasty. The fall of the Western Zhou took the typical form of a foreign invasion that struck down the Zhou center and had as its consequences the disintegration of the geopolitical unity once constructed by the Zhou. The fall was related as closely to the internal politics of the Western Zhou state as to the prolonged cultural and military confrontation between the Zhou and the northwestern peoples through the difficult terrain of northwestern China. It was the result of a long and complex interplay between politics and geography that should be understood as both a historical and a geographical process.

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[More information](#)*Introduction*

5

Since the 1980s, our knowledge of the Western Zhou period has been significantly altered by archaeological excavations. These excavations, most notably of half a dozen cemeteries belonging to the regional Zhou states Jin 晉, Guo 虢, Ying 應, Yan 燕, Xing 邢, and Qin 秦, have redirected Western Zhou studies in two prominent ways. First, scholarly research, previously concentrated on the major capital cities in the core areas of Shaanxi and Henan, has shifted its focus to the periphery of the Zhou world. That has raised questions regarding the relationship between the Zhou court and the regional Zhou states and with this the question of the general geopolitical structure of the Western Zhou state. Second, these excavations have yielded outstanding new materials, especially inscribed bronze vessels from the second half of the Western Zhou, reminding us of the importance of this problematic period, during which there was a gradual move from central control to regional competition. The convergence of these two issues calls for a systematic investigation into the rationales and dynamics of late Western Zhou history.

The purpose of this book is to examine the complex relationship between geography and its political configuration in the particular case of the crisis and fall of the Western Zhou state as a continuous historical and geographical process. With special attention to the natural condition of the western half of the Zhou realm, the study will not only demonstrate how but also explain why the Zhou political system could not stand the passage of time, but led eventually to the dissolution of the Western Zhou state and the collapse of the royal domain. It is intended not to be a general history of the Western Zhou period, or even a general history of the late Western Zhou, but rather to construct a consistent historical interpretation of a particular problem on the basis of solid evidential research into issues surrounding the historical fall of the Western Zhou. Within this general purpose, there are five specific and interrelated objectives.

As the foundation for this study, I hope first to reveal the geographical dimensions of the Western Zhou state and to construct a geographical framework in which sociopolitical changes can be measured by the extension of their spatial relations. This will be done in a dual process: on the one hand, the study demonstrates how the shape of land, the *landscape*, influenced and guided the development of the Western Zhou state, and on the other, it shows how the Western Zhou state built its agencies into, and hence they became participants in, the region's landscape (see below for discussion on the meaning of landscape). The discovery of bronze inscriptions throughout the Zhou world, very often bearing the names of their casters in the regional Zhou states, provides us with a real chance actually to delimit the spatial presence of the Western Zhou state. The study further shows how, under changing circumstances, the Western Zhou state responded to external pressures and internal tensions through the reconfiguration of its geographical space. To this end, I offer a realistic construction of the

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[More information](#)

Zhou–Xianyun war, situating it in the actual terrain of western Shaanxi and eastern Gansu, and show the extent to which the war constituted a major threat to the Zhou royal domain.

The second objective of this study is to rediscover the complex political circumstances surrounding the fall of the Western Zhou capital in 771 BC. In this regard, traditional historiography has failed to present a consistent account of this critical period in Chinese history: not only are many aspects of the historical fall obscured by legends and illusions, but even a general outline of the period is derogated from by various discrepancies and contradictions in the received sources. The present study aims at a clear understanding of the political dynamics at the court of King You, and at an interpretation of the immediate causes of the historical fall. Underlying this interpretation, the study will show how the court politics in the Zhou center was related to the geopolitics of the northwestern frontier in a reciprocal relationship, and how the landscape, as the visible aspect of the region's geography, played an important role in the fall.

Third, outside crisis had inside reasons. Under this assumption, the study investigates the origins of political and social disorders that had served to undermine the Zhou's capability to sustain their early spatial presence. The study looks into the basic structural characteristics of the Western Zhou state and the principles of its government for the causes of its gradual weakening. Although this is not a study to address systematically the various aspects of the Zhou political system, it will discuss problems in that system. Through the study, I hope to reveal a logical link between the "sudden" fall of the Western Zhou dynasty and the much longer historical process of its gradual decline. Although a "fall" did not have to be the inescapable outcome of a "decline," in this particular case the long-term disorder in the Western Zhou state and the outside pressure evidently worked together to prepare the ground for its eventual fall. I hope too, through this study, to gain a concrete understanding of the fundamental problems and challenges facing the early Chinese states and their possible responses.

Fourth, the study aims at an explanation of the origins of the interstate warfare that marked the Eastern Zhou period and of the preconditions for the rise of empire in China. To this end, I conduct a systematic reexamination of the geopolitical transition by looking into the actual process of the relocation of the Zhou center in Luoyi as well as the migration of a number of important Zhou polities to the eastern plain. Through this examination, I hope to explore the far-reaching impact that the fall of the royal domain in the west had on the geopolitics of the east.

Finally, with this book, I review some of the most important archaeological discoveries that have been made since the 1980s and discuss their implications for the study of Western Zhou history. There have only been two general histories and one sourcebook, in addition to a handful of sporadically published articles, on this critical period in Chinese history in

Introduction

7

the English language.⁷ Apart from a recent introduction to Western Zhou archaeology,⁸ a fuller coverage of the archaeological findings of the Western Zhou period, especially recent ones, not only is needed, but has long been overdue. In this regard, I hope the present book will serve as a useful tool for future researches using archaeological materials from the Western Zhou period. However, it must also be noted that although the book reviews archaeological findings of the period, its main theme is historical and is designed to answer historical questions; therefore, it should not be measured as purely an archaeological work.

SOURCES

The sources for this study are of three types: archaeological, inscriptional, and textual. In the following, I will discuss their nature and meaning for the study of Western Zhou history.

The archaeological materials provide us with a direct link between our time and the Western Zhou, and a concrete experience of the distant past. According to the conventional classification in archaeology, the material from the Western Zhou period can be largely divided between portable artifacts and non-portable remains, apart from the organic and environmental evidence of the time.⁹ As the Western Zhou was in the heyday of China's Bronze Age, there seems little need to emphasize the importance of the bronze articles, especially bronze vessels, to understanding Western Zhou culture, religion, and social conditions. But, from the standpoint of the present study, it is especially worth noting that, with the high social and economic values placed on them as the end-products of a long process of material transportation and distribution in a political structure, they are evidence of elite activities. As such, they are particularly significant as indications of social and political focuses in a given landscape of which they are an integral part. However, bronzes are not the only type of artifact excavated from the elite sites, which also contain items such as pottery, jades, and lacquerware; quite often, though not always, the elite burials are also accompanied by burials of horse-drawn war-chariots, the most complex industrial products of the time. Pottery wares are extremely important in Western Zhou studies because, reasonably locally manufactured, they were

⁷ Herrlee Creel, *The Origins of Statecraft in China, vol. 1: The Western Chou Empire* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970); Cho-yun Hsu and Katheryn Linduff, *Western Chou Civilization* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988); Edward Shaughnessy, *Sources of Western Zhou History: Inscribed Bronze Vessels* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991).

⁸ See Jessica Rawson, "Western Zhou Archaeology," in *The Cambridge History of Ancient China: From the Origins of Civilization to 221 BC*, ed. Michael Loewe and Edward L. Shaughnessy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 352–449. A brief and much earlier introduction to Western Zhou archaeology is found in Kwang-chih Chang, *The Archaeology of Ancient China*, 4th edition (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986), pp. 339–67.

⁹ See Colin Renfrew and Paul Bahn, *Archaeology: Theories, Methods, and Practice* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1991), pp. 41–42.

tied closely to the diverse local traditions, showing regional characteristics of the Western Zhou culture that cannot be learned from the bronzes. Moreover, because they display more rapid stylistic changes and shorter duration, pottery wares are sometimes, at least in the intensively researched areas, better indicators of the date of sites than the bronzes are.

The non-portable remains include features that we can only see in the field, including man-made structures such as palace foundations, houses, pits, trenches, workshops, and the various burials. These are the indicators of residential life of the Western Zhou and depositories of information about past cultural and religious practice. However, the importance of these structural remains lies not only in the information they contain, but also, more critical to the present study, in the fact that they are the locus of the various meaningful artifacts. They provide a direct link between culture and space, and only through such links are the artifacts meaningful as archaeological evidence. Moreover, in the conjunction of the two types of evidence there lies a special type of archaeological evidence: the way in which the various artifacts were arranged and grouped. Such information is very important for the study of the cultural and religious thought of the Western Zhou.

However, the importance of archaeological materials does not lead to the conclusion that they are perfect evidence for the Western Zhou past; perhaps they are far from being perfect. Their disadvantage lies first of all in the fact that they do not themselves constitute a systematic arrangement of information, but are highly fragmentary and even accidental, as many archaeological discoveries are the result of chance and not of planned excavation, which is becoming more and more difficult in China today. Despite the increasing volume of materials we have, they are but a fragment of the Western Zhou past. More significantly, the archaeological materials are not exactly “fresh” from the condition of their creation; they have come to most of us, especially to scholars in the West, in the form of published “records” that inevitably carry with them the imprints and reflect the views of the archaeologists who produced them. Such records can sometimes be highly selective and the choice of what is to be included in a report and what is not can be very subjective.

Inscribed bronzes constitute a unique type of material because they are, when known from archaeological contexts, simultaneously archaeological materials and historical texts for our study. Inscribed bronzes of the Western Zhou period were known to scholars as early as the Han dynasty (206 BC–AD 220) and an enormous number have now been accumulated.¹⁰

¹⁰ See Shaughnessy, *Sources of Western Zhou History*, pp. 5–13. The *Yin Zhou jinwen jicheng*, the most comprehensive collection of rubbings and hand-drawings of inscriptions in eighteen volumes (based on careful evaluations), registers 12,113 inscribed bronzes: see *Yin Zhou jinwen jicheng* (Beijing: Zhonghua, 1984–94). This work is accompanied by transcriptions in five volumes: *Yin Zhou jinwen jicheng shiwen* (Hong Kong: Chinese University of Hong Kong Press, 2001). Another 1,258 recently

Introduction

9

As archaeological evidence, the inscribed bronzes became widely available only during the Western Zhou, and declined in significance after the end of the period. Some inscriptions are remarkably long and informative regarding contemporary events at the Zhou royal court or in the regional states. In fact many, especially the “Appointment Inscriptions,” contain portions that were evidently copied from the official “appointment letters” on the wooden or bamboo strips that the casters of the bronzes received directly from the Zhou king.¹¹ Excavated inscriptions from a particular area that mention events and personnel associated with the Zhou court from a demonstrably Zhou cultural context best testify to the political relations between the Western Zhou state and that area. Even in the case of short inscriptions, of which an essential part is the name of the caster (often given along with the name of the local state), they too are helpful in identifying the political affiliation of the sites from which they were excavated. Certainly, as historical documents, the inscribed bronzes are much more important than just a mere geographical indicator. For the very fact that their casting was motivated on various occasions by a variety of reasons – the commemoration of administrative and military merits, facilitation of marriage relationships, religious prayer to ancestral spirits, recording family history, preservation of important treaties or deals of territorial or material exchange, marking their owning families or origins of manufacture (as often on weapons and tools), and so on – the inscriptions are our primary evidence of almost every aspect of political and social life during the Western Zhou.

Scholars have long recognized the high historical value of the bronze inscriptions as primary sources for Western Zhou history.¹² However, in their strength also lies their weakness. As contemporaneous historical sources, the bronze inscriptions only allow us to access Western Zhou reality through the eyes of their composers, whose vision was inevitably conditioned by the social context in which they lived. As such, even if the inscriptions are truthful records of their composers’ views, the views could be biased. This can be seen in the plain fact that the only facts-recording inscriptions are those that record honors and accomplishments of their

discovered inscribed bronzes are collected in *Jinchu Yin Zhou jinwen jilu* (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2002), edited by Liu Yu and Lu Yan. The majority of these inscriptions are short; however, according to a conservative calculation by the author, the number of inscriptions that have more than fifty characters exceeds 350 pieces.

¹¹ For the definition of “Appointment Inscriptions,” see Li Feng, “‘Offices’ in Bronze Inscriptions and Western Zhou Government Administration,” *Early China* 26–27 (2001–2), 14–18. See especially note 143 on p. 50 for the use of written documents in the court ritual of appointment. For transmission of documents from wooden or bamboo media onto the bronzes, see also Lothar von Falkenhausen, “Issues in Western Zhou Studies: A Review Article,” *Early China* 18 (1993), 146, 167; Li Feng, “Ancient Reproductions and Calligraphic Variations: Studies of Western Zhou Bronzes with Identical Inscriptions,” *Early China* 22 (1997), 40–41.

¹² For the historical value of the bronze inscriptions, see as early as Herrlee G. Creel, “Bronze Inscriptions of the Western Chou Dynasty as Historical Documents,” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 56 (1936), 335–49. This position was reconfirmed by Shaughnessy, who took careful note of their subjectivity and partiality; see Shaughnessy, *Sources of Western Zhou History*, pp. 175–82.

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[More information](#)

owners, and not their disgrace and failures.¹³ This aspect is highly relevant to and indeed disappointing for our study of the fall of the Western Zhou because we can never expect to find an inscription that will tell us in great detail about how the Zhou capital was ravaged and the Zhou king was killed by the foreign enemies; such a topic would simply not have been of serious interest to the owners of inscribed bronzes. This example may be extreme, but it shows that there are certain aspects of Western Zhou history that the inscriptions will, by their very nature, never tell us. Therefore, we must always be aware of the partiality and subjectivity of the inscriptions while using them as primary historical sources. Certainly, the limits of the bronze inscriptions can still be explored in other contexts, such as their regional differences, cultural and ethnic background, process of manufacture, and ritual, especially religious ritual, uses. The last point was stressed by Lothar von Falkenhausen, who argued that since they were cast on “ritual” bronzes that were used in religious contexts to communicate with ancestral spirits, “the bronze inscriptions must be understood as essentially religious documents.”¹⁴ But, in order to understand the full complexity of this particular issue, one should also not overlook the appealing point made more recently by Wu Hung that it was the life events of the caster, but not the need to dedicate them to the ancestors, that provided the reason for making bronzes with commemorative inscriptions.¹⁵ While the issue needs to be examined more closely in a separate study, it is my conviction that the bronze inscriptions in huge number constitute such a complex body of documents that no single theory has the merit to explain the creation of all of them. In short, while being aware of their limits and bias, the present study draws heavily on the bronze inscriptions as primary sources of Western Zhou history.

The third category of sources, the textual records, involves a more complicated situation and hence needs discussion in more detail. The Western

¹³ In this regard, it is probably justified for Shaughnessy to note that “their Zhou composers never intended them to provide a complete or objective historical record or to describe, in the words of Leopold von Ranke (1796–1886), ‘how it really was’”; see Shaughnessy, *Sources of Western Zhou History*, p. 176. The only exception that speaks directly about the dark side of Western Zhou society is the inscription on the Mu *gui* 牧簋 (JC: 4343), but such a statement was recorded to form the background of the caster’s new government appointment. On this unique inscription, see Li Feng, “Textual Criticism and Western Zhou Bronze Inscriptions: The Example of the Mu *Gui*,” in *Essays in Honor of An Zhimin*, ed. Tang Chung and Chen Xingcan (Hong Kong: Chinese University of Hong Kong, 2004), pp. 291–93.

¹⁴ See Falkenhausen, “Issues in Western Zhou Studies,” pp. 145–52; quote from p. 146. It should be noted that, on the other hand, Falkenhausen also admits that the bronze inscriptions “encode concrete bits of information of undeniable historical validity.” See *ibid.*, p. 167.

¹⁵ In other words, if the recorded events had not taken place, the inscriptions would not have been cast. Therefore, Wu Hung argues that the meaning of a Western Zhou bronze had already changed from that of Shang: “it was no longer an instrument in a ritual communication with deities, but a proof of glory and achievement in this life.” See Wu Hung, *Monumentality in Early Chinese Art and Architecture* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1995), p. 63.