MANUSCRIPT AND TEXT CULTURES

2024, volume 3, number 1
ISSN: 2752-3462
e-ISSN: 2752-3470
www.mtc-journal.org

Antiquity Resurfaced: Critical Reflections on the Ethics of Manuscript Acquisition for the Study of Early China

Dirk Meyer
University of Oxford, dirk.meyer@ames.ox.ac.uk

DOI: 10.56004/v3.1dm

Abstract: Unprovenanced manuscripts increasingly inform the study of early China. Scholars of early China must therefore take a stance as to how they want to position themselves towards such resources. After the publication of the unprovenanced manuscripts in the possession of the Shanghai Museum, some members of the scholarly community decided to disengage with research involving unprovenanced texts. They no longer comment, in print, on any matter related to such manuscripts. Or so they claim. Others, including myself, deem it necessary, indeed important, and academically warranted, to engage in considerable depth with these materials, as well as with the academic output created by their publication. And of course, there are various shades of grey between those two camps. Now that with the Ānhuī Dàxué 安徽大學 (Anhui University) acquisition of Songs (Shī 詩) and a text in the tradition of the Analects of Confucius (**Zhòngní yuē* 仲尼曰 'Confucius said') the field is confronted with another major cache of foundational texts of unknown origins dating to the Warring States period (ca. 453–221 BC), it is timely that we reflect, methodologically, on the pros and cons of using these materials in academic discourse.

Keywords: Early China, Provenance, Manuscript cultures, Cultural heritage, Manuscript preservation, Reading habits, Manuscript acquisition, Chinese philosophy

Introduction

A note of caution is in order before I reflect on how unprovenanced source materials inform the study of early China. While trying to be balanced in my discussion, I cannot ignore my own scholarly biases entirely, as I am convinced the study of early China benefits from studying all manuscripts we have to date. I would always prefer to work with archaeologically obtained texts. However, I believe to ignore unprovenanced manuscripts right now would do injustice to world heritage, as it would mean to silence some extraordinary thinkers and philosophers of the past, who we know only from these manuscripts, and to bury their ideas for good. Moreover, I fear to ignore such texts would mean that the scholarly community outside China imposes hegemonic principles on Chinese scholarship, for current pleas to ignore said manuscripts largely come from western scholars, whereas the scholarly community in China overwhelmingly acknowledges their importance.[1] The initial publications of unprovenanced and provenanced manuscripts in China are mostly undertaken by the same scholars and institutions. Unprovenanced manuscripts thus influence how palaeographers read provenanced manuscripts, and they feed into tertiary tools such as dictionaries and other reference works, which again shape the way we understand ancient Chinese. Hence, a large body of research has begun to accumulate that draws on both provenanced and unprovenanced manuscripts as well as transmitted text traditions, using them in a complementary manner. Because the manuscript texts further our understanding of the development of the Chinese language and the evolution of the writing system, it is an illusion, and methodologically flawed, to think one can ignore unprovenanced manuscripts altogether while conducting research on early China. I therefore argue for the careful inclusion of unprovenanced manuscripts in the study of early China. My argument is that, while the loss of archaeological contexts matters greatly, it does not prohibit the study of such texts. This is particularly true when we study texts that claim a wider-than-local generality—*viz* philosophical or otherwise foundational texts, but also mathematical or science focused-writing—rather than texts with a more 'utilitarian' outlook (for instance, inventory writing).

[1] There are of course exceptions, but they represent a minority by quite some margin. Goldin (2023: 147) cites two articles, namely Luó Xīn (2008) and Zhèng Róngnī (2014), as he seeks to counter von Falkenhausen's claim (2021: 267) that he and like-minded scholars betray an attitude of 'imperial arrogance' when they claim it to be 'best practice' (Hunter 2021: 16) to ignore manuscripts without provenance.

The world beyond China

I would like to begin by citing two cases of manuscript finds with considerable impact on the Anglo-American and European experiences. The first one takes us back to the year 1906 when, on a day in December, the American businessman Charles Lang Freer (1854–1919) acquired a group of four early Christian manuscripts from antiquities dealers in Egypt. His diary entry of Wednesday 19 December reads as follows:

> Cairo: Bought manuscripts in forenoon & paid for them during the afternoon.[2]

This is all the entry says about the event. At the time American and European travellers would routinely go to Egypt in search for manuscripts, and so Freer's purchase was nothing out of the ordinary. It later transpired that Freer had bought, among other manuscripts, an especially well-preserved Greek manuscript on parchment containing the four gospels: Matthew, John, Luke, Mark, in that order. At the time it was thought to be one of the earliest known Greek copies of the New Testament. Naturally this created quite a stir. Equally exciting to the Christian world was moreover that the manuscript contained an ending for the Gospel according to Mark that was hitherto unknown from other Greek witnesses (Nongbri 2018: 1–2).

The Gospels, as well as other manuscripts purchased by Freer, were kept in the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C. Facsimiles of the manuscripts were produced in 1912, six years after their purchase. Now referred to after their new host as 'the Washington Manuscripts' or 'Codices Washingtonenses', the manuscripts were granted status on a par with the Codex Sinaiticus at St Petersburg; the Codex Vaticanus at Rome; or with the Codex Bezae at Cambridge (Nongbri 2018: 4).

The editing and publishing of the manuscripts was assigned to Henry Sanders, then a junior professor of Latin at the University of Michigan. When asked about their provenance, he responded:

> While I am not as yet allowed to publish the exact spot where the MSS were found, the statements made by the finders fix it definitely and [they] are consistent with the evidence gathered (Sanders 1912: 3–4; cited from Nongbri 2018: 4–5).

Now, more than a hundred years later, questions of the age and place of origin of the manuscripts are still unresolved. While on palaeographical evidence Sanders thought of them as

[2] Charles Lang Freer Diary, 19 December 1906. Cited from Nongbri (2018: 1).

having been copied around the fourth century AD (Sanders 1912: 139), others soon dated them to the fifth or the sixth century (Nongbri 2018: 4–5).

Even less is known about their place of origin. Knowing that American and European manuscript collectors would routinely pay good money for any piece of information they could obtain, locals would often say whatever their unloved colonial interrogator wanted to hear. American–European manuscript hunters considered this a form of dishonesty. For the local Egyptian communities, however, it simply presented the opportunity of obtaining a handsome amount of cash from an unwanted intruder (Nongbri 2018: 4–5).

The Freer manuscripts are not alone in lacking clarity about their date and find-spot. Now rarely on display, they have been replaced by later, 'more exciting' finds of manuscripts from Egypt: manuscripts that were larger in scope (e.g. the Coptic manuscripts acquired in 1911 by J. Pierpont Morgan); that were deemed older (e.g. the Greek papyrus purchased in the 1930s by A. Chester Beatty and the collection of Greek papyri purchased in the 1950s by the Swiss collector Martin Bodmer); or that contained materials judged more transformative to the study of early Christianity because they covered different, or even previously entirely lost texts of the Christian faith (Nongbri 2018: 9).

The second case takes us to the year 1417, when the acclaimed Renaissance manuscript hunter Poggio Bracciolini (1380–1459) rode through the wintry landscapes of southern Germany, searching for unknown manuscript texts of the Latin classics in the local monastic libraries.[3] He knew time was against him. With the bookworm, mould and the Christian Church, there were powerful forces driving the irrevocable destruction of memory from the admired Classical era.[4] He was soon to be successful, finding a manuscript text that, as per Stephen Greenblatt, would help to change the course of things for ever: *De Rerum Natura* (*On the Nature of Things*) by Lucretius (fl. first century BC). It is a monumental work that celebrates, in six books of hexameter verse, the 'ceaseless mutation of forms composed of indestructible substances' (Greenblatt 2011: 186)—the power of the atoms. This text was one of many mosaic pieces that would help to smooth the path to modernity of Anglo-European thinking. In the fully confident manner of western-centric hubris not rarely seen in American–European scholarship, the Harvard philosopher George Santayana would later call it the 'greatest thought that mankind has ever hit upon' (Santayana 1947: 23).

Nowadays, we all know how revolutionary Lucretius' *De Rerum Natura* really was. In the

[3] A wonderful account of this is given in Greenblatt (2011).

[4] Accounts about the poor state of the convent libraries at the time were likely overstated. The humanists were so eager to lay their hands on rare Latin texts that in their letters they developed an exaggerating rhetoric. The early humanist Petrarch was perhaps the first to do this in his letter about Quintilian, by which Poggio was heavily influenced (personal conversation with G. Rota, 2023).

fifteenth century, however, its popularity was a mere reflection of its rarity.[5] At the German monastic library (probably the Benedictine abbey of Fulda) in 1417, Poggio had the manuscript copied as soon as he could. He then sent his copy to his Humanist friend Niccolò Niccoli (1364–1437) in Florence, Italy (Greenblatt 2011: 203–204). Niccoli produced another copy of it. This later copy served as the source of dozens of further manuscripts. Of these, fifty are known to have survived to the present day (Greenblatt 2011: 204). Many of these served in turn as the source texts for later reproductions, thanks to which *De Rerum Natura* can still be read today.[6] Studied and admired by multiple generations of philosophers and literary scholars alike, *De Rerum Natura* puts into sharper relief the development and the branching out of Epicurean philosophy in the intellectual world of the Roman Empire.[7] The manuscript text which Poggio found in a German monastic library, as well as Poggio's original copy of it, are now lost. These two cases are not isolated. Rather, they are examples of how the foundations of the Christian faith, as well as of the modern West, are to a large extent built on manuscript texts of which we have no, or very little, contextual data because they were obtained through channels other than archaeological excavations.

Not every text would stand the test of time, however. Some of the most sensational manuscripts—unprovenanced manuscripts that were initially greeted with applause by the academic community even if acquired after the UNESCO treaty to preserve cultural heritage took effect in the 1970s (on which more later)—would soon be discarded as forgeries, often to the embarrassment of the academic who first endorsed them. The notorious *Gospel of Jesus's Wife* is a case in point. Written on a roughly 1300-year-old papyrus scrap, it records the words 'Jesus said to them, my wife...' It was first presented by the Harvard scholar Karen King, Hollis Professor of Divinity, as a sensational gaze on Jesus' life at the International Congress of Coptic Studies conference in Rome in 2012, but it soon invited scepticism, then utter disbelief, just to be mocked later as amounting to a 'Monty Python sketch' (Depuydt 2014: 174).

In 2014 though, judging the scrap as authentic, King concluded in *Harvard Theological Review* that, considering all evidence, including the

---

[5] The real 'game changers' at the time were the discovery of a complete text of Quintilian's *The Orator's Education* (by Poggio) and Cicero's letters in the fourteenth century by Petrarch (but circulating only much later thanks to Coluccio Salutati and his circle of humanists in Florence, including Poggio). Quintilian, along with Cicero's rhetorical treatises, was the gateway to the Ciceronian prose style that became standard in Renaissance treatises. Humanistic (and Renaissance) letter collections are heavily modelled on Cicero's example. This started with Petrarch, who wrote his own collection of letters, *Familiares*, in 24 books, an enthusiastic reaction to his own discovery of—part of—Cicero's letters (personal conversation with G. Rota, 2023).

[6] Three ninth-century copies of *De Rerum Natura* are also known today, of which Poggio, however, was unaware.

[7] Note, however, because Epicureanism discourages someone's involvement in politics, which goes against some of the core founding values of Roman society, Epicureanism would always remain a rather niche philosophical school in Rome compared with, say, Platonism or Stoicism. This is reflected in Cicero's spiteful comments about Epicureans in his letters to Atticus and in his philosophical dialogues (personal conversation with G. Rota, 2023).

> 'characteristics of the materials (papyrus and ink); application of the ink on the page; handwriting; language; compositional practice; the provenance of discovery; and historical contextualization' (King 2014: 154)

the fragment was produced in antiquity, in the seventh or eighth century AD (King 2014: 158), affirming that 'women who are wives and mothers can be Jesus's disciples' (King 2014: 131).

Pressed by the investigative journalist, Ariel Sabar, King later conceded that she probably fell for a bogus text.[8] As both a practitioner of the Christian faith and a secular scholar of Christianity, the question was posed whether King's desire for the text's authenticity may have affected her intellectual attitude towards the scrap. As put by Sabar, 'was there a lack of information?' or just 'a lack of investigation?' (*The Washington Post*, 21 June 2016.)

The Chinese case

Just like the 'Christian West', the study of early China too relies on sometimes spectacular manuscripts that have no provenance. They are generally purchased by experts on antique markets, often that of Hong Kong, and then gifted to universities or museums. Pertaining only to the 'classic' period of production of Chinese thought, the Warring States, the manuscript collections of the Shanghai Museum (*Shànghǎi bówùguǎn cáng zhànguó Chǔ mù zhújiǎn* 上海博物館藏戰國楚墓竹簡—'Chǔ manuscripts from the Warring States period in the possession of the Shanghai Museum', henceforth just Shànghǎi),[9] Tsinghua University (*Qīnghuá Dàxué cáng zhànguó zhújiǎn* 清華大學藏戰國竹簡—'Warring States manuscripts in the possession of Tsinghua University', henceforth Qīnghuá),[10] as well as Anhui University (Ānhuī Dàxué 安徽大學, henceforth Ānhuī)[11] are among the most prominent because of the kind of texts they contain.[12] These finds are expansive in scope, each representing a

8 Sabar's Smithsonian coverage of the matter, and later his article in *The Atlantic* were instrumental for King to revise her judgement publicly (*The Washington Post*, 21 June 2016). His book *Veritas* provides an account of the whole incident.

9 The Shànghǎi collection of Chǔ manuscripts was acquired by the Shanghai Museum in 1994. It contains some 1200 inscribed bamboo slips. The Shanghai Museum has been publishing these since 2001 (*Shànghǎi* 2001–).

10 The Qīnghuá slips were purchased in the Summer of 2008 in Hong Kong. They contain just short of about 2500 bamboo slips.

11 The manuscripts were purchased by an undisclosed buyer and donated to Anhui University in 2015. The publication is in progress (*Ānhuī* 2019–).

12 Shànghǎi contains very diverse texts, including sociopolitical and philosophical texts, as well as ones with a quasi-historical focus. ('Historical' here does not mean that these texts present history in a positivist, 'Rankean', sense but with a polemical attitude, which makes them argumentative rather than descriptive.) Qīnghuá has texts of the foundational Documents (Shū 書) tradition, as well as annalistic texts. *Qīnghuá Dàxué cáng Zhànguó zhújiǎn* vol. 2 contains a single manuscript in 138 slips, now named **Xì nián* 繫年. It is the longest Warring States manuscript found to date. **Xì nián* gives a chronology of events spanning the beginnings of Zhōu rule to the reign of King Dào 悼王 of Chǔ (ca. 400 BC). Moreover, over twenty-one slips Qīnghuá contained the world's oldest decimal table (Qiu

library on its own. It will take years, if not decades, to sort through all the manuscript texts of these finds.[13]

That the field of early Chinese studies increasingly relies on these materials presents obvious challenges, academically, ethically, methodologically. Academically, because it excludes some academics in the West who choose to refrain from commenting, in print, on texts without provenance;[14] ethically, because many of these manuscripts were forcefully removed from tombs;[15] methodologically, because increasingly we are working with texts for which we have little or no contextual information.[16]

In what follows I shall deal with these matters individually. I do so by paying special attention to matters of methodology before I return to the issues of scholarly community and ethics. I wish to stress, however, that this is in no way meant to be a complete treatment of the matter. Rather, I see it as a starting point for a more honest conversation cutting across the different camps, not just within the field of early Chinese studies. My hope is to 'universalise' our conversation about matters of texts without provenance beyond individual research fields (in my case, early China) while acknowledging the specific needs and demands of each field.

2014) for multiplying numbers—whole or half-integer—up to 99.5. Anhui University contains texts in the Analects tradition (*Lúnyǔ* 論語) and texts of the Songs (Shī 詩) tradition which inform the foundational *Classic of Songs* (*Shījīng*). This includes a hitherto unseen 'Airs of the States' (Guófēng) anthology.

13 Speaking of Qīnghuá alone, it took thirteen years for the editors of Qīnghuá to publish the first fourteen of eighteen planned volumes.

14 Goldin (2013, 2023) is most outspoken on this matter. In archaeological contexts 'provenience' (*in situ* location) has replaced 'provenance' (chain of custody). For simplicity, I shall use 'provenance' in the broader sense as referring to 'where a thing comes from'.

15 The UNESCO conventions of world heritage from 1970, which came into force in 1972, are often invoked in this context. They focus on international trade of illicit antiquities, covered by the 'Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property'. The full treaty is listed here: https://www.unesco.org/en/legal-affairs/convention-means-prohibiting-and-preventing-illicit-import-export-and-transfer-ownership-cultural (accessed 7 March 2025). It states, in article 2, that 'The States Parties to this Convention recognize that the illicit import, export and transfer of ownership of cultural property is one of the main causes of the impoverishment of the cultural heritage of the countries of origin of such property and that international co-operation constitutes one of the most efficient means of protecting each country's cultural property against all the dangers resulting there from'. The UNESCO conventions only address the matter of one state stealing from another, not that stealing cultural property is an act against world heritage that deprives us all.

16 Manuscripts are in tombs not just to store information. Rather, they serve ritual purposes, as they are part and parcel of a tomb assemblage which is lost as soon as they are forcefully removed. On the matter of archaeological contexts see Renfrew (2000: 12). For the Chinese case see von Falkenhausen (2006: 11–13).

Methodological issues: what is lacking and what not

My methodological reflections are based on two guiding questions, each of which branches out into further, related, matters.

First: what do we gain by using manuscript texts without provenance? Related to this is of course the converse, what do we lose by using these manuscript texts *in the way we have them*?

Second: what would be lost had we not got hold of these texts? And again, related to this, the reverse: what would be gained had we decided to ignore them in the first place, or else, if we were to take the decision to ignore them now?

I shall conclude my assessment by noting that while contexts matter, they do not determine *everything.* Especially for foundational or otherwise philosophically relevant texts it transpires that contexts only minimally inform our reading of these texts. The absence of contexts therefore does not invalidate their analyses. Related to this point, I hold that to neglect the manuscripts without provenance from research—on early China in the present case—would amount to an act of depriving world heritage. We must acknowledge that cultural institutions are not part of an illegal industry and so we cannot hold world heritage to ransom. Once a text was stolen, we must see to it that it be returned to the public domain and not end up hidden in a private collection. When public institutions—in China or elsewhere—publish photographs and transcriptions of manuscripts without provenance and thus allow them to inform our understanding of ancient Chinese texts, this is an act of damage control.

First question:

What is gained by using the unprovenanced manuscripts in the Shànghǎi, Qīnghuá, Ānhuī collections?—and what is lost by using them the way they are?

Firstly, although lacking provenance, the manuscript collections provide more information than some scholars might be inclined to admit. This is for two reasons.

To begin with, we have the slips, and plenty of them: around 2500 for Qīnghuá, 1200 for Shànghǎi and 1176 for Ānhuī. Of the last, 117 carry texts of the foundational Songs tradition (Shī 詩) and thirteen a reasoned selection of sayings from the Analects tradition, named by the editors as *Zhòngní yuē* 仲尼曰 ('Confucius Spoke').[17] When the Shànghǎi slips were purchased in three batches in 1994, the first was covered, and thus protected, by thick, hardened mud. The other batches had been washed and were soft. They stuck together like 'wet noodles' (Allan 2015: 51). The Qīnghuá manuscripts were waterlogged when they arrived at Tsinghua University in 2008 (Liú Guózhōng 劉國忠 2011).

Before the unprovenanced libraries of Shànghǎi, Qīnghuá and Ānhuī were obtained, there was a major discovery of manuscript texts from a tomb in 1993. Located near the city of Jīngmén 荆門 in Húběi Province, Guōdiàn 郭店 Tomb 1 contained 804 bamboo slips from the Warring States period carrying diverse philosophical texts, some of which were known, other entirely new to us.[18] Because attempts to dry the Guōdiàn and Shànghǎi manuscripts resulted in loss, the Qīnghuá manuscripts were left submerged in distilled water. I do not know whether the mud covering the Shànghǎi manuscripts has ever been tested sufficiently. If so, I presume it could provide important clues about the immediate environment of the slips—both in time and space. Select slips were subjected to radiocarbon testing. Sure, not *every single* slip was tested—understandably so, as this would cause too much damage to the collection. But those of the Qīnghuá collection that were tested—slips that carried no writing—are dated to circa 400–200 BC.[19] For reasons of protecting national heritage, the ink was not examined in the same way.[20] According to Huáng Dékuān (2017), radiocarbon analysis suggests that the Ānhuī manuscripts are roughly 2280 years old, calibrated to the year 1950 (Huáng Dékuān 2017: 56–58). This gives us a date of circa 330 BC for the manuscripts. Subsequent chemical analysis of the slips confirmed their mid-Warring States pedigree. But as with Qīnghuá and Shànghǎi, the ink was not tested.

That the ink was never tested led some academics—especially those based outside of China—to question the validity of the results. For three reasons I think it unlikely that forgers produced fake manuscripts by using genuinely old bamboo slips. Firstly, taking

[17] Besides the Songs which overlap partly with the transmitted *Classic of Songs* (*Shījīng* 詩經), and the manuscript *Confucius Spoke*, Ānhuī also contain a version of *Cáo Miè zhī zhèn* 曹沫之陣 (*Cáo Miè's Battle Arrays*) which has a close counterpart in one of the manuscripts collated in vol. 4 of *Shànghǎi*, but also material which the editors consider closely related to the transmitted text *Songs of the South* (*Chǔcí* 楚辭). To date, the only book-length study of Ānhuī Songs is Meyer and Schwartz (2022). For a preliminary discussion of the text and its implications for our understanding of the *Analects* see Xú Zàiguó and Gù Wángyè (2022: 75–79); for a book-length discussion see Meyer and Schwartz (forthcoming). For a study of *Cáo Miè zhī zhèn* see Caldwell (2014); Lǐ Pénghuī 李鵬輝 (2022: 80–84).

[18] Studies dealing with the Guōdiàn texts are too vast to be referenced here in full. Allan and Williams (2000) introduced the tomb and its texts to the English-speaking world. Book-length studies in a western language pertaining to these materials include Holloway (2009); Meyer (2011); Cook (2012); Chan (2019). Cook provides fully annotated translations of all texts from that tomb. Photographic reproductions of the manuscript slips plus annotated transcriptions are given in *Guōdiàn* (1998).

[19] So far Jiǎ Liánxiáng (2015: 59–60) is the only publication discussing the actual radiocarbon-dating test results. Interpreting radiocarbon dates is risky because the carbon ratios in the atmosphere are not historically constant, which is why calibration against tree rings (dendrochronology) leads to more precise dating ranges.

[20] Personal communication with Lǐ Xuéqín, Dartmouth, NH, 1 September 2013. The fullest account of this matter, in print, is in Liu Guozhong (2015).

the first Shànghǎi batch, all slips came from the same, mud-wrapped pack about which, admittedly, we know very little. As for the wet and waterlogged slips of Shànghǎi, once dried the slips would immediately warp and become brittle, with the writing on them fading quickly (a fate the Qīnghuá did not share as they were never dried). To assume that someone could have written on the slips in fine calligraphy between having them cleaned and soaked in distilled water (as per the Qīnghuá slips) is not realistic.[21] Lastly, closely related to the second point: in many instances the slips are cracked, with the writing going over the cracks.[22] The writing must therefore predate the cracks. These facts present strong evidence that the manuscripts are products of the Warring States, not recent forgeries.[23]

Once the material authenticity of the slips is confirmed, the calligraphy too provides important clues. To begin with, it shows features corresponding to those of the Guōdiàn slips. This confirms the results of the radiocarbon testing of the slips, as dated to circa 300 BC. Moreover, as with Guōdiàn, the writing shows strong characteristics of the kingdom of Chǔ 楚 on the middle Yangzi.

Scribal practices also become apparent. Thanks to the major acquisitions of unprovenanced manuscripts (Qīnghuá, Shànghǎi and Ānhuī) we know much more about ligature writing than ever before. This includes short forms of names and concepts (the name Kǒngzǐ—Master Kong, *viz* Confucius—as seen in the Shànghǎi manuscripts is a case in point),[24] as well as the anaphoric reduplication of a term[25] or the anaphoric and forward reduplication of a term by the same mark on the slips.[26]

---

[21] But note, for caution's sake, that a similar argument was made by King (2014) about the *Gospel of Jesus's Wife*.

[22] Examples include slip 10 of Qīnghuá **Bǎo xùn* 保訓 ('Prized Instructions') where the crack in the slip goes through the first five graphs, or *Zhōu Wǔwáng yǒu jí* 周武王有疾 ('King Wu of Zhou Was Terminally Ill'), where there are cracks going through various graphs on various slips, for instance slip 4 graph 13, 4/12, 9/11, 9/12; **Yǐn zhì* 尹至 ('Arrival of Yin') 3/9.

[23] Xíng Wén (2016a, 2016b) made the reverse argument in his series of case studies published in *Guāngmíng rìbào*, showing that the Zhéjiāng manuscripts are fake (more on the Zhéjiāng manuscripts below). Fischer (2009) provides an expansive account of techniques of text authentication in China. See also Friedrich (2020) on this matter. Next to physical evidence, philological clues may also help to ascertain the authenticity of a manuscript. Foster (2017a) remarks that unusual features of unprovenanced materials, physical or textual, which can also be traced in excavated manuscripts *after* the publication of the unprovenanced manuscripts with those features, could point towards the authenticity of the unprovenanced manuscript in question.

[24] In the Shànghǎi **Mín zhī fùmǔ* 民之父母 ('Parents of the Common Folk') the copyist produced the name Kǒngzǐ as appearing first by writing both the graphs *kǒng* 孔 and *zǐ* 子 in full while choosing to write 孔 = (i.e. 孔子) in the remaining five occurrences of the name.

[25] See for instance Qīnghuá **Mìng xùn* 命訓 ('Commands and Admonishments') slip 1: [...] 少 (小) 命日 = 成" = 。(日成) 則敬 '...small commands may be accomplished daily'. When they (i.e. the small commands) are accomplished daily they produce reverence'.

[26] See again Qīnghuá **Mìng xùn*: 夫司悳 (德) 司義而易 (賜) 之福 =(祿) , (福) 祿才(在) 人 = , (人) 能居女 (如) 不居而垩 (重) 義則尾(度) 至于亟 (極) 'As a matter of fact, when [*mìng*] oversees virtuous power, as well as what is right (*yì*), and the riches and fortunes are bestowed on men (*rén*), then men (*rén*) are able to settle as if they weren't settling, thus valuing what is right, then standards reach their apex'. (I am aware that Shaughnessy (2016) takes *sī* 司 quite

Fig. 1: 孔= writing 孔子, Master Kong (Confucius) © Shànghǎi manuscripts.

Next, we know a lot more about punctuation practices, as markers of both performance and reading habits, which puts into sharper relief the sociology of text and text performance in early China.[27] Moreover, we have gained a much deeper understanding of the complex uses of a manuscript text and its reproduction, including matters of orality as part of the continuous production of a text.[28]

Looking at the back of the slips is also insightful. Here I refer in particular to the fine diagonal lines carved or drawn on the back of the slips, confirming that when a manuscript was produced it normally came from a single bamboo tube.[29] We now know that the lines had a different function from the sequence numbers of the slips that often occur on their back.[30] From this we gain unprecedented views into the commodification of manuscripts and their production in professional workshops at the time of maturing manuscript cultures during

differently in his informative discussion of textual variation in the manuscript text. Meyer (forthcoming) discusses this in more detail.) It is of course not certain that the reduplication mark here works in both directions but given the structure of (repetitive) argument I believe it is safe to assume so.

27 The Qīnghuá manuscript text **Yǐn zhì*“ with its perspective markers of dramatic speech is a case in point (see the discussion in Meyer 2021: 204, 229, 235). The song Yǒng 甬 *1* (‘White Boat’ 白舟 / ‘Cedar Boat’ 柏舟) of Ānhuī contains punctuation to highlight where in the song variation occurs (Meyer and Schwartz, forthcoming). Matters of punctuation in manuscript texts pertaining to codicological issues are discussed most prominently in Krijgsman (2018; 2023: 37–43); matters of semantic relevance in Richter (2023). Chéng Péngwàn (2017) offers the most comprehensive study. On the physical properties of a manuscript and how they inform us about early Chinese textuality see Shaughnessy (2006, 2014); Allan (2015); Krijgsman (2023); as well as Gù Shǐkǎo (Scott Cook) with his numerous studies establishing the authoritative slip sequence of a manuscript text.

28 The literature is too vast to review in full. See e.g. Morgan (2011, 2015); Morgan and Chemla (2018); Richter (2013); Krijgsman (2019a, 2019b, 2016); Shaughnessy (2019).

29 The recently purchased Peking University Western Hàn (202 BC–AD 8) *Lǎozǐ* 老子 manuscripts *shàng* 上- and *xià jīng* 下經 (upper and lower parts) cast further light on the purpose of the slanting line on the back of the slips. This corpus is consistent in that the slanting line—as is true for instance of Qīnghuá manuscript text *Zhōu Wǔ wáng yǒu jí*—runs exclusively from the top left of the first slip to the upper half of the right end of the final slip. According to Sūn Pèiyáng (2011), this situation applies to the great majority of bamboo manuscripts from the Warring States to the Hàn. A counter-example is the Qīnghuá **Qí yè* 耆夜 manuscript where the slanting line also goes in the opposite direction. This suggests that a minority of manuscripts also had a ‘V’-shaped, or perhaps even ‘W’-shaped line on the back of the slips instead of just the diagonal ‘/’ as in most cases known thus far. Hán Wēi (2012) explored in greater depth the fact that the lines on the back of the slips often appear in regular sets, with the line at the end of a set connecting back to its beginning, thus forming a spiral. See further Staack (2017).

30 Qīnghuá **Yǐn zhì* is instructive in this regard because it has a rather unusual placing of slip numbers paired with the slanting line. The uneven arrangement of the numbers, it seems, was not an obstacle to arranging the slips correctly in a manuscript. The sequence-numbers, which in this case are disconnected from the binding of the slips into the manuscript, seem to have served as a guideline for the copyist of the text before the slips were bound together.

the Warring States period.[31]

So much for the physical properties of the manuscripts. And although we lack any information from the burial site, such as where in the tomb the manuscripts were placed or which additional artefacts accompanied them, the materiality of the unprovenanced manuscripts is nonetheless highly instructive, casting light on the complexities of literary cultures and text production at the time.[32] In comparison, the problems with the manuscript finds from Egypt that are so important to Christian traditions look much more dire.

In the case of manuscripts appropriated for Christian ends—in an appropriating manner they are conventionally labelled 'Christian manuscripts'—that are now widely held in the possession of both scholarly and cultural institutions, attempts to place them in time and space often rely solely on the work of papyrologists and palaeographers (Nongbri 2018). Radiocarbon testing is seldom done. This is for various reasons, but generally policies against destroying artefacts are cited. Any analysis that might cause loss or damage to a manuscript is therefore often strictly forbidden (Nongbri 2018: 270). The manuscript's wholeness stands above everything else. This is understandable from an antiquarian perspective, yet it is not without risk.[33] This point is even more telling when the owner of a manuscript praises it as the oldest of its kind. Radiocarbon and other scientific testing might therefore potentially damage the manuscript's status, and with it that of the institution which holds it (Nongbri 2018: 270). Although far from perfect, on the Chinese side things are brighter in this regard.

In the case of the Chinese collections, matters of intertextuality are even more instructive. Thanks to the Qīnghuá manuscripts, the study of the Documents traditions (Shū 書),[34] which informs the foundational *Classic of Documents* (*Shūjīng* 書經), has reached an unprecedented level of interest as well as new conclusions.[35] It has enabled us to appreciate the

[31] For a hypothesis about the commodification of the bamboo slips as raw material for manuscript production on a large scale see Meyer (2021: 223–28).

[32] On this point, the work by Chéng Péngwàn (2017) and Jiǎ Liánxiáng (2015) is particularly relevant.

[33] The danger of this practice is becoming plain as we remember the forgery of the Hitler diaries, a series of sixty notebooks, written between 1981 and 1983 by a certain Konrad Paul Kujau (1938–2000). The diaries were authenticated by the renowned historian of early modern Britain and Nazi Germany, Hugh Redwald Trevor-Roper (1914–2003), Regius Professor of Modern History at the University of Oxford—shortly before they were shown to be forgeries by forensic analysis, which had not been performed previously.

[34] The *Classic of Documents* (*Shūjīng* 書經) is one of the Five Confucian Classics and a cornerstone of self-styled identity narratives of the Chinese as a people.

[35] See e.g. Chéng Hào (2015); Kern and Meyer (2017). In the English language alone, three monographs on the Shū traditions have been produced. Allan (2012; 2015: 266–77) developed the notion of Shū as a literary form; Meyer (2021) focuses on how certain communities make use of a developing Shū genre by actualising their cultural capital according to their changing visions of history and evolving group interests; Grebnev (2022) outlines the diachronic evolution of the scriptural tradition of Shū to explain the significance of the paracanonical scriptures in the *Yì Zhōushū* 逸周書 (Leftover Documents of Zhōu), as well as other texts that have not been traditionally labelled as *shū*, such as the *Liù tǎo* 六韜 ('Six Sheaths'). Nylan and Ruyue (forthcoming) have produced a book on the *Documents* as circulating

nuances of the Documents tradition beyond the canon-centred paradigm. We can now see the Documents as a genre in performance that can be vastly different from the received *Classic of Documents*. The Documents were a dynamic tradition that provided the framework for contrasting communities to adapt and recompose utterances (*viz* texts) for the purposes of their groups. As such, the Documents appear as cultural capital, used and refashioned by Warring States communities and their various sub-groups to renegotiate spaces of influence (Meyer 2021).

Or consider the situation with the Songs (Shī 詩), another foundational tradition of China,[36] and the impact which manuscripts without provenance have on how we see the Songs today.[37] It was first reported that the Songs manuscript of Ānhuī shows remarkable overlap with the anthologised 'Guófēng' 國風 (Airs of the States; henceforth just 'Airs') of the *Máo* 毛 recension of the *Classic of Songs*.[38] However, we now realise this is not quite so. As seen from the manuscripts of Songs of Ānhuī *Songs*, we must separate the 'Airs' into two entities: one is the Royal Zhōu and the Royal Shào, which formed a stable entity in antiquity. The other is the songs of the 'peripheral' states which, compared with the anthologised 'Airs' of the *Máo* recension, are much more inconsistent.[39] We can deduct that the songs of the Royal Zhōu and the Royal Shào have formed a sound mould, supported by a stable phonetic texture, within which different lexical choices could be made. Within this mould, different text communities could thus lay claim to their reading of a song by applying certain semantic choices (Meyer and Schwartz 2022). But this did not happen at random. Rather, we see from the manuscripts that the songs could be appropriated, semantically, through consistent choices made by the writers, that is, actors who materialised in writing the choices of a community in their engagement with the Songs. Writers should therefore not be confused with authors. In other words, in ancient China, different text communities would fill the sound moulds of aurally fixed songs creatively for their purposes within suspended but delimited possibilities in a consistent way (Meyer and Schwartz, forthcoming). This includes deliberate choices by writers to further the image-programme of a song. Consider the following example:

during the Hàn dynasties.

[36] Just like the Documents, the *Classic of Songs* (*Shījīng* 詩經) is one of the Five Confucian Classics and a cornerstone of self-styled identity narratives of the Chinese as a people.

[37] I would like to single out the works of Gù Shǐkǎo (2014) and Kern (2015, 2015; Kern and Meyer 2017) as particularly relevant. In his discussion of the ode in the Qīnghuá manuscripts, Kern (2019) reconstructs a sociology of the use of the manuscript text during the Warring States period. Gù Shǐkǎo, also using the Qīnghuá manuscripts, furthers Fù Sīnián's 傅斯年 (1896–1950) age-old hypothesis about the use of select and stable items of a repertoire of dance and music at the Zhōu court that informed the making of the 'Zhōu Sōng' by suggesting, through close text analysis, that the 'Zhōu Sōng' had possibly been multi-stanza compositions rather than the isolated brief odes which we see in the *Máo Songs* recension.

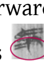
[38] Following Meyer and Schwartz (2022), I use 'Songs' (with a capital S, not italicised) to denote the institution of the Songs; I use 'song' (without capitals) to refer to one individual song within that tradition; I use '*Songs*' to refer to a particular recension of the Songs.

[39] On this divide *as seen from the manuscripts* see Meyer and Schwartz (2022: 29–37).

陟皮高阬我(馬) 玄黃 _ 6|
\我古勹皮兕衡隹㠯羕[illegible]

陟皮𡾺嵬我(馬)𤬪遺
我古勹金罍隹㠯羕褱
陟 7|| 皮浢矣我(馬) 徒矣
我[illegible]夫矣員可無矣 ■[40]

Ascending that high ridge, my horse () has turned dark yellow.
I now ladle into that rhinoceros-horn cup, it is thus my pain shall last.
Ascending that craggy height, my horse () is on the verge of collapse.
I now ladle from the bronze bucket, it is thus my yearning will last.
Ascending that slippery slope, my horse () is at a crawl.
And as for my humble servant, there is nothing more to say!
(Royal Zhōu song 3)

This is an exceptionally beautiful case of how writing can afford meaning that goes beyond semantic articulations. Consider how the writer rendered the word for 'horse' in the three stanzas. The horse features centrally in the image-programme. It stands metaphorically for the sufferings of the male traveller as imagined by the pained woman, his lover. The ongoing decline of the horse from one stanza to the next depicts this. At first, the horse has ascended a high ridge, and the writer shows that its strong legs are pacing forward ; in the second stanza, the writer has changed the position of the horses' legs . They are now inverted, capturing the image of the horse being pushed to ascend a rock-strewn height. By the third stanza, the traveller's horse is finished. It is now at a crawl. The calligraphy reflects this by showing a legless horse  (see Meyer and Schwartz 2022: 12–15).

This demonstrates how the writer of the song made use of the written graph to communicate what they thought was going on in the song. They took the written graph to build the song's image-programme and so the song's meaning.[41] We see from this how a community is speaking and expressing itself through their creative use of the written graph. The instability of writing in early China, which is apparent everywhere in manuscript texts across many periods,[42] can thus be seen as having provided an opportunity to the writer

[40] The symbol of the vertical line shows an undamaged end or beginning of a slip, the number in subscript provides the slip number in question. Hence, 6| marks the unbroken end of slip 6. \ marks the top of a broken slip. The fat black square ■ marks the end of a song.

[41] More examples are provided in Meyer and Schwartz (2022: 12–21).

[42] Galambos (2006) provides a systematic analysis of the instability of the signific in Chinese graphs in manuscript texts up until the Tāng Dynasty (AD 618–907). Much of Shaughnessy's work is concerned with documenting variance in manuscript writing. See for instance his discussions of **Mìng xùn* (2016; minimally revised reprint: 2023).

to express, visually but silently, added layers of meaning.[43]

This offers an entirely novel understanding of the Songs which we would not have gained without the manuscripts from Anhui University. Having had a glimpse of just how the semantic appropriation of a song worked in antiquity, it also provides the opportunity to look back at the received tradition and apply this insight to the *Classic of Songs* to describe how in *Máo—viz*, the winning recension of the Shī—the act of projecting the songs to a more philosophising reading might have followed similar patterns (Meyer and Schwartz, forthcoming).

In summary, with the possession of the manuscripts from Shànghǎi, Qīnghuá and Ānhuī, we have entered a new stage of understanding early China from a socio-philosophical, literary and material perspective.

But what did we *lose* by allowing these manuscripts to enter the academic discourse? Here Guōdiàn Tomb 1 is instructive. Without doubt, the Guōdiàn manuscripts, which carry a broad range of philosophical texts, are so far the best resource for the student of early China. The bamboo slips were obtained in a supervised excavation, so they have a provenance. But even such a well-documented case as Guōdiàn is not entirely unproblematic because the tomb was looted before the rescue excavation took place. That means the items in the tomb were displaced before archaeologists could get to them. And tombs have been looted throughout China's history. So even with properly excavated tombs the academic community must nevertheless reconstruct contexts that are otherwise lost. From the burial structures we know they were part of a tomb assemblage of a low-ranking aristocrat whose tomb was sealed around 300 BC.[44]

As for the manuscripts without provenance, we do not know who owned the slips. We also do not know whether they came from a tomb, a well, or from the remains of an old settlement. But the documented Guōdiàn and Shuìhǔdì 睡虎地 have cast light on matters of text possession in tombs, and some inferences can be made on this basis regarding Shànghǎi, Qīnghuá and Ānhuī. If we choose to use these texts, they should therefore not be taken in isolation but studied with reference to the Guōdiàn materials and other documented resources. It is clear, however, that with unprovenanced materials we miss an important link informing us about the sociology of text possession of different kinds of writing in early China. As Martin Kern aptly laments, we have no way of knowing whether the non-provenanced manuscript collections of Shànghǎi, Qīnghuá and Ānhuī were texts that be-

[43] On the creative use of the writing in early China see the discussion of 'White Boat' ('Cedar Boat') in Meyer and Schwartz (forthcoming).

[44] See e.g. Cuī Rényì (1997: 38–42; 1998); Luó Yùnhuán (1999); Péng Hào (1999a, 1999b, 1999c); Lǐ Xuéqín (2000a, 2000b), among many others. As an isolated voice, Wáng Bǎoxuán (1999) suggests that the tomb might have been closed as late as 227 BC.

longed together originally, or whether they were 'cobbled together before they were sold in Hong Kong' (Kern 2019: 10). In his article Kern further remarks:

> 'we do not know from where these manuscripts come, whether or not they are complete, to whom they may have belonged either personally or institutionally, who produced them, who their audience was, what purpose they may have served, what their place was in relation to a possibly much larger body of other (tomb?) artifacts, how they were originally arranged in their physical surroundings, and so on' (Kern 2019: 9).

This is certainly true. But have we really answered these questions satisfactorily for the Guōdiàn manuscripts? We *do* know where they come from, but do we know they were complete? We do not. We may assume that the text witnesses we obtained from the tomb are the *products of that environment*, be it the burial or their use by the tomb occupant. But we do not know this for sure. It is often inferred, on rather weak grounds, that they belonged to the tutor of the crown prince.[45] The scientifically excavated Shuìhǔdì is more informative in this regard, as we learn from it that there was *some* closer relation between the tomb occupant and the manuscripts. However, even for a well-documented tomb such as Guōdiàn we do not know who produced them, for what purposes, and for whom (cf. Waring 2020). These I believe are questions of textuality rather than questions of tomb composition. Hence, while a tomb context such as Guōdiàn casts light on the place of the manuscripts within the larger (tomb?) structure, it remains silent about matters of their origin, circulation and reception.

Thanks to Qīnghuá, Shànghǎi and Ānhuī we have learned a great deal about complex matters such as the sociology of text performance across genres in early China, the adaptation of foundational texts by the communities, as well as the multi-layered intertwining of genres and foundational texts. But due to the lack of archaeological evidence we are nonetheless missing crucial links. When studying matters of acquiring literacies, this is especially pertinent. Christopher Foster's research on the *Cāng Jié piān* 蒼頡篇, a rather odd text which is sometimes understood as a scribal primer that was popular during the Western Hàn (202 BC–AD 8),[46] is highly instructive in this regard (Foster 2017a: 223–32; 2017b: 233–356). As part of his research, Foster cites a small shaving of a slip, N.XIV.20, collected by the British explorer Aurel Stein (1862–1943) on one of his many expeditions to China.

[45] This hypothesis is based on one single cup which bears a crude and contested inscription at the outside on the bottom of the cup.

[46] To my mind the textual features of the *Cāng Jié piān*—here I mention its rhyming structures and its unusual collection of terms that are reminiscent of a *fù*—speak against the theory that it was a primer. Inspired by the work of Mary Carruthers on medieval memory devices (see especially Carruthers 2006, 2008), I like to think of it as a tool that structures memory, spatially, by textual means.

Found in the Taklamakan desert, 'at the seat of an ostensibly foreign kingdom',[47] the slip shows some remarkable overlap with the *Cāng Jié piān*. But how did it get there? and why? And 'what does this tell us about the spread of Chinese literacy along the Silk Road in this period?' (Fù Xīmíng 2018). Lacking further clues we shall never know.[48]

Second question:

What would we lose had we decided to ignore unprovenanced manuscript texts in present-day discourse?—and what would we gain by ignoring them now?

Put briefly, reverse the discussion of such matters as the sociology of text performance across genres in early China, the adaptation of foundational texts by different text communities and the intertwining of genres and foundational texts, and we have the answer to the question of what would be lost by dismissing the manuscript texts of Shànghǎi, Qīnghuá and Ānhuī.

But is there something we would have gained had we ignored them initially? I see two points that are particularly relevant. First, we would have avoided a scholarly split in the Anglo-American and European academic community. How all-encompassing can our research results be when some colleagues, albeit a minority, decide not to participate in a collaborative academic discourse? The 'manuscript-lot' in the field of Early China studies can make good use of manuscript finds, as well as of the received literature and any research output related to these resources—but others choose not to. They do not comment, in print, on unprovenanced manuscripts (and presumably our findings with reference to these manuscripts), and so they cannot integrate our conclusions in theirs or cite the relevant sources in a proper academic manner. But how valuable will such research be when it fails to acknowledge (or integrate in their argument proper) the relevant source materials? Such research cannot be tested by the readers and is, consequently, methodologically weak. The result is we have two, in each case weakened, fields. I see this rift as our biggest loss. Moreover, with one choosing not to cite the academic finds of the other, we get a very skewed account of the field of Early China studies *tout court*.

UNESCO heritage policies are another matter. They are often invoked in this conversation, even though they are not applicable as I shall detail later, and they too are a double-edged

---

47 Fù Xīmíng (Christopher Foster) (2018). In his enquiry as to why the primer was brought to Níyǎ 尼雅, Foster follows the line of reasoning presented by Wáng Yuè (1998: 55–58).

48 The case illustrates how contexts can produce a more exciting narrative than the text alone. A line on a stick with some reduplication of the *Cāng Jié piān* may not be all that exciting, as the text was copied routinely, as Foster assumes. But place that stick beyond the frontiers of the Hàn kingdom or put it at a watchtower manned by conscripted peasants, then, so Foster, we can begin to speculate about the spread of literacies to non-elite segments of society. See Foster (2021, forthcoming).

sword. They are designed for the nation state and national heritage, which the nation state in question seeks to protect. They are not designed to preserve the multi-faceted, complex reality of different cultural layers as buried in the ground, layer after layer.[49] Rather, they are partly driven, to put it plainly, by a hegemonic nationalistic discourse in addition to concerns about protecting 'national' ancient heritage. However, when ancient heritage is nationalised, as is now the case *also because* of UNESCO policies, voices of the periphery get lost too easily (Cuno 2008). We all know what good work Greek, Italian and Turkish archaeology have done. But the damage caused by their focus on *national* heritage, as defined by the political leaders of the—somewhat randomly assembled—successor states, Greece, Italy and Turkey, and what they find worthy of protection, is immense too. Moreover, there is a further, 'imperialist', element to it. In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries German and British archaeologists in particular decided what was worthy of excavation and preservation and what could be destroyed along the way.[50] This selective restoration continues to this day. The Oxford-New York University project 'Aphrodisias', which is committed to restoring one select time-slice, is a case in point.[51] Since it is committed to restoring one time-slice only, it must therefore ignore (*viz* destroy) multiple layers of Byzantine and Ottoman settlements along the way.[52] No doubt, they are recording the parts they remove archaeologically. But those layers will cease to be accessible to further archaeological work in the future.

The 1970 UNESCO heritage protection treaty is intended to stop the illegal export and import of antiquities. That means the treaty seeks to ensure that antiquities either remain in their country of origin or are returned to it. In the case of Chinese antiquities, whether bronze vessels or bamboo-slip manuscripts, they were originally produced in those territories which are now recognised as belonging to the PRC. For as long as the artifacts remain in China, their preservation and publication does not contravene the UNESCO heritage protection treaty.

What then if students of Early China decided to ignore unprovenanced manuscripts *now*, after two decades of working with them? The damage caused would be even greater, since it would create a further divide. However, this time the rift would not cut across the academic communities in the West. Worse, it would largely divorce Sinology in the West from the

---

[49] For a thought-provoking discussion of the national-normative claims inherent in the UNESCO policies see Cuno (2008).

[50] For instance, an exceptionally large number of early Christian churches were destroyed to 'restore' ancient Greek temples.

[51] The project is described here: http://aphrodisias.classics.ox.ac.uk (accessed 27 February 2023).

[52] As a side note, the fascinating issue with successor states, especially Greece (and to some extent also Italy and Turkey), is moreover how an external, imperial outlook was adopted by local elites who then accepted it as their model of national identity. The modern Greek self-perception is inherently built on how 'Europeans', in particular the Germans and the British, have viewed 'the Greeks'. It is also quite ironic how modern Turkey takes great pride in its Hittite heritage, never mind that there is no ethnic or cultural continuity with the Bronze-Age Hittites, who were themselves immigrants into Anatolia. A similar case could also be made about Egypt.

study of China in China. It would create an 'us' against 'them' and mark the end of mutual (and extremely fruitful) co-operations.

Unlike the unprovenanced finds that inform the Christian West, the manuscript texts in China were not appropriated by colonial masters from foreign-ruled territories and shipped abroad to serve new purposes. Quite the opposite, in fact. Investigated, acquired and then published by academic specialists in China, these manuscripts remain within their source communities and have not become the possessions of more affluent owners in foreign places. Also, unlike the texts from Egypt that were appropriated by Anglo-European and American individuals for Christian ends, the Chinese situation is much more democratic. Once they are obtained, cleaned and deciphered, and moreover protected from rapid decay, publications including high-resolution photographs, as well as the accompanying critical apparatus, are normally made available quickly in print and online (although the online reproduction may not always be sanctioned by the department in question). This was at least the case with Shànghǎi, Qīnghuá and Ānhuī.[53] The 'Christian' texts from Egypt now in Italy, the UK, France, Germany, Russia and the United States are a far cry from this, insofar as they are often *not* made available digitally, probably due to a lack of funding.

Conclusion and outlook: what next?

It is not realistic to assume that those who study Early China will cease to rely on manuscripts without archaeological contexts anytime soon. Too much is at stake.[54] For the Chinese communities the manuscripts are an important element of national heritage and memory. And rightly so. For western scholars to demand of our Chinese colleagues to end this practice is, to me, presumptuous, as well as culturally and academically hegemonic. Moreover, for western scholars to demand of their western colleagues that they put on hold their research on these matters would result in the just-described polarity of 'us' versus 'them'. To do so with reference to UNESCO guidelines is misguided: firstly, because the guidelines are themselves not unproblematic as they are partly serving normative-hegemonic and nationalistic ends; and secondly, the guidelines do not, in any case, apply to these manuscripts. And for colleagues to claim they are following 'best practices' (Hunter 2021: 16) when ignoring those manuscripts seems equally misguided because it does not address the issue at stake. How could it be 'best practice' when even reading excavated manuscripts today is inextricably informed by palaeographical practices seen from

[53] This should not hide how nationalism in Chinese archaeology can be distorting, whether or not it applies to manuscripts. See von Falkenhausen (1993, 1995).

[54] China is of course not alone in this. Cf. the emphatic plea by the Assyriologist David Owen (2009) to use tablets without provenance in academic discourse. See also, importantly, Brodie (2016).

unprovenanced ones?[55] How could it be 'best practice' to read such manuscripts, as some claim,[56] and perhaps the relevant scholarship about them, while remaining non-explicit about the potential consequences of doing so in their own research? Of course, not everyone has to work on these resources. Not everyone should have to keep up with ever-more manuscript finds. But for us to ignore unprovenanced texts in deference to guidelines that are not themselves free of fault and by demanding measures which are also not upheld consistently in the West, is methodologically confused and cannot be the way forward either.

I do believe that manuscripts obtained by way of a scientific excavation will always supersede those that are unprovenanced. However, I think it ought to be acknowledged that the Chinese case is hugely complex and, in many ways, differs from the experience in the West. As outlined, the Chinese manuscripts stay within their source environment and are not appropriated by affluent art connoisseurs and, ripped out of their contexts, sent abroad to remain in often hidden places for the visual pleasures of the wealthy. Instead, they remain within their target area. They are carefully checked by groups of specialists, often from different universities, received by public institutions such as universities and museums, and then returned in a timely manner to the wider scholarly community through high-resolution photographs of the manuscripts together with a philologically highly competent scholarly apparatus. Yet, mishaps do happen. They show that more can be done.[57] First, I suggest that both the soil with which some of the manuscript texts are covered *and* the bamboo slips themselves should be subject to chemical testing upon acquisition, if only to get a clearer sense about the original location of the slips. For consistency the ink too ought to be tested, even though it would be no proof of authenticity.[58] I appreciate this is no small thing to ask because it would compromise the wholeness of the manuscript. We must therefore hope that it will be possible soon to develop less-destructive methods that also work for ink pigments.

---

55 See on this point also Allan (2015: 70).

56 The discerning reader will relate to the ironic-polemical nature of this sentence. My choice to leave this claim uncited serves to showcase how such a practice will have a damaging effect on academic rigour.

57 The Zhéjiàng manuscripts are a case in point. Although they were considered not to be authentic, they were nonetheless published. Xíng Wén publicly announced them as fake (2012a, 2012b); a similar publication on the Peking University Western Han Lǎozǐ (2016b). Cáo Jǐnyán (2012) wrote a rebuke to Xíng Wén. On the Zhéjiàng manuscripts see further Lai and Wang (2017). Jens Østergaard Petersen posted a thorough discussion on Researchgate.net (2019).

58 Even the testing of the ink would not *per se* prove the authenticity of the manuscripts because by now, ancient ink has been found in several tombs and so there remains at least the theoretical possibility that forgers might use ancient ink to write on recovered ancient slips. (But note that it is theoretically possible even to forge the composition of the ink too.) Other indicators must therefore be used to validate the authenticity of unprovenanced manuscripts in addition to radiocarbon testing of the slips and analysing the chemical consistency of the ink, as well as, of course, positive affirmation by leading palaeographers regarding the authenticity of the calligraphy. For instance, the palaeographic analysis of previously unseen structural and calligraphic variations that nonetheless conform to our knowledge of Chinese palaeography and historical phonology may help to authenticate the materials in question. By 2004, some twenty-four sites were found that contain either ink or inkstones. For a list see the Appendix produced by Shaughnessy (2004: 237). Jiǎ Liánxiáng (2015) gives a further update for the Warring States.

For now, we must ask ourselves what matters more, the wholeness of the artefact or our confidence in treating it as genuine? This means we must engage in a wider debate about the dynamics of cultural heritage, antiquarianism, provenance and a manuscript's value for society, and how they interact with one another. What is less damaging to our cultural heritage, a well-documented manuscript that might be compromised materially by having it subjected to (more) extensive testing, but which is preserved as high-resolution photographs and scans? Or a manuscript that is preserved 'more wholly' (noting that almost all of what we get is already partly damaged, and even exposing it to light changes its surface structure) and stored physically *in that condition*, but for which matters of authenticity could have been addressed more fully? Or is it in fact impossible to ask these questions as they just reflect the current state of the art of testing a manuscript? Who knows, perhaps it will be possible in a not-so-far future to subject manuscripts to comprehensive testing without compromising their wholeness?[59]

Second, to suggest sending the manuscripts abroad for further tests—this is an oft-repeated demand at conferences—is not realistic (and a perfect example of the hegemonic attitude). Why would any Chinese institution choose to do so? The reverse would never happen either. Chinese labs today are fitted to very high standards, just as they are in the West. Nevertheless, it would be good practice to invite specialists from abroad to participate in the analyses of the physical manuscripts in China.[60]

Third, it is already good practice in China that institutions which acquire manuscripts without provenance hold authenticating meetings attended by specialists from multiple universities (as well as, ideally, international experts) before publishing the obtained manuscripts. That the minutes of the Peking University authenticating meeting of the Western Hàn "Lǎozǐ" 北京大学出土文献研究所工作简报 which were initially published on the institution's website is a positive example of this. (Unfortunately the minutes are no longer accessible.) One would hope this could become standard practice. Perhaps it might also be possible in the future to publish the names and opinions of the participating members (and objections, if any).

Every cache of unprovenanced manuscripts, it has been argued, might intensify the hunt for more. But is this so clear-cut? Although it is important that we acknowledge this possibility, it is unlikely that looters are looking specifically for manuscripts. They are simply

---

[59] The example of how the various attempts to unroll the carbonised papyri from Herculaneum in the nineteenth century were quite destructive is instructive in this regard (see Sider 2005: Ch. 5). Today, with the help of AI, it is possible to unroll them, virtually, and begin to read them.

[60] On this point, Jens Petersen's (2019) discussion of the Zhéjiàng slips is informative. The tests were run by the lab of Peking University and given the same results as those for the Qīnghuá slips. He writes, 'I do not believe that, in the absence of direct evidence, it would be right to attach suspicion to the laboratory at the School of Archaeology and Museology at Peking University, but it is surprising that no one has remarked on the identity of the reports' (Petersen 2019: 14).

too rare, and they are too difficult to preserve (Allan 2015: 55–69). It is more likely that tomb robbers, now understanding the value of manuscripts, preserve them if they have the technical expertise to do so, whereas previously they simply did not bother with them (Foster 2017a: 237–8; Friedrich 2020).

Should we therefore not acknowledge that Chinese cultural institutions are not party to an illegal trade that drives cultural destruction? Manuscripts will be looted along with other belongings of a tomb, no matter the stance of the cultural institutions towards the manuscripts' preservation—and the best attempts of the authorities to enforce the law and prevent tomb looting. But the work of the institutions—Tsinghua University, Peking University, Shanghai Museum, Anhui University, Yuelu Academy, to name just some of them—ensures that (stolen) manuscripts do not end up hidden from sight in a rich collector's basement but are returned to the public in a scholarly manner so we can further our knowledge of ancient China, and so ancient humanity in general. This does not sanction the scourge of tomb-robbing, which is equally condemned by the relevant authorities in China. But when a tomb has been robbed, and the manuscripts taken, should we not try to undo the damage caused—at least to the best of everyone's ability? We simply cannot allow that world cultural heritage is held to ransom.

Once a manuscript without provenance has been obtained by a cultural institution to rescue it from oblivion, might artificial intelligence not help to authenticate whether it is genuine? The Ithaca Project of DeepMind shows for Greek inscriptions what is potentially feasible.[61] And what about forensic science? It has been applied successfully to trace the illegal trade of animals, artefacts and other protected goods. Why not also manuscripts?[62]

Finally, it should be made more profitable for the individual in the countryside to report a tomb than to dig it up illegally and at high personal risk.[63] One would hope that one day China will have the means, including enough well-trained archaeologists, local and international, to marginalise the relevance of other channels of obtaining knowledge about thought production in antiquity. But make no mistake: just like Poggio Bracciolini's struggle cited at the beginning, we are racing against loss and decay. World heritage is at stake.

---

[61] See the project site: https://ithaca.deepmind.com (accessed 9 March 2023). See moreover Assael et al. 2022

[62] See the Annual Report of the Government Chief Scientific Adviser 2015: Forensic Science and Beyond: Authenticity, Provenance and Assurance. Evidence and Case Studies": https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/506462/gs-15-37b-forensic-science-beyond-evidence.pdf (accessed 9 March 2023).

[63] Kersel (2006) suggests that the actual looter receives no more than 1% of the realised asking price of traded antiquities. It must be noted, however, that her study does not consider manuscripts but easy-to-preserve artefacts. But my guess would be, unfounded at this point, that the percentage to the looter would not be very different for manuscripts.

Acknowledgements

I like to thank the two reviewers, as well as Sarah Allan, Christopher Foster, Almut Fries, Yegor Grebnev, Rens Krijgsman, Gabriele Rota, Adam Schwartz and Selena Wisnom for helpful suggestions and corrections.

References

Allan, S. 2012: 'On Shu 書 (Documents) and the Origin of the Shang Shu 尚書 (Ancient Documents) in Light of Recently Discovered Bamboo Slip Manuscripts'. *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 75, no. 3: 547–57. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1017/s0041977x12000547.

——— 2015: *Buried Ideas: Legends of Abdication and Ideal Government in Early Chinese Bamboo-Slip Manuscripts*. State University of New York Press.

Allan, S. and Williams, C. (eds) 2000: *The Guodian Laozi: Proceedings of the International Conference, Dartmouth College, May 1998*. Society for the Study of Early China and Institute of East Asian Studies, University of California.

Ānhuī 2019–: *Ānhuī Dàxué cáng Zhànguó zhújiǎn* 安徽大學館藏戰國竹簡. Zhōngxī shūjú.

Brodie, N. 2016: 'Scholarly engagement with collections of unprovenanced ancient texts'. In K. Almqvist and L. Belfrage (eds), *Cultural Heritage at Risk: The Role of Museums in War and Conflict*. Ax:son Johnson Foundation, 123–42.

Caldwell, E. 2014: 'Promoting Action in Warring States Political Philosophy: A First Look at the Chu Manuscript Cao Mie's Battle Arrays'. *Early China* 37: 259–89. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1017/s0041977x12000547.

Cáo Jǐnyán 曹錦炎 2012: 'Zhé Dà Chǔjiǎn Wúyōng Zhìyí' 浙大楚簡毋庸置疑, 18 June 2012.

Carruthers, M. 2006: *The Craft of Thought: Meditation, Rhetoric, and the Making of Images, 400–1200*. Cambridge University Press.

——— 2008: *The Book of Memory: A Study of Memory in Medieval Culture*. Cambridge University Press.

Chan, S. (ed.) 2019: *Dao Companion to the Excavated Guodian Bamboo Manuscripts*. Springer.

Chéng Hào 程浩 2015: '"Shū" lèi wénxiàn xiān Qín liúchuán kǎo: yǐ Qīnghuá zhànguó zhuújiǎn wéi zhōngxīn' 「書」類文獻先秦流傳考——以清華藏戰國竹簡為中心. PhD thesis, Tsinghua University.

Chéng Péngwàn 程鵬萬 2017: *Jiǎnbó shū géshì yánjiū* 簡牘帛書格式研究. Shànghǎi gǔjí chūbǎnshè.

Cook, S. 2012: *The Bamboo Texts of Guodian: A Study and Complete Translation*, 2 vols. Ithaka.

Cuī Rényì 崔仁義 1997: 'Shìlùn Jīngmén zhújiǎn Lǎozǐ de niándài' 試論荊門竹簡《老子》的

年代. *Jīngmén Dàxué xuébào*, no. 2: 38–42.
——— 1998: *Jīngmén Guōdiàn Chǔ jiǎn Lǎozǐ yánjiū* 荊門郭店楚簡老子研究. Kēxué chūbǎnshè.
Cuno, J. 2008: *Who Owns Antiquity? Museums and the Battle over Our Ancient Heritage*. Princeton University Press. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1515/9781400839247.
Depuydt, L. 2014: 'The Alleged Gospel of Jesus's Wife: Assessment and Evaluation of Authenticity'. *Harvard Theological Review* 107, no. 2: 172–89. DOI: 10.1017/S0017816014000194.
von Falkenhausen, L. 1993: 'On the Historiographical Orientation of Chinese Archaeology'. *Antiquity* 67: 839–49. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1017/s0003598x00063821.
——— 1995: 'The regionalist paradigm in Chinese archaeology'. In P. Kohl and C. Fawcett (eds), *Nationalism and the Practice of Chinese Archaeology*. Cambridge University Press, 198–217. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1017/cbo9780511558214.012.
——— 2006: *Chinese Society in the Age of Confucius (1000-250 BC) the Archaeological Evidence*. The Cotsen Institute of Archaeology. DOI: https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctvdmwwt6.
——— 2021: 'Review of Yuri Pines, *Zhou History Unearthed*'. *Journal of Chinese Studies* 73: 263–67.
Fischer, P. 2009: 'Authentication Studies (辨僞學): Methodology and the Polymorphous Text Paradigm'. *Early China* 32: 1–43. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1017/s0362502800000067.
Foster, C.J. 2017a: 'Introduction to the Peking University Han Bamboo Strips: On the Authentication and Study of Purchased Manuscripts'. *Early China* 40: 167–239. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1017/eac.2017.2.
——— 2017b: 'Study of the Cang Jie Pian: Past and Present'. PhD thesis, Harvard University.
——— 2021: 'The Spread of Scribal Literacy in Han China: All along the Watchtowers'. In T.L. Thurston and M. Fernández-Götz (eds), *Power from Below in Premodern Societies: The Dynamics of Political Complexity in the Archaeological Record*. Cambridge University Press, 175–201. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009042826.009.
——— forthcoming: 'Writing Beyond Han Boundaries'. In *Dunhuang: The Life of Objects Along the Silk Road*.
Friedrich, M. 2020: 'Producing and identifying forgeries of Chinese manuscripts'. In M. Friedrich (ed.), *Fakes and Forgeries of Written Artefacts from Ancient Mesopotamia to Modern China*. De Gruyter, 291–336. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110714333-014.
Fù Xīmíng 傅希明 (Christopher Foster) 2018: 'Sī Tǎnyīn dì sì cè Zhōngyà kǎochá suǒ huò Níyǎ yízhǐ Cāng Jié piān Hànjiǎn yī méi' 斯坦因第四次中亞考察所獲尼雅遺址《蒼頡篇》漢簡一枚. *Jiǎnbó Bamboo and Silk*. https://www.academia.edu/37620526/.
Galambos, I. 2006: *Orthography of Early Chinese Writing: Evidence from Newly Excavated Manuscripts*. Department of East Asian Studies, Eötvös Loránd University.
Goldin, P. 2013: 'Heng Xian and the Problem of Studying Looted Artifacts'. *Dao: A Journal of Comparative Philosophy* 12, no. 2: 153–60. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1007/s11712-013-

9323-4.

——— 2023: 'The Problem of Looted Artifacts in Chinese Studies: A Rejoinder to Critics'. *Dao: A Journal of Comparative Philosophy* 22, no. 1: 145–51. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1007/s11712-022-09870-8.

Grebnev, Y. 2022: *Mediation of Legitimacy in Early China: A Study of the Neglected Zhou Scriptures and the Grand Duke Traditions*. Columbia University Press. DOI: https://doi.org/10.7312/greb20340.

Greenblatt, S. 2011: *The Swerve: How the World Became Modern*. W.W. Norton and Company.

Gù Shǐkǎo 顧史考 (Scott Cook) 2014: 'Qinghua jian "Zhou gong zhi qinwu" ji Zhou song zhi xingcheng shitan' 清華簡〈周公之琴舞〉及《周頌》之形成試探. In Lín Bóqián 林伯謙 (ed.), *Disanjie Zhongguo gudian wenxianxue guoji xueshu yantaohui lunwenji* 第三屆中國古典文獻學國際學術研討會論文集. Dōngwú Dàxué, 83–99.

Guōdiàn 1998: *Guōdiàn Chǔ mù zhújiǎn* 郭店楚墓竹簡. Wénwù chūbǎnshè.

Hán Wēi 韓巍 2012: 'Xí Hàn zhúshū Lǎozǐ zhújiǎn huàhén de chūbù fēnxī' 西漢竹書老子竹簡劃痕的初步分析. In *Běijīng Dàxué cáng Xī Hàn zhúshū èr* 北京大學藏西漢竹書貳. Shànghǎi gǔjí chūbǎnshè.

Holloway, K. 2009: *Guodian: The Newly Discovered Seeds of Chinese Religious and Political Philosophy*. Oxford University Press. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780195371451.001.0001.

Huáng Dékuān 黃德寬 2017: 'Ānhuī dàxué cáng Zhànguó zhújiǎn gàishù' 安徽大學藏戰國竹簡概述. *Wénwù*, no. 9: 54–59.

Hunter, M. 2021: *The Poetics of Early Chinese Thought: How the Shijing Shaped the Chinese Philosophical Tradition*. Columbia University Press. DOI: https://doi.org/10.7312/hunt20122.

Jiǎ Liánxiáng 賈連翔 2015: *Zhànguó zhúshū xíngzhì jí xiāngguān wèntí yánjiū* 戰國竹書形制及相關問題研究. Zhōngxī shūjú.

Kern, M. 2015: 'Speaking of poetry: Pattern and argument in the "Kongzi Shilun"'. In J. Gentz et al. (eds), *Literary Forms of Argument in Early China*. Brill, 175–200. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004299702_008.

——— 2019: '"Xi Shuai" 蟋蟀 ("Cricket") and Its Consequences: Issues in Early Chinese Poetry and Textual Studies'. *Early China* 42: 39–74. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1017/eac.2019.1.

Kern, M. and Meyer, D. (eds) 2017: *Origins of Political Philosophy: Studies in the Composition and Thought of the* Shangshu *(Classic of Documents)*. Brill. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004343504.

Kersel, M.M. 2006: 'From the ground to the buyer: a market analysis of the trade in illegal antiquities'. In N. Brodie et al. (eds), *Archaeology, Cultural Heritage, and the Antiquities Trade*. University of Florida Press, 188–205. DOI: https://doi.org/10.5744/florida/9780813029726.003.0010.

King, K.L. 2014: '"Jesus Said to Them, 'My Wife...'": A New Coptic Papyrus Fragment'. *Havard*

Theological Review 107, no. 2: 131–59. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1017/s0017816014000133.
Krijgsman, R. 2016: 'The Textualization of Cultural Memory in Early Chinese Manuscripts'. DPhil dissertation, University of Oxford.
——— 2018: 'An Inquiry into the Formation of Readership in Early China: Using and Producing the *Yong Yue 用曰 and Yinshu 引書 Manuscripts'. *T'oung Pao* 104, nos. 1–3: 2–65. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1163/15685322-10412p02.
——— 2019a: 'A Self-Reflexive Praxis: Changing Attitudes Towards Manuscript and Text in Early China'. *Early China* 42: 75–110. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1017/eac.2019.2.
——— 2019b: 'The One Text in the Many: Separate and Composite Readings of an Early Chinese Historical Manuscript'. *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 82, no. 3: 473–92. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1017/s0041977x19000673.
——— 2023: *Early Chinese Manuscript Collections: Sayings, Memory, Verse, and Knowledge*. Brill. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004540842.
Lai, G. and Wang, E. 2017: 'Manuscript Culture in Early China: Editors' Introduction'. *Chinese Studies in History* 50, no. 3: 167–71. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1080/00094633.2017.1420287.
Lǐ Pénghuī 李鵬輝 2022: 'Jù Ānhuī Dàxué cáng Zhànguó zhújiǎn *Cáo Miè zhī zhèn*: tán Shàngbó jiǎn xiānguān wén de biānlián' 據安徽大學藏戰國竹簡《曹沫之陳》談上博簡相關簡文的編聯. *Wénwù* 3: 80–84.
Lǐ Xuéqín 李學勤 2000a: 'The Confucian Texts from Guodian Tomb Number One: Their Date and Significance'. In S. Allan and C. Williams (eds), *The Guodian Laozi: Proceedings of the International Conference, Dartmouth College, May 1998*. Society for the Study of Early China and Institute of East Asian Studies, University of California, 107–11.
——— 2000b: 'Xīn fāxiàn jiǎnbó yìjí duì xuéshùshǐ de yǐngxiǎng' 新發現簡帛佚籍對學術史的影響. *Dàojiā wénhuà yánjiū* 道家文化研究 18: 1–9.
Liu Guozhong 2015: *Introduction to the Tsinghua Bamboo-Strip Manuscripts*, trans. C.J. Foster and W.N. French. Brill. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004312340.
Liú Guózhōng 劉國忠 2011: *Zǒujìn Qīnghuá jiǎn* 走進清華簡 . Gāoděng jiàoyù chūbǎnshè.
Luó Xīn 羅新 2008: 'Xīn chūtǔ mùzhì yǔ xiàndài xuéshù lúnlǐ' 新出墓誌與現代學術倫理, 6 March 2008.
Luó Yùnhuán 羅運環 1999: 'Jīngmén Guōdiàn Chǔ jiǎn bǐtán: Guōdiàn Chǔ jiǎn de niándài yòngtú jí yìyì' 荊門郭店楚簡筆談: 郭店楚簡的年代用途及意義. *Húběi Dàxué xuébào (Zhéxué shèhuì kēxué bǎn)* 湖北大學學報 (哲學社會科學版), no. 2: 1–13.
Meyer, D. 2011: *Philosophy on Bamboo: Texts and the Production of Meaning in Early China*. Brill.
——— 2021: *Documentation and Argument in Early China: The Shàngshū* 尚書 *(Venerated Documents) and the Shū Traditions*. Mouton De Gruyter. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110708530.
——— forthcoming: 'The Dialectics of Rule in the Political Philosophy of **Mìng xùn* (Taking Chinese Philosophy On Its Own Terms)'. In W. Behr and L. Indraccolo (eds), *Warp, Weft,*

Woof. Brill.

Meyer, D. and Schwartz, A.C. 2022: *Songs of the Royal Zhōu and the Royal Shào: Shī of the Ānhuī University Manuscript*. Brill. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004512436_004.

Meyer, D. and Schwartz, A.C.S. forthcoming: 'Aural Fixity and Semantic Flexibility in the Early Chinese Songs: The Case of "White Boat" 白舟 / "Cedar Boat" 柏舟 in the Ānhuī University Manuscripts'. *Xiānggǎng Dàxué Zhōngwén Xuébào* 香港大學中文學報 *(HKU Journal of Chinese Studies)*.

Morgan, D.P. 2011: 'A Positive Case for the Visuality of Text in Warring States Manuscript Culture'. In *'Rise of Writing', University of Chicago, 15–16 October, 2011*.

——— 2015: 'What Good's a Text? Textuality, Orality, and Mathematical Astronomy in Early Imperial China'. *Archives Internationales d'histoire Des Sciences* 65, no. 2: 549–72. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1484/j.arihs.5.112777.

Morgan, D.P. and Chemla, K. 2018: 'Writing in Turns: An Analysis of Scribal Hands in the Bamboo Manuscript Suan Shu Shu 筭數書 (Writings on Mathematical Procedures) from Zhangjiashan Tomb No. 247'. *Bamboo and Silk*, 152–90. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1163/24689246-00101006.

Nongbri, B. 2018: *God's Library: The Archaeology of the Earliest Christian Manuscripts*. Yale University Press.

Nylan, M. and Ruyue, H. forthcoming: *The Documents* Shangshu*: Translated and Introduced by Michael Nylan and He Ruyue*. University of Washington Press.

Owen, D. 2009: 'Censoring Knowledge: The Case for the Publication of Unprovenanced Cuneiform Tablets'. In J. Cuno (ed.), *Whose Culture: The Promise of Museums and the Debate over Antiquities*. Princeton University Press, 125–42. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1515/9781400833047-008.

Péng Hào 彭浩 1999a: 'Guōdiàn yī hào mù de niándài jí xiāngguān de wèntí' 郭店一號墓的年代及相關的問題. In Chén Fúbīn 陳福濱 (ed.), *Běn shìjì chūtǔ sīxiǎng wénxiàn yǔ Zhōngguó gǔdiǎn zhéxué yánjiū lùnwénjí* 本世紀出土思想文獻與中國古典哲學研究論文集. Fǔrén Dàxué, vol. 2, 357–64.

——— 1999b: 'Guōdiàn yī hào mù de niándài yǔ jiǎnběn *Lǎozǐ* de jiégòu' 郭店一號慕的年代與簡本《老子》的結構. *Dàojiā wénhuà yánjiū* 道家文化研究 17: 13–21.

——— 1999c: 'Wàngshān, Bāoshān, Guōdiàn Chǔ mù de fājué yǔ Chǔ wénhuà' 望山、包山、郭店楚慕的發掘與楚文化. *Transactions of the International Conference of Eastern Studies/Kokusai tōhō gakusha kaigi kiyō* 國際東方學者會議紀要 44: 23–31.

Petersen, J.Ø. 2019: 'The Zhejiang Daxue Zuozhuan "Chu Manuscript"'. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/341597898_The_Zhejiang_Daxue_Zuozhuan_Chu_manuscript_zhejiangdaxuezangchujianzuochuan.

Qiu, J. 2014: 'Ancient Times Table Hidden in Chinese Bamboo Strips'. *Nature*. DOI: 10.1038/nature.2014.14482.

Renfrew, C. 2000: *Loot, Legitimacy, and Ownership: The Ethical Crisis in Archaeology*. Duckworth.

Richter, M. 2013: *The Embodied Text: Establishing Textual Identity in Early Chinese Manuscripts*. Brill. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004243811.

——— 2023: 'Towards a Broad Concept of Punctuation'. *Bamboo and Silk* 6: 159–85. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1163/24689246-20230032.

Sanders, H. 1912: *The Old Testament Manuscripts in the Freer Collection Part 1: The Washington Manuscripts of the Four Gospels*. Macmillan. DOI: https://doi.org/10.3998/mpub.9690561.

Santayana, G. 1947: *Three Philosophical Poets: Lucretius, Dante, and Goethe*. Harvard University Press.

Shànghǎi 2001–: *Shànghǎi bówùguǎn cáng Zhànguó Chǔ zhú shū* 上海博物館藏戰國楚竹書 . Shànghǎi gǔjí chūbǎnshè.

Shaughnessy, E.L. 2004: 'Afterword'. In T. Tsien, *Written on Bamboo and Silk: The Beginnings of Chinese Books and Inscriptions*, 2d ed. with an afterword by Edward L. Shaughnessy. University of Chicago Press, 237.

——— 2006: *Rewriting Early Chinese Texts*. State University of New York Press.

——— 2014: *Unearthing the Changes: Newly Unearthed Manuscripts of the Yijing and Related Texts*. Columbia University Press.

——— 2016: 'Varieties of Textual Variants: Evidence from the Tsinghua Bamboo-Strip **Ming Xun* Manuscript'. *Early China* 39: 111–44. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1017/eac.2016.4.

——— 2019: *Chinese Annals in the Western Observatory: An Overview of Western Sinologists' Studies of Chinese Excavated Documents*. Jao Tsung-i Academy of Sinology Monograph. De Gruyter. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1515/9781501516948.

——— 2023: *Writing Early China*. SUNY Press.

Sider, D. 2005: *The Library of the Villa Dei Papiri at Herculaneum*. J. Paul Getty Museum.

Staack, T. 2017: 'The Neglected "Backyard" of Early Chinese Manuscripts: How an Analysis of the Verso of Bamboo Slips Can Enable the Reconstruction of a Manuscript Roll'. *heiDOK - University of Heidelberg Open Access Platform*.

Sūn Pèiyáng 孫沛陽 2011: 'Jiǎn cèbèi huàxiàn chūtàn' 簡册背劃綫初探. *Chūtǔ Wénxiàn yǔ gǔwénzì yánjiū* 出土文獻與古文字研究 4: 449–62.

Wáng Bǎoxuán 王葆玹 1999: 'Shìlùn Guōdiàn Chǔ Jiǎn Gè Piān de Zhuànzuò Shǐdài Jí Qí Bèijǐng—Jiānlùn Guōdiàn Jí Bāoshān Chǔ Mù de Shídài Wèntí' 試論郭店楚簡各篇的撰作時代及其背景—兼論郭店及包小楚墓的時代問題. *Zhōngguó Zhéxué* 中國哲學 20: 366–90.

Wáng Yuè 王樾 1998: 'Lüèshuō Níyǎ fāxiàn de Cāng Jié piān Hànjiǎn' 略說尼雅發現的 '蒼頡篇' 漢簡. *Xīyù yánjiū* 西域研究, no. 4: 55–58.

Waring, L. 2020: 'What the Single Bamboo Slip Found in Mawangdui Tomb M2 Tells Us about Text and Ritual in Early China'. *T'oung Pao* 106: 56–86. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1163/15685322-10612p03.

Xíng Wén 邢文 2012a: 'Zhé Dà Cáng Jiǎn Biànwéi (Shàng)' 浙大藏簡辨偽（上）, 28 May

2012.
——— 2012b: 'Zhé Dà Cáng Jiǎn Biànwéi (Xià)' 浙大藏簡辨偽（下）, 4 June 2012.
——— 2016a: 'Běidà jiǎn Lǎozǐ biànwěi' 北大簡老子辨偽, 6 August 2016.
——— 2016b: 'Biànzhēng zhī měi yǔ sàndiǎn tòushì—Běidà jiǎn Lǎozǐ zài biànwěi' 辯證之美與散點透視—北大簡老子再辨偽, 12 September 2016.
Xú Zàiguó 徐在國 and Gù Wángyuè 顧王樂 2022: 'Ānhuī Dàxué cáng Zhànguó zhújiǎn Zhòngní piān chūtán' 安徽大學藏戰國竹簡《仲尼》篇初探. *Wénwù* 文物, no. 3: 75–79.
Zhèng Róngnī 鄭蓉妮 et al. 2014: 'Yánjiū dàojué wénwù xuéshù lúnlǐ wèntí píngxī' 研究盜掘文物的學術倫理問題評析. *Zìrán biànzhèng fǎ tōngxùn* 自然辯證法通訊 36, no. 5: 119–28.