

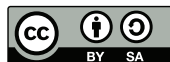
From royal court to ancestral shrine: transposition of command documents in Early Chinese epigraphy

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Abstract: While the earliest attested Chinese manuscripts date only from the late fifth century BC, bronze inscriptions cast between the tenth and eighth centuries BC provide abundant evidence of the administrative use of manuscripts at the royal court, especially during the appointment ceremonies in which the royal secretaries read out the king's command to the aristocratic elite. These command documents were sometimes quoted at length in inscriptions cast on the ritual bronze vessels by these appointees, who had them displayed in their ancestral shrines and used them in ancestral sacrifices and ensuing feasts. Based on the epigraphic evidence, this paper explores various aspects of manuscript production in the Western Zhou administration (1045–771 BC) and investigates the complex editorial process behind the textual transfer from the command documents onto bronze ritual paraphernalia. Through an analysis of various editorial approaches to the composition of bronze inscriptions, the value and status imputed to manuscripts by Western Zhou aristocracy has been further discussed. Such reconstruction of lost manuscript practices can enrich our understanding of textual production not only during the Western Zhou period but in Early China in general.

Keywords: Early China, bronze inscriptions, manuscripts, editorial practices, Western Zhou

Introduction

At least 79 chariots loaded with burial goods together with some hundred horses made up the spectacular cortège in 433 BC during the funeral of Marquis Yi of Zeng 曾侯乙, a ruler of a satellite polity of the mighty kingdom of Chu 楚. A logistically challenging enterprise, the ritual array was orchestrated with the help of records on bamboo-strip manuscripts,¹ which were eventually placed in the tomb together with the burial goods. What seems to be the first of the records opens as follows:

大莫敖陽為適巴之春，八月庚申，冑起執事人書入車：

右令建所乘大旃：

獲輪、弮、鞞、銅造、畫軻、斂鞞、虎鞞...

[The year when] in the spring the Grand Mo'ao Yang Wei 陽為 went to Ba 巴, the eighth month, [day] *gengshen* (57/60). The armour (?) officer recorded the received chariots:

The grand banner chariot ridden by the Commander of the Right,
Jian 右令建:

red wheels, bamboo and leather screens, bronze appurtenance (?), polychromatic hub straps, ornamented mattresses, tiger-skin bow cases...²

While it is safe to assume the manuscript practice neither in Ancient China nor in Zeng began with the organisation of Marquis Yi's funeral, nonetheless, the bamboo strips recovered from his tomb are the earliest physically preserved manuscripts from the region of East Asia known to this day.³ Only a few of the transmitted texts are believed to have

¹ For the reconstruction showing how these manuscripts were used in the organization of the burial, see Habberstad (2014).

² The photographs and critical edition of the manuscript were published in Hubei sheng bowuguan 湖北省博物館 (1989). For this particular strip, see plate 169:1 正 (photograph) or p. 490 (edition). Aside from this edition, my translation here is based on studies by Li Xueqin 李學勤 (2006a), Xiao Shengzhong 蕭聖中 (2011), Habberstad (2014), Song Huaqiang 宋華強 (2015), and Luo Xiaohua 羅小華 (2017).

³ The term manuscript here refers to a type of a portable material artefact commonly used in a particular culture as a medium for writing in a wide range of contexts and moreover bearing a handwritten text, regardless of its content. Hence the covenant tablets from Houma 侯馬 and Wen Xian 溫縣, brush-written in ink on stone slabs are not considered manuscripts here. According to Williams (2013), these texts date between about 442–424 BC.



Fig. 1: Part of the bamboo-strip manuscript unearthed from the tomb of Marquis Yi, Leigudun, Hubei Province (from right to left strips #210, #212, #211, #213, #214, #145, #120, #121, #191, #194). © Hubei Provincial Museum. Reproduced with permission.

originated prior to 433 BC, and only rarely do they contain references to people writing, reading, or handling manuscripts in any other manner.⁴ Aside from assuming some analistic and record-keeping practices were in place, our knowledge of manuscript practices in China during the earlier half of the first millennium BC is solely dependent on the epigraphic evidence of inscriptions cast⁵ in bronze ritual vessels and bells. These objects were commissioned by the nobility who had them displayed in the ancestral temples of their lineages and used them in ancestral sacrifices as well as in the ensuing feasts. Of the large corpus of several thousand bronze inscriptions produced between the thirteenth and fifth centuries BC, roughly 150 inscriptions offer the best evidence for the study of manuscript practices of the time. These inscriptions come from the Western Zhou period between the tenth and early eighth centuries BC and tell of a specific type of ceremony at the royal court during which their donors⁶ had been appointed to official positions. Many of these inscriptions relate how during this ceremony manuscripts—the so-called ‘command documents’—were perused and handled, and the scholarly consensus holds that these inscriptions also quote from the text of such manuscripts.

Historians of Ancient China are well aware that a degree of knowledge regarding more ancient manuscript practices antecedent to those attested to by discoveries of actual bamboo-strip manuscripts is to be gained from epigraphy. Li Feng has already explored the use of writing in the state and even lineage administration during the Western Zhou period,⁷ and several insightful studies have been made on the writing behind the appointment ceremony and related production of inscriptions.⁸ The goal of this article is therefore somewhat different. It aims to complement the reconstruction of manuscript production by studying the manuscript reception. The texts composed in the second half of the first millennium BC increasingly reflect on the manuscript practices, and recent archaeological discoveries have shown that the practices of circulating, collecting, and even entombing various kinds of manuscripts constituted important means of identity construction in certain strata of Ancient Chinese society.⁹ But what of earlier times from which no manuscripts came down to us? To address this question, in the first step, I shall discuss several issues concerning the production process of the command documents as well as their textual features; next, I shall investigate the manner

⁴ Kern (2007: 122–27). These practices appear more commonly only in texts from the fourth century BC on; see Krijgsman (2019).

⁵ Bronze inscriptions from the Late Shang (ca. 1250–1046 BC), Western Zhou (1045–771 BC), and Chunqiu (770–476 BC) periods were usually cast, but several instances of carved inscriptions from these periods also exist. For Late Shang inscriptions carved in bronze, see Yue Zhanwei et al. (2012: 66–7); Yang Huan and Yang Jian (2020).

⁶ A donor—following von Falkenhausen (2006a: 244; 2011: 240 n. 3)—is a person who commissioned the manufacture of the vessel; it is usually the donor whose achievements are presented in an inscription.

⁷ Li Feng (2011; 2018: 24–33).

⁸ Among all, the most comprehensive treatment is Kern (2007); see also von Falkenhausen (1993: 145–71; 2006b); Shaughnessy (2007).

⁹ On the former issue, see Krijgsman (2019); on the latter, see Selbitschka (2018).

in which these command documents were treated during the production of inscribed bronze objects. The following questions will be addressed specifically: what happened to the text when transposed from a manuscript onto a durable bronze vessel; in what way did its function and meaning change; and what can the complexity and variety of editorial practices employed during such transferal reveal about the status assigned to the manuscripts by various individuals and their respective communities in the past? Overall, considering not only how and why manuscripts were produced but also in what ways they were used and valued by their owners can enrich the understanding of manuscript practices in Early Chinese society in periods from which no manuscripts survive. The findings of such inquiry can then inform discussion of textual production in Early China in general as well as further cross-cultural comparisons.

The bronze tureen of Song and its inscription

One of the more elaborate examples of inscriptions commemorating the appointment ceremony at the royal court was cast in duplicate on the inner bottom and inside the lid of a bronze tureen (*gui* 簋) in the collection of the Yale University Art Gallery. Such tureens were used for serving cooked grains, most likely millet, during the regular ancestral sacrifices in aristocratic lineages' ancestral temples. This tureen was part of a larger set of at least four tureens and several other vessels commissioned by an official called Song 頌, presumably in 779 BC.¹⁰ Figs. 2–5 show the Yale tureen and its inscriptions.

The inscription on Song's tureen serves as a case study illustrating various issues for discussion in this paper. Below is a translation; for the reader's convenience, I have broken the text of the inscription into six parts, as different parts of the inscription will be referred to at various stages of the following analysis:

¹⁰ For this date, see Zhang Maorong (2005: 8–9). Scholars have also dated these vessels to the year 825 BC, see, for example, Shaughnessy (1991: 285). I follow Shaughnessy (1991) for the dates of the Western Zhou kings. The Western Zhou period can be further divided into three subperiods: Early Western Zhou (1045–957 BC), Middle Western Zhou (956–858 BC), and Late Western Zhou (857–771 BC). For the details on the remaining vessels produced by Song, see note 70. The details of the discovery of Song's vessels are unknown other than that this must have happened before the nineteenth century. The vessels were probably looted from Song's tomb or recovered from a cache buried by his lineage. The standard edition of the inscription together with the facsimiles of its rubbings was published in *Zhongguo shehui kexueyuan kaogu yanjiusuo* (2007: no. 04333). This work serves as the standard edition of many other inscriptions discussed in this article and is hereafter abbreviated as 'JC'. The JC reference number can be used to look up the inscriptions in a variety of electronic databases where further details regarding their provenance can be retrieved. Most of the inscriptions surveyed in this article were unearthed—by looting, stray finds, or archaeological excavation—in the Wei River valley in Shaanxi province, China. Aside from *gui* (round tureen), Chinese terms for the typology of bronze objects used in this article include *ding* (cauldron), *zhong* (bell), *hu* (jar), *pan* (shallow basin), *xu* (oval tureen), and *zhi* (cup).



Fig. 2: The bronze tureen of Song (height 29.53cm, width 43.82cm). Yale University Art Gallery (1952.51.11a-b), public domain.

- A. 唯三年五月既死霸甲戌，王在周康昭宮，旦，王徂大室，即位。宰引右頌入門，立中廷，尹氏授王令書，王呼史號生冊令頌。

It was the third year, fifth month, [the period] after the dying brightness (of the moon), [day] *jiaxu* (11/60). The King was in Zhou, in the palace [dedicated to Kings] Kang and Zhao. At dawn, the King arrived at the Grand Hall and assumed [his] position. Superintendent Yin accompanied Song, entering the gate and standing in the centre of the courtyard. **Sir Yin passed the command document (*ling shu* 令書) to the King. The King called out to the Secretary Guosheng to command Song by means of the manuscript roll (*ce ling* 冊令):**

- B. “王曰：‘頌！令汝官司成周賈，監司新造賈，用宮御。錫汝玄衣黼純、赤市、朱衡、鑾旂、鑿勒，用事！’”

‘The King says: “Song! [I] command you to take office in charge of merchants in Chengzhou, and to supervise as an overseer the newly arrived merchants, in order to supply the palace. [I] award you a black jacket with embroidered hem, a red apron, a scarlet girdle, a banner with jingles, [and] a bronze-studded bridle. Use



Fig. 3: Inscription on the bronze tureen of Song. Yale University Art Gallery (1952.51.11a-b), public domain.

them in [your] service!”¹¹

C. 頌拜稽首，受令冊，佩以出，返入覲璋。

[I,] Song, did obeisance, bowed and prostrated myself, received the roll with the command (*shou ling ce* 受令冊), hung it [on my belt] and came out [of the courtyard]. [I then] returned to present a jade tablet.

D. 頌敢對揚天子丕顯魯休，

[I,] Song, take the liberty to extol in response the Son of Heaven’s illustrious [and] blessed beneficence,

E. 用作朕皇考恭叔、皇母恭姒寶尊簋，

[and] take this occasion to make [for] my august deceased father Middleborn Gong (‘the Respectful’) and august mother Gong (‘the Respectful’) Si [this] treasured sacrificial *gui* tureen.

¹¹ The translations of award items here and below have greatly benefited from the earlier work of Dobson (1962), Serruys (1969), Shaughnessy (1991, 2007), and von Falkenhausen (2006a). My choices of particular translations have generally been informed by the paleographical survey and analyses by Wu Hongsong (2006).



Fig. 4: Lid of the bronze tureen of Song. Yale University Art Gallery (1952.51.11a-b), public domain.

- F. 用追孝、祈句康彘、純祐、通祿、永令。頌其萬年眉壽無疆、駿臣天子霽終、子子孫孫永寶用。

[I, Song shall] use it to pursue filial service, to pray for abundant ..., pure [divine] protection, pervading wealth, and eternal mandate. For ten thousand years of abundant longevity without limits, relentlessly serving the Son of Heaven until the sprightly end, [I,] Song shall for generations of descendants eternally use [this vessel] as a treasure.

Indeed, as pointed out already in the 1930s by Herrlee G. Creel,¹² the phrase ‘to command by means of a manuscript roll’ (*ce ling* 冊令) in part A means nothing other than

¹² Creel (1936: 349 n. 48) observed that *ce ming* 冊命 (also written *ce ling* 冊令) is a common expression ‘meaning “to command by means of a document,” i.e. to read aloud an order which had previously been written.’ In fact, such understanding has been common among traditional scholars at least since the times of Du Yu 杜預 (222–284; see Ruan Yuan (1980: 1825)) and among modern Chinese scholars beginning with Chen Mengjia (1956: 158). For a more recent reconfirmation of such a reading, see Kern (2007: 152–57).



Fig. 5: Inscription on the lid of the bronze tureen of Song. Yale University Art Gallery (1952.51.11a-b), public domain.

to read the command from the document out loud. After the command had been read out, the appointee received a manuscript with the text of the command (*shou ling ce* 受令冊). As the inscription reproduces the content of the command and preserves even its second-person diction, scholars generally agree the text quoted in the inscription had been copied from this very manuscript.¹³ Despite its no longer being available, some features of such underlying administrative manuscripts and the mechanisms of their production can, to a certain degree, be reconstructed based on the inscriptions such as that of the Song *gui-tureen*. This has been undertaken in the following section.

¹³ Already Lü Dalin 呂大臨 (1046–1092) was of this opinion, see Lü Dalin (1781: *juan* 3 folio 12a). In modern scholarship, such understanding goes back at least to Creel (1936), Qi Sihe (1947), Chen Mengjia (1956), and Shirakawa (1968: 161–2) and is shared by most of the scholarship cited in this article.

The royal command documents: production, content, and form

Production and use of the command documents at the Zhou royal court

Based on the explicit descriptions of the handling of the command documents in inscriptions such as the above-quoted Song *gui* (part A), scholars were quick to note the command document (*ling shu* 令書) must have been produced prior to the appointment ceremony.¹⁴ The command documents were composed by the royal scribes, quite likely under the surveillance of the Roll Makers (Zuo ce 作冊) or Interior Secretaries (Nei Shi 內史), who most commonly appear in inscriptions to be those responsible for presenting the command document to the king and reading it out.¹⁵

As the appointees received their own copy of the command document, it is commonly assumed that at least two copies of it were produced before the ceremony, one of which

¹⁴ See Creel (1936: 342); Chen Mengjia (1956: 149); Wong Yin-wai (1978: 90); Kane (1982: 16); Chen Hanping (1986: 130); Shaughnessy (1999: 299; 2007: 876); Kern (2007: 150); Li Feng (2008a: 109; 2011: 275); Allan (2012: 555–6).

¹⁵ On the function of the royal secretarial corps, see Kern (2007); Li Feng (2008a). The exact handling of the command document by royal secretaries has been subject to disagreement. The most detailed description of this in inscriptions comprises two parts, part A: *X shou wang ling shu* X 受王令書, and part B: *wang hu Y ce ling Z* 王呼 Y 冊令 Z. The crux of the problem is that the graph 受 in part A was commonly used to represent both the words 'to receive' (Old Chinese *[d]u?) and 'to give' (Old Chinese *[d]u?-s, later written 授; Old Chinese reconstruction after Baxter and Sagart (2014)). The traditional interpretation favours the latter reading, thus having the first official (X) to hand the command document (*ling shu*) over to the king, who then orders the second official (Y) to read it out to the appointee. In such an interpretation, it is implicitly understood that the king would hand the document over to the second official, who would then hold it in his own hands as he read it. The direct involvement of the king in the handover is confirmed by an alternative wording in the inscription on the Mian *gui* (JC 04240): *wang shou Zuoce Yin shu, bi ce ling Mian* 王受 (授) 作冊尹書, 俾冊令免, meaning 'the King handed the document to the Roll Maker Yin in order to command Mian by [reading out] the roll'. Based on this inscription, Li Feng (2001: 50 n. 143), taking it as an elaboration of part A, suggested that 受 in part A must stand for 'to receive', and that *wang ling shu* is to be understood as one term ('the document of royal command'). In such reading, the king first passes the document to one official and calls on another to read it out. A similar (though not entirely identical) scenario where the king appears on the scene with the document in his hand has been criticized rightly by Kern (2007: 152). It is important to note that the detailed two-part description of the handling of the manuscript appears in the epigraphic record only by the middle of King Xuan's reign at the very end of the ninth century BC. Prior to this, the descriptions only contain part B, i.e. the king calling out to an official to read out the command. It thus follows that what is rendered in the Mian *gui* inscription, cast roughly in the late tenth century BC, is really an elaboration of part B and not of part A, and that it only makes explicit what is otherwise implicitly understood: that while ordering the secretary to read out the command, the king would pass the document on to him. While in Li's reading, the function of the first secretary in the ritual performance is limited to a mere holder of the document for his colleague, in the traditional reading which is preferred here, he represents the issuing authority of the document; this issuing authority then presented the document to the king who sanctioned it by his own hands before passing it over for execution. Such a scenario seems far better suited to the bureaucratized picture of Western Zhou government as proposed by Li Feng (2008a). Some authors read *ce* as 'to write down', but Kern (2007: 152–7) has already argued convincingly against such reading.

was subsequently stored in some kind of archival repository at the royal court.¹⁶

Several inscriptions suggest the existence of such archives when the text of their command mentions:

1. a command by a previous king (or kings) to the appointee's ancestor(s),¹⁷
2. a command by a previous king to the appointee himself,¹⁸ or
3. an earlier command to the appointee by the same king.¹⁹

Moreover, instances exist in which the wording of commands to different individuals at different times concerning the same topics are nearly identical.²⁰ Overall, the capacity to look up and reproduce earlier commands implies the hard copies of command documents were stored in archives at the royal court and accompanied by relevant records to keep track of the appointments.

At the ceremony, one copy was handed over to the appointee, while the other entered the archives and could be further retrieved to inform the production of related commands in the future.

¹⁶ Creel (1970: 127–9) makes both these points explicitly; the existence of such archival repositories was later postulated by a range of scholars including von Falkenhausen (1993: 162–3), Shaughnessy (1997: 3–5; 2007: 867–8), Kern (2007: 149), Li Feng (2008a: 110), Allan (2012: 555–6), and Shaughnessy (2020: 304–6). While we do not know much about their scope and affiliation, the facts that they stored documents related to administrative procedures and that these could be later retrieved allow us to call such repositories ‘archives’; see Brosius (2003); for some Ancient Chinese archives, see Fölster (2018).

¹⁷ See, for example, the inscription on the Master Hu *gui* 師虎簋 (JC 04316). In translating *shi* 師 as ‘Master’, I follow Khayutina (2018).

¹⁸ See, for example, the inscription on the Shan *ding* 善鼎 (JC 02820).

¹⁹ These cases were noted already by Kane (1982: 18) and Shaughnessy (1997: 4); see also Shaughnessy (2007: 867–8; 2020: 304–6).

²⁰ The most famous case is the pair of inscriptions on the Xun *gui* 詢簋 (JC 04321) and Master You *gui* 師酉簋 (JC 04288–89). Regardless of the exact relationship between Xun and Master You, the fact that they render the royal command in a nearly identical fashion seems to suggest the text of the earlier command was stored at the royal court and retrieved to inform the drafting of the latter; on this point, see Liu Li (2017: 7–8). There has been a variety of propositions concerning the relation between You and Xun: a father and his son, a grandfather and his grandson, or no relation whatsoever. For a recent overview with a traditional ‘father and son’ stance, see Wang Zhiguo (2013b); for an article challenging the traditional view, see Xia Hanyi (2005). For translations and a brief introduction, see Khayutina (2016).

Textual boundaries of the command document

A more intriguing question is how one is to identify the boundaries of the command document embedded in the bronze inscription. How much from an inscription's text is actually a quotation from the document? The end of the command is normally easily discernible due to the change of perspective, with the ensuing part most commonly voicing the appointee's gratitude; the words of gratitude occur in several Late Western Zhou instances followed by the description of the handover of the document at the royal court, as is the case in the Song *gui* inscription (part C).

As for the exact beginning of the written command, scholars usually surmise the content of the command document follows after the introductory phrase *wang yue* 王曰 'the king says (or said)' or *wang ruo yue* 王若曰, 'the king approved of saying'.²¹ Given the fact that the command document was 1) written before the ceremony and 2) not pronounced by the king himself but read out by his proxy, I agree with the hitherto marginal view propounded by Dong Zuobin claiming these introductory phrases must also have been part of the command documents, serving as a preamble to the command text.²² Reading out this phrase during the ceremony would distinctly define the authority behind the command, which was written in the first person²³—it would clarify that although uttered by the secretary, the words were those of the monarch.²⁴ This makes sense particularly if one considers there may have been further oral interaction between the secretary and the appointee during the ceremony.

While it remains that this does not necessarily imply the introductory phrase *wang yue* (or *wang ruo yue*) was written in the command document (it may have been simply pronounced without a written guideline), later evidence suggests that it was indeed included in the written document. Consider the following excerpts from a speech that supposedly took place in 506 BC, recorded in the *Zuo Tradition* (*Zuo zhuan* 左傳), a complex historical text whose content may have largely been established by the fourth century BC:

²¹ For a long time, this phrase has been commonly translated as 'the king spoke thus'; see, for example, Karlgren (1948, 1950). Nakai Sekitoku 中井積徳 (d. 1817) and Wang Xianqian 王先謙 (1842–1917) were among the earliest advocates of this reading, later cemented in an influential article by Yu Xingwu (1966). New trends in understanding this phrase are introduced below.

²² Dong Zuobin (1944); the few (chiefly tacit) proponents of this view in recent scholarship include Yoshimoto (1991: 43–4), Krjukov (2012: 177), Peng Yushang (2014: 8), and Li Guanlan (2018: 224–6; 2019: 37–8).

²³ This is suggested by several inscriptions which preserve first-person pronouns or self-references to the king ('I, the One' *yu yi ren* 余一人 etc.) in the text of the command.

²⁴ That the phrase *wang ruo yue* clarifies the delegated nature of the oral delivery of royal speech or command is an understanding that goes back to the earliest commentaries of the canonical *Book of Documents* (*Shang shu* 尚書) in the early first millennium AD; see, for example, Ruan Yuan (1980: 198, 203); Legge (1991: 225, 363); Ding Jin (2013: 148–9). For a recent reaffirmation of such understanding, see Allan (2012: 552–4).

其子蔡仲改行帥德，周公舉之，以為己卿士。見諸王，而命之以蔡，其命書云：‘王曰：“胡，無若爾考之違王命！”’也。

His son [Hu], the Secondborn of Cai, changed his ways and pursued a virtuous course. The Duke of Zhou raised him to office and made him his own dignitary. [He] presented him to the king, who gave him command over [the land] of Cai. **The command document (*ming shu* 命書) [used for that purpose], indeed reads ‘The King said: “Hu! You shall not, like your father, violate the king’s command!”’**

晉文公為踐土之盟，衛成公不在，夷叔，其母弟也，猶先蔡，其載書云：‘王若曰：“晉重，魯申，衛武，蔡甲午，鄭捷，齊潘，宋王臣，莒期。”’藏

在周府，可覆視也。

When the Duke Wen of Jin made the covenant [conference] at Jiantu (632 BC), Duke Cheng of Wei was not present. Middleborn Yi was [only] his younger brother, and still he took precedence of Cai. **The record document (*zai shu* 載書) [of this conference] reads: ‘The King approved of saying: “Chong of Jin, Shen of Lu, Wu of Wei, Jiawu of Cai, Jie of Zheng, Pan of Qi, Wangchen of Song, Qi of Ju.”’** It is stored in the Zhou archive and can be consulted. (*Zuo Tradition*, 4th year of Duke Ding of Lu, 506 BC)²⁵

Apparently, the composers of the *Zuo Tradition* understood the phrases *wang yue* and *wang ruo yue* to be integral parts of the official documents issued by the Zhou royal court. As both the practice of appointment ceremonies and covenant conferences were still alive at the time the *Zuo Tradition* was composed,²⁶ there exist good reasons to believe that such understanding reflects the contemporaneous reality and perhaps even

²⁵ Ruan Yuan (1980: 2135). Translation adapted from Durant et al. (2016: 1751). Compare also another passage concerning events from the 28th year of the Duke Xi (632 BC): 王命尹氏及王子虎、內史叔興父策命晉侯為侯伯，賜之大輅之服、戎輅之服、彤弓一、彤矢百、旅弓矢千、秬鬯一卣、虎賁三百人，曰：“王謂叔父，敬服王命，以綏四國，糾逖王慝！” ‘The king commanded Sir Yin together with Prince Hu and Interior Secretary Middleborn Xingfu to command the Lord of Jin by [reading out] the [manuscript] roll to act as overlord, and to award him a grand royal chariot with accoutrements, a war chariot with accoutrements, one red bow, one hundred red arrows, black bows with one thousand arrows, one bucket of fragrant [sacrificial] black-millet wine, [and] three hundred “tiger” guards, saying: “The King tells [his] Uncle respectfully to submit himself to the King’s command, thereby to pacify the four regions and drive off the King’s antagonists!”’ See Ruan Yuan (1980: 1826); for a complete translation of this entry, see Durant et al. (2016: 421).

²⁶ The *Zuo Tradition* was largely completed by the fourth century BC; see Durant et al. (2016: xxxviii). As attested to by the King Cuo of Zhongshan *hu* 中山王響壺 inscription (JC 09735), the practice of the Zhou kings ‘rewarding by means of a roll’ *ce shang* 策賞 was still alive by the late fourth century BC. The mentions of the appointment ceremony in the received texts mainly from the Eastern Zhou period are conveniently collected and discussed by Chen Mengjia (1956: 160–3); see also Qi Sihe (1947: 223–6). Covenant conferences were common between the seventh and fifth centuries BC but are reported to have taken place as late as 279 BC.

an earlier practice. Coherent use of the phrase *wang yue* to structure the text of longer inscriptions—a phenomenon analysed later in this article—seems further to confirm this view. Consequently, it is fair to consider the phrases *wang yue* ('the king says (or said)') or *wang ruo yue* ('the king approved of saying') to be intrinsic parts of the command document.

Despite all the evidence for the delegatory character of the command procedure during the appointment ceremony raised by numerous scholars in past, the idea that the command was pronounced by the king himself remains fairly widespread in scholarship. The following section further clarifies why this idea is not sustainable, at least not as an *a priori* assumption in the study of bronze inscriptions.

The problem of royal speeches: did the Zhou kings ever speak?

The Zhou kings surely did speak. However, a different question is how much of what they said actually found its way into the bronze inscriptions. For a long time, the exact meaning of the phrase *wang ruo yue* 王若曰 has been the subject of a relentless debate.²⁷ The delegatory mechanism of the appointment ceremony is crucial for our understanding of the issue, as is the fact that the command documents were pre-prepared. There is therefore no need not to ponder if a mere digest of the royal speech was recorded by scribes, whether or not they mastered stenography or were taking turns recording the speech in order not to miss a single word.²⁸ Most likely, the Zhou kings never personally uttered most of what was ascribed to them in the bronze inscriptions. As aptly put by Martin Kern, the kings took their position, sanctioned the ceremony by their sheer presence, and thus approved the utterances on their behalf.²⁹ Agreement is increasing that *ruo* 若 (Old Chinese **nak*)³⁰ in the phrase *wang ruo yue* stands for the word *nuo* (today

²⁷ For a good overview of previous arguments, see Yu Xingwu (1966); von Falkenhausen (2011: 264–7); Ding Jin (2013: 148–50); Ye Xiucheng (2016: 131–2).

²⁸ Kern (2007: 157). For some of the implausible proposals, see Zhang Huaitong (2008: 187); von Falkenhausen (2011: 268–9). The same applies to the 'aristocratic speeches' as reconstructed by von Falkenhausen (2011); these too could be pre-prepared, memorized, and delivered during the audience, see Kern (2009b: 87). There was surely no space for improvisation in the course of the ceremony. By no means is this to deny the existence of personal or informal communication between the Zhou king and his higher officials; this is merely to accentuate that such kind of interaction was not part of the highly formalized appointment ceremony. Judging from available evidence, what was uttered by the king in a private conversation with an aristocrat was seldom deemed so consequential to have it cast in bronze.

²⁹ Kern (2007: 151). Compare the later description of royal audience as provided by the 'Jin li' 覲禮 ('Audience Rite') chapter of the Warring States text *Etiquette and Rites* (*Yili* 儀禮), edited by Ruan Yuan (1980: 1087–94); for an English summary and discussion, see von Falkenhausen (2011: 254–64); for a full translation, see Steele (1917: 1–8).

³⁰ The reconstruction of Old Chinese pronunciation is taken from Baxter and Sagart (2014).

written 諾, Old Chinese *nʰak), ‘to approve’.³¹ Given the delegatory nature of the delivery of royal command, it thus makes perfect sense to read the phrase *wang ruo yue* as ‘the King approves (or approved) of saying’,³² essentially as a marker of a delegated speech.

In light of the above discussion, there appears to be only very scarce evidence of the actual utterances made by the Zhou kings themselves as well as of direct interaction with their subjects. Such close interactions must have been exceptional and perceived as a sign of an unusual honour or prestige, for when a Zhou king actually spoke or interacted directly with his subjects, these made sure to state this explicitly in their inscriptions. Thus, when the donors, well aware of the common delegatory practice, wished to stress that His Majesty commanded them personally, they had the king not just ‘commanding’ them but ‘commanding them personally’ (*qin ling* 親令) in their inscriptions.³³ By the same token, the extraordinary occasion in which the king personally pronounced³⁴ the award could be duly commemorated by the words *qin xi* 親錫, ‘personally awarded’.³⁵ This is not to say that all instances where the king ‘speaks’ *yue* 曰, ‘commands’ *ling*, or ‘awards’ *xi* in the inscriptions were necessarily intermediated. However, it follows that only in the few places where the word *qin* (‘personally’) is used can one be relatively sure these activities were carried out personally by the king.

This argument is best illustrated by the inscription carved into a set of bells belonging to Lord Su of Jin 晉侯蘇, one of the rare examples where an aristocrat (indeed one of the highest-ranking ones of the day) was involved in personal and direct interaction with the Zhou king:

三月方死霸，王至于范，分行，王親令晉侯：“率乃師左濟澗，北濟□

³¹ See von Falkenhausen (2006b: 280) and especially von Falkenhausen (2011: 264–6). However, not fully acknowledging the delegatory nature of the delivery of royal command, von Falkenhausen treats *nuo* 諾 adverbially, translating ‘the king approvingly said’. Cook’s (2016, 2017) understanding is similar, translating ‘the king, agreeing (to X’s promotion/award), said’. On the use of *nuo* in later pre-imperial decision-making, see Giele (2006: 246–8).

³² Edward L. Shaughnessy is to my knowledge the only scholar to translate the phrase like this (‘the King approved of saying’); see, for example, Shaughnessy (2007, 2020). He does not, however, consider the phrase to be part of the command document (personal communication, 2 November 2019).

³³ For the cases of *qin ling*, see the Middle Western Zhou Secretary Mao hu 史懋壺 lid (JC 09714) and the Late Western Zhou Ke zhong 克鐘 (JC 00204–8) and the Lord Su of Jin zhong 晉侯蘇鐘 (Jung Bor-sheng et al. 2006: nos. 871–82; hereafter abbreviated as ‘NA’). In the inscription on the 42nd year Qiu ding 逯鼎 (NA 745–6), the royal command refers to the king’s previous personal command (‘[you] have not disobeyed my personal command’ *fu ni zhen qin ling* 弗逆朕親令). The third graph in the second column of the Middle Western Zhou Nong you 農卣 inscription (JC 05424) is usually read as *qin* 親, but this reading is problematic; see Dong Shan (2018).

³⁴ *Xi* 錫 means ‘to award’, but apparently what is meant by it is a declarative speech act of awarding someone with something rather than a physical transfer of objects. This becomes most obvious in the phrase *ce xi* 冊錫, ‘to award by means of a roll’, i.e. to read out the award.

³⁵ The cases of personal awards *qin xi* 親錫 include the Middle Western Zhou Yu gui 逯簋 (JC 04207) and the Late Western Zhou Lord Yufang of E ding 鄂侯馭方鼎 (JC 02810), the Cheng zhong 成鐘 (NA 1461), and the Lord Su of Jin zhong 晉侯蘇鐘 (NA 871).

(遂)，伐宿夷！”晉侯蘇折首百又廿，執訊廿又三夫。王至于鄆城，**王親遠省師**，王至晉侯蘇師，王降自車，立南嚮，**親令晉侯蘇**自西北隅敦伐鄆城。...六月...**王親錫駒四匹**。

In the third month, at the dying brightness [of the moon], the king arrived in Fan and divided his ranks. The King **personally commanded** Lord Su of Jin: ‘Lead your troops to besiege Huan from the left, to besiege Sui from the north, to attack the barbarians of Sù!’ Lord Su of Jin cut off one hundred and twenty heads, [and] captured twenty-three men. The King arrived at the citadel of Yun. The King **personally inspected** the troops from a distance. The King reached the troops of Lord Su of Jin. The King descended from [his] chariot, stood facing south, and **personally commanded** Lord Su of Jin to take the citadel of Yun by assault from the northwest corner. (...) In the sixth month...the King **personally awarded** Su four foals.³⁶

To be sure, not only the ritual communication with the king used to be mediated and thus indirect. It appears that such practice was well rooted in Western Zhou aristocratic society, as suggested by other inscriptions.³⁷ Readers of Zhou bronze inscriptions are accustomed to the fact that the subject of a verb is, at times, not its actual agent. It is common knowledge that when someone ‘makes’ (*zuo* 作) a bronze vessel, they have it produced by the craftsmen. It should be of no surprise therefore that the same applies to a range of other verbs, including *ling* ‘to command’, *xi* ‘to award’, *yue* ‘to address someone’, ‘to say’ and others. Consider again a phrase from the inscription on the bells of the Lord of Jin describing his military achievements:

晉侯蘇折首百又廿，執訊廿又三夫。

³⁶ NA 870–85. My translation follows that of Shim (1997: 49–51), with modifications based on the studies of Ma Chengyuan (1996), Qiu Xigui (1997), Li Xueqin (1996, 2006b), and Fan Changxi (2017). See Shim (1997) for the full translation followed by a thorough study of this inscription. Shim dates the inscription to the reign of King Li (857–828 BC), but more likely these are events from the reign of King Xuan (827–782 BC); see Nivison and Shaughnessy (2000).

³⁷ See, for example, the inscription on the Duoyou *ding* 多友鼎 (JC 02835), where the composer of the inscription deemed it important to mention that the donor of the inscription, Duoyou, was addressed by his superior, the Martial Duke 武公, personally: 丁酉，武公在獻宮，廼命向父召多友，廼迺于獻宮，公親曰多友曰：‘余肇使汝，休不逆，有成事，多擒。汝靖京師，錫汝圭瓊一、湯鐘一肆，鑄鑿百鈞。’ [Day] *dingyou* (34/60), the Martial Duke was at the Offering Palace; [he] then commanded Xiangfu to summon Duoyou. [He] then came out of the Offering Palace. The Duke personally addressed Duoyou, saying: “I have employed you for the first time, [you] were excellent, have not disobeyed and had achieved your mission, with many captives. You have pacified Jingshi. [I] award you one ladle with a jade *gui*-shaped handle, one set of harmonious bells, [and] one hundred *jun* of ... and bronze plates.” For the full text of the inscription and its translation, see Shaughnessy (1983: 57–8); Li Feng (2006: 147–9).

‘Su, Lord of Jin, cut off one hundred and twenty heads, and captured twenty-three men.’

These are quite impressive figures for one man, compared to a far more realistic account from another Late Western Zhou inscription on the Firstborn Jianfu *gui* 伯戡父簋:

伯戡父從王伐，親執訊十夫，馘廿，得俘金五十鈞。

‘Firstborn Jianfu followed the king in the campaign, [and] **personally captured** ten men, collected twenty ears, [and] acquired fifty *jun* of bronze.’³⁸

The fact that the word *qin* (‘personally’) is missing in the description of the Lord of Jin’s military achievements in his inscription, which is otherwise preoccupied with making the personal involvement explicit (the word *qin* appears no less than five times in the inscription), strongly implies that the ‘Lord of Jin’ in the above phrase is a synecdoche for the Lord of Jin and his men. The omnipresence of mediacy in the social intercourse of Ancient Chinese aristocracy—especially in the top-down direction—should be kept in mind not only in the study of bronze inscriptions but also of the Early Chinese texts in general.³⁹

The content and structure of the command document

Having clarified the textual boundaries of the royal command embedded in a bronze inscription, it is now possible to examine the actual content and structure of the command document. The quotation from the command document in the Song *gui* inscription (part B) amounts to 34 words. This was certainly not the full text of the royal command. To fit the desired length and style, in most cases only excerpts of the command documents were quoted in the inscriptions.⁴⁰ The quotations in the majority of inscriptions are limited to the themes of command and award, as is the case of the Song *gui* inscription. However, it is to be expected that all the commands were drafted in a more or less unified fashion following a standard template and including several standard topics and only

³⁸ Wu Zhenfeng (2012: nos. 05276–77). For the full translation and discussion, see Shaughnessy (2017: 162–5).

³⁹ The observation that the king’s interaction and communication was mediated is not new but seems to have been disregarded in the scholarship of past decades. Already in the Qing dynasty, Zhu Weibi (1771–1840) notes that the personal command is only one of the many modes in which a royal command was pronounced, see Zhu Weibi (1919). In a similar spirit, Chen Mengjia (1956: 150–1) observes the difference between personal (*qin*) and mediated royal commands. Note that even during the ancestral sacrifices, the communication between the impersonator of ancestral spirits and the host of the sacrifice was intermediated by a ritual specialist (*zhu* 祝).

⁴⁰ Creel (1970: 126–7); Kane (1982: 16); Yoshimoto (1991: 44–9); von Falkenhausen (1993: 160–6; 2006a: 254; 2011: 245, 263).

portions of them were included in the inscriptions. With the help of several inscriptions of greater length than that of the Song *gui*, some other standard elements of the command document can be identified. The themes recurring in these longer inscriptions can be summed up as follows:

1. great deeds of the founding kings Wen and Wu
2. exemplary conduct of former kings' assistants, typically the appointee's ancestors
3. mention of former support of Heaven
4. previous commands to the appointee or his ancestors
5. previous achievements of the appointee
6. outline of a critical situation
7. new command and duties
8. exhortations concerning the duties or the awards
9. awards

The completeness, order, and wording of these thematic units may differ in each inscription,⁴¹ but their language remains highly uniform and formulaic throughout Western Zhou; this suggests a continuous and consistent tradition in the drafting of command texts at the royal court. It can therefore be assumed that a standard command document quite likely included most of the themes listed above. The sequence of the themes in some of the longer inscriptions is given in Tab. 1:

Tab. 1: Sequence of themes in selected inscriptions (in chronological order).

Vessel	Sequence of themes	Overall length (in graphs) ⁴²	No. of sub-units	Reference
Larger Yu <i>ding</i>	1-2-3-7-9-8	9+255=264	4	JC 02837
Master Xun <i>gui</i>	1-2-3-6-5-7-9	5+153=158	2	JC 04342
Xun <i>gui</i>	1-2-7-9-8	3+82=85	1	JC 04321
Duke of Mao <i>ding</i>	1-2-3-6-7- 8-7-8-7-8- 7-9-8	11+467=478	5	JC 02841

⁴¹ For an overview of how the use of some of the above themes varies across the sample of forty inscriptions, see Yoshimoto (1991: 45-6). This overview can be supplemented with several more inscriptions listed in Li Guanlan (2019: 38-9), whose categorisation of themes is similar to Yoshimoto's.

Vessel	Sequence of themes	Overall length (in graphs)	No. of sub-units	Reference
Master Ke xu	1-2-4-7-9-8	5+118=123	2	JC 04467-8, NA 1907
Larger Ke <i>ding</i>	4-7-9-8	3+101=104	1	JC 02836
Mu <i>gui</i>	4-7-6-8-9-8	5+142=147	2	JC 04343
Ran xu	... 8-7-8-9-8	(>2)+>124=>126	≥2	JC 04469
42 nd year Qiu <i>ding</i>	1-2-4-5-9	3+150=153	1	NA 745-6
43 rd year Qiu <i>ding</i>	1-2-4-7-8-9-8	5+182=187	2	NA 747-56

Setting aside the longest Duke of Mao *ding* and the incomplete Ran xu inscriptions, the average length of quotations in these ‘long’ inscriptions is 152.6 graphs. The oldest extant bamboo strips from the above-mentioned tomb of Marquis Yi are 70–75cm high and circa 1cm wide, and some 45–50 rather sizeable graphs would fit on each strip. The command document of 150 graphs would thus easily fit on three such strips alone. In the fourth century BC, literary texts were usually written on strips of 30–45cm in height with circa 25–40 graphs per strip. By these conventions, the text of 150 graphs would fit on a ‘mini roll’ comprising some four to six strips. As the inscriptions consistently refer to the manuscript received by an appointee as ‘a roll’ (*ce* 冊), it is reasonable to assume that these consisted of several strips and in turn the standard text of a royal command was not shorter than at least three strips (i.e. roughly 90 graphs).⁴³ Manuscripts of similar proportions did circulate by the fourth century BC, and it might be helpful to bear in mind such an estimate of the size of the command document, no matter how imprecise it might be.

⁴² The overall length of the command is a sum of the preamble *wang ruo yue* or *wang yue* (first figure) and the body of the command (second figure). Reduplicated graphs are counted as two graphs.

⁴³ The recently discovered fourth-century-BC manuscript witness of the *Command establishing Xu* (*Feng Xu zhi ming* 封許之命) contains circa 270 graphs; the contemporaneous manuscript text **Command to She* (*She ming* 攝命) contains nearly a thousand graphs. The transmitted text *Command to Lord Wen* (*Wen Hou zhi ming* 文侯之命) has 212 graphs. For these texts, see Qinghua daxue chutu wenxian yanjiu yu baohu zhongxin (2015: 37–44, 117–23; 2018: 25–48, 109–21); Ruan Yuan (1980: 253–4). Note that *Etiquette and Rites* states that texts shorter than a hundred graphs ought not to be written on rolls (*ce*); for a discussion of this passage and of the materiality of bamboo manuscripts in general, see Staack (2018).

A few of the inscriptions also show a practice of parsing the text of the royal command into shorter subunits, each of them introduced by the words *wang yue*, ‘the king says (or said)’.⁴⁴ Tab. 2 shows how individual themes are grouped into subunits in several longer inscriptions. The content of individual subunits is relatively stable across inscriptions cast by different lineages at different times. This implies that the division into subunits was not merely a compositional practice during the drafting of inscriptions; rather, it was a common practice during the drafting of administrative documents at the royal court. Breaking down a longer text of the command document into several units may have served as a rhetorical device to augment its effect on the audience, but it may also suggest that the whole performance of reading out the command was structured, such as by the appointees’ kowtows during specific moments of the ceremony. Thus, the command documents were composed in writing, but customized to serve the needs of their oral delivery.

Tab. 2: Subunits (SU), themes they contain, and their length (in parentheses) in selected inscriptions. Core themes—command (7) and awards (9)—are highlighted.

Vessel	SU 1	SU 2	SU 3	SU 4	SU 5
Larger Yu <i>ding</i>	1–2–3–4–7 (141)	7 (10)	7–9 (95)	8 (9)	
Master Xun <i>gui</i>	1–2–3 (57)	6–5–7–9 (96)			
Duke of Mao <i>ding</i>	1–2–3–6 (103)	7–8 (99)	7–8 (61)	7–8 (84)	7–9–8 (120)
Master Ke xu	1–2 (33)	4–7–9–8 (85)			
Mu <i>gui</i>	4–7–6 (61)	8–9–8 (81)			
Ran xu	...+8 (37+)	7–8–9–8 (87)			
43 rd year Qiu <i>ding</i>	1–2–4–7–8 (140)	9–8 (42)			

This section showed how epigraphic data can supplement our knowledge of manuscript

⁴⁴ It seems that only the first subunit at the beginning of the command could be introduced by words *wang ruo yue*.

production in periods from which no manuscripts are available. The command documents were drafted at the royal court in a uniform fashion and served as a script for the oral performance of the royal command by the king's representatives. The document was produced in two copies; one entered the archive at the royal court, and the other was handed over to the appointee. Some of the appointees later made use of their copies when casting ritual bronze paraphernalia with inscriptions commemorating their appointment. How exactly they used their manuscripts to this end is shown in the following section.

The use of command documents in the composition of inscriptions

The usual content of the Western Zhou bronze inscriptions

At a certain stage of their lives, Western Zhou aristocrats would commission the casting of ritual bronze vessels or bells, though not for sustaining the ancestral sacrifice *per se* but rather its splendour.⁴⁵ This took place usually after the death of the father, but the bronzes were cast on various other occasions as well. Many noblemen would also have their bronzes inscribed, employing conventional and highly formulaic epigraphic templates.

Most of these inscriptions can be analysed according to the structural framework proposed by Lothar von Falkenhausen (1993). The core part of an inscription is a phrase identifying the donor of the vessel together with a dedication, usually to one's ancestors—the so-called 'statement of dedication' (part E of the Song *gui* inscription). Further proclamations, typically concerning the use of the vessel—the so-called 'statement of purpose'—can be attached after it (part F of the Song *gui* inscription).⁴⁶ The majority of Western Zhou bronze inscriptions contain only these two parts. Only a smaller part of the corpus, roughly a couple of hundred inscriptions, narrate, in addition, a 'background event' that prompted the casting of the inscribed vessel.⁴⁷

Including such a 'background event' is an ancient epigraphic practice that originated

⁴⁵ The possession of expensive bronze paraphernalia was not a prerequisite for performing sacrifices.

⁴⁶ For an influential but outdated account of these phrases, see Xu Zhongshu (1936); for more recent reassessments, see Chen Yingjie (2008) and Shi Anrui (2019).

⁴⁷ Von Falkenhausen calls this part the 'announcement of merit'. I prefer to use a more neutral term 'background event' because it does not always mention the donor's merits (especially not in the Shang period inscriptions), and because at least nominally the event is usually not presented as a donor's merit but as their superior's graciousness to which the donor responds.

at the Late Shang royal court (thirteenth to eleventh centuries BC), where the aristocrats inscribed bone, stone, or bronze objects to commemorate generous awards from the Shang king or other superiors.⁴⁸ This practice developed further during the Western Zhou period. While the Shang inscriptions never mention an awardee's merits, highlighting solely their superior's beneficence, early Zhou inscriptions have already begun to indicate what the awardee's merit was,⁴⁹ a theme that became prominent throughout the following centuries. Thus one learns from the Zhou inscriptions not only that a person was given an award, but also the reasons for it, such as excellent performance in warfare or in an archery contest, assistance to the king or queen, carrying out a task or a mission, and, from the tenth century BC on, also the induction into office per appointment ceremony, as was case, for instance, of the Song *gui* (see parts A, B, and C).⁵⁰

Throughout their lives, Western Zhou aristocracy may have attended appointment ceremonies repeatedly. After the initial appointment, aristocrats may have been reappointed or promoted further for achievements or because of personnel changes in other related positions. Furthermore, they could also have been attending to temporary tasks or have been rewarded for their service or military achievement numerous times. Moreover, they could have been reappointed by a new king following the death of the previous ruler. At most of these ceremonies, the appointee would presumably receive his copy of the appointment document, but it is likely that only a fraction of these documents would subsequently inform the drafting of an inscription. Just why a particular appointment would be preferred over others is not entirely clear, but it is usually assumed that the temporal proximity of the appointment and casting events was an important factor. When the choice was made, the selected command document would inform the composition of the 'background event' part of the inscription. In aristocratic lineages, it was most likely the lineage's scribes who prepared the draft for their masters.⁵¹

⁴⁸ On this habit, see Shi Anrui (2019: 204–5); for the bone inscriptions, see also Liu Zhao (2013: 46).

⁴⁹ For a discussion about the implications of these developments, see Krjukov (2012: 156–60); Shi Anrui (2019: 204–7). Note that some of the earliest Western Zhou inscriptions, such as *Li gui* 利簋 (JC 04131) or 'Tian wang' *gui* 天亡簋 (JC 04261), are in line with the Shang habit and do not record the merits of their donors.

⁵⁰ For in-depth analyses of the theme of gift-giving in Early Chinese bronze inscriptions, see Cook (1997); Krjukov (2012); Khayutina (2010).

⁵¹ Itō (1987: 13–76); von Falkenhausen (1993: 160). For a systematic rebuttal of the argument that the inscriptions were drafted by royal scribes (as advanced in Matsumaru Michio 1977), see Shi Anrui (2019: 82–157).

From the command document to the draft of an inscription

The editorial practices during the drafting process are of great importance for the study of the reception of manuscripts during the Western Zhou period. To meet the desired length and style of the ‘background event’, the composers used a variety of approaches to represent the text of the command document in their inscriptions.⁵²

Excerpting from the command document

To fit into the limited surface inside the vessel and possibly also to reduce the laboriousness (and related costs) of the production, usually only a digest of the command document was rendered in the inscriptions. The preferred pattern of excerpting from the command document is unambiguous—nearly all composers opted for preserving the core content of the command, that is, the particular appointment and related awards, sometimes accompanied by exhortations regarding the service to be rendered.⁵³

As mentioned earlier, the text of the command document was divided into several subunits. One of the possible editorial practices in composing the inscriptions would be to excerpt only the subunit(s) with the ‘core’ content, that is, the commands and awards. Interestingly, in cases where only one of these two themes was to be preserved, it was usually not the command but the awards.⁵⁴ It is possible that the awards and the command originally constituted two separate subunits of the command document and that they were merged only later during the drafting of an inscription.⁵⁵

⁵² For previous consideration of the editorial process, see von Falkenhausen (1993: 156–67; 2011: 239–51), who distinguishes between ‘documentary’ and ‘subjective’ modes of rendering the ceremony; Ding Jin (2013: 158–9), who briefly looks at abbreviation and related textual adaptations. Li Guanlan (2019) distinguishes three types of editorial approaches: 1. Preserving the full text of the command or only slightly abridged; 2. Excerpting from the command; 3. Substantial reworking of the text of the command, such as through versification. Only a handful of inscriptions, however, fall into her first and third categories.

⁵³ Yoshimoto’s table (1991: 45–6) is quite illustrative of this tendency.

⁵⁴ Krjukov (2012: 179). The examples of inscriptions which clearly quote the royal command (*ce ling*) and yet record only the award are the Master Dao *gui* 師道簋 (NA 1394), the Wangchen *gui* 王臣簋 (JC 04268), and the Li *ding* 利鼎 (JC 02804). The only inscription that quotes from the command document but preserves only the command is the Tong *gui* 同簋 inscription (JC 04270–1). Overall, the theme of royal gift-giving is much more common in Western Zhou epigraphy than that of royal commands; see Cook (1997: 281); Khayutina (2010: 42–3).

⁵⁵ This is suggested also by some longer inscriptions where the awards and the command occur in different subunits (see Tab. 2). Shortening of the command text during the editorial work necessarily required the merging of subunits, and the coexistence of command and awards in the same subunit in an inscription thus does not necessarily imply that they belonged to the same subunit in the original command document. Their occurrence in two different subunits in an inscription, on the other hand, suggests strongly that they were distributed in two different subunits also in the command document. However, the inconsistency in the distribution of themes in subunits might also reflect the varying composition habits of the draftsmen of royal commands.

Both the command and the awards represented a reminder of the king's trust and of the appointee's obligations.⁵⁶ The focus on awards reveals that the composers shared the notion of what the formal function of an inscription with a background event was: to celebrate the donor's superior and to express the donor's gratitude for the superior's beneficence. The initial form of background events depicting solely the unconditional generosity of the superior was gradually inflated by the inclusion of the king's commands and the donor's achievements during the Early Western Zhou period, but formally the purpose of commemorating these events remained explicitly stated in the inscriptions: 'to extoll (a superior's) beneficence' (see part D of the Song *gui* inscription). The fact that some composers boiled down the elaborate text of the royal command to an apron and a pair of slippers seems to indicate that the awareness of such a formal function of a bronze inscription with a background event was very much widespread during the Western Zhou period.⁵⁷

Editing the excerpts of the command document and merging them with the templates

To form a 'background event' the text excerpted from a command document was usually contextualized by a standardized 'event notation'⁵⁸ that provided the logistic details of a particular appointment ceremony (see part A of the Song *gui* inscription). The event notations are highly formulaic, possibly informed by the conventional recording practice of the time or even by some kind of paratext that might have accompanied the command

⁵⁶ Kane (1982: 16).

⁵⁷ An alternative interpretation would be that the awards functioned at the same time as unequivocal signs of a particular position or even aristocratic rank. However, while the awards seem to reflect a certain system (Krjukov 2012: 220–48; Wang Zhiguo 2013a), particular sets of awards are not unique for a particular official position (Ho Shu-huan 2007: 228–46), and the system of aristocratic ranks, as discussed by Li Feng (2008b), is only an Eastern Zhou invention.

⁵⁸ I borrow the term 'event notation' from Shaughnessy (1991), but I use it as an umbrella term for all contextualizing elements of a particular event, i.e. date, location, and identification of the persons involved. The standard elements in the event notation formula are: 1. date: copula *wei* 唯, year, month, lunar phase, day; 2. king's location: place name, palace/temple name; 3. time of day: dawn (*dan* 旦) or daybreak (*mei shuang* 昧爽); 4. king's arrival to the hall/temple (*wang ge...* 王恪...); 5. king's assuming of position (*ji wei* 即位); 6. arrival of the appointee (A), usually with the accompanying (*you* 右) superordinate (S). The basic forms are: a) S 入右 A ('S entered accompanying A'); b) S 右 A ('S accompanied A', e.g. JC 02813, 04240, 09899; Wu Zhenfeng (2012: no. 05258); c) S 右 ('accompanied by S', e.g. JC 04196); d) S 右 A 入門 ('S accompanied A through the gate'); exceptionally also just e) A 入門 ('A entered the gate', e.g. NA 1555); 7. appointee's assuming of position: standing in the middle of the courtyard (*li zhong ting* 立中廷); 8. appointee's positioning: facing north (*bei xiang* 北嚮); 9. presentation of the command document to the king by secretary X (X 授王令書, 'X handed the command document over to the king'); 10. king's beckoning to secretary Y to read out the command to the appointee (王呼 Y 冊令 A 'the king called Y out to command A by [reading out] the roll'). Any number of these elements could be omitted from the contextualizing formula. For a handy overview and discussion of all variations in the wording of event notations attested by his time, see Musha (1979: 77–90).

document. Three basic editorial approaches to the merging of the command document and the event notation can be discerned: 1. preserving the full notation, 2. reworking the notation, and 3. no notation (see Tab. 3, lines 1–3):

The first approach employs a more or less full template for the event notation, making explicit the whereabouts of the investiture ceremony and clearly stating the delegatory mechanism of the announcement of the command.⁵⁹

The second approach, on the other hand, is not explicit regarding the delegatory mechanism of the appointments. While the mediated nature of reading out the command at the royal court must have been well understood at the time, it seems that some of the inscriptions in this mode are deliberately equivocal in their rendering of the ceremony, attempting to sketch a somewhat closer relationship between the appointee and the king (see Tab. 3: 2Ab-d, 2B, 2C). The event notation can be significantly abbreviated, and sometimes only the date remains.⁶⁰

The third approach is to omit the event notation completely. In these inscriptions, the background event is represented by the command document alone. When the metatextual information ‘the King approved of saying’ (*wang ruo yue*) appears at the very beginning of the inscription, it essentially serves as the event notation: it identifies the event as that of the formal (mediated) royal speech or command. Opening directly with this preamble, these inscriptions mimic the form of administrative documents. When the words ‘the King said’ (*wang yue*) are used instead, the mediated nature of the command becomes somewhat obfuscated.

The way of representing the excerpts of the command document in the background event also differed (see Tab. 3, columns A–C). Three basic practices included:

- A) maintaining the original form of the scripted speech, i.e. direct speech, either marked (by *wang ruo yue*, *wang yue*, or *yue*) or unmarked but still retrievable on linguistic grounds due to the use of first- and second-person pronouns;
- B) transforming part of the excerpt into indirect speech, while rendering the rest of it in direct speech; and
- C) transforming the whole excerpt into indirect speech. Reworking the direct speech into indirect speech entailed a change of perspective, where the king’s self-references were substituted by the word ‘king’ (*wang*) while the second-

⁵⁹ The main criterion for the event notation to classify as ‘full’ is that it clearly renders the delegatory mechanism of the appointment ceremony, e.g. by the words *wang hu Y (ce) ling A* ‘the King called out to Y to command A (by [reading out] the roll)’.

⁶⁰ Reduced to a mere date, the event notation still unambiguously situates the command into the ceremonial setting, and thus performs the contextualizing function successfully.

person pronouns were omitted or replaced by the third-person pronouns or the appointee's name.⁶¹

The attested combinations of the above-mentioned approaches are summarized in Tab. 3. Translations of representative examples are provided in the Annex.

Tab. 3: Attested modes of representation of the royal command and their merging with templates.

Event notation template	Aa: Direct speech marked with 王若曰	Ab: Direct speech marked with 王曰	Ac: Direct speech marked with 曰	Ad: Un-marked direct speech	B: Indirect + direct speech	C: Indirect speech
1. Full	1Aa	1Ab	1Ac	1Ad	1B	1C
2. Re-worked	2Aa	2Ab	2Ac	2Ad	2B	2C
3. None	3Aa	3Ab				3C

After the background event was formulated, it was further merged with the rest of the inscription, that is, with the statement of dedication (and through it, optionally, also with the statement of purpose). The seam between these parts typically employs a common transition formula which expresses the reasons for having the object inscribed—most often, this is to acclaim the charity of one's benefactor, typically the Zhou king (see part D of the Song *gui* inscription).⁶² This is then followed by a formula stating the act of vessel-making (see Song *gui* part E).

The transition formula is often preceded by a phrase '[I, such-and-such], am doing obei-

⁶¹ On this point, see Yoshimoto (1991: 44); see also Shaughnessy (2007: 874). A nice example of such a transformation is the Chi *zhi* 饗饗 inscription (JC 06516); see Tab. 3: 2Aa.

⁶² Some disagreement should be noted here about the nature of this transition formula, as many scholars today still believe that it records the response of the appointee at the court immediately after having received the command (it is thus often translated as 'X in response extolled the beneficence of the King'). However, Lin Yun and Zhang Yachu (1964) invalidated such a reading more than half a century ago. For a supplement to their arguments, see Krjukov (2012: 170); Shi Anrui (2017: 547–56); for a discussion on the origins of the use of the phrase, see Krjukov (2012: 163–72); Shi Anrui (2019: 204–12). Other albeit much less widespread transition formulas are 'I do not take the liberty to shirk [my duties]' *bu gan chi* 不敢弛, 'I do not take the liberty to cease [my diligence]' *fu gan ju* 弗敢沮 and the like; these, however, mostly fell out of use by the Middle Western Zhou.

sance and bowing prostrate' (*X bai shou qi shou* 某拜首稽首), which is not, as is usually misunderstood, a report about the kowtow that the appointee certainly did after the ceremony, but a common polite formula of the time expressing gratitude, which is used here to introduce the subsequent transition formula.⁶³ Only towards the end of the eighth century BC do the 'background events' begin to be wound up by an 'follow-up formula' describing the reception of the manuscript roll after the ceremony, such as in the above case of the Song *gui* inscription (part C).⁶⁴ The inclusion of this formula may signal a growing focus on the materiality of the command document in the aristocratic communities.

Switching the media: the transfer from a manuscript to an inscription

The finalized draft of the inscription (i.e. a 'master-copy') was not always the final stage in manuscript production related to the casting of an inscription.⁶⁵ When the master-copy reached the bronze workshop, an auxiliary model manuscript was produced by the workshop specialists that was used directly in the inscription process by the craftsmen. Ancient Chinese bronze vessels were cast from ceramic moulds using the piece-mould technique,⁶⁶ and the inscriptions thus had to be prepared on the core or outer moulds of the casting assembly. For the sake of convenience, the inscription could be also first prepared on a separate clay slab (so-called 'inscription block') which was then inserted into the core (or outer mould; Fig. 6: 4–5).

The process of creating an inscription on the inscription block is visualized in Fig. 6.⁶⁷ Copying from the model manuscript, a craftsman engraved the sketch of the text into the inscription block (Fig. 6: 2) in the desired size and layout, a process sometimes aided by incising grid lines to ensure the even spacing between the individual graphs and columns. Upon engraving, the sketched inscription was proofread, and necessary corrections were made. Subsequently, the strokes of individual graphs were modelled from clay over the

⁶³ Shi Anrui (2017).

⁶⁴ These are precious as they document the reception of the manuscript. In these cases, the narrative sequence contains an actual record of the kowtow, and the polite formula *bai shou qi shou* is thus not repeated again. Apart from the Song vessels, inscriptions with this feature include the Dapifer Shan *ding* 膳夫山鼎 (JC 02825), and the 42nd and 43rd year Qiu *ding* (NA 745–55). Two more inscriptions contain a similar description, though not of manuscripts but award items; see the Roll Maker Wu *he* 作冊吳盃 (Wu Zhenfeng 2012: no. 14797) and the Lord Su of Jin *zhong* 晉侯蘇鐘 (NA 879).

⁶⁵ Škrabal (2019).

⁶⁶ See Bagley (1990); Shaughnessy (1991: 35–43).

⁶⁷ This section follows a new interpretation put forth in the last two decades; for details, see Nickel (2006: 36–7); Zhang Changping (2012); Škrabal (2019); for a detailed overview in English, see Škrabal (2021).

grooves of the sketched inscription (Fig. 6: 3), such that the clay strokes were anchored in these grooves and yet they protruded in relief over the surface of the inscription block.⁶⁸ Note that in this process the graphs are both sketched and modelled in mirror writing. It is likely that the model manuscript, too, was written in mirror writing to facilitate the transfer between the media.

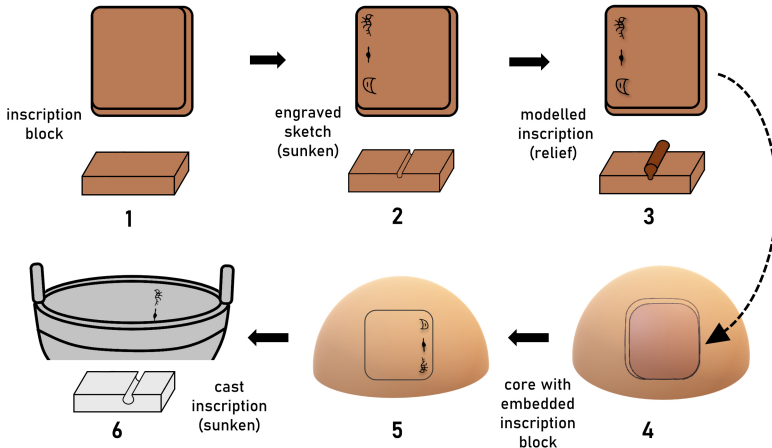


Fig. 6: Basic steps in the production of a Western Zhou bronze inscription, with a cross section view: Clay slab (inscription block) prepared (1); the sketch of the inscription engraved onto the block in mirror-writing (2); graphs modelled from clay put over the sketch (3); cavity gouged out of the core to accommodate the inscription block (4); inscription block embedded in the core upside down (5); moulds fired, piece-mould assembly formed, and molten bronze cast, producing a bronze object with a sunken inscription (6).

The goal of such a strenuous process was to create a negative mould with relief text, which upon casting would produce a positive sunken text inside a bronze vessel (or on the surface of a bronze bell, Fig. 6: 6). Given the thin strokes and the location inside vessels that would be filled with food and subsequently cleaned, the sunken inscription was more durable than one in relief where the strokes could easily rub or break away. Upon casting and solidifying, the mould was broken and the vessel—including the inscribed area—was cleaned and polished.

When the donor wished to replicate the same text on several vessels, this procedure had to be repeated each time.⁶⁹ Song, for example, had the same text inscribed on at least

⁶⁸ This was most likely achieved by tube lining (slip trailing); on this technique, see Nickel (2006).

⁶⁹ Mechanically reproduced inscriptions began to appear only in the late eighth century BC (Sakikawa 2017), but

four tureens and their lids, three cauldrons (*ding* 鼎), two wine jars (*hu* 壺) and their lids, and one basin (*pan* 盤).⁷⁰ Comparison of handwriting suggests that these inscriptions were produced by at least seven craftsmen;⁷¹ the various outcomes can be viewed in Figs. 11–21:

In each of these sixteen instances, the inscription mould was prepared anew, reproducing the same text but with differences in layout and even minor editorial touches. The most conspicuous of these occur in the inscriptions cast on cauldrons and jars. In comparison to the text cast on tureens, these inscriptions add the words ‘twenty households’ (*er shi jia* 廿家) in the royal command after the phrase ‘take office in charge of merchants in Chengzhou’ (*guan si Chengzhou gu* 官司成周賈, see part B of the translation above), thereby specifying the scope of Song’s tasks; furthermore, they omit the words ‘eternally’ (*yong* 永) and ‘without limits’ (*wu jiang* 無疆) from the inscriptions’ statement of purpose (see part F, compare rubbings in Figs. 7–10). The basin inscription also includes the addition of ‘twenty households’ but does not omit the three words ‘eternally’ and ‘without limits’. Based on these slight differences, we can glean some insights into how the text was transferred from the master-copy onto the bronze vessels.

The layout of the basin inscription⁷² offers an important clue here. Despite the addition of two graphs 廿家 for ‘twenty households’ in the sixth column, the *mise-en-page* of the remaining part of the inscription is identical to that of the shorter tureen inscriptions, with the exception of the sixth, seventh, and eighth column. This suggests that the same model manuscript was used for laying out both the tureen and the basin inscriptions, and that the addition in the basin inscription was carried out *ex post*, perhaps even

regarding ritual vessels, this practice never superseded manual reproduction. Reusable bipartite stone and metal moulds were developed during the second half of the first millennium BC for cast coinage (Jiang Baolian 2004), and by the second century BC even ceramic moulds were used repeatedly for casting of inscribed bronze mirrors (Yang Yong and Bai Yunxiang 2020: 110–11), but no instance of applying reusable moulds to reproduce inscriptions on ancient ritual bronzes has hitherto been reported.

⁷⁰ One cauldron (JC 02828) and one jar (JC 09731) are in the collection of the National Palace Museum (Taipei); the Shanghai Museum houses one cauldron (JC 02829) and one tureen lid (JC 04338). One cauldron (JC 02827) and one lidless tureen (JC 04335) are stored in the Palace Museum (Beijing). The Shandong Museum (Jinan) and the Yale University Art Gallery (New Haven) possess one lidded tureen each (JC 04334+04339 and JC 04333, respectively; note that some compendia mistakenly locate the Shandong lid in the Shanghai Museum). One more lid is in the Kurokawa Institute of Ancient Cultures in Nishinomiya (JC 04336), and one lidless jar is in the collection of the National Museum of China in Beijing (NA 1962). Moreover, there are rubbings of one more tureen inscription that does not match any of the extant vessels (JC 04337) and of one jar lid (JC 09732). The present location of the basin is also unknown, and only a rubbing of its inscription survives (see Wu Zhenfeng 2012: no. 14540). For an up-to-date overview of the location of Song vessels, see Zhang Changshou and Wen Guang (2009). One more lidded tureen (JC 04332) is in the possession of the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art (Kansas City), but its authenticity remains uncertain, see Lai Guolong (2008: 68).

⁷¹ The craftsman who inscribed the Yale tureen and its lid was the busiest among them all—the Palace Museum and Shandong Museum tureens and the Kurokawa Institute lid were also inscribed by him. For a study on individual hands in Western Zhou bronze inscriptions, see Li Feng (1997).

⁷² Wu Zhenfeng (2012: no. 14540).

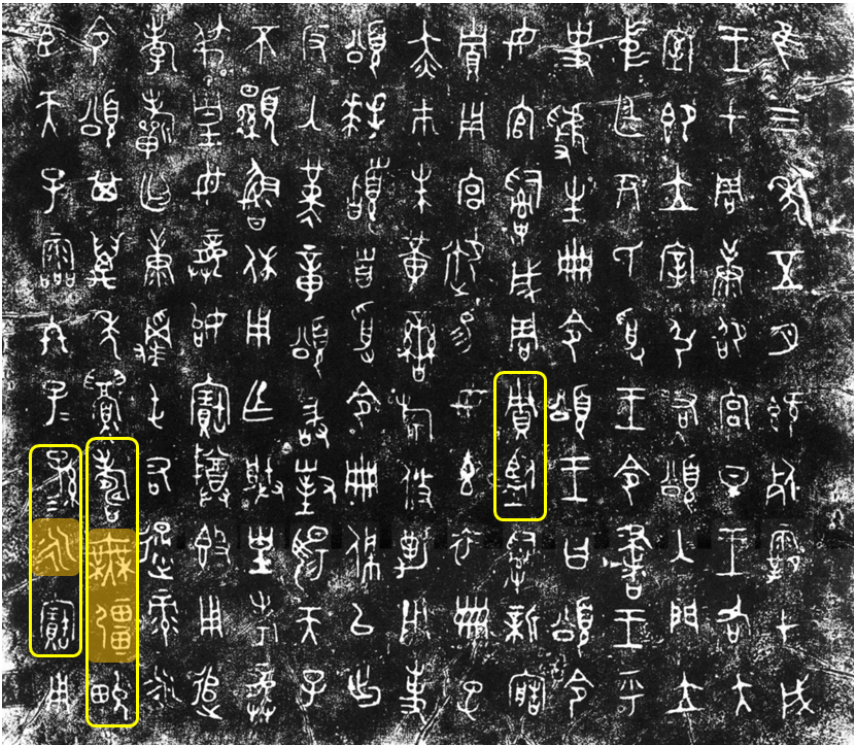


Fig. 7: Rubbing of the inscription on Song's tureen, discussed passages highlighted.

after the initial sketch had been engraved in the inscription block (this would necessitate deleting and rewriting the text of the three columns mentioned). To accommodate the two additional graphs, the basin inscription crowded together 11 graphs in the seventh column and omitted the graph *shi* 事 'service' from the phrase *yong shi* 用事 'Use them in [your] service!' in the neighbouring eighth column. The words 'twenty households' (*er shi jia*) were then supplemented in the model manuscript. Curiously, however, three graphs were in turn deleted from the manuscript, arguably to preserve the neat layout with each column equally long. The disparity in the number of added and deleted graphs is due to the use of a single graph, the common ligature 廿, to write two words, *er shi* ('twenty').⁷³ Thus, three words were deleted from the manuscript to vacate space for three words, without realizing that the latter can be written with only two and not three graphs. Apparently, this editorial decision was made purely at an aural level, with-

⁷³ This confirms that by the early eighth century BC, the graph 廿 but also the similar graphs 卅 for 'thirty' and 卌 for 'forty' are indeed compound graphs (*hewen* 合文) and are to be read as two words, *pace* Shang Chengzuo (2004).

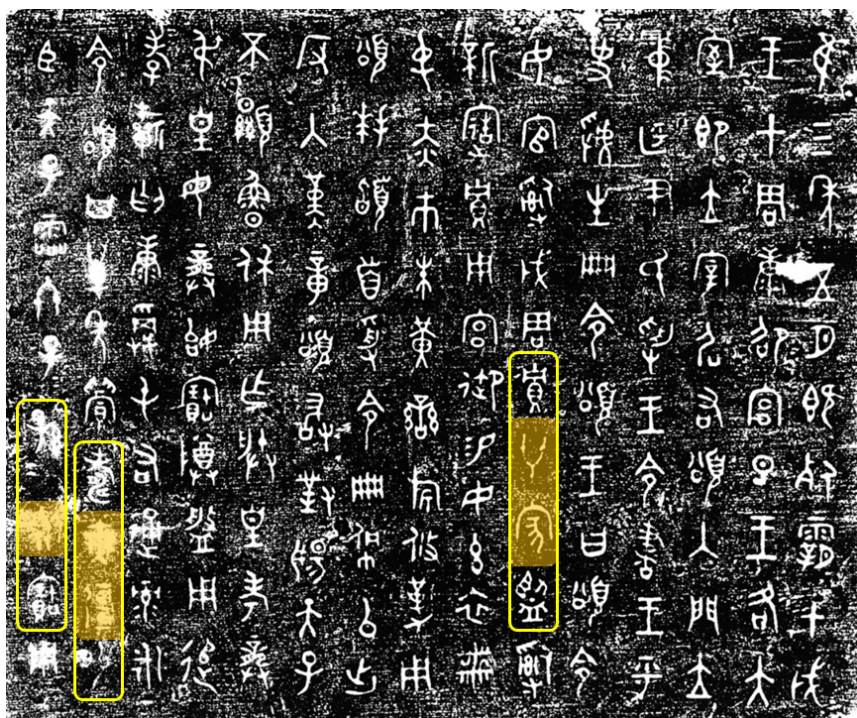


Fig. 8: Rubbing of the inscription on Song's basin, discussed passages highlighted.

out anticipating the use of the ligature for 'twenty'. After these changes were made in the model manuscript, the production process moved on to the cauldron and jar inscriptions. As a result, the cauldron and jar inscriptions have 149 characters each as compared to the 150 graphs of the tureen inscriptions. In all likelihood, the original master-copy for Song's inscriptions contained both the added and deleted graphs (i.e. 152 graphs in total), but also a request to align them in an orderly, *stoichedon*-style fashion. Instead of ligating or crowding together any two graphs, the craftsmen tried to resolve this task by omission, at first by leaving out words for 'twenty households', a solution reconsidered at a later stage when three graphs from a closing formula were dropped instead. The complexity in planning, organization, and execution of the inscription process thus left permanent imprints in the text and visual qualities of Song's inscriptions.



Fig. 9: Rubbing of the inscription on Song's cauldron, discussed passages highlighted.

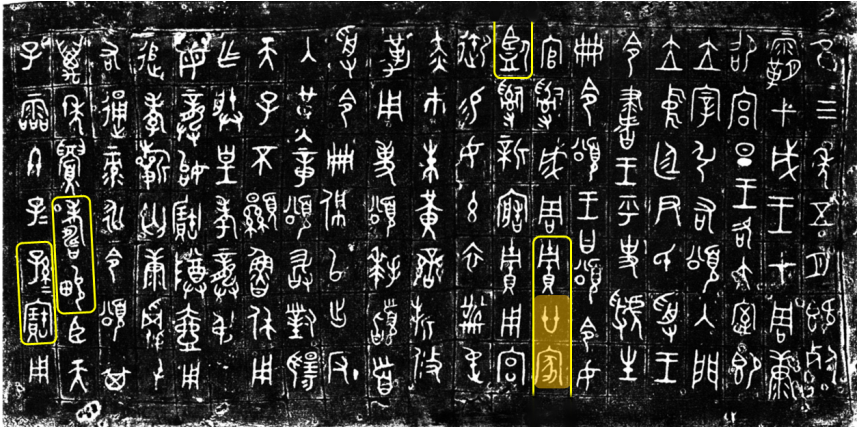


Fig. 10: Rubbing of the inscription on Song's jar, discussed passages highlighted.

Entering the shrine: inscribed bronzes and their audience(s)

The inscriptions were not meant to supersede the function of the command documents. However, as they were cast on objects which had their own specific function, they offered new venues for the presentation of the documents' content: the inscribed vessels or bells entered the communal setting of ancestral sacrifices and related feasts.



Fig. 11: Song ding, collection of the Shanghai Museum. © Shanghai Museum. Reproduced with permission.

After its one-time use in the ritual performance as the script for a declarative speech act, the original of the command document rested in the royal archive; similar to this was the destiny of the appointee's copy, which was probably stored in some kind of lineage repository.⁷⁴ We have no evidence these manuscripts were used during the sacrifices. However, ancestral sacrifices were the *raison d'être* of the ritual bronzes, and they represent the primary context in which the function of the inscriptions should be considered.

⁷⁴ Von Falkenhausen (1993: 162–3; 2006b: 254, 271).



Fig. 12: Song *ding*, collection of the Palace Museum, Beijing. Photograph © Zhao Shan 趙山, provided by the Palace Museum. Reproduced with permission.



Fig. 13: Song *ding*, collection of the National Palace Museum, Taipei. Public domain.

Given the fact that the sacrificial food rendered the inscriptions cast inside the vessels partially or completely invisible during the sacrifices, some scholars believe that the inscriptions were primarily (or even exclusively) aimed at the ancestral spirits. But while the spirits qualified as members of the inscriptions' audience, so certainly did the living, for the sacrifices were not only religious events, but also social events *par excellence*. This was the place where the clansmen reaffirmed their bonds, the lineage's collective identity was cultivated, and inter-lineage alliances were formed and cemented.⁷⁵

It is perhaps useful to keep in mind that for most of their above-ground lifetime in antiquity, that is, prior to being buried as grave goods, the bronze objects were not filled with sacrificial food; they were probably aligned or stored in the ancestral temple. According to *Etiquette and Rites* (*Yi li* 儀禮), a fourth-century BC text that contains the most detailed description of the sacrificial ritual, the preparations began three days before the actual sacrifice and involved displaying and handling of ritual vessels by the host of the sacrifice and his kinsmen, as well as by their guests. Following the sacrifice proper, the living

⁷⁵ Von Falkenhausen (1993: 150), Luo Tai (2006: 344–5); for a comprehensive treatment of Ancient Chinese ancestral sacrifice, see Liu Yuan (2007); for further insightful studies, see Kern (2000, 2009a); Cook (2005); Puett (2005); Sterckx (2011: 83–166).



Fig. 14: The inscription inside the Song *ding* from the collection of the National Palace Museum, Taipei. Public domain.

feasted from the vessels.⁷⁶ Moreover, inscriptions were cast not only on the insides of the vessels but also on their lids, as was the case with Song's vessels. Taken off the vessels, lids would render an inscribed text visible even when the vessels were loaded with offerings.

As symbols of power and wealth, the inscribed bronzes might also have been viewed by visitors at other times rather than exclusively during sacrificial events. The texts transposed from command documents to bronzes now contributed to the elevation of the social status of their donors during regular ritual and social gatherings. Embedded in the frame of conventional epigraphic style, they supported their donors' self-fashioning claims of loyalty and filial piety; owing to their luxurious media, these texts gained a new, superior material quality that visually paralleled the achievements mentioned in the inscriptions. They now constituted integral parts of the visual landscape of the ancestral temple and ritual feasts.⁷⁷ By Song's lifetime, the scale of these gatherings saw a

⁷⁶ Ruan Yuan (1980: 1178–1218); for a translation, see Steele (1917: 127–214).

⁷⁷ On the display qualities of bronze inscriptions, see Venture (2002: 276–94). On the variety of settings in which inscribed vessels were used, see Li Feng (2011: 293–300).



Fig. 15: Song *gui*, collection of the Palace Museum, Beijing. Photograph © Hu Chui 胡錘, provided by the Palace Museum. Reproduced with permission.

notable growth compared to the previous centuries;⁷⁸ the reproduction of the same text on several vessels thus ensured that the inscriptions' message would reach as many in the audience as possible.

Cast in bronze, the inscriptions were imbued with the potential to endure for generations and thus to serve as permanent showcases of their donor's achievements. The fact that many of these objects survived to the present day is the best corroboration. While most of the bronzes were typically buried with their donors, several Western Zhou hoards reveal the habit of storing some of the inscribed vessels cast by former lineage members for several generations, such as the famous hoards in Zhuangbai 莊白 or Qiangjia 強家 in Fufeng County, Shaanxi. The same, however, might also have applied to manuscripts; those of imminent importance to a lineage might have been stored, copied, and recopied over time.⁷⁹

⁷⁸ Rawson (1989: 89–91). For more details on these developments, see Rawson (1999: 433–40); von Falkenhausen (1999; 2006a: 29–73).

⁷⁹ See Kern (2007: 166). As witnessed by several encomia in the *Book of Songs* (*Shi jing* 詩經), the composition (and subsequent ritual performance) of songs commemorating an important appointment or command was also quite



Fig. 16: The lid of the Song *gui*, collection of the Shanghai Museum. © Shanghai Museum. Reproduced with permission.

Conclusion: the transposition and reception of manuscripts in Western Zhou China

The practice of drafting the command documents at the Western Zhou royal court was more or less uniform. The practice of using them to inform epigraphic production was not.

Scripts for royal speeches were first drafted in duplicate by royal scribes, performed on behalf of the king by his representatives and then distributed to their target audience and stored in both royal and private repositories. The political power made conscious and programmatic use of the manuscripts in exercising its authority and disseminating its ideology. However, there is no evidence to inform us whether it regarded the

a reliable strategy to preserve the memory of royal grace. For some of these songs, which include titles such as ‘Grandly lofty’ (*Song gao* 崧高), ‘Multitudes of the People’ (*Zheng min* 烝民), ‘The Greatness of Han’ (*Han yi* 韓奕), ‘The Yangtze and the Han [rivers]’ (*Jiang Han* 江漢), ‘Permanent Martial Spirit’ (*Chang wu* 常武) or ‘Closed Palace’ (*Bi gong* 闕宮), see Qi Sihe (1947: 215–22); Shim (2012); Shaughnessy (2015: 360–5). These may have been considered even more impressive than a mere reproduction of the run-of-the-mill administrative language of the command document.



Fig. 17: Song hu, collection of the National Palace Museum, Taipei. Public domain.



Fig. 18: Song hu and its inscribed lid, collection of the National Palace Museum, Taipei. © National Palace Museum. Reproduced with permission.



Fig. 19: The inscription inside the Song *hu*, collection of the National Museum of China, Beijing. © National Museum of China. Reproduced with permission.

manuscripts it produced as having a purely instrumental role in that dissemination; at no point do the royal documents accentuate their materiality, nor do they call on the existence or authority of other manuscripts.

Viewed through the prism of the transposition of the command documents onto epigraphic media, the situation was more complex regarding the reception of these manuscripts. On the one hand, there was a shared approach to the command document as a textual source. Nearly all the composers embedded the manuscript text into the inscription in a truncated fashion, merely treating it as a source of semantic information feeding the narrative of the background event. They abbreviated it, excerpted from it, shifted its narrative perspective, but hardly ever quoted it in full.

On the other hand, the practices of representing how command documents were used during the ceremony varied significantly, which seems to bespeak differing attitudes to the authority of the administrative document among the composers of bronze inscriptions. Some composers transformed the command text into a narrative which does not imply the existence of any kind of administrative document at all. Other composers



Fig. 20: The inscription inside the Song *hu*, collection of the National Palace Museum, Taipei. © National Palace Museum. Reproduced with permission.

reshaped the event notation to create an impression of the king's personal address, and some—such as Song and his scribes—harnessed the authority of the command document by accentuating the use of the manuscript during the ceremony. For these composers it was important to show that the royal command was a product of the administrative machinery rather than His Majesty's caprice; to show that it existed in a written form, verifiable against physical evidence; and from the end of the ninth century BC, to show that they were in possession of such a document themselves.⁸⁰ This growing focus on the materiality of the royal command indicates that aristocratic communities emerged that esteemed the authority of written texts, valued royal manuscripts as sources of their social prestige and presumed that such an attitude was shared by others as well. As Erwin Panofsky would put it, most of the composers treated their copies of command documents as 'documents' (sources of information), but there were also those who started to regard them as 'monuments' (*objects of urgent meaning for communities*).⁸¹

⁸⁰ We may speculate that since the inscriptions were drafted by trained scribes, it was the scribal communities that introduced this kind of representation of the authority of a written text to the sphere of epigraphy. However, the donors would still have an opportunity to fine-tune the wording of an inscription according to their taste.

⁸¹ Panofsky (1955: 9–10).



Fig. 21: The inscription on the lid of the Song *hu*, collection of the National Palace Museum, Taipei. © National Palace Museum, reproduced with permission.

Indeed, command documents represented materialized testimonies to the achievements of the donors (and often those of their ancestors) being acknowledged by the king or the government representatives. As far as we are aware, the appointment ceremony was one of the most prestigious political ceremonies of the time. It was thus a matter of social cachet to exhibit the encounters that one's own lineage had with it. The insignia of power conferred on the appointee did not become the permanent possession of his lineage,⁸² and the inscribed bronzes commemorating the ceremony—if not buried with their owners—could not fully reproduce all the appointments of the lineage's members. What stayed with the living were the memories, seconded by the documents. In a way, the political success of a lineage was indicated by the amount of command documents stored in its repository. It is thus possible that manuscripts of this type were valued as sources of prestige for the individuals and in turn for the whole lineage; they constituted resources for the construction and maintenance of a lineage's identity and public image, resources that became increasingly important in Middle to Late Western Zhou society where political turmoil and the growth of the administrative body reshaped the tradi-

⁸² Kane (1982: 19).

tional pathways to power. Such a sociopolitical environment may have motivated aristocratic lineages to reproduce, reconstruct, or even retrospectively create documents related to the foundational moments in their past.⁸³

Nevertheless, even those inscriptions that emphasize the use of manuscripts still bring the focus of their use back to a particular moment in the appointment ceremony: that of the oral performance of the manuscript text. For these inscriptions, it was the reading of the manuscript's text in a ceremonial setting that created the authority of the manuscript, and not the other way around. Thus, they never quote the document in the way the *Zuo Tradition* passages did above, that is, 'the command document reads' **ling shu yue* 令書曰 or 'the roll reads' **ce yue* 冊曰; there is always an agent reading the command out. For these inscriptions, the command documents represent the script for an authoritative oral performance, and not authoritative writing. Keeping in line with epigraphic conventions, these inscriptions commemorate and celebrate a document-related *event* rather than the actual *document* itself.

Only a handful of inscriptions treat the command documents somewhat differently. Among these, the inscription cast inside the bronze cauldron of the Duke of Mao in the late ninth century BC (Mao Gong *ding* 毛公鼎, JC 02841, see Figs. 22, 23) maintains its primacy as the longest of all known Western Zhou bronze inscriptions.⁸⁴ Opening directly with the words 'The King approved of saying' (*wang ruo yue*), it replicates the form of the source manuscript. Fourteen times longer than that of the Song *gui*, and covering most of the common themes, the quotation of the command document in the Mao Gong *ding* inscription appears to have reproduced the original manuscript in its entirety.

As in other inscriptions, it was the royal command that was being commemorated here. But unlike the other inscriptions, the one cast inside the cauldron of the Duke of Mao does not commemorate the command by taking its audience back to the appointment ceremony. Rather, it presents them with a lavish, labour-intensive reproduction of the command document stripped of the context in which it was performed. This unique case of transposing a complete manuscript onto an epigraphic medium further highlights the increasing attention to the materiality of royal commands in the late ninth and early eighth century BC. In the course of two centuries when written documents were being issued to accompany spoken royal commands or awards, the commands and the documents became increasingly intertwined, and the command documents gradually became

⁸³ Without wishing to swerve into the complex topic, this may indeed apply to the creation, edition and transmission of the thematically related texts found in some of the Warring States period manuscripts or in the received anthology *Book of Documents*. For recent studies on such texts, see Shaughnessy (2020) and Meyer (2021: 187–200). On the *Book of Documents* in general, see Kern (2009a: 182–88), Kern and Meyer (2017), and Meyer (2021).

⁸⁴ For a translation, see Dobson (1962: 218–20); Cook (2016; 2017: 127–30).



Fig. 22: The Duke of Mao *ding*, National Palace Museum, Taipei. Public domain.



Fig. 23: Inscription on the Duke of Mao *ding*, National Palace Museum, Taipei. Public domain.

emblematic tokens of the royal command itself.⁸⁵

The appointment ceremonies were conducive to this trend, but the occasion that prompted this development must particularly have been when the command documents were delivered to distant regions, military encampments or even battlefields across the kingdom by royal envoys and read out in the king's absence. The song *Chu Ju* 出車 ('Chariots on the Campaign'), which was probably composed between the late ninth and the mid-eighth century BC, seems to represent the first instance where a royal command is explicitly referred to in terms of its material manifestation rather than its oral performance:

昔我往矣，	When we were marching at first,
黍稷方華；	the millets had just begun to flower;
今我來思，	now that we are returning,
雨雪載塗。	the snow falls, and the roads are all mire.
王事多難，	The King's affairs were in disarray,
不遑啟居；	[thus we] had no leisure to rest.
豈不懷歸，	Did we not long to return?
畏此簡書。	[But] we held this [bamboo]-strip document in awe. ⁸⁶

⁸⁵ In this context, two bronze plates deserve a mention that were allegedly unearthed together with a number of jade objects in 1807 in Jiayang County, Shandong. The plates were reportedly ca. 29.3cm high and 15cm wide and gilded on both sides; the outer side was ornamented with 'dragons amid clouds' (*yun chi* 雲螭), while the inner side was divided into columns by vertical bars in silver inlay, containing an inscription of roughly 150 characters highlighted in red, possibly by cinnabar. The inscription renders a part of the command of an unspecified king to a person called Ao 敖. The early scholars who studied this inscription identified the appointee with the Duke Wu of Lu 魯武公 (r. 824–816 BC) and dated it in the third year of the King Xuan (825 BC). In line with authentic inscriptions, the quotation from the command document is preceded by the introductory 'event notation' (type '2Aa' in the above classification) and followed by the polite 'transition formula' ('[I], Ao, am doing obeisance and bowing prostrate, and am taking the liberty to extoll in response the Son of Heaven's beneficent command') and a note 'Year 30', which was the last year of the Duke Zhen of Lu 魯真公 (r. 854–825 BC). Should this artefact be authentic, it would be the first known instance of the text of a command document not being reproduced on a sacrificial vessel but as an (abbreviated) luxurious metal edition in its own right. However, the plates have long been lost and their inscription is only reproduced as a modern-script edition in a local gazetteer from the late nineteenth century, see Zhang Wenhua et al. (2009: *juan* 1 folio 29a, *juan* 4 folios 2a–3a); for a study, see Wang Ning (2012). The description of the ornament as 'dragons amid clouds' (*yun chi* 雲螭) could be possibly linked to commonly seen Late Western Zhou ornaments such as *qiequwen*; however, the use of gilding, silver inlay, and cinnabar raises suspicion about the Western Zhou date of this piece. Nevertheless, without the original artefact at hand, it is impossible to determine whether this could be some kind of Eastern Zhou reproduction or indeed a later forgery.

⁸⁶ Ruan Yuan (1980: 416). Translation adapted from Legge (1991: 263–4). The military campaign against the Xianyun 獫狁 tribes commemorated in this song is usually dated to the end of the Western Zhou period; see Li Feng (2006: 344–5). However, Peng Yushang (2004) has shown that these campaigns must have continued after the year 771 BC as well. Peng's arguments can be corroborated by a reassessment of the date for the Guoji Zi Bai *pan* 號季子白盤 (JC 10173), which should date to 759 BC; see Yang Bo (2018) and Han Wei (2020). Note that the historiographical work *The Grand Scribe's Records* (*Shiji* 史記) written in the second century BC seems to place the creation of this song in the reign of King Xiang of Zhou 周襄王 (r. 651–619 BC); see Peng Yushang (2004: 10).

Manuscripts certainly continued to be appreciated by aristocrats in the Chunqiu period (770–476 BC), and the practices of selective preservation, creative transmission, and perhaps even the circulation of writing will have contributed to the development of the intellectual environment of the time. Paradoxically, the practice of transposing command documents disappears from Chinese epigraphy precisely at this time. Following the sacking of the Zhou royal domain in the Wei River valley and the subsequent relocation of the royal court eastwards to a site in the vicinity of present-day Luoyang in the first half of the eighth century BC,⁸⁷ the theme of appointment ceremonies and quotations from command documents by and large disappear from the epigraphic record. While this may partially be caused by the general scarcity of inscriptions in the present corpus coming from the territorially reduced Eastern Zhou royal domain, by the expected drop in the scale and frequency of the actual ceremony, and by the disengagement of the composers from traditional epigraphic conventions,⁸⁸ the actual reasons for abandoning this practice are still unknown. The production of command documents at the royal court continued well into the late pre-imperial period, however (the fourth to the third century BC), and it gradually turned into the ‘investiture’ ceremony (*ce feng* 冊封), which was maintained throughout imperial times until the fall of the Qing dynasty in 1911.⁸⁹

Annex

1Aa: Full template, direct speech marked with *wang ruo yue*

唯元年六月既望甲戌，王在杜厓，徂于大室，并伯入右師虎，即立中廷，北嚮，王呼內史吳曰冊令虎。“王若曰：‘虎，載先王既令乃祖考事，適官司左右戲繁荊。今余唯帥型先王令，令汝廢乃祖考適官司左右戲繁荊。敬夙夜，勿廢朕令！錫汝赤舄，用事。’”

It was the first year, sixth month, after the full moon, [day] *jiaxu* (11/60). The King was at Du station. [He] arrived at the Grand Hall. The Elder of Jing entered accompanying Master Hǔ. [They] assumed [position] standing in the middle of the courtyard, facing north. The King called out to Interior Secretary Wu, saying: ‘Command Hǔ by [reading

⁸⁷ For a recent study of this process, see Chen Minzhen and Pines (2018).

⁸⁸ See Mattos (1997) on the new epigraphic style emerging in this period. The new style was increasingly preoccupied with the donor’s virtues and favoured rhymed form, as in the Guoji Zi Bai *pan* inscription mentioned above.

⁸⁹ Although various kinds of administrative documents continued to be transposed onto stone stelae from the second century AD by local communities, unlike their Western Zhou predecessors, it seems the appointees in later periods no longer sought to eternalize their documents in luxurious media. However, this practice was taken up by the imperial court itself from the seventh century AD onwards at the latest; the court issued the investiture documents directly on high-end writing materials such as jade strips or silver or golden plates for the highest-ranking members of the aristocracy or for important diplomatic purposes. See Liu Zhiyan (2018) and Wang Biyang (2019) for some examples of such artefacts.

out] the roll!’ The King approved of saying: “Hü! In the past, the former king had already commanded your ancestors to serve, taking an office in principal charge of the left and right camps at Fan and Jing. Now I emulate the model of the former king’s command, [and I] command you to succeed your ancestors in taking office in principal charge of the left and right camps at Fan and Jing. Respect [this] day and night, do not disregard my command! [I] award you red slippers. Use them in [your] service.” (JC 04316).

1Ab: Full template, direct speech marked with *wang yue*

唯三年五月既死霸甲戌，王在周康昭宮，且，王徂大室，即位。宰引右頌入門，立中廷，尹氏授王令書，王呼史虢生冊令頌。“王曰：‘頌！令汝官司成周賈廿家，監司新造賈，用宮御。錫汝玄衣黼純、赤市、朱衡、鑾旂、鑿勒，用事！’”

It was the third year, fifth month, [the period] after the dying brightness (of the moon), [day] *jiaxu* (11/60). The King was in Zhou, in the palace [dedicated to Kings] Kang and Zhao. At dawn, the King arrived at the Grand Hall and assumed [his] position. Superintendent Yin accompanied Song, entering the gate and standing in the centre of the courtyard. Sir Yin passed the command document to the King. The King called out to the Secretary Guosheng to command Song by [reading out] the roll: ‘The King says: “Song! [I] command you to take office in charge of twenty households of merchants in Chengzhou, and to supervise as an overseer the newly arrived merchants, in order to supply the palace. [I] award you a black jacket with embroidered hem, a red apron, a scarlet girdle, a banner with jingles, [and] a bronze-studded bridle. Use them in [your] service!”’ (JC 02828). For another example, see JC 04276.

1Ac: Full template, direct speech marked with *yue*

唯正月初吉丁亥，王徂于成宮，并公入右室，王呼尹氏冊令咎曰：“賡乃祖考作冢司土于成周八師，錫汝秬鬯一卣、玄衮衣、赤市、幽衡、赤舄、鑿勒、鑾旂，用事。”

It was the first month, [the lunar phase of the] first auspiciousness, [day] *dinghai* (24/60). The King arrived at the palace [dedicated to King] Cheng. Duke of Jing entered accompanying Hū. The King called out to Sir Yin to command Hū by [reading out] the roll as follows: ‘Succeed your ancestors in serving as Grand Supervisor of Land in the Eight Armies of Chengzhou. [I] award you one bucket of fragrant [sacrificial] black-millet wine, a dark embroidered jacket, a red apron, a black girdle, red slippers, a bronze-studded bridle, a banner with jingles. Use them in [your] service.’ (JC 09728).

1Ad: Full template, unmarked direct speech

唯正月初吉丁卯，王在周康宮，徂大室，即位，益公入右申。中廷，王命尹冊命申：“賡乃祖考胥大祝，官司豐人眾九戲祝，錫汝赤市、縈衡、鑿旂，用事。”

It was the first month, [the lunar phase of the] first auspiciousness, [day] *dingmao* (4/60). The King was at Zhou in the palace [dedicated to King] Kang. [The King] arrived at the Grand Hall [and] assumed position. Duke of Yi entered accompanying Shen. [When they assumed position] in the middle of the courtyard, the King commanded Yin to command Shen by [reading out] the roll: ‘Succeed your ancestors in assisting the Great Invocator by taking office in charge of the invocators of the people in Feng together with [those of] the Nine Camps. [I] award you a red apron, a curled girdle, [and] a banner with jingles. Use them in [your] service!’ (JC 04267). Compare also JC 04319 and JC 04268.

1B: Full template, indirect and direct speech

唯王二月既生霸丁丑，王在周新宮，王徂大室，即位，士戍右殷，立中廷，北嚮，王呼內史音令殷，錫市、朱衡。“王若曰：‘殷！令汝賡乃祖考友司東鄙五邑。’”

It was the second month of the royal calendar, after the growing brightness [of the moon], [day] *dingchou* (14/60). The King was at Zhou in the New Palace. The King arrived at the Grand Hall and assumed position. Officer Shu accompanied Yin, [and they] stood in the middle of the courtyard, facing north. The King called out to Interior Secretary Yin to command Yin, awarding him an apron and a scarlet girdle. ‘The King approved of saying: “Yin! [I] command you to succeed your ancestors and clansmen in charge of the Five Settlements in the eastern periphery.”’ (NA 840). Compare also JC 9899 and NA 744.

1C: Full template, indirect speech

唯三月初吉乙卯，王在周，徂大室。咸，井叔入右趨，王呼內史冊令趨賡厥祖考服，錫趨織衣、緝市、絢衡、旂。

It was the third month, [the lunar phase of the] first auspiciousness, [day] *yimao* (52/60), the King was at Zhou. [The King] arrived at the Grand Hall. When this concluded, the Middleborn of Jing entered accompanying Chi. The King called out to the Interior Secretary to command Chi by [reading out] the roll to continue his ancestors’ service, awarding Chi a dyed-silk jacket, a black apron, a hemp-beige girdle, [and] a banner. (JC 06516). See also JC 04196 and Wu Zhenfeng (2012: nos. 05258 and 05295).

2Aa: Reworked template, direct speech marked with *wang ruo yue*

唯九月初吉丁亥，王徂大室，冊命呂。“王若曰：‘呂，賡乃考總司鄭師氏，錫汝玄衣黼純，緇市綱衡、戈珣戩駟秘彤沙、旂鑿，用事。’”

It was the ninth month, [the lunar phase of the] first auspiciousness, [day] *dinghai* (24/60). The King arrived at the Grand Hall to command Lü by [reading out] the roll. ‘The King approved of saying: “Lü! Succeed your father to be in general charge of Masters in Zheng. [I] award you a dark jacket with embroidered hems, a black apron with a hemp-beige girdle, a halberd with an ornamented blade, a wound handle and a red ribbon, and a banner with jingles. Use them in [your] service!”’ (Wu Zhenfeng 2012: 2012: no. 05257).

2Ab: Reworked template, direct speech marked with *wang yue*

唯正月初吉甲寅，備仲入右呂服余，王曰：“服余，令汝賡乃祖考事，胥備仲，司六師服，錫汝赤市、幽衡、鑿勒、旂。”

It was the second month of the official calendar, [the lunar phase of the] first auspiciousness, [day] *jiayin* (51/60). The Secondborn of Bei entered accompanying Fuyu of Lü. The King said: ‘Fuyu! [I] command you to succeed your ancestors’ service in assisting the Secondborn of Bei by being in charge of the servicemen of the Six Armies. [I] award you a red apron, a dark black girdle, a bronze-studded bridle [and] a banner.’ (JC 10169). See also JC 04255. In some cases, the background event shrinks to a mere date notation: JC 04215, JC 04216.

2Ac: Reworked template, direct speech marked with *yue*

唯四月初吉，王在夷宮，宰夷父右害立，王冊命害曰：“錫汝鞶朱衡、玄衣黼純、旂、鑿勒，錫戈珣戩彤沙，用纘乃祖考事，官司夷僕、小射、底魚。”

It was the fourth month, [the lunar phase of the] first auspiciousness, the King was at the palace [dedicated to the King] Yi. Superintendent Yifu accompanied Hai to stand [in the middle of the courtyard]. The King commanded Hai by [reading out] the roll as follows: ‘[I] award you a ... scarlet girdle, a dark jacket with embroidered hems, a banner, [and] a bronze-studded bridle. [I] award [you] a halberd with an ornamented blade, [and] a red ribbon. Use them to continue your ancestors’ service by taking office in charge of the

barbarian servants, minor archers, and fish suppliers.’ (JC 04258).

2Ad: Reworked template, unmarked direct speech

唯十又二月初吉丁丑，王在宗周，徂于大廟，榮伯右同，立中廷，北嚮，王命同：“佐佑虞大父，司場、林、虞、牧，自澆東至于河，厥逆至于玄水，世孫孫子子佐佑虞大父，毋汝有闕！”

It was the twelfth month, [the lunar phase of the] first auspiciousness, [day] *dingchou* (14/60), the King was at Zongzhou. [The King] arrived at the Grand Temple. The Elder of Rong accompanied Tong, standing in the middle of the courtyard, facing north. The King commanded Tong: ‘Assist the Supervisor of Natural Resources Dafu by taking charge of the fallows, forests, [game and fish in] woods and lakes and pastures from the east of the Biao [river] to the [Yellow] River, and upstream all the way to the river Xuan. Generation after generation, for generations of descendants, assist the Supervisor of Natural Resources Dafu; you shall not idle!’ (JC 04270-71). See also JC 02786.

2B: Reworked template, indirect and direct speech

唯元年三月丙寅，王徂于大室，康公右郃咎，錫織衣、赤^①市，曰：“用嗣乃祖考事，作司土。”

It was the first year, third month, [day] *bingyin* (3/60). The King arrived at the Grand Hall. The Duke of Kang accompanied He Yuan, [who was] awarded a dyed-silk jacket, a red ... apron, [and who was commanded] as follows: “Use them to succeed the service of your ancestors and serve as the Supervisor of Land!” (JC 04197). See also NA 1915.

2C: Reworked template, indirect speech

唯三月既生霸乙卯，王在周，令免作司土，司鄭遺廩，眾虞、眾牧，錫織衣、鑿。

It was the third month, after the growing brightness [of the moon], [day] *yimao* (52/60), the King was at Zhou, [and he] commanded Mian to serve as the Supervisor of Land, to be in charge of granaries at the outskirts of Zheng, as well as of [game and fish in] woods and lakes as well as of the pastures, awarding [him] a dyed-silk jacket and jingles. (JC 04626). See also JC 02790, JC 02796.

3Aa: No template, direct speech marked with *wang ruo yue*

“王若曰：‘師克，丕顯文武，膺受大令，匍有四方，則繇唯乃先祖考有功于周邦，捍害王身，作爪牙。王曰：克，余唯經乃先祖考克齡臣先王，昔余既令汝，今余唯申就乃令，令汝廣乃祖考，總司左右虎臣。錫汝柅鬯一卣、赤市五衡、赤舄、邪幅、駒車、牽較、朱鞞、鞞、靳、虎兕熏裏、畫轉、畫輶、金甬、朱旂、馬四匹、鑿勒、素戔，敬夙夕，勿廢朕令。’”

“The King approved of saying: “Master Ke! Greatly illustrious [Kings] Wen and Wu received the great Mandate, [and] took possession of the four regions. Then indeed it was your former ancestors who had merits to the Zhou state(s), guarded the King and were his claws and teeth.” The King says: “Ke! I follow [the fact that] your former ancestors were capable of ... serving the former kings. In the past I have already commanded you, now I extend and continue your command, commanding you to succeed your ancestors to be in general charge of the Tiger Servitors of the left and the right. [I] award you one bucket of fragrant [sacrificial] black-millet wine, a red apron with five girdles, red slippers, leg wraps, a colt chariot, ... side-rails, scarlet hides, a bow case, reins, a tiger-skin canopy with light-red lining, ornamented yoke straps, ornamented axle straps, a bronze rattle, a scarlet banner, four horses, a bronze-studded bridle, [and] an unornamented axe. Be respectful day and night, do not disregard my command!” (JC 04467). See also JC 02841.

3Ab: No template, direct speech marked with *wang yue*

王曰：“采隻，命汝作司土，錫汝織衣、赤[⊙]市、鑾旂，用事。”

The King said: ‘Cai Zhi! [I] command you to serve as Supervisor of Land. [I] award you a dyed-silk jacket, a red ... apron, and a banner with jingles. Use them in [your] service!’ (Wu Zhenfeng 2012: nos. 05154–55). See also JC 04199.

3C: No template, indirect speech

This category is only hypothetical since it is difficult to assess whether the narrative in the inscription actually paraphrased that of the command document. The opening of the Mai zun inscription (JC 06015) may fall into this category:

王令辟邢侯出[⊙]，侯于邢。

The King commanded [our] master, the Lord of Xing, to go out of X and to rule in Xing.

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