

Han. On a macro-level, tomb libraries such as these provide a clear connection between the personal and professional life of the tomb occupant, the (local-) state's administrative practices, and the spread of literature across the country. As a nexus of various spheres of written culture, it is therefore an excellent site of comparison, both with other tomb libraries in early China but also with similar sites across the ancient world.

This high-quality volume heads an eagerly awaited series comprising the remaining materials from the tomb. Two more volumes are reportedly scheduled for publication in this year. This volume and the series as a whole is a welcome addition to the field and will undoubtedly propel our understanding of early Han society to new heights and stimulate numerous new avenues of research.

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Center for Unearthed Documents and Ancient Script at Fudan University: *Chutu wenxian yu guwenzi jiaocheng*

出土文獻與古文字教程 (A Course on Unearthed Documents and Ancient Scripts).

Shanghai: Zhongxi Book Company, 2024. ISBN 978 7 547 52134 2.

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Reviewing any book in a thousand words is hard; reviewing a three-volume publication totalling an imposing 958 pages is demanding. Fortunately, the quality of the book in question made the task easy. As the title indicates, this publication is a textbook for the study of Chinese unearthed documents (*chutu wenxian* 出土文獻), i.e. documents “emerging from earth” both in the past, such as during the Song dynasty (960–1127 CE) when ancient bronzes were discovered, as well as in the last decades from archaeological excavations. (The problem of loot is mentioned, but not discussed.)

These documents are of incredible value for the study of textual histories and language developments. Among the unearthed documents, there are those produced and buried before reforms aiming at standardizing the script were implemented under the first dynasty, the Qin 秦 (221–206 BCE). They therefore preserve orthographies that were for the most part neither seen nor used for two or more millennia, and their data is crucial to understand developments of Old Chinese. Ancient Chinese documents of this sort are being recovered in large numbers, requiring continuous updates of studies.

The first volume introduces the nature and scope of the research, which falls into “unearthed documents” and “ancient script” (*guwenzi* 古文字). It defines the terminology used in these fields, and the relationship between unearthed documents and transmitted ones. It overviews the origin of Chinese writing and Old Chinese reconstructions. Lastly, it gives a useful overview of tools for the study of ancient texts in the form of dictionaries, printed studies, and online databases.

Volumes 2 and 3 contain seven sections, each dedicated to a category of documents: Shang and Zhou oracle bone inscriptions and bronzes (sections 1 and 2); Warring

States, Qin, and Han silk and bamboo documents (3 and 4); Warring States, Qin, and Han bronze inscriptions (5); seals, seal inscriptions, and writings on pottery (6); and, finally, coins, lacquer and stone inscriptions. For the first six, the reader is introduced to discoveries and the significance of the findings (*gailun* 概論), after which selected readings (*xuan du* 選讀) follow, with images of objects and their inscriptions, a short explanation of the discovery, a transcription with annotations, and a short bibliography. Occasionally, further readings are also listed. The seventh section covers the materials in a more concise way.

There are many reasons to praise this book. It balances well a discussion of methods with examples that show their application. Particularly welcome are clarifications on the necessity of using the transmitted corpus to read the manuscripts. This is often seen as a desire to make the new evidence “match” the transmitted records, and while there have been examples of this in the scholarship, it is by and large an unfair criticism. We would not be able to read the unearthed material were it not for what has been understood about received texts over the centuries. As Liu Zhao points out, one has to rely on Han scholars’ annotations and commentaries, without, however, *forcing* Han interpretations of a graph or word onto earlier material (p. 3, and throughout the introduction).

A couple of minor notes concern the sections on Old Chinese reconstructions. After an explanation of the principles to do reconstructions, we are also offered examples of spellings that seem to defy the general principle according to which a word’s phonetic value can be used to spell another: same place of articulation for the initial, followed by the same final. For example, we are told that dental (*t-, *d-) and nasal initials (*n-) occasionally interact (pp. 71–2) in Warring States manuscripts. Here one wishes the authors had attempted an explanation, to avoid reinforcing the misunderstanding that anything can spell anything in Old Chinese. (A somewhat frustrated Chen Jian earlier states that “[t]he study of ancient Chinese script is neither mysterious nor entirely lacking criteria”, p. 4). I find annotations where each phoneme in reconstructions is visually marked helpful, as opposed to having all phonemes presented as a continuous unit, as is the case in this book.

A second notable aspect is the exclusion of any treatment of the covenants (*mengshu* 盟書), tablets recording contracts of alliance among noble houses around the seventh to fifth centuries BCE. I grant that because of their formulaic nature, covenant writings offer a more limited set of data to understand Old Chinese, and publications on this material have been slow. Yet they are unearthed documents that could have been introduced. As a reader and user, a more detailed index and table of contents to navigate more conveniently all the useful sections and sub-sections of this study would have been welcome.

But these shortcomings are minor considering what this book achieves. It is produced by scholars who first read, interpret, and make accessible to the world ancient Chinese documents (the list of contributors is at page 22). Each topic is discussed thoroughly and with additional examples taken from the most recent manuscript discoveries, broadening the scope of earlier studies such as *Readings of Shang and Zhou Ancient Script* 商周古文字讀本, edited by Liu Xiang 劉翔 et al. (Beijing, 1989). I hope it will invigorate the study of Early China in Anglophone academic circles, given the endless stream of exciting discoveries of ancient documents. Indeed, its translation in English, while demanding, would be a worthwhile endeavour. It would continue the work of promoting the value of unearthed documents for the study of ancient China, adding to earlier and still seminal studies such as Qiu Xigui’s *Chinese Writing* (Berkeley, CA, 2000) or Ed Shaughnessy’s *Sources of Western Zhou History* (Berkeley, CA, 1991).