

REASSESSING TEXTUAL SOURCES FOR PRE-IMPERIAL QIN HISTORY

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The revolutionary impact of archeological discoveries of the recent decades on the field of early China's studies is self-evident. The immense richness of material data, and especially the newly discovered paleographic sources from the Warring States (Zhanguo 戰國, 453–221 BCE), Qin (秦, 221–207 BCE) and Han (漢, 206 BCE–220 CE)¹ periods had not just added new pages to socioeconomic, administrative, cultural and religious history of the Chinese world, but also necessitated rethinking of many previous perceptions. The sheer size of the newly available data easily dwarfs that of textual sources which previously served as the sole source of knowledge on China's history before and after the imperial unification. Suffice it to look just at the publications of unearthed (or looted and subsequently purchased) texts during the recent year and a half: two volumes of the new Tsinghua (Qinghua) University Chu 楚 slips collection, two volumes of the Yuelu Academy 岳麓書院 Qin slips collection; the first (of the planned 6) volumes of the Qin slips from Liye 里耶, Hunan; the first two volumes of the Han slips from the Jianshui Jinguan 肩水金關, Gansu; this in addition to the ongoing publication of the Shanghai Museum collection of Chu slips, and the planned publication of Qin and Han slips from the Peking University collection. Scholars who were used to write textbooks of early China's

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¹ Hereafter all the dates are Before Common Era unless indicated otherwise.

history through retelling the *Historical Records* (*Shiji* 史記) accounts face the bewildering task of profoundly reconsidering their perspective.

How to reconcile the supposedly well-known textual evidence and the new material and paleographic data is one of the major challenges for the historians of early China. For some scholars, most notably in China, abandoning such a revered text as *Historical Records* appears to be almost a sacrilege; and these scholars naturally tend to interpret the new findings in the way that should corroborate or correct the textual evidence, leading to their accusations in “textual bias” (see [5; 18, especially pp. 24–26]). Alternatively, segments of Western academic community are attracted to what I dubbed elsewhere a “textoclasm”: dismissing the importance of the received texts altogether, either due to their perceived biases, or dubious authenticity or both². Naturally, a more convincing solution to the increasing divergence between the received texts and the newly available data would be that of “the third way”: trying to reconcile both types of sources neither by uncritically following nor by altogether dismissing textual evidence, but by revisiting the received texts and re-reading them in light of the new archeological and paleographic evidence. As I hope to demonstrate, a fresh look on centuries-old texts, free of biases of generations of interpreters, may provide a novel view of political and cultural dynamics of the pre-imperial and early imperial ages; a view which would support rather than be at odds with the extra-textual data.

Before I proceed toward my case study, a few general observations are in place. First, in reading early texts, most notably those with multiple layers of commentaries, such as the *Zuo zhuan* 左傳 or the *Historical Records* it is important to “liberate” the text from the habitual skewed interpretation of its content by later commentators. For instance, it is all too often taken for granted that Sima Qian detested the First Emperor (秦始皇, r. 221–210) and depicted him as a ruthless tyrant; yet a closer look at the *Historical Records* would present a much more nuanced and balanced picture³. Second, we should not automatically assume that every piece of (mis-) information presented in a historical text is reflective of an author’s biases or hidden agenda(s): quite often it can be traced to the source texts which were utilized by the author; and when the historian incorporated multiple sources, we can discover in his account – e.g. in the *Historical Records* – coexistence of

² I have encountered not a few “textoclastic” remarks at conferences, in anonymous reviews, and in oral communication, but its proponents still did not put their ideas in writing. Among recent publications, one that is closest to the “textoclastic” argumentation is an article by Bo Ærenlund Sørensen (see [30]); yet curiously, while proclaiming the superiority of the archaeological data over the texts, Sørensen makes no attempt to utilize archeological findings altogether.

³ For different approaches toward the historian’s portrait of the First Emperor, see, e.g., [3; 23, p. 141–176; 4].

distinct, and even contradictory perspectives on a single event or phenomenon (see [20]). Third, when we deal with a variety of pre-imperial and early imperial texts, especially those associated with the so-called “Masters” (諸子) lore, we should be careful about the dating of not just a specific text, but, whenever determinable, of portions and sections thereof. And, finally, it is recommendable – whenever possible – to treat the textual evidence much like we treat the archeological data: in its broadest context and through analyzing interrelations among various texts. As I hope to demonstrate below, this complex approach would yield much better results than confining oneself to an inevitably speculative discussion over a few disputed passages.

Having said this, I can proceed now toward the topic of this paper, namely analyzing the textual data on Qin’s cultural identity. I had explored this topic first a few years ago in a joint paper with my colleague and friend archeologist, Gideon Shelach, when we tried to utilize archeological, paleographic and textual data to trace development trajectory of the pre-imperial state of Qin. I later touched upon the topic in a few other publications (see [29; 18; 20]). Here I would like to expand upon my previous research and present the textual data in a systematic way. By analyzing views of Qin in pre-imperial texts, I hope to demonstrate that these texts present a complex picture of Qin’s cultural trajectory, which parallels rather than contradicts the non-textual data; and that beneath a variety of multiple biases and agendas of historians and thinkers, we can still obtain a largely reliable picture of Qin’s history.

Background: Qin as the cultural Other?

The *Historical Records*, our major (and for many scholars until recently almost an exclusive) source for the early Qin history, is also the major source for the allegation that Qin was a “barbarian” state, distinct from early China polities. For instance, in one of his major discussions of the rise of Qin, Sima Qian (司馬遷, c. 145–90) mentions:

今秦雜戎翟之俗，先暴戾，後仁義，位在藩臣而臚於郊祀，君子懼焉。

Qin’s customs were mixed with those of Rong and Di, it advanced violence and cruelty and downgraded benevolence and righteousness; being in a vassal position, it carried out suburban sacrifices [appropriate to the Zhou king]: the superior men were overawed by this. [48, 15, p. 685].

Elsewhere the historian depicts Qin's situation in the early 4th century BCE as follows:

周室微，諸侯力政，爭相併。秦僻在雍州，不與中國諸侯之會盟，夷翟遇之。

The house of Zhou declined, the overlords ruled by force, struggling to annex each other. Qin was remote in Yongzhou, it did not participate in the assemblies and alliances with the overlords of the Central States, who treated it like Yi and Di "barbarians" [48, 5, p. 202]⁴.

These remarks about Qin's alleged "barbarianism," its remoteness and miniscule role in the life of the Zhou 周 world recur in other chapters of the *Historical Records*; and as we shall see below they are echoed in several texts from the late Warring States period on. Yet Sima Qian also suggests that the success of Qin was based in part on its ability to acculturate itself to the Zhou culture. He tells of Lord Xiao (秦孝公, r. 361–338), whose reforms became the turning point in Qin's history, and who had succeeded precisely because he called upon the worthy ministers from the eastern, "normative" Zhou states; one of these guest ministers, Shang Yang (商鞅, d. 338), became the architect of reforms, which turned Qin into a super-power. Significantly, among Shang Yang's reforms Sima Qian mentions steps aimed at eliminating "the teachings of Rong and Di" and improving public morality. The civilizing impact of the alien advisors on Qin's originally coarse customs is mentioned also in the famous memorial against the expulsion of the foreigners, submitted by another great foreigner at Qin's service, Li Si 李斯 (d. 208) (see respectively [48, 68, p. 2234; 48, 87, p. 2544]). Qin's "acculturation" is intrinsically linked in the *Historical Records* with Qin's self-strengthening; both occurred in the wake of Lord Xiao's reforms.

Sima Qian established a convenient explanatory framework for Qin's cultural trajectory: a remote and "barbarian" polity, which is gradually – even if imperfectly – becomes acculturated to the high culture of the Zhou world, and resultantly is able to overcome its rivals. For later observers this trajectory could not but resemble similar processes of supposed "Sinification" of China's alien rulers⁵. It is not surprising then, that in the 20th century, with the increasing popularity of ethnicity as a major analytical tool for historians, Qin was proclaimed by several eminent scholars, such as Meng Wentong 蒙文通 and Derk Bodde, as essentially a non-Sinitic polity (see [46; 1, 2ff]). This view is occasionally echoed in

⁴ Yongzhou is one of the "Nine Provinces" (九州 *jiu zhou*) in the western part of the Yellow River basin, i.e. the Qin territory. For the "Nine Provinces," see [2].

⁵ For the popularity of the Sinification or Sincization theories in the 20th century studies, see [25, p. 2–4].

recent studies as well, even among those conducted by archeologists (see [41; 30, 14 ff]; for an archeological study that emphasizes Qin's otherness, see [37]). Nonetheless, it is clear now that if any, Qin cultural trajectory was diametrically opposite to that deduced from the *Historical Records*: namely, Qin started as a normative Zhou polity, and its otherness was in all likelihood a by-product, either intentional or unintentional, of the mid-fourth century BCE reforms, rather than vice versa.

Limitations of space prevent me from exploring here archeological and paleographic data on Qin's cultural trajectory; hence I shall simply briefly summarize the findings proposed by Lothar von Falkenhausen and Gideon Shelach (for material data), and by Martin Kern and myself, among others, for paleographic evidence (see [8; 29; 11; 18]). Putting aside an interesting topic of pre-state origins of the Qin ruling elite (for which see the discussion below of the recently published *Xi'nian* 繫年 text from the Qinghua collection), I shall focus on observable traits of the Qin polity itself. Here, von Falkenhausen's definition of Qin as a "regional phase" of the mainstream Zhou culture (see [8]) appears to me as particularly appropriate. Qin's mortuary habits, especially its strongly pronounced observation of sumptuary norms dictated by Zhou ritual regulations, the composition of its bronze assemblages, its written language and the formulae used in its bronze inscriptions, the layout of its capitals, its state religion—all these unmistakably place it within the parameters of the Zhou civilization. While there are certain local peculiarities which can be associated with the Qin culture – such as relatively higher percentage of the so-called flexed burials among Qin tombs, or the early proliferation of the *mingqi* 明器 ceramic imitations of the bronze ritual vessels – these are by no means exceptional to Qin, and cannot serve as a dividing line between it and other Zhou polities. Rather, in many respects – such as its script system, which "was the most faithful in carrying on the written tradition of the Zhou dynasty" [24, p. 78–89] or the shape of the bronze vessels, which continued the early Zhou tradition well into the early Warring States period – Qin was markedly more "conservative," or, probably, more proximate to the Western Zhou model than its eastern peers. This proximity to the Zhou is not very surprising by itself, particularly in light of the often overlooked fact that Qin inherited the militarily and ritually significant Western Zhou heartland, which might have encouraged its leaders to identify themselves as righteous heirs of the Zhou glorious tradition⁶.

This conservative pro-Zhou trend had been abruptly halted in the middle-fourth century BCE with the launch of profound social, economic and political reforms associated with Shang Yang. In the aftermath of these

⁶ See [8] for the latter point. For the importance of the Wei River 渭河 valley for the Zhou house, see [13], for the rise of Qin and its occupation of the Zhou heartland see [13, p. 262–276].

reforms, which, among other things, reshaped the social pyramid, replacing hereditary aristocracy with the new merit-based rank system, tremendous change occurred in Qin burials. Bronze vessel assemblages (or their *mingqi* imitations), the hallmark of the Zhou culture, had all but disappeared from the native Qin burials, being replaced with new sets of utilitarian vessels⁷. New forms of burials, most notably the so-called “catacomb” burials proliferated rapidly through the Qin cemeteries. These changes, which are easily observable archeologically, might have been caused either by new religious beliefs of the populace, or the increased visibility of the previously marginalized lower strata, or both⁸; but in any case they caused significant divergence between Qin mortuary culture and that of other Zhou states. Yet the distinctions were not just in mortuary practices: they were conceptualized in the Qin legal system, which distinguished between native population and the alien residents; and they might have brought about even conscious separation of the Qin populace from the “Xia” 夏 inhabitants of the Central Plains, although with regard to the latter point the evidence is still inconclusive (see [18, p. 23–35]). In general, it seems that the marked tendency in the late pre-imperial Qin was separation from rather than integration into the Zhou world, although other factors, such as significant immigration of elite members and commoners from the East might have softened centrifugal trends.

This ostensible contradiction between the archeologically observable data and the common reading of the *Historical Records* may well indicate the fundamental unreliability of the latter, inadvertently strengthening thereby the position of radical text-doubters. A more careful reading of the texts we have at our disposal – including the *Historical Records* (see [20]) – brings about a different picture, though. In what follows I shall demonstrate that the textual data, when properly analyzed, corroborates rather than contradicts the archeological findings outlined above.

Qin in the Zuo zhuan

The earliest references to Qin in transmitted textual sources appear in two canonical collections: the *Canon of Odes* (*Shi jing* 詩經) and the

⁷ A few Qin burials from the late Warring States period do yield ritual vessels, either bronze or ceramic imitations; but it is widely asserted that these come from the tomb of migrants from eastern states who settled in the Qin core area (see [45, p. 41]).

⁸ For the sudden proliferation of the catacomb burials in the aftermath of Shang Yang’s reforms, see [29, esp. p. 215, figure 10.3]; for religious explanation of this phenomenon, see [22]; this topic is also discussed by Lai Guolong (see [12]).

Venerated Documents (*Shang shu* 尚書). The first contains a selection of Qin poems, the majority of which are indistinguishable in their style and content from those of other early Zhou polities. Only one ode – the “Huangniao” 黃鳥 (“The Oriole,” Mao 131) – is of high historical interest, as it supposedly laments the burial of three Qin ministers selected to escort Lord Mu 秦穆公 (r. 659–621) to his grave. Lord Mu, whose exceptional position in early Qin history will be discussed below, is also attributed with the authorship of the last of the *Venerated Documents*: the “Qin Pledge” (*Qin shi* 秦誓). The preservation of Qin-related materials in both collections (especially the latter) may be a result of editorial efforts of the imperial Qin court erudites (*boshi* 博士), who are likely to have contributed to the final shaping of the *Odes* and the *Documents* corpus (see [11, p. 183–196]); but, whether this assertion is correct or not, it is noteworthy that neither collection appears to single out Qin as either a cultural alien, or, alternatively, a particularly important polity.

This view of Qin as an ordinary but relatively unimportant Zhou polity is characteristic of the *Zuo zhuan*, our major source for the history of the Springs-and-Autumns period (Chunqiu 春秋, 770–453 BCE). As is well known, the dating, authorship and nature of the *Zuo zhuan* are still subject to considerable controversy; in particular, most Western scholars (and considerable part of Chinese) tend to view it as a fourth-century BCE compilation, while others – including myself – tend to date its composition to the mid-fifth century BCE⁹. Yet these debates are less consequential for our discussion: insofar as the *Zuo zhuan* incorporates earlier historical records from several Springs-and-Autumns period polities – which, as I argued elsewhere, served as its future “building blocks” – then it does reflect to a considerable extent the realities of the period under discussion. As such it provides us with important correctives to the view of Qin that was shaped by the *Historical Records*.

This said, the reader of the *Zuo zhuan*, eager to learn more about the state of Qin, may well remain disappointed. Among major polities of the Springs-and-Autumns period, Qin appears less prominent in the eyes of the *Zuo zhuan* author. Its history is narrated only in the context of wars or alliances with two major superpowers, Jin 晉 and Chu 楚; evidently, no original Qin materials were utilized in the compilation of the *Zuo zhuan*. Moreover, the coverage of Qin history in the text is not just sketchy, but is extremely uneven: two thirds of the Qin-related entries cover the years 651–611 (i.e. just 16 pct. of the years covered by the *Zuo zhuan* and even a lesser percent of the entire narrative). These years largely coincide with the reign of Lord Mu, under whose aegis Qin’s power, and its impact on the life of the Zhou polities peaked; in the aftermath of Lord Mu’s reign

⁹ For a variety of views of the *Zuo zhuan*, see three complementary studies: [27; 17; 14].

we have only brief references to Qin's intermittent wars and alliances with Jin and Chu, but almost no information about Qin's domestic affairs or about its activities unrelated to two major powers. In the last third of the *Zuo zhuan* narrative, Qin all but disappears; whereas the *Springs-and-Autumns Annals* (*Chunqiu* 春秋) – the text upon which the *Zuo zhuan* comments – continue to record deaths and burials of Qin's rulers, the *Zuo zhuan* does not even comment upon these entries. This sketchy coverage creates an impression of Qin's marginality, although as I shall demonstrate below this is not necessarily the case.

Sketchy as it is, the *Zuo zhuan* narrative offers not a few important clues about Qin history. First, we learn of Qin's proximity to the Zhou house. Thus, in its first appearance on the *Zuo zhuan* pages, in the year 707, Qin acts as Zhou's ally, assisting the royal armies to restore order in a minor Rui 芮 polity. In 688, Qin participated, albeit indirectly, in restoring the power of pro-Zhou ruler in Wei 衛; in 649, Qin under Lord Mu assisted in repelling the Rong 戎 attack on the Zhou. Later, Lord Mu of Qin acted as a major ally of the ousted King Xiang of Zhou (周襄王, r. 651–619) during the 636–635 succession crisis (see [33, Huan 4.3–4, p. 101–102; Zhuang 6.1, p. 167–168; Xi 11.3, p. 338–339; Xi 24.5, p. 427–428; Xi 25.2, p. 431]). There are no indications whatsoever of tensions between Qin and Zhou, which may single out Qin as a more reliable royal partner than traditional Zhou allies, such as Zheng 鄭, Qi 齊 and Jin, each of which had its frictions with the Zhou, as narrated in the *Zuo zhuan*.

Second, the *Zuo zhuan* maintains a generally favorable attitude toward Qin, especially toward Lord Mu, who is the only ruler whose activities merit relatively detailed discussion. In the early stages of Lord Mu's relations with his Jin neighbors, he constantly holds high moral ground: he assists Jin during the famine there (although Jin does not reciprocate); he helps the fugitive Jin princes to restore order in their state; and when he captures the intemperate Lord Hui of Jin (晉惠公, r. 650–637) after the major battle in Han 韓, in 645, he releases him, albeit somewhat unwillingly, displaying thereby real chivalry (see [33, Xi 10.3, p. 334–336; Xi 13.4, p. 344–345; Xi 15.4, p. 351–366]). The *Zuo zhuan* hints that moral superiority of the Qin ruler might have played a decisive role in his victory in Han, encouraging the leading Jin minister, Qing Zheng (慶鄭, d. 645) to betray his ruler on the battlefield. The repeated laudations of Lord Mu's integrity, benevolence and prudence contrast sharply with the *Zuo zhuan* conspicuously negative depiction of contemporaneous Jin rulers, Lord Hui, and his son and heir, Lord Huai (晉懷公, r. 637–636). This obvious bias derives in all likelihood from the supporters of yet another Jin prince who was a protégé of Lord Mu, Chong'er 重耳, who in 636 ousted, with the support of Qin armies, his nephew, Lord Huai, and ascended the Jin throne as the illustrious Lord Wen (晉文公, r. 636–628). It seems that the Jin records, from which the

Zuo zhuan author learned about Lord Mu of Qin's activities, were prepared by admirers of Lord Wen, casting favorable light on Lord Mu due to the latter's crucial role in Chong'er's enthronement.

The narrative's attitude toward Lord Mu changes in the aftermath of Lord Wen of Jin's ascendancy, as relations between the erstwhile allies gradually cool. Lord Mu's avarice and hubris are blamed for the conflict with Jin, which brought about a series of military setbacks for the Qin armies¹⁰. Yet even amid these negative events, Lord Mu remains a source of admiration for the *Zuo zhuan* narrator: in particular, his ability to take responsibility for his mistakes rather than blaming his underlings is hailed. The *Zuo zhuan* even suggests that admiration of Lord Mu was shared by the composers of the *Chunqiu* annals, which refused to record the names of the heads of anti-Qin armies "because of Lord Mu and out of respect to Qin. It is called 'esteeming the virtuous'"¹¹. Later, the *Zuo zhuan* author himself (the "superior man" 君子)¹² praises Lord Mu for his ability to continuously employ worthy ministers despite earlier setbacks:

君子是以知秦穆之為君也，舉人之周也，與人之壹也；孟明之臣也，其不解也，能懼思也；子桑之忠也，其知人也，能舉善也。《詩》曰：「于以采芣？于沼、于沚。于以用之？公侯之事」，秦穆有焉。

Thus, the superior man knows that as a ruler Lord Mu of Qin was broad-minded in promoting men and was unswerving in entrusting responsibilities to them. Meng Ming as a minister was not remiss, and even in fear he was thoughtful. Zisang's loyalty was in recognizing the worth of others and being able to promote the good. The *Odes* say: "Where do we gather the wormwood? // By the pond, on the islets. // How do we use it? // In the sacrifice for our lord." [Lord] Mu of Qin had something of this in him [33, Wen 3.4, p. 530]¹³.

We shall see later that the end of Lord Mu's career was gloomy: his decision to sacrifice worthy nobles as companions-in-death was bitterly criticized by the *Zuo zhuan* author; but this final flaw notwithstanding it

¹⁰ The fateful decision of Lord Mu to attack the state of Zheng in 627 (see [33, Xi 32.3, p. 489-491; Xi 33.1, p. 494-496]) brought about the breakdown of Qin-Jin alliance, and subsequent defeat of Qin, first at Yao 穀 and then in a series of other battles.

¹¹ 卿不書，為穆公故，尊秦也，謂之崇德 [33, Wen 2.6. p. 526].

¹² For the "superior man" as a possible voice of the *Zuo zhuan* author, see [10].

¹³ Meng Ming was employed by Lord Mu despite his defeats at the hand of Jin; in 624 he finally succeeded to overawe Jin armies. Zisang, a.k.a. Gongsun Zhi 公孫枝, was a leading Qin minister, who apparently promoted Meng Ming to the chief military position. The cited *Ode* is "Cai fan" 菜芣 (Mao 13).

is clear that the narrative's portrait of Lord Mu remains overwhelmingly positive. Obviously, neither this ruler nor his entourage display any traits of "barbarianism"; if any, Qin personages cited in the *Zuo zhuan* disclose perspicacity, morality and ritual versatility on the same level as their peers from the eastern states. This is the third major feature of the *Zuo zhuan* treatment of Qin: this country is viewed as a normative, albeit not necessarily important Zhou polity. Thus, when a rare Qin guest at the court of Lu 魯 impresses his hosts with ritual versatility, the Lu noble exclaims "without superior men, how could the state be maintained? There are no remote states!"¹⁴ Qin was remote, indeed, from the Lu point of view, but surely not "barbarian".

The Lu noble's exclamation about Qin remoteness reminds us of the major reason for Qin's ostensible marginality in the *Zuo zhuan*; namely the fact that the latter text remains after all decisively Lu-centered. Being a commentary to the Lu court annals, the *Zuo zhuan* inevitably focuses on the affairs of that eastern polity; other states are treated primarily in the context of Lu's political life, and appear in the narrative only whenever they are significant for Lu's external affairs. The *Zuo zhuan* author focuses mostly on the affairs of two major superpowers, Jin and Chu, the activities of which had a major impact on the life of Lu, and on the affairs of the neighboring polities, such as Qi 齊, Wei, Song 宋 and Zheng. Qin, which played only a marginal role in Lu's life, is of minor interest to the author; hence its exploits outside the framework of Jin-Chu relations are almost never mentioned: these were irrelevant to the Lu-centered narrative.

Having this understanding in mind we may notice that while remote, Qin is never presented as a marginal state. From scattered information of its military exploits we can understand that Qin remained a powerful polity even after Lord Mu's demise. Its armies acted, even if infrequently in the eastern and southeastern parts of the Chinese world, e.g. against Zheng, Song, and even – allying with the Chu armies – against the late Springs-and-Autumns period superpower, the southeastern state of Wu 吳¹⁵. In a speech pronounced on the eve of a major interstate conference of 546, a Jin leader recognized Qin, along with Jin, Chu and Qi, as one of the four pivotal superpowers of the current world (see [33, Xiang 27.4, p. 1130]). These scattered pieces of information allow us to modify the wrong perception of Qin's supposed "marginality".

Going back to the issue of Qin's alleged "barbarianism," there are two major pieces of information that require our attention. First, and by far more important, is the *Zuo zhuan* author's outburst of anger against Lord Mu of Qin, who ordered, on the eve of his death, to bury with him

¹⁴ 不有君子，其能國乎？國無陋矣 [33, Wen 12.5, p. 589].

¹⁵ See [33, Xiang 11.4, p. 990] (attacks on Zheng and Song); [33, Xiang 26.6, p. 1114–1115; Ding 4.3, p. 1548 and Ding 5.5, p. 1551] (attacks on Wu).

“three fine men” of the Ziju 子車 lineage. The narrative tells how the lamenting capital-dwellers (*guoren* 國人) of Qin composed the “Oriole” ode in the memory of the slain nobles; then the “superior man” makes his famous comment:

君子曰：「秦穆之不為盟主也宜哉！死而棄民。先王違世，猶誥之法，而況奪之善人乎？《詩》云：『人之云亡，邦國殄瘁。』無善人之謂。……今縱無法以遺後嗣，而又收其良以死，難以在上矣。」君子是以知秦之不復東征也。

The superior man says: “It is appropriate that Lord Mu did not become the master of the covenants (i.e. the hegemon). In his death he abandoned the people. When the former kings departed from the world, they still would leave behind proper norms: how could they ever take away the good men? The *Ode* says: “When good men perish, the state is exhausted and suffers.” It is told of having no good people. ... Now, not just [Lord Mu] left no good norms for the posterity, but he also collected the good people to follow him in death: it will be difficult for him to remain above [in Heaven?]”. Thereby the superior man knows that Qin will never again march eastwards [33, Wen 6.3, p. 547–549]¹⁶.

This is an extraordinary interesting piece of criticism. First, it is important to contextualize it in the *Zuo zhuan* exegetical framework: the author’s criticism of Lord Mu’s posthumous cruelty serves to explain why his death was not reported in the *Chunqiu* annals, unlike the deaths of every Qin ruler thereafter. Second, the criticism appears curiously limited in scope: the author does not mention at all the large-scale human sacrifice which accompanied the burial of Lord Mu (177 people, according to the *Historical Records*; this number is archeologically verifiable)¹⁷. Rather he focuses only on the sacrifice of three nobles: the people who were supposed to be employed in the state administration rather than be wasted in the burial pit. Third, the author does not hint at all at a semi-barbarian nature of Lord Mu’s act. As is well known, human sacrifice continued through the Zhou period and beyond; but its scope was usually small, limited to the deceased ruler’s servants and concubines; and in many Zhou polities it was not normally practiced. Qin was exceptional with this regard: the scope of human victims as noticed both in the *Historical Records* and in the excavation of Lord Jing’s 秦景公 (r. 576–537) tomb from the Nanzhihui 南指揮 necropolis, is more on par with the Shang 商 (c. 1600–1046) rather with the Zhou norms.

¹⁶ The cited poem is “Zhan ang” 瞻卬 (Mao 264).

¹⁷ See [48, 5, p. 194]. Tomb M1 from Nanzhihui 南指揮 necropolis, the resting place of Lord Jing 秦景公 (r. 576–537), contained 166 human remnants (see [6, p. 486]).

Nonetheless, the author does not single out Qin as a cultural Other: rather he blames its ruler for deviating from the legacy of the sage kings of the past, which implies the author's high expectations of Lord Mu. Finally, the passage may serve also as a convenient means of dating the *Zuo zhuan* in general: the author evidently did not live into the 360s when the Qin armies started their unstoppable march eastwards. Moreover, the bold prediction of Qin's eternal incapacity to march eastward again may reflect the fact that by the time of the *Zuo zhuan* composition this state was at the nadir of its power. In later sections, I shall return to this issue.

Another passage from the *Zuo zhuan* that may be of interest for analyzing Qin's cultural belonging is a part of a lengthy narrative about Prince Jizha 季札 of Wu, who toured in 544 major Zhou polities. During the visit to Lu he was entertained with a complete performance of the *Canon of Odes* repertoire. After listening to "The Airs of Qin" 秦風 section, Jizha exclaimed: "This is called the melodies of Xia! One who is able to be Xia will become great – [will attain] the utmost greatness! It is [from] the old Zhou [lands]!"¹⁸ This saying could have testified to the Qin's position as a paradigmatic "Xia" (Sinitic) state, but manifold problems with this passage dictate utmost caution. First, the meaning of "Xia" here is not unequivocal. While many readers would automatically consider it identical to the "Huaxia" 華夏 ("Chinese"), Yang Bojun convincingly argues in his gloss that the term refers to the geographic location of Qin in the Western lands. Alternatively, the term "Xia" may stand in this context as a loan character for its cognate, *ya* 雅 (meaning "standard, elegant") (see [11, p. 105, n104]). Finally, and most importantly for the present discussion, the entire story of Jizha's visit to the Central States and his semi-prophetic discussion of the future of different states based on their music is undoubtedly of much later origin than the bulk of the *Zuo zhuan*; indeed Jizha's prophecy of Qin's "utmost greatness" strongly suggests the post-unification (i.e., post-221) origin of his speech¹⁹. For all these reasons I think that the sentence above should not be treated as part of the "Qin in the *Zuo zhuan*" discussion.

We can summarize our discussion of the *Zuo zhuan* as follows. First, the text does not pay much attention to Qin, but this is not necessarily reflective of either the state's marginality or "barbarianism" but rather of the peculiar geographic focus of the *Zuo zhuan*. Second, whenever Qin affairs are discussed, there is no hint of cultural otherness; the state appears as a normative polity, possibly a close ally of the royal Zhou house and not as a threat to political and cultural order of the "Central States." Third, it is clear that while Qin remained an important power throughout most of the Springs-and-Autumns period, it never regained an active role in the affairs

¹⁸ 此之謂夏聲。夫能夏則大，大之至也。其周之舊乎！ [33, Xiang 29.13, p. 1163].

¹⁹ See the detailed discussion [54].

of the Central Plain during Lord Mu's reign; and, as the *Zuo zhuan* author's failed prediction indicates, by the time of the *Zuo zhuan*'s composition Qin was not considered a superpower. Now, having this in mind we shall trace the views of Qin in other historical and philosophical texts from the Warring States period.

Qin in the Early Warring States Period Texts

From the time of the compilation of the *Zuo zhuan* and until the creation of the *Historical Records*, we have no examples of texts that tried to systematically cover the history of the Zhou world. The interest in history writing had visibly shifted from analyzing events to deducing moral lessons, mostly through invented or embellished speeches attributed to former statesmen or to paragons of good rule. This genre of *Speeches* (yu 語) is best represented in the *Speeches of the States* (*Guoyu* 國語) – a compilation that largely covers the same period as the *Zuo zhuan* and which might have incorporated and edited parts of the *Zuo zhuan* or of its primary sources. The *Guoyu* is a more heterogeneous compilation than the *Zuo zhuan*; parts thereof (especially the so-called books of Qi, Zheng, Wu and Yue 越) might have been composed later than the bulk of the text, which deals with Zhou, Lu, Jin and Chu; but even many narratives from its earlier layer have an unequivocal flavor of the Warring States period ideology, diminishing thereby their reliability as a source for the Springs-and-Autumns period history²⁰.

In general, the *Guoyu*'s treatment of Qin is very similar to that in the *Zuo zhuan*: namely, this state remains marginal for the compilers, which is reflected in the fact that among major polities of the Springs-and-Autumns period, Qin is the only one which did not merit even a single "book" in the *Guoyu*. Qin figures prominently only in the early books of Jin ("Jin yu" 晉語 2–4), which deal with the succession crisis in Jin, the subsequent enthronement of Chong'er, and Chong'er's career as Lord Wen of Jin. Fundamentally, these sections do not differ from the parallel *Zuo zhuan* discussion dedicated to Lord Mu of Qin, although the *Guoyu* version contains certain later embellishments and modifications. Yet insofar as these embellishments do not alter our picture of either Qin's power or of its cultural identity, I shall not expand on them in the present study.

²⁰ The *Guoyu* is much less studied than the *Zuo zhuan* (see brief discussions in [27; 17]. I analyze briefly some of the differences between the *Zuo zhuan* and the *Guoyu* in [19, p. 210–215].

Of more interest may be a short mention of Qin in the Wu (“Wu yu” 吳語) section of the *Guoyu*. In a speech allegedly pronounced by King Fuchai of Wu (吳王夫差, r. 495–473) to a Jin envoy amid the tense standoff with Jin on the eve of the Huangchi 黃池 covenant, Fuchai criticizes Jin misconduct:

君今非王室不平安是憂，億負晉眾庶，不式諸戎、狄、楚、秦；將不長弟，以力征一二兄弟之國。

Your ruler is not worried of the troubles of the Zhou house. He relies on the Jin multitudes; does not contemplate [the menace of] Rong, Di, Chu and Qin; he does not behave in a brotherly fashion and forcefully assaults fraternal states [34, “Wu yu” 吳語 19.7, p. 550].

Fuchai resorts to his alleged belonging to the Ji 姬 clan, which makes him “a brother” of the Jin lord; as such he urges the Jin to accept Wu’s leadership on behalf of the common clan interests. In the speech he singles out four enemies, against whom the Ji clan should maintain its solidarity: the Rong and the Di tribesmen, and the states of Chu and Qin. This combination of Chu and Qin with non-Sinitic “barbarians” never occurs in the *Zuo zhuan*. In the context of Fuchai’s speech it may be read narrowly as referring to the fact that both Chu and Qin were not ruled by the members of the Ji clan; but I think the context unmistakably places both major powers among “barbarians” as is common in many Warring States period texts (see below).

The most interesting issue here is the dating of Fuchai’s speech. Should it belong to the late Warring States period, when pejorative remarks against Chu and Qin’s “barbarianism” abound, we could have ignored it; but this is not necessarily the case. Extracts from what was identified as the “Wu yu” chapter of the *Guoyu* had been discovered in Tomb 36 from Shibancun 石板村 village, Cili 慈利 county, Hunan (see [53]). The tomb is tentatively dated to the early half of the Warring States period; and if it can serve as a *terminus ante quem* for the “Wu yu”, then it would be the earliest instance of casting Qin (and Chu) as the cultural Other. Yet much caution is needed here. First, the cited statement does not appear in the heretofore published sample of the Shibancun Tomb 36 slips. Second, it is quite possible that the “Wu yu” text had not been compiled at one time, but was modified, as many other contemporaneous texts, during the process of its transmission, and the cited passage might have been added at a later point. Its existence in any case remains a question mark to my conclusions below.

Until very recently, the *Guoyu* was the only known large-scale historical text from the Warring States period, supplemented by the laconic and badly preserved *Bamboo Annals* 竹書紀年 (for the latter, see [28; 15]). Recently, however, discoveries of several previously unknown texts have considerably expanded our exposure to pre-imperial Chinese historiography. Among these

the very recently published text from the Qinghua collection, named by its editors *Xi'nian* 繫年, is undoubtedly the most interesting and illuminating in terms of what we can learn from it about the evolution of China's historiographic tradition. The well-preserved text comprises 23 sections recorded on 138 numbered bamboo slips; it narrates events in the history of the Zhou world from the beginning of the Zhou rule to the early fourth century BCE; and its major focus is on inter-state relations throughout these six centuries. Being written in a Chu script and supposedly looted from a Chu tomb, the *Xi'nian* presents a novel perspective on China's past. While the text is by no means Chu-centered (its Chu connection is even less explicit than the Lu connection of the *Zuo zhuan*), its focus shifts from Shandong states toward west and south; and Qin occupies a relatively larger portion thereof than is the case in the *Zuo zhuan* and *Guoyu*. Moreover, while it is quite probable that the *Xi'nian* author had at his disposal the *Zuo zhuan* as a major source for the Springs-and-Autumns period history, it is clear that he possessed additional independent sources, which makes his narrative exceptionally interesting in terms of the light it sheds on the events of the early to middle Zhou age. With regard to Qin, one of the most significant entries is the first one which deals with Qin affairs, namely section 3:

周武王既克殷，乃設三監于殷。武王陟，商邑興反，殺三監而立祿子耿。成【13】王尸（繼？）伐商邑，殺祿子耿，飛廉東逃于商蓋氏，成王伐商蓋，殺飛廉，西遷商【14】蓋之民于朱圉，以御奴虐之戎，是秦之先，世作周（幹？）。周室既卑，平王東遷，止于成【15】周，秦仲焉東居周地，以守周之墳墓，秦以始大。【16】

When King Wu of Zhou overcame Yin (Shang), he established three supervisors in Yin. When King Wu ascended [Heaven], the Shang settlement rose in revolt, killing the three supervisors and establishing Lu Zigeng. King Cheng {13} [of Zhou] again invaded the Shang settlement, and killed Lu Zigeng. Feilian fled eastward to the Shanggai (Shangyan?) lineage; King Cheng attacked Shanggai, killed Feilian and transferred the Shanggai {14} people westward to Zhuyu, to repel the Nucuo(?) Rong: these were the Qin ancestors who for generations acted as Zhou protectors. When the Zhou declined and King Ping relocated to the East, arriving at Chengzhou {15}, Qin Zhong occupied Zhou lands to the east, to preserve Zhou cemeteries. Thus Qin started its greatness {16}²¹.

²¹ See [47, p. 141]; slip numbers appear in figure brackets (in Chinese: in bold square brackets). Zigeng was a son of the last Shang ruler, Zhouxin 紂辛; Shanggai (or Shangyan) is identified as an eastern location in the vicinity of the Lu capital, Qufu 曲阜;

This is an extraordinary interesting piece of information. First, if reliable²², it may resolve a long-term debate about the “Western” vs. “Eastern” origins of the Qin. The conflicting information in the *Historical Records* with regard to Qin’s origins caused many divisions among historians and archeologists alike (see [8; 7]); the *Xi’nian* appears to resolve the controversy: Qin ancestors came from among the Shang subjects who were replaced westward by the Zhou rulers²³. Second, the text leaves no doubt that Qin *were not* aliens from the point of view of the Central Plains culture, but rather firmly belonged to this culture from the very beginning. Third, the text reminds of the Qin-Zhou alliance, which is mentioned also in the *Historical Records*, and which, as we have seen, is confirmed in the *Zuo zhuan* as well. Finally, it indicates that by the time of the text’s compilation (early fourth century BCE?), Qin was still (or again?) considered a great power, the origins of the greatness of which were traceable to its alliance with the Zhou royal house and inheritance of the Zhou lands.

The *Xi’nian* narration of the later stages of Qin history parallels the *Zuo zhuan* with its over-emphasis on Lord Mu’s exploits as powerbroker in the state of Jin; yet in distinction from the *Zuo zhuan*, the *Xi’nian* authors seem to be interested not just in the Jin-Qin relations but also, probably primarily, in the formation of the Qin-Chu alliance in the aftermath of Lord Mu’s reign. Yet despite this interest, and despite the proclamation of Qin’s greatness, cited above, one cannot but notice Qin’s gradual disappearance from the *Xi’nian* narrative: while it figures prominently in sections 3 (cited above) and 6–10, the second half of the narrative (sections 11–23) contains only 15 pct of Qin-related references²⁴.

Feilian is recorded in the *Historical Records* as a faithful subject of Zhouxin and a Qin ancestor; Qin Zhong according to the *Historical Records* is the first Qin leader to be enfeoffed by the Zhou king as a ranked noble. The *Xi’nian* narrative differs considerably from that in the *Historical Records*.

²² I am not in a position to judge the authenticity of the Qinghua slips; but it should be reminded that even if the slips are genuine this does not guarantee the reliability of their records of Qin’s past.

²³ Li Xueqin (see [40, p. 1-5]) has noticed that the Zhuyu 朱圉 location to which the Qin ancestors were supposedly relocated, may be identical to Maojiaping settlement, Gangu County 甘谷毛家坪 where the early Qin remnants were discovered; Maojiaping site is located in the vicinity of Zhuyu township 朱圉鄉. Interestingly, archeological excavations at Maojiaping suggest coexistence of two distinct cultural (ethnic?) groups in the same settlement (see [31]); this may indeed suggest that one segment of the Maojiaping residents were migrants from elsewhere.

²⁴ The *Xi’nian* is structured chronologically, albeit less rigidly than the *Zuo zhuan*, because every section deals with a certain politically significant development which may span generations or even centuries, like in the Section 3 cited above in the text. As such, the *Xi’nian* may be qualified as one of the earliest antecedents of the later *jishi benmo* 紀事本末 genre.

It seems that although Qin remained a powerful polity, its overall impact on the affairs of the Zhou world in the late fifth and throughout the fourth century BCE considerably diminished.

The *Xi'nian* provides an important corrective to the predominantly Eastern perspective of Chinese history as is seen from the majority of the early Warring States period texts, most of which are associated with the states in the current Shandong province (e.g. Qi, Lu, Song). None of these texts treats Qin as the cultural Other; but nor do they refer to it as an important political player. Thus, Qin is next to absent from the earliest texts from the Masters' lore: the *Lunyu* 論語 and the *Mozi* 墨子. Significantly, Mozi's discussions of major military powers of his age (Qi, Jin, Chu and Yue) ignore Qin altogether, further indicating thereby that during the fifth century BCE this state indeed reached the nadir of its power. Moreover, it seems that even the resurrection of Qin's fortunes under Lord Xiao did not immediately influence eastern writers: hence Qin is largely ignored in such middle to late Warring States period texts as *Yanzi chungqiu* 晏子春秋 and *Guanzi* 管子, associated with the state of Qi; and is similarly marginal in the *Ru* 儒 texts from the Qi-Lu area, such as *Mengzi* 孟子 and the chapters of the *Records of Rites* (*Liji* 禮記). None of these texts contains any hint of Qin "barbarianism," but nor do they display any specific interest in the Western power. All this was to change by the end of the fourth century BCE.

A Barbarian Other? Qin in the Late Warring States Period

During the second half of the Warring States period we can observe two major changes with regard to Qin's image. First, in many (although by no means all) texts of that age Qin becomes much more visible than before; second, in many texts it is perceived as a culturally distinct, "barbarian" state; and this image is intrinsically linked to the strongly pronounced enmity toward Qin. Although the new image of Qin was not necessarily shared by all the authors, it definitely became pervasive in much of the late Warring States period literature.

To illustrate the new perception of Qin, I shall start with another major commentary on the *Springs-and-Autumns Annals*, namely the *Gongyang zhuan* 公羊傳, the bulk of which was composed, according to Joachim Gentz's meticulous study, between 320 to 233 BCE (see [9, s. 345–403]). Unlike the *Zuo zhuan*, the *Gongyang zhuan* (and its sister commentary, the *Guliang zhuan* 穀梁傳) do not focus on the historical background of the

Annals' entries, but rather try to discern behind the terse formulaic language of the *Annals* the hidden political message allegedly associated with the *Annals'* putative author, Confucius. Inasmuch as the *Annals* only infrequently refer to Qin, neither the *Gongyang* nor the *Guliang zhuan* dedicate much space to that state; but even among these few Qin-related entries we can discern a radically new image of this country. Thus, in a comment upon the *Annals* report about Qin's defeat by Jin in 627 at Yao 穀, in the aftermath of Qin's failed assault against the state of Zheng, the *Gongyang zhuan* says:

其謂之秦何？夷狄之也。曷為夷狄之？秦伯將襲鄭，百里子與蹇叔子諫曰：「千里而襲人，未有不亡者也。」秦伯怒曰：「若爾之年者，宰上之木拱矣，爾曷知！」師出，百里子與蹇叔子送其子而戒之曰：「爾即死，必於穀之嶽巖，是文王之所辟風雨者也，吾將尸爾焉。」子揖師而行。百里子與蹇叔子從其子而哭之。秦伯怒曰：「爾曷為哭吾師？」對曰：「臣非敢哭君師，哭臣之子也。」

Why Qin is mentioned? Because [the *Annals*] view it akin to the Yi or Di ["barbarians"]. Why do they view it akin to the Yi or Di? When the Earl of Qin [Lord Mu] planned to assault Zheng, [his ministers], Master Baili [Xi] and Master Jianshu remonstrated: "To launch an assault on a country one thousand *li* away: one cannot but perish!" The Earl of Qin said in anger: "You, people, are so old that even trees on your tombs are already so thick as to fill one's embrace; what do you know?" When the army departed, Masters Baili and Jianshu sent off their sons with a warning: "You are dead; this will happen at Yao cliffs. This is the place where King Wen [of Zhou] escaped from wind and rain; there we shall bury you." The sons saluted them and followed the army. Masters Baili and Jianshu followed their sons, weeping. The Earl of Qin said in anger: "Why are you weeping over my army?" They replied: "We, your subjects, dare not to weep over the lord's army, we are weeping over our sons." (*Gongyang zhuan* Xi 33.2)

This is the first instance of Qin's equation with the Yi and Di "barbarians." From the context it is not entirely clear whether the "barbarian" designation reflects Qin's cultural otherness, or just the *Annals'* (i.e. Confucius') criticism of Lord Mu's uncivilized behavior and his failure to heed remonstrance. If the latter interpretation is correct, then Qin's "barbarianism" is not intrinsic but is reflective of its ruler's behavior. Indeed, elsewhere, the commentary suggests that Qin could be "upgraded" toward a "civilized" polity. In commenting upon the single

Annals' entry on the Qin official's (named Sui) visit to Lu, the *Gongyang zhuan* says:

遂者何？秦大夫也。秦無大夫，此何以書？賢繆公也。何賢乎繆公？以為能變也。

Who is Sui? A Qin ranked noble (大夫). But Qin has no ranked nobles, so why was he recorded? It is because [the *Annals* consider] Lord Mu worthy. Why Lord Mu is considered worthy? Because he was able to change [his behavior] (*Gongyang zhuan* Wen 12.6).

Read in tandem, the two entries above reflect a certain ambivalence of the *Gongyang zhuan* authors with regard to Qin's cultural belonging: Lord Mu can be degraded, but can be also upgraded by the *Annals*: either he is a Chinese turned "barbarian" or a "barbarian" becoming Chinese. This ambivalence disappears, though in other entries. Thus, in 537, the *Annals* record the death of a Qin ruler, without providing the ruler's personal name (earlier, names of the deceased Qin rulers were duly recorded). The *Gongyang* commentary explains:

何以不名？秦者夷也，匿嫡之名也。其名何？嫡得之也。

Why was [the ruler] not named? Qin are Yi ["barbarians"]; they conceal the name of the proper heir. Then why [earlier Qin rulers] were named? Because the name of the proper heir was obtained (*Gongyang zhuan* Zhao 5.5).

The explanation is extremely weak and unconvincing (as is in many other *Gongyang zhuan* comments); evidently there was some unknown change in the *Annals'* rules which caused the authors on the one hand to conceal the proper name of the deceased Qin lord, while on the other to start reporting the Qin rulers' burials (a novelty which was not commented upon by any of the *Annals'* commentaries). Yet skewed as it is, the explanation allows the *Gongyang* authors to introduce the topic of Qin's cultural otherness as a given fact rather than a matter of the *Annals'* moral evaluation. Qin are simply equal to the Yi, and nothing can be done about that.

Let us go back briefly to the previous entry and to the odd claim of the *Gongyang zhuan* that "Qin has no ranked nobles." This claim, which is repeated elsewhere in the text (Zhao 1.4) is suggestive of both the date of the *Gongyang zhuan* composition and of the reason for its exclusion of Qin from the Zhou civilization. The abolition of the centuries-old system of hereditary aristocracy and its replacement with a new system of twenty ranks of merit is one of the hallmarks of Shang Yang's reforms in Qin; and it is only in the aftermath of these reforms that outsiders could have come to the conclusion that Qin lacks the system of ranked nobility

altogether. Yet abolition of the old aristocratic order had also a profound cultural effect. In the wake of it, Qin had suddenly abandoned some of the Zhou ritual norms, as is observable in the disappearance of ritual vessel assemblages from the late Warring States period Qin tombs, and this rapid change might have indeed created an impression of cultural otherness for dwellers of other Zhou states, where ritual norms associated with the Zhou aristocratic order faded away much slower than in Qin. Arguably, then, Shang Yang's reforms contributed decisively toward Qin's estrangement from its eastern neighbors, and in their aftermath the image of Qin as a "barbarian" other became gradually established. This image is duly reflected in the *Gongyang zhuan*, and also, albeit less explicitly, in the parallel *Guliang zhuan* (for which see note 30 below).

Qin's ritual deficiency is also one of its maladies as identified by Xunzi (荀子, c. 310–230). An astute political analyst, Xunzi visited Qin, witnessed its ascendancy to the position of the supreme superpower of the Zhou world, and even sought – unsuccessfully – employment there. In the *Xunzi*, Qin figures much more prominently than in other *Ru* writings; and this phenomenon may well reflect its increasing political importance in the Zhou world. Xunzi's personal attitude toward Qin is complex: at times he praises Qin's achievements, its military prowess and good social order; but he also does not conceal critical remarks. For instance, having praised Qin's attainments, he immediately explains its deficiencies:

故四世有勝，非幸也，數也。是所見也。故曰：佚而治，約而詳，不煩而功，治之至也，秦類之矣。雖然，則有其謬矣。兼是數具者而盡有之，然而縣之以王者之功名，則倜倜然其不及遠矣！是何也？則其殆無儒邪！故曰：粹而王，駁而霸，無一焉而亡。此亦秦之所短也。

Hence, [Qin's] four generations of victories are not just good luck: these are its methods. This is what I have seen. Hence it is said: At ease, and yet ordered; restricted to essentials, and yet well detailed; does not overlabor and yet attains merit: this is the top of good order. Qin is of this kind. Nonetheless, it still has something to fear. With all its methods and preparations, it is still far removed from the attainments and reputation of the True Monarch. Why is that? Because it has almost no *Ru* scholars. Hence it is said: When you have it completely, you are a True Monarch; when you have some of it, you are hegemon; when you have none of it, you are lost. This is also Qin's malady [49, "Qiang guo" XI.16, p. 303–304].

Xunzi's criticism of Qin is careful and reserved (which is understandable in the context of a discussion with the leading Qin minister, Fan

Sui (范雎, d. 255 BCE): he acknowledges Qin's achievements and disapproves just of one aspect of its political culture: its insufficient reliance on the *Ru* scholars. In this passage there are no hints of Qin's supposed otherness or cultural inadequacy; to the contrary, Xunzi's expectations of this state are evidently high. Elsewhere, however, a more critical assessment is heard:

天非私齊、魯之民而外秦人也，然而於父子之義、夫婦之別，不如齊、魯之孝共敬文者，何也？以秦人之從情性、安恣睢、慢於禮義故也，豈其性異矣哉！

It is not that Heaven is partial toward the people of Qi and Lu and considers the people of Qin foreigners; yet from the point of view of propriety between father and son and separation between husband and wife [Qin] cannot be compared to the filiality, respectfulness and proper adornment of Qi and Lu. Why is that? Because the people of Qin follow their inborn nature, are content with following their desires; they are remiss at ritual and propriety. Does this mean that their inborn nature is different? [49, "Xing'e" XVII.23, p. 442].

At first glance, this passage does not appear extraordinarily critical of Qin; after all Xunzi reconfirms basic similarity between the inborn nature of the people of Qin and those of the most ritually and culturally refined polities, Qi and Lu; it is just that Qin's cultivation appears lacking. However, in the context of the Warring States period polemics, Xunzi's pronouncements appear very harsh. Unrestrictedly following one's inborn nature and one's desires was interpreted by the Warring States period *Ru* ritualists as the most demeaning feature of uneducated "barbarians"; as the "Tan Gong" 檀弓 chapter of the *Records of the Rites (Liji 禮記)* specifies, "to follow directly one's real feelings is the way of the Rong and the Di. It is not the Way of Ritual"²⁵. Thus, Xunzi does imply, even if in a somewhat less straightforward way than the *Gongyang zhuan*, that Qin people are fundamentally similar to the "barbarians," rather than to the civilized population of the Central States.

Xunzi's self-restrain and caution when dealing with Qin disappears in some other texts, which energetically promote the vision of Qin's "barbarianism." This is evident most prominently in the *Zhanguo ce* 戰國策, a heterogeneous collection of the Warring States period anecdotes, put together by the end of the Former Han dynasty. The *Zhanguo ce* contains no less than five (out of total 30) sections dedicated to Qin, and the looming presence of this state is well palpable through other sections as well. Not surprisingly, perhaps, this text contains some of the harshest

²⁵ 有直情而徑行者，戎狄之道也。禮道則不然 [39, "Tan Gong xia" 檀弓下 10, p. 271].

anti-Qin statements, some of which hint also at its cultural otherness. Qin is portrayed as a state that “has common customs with the Rong 戎 and Di 狄; a state with tiger’s and wolf’s heart; greedy, profit-seeking and untrustworthy, which knows nothing of ritual, propriety and virtuous behavior”²⁶. Some of the *Zhanguo ce* anti-Qin philippics go to the extreme of designating Qin as “the mortal enemy of All-under-Heaven”²⁷. Here and elsewhere Qin is portrayed as an outsider to the civilized world, a state that is external to the Zhou All-under-Heaven (*tianxia* 天下), the cultural Other which exists beyond the pale of humanity²⁸. While these statements may be dismissed as politically tendentious, it is possible that they reflect a broader cultural trend. Apparently, even some Qin courtiers accepted the exclusion of their state from the civilized All-under-Heaven. In a memorandum allegedly submitted by Han Feizi 韓非子 (d. 233), or by some other “guest minister”, to the king of Qin, the author discusses at great length Qin’s advantages in comparison to the *tianxia*, which is treated as an enemy to be invaded and annexed [35, “Chu xian Qin” 初見秦 I.1, p. 2–3]. Whatever the provenance of this memorandum, it must have been formulated in accord with the argumentation acceptable at the court of Qin during the late Warring States period²⁹. As such it suggests that even some of the Qin leaders accepted its peculiar position as a state beyond All-under-Heaven, and a singular enemy of *tianxia*.

The increasingly pronounced anti-Qin sentiments in the late Warring States period texts do not mean, however, that the negative attitude toward Qin became uniform. More often than not pejorative remarks about Qin’s alleged “barbarianism” are intermingled with neutral or even positive sayings about Qin, as presented, for instance, in the *Xunzi* and also in the *Zhanguo ce*. It seems that the Warring States period and early Han thinkers tried to reconcile the notion of Qin’s otherness with the understanding that many aspects of Qin culture remained similar to that of other Zhou states. They suggested different solution for this apparent contradiction: some, as

²⁶ 秦與戎、翟同俗，有虎狼之心，貪戾好利而無信，不識禮義德行 [52, “Wei ce 魏策 3” 24.8, p. 907]; a similar passage appears in the *Zhanguo zonghengjia shu* 戰國縱橫家書 unearthed at Mawangdui 馬王堆 tomb no. 3 in 1973 (see [45, p. 16:52]).

²⁷ 秦，天下之仇讎也 [52, “Chu ce 楚策 1” 14.17, p. 508].

²⁸ See a detailed discussion on Qin’s exclusion from *tianxia* in [16, p. 109-13]. For other instances of pejorative remarks about Qin in the *Zhanguo ce*, see [52, “Xi Zhou ce 西周策” 2.3, p. 49; “Zhao ce 趙策 3” 20.10, p. 726]. At one point even a Qin statesman acknowledges long-term hatred of “All-under-Heaven” toward Qin see [52, “Qin ce 秦策 3” 5.15, p. 194–195].

²⁹ The same memorandum appears also in the *Zhanguo ce* (see [52, “Qin ce 1” 3.5, p. 88-91]), where it is erroneously attributed to an earlier Qin statesman, Zhang Yi 張儀 (d. ca. 310). See a summary of distinct views regarding the authenticity of “Han Feizi’s” memorandum [38, p. 14–25].

the authors of the *Guliang zhuan*, argued that Qin's degradation into "barbarianism" began only due to negative political developments by the end of the reign of Lord Mu; others, like Jia Yi (賈誼, c. 200–168) attributed Qin's deterioration to the corruptive impact of Shang Yang's reforms; while yet others, like Sima Qian, argued to the contrary, that Shang Yang tried to improve Qin's "barbarian" nature and to introduce the advanced culture of the East to this remote state³⁰. These conflicting assessments may reflect contradictory aspects of Qin's social and cultural policy as well as its complex relations with eastern neighbors, who were both the victims of Qin's attack but also the source of many migrants, including leading intellectuals, some of whom made an enviable career at the court of Qin (see more [18, p. 35–44]).

In an insightful study Zang Zhifei 臧知非 suggested that conflicting assessments of Qin in the late Warring States and early Han texts reflect largely contemporaneous political and ideological polemics and should not be taken at their face value (see [51, p. 8–18]). The actual situation, however, may have been more complex, as it is evident that deeper cultural processes were involved. I have mentioned above that even certain Qin courtiers might have internalized its image as an outsider to the civilized "All-under-Heaven". Other sources further confirm that by the end of the Warring States period some Qin statesmen might have adopted the eastern outlook according to which their state was the cultural Other. The *Lüshi chunqiu* 呂氏春秋, a major text composed at the court of Qin, attributes to Lord Mu of Qin a saying: "Qin is a remote and uncouth state (similar to the) Rong and Yi"³¹. While this statement was made for rhetorical purposes and should not be read too literally, it nevertheless suggests that the *Lüshi chunqiu* authors, and perhaps their audience, were under the impression that this was how the Qin rulers saw themselves four centuries earlier, which means that by their time the memory of the Zhou-oriented Qin culture had largely vanished. Even more puzzling is the attitude revealed in a famous memorandum against the expulsion of alien statesmen by Li Si 李斯 (d. 208), who argued:

夫擊甕叩缶，彈箏搏髀，而歌呼嗚嗚快耳者，真秦之聲也；鄭、衛、桑間，昭、虞、武、象者，異國之樂也。今擊甕叩缶而就鄭衛，退彈箏而取昭虞。

³⁰ See (*Guliang zhuan* 33.3); for Jia Yi's assertion, see [32, 48, p. 2204]; for Sima Qian's views (more precisely, his citation of the alleged Shang Yang's words), see [48, 68, p. 2234]. A more extreme attitude toward Qin is reflected in the mid-second century *Huainanzi* 淮南子, the authors of which assert that Qin's innate greediness and aggressiveness "could not be transformed by positive means" 不可化以善; hence the harsh laws of Shang Yang were implemented there (see [36, 21, p. 711 ("Yao lue" 要略)].

³¹ 秦國僻陋戎夷 [44, "Bu gou" 不苟 24.1, p. 1584].

To thump a water jar and bang a pot, to twang a zither, slap one's thigh and sing *woo-woo* as a means of pleasing the ear and the eye— this is the true Qin sound. But the songs of Zheng and Wei, the *Sangjian*, *Zhao*, *Yu*, *Wu*, and *Xiang*—these are the music of other states. Yet now you set aside the jar-thumping and the pot-banging and turn to the music of Zheng and Wei, you reject the zither-twanging and accept *Zhao* and *Yu* [48, 87, p. 2544]³².

This text, one of the classical references to Qin's alleged "barbaric" culture, was submitted to Qin officials, and certainly was not designed to harm their feelings. Yet, putting aside a puzzling reference to the music of Zheng 鄭 and Wei 衛 as the hallmark of proper Eastern culture, we know archeologically, that Li Si's presentation of Qin's musical past is incorrect: in the Springs-and-Autumns period Qin's musical culture was largely akin to Zhou ritual music³³. That Li Si and apparently other Qin courtiers were not aware of this and believed that Zhou music at the Qin court is a new phenomenon, proves that in the late Warring States period not only Qin's image in the eyes of outsiders, but perhaps its own sense of identity had profoundly changed³⁴.

Let us summarize our findings. The texts of the late Warring States period appear, first, incomparably more aware of Qin's menacing presence in the Zhou world than earlier texts; and, second, contain a significant sub-current of treating Qin as a cultural Other. As I have tried to show above, this otherness might have reflected not just heated anti-Qin rhetoric but certain objective (and archeologically observable) changes in Qin's cultural trajectory. While Qin's movement out of the Zhou center was not a straightforward process, and it was strongly moderated by Qin's ongoing acceptance of migrants from other states, there is no doubt that on the eve of unification its distinction from the rest of the Zhou world was more strongly pronounced than ever before.

³² I slightly modify Burton Watson's translation, see [26, p. 183].

³³ Qin musical culture can be partly reconstructed from the excavated bells and chime-stones and their inscriptions; see a brief discussion [50, p. 299–300]. The "music of Zheng and Wei" was usually employed in a pejorative meaning as licentious, unorthodox music. See, for example [43, "Wei Ling gong" 衛靈公 15.11, p. 164; 40, "Ben sheng" 本生 1.2, p. 21; 48, p. 1176]. It is puzzling that in Li Si's memorandum it is treated as a hallmark of positive, Eastern, culture. Is it possible that Li Si believed that it is better for Qin to be attached to the licentious music of the East than to its own "barbaric" sounds?

³⁴ For another anecdote that shows that "tapping the pot" was considered in the late Warring States period as standard Qin music, see [48, 81, p. 2442]; for an assertion of the Western origins of Qin's old music see [44, "Yin chu" 音初 6.3, p. 335]. For an alternative tradition that emphasizes "Chineseness" of Qin's old music, see [35, "Shi guo" 十過 III.10, p. 70–72; 48, 5, p. 193].

Epilogue: Beyond the Han Perspective: Re-reading the texts

At this stage I want to go back to Sima Qian's views of Qin with which I started my discussion. Too often his narrative is read straightforwardly as expurgation of Qin from the Zhou cultural universe. Elsewhere I have shown that this is not the case: while synthesizing his disparate sources (including the now lost *Qin Records* 秦記, presumably saved by Xiao He 蕭何 (257–193), the future chancellor of the Han dynasty, from the Qin imperial archives before they were burned down in 206), Sima Qian gave enough space for different views of Qin, including those which identified this state as a normative Zhou polity (see [20]). While Sima Qian's narrative does contain wrong and fairly misleading statements about Qin, a careful reading of the *Historical Records* as a whole may well result in a more nuanced and more accurate view of Qin's history than is often done.

This brings me to the last point that I want to highlight: the problem of careless reading of the received texts. Quite often we are misled not by the text itself but by its misinterpretation by later commentators, editors and critics. For instance, in the context of the Han and later political polemics, it gradually became habitual to disparage the imperial Qin, treating it as an anti-Traditional, anti-Confucian entity, a regrettable historical aberration; and these views, while by no means unanimous, were projected backward to pre-imperial Qin which was cast as a cultural Other of the Zhou world³⁵. This line of argument became so powerful that many scholars – traditional and modern alike – accepted it uncritically, paying little if any attention to the contrary evidence which existed in the same corpus of texts from which the image of Qin's otherness was deduced. Much like in the case of Qin's southeastern neighbor, the state of Chu, the “barbarian” image of which was misread backward into the *Zuo zhuan* pages, the appeal of ethnic explanation of early China history for many modern scholars was so high as to blind them to all the evidence – textual and otherwise – that undermined their favorable interpretation of ancient texts.

The archeological revolution liberated us from many outdated paradigms, of which Qin's (or Chu's) intrinsic “otherness” is just one example. Yet rather than invalidating textual sources, this revolution allows us to re-read the texts with due carefulness, freeing them from generations of misinterpretations, and paying attention to their multiple nuances. I hope to have demonstrated above that analyzing textual evidence in a systematic and comprehensive fashion may bring about a new picture, which can be as novel and refreshing as the one obtained from the archeological and paleographic

³⁵ For debates over Qin's historical image (which focus on Qin's empire but is relevant to the state of Qin as well), see [21].

sources. Full integration of textual, material and paleographic data is today the pressing need in our field; and I hope to have convinced the audience in the validity of the textual leg of this tripod of early China studies.

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