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The Question of Literariness in the Composition of Western Zhou Bronze Bell Inscriptions*

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The present article sets out to investigate whether it is possible to talk about verbal parallelism, such as rhyme and meter in early Chinese bronze inscriptions in terms of sound correlated figures of speech. The answer to this question depends on whether or not these audible patterns can be shown to fulfill an identifiable structuring function in shaping the texts' messages. Addressing this issue is important in so far as it bears some major clues on how bronze inscriptions were retrieved (i.e. read, recited, etc.) and understood during the time when their carriers were still in use.

After discussing some disputed aspects concerning the nature and function of texts from early Chinese bronze inscriptions with regard to their ritual and material context, the present study proceeds with a detailed literary inquiry of the rhymed text inscribed on the late Western Zhou Guoji bian *zhong* 虢季編鐘 chime as a sample analysis.

Keywords: Bronze inscriptions, rhyme, literary form, literariness

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1. Introduction

In the first volume of the *Cambridge History of Chinese Literature*, published in 2013, one reads the following statement:

> Western Zhou bronze inscriptions are in many respects the fountainhead of Chinese Literature. [⋯] Cast into precious and durable artefacts of display, bronze inscriptions were more than just silent writings: their gradually emerging aesthetics of rhyme, meter, onomatopoeia, and other euphonic elements indicate that they were meant to be recited and heard.[1]

Despite having eventually found their rightful place in the history of Chinese literature,[2] early Chinese bronze inscriptions, as the above cited passage suggests, are nevertheless often understood as reflecting something more, or perhaps rather something less than written literary texts. This is mainly due to the not entirely unfounded conviction that the recital of messages cast on ritual bronze paraphernalia may have been inextricably interwoven with other, non-verbal forms of expression that together constituted the ritual performances these artefacts were involved in. Thus, when it comes to interpreting the phenomenon of verbal parallelism in bronze inscriptions, many scholars tend to locate these features within the context of ritual and music. Indeed, especially rhymed inscriptions on bronze bell chimes invite one to draw parallels between the field of literary form and the audible aesthetics of musical performance. Chen Zhi 陳致 for instance observes the following phenomenon:

> The four notes yu 羽 , gong 宮 , jue 角 and wei 徵 make up the basic melodic register of bronze bell chimes that were cast from the mid-Western Zhou period onwards. In correspondence to that, Western Zhou bronze inscription display the following features: Firstly, from the mid-Western Zhou period onwards four-character set phrases began to appear. Secondly, it became increasingly common for inscriptions starting from this period to employ rhyme. This development towards four character

1 Martin Kern, "Early Chinese literature, beginnings through Western Han," in *The Cambridge History of Chinese Literature, Volume I: To 1375*, ed. Stephen Owen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 12–13.

2 Earlier seminal overviews in the field of early Chinese Literature, such as Mark Edward Lewis's *Writing and Authority in Early China* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1999), merely mention the role of bronze inscriptions in passing.

> phrases and rhyme in bronze texts is especially apparent in inscriptions cast on bell chimes.[3]

Important as this observation is, it does not necessarily imply an interdependency, let alone the identity of verbal parallelism and musical rhythms when it comes to the interrelation of Western Zhou bronze inscriptions and their carriers.[4] Neither does it suggest the temporal and spatial coincidence of the bronze bells' musical performance with the retrieval of the texts inscribed on them.[5] Quite to the contrary, as we will discuss below, the placement and size of inscriptions, as well as the texts' description of their carriers' pedigree and use, including onomatopoeic renderings of chime sounds etc., suggest that the inscribed messages were meant to transcend and outlive the special events in which the bells and vessels were employed. Rather than showing the texts to have merged with the multi-media ritual performances, textual analysis only allows us to ascertain, to a certain extent, a transfer of the carriers' material and audible features into the medium of the text. If this is the case, it means that we are in fact dealing with literary text in which verbal parallelism could be expected to work in a poetic sense as sound correlated figures of speech. It is this possibility which the present article sets out to explore.

Prior to conducting a thorough literary analysis of the rhymed text

3 The original reads: 羽、宮、角、徵四聲構成了西周中期以後編鐘的基本旋律特點。與此相對應的是，西周青銅器銘文，有如下幾個特點：第一是西周中期以後四言套語的出現；第二是西周中期以後金文越來越普遍用韻的傾向。而在青銅器銘文尤以編鐘銘文，四言化與韻文化的發展脈絡更為明顯，Chen Zhi 陳致 , "Cong 'Zhou Song' yu jinwen zhong chengyu de yunyong lai kan gu ge shi zhi yongyun ji siyan shiti de xingcheng" 從〈周頌〉與金文中成語的運用來看古歌詩之用韻及四言詩體的形成 , in *Kua xueke shiye xia de Shijing yanjiu* 跨學科視野下的詩經研究 , ed. Chen Zhi (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2010), 17–59, reprinted in idem, *Shi Shu li yue zhong de chuantong: Chen Zhi zi xuan ji* 詩書禮樂中的傳統：陳致自選集 (Shanghai: Shanghai Renmin chubanshe, 2012), 1–30, 22–23. The English translation is my own.

4 This is also suggested by the fact that rhyme and a preference for four-character phrases appear in inscriptions cast on bronze vessels that served as containers for food and wine as well. Moreover, Wolfgang Behr's strong assumption that incipient Chinese metrics did not count syllables but emphases and ictus (Behr, *Reimende Bronzeinschriften und die Entstehung der chinesischen Endreimdichtung* [Bochum : Projekt Verlag, 2009], 382), further relativizes the implications of Chen's find for possible associations between the musical properties of bronze bells and the literary form of their inscriptions.

5 I use the word "retrieval" throughout this paper in order to collectively refer to all possible forms of retrieval or actualization of the verbal messages encoded in written documents, such as silent reading, loud reading, the recital in front of a listening audience, etc.

inscribed on the late Western Zhou Guoji bian *zhong* 虢季編鐘 chime as a generic example, we start with a general discussion on a number of disputed aspects concerning the nature of Western Zhou bronze inscriptions as literary texts. Many recent studies tend to overlook or even neglect the fact that we are dealing with written artefacts whose circumstances of composition, purpose and context of retrieval are anything but certain. Reconsidering some of these issues from the perspective of literary analysis might further our insight into this epigraphic genre.

2. Between ritual performance and textual composition

Chimes of suspended *yong* bells (*bian yongzhong* 編甬鐘) played a crucial role in the politico-religious context of aristocratic ancestral ritual in mid-Western to late Eastern Zhou China (ca. 950–221 BCE).[6] Used for musical accompaniment during sacrifices and feasts, these tokens of power and prestige have been excavated mostly from aristocratic tombs clustered around Bronze Age power centres on the North China Plain.[7] Apart from their material splendour, texts inscribed on a number of excavated *yong* bells mesmerise the beholder with their tendency towards tetrameter and with the appearance of rhyme patterns, both of which are reminiscent of the literary form associated with the rhymed portion of Zhou Hymns (*Zhou Song* 周頌) and, to some extent, the Greater Elegantiae (*Da Ya* 大雅) in the transmitted *Book of Odes*[8] (*Shijing* 詩經). As already mentioned above, these linguistic features in turn are often understood as reflecting the musical aesthetics of ritual performances

6 See Lothar von Falkenhausen, *Suspended Music: Chime-Bells in the Culture of Bronze Age China* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1993), 1–66.

7 Ibid, 25. However, a significant number of Western Zhou bronze bells has also been recovered from protective caches or hoards. I thank one of the anonymous reviewers for making me aware of this.

8 Rhyme in bronze inscriptions was first systematically described by the late Qing philologist Wang Guowei 王國維 (1877–1927) in his "Liang Zhou jinshiwen yundu" 兩周金石文韻讀 from 1917. For an overview on twentieth century scholarship on the topic as well as for the most comprehensive treatment of the issue to date see Behr, *Reimende Bronzeinschriften und die Entstehung der chinesischen Endreimdichtung*, 65–96. Among the most recent studies on rhyme in Western and Eastern Zhou bronze inscriptions, Yang Huaiyuan 楊懷源 and Sun Yinqiong 孫銀瓊 , *Liang Zhou jinwen yong yun kao* 兩周金文用韻考 (Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 2014) should also be mentioned. For the similarities of rhyme and meter in Western Zhou bronze inscriptions and in the *Odes*, especially in the Zhou Hymns, see Chen Zhi , "Cong 'Zhou Song' yu jinwen zhong chengyu de yunyong lai kan gu ge shi zhi yongyun ji siyan shiti de xingcheng" .

within the aristocratic institution of Western Zhou ancestral sacrifice.[9] Martin Kern, for instance, holds that

> [o]n the whole, rhyme and meter developed over time in the earliest poetry of hymns and inscriptions. This development toward increased regularity appeared along with the consolidation of the royal institution of the ancestral sacrifice during the mid-and late Western Zhou. Earlier, less constrained aesthetic forms were replaced by a more formulaic mode of expression that reflected the gradually solidifying aesthetics of royal and aristocratic performances.[10]

The same has been suggested by Constance A. Cook and Yan Sun in their introduction to *A Source Book of Ancient Chinese Bronze Inscriptions*, the first reference work in English of this sort:

> We see the rise of musical instruments cast in bronze at the same time that onomatopoeia and rhymed sections of text also increase, suggesting the importance of music to the ceremonies in which the inscribed text was formed and the vessel eventually used.[11]

In her most recent monography, *Ancestors, Kings and the Dao*, Cook goes even further when she states:

> From the shift in rhymes in even the earliest examples [of Western Zhou Bronze inscriptions], it appears that the recitation may have been punctuated with the striking of metal and stone chimes along with drums. [⋯] If the rhyme and assonance evident in even these Early Western

9 This has been first suggested in Henri Maspero, *La Chine Antique* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1927), 353–366. For more recent views see Martin Kern, "The Performance of Writing in Western Zhou China," in *The Poetics of Grammar and the Metaphysics of Sound and Sign*, eds. Sergio La Porta and David Shulman, (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 159–171; idem, "Bronze Inscriptions, the Shijing and the Shangshu: The Evolution of the Ancestral Sacrifice during the Western Zhou," in John Lagerwey / Marc Kalinowski, eds., *Early Chinese Religion, Part One: Shang through Han (1250 BC to 220 AD)* (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 143–200; and especially Constance A. Cook, *Ancestors, Kings and the Dao* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Asia Center, 2017), passim.

10 Kern, "The Performance of Writing in Western Zhou China," 195.

11 Constance A Cook and Paul R. Goldin, eds., *A Source Book of Ancient Chinese Bronze Inscriptions* (Berkeley: The Society for the Study of Early China, 2016), xix.

> Zhou inscriptions is an indicator of the musicality of these performances, we may speculate that instrumentation actually accompanied (or purposely contrasted) the incantation of ritual texts preserved in the inscriptions.[12]

Within this conception, ritual performances being physical processes unfolding in time and space, rhyme and meter are less conceived of as text-structuring devices in a poetic sense than as euphonic patterns forming part of multi-media performances.

Someone who does consider the development of rhyme and meter in bronze inscriptions in poetic-linguistic terms is Wolfgang Behr. In his seminal study on rhyming bronze inscriptions he compares the phylogenesis of early Chinese poetry to the ontogenesis of rhyme in children.[13] Within this analytical framework, he associates early, metrically irregular rhyming inscriptions with spontaneously produced infantine rhyme patterns which often lack any discernable meter as well. Just as children are bound to abandon their sing-song style of recitation, which characterizes their "poetic" output up to the age of ten, once they develop a metrical awareness, the transition from rhyming to rhymed inscriptions, Behr states, is marked by the regular conflation of rhyme and meter, where rhyme changes from an ornamental mode into an explicitly poetic devise.[14] Yet he too is quick to add that

> inscriptions exhibiting such structural properties do not suddenly turn into poetry, as they still remain pragmatically embedded in the context of religious rituals and the performative modes of speech employed in these occasions.[15]

Instead Behr argues for the emergence of poetic literariness to coincide with an aesthetic usage of repetitive linguistic figures and tropes that consciously transcend the temporal boundedness of the performative.[16]

While this definition is perfectly valid, it seems worthwhile to reconsider

12 Cook, *Ancestors, Kings and the Dao*, 10, 18. Cook earlier applied this assumption in her interpretation of the rhymed Bin Gong *xu* 䜌公盨 inscription. See Cook, "Sage King Yu and the Bin Gong *Xu*," *Early China* 35 (2013): 69–103, esp. 87–93.

13 Behr, *Reimende Bronzeinschriften und die Entstehung der chinesischen Endreimdichtung*, 9–15.

14 Ibid, 384.

15 Ibid.

16 Ibid, 384–385.

whether these texts or, more specifically, their possible retrieval was indeed spatially and temporally bound to the ritual contexts in which their carriers were involved. Although this idea has by now become something of a commonplace in Early China studies, it is nevertheless still little more than an informed guess. On the one hand, contiguities between archaic rhyme schemes and generic consonance patterns, marking the topical sequences of formulaic ritual speech, as well as parallels between the development of tetrameter and of four-tone music are undeniable.[17] This indeed suggests contacts on multiple levels between the fields of literary form, ritual speech and musical performance in Early China. On the other hand, however, no text from any extant Western- or Eastern Zhou bronze inscription can be reasonably understood as a ritual liturgy or "libretto." This evidently counts for the bulk of inscriptions which do not exceed a simple casting statement in the form of "X made this precious bronze." Yet most, if not all longer inscriptions too would make little sense if they were to be recited in their entirety during any given ritual as they combine references to different settings and events that were divided from each other spatially as well as temporally. Even those rare instances which depict only one more or less coherent ritual setting prove to be problematic when interpreted in terms of a liturgy. Consider for instance the rhymed text from the late Western Zhou Xing *zhong* 瘐鐘 #1 (*JC* 246) inscription:[18]

17 See for instance Jiang Kunwu 姜昆武 , *Shi Shu chengci kaoshi* 詩書成詞考釋 (Ji'nan: Qi Lu shushe, 1989), 5–10; David Schaberg, "Command and the Content of Tradition," in *The Magnitude of Ming: Command, Allotment and Fate in Chinese Culture*, ed. Christopher Lupke (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2005), 34–41; Chen Zhi, "Cong 'Zhou Song' yu jinwen zhong chengyu de yunyong lai kan gu ge shi zhi yongyun ji siyan shiti de xingcheng", 17–59 ; and idem, "'Ri ju yue zhu' yu 'ri jiu yue jiang;' Zaoqi siyan shi yu jisi lici shili" – *Shijing* yu jinwen zhong chengyu「日居月諸」與「日就月將」：早期四言詩與祭祀禮辭釋例 ——《詩經》與金文中成語 , in idem, Chen Zhi, *Shi Shu* li yue zhong de chuantong: Chen Zhi zi xuan ji, 42–64.

18 The numbers for the identification of Western Zhou bronze inscriptions follow the nomenclature used in Zhongguo Shehuikexueyuan Kaoguyanjiusuo 中國社會科學院考古研究所 ed., *Yin Zhou jinwen jicheng* 殷周金文集成 , rev. ed., 8 vols. (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2007), hereafter referred to as *JC*. Numbers for inscriptions published after the compilation date of *JC* are given according to the NA and NB nomenclatures used in the "Digital Archive of Bronze Images and Inscriptions" 殷周金文暨青銅器資料庫 , compiled by the Institute of History and Philology, Academia Sinica 中央研究院歷史語言研究所 , 2012, http://www.ihp.sinica.edu.tw/~bronze/, hereafter referred to as AS database. The direct and the interpretive transcriptions provided in *JC* have been occasionally adapted by adopting the more cautious choices in Wu Zhenfeng 吳鎮烽 , ed., *Shang-Zhou qingtongqi mingwen ji tuxiang jicheng* 商周青銅器銘文暨圖像集成 , 35 vols. (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2012).

瘨趄趄(桓桓)，夙(夙)夕聖⿺走襄(爽)*[s]ˤaŋ 【陽】a[19]
追孝于高且(祖)辛公 *C.qˤoŋ 【東】A
文且(祖)乙公 *C.qˤoŋ 【東】A
皇考丁公 *C.qˤoŋ 【東】A
龢鐳(林)鐘 *toŋ 【東】A
Unceasing night and day, Xing lets his wisdom / ability shine,
pursuing filial devotion to his High Ancestor Xin Gong,
his patterned grandfather Yi Gong,
and his august father Ding Gong
by means of these harmoniously tuned *lin* bells.[20]

用卲(昭)各(格)喜侃樂歬(前)文人 *ni[ŋ] 【真】B
用⿰礻奉(祓)𦔻(壽)*[N-t]uʔ 【幽】C
匃永令(命)*riŋ-s 【真】B
⿰𦥑卓(綽)綰媚(髮)彔(祿)屯(純)魯 *[r]ˤaʔ 【魚】a
弋(式)皇且(祖)考 *k-r̥ˤuʔ 【幽】C
高對爾剌(烈)嚴才(在)上 *daŋʔ-s 【陽】a
豐豐𧰼𧰼，⿰鬲蟲(融)妥(綏)厚多福 *pək 【職】c
廣啟瘨身 *ni[ŋ] 【真】B

19 In this and in the following examples of texts from bronze inscriptions I transcribe the approximate sound value of the graphs in rhyming positions according to the "Baxter-Sagart Old Chinese reconstruction, version 1.1" (20 September 2014, http://ocbaxtersagart.lsait.lsa.umich.edu/BaxterSagartOCbyMandarinMC2014-09-20.pdf). I further provide the traditional Chinese rhyme class for each of these graphs according to William H. Baxter, *A Handbook of Old Chinese Phonology* (Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 1992), 367–564, as well as a rhyme scheme for the entire text. The latter takes into consideration the so called *tongyun* 通韻 (continuous or interconnecting rhyme of open classes with their consonantal parallel classes) and *heyun* 合韻 (uniting rhyme of classes with different main vowel but with identical or absent final) phenomena. Cf. Behr, *Reimende Bronzeinschriften und die Entstehung der chinesischen Endreimdichtung*, 433, 470; and Yang Huaiyuan and Sun Yinqiong, *Liang Zhou jinwen yong yun kao*, 92–144. *Tongyun* and *heyun* rhymes are marked by the use of lower case letters within the rhyme schemes.

20 My interpretation of this paragraph follows Lothar von Falkenhausen, who states: "It appears that the verb *zuo* 作, 'to make,' was accidentally left out of the inscription; it should be between positions 21 and 22. Just possibly, this character may have been located on another bell [...]; in this case, everything preceding the object of the sentence, *Helinzhong* 龢鐳鐘 'this set of harmonically tuned chime-bells,' would have to be taken as grammatically subordinate to it [...]"Lothar von Falkenhausen, "Ritual music in Bronze Age China: An archaeological perspective," (Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 1988), 968, n. 10.

勵(擢)于永令(命)*riŋ-s 【真】B

I use them to call down and give joyous pleasure to my patterned forbears;
I use them to pray for long life everlasting,
plenty of good fortune and wealth, as well as great felicity.[21]
May my august forbears, who brightly watch from high above,[22]
shower down upon me many blessings.
May they broadly open up Xing's awareness (of his inherited responsibilities),[23]
so he may be promoted to enjoy an everlasting mandate.

褱受余爾𪓑(𪓐)福 *pək 【職】c
瘨其萬年 *C.nˤi[ŋ] 【真】B
櫅(齊)角𩰬(熾)光 *kʷˤaŋ 【陽】a
義(宜)文神無彊(疆)𩁹(顯)福 *pək 【職】c
用瑀光瘨身 *ni[ŋ] 【真】B
永余寶 *pˤuʔ 【幽】C

May I be lovingly given beautiful blessings.
Xing will for ten thousand years
[present] even-horned and redly gleaming [sacrificial bulls].[24]
May the limitless brilliant blessings of the patterned spirits
protect and glorify Xing's person;
may I treasure these [bells] forever.

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21 My interpretation of this line follows Ma Chengyuan 馬承源 et al., *Shang Zhou qingtongqi mingwen xuan* 商周青銅器銘文選, 4 vols. (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 1988), vol. 3, 193, n.3.

22 The reading of the graph 弋 as 式 follows a suggestion by Qiu Xigui 裘錫圭. Qiu further follows Ding Shengshu 丁聲樹, "*Shijing* 'shi' zi shuo" 詩經「式」字說, *Bulletin of the Institute of History and Philology* 中央研究院歷史語言研究所集刊 6.4 (1936): 487–495, in reading the graph in the sense of to urge someone to do something. See Qiu Xigui, "Buci 'yi' zi he *Shi*, *Shu* de 'shi' zi" 卜辭「異」字和詩、書裡的「式」字, *Zhongguo yuyanxuebao* 中國語言學報 1 (1983): 178–179. See also Chen Yingjie 陳英傑, *Xizhou jinwen zuo qi yongtu mingci yanjiu* 西周金文作器用途銘辭研究 (Beijing: Xianzhuang shuju, 2008), 371, for a similar conclusion.

23 Cf. von Falkenhausen, "Ritual music in Bronze Age China," 969.

24 Compare Lian Shaoming 連劭名, "Shi Qiang *pan* mingwen yanjiu" 史牆盤銘文研究, in Shanxi Zhouyuan kaogudui 陝西周原考古隊, Yin Shengping 尹盛平, eds., *Xizhou Wei shi jiazu qingtongqi qun yanjiu* 西周微氏家族青銅器群研究 (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 1992), 366, for the interpretation of this phrase.

These lines would indeed qualify as generic ritual utterances, were they not ultimately embedded within statements relating them to their carriers' pedigree and intended purpose, as well as to the memory of the bronze's donor.[25] I have therefore chosen to render them as desiderative or imperative statements in the subjunctive mode in my English translation. Since Western Zhou bronze inscriptions were cast together with their carriers, it makes more sense to me to read these lines as "manuals" or promises, rather than understanding them as ritual speech acts to be uttered as the bells were used or as confirmation that they indeed have been used in the intended way, both of which would be grammatically possible.

In sum, I argue that the primary frame of reference for these passages is to be found not so much in an actual ritual setting, which they of course allude to in a pars pro toto manner, but rather in the material object they are inscribed on, its history and symbolic significance, including the latter's role in ancestral ritual. Something similar has been suggested regarding the interpretation of formulae employed to mark the donor's receipt of royal appointments and his ensuing expression of gratitude such as "to bow prostrate" and "to extol the king's grace." Consider for instance the text inscribed on the mid- Western Zhou Li *juzun* 盞駒尊 (*JC* 6011), a *zun*-beaker cast in form of a horse with an inscribed front:

> 隹 (唯) 王十又二月，辰才 (在) 甲申，王初執駒于𠂤。王乎 (呼) 師豦召 (詔) 盞。王親旨 (詣) 盞駒易 (賜) 兩。
> It was in the twelfth month, when *chen* was at *jia-shen* (day 21 in the sexagesimal *gan-zhi* 干支 cycle), when the King for the first time selected colts at An. The King called out for Commander Qu to summon Li. The King personally selected colts for Li and bestowed a pair on him.

> 拜䭫 (稽) 首曰：王弗望 (忘) 毕 (厥) 舊宗小子，楚皇盞身。盞曰：王倗下不其 (期)，則邁 (萬) 年保我邁 (萬) 宗。
> [Li] bowed prostrate, speaking: "The King has not forgotten the young son of his old lineage and [?] Li's person"[26] Li spoke: "The King befriends those below without limit, and hence for ten-thousand years protects our ten thousand lineages."[27]

25 For further examples of rhymed inscriptions from late Western Zhou bells that follow the same pattern see the Jing Ren Ning *zhong* 井人妄鐘 (JC 109–12) and the late Western Zhou Liang Qi *zhong* 梁其鐘 (*JC* 187) inscriptions.

26 So far no interpretation has been suggested for the graph 楚.

27 Cf. Chen Yingjie, *Xizhou jinwen zuo qi yongtu mingci yanjiu*, 452.

> 盞曰：余其敢對揚天子之休，余用乍 (作) 朕文考大中 (仲) 寶噂 (尊) 彝。盞曰：其邁 (萬) 年世子孫孫永寶之。
>
> Li spoke: "I shall dare to extol the Son of Heaven's grace, wherefore I have commissioned the precious sacrificial *zun*-vessel for my cultured deceased father Da Zhong." Li spoke: "May sons and grandsons for ten thousand years and for ten thousand generations forever treasure it."

While most scholars would understand the statements in question as ritual testimonies marking the actual sequence of actions involved in the royal audience, Zhu Qizhi 朱其智 proposes a different interpretation here. He states:

> Within the inscriptions, the phrases (*bai* [*shou*] *qi shou* 拜 [手] 首) and "to extol" (*duiyang* 對揚) take on a transitional character in that they serve as links between adjacent paragraphs. In terms of their content, they do of course belong in the context of the appointment ceremony, yet looked at from the perspective of the inscriptions' structure, they should be understood as part of a 'casting statement' (*zuo qi zhi yong* 做器之用).[28]

Ondřej Škrabal even goes one step further. He has shown that in Western Zhou bronzes as well as in early transmitted texts, both these formulae have already developed into figures of speech conveying the acceptance of a royal appointment and the expression of gratitude towards the king without necessarily referring to the ritual action laid out in the formulae's literal meaning.[29] While this might not be the case with the statements we see in

28 「『拜 (手) 頷首』和『對揚』文句，在篇章中呈過渡性質，其著承上啓下的作用。從內容上看，它們是冊命儀禮的一部分，但從篇章結構上來看，當將它們歸入『做器之用』段落為妥」, Zhu Qizhi 朱其智 , *Xizhou mingwen pianzhang zhitong ji qi xiangguan yufa yanjiu* 西周銘文篇章指同及其相關語法研究 (Baoding: Hebei Daxue chubanshe, 2007), 85.

29 See Shi Anrui 石安瑞 (Ondřej Škrabal), "You tongqi mingwen de bianzuan jiaodu kan xizhou jinwen zhong 'bai shou qi shou' de xingzhi" 由銅器銘文的編纂角度看西周金文中「拜手稽首」的性質 (On the Nature of the Phrase "bai shou qi shou 拜手稽首 " in Western Zhou Bronze Inscriptions from the Perspective of Inscriptions' Composition), in *Qingtongqi yu jinwen* 青銅器與金文 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2017): 541–559. Škrabal moreover holds that passages pretending to record the exchange of words between the vessel donor and the king in Western Zhou bronze inscriptions, as well as the mentioning of gestures of receipt and gratitude performed by the donor, are not to be mistaken for descriptions of the actual actions, but must be seen in terms of the rhetoric employed in the vessel donor's casting statement. I strongly agree with him on this issue.

the Xing *zhong* inscription, they too need to be understood first and foremost as structural elements constituting the inscribed text. In his important 1993 review article, "Issues in Western Zhou Studies," von Falkenhausen proposed that all known bronze inscriptions adhere to a standardized tripartite scheme consisting of an "announcement of merit," a "statement of dedication," and a "statement of purpose."[30] Whereas not every part needs to be present in each and every inscription, the pattern nevertheless provides the "deep-structure' of any given Western Zhou epigraphic text. According to this deep-structure, the Xing *zhong* inscription may be divided into a statement of dedication: "Unceasing night and day, Xing lets his ability shine, pursuing filial devotion to his High Ancestor Xin Gong, […] by means of these harmoniously tuned *lin* bells;" and a statement of purpose making up the remainder of the text.[31]

The last portion from a typical statement of purpose has been further defined by Xu Zhongshu 徐中舒 (1898–1991) as *guci* 嘏辭 (auspicious words) formulae, a term employed in an idealized description of Zhou ancestral ritual found in the *Li Ji* 禮記 .[32] According to Zheng Xuan's 鄭玄 (127–200) and Sun Xidan's 孫希旦 (1736–1784) explanations, *guci* were words of blessing the spirits would have conveyed to the worshippers through the voice of an impersonator (*shi* 尸) or invocating priests.[33] Thus von Falkenhausen conjectures:

> The presence of *guci* in the bronze inscriptions strongly suggests that these inscriptions constitute the very messages that were presented to the spirits during a ceremony by their "pious descendants." [34]

However, apart from the fact that, especially longer bronzes texts, routinely address multiple target audiences, including not just the dead ancestors but also contemporary lineage members, peers and future descendants, these *guci*

30 Lothar von Falkenhausen, "Issues in Western Zhou Studies: A Review Article," *Early China* 18 (1993): 152–156.

31 Some scholars have pointed out that the Xing *zhong* inscription may have been preceded by a passage recording a royal appointment, inscribed on a second, perhaps now lost bell. Thus their might have been an "announcement of merit" in the Xing zhong inscription as well. Cf. von Falkenhausen, "Ritual music in Bronze Age China," 967, n. 8.

32 See Xu Zhongshu 徐中舒 , "Jinwen guci shili" 金文嘏辭釋例 , *Bulletin of the Institute of History and Philology* 6.1 (1936): 1–44.

33 Sun Xidan 孫希旦 , *Liji jijie* 禮記集解 (Taipei: Wenshizhe chubanshe, 1990 [1860]), 21.594–597.

34 Von Falkenhausen, "Issues in Western Zhou Studies," 24.

passages as well may be seen as part of an inscription's literary structure.[35] Besides, in the above cited Xing *zhong* inscription for instance, the *guci* passage comes right after the donor's pledge: "Xing will for ten thousand years present even-horned and redly gleaming sacrificial bulls." As this clearly marks a future promise, nothing suggests that the following lines were perceived to have been uttered by the donor's ancestors. Instead they read like a prediction on how the ancestors are expected to react upon receiving the promised offerings: "May the limitless brilliant blessings of the patterned spirits protect and glorify Xing's person; may I treasure these [bells] forever." Moreover, as is the case in the Xing *zhong* text, the majority of epigraphic *guci* passages culminate in the wish that their carriers may be used indefinitely by the donor and his descendants, thus turning the entire message into a statement related to the use of the bronze. In a way, these final lines complement the statement of dedication, "I made this bronze for my forebear(s) X," by concluding: "may it be used indefinitely." In sum, I would argue that von Falkenhausen's tripartite scheme ultimately allows us to interpret even the longest extant inscriptions in terms of extended, multi-layered casting statements within which references to ritual acts serve as confirmation, instruction and promise at the same time.[36] Together with the memory of events leading to the casting of a bronze or a set of bronzes, such as royal appointments in most cases, these claims and pledges imbue the bells and vessels with meaning *beyond* their physical employment in

35 Xu Zhongshu himself states at the beginning of his investigation: "Although the auspicious words in bronze inscriptions are not those which have been used within an actual ritual setting, the vessels they are inscribed on are for the most part sacrificial vessels. Thus some texts recount how a vessel was commissioned for and dedicated to the donor's forefathers, concluding this narrative with words of prayer; some recount the ancestor's deeds and extend this narrative with a passage pertaining to the receipt of ancestral blessings." (金文嘏辭雖非祭祀時所用，但此類器物，大半均為祭器。故銘文多述為父祖做器，而繼以祈匄之辭；或述其父祖功德，而申以錫降之文) , Xu Zhongshu, "Jinwen guci shili," 2.

36 In making this statement, I follow the position advocated in Itō Michiharu 伊藤道治 , *Chūgoku kodai kokka no shihai kōzō* 中国古代国家の支配構造 (Tokyo: Chūō kōronsha, 1987), 13–30, that the inscriptions speak from the standpoint of their named donors. For a discussion on the divergent positions on the topic of perspective and context see Li Feng, *Bureaucracy and the State in early China: Governing the Western Zhou* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 11–20, and Christian Schwermann, "Composite Authorship in Western Zhou Bronze Inscriptions: The Case of the 'Tianwang gui' 天亡簋 Inscription," in *That wonderful composite called author: Authorship in East Asian literatures from the beginnings to the seventeenth century*, eds. Christian Schwermann and Raji C Steineck (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 30–57.

ancestral ritual.

There are several other factors which support my position. The information we are able to retrieve from bronze inscriptions by philological means today would have been present in the living memory of the bronze donors and their peers. In other words there was ultimately no need for them to resort to the inscribed texts during ancestral rituals. This might explain why numerous Western and Eastern Zhou bronzes found to date are not inscribed at all. It also fits with the fact that all extant inscriptions are only legible upon close examination, a perspective hardly anyone would have been granted during ritual performances.[37] Moreover, in the case of food and alcohol vessels, the inscriptions, customarily cast on the inside of the containers, were completely covered up during sacrificial ceremonies and banquets.[38] All this suggests that texts inscribed on ritual bronze paraphernalia were perhaps never intended to be recited during ceremonies, but meant to be retrieved when their carriers were *not* in use, presumably in order for a later beholder to be able to re-construct the bronze's ritual and socio-political context through the act of reading the inscription. Whether some bronzes were inscribed as a precautionary measure against possible disruptions of ritual continuity, or whether it was because particular donors felt the need to cast their claims to political pedigree and social position into writing in the hope to shape their image for posterity, we might never know.

In any case, instead of simply assuming that we are dealing with the words actually reiterated by the donors and their descendants during ceremonial settings, it might be more reasonable to understand these inscribed messages in the manner they present themselves to anyone who endeavours to disclose their content, as figures of reading that is. In a couple of inscriptions this manner is

37 Both von Jessica Rawson and Kern stress that, based on their relatively coarse decorations, especially assemblies of late Western Zhou bronzes were intended to be looked at from a certain distance. Hence the perspective one would assume when reading the inscription iss notably different from the perspective indicated by the vessels' decoration. See Jessica Rawson, "Statesmen or Barbarians? The Western Zhou as seen through their Bronzes." *Proceedings of the British Academy* 75 (1989): 91; and Kern, "The Performance of Writing in Western Zhou China," 190. See also Lothar von Falkenhausen, "Late Western Zhou Taste," *Études chinoises* 18.1–2 (1999): 143–177.

38 Some scholars hold that the inscribed messages would have been perceived to mingle with the smell of food and ascended to the ancestral spirits during ritual performances. See for instance von Falkenhausen, *Suspended Music*, 147; Kern, "The Performance of Writing in Western Zhou China," and Cook, *Ancestors, Kings and the Dao*. However this claim is little more than an informed guess, there is no evidence whatsoever to substantiate this assumption.

rendered explicit by the presence of the particle *yue* 曰 , "to speak," used to introduce passages of direct speech, especially the king's commands.[39] Most importantly, texts from bronze inscriptions manage to accommodate switches between speakers and audiences addressed in different contexts at different points in time by presenting these spatially and temporally separate events in correlation. This sort of operation can only be achieved within the realm of literature. Its success is furthermore contingent upon the process of reading the inscription in one continuous setting. To assume that separate portions of an inscription were retrieved in different settings or that some were ritually re-enacted while others were not would be tantamount to depriving the text of its very nature.

This is not to say that some ritual formulae, such as those in the Xing *zhong* and Li *juzun* inscriptions above, could not have been modelled on those words actually spoken during royal investitures or ancestral sacrifices. However, once they enter the text of an inscription, they turn into building blocks of a literary text and its overall message, held together by the latter's linguistic fabric. Some scholars might object that at least the king's charges, as we find them in numerous appointment inscriptions, present us with abbreviated versions from the actual written commands that were handed to the appointee during the award ceremony.[40] Assuming this is basically correct, we again have to account for the systemic difference between the actual command and the command as part of an inscription. Škrabal brings it to the point when he states:

> The text of an appointment inscription cannot be understood as a verbatim epigraphic version of the original appointment document. The inscription rather reworks the information from the latter into an entirely new text,

39 The king's commands are mostly marked by the phrase "*wang ruo yue*" 王若曰 , "the King spoke approvingly" (i.e. approving of the vessel donor's appointment). The interpretation of *ruo* 若 , old-Chinese *nak, as *nuo* 諾 , old-Chinese *nˁak, to approve, follows a phonetic gloss in Luo Zhenyu 羅振玉 , *Zengding Yinxu shuqi kaoshi* 增訂殷墟書契考釋 (Taipei: Yiwen yinshuguan, 1969 [1916]), 2.56. For the interpretation of the phrase *ruo yue* 若曰 in Western Zhou bronze inscriptions as a statement of approval see von Falkenhausen, "The Royal Audience and its Reflections in Western Zhou Bronze Inscriptions," in *Writing and Literacy in Early China: Studies from the Columbia Early China Seminar*, ed. Li Feng and David Prager Branner (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 2011), 264–267.

40 See for instance Chen Hanping 陳漢平 , *Xizhou ceming zhidu yanjiu* 西周冊命制度研究 (Shanghai: Xuelin chubanshe, 1986), 306–307; and von Falkenhausen, *Suspended Music*, 156–158.

> [⋯] into a ritual message directed at multiple target audiences, ranging from the ancestors from the past, contemporary lineage members, peers and affinal relatives, all the way to the donor's future descendants.[41]

If that is the case, we may indeed reasonably speak about Western Zhou bronze inscriptions in terms of literary texts consciously transcending the temporal boundedness of the performative.

This then brings us back to our initial question: Are verbal parallelisms, such as rhyme and meter in the bronzes necessarily bound to a performative ritual setting, or can these features also be understood in terms of literary characteristics? In order to answer this question, we first of all need to define exactly what we mean by "literary." Literariness, as I use the term here, refers to the internal organization of a text in a way that it foregrounds its *linguistic manner*.[42] The latter, moreover, should fulfil a significant function in the shaping and communication of the encoded message. How then can we tell whether the linguistic properties of a given inscription fall into this category or not? It does if rhyme and other sorts of verbal parallelism can be shown to function as an *extended sign context*, which contributes to an enhanced understanding of the inscribed message.[43] This is the case if certain rhyme-series concur with certain topics or units of meaning for instance.

In the remainder of this paper I will explore this possibility by subjecting the text from a rhymed *yong* bell inscription to a thorough literary analysis. Among the available corpus I have chosen the text inscribed on the late Western Zhou Guoji bian *zhong* 虢季編鐘 (NA 1–8) assemblage for closer scrutiny, as this is one of the most metrically regular text among the extant corpus of Western and Eastern Zhou bell inscriptions, presenting us with an

41 「冊命銘文不是逐字抄存冊命文書內容的青銅版文書，而是利用文書中信息的新一篇文章……形成針對許多不同的目標群 —— 從過去的祖先，當時的家族成員，同僚、友人、婚姻聯盟成員等，至於後世的子孫 —— 的儀式信息」, Škrabal, "You tongqi mingwen de bianzuan jiaodu kan xizhou jinwen zhong 'bai shou qi shou' de xingzhi," 547. The translation into English is my own.

42 For this definition see Jan Assmann, "Kulturelle Texte im Spannungsfeld von Mündlichkeit und Schriftlichkeit," in Andreas Poltermann, ed., *Literaturkanon – Medienereignis – Kultureller Text: Formen interkultureller Kommunikation und Übersetzung* (Berlin: Erich Schmidt Verlag, 1995), 270–292. for an English translation, see idem, *Religion and Cultural Memory: Ten Studies*, trans. Rodney Livingstone (Stanford Ca.: Stanford University Press, 2006), 101–121.

43 For this term and its definition see Wolfgang Behr and Joachim Gentz, "Einleitung zum Themenschwerpunkt, Komposition und Konnotation – Figuren der Kunstprosa im Alten China," *Bochumer Jahrbuch zur Ostasienforschung* 29 (2005): 5.

almost perfect rhyme pattern.[44] Moreover, as Chen Zhi has previously shown, the text from the Guoji *zhong* inscription comes closest in content and literary form to the rhymed Zhou Hymns in the transmitted *Mao Odes*.[45] The results of this investigation may therefore be of some significance to the study of the *Mao Odes* and their relation to Western Zhou epigraphic sources as well.

3.The Guoji bell chime and its inscriptions

The Guoji bell assemblage was discovered together with a huge amount of funerary items, including among them 58 ritual bronzes, retrieved during the archeological excavation of tomb M2001 from the Guo 虢 lineage cemetery between March 1990 and May 1991 at the site of Shangcunling 上村嶺 in modern day Sanmenxia 三門峽 city, Henan 河南 province.[46] The hitherto undisturbed tomb, probably dating from the late Western Zhou or early Springs and Autumns period,[47] is named after its occupant, Guoji, who is thought to have been the founder of a Guo sub-lineage.[48] Apart from the bell chime, the

44 For a detailed description of the assemblage and the circumstances of its excavation see Henan sheng Wenwu Kaogu Yanjiusuo 河南省文物考古研究所 and Sanmenxia shi Wenwu Gongzuo-dui 三門峽市文物工作隊 , *Sanmenxia Guoguo mu* 三門峽虢國墓 (Beijing: Wenwu Chubans-he, 1999), 71–79. The inscriptions are also recorded and transcribed in Liu Yu 劉雨 and Lü Yan 盧巖 eds., *Jin chu Yin Zhou jinwen jilu* 近出殷周金文集錄 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2002), 210–226, and in Wu Zhenfeng 吳鎮烽 ed., *Shang Zhou qingtongqi mingwen ji tuxiang jicheng* 商周青銅器銘文暨圖像集成 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2012), vol. 27, 500–514.

45 Chen Zhi, "Cong 'Zhou Song' yu jinwen zhong chengyu de yunyong lai kan gu ge shi zhi yongyun ji siyan shiti de xingcheng," 25–26.

46 See Henan Sheng Wenwu Kaogu Yanjiusuo, *Sanmenxia Guoguo mu*, 71–79.

47 The polity of Guo allegedly was founded by younger full brothers of King Wen (Wen Wang 文王) during the early Western Zhou period. Throughout Western and Eastern Zhou times several ruling lineages from the House of Guo co-existed until the state had been conquered by Jin 晉 in 655 BC. For the history of the various Guo lineages and polities see Chen Mengjia 陳夢家 , *Xizhou tongqi duandai* 西周銅器斷代 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2004), 384–398; Lothar von Falkenhausen, *Chinese Society in the Age of Confucius (1000–250 BC): The Archaeological Evi-dence* (Los Angeles: Cotsen Institute of Archaeology, University of California, 2006), 91–111; and especially Li Feng, *Landscape and Power in Early China: The Crisis and Fall of the West-ern Zhou 1045–771 BC* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 251–261. For different arguments about the dating of the Shangcun ling cemetery see the sources listed in Falkenhausen, *Chinese Society in the Age of Confucius (1000–250 BC)*, 92, n. 35, n. 36.

48 Li Feng assumes that the epithet Ji 季 in Guoji 虢季 does not stand as a personal seniority marker but as part of the name, indicating that Guoji might have been the founder of the Ji sub-lineage. See Li Feng, *Landscape and Power in Early China*, 252, 256.

M2001:49 (*Sanmenxia Guoguo mu*, plate 8:1)

tomb also yielded 31 more inscribed bronzes commissioned by the occupant, among them seven graded *ding* 鼎 tripods, indicating Guoji must have been a ruler within the Guo polity.

Most of the altogether 39 inscribed Guoji bronzes merely bear variations of a standard casting formula such as the following to be found on each of the seven Guoji *ding* cauldrons:

> 虢季乍 (作) 寶鼎，季氏其萬年子子孫孫永寶用亯 (享) 。[49]
> Guoji had made these precious ding cauldrons,[50] shall the Ji sub-lineage treasure and use them in sacrifices for generations without end.

Only the identical inscriptions cast on the first four bells of the Guoji bian *zhong* chime (M2001:45; M2001:49; M2001:48; M2001:44) present us with a longer text, comprising altogether 51 graphs. Among those, only the inscriptions on M2001:49 and on M2001:48 are fully legible.

49 See Henan Sheng Wenwu Kaogu Yanjiusuo, *Sanmenxia Guoguo mu*, 33–38.

50 I choose to translate the word *zuo* 乍 (作), "to make," here in the causative sense as "to have something made," thus indicating that the donor did not actually craft the bronze himself, but had it commissioned in a bronze workshop, presumably after the Zhou king granted him the right and the material to do so. The choice for the past perfect tense does not imply that the inscription was placed on the bell after it was cast, as Western Zhou bronze inscriptions were customarily cast together with their carriers. However, in line with this article's argument, I believe that the inscribed texts were composed by taking into account a later reader's perspective. It therefore makes sense to assume that past perfect was in fact the intended choice of tense not just for this, but for all casting statements except for those explicitly marked as the donor's direct speech, such as in the text from the Li *juzun* inscription cited above.

If we arrange the text according to its rhyme pattern, taking each rhyme position to indicate a sentence break, the inscription reads as follows:

隹 (唯) 十月初吉丁亥	
虢季乍 (作) 為  (協) 鐘 *toŋ	【東】A
其音  (鳴)  (雍) *loŋ	【東】A
用義 (宜) 其 (家) *kˁra /  (宁 = 賓) *pi[n]	【魚】c /【真】X
用與其邦 *pˁroŋ	【東】A
虢季乍 (作) 寶 *pˁuʔ	【幽】B
用亯 (享) 追孝 *qʰˁ<r>uʔ-s	【幽】B
于其皇考 *k-r̥ˁuʔ	【幽】B
用旛 (祈) 萬壽 *[N-t]uʔ	【幽】B
用樂用亯 (享) *[qʰ]aŋʔ	【陽】C
季氏受福無彊 *kaŋ	【陽】C

It was in the tenth month during beginning auspiciousness, on *ding-hai* day,
When Guoji had made these harmoniously tuned bells;
Their chime sounds "*yong*."
He uses them to comfort his family / guests;
He uses them to consolidate his polity.
Guoji had made these treasures,
He uses them to present offerings, sacrificing
To his august deceased father;[51]
He uses them to pray for long life.
He uses them to entertain and to present offerings.
The Ji sub-lineage shall receive boundless blessings.

The decipherment and interpretation of the text proves to be relatively unproblematic except for line four, which I have rendered "he uses them to comfort his family / guests." While the reading of the graph " 義 " as { 宜 } (to suit, to comfort) is quite common in Western Zhou bronze inscriptions,[52] the last graph can be interpreted either as "家" (family / household) or as "賓" (guests).[53] In

51 "Yong xiang zhui xiao yu" 用享追孝于 is a variation of a sacrificial formula centred on the terms *xiang* and *xiao*, both are used as verbs here in the sense of to offer or to feast, see Chen Yingjie, (2008), 239–244; 709–714; see also Chen Zhi, "Yuan xiao" 原孝 , Renwen Zhongguo 人文中國 9 (2002): 229–252, revised and reprinted in idem, (2012), 159–176, esp. 164–167.

52 See Tian Wei 田煒 , *Xizhou jinwen zi ci guanxi yanjiu* 西周金文字詞關係研究 (Shanghai, Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2016), 61–63, 228–229.

53 Except for Liu Yu and Lü Yan (2002), all other transcriptions have *jia* 家 instead of *bin* 賓 .

M2001:49 the graph  does resemble the form  , transcribed as "家" in the late Western Zhou Song *hu* lid 頌壺蓋 inscription (*JC* 9732).[54] However the graph  in M2001:48 does rather resemble the form  , transcribed "宥" and interpreted as { 賓 } in the mid- Western Zhou Cuo *zhong* 虘鐘 inscription (*JC* 88).[55] From the point of view of the text's general argument, both interpretations would make perfect sense. Although *bin* appears frequently in bell inscriptions from late Western Zhou and Springs and Autumns times within the standard formula "*yong yue hao bin*" 用樂好賓 (to use it / them [the bell(s)] to entertain esteemed guests),[56] *jia*, in this formulation, is virtually absent in the same corpus. Yet if we look at the juxtaposition of *jia* and *bang* 邦 (polity) in our inscription, we find that those two concepts appear as a pair elsewhere in Western Zhou bronze inscriptions as well.[57] For instance in the text from the late Western Zhou Mao Gong *ding* 毛公鼎 inscription (*JC* 2841) we find the following two passages from a royal command:[58]

> 王曰：父曆，今余唯肇 (肇) 巠 (經) 王命，命女 (汝) 辟 (乂) 我邦、我家内外……。
> The king said: "Father Yin! I now follow the path of the former King's order and charge you to administer my polity and the inside and outside affairs of my (the royal) household.

> 王曰：父曆，今余唯蘲 (申) 先王命，命女 (汝) 亟一方，  (宏) 我邦、我家……。
> The King said, "Father Yin! I now broaden the charge of the former King and order you to take exclusive control over this one area. Make great our polity and expand (the influence of) my house.[59]

Even though the context here is different from that of the Guoji bell text, it does make sense to understand that Guoji may have used the bells both during the feasting of his male kin folk and during banquets summoning the officials

54 Rong Geng 容庚 , ed., *Jinwen bian* 金文編 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1985), 510.

55 Ibid, 433.

56 See Chen Yingjie, *Xizhou jinwen zuo qi yongtu mingci yanjiu*, 323–325; 338–340.

57 I shall thank Maria Khayutina for pointing this out to me.

58 See also the inscription on the late Western Zhou Shuxiang fu Yu *gui* 叔向父禹簋 (*JC* #4242).

59 The translation of both passages is slightly adapted from Robert Eno "Inscriptional Records of the Western Zhou," 74–75, last modified January 2017, http://www.iub.edu/~g380/3.10-WZhou_Bronzes-2010.pdf.

who were in charge of administering his polity. Since the contrast between one's household and one's polity as a difference between inner and outer or between private and "public" seems to befit the context better than a somewhat unclear differentiation between guests and the polity, I choose to adopt the former variant in the following.[60]

In terms of its message, the entire text reads like an extended casting statement elaborating on the bells' material features, its acoustic properties as well as on its purposes, similar to the text from the Xing *zhong* inscription, quoted at the beginning of this paper. Before we proceed to an in depth literary analysis of the text, I would like to quote some further examples in order to demonstrate that the Guoji *zhong* inscription is not unique in its content but follows a generic pattern found in bronze bell inscriptions from the mid-Western Zhou period all the way to late Springs and Autumns times. To date, the earliest extant example of this kind is the mid- Western Zhou Cuo *zhong* 鐘 (*JC* 88) inscription:

隹 (唯) 正月初吉丁亥	
虘乍 (作) 寶鐘 *toŋ	【東】a
用追孝 *qʰˁ<r>uʔ-s	【幽】B
于己白 (伯)*pˁrak	【鐸】X
用亯 (享) 大宗 *[ts]ˁuŋ	【冬】A
用 (濼) 樂好宧 (賓)*pi[n]	【真】X
虘眾 (暨) 蔡姬永寶 *pˁuʔ	【幽】B
用卲大宗 *[ts]ˁuŋ	【冬】A

It was in the first month during beginning auspiciousness, on *ding-hai* day,
When Cuo had made these treasured bells.
He uses them to sacrifice
To Elder Ji.
He uses them to present offerings at the great lineage temple
And to entertain esteemed guests.
Cuo and (his consort) Cai Ji shall treasure them forever
And use them to welcome [the ancestors] at the great lineage temple.

The same three purposes as those mentioned in the Guoji *zhong* inscription, offering sacrifices to the donor's father and ancestors as well as the feasting of

60 For a similar interpretation of this line see Chen Yingjie, *Xizhou jinwen zuo qi yongtu mingci yanjiu* , 541–542.

guests, can be observed in this inscription too. This tripartite structure appears similar also in the text from the late Western Zhou Xian *zhong* 鮮鐘 (*JC* 143) inscription, only that in this case it is preceded by a terse account of a royal bestowal which led to the casting of the bell:

隹 (唯) □月初吉□寅
王才 (在) 成周嗣 (司) 土 (徒) 滮宮
王易 (錫) 鮮 (鮮) 吉金
鮮 (鮮) 擇 (拜) 手䭫 (稽) 首 *l̥uʔ 【幽】A
敢 (敢) 對揚天子休 *qʰ(r)u 【幽】A
用乍 (作) 朕皇考𣪊 (林) 鐘 *toŋ 【東】X
用侃喜上下 *gˁraʔ 【魚】b
用樂好賓 *pi[n] 【真】X
用旛 (祈) 多福 *pək 【職】a/b
子孫永寶 *pˁuʔ 【幽】A
It was in the […] month during beginning auspiciousness, on […]-*yin* day,
When the King was in Cheng-Zhou at the palace of the Minister of Troops, Hu.
The King bestowed on Xian precious metals.
Xian, bowing prostrate touching his head to the ground,
Dared to respond to and to extol the Son of Heaven's grace,
Wherefore he had made these Lin bells for his august deceased father.
He uses them to delight [the spirits] above and below,
And to entertain distinguished guests.
He uses them to pray for manifold blessings.
Sons and grandsons shall treasure them forever.

The same structure surfaces again in the text from the late Springs and Autumns Qi Baoshi *zhong* 齊鮑氏鐘 (JC 142) inscription:

隹 (唯) 正月初吉丁亥
齊鞷 (鮑) 氏孫□巽 (擇) 其吉金
自乍 (作) 穌鐘 *toŋ 【東】X
卑 (俾) 鳴攴好 *qʰˁuʔ 【幽】A
用亯 (享) 台 (以) 孝 *qʰˁ<r>uʔ-s 【幽】A
于𠂤 (予) 皇且 (祖) 文考 *k-r̥ˁuʔ 【幽】A
用匽用喜 *qʰ(r)əʔ 【之】a
用樂嘉賓 *pi[n] 【真】X

及我**匌**(朋)友 *[ɢ]ʷəʔ 【之】a
子子孫孫永寶鼓之 *tə 【之】a

It was in the first month, beginning auspiciousness, on *ding-hai* day
When Sun […] from the Bao lineage of Qi[61] selected auspicious metals
To make these harmonious bells on his own account,
Causing them to sound pleasant.[62]
I use them to present offerings and to sacrifice
To my august forebears and my cultured father.
I use them to feast and delight (the ancestral spirits);
I use them to entertain distinguished guests
As well as my peers.
Sons and Grandsons shall treasure and strike them forever.

Many more examples could be cited that fit into this pattern to a greater or lesser degree. Although none of these three examples matches the metrical regularity as well as the neat rhyme pattern observed in Guoji bell inscription even remotely, what immediately catches the eye is that apart from their similarity in content, these inscriptions also share a limited repertoire of rhyme words that belong to an even narrower spectrum of rhyme classes. Taking into account also the above cited Xing *zhong* inscription as well as similar bell inscriptions mentioned in Chen Zhi (2010), 17–28, we find that eight rhyme categories stand out in particular. Those are *dong* 東 (*-oŋ), *you* 幽 (*-uʔ), *yang* 陽 (*-aŋ), *zhi* 之 (*-ə[ʔ]), *zhen* 真 (*-in), *zhi* 職 (*-ək), *yu* 魚 (*-aʔ) and *dong* 冬 (*-uŋ) respectively. Except for *dong* 冬 , all of these belong to the eleven rhyme groups which according to Behr (2009) feature more than ten rhyme words each in the extant corpus of Western Zhou bronze inscriptions.[63] Their distribution in the inscriptional corpus, moreover, is in large parts due to extra-linguistic factors such as the appearance of stock rhymes and the recurrent use of certain rhyme words within formulaic expressions, including the issuing and the answering of royal mandates and the auspicious formulae at the end of most inscriptions. The former, as David Schaberg has shown, preferred words ending on *-aŋ, *-oŋ, *-ək, *-ə(ʔ) and *-u(ʔ) in the ultimate

61 Cf. Guo Moruo 郭沫若 , *Liang Zhou jinwenci daxi tulu kaoshi* 兩周金文辭大系圖錄考釋 , revised edition (Beijing: Kexue chubanshe, 1957 [1935]), 211, for the identity of the donor.

62 The transcription and interpretation of this clause follows Guo Moruo, *Liang Zhou jinwenci daxi tulu kaoshi*, 211.

63 Behr, *Reimende Bronzeinschriften und die Entstehung der chinesischen Endreimdichtung*, 421.

position of consecutive or proximate phrases.[64] In fact, Schaberg even states that "the placement of words with these *finals* (not only these rhymes), at the ends of phrases (more than anywhere else) associated an utterance with the royal style and the style of command," [65] thus leading him to speak about consonance (i.e. alliteration of finals) rather than rhyme.

Nevertheless, the distribution of words featuring these finals according to the above mentioned rhyme groups does matter, for, as Schaberg further points out, certain rhymes tend to relate to specific conceptual fields in this special language.[66] We see for example *-aŋ and *-oŋ series dominating the formulae of royal commands, while *-u(ʔ) clusters mostly appear within an aristocrat's response to the former. Yet what happens with these sound patterns in the transition from ritual speech to written literary texts? My guess would be that they turn into thematic markers. This is exactly the phenomenon Haun Saussy has observed with regard to the distribution of rhyme groups in the Greater Elegantiae and Hymns sections in the *Odes*. Saussy thus refers to these rhyme families as "phonetic and thematic units."[67] What is more important, he differentiates between their primary appearance (possibly in the context of ceremonial speech [A/N]) and their secondary retrieval in the context of literary composition:

> Do the rhyme-words take over and write the poem on their own? Or does the theory of kingship dictate the poetry? To be sure, the poets use these words because these are the words the Chinese language makes available; many of these words would also occur in a prose document on the same subject. But to treat this vocabulary as nothing more than a set of meaningful terms would be to ignore the power of poetic technique and transmission to shape content and, over time, linguistic usage. It must have been after poetic precedent had assembled and linked these typical rhyme-words that they could have taken on such insistent, symptomatic force, eventually becoming obligatory metaphors of royal power and hastening in whole crews to fill out a stanza whenever one of them had

64 See David Schaberg, "Command and the Content of Tradition," in *The Magnitude of Ming: Command, Allotment and Fate in Chinese Culture*, ed. Christopher Lupke (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2005), 37–41.

65 Ibid, 38. Schaberg's observation also pertains to certain groups of words ending on -k and -ʔ in the Baxter/Sagart transcription.

66 Ibid, 37.

67 Haun Saussy, "Repetition, Rhyme, and Exchange in the Book of Odes," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 57.2 (1997): 538–542.

> been used. [⋯] These rhyme-families invite the speculation that the ability to invoke thematically appropriate rhyme-series would have been part of the equipment of any competent *Shi jing* composer.[68]

The question is, does this apply for the use of rhyme in certain texts from bronze inscriptions as well or does the Guoji bell inscription just count as one of those "extreme examples, distillations and regularizations of possibilities inherent in ceremonial speech," as Schaberg puts it?[69] This question shall be addressed in the following.

4. Towards a literary reading of the text from the Guoji bell inscriptions

As a first step towards a more close literary reading of the text from the Guoji bell inscriptions I will visually highlight the text's internal divisions according to its rhyme pattern by organizing the text into stanzas:

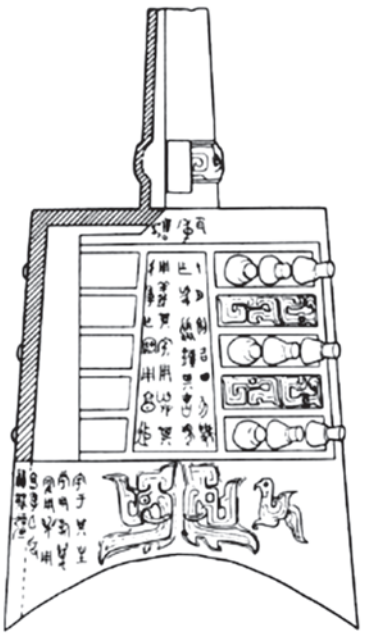
隹十月初吉丁亥

虢季乍為協鐘 *toŋ	【東】A
其音鳴雍 *loŋ	【東】A
用義其家 *kˁra	【魚】c
用與其邦 *pˁroŋ	【東】A
虢季乍寶 *pˁuʔ	【幽】B
用享追孝 *qʰˁ<r>uʔ-s	【幽】B
于其皇考 *k-r̥ˁuʔ	【幽】B
用祈萬壽 *[N-t]uʔ	【幽】B
用樂用享 *[qʰ]aŋʔ	【陽】C
季氏受福無彊 *kaŋ	【陽】C

Leaving aside the dating formula, which customarily does not form part of an inscription's rhymed portion, the Guoji bell text appears to fall into three parts. We can clearly distinguish between the passages as they concur with the rhyme changes. Moreover, we find the first line of the text's second

68 Ibid, 541.

69 Schaberg, "Command and the Content of Tradition," 39.



M2001:48 (*Sanmenxia Guoguo mu*, 75)

main portion to retrieve the casting statement from line two with an altered ending, thus introducing not just a new topic but also the second rhyme within the series. Since as a rule early Chinese bronze inscriptions follow the principle of economy, we cannot expect to find this kind of redundancy in any bronze inscription unless it fulfils a certain non-trivial function. Here, as we will see more explicitly below, it is clearly meant to act as a structuring device distinguishing the text's two main topics. Furthermore, the fact that the inscription on M2001:48 exceeds the bell's surface segments normally reserved for writing, shows that the text could not have been shortened in any way. As this is hardly the case regarding the text's message, it must have been due to the requirements of the text's literary form.

A further clear indicator for the inscription's literary nature is the phrase, "Guoji had made these harmoniously tuned bells, their chime sounds 'yong. '" It suggests that the time of textual retrieval was probably not meant to coincide with that of the bells' musical performance. This is something the Guoji bell text has in common with numerous Western Zhou and Springs and Autumns bell inscriptions that describe their carriers' sound in a similar fashion by using onomatopoeia. For example in the late Western Zhou Hu *zhong* 鄘鐘 or Zong-Zhou *zhong* 宗周鐘 inscription (*JC* 260) we find the following expression:

> 王對乍 (作) 宗周寶鐘，倉倉悤悤，雝雝雝雝，用卲各不 (丕) 顯且 (祖) 考先王。
>
> The king had made this precious Zong-Zhou bell in response [to Heaven's

and the ancestors' protection]. (Its chime sounds) *ts^{hʕ}aŋ-*ts^{hʕ}aŋ, *[ts]^{hʕ}oŋ-*[ts]^{hʕ}oŋ, *t^{ʕ}or-*t^{ʕ}or, *q(r)oŋ-*q(r)oŋ. He uses it to welcome down his glorious grandfather and the former Kings.

Similar on the late Western Zhou Qiu *zhong* 逑鐘 (NA 773) it states:

逑敢對天子丕顯魯休𠭯，用乍 (作) 朕皇考龔弔 (叔) 穌鐘。鎗鎗悤悤，𨗉𨗉鏞鏞，用追孝，卲各喜侃前文人。
Qiu dares to extol the gracious gift from the Son of Heaven wherefore he had made these harmoniously tuned bells for his august deceased father Gong Shu. (Their chime sounds) *ts^{hʕ}aŋ-*ts^{hʕ}aŋ, *[ts]^{hʕ}oŋ-*[ts]^{hʕ}oŋ, x-x, *q(r)oŋ-*q(r)oŋ. May they be used to present offerings and to welcome down and delight the ancestors.

Such expressions were likely conceived to substitute for the real audible experience one would have when listening to the chime being played.[70] It would be misleading, I think, to understand these onomatopoeic phrases as parts of ritual speech acts originally having been uttered during the bells' performance. Rather, the use of onomatopoeic images enables the texts to incorporate and transform audible performance aesthetics into their own artistic conception, presumably with the intent of having them transcend the temporal boundedness of the performative setting. Again, if this is the case, we would indeed be dealing with consciously poetic texts or passages of texts.

As we have already pointed out above, many of the rhyme groups or consonance clusters found in Western Zhou bronze inscriptions are inextricably linked with certain ritual topics or conceptual fields. This obviously also applies to the three rhyme classes that constitute the rhyme scheme in the Guoji bell inscription. More than that, I argue, these well-established phono-thematic units are intended here to poetically mingle with and thus become associated with the physical and audible properties of the bell. This becomes clear when we consider the rhyme words within the text's English translation. In order to render the rhyme scheme visible in the English text, words corresponding to the Old Chinese rhyme-words from the *dong*- 東 rhyme group are underlined with dots, words corresponding to those from the *you*- 幽 group with a broken line, and those corresponding to the OC rhyme-words from the yang- 陽 group are underlined with a sequence of upended squares:

70 Similar phenomena can be observed in the *Odes*' Temple Hymns section as well. See for example *Zhi jing* 執競 (Mao #274) and *You gu* 有瞽 (Mao #280). Both texts are also dealt with in Kern, "The Performance of Writing in Western Zhou China," 166–168.

Guo Ji had made these harmoniously tuned bells,
Their chime sounds "yong."
He uses them to comfort his family,
He uses them to consolidate his polity.

Guo Ji had made these treasures;
He uses them to present offerings, sacrificing
To his august deceased father;
He uses them to pray for long life.

He uses them to entertain and to present offerings;
The Ji sub-lineage shall receive boundless blessings.

The divisions indicated by the rhyme sequences prove to be exactly in line with the text's topical units. In the first passage, marked by the rhyme *-oŋ, the bell, *toŋ, introduced as a physical object, is juxtaposed to its sound, *loŋ, thus establishing the first rhyme sequence. The second "verse"[71] further relates the bell's physicality and sound to its socio-political function. The absent rhyme in the second line is bridged by a perfect syntactical parallelism, equaling the entertainment of family and kin with the consolidation of the polity, *pˁroŋ. The second passage starts with a retrieval of the casting statement, substituting treasure, *pˁuʔ, for bell, *toŋ, in the rhyming position, thus introducing the second rhyme sequence.[72] This sequence relates to the bell's significance in private ancestral sacrifice. Here it is not the bells' physical shape or sound that seems to matter. Instead the focus shifts to the precious material they are made of, supposedly bestowed upon Guo Ji by the Zhou king, which qualifies the bells for their use in ancestral sacrifice.[73] Thus we are dealing with two phono-thematic units juxtaposed to each other in two complementary strands by means of verbal patterning. The last passage conjoins these two thematic fields into one single theme: "He uses them to entertain and to present offerings."

71 It is important to note here that the inscribed physical text shows no arrangement mirroring verse boundaries or stanzas. Talking of verses here has to be understood as the invention of a purely analytic tool helping us to make sense of the text's structure that would have been realized in verbal retrieval.

72 The retrieval of the same topic concurring with a change of rhyme after a stanzaic division is also frequently observed in the Airs of the States section in the *Odes*. See Saussy, "Repetition, Rhyme, and Exchange in the Book of Odes," 523.

73 This is suggested also by the eulogy *Zai xian*. The king awards a minister with precious metals which the latter used to commission the casting of a vessel in the royal foundry.

Interesting at this point is further the connection between the words bell (*toŋ) and treasure (*pˁuʔ) and the established phono-thematic units they introduce. Each marking the beginning of a rhyme sequence, the two terms gather their intended associations while the sequences progress. This concurrence of phonetic and thematic contiguity is also important when it comes to the bells' sound, *loŋ. What might appear to be a purely onomatopoeic expression, supposedly intended to mimetically reproduce the bell's sound, does in fact relate to the semantic field associated with the -oŋ assonance group in Western Zhou ceremonial speech. The same phenomenon can be observed with onomatopoeic expressions in the *Odes*. Let us consider for instance the following *-aŋ sequence in the Temple Hymn *Zhi jing* 執競 (Mao #274):

執競武王 *ɢʷaŋ	【陽】A	Terrible in his power was King Wu,
無競維烈 *[r]at	【月】X	None so mighty in glory.
不顯成康 *k-r̥ˁaŋ	【陽】A	Illustrious were Cheng and Kang,
上帝是皇 *[ɢ]ʷˁaŋ	【陽】A	Whom Di on High made august.
自彼成康 *k-r̥ˁaŋ	【陽】A	From the days of Cheng and Kang
奄有四方 *C-paŋ	【陽】A	Ours were the lands of the four quarters.
斤斤其明 *mraŋ	【陽】A	Dazzling their brightness,
鐘鼓喤喤 *[ɢ]ʷˁaŋ-*[ɢ]ʷˁaŋ	【陽】A	**The bells and drums sound huang-huang,**
磬筦將將 *[ts]aŋ-*[ts]aŋ	【陽】A	**The stone-chime and pipes echo jiang-jiang,**
降福穰穰 *naŋ-*naŋ	【陽】A	The blessings come down abundantly.[74]

Here as well, the onomatopoeic reduplicatives used to render the sound of bells, drums and pipes seem to have been consciously chosen to fit into the phono-thematic *-aŋ series, relating to the topic of royal power. This is also the case in the Eulogy *Zai xian* 載見 (Mao #283), which further shows a tripartite structure similar to that of the text from the Guoji bell inscription:[75]

74 The Chinese text, see Qu Wanli 屈萬里 , *Shjing quanshi* 詩經詮釋 (Taipei: Lianjing, 1983), 565. The English translation follows, with slight adaptions, that of Arthur Waley, *The Book of Songs: The Ancient Classic of Poetry*, ed. Joseph R. Allen (New York: Grove Press, 1996 [1937]), 294.

75 The literary contiguities between the text from the Guoji bell inscription and the Mao Eulogy *Zai xian*, especially concerning their similar rhyme patterns, have been first pointed out in Chen Zhi, "Cong 'Zhou Song' yu jinwen zhong chengyu de yunyong lai kan gu ge shi zhi yongyun ji siyan shiti de xingcheng," 25–26.

載見辟王 *ɢʷaŋ	【陽】A	They appeared before their sovereign King,
曰求厥章 *taŋ	【陽】A	They sought their insignia from him.
龍旂陽陽 *laŋ	【陽】A	Dragon-banners blazing bright,
和鈴央央 *ʔaŋ	【陽】A	**Tuneful bells tinkling,**
鞗革有鶬 *[s.r̥]ˁaŋ	【陽】A	Bronze-knobbed reins jangling,
休有烈光 *kʷˁaŋ	【陽】A	The gifts shone with glorious light.
率見昭考 *k-r̥ˁuʔ	【幽】B	They presented them to their bright ancestors,
以孝 *qʰˁ<r>uʔ-s	【幽】B	thus paying their reverence,
以享 *[qʰ]aŋʔ	【陽】A	thus making their offerings,
以介眉壽 *[N-t]uʔ	【幽】B	that they might be vouchsafed long life.
永言保 *pˁuʔ 之	【幽】B	Oh treasure it forever!
思皇多祜 *[g]ˁaʔ	【魚】C	Great and many are their blessings.
烈文辟公 *C.qˁoŋ	【東】c	Glorious and mighty, those former patriarchs,
綏以多福 *pək	【職】c	Who secure us with many blessings,
俾緝熙于純嘏 *kraʔ	【魚】C	Through whose bright splendors we greatly prosper.[76]

In both examples, the choice of onomatopoeic expressions clearly follows phonorhetorical considerations based on the conventions of ceremonial speech. This interpenetration of phonorhetoric and musical acoustics results in a merging of special language and performance aesthetics in the medium of the text. The effect created by such an operation could not have been achieved by the actual coincidence of musical performance and speech but through the texts recital outside of any context involving the bells' actual use. Thus the image of a ritual multi-media performance serves merely as a reference for the *extended sign-context* on the text's phonorhetoric level.

We could even go one step further in our analysis and look into the text's complete phonorhetorical pattern by providing a phonetic transcription of the entire text (not including the dating formula):[77]

號季乍為協鐘 【東】A *[k]ʷˁrak *kʷi[t]-s *[ts]ˁak *ɢʷ(r)aj *[ɢ]ˁep *toŋ

76 Qu Wanli, *Shjing quanshi*, 578. The English follows, with slight adaptations, Waley, *The Book of Songs*, 299.

77 This is an approach first applied to early Chinese texts in Jeffrey R. Tharsen, "Chinese Euphonics: Phonetic Patterns, Phonorhetoric and Literary Artistry in Early Chinese Narrative Texts" (Ph.D diss., University of Chicago, 2015).

其音鳴雍　【東】A　*gə *[q](r)əm *m.reŋ *loŋ
用義其家　【魚】c　*loŋ-s *ŋ(r)aj-s *gə *kˤra
用與其邦　【東】A　*loŋ-s *ɢ(r)aʔ-s *gə *pˤroŋ

虢季乍寶　【幽】B　*[k]^{w}ˤrak *k^{w}i[t]-s *[ts]ˤak *pˤuʔ
用享追孝　【幽】B　*loŋ-s *[q^{h}]aŋʔ *truj *q^{h}ˤ<r>uʔ-s
于其皇考　【幽】B　*ɢ^{w}(r)a *gə *[ɢ]^{w}ˤaŋ *k-rˤuʔ
用祈萬壽　【幽】B　*loŋ-s *C.[ɢ]ər *C.ma[n]-s *[N-t]uʔ

用樂用享　【陽】C　*loŋ-s *[ŋ]ˤrawk *loŋ-s *[q^{h}]aŋʔ
季氏受福無彊　【陽】C　*k^{w}i[t]-s *k.deʔ *[d]uʔ *pək *ma *kaŋ

As we saw is the case with the rhyme words, the whole phonetic pattern can be meaningfully transferred onto the English translation as well:

Guo Ji had made these harmoniously tuned bells,
Their chime sounds "yong."
He uses them to comfort his family,
He uses them to consolidate his polity.

Guo Ji had made these treasures;
He uses them to present offerings, sacrificing
To his august deceased father;
He uses them to pray for long life.

He uses them to entertain and to present offerings;
The Ji sub-lineage shall receive boundless blessings.

What strikes one first, is how the recurring formula "*yong*" 用 ([he] uses [the bells] to) resonates with the first rhyme cluster, carrying the bells as topic and sound throughout the whole text. We further observe two consonance clusters outside of the rhyming positions appearing in the text's two main passages respectively. Both these groups also form thematic units as is the case with the rhyme words. With this additional information, we now see how the last passage fully fits into the text's phonorhetoric pattern. The two closing lines combine key-terms from each consonance cluster, retrieving the alliterating sequence from the penultimate syllables in the preceding three lines now shifted into the rhyming position. This again concurs with the text's semantic content, since the last two lines reintegrate the two sides and functions of

the bell by subsuming them under its overall purpose of securing boundless blessings for Guoji's own lineage.

5. Conclusion

This study has shown that the analysis of literary form, a method which so far is still severely underrepresented in the study of ancient Chinese bronze inscriptions,[78] can further our understanding of the import and the purpose of texts inscribed on early Chinese ritual bronze paraphernalia. Although many texts from Western Zhou bronze inscriptions, especially from bell inscriptions, make reference to and appropriate aspects of ritual speech, music and multimedia performances as basis for their literary patterning, their conception transcends the spatial and temporal context of ritual at the same time. While in the overwhelming majority of "rhymed" inscriptions, onomatopoeia and consonance clusters may merely serve to recreate parts of a ritual setting in the medium of the inscribed text, some inscriptions seem to consciously arrange these elements into literary artefacts in which the distribution of rhyme-words serves to structure and to communicate the texts' message in terms of an *extended sign-context*. This find may also be of importance regarding the study of rhymed literary texts beyond the medium of bronze inscriptions in Early China as poeticity, or better, the use of verbal parallelism, is still often believed to have served mainly mnemonic purposes within an oral literary tradition.[79]

78 Among the few important studies dealing with the inscriptions from a literary perspective are Behr, *Reimende Bronzeinschriften und die Entstehung der chinesischen Endreimdichtung*; Tharsen, "Chinese Euphonics" ; and Robert Eno, "Reflections on Literary and Devotional Aspects of Western Zhou Memorial Inscriptions," in *Imprints of Kinship: Studies of Recently Discovered Bronze Inscriptions from Ancient China*, ed. Edward L. Shaughnessy (Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 2017), 261–285.

79 Cf. Kern, , "The Performance of Writing in Western Zhou China," 180–182, with references made to Jan Assmann, *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis: Schrift, Erinnerung und politische Identität in frühen Hochkulturen* (Munich: Beck, 1999), 56–57, and Stanley Jeyaraja Tambiah., *Culture, Thought, and Social Action: An Anthropological Perspective* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1985), 165.

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論西周編鐘銘文的文學性質

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本文旨在探討古代中國青銅器銘文中尾韻、韻律等排比現象能否視為一種文學修辭手法。這一問題的關鍵在於此類音韻格局是否有助於構造、顯示銘文裡所傳達的文本信息。金文押韻的現象，進一步牽涉到古代青銅器銘文在它們原有的歷史環境中如何被理解和運用，因此對此類問題的細緻考察便顯得極具價值。

筆者首先將一些具有爭議性的關於青銅器銘文物質性和功能性的因素加以探討和釐清。接著本文以西周晚期虢季編鐘銘文為例，對該銘文進行全面的文學分析。

關鍵詞：青銅器銘文　押韻　文體　文學性