

“I Write Therefore I Am”

Scribes, Literacy, and Identity in Early China

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IN A RECENTLY PUBLISHED ARTICLE on literacy and identity, social scientists Elizabeth Birr Moje and Allan Luke distinguish “five metaphors for identity in history and contemporary research.”¹ More importantly, though, the authors review a tremendous amount of sociological and social-psychological literature in order to demonstrate how scholarship has increasingly related different conceptions of identity and the self to literacy. Accordingly, “texts and the literate practices that accompany them not only reflect but may also produce the self.

¹ Elizabeth Birr Moje and Allan Luke, “Literacy and Identity: Examining the Metaphors in History and Contemporary Research,” *Reading Research Quarterly* 44.4 (2009): 419.

ABSTRACT: Scholarship usually accords early Chinese scribes little respect. The common perception is that they were nothing but low-level bureaucrats who carried out menial tasks in early imperial administration. But scribes saw themselves differently. Through an in-depth analysis of received literature and archaeological finds unearthed from the tombs of scribes, I argue that being a scribe was not only a privilege but also a matter of great pride to the individuals allowed to enter this profession. The fact that a significant number of tombs from the late fifth century BCE through the early first century CE yielded administrative and legal manuscripts in close proximity to writing utensils shows that literacy was the most crucial aspect of their identity. Their writing skills informed a sense of self that even extended into the afterlife.

摘要：學術界對古代文書（“史”）並不相當重視。文書通常僅被視為古代政治制度中負責雜事的低級官吏，但是他們對自己的身份卻有完全不同的看法。通過對文獻與墓葬考古的深入研究，本文的結論是文書認為這一職業不但是一種特殊榮幸，同時也是個人的驕傲。

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS: I thank Michael Loewe, Charles Sanft, Paul Goldin, Michael Hunter, Hans van Ess, Maria Khayutina, Joachim Gentz, Matthias Richter, Barend ter Haar, Wolfgang Behr, Martin Kern, Michael Puett, Michael Nylan, Lillian Lan-ying Tseng, Duane Corpis, John Kieschnick, Melissa J. Brown, and two anonymous reviewers for valuable comments. All remaining mistakes are my own.

Moreover, some also argue that texts can be used as tools for enacting identities in social settings.² In light of the fact that a significant number of Chinese individuals living during the fifth through first centuries BCE were buried with manuscripts, such arguments seem pertinent for early Chinese society as well. What does it say about the self-concept of a person when his or her ability to read and write assumed a prominent role in funerary rites? This is the main question I pursue in this article.

Research on literacy in the field of early China studies has gained momentum with the release of a volume edited by China scholars Feng Li and David Prager Branner.³ The issue of identity, however, and its relationship to literacy has not yet been raised. I therefore first discuss the evidence for literacy and writing that is found in Chinese literary and archaeological sources of the late preimperial and early imperial periods. I then analyze the training and work of late preimperial and early imperial scribes, drawing on information in manuscripts excavated from tombs and settlement sites as well as from transmitted sources. In a third step, I identify several specific individuals in Chinese tombs as literate and scribes because of the writing paraphernalia and manuscripts that were buried with them.⁴ Finally, I suggest that sociological and anthropological explanations of identity support an interpretation that scribes (*shi* 史), as a distinct group, assumed a special social position. I argue, not only that the actual ability to write is palpable through certain kinds of texts when also associated with writing paraphernalia in the same tomb, but also that the ability to write was a crucial aspect of the self-representation of scribes.

Evidence of Literacy and Writing

In acquainting readers with his preferred definition of literacy in the classical world, William V. Harris cites a 1977 report on contemporary world literacy from the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO): a person counts as illiterate when

² Moje and Luke, "Literacy and Identity," p. 416.

³ *Writing and Literacy in Early China: Studies from the Columbia Early China Seminar*, ed. Feng Li and David Prager Branner (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2011).

⁴ Tombs and their contents are listed, for instance, in Enno Giele, "Early Chinese Manuscripts: Including Addenda and Corrigenda to *New Sources of Early Chinese History: An Introduction to the Reading of Inscriptions and Manuscripts*," *Early China* 23–24 (1998–1999): 306–28.

she or he “cannot with understanding both read and write a short simple statement on his everyday life.”⁵ Li and Branner oppose a straightforward equation of mere writing and reading skills, arguing more generally that literacy is “a phenomenon possessing multiple social extensions and serving multiple contexts within which it is meaningful and by which it can be measured.”⁶ On a more theoretical level, oral-ity scholar Walter Ong understands writing as the technologizing of oral communication in the sense that the written word only conveys the content of spoken exchanges.⁷ Egyptologist Jan Assmann’s concept of “cultural memory” transfers this perception into a broader historical context. Writing, he argues, is essential for any given culture to develop a collective memory (that is to say, a collective identity) over time as texts are necessary to store and conserve relevant information.⁸ Following Assmann’s line of reasoning, I suggest that the emergence of a literate elite that maintained itself through writing and texts—in other words, the establishment of a central bureaucracy in imperial China—was both a reflection of and a driving force behind this hunger for collective memory.⁹

In short, ancient literacy and the importance of writing are quite complicated subjects. Although basic literacy may very well be conceived as the ability to write and read short notes, this level of literacy would not have sufficed to sustain the complexity of late preimperial and early imperial Chinese societies. Thus, it is only prudent to discern different degrees of literacy. Harris, again, leads the way by demarcating “scribal literacy” from “craftsman’s literacy.” The former denotes a group of specially trained writers who fulfilled essential duties in state

⁵ *Statistics of Educational Attainment and Illiteracy 1945–1974* (Paris: Unesco, 1977), p. 12, cited in William V. Harris, *Ancient Literacy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989), p. 3.

⁶ Feng Li and David Prager Branner, “Introduction: Writing as a Phenomenon of Literacy,” in *Writing and Literacy in Early China*, p. 5.

⁷ Walter J. Ong, *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word*, 30th anniversary ed. (3rd ed.), with additional chapters by John Hartley (London: Routledge, 2012), pp. 77–79.

⁸ Jan Assmann, *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis: Schrift, Erinnerung und politische Identität in frühen Hochkulturen* (Munich: Verlag C.H. Beck, 2007), p. 19.

⁹ Jack Goody and Ian Watt, “The Consequences of Literacy,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 5.3 (1963): 314. For a critique, see John Halverson, “Goody and the Implosion of the Literacy Thesis,” *Man*, n.s., 27.2 (1992): 301–17. Also see, for instance, Christopher Leigh Connery, *The Empire of the Text: Writing and Authority in Early Imperial China* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 1998), esp. pp. 1, 11, 42, 44–45.

administration, whereas the latter describes the extent of writing skills among artisans who were required to furnish objects with inscriptions.¹⁰ The ability to write several characters and short, formulaic sentences also fits the category of rudimentary or bare literacy proposed by Michael Nylan. In her scheme of three types of literacy (bare literacy, numeracy, and high cultural literacy), Nylan posits an intermediate position between numeracy and high cultural literacy with the skill to correlate contents of various literary texts.¹¹ Throughout this article, I use a concept of basic literacy, one that takes the definition proposed by Harris and UNESCO as a guideline, because I suggest that the act of writing and the ability to put pen to paper for a range of purposes were much more important to a certain group of people in early China than the expression of intellectual thought through writing.

Who was writing during the late fifth through first centuries BCE? And, more to the point, who exploited mortuary rituals to showcase their writing skills? Any attempt to answer such questions cannot ignore the fact that our knowledge on the subject derives from two very distinct kinds of sources, each significantly limited in its own way: transmitted texts and archaeological data. In general, any text from the corpus of received literature necessarily presents a distorted picture as it was shaped by the intentions of not merely one author but often several editors. Even the beliefs and ideas of one author in a given text often represent one position in a broad, diverse cultural dialogue that took place among contemporaneous authors. Selective textual readings by modern students of the field risk reducing those dialogues to the thoughts of the loudest voices remaining in written sources. Archaeological evidence, and especially funerary data, is selective in the sense that only finds and features that the deceased and bereaved deemed indispensable were incorporated into burial rites. Ceremonial actions lacking physical manifestations in or around tombs are a priori intangible to archaeologists. Moreover, as prescriptive rather than descriptive texts, the so-called *Three Rites Canon* (*Liji* 禮記, *Yili* 儀禮, and *Zhouli* 周禮) are anything but reliable sources about actual practices. In addition, due to the happenstance of preservation and human interference,

¹⁰ Harris, *Ancient Literacy*, pp. 7–8; also see Anthony J. Barbieri-Low, “Craftsman’s Literacy: Uses of Writing by Male and Female Artisans in Qin and Han China,” in *Writing & Literacy in Early China*, p. 373.

¹¹ Michael Nylan, *Yang Xiong and the Pleasures of Reading and Classical Learning in China* (New Haven, CT: American Oriental Society, 2011), pp. 49n70, 50n73.

we are often unable to learn the extent of finds and features that originally constituted a tomb (for example, mounds, shrines, and the like). More particularly, although the authors and editors of philosophical, historiographical, and other kinds of texts were, of course, capable of writing, we cannot expect them to reflect upon general matters of literacy just because we, as scholars, are prone to do so by professional disposition. Likewise, we cannot expect tombs to contain indicators of literacy unless they were vital to the burial ritual. Thus, we inevitably have to deal with piecemeal information in both the written and archaeological records.

In received literature and secondary scholarship alike, literate men are often subsumed under the generic term “gentlemen” (*shi* 士) without much regard for differing levels of expertise. Usually the word “gentlemen” is used as a collective noun for an emerging class of literate people who came to dominate the political and intellectual scene by the end of the preimperial era.¹² Scattered passages of transmitted literature also inform assertions that physicians, diviners, and even runners and butchers—who are not included in the gentleman category—were literate, albeit to varying degrees.¹³ More substantial information on groups of writers other than gentlemen is considerably harder to locate as it is mostly buried in the details of archaeological evidence. Nevertheless, a basic knowledge of writing has long been inferred for some kinds of ancient Chinese artisans, even though it was only recently substantiated by a systematic analysis of a small sample of inscriptions found on the life-sized terracotta figurines unearthed from the mausoleum of the First Emperor (Qin Shi Huangdi 秦始皇帝, r. 246–210 BCE), lacquer vessels, and stone tomb slabs.¹⁴ Moreover, clues also indicate basic writing skills for soldiers and sometimes women.¹⁵

¹² See, for instance, Yuri Pines, *Envisioning Eternal Empire: Chinese Political Thought of the Warring States Era* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2009), pp. 115–84, 210–14, and for a critical view, see Robert H. Gassmann, “Through the Han-Glass Darkly: On Han-Dynasty Knowledge of the Ancient Chinese Term *shi* (Gentlemen),” *Monumenta Serica* 51 (2003): 527–42.

¹³ See T'ung-tsu Ch'ü, *Han Social Structure*, ed. Jack L. Dull (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1972), p. 109, cited in Mu-chou Poo, *In Search of Personal Welfare: A View of Ancient Chinese Religion* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998), p. 180.

¹⁴ Poo, *In Search of Personal Welfare*, p. 181; Barbieri-Low, “Craftsman's Literacy.”

¹⁵ Robin D. S. Yates, “Soldiers, Scribes, and Women: Literacy among the Lower Orders in Early China,” in *Writing & Literacy in Early China*, pp. 360–67.

The lack of clearly defined information on literacy in either received sources or archaeological data has inevitably spawned controversies over early Chinese literacy rates. Mark Edward Lewis and Robin Yates, for instance, endorse the view that the ability to write was relatively common, even among lower members of society. Michael Nylan rejects their arguments because, on the one hand, Lewis and Yates were not “paying due attention to the existence of oral commands and scribes,” and on the other hand, they were not “distinguishing sufficiently between bare literacy and numeracy (such as might be found among low-ranking army conscripts) and high cultural literacy (such as would have been required by high-ranking officials at the Han court);” nor were Lewis and Yates “separating ‘reading and writing’ from ‘composition.’”¹⁶

Nylan’s standards for evaluating literacy may be too high, however, given that the extent and contents of oral traditions and reading habits are largely lost to us. We will never be able to collect a significant body of data against which the occasional evidence of actual writing skills can be measured. In addition, although her distinction between rudimentary literacy, numeracy, and high cultural literacy is very well taken, it is not always possible to neatly separate numeracy from bare literacy when one is limited to interpretations of highly selective sources. Unnoted by many, Mu-chou Poo subtly reconciles these positions. He suggests that bare literacy at least was widespread from the Qin (246–206 BCE) through Han (206 BCE–220 CE) periods, because members across numerous social strata—gentlemen, artisans, diviners, butchers, and so on—were able to write (and read).¹⁷ But he also argues that the absolute number of fully literate people was quite low, particularly among the lower echelons of society.

Scribal Training

However scarce information on certain categories of literate people or the general literacy rate may be, one group of literate individuals stands out: the so-called scribes. The fact that received and archaeological

¹⁶ Yates, “Soldiers, Scribes, and Women,” p. 340; Lewis, *Writing and Authority*, as discussed in Nylan, *Yang Xiong*, p. 49n69, and Michael Nylan, “Textual Authority in Pre-Han and Han,” review of *Writing and Authority in Early China*, by Mark Edward Lewis, *Early China* 25 (2000): 205–58.

¹⁷ Poo, *In Search of Personal Welfare*, pp. 181–82.

sources for once provide almost lavish information renders such writers ideal subjects for closer scrutiny. Unsurprisingly, scribes (and historiographers, *shiguan* 史官, their modern Chinese equivalents) have long been a favorite subject of academic discourse, especially in the People's Republic of China and Taiwan.¹⁸ Yet a coherent synthesis of the connotations of the word “scribe” based on both transmitted and archaeological evidence is still missing. Here, I summarize what both sources of evidence tell us about the word “scribe.”

Ordinarily, the role designated by the character 史 (*shi*) is rendered as scribe, historian, clerk, archivist, or secretary. Without further chronological specification, such translations can be somewhat misleading as they imply that writing was the most essential aspect of the position. Quite the opposite was true, however, as demonstrated by many studies of Shang (ca. 1600–1045 BCE) oracle bone inscriptions, Western and Eastern Zhou (1045–221 BCE) bronze inscriptions, and received texts mostly from the preimperial period. The graph 史 (*shi*) first appears in oracle bone inscriptions from the late Shang period (ca. 1200–1045 BCE), where it might be understood as referring to some kind of envoy. Moreover, it is part of the compound *dashi* 大史 (great scribe), a term that not only describes a person who fulfilled ritual tasks but also names a specific ritual.¹⁹ Similar observations have been made for Western Zhou (1045–771 BCE) bronze inscriptions. A number of these inscriptions depict the scribe—as I call the position—as “the most powerful ritualist and minister in the king’s service.”²⁰ In this capacity, the post holder directed and personally led military operations, acted as an envoy, and was responsible for the execution of the most significant state rituals. More importantly, the Western Zhou scribe “was a ritualist, an official whose ‘service’ was essentially of a religious nature.”²¹ Kai

¹⁸ See, for instance, *Zhongguo shixueshi lunwen xuanji* 中國史學史論文選集, ed. Du Weiyun 杜維運 and Huang Jinxing 黃進興, 2 vols. (Taipei: Huashi chubanshe, 1976), and Niu Runzhen 牛潤珍, *Han zhi Tang chu shiguan zhidu de yanbian* 漢至唐初史官制度的演變 (Shijiazhuang: Hebei jiaoyu chubanshe, 1999).

¹⁹ Kai Vogelsang, “The Scribes’ Genealogy,” *Oriens Extremus* 44 (2003–2004): 4–5; Kai Vogelsang, *Geschichte als Problem: Entstehung, Formen und Funktionen von Geschichtsschreibung im Alten China* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2007), pp. 21–30. See also Ding Bo 丁波, “Shang dai de wu yu shiguan” 商代的巫与史官, *Zhongguo shehui kexueyuan yanjiushengyuan xuebao* 中国社会科学院研究生院学报, no. 3 (2004): 118–19; Niu Runzhen, *Han zhi Tang chu shiguan*, pp. 4–6.

²⁰ Constance C. Cook, “Scribes, Cooks, and Artisans: Breaking Zhou Tradition,” *Early China* 20 (1995): 250.

²¹ Cook, “Scribes, Cooks, and Artisans,” p. 252. For various functions of scribes, see

Vogelsang points out that in the *Chunqiu* 春秋, the term 史 (*shi*) is not mentioned once.²² However, in its main commentary, the *Zuozhuan* 左傳, the scribe's range of tasks widens. Apart from the familiar military and ritual functions, scribes now advised rulers, consulted oracles, and attained the role of astronomers. They are even pictured as writers in charge of legal documents (orders, mandates, or wills). Simultaneously, the appellations of scribes diversified. The sources, for instance, discern scribes of invocations (*zhushi* 祝史), milfoil divination (*shishi* 筮史), assistance (*zuoshi* 左史), and sacrifices (*jishi* 祭史).²³ An even more elaborate scheme of various scribe posts and concomitant duties is developed in the prescriptive and idealizing *Zhouli*.²⁴ Given the complexity of secular tasks coupled with the religious duties held by scribes from the eighth through third centuries BCE, statements claiming "the transformation of the 'religious scribe' into the 'bureaucratic scribe'" are oversimplifying the matter.²⁵

The exact duties of scribes active during the last years of the Qin period and the early imperial period may not be entirely clear.²⁶ But some insights can be gained from received literature, as well as from manuscript finds at settlement sites and at tombs. To be clear, during the Qin and Han dynasties, no formal office identified by the solitary character 史 (*shi*) existed. The general term "scribe" (史 *shi*), referred to in later primary sources and secondary scholarship, is a catch-all expression referring to a range of literate men who are believed to have served as low-ranking officials. Instead, actual posts were always denoted by compound terms—*zhushi*, *shishi*, and so on (as mentioned

Vogelsang, "The Scribes' Genealogy," p. 5, and Vogelsang, *Geschichte als Problem*, pp. 30–47.

²² Vogelsang, "The Scribes' Genealogy," p. 6, and Vogelsang, *Geschichte als Problem*, p. 49.

²³ Vogelsang, "The Scribes' Genealogy," pp. 6–7; also see Vogelsang, *Geschichte als Problem*, pp. 47–87; Lin Xiaoping 林晓平, "Chunqiu Zhanguo shiqi shiguan zhize yu shixue chuantong" 春秋战国时期史官职责与史学传统, *Shixue lilun yanjiu* 史学理论研究, no. 1 (2003): 61–62.

²⁴ Xu Zhaochang 许兆昌, *Zhou dai shiguan wenhua: qianzhou xinqi hexin wenhua xingtai yanjiu* 周代史官文化: 前轴心期核心文化形态研究 (Changchun: Jilin daxue chubanshe, 2001), pp. 38–78; Martin Kern, "Offices of Writing and Reading in the *Rituals of Zhou*," in *Statecraft and Classical Learning: The "Rituals of Zhou" in East Asian History*, ed. Benjamin A. Elman and Martin Kern (Leiden: Brill, 2009), pp. 69–81.

²⁵ Achim Mittag, "The *Qin Bamboo Annals* of Shuihudi: A Random Note from the Perspective of Chinese Historiography," *Monumenta Serica* 51 (2003): 558.

²⁶ Enno Giele, "Signatures of 'Scribes' in Early Imperial China," *Asiatische Studien / Études Asiatiques* 59.1 (2005): 382.

above). The *Zhouli*, for example, refers to forty-two offices as various kinds of 史 (*shi*).²⁷ However, the *Zhouli* is likely a fourth-through-third-century BCE product that projects a perfect administrative system back to the Western Zhou.²⁸ These idealized descriptions of scribes and their respective duties put them in charge of fiscal, military, or administrative affairs and see them engaged in astrological inquiries.²⁹ If we are to believe Sima Qian's 司馬遷 (ca. 145–86 BCE) *Shiji* 史記, a reputedly ordinary scribe by the name of Kuan Shu 寬舒 was not only well versed in the occult arts but even lent advice to Han Wudi 漢武帝 (r. 141–87 BCE).³⁰

Recording governmental business and official communications were only one aspect of a scribe's job description. Examining the office of *taishi ling* 太史令 and the careers of its two most prominent occupants, Sima Tan 司馬談 (d. 110 BCE) and Sima Qian, helps to further elucidate the point. Miscellaneous English translations of the title *tai-shi* or *taishi ling* circulate in secondary studies: "grand scribe," "grand historian," or "grand astrologer" being the most popular suggestions. In contrast to the first and second translations, the very last term hints at tasks one would not necessarily associate with a scribe at first glance. Dorothee Schaab-Hanke pursues the actual contents of Sima Tan's and Sima Qian's daily work and concludes that a considerably younger account recorded in the *Hou Hanshu* 後漢書 is accurate. According to the "Baiguan zhi" 百官志, the *taishi ling* was

responsible for [fixing the beginnings of] the seasons and for the calendar of the stars. Toward the end of the year, he submits the new annual calendar to the throne. For state ceremonials, such as sacrifices, burials or marriages, he is responsible for submitting to the throne the auspicious days and those to be avoided. In case there are portents, such as calamities or unusual events, he is responsible to record them.³¹

²⁷ Kern, "Offices of Writing and Reading," p. 69; for different *shi* 史 mentioned in excavated manuscripts, see Giele, "Signatures of 'Scribes,'" p. 367.

²⁸ William G. Boltz, "Chou li," in *Early Chinese Texts: A Bibliographical Guide*, ed. Michael Loewe (Berkeley: Society for the Study of Early China and Institute of East Asian Studies, University of California, 1993), pp. 24–25. For arguments that suggest a specifically Qin (221–206 BCE) date, see David Schaberg, "The *Zhouli* as Constitutional Text," in *Statecraft and Classical Learning*, p. 39.

²⁹ Kern, "Offices of Writing and Reading," pp. 77–80.

³⁰ Sima Qian, *Shiji*, 130 *juan* in 10 vols. (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1959), v. 2, j. 12, p. 455, and v. 4, j. 28, p. 1386.

³¹ "Baiguan er" 百官二, in Fan Ye 范曄, *Hou Hanshu* 後漢書, 90 *juan* plus 30 *zhi* 志 in

The grand scribe's authority lay in adjusting the calendar and divination. Also tasked with documenting portents, his writing abilities were of secondary importance. Schaab-Hanke compares the Western Han *taishi ling* to shamans and sorcerers, because the grand scribe

seems to have applied his knowledge about phenomena in the heavens to practical needs on earth, such as warding off the enemy who inhabited a certain area on earth by pointing with the spear of Taiyi toward the corresponding position in the sky, a practice similar to one which has recently been compared with voodoo.³²

It is well known by now that when Sima Tan and Sima Qian compiled the *Shiji*, they were only moonlighting as historians; their primary duties lay with fixing the calendar and divination.

A connection between scribes and divination emerges in other places as well. The prescriptive *Liji* mentions scribes and diviners (*bu* 卜) side by side in two instances. In ancient times, we are told, "diviners fixed the turtle shells and scribes put [the outcome] down in ink" 卜人定龜, 史定墨.³³ Both parties apparently were involved in the divination process. Another passage counts scribes and diviners, along with invocators (*zhu* 祝), charioteers (*yu* 御), archers (*she* 射), and physicians (*yi* 醫) among the "hundred artisans" (*bai gong* 百工).³⁴ Turning from received to excavated texts, the picture does not change all that much. Fourteen bamboo slips yielded by tomb no. 247 at Zhangjiashan 張家山 in Hubei Province (no. 10 in the appendix, dated somewhere between 221 BCE and 141 BCE) give us the "Statutes on [the Education of] Scribes" ("Shilü" 史律). One of the statutes is enlightening in several respects:

12 vols. (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1965), v. 12, *zhi* 25, p. 3572, quoted and translated as the "Monograph on the Hundred Officials" ("Baiguan zhi") in Dorothee Schaab-Hanke, "The Power of an Alleged Tradition: A Prophecy Flattering Han Emperor Wu and Its Relation to the Sima Clan," *Bulletin of the Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities* 74 (2002): 259.

³² Schaab-Hanke, "Power of an Alleged Tradition," p. 264. See also Tong Enzheng, "Magicians, Magic, and Shamanism in Ancient China," *Journal of East Asian Archaeology* 4.1-4 (2002): 46-47, 57.

³³ "Yu zao" 玉藻, in *Liji zhengyi* 禮記正義, ed. Zheng Xuan 鄭玄, Kong Yingda 孔穎達, and Lü Youren 呂友仁, 70 *juan* in 3 vols. (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2008), v. 2, j. 39, p. 1187. Another *Liji* passage describes scribes simply as "keepers of [bamboo or wooden] slip records" (*zhi jian ji* 執簡記); "Wang zhi" 王制, in *Liji zhengyi*, v. 1, j. 19, p. 562.

³⁴ "Wang zhi," in *Liji zhengyi*, v. 1, j. 19, p. 553.

At the age of seventeen, the sons of scribes, diviners [and invocators?] study [the same skills as their fathers]. Student scribes, diviners, and invocators study for three years. Afterward, their tutors take them to pay a formal visit to the grand scribe, the grand diviner, or the grand invocator; commandery scribal students pay a formal visit to their [respective] governor. All students assemble on the first day of the eighth month to be tested.

史、卜子年十七歲學。史、卜、祝學童學三歲，學俱將詣大史、大卜、大祝，郡史學童詣其守，皆會八月朔日試之。³⁵

Again, scribes, diviners, and invocators are treated in one fell swoop. All three professions were inheritable. In each instance, job training began at the age of seventeen, lasted three years, and culminated in an official exam. Although subsequent sections of the Zhangjiashan “Statutes on [the Education of] Scribes” incorporate limited information about different curricula for scribes, diviners, and invocators, the parallel progression of their education and ensuing career stages is striking.³⁶ Of course, the duties of scribes were not entirely congruent with the responsibilities of invocators and diviners. Nevertheless, the fact that these three vocations, and especially scribes and diviners, were frequently related to each other in prescriptive texts, historiographies, and one excavated legal document suggests that they shared some tasks.

The majority of scribes surely had a working knowledge of divination practices. For example, finds recovered from five additional imperial tombs (nos. 6, 7, 9, 15, and 33 in the appendix), dating from the late third century BCE through early first century CE, show their single male occupants accompanied by official administrative and legal texts, including maps and itineraries as well as hemerological manuscripts. Various kinds of writing paraphernalia are also part of the grave goods at these sites.³⁷

³⁵ “Shilü,” in *Zhangjiashan Han mu zhujian (ersiqi hao mu)*, p. 203, slip no. 474 (see appendix, tomb no. 10). Note that full references for tomb-related sources are given in the appendix. For a slightly different translation, cf. Anthony J. Barbieri-Low and Robin D. S. Yates, *Law, State, and Society in Early Imperial China: A Study with Critical Edition and Translation of the Legal Texts from Zhangjiashan Tomb No. 247*, 2 vols. (Leiden: Brill, 2015), v. 2, p. 1093.

³⁶ Yates “Soldiers, Scribes, and Women,” pp. 350–57.

³⁷ On the frequent coincidence of writing paraphernalia and manuscripts, see Ethan Richard Harkness, “Cosmology and the Quotidian: Day Books in Early China,” (PhD diss., University of Chicago, 2011), pp. 40–41.

Asserting a certain level of arithmetic proficiency in a scribe, as several scholars have done, appears reasonable given the finding of a mathematical text among the array of manuscripts in Zhangjiashan tomb no. 247.³⁸ A grand scribe probably would have had a hard time fixing the calendar without some mathematical skills. Supplementary archaeological data that has been overlooked by previous studies lends support to this interpretation. One of the five tombs just mentioned, Shuihudi 睡虎地 tomb no. 77, includes Western Han statutes, hemerological manuals (*rishu* 日書, usually translated as “day books”), and a mathematical manuscript entitled *The Art of Calculation* (*Suanshu* 算術) as well as a brush and an ink stone.³⁹

One could even go so far as to attest some degree of medical expertise for early Chinese scribes. After all, Zhangjiashan tomb no. 247 contained manuals entitled *Writings on the Channels* (*Maishu* 脈書) and the *Pulling Book* (*Yinshu* 引書). Both works are concerned with so-called “nurturing life” (*yangsheng* 養生) techniques.⁴⁰ A second *yangsheng* text surfaced from Zhangjiashan tomb no. 136/336 (dated ca. 173–167 BCE), also located at Zhangjiashan cemetery.⁴¹ Only a few miles southwest, tomb no. 30 at Zhoujiatai 周家台 cemetery (no. 9 in the appendix, dated 209 BCE) contained the medical text *Methods for [Curing] Ailments* (*Bingfang* 病方), which conveys various remedies and prophylactic measures (including some incantations) to cure and prevent a number of illnesses and afflictions. In addition, the thirty-to-forty-year-old tomb occupant was accompanied by some adminis-

³⁸ For instance, Yates “Soldiers, Scribes, and Women,” p. 352; Wu Fuzhu 吳福助, *Shuihudi Qin jian lunkao* 睡虎地秦簡論考 (Taipei: Wenjin chubanshe, 1994), p. 150. The mathematical text is called *Suanshu shu* 算數書; see Joseph W. Dauben, “算數書 *Suan Shu Shu*: A Book on Numbers and Computations; English Translation with Commentary,” *Archive for History of Exact Sciences* 62.2 (2008): 91–178; Peng Hao 彭浩, *Zhangjiashan Han jian “Suanshu shu” zhushi* 張家山漢簡《算數書》註釋 (Beijing: Kexue chubanshe, 2001).

³⁹ HWKY and YB, “Hubei Yunmeng Shuihudi M77 fajue jianbao,” pp. 34–35 (see appendix, tomb no. 15, for full reference).

⁴⁰ *Yinshu*, in *Zhangjiashan Han mu zhujian*, pp. 285–99; *Maishu*, in *Zhangjiashan Han mu zhujian*, pp. 235–46. Zhangjiashan Han jian zhenglizu 張家山漢簡整理組, “Zhangjiashan Han jian *Yinshu* shiwen” 張家山漢簡《引書》釋文, *Wenwu*, no. 10 (1990): 82–86; Peng Hao 彭浩, “Zhangjiashan Han jian *Yinshu* chutan” 張家山漢簡《引書》初探, *Wenwu*, no. 10 (1990): 87–91.

⁴¹ JB, “Jiangling Zhangjiashan liang zuo Han mu chutu dapi zhujian,” p. 4. Tomb no. 136 was later renumbered 336; see Barbieri-Low and Yates, *Law, State and Society*, v. 1, p. 41n29.

trative documents as well as divinatory day books and charts.⁴² Many charts are concerned with medical issues.⁴³

In sum, the notion of the scribe as an official post or a formal vocation that was exclusively concerned with writing does not fit the above evidence very well. Instead, this evidence suggests the late pre-imperial and early imperial scribe as a person in official employ who was not only trained in writing but also required to be familiar with divinatory and occult practices, basic arithmetic procedures, and some medicine.

Now that I have established the most basic features of scribal work during the third through first centuries BCE, let us probe a little deeper into the process of scribal education. The Zhangjiashan “Statutes on [the Education of] Scribes” passage (cited above) reveals that sons inherited the right to train as scribes from their fathers. This custom, like other duties discussed above, dates back at least to the early ninth century BCE.⁴⁴ The phrasing of the Zhangjiashan statute, however, leaves room for speculation. Were only sons of scribes following in the footsteps of their fathers, or were newcomers allowed into scribal training as well? An excavated legal manuscript from Shuihudi tomb no. 11 (no. 7 in the appendix, dated 217 BCE), entitled “Miscellaneous [Statutes on the Affairs of the] Ministry of Finance” (“Neishi za” 內史雜), provides a convincing and definitive answer: “[Individuals] that are not the sons of scribes must not venture to study [this trade] in schools [specializing in scribal education]. Those who violate this ordinance are committing a crime” 非史子毆 [也], 毋敢學學室, 犯令者有罪.⁴⁵ At this point, becoming a scribe was indeed a privilege limited

⁴² HJZB, “Guanju Qin Han Mu qingli jianbao,” pp. 26–32. For the *Bingfang* manuscript, see *Guanju Qin Han mu jiandu*, pp. 126–31. See appendix, tomb no. 9, for full references.

⁴³ For instance, Yang Hua 杨华, “Chutu rishu yu Chu di de jibing zhanbu” 出土日书与楚地的疾病占卜, *Wuhan daxue xuebao (Renwen kexueban)* 武汉大学学报 (人文科学版), no. 5 (2003): 564–70.

⁴⁴ Adam Daniel Smith, “Writing at Anyang: The Role of the Divination Record in the Emergence of Chinese Literacy,” (PhD diss., University of California, Los Angeles, 2008), pp. 25–26; Lothar von Falkenhausen, *Chinese Society in the Age of Confucius (1000–250 BC): The Archaeological Evidence* (Los Angeles: Cotsen Institute of Archaeology, University of California, 2006), pp. 56–73.

⁴⁵ “Neishi za” in *Shuihudi Qin mu zhujian*, p. 63, slip no. 191 (see appendix, tomb no. 7). Note that all page numbers for *Shuihudi Qin mu zhujian* refer to the separately numbered transcription section. For another translation, cf. A.F.P. Hulswé, *Remnants of Ch’in Law: An Annotated Translation of the Ch’in Legal and Administrative Rules of the 3rd Century B.C. Discovered in Yün-meng Prefecture, Hu-pei Province, in 1975* (Leiden: Brill, 1985), pp.

to sons of scribes. The very existence of such legislation indicates that external candidates did try to enter the field as well.

Formal training determined eligibility for office. Low-ranking officials who may have had *some* writing skills—but who were neither certified as scribes nor appointed as such—were not allowed to perform a scribe's tasks: "Low officials who are able to write must not venture to carry out the duties of scribes" 下吏能書者，毋敢從史之事。⁴⁶ Only those trainee scribes who lived up to the government standards of writing and reciting 5,000 graphs eventually made it into office.⁴⁷

Test scribal students on the basis of the fifteen chapters.⁴⁸ When they are able to recite and write more than five thousand characters, they are ready to be appointed as scribes. The scribal students are also to be tested on the eight forms [of written graphs]. Commanderies send the results of their exams on the eight forms [of written graphs] to the grand scribe. The grand scribe reads the results out loud and selects the best candidates to be appointed directing scribe of their respective counties. Those who fall short [of expectations] must not be appointed as scribes.

【試】史學童以十五篇，能風（諷）書五千字以上，乃得為史。有（又）以八體（體）試之，郡移其八體（體）課大史，大史誦課，取最（最）一人以為其縣令史，殿者勿以為史。⁴⁹

Scribal trainees who did not meet these requirements were excluded from the scribal trade. It is debated whether the curriculum really required students to learn 5,000 *different* characters; after careful analysis, Robin Yates concludes that they were more likely acquainted with

87–88. For information on the tomb and textual finds, see appendix, tomb no. 7; *Yunmeng Shuihudi Qin mu*, pp. 7–8, 12–25.

⁴⁶ "Neishi za," in *Shuihudi Qin mu zhujian*, p. 63, slip no. 192; cf. Hulsewé, *Remnants of Ch'in Law*, p. 88.

⁴⁷ On reading and reciting in scribal training, see Wolfgang Behr and Bernhard Führer, "Einführende Notizen zum Lesen in China mit besonderer Berücksichtigung der Frühzeit," in *Aspekte des Lesens in China in Vergangenheit und Gegenwart: Referate der Jahrestagung 2001 der Deutschen Vereinigung für Chinastudien (DVCS)*, ed. Bernhard Führer (Bochum: Projekt Verlag, 2005), pp. 16, 18; Wu Fuzhu, *Shuihudi Qin jian lunkao*, p. 151.

⁴⁸ It is not clear which specific texts the "fifteen chapters" refers to; cf. Yates, "Soldiers, Scribes, and Women," p. 351.

⁴⁹ "Shilü," in *Zhangjiahan Han mu zhujian*, p. 203, slip nos. 475–76. Barbieri-Low and Yates, *Law, State, and Society*, v. 2, p. 1093, and Yates, "Soldiers, Scribes, and Women," pp. 350–51, offer slightly alternate and extensively annotated translations. For somewhat different testing requirements, see Ban Gu 班固, *Hanshu* 漢書, 100 *juan* in 12 vols. (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1962), v. 6, j. 30, p. 1721.

2,500 to 3,500 characters.⁵⁰ Nevertheless, the fact remains: scribes were accomplished writers (not authors) by the end of their training.

Despite having gone through all that trouble, some graduates were determined to take a different career path after leaving school. A section from the Zhangjiashan “Statutes on [the Education of] Scribes” makes it clear that the imperial administration was keen to prevent such a choice: “Those [graduate] scribes, diviners, and invocators who do not assume a post are fined four *liang* of gold [about 61.4 grams]; their tutors [are fined] two *liang* [about 30.7 grams]” 不入史、卜、祝者，罰金四兩，學佻二兩。⁵¹ There are at least three ways to interpret this excerpt. The first and most obvious reading is that the legislative body did not want to see resources squandered. A hefty fine of more than sixty grams of gold, roughly 2,304 cash (*qian* 錢), was intended to encourage prospective graduates to think twice about quitting the field.⁵² Placing a burden of over thirty grams of gold on failed tutors ought to be understood as incentive for teachers not merely to foster the practical abilities of their students but also to instill the correct attitude in them. Enjoying the privilege of working as a scribe was not simply a matter of mastering script and reading. It was also a state of mind.

A second and less obvious reason for fining graduates who do not accept posts as scribes (and their tutors) might be diminishing resources in more general terms. The empire could ill afford to lose competent personnel. For instance, amid the more than 36,000 Qin administrative documents salvaged from a well at Liye 里耶 in western Hunan Province (dated 222–209 BCE) one laments that “stationary officials are too few to take care of [government] affairs” 居吏少不足以給事。⁵³

⁵⁰ Yates, “Soldiers, Scribes, and Women,” pp. 351–53.

⁵¹ “Shilü,” in *Zhangjiashan Han mu zhujian*, p. 204, slip no. 480; cf. Barbieri-Low and Yates, *Law, State, and Society*, v. 2, p. 1097.

⁵² Yu Zhenbo 于振波, “Qinlü zhong de jiadun bijia ji xiangguan wenti” 秦律中的甲盾比价及相关问题, *Shixue jikan* 史学集刊, no. 5 (2010): 37. Although based on materials that predate the Zhangjiashan finds by approximately one hundred years, Yu’s analysis gives a sense of the relative monetary value of gold-weight fines: one *liang* 兩 (a weight unit) was twenty-four *zhu* 銖 (another weight unit), and one *zhu* was twenty-four *qian* (cash or coins). Thus, $24 \text{ liang} \times 24 \text{ zhu} \times 24 \text{ qian} = 2,304 \text{ qian}$. Working off their debt at a rate of six cash per day would have taken the graduates 384 days.

⁵³ Slip no. 8-197 (recto) in *Liye Qin jian (yi)* 里耶秦簡 (壹), ed. Hunan sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo 湖南省文物考古研究所 (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 2012), p. 22. Note that all page numbers from *Liye Qin jian* refer to the separately numbered transcription section. For a revised transcription, cf. *Liye Qin jiandu jiaoshi (di yi juan)* 里耶秦簡牘校

A third reading of the Zhangjiashan statute on fines is that scribal graduates who did not want to become embedded in imperial bureaucracy might have used their writing skills in unlawful activities. The legal texts unearthed at Shuihudi and Zhangjiashan contain several stipulations that deal with the forging of official correspondence.⁵⁴ In addition to being competent writers, scribal graduates were familiar with administrative procedures. They knew well the contents, design, and ways of transmitting administrative documents. Thus, it would have been fairly easy for them to falsify any kind of communication between local offices or even an imperial edict. The statutes concerned with forgeries as well as the Zhangjiashan statute passage (quoted above) that prohibited failed scribal students from becoming scribes were not only geared toward scribes in office but also meant to discourage trained yet unemployed scribes from unlawfully interfering with government affairs. The various statutes, especially when read together with the gold-weight-fine statute, strongly suggest that scribal education was aimed at the single goal of training efficient, highly qualified, dedicated, and loyal scribes.

For satisfactory performance, administrators needed to work well together. It was essential that the common forms of script were as decipherable in the empire's capital as on its periphery. Modern scholarship, however, still disagrees about orthography. Did the alleged unification of script by the First Emperor truly resolve the issue of varying forms of graphs? It was long accepted that all scribes of the newly established empire drew from a standardized set of graphs, but we now know that writers often used different characters to denote the same word—pronunciation apparently took precedence over written form.⁵⁵

The fact that paleographers are able to distinguish groups of writers

釋(第一卷), ed. Chen Wei 陳偉 (Wuhan: Wuhan daxue chubanshe, 2012), p. 109. For an overview of the Liye cache, see Robin D. S. Yates, "The Qin Slips and Boards from Well No. 1, Liye, Hunan: A Brief Introduction to the Qin Qianling County Archives," *Early China* 35–36 (2012–2013): 291–329.

⁵⁴ "Zeilü" 賊律, in *Zhangjiashan Han mu zhujian*, pp. 134–35, slip nos. 9–10, 12–13; cf. Barbieri-Low and Yates, *Law, State, and Society*, v. 2, pp. 392–95; "Falü dawen" 法律答問, in *Shuihudi Qin mu zhujian*, pp. 106–7, slip nos. 55–59; cf. Hulswé, *Remnants of Ch'in Law*, pp. 135–36.

⁵⁵ Imre Galambos, *Orthography of Early Chinese Writing: Evidence from Newly Excavated Manuscripts* (Budapest: Department of East Asian Studies, Eötvös Loránd University, 2006); Martin Kern, "Methodological Reflections on the Analysis of Textual Variants and the Modes of Manuscript Production in Early China," *Journal of East Asian Archaeology* 4.1–4 (2002): 164.

in excavated manuscripts by their handwriting refers back to the formal education process. It is not surprising that scribes trained at the same regional or even local institutions mainly adhered to the same rules. Olivier Venture identifies large clusters of comparable writing styles and argues for a relatively high degree of uniformity, at least in the area associated with the so-called Chu 楚 culture. Such “cultural/political community [writing] habits,” as he calls them, are easier to comprehend once the context from which administrative literature arose is examined.⁵⁶

As I illustrate in more detail below, scribes started out at local posts that brought together as coworkers a fairly small group of people trained at local schools, who would have had no major difficulties in making themselves mutually understood. Of course, such posts and schools were far removed from day-to-day events at the imperial court, so centrally directed changes took hold considerably more slowly. Subsequent relocation from local posts to transregional offices, which employed scribes of more diverse educational backgrounds, required the adjustment of one’s ductus to existing habits. It is almost to be expected that not all transferees were able to completely make the transition in orthography. Novel standards may have been universally mandated throughout the empire—in fact, certain characters were already written in the same way throughout the empire—but orthographical variations in excavated manuscripts show there was still a larger number of graphs that writers at different locations wrote differently, as subsequent generations of scribes were not exclusively trained according to the new rules. The ultimate goal of scribal training was to secure a job in public administration, which, in turn, led to the production of written documents.

There is no doubt that the majority of texts penned—or more accurately, brushed—by scribes wound up in government archives. The *Zhouli*, for instance, records several offices that were charged with the administration of official archives.⁵⁷ In chapter 38 of the *Han Feizi* 韓非子, we read: “All laws are compiled into charts and registers; [these] are established in official archives so that they may be publicized among the hundred surnames [the general public]” 法者，編著

⁵⁶ Olivier Venture, “Looking for Chu People’s Writing Habits,” *Asiatische Studien / Études asiatiques* 63.4 (2009): 949.

⁵⁷ Kern, “Offices of Writing and Reading,” p. 70.

之圖籍，設之於官府，而布之於百姓者也。⁵⁸ And from documents collected at Juyan 居延 (Etsin Gol) in the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region of northwestern China, we learn that officials traveled “to visit document archives” (*jiu shufu* 就書府).⁵⁹

On the other hand, we also know that manuscripts occasionally found their way into tombs. Various explanations have been proposed for why texts served as grave goods. While a number of scholars argue that the texts “were interred for reasons that likely had to do with the postmortem passages of the tomb occupants,”⁶⁰ others attributed the writings with apotropaic or talismanic functions,⁶¹ or with ritual significance because they were deposited at special positions inside tombs.⁶² By arguing that the netherworld basically duplicated the mortal world, another point of view sees them as serving the same exact purposes in the afterlife as they did in the world of the living.⁶³ Unfortunately, the religious implications of so-called tomb texts cannot be explored in detail here.⁶⁴

For the purposes of this article, it is more important to acknowledge the fact that substantial differences existed among such writings. Scholarship is preoccupied with “tradition texts” or “texts with a history.”⁶⁵ Both phrases refer to writings found in graves that have

⁵⁸ “Nan san” 難三, in *Han Feizi jijie* 韓非子集解, comp. Wang Xianshen 王先慎, in 20 *juan* (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1998), j. 16, p. 380.

⁵⁹ Slip no. 135.35 in *Juyan Han jian (jiayi bian)* 居延漢簡 (甲乙編), ed. Zhongguo shehui kexueyuan kaogu yanjiusuo 中國社會科學院考古研究所, 2 vols. (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1980), v. 2, p. 95. The documents discovered at Juyan date from the first century BCE through first century CE.

⁶⁰ Mark Csikszentmihalyi, *Material Virtue: Ethics and the Body in Early China* (Leiden: Brill, 2004), p. 1; Constance A. Cook, *Death in Ancient China: The Tale of One Man's Journey* (Leiden: Brill, 2006); Guolong Lai, *Excavating the Afterlife: The Archaeology of Early Chinese Religion* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2015).

⁶¹ Barbieri-Low, “Craftsman's Literacy,” p. 394; Robin D. S. Yates, “State Control of Bureaucrats under the Qin: Techniques and Procedures,” *Early China* 20 (1995): 341.

⁶² Michael Nylan, “Toward an Archaeology of Writing: Text, Ritual, and the Culture of Public Display in the Classical Period (475 B.C.E.–220 C.E.),” in *Text and Ritual in Early China*, ed. Martin Kern (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2005), p. 8.

⁶³ Yuri Pines, “History as a Guide to the Netherworld: Rethinking the *Chunqiu shiyu*,” *Journal of Chinese Religions* 31.1 (2003): 119.

⁶⁴ Lothar von Falkenhausen points out that manuscript finds, along with increasing amounts of objects of everyday use, were expressions of new religious beliefs; see his “Social Ranking in Chu Tombs: The Mortuary Background of the Warring States Manuscript Finds,” *Monumenta Serica* 51 (2003): 443–44.

⁶⁵ Martin Kern, “Methodological Reflections,” pp. 145–48, introduces the categories of “texts with a history” and “occasion texts.” Matthias Richter favors the expression “tradi-

(often deviating) counterparts in transmitted literature such as the three *Laozi* 老子 versions recovered from Guodian 郭店 tomb no. 1.⁶⁶ In contrast, “occasion texts”—such as divinatory records, legal and administrative documents, or inventory lists of burial objects (*qiance* 遣策)—are studied considerably less.

The distinction between occasion and tradition texts is crucial because it is inextricably linked to the problem of authorship. Authors are accountable for the intellectual content of pieces of writing, but they are not necessarily the ones who bring their own thoughts to paper.⁶⁷ Scriveners, however, do exactly that act: they physically put something down in writing. The cognitive process spawning the content of a document is irrelevant in this regard.⁶⁸ As the *Laozi*, *Mengzi* 孟子, *Xunzi* 荀子, and other works demonstrate, ancient Chinese tradition texts are commonly synonymous with their (attributed) authors. Occasion texts more often than not remain anonymous.

At first glance, scribal signatures witnessed on some excavated administrative records seem the exception. Even then, the author, who provided the factual content of the document, and the scribe, who actually wrote it, might both very well escape our grasp. Enno Giele illustrates that signatures on archaeological manuscripts were not necessarily autographs.⁶⁹ Instead, they may have been copied along with the rest of the manuscript. Whenever such copying was the case, the names of the respective authors *and* scribes elude us. Another find from Shuihudi tomb no. 11 reveals that replicating written documents was indeed an essential aspect of imperial rule. It mandates that the counties (*xian* 縣) notify the capital offices (*duguan* 都官) as to what statutes they are using by sending copies of them.⁷⁰

tion texts” because “‘having a history’ always depends upon a certain point in time from which the object is viewed”; Richter, “Textual Identity and the Role of Literacy in the Transmission of Early Chinese Literature,” in *Writing & Literacy in Early China*, p. 208n3.

⁶⁶ Hubei sheng Jingmen shi bowuguan 湖北省荆门市博物馆, “Jingmen Guodian yi hao Chu mu” 荆门郭店一号楚墓, *Wenwu*, no. 7 (1997): 35–48; Sarah Allan and Crispin Williams, eds., *The Guodian Laozi: Proceedings of the International Conference, Dartmouth College, May 1998* (Berkeley: Society for the Study of Early China and Institute of East Asian Studies, University of California, Berkeley, 2000).

⁶⁷ See, for instance, Connery, *The Empire of the Text*, pp. 44–45.

⁶⁸ Walter Ong argues that written discourse is always detached from the author. Consequently, direct exchange between author and reader is impossible; Ong, *Orality and Literacy*, pp. 77–78.

⁶⁹ Giele, “Signatures of ‘Scribes,’” p. 364.

⁷⁰ “Neishi za,” in *Shuihudi Qin mu zhujian*, p. 61, slip no. 186; cf. Hulsewé, *Remnants*

More generally, Martin Kern cautions readers to pay closer attention to the distinction between textual reproduction and manuscript production whenever dealing with excavated manuscripts. *Reproduction* (or copying) “refers to an earlier textual model, written or oral,” whereas *production* indicates “an original creation of the written form” of the text. In theory, three possible modes guided the production of a piece of writing: (a) direct copying from a parallel text, (b) dictation from a text, and (c) writing from memory without a text at hand.⁷¹ That there is more than one method of manuscript production carries direct implications for the archaeological material at hand. Yuri Pines suggests that Xi 喜, the occupant of Shuihudi tomb no. 11 (whose professional life I discuss more below), actually transcribed a speech that he had personally witnessed.⁷² If it is truly the case that an oral performance was written out by hand, this act could align with with Kern’s points (b) or (c). Xi, moreover, must have been a fairly accomplished writer. The resulting manuscript retrieved from his coffin now goes by the title *Writing on Someone Else’s Words* (*Yushu*).

The presence of occasion texts as grave goods emphasizes the significance of the ability to write and the act of writing itself in the work of scribes. Conveying meaning evidently trumped the creation of intellectual property. As a consequence, the author may safely be neglected in what follows; we shall concentrate on the scrivener instead.

More Than Scriveners

Occupation texts provide us with revealing information about scribes and their specific duties during the late preimperial and early imperial periods. Particularly important are (the only) two records of scribal career trajectories. Both records describe men who were eventually

of *Ch’in Law*, p. 86. On the meaning of *duguan*, see Michael Loewe, “The Organs of Han Imperial Government: *zhongdu guan*, *duguan*, *xianguan* and *xiandao guan*,” *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 71.3 (2008): 514–18.

⁷¹ Kern, “Methodological Reflections,” p. 167.

⁷² Yuri Pines, *Foundations of Confucian Thought: Intellectual Life in the Chunqiu Period* (722–453 B.C.E.) (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2002), p. 24. For transcriptions of the *Yushu* 語書, see *Yummeng Shuihudi Qin mu*, pp. 14–22; *Shuihudi Qin mu zhujian*, pp. 13–16; see also Wu Fuzhu, *Shuihudi Qin jian lunkao*, pp. 39–138. Pines also asserts that “the tradition of recording speeches is probably as old as Chinese historiography itself” (p. 24). Lothar von Falkenhausen argues that the custom might be as old as the Western Zhou period; see his “The Royal Audience and Its Reflection in Western Zhou Bronze Inscriptions,” in *Writing & Literacy in Early China*, pp. 249–50, 268–70.

promoted to directing scribes (*lingshi* 令史), a post that figures prominently among excavated administrative and legal documents and thus shines some light on scribes' expertise in the more advanced stages of their careers. As we shall see, competence in legal, divinatory, arithmetic, and medical matters was required of scribes.

The scribe named Xi is the deceased interred in Shuihudi tomb no. 11 (figs. 1 and 2). After dying in or around 217 BCE, he was encased in a single wooden coffin and interred in a fairly small wooden chamber.⁷³ In 1975, Chinese archaeologists encountered the burial in nearly perfect condition apart from considerable flooding inside the chamber. In reaction to the publication of the findings and features shortly after, academia cared little for the lacquer vessels, ceramic and bronze containers, bamboo hampers, or bronze sword with a jade pommel that were stored in the western compartment (fig. 1). Scholars had eyes only for the many inscribed bamboo slips that filled the interior of the coffin (fig. 2).

The most alluring manuscripts turned out to be various legal documents, among them the statutes discussed in the preceding section. The "Miscellaneous [Statutes on the Affairs of the] Ministry of Finance" were part of a collection that is now known as the *Eighteen Kinds of Qin Statutes* (*Qinlü shiba zhong* 秦律十八種). In addition, Xi's tomb brought the following legal documents to light: "Statutes on Verification" ("Xiaolü" 效律), "Miscellaneous Copies of Qin Statutes" ("Qinlü zachao" 秦律雜抄), "Questions and Answers to Exemplary Statutes" ("Falü dawen" 法律答文), and *Templates for Sealing and [Physical] Exams* (*Fengzhen shi* 封診式).⁷⁴ The "day books" (*rishu*), which included texts entitled "Essay on the Human Form" ("Renzi pian" 人字篇) and "Spellbinding" ("Jie" 結), also have attracted considerable attention.⁷⁵ These finds are impressive indeed.

⁷³ *Yunmeng Shuihudi Qin mu*, p. 11.

⁷⁴ Transcriptions of all the Shuihudi texts can be found in *Shuihudi Qin mu zhujian*, pp. 67–164; translations are in Hulsewé, *Remnants of Ch'in Law*. See also Katrina C. D. McLeod and Robin D. S. Yates, "Forms of Ch'in Law: An Annotated Translation of the *Feng-chen shih*," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 41.1 (1981): 111–63, doi: 10.2307/2719003.

⁷⁵ See, for instance, Rao Zongyi 饒宗頤 and Zeng Xiantong 曾憲通, *Yunmeng Qin jian rishu yanjiu* 雲夢秦簡日書研究 (Hong Kong: Zhongwen daxue chubanshe, 1982); Liu Lexian 劉樂賢, *Shuihudi Qin jian rishu yanjiu* 睡虎地秦簡日書研究 (Taipei: Wenjin chubanshe, 1994); Lian Shaoming 連劭名, "Yunmeng Qin jian 'Jie' pian kaoshu" 雲夢秦簡《詁》篇考述, *Kaogu xuebao* 考古學報, no. 1 (2002): 23–38; Donald Harper, "A Chinese Demonography of the Third Century B.C.," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 45.2 (1985): 459–98, doi: 10.2307/2718970.

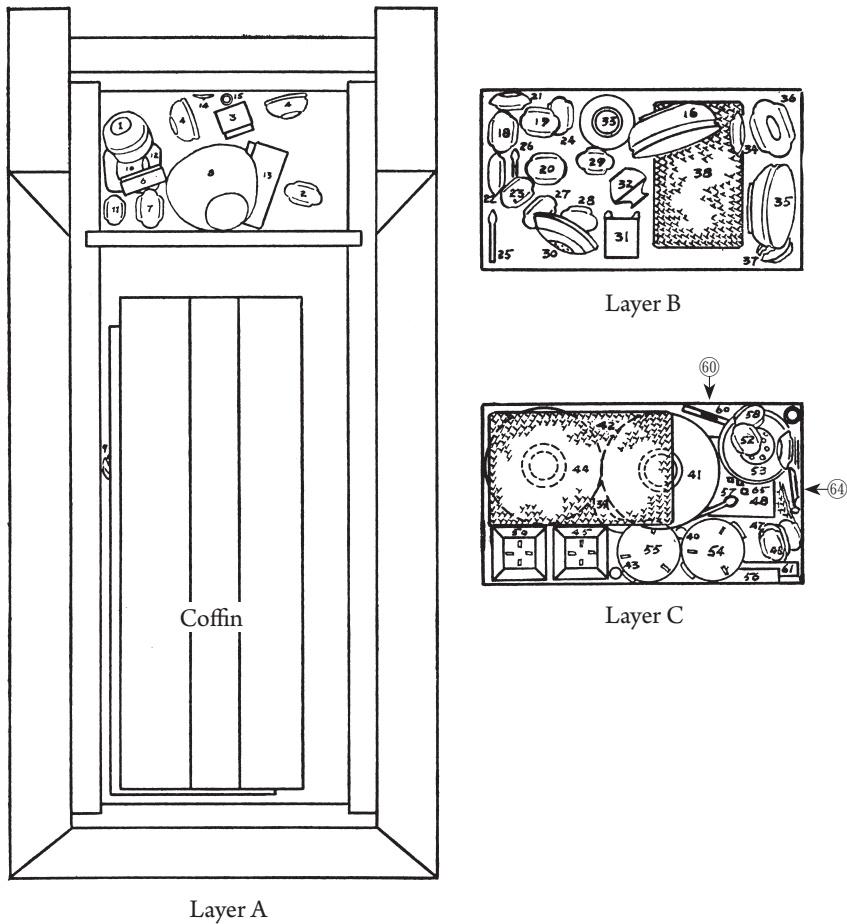


FIG. 1 Tomb of Directing Scribe Xi (217 BCE; Shuihudi tomb no. 11). This figure shows the outline of a small wooden chamber (352 cm L × 172 cm W × 116 cm H), constructed in an east–west orientation at the bottom of a vertical pit (510 cm deep). A vertical wooden wall divided the chamber into two compartments. Xi’s coffin was found in the eastern compartment. The majority of burial goods were deposited in the western compartment, stacked in three layers (*ceng* 層): C, B, A, from bottom to top. Among the finds (in layer C) were a writing brush inside a lacquered case (no. 60) and a bronze scratch knife (*xue*) with a ring butt (no. 64). Source: X2WX, “Hubei Yunmeng Shuihudi shiyi hao Qin mu fajue jianbao,” p. 2, fig. 3.1 (see appendix, tomb no. 7, for full reference). Image used with permission.

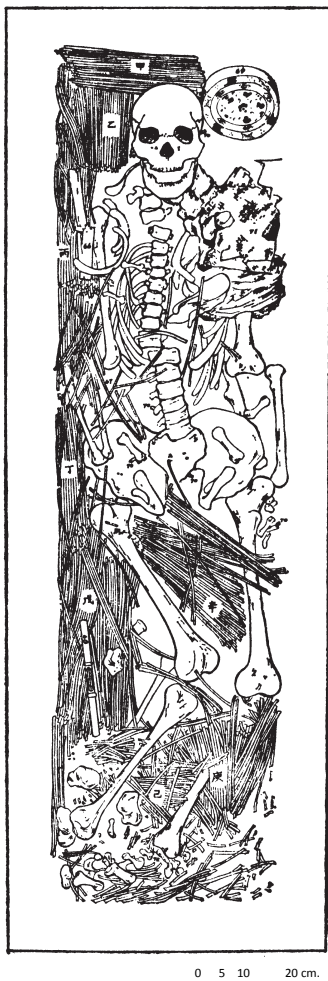


FIG. 2 Interior of Directing Scribe Xi's Coffin. In addition to Xi's skeletal remains, the coffin contained 1,155 intact inscribed bamboo slips and two writing brushes. One writing brush was found near his right elbow, another by his right knee. Source: X₂WX, "Hubei Yunmeng Shuihudi shiyi hao Qin mu fajue jianbao," p. 3, fig. 4 (see appendix, tomb no. 7). Image used with permission.

What makes Xi's tomb truly special for my purposes is the *Record of Arranged [Consecutive] Years* (*Biannian ji* 編年記). Not only does this chronicle mention the tomb occupant by name and give the year he was born (262 BCE), but it also reiterates the cornerstones of his career as a scribe.⁷⁶ In 246 BCE, as a seventeen-year-old, he registered (*fu* 傅) to train as a scribe. Hence, Xi probably began scribal training precisely at the age stipulated by the Zhangjiashan "Statute on [the Education

⁷⁶ *Shuihudi Qin mu zhujian*, plates 1–7, pp. 3–10; also see, for instance, Huang Shengzhang 黃盛璋, "Yunmeng Qin jian 'Biannian ji' chubu yanjiu" 云梦秦简《编年记》初步研究, *Kaogu xuebao*, no. 1 (1977): 1–22; Mittag, "The Qin Bamboo Annals of Shuihudi."

of] Scribes.” After three years of education (in 244 BCE), which again accords with the Zhangjiashan regulation, he graduated (*yu* 掄) and became a scribe in the administration of the Qin state.⁷⁷ Unfortunately, on the chronicle, the character preceding the obligatory 史 (*shi*) in Xi’s postgraduation title is illegible. Nonetheless, the entry tells us that after graduation, the scribe was stationed at the city of Anlu 安陸.⁷⁸ There, he rose to the rank of directing scribe (*lingshi*) in 241 BCE, before being transferred to Yan 鄢 County as a directing scribe in 240 BCE.⁷⁹ Since no changes are reported for the intervening period, we have to assume that Xi was still a directing scribe when he “solved lawsuits” (*zhi yu* 治獄) in 235 BCE at his new place of employment. Without further explanation, the chronicle ends by simply stating the year 217 BCE, thus providing a terminus ante quem for the scribe’s demise.⁸⁰

A rather similar career trajectory may be discerned in Liye tablet no. 8-269, which reports the curriculum vitae of a directing scribe named Kou 鉤:

- 資中令史陽里鉤伐闕 Verification of the experience of Kou from the Yang hamlet, directing scribe at Zizhong:⁸¹
- 十一年九月隴為史 In the eleventh year [of King Zheng 政 of Qin⁸²; 236 BCE], Kou passed [the final exam at scribal school] and was appointed scribe.
- 為鄉史九歲一日 He served as district scribe for nine years and one day.
- 為田部史四歲三月十一日 He served as scribe of the agricultural division [in the district he was appointed to] for three years, nine months, and eleven days.

⁷⁷ I take *yu* 掄 (to lift; to raise) to be a homophone of *yu* 隴 (to exceed).

⁷⁸ During the Western Han, Anlu belonged to Jiangxia Commandery 江夏郡 and was located in the vicinity of modern-day Yunmeng 雲夢 County in northeast-central Hubei Province. See *Zhongguo lishi dituji* 中國歷史地圖集, ed. Tan Qixiang 譚其驤, vol. 2, *Qin, Xi Han, Dong Han shiqi*, 秦·西汉·东汉时期 (Beijing: Zhongguo ditu chubanshe, 1982), plates 22–23, grid ref. 7 (horiz.) 4 (vert.).

⁷⁹ During the Western Han, Yan County was subordinate to Nan Commandery 南郡 and lay roughly eighty-five miles northwest of Anlu, near the modern-day city of Yicheng 宜城, Hubei Province. On the renaming of Yan to Yicheng in 192 BCE, see Barbieri-Low and Yates, *Law, State, and Society*, v. 2, p. 1008n97.

⁸⁰ *Biannian ji*, in *Shuihudi Qin mu zhujian*, plates 1–7, pp. 3–10.

⁸¹ Zizhong 資中 was part of the Shu Commandery 蜀郡 in Sichuan, a few miles south-east of modern-day Chengdu 成都; see *Zhongguo lishi dituji*, v. 2, plates 29–30, grid ref. 4 (horiz.) 3 (vert.).

⁸² He later became the First Emperor.

為令史二月	He has been serving as directing scribe for two months.
□計☒戶計	[In this capacity] he calculates [<i>illegible</i>] [<i>blank space</i>] and households.
年卅六	[Kou is] thirty-six years old.
可直司空曹	He may be appointed to the Bureau of Convict Labor. ⁸³

Kou, the subject of this qualification check, graduated from scribal school and was immediately recruited as a scribe. Once again, practice complies with the stipulations of the slightly younger “Statutes on [the Education of] Scribes”: student scribes who met imperial expectations were given a job right away. Unlike the account of Xi’s career, this record remains silent about Kou’s actual age at graduation. We can only say with some certainty that he must have been around twenty-three years old when he assumed his post as district scribe (*xiangshi* 鄉史). After having worked as a district scribe and a scribe of the agricultural division (*tianbushi* 田部史) for a total of thirteen years, five months, and twelve days, the thirty-six-year-old Kou’s performance was now being reviewed. The document indicates that this process was integral to the deliberations of assigning positions in imperial government. Among other things, Kou’s background in the management of population registers—referred to as “calculating households” ([*illegible graph*] *ji* [*blank space*] *huji* □計☒戶計)—was deemed sufficient to entrust him with new and additional responsibilities.

In this light, my previous statement that there existed no formal office identified by the solitary character 史 *shi* might seem at odds with the initial jobs of Xi and Kou. Both launched their careers as generalized scribes (史 *shi*), Xi for three years and Kou apparently for six years. But these were not the specific offices they later went on to hold—district or directing scribes. The generic use of the term 史 *shi* here suggests that junior scribes were expected to gather practical experience in various aspects of scribal duties before they were ready to take on more demanding and specialized tasks. They could, in fact,

⁸³ Tablet no. 8-269 in *Liye Qin jian*, p. 54 (photo), p. 26 (transcription); cf. *Liye Qin jian du jiaoshi*, p. 125. I follow Barbieri-Low and Yates, *Law, State, and Society*, v. 1, p. 194 in translating *sikong cao* 司空曹 as Bureau of Convict Labor. Note the use of *yu* 踰 in line 2 to indicate graduation. The symbol □ indicates an illegible character, while ☒ represents where a blank space occurs in the manuscript.

very well have been the “scribes without rank” (*shiwu juezhe* 史毋[無] 爵者) referred to in one of the Shuihudi statutes.⁸⁴ It is equally likely to recognize in them the so-called junior scribes (*xiaoshi* 小史; *shaoshi* 少史) known from manuscripts secured at a beacon tower at Ejin Banner (Ejina qi 額濟納旗; dated ca. 59 BCE–28 CE) in Inner Mongolia, as well as manuscripts at Juyan (Inner Mongolia) and Liye (Hunan).⁸⁵ In some of these contexts, unspecified scribes as well as junior scribes appear as members of a traveling workforce; the respective records simply state that they “came” (*lai* 來).⁸⁶

Shortages in resident staff, attested to in the complaint about insufficient personnel (mentioned earlier),⁸⁷ were addressed by sending out rookie scribes to support local offices and, in turn, allowing them to improve existing skills and pick up new ones in practice. As recent graduates from scribal school they were adequately literate, yet they had little knowledge of the practical demands of administering an empire. Active involvement in alternating divisions of the government slowly but steadily acquainted the young scribes with the many facets of their day-to-day work. Consider, for instance, the main premise of the modern German apprenticeship system:

It is assumed that a broad basis of elementary vocational qualifications leads to maximising flexibility of workers and mobility between workplaces. . . . Specialization only takes place after an initial training period.⁸⁸

In the initial phase of their training, apprentices hone the fundamental skills of their desired jobs. Mastering the basic tenets renders them highly versatile employees, who, after having completed this first step, are perfectly prepared to focus on a specific area of expertise. The same was true for early Chinese scribes. Once they had successfully finished scribal school and were appointed scribes (*shi*), a period of on-the-job training ensued.

⁸⁴ “Chuan shi lü” 傳食律, in *Shuihudi Qin mu zhujian*, p. 60, slip no. 182; cf. Hulsewé, *Remnants of Ch'in Law*, p. 85.

⁸⁵ See tablet 2000ES7S:9A in *Ejina Han jian shiwen jiaoben* 額濟納漢簡釋文校本, ed. Sun Jiazhou 孫家洲 (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 2007), p. 62. For *shaoshi* 少史, slip no. 10.30 in *Juyan Han jian*, v. 2, p. 7.

⁸⁶ In *Liye Qin jian*, for instance, see tablet no. 8-144 (verso), p. 17; and tablet no. 8-645 (verso), p. 41; cf. *Liye Qin jian du jiaoshi*, pp. 76, 189.

⁸⁷ Slip no. 8-197 (recto) in *Liye Qin jian (yi)*, p. 22.

⁸⁸ Thomas Deissinger and Silke Helwig, “Apprenticeships in Germany: Modernising the Dual System,” *Education & Training* 47.4–5 (2005): 315.

At this point in their professional lives, writing was still very much part of everyday education. A considerable volume of writing exercises commingling with administrative manuscripts is ample testament to the centrality of writing in their education.⁸⁹ One excavated text in particular conveys how a scribe was engaging with the endonym of his job. He paired the single graph 史 *shi* (scribe) at least three times and referred to a *lingshi* (directing scribe) once.⁹⁰ Usually such exercises adhere to a simple formula: one or more characters are repeated several times in columns that follow straight lines, just as it would be in official documents. Before they would be eligible as fully fledged members of the rank and file, junior scribes had to prove themselves under varying circumstances over the course of several years.

Legal Competence of Directing Scribes

The majority of directing scribes appear in excavated manuscripts without further specification in their titles. Where scattered signifiers of directing scribes' titles do appear, however, they affirm the involvement of their holders in essential aspects of imperial government on local and regional levels. For instance, Liye tablets name a directing scribe of agriculture (*tian lingshi* 田令史)⁹¹ and a directing scribe of the Office of Households (*hucao lingshi* 戶曹令史).⁹² Juyan tablets introduce the post titles of directing scribe of canal A (*jiaqu lingshi* 甲渠令史), directing scribe of the municipal granary (*chengcang lingshi* 城倉令史), and directing scribe of the armory (*ku lingshi* 庫令史).⁹³ These inscriptions adding a signifier often offer little more information than the title itself, because many manuscripts are only partially preserved.

Nonetheless, there are some cases that allow deeper insights into directing scribes' range of legal duties. We read, for example, that the

⁸⁹ In *Liye Qin jian*, see no. 8-176 (recto) on p. 21; no. 8-1437 (verso) on p. 70; no. 8-1499 on p. 73; and no. 8-1915 on p. 88. Cf. *Liye Qin jiandu jiaoshi*, pp. 105, 325, 340, 406. Also, in v. 2 of *Juyan Han jian*, see slip nos. 24.9B, 25.8, and 25.18B on p. 15; slip no. 26.9B on p. 16; and slip no. 32.12B on p. 20.

⁹⁰ *Juyan Han jian*, v. 2, p. 111, slip no. 158.12. The upper end of the slip is missing, so there may have been additional pairings.

⁹¹ Tablet no. 8-165 in *Liye Qin jian*, p. 20; cf. *Liye Qin jiandu jiaoshi*, p. 100.

⁹² Tablet no. 8-2004 in *Liye Qin jian*, p. 91; cf. *Liye Qin jiandu jiaoshi*, p. 166.

⁹³ In vol. 2 of *Juyan Han jian*, see tablet no. 84.27, p. 62; tablet nos. 142.34–35, p. 100; and tablet no. 84.18, p. 62.

directing scribe of the fields was ordered to conduct some kind of audit before the slip brakes off. In contrast, the wooden tablet relating to the directing scribe of the Office of Households was fairly complete:

- 卅四年八月癸巳朔癸 卯戶曹令史 𠄎 In the thirty-fourth year [of the First Emperor's reign; 213 BCE] on the *guisi* day of the eighth month, whose first day was a *guimao* day, Directing Scribe of the Bureau of Households [*broken*] [has collected]
- 盡卅三年見戶數牘北 (背)移獄具集上 𠄎 the number of households that are verified on the backs of [household register] tablets through the end of the thirty-third year [of the First Emperor's reign; 214 BCE]. He is transferring legal cases and the prepared and collected [numbers of households] to the higher authorities [*illegible; broken*]:
- 廿八年見百九十一戶 Twenty-eighth year [219 BCE], verified [number of] households: 191
- 廿九年見百六十六戶 Twenty-ninth year [218 BCE], verified [number of] households: 166
- 卅年見百五十五戶 Thirtieth year [217 BCE], verified [number of] households: 155
- 卅一年見百五十九戶 Thirty-first year [216 BCE], verified [number of] households: 159
- 卅二年見百六十一戶 𠄎 Thirty-second year [215 BCE], verified [number of] households: 161 [*broken*]
- 卅三年見百六十三戶 𠄎 Thirty-third year [214 BCE], verified [number of] households: 163 [*broken*]⁹⁴

It is noteworthy that this particular directing scribe in the Office of Households was supervising household registers. Keeping accurate

⁹⁴ Tablet no. 8-2004 in *Liye Qin jian*, p. 243 (photo), p. 91 (transcription). *Liye Qin jian du jiaoshi* (p. 166) adds some content to the inscription where the individual columns were illegible, indicated by □, or the tablets had broken off, indicated by 𠄎. Since the authors do not divulge on what grounds they emended the *Liye Qin jian* version, I am following the photo. The table presents an outline of demographic change in what may have been a district (*xiang* 鄉) of Qianling County 遷陵縣 (roughly modern-day Liye): after a sudden drop between the years 219 and 218 BCE, the population slowly recovered in subsequent years.

count of such data was essential knowledge for the imperial government because these data were the basis of tax revenues.⁹⁵

In addition to overseeing the total figures, the directing scribe was in charge of forwarding the numbers to the superior offices at the commandery level, a duty we also observe several times in the *Liye* and *Juyan* manuscripts. For example, different sides of the same tablet (no. 8-1511) record:

[Recto:]

廿九年九月壬辰朔辛亥，遷陵丞昌敢言之：令令史感上水火敗亡者課一牒。有不定者，謁令感定。敢言之。	In the twenty-ninth year on the <i>renchen</i> day of the ninth month, whose first day was a <i>xinhai</i> day, Chang, assistant at Qianling [County] dares to inform [the higher authorities] of the following: Directing Scribe Gan was ordered to submit an evaluation [recorded on] one single tablet of the damages and losses [in the county] that were caused by floods and fires. Gan was also ordered to confirm those [damages] that have not yet been confirmed. This is what I dare to convey.
---	--

已。

This has already been taken care of.

[Verso:]

九月辛亥水下九刻，感行。	On the <i>xinhai</i> day of the ninth month as the water had fallen to the ninth mark [1 p.m.] Gan forwarded [his report].
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感手

By the hand of Gan.⁹⁶

The front (recto) of the tablet preserves a direct order to a directing scribe who was tasked with assessing the scope of damages and losses to county property under his jurisdiction. The matter sounded somewhat urgent as the official giving the order made sure to remind the directing scribe that *all* damages had to be included in his report. He need not have worried too much because on the

⁹⁵ Also see the household statutes yielded by Zhangjiashan tomb no. 247; “Hulü” 戶律, in *Zhangjiashan Han mu zhujian*, pp. 175–80, slip nos. 305–46; cf. Barbieri-Low and Yates, *Law, State, and Society*, v. 2, pp. 783–822. For an actual tax imposed on households, see tablet no. 8-1519 in *Liye Qin jian*, p. 75; cf. *Liye Qin jian du jiaoshi*, pp. 345–46.

⁹⁶ Tablet no. 8-1511 in *Liye Qin jian*, p. 74; cf. *Liye Qin jian du jiaoshi*, pp. 341–42. On time keeping using a water clock, see Yates, “Qin Slips and Boards,” p. 302.

back of the tablet we are informed of the directing scribe's immediate response: on the very same day, he informed his superior that he had already taken care of this business before signing off on the document himself. This episode and the previous one reporting on household registers illustrate that directing scribes, acting on a county (*xian* 縣) level, linked the lower tiers of local administration—districts (*xiang*) and hamlets (*li* 里)—with higher authorities in the commandery (*jun* 郡). Directing scribes supervised and built on the work of lower ranking officials in order to report to their own superiors.

Tablet no. 8-1511 demonstrates that reading and writing lay at the heart of directing scribes' jobs. First, Directing Scribe Gan needed to be able to read and understand the exact contents of what he was mandated to do. Second, he needed to read and intellectually process the information provided by the lower ranking officials who assisted his efforts. Third, on the tablet verso, Gan himself emerges as the actual writer. One could easily argue that years of training were well spent as Gan had anticipated what he was supposed to do; he had already fulfilled the task. A directing scribe was expected to be intimately familiar with the statutes and ordinances.⁹⁷ So naturally, a well-trained scribe would be prepared: the "Statute on Fields" ("Tianlü" 田律), recovered from Directing Scribe Xi's tomb, insisted that damages to crops caused by droughts, floods, or locusts invariably were to be announced in writing.⁹⁸

Quite a few manuscripts among the Liye finds show directing scribes in supervising capacities. They oversaw (*jian* 監; *shiping* 視平) the distribution of food supplies,⁹⁹ assignment of labor,¹⁰⁰ and issuance of money.¹⁰¹ Whenever food or money was involved, we might

⁹⁷ There are at least two cases in *Liye Qin jian* in which certain issues were forwarded in writing to directing scribes so that they could deal with them "in accordance with the statutes and ordinances" 可以律令從事: slip no. 8-21, p. 11, and slip no. 8-1219, p. 63; cf. *Liye Qin jian du jiaoshi*, pp. 33–34, 293. In a third case, a directing scribe traveled to a neighboring county in order to proofread (*chou* 讎) its copies of the statutes and ordinances. See tablet no. 6-4, p. 7; cf. *Liye Qin jian du jiaoshi*, p. 19.

⁹⁸ "Tianlü," in *Shuihudi Qin mu zhujian*, p. 19; cf. Hulsewé, *Remnants of Ch'in Law*, p. 21.

⁹⁹ In *Liye Qin jian*, see, for instance, slip no. 8-1576, p. 78, and slip no. 8-1839, p. 86; cf. *Liye Qin jian du jiaoshi*, pp. 364, 398.

¹⁰⁰ In *Liye Qin jian*, see tablet no. 8-1239, p. 64; tablet no. 8-1334, p. 67; tablet no. 8-1551, p. 76; tablet no. 8-1580, p. 78; and tablet no. 8-1584, p. 78; cf. *Liye Qin jian du jiaoshi*, pp. 297, 356, 364, 365.

¹⁰¹ See, for instance, tablet no. 8-992 in *Liye Qin jian*, p. 57; cf. *Liye Qin jian du jiaoshi*, p. 258.

take the phrase “watching the balance” (*shiping*) quite literally. It was the responsibility of the directing scribe in charge to ensure proper procedure. Of course, such situations required arithmetic competence—of the sort implied by the mathematical text unearthed from Zhangjiashan tomb no. 247.

Significantly, because they are tied to the mundane administrative responsibilities of scribes whose duties required them to travel, the skills of divination enter the picture here. Directing scribes, as longer-term affiliates of specific offices near whose headquarters they most likely also resided, traveled less frequently than junior scribes, who were part of a mobile workforce. Nevertheless, the demands of their job rendered occasional extended journeys unavoidable. Take Directing Scribe Kou, for instance, who, at some point, “traveled to an ancestral temple” (*xing miao* 行廟).¹⁰² He was not the only one to have done so. Recently, Chen Wei has compiled a list of at least eleven different directing scribes who visited one or several unspecified ancestral shrines; some went multiple times.¹⁰³ At least one reason for these journeys was to supervise the sale of leftover sacrificial meals.¹⁰⁴

Other evidence suggests additional reasons for traveling. Yinwan tomb no. 6 (no. 33 in the appendix, dated 10 CE) and Zhoujiatai tomb no. 30 (no. 9 in the appendix) each yielded personal accounts of portions of the occupant’s professional life. The man buried at Yinwan was a certain Shi Rao 師饒, who served as scribe of the Bureau of Merit (*gongcao shi* 功曹史). His diary covers parts of the year 11 BCE and lists the toponyms of different places where he lodged overnight. Apparently, he was on the road so much that it warranted explicit mention whenever he spent a night at home (*sujia* 宿家). Shi Rao’s busy schedule is also mirrored in the so-called greeting tablets he was buried with—they were an integral part of etiquette on official visits at the time.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰² Tablet no. 8-174 (verso) in *Liye Qin jian*, p. 21; cf. *Liye Qin jiandu jiaoshi*, p. 78.

¹⁰³ *Liye Qin jiandu jiaoshi*, p. 78.

¹⁰⁴ In *Liye Qin jian*, see tablet no. 8-993, p. 57; tablet no. 8-1002, p. 57; tablet no. 8-1055, p. 58; tablet no. 8-1091, p. 60; and tablet no. 8-1579, p. 78; cf. *Liye Qin jiandu jiaoshi*, pp. 258 (tablet no. 8-993), 259 (tablet nos. 8-1002 and 8-1091), 269 (tablet nos. 8-1055 and 8-1579). Also see Lu Jialiang 魯家亮, “Liye Qin jian ‘Lingshi xing miao’ wenshu zaitan” 里耶秦簡“令史行廟”文書再探, *Jianbo yanjiu* 2014 簡帛研究 2014, ed. Yang Zhenhong 楊振紅 and Wu Wenling 鄒文玲 (Guilin: Guangxi shifan daxue chubanshe, 2014), pp. 43–51; Yates, “Qin Slips and Boards,” pp. 318–26; Charles Sanft, “Paleographic Evidence of Qin Religious Practice from Liye and Zhoujiatai,” *Early China* 37 (2014): 337–40.

¹⁰⁵ See the preface to *Yinwan Han mu jiandu*, p. 3; for the text of the diary, see pp. 138–44

The itinerary from Zhoujiatai tomb no. 30, in contrast, is moderately more articulate about the precise duties that the deceased scribe performed at diverse locations in 213 BCE. Although his exact post remains a mystery, we are informed, for instance, that he went to Jiangling 江陵 (present-day south-central Hubei) in order “to manage the inner archive” (*zhi houfu* 治後府).¹⁰⁶

Exiting the walls of one’s hometown meant stepping into the unknown. The dangers that lay ahead were a constant source of anxiety for traveling officials. Shi Rao, for example, expressed anguish on several occasions about road conditions as he recorded instances of heavy rainfall (*shenyu* 甚雨) during his voyages.¹⁰⁷ One way to deal with the uncertainty associated with travel was to determine an opportune time. Some scribes were buried with divinatory day books and diagrams, and traveling figures prominently in writings related to divination.¹⁰⁸ Thus, the voyage itself was serious business that needed to be carefully planned. Choosing the wrong day could have devastating consequences, worst of all the death of the traveler. This perspective sounds rather grim to contemporary readers and anything but convenient.

What were scribes to do when the need to travel was urgent? In a collection of medical treatments and occult materials from Zhoujiatai tomb no. 30, we find the following passage that suggests ancient Chinese travelers were not necessarily dogmatic about the outcome of initial prognostications:

有行而急，不得須良日。東行越木，南行越火，西行越金，北行越水，毋須良日可也。	Whenever [the reason for] traveling is urgent, it is not necessary to wait for a good [auspicious] day. When one travels east, one should cross wood; when one travels south, one should cross fire; when one travels west, one should cross metal; when one travels north, one should cross water. [If these precautions are taken] it is possible not to wait for a good day. ¹⁰⁹
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(see appendix, tomb no. 33). See also Maxim Korolkov, “‘Greeting Tablets’ in Early China: Some Traits of the Communicative Etiquette of Officialdom in Light of Newly Excavated Inscriptions,” *T’oung Pao* 98.4–5 (2012): 295–348.

¹⁰⁶ *Guanju Qin Han mu jiandu*, p. 95, slip nos. 34–35.

¹⁰⁷ *Yinwan Han mu jiandu*, pp. 139–40, slip nos. 15, 30–31.

¹⁰⁸ See, for instance, *Rishu yizhong* 日書一種, in *Shuihudi Qin mu zhujian*, p. 243, slip nos. 139–46; *Rishu*, in *Guanju Qin Han mu jiandu*, pp. 110–11, slip nos. 188, 192, 194; tablet no. YM6D9 (verso) in *Yinwan Han mu jiandu*, p. 126; and “Xingde xingshi” 行德行時, in *Yinwan Han mu jiandu*, p. 145, slip nos. 77–89.

¹⁰⁹ *Guanju Qin Han mu jiandu*, p. 133, slip no. 363.

A similar notion is expressed in a divinatory text salvaged from the remains of the beacon tower at Ejin Banner:

函南方火即急行者 [broken] south relates to [the element] fire; when travelers
越此物行吉。 on urgent business cross this element, their voyage will
be auspicious.¹¹⁰

Both manuscripts reveal a remarkable sense of pragmatism. Whenever a date was considered inopportune for going on a trip, scribes, as adepts in the occult arts, had an array of remedies at their disposal. Taking appropriate precautions was key to a safe journey.

But traveling was not the only domain in which divination was applied. Hemerological manuals in the form of day books found in Zhoujiatai tomb no. 30 and Fangmatan 放馬灘 tomb no. 1 (no. 6 in the appendix, dated 239 BCE) highlight that the outcome of day-to-day affairs was also dependent on proper timing:

子，旦有言，喜，聽； On zi [days]: At dawn, there is speaking, lightheartedness,
子，旦有言，喜， and listening; late in the day, one does not listen [to
聽；安(晏)不聽； complaints, accusations, appeals]; during daytime, one
晝得美言；夕得美 may find excellent words; in the evening, one may find
言。 excellent words.¹¹¹

This excerpt comes from two sets of recommendations about how to conduct business on days that correspond with each of the twelve branches (*zhi* 支) in the sexagenary cycle. The individual days in the Zhoujiatai day books are subdivided into five parts, whereas those of the Fangmatan day books are broken down into four sections. Each time of day is associated with specific activities that will thrive (“find excellent words”) and other activities that will go awry (“have unpleasant words,” *you eyan* 有惡言). Activities not specified will not be influenced. Some parts of the day were regarded as causing fury (*younu* 有怒) or not being fit for managerial tasks (*buzhi* 不治) in the first place. However, the majority of time slots were reserved for listening to formal complaints and accusations by the general public (*ting* 聽; *gaoting zhi* 告聽之), or not (*buting* 不聽; *gaobuting* 告不聽).¹¹²

¹¹⁰ Slip no. 2002ESCSF1:4 in *Ejina Han jian shiwen jiaoben*, p. 104. For another set of precautions, see *Rishu yizhong*, in *Shuihudi Qin mu zhujian*, p. 243, slip nos. 139–46.

¹¹¹ *Rishu jiazhong* 日書甲種, in *Tianshui Fangmatan Qin jian jishi*, p. 114, slip no. 54 (see appendix, tomb no. 6).

¹¹² *Guanju Qin Han mu jiandu*, p. 118, slip nos. 245–57; *Rishu jiazhong*, in *Tianshui*

This aspect of legal knowledge is very much related to the work of directing scribes, although we cannot safely identify the occupant of either of the Zhoujiatai or Fangmatan tombs as holding such a role. Conversely, Xi was, in fact, a directing scribe when he died. Moreover, in contrast to Kou's duties (whose performance check is recorded on Liye tablet no. 8-269) and the duties of the remaining scribes and directing scribes discussed so far, Xi's professional duties aligned much more with legal than administrative matters. First of all, the chronicle deposited in his coffin informs us that Xi "solved lawsuits" in 235 BCE.¹¹³ And like the occupants of tomb no. 77 at Shuihudi and tomb no. 247 at Zhangjiashan, Xi was accompanied by various kinds of legal texts—including a corpus of texts that is now known as *Templates for Sealing and [Physical] Exams*. None of these documents name Xi personally since they refer to directing scribes in abstract terms ("Directing Scribe X," *lingshi mou* 令史某). But it is surely not an outrageous claim to say that the work associated with these abstract designations must have pertained to Xi's own responsibilities in a meaningful way. Moreover, these responsibilities would have been roughly comparable for all directing scribes in Xi's line of (legal) specialization.

A practical understanding of the human body—and other mammals apparently—was required of directing scribes pursuing legal careers. The *Templates* instruct directing scribes to make use of medical skills in two specific instances (based on actual cases): examining the age of a cow in a dispute over rightful ownership of the animal and conducting a physical exam on a disobedient slave.¹¹⁴ Medical texts recovered from Zhangjiashan tomb nos. 247 and 136/336, as well as from Zhoujiatai tomb no. 30, also suggest their occupants had some level of medical expertise. Manuals, such as the *Writings on the Channels* and the *Pulling Book*, were the way to acquire the basic knowledge. Yet more serious issues were also addressed. One example in the *Templates* shows a directing scribe ordered to arrest a delinquent,¹¹⁵

Fangmatan Qin jian jishi, plates 9–10, pp. 87–88 (slip nos. *jia* 甲 54–65), and *Rishu yizhong* 日書乙種, in *Tianshui Fangmatan Qin jian jishi*, plates 19–20, pp. 114–15 (slip nos. *yi* 乙 35–46).

¹¹³ *Biannian ji*, in *Shuihudi Qin mu zhujian*, p. 7, slip no. 19.

¹¹⁴ *Fengzhen shi*, in *Shuihudi Qin mu zhujian*, pp. 151 (slip 24), 154 (slip 39); cf. McLeod and Yates, "Forms of Ch'in Law," pp. 129, 142, 146.

¹¹⁵ *Fengzhen shi*, in *Shuihudi Qin mu zhujian*, p. 150 (slip 16); cf. McLeod and Yates, "Forms of Ch'in Law," pp. 139–41.

and two other models portray directing scribes sent to crime scenes as primary investigators—one to solve a robbery,¹¹⁶ one to solve a murder.¹¹⁷ What is more, the *Templates* instruct that reports must be submitted in writing.

The emphasis on writing is also visible in the subsequent step of the legal process. One might doubt the reliability of the prescriptive *Liji* in general, but a statement that scribes were obliged to report disputable cases (*yu* 獄) to their superiors, who then passed them on to higher authorities, does not seem too far-fetched.¹¹⁸ Besides, an actual collection of such doubtful cases has been recovered from Zhangjiashan tomb no. 247 (*Zouyan shu* 奏讞書).¹¹⁹ Directing Scribe Xi was thus an in-the-field legal expert.

The sheer quantity of manuscripts assembled in his tomb illustrates the central role of literacy in Xi's professional life. His ability to write was highlighted by three bamboo writing brushes and one scratch knife (*xue* 削) found in his tomb. Two of these brushes were even deposited inside the coffin, along with the entire set of manuscripts (fig. 2). The remaining brush and knife, and most of the remaining burial goods, were in a separate compartment (fig. 1). Naturally, the proximity of manuscripts and writing utensils in his tomb is no sufficient indicator that Xi himself wrote all these texts. In fact, there is evidence that some documents were written by the hands of different people.¹²⁰ Yet collating the textual and material evidence at hand—his work as a scribe in tandem with the interred documents and writing paraphernalia—unmistakably proves that he was capable of writing and that this particular skill was very important to him.

As an experienced scribe, Xi most likely served as a mentor to junior scribes who passed through his office during their period of on-the-job training. The fact that a text entitled *The Way of Being a [Good]*

¹¹⁶ *Fengzhen shi*, in *Shuihudi Qin mu zhujian*, p. 160 (slips 73–83); cf. McLeod and Yates, "Forms of Ch'in Law," pp. 157–59.

¹¹⁷ *Fengzhen shi*, in *Shuihudi Qin mu zhujian*, p. 157 (slip 55–62); cf. McLeod and Yates, "Forms of Ch'in Law," pp. 154–55.

¹¹⁸ "Wang zhi," in *Liji zhengyi*, v. 1, j. 19, p. 555.

¹¹⁹ *Zouyan shu*, in *Zhangjiashan Han mu zhujian*, pp. 213–31. Barbieri-Low and Yates translate the *Zouyan shu* in *Law, State, and Society*, v. 2, pp. 1167–1416; cf. their introduction in v. 1, pp. 89–110.

¹²⁰ Matthias L. Richter, *The Embodied Text: Establishing Textual Identity in Early Chinese Manuscripts* (Leiden: Brill, 2013), p. 176.

Official (*Weili zhi dao* 為吏之道) was part of Xi's collection of interred manuscripts suggests that he took his role as an educator seriously.¹²¹ In this context, a quote by Li Si 李斯 (?280–208 BCE), himself a former junior official (*xiaoli* 小吏), comes to mind. He appealed to the First Emperor that “those who want to study laws and ordinances ought to take officials as teachers” 欲有學法令，以吏為師。¹²²

All in all, the substantial variety of manuscripts found in Directing Scribe Xi's coffin, as well as in several more tombs under discussion (nos. 6, 7, 9, 10, 13, 15, and 33 in the appendix), in combination with additional evidence provided by documents retrieved from settlement sites show that directing scribes, including Xi himself, were well versed in legal procedure, state administration, occult practices, and medical knowledge. The contents of such documents have little philosophical significance; instead they conform to Martin Kern's category of formulaic writings.¹²³ Although scribes, at least the ones directly concerned with governance, have been identified as the basis of the Chinese empire, their lack of intellectual depth has earned them a bad reputation. For it is largely due to their association with legal and administrative documents that scribes generally are accorded low social status. Xi, for example, is considered a minor player in the administrative hierarchy of the late Qin state and early Qin empire.¹²⁴

On a more general level, it has been argued that the mere act of writing, and scribal writing in particular, was little respected before the Eastern Han (25–220 CE) period.¹²⁵ Kern also asserts that the literacy demands on scribes were rather limited.¹²⁶ Some roughly con-

¹²¹ Wu Fuzhu, *Shuihudi Qin jian lun kao*, p. 153; Yates, “Soldiers, Scribes, and Women,” p. 357. For a transcription of the text, see *Wei li zhi dao*, in *Shuihudi Qin mu zhujian*, pp. 167–76.

¹²² *Shiji*, v. 1, j. 6, p. 255; v. 8, j. 87, p. 2546.

¹²³ See, for instance, Kern, “Methodological Reflections,” p. 148.

¹²⁴ See, for instance, the preface (*qianyan* 前言) to *Zhangjiashan Han mu zhujian*, prefatory materials, p. 1; Robin D. S. Yates, “Social Status in the Ch'in: Evidence from the Yün-meng Legal Documents. Part One: Commoners,” *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 47.1 (1987): 201–19, doi: 10.2307/2719161; and Kern, “Offices of Writing and Reading,” pp. 71–72.

¹²⁵ Michael Nylan, “Calligraphy, the Sacred Text and Test of Culture,” in *Character & Context in Chinese Calligraphy*, ed. Cary Y. Liu, Dora C. Y. Ching, and Judith G. Smith (Princeton: Princeton University Art Museum, 1999), p. 19; Michael Nylan, “Toward an Archaeology of Writing,” p. 7, but see p. 9.

¹²⁶ Kern, “Offices of Writing and Reading,” p. 67. But Hans van Ess cautions against a tendency to oversimplify ancient social reality based solely on transmitted literature;

temporaneous thinkers apparently shared the same view. One opinion expressed in the *Xunzi*, for example, is downright cynical. It describes Zhou-period officials (*shi* 士 and *dafu* 大夫) as people who simply “obey the laws and regulation” (*xun faze* 循法則), following whatever is written in “charts and registers” (*tu ji* 圖籍) without any comprehension of their contents (*buzhi qi yi* 不知其義).¹²⁷ According to Yang Xiong 揚雄 (53 BCE–18 CE), copying a text was a noble pursuit only when the writer truly engaged its essential meaning.¹²⁸ Although active roughly two hundred years after the majority of tomb occupants under discussion—and therefore not necessarily representative of their time—Wang Chong 王充 (27–100 CE) was equally vocal about his distaste for the formulaic writings of scribes. Michael Nylan summarizes Wang’s stance on the topic: “Mere talent or the ability to wield a brush, physically and rhetorically, have little or no inherent value, being the skills of contemptible craftsmen.”¹²⁹ The fact that scribes were working with crude materials—bamboo slips and wooden tablets, in lieu of fancier silk (or later paper)—surely did not help their reputation either.

In general, only the production of philosophical works carried prestige. Ancient and modern commentators alike agree that scribes remained on the margins of the literate community. In a society that placed great emphasis on the written word yet where barely anyone was literate, we would expect highly educated people to proudly display their writing skills. Ostensibly, the opposite was true. Writing for its own sake seems to have been widely despised among the literati. It is therefore all the more interesting to learn from the analysis of archaeological data (which I turn to next) that individuals such as Directing Scribe Xi decisively emphasized their ability to write.

In sum, regardless of whether junior or senior scribes were mainly carrying out administrative or legal assignments, their daily routines shared many features. First, they were responsible for collecting, documenting, communicating, and preserving information that was fundamental to the functioning of the empire.¹³⁰ This responsibility required

see his “An Interpretation of the *Shenwu fu* of Tomb No. 6, Yinwan,” *Monumenta Serica* 51 (2003): 608.

¹²⁷ “Rongru” 榮辱, in *Xunzi jijie* 荀子集解, ed. Wang Xianqian 王先謙, 20 *juan* in 2 vols. (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1988), v. 1, j. 2, p. 59.

¹²⁸ Nylan, *Yang Xiong*, p. 52.

¹²⁹ Nylan, “Calligraphy,” p. 42.

¹³⁰ Herman te Velde makes a similar argument for ancient Egypt: “Scribes were the

a fair amount of traveling, be it to some distant ancestral shrine or a crime scene. Out-of-town travel, in turn, necessitated divination, as did many other aspects of scribal work.

Yet one thing lay at the very core of all official actions: literacy. Scribes had to not only read but also completely grasp the meanings of written orders. Literacy was the prerequisite to gain an in-depth knowledge of statutes and ordinances—they could not merely copy, as some contemporaneous scholars contended, but had to fully comprehend. Only comprehension renders sensible a statement transmitted by at least two *Liye* slips that certain matters were forwarded to directing scribes in writing so that they would “follow up on the issues in accordance with the statutes and ordinances.”¹³¹ This requirement of comprehension is even more apparent from a document yielded by the same cache that records the trip of a directing scribe to a neighboring county with the intent of proofreading its versions of the statutes and ordinances (*chou lüling* 讎律令).¹³²

The very fact that “Statutes on Forwarding Documents” (“Xingshu” 行書 or “Xingshu lü” 行書律) even existed is ample evidence of the pivotal role of written communication in late preimperial and early imperial government.¹³³ Moreover, any kind of correspondence was filed in archives for future reference. For instance, the household registers gathered by the districts (*xiang*) were put in sealed cases and shipped to the county court. When they were needed, the supervising directing scribe and the court official in charge (*lizhu* 吏主) both had to ensure that the seal was intact before the box was opened.¹³⁴

Scribes made active use of their writing talents on a slightly more personal level as well. From the two diaries yielded by Shi Rao’s tomb

core and backbone of Ancient Egyptian civilization”; contrary to ancient China, though, “they were the elite”; Velde, “Scribes and Literacy in Ancient Egypt,” in *Scripta Signa Vocis: Studies about Scripts, Scriptures, Scribes and Languages in the Near East Presented to J.H. Hospers by His Pupils, Colleagues and Friends*, ed. H. L. J. Vanstiphout (Groningen: E. Forsten, 1986), pp. 253–64.

¹³¹ *Liye Qin jian*, slip no. 8-21, p. 11, and slip no. 8-1219, p. 63; cf. *Liye Qin jian du jiaoshi*, pp. 33–34, 293.

¹³² *Liye Qin jian*, tablet no. 6-4, p. 7; cf. *Liye Qin jian du jiaoshi*, p. 19.

¹³³ “Xingshu,” in *Shuihudi Qin mu zhujian*, p. 61, slip nos. 183–85; cf. Hulsewé, *Remnants of Ch’in Law*, pp. 85–86; “Xingshu lü,” in *Zhangjiashan Han mu zhujian*, pp. 169–71, slip nos. 264–77; cf. Barbieri-Low and Yates, *Law, State, and Society*, v. 2, pp. 729–52.

¹³⁴ “Hülü,” in *Zhangjiashan Han mu zhujian*, p. 178, slip nos. 331–36; cf. Barbieri-Low and Yates, *Law, State, and Society*, v. 2, pp. 798–99.

(no. 33 in the appendix) and Zhoujiatai tomb no. 30 (no. 9 in the appendix), we know that taking notes seems to have been common practice. Apart from conveying factual information, such memoranda reveal a way of structural thinking that is to be expected for members of a hierarchical bureaucracy: notes allowed the scribe to rely on them at a later date. Shi Rao, for example, listed the amount of money he gave to the custodian of his own estate on several occasions.

In short, the abilities to read and write were the most fundamental skills needed to work as a scribe. All additional expertise was dependent on the fact that scribes were truly literate. Mastering the intricate details of imperial administration, laws, medicine, and divination was only possible because scribes were not simply copyists but absolutely able to immerse themselves in the contents of their documents. Considering the many and varied demands that were put on scribes, then, raises a more fundamental question: Is it even appropriate to translate 史 *shi* as “scribe,” or should the term be “clerk”? The claim that they were crude copyists has already been disproved. The Merriam Webster dictionary definition of “clerk” is more adequate to describe 史 *shi*:

An official responsible (as to a government agency) for correspondence, records, and accounts and vested with specified powers or authority (as to issue writs as ordered by a court).¹³⁵

Seeing scribes as officials in charge of correspondence, records, and accounts might look like an accurate assessment at first sight. Yet it is open to interpretation whether being responsible for something entails actual engagement in the contents of the documents one is being asked to handle. Today, clerks at a department of motor vehicles in a US state may have only a superficial understanding of the statutes underlying the forms they hand out, collect, file, and transfer to higher authorities. In contrast, as we have seen in this section, late preimperial and early imperial scribes were very much experts in their respective fields—although not every scribe specialized in basic administrative work; some were criminal investigators and legal experts. Literacy and writing lay at the very root of all their work as scribes.

¹³⁵ Merriam-Webster, s.v. “clerk,” accessed on November 5, 2016, <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/clerk>.

Archaeological Evidence about Scribes

My aim here is to establish a link between the writing skills of tomb occupants and the way they depicted themselves as literate beings through the use of material culture. Tombs eligible for analysis therefore require other finds in addition to manuscripts. In burial contexts dating from the fifth through first centuries BCE, where written materials are the sole remains, we can barely go beyond mere speculation. The deceased may have been able to read and write, or may not have been literate at all—their interred documents intended only to impress an audience (perhaps similar to coffee-table books of our time).

Naturally, actual writing tools are the best indicators to remove such doubts. The more such implements are associated with manuscripts, the more likely it is that the tomb occupant not only was a writer but took pride in being able to write. Then again, brushes, ink, and ink stones by themselves need not necessarily point to literacy, for they were also employed by early Chinese painters—as illustrated by two ink stones and 4,385 ink lumps from the antechamber (*qianshi* 前室) and western ancillary chamber (*xi ershi* 西耳室) of the tomb of the King of Nanyue 南越 (Zhao Hu 趙胡 or Zhao Mo 趙昧; r. 137–122 BCE) at Guangzhou. Scientific analyses of samples from the ink lumps, ink residue on the ink-stone surfaces, and ink from the cloud patterns painted on the walls and ceilings of both chambers verify identical chemical compositions in all three instances.¹³⁶ The ink that was used to decorate the tomb was, in fact, prepared on both ink stones. Thus, the most plausible combination of burial goods suggesting literacy is manuscripts *and* writing paraphernalia.¹³⁷

Authentic utensils (in contrast to replicas of no practical use¹³⁸)

¹³⁶ *Xi Han Nanyue wang mu* 西汉南越王墓, ed. Guangzhou shi wenwu guanli weiyuanhui 广州市文物管理委员会, Zhongguo shehui kexueyuan kaogu yanjiusuo 中国社会科学院考古研究所, and Guangdong sheng bowuguan 广东省博物馆, 2 vols. (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 1991), v. 1, pp. 29, 128, 142.

¹³⁷ A brush (item no. 78.D.M.T7:01) and ink stone (item no. 79.D.M.T7:03) in combination with administrative documents have also been found in a Western Han building in Dunhuang 敦煌 County, Gansu Province; see Gansu sheng bowuguan 甘肃省博物馆 and Dunhuang xian wenhuaguan 敦煌县文化馆, “Dunhuang Majuanwan Han dai fengsui yizhi fajue jianbao” 敦煌马圈湾汉代烽燧遗址发掘简报, *Wenwu*, no. 10 (1981): 4; for a discussion of the administrative documents, see Wu Rengxiang 吴昉骧, “Yumenguan yu Yumenguan hou” 玉门关与玉门关候, *Wenwu*, no. 10 (1981): 11.

¹³⁸ A wooden imitation of a scratch knife was detected near the pelvis of a certain Shiqi Yao 侍其繇, who was buried sometime during the first century BCE near modern-

refer to the *act* of writing—for which brush, ink, and ink stones were essential. Brushes were in use as early as the Neolithic, when pottery was first ornamented by painting, and writing with brushes is safely attested for the Shang period.¹³⁹ The instrument itself—at least the fifteen archaeological examples considered here (see appendix table)—consisted of bamboo or wooden shafts with animal hair attached at one end (fig. 3A). Customized cases fashioned from lacquered bamboo tubes were regularly associated with brushes. Because of a presumed capacity to influence whatever words emanate from their tips, brushes have occasionally been attributed with apotropaic powers.¹⁴⁰ Yet considering how closely the fifteen brushes relate—in function and proximity—to administrative and legal records, formulaic texts concerned with divination practices, and mathematical and medical treatises in the thirty-three tombs under consideration here (see appendix table), I conclude that warding off evil was not their primary function in burials.

By the dawn of the imperial age, the brush had become *the* tool of the scribal trade, or so the *Liji* compilers proclaimed: “scribes carry brushes and gentlemen carry words” 史載筆，士載言。¹⁴¹ There is not much practical sense in wielding a brush without leaving a mark. Although nowadays we can watch calligraphers practicing their art by softly dipping brushes in water before elegantly drawing characters on asphalt surfaces in public parks,¹⁴² ancient writers were not content with fabricating evaporating graphs. They required something permanent, and ink was the perfect solution. For its production, soot was collected and mixed with glue to give the amalgam a solid texture. This way, ink was handy whenever needed at work or on the road. Before it was ready to be absorbed by a brush, it was necessary to liquefy the small soot-glue ink lumps.

With a little water added, another archaeologically verified artifact was called into action. The twenty-one ink stones yielded by the tombs in question usually consisted of a circular or rectangular solid base and

day Wangtuan 網疇 village in Jiangsu Province; Nan Bo 南波, “Jiangsu Lianyungang shi Haizhou Xi Han Shiqi Yao mu” 江苏连云港市海州西汉侍其繇墓, *Kaogu* 考古, no. 3 (1975): 171 (no. 5 in fig. 2), 174.

¹³⁹ Tsien, *Written on Bamboo and Silk*, pp. 176–82.

¹⁴⁰ See, for instance, Nylan, “Toward an Archaeology of Writing,” p. 9.

¹⁴¹ “Qu li shang” 曲禮上, in *Liji zhengyi*, v. 1, j. 4, p. 105.

¹⁴² Angela Zito, “Writing in Water, or, Evanescence, Enchantment and Ethnography in a Chinese Urban Park,” *Visual Anthropology Review* 30.1 (2014): 11–22.

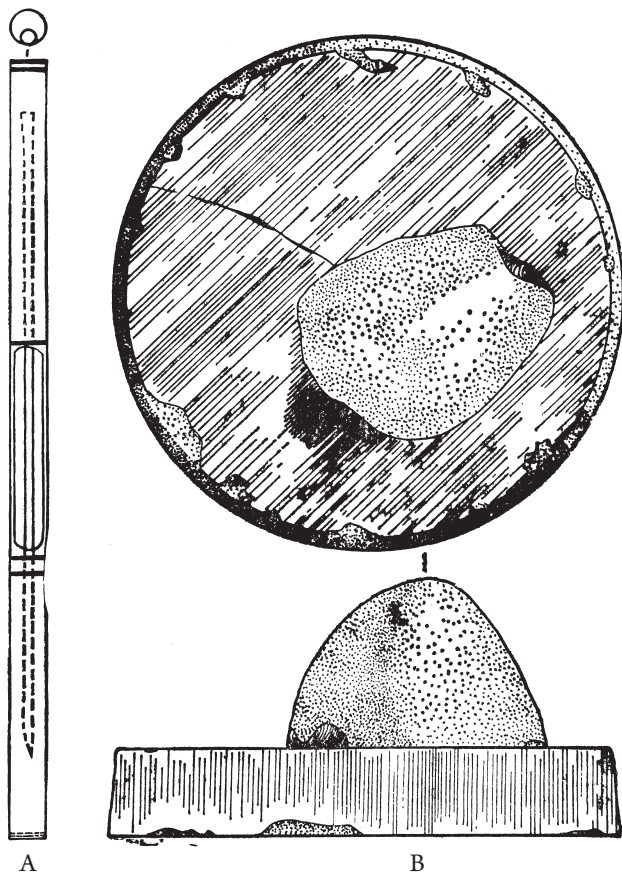


FIG. 3 Examples of Writing Utensils (167 BCE; Fenghuangshan tomb no. 168). Image A shows a bamboo writing brush stored in a lacquered bamboo case, and B shows a circular ink stone with a smaller rub stone. Source: HWKY, “Jiangling Fenghuangshan yiliuba hao Han mu,” p. 495, figs. 40.1 and 40.2 (see appendix, tomb no. 18, for full reference). Images used with permission.

a smaller rub stone (see fig. 3B and appendix table). After the ink lump was pulverized by circular or longitudinal movements of the latter, the resulting black powder would be blended with water.¹⁴³ Moreover, one third of the ink stones under discussion—seven, to be exact—were fitted in customized wooden cases, some of them painted with quite elaborate lacquer motifs. For instance, tomb no. 11 at Jinqueshan 金雀山 in Shandong Province (no. 20 in appendix) yielded a strikingly dec-

¹⁴³ Tsien, *Written on Bamboo and Silk*, pp. 184–85. Ink lumps were discovered in Zhoujiatai tomb no. 30 and Shuihudi tomb no. 4 (see appendix, tomb nos. 8 and 9); “Guanju Qin Han Mu qingli jianbao,” p. 31, and *Yunmeng Shuihudi Qin mu*, p. 26.

orated specimen. The lid of the case portrays a cloud-like pattern that is crowded with two large birds, a feline quadruped, another quadruped, and a bear.¹⁴⁴

Not even well-educated writers are immune to mistakes, neither today nor in ancient China. Once an incorrect graph was applied to a wooden or bamboo surface, the damage was done. To remove permanent ink from stationery, a simple yet ingenious remedy was devised: the scratch knife (*xue*, occasionally and perhaps anachronistically translated as “book knife,” *shu dao* 書刀; see item no. 18 in fig. 4B).¹⁴⁵ Ordinarily cast from bronze with a circular butt at the end of the handle—iron examples are occasionally known—evidence of its function in the writing process chiefly stems from received literature.¹⁴⁶ Scratch knives permitted writers to erase characters by softly scraping them from the surfaces of bamboo or wooden stationery. In addition, they could be used to trim the edges of preprepared slips and tablets. The fact that thirty-eight scratch knives were associated with manuscripts (see appendix table) lends sufficient credence to the assertions made in transmitted texts. These knives were discovered either in close proximity to written documents or other writing tools, or else in the pelvic regions of the tomb occupants.¹⁴⁷ The latter location derives from the function of the typical ring butt. Seven of the First Emperor’s terracotta figures wore scratch knives with whetstones on their belts.¹⁴⁸ Hence, the ring butt served as an eye that allowed its owner to suspend the knife from the hip. This way, it was always close at hand.

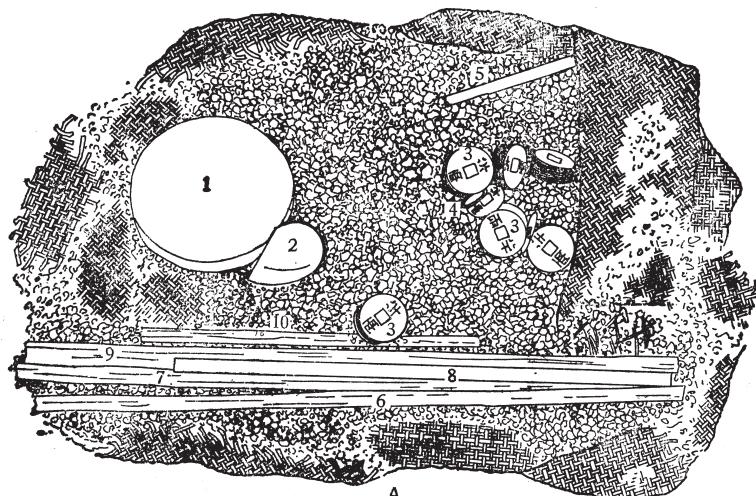
¹⁴⁴ LB, “Shandong Linyi Jinqushan Zhou shi muqun fajue jianbao,” pp. 48–49 (see appendix, tomb no. 20, for full reference); Hu Jigao 胡继高, “Yijian you tese de Xi Han qihe shiyan,” 一件有特色的西汉漆盒石砚, *Wenwu*, no. 11 (1984): 59–61.

¹⁴⁵ Silk, as one of if not *the* most prized materials in early Chinese society, was preferred over crude bamboo and wood. One of the Shuihudi statutes deemed wood from willow trees (*liu* 柳) and other soft (*rou* 柔) timber as suitable for writing; “Sikong” 司空, in *Shuihudi Qin mu zhujian*, p. 50, slip nos. 131–32; cf. Hulsewé, *Remnants of Ch’in Law*, p. 76. Only three tombs at Fenghuangshan 鳳凰山 cemetery in Hubei—tomb nos. 10, 167, and 168 (nos. 13, 16, and 18 in the appendix, respectively)—provided unused stationery in the form of several wooden tablets.

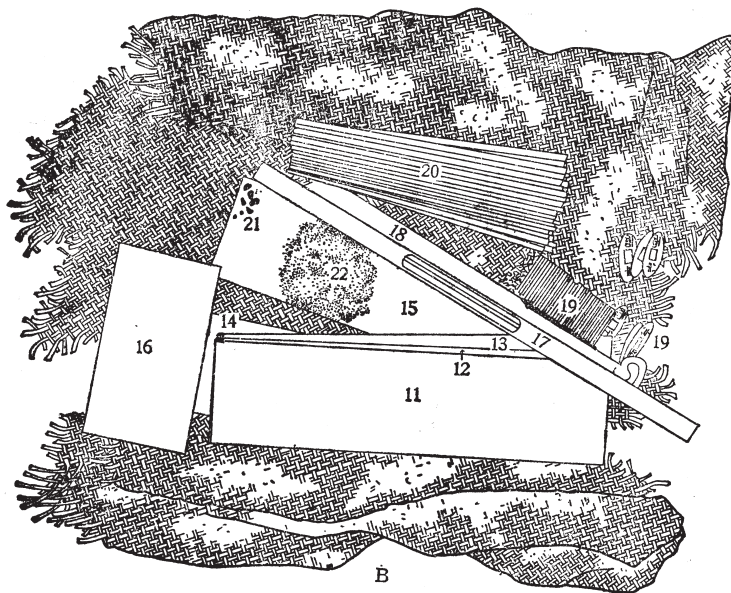
¹⁴⁶ Tsien, *Written on Bamboo and Silk*, pp. 194–95.

¹⁴⁷ For example, the two scratch knives from Tianchang 天長 tomb no. 19 were found inside the coffin, to the right of the pelvis of the skeletonized male occupant. See TWG and TB, “Anhui Tianchang Xi Han mu fajue jianbao,” pp. 5 (fig. 2.48), 7 (see appendix, tomb no. 22, for full reference).

¹⁴⁸ *Qin Shihuangdi lingyuan kaogu baogao* (2000) 秦始皇帝陵园考古报告 (2000), ed. Shanxi sheng kaogu yanjiusuo 陕西省考古研究所 and Qin Shihuang bingmayong bowuguan 秦始皇兵马俑博物馆 (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe 2006), pp. 74–79, 88 (pit no. K0006).



A



B

0 5 10 cm.

FIG. 4 Burial Goods from a Bamboo Hamper (167 BCE; Fenghuangshan tomb no. 168). This hamper was found in the northern (lateral) compartment of the site. The artifacts found in the upper stratum (A) are: one ink stone (no. 1), one rub stone (no. 2), sixty-two *banliang* 半兩 coins (no. 3), one bronze weight (no. 4), one bamboo equal-arm balance (no. 8), and five bamboo sticks (nos. 5–7; 9–10). The artifacts found in the lower stratum (B) are: six blank wooden tablets (nos. 11–16), one writing brush with case (no. 17), one scratch knife (no. 18), five ink lumps (no. 21), greyish-white powder (no. 22), thirteen bamboo counting rods (no. 20), and thirty-nine *banliang* coins. Source: HWKY, “Jiangling Fenghuangshan yiliuba hao Han mu,” p. 491, fig. 36 (see appendix, tomb no. 18). Image used with permission.

Do scratch knives indicate their owner's profession? Excavators of pit K0006 at the First Emperor's tomb invoked a scratch knife from Fenghuangshan tomb no. 168 in Hubei (no. 18 in the appendix) to conclude that the seven terracotta figures represent officials. Judging from all the burial goods contained in Fenghuangshan tomb no. 168, I suggest that this is not a safe assumption. The existence and contents especially of administrative and legal texts elsewhere (in nos. 7, 9, 10, 15, 22, 33 in the appendix) rather unambiguously designate their tomb occupants as scribes in official employ, but comparable manuscripts are missing from Fenghuangshan tomb no. 168. This tomb only retained burial inventory lists, a funerary text titled *Written Announcement to the Underworld Bureaucracy* (*Gao dixia guanli shu* 告地下官吏書), and unused stationery. Furthermore, although the bamboo hamper holding the scratch knife was partially filled with artifacts that suggest some degree of literacy—such as an ink stone, a brush, and six blank wooden tablets (stationery)—the remaining items indicate probable mercantile affinities (bamboo sticks, counting rods, an equal-arm balance with bronze weight, and *banliang* 半兩 coins; see fig. 4). Admittedly, weighing merchandise and collecting money most likely were among the duties assigned to scribes—for example, the directing scribes who supervised the sale of the leftover sacrificial meals. However, as cutting tools, scratch knives could have been utilized in any number of different ways.¹⁴⁹ Consequently, scratch knives cannot be understood as status symbols of a particular profession by default; additional data must be taken into account.

Mere association of one or even several utensils—a brush, an ink stone, ink lumps, a scratch knife—with documents in a tomb assemblage may not suffice to entirely convince all readers of the writing skills of interred individuals. Nevertheless, I suggest that immediate or close spatial proximity of writing paraphernalia to texts is not pure coincidence. The objects were jointly deposited because the act of writing is inseparable from its consequence, that is to say, from the text. Close proximity, therefore, is one additional factor that

¹⁴⁹ For instance, in Mawangdui 馬王堆 tomb nos. 1 and 3, several scratch knives were directly associated with toiletry products and *liubo* 六博 game paraphernalia; *Changsha Mawangdui yi hao Han mu*, v. 1, pp. 89–93, 129; *Changsha Mawangdui er, san hao Han mu*, pp. 162–66 (see appendix, tomb nos. 14 and 17). In the King of Nanyue's tomb twenty-seven scratch knives were found in a lacquer box that mainly contained carving tools; *Xi Han Nanyue wang mu*, v. 1, p. 106.

considerably enhances the chances of identifying a tomb occupant as a writer.

The latter two genres, however, are slightly at odds with my general argument since such texts, in all likelihood, were composed after the tomb occupants had already died. Hence, the ink stone, two scratch knives, and inventory lists of burial goods accumulated in Huo He's coffin, for example, do not conclusively prove Huo's literacy. If he was, in fact, the legitimate owner of the scratch knife whose inscription identifies its bearer as being "suitable for [public] offices remunerated with two thousand bushels" 宜官腆二千石, then it would probably be safe to assume that Huo could not have become a relatively high-ranking official without being able to write and read.¹⁵⁰ He may simply have passed the point where the act of writing was overly important to him because, at such an advanced career stage, writing competence was taken for granted.¹⁵¹

Such presumption of literacy for advanced officials is also suggested by the fact that few tradition texts were linked to writing tools. Only four of the thirty-three tombs in the appendix table (nos. 14, 19, 27, 31) yielded tradition texts in association with writing utensils. The individuals in these four tombs were surely capable of reading their copies of the *Lunyu* 論語, *Wenzi* 文子, *Laozi*, or *Sun Bin bingfa* 孫臏兵法, and they most probably were writers (not authors!) themselves. Perhaps with the exception of Liu Xiu 劉修 (King Huai 懷 of Zhongshan 中山 and occupant of no. 27), these people just did not put much emphasis on this particular aspect of literacy. The same could be said for any other individual—the man buried in Guodian no. 1 instantly springs to mind¹⁵²—who was found in the company of tradition texts but no writing tools (assuming that conditions for the preservation of both kinds of artifacts were roughly comparable and the tomb had not been robbed).

Eleven of the tombs listed in the appendix table allude only vaguely to literacy. First, they only couple with manuscripts either one

¹⁵⁰ NB and LYG, "Haizhou Xi Han Huo He mu qingli jianbao," *Kaogu*, no. 3 (1974): 185 (see appendix, tomb no. 28, for full reference).

¹⁵¹ Presumption of literacy is also true for Shao Tuo 邵佗, the occupant of Baoshan 包山 tomb no. 2, who served as a high court official during his lifetime; *Baoshan Chu mu*, v. 1, pp. 334–37 (see appendix, tomb no. 4).

¹⁵² For Guodian tomb no. 1, see Hubei sheng Jingmen shi bowuguan, "Jingmen Guodian yi hao Chu mu."

ink stone (nos. 8, 12, 13, 24) or between one and four scratch knives (nos. 2, 3, 14, 17, 21, 25, 32). Second, in these cases, it is impossible to establish a spatial connection between both kinds of finds. And third, the nature of the majority of documents in these eleven tombs—inventory lists, another announcement to the underworld (here entitled *Written Announcement on a Wooden Tablet* [*Wengao du* 文告牘], in tomb no. 25), two letters, a prayer, a testament, divination texts—implies that they were brushed by someone else.

Among the remaining tombs, an obvious pattern of literate tomb occupants emerges. The direct association of writing utensils and manuscripts primarily in coffins and containers has been demonstrated above. It deserves further mention that in most of these cases, two or more writing tools were present. For instance, Jiudian 九店 tomb no. 56 (no. 5 in the appendix) yielded an iron scratch knife and a small lacquer box containing several ink lumps. Both kinds of writing utensils were wrapped in hemerological manuals (various kinds of day books). Judging from his manuscripts and the rest of his grave goods, the occupant may or may not have been an official. Several weapons—a wooden bow, seventeen bronze arrowheads, a bronze short sword—and a pile of lacquered-leather scale armor could also mark the deceased a military man, even a military official (*wuli* 武吏 or *shili* 士吏).¹⁵³ But ultimately, it is the contents of the various texts that allow us to distinguish different types of writers. The administrative and legal character of records that emerged from Shuihudi no. 11, Zhoujiatai no. 30, Zhangjiashan no. 247, Fenghuangshan no. 10, Shuihudi no. 77, Tianchang no. 19, Shuanglong no. 1, and Yinwan no. 6 (nos. 7, 9, 10, 13, 15, 22, 26, and 33 in the appendix) makes one thing abundantly clear: the men interred in these tombs were not only writers, but scribes in public service; a fact that they conspicuously transferred into their underground homes.¹⁵⁴

¹⁵³ *Jiangling Jiudian Dong Zhou mu*, p. 51; *Jiudian Chu jian*, pp. 152–54 (see appendix, tomb no. 5).

¹⁵⁴ For tombs as underground homes, see, for instance, Poo, *In Search of Personal Welfare*, p. 165; Mark Edward Lewis, *The Construction of Space in Early China* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2006), pp. 119–21; Wu Hung, *The Art of the Yellow Springs: Understanding Chinese Tombs* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2010), pp. 38–40.

Theories of Identity

What exactly does it mean when one emphasizes literacy in archaeological contexts? I start my inquiry into identity with the self. The so-called “self-concept,” or how a person sees him- or herself, represents what an individual could become, would like to become, and is afraid of becoming.¹⁵⁵ The self, thus, is the object of reflection; individuals reflect on their current behavior and regulate future conduct accordingly. In the process, actors assume the perspective of others.¹⁵⁶ The possibility to adjust to social challenges, of course, precludes a static sense of the self. Instead of clinging to one fixed notion of the self, Ann Patrice Ruvolo and Hazel Rose Markus coined the phrase “working self-concept” to acknowledge the dynamic nature of the self. The self is an active agent that adapts to changing circumstances. The self, moreover, is represented in material culture as well as interpersonal behavior.¹⁵⁷ A person actually commands more than one way to express a desired self. In social interactions, some self-representations carry more weight than others. Actors choose those self-representations that they deem most beneficial in any given situation. This pool of self-representations is not only based on past experiences but also draws on present experiences as well. Self-representations are just as dynamic as the self-concept.¹⁵⁸

Sociologists often use the term “identity” synonymously for what has just been described as “self-concept.” This intimate bond between both concepts is all the more visible by the pairing of “self” with “identity” in the titles of numerous essays and monographs, despite minor differences.¹⁵⁹ Some sociologists conceive of identity as “a way of mak-

¹⁵⁵ Ann Patrice Ruvolo and Hazel Rose Markus, “Possible Selves and Performance: The Power of Self-Relevant Imagery,” *Social Cognition* 10.1 (1992): 96; Daphna Oyserman, “Self-Concept and Identity,” in *Blackwell Handbook of Social Psychology: Intraindividual Processes*, ed. Abraham Tesser and Norbert Schwarz (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2001), p. 499.

¹⁵⁶ Jan E. Stets and Peter J. Burke, “Identity Theory and Social Identity Theory,” *Social Psychology Quarterly* 63.3 (2000): 224.

¹⁵⁷ Ruvolo and Markus, “Possible Selves and Performance,” pp. 98–100; Oyserman, “Self-Concept and Identity,” p. 501.

¹⁵⁸ Hazel Markus and Elissa Wurf, “The Dynamic Self-Concept: A Social Psychological Perspective,” *Annual Review of Psychology* 38 (1987): 301.

¹⁵⁹ See, for instance, Naomi Ellemers, Russell Spears, and Bertjan Doosje, “Self and Social Identity,” *Annual Review of Psychology* 53.1 (2002): 161–86; Oyserman, “Self-Concept and Identity.”

ing sense of some aspect or part of self-concept.”¹⁶⁰ Identity, thus, is only a contributing element to the self-concept.

The definition of the modern Western notion of individuality as “autonomous, self-animated, and self-enclosed,”¹⁶¹ which many anthropologists and archaeologists criticize,¹⁶² is akin to the sociological self-concept that defines how a person perceives herself or himself. Given that identity is but part of the self-concept, it is impossible to maintain that identity equals individuality (the self-concept). Regardless of whether one deals with the self as a whole or identity as one aspect of it, the basic principles remain unchanged: “possible identities are not fixed. Rather they are amended, revised, and even dropped depending on contextual affordances and constraints.”¹⁶³ Individuals tailor particular identities for specific occasions because they want to be as convincing as possible in their self-portrayal.¹⁶⁴ Only then can actors expect maximal rewards for themselves.¹⁶⁵

Sceptics might protest that identities exist only in the mind of the object, yet empirical studies have offered unambiguous evidence to the contrary: identities are perceived as such by the outside world as well.¹⁶⁶ Consequently, identities are “joint constructs” by the social actors, their audiences, and the situations in which interactions occur. Different identities are developed for different audiences. A person assumes “role identities” that are conditioned by social circumstances.¹⁶⁷ At first, role identities are specific to certain situations. Over time, a hierarchy of role identities develops, placing the most central

¹⁶⁰ Daphna Oyserman, Kristen Elmore, and George Smith, “Self, Self-Concept, and Identity,” in *Handbook of Self and Identity*, ed. Mark A. Leary and June Price Tangney, 2nd ed. (New York: Guilford Press, 2012), p. 73.

¹⁶¹ LiPuma, “Modernity and Forms of Personhood in Melanesia,” pp. 53–54.

¹⁶² See, for instance, Marilyn Strathern, *The Gender of the Gift: Problems with Women and Problems with Society in Melanesia* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988); Chris Fowler, *The Archaeology of Personhood: An Anthropological Approach* (London: Routledge, 2004).

¹⁶³ Daphna Oyserman and Leah James, “Possible Identities,” in *Handbook of Identity Theory and Research*, ed. Seth J. Schwartz, Koen Luyckx, and Vivian L. Vignoles, vol. 1, *Structures and Processes* (New York: Springer, 2011), p. 120.

¹⁶⁴ Mahzarin R. Banaji and Deborah A. Prentice, “The Self in Social Contexts,” *Annual Review of Psychology* 45 (1994): 306.

¹⁶⁵ Stets and Burke, “Identity Theory and Social Identity Theory,” p. 227.

¹⁶⁶ Markus and Wurf, “The Dynamic Self-Concept,” p. 323.

¹⁶⁷ Sheldon Stryker, “Identity Salience and Role Performance: The Relevance of Symbolic Interaction Theory for Family Research,” *Journal of Marriage and Family* 30.4 (1968): 559–60; Peter J. Burke and Judy C. Tully, “The Measurement of Role Identity,”

role identities at the top. Adjustments in the display of identities are not necessarily made deliberately; a person might be so familiar with some conditions that the most salient identities come into play intuitively.¹⁶⁸

Identity is relevant not only for individuals. Social theory distinguishes two to four differing identities. The most common distinction is between personal and social identity. Jan E. Stets and Peter J. Burke, for instance, opt for a more nuanced understanding, arguing there is a “person identity” (or a “core identity”) that is tied to an individual, a role identity tied to particular roles, and a social identity tied to a social group.¹⁶⁹ Jonathan H. Turner sees the “self as composed of four fundamental identities”—adding group identity to Stets and Burke’s list.¹⁷⁰ In contrast to social identities that are associated with “cognitions and feelings that people have of themselves as members of social categories” (such as gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, and class), group identities “stem from membership in, or identification with, corporate units.”¹⁷¹ Group members are united by what they have in common. Studies also verify that individuals often go to great pains to protect group interests.¹⁷² The actor is no longer viewed as an individual but becomes part of the group (“depersonalization”¹⁷³). When the personal identities of social actors fade into the background because they identify with a larger unit, loyalties lie with the group. Individuals consciously seek out the social categories, or objects, that define their own group and distinguish it from other groups.¹⁷⁴

Identity does not equal individuality; identity is a contributing part of individuality—or better, of the self-concept. In developing identities, the individual reflects on the self and the self’s behavior.

Social Forces 55.4 (1977): 883. On the interplay of actors, audiences, and situations, also see Markus and Wurf, “The Dynamic Self-Concept,” p. 325.

¹⁶⁸ Oyserman and James, “Possible Identities,” p. 120.

¹⁶⁹ Stets and Burke, “Identity Theory and Social Identity Theory,” p. 229.

¹⁷⁰ Jonathan H. Turner, *Contemporary Sociological Theory* (Los Angeles: Sage, 2013), p. 349; also see p. 344.

¹⁷¹ Turner, *Contemporary Sociological Theory*, p. 349.

¹⁷² Ellemers, Spears, and Doosje, “Self and Social Identity,” p. 163.

¹⁷³ Michael A. Hogg and Scott A. Reid, “Social Identity, Self-Categorization, and the Communication of Group Norms,” *Communication Theory* 16.1 (2006): 10.

¹⁷⁴ Hogg and Reid, “Social Identity, Self-Categorization,” pp. 10–11. For instance, Jan Assmann explicitly attaches his “collective memory” concept to a specific social group; see his *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis*, p. 39. Group identities differ from personal identities because they can also operate unconsciously.

Individuals adjust the way they represent themselves in order to fit an ideal notion of their self. Individuals choose, from among a variety of possible self-representations, the most salient one in any given situation. The fact that self-representations and identities are malleable and regularly adapted whenever audiences shift not only shows the dynamic character of both concepts but also highlights that they are indeed social forces that impact the structures of society. One significant consequence of this communal aspect is the formation of group identities based on personal identities and self-representations. The group as a collective intentionally utilizes shared traits to set itself apart from other groups.

Scribes' Identities

Was it really the deceased themselves who assumed the identities of scribes in late preimperial and early imperial burial rituals, or was it rather a concern of the bereaved? Whenever dealing with mortuary remains, we have to consider two inextricably interrelated levels of motivation. On the one hand, there is the religious meaning of the burial ritual in all its facets; on the other hand, there are social implications. Such rituals were influenced both by the desire of the departed to express a certain self-concept and by the perspective of the descendants who wished to legitimize their own social standing.

Accounts of the early ritual compendia depict ancient Chinese funerary rites as including a procession leading from the deceased's place of residence to the burial plot.¹⁷⁵ Along the way, personal objects, as well as presents made by attending mourners, were first displayed and afterward deposited in the tomb. If we accept that these showcased goods were recorded on burial inventory slips or tablets, which sometimes come to light in archaeological excavations, then the writing tools explicitly mentioned on inventory slips recovered from tombs of scribes must have been part of these ceremonies.¹⁷⁶

On the whole, the inventory records accord very well with the archaeological evidence at hand. For instance, the following items were included in the burial inventory of Zhangjiashan tomb no. 247:

¹⁷⁵ See, for instance, Cook, *Death in Ancient China*, p. 38.

¹⁷⁶ "Jixi li" 既夕禮, in *Yili zhushu* 儀禮注疏, comm. by Zheng Xuan and Kong Yingda, 50 *juan* in 3 vols. (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2008), v. 3, j. 39, pp. 1189–90.

書一筩	one bamboo hamper [containing] documents
筆一，有管	one ink brush with case
研一，有子	one ink stone with rub stone ¹⁷⁷

The Zhangjiashan burial actually contained two ink stones, including one rub stone each, and one bamboo case holding a brush, as well as the remains of a partially disintegrated bamboo hamper in which the manuscripts and writing paraphernalia were kept.¹⁷⁸

Yinwan tomb no. 6 provides a second example:

刀二枚	Two [scratch] knives;
筆二枚	Two ink brushes;
板研一	One ink stone and one rub stone;
墨囊一	One ink pouch. ¹⁷⁹

Shi Rao, the male occupant of this grave, was buried with two writing brushes, two scratch knives, and a lacquered ink-stone case inside his coffin. The ink pouch had probably already decomposed by the time the tomb was opened.¹⁸⁰

Manuscripts, brushes, and ink stones were visible parts of the mortuary rites. Indeed, they were *the* integral aspect of self-representation. In the tombs of scribes (nos. 7, 9, 10, 13, 15, 22, 26, and 33 in the appendix), the rest of the tomb assemblages were quite generic: mostly lacquer and pottery containers, some furniture, and occasional weapons, in addition to zoomorphic and anthropomorphic figurines as well as some miniature models. Following the argument that actors choose from among a pool of various role identities the ones most beneficial to them, I suggest that the tomb occupants were deliberately presented to the funerary audience as literate beings. The hope was that everyone should see and most probably admire the fact the departed served as scribes.

The relatively large number of deceased individuals who resorted

¹⁷⁷ “Qiance” 遣策, in *Zhangjiashan Han mu zhujian*, p. 304, slip nos. 34, 39, and 40, respectively.

¹⁷⁸ JB, “Jiangling Zhangjiashan san zuo Han mu,” pp. 2 (fig. 5), 3, 7 (see appendix, tomb no. 10, for full reference).

¹⁷⁹ Tablet YM6D13 (recto) in *Yinwan Han mu jiandu*, pp. 24, 131.

¹⁸⁰ *Yinwan Han mu jiandu*, pp. 164–65; LYG, “Jiangsu Donghai xian Yinwan Han muqun fajue jianbao,” pp. 9, 16, 17, 23 (see appendix, tomb no. 33).

to similar methods of self-representation—eight out of the thirty-three tombs under review (nos. 7, 9, 10, 13, 15, 22, 26, and 33)—demonstrates that the personal identity of scribes also contributed to and largely constituted a group or social identity. Writing and its practical implementation in office was their common denominator. Interestingly, a similar mindset is explicitly expressed in the ancient Egyptian text “The Satire on the Trades” (2025–1700 BCE), in which a scribe enlightens his son about the advantages of his profession by casting an extremely dark shadow on several other crafts.¹⁸¹ Given that it was an inheritable privilege to train as a scribe, in ancient China as well as Egypt, I argue that group membership was legally mandated and hence nothing special. Yet, while other late preimperial and early imperial Chinese writers might have stressed different identities after their demise, these particular nine tomb occupants decisively took pride in being part of this rather exclusive group. Distinction from out-groups, such as the illiterate masses or classically educated literati, who were unable to find merit in the work of scribes, ranked first on their agenda.

Conclusion

The earliest scribes known to us were not at all concerned with writing. They were military leaders, ritual specialists, or envoys. But, over time, scribes became more and more associated with literacy. By the late preimperial and early imperial period, scribes were an integral part of governance. After three years of successful training in reading, reciting, and writing, they were ready to enter state administration. However, getting acquainted with the means to produce and engage in texts was only the beginning of their education. As novice contributors to local and regional government, junior scribes were not yet awarded official ranks. First, they had to go through a period of on-the-job training. A plethora of writing exercises yielded by various settlement sites indicates that honing one’s writing skills was as much part of the proceedings as experiencing different aspects of governance. Equipped with this kind of knowledge, the rising scribes were perfectly prepared to specialize in either administrative or legal work. At least at

¹⁸¹ “The Satire on the Trades: The Instruction of Dua-Khety,” in *The Literature of Ancient Egypt: An Anthology of Stories, Instructions, Stelae, Autobiographies, and Poetry*, ed. William Kelly Simpson, 3rd ed. (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003), p. 435.

that point, they were more than just functionally literate. For instance, the resumes of Zhao Yu 趙禹 (fl. mid-second century BCE) and Lu Wenshu 路溫舒 (fl. mid-first century BCE), who both started out as modest scribes and rose through the ranks to the upper echelons of Western Han imperial administration, show that gathering practical experience for a few years helped to transform midcareer scribes into extremely capable writers.¹⁸²

Scribes inclined to pursue the administrative line of government became familiar with methods of dealing with numbers (from household registers, for example), whereas legal experts needed to know human (and mammalian) anatomy. Regardless of whether midcareer scribes focused on administrative or legal matters, they all had an excellent command of the contemporaneous statutes and ordinances. Some of the practical requirements of their work, such as extensive traveling and interacting with the general public, required divination skills. But at the very core of all these activities lay written documents, and the need to read and write. All policies implemented in office originated from writing, and every kind of communication needed to be handled in writing. Literacy was the be-all and end-all of scribal existence. These observations, along with the fact that training as a scribe was an inheritable privilege, highlight that the late preimperial and early imperial governments succeeded in educating highly qualified and, more importantly, intensely dedicated scribes. They were most certainly the backbone of the empire.

The archaeological record shows that some scribes were indeed deeply aware of their own significance. Tombs that yielded a large volume of administrative, legal, divinatory, mathematical, and medicinal texts in close proximity to writing paraphernalia are sufficient testament to that effect. Following the general consensus that the netherworld was believed to replicate secular bureaucratic structures,¹⁸³ we can see how scribal identity expressed through interred texts and writing tools would guarantee the status quo in the beyond. In the end, all that really mattered was the job: “I write therefore I am”—in this life and the next.

¹⁸² For Zhao Yu, see *Shiji*, v. 10, j. 122, p. 3136, and *Hanshu*, v. 11, j. 90, p. 3651; for Lu Wenshu, see *Hanshu*, v. 4, j. 23, p. 1102 and v. 8, j. 51, p. 2367.

¹⁸³ See, for instance, Lewis, *Writing and Authority*, pp. 27, 49; Guo Jue, “Concepts of Death and the Afterlife Reflected in Newly Discovered Tomb Objects and Texts from Han China,” in *Mortality in Traditional Chinese Thought*, ed. Amy Olberding and Philip J. Ivanhoe (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2011), pp. 95–104.

*Appendix: Tombs with Texts and Writing Tools,
500 BCE–10 CE*

Here, I present only tombs that yielded at least one manuscript *and* one kind of writing utensil. Writing utensils are: writing brushes (*bi* 筆), ink stones (*yan* 硯), ink stone cases (*yanhe* 硯盒), and so-called scratch knives (*xue* 削). Sometimes also present are rub stones (*yan-shi* 硯石; *yanmoshi* 硯墨石; *shiyanchu* 石硯杵; *shimo* 石磨; *moshi* 磨石). I also include in the manuscript category inscribed wooden labels (which were originally attached to various kinds of objects) and stationery (by which I mean wooden tablets or bamboo slips lacking inscriptions). Manuscripts and writing utensils were frequently stored in woven bamboo hampers (*si* 筥).

These thirty-three tombs, presented in chronological order, date from the fifth century BCE through the early first century CE, when wooden burial chambers were usually constructed at the bottom of vertical shaft pits. Even small tombs with a single chamber contained between two and seven compartments (comp.) separated by wooden walls. Large tombs had multiple chambers, some of which were further subdivided into compartments. Because so few human remains survived, sexing tomb occupants is regularly based on the nature of the immediately associated burial goods, which necessarily risks misattribution.

					<i>Manuscripts</i>	
TOMB	DATE	GENDER	MS. TYPE	PLACEMENT		
1 Changtaiguan M ₁	5th c. BCE	1 ♂ (?)	burial inventory lists text on Duke of Zhou	NW comp. E comp.		
2 Leigudun M ₁	433 BCE	1 ♂ 21 ♀	burial inventory lists	N chamber		
3 Wangshan M ₁	4th c. BCE	1 ♂	divination texts	S comp.		
4 Baoshan M ₂	316 BCE	1 ♂	burial inventory lists divination texts	E comp. N comp.		
5 Jiudian M ₅₆	3rd c. BCE	1 ♂	hemerologies	niche in pit wall		
6 Fangmatan M ₁	239 BCE	1 ♂	hemerologies maps	coffin outside coffin		
7 Shuihudi M ₁₁	217 BCE	1 ♂	chronicle; statutes; legal texts; mathematical treatises, hemerologies	coffin		
8 Shuihudi M ₄	late 3rd c. BCE	1 ♂	2 letters	main comp.		
9 Zhoujiatai M ₃₀	209 BCE	1 ♂	calendar; itinerary; hemerological texts & charts; medical text	hamper north of coffin		
10 Zhangjiashan M ₄₇	late 3rd c. BCE	1 ♂	chronicle; statutes; legal texts; medical texts; mathematical treatises; hemerologies; burial inventory lists	with partially preserved hamper in W comp.		
11 Wangchengpo, tomb of Yu Yang	2nd c. BCE	1 ♂	burial inventory lists labels; record of an imperial donation	main comp. E & W comps.		
12 Zhangjiashan M ₁₂₇	2nd c. BCE	1 ♂	hemerologies	E comp.		
13 Fenghuangshan M ₁₀	2nd c. BCE	1 ♂	administrative registers; bamboo stationery; burial inventory list	hamper in lateral comp.		
14 Mawangdui M ₃	186 BCE	1 ♂	tradition texts; medical texts; funerary text; maps, burial inventory lists; labels	S, E & W comps.		
15 Shuihudi M ₇₇	2nd c. BCE	1 ♂	administrative registers; chronicle; statutes; legal text; hemerologies; mathematical treatise	hamper in S comp.		
16 Fenghuangshan M ₁₆₇	179–141 BCE	1 ♀	burial inventory lists wood stationery	shaft fill hamper in W comp.		
17 Mawangdui M ₁	168 BCE	1 ♀	burial inventory lists	E comp.		

Writing utensils

INK STONE	INK STONE CASE	BRUSH	SCRATCH KNIFE	LOCATION IN TOMB
0	0	1	2	box in NW comp.
0	0	0	4	E chamber
0	0	0	2	E comp.
0	0	1	3	N comp. & main comp.
0	0	0	1	niche in pit wall
0	0	1	0	coffin
0	0	3	1	coffin & N comp.
1	0	0	0	main comp.
0	0	1	1	hamper north of coffin
2	0	1	0	with partially preserved hamper in W comp.
1	1	0	0	E comp.
1	0	0	0	E comp.
1	0	0	0	hamper in lateral comp.
0	0	0	2	N comp.
1	0	1	0	hamper in S comp.
0	0	1	1	hamper in W comp.
0	0	0	3	N comp.

			<i>Manuscripts</i>	
TOMB	DATE	GENDER	MS. TYPE	PLACEMENT
18 Fenghuangshan M168	167 BCE	1 ♂	burial inventory lists funerary text, wood stationery	hamper in N comp. N comp.
19 Shuanggudui M1	165 BCE	1 ♂	annals; tradition texts; hemerological texts; primer	with partially preserved hamper in main comp.
20 Jinqueshan M11	3rd–1st c. BCE	1 ♂	burial inventory lists	?
21 Yandaishan M1	2nd–1st c. BCE	1 ♂ 1 ♀	burial inventory lists	ancillary chamber
22 Tianchang M19	1st c. BCE	1 ♂	administrative documents; greeting tablets	N comp.
23 Haiqu M106	87 BCE	1 ♂	inscribed bamboo slips, wood stationery	head comp.
24 Shuiquanzi M5	post 72 BCE	1 ♂ 1 ♀	hemerologies; primer	on E coffin
25 Huchang M5	70 BCE	1 ♂ 1 ♀	list of deities funerary text, hemerology, labels	male's main comp. male's E comp.
26 Shuanglong M1	1st c. BCE	1 ♂ 3 ♀	greeting tablets; burial inventory lists	male's coffin
27 Dingxian M40	55 BCE	1 ♂	chronicle; tradition texts	hamper in E comp. of rear chamber
28 Wangtuan, tomb of Huo He	1st c. BCE	1 ♂ 1 ♀	burial inventory list, wood stationery	male's coffin
29 Sangyangdun M1	1st c. BCE	3	burial inventory list	S coffin
30 Dongyang M7	1st c. BCE	1 ♂ 1 ♀	prayer	female's coffin
31 Shangsun Jiazhai M115	1st c. BCE	1 ♂ 1 ♀	military texts	floor btwn coffins
32 Xupu M101	post 5 CE	1 ♂ 1 ♀	testament, sales records, record of donation, burial inventory list	S coffin
33 Yinwan M6	10 CE	1 ♂ 1 ♀	administrative registers; chronicle; hemerological texts & charts; greeting tablets; diary; rhyme prose (<i>fu</i> 賦); burial inventory lists	male's coffin

Writing utensils

INK STONE	INK STONE CASE	BRUSH	SCRATCH KNIFE	LOCATION IN TOMB
1	0	1	1	hamper in N comp.
1	0	0	0	with partially preserved hamper in main comp.
1	1	1	0	?
0	0	0	1	male's coffin
1	1	0	2	N comp. & in coffin
1	1	0	0	?
1	0	0	0	?
0	0	0	1	male's coffin
1	1	1	0	male's coffin
4	0	0	4	coffin & in E comp. of rear chamber
1	1	0	2	male's coffin
1	0	0	1	? & on N coffin
0	0	0	1	male's coffin
1	0	0	2	near female's coffin
0	0	0	1	N coffin
1	1	2	2	male's coffin

TOMBS OF THE PREIMPERIAL PERIOD

1. Changtaiguan 長臺關 tomb no. 1; Henan (Xinyang 信陽); mid- to late fifth century BCE.
Source: *Xinyang Chu mu* 信阳楚墓, ed. Henan sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo 河南省文物考古研究所 (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 1986), pp. 64–68, 124–36.
2. Leigudun 擂鼓墩 tomb no. 1, tomb of Marquis Yi of Zeng (*Zeng hou Yi* 曾侯乙); Hubei (Suixian 隨縣, Leigudun 擂鼓墩); 433 BCE.
Source: *Zeng hou Yi mu* 曾侯乙墓, ed. Hubei sheng bowuguan 湖北省博物館, 2 vols. (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 1989), v. 1, pp. 250–52, 452–58, 487–531.
3. Wangshan 望山 tomb no. 1; Hubei (Jiangling 江陵); mid-fourth century BCE.
Source: *Jiangling Wangshan Shazhong Chu mu* 江陵望山沙塚楚墓, ed. Hubei sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 1996), pp. 106, 108–10.
4. Baoshan 包山 tomb no. 2, tomb of Shao Tuo 邵佗; Hubei (Jiangling 江陵, Jingmen 荊門); 316 BCE.
Source: *Baoshan Chu mu* 包山楚墓, ed. Hubei sheng Jingsha tielu kaogudui 湖北省荆沙铁路考古队, 2 vols. (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 1991), v. 1, pp. 45–277.
5. Jiudian 九店 tomb no. 56; Hubei (Jiangling 江陵, Jingzhou 荊州); mid-third century BCE.
Sources: *Jiangling Jiudian Dong Zhou mu* 江陵九店东周墓, ed. Hubei sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo 湖北省文物考古研究所 (Beijing: Kexue chubanshe, 1995), pp. 49–51; *Jiudian Chu jian* 九店楚簡, ed. Hubei sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo 湖北省文物考古研究所 and Beijing daxue zhongwenxi 北京大學中文系 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2000), pp. 149–55.
6. Fangmatan 放馬灘 tomb no. 1; Gansu (Tianshui 天水); 239 BCE.
Sources: Gansu sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo 甘肅省文物考古研究所 and Tianshui shi Beidao qu wenhuaguan 天水市北道區文化館, “Gansu Tianshui Fangmatan Zhanguo Qin Han muqun de fajue” 甘肅天水放馬灘戰國秦漢墓群的發掘, *Kaogu* 考古, no. 2 (1989): 1–11, 31. For the manuscripts, see *Tianshui Fangmatan Qin jian jishi* 天水放馬灘秦簡集釋, ed. Sun Zhanyu 孫占宇 (Lanzhou: Gansu wenhua chubanshe, 2013).

TOMBS OF THE IMPERIAL PERIOD

7. Shuihudi 睡虎地 tomb no. 11, tomb of Scribe Xi 喜; Hubei (Yunmeng 雲夢); 217 BCE.
Sources: *Yunmeng Shuihudi Qin mu* 云夢睡虎地秦墓, ed. *Yunmeng Shuihudi Qin mu bianxiezu* 《云夢睡虎地秦墓》編寫組 (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe,

- 1981). Also see X2WX (Xiaogan diqu di-er qi yigong yinong wenwu kaogu xunlianban 孝感地区第二期亦工亦农文物考古训练班), “Hubei Yunmeng Shuihudi shiyi hao Qin mu fajue jianbao” 湖北云梦睡虎地十一号秦墓发掘简报, *Wenwu* 文物, no. 6 (1976): 1–10. For the manuscripts, see *Shuihudi Qin mu zhujian* 睡虎地秦墓竹简, ed. Shuihudi Qin mu zhujian zhengli xiaozu 睡虎地秦墓竹简整理小组 (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 1990).
8. Shuihudi 睡虎地 tomb no. 4; Hubei (Yunmeng 雲夢); late third century BCE. *Sources*: *Yunmeng Shuihudi Qin mu*, pp. 8, 11, 25–26. Also see Xiaogan diqu di-er qi yigong yinong wenwu kaogu xunlianban, “Hubei Yunmeng Shuihudi shiyi zuo Qin mu fajue jianbao” 湖北云梦睡虎地十一座秦墓发掘简报, *Wenwu*, no. 9 (1976): 51–61.
9. Zhoujiatai 周家台 tomb no. 30; Hubei (Jiangling 江陵, Jingzhou 荆州, Guanju 關沮); 209 BCE. *Sources*: HJZB (Hubei sheng Jingzhou shi Zhouliang Yuqiao yizhi bowuguan 湖北省荆州市周梁玉桥遗址博物馆), “Guanju Qin Han Mu qingli jianbao” 关沮秦汉墓清理简报, *Wenwu*, no. 6 (1999): 26–47. For the manuscripts, see *Guanju Qin Han mu jiandu* 关沮秦汉墓简牘, ed. HJZB (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2001).
10. Zhangjiashan 張家山 tomb no. 247; Hubei (Jiangling 江陵, Jingzhou 荆州); between 221 BCE and 141 BCE. *Sources*: JB (Jingzhou diqu bowuguan 荆州地区博物馆), “Jiangling Zhangjiashan san zuo Han mu chutu dapi zhujian” 江陵张家山三座汉墓出土大批竹简, *Wenwu*, no. 1 (1985): 1–8. For the manuscripts, see *Zhangjiashan Han mu zhujian (ersiqi hao mu)* 張家山漢墓竹簡 (二四七號墓), ed. Zhangjiashan ersiqi hao Han mu zhujian zhengli xiaozu 張家山二四七號漢墓竹簡小組 (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 2001).
11. Wangchengpo 望城坡, tomb of Yu Yang 渔楊; Hunan (Changsha 長沙); early second century BCE. *Source*: Changsha shi wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo 长沙市文物考古研究所 and Changsha jiandu bowuguan 长沙简牍博物馆, “Hunan Changsha Wangchengpo Xi Han Yu Yang mu fajue jianbao” 湖南长沙望城坡西汉渔阳墓发掘简报, *Wenwu*, no. 4 (2010): 4–35.
12. Zhangjiashan 張家山 tomb no. 127; Hubei (Jiangling 江陵, Jingzhou 荆州); early second century BCE. *Source*: JB (Jingzhou diqu bowuguan 荆州地区博物馆), “Jiangling Zhangjiashan liang zuo Han mu chutu dapi zhujian” 江陵张家山两座汉墓出土大批竹简, *Wenwu*, no. 9 (1992): 1–11.
13. Fenghuangshan 鳳凰山 tomb no. 10; Hubei (Jiangling 江陵, Jingzhou 荆州); early second century BCE.

- Sources: Changjiang liuyu di-er qi wenwu kaogu gongzuo renyuan xunlianban 长江流域第二期文物考古工作人员训练班, “Hubei Jiangling Fenghuangshan Xi Han mu fajue jianbao” 湖北江陵凤凰山西汉墓发掘简报, *Wenwu*, no. 6 (1974): 41–61; and Hong Yi 弘一, “Jiangling Fenghuangshan shi hao Han mu jiandu chutan” 江陵凤凰山十号汉墓简牍初探, *Wenwu*, no. 6 (1974): 78–84.
14. Mawangdui tomb no. 3; Hunan (Changsha 长沙); 186 BCE.
Source: *Changsha Mawangdui er, san hao Han mu* 长沙马王堆二、三號漢墓, ed. Hunan sheng bowuguan 湖南省博物館 and Hunan sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo 湖南省文物考古研究所, vol. 1 of *Tianye kaogu fajue baogao* 田野考古发掘报告 (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 2004), pp. 26–236.
15. Shuihudi 睡虎地 tomb no. 77; Hubei (Yunmeng 雲夢); first half of the second century BCE.
Source: HWKY (Hubei sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo 湖北省文物考古研究所) and YB (Yunmeng xian bowuguan 云梦县博物馆), “Hubei Yunmeng Shuihudi M77 fajue jianbao” 湖北云梦睡虎地 M77 发掘简报, *Jiang Han kaogu* 江汉考古, no. 4 (2008): 31–37.
16. Fenghuangshan 鳳凰山 tomb no. 167; Hubei (Jiangling 江陵, Jingzhou 荊州); 179–141 BCE.
Sources: Fenghuangshan yiliuqi hao Han mu fajue zhengli xiaozu 鳳凰山一六七号汉墓发掘整理小组, “Jiangling Fenghuangshan yiliuqi hao Han mu fajue jianbao” 江陵鳳凰山一六七号汉墓发掘简报, *Wenwu*, no. 10 (1976): 31–37, 50. For the inventory lists, see Jilin daxue lishixi kaogu zhuanye 吉林大学历史系考古专业 and Fu Jincheng kaimen banxue xiaofendui 赴纪南城开门办学小分队, “Fenghuangshan yiliuqi hao Han mu qiance kaoshi” 鳳凰山一六七号汉墓遣策考释, *Wenwu*, no. 10 (1976): 38–46.
17. Mawangdui tomb no. 1, tomb of Xin Zhui 辛追; Hunan (Changsha 长沙); 168 BCE.
Source: *Changsha Mawangdui yi hao Han mu* 长沙馬王堆一號漢墓, ed. Hunan sheng bowuguan 湖南省博物館 and Zhongguo kexueyuan kaogu yanjiusuo 中国科学院考古研究所, 2 vols. (Beijing: Wenwu Chubanshe, 1973), v. 1, pp. 128, 130–55.
18. Fenghuangshan 鳳凰山 tomb no. 168; Hubei (Jiangling 江陵, Jingzhou 荊州); 167 BCE.
Sources: HWKY (Hubei sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo 湖北省文物考古研究所), “Jiangling Fenghuangshan yiliuba hao Han mu” 江陵鳳凰山一六八号汉墓, *Kaogu xuebao* 考古学报, no. 4 (1993): 455–513. Also see Jincheng Fenghuangshan yiliuba hao Han mu zhenglizu 纪南城鳳凰山一六八号汉墓发掘整理组, “Hubei Jiangling Fenghuangshan yiliuba hao Han mu fajue jianbao” 湖北江陵鳳凰山一六八号汉墓发掘简报, *Wenwu*, no. 9 (1975): 1–7, 22.

19. Shuanggudui 雙古堆 tomb no. 1, Tomb of Xiahou Zao 夏侯灶, Marquis of Ruyin 汝陰侯; Anhui (Fuyang 阜陽); 165 BCE.
Source: Anhui sheng wenwu gongzuodui 安徽省文物工作队, Fuyang diqu bowuguan 阜陽地區博物館 and Fuyang xian wenhua ju 阜陽縣文化局, “Fuyang Shuanggudui Xi Han Ruyin hou mu fajue jianbao” 阜陽雙古堆西漢汝陰侯墓發掘簡報, *Wenwu*, no. 8 (1978): 12–31.
20. Jinqueshan 金雀山 tomb no. 11; Shandong (Linyi 臨沂); late third century BCE to late first century BCE.
Source: LB (Linyi shi bowuguan 臨沂市博物館), “Shandong Linyi Jinqueshan Zhou shi muqun fajue jianbao” 山東臨沂金雀山周氏墓群發掘簡報, *Wenwu*, no. 11 (1984): 41–58.
21. Yandaishan 烟袋山 tomb no. 1; Jiangsu (Yizheng 儀征); late second century BCE to early first century BCE.
Source: Nanjing bowuyuan 南京博物院, “Jiangsu Yizheng Yandaishan Han mu” 江蘇儀征烟袋山漢墓, *Kaogu xuebao*, no. 4 (1987): 471–501.
22. Tianchang 天長 tomb no. 19; Anhui; first century BCE.
Source: TWG (Tianchang shi wenwu guanlisuo 天長市文物管理所) and TB (Tianchang shi bowuguan 天長市博物館), “Anhui Tianchang Xi Han mu fajue jianbao” 安徽天長西漢墓發掘簡報, *Wenwu*, no. 11 (2006): 4–21.
23. Haiqu 海曲 tomb no. 106; Shandong (Rizhao 日照); 87 BCE.
Source: Shandong sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo 山東省文物考古研究所, “Shandong Rizhao Haiqu Han mu (M106) fajue jianbao” 山東日照海曲漢墓 (M106) 發掘簡報, *Wenwu*, no. 1 (2010): 4–25.
24. Shuiquanzi 水泉子 tomb no. 5; Gansu (Yongchang 永昌); after 72 BCE.
Sources: Gansu sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo, “Gansu Yongchang Shuiquanzi Han mu fajue jianbao” 甘肅永昌水泉子漢墓發掘簡報, *Wenwu*, no. 10 (2009): 52–61; Zhang Cunliang 張存良 and Wu Hong 吳葦, “Shuiquanzi Han jian chushi” 水泉子漢簡初識, *Wenwu*, no. 10 (2009): 88–91.
25. Huchang 胡場 tomb no. 5; Jiangsu (Hanjiang 邗江); 70 BCE.
Source: Yangzhou bowuguan 揚州博物館, and Hanjiang xian tushuguan 邗江縣圖書館, “Jiangsu Hanjiang Huchang wu hao Han mu” 江蘇邗江胡場五號漢墓, *Wenwu*, no. 11 (1981): 12–23.
26. Shuanglong 雙龍 tomb no. 1; Jiangsu (Lianyungang 連雲港, Haizhou 海州); mid- to late 1st century BCE.
Source: LYG (Lianyungang shi bowuguan 連雲港市博物館), “Jiangsu Lianyungang Haizhou Xi Han mu fajue jianbao” 江蘇連雲港海州西漢墓發掘簡報, *Wenwu*, no. 3 (2012): 4–17.

27. Dingxian 定縣 tomb no. 40, possibly the tomb of Liu Xiu 劉修, King Huai 懷 of Zhongshan 中山; Hebei; 55 BCE.
Source: Hebei sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo 河北省文物考古研究所, “Hebei Dingxian 40 hao Han mu fajue jianbao” 河北定縣 40 号汉墓发掘简报, *Wenwu*, no. 8 (1981): 1–10.
28. Wangtuan 網疇, tomb of Huo He 霍賀; Jiangsu (Lianyungang 連雲港, Haizhou 海州).
Source: NB and LYG (Nanjing bowuyuan and Lianyungang shi bowuguan), “Haizhou Xi Han Huo He mu qingli jianbao” 海州西汉霍賀墓清理简报, *Kaogu*, no. 3 (1974): 179–86.
29. Sanyangdun 三羊墩 tomb no. 1; Jiangsu (Yancheng 鹽城, Yuxiang 徐巷); late first century BCE.
Source: Jiangsu sheng wenwu guanli weiyuanhui 江苏省文物管理委员会 and Nanjing bowuyuan, “Jiangsu Yancheng Sanyangdun Han mu qingli baogao” 江苏盐城三羊墩汉墓清理报告, *Kaogu*, no. 8 (1964): 393–402.
30. Dongyang 東陽 tomb no. 7; Jiangsu (Xuyi 盱眙); late first century BCE.
Source: Nanjing bowuyuan, “Jiangsu Xuyi Dongyang Han mu” 江苏盱眙东阳汉墓, *Kaogu*, no. 5 (1979): 412–26.
31. Shangsun Jiazhai 上孫家寨 tomb no. 115; Qinghai (Datong 大通, Xining 西寧); late first century BCE.
Sources: Qinghai sheng wenwu kaogu gongzuodui 青海省文物考古工作队, “Qinghai Datong xian Shangsun Jiazhai yiyiwu hao Han mu” 青海大通县上孫家寨一一五号汉墓, *Wenwu*, no. 2 (1981): 16–21. Also see *Xining Shangsun Jiazhai Han Jin mu* 上孫家寨汉晋墓, ed. Qinghai sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo 青海省文物考古研究所 (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 1993), pp. 30–32, 186–94.
32. Xupu 胥浦 tomb no. 101; Jiangsu (Yizheng 儀征); after 5 CE.
Source: Yangzhou bowuguan, “Jiangsu Yizheng Xupu 101 hao Xi Han mu” 江苏仪征胥浦 101 号西汉墓, *Wenwu*, no. 1 (1987): 1–19.
33. Yinwan 尹灣 tomb no. 6, tomb of Shi Rao 師饒 and unnamed woman; Jiangsu (Donghai 東海, Lianyungang 連雲港, Wenquan 溫泉); 10 CE.
Sources: LYG (Lianyungang shi bowuguan), “Jiangsu Donghai xian Yinwan Han muqun fajue jianbao” 江苏东海县尹灣汉墓群发掘简报, *Wenwu*, no. 8 (1996): 4–25. For the manuscripts, also see *Yinwan Han mu jiandu* 尹灣漢墓簡牘, ed. LYG, Donghai xian bowuguan 東海縣博物館, Zhongguo shehui kexueyuan Jianbo yanjiu zhongxin 中國社會科學院簡帛研究中心, and Zhongguo wenwu yanjiusuo 中國文物研究所 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1997).