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MING QING YANJIU

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MQYJ XIX

This issue is dedicated to the memory of Prof. Lionello Lanciotti (1925-2015), a great Man who really knew what rén 仁 is

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THE INFLUENCE OF SONG AND QING ANTIQUARIANISM ON MODERN CHINESE ARCHAEOLOGY

Chiara Visconti*

ABSTRACT

Archaeology has been introduced to China in the early twentieth century thanks to the crucial theoretical and methodological contribution of the Western world. Though the emergence of archaeology as a field of study reflected a growing interest among Chinese scholars in empirically based science it is also true that the interest for ancient artefacts and the material traces of the past has been a salient characteristic of Chinese historical accounts since antiquity. Indeed, what scholars termed antiquarianism can be traced to two key works of the Northern Song period, the *Kaogu tu* by Lü Dalin and the *Bogu tu* by Wang Fu. The influence of both works is still very visible in the classification of ritual bronze vessels. The other key moment in collecting culture and antiquarian studies was the very long reign of Qianlong, whose art collections exceeded any previous one. Though the investigation methods of Song and Qing literati were certainly different from modern ones it is also true that their cultural tradition remains in many ways a characteristic trait of Chinese archaeology.

Keywords: archaeology, antiquarianism, Song, Qing dynasty, collections

Archaeology, conceived as a discipline that studies the past through traces left by human or natural activity mainly through the use of stratigraphic excavation, has developed only recently in China. The first modern archaeological excavations were carried out in the first quarter of the twentieth century by Western archaeologists, while the first state-sponsored campaign was carried out in the site of Yinxi 殷墟, Anyang 安陽 between 1928 and 1937 and directed by

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archaeologists who had studied in the West.¹ The term *kaoguxue* 考古學 itself, though of earlier origin, as we shall see, was re-imported into China as a neologism from Japan to translate *ἀρχαιολογία* and define the new discipline.² Many scholars consider therefore Chinese archaeology as a recent development, introduced to China in the early twentieth century thanks to the crucial theoretical and methodological contribution of the Western world.³ Other scholars, however, have underlined the influence on Chinese archaeology of the collecting cultures and antiquarian studies of the dynastic period, especially those of period of the Northern Song 北宋 (960-1127) and Qing 清 (1644-1911) dynasties.⁴ Though the investigation methods of Song and Qing literati were certainly different from modern ones it is also true that their cultural tradition remains in many ways a characteristic trait of Chinese archaeology.

Through a brief survey of the methods used in the Song and Qing periods, the most important ones for the development of antiquarianism, the present article seeks to show how modern Chinese archaeology is still profoundly affected, wittingly or unwittingly, by the century-old tradition of collectors and antiquarians, much more than it is generally believed. More specifically, as far as historical archaeology is concerned, the China-centred version and the lack of interest for the past of other civilizations, the nationalist perspective in the analysis of the data, the focus on specific artefacts instead of the overall complexity of material culture, and even the language adopted, which characterized and to some extent continues

¹ The excavation of YinXu was begun in 1928, with the support of the Freer Gallery of Art and of the newly founded Institute of History and Philology (Shiyusuo 史語所), Academia Sinica, and was directed by Fu Sinian 傅斯年 (1896-1950) and Li Ji 李濟 (1896-1979); the first had studied in London, while the second had a Ph.D. from Harvard. The fifteen campaigns carried out between 1928 and 1937 were the first to be financed by the government and can be considered the beginning of Chinese archaeology. For the excavation of YinXu see Li Ji 1977.

² Xia Nai 1984; Xia Nai and Wang Zhongshu 1986: 2.

³ Lu 2002: 119-20; Su Rongyu 2004: 423-24; Liu Li and Chen Xingcan 2012: 2.

⁴ Chang Kwang-chih 1968: 3-4; Chang Kwang-chih 1981: 158; Demattè 2011: 165; Pirazzoli-t'Serstevens 2010: 115.

to characterize Chinese archaeology, are largely a result of the influence of this tradition.

While the importance of the antiquarian tradition is out of the question, it is my opinion that an effort must be made to distinguish more clearly archaeology from it in order to establish a correct and balanced relation between the two disciplines.

Song Dynasty Collecting Culture and Antiquarianism

Though the interest for ancient artefacts and the material traces of the past to support historical and epigraphic studies had been a salient characteristic of Chinese historical accounts since antiquity, it is commonly accepted that ‘antiquarianism’, conceived as the critical study of the artefacts, developed during the Song dynasty, in parallel with the spread of collecting practices.

It was in this period that antiquarianism began to be called *jīnshíxué* 金石學, literally meaning ‘the study of metals and stones,’ in reference to the material on which inscriptions were made, in particular ritual bronzes and stelae, though the name *kaogu* 考古 is also found in the sources of the time.

The two terms remained basically interchangeable up to the twentieth century, when *jīnshíxué* began to be used for ‘epigraphy’ and *kaoguxue* for ‘archaeology’.

There were many factors that led to the collecting, classifying and publishing of ancient artefacts, creating what was basically a new discipline destined to have a profound influence on the East, and they reflect the contradictions of the period: on the one hand, political and military weakness, on the other hand, the final affirmation of a class of functionaries-literati, cultural advances and the extraordinary development of science and technique, along with the general development of the economy. From a political perspective, there was a desire to reaffirm Han 漢 ethnic authority after fifty years of unstable and mostly non-Han governments. To this we must add the political weakness of the Song dynasty, whose authority had been threatened first by the Qidan 契丹 of the Liao 辽 dynasty (907-1125)

and then by the Nüzhen 女真 of the Jin 金 dynasty (1115-1234), a threat that culminated in the loss of control over Northern China in 1127. One of the results of this new political drive, was a resurgence of the *güwen* 古文 literary movement, which had originally developed almost two centuries before.⁵ The Neo-Confucian synthesis developed by Song intellectuals led also to a greater interest in the past, particularly that of the Zhou 周 period (approximately 1050-221 B.C.), an interest that gradually grew into one of the most important cultural trends in ancient China.

Part of the new cultural climate was also the promotion of science and changes in the life of the court, accompanied by a renewed interest in the study of the Classics, the reproduction of calligraphic and pictorial works by ancient masters, new rites and music based on the Zhou tradition, the development of collecting, epigraphy and, last but not least, antiquarianism. The interest in ancient artefacts besides classical texts was probably fuelled by accidental discoveries following the intense building activity of the first period of the dynasty.⁶ Many Shang 商 bronzes were discovered in Xiaotun, 小屯 near the city of Anyang, already identified as the site of the last capital of the dynasty, ending up in both private collections and the imperial one. The spread of xylographic technique helped the production of printed works describing these objects.

The interest of collectors and scholars focused especially on ritual vases, which were attributed special pedagogical and ethical value, and on stelae, but there were also studies on jade, coins, and building materials. It is calculated that during the period of the Northern Song about 40 collections of antiquities were established and more than 120 scientific studies of antiquities were published. Most of the objects in the collections were already lost by the 1120s, when the hordes of the Jin invaded Central and Northern China and the court of the Song was forced to move to Hangzhou 杭州. We still have knowledge of the ancient bronzes and other artefacts in the collections thanks to thirty catalogues, most of them later editions,

⁵ See Falkenhausen 2013: 44-45.

⁶ Rudolph 1963: 174.

which have survived to the present day.⁷ The influence of these works on archaeological methods still applied today is such that it has led some scholars to consider *jinsbixue* as the origin of modern Chinese archaeology.

The renowned thinker and politician Ouyang Xiu 歐陽修 (1007-1072) can be considered the father of Chinese antiquarianism and epigraphy. Historian, man of letters, supporter of the *guwen*, Ouyang Xiu was in favour of studying Confucian classics in the original, as opposed to later interpretations. This insistence on original sources (*baogu* 好古), independently of their literary importance, and the search for historical truth, led Ouyang Xiu to accumulate an enormous collection of about one thousand rubbings (*tapian* 拓片) of bronze inscriptions and stone stelae, dating to various periods. Ouyang Xiu, however, was not interested in the objects themselves as much as in the inscriptions they bore. Nevertheless, he insisted on the quality of the rubbings and their correspondence to the originals. Though Ouyang Xiu's enormous collection went mostly lost shortly after his death, we still have the study in ten *juan* that the scholar dedicated to it, entitled *Jigu lu* 集古錄 and published in 1069. This book had a profound impact on the theory and methods of collecting and on the studies on epigraphy and calligraphy. Ouyang Xiu collected inscriptions from various historical periods attributing equal importance to the more recent ones. Notwithstanding his prestige, Ouyang Xiu was also accused by some of lacking of a scientific approach and of having collected out of passion more than scientific interest. In the preface to *Jigu lu* (*Jigu lu mu xu* «集古錄目» 序) itself we find:

夫力莫如好，好莫如一。予性顛而嗜古，凡世人之所貪者皆無欲於其間，故得一其所好於斯。好之已篤，則力雖未足猶能致之。故上自周穆王以來，下更秦漢隋唐五代，外至四海九州名山大澤，窮崖絕谷，荒林破塚，神仙鬼物詭怪所傳莫不皆有以為集古錄。

In general terms, however, having the wherewithal to acquire an object is not as good as being possessed by the love for that object, and being

⁷ Rong Yuan and Rong Geng 1936; Poor 1965.

possessed by the love for an object requires resolute single-mindedness. As I am by nature addicted to antiquity and have no desire whatsoever for those things that men of this present age hanker after so ardently, my attentions have been focused on my love for objects such as these. So intense is this love, that although my means have inadequate, I have nonetheless managed to assemble a collection. They date from the time of King Mu of the Zhou Dynasty onwards, down through the Qin, the Han, the Sui, Tang and Five Dynasties, their geographical reach encompasses the Four Seas and the Nine Provinces. They derive from famous mountains and broad marshes, isolated cliffs and cut-off valleys, wild forests and ruined tombs.⁸

Thus, while underlining the chronological and geographical variety of the rubbings in his collection and the inclusion of objects whose nature is not entirely clear to him,⁹ Ouyang Xiu also states that personal pleasure was the main drive behind his collection.¹⁰

While, as already noted, Ouyang Xiu was interested only in inscriptions, his disciple Liu Chang 劉敞 (1019-1068) was interested also in the supports themselves. Liu Chang published his collection of vessels found in the province of Shaanxi with the title *Xian Qin guqi tu* 先秦古器圖 or *Illustrations of Pre-Qin Antiquities*, a work of one *juan* of which only the preface has survived. Ouyang Xiu himself writes that many of the bronzes in Liu Chang's collections had been found in the ancient area of Chang'an by farmers and herders, and had been collected by Liu when he was superintendent in Shanxi 陝西.¹¹ Liu Chang lists the aspects that, in his opinion, should be taken into account in the study of ancient bronzes, namely the ritual, the etymological and the genealogical aspect.¹² Citations of Liu Chang's

⁸ Ouyang Xiu, *Jigu lu mu xu*, in *Ouyang Xiu quanji*, 2: 599-600. Translated by Duncan M. Campbell.

⁹ See Sena 2013: 215.

¹⁰ For more on this topic see also Egan 2006: 21; Miller 2012: 118-21.

¹¹ Ouyang Xiu in *Shike shiliao xinbian* I.1a. Cited in Zhu Jianxin 1964: 21.

¹² “禮家明其制度，小學正其文字，譜牒次其世諡” (Liu Chang, *Gongsbi ji*, 36: 13b-14a, quoted in Zhu Jianxin 1964: 21).

catalogue in other works clarify, to some degree at least, the method he used for classifying the objects and their subsequent influence.¹³

Among the main collectors of the Northern Song period was also the known painter and man of letters Li Gonglin 李公麟 (ca. 1042-1106) who, like Ouyang Xiu and Liu Chang, used his private collection to study antiquity.¹⁴ The bronzes and jades he accumulated made his collection one of the most important of the eleventh century but, unfortunately, in this case too we no longer have the catalogues Li Gonglin himself had compiled. Li Gonglin illustrated a few archaic bronzes, presumably from his collection, also in the horizontal scroll *Longmian shanzhuang* 龍眠山庄, in which he depicts his retreat among the mountains of Anhui 安徽. In all probability, it was the method adopted by Li to classify and describe the objects he collected that inspired, along with that of Liu Chang, the authors of the two most important antiquarian catalogues of the period, *Kaogu tu* 考古圖 and *Xuanhe bogu tu* 宣和博古圖.

Kaogu tu 考古圖 or *Illustrations for the Study of Antiquity*, compiled with a preface dated 1092 by Lü Dalin 呂大臨, includes, in ten *juan*, more than 230 objects dating to a period that goes from the Shang dynasty to the Han dynasty.¹⁵ We have only later editions of the work, the most ancient of which is a fourteenth century reprint of a 1299 version.¹⁶ This is the earliest antiquarian catalogue of which we have a full copy and a milestone in the study of ritual bronze vessels and ancient jades. Thanks to his contacts and the official positions held for the Song government, Lü Dalin (ca. 1044-1093),¹⁷ had a chance to examine and catalogue the pieces found in about thirty private collections and inside the imperial palace, in the Imperial Archives (*mige* 秘閣), in the Court of Imperial Sacrifices (*taichang* 太常) and in the Palace Storehouse (*neichang* 內常); thus *Kaogu tu* remains the main

¹³ Hsu Ya-hwei 2013b: 232-33.

¹⁴ See Harrist 1995.

¹⁵ The work includes also two *addenda*, probably of the period of the Southern Song, entitled *Xu kaogu tu* 續考古圖 and *Kaogu tu shimen* 考古圖釋文.

¹⁶ However, the version with the best illustrations is considered to be the one in *Siku quanshu* 四庫全書.

¹⁷ For biographical information on Lü Dalin see Hsu Ya-hwei 2013b: 234-35.

source for the study of the various forms of collecting of the time. Among the collections cited in the work are some of the most important figures of the time, from Wen Yanbo 文彦博 (1006-1097) to Liu Chang and Li Gonglin themselves, whose importance is repeatedly mentioned and whose work seems to have inspired the approach and the very title of the *Kaogu tu*. The first six volumes are dedicated to ritual bronze vases, classified according to their form, starting with two *ding* 鼎 tripods used for cooking; the seventh volume describes bells, a lithophone and other musical instruments of the Zhou period; jades are described in the eighth volume while the last two *juan* are devoted to a miscellany from the Qin and Han period. As we shall see, the typology and the vocabulary developed by Lü Dalin will continue to be used not only in later antiquarian studies, but also in modern archaeological publications.

As suggested by the term *tu* in the title, literally ‘drawing’ or ‘illustration’, one of the most salient and innovative aspects of the *Kaogu tu* is precisely the inclusion in the text of linear sketches of the objects to provide the reader with a visual reference (fig. 1).

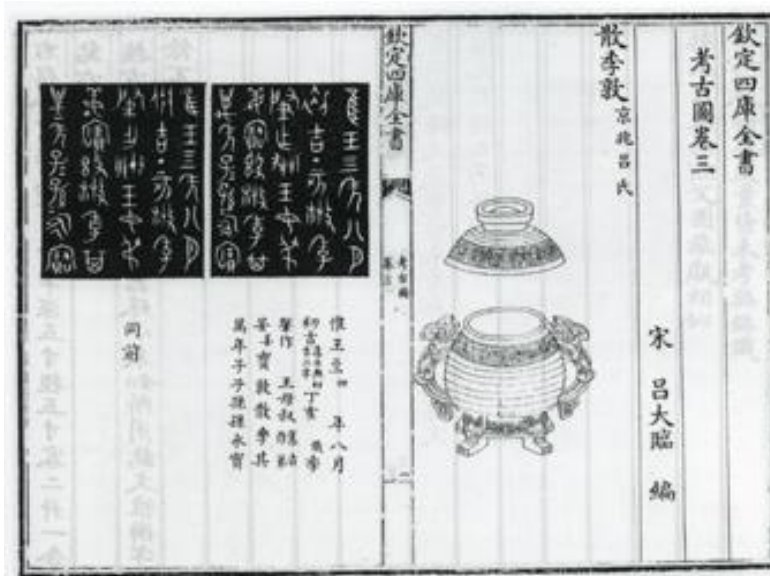


Fig. 1: Catalogue entry from *Kaogu tu* 3 (SKQS, 840: 126)

Along with the sketch there is a copy or the rubbing of the inscription (depending on the edition) in seal script and its transcription in *lishu* 隸書. The description includes the name of the object, that of the collector and the place in which the object is kept, the place of origin, when known, the dimensions, the weight and, in some cases, a scholarly analysis of the artefact. Decorations are not described, while they are present in the drawings. In the preface to the *Kaogu tu*, Lü Dalin explains that what brought him to antiquarian studies was the desire to investigate, through the analysis of the objects, the origin of rituals, to discover information not reported in the Classics and to correct mistakes found in later exegetic commentaries.¹⁸ For Lü Dalin, artefacts are tangible traces of the past, capable of putting him into contact with the ancients:

觀其器，誦其言，形容髣髴，追三代之遺風，如見其人矣。

When I view their vessels, chant their words [ie. The inscriptions], I conjure up their likeness, thereby recapturing the lingering influence on the Three Dynasties, as if I were meeting [the ancients] in person!¹⁹

The interest in ancient rituals, associated with the resurgence of Confucianism, led to an interest in ancient artefacts as a whole, including their form and origin, rather than the sole inscriptions. The discovery and study of a number of ancient bells, described in the seventh volume,²⁰ for example, led to various efforts to imitate them, especially during the reign of Emperor Huizong, to whom we owe also the edition of the second antiquarian catalogue of the time: the *Xuanhe bogu tu*.

Huizong 徽宗 (r. 1101-1125), last emperor of the dynasty of the Northern Song, was a sophisticated intellectual and a lover of the arts. Himself a painter and calligrapher of some talent, Huizong managed

¹⁸ Lü Dalin, *Kaogu tu ji* 考古圖記, in *Siku quanshu*, 840: 95. Quoted in Chang Kwang-chih 1981: 158.

¹⁹ Lü Dalin, *Kaogu tu ji*, in *Siku quanshu*, 840: 95. Tr. by Sena 2010: 224.

²⁰ Ebrey 2009: 34-5. For a more extensive analysis of the topic see Falkenhausen 1993a and, in particular, Ebrey 2010.

to put together an unparalleled art collection.²¹ The collecting of ancient bronzes was stimulated also by the ritual reform decided in 1103 by the Emperor, which established that court rituals had to conform as much as possible to the ones described in the Classics and, in particular, to the *Zhouli* 周禮.²² Functionaries were invited to bring to court the more significant pieces among the ones found in their areas of jurisdiction. Huizong sent agents to the various provinces to collect the material, in order to have as many models as possible to ensure the instruments used in the ritual corresponded to the ones of the past. With an imperial decree dated 1113, Huizong announced he had collected more than 500 bronzes, whose aspect had been documented, whose form and decoration had been studied, and whose symbolical significance had been clarified.²³ On the basis of the collected material, imitations of the bronzes were produced to be used in the rituals or donated to functionaries. Basing himself on the studies and experience accumulated by private collectors in previous years, Huizong not only collected thousands of works among books, paintings, calligraphies, rubbings, ancient bronzes and jades, but also employed the court literati-functionaries to catalogue and analyse the pieces. Today what remains are the catalogues of the paintings, of the calligraphies and of the antiquities. The latter catalogue, originally entitled *Xuanbe bogu tu* 宣和博古圖 or *Illustrated Catalogue of Antiquities from the Xuanbe Hall*, has survived in a version entitled *Chongxiu Xuanbe bogu tulu* 重修宣和博古圖錄 or *Revised Catalogue of Antiquities Illustrated from the Xuanbe Hall*, compiled under the direction of functionary Wang Fu 王黼 (1079-1126) in the 1120s. Generally known as with the abbreviated name *Bogu tu*, the text exists in various editions, the most ancient among extant ones being dated 1308. Divided in thirty volumes, it describes 839 objects from the imperial collection, arranged in twenty categories.²⁴ This monumental work is

²¹ The figure of Huizong as a collector has been studied especially by Patricia Buckley Ebrey. See Ebrey 2008 and 2014.

²² See Hsu Ya-hwei 2013a.

²³ Yang Zhongliang 楊仲良, *Huang Song tongjian changbian jishi benmo* 皇宋通鑑長編紀事本末, 134, 8: 4193-94.

²⁴ Also for the *Bogu tu* the reader can refer to the edition in the *Siku quanshu*, 840.

all the more precious if we consider that Huizong's magnificent collection went almost entirely lost already in the years of the fall of the Northern Song and that *Bogu tu* is therefore the only source for understanding its size and characteristics. The objects range chronologically from the Shang period to the Tang 唐 one (618-907) and, in line with the interests of the time, are mostly ritual vessels and bells, though there are more than a few musical instruments, weapons, mirrors and chariot finials. Each entry in the catalogue includes a sketch of the object, the rubbing and the transcription of the inscription, if present, and a description. The latter, though generally shorter than the ones found in the *Kaogu tu*, also include besides the dimensions and the origin when known, some observations on the shape and, for the first time, on the decoration



Fig. 2: Catalogue entry from *Bogu tu* (*Zhida chongxiu Xuanhe bogu tulu*, 2: 33-34)

(fig. 2). Though the motivations behind the *Kaogu tu* and *Bogu tu* were different, at least to some extent,²⁵ it seems that the authors of the *Bogu tu* were inspired, although they never mention him, by Lü Dalin, who in turn had used the method adopted for the first time by Li Gonglin. Whatever the ideological or political motivations behind this study and notwithstanding a few inconsistencies and mistakes, due also to the fact that it was written by more than one author, the *Bogu tu* clearly evidences the enormous advances in the field of antiquarian and epigraphic studies that had taken place in a span of about fifty years. For example, Hsu Ya-hwei has compared the transcriptions of the inscription of an VIII century B.C. cauldron, the Jin Jiang-*dǐng* 晉姜鼎, in the *Jigu lu*, the *Kaogu tu* and the *Bogu tu*, evidencing the increasing number of deciphered characters.²⁶ As we shall see, the tendency to favour the philological aspect over the original context of the finds, characteristic of modern Chinese archaeology, is a result of the influence of traditional antiquarianism.²⁷ However, the true revolution in antiquarian studies and the one that had the most enduring effects was the new terminology adopted in the classification of ritual bronzes.

Qing Dynasty Collecting Culture and Antiquarianism

After the fall of Kaifeng 開封 and the loss of imperial collections, along with many private ones, antiquarian studies lost the innovative drive that had characterized the period of the Northern Song. The period of the Southern Song 南宋 (1127-1279), Yuan 元 (1279-1368) and Ming 明 (1368-1644) dynasties is generally considered as one of little progress in the area of the *jīnshíxue* 金石學,²⁸ though the catalogues published between the second half of the eleventh century

²⁵ For a comparison between *Kaogu tu* and *Bogu tu* see Sena 2010.

²⁶ Hsu Ya-hwei 2013b: 237-39 and figg. 3-5.

²⁷ Falkenhausen 1993b: 843.

²⁸ Demattè 2011: 166; Pirazzoli-t' Serstevens 2010: 119-20; Falkenhausen 2013: 51.

and the early twelfth century continued to be reprinted.²⁹ While it was the illustrations in these catalogues that inspired the production of archaic style bronzes in the Ming period,³⁰ the interest of the literati shifted increasingly towards palaeographic and philological studies, often losing sight of the relation between inscription and object, which was also semantic. During these centuries, the study of the artefacts seems to focus more on their aesthetic or symbolical aspects, rather than their historical and social significance.

It was only in the seventeenth century that things changed and there was a resurgence in antiquarian or even archaeological studies.³¹ Specifically, it was during the Qing dynasty (1644-1911), that there was a sort of rebirth of the *jinsbixue*. The crucial moment for this rebirth was the very long reign of Qianlong 乾隆 (Gaozong 高宗, 1735-1795), whose art collections went beyond, at least in terms of sheer size, any of the previous ones. In regards to bronzes, specifically, Qianlong was well-aware of the importance of these as a symbol of imperial power and dynastic legitimacy, all the more given the Manchu origin of the Qing. Also for this reason, instead of destroying the collections of their rivals like the Jin had done when they had conquered the capital of the Northern Song, the Qing decided to keep the Ming collection of ritual bronzes and further enrich it, using it as a symbol of political legitimacy and power. Qianlong, in particular, had received an extensive education in the Classics and, like his predecessor, believed that the golden age of Chinese civilization had been the period of the Three dynasties, *Sandai* 三代. During his reign the collection was greatly expanded and Qianlong also ordered that copies of ancient ritual vases, in bronze and ceramic, were to be used during the ceremonies.³² Qianlong's collection of ancient bronzes was probably based on an original Ming nucleus,

²⁹ The *Baogu tu*, for example, was reprinted in 1528, 1588, 1596, 1599, 1600, 1603 and 1636; see Hsu Ya-hwei 2008: 76-96. On the various editions of the *Kaogu tu* see Rong Geng 1994.

³⁰ On the different attitude towards ancient bronzes in the Ming period, see Clunas 1991.

³¹ Elman 1984: 2-36.

³² Rawson 2005: 272-75.

although we can only speculate as to its size. The collection was expanded also thanks to private properties confiscated by the Qing government and gifts received from both Chinese and foreign functionaries. Today the collection is located in the Palace Museum of Beijing and in that of Taibei. In 1749, Qianlong issued an edict ordering the compilation of a catalogue based on the same method of the *Kaogu tu* and the *Bogu tu*, as described in the following passage:

乾隆十四年十一月初七日奉上諭：遂古法物流傳有自者，惟尊彝鼎鬲歷世恒遠，良以質堅而體厚，不為燥濕所移，剝蝕所損，淵然之光穆乎，可見三代以上規模氣象。故嗜古之士，亟有取焉。宣和博古一圖播在藝苑，繼之者有呂氏考古圖，而此外記載寂寥。豈非力能致之，而弗能聚，所見隘而無足紀歟。我朝家法不事玩好，民間鑑賞既弗之禁，而殿廷陳列與夫內府儲藏者未嘗不富。朕於幾務晏閒間加題品夷，考舊圖多所未載，因思古器顯晦有時，及今不為之表章載之，簡牘考索者其奚取徵焉。命尚書梁詩正蔣溥汪由敦，率同內廷翰林，仿博古圖遺式，精繪形模，備摹款式，為西清古鑑一編，以游藝之餘功，寄鑑古之遠思，亦足稱昇平雅尚云。特諭。

On the seventh day of the eleventh month, in the fourteenth year of the reign of the Qianlong emperor [1749], we have respectfully received his majesty's superior command: among the rare ancient ritual objects handed down through generations, only bronze vessels such as the *zun*, *yi*, *ding*, and *nai* will last forever through the ages. Their solid nature and heavy bodies remain unchanged by drought and damp, unharmed by rust. Their mysterious glories reveal the greatness and atmosphere of the three dynasties [that is, the Xia, Shang, and Zhou]. Therefore, many antiquarians are anxious to acquire ancient bronzes. *Xuanhe bogu tulu* circulated widely among art world and then came Lü Dalin's *Kaogu tu*. Besides these two catalogues, very few records about ancient bronzes have survived. The techniques to compile catalogues do exist, but the difficulty of gathering a large number of objects remains. Small collections are not worth recording. The royal discipline of our dynasty prevents us from indulging in entertainments and frivolities. But it is perfectly acceptable for the people to take part in the lively realms of connoisseurship and art appreciation and, after all, many bronzes are displayed in the imperial palaces. In spite of the pressures of my duties, I have found the time to examine and grade these bronzes, discovering that many of these ancient bronzes have never been documented in previous catalogues. Since the discovery and disappearance of these treasures are events of some moment, if we fail to honour them by

writing them up in books as soon as possible, how can future investigators get information? I hereby designate the three ministers Liang Shizheng, Jiang Pu, and Wang Youdun, leading Hanlin scholars of the inner court, to compile the *Xiqing gujian*, following the schema of *Bogu tu* by providing detailed depictions of form and unabridged transcriptions of inscriptions. If, while one is bringing the reserve of merit [accumulated from] one's engagement with the arts to bear on lofty thoughts drawn from reflections on antiquity, this is worthy of the name of peace and grace. Respect this.³³

The editorial project begun by Qianlong in 1749 turned out to be the most ambitious one every carried out in the field of antiquarian studies. Four catalogues were published in the space of about forty years, illustrating and describing a total of 4,105 bronzes. The first volume, entitled *Xiqing gujian* 西清古鑑 [*Mirror of the Antiquities of the Xiqing Hall*], was finished in 1751 by a group of scholars (curiously none of them a specialist in epigraphy) directed by Liang Shizheng 梁詩正 (1697-1763); in forty *juan*, it describes the first 1529 objects. These were mostly ritual vessels, but also mirrors, lamps and weapons. It is likely that most of them belonged to the collection of the Ming emperors.³⁴ The second catalogue, entitled *Ningshou jiangou* 寧壽鑑古 [*Mirror of the Antiquities of the Ningshou Palace*], probably compiled between 1776 and 1781,³⁵ classifies 600 vases and 101 bronze mirrors kept in the Ningshougong 寧壽宮. It is the only one of the catalogues that lacks a preface or a postface, as well as a compilation date or list of curators. The project was finished in 1793 with the compilation of two supplements of 20 *juan* each, entitled *Xiqing xujian jiabian* 西清續鑑甲編 and *Xiqing xujian yibian* 西清續鑑乙編 [*Supplement to the Ancient Mirror of the Xiqing Hall, first and second part*], which classified respectively 975 objects located in the imperial magazines and 900 destined to the imperial palace of Shenyang 瀋陽, and documents the continuous expansion of the imperial collection. Collectively the catalogues are known as *Xiqing sijian* 西清四鑑.

³³ Qing Gaozong, 清高宗, "Shang yu 上諭", in *Xiqing gujian*, *Siku quanshu*, 841: 1b. Translated by Yu Hui-chun 2011:150-51.

³⁴ Yu Hui-chun 2011: 154.

³⁵ Holzwarth 2005: 50.

Notwithstanding their extension –the four catalogues are the most imposing work of this type ever produced– and the quality of the drawings, from a theoretical perspective these catalogues cannot be considered an innovation in the field of antiquarian studies. The authors, obeying the dispositions of Qianlong himself, followed the approach of the Song catalogues, grouping the objects by categories and chronologically. Each bronze is illustrated using a woodblock print and is accompanied by a printed copy of the inscription, if present, as opposed to a rubbing. There follows a brief description of the dimensions and origin of the object. Also, the editors of the work made many mistakes and failed to recognize many fakes. Indeed, almost half the objects,³⁶ if not three quarters,³⁷ seem not original. Overall, the work seems more interesting for its political significance than for its actual content. In particular, Qianlong's imperial aspirations are reflected in the collection of bronzes which, at least in his intentions, was to include objects from the four corners of the empire and range from remote antiquity to the Qing period. In the appendix to the first part of the *Xiqing xujian* (*Xiqing xujian jibian fulu* 西清續鑑甲編附錄), thirty-eight objects are described, brought all the way from the remote borders of the empire. Among these are Islamic bronzes, weapons, percussion instruments, coins, both foreign and Qing, and the imperial seals with which past dynasties had affirmed their control over conquered lands. By inserting in his collection objects from lands far away from Zhongyuan 中原, including relatively recent objects, Qianlong affirmed his authority over those lands and the ethnic groups that inhabited them. This nationalistic use of archaeological research is not so different from the one that still can be discerned in various countries in which the legitimacy of the occupation of a land is questioned.

Alongside the catalogues ordered by Qianlong, during the Manchu domination, there were many works that illustrated, classified and described objects found in private collections, none of which,

³⁶ Shaughnessy 1991: 11.

³⁷ Shirakawa Shizuka 白川靜 1962-1984: vol. 42, 116.

however, is even remotely close in terms of size to the imperial one.³⁸ Though these works show signs of progress in the field of epigraphy and in terms of rubbing techniques, they also generally follow the standards set by the Emperor.

More interesting are the sources that bear witness to the field research carried out by the Qing scholars, sources that are more systematic and detailed than the ones of the past. The long-standing tradition of travel diaries was renewed and enriched through a specifically archaeological approach. Among the more representative works of this type is the *Rixia jiuwen* 日下舊聞 by Zhu Yizun 朱彝尊 (1629-1709), a history of Beijing from the origins to the Ming period, which describes the historical and archeological sites of the capital and the changes over time. In 1774, Qianlong ordered an updated version, which was compiled under the direction of Yu Minzhong 于敏中 (1714-1780), entitled *Qinding rixia jiuwen kao* 欽定日下舊聞考, and published in 1786. With 160 *juan*, the *Qinding rixia jiuwen kao* covers topics ranging from astronomy to the history of cities, from the descriptions of walls to that of imperial palaces, from the customs of the people, to the transcription of numerous stelae, many of which forgotten or hidden. Among these are the famous *Shiguwen* 石鼓文 stone drums inscribed with seal script, which had been brought to light in the seventh century during the Tang dynasty and had somehow reached Beijing.³⁹

One of the most interesting figures of the period is that of Huang Yi 黃易 (1744-1801). A man of letters, an expert epigraphist, painter and traveller, Huang Yi documented his expeditions in search of stelae (*fangbei* 訪碑) in accurate travel diaries and annotated paintings, the most famous of which are probably those of the album *Song Luo fangbei riji* 嵩洛訪碑日記.⁴⁰ After having climbed Mount Luo and visited the ancient capital of Luoyang 洛陽 in 1796, Huang Yi painted

³⁸ On the catalogues of the Qing period, see Demattè 2011: 167-71; Pirazzoli-t'Serstevens 2010; Rawson 2005.

³⁹ *Qinding rixia jiuwen kao*, 68-70.

⁴⁰ The album is currently in the Gugong bowuguan, in Beijing. See Hsu Eileen 2005 and 2008; Tseng 2003.

this album, which includes twenty-four sheets, each one depicting a place he saw and accompanied by a written description. When one looks at the work, one sees that Huang Yi's exploration amounted to what we would call today an actual territorial survey, based on previous studies and carefully documented; his almost archaeological approach is evidenced also by the fact that Huang was always accompanied by a team, in charge, among other things, of producing rubbings of the inscriptions he found.⁴¹ Huang Yi's album inspired various copies among which the extremely faithful one of 1891 by the scholar Wu Dacheng 吳大澄 (1835-1902), who wrote also treatises on bronzes, jades and seals. Huang Yi's fame however rests largely on a previous discovery: the funerary complex of the Wu family. In 1786, Huang Yi had identified the existence, near Jiexiang 嘉祥 and south of Mount Tai 泰山 in the province of Shandong 山東, of the necropolis of the Wu 武 family, dating to the second century, and had partially excavated it, bringing to light more than forty inscribed stelae and pictorial stones.⁴² Though the methods used by Huang to excavate the complex were highly questionable, the discovery of the site and the systematic study of the findings that followed, remain one of the founding moments of Chinese archaeology.

Some Observations on the Relation between Traditional Antiquarian Studies and Archaeology in China

During the final Qing period, a number of Swedish, English, French, German, Russian and Japanese explorers and archaeologists arrived in Xinjiang and Gansu to follow the ancient caravan routes known as the Silk Road, uncovering (and often taking back to their countries) all kinds of treasures. But it was only with the fall of the dynasty in 1911 that modern archaeology came to China and Western and Chinese archaeologists began to actually collaborate, although on an

⁴¹ Tseng 2003: 41.

⁴² On the discovery of the necropolis of the Wu family and the excavations by Huang Yi see, among others, Wu Hung 1989 and Liu Cary Y. 2008.

irregular basis and with frequent contrasts. Since then, archaeology has been steadily progressing, expanding available data and areas of interest, and innovating its theories and methods. At the same time, any Western archaeologist working in China cannot help being struck by the continuing influence of Chinese antiquarian studies on archaeological practice.

Generally speaking, archaeology has still difficulty distinguishing itself from historical studies. In the Chinese academia, the independence of the discipline has been acknowledged only recently with its separation from history departments, but the relation between archaeological sources and written sources remains problematic. As we have seen, ancient objects were mainly used to confirm or confute textual sources and this remains largely true for historical archaeology.⁴³

Antiquarian studies, like historical ones, were the expression of the dominant elite and a response to the need of establishing a cultural continuity for the Han ethnic group in the case of Emperor Huizong, or to affirm territorial sovereignty and legitimize an imperial project in the case of Qianlong. It is interesting to observe that in the twentieth century the concept of nationalism and its influence on archaeology had an evolution similar to that of the ideas of Song and Qing antiquarians. In the early twentieth century, the efforts to reconstruct an historical tradition and define the new nation-state combined with the development of a new concept of ethnic identity. In their effort to affirm a modern idea of the nation after centuries of imperial authority, intellectuals promoted the concept of Han ethnic identity and the notion that Chinese shared not only a cultural and historical connection but also, and more crucially, a racial one. They thus ended up to some extent replicating Huizong's cultural project. After the birth of People's Republic of China, there was a shift to a multi-ethnic model of nation (*wuzu gonghe* 五族共和), closer to the one originally adopted by Qianlong, which beside the Han ethnic group also includes those of Tibet, Mongolia, Manchuria and Xinjiang.

⁴³ On the complexity of the relation between archeological practice and historical practice in China, see Chang Kwang-chih 1981 and Falkenhausen 1993b.

However, at least from a cultural perspective, the emphasis remained on the Han ethnic group as the founding race and motor of the revolution. Modern archaeology, too, while surely conditioned also by other factors, has continued to have a basically nationalist character, privileging research on given dynastic periods and geographical areas, in particular the Central Plain, Zhongyuan, replicating the focus of the original antiquarian studies. The approach of Chinese archaeology seems, in the last analysis, more influenced by the ideas of nationalism, of antiquity, of the unity and purity of Chinese civilization, than Marxism, as it is generally believed, and in general by traditional Chinese culture rather than Western cultural perspectives.

From a more technical perspective, the influence of antiquarian studies is still very visible in the classification and selection of archaeological finds. In this case, while the role played by Song scholars is universally acknowledged, the contribution of Qing scholars is more controversial. The reason is that on the one hand, Qing scholars passively adhered to the standards established at the time of the Northern Song. On the other hand, it is true that in the eighteenth and nineteenth century private collections and epigraphic and antiquarian studies progressed considerably. However, very often, these studies were published and began to circulate only many years later and it is therefore difficult to evaluate their actual impact on scientific archaeology. Even in the case of the *Xiqing sijian* 西清四鑑 ordered by Qianlong, only the *Xiqing gujian* was printed in 1755, while the others survived only as manuscript copies, and all four were rarely consulted outside the circle of the Emperor and his closest functionaries.

The *Kaogu tu* and the *Bogu tu* remain fundamental works in more than one way: to help understand the various forms of collecting, private and public, that characterized imperial China; for the critical analysis of the illustrated finds; for the wealth of information they provide; for the scientific approach to the problems of classification and dating, which earned Lü Dalin the title of ‘first archaeologist in Chinese history’. They remain, even today, a necessary reference for the study of ancient bronzes and especially for their nomenclature.

More specifically, the *Kaogu tu* categorizes objects according to what we could call classes, forms and types. The class of ritual vases,

which is the largest one, is presented in the first six *juan* according to the following sequence: the first book is dedicated to 18 *ding* 鼎; the second *juan* describes 12 *li* 鬲 and 6 *yan* 甗; the third catalogues the *dui* 敦, the *gui* 簋, and the *fu* 簠; the fourth *juan* catalogues 21 bronzes as *yi* 彝, 8 *you* 卣, 3 *zun* 尊, 1 *lei* 罍 and 14 *hu* 壺; the fifth, *jue* 爵, *gu* 觚, *dou* 豆 and *bu* 甗; the sixth, finally, illustrates the *pan* 盤, *yi* 匜 and *yu* 盂.

The *Bogu tu* groups objects into twenty categories. The first twenty-one *juan* are dedicated to ritual vessels (in this case too this is the largest category), followed by musical instruments, miscellanies and mirrors, in the last three volumes. As for the sequence of the vessels, the *Bogu tu* also starts with *ding* and continues with bottles, jars, tripods for alcoholic beverages, calices, goblets, tureens, plates, steamers and various types of basins.

In both catalogues, within each category, objects are classified in chronological order.

Notwithstanding some differences, the classification method is similar: objects are catalogued based on formal and functional criteria, grouping together those who have similar functions (e.g. tripod steamers) and distinguishing between various types within the category (e.g. *li* and *yan* steamers). The classification system mostly coincides with the one used in the *Xiqing sijian* of the Qianlong period.

In the *Kaogu tu* we thus have tripod cauldrons, tripod steamers, bowls, bottles, goblets, plates and basins. With very few differences, this classification system continues to be used in archaeology.⁴⁴ Even more important for its influence on modern archaeology is the nomenclature adopted by Song antiquarians.⁴⁵

The names used for containers and decorations in both works are inferred from the inscriptions on the objects themselves or, not always correctly, from classic texts. In most cases they are not descriptive and evidence an approach that has been justly called emic or ethnosemantic.⁴⁶ This approach explains some of the mistakes: the

⁴⁴ Sena 2010: 209-10.

⁴⁵ Rudolph 1963: 176; Chang Kwang-chih 1981: 159.

⁴⁶ Chang Kwang-chih 1981: 159.

use of the term *yi* 彝 to indicate a specific type of ritual vase rather than one in general, or also that of the term *zun* to indicate a specific type of container. Though the great effort made by Song scholars is certainly to be appreciated, the use of this nomenclature in archaeology raises many problems. In the area of ritual bronzes, as well as in the classification of other objects, it has hindered the development of a true typology based on morphological variations of the objects.⁴⁷ This happened even though the first generation of Chinese archaeologists had realized the need for more objective classification criteria. An emblematic case is that of Li Ji 李濟 (1896-1979) who, in publishing his findings from Yinxu, opted for a hybrid terminology, combining the original nomenclature with a more objective language. More specifically, Li Ji used names like *dingxingqi* 鼎形器, ‘tripod shaped vase’, instead of *ding* 鼎, ‘tripod’, to identify the container with a circular opening and three legs used for cooking. Li Ji’s example, however, was rejected and the same is true for Chang Kwang-chih’s proposal to adopt a system based on established and clear taxonomic criteria.⁴⁸

Even more misleading is the terminology used for decorations. The most controversial example is the use, starting from the Song period, of the term *taotie* 饕餮 to indicate a decoration consisting of two eye-resembling studs surrounded by symmetrical motifs, which is practically always present on ritual vessels of the Shang period. The name *taotie*, as explicitly stated in the *Kaogu tu*, was the result of the interpretation of a passage of the *Zuozhuan* 左傳 (*Zuo Commentary*) and, more specifically, of a passage of the sixteenth *juan* of the *Lüshi Chunqiu* 呂氏春秋 or *Annals of Master Lü*, reading:

周鼎著饕餮，有首無身，食人未咽，害及其身，以言報更也。為不善亦然。

The tripods of Zhou are decorated with the *Taotie*. It has a head but no body. It devours people, but since it can never swallow them, its actions

⁴⁷ See Falkenhausen 1993b: 842-43.

⁴⁸ Chang Kwang-chih 1981: 161.

bring harm to itself. This expresses the principle of retribution. Acting contrary to the good is quite like this.⁴⁹

Starting with Song antiquarians then, this decorative motif has been called *taotie* and interpreted, in most cases, as a warning against gluttony or, more generally, as an apotropaic motif.⁵⁰ The use today of the term *taotie* is doubly misleading: on the one hand it defines the meaning of the motif even though this is far from being established and, on the other hand, it does not take into account the diachronic development of the motif. Although the attribution has been rejected for some time by many scholars it continues to be used.

Even more abstruse, from the point of view of a non-Chinese archaeologist, is the terminology used for the decorative motif translated as ‘dragon’. In the *Bogu tu*, five different terms are used, *long* 龍, *kui* 夔, *chi* 螭, *jiao* 蛟 and *qiu* 虯, sometimes in combination, but the reason for using one or the other is not always clear, perhaps because the catalogue is not the work of a single author.⁵¹ At least two of these terms, *long* and *kui*, are still often used in archaeological classifications.

Finally, the use of the dynastic grid in absolute chronologies is also ascribable to the influence of antiquarian studies, although partly due to a much more deeply entrenched way of thinking. This use, wittingly or unwittingly, often turns out to be ideological.

Modern archaeology relies by definition on material traces, but necessarily acknowledges the importance of written sources. Texts taken from literary sources, but also from epigraphs, images or coins (all of which are abundantly present in China) are a fundamental integration to the findings of archaeology. It is however necessary to be aware of the difference between the archaeological source, which may have formed also independently of human will, and written sources, which are always the result of a deliberate effort. It is also important to avoid considering archaeology as an ancillary discipline of history or antiquarian studies.

⁴⁹ Lü Buwei 呂不韋, *Lǐshǐ Chunqiu*, 16: 5. Tr. by Knoblock and Riegel 2010: 376.

⁵⁰ For a study of the name *taotie* see Wang Tao 1993.

⁵¹ Ebrey 2011: 52-55.

In China, archaeological studies on the Age of Bronze have for a long time focused on the area of the middle valley of the Yellow River, while the study of the historical periods has focused mainly on pre-1000 A.D. funerary monuments, on the ancient dynastic capitals and, within these, on the great buildings associated with imperial authority. In other words, with the places described in literary sources or containing beautiful objects, an approach that limits archaeology to a supporting role for other disciplines.

On the other hand, in recent years, Chinese archaeology has been progressing rapidly and systematically. There is a growing number of excavations and an increasing wealth of data. The goals of the research had been partly redefined as well as the techniques and methods. The discipline is nowadays more open towards the outside world and more interested in an exchange, as well as characterized by a growing awareness of the role that Chinese archaeology could and should play at a global level. Everything suggests that within a short time it will be possible to combine even more effectively the rich and certainly crucial role of the antiquarian tradition with the requirements of modern scientific practice.

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