World views and military policies in the early Roman and Western Han empires

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Chapter 2
Chinese worldviews from the late Shang to the Qin periods (*c.* 1200 BC-200 BC)

1. Introduction

Between 500 BC and AD 14 Rome developed from a small city-state into a large territorial empire. The process of state formation in China was very different. When Qin Shi Huang founded the first unified empire, various dynasties had already held sway before 221 BC. There has been a long-standing debate between western scholars and Chinese historians and archaeologists about whether or not the Xia 夏 should be seen as the first Chinese dynasty and the precursor to the emergence of large states in China.[1]

However, this is not the place to enter into the complex controversy about the origins of Chinese state formation.[2] After the creation of the Qin Empire in China and the establishment of the Roman Principate in Mediterranean and western Europe, the elite class of the two societies applied the terms *tianxia* and *orbis terrarum* to describe the world as they knew it. In the previous chapter, the transformation of the Roman worldview during the Republic and early Principate has been examined by focusing on the appearance of the term *orbis terrarum* and its use in the *Res Gestae*. In this chapter I shall carry out a study of the formation and transformation of Chinese worldviews during the lengthy process leading to the emergence of the Qin Empire. The concept of *tianxia*, the Chinese counterpart of the Latin *orbis terrarum*, will serve as a focal point for an investigation into the evolution of Chinese worldviews

[1] Huber (1988) 46-77; Thorp (1991) 1-33; Liu Li and Chen Xingchan (2003) 26-29.

[2] For this issue, see the monograph of Liu Li and Chen Xingchan (2003); Liu Li (2004) 223-238. Many debates focus on whether the Erlitou culture (c. 1900 – 1500 BC) in archaeology corresponds to the legendary Xia dynasty (c. 2100 – 1600 BC), the earliest large territorial state in Chinese history. For discussions of this problem, see Allan (1984) 242-256 and *id.* (1991). In a recent article, Allan offers a new interpretation of the relationship between Erlitou culture and the formation of Chinese civilization; see Allan (2007) 461-96. In an interesting article, Liu Li investigates the divergent views of Chinese and non-Chinese scholars on the question of whether the Xia dynasty should be regarded as historical fact or as fiction. See Liu Li (2009) 831-843. The question of the existence of the Xia dynasty has become the subject of a prolonged debate since Gu Jigang 顧頡剛 cast doubt on its historicity in the early twentieth century.

during the long pre-Qin period.

2. Worldviews between the late Shang and late Zhou periods

2.1 Zhong and Sifang/Situ: concepts of space in the mental map of the Shang people

The Taiwanese scholar Xing Yitian 邢義田 claims that the first attestation of the term *tianxia* is to be found in an essay entitled *The Announcement of Duke Shao* (*Shaogao* 召告) from the *Book of Zhou* (*Zhoushu* 周書), a section of the *Book of Documents* (*Shangshu* 尚書). Since this treatise is commonly assumed to have been written in the early Western Zhou period (1046-771 BC), it can be used to shed some light on the worldview held by the ruling class of early-Chinese society.[3] The text runs as follows:

> *Only if the king is virtuous and the king himself serves as a model followed by the people under the* tianxia, *can his name spread far and wide throughout* (*the lands*). 其惟王位在德元，小民乃惟刑用於天下，越王顯。[4]

Sima Qian states that the *Announcement* contains moral advice which the Duke Zhou 周公, the younger brother of King Wu 武王 (r. 1046-1043 BC), gave his nephew, King Cheng 成王 (r.1042/35-1006 BC), Wu's successor, on how to become a good monarch by applying the power of virtue.[5] In a literal sense, *tianxia* 天下 is a geographical term meaning "all (areas) under Heaven".[6]

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[3] The *Shaogao* is commonly regarded as one of the earliest chapters of the *Shang shu*. For a good discussion of the *Shang shu* itself and of the high reputation it enjoyed among later writers for a period of over two thousand years, see Shaughnessy (1993) 376-89.

[4] *Shang shu* 15,14. 400; Xing Yitian (1991) 441. The Japanese scholar Shinichiro Watanabe 渡辺信一郎 has carried out a detailed investigation into the term *tianxia* and its usage in written sources of the pre-Qin period. See Shinichiro Watanabe, trans. Xu Chong 徐衝 (2008) 3-17. Zhao Tingyang 趙汀陽 has published a series of articles focusing on the concept of *tianxia* in the Chinese classical sources, but his approach is principally philosophical. For a critical discussion of Zhao's theory, see Zhang Qixian 張其賢 (2001).

[5] *Shiji* 4, 133.

[6] In most publications dealing with Chinese ancient history in English scholarship, the term "*tianxia*" is simply translated as "all under Heaven" without any further

Nevertheless, in the passage from the *Announcement* just quoted, the emphasis is on the political space in which the king's example should be followed by his subjects. In the Zhou dynasty, the sort of a geopolitical entity implied by *tianxia* under the authority of the Zhou king was conceptualized as consisting of two parts: the *wangji* 王畿, the core lands of the Wei River Valley which were directly controlled by the Zhou royal domain, and the numerous hereditary fiefs surrounding this core area which were ruled *de facto* by the Zhou nobles.[7]

Soon after the Zhou defeated the Shang, the Dukes of Shao and Zhou fulfilled the plan of the deceased King Wu to build a new capital at the confluence of the Yellow River and River Luo, which was called Luoyi (present-day Luoyang, Henan Province) 洛邑, or Chengzhou 成周, symbolizing the centre of the *tianxia*.[8] The city, together with its adjacent lands, formed the core area of the Zhou domain, and the vast areas of lands surrounding this core area were called the *sifang* 四方 (four quarters) or *situ* 四土 (four lands). Nevertheless, it is important to note that the term *tianxia* 天下 was not used in the early Chinese written sources until the Spring and Autumn 春秋 period (770 – 476 BC) and the time of the Warring States 戰國 (476 – 221 BC).

The idea that the world consisted of a centre and four quarters (*sifang*) is much older. Using the then newly discovered oracle-bone inscriptions to study Shang history, Dong Zuobin 董作賓 (1895 – 1963), one of the first historians in modern Chinese scholarship, was able to show that the capital of Yin Shang 殷商 referred to in the early Chinese literature appears as *Dayi Shang* (the big city of Shang)大邑商 or *Zhong Shang* (Central Shang)中商 in the oracle-bone documents.[9] The territory of the late Shang state was thought to consist of a

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interpretation. In my view, this is somewhat problematic.

[7] For the landscapes of the Western Zhou homeland and its regional states, see Li Feng 李峰 (2006) 30-90.

[8] *Shiji* 4, 133. According to the account of Sima Qian, nine tripod cauldrons, which were believed to have been cast by the legendary flood-tamer the Great Yu in remote antiquity and which symbolized the nine earliest provinces of China, were moved the city of Luoyi. From this moment, the new capital was regarded as the centre of the Chinese political landscape. For the fable of the casting of the nine tripods, see Chang (1983) 95-100; Lewis (1999) 268-271; (2006b) 54.

[9] Chen Mengjia 陳夢家 (1956) 255. On the sources for early Chinese history, see the essays in Shaughnessy (1997). For the Chinese writing system of the pre-Qin period, see Boltz (1999) 74-124. The most important publications on the Shang oracle inscriptions in Chinese are the monographs by Chen Mengjia and Hu Houxuan 胡厚宣. In Western scholarship, Keightley's *Sources of Shang history: the Oracle-bone Inscriptions of*

core area, the royal domain, and the vast neighbouring areas loosely called the *situ* 四土 or *sifang* 四方, which literarily means "the lands of the four directions".[10] But scholars who study late Shang history have observed that the character *fang* as it appears in many of the oracle-bone inscriptions often refers to various political entities in or bordering on the Shang territory. In order to achieve a better understanding of this point, it is necessary to pay attention to the spatial aspects of political and administrative organization in the Shang period. Following the reign of King Tang 湯 (c.1675 – 1646 BC), the first monarch of the Shang, the Shang people frequently moved their capital from one place to the other, their aim being to control valuable resources like copper, tin and lead, as shown by the brilliant studies by Chang Kwang-chih 張光直.[11] This situation lasted until the reign of King Pan Geng 盘庚 (c. 1290 – 1263 BC), who moved the capital to Yin 殷 (present-day Anyang 安陽, northern Henan province). This became the permanent capital until the displacement of the Shang dynasty by Zhou. However, although the Shang kings constantly shifted their capitals during the first three centuries after the establishment of their dynasty, the region in which the members of the Shang royal house performed sacrifices to the spirits of their deceased ancestors, especially the *di* 帝, the highest god in the pantheon of the Shang religion, never changed. This sacred place was thought to be the core area in the Shang cosmology.[12] Around

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Bronze Age China (Berkeley 1978) is an indispensable monograph in the field of oracle-bone studies. For the studies of oracle-bone inscriptions in the twentieth century, see Wang Yuxin 王宇信 and Yang Shengnan 楊升南 (1999). On the bronze inscriptions of the Shang and the Zhou dynasties, the most important publications are the eight volumes edited by the Institute for Archaeology of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences. In the West, Shaughnessy's monograph focusing on the inscribed bronze vessels in the Western Zhou dynasty has become a standard book in the field of inscribed bronze vessels. See Shaughnessy (1992).

[10] For examples of the sequences *sifang*, *situ* or *fang* in the oracle-bones in the reign of Wuding 武丁, see Chen Mengjia (1956). Wheatley translates these expressions as "four quarters", and this is the translation which I adopt in my discussion. See Wheatley (1971); Wang Aihe 王愛和 (2000) 23; Wang Aihe (2001) 114.

[11] For the frequent movement of the Shang capital before King Pan Geng, see Chen Mengjia (1956) 249-252; For Chang Kuang Chi's famous theory, see Chang (1990).

[12] Scholars believe that the cult of *di* is closely related to the worship of the Shang ancestral spirits. See Hsu and Linduff (1988) 101. For the rite of ancestor worship and Shang state religion, see Eno (2009) 54-102. For an archaeological account of the core area of Shang, see Chang (1980) 69-73. Whether the *di* was originally regarded as the highest god and later transformed into the representative of Shang ancestral spirits, or

the core area lay multiple subordinate states scattered across the central plain surrounding the Shang royal domain. All of these states, to a greater or lesser extent, stood in a dependent relationship to the Shang; some of them were even only very loosely under the control of the Shang state.[13] The Shang king bolstered his power by means of frequent travels, hunting trips and military campaigns. The territories of these political entities which were connected to the Shang royal house were referred to in the inscriptions on the oracle bones as *sifang* 四方 or *situ* 四土. In later political contexts *fang* means "side", "border" or "quarter".[14] As will be revealed, such a conception of a square world consisting of a centre and four cardinal directions played a significant role in shaping the spatial conception of the subsequent Chinese dynasties.

2.2. Sifang *and* zhongguo*: worldviews in the Western Zhou period*

After the battle of Muye 牧野 in 1046 BC, the Zhou, a subordinate state located on the western periphery of the Shang world in the Wei River Valley, annexed large parts of the Shang land and established a new regime in c. 1045 BC.[15] Although the extent to which the geographical and cosmological views of the Western Zhou people were influenced by the former Shang dynasty is unknown, the character *sifang* 四方, which appears on many inscribed bronze objects belonging to this period, clearly illustrates the link between the two dynasties in terms of cosmological views.[16] For example, the inscription on the bronze sacrificial vessel named the Da Yu Ding 大盂鼎, which can be dated to the reign of King Kang 康王 (r. 1005/3-978 BC) of the early Western Zhou period, contains the phrase "extending to the *sifang*" (*puyou sifang* 甫有四方).[17]

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vice-versa, is a matter of dispute in scholarship, see Shima Kunio 島邦男 (2006); Chen Mengjia (1958) 561-582; Hu Houxuan (1959) 23-50; 89-110; Wang Aihe (2001) 116; Itō Michiharu 伊藤道治 trans. Jiang Lansheng 江藍生 (2002) 3-38.

[13] Keightley (1983) 552.

[14] Keightley (2000) 66. In addition to the fact that the *fang* is related to directions in many oracle-bone inscriptions, the Shang people were in the habit of linking the *fang* to a number of names referring to specific places, see Chen Mengjia (1956) 270-291.

[15] The precise date of the Zhou conquest of Shang is far from certain. Shaughnessy suggests that the Zhou dynasty began in 1045 BC. See Shaughnessy (1991) 217-236; Wang Aihe (2000) 57.

[16] For continuities in cosmological conceptions during the Shang and Zhou periods, see Keightley (1983) 121-129.

[17] *JC* 2626. The Da Yu Ding records King Kang's appointment of a minister named Yu,

The term *sifang* also appears on the Lai Pan 逨盤, a inscribed bronze vessel dating from the late Western Zhou.[18] In the *Book of Songs* (*Shi jing* 詩經), containing the oldest surviving Chinese poetry, some of which was written during the early Western Zhou period, the expression *sifang* frequently appears in some early poems, generally carrying a meaning similar to that which can be observed in the inscription on the Da Yu Ding and some other contemporary bronze vessels.[19] It is impossible to verify whether this geographical concept existed in Zhou culture before the Zhou state became affiliated to Shang, or whether it was borrowed from the Shang people.[20] However, it is clear that, by the early Western Zhou period at the latest, the basic world view was based on the idea that there was a core area in which the royal domain was located and four quarters (*sifang*) occupying the peripheral zones.

Against this background, it does not come as a surprise that the emphasis on the *sifang* in early Chinese sources was closely related to various groups of characters, such as *zhong* 中(centre) or *zhongguo* 中國 (Central State(s)). For instance, a poem entitled *Minlao* 民劳 in the *Shi jing* contains the following passage:

> *Let us cherish the centre of the state* (zhongguo) *in order to secure the pacification of the four quarters* (sifang)…*Let us cherish the capital* (jingshi) *of the state in order to secure the pacification of the four quarters* (sifang).惠此中国，以绥四方……惠此京师，以绥四方。[21]

In this passage *sifang* refers to the vast territories beyond the core area of the

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and the latter cast a bronze vessel inside which King Kang's appointment and instructions were inscribed. As one of the most famous excavated bronze vessels of the Western Zhou, it has been thoroughly discussed since the late 19th century. For a recent study, see Li Xueqin 李學勤 (1985) 51-55.

[18] The texts containing the characters 四方 can be seen on some other bronze vessels such as the Ke Ding 克鼎, the Shihu Gui 師虎簋 and the Jinbang Gui 晉邦簋 cast during different periods of the Western Zhou dynasty. See Yu Shengwu 于省吾 (1935) 38-43.

[19] For some of the character *sifang* 四方 appearing in *Shijing*, see *Shijing* 270; 280; 315; 367; 373; 381; 387; 395; 397; 422; 418; 422; 433; 450; 454; 562; 465; 478; 480; 483; 506; 527; 533, see Gao Heng 高亨 (1980).

[20] For the relationship between the Zhou and the Shang, see Hsu and Linduff (1988) 41-59.

[21] *Shijing* 422. Mao Heng 毛亨, an exegete living in Han period, comments: "Zhongguo, the capital".

Zhou. The term *zhongguo* corresponds to *jingshi*, most likely signifying the new capital of Zhou, the city of Luoyi, mentioned above.

The term *zhongguo* also appears in the chapter *Zicai* 梓材 of the Shangshu:

> *Heaven gave our ancestors a mission to open up new fields [and] to govern the people at the centre of the state* (zhongguo). 皇天既付中國民，越闕疆土于先王。[22]

At the opening of the chapter, it has been said that some essays from the *Shangshu* can be dated back as far as to the time of Duke Shao in early Western Zhou times when the project for the construction of the city of Luoyi was just commencing. In the chapter *Zicai*, the term *zhongguo* is again used to refer to the city of Luoyi, the new capital located in the Luo River Valley.[23] An inscription on the bronze vessel He Zun 何尊 excavated near present-day Baoji 寶雞 (Shanxi province) in the early 1960s corroborates the argument. The value of the inscribed text lies not only in the fact that it confirms that the new capital of Luoyi was constructed in the fifth year of the reign of Duke Zhou, as stated in the *Shangshu* (cf. below); it is also the earliest record containing the characters *zhongguo* 中國 (central state), which is nowadays used to refer to the People's Republic of China. Consequently, the inscription in the He Zun has attracted special attention from scholars studying the origins of Chinese ethnicity and nationality.[24]

In a nutshell, it can be concluded that the Western Zhou people subscribed to a worldview in which the world consisted of a central area (sometimes referred to as the *zhongguo*) which was surrounded by territories vaguely designated the *sifang*. However, the paucity of early Chinese texts makes it difficult to achieve a clear understanding of the relationships between the two

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[22] *Shang shu* 14,13. 387. *Shang shu Zhengyi* Vol. 2, 458.

[23] Wang Aihe (2000) 65. A whole chapter is addressed to cosmological views in Shang and Zhou China in Wang's monograph. See Chapter 2, 23-74.

[24] For instance, Ge Zhaoguang's recent book on Chinese identity in Chinese intellectual history, *Zhai Zi Zhongguo* 宅茲中國, quotes the famous phrase from the inscription of the He Zun, which is translated as *I built my home in the zhongguo* 余其宅茲中國. For an interpretation of the full inscription, see Tang Lan 唐蘭 (1976) 60-61. The text of the He Zun has been translated into English by Shaughnessy, see Shaughnessy (1997) 77. Ge notes that the term *zhongguo* carries different meanings in different periods of Chinese history. In the inscription of the He Zun, *zhongguo* denotes the city of Luoyi. See Ge Zhaoguang 葛兆光 (2011) 3 of Preface.

components.

Pertinently, such a perception of the world was not merely a symbolic exercise in the ideological realm. It was also connected to the territorial expansion which had taken place in the early Western Zhou period. In the first two hundred years following its conquest of Shang, the Western Zhou went through a process of large-scale territorial absorption. In particular during the reigns of King Cheng 成王 (d. 1021 BC) and King Kang 康王 (d. 996 BC), the power of the Zhou reached its zenith.[25] By their time the lands under the control of Zhou had been substantially increased since the time of King Wu. Its eastern boundary was now formed by the East Sea; its southern regions extended as far as the Han River Basin 漢江盆地 and the Nanyang Plain 南陽平原; its northern frontier followed the course of the Ordos 鄂爾多斯 in modern Inner Mongolia; and its western boundary lay beyond the eastern Liupan Mountains 六盤山. Therefore the Zhou territories consisted of the Luo River Valley (modern Henan and southern Shanxi province), which was the core area, and of the vast tracts of lands stretching outwards in the four directions.

It is well known that the most distinctive feature of the political institution of the Western Zhou was its feudal system.[26] From roughly the time of Duke Zhou and thereafter, the Zhou kings established multiple vassal states among them Yan 燕, Qi 齊 and Lu 魯 throughout the alluvial plain in the Yellow River Valley. The nobles of Zhou and old Shang, who initially had been granted the newly conquered land by the Zhou kings, were endowed with the power to rule the indigenous peoples, although they were all to some extent supervised by the royal house of Zhou.[27] Many of the vassal states located on the fringes of the Western Zhou realm were surrounded by "barbarian peoples", the Man 蠻, the Yi 夷, the Rong 戎 and the Di 狄 referred to in later texts. Why were so many vassal states located in remote places far from the core area of Zhou? One possible answer is that these vassal states were

[25] On territorial expansion in the period of the early Zhou, see Li Feng (2006) 1-27.

[26] For a discussion of Zhou feudalism, see Hsu and Linduff (1988) 177-85. Li Feng, however, opposes the use of the term "feudalism" in the context of Western Zhou political history. Instead, he suggests that the political system of the Western Zhou state was a kind of "delegatory kin-ordered settlement State". For details, see Li Feng (2010) 269-302. For the relationship between the local sub-states and the central government of Zhou, see *ibid*, 254-267.

[27] For the bureaucratic apparatus of the Western Zhou, see Li Feng's English monograph, Li Feng (2008).

supposed to act as watchdogs, protecting the Zhou people from the threat of rebellion by local populations and from barbarian invasions.[28] If this view is accepted, the outlying territories occupied an important place in the Zhou worldview. It also follows that, at least during the early and mid-Western Zhou dynasty, the Zhou people did not have well-defined boundaries.

A passage contained both in Chapter *Kanggao* 康誥 and Chapter *Zicai* 梓材 of the *Shang shu* sheds some light on the place occupied by the barbarians dwelling on the borders of the Zhou realm in Zhou world views:

> *Duke Zhou commenced the construction of the new great city at Luo in the eastern land. People from the four quarters flocked to the assembly, including those who dwell in* hou, dian, nanbang, cai, wei, *as well as hundreds of craftsmen and peoples living on the frontiers* (bomin).
> 周公初基作大邑于东國洛，四方民大和會，侯、甸、男邦、采、衛，百工播民，和見士于周。[29]

Most scholars agree that this passage was written in the early Western Zhou period. In it *hou* and *dian* are the two zones closest to the centre, similar to the picture to be found in the *Yugong*. The term *bomin* almost certainly refers to such barbarian peoples as the Man, the Yi, the Rong and the Di living on the periphery of the Zhou world. These peoples were invited by Duke Zhou to attend the inauguration ceremony which took place in Luoyi. The author of the *Zuozhuan* 左传 (Commentary of Zuo),[30] a historical work completed between the late fifth and fourth centuries BC, mentions that during the reign of King Mu 穆王 (r. 956-918 BC) a significant military campaign was waged against the Quanrong 犬戎, a barbarian tribe living in the northeastern regions of the Wei River Valley. Thereafter, the Quanrong never seem to have made an appearance the Western Zhou royal court again. These indications suggest that, even before the mid-Western Zhou period, the barbarian peoples living on the fringes of the Zhou borders occupied a place in Zhou worldviews.

The kings of the early Zhou period authorized various Zhou nobles to establish vassal states in the far-off lands. As far as the Zhou state was

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[28] Li Feng (2008) 113.
[29] *Shang shu* 14,11. 358.
[30] The *Zuozhuan* is now regarded as a compilation of several authors rather than a work completed by a single writer. Sima Qian credits Zuo Qiuming 左丘明 as the compiler of the works. See *Shiji* 130, 3300.

concerned, this was actually a convenient method of achieving territorial expansion and establishing regular communication with the east. In some literary sources of the Zhou period, those dwelling in the remote lands are referred to as the *yuanmin* 遠民, "the distant people". Some were descendants of the Shang, but the rest belonged to various ethnic groups. In the inscribed bronzes of the Zhou period they are designated by such names as Xianyun 玁狁, Rong 戎 or Huaiyi 淮夷.[31] However, it should be emphasized that the relationships between the Zhou king and royal court and various groups living on the periphery of the Zhou realm frequently alternated from friendly to hostile or vice-versa. Therefore it is impossible to draw a clear line between the lands inhabited by the Zhou people and the non-Zhou barbarians.

2.3. Changes in world views during the Spring and Autumn and Warring States periods

After the collapse of Western Zhou power during the eighth century BC, King Ping 平王 (r. 770-720 BC) moved the old capital from Hao 鎬 to Luoyi in the Luo River Valley, an event marking the beginning of a new era, the Eastern Zhou (771-255 BC). During the next five hundred years Chinese worldviews changed significantly.[32]

In various written sources compiled during the Eastern Zhou, the expression "the central state" (*zhongguo*) no longer referred specifically to the city of Luoyi, but more frequently connoted the Central Plain (*zhongyuan* 中原) of the Yellow River Valley, a huge landmass encompassing modern Henan, northern Jiangsu and Anhui, western Shandong and a small part of Hubei. As time went by the power and authority of the Zhou king and Zhou royal house declined. Luoyi lost much of its earlier prominence, and a number of feudal states in the Eastern Zhou royal domain was rising to power.

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[31] Scholars suggest that the Xianyun 玁狁 recorded in the Western Zhou inscriptions are to be identified with the Quanrong 犬戎, mentioned in the literary sources compiled in the Eastern Zhou period. For the names and origins of these barbarian peoples in the Western Zhou, see Wang Guowei 王國維 (1959) 583-605.

[32] The homeland of the Zhou people in the Wei River Valley had been occupied by the barbarian tribe of the Western Rong *(Xi Rong* 西戎) by the mid-eighth century BC. This was the most immediate cause of King Ping's decision to move eastwards. However, recent research has revealed that many royal activities had been taking place in the capital city of Chengzhou 成周 (Luoyi) since the early Western Zhou period. See Hsu and Linduff (1988) 264-265.

A number of dukedoms originally founded by relatives or associates of the Zhou king, such as Zheng 鄭, Qi 齊, Jin 晉, Lu 魯 and Qin 秦 had grown into powerful states from the late seventh and early sixth century BC. Subsequently, the non-Zhou states in the south, like Chu 楚 in the Han River Valley and Wu 吳 and Yue 越 in the Yangzi Delta also gained prominence during the early Eastern Zhou period, more commonly known as the *Chunqiu* (Spring and Autumn) period.[33] From approximately this period onwards, a number of states in the Central Plain began to trace their cultures back to a common ethnic and cultural identity, the culture of *huaxia* 華夏. This increase in cultural and ethnic homogeneity ran parallel to a process in which barbarian tribes were either absorbed into the newly created world order or excluded from it.[34] In part as a result of this growth in cultural self-consciousness, the concept of *tianxia* was increasingly used to denote a more or less "closed" entity whose boundaries were determined by culture, ethnicity and geography.[35]

Scholars have long observed the fundamental impact of changes in ecology and landscape of northern China on the formation of the two cultural zones in the first half of the last millennium BC.[36] As historical meteorologists and anthropologists have noted, the late Neolithic period (c. 2000-1000 BC) witnessed the emergence of drier and colder climatic conditions along the line of the northern Yellow River – Qin Mountains 黃河–秦嶺, especially in the area of the present-day Ordos 鄂爾多斯 and Baotou 包頭 in Inner Mongolia. This trend peaked around 1000 BC. As a result, in the vast areas ranging from

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[33] For the eclipse of the Western Zhou royal house and the rise of the neighbouring vassal states, see Hsu (1999) 547-51; Li Feng (2006) 91-140.

[34] For the locations of the Zhou people and the non-Zhou in the Western Zhou and Spring and Autumn period, see Shi Nianhai 史念海 (1990) Vol. 2, 57-84.

[35] The rise of the identity of *huaxia* can be attributed to the long-term historical evolution of the amalgamation between the Zhou people and their neighbours. See Paulleyblank (1983) 411-66; Hsu (1999) 550. Nowadays *huaxia* is often used as an equivalent of "Chinese", but strictly speaking this is a misuse of the term.

[36] See Chu Coching 竺可楨 (1972) 17. From the perspective of anthropology and archaeology, Wang Mingke 王明珂 believes that the pastoral boundary in northern China was formed between 2000 BC and 1000 BC as a result of climate change. See Wang Mingke (2008) 97-99. In an influential publication Wang examined the formation of the ecosystems in the areas of modern Qinghai, Ordos and the West Liao River from c. 2000 BC to 600 BC; see Wang Mingke (1997), 95-151. In his classic book, Di Cosmo has also examined the transition to pastoral nomadism in the northern zone of China during the Western Zhou and the Spring and Autumn period; see Di Cosmo (1999) 909-951.

Hetao 河套 located to the south of the Yin Mountains 陰山 to the state of Yan and even to the north of the Liaodong Peninsula 遼東半島, at the end of the seventh and sixth century BC the mixed economic model combining agriculture and animal husbandry was gradually replaced by a type of nomadic economy.[37]

Correspondingly, the barbarians who lived to the north of the Yellow River gradually developed their distinctive culture and customs. One outcome of this natural change was the formation of new ethnic peoples in the Eastern Zhou period. The Hu (later known as the Xiongnu 匈奴), for instance, were a confederation of nomadic tribes which arose in the last decades of the third century BC, when they began to pose a threat to the Qin and Han Empires. I shall discuss their development in a later chapter. Another phenomenon of this period was the gradual migration of a number of peoples who had lived on the periphery of the Zhou areas into the central regions. These peoples were progressively integrated into the mainstream *huaxia* culture. In the meantime, those tribes which remained in and beyond the Hexi Corridor 河西走廊 and on the Inner Mongolian Plateau were becoming nomadized.

Consequently, by the sixth century BC at the very latest two features can be observed. First, more frequently than before, those rulers who had established their states in the early Western Zhou period and were connected with the Zhou clans, like the leaders of the states of Qi, Lu and Jin, began to trace their origins to the Western Zhou culture. Both culturally and psychologically, they self-consciously distanced themselves from the non-Zhou states, including the barbarian tribes on the northern and western frontiers and those in and beyond the Yangzi River Valley. Abundant evidence in the documents created in the pre-Qin period reveals the cultural and ethnic discrimination towards such non-Zhou peoples as the Man 蠻 and the Yi 夷.[38] In the next three centuries, in order to seize hegemonic power (*ba*) 霸 over the Central Plain, the principal states of Qi 齊 in the east, Jin 晉 in the north and Chu 楚 in the south as well as Wu 吳 and Yue 越 in the Yangzi River Delta struggled fiercely for power using the slogan "venerate the Zhou king, expel the barbarians" (*Zun wang rang yi* 尊王攘夷).[39] Interestingly, although in the Spring and Autumn period some states were situated in the remote areas of the Zhou

[37] Wang Mingke (2008) 65.

[38] For some instances in Chinese classical texts, see Luo Zhitian 羅志田 (1996) 215.

[39] On the formation of the *Ba* system, see Hsu (1999) 551-562.

realm, intersecting with various ethnic tribes, they consciously reinforced their "Chinese-ness", considering Zhou rituals and institutions as models which had to be followed.

The case of the vassal state of Qi bears witness to the vast distances across which these Zhou models were thought relevant. Although the first ruler of Qi, Jiang Shang 姜尚, was not a member of the Ji 姬 clan, the Jiang 姜 clan had established a marriage alliance with the Zhou rulers when Zhou was still a humble state in the Wei River Valley. As a general and the right-hand man of King Wu, Jiang Shang had made important contributions to the Zhou campaigns against Shang. Accordingly, Qi occupied a prominent position among the vassals of the Western Zhou. In the Spring and Autumn period, Duke Huan of Qi 齊桓公 (r. 685-643 BC) appointed Guan Zhong 管仲 prime minister. The latter embarked on a series of reforms and finally made Qi the most powerful state of the early Eastern Zhou period.[40] Pertinently, it should be noted that, geographically, Qi was not at the centre of the Zhou world but part of the eastern lands bordering the sea. Like other states affiliated with Zhou, the Qi people were surrounded by various barbarian tribes, the most formidable of which was the Dong Yi 東夷. From roughly the early Western Zhou period onwards, Qi frequently suffered disturbances from incursions by neighbouring barbarian tribes like the Yi, Rong and Di. Furthermore, during the reign of King Yi 夷王 (r. 899/7-873 BC), the king launched a military campaign against Duke Ai 齊哀公 (d. 863 BC) in retaliation for the latter's noncompliance. Despite these difficulties, Qi was able to maintain a prominent place among the vassal states until the late Warring States period.

The influence exercised on the state of Qi by Zhou culture is reflected by a famous saying of Confucius (551-479 BC):

> *Had it not been for Guan Zhong, we might well be wearing long hair and folding our robes to the left!* 微管仲，吾其被髮左衽矣！[41]

Confucius' words imply that the differentiation between the *xia* 夏 or *hua* 華 (Chinese-ness as selfness) and *yi* 夷 (barbarianism as otherness) did not depend on the geographical distance between vassal states and the Zhou royal court,

[40] On the hegemony of the state of Qin over the Central Plain in the reign of Duke Huan, see Tong Shuye 童書業 (2003) 155-174. For Guan Zhong, see Rosen (1976).
[41] *Lun yu* (*Xian wen*) 14,17. 157.

but on the degree of the affinity with the Zhou tradition in ritual and customs. After the collapse of Zhou rule, the transmission of the Zhou legacy was thought to be a key component in reconstructing the ethnical and cultural identities.

One of the effects of the emergence of a relatively homogenous Chinese culture based on Zhou models was a transformation of the idea of *tianxia*, which was now invested with new connotations. Two cases quoted from *Zuo Zhuan*, the most important document on the history of the Lu state compiled in the Warring States period, illustrate this phenomenon:

> *Even ruling the world mildly*, (*the Zhou*) *was still worried about invasions by the outsiders*.[42] 其懷柔天下也，猶懼有外侮。
>
> *Humanizing the central states* (zhongguo) *by means of virtue*, *while intimidating barbarians in the four quarters* (siyi) *by means of punishment*.[43] 德以柔中國，刑以威四夷。

In the first passage, Fu Chen 富辰, a minister of King Xiang (d. 619), is persuading the Zhou king to treat the vassal states, Hua 滑, Wei 衛 and Zheng 鄭 fairly. He does so by pointing out that, even in the period of Western Zhou, when the Zhou house was powerful and capable of ruling the world (*tianxia*) mildly, the Zhou was still anxious about external attacks (*waifu*). Fu's words sit uneasily with the Zhou view that lands inhabited by "outsiders" were part of the "Zhou world". Nevertheless, it should be borne in mind that the dialogue between Fu Chen and King Xiang took place in the late seventh century, when Zhou power had been declining for a long time. In the meantime, the barbarians on the periphery of the former Zhou realm and multiple vassal sates had risen to prominence. The worldview during this very period was undergoing a crucial transformation in which the original concept of *tianxia*, which was based on the model of a "centre and four quarters", was finally displaced by a two-tier cosmic system based on the ideas of "inside" (*nei*) and "outside" (*wai*). The geographical meaning of *zhongguo* now increasingly became synonymous with *tianxia*, while the land of barbarians was conceptualized in opposition to it.

In the second statement, *siyi* (barbarians living in the four quarters) is used

[42] *Zuo zhuan* (Xi 24) 425.
[43] *Zuo zhuan* (Xi 25) 436.

in opposition to *zhongguo* (the people in the central states), indicating that a distinction between the two ethnic groups had been drawn.[44] Literary texts show that Chinese identity was beginning to be consolidated as an articulation of the concept of *zhongguo*. The transformation of the concept of *tianxia* should be seen as a closely related development.[45]

Down to the Warring States period, various vassal states of Zhou had been obliterated as a result of perennial and intensive warfare. Finally, by the early and mid-fourth century BC seven major states, Yan 燕, Qi 齊, Zhao 趙, Wei 魏, Han 韓, Qin 秦 and Chu 楚, dominated the landscape of Chinese politics. A detailed analysis of the key factors and events leading to the formation of the first unified Chinese Empire between the fourth and late third centuries BC is beyond the scope of this chapter. Nevertheless, two developments which occurred during this period are directly relevant to the issues being discussed here.

The first of these is that, by the late third century BC, those non-Zhou barbarian tribes such as the Rong, Di and Yi which used to live on the northern periphery of the old Zhou had either had been forced to move to areas far from the Chinese states in the Central Plain, or had migrated to the central areas and been incorporated into the newly shaped *huaxia* civilization.

Secondly, by the late Warring States period, the geographical boundaries of China, defined here as comprising all those areas in which *huaxia* civilization had taken root, had expanded far beyond the drainage basin of the Yellow River. The state of Chu provides a good illustration. Chu was initially established by the non-Zhou people of the central Yangzi valley.[46] Even in the early Western Zhou period, Chu had risen to prominence on account of its far-flung territory and large population, which allowed it to act as a counterweight to the power of the Zhou and its vassals.[47] After the conquest of Yue in 334

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[44] Here *zhongguo* should be understood as an ethnic concept rather than geographical one.

[45] A great deal of attention has been paid to the subject of the mutual transitions between the *xia* 夏 and the *yi* 夷 in the Spring and Autumn and Warring States periods. For some examples, see Luo Zhitian (1996) 213-224; Guo Wei 郭玮 (2004); Li Feng (2006) 285; Di Cosmo (2004) 93-94; Mittag and Mutschler (2010) 524.

[46] For discussions on the culture of Chu and its acculturation with the states in the Central Plain during the Warring States period, see a series of papers edited by Lawton (1991).

[47] For the geography of Chu and its relationship with Western Zhou and its vassal states, see Blakeley (1999) 9-20.

BC, the Chu gained control over the entire middle and lower Yangzi River region. As a result of frequent interactions with other major states in the Central Plain over the course of several centuries, by the mid-fourth century at the latest in a cultural sense the Chu had come to resemble the old Zhou states.[48]

Another example is the state of Qin. As it was situated in the Wei River Valley, Qin had been closely associated with various barbarian tribes and alien cultures since the Western Zhou dynasty. For a long while Qin had been a second-rank state among Zhou's satellites. Nonetheless, archaeological evidence shows that the Qin nobles shared a common culture with their counterparts in other states of the Central Plain.[49] After the Shang Yang reforms 商鞅變法 in the mid-fourth century BC, Qin rose to become the leading state.[50] For the purposes of the present investigation, the most important point is that, while Qin undoubtedly distanced itself from the other vassal states of Zhou, it never considered itself to be culturally more closely associated with the barbarians than with other Zhou vassal states in the Central Plain.[51] Qin undoubtedly saw itself as a part of the *tianxia* order rather than as an outsider to that system.[52]

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[48] Major (1999) 168; This is, of course, not to deny the distinctiveness of the Chu culture from that of the states in the northern part of the Central Plain. For the distinctive culture of Chu and its diversity and complexity, see several articles collected in Cook (1999). But, as Pines points out, "during the Warring States period, the centrifugal tendencies were counterbalanced by forces of renewed cultural integration, promulgated by members of the educated elite"; see Pines (2012) 187 n.12.

[49] Lewis (2007) 39.

[50] For the reforms in and territorial expansion of Qin in the Warring States period, see Lewis (1999) 596. For the history of Qin prior to unification, see the monograph of Wang Quchang 王蘧常(2000). For an excellent recent overview of Qin history from its early origins to the eve of unification, see Pines with Von Falkenhausen, Shelach and Yates (2013) 11-32.

[51] As Pines observes in a recent article, "For generations Western scholarship was plagued by the erroneous view, perpetuated among others by Bodde, which, following a series of pejorative remarks about Qin in the Warring States and Han literature, in particular in the Historical Records Qin is identified as a "semi-barbarian" polity, a cultural outsider from the margins of the Zhou civilization. Archaeologists — most notably Lothar von Falkenhausen — were among the first to question this misperception." See Pines (2014) 446-447. Kern's book on the stele inscriptions of Qin Shi Huang is an impressive book reinforcing our understanding of the close affinity of the Qin ruling elite with Zhou culture.

[52] I do not agree with Yuri Pines who boldly stated that, since the mid-fourth century BC after Shang Yang's reforms, Qin was 'definitely beyond *tianxia* boundaries'. See Pines (2002) 110.

On the basis of the evidence, the conclusion is that, by the middle and late Warring States period, *tianxia* more frequently was used to refer to the huge landmass made up of the combined territories of the seven major states. Two passages quoted from the *Zhanguo ce* 戰國策 (Schemes/Strategies of the Warring States) clearly show that such an idea was very common among the elite members in this period:

> *In ancient times, there were tens of thousands of states within the four seas. Although the size of some cities was big, none was bigger than 300* zhang. *Although the population of some cities was large, there was none larger than 3,000* hu… *The tens of thousands of states in ancient times have nowadays been reduced to the seven major states.* 且古者四海之內，分為萬國。城雖大，無過三百丈者。人雖眾，無過三千家者……今古之為萬國者，分為戰國七。[53]

Although the term *tianxia* does not appear in this text, in which it is replaced by *sihai,* the message is clearly that the territory within the *sihai* (in other words, the *tianxia*) which had contained tens of thousands of states in remote antiquity, had now fallen under the control of only seven major states.

In another passage, Su Dai 蘇代, a statesman and rhetorician living in the middle of the Warring States period, gives the following comment on the relative importance of the state of Yan among the states of the Warring States period:

> *In the tianxia which consists of the seven states*, *Yan is one of the weaker.* 凡天下之戰國七，而燕處弱焉。[54]

On the basis of the foregoing discussion, it is possible to conclude that the period between the late Shang era and the foundation of the first unified empire witnessed some important transformations in worldviews.

In the late Shang period, the early Chinese worldview conceptualized the world as consisting of a "centre" and "four quarters". In the Zhou period, a very similar cosmic ideology still prevailed according to which the world consisted of a central capital (*zhongguo*) and four quarters (*sifang*), which had almost certainly been formulated under the influence of Shang models.

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[53] *Zhanguo ce* 20 (*Zhao* 3,1) 678. 1 *zhang* = 10 *chi* = 2.32 metres.
[54] *Zhanguo ce* 29 (*Yan* 1,8) 1056.

Interestingly, the term *tianxia* rarely appears in early Chinese political discourse until the fall of Zhou in the mid-seventh century.

As a result of the decline of Zhou power in the eighth century BC, the Zhou capital of Luoyi gradually lost its role as the centre of the Zhou world. Probably as a result of its diminution in power, the concept of *zhongguo* acquired a broader connotation, developing as a term for the Chinese world and tending to become coterminous with *tianxia*.

When a recognizably Chinese identity began to develop from about the sixth century BC, it continued to bear the imprint of Zhou tradition. From about this time, the Chinese worldview began to be heavily influenced by layers of cultural and religious self-consciousness. The distinction between the *hua* (roughly translated as Chinese-ness) and *yi* (barbarianism), which appeared between the seventh and the fifth century BC, introduced an important element of introversion and inclusiveness into Chinese worldviews.

From the middle of the Warring States period, two factors encouraged this development. First, the increasingly clear-cut separation between the agricultural and nomadic worlds in the north; and second, the emergence of an increasingly homogenous culture in which all of the seven major states participated.

The establishment of a unified Chinese Empire by the Qin king, Ying Zheng 嬴政, who became the First Emperor, created a new world order encompassing all those areas which participated in the emerging Chinese culture and identity. This political fact is reflected by the further development of the term *tianxia*, which now began to be used to refer to a "closed" geopolitical space consisting of the former territories of the seven states.

Although the literary evidence pointing to the emergence of this new worldview is quite strong, it would be wrong to conclude that the more open conception of the world which had existed in the Western Zhou period completely disappeared. In recent research into the development of spatial conceptions in early Chinese classical literature, a chapter preserved in the *Shang shu* named *Yugong* 禹貢 (Tribute of Yu), an eulogy attributed to the legendary sage ruler Great Yu 大禹, the founder of the Xia, has attracted particular attention. Unfortunately, this text cannot be securely dated. It is universally agreed that the *Yugong* cannot possibly have been written by its alleged author, but the dates of composition which have been proposed in the scholarly literature range from the last centuries of Zhou to the early imperial period. For the purposes of my argument it does not really matter which of these

proposals is more likely to be correct.[55]

According to traditional Chinese historiography, the Great Yu was known as a hero who successfully resolved the flooding problems which had plagued the Central Plain of the Chinese landmass for a long time. Allegedly, he spent thirteen years giving leadership to people in trying to cope with the floods, and finally overcame them by draining the land and channelling the rivers to the sea.[56] The *Shangshu* reports that the Great Yu divided the floodplain into nine parts, or nine provinces, named the *jiuzhou* 九州. This is the earliest administrative division based on geographical knowledge recorded in Chinese historical documents.[57] In the world system conceived by the Great Yu, the *jiuzhou* was closely linked to the *wufu* (five zones) 五服, five geographical cultural zones which are named *dian* 甸, *hou* 候, *sui* 綏, *yao* 要 and *huang* 荒 respectively.[58] The innermost zone was seen not only as the geographical centre, but also symbolized the highest level of civilization of the five. Conversely, the zone of *huang*, the outmost layer of the world order, was seen as the least civilized region in the world. Everything lying outside of the *huangfu* 荒服, the outmost layer of the system, was designated the *siji* 四极 (four ends), referring to the four outermost ends of the world.

It is noteworthy that in some pieces of classical Chinese literature the term *siji* is replaced by another term, *sihai* 四海 (four seas). In the book *The Explanation of Names* (*Shiming* 釋名), a Chinese lexicographical compilation attributed to Liu Xi 劉熙 and believed to date from c. AD 200, the *hai* is explained as being interchangeable with the similarly shaped character, but with a different radical, *hui* 晦, which means "too obscure to see clearly".[59] From this it might be inferred that the world order which is found in the *Yugong*, as argued

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[55] See Loewe (1993) 378.

[56] For the flood myths of early China and the tale of Great Yu, see Lewis (2006) 38-39.

[57] The names of the nine provinces are not only recorded in the *Yugong*, they appear in later literary sources among them *You shi lan* 有始覽 in *Lüshi Chunqiu* 呂氏春秋, *Zhi fang* 職方 in *Zhouli* 周禮 (*Zhou's Ritual*) and *Shidi* 釋地 in *Erya* 爾雅. Tang Xiaofeng 唐曉峰 suggests that in the later sources *jiuzhou* is not always related to the tale of the Great Yu. In the later period, it was generally used to refer to the vassal states of the Western Zhou. See Tang Xiaofeng (2010) 221-222.

[58] According to *Guangya* 廣雅, *huang* 荒 means "remote" or "far", see *Shigu* 釋詁, *Guang ya*.

[59] *Shiming* 釋名, Vol.1 *Shi shui* 釋水, 9. Li Ling 李零 (2000) 260. Tang Xiaofeng (2010) 132.

earlier, had a relative well-defined centre but unclear boundaries.

Whatever the exact date of composition of the *Yugong* might have been, its contents serve as a reminder that rather than ousting existing ideas about the world, the more closed worldview which emerged during the Spring and Warring States periods coexisted with older spatial conceptions.

3. The stele inscriptions of Qin Shi Huang

3.1 Background

According to the *Basic Annals of the First Emperor of Qin* in the *Shiji* 史記 (Records of the Grand Historian), Qin Shi Huang paid four visits to his newly conquered eastern regions between 219 and 210 BC.[60] During each of his tours, he visited venerated mountains located on the eastern edge of the empire and performed rituals, after each of which a series of inscribed stelae was set up to eulogize the virtues of Qin (*song Qin de* 颂秦德).[61] Although Sima Qian relates that eight stelae were set up during Qin Shi Huang's eastern tours, the texts of only six inscriptions are recorded in his account.[62] The text of a seventh inscription is known from a transcription made during the Tang dynasty. Linguistically, the seven surviving inscribed texts are characterized by certain uniform rhymes and formulae, but these aspects will not be discussed in this chapter.[63]

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[60] For the routes, see Wang Jingyang 王京陽 (1980) 70-76.

[61] For an introduction to Qin Shi Huang's progresses and his stele inscriptions, see Kern (2000) 1-9. For the texts of the stele inscriptions of Qin Shi Huang, see *Shiji* 6, 243-267; Kern (2000) 10-49. For a commentary on the inscriptions, see Rong Geng (1935) 125-171.

[62] The inscription of Mt Yi 嶧山 was composed when Qin Shi Huang made his first tour in 219 BC but the text was not included in the *Shiji*. However, its contents have been preserved in a transcript which was made during the Tang 唐 dynasty (AD 618–907). The copy of the Mt Yi inscription is now in the Museum of the Forest of Stelae of Shanxi Province. The only missing text is the inscription of Zhifu 之罘, created after the First Emperor's visit to Mount Zhifu in the same year. Most scholars do not doubt the authenticity of these inscriptions; see Kern (2000) 3.

[63] Scholars believe the author of the inscriptions to have been Li Si 李斯, Chancellor to the First Emperor. Liu Xie 劉勰 (467–522) and Li Daoyuan 酈道元 (c. 470 – 527), two writers who lived in the period of Nanbei Dynasty 南北朝, state that both the calligraphy and the content were derived from Li Si; see Liu Xie, *Wenxin diaolong* 文心雕龍, 21,803; Li Daoyuan, *Shuijing zhu* 水經注, 4,130; 25,810; 40,1256. Some have

The texts of Mt Langxie (琅邪) and Mt Kuaiji (会稽) contain 288 characters each, making them twice as long as the other inscriptions.[64] Despite these differences, all of the seven inscriptions have the same basic structure.[65] For the purpose of the present analysis, they can be divided into three parts. The first part provides background information which sets the scene for the following narrative. In part two, the inscription provides an eulogy of the grand achievements of Qin Shi Huang. In most cases the topics covered in this section include criticism of the cruelty and violence of the six former kings and praise for the pacification and unification achieved by the First Emperor. The last part can be regarded as a kind of summary. It normally consists of only two or three lines, closing the panegyric by emphasizing the lofty aim of the erection of the inscribed stelae, which are stated to have been set up in order to publicize the principles of imperial rule and to glorify and transmit the accomplishments of the First Emperor to later generations forever.[66]

Since Martin Kern has made a close and systematic analysis of the structure of the text, there is no need for a detailed re-examination of this topic.[67] For this reason I shall immediately focus on those issues which are directly related to my own investigations. The two central questions which will occupy us are: What kind of worldview is found in Qin Shi Huang's stele inscriptions, and in what way or ways does this worldview differ from those of the pre-imperial period? In the first half of this chapter, I discussed changes in Chinese worldviews over a long period of time, tracing their transformation between the late Shang and the Eastern Zhou periods. Building on earlier findings, I shall now proceed to examine the inscribed stelae set up by Qin Shi Huang with the aim of shedding some light on the next stage of development.

3.2. Tianxia *in the stelae*

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expressed doubts about the authorship of these inscriptions. Chen Zhiliang 陳志良, for example, thinks the texts were composed by Zhao Gao 趙高, a eunuch and later chancellor of Qin. Since both Li Si and Zhao Gao were closely connected to Qin Shi Huang, the problem of authorship has little relevance to my examination of the worldviews of the ruling class in the Early Imperial China.

[64] Some lines of the Jieshi Gate inscription（碣石門）are thought to be missing.

[65] As pointed out by Kern (2008) 217-240.

[66] This formula is clearly presented in the inscriptions of Mt Yi; Mt Tai; Mt Zhifu; Mt Jieshi Gate and Mt Kuaiji.

[67] Chapter 4 in Kern (2000), 119-147.

In the seven inscriptions, *tianxia*, one of the terms most frequently used in the text, occurs nine times altogether. The complete lists is as follows:

i) *Now the August Thearch/ Has unified the* tianxia *under one lineage/ Warfare will not occur again!* 迺今皇帝，壹家天下，兵不復起！[68]

ii) *In his twenty-sixth year/ He first unified the* tianxia*/ There was none who was not respectful and submissive.* 廿有六年，初並天下，罔不賓服。[69]

iii) *The August Thearch embodies sagacity/ And after having pacified the* tianxia*/ he has fulfilled his duties as a ruler.* 皇帝躬聖，既平天下，不懈于治。[70]

iv) *Everywhere in the* tianxia*/ He unifies the minds and integrates the wills.* 普天之下，摶心輯志。[71]

v) *He universally promulgates sagacious laws/ Gives warp and woof to the* tianxia*/ Forever to serve as ritual norm and guideline.* 普施明法，經緯天下，永為儀則。[72]

vi) *He seized and extinguished the six kings/ Far and wide the* tianxia *was unified/ Disaster and harm were cut off and stopped/ Forever halted were clashes of arms.* 禽滅六王，闡並天下，災害絕息，永偃戎兵。[73]

vii) *The numerous multitudes are free of corvée/ And the* tianxia *is pacified.* 黎庶无繇，天下咸抚。[74]

viii) *In his thirty-seventh year/ He tours the* tianxia *in person/ And all around surveys the distant regions.* 卅有七年，親巡天下。[75]

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[68] Inscription of Mt Yi, 28-29. The translations given here and below are slightly adapted versions of those of Kern.
[69] Inscription of Mt Tai, 4-6.
[70] Inscription of Mt Tai, 19-21.
[71] Inscription of Mt Langxie, 17-18.
[72] Inscription of Mt Zhifu, 28-30.
[73] Inscription of Mt Zhifu Dong-guan, 16-18.
[74] Inscription of the Jieshi Gate, 27-28.
[75] Inscription of Mt Kuaiji, 4-6.

ix) *He took great pains to cleanse/purify customs, and the entire* tianxia *receives the influence/is affected by this/ [All] is covered and clothed by the superb guidelines.* 大治濯俗，天下承風，蒙被休經。[76]

In each of these nine passages, *tianxia* seems to refer to a relatively closed geo-political entity. In the first text, *tianxia* refers to the unified land made up of the formerly fragmented territories of the multiple states which had existed before unification. The emphasis is on the fact that the First Emperor, for the first time, had unified the world under his own lineage. In the future warfare would be a thing of the past, disasters would no longer occur and people would henceforth live in peace and tranquility.[77] The use of the phrase "has unified the *tianxia* under one lineage" (*yi jia tianxia* 壹家天下) merits attention. In this instance, the character *jia* (家 house, lineage) symbolizes the House of Qin.[78] It indicates that the territories of the former seven states constituting the *tianxia* have now been brought together in a cohesive imperium under Qin Shi Huang and his clan.[79]

The theme of unification, implying the earlier existence of a fragmented world, is also found in the inscriptions of Mt Tai (nos. ii and iii) and Mt Zhifu Dong-guan (no. vi). In the latter inscription the perspective shifts from territorial unification to the unification of minds and wills.

In the inscription of Mt Langxie (no. iv), the author eulogizes the accomplishments of the First Emperor by referring to his famous unification of the written script, weights and measures, coinage and so on. These measures can be seen as making a contribution to the unification of "minds and wills"

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[76] Inscription of Mt Kuaiji, 58-9.

[77] In lines 19-27, the author briefly recalls history, stating that there had been conflicts and wars since remote antiquity. By calling attention to the chaos and turmoil of the past, the author underlines the formidable achievement of the First Emperor who had stopped warfare and unified the world.

[78] For the complicated relationship between *guo* 國 (state) and *jia* 家 (house) in ancient Chinese society, see the monograph by Ogata Isamu 尾形勇, trans. Zhang Hequan 張鶴泉 (1993). The author examines the origin of *jia* and its relationship to the royal houses and dynasties since the Zhou period. He acutely points out that the relationship between the state and house in kingship was based on the loyalty of ministers to their political leaders. In our text, on the term *yi-jia* 壹家, *yi* means "one", *jia* refers to "house". The phrase denotes that Qin Shi Huang annihilated the six feudal states and unified them as single state under the authority of Qin, the new empire. For *jia* as a spatial unit in pre-Qin China, see Lewis's recent study (2006) 77-130.

[79] For the historical narrative of the annihilation of the six states, see *Shiji* 5, 231-235.

referred to in Text iv. The basic message is that, on all levels, an indivisible imperial domain had been forged.[80]

The layout of the Zhifu inscription (no. v) is similar to that of the Mt Yi text. The author first eulogizes the military feats and prowess of Qin Shi Huang who had obliterated the atrocious kings of the six states through punitive wars, bringing an end to centuries of chaos and turmoil. In the subsequent section, the author focuses on the laws promulgated by the First Emperor. Here, the metaphor of the warp 經 and woof 緯 is used to denote the politico-ethical principles institutionalized by the emperor.[81] The Emperor hopes these will be obeyed throughout the Empire and will be adopted as guidelines by later next generations.[82]

The stele inscription at the Gate of Jieshi, the present-day city of Qinhuangdao 秦皇島, Hebei province (no. vii), was erected in 215 BC, when the First Emperor visited the territory of the former state of Yan during his third eastern excursion. Several lines are missing at the beginning of the text, but the structure and subject of the inscription generally coincides with those of the other six. The text states that, after eliminating the six kings, the First Emperor ordered all city-walls of the old states to be demolished, opened the river embankments and removed dangerous obstacles. These attempts were just as pertinently aimed at building a unified empire in a real sense. Following this, the author narrates that multitudes of commoners (*lishu* 黎庶) are now free of corvée, and that the *tianxia* has been pacified and peace bestowed on it.[83] Therefore, *tianxia* is connected to *lishu*, designating the people affected by the administrative re-organization of Qin.

In 210 BC, Qin Shi Huang made his fourth and final tour through the eastern commanderies of his empire (no. viii). This time he travelled all the way to the territory of the old Yue state (present-day Zhejiang province). This

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[80] Inscription of Mt Langxie, 17-20. On these policies see *Shiji* 5, 239. In recent years, scholars have begun to doubt that the scale of Qin Shi Huang's reforms was as large as has been previously thought. For discussion, see Pines with Von Falkenhausen and Shelach and Yates (2013) 48.

[81] See *Zuo Zhuan* (Zhao 25) p.1197: The ritual is the discipline observed by both upper and lower classes in society, as warp and woof connecting Heaven and Earth, see also Kern (2000) 37.

[82] Inscription of Mt Zhifu, 30: "Forever to serve as ritual norm and guideline" (*yong wei yi ze* 永爲儀則)

[83] Inscription of Jieshi, 21-24.

region had been outside the old Zhou domain of earlier centuries, but had been incorporated within the First Emperor's new *tianxia* system.

The ninth passage refers to Qin Shi Huang's reforms in moral and social terms. In line 57, for example, the author claims that, under the sovereignty of the ruler, "all has been transformed to become honest and pure".[84] The entire population living within the boundaries of the political domain of Qin is said to have been affected by these reforms. Here as the other texts, the term *tianxia* cannot be interpreted as a reference to the entire world but only to those areas which had been conquered.[85]

The meanings of the term *tianxia* in the stelae inscriptions of Qin Shi Huang shed an interesting light on the relationship between the configuration of imperial power and imperial world views during the Qin period. Following the centuries of disunity and turmoil which had arisen after the decline of Zhou, for the first time the Chinese world was unified under a single monarchic sovereignty.

The First Emperor of Qin travelled continuously throughout the newly conquered territory for the purpose of consolidating imperial sovereignty and authority. During these journeys, sacrifices were performed on venerated mountains and on the banks of rivers to honour Heaven and various holy (ancestral) spirit beings in order to link the emperor to the divine world and immortality.[86] The act of erecting inscribed *stelae* on top of mountains was meant to contribute to achieving this purpose.

Therefore, the meanings of the term *tianxia* which are encountered in the inscriptions strongly reinforce the idea that the Chinese "world" had begun to be perceived as a relatively closed geopolitical entity, different in character from

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[84] Inscriptions of Mt Kuaiji, 57.

[85] Of the seven inscriptions, only the last one mentions some concrete reforms of customs and rituals. I would suggest that this text refers to the territory occupied by the old Yue in the Spring and Autumn period. For a long time, this area had been regarded as a region in which civilization stood at a lower level than in the states of the Central Plain. The First Emperor might have felt it more urgent to launch reforms in this region.

[86] It is believed that the spirits of the legendary sage kings, like the Yellow Emperor and the Immortals could be reached by ascending to the top of a number of venerated mountains. This is the main reason the First Emperor and some emperors in the later Han dynasty had to travel to the eastern edge the world, ascending mountain tops to perform sacrifices. For discussion, see Kern (2008) 256. I shall return to this topic in Chapter 6.

the unbounded and open worldview which was embraced by the Romans during the Late Republic and Early Principate.

3.3. Tianxia *in Sima Qian's biography of Qin Shi Huang*

A study of the meanings of the term *tianxia* in the *Basic Annals of the First Emperor* strengthens this conclusion. In this treatise, the expression *tianxia* occurs ninety-one times, often in passages containing such terms as *sihai* 四海, *hainei* 海内 and *junxian* 郡县, which belong to the same semantic field. These other terms help clarify the connotations of *tianxia* in the passages concerned. Some good examples are to be found in various passages from the *Basic Annals of Qin Shi Huang*:

> *Chancellor Wang Wan, Imperial Secretary Feng Jie and Commandant of Justice Li Si all replied: "…Now Your Majesty has raised troops to punish the evil and the remiss, brought peace to the tianxia, made the hainei (area within the seas) into junxian (provinces and counties) and ensured that laws and rulings shall proceed from a single authority. From highest antiquity to the present, such a thing has never occurred before, nor could the Five Emperors equal it…"* 丞相琯、御史大夫劫、廷尉斯等皆曰："……今陛下興義兵，誅殘賊，平定天下，海内為郡縣，法令由一統，自上古以來未嘗有，五帝所不及……"[87]
>
> *Thus the tianxia was divided into thirty-six jun (commanderies), and each commandery was provided with a governor, a military commandant and a censor. The common people were renamed the "black-headed ones".* 分天下為三十六郡，郡置守、衛、監。更名民曰"黔首"。[88]
>
> *Now the Emperor has unified the hainei (all within the sea), making it into juxian (commanderies and counties), and the bringing peace to the tianxia…* 今皇帝並一海内，以為郡縣，天下和平……[89]
>
> *Captain of the Archers Zhou Qingchen stepped forward and spoke these words of praise: "In former times Qin's territory did not exceed 1,000 li. But Your Majesty, through your spiritual power and enlightened sagacity, has pacified the hainei (all within the seas) and driven out the Man and Yi barbarians…* 周青臣進頌曰：

[87] *Shiji* 6, 239.
[88] *Ibid.*, 239.
[89] *Ibid.*, 247.

"他時秦地不過千里，賴陛下神靈明聖，平定海內，放逐蠻夷……"[90]

The Second Emperor plotted with Zhao Gao, saying: "I am still young and have just ascended the throne, and the black-headed people are not yet won over to me. The former emperor made tours through the commanderies and counties in order to display his might and cause the hainei (area within the seas) to be held in awe. Now, if I do not make a similar tour, they will regard me as weak and I shall have no way to make people living in the tianxia serve me as subjects!" 二世與趙高謀曰："朕年少，初即位，黔首未集附。先帝巡行郡縣，以示強，威服海內，今晏然不巡行，即見弱，毋以臣畜天下……"[91]

The Second Emperor said: "…The former emperor rose up from among the feudal lords to unite the tianxia. After the tianxia had been pacified, he drove out the four barbarian tribes in order to bring peace to the border regions, and he built halls and palaces as a symbol of his success…" 二世曰："……且先帝起諸侯，兼天下，天下已定，外攘四夷以安邊境，作宮室以章得意……"[92]

The first three passages refer to the *tianxia* or *hainei* being divided into administrative units after the establishment of a unified, pacified empire. The last three texts refer to the idea that imperial sovereignty was bounded by "the four seas" (*sihai*) or confined to the areas "within the seas" (*hainei*).[93] This conceptualization of space and power was evidently influenced by the pre-Qin worldview in which the world consisted of a centre and four quarters (*sifang*). Ideologically, the primary Qin administrative organization, the system of commanderies and counties, was established throughout the newly conquered lands in which the people of *huaxia*, representing the mainstream of developing "Chineseness", defined the backbone of the order of *tianxia*.[94] In the process, the barbarian tribes, as clearly shown by the last three texts, were all driven out of the newly formed Chinese realm.

In the biography of Qin Shi Huang, Sima Qian relates that walls and bulwarks were built to fend off the invasions by non-Chinese barbarians, of which the most important project was the construction of the Great Wall.[95] Qin

[90] *Ibid.*, 254.
[91] *Ibid.*, 267.
[92] *Ibid.*, 271.
[93] For the symbolic meaning of the "sea", see the above discussion.
[94] For the names of the thirty-six provinces, see *Shiji* 5, 239.
[95] *Shiji* 5, 239.

Shi Huang's overall defensive imperial policy was bitterly criticized after the collapse of Qin. The most influential critic was the early-Han statesman Jia Yi 賈誼 (200-168 BC). In his famous essay, *Faulting the Qin* (Guo Qin lun 過秦論), Jia identified the completely defensive policy of Qin as one of the main reasons for its rapid demise.[96] The practical imperial policies of the Qin dynasty will be discussed in a later chapter.

4. Alternative worldviews in Qin China

Soon after the unification, according to *Shiji*, the high-ranking Qin officials led by Chancellor Wang Guan 王綰, Court Minister Li Si and Imperial Councillor Feng Jie 馮劫, advised Ying Zheng to change his title in order to broadcast his successes.[97] Having examined various old designations such as those of the Three Augusts 三皇 and the Five Emperors 五帝, which had been used to refer to the legendary sage rulers of remote antiquity, he coined a brand new title *huangdi* 皇帝 (Thearch August) for himself. By assuming this title Qin Shi Huang wished to express the idea that he had opened a completely new chapter in human history, in line with his conviction that his personal achievements surpassed those of any previous ruler.[98] The title of "king" (*wang* 王) transmitted from the Zhou dynasty was no longer deemed appropriate. Interestingly, another traditional title, *tianzi*, meaning "Son of Heaven", remained in use.[99] As

[96] Jia Yi's essay is recorded in Sima Qian's *Shiji*. As Jia notes, "Qin united and incorporated the lands of the feudal lords East of the Mount into more than thirty commanderies, repaired ferries and forts, and refined their armour and weapons to protect them". See *Shiji* 5, 279.

[97] In their proposal these officials highlighted the achievements of the First Emperor. As they pointed out, "if the title is not changed now, there will be no way to celebrate the achievements and make them known to [future] generations. Let's consult on the imperial title." See *Shiji* 5, 236.

[98] According to Nishijima Sado 西嶋定生, as a title, *huangdi* 皇帝, originally meant "shining god". Literally, the character *huang* 皇 has the same sound value as 煌, and as an adjective means "shining". If this opinion is right, it would follow that the First Emperor saw himself as a god rather than as a deified human being. Therefore, Sado's observation challenges the traditional view that the emperor was assumed to be an agent between God and humankind, a view which Sado thinks emerged only after the period of the Western Han dynasty. See Nishijima Sado 西嶋定生, trans. Huang Yaoneng 黃耀能 (1983) 23-24.

[99] The term *tianzi* 天子, which can be traced back to the Western Zhou dynasty,

many scholars have pointed out, this title emphasizes the affinity existing between the ruler and Heaven, denoting that the ruler's legitimate power derived from Heaven. This ideological claim might explain why the First Emperor chose to have his accomplishments displayed on mountain tops near the edge of the *oikoumene*, in complete contrast to the Senate's decision to set up copies of Augustus' *Res Gestae* in major cities.[100]

If imperial sovereignty was to be linked to Heaven, it should not be limited by any spatial limits, like mountains, rivers and seas, but extend to the everything under Heaven, in accordance with the literal meaning of *tianxia*. As a matter of fact, the stele inscriptions contain various references to such a worldview, which is at odds with the concept of a bounded *tianxia*:

> *This is the land of the August Emperor: to the west it ranges to the flowing sands, to the south it completely takes in where the doors face north. To the east it enfolds the eastern sea, to the north, it goes beyond Daxia. Wherever human traces reach, there are none who are not his subjects.* 皇帝之土，西涉流沙，南盡北戶，東有東海，北過大夏，人跡所至，無不臣者。[101]

It is also recorded that every bit of earth on which the sun and the moon shine is included in the emperor's domain:

> *Wherever the sun and moon shine, and wherever boats and carriages carry loads, all people live out their lives and of all/among them all there is none who does not achieve his ambitions*！日月所照，舟輿所載，皆終其命，莫不得意！[102]

These two passages refer to a worldview which is radically different from that which encountered in other passages of the same texts. Interestingly, however, the existence of this alternative worldview never tempted the First Emperor to adopt a sustained policy of further expansion after the territories of the seven major states had been unified into a single empire.

It is true that, after 221 BC, the First Emperor ordered his generals to campaign against the Yi tribes in the southeast of the empire, and took great

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appeared in Chinese sources at very early period. By the time of Warring States period, it had become the general designation of the political leader with highest power. See Gan Huaizhen 甘懷真 (2008) 348.

[100] For a more detailed discussion of Qin Shi Huang's visit to Mount Tai and of the performance of the rituals of *feng* and *shan*, see Chapter 6.

[101] Inscription of Mt Langxie, 62-68.

[102] Inscription of Mt Langxie, 21-24.

pains to conquer the Southern Yue 南越, establishing a number of commanderies and counties on the imperial frontiers,[103] but these military and administrative efforts should be seen as sequels to the defeat of the state of Chu in 223 BC. Unlike Augustus, the First Emperor of China does not seem to have been much attracted by the idea of extending imperial power into *terra incognita*.

A brief review of the military conquests of Qin after 221 BC casts into relief the differences existing between the imperial policies of the two empires. Shortly after the unification of China, Qin Shi Huang established a commandery in Longxi 隴西 (present-day southeastern Gansu Province) to define and stabilize the western frontier of the new Empire.[104] Following this he ordered his general, Meng Tian 蒙恬, to expel the Qiang tribes 羌 from the Hehuang Basin 河湟谷地 (modern eastern Qinghai province).[105] After this goal had been achieved, the First Emperor seems to have had no interest in any further westward expansion.

If Sima Qian's narrative can be relied upon, the campaign which was fought against the Xiongnu in 215 BC arose from more or less fortuitous causes. When Qin Shi Huang was on his way to inspect the northern frontier of the empire, Master Lu 卢生, a native of Yan, who had been sent out to the East [China] Sea to search for the Immortals, returned. He submitted a document to the emperor in which he predicted that the Qin Empire would be ended by the

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[103] Sima Qian reports that, after the defeat of the Chu state, Qin established new provinces in the south of Chu, namely Ba province 巴郡 and Qianzhong province 黔中郡. In the Qin dynasty, a man named Chang An 常頗 was ordered to construct a road called Wuchi Dao 五尺道 to cross from Southern Shu 蜀南 (corresponding to southern Sichuan Province) to Dianchi 滇池 (modern Dali 大理, Yunnan Province). Some imperial officials were dispatched to administer these areas. See *Shiji* 116, 2993. Fan Ye says that King Zhao 昭 (325-251 BC) of the Qin state annexed some lands of the Yi tribes and created the province of Qianzhong when the Qin army was campaigning against Chu under General Bai Qi 白起. For details, see Fan Ye 范曄, *Hou Hanshu* 86.

[104] The three provinces, Longxi 隴西, Beidi 北地 and Shangjun 上郡, were established in the reign of King Zhao, after the king of Yiqu 義渠, a barbarian tribe active in the Liupan Mountains 六盤山 and Hetao area, had been killed by Empress Xuan in the Ganquan Palace 甘泉宮. Immediately after the establishment of these provinces, the ruler of Qin begun to build Great Wall in these areas to protect them from hostile raids undertaken by the Hu. See *Shiji* 109, 2874.

[105] *Hou Hanshu* 87,77.

Hu. For this reason the First Emperor ordered Meng Tian to attack the Hu barbarians in the north with a force of 300,000 troops. Meng Tian successfully seized the area to the south of the bend in the Yellow River. In the area between Yuzhong 榆中 and Mt Yin 陰山, forty-four counties were established in the frontier zone in order to establish security.[106] A line of fortification works was constructed along the Yellow River to protect the northern frontier. Only three regions beyond the Yellow River, namely: Gaoque 高闕, Beijia 北假 and Yangshan 陽山, had been seized from the hands of barbarians, but outposts were also established to separate the Rong people 戎 from the Chinese settlements.[107] In 213 BC, Sima Qian says, officials in charge of administering lawsuits who had been found guilty of corruption were transported either to construct the northern section of the Great Wall or the garrison of Nan Yue in the southernmost part of the Qin Empire.[108]

To sum up, the stele inscriptions and other sources for Qin history indicate the simultaneous existence of two seemingly contradictory worldviews. On the one hand, there is the view that "all under Heaven" had been unified under the First Emperor's omnipotent and omnipresent power. On the other hand, the idea that imperial sovereignty was geographically unbounded also existed. To judge from the surviving sources, the former view was not only ideologically dominant but also informed or reflected actual Qin policies. The First Emperor and his son were fully aware that beyond the boundaries of the Qin Empire lived other ethnic groups including the Qiang, the Rong, the Hu and Chaoxian 朝鮮. In most texts these huge territories are represented as lying outside the boundaries of the *tianxia*, and neither the Qin nor the early Han emperors showed any great interest in subjugating these areas.

5. China and Rome compared

As we have seen, the concepts *orbis terrarum*, "circle of the lands", and *tianxia*, "all under Heaven", played an important part in the imperial ideologies and worldviews of the early Principate and Qin China respectively. At first glance, the two concepts, each of which refers to "the world as a whole", are very

[106] For the anecdote and Meng Tian's military success against Xiongnu, see *Shiji* 5, 252-253.
[107] *Ibid.*, 253.
[108] Three provinces were created in Lingnan 嶺南 which was located in the very south of the territory, namely: Guilin 桂林, Xiangjun 象郡 and Nanhai 南海. See *Shiji* 5, 253.

similar. Nevertheless, on closer inspection, it transpires that they carry rather different meanings which point to important differences in the way the world, and the place of the Roman and Chinese Empires in that world, were perceived.

The first chapter has revealed that *orbis terrarum*, in the language of politics of the Late Roman Republic, and specifically in the inscription of *Res Gestae Divi Augusti*, refers to an open, externally orientated and all-inclusive worldview. In complete contrast to this, both the stele inscriptions set up by Qin Shi Huang and classical Chinese literature employ the term *tianxia* to refer to a far more closed, inwardly orientated and exclusive view of the world. The founding emperors of China and Rome, Qin Shi Huang and Augustus, both demonstrated their supreme authority by claiming that they had achieved "world dominance", but in reality they were claiming two different things. How can this discrepancy be accounted for?

Part of the explanation might lie in the rather different historical trajectories followed by early Roman and early Chinese expansion and in the different social and political structures of republican Roman and pre-Qin society. As pointed out by Eckstein, the war-like city-state of Rome developed in a ferociously competitive inter-state environment which covered large parts of the Mediterranean world. Consequently, the emergence and persistence of a militaristic mentality in Rome cannot be regarded as exceptional or surprising. What remains striking is the extent to which the processes of military expansion were intertwined with social and political developments in republican Rome. Large sections of Roman society benefited from the conquests which commenced in the late fifth century BC and accelerated during the final centuries of the Republic. Lands and booty were distributed to Roman smallholders as reward for their service in the army. Aristocrats were expected to serve in the army for as long as ten years, and aristocratic generals and officers acquired land, slaves and social prestige. In conjunction with the emphasis on *virtus* and *gloria* as key cultural values, the fierce competition among the Roman noble families in their pursuit of military prestige and glory made the Roman state an aggressive "war machine".[109] The interplay between these

[109] Joseph Schumpeter defined imperialism as the "objectiveless disposition of a state to unlimited forcible expansion". See Dolye (1986) 23-24. Schumpeter is probably one of the earliest scholars to use the phrase "war machine" to describe the aggressiveness and intense militarism of some empires in human history. Here I use the term "war machine" to describe Rome's aggressiveness in annexing alien territories, but I do not agree that Rome's expansion was driven by an "objectiveless disposition". For a good discussion of the objectives of Roman warfare and expansion during the Republic see

internal stimuli and external factors drove a process of quasi-continuous expansion which lasted for centuries.

As was discussed in Chapter One, Hellenistic imperial ideologies began to affect Roman worldviews in the second century but did not achieve any prominence until the second quarter of the last century BC. In this period, territorial expansion continued to be seen as a tool to satisfy the personal desire for glory. Nevertheless, the elite of republican Italy had now also found an ideology perfectly suited to presenting the seemingly never-ending process of expansion in a new light and to define "world domination" as the ultimate goal of this process. Following the establishment of the Principate, this ideology was adopted by Augustus and thence found its way into the imperial ideology of subsequent centuries.

Ancient China followed a completely different historical trajectory. Unlike the Roman Empire of the late first century BC, the first united Chinese Empire was preceded by the organized and highly prestigious political system of the Western Zhou which had encompassed large parts of China. In other words, by the time of the establishment of the Qin Empire in 221 BC, advanced political entities had already existed in the landmass of East Asia for centuries. The Western Zhou can be seen as a quasi-territorial empire which was characterized by the supremacy of the Zhou king over a number of feudal states which occupied most of the Zhou world. As said, the worldview of the Zhou people appears to have been based primarily on the view that the world consisted of a "centre" and "four quarters". This corresponded to the political structure of the Zhou realm which consisted of a royal domain which was surrounded by multiple vassal states.

The high value which the Zhou kings placed on the concept of *zhong* (centre) can be traced back to the late Shang dynasty. The first ruler of the Western Zhou dynasty built a new capital, the city of Luoyi, which he named *zhongguo*, referring to the centre of the state. He also called himself Son of Heaven, reflecting the claim that his rule was based on a "Mandate of Heaven" (*tianming* 天命).

If Heaven was seen as a supreme god rather than simply as a celestial object, this might have resulted in a worldview in which the areas subjected to this omnipotent Heaven did not have any geographical limits. However, as noted in the first half of this chapter, the term *tianxia* rarely appears in Western Zhou texts. So it is not entirely clear where the limits of the Zhou territory were

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Harris (1979).

supposed to lie. In reality, the Zhou king distributed the conquered lands to his supporters, and the multiple regional states thereby created, mainly in the eastern lands, surrounded Luoyi in the nature of satellites.

The eastern capital of Luoyi did not become the political centre of the Zhou world until 771 BC, when King Ping was forced to move there as a result of the threat posed by the western Rong. During the following centuries, the power of the central Zhou state declined, while that of a handful of Zhou feudal states increased. Pledging its allegiance to the principle "venerate the Zhou king, expel the barbarians", the state of Qi followed Zhou rituals and norms while trying to carve out a dominant position in the newly emerging multi-state system. However, in the following two centuries Zhou rituals became increasingly less important, prompting Confucius to call for a restoration of the order in the world by returning to the rituals and norms of the Zhou ancestors.

Under these circumstances the concept of *zhong* (centre) became even more important than it had been. Nevertheless, it should be noted that, during this period, the idea of centre was transformed from a geographical into a cultural and ethnic concept. This shift was paralleled by the gradual emergence of the cultural concept of "Chinese-ness" (*xia*) from which all non-Chinese peoples (*yi*) were excluded.

As a result of these developments, the earlier worldview which had been based on the opposition between centre and *sifang* was replaced by a new perception of the world which distinguished between "inside" and "outside". In this new context, the term *tianxia*, "all under heaven", acquired a new meaning. From the late third century BC, this term was frequently used to refer to the "closed" geographical, political and cultural world ruled by Qin Shi Huang and his successors.

The historical trajectory followed by the fast expanding city-state of Rome was completely different. Although Roman culture was heavily influenced first by the Etruscans and later by the Hellenistic Greeks, the aristocratic elite of republican Rome did not have to deal with the cultural legacy of a highly prestigious political and cultural precursor comparable to the Zhou kingdom. During the seventh century BC, Rome had been just one of a vast number of tiny city-states and over the centuries which followed Roman worldviews took shape gradually in a long process of centrifugal expansion. During the first half of the third century, the concept of *Italia* became an important element in Roman territorial thinking, but as demonstrated in

Chapter One, even this concept was open to various interpretations, and soon after Roman hegemony had been established throughout peninsular Italy, Roman armies were sent to Sicily, Sardinia, Spain, North Africa and the Greek-speaking East.

When cultural contacts with the Hellenistic world intensified during the second and first centuries BC, Rome took over the Hellenistic ideology of world dominance, an idea which perfectly described the logical outcome of a never-ending process of centrifugal expansion. Elaborating on this idea, writers of the Augustan period developed not only the concept of the *imperium sine fine* but also the idea that Rome or Italy was the centre of the *orbis terrarum*.[110] The centrifugal, inclusive and encompassing worldview of this period stands in sharp contrast to the cohesive, exclusive and self-contained perception of the world which is found in Qin and Han China.

Although this contrast between Roman and Chinese worldviews can be convincingly related to differences in the military, political and cultural trajectories from which the Qin-Han and Roman Empires emerged, ecological factors might also have played a part. The city of Rome was situated in close proximity to the shores of the Mediterranean Sea, leading to a much higher level of connectivity. After the Second Punic War, the existence of excellent connections by sea facilitated Roman expansion and, by the end of the first century BC, Roman "world dominance" continued to be largely synonymous with mastery of the Mediterranean world.[111]

The core area of Shang China was the North Chinese Plain, far away from the sea. When this fact is taken into consideration, it is not entirely surprising that the Shang people saw themselves as occupying the centre of a square world. The homeland of the Zhou kings was located in the Wei River Valley, adjacent to the Yellow River but far from the Yellow Sea. In various early Chinese texts, such as the *Book of Mountains and Seas* (*Shanhai jing* 山海經) and the *Tales of King Mu, Song of Heaven* (*Mu tianzi zhuan* 穆天子傳), the sea is described as a marginal part of the world, teeming with exotic mysteries.[112]

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[110] For example, Strab. 2,5,26; 6, 4,1. Vitr. 6,1,10-11. For a good discussion of this idea see Clark (1999) 220-223.

[111] For the ecology of the Roman Empire, see Woolf (2012) 56-61. For connectivity in the ancient Mediterranean world, see Horden and Purcell (2000) and Wilson (2003). For the Mediterranean as the Roman *mare nostrum* see Abulafia (2011) 191-211. See also the essays in Harris (2005) for a reconsideration of the role of the Mediterranean in Antiquity.

[112] Tang (2006) 128-33. In Chinese classical texts the Eastern Sea is often associated

As the discussion in Chapter Four will show, the ecological changes which took place in the northern regions of China between the sixth and third centuries BC created a rather sharp dichotomy between the areas dominated by traditional farming and the regions in which pastoral nomadism was becoming the principal economic activity. Even before the unification of China in 221 BC, the states of the northern plain had begun to build walls as a prevention against invasions by the nomadic or semi-nomadic tribes of the north. Admittedly, some of these walls were built to secure newly conquered areas rather than to protect existing territories. The stone walls along the Yin Mountain Ridges built by Zhao in the late Warring States period, for example, are a mark of the successful expansion of the agrarian territories to the north.[113] Similarly, Qin Shi Huang's military operations against the Xiongnu, which resulted in the conquest of the Houtao area 後套 in 215 BC, are also thought to have served this purpose.[114] However, the construction of the Great Wall following the completion of the First Emperor's short campaign against the northern barbarians strongly suggests that he had no interest in further territorial expansion.[115] Similarly, after Qin's conquest of Nanyue, the Qin and Han emperors showed little interest in conquering the hilly terrain of South China stretching beyond the Yangzi valley.

Turning to the Roman Empire, it has been suggested that the pace of territorial expansion slowed down after Augustus because various "natural" limits, among them the Rhine, the Danube and the Sahara, had been reached.[116] But closer inspection suggests that, although the Sahara and the Arabian Desert did form insuperable obstacles, many opportunities for further conquest continued to exist in other areas. What possible explanation can be offered for the fact that, in the two centuries which followed Augustus' death, far fewer regions were added to the Empire than during the last two centuries BC? Does

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with monsters and the Immortals.

[113] Baiyin Chagan 白音查幹 (2000) 81-6. Cf. Di Cosmo (2004) 138-58. Lees and Bates argue that the increase in the number of the people involved in agriculture during the Warring States period stimulated the devolvement of irrigated farming, which in turn stimulated further population growth. The agriculturalists responded to this by expanding their farming areas to the north. See Lees and Bates (1974) 187-193.

[114] Wang Mingke 王明珂 (2008) 155; Xin Deyong 辛德勇 (2009) 241-42; 55. For a detailed discussion of the northern frontiers of the Qin and Han Empires and of the functions of the Great Wall, see Chapter Four.

[115] For a more detailed discussion of this issue see Chapter 4.

[116] Cornell (1993) 141 and 146.

this mean that the policies of most Roman emperors were less aggressive than those of the generals of the Middle and Late Republic? Is it possible to find any evidence of the gradual abandonment of the "open" worldview of the Augustan age and the emergence of a more "closed" perception of the Roman world which placed more emphasis on the opposition between the "civilized" world ruled by the Roman emperors and the areas beyond the frontiers inhabited by "uncivilized" barbarians? These are the main questions for which answers will be sought in the next chapter.