

The Sacred Space of an Aristocratic Clan in Zhou China (11th - 3rd centuries BC) under Transformation

An Attempt at Interpretation¹

Maria Khayutina

The sacred² is a multi-dimensional³ construct produced by people in the course of their world-building practice.⁴ An ideological paradigm, usually a religion,⁵ allows for recognition of the sacred on the *mental* level.⁶ On the *social* level it can be produced, recognized and used only within the social space⁷ of a group whose members share a

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² The sacred may be perceived as “a quality of mysterious and awesome power, other than man and yet related to him, which is believed to reside in certain objects of experience” (Berger 1969: 25).

³ Henri Lefebvre distinguishes between three “fields” in the space, which are “apprehended separately, just as molecular, electromagnetic and gravitational forces in physics: <...> first, the *physical* – nature, the Cosmos; secondly, the *mental*, including logical and formal abstractions; and, thirdly, *social* (cf. Lefebvre 1991: 11). The space manifests itself as “the logico-epistemological space, the space of social practice, the space occupied by sensory phenomena, including products of imagination such as projects and projections, symbols and utopias” (Lefebvre 1991: 12). I prefer to discuss the mental, social and physical aspects of space not as “fields”, but rather as “levels” of apprehension, or as dimensions.

⁴ “Every human society is an enterprise of world-building. <...> Society structures, distributes, and co-ordinates the world-building activity of man. And only in society can products of those activities persist over time” (Berger 1969: V and 7). A religion is “a human enterprise by which a sacred cosmos is established” (Berger 1969: 25) and the mundane reality is “accepted and valorized”. The sacred is a “derived reality, a product of human creativity, which leads to the affirmation of the preexistence of the profane” (cf. summary of Raffaele Pettazzoni’s theory of religion, represented in his works *L’onniscienza di Dio* (1955) and *Gli ultimi appunti* (1959), in the analytical survey of works of Italian historians of religion Pettazzoni, Brelich and De Martino in: Massenzio 1994: 22, trans. from French is mine – M. Kh.).

⁵ Cf. Eliade 1957: 7; Berger 1969: 25. However, the sacred also exists in non-religious contexts. For example, monuments to war or genocide victims are respected as sacred in modern humanistic representations. Eliade mentions also “sacred places” of one’s private universe, which are different from one’s everyday existence, such as the homeland, the place of the first love etc. (cf. Eliade 1957: 15).

⁶ Outside such mental space it can be regarded as “less sacred”, profane, or even insane, depending on the degree of alienation of the concurrent social units.

⁷ “It is possible to represent the social world in a form of space (multi-dimensional) constructed on the principles of differentiation or distribution, constituted by the complex of properties, and acting in the considered social universe” (Bourdieu 1984: 3, trans. from French is mine – M. Kh.).

common ideology and effectuate their representations in the common way of practice.⁸ Thirdly, people elaborate the specific ways that allow the sacred to manifest itself on the *physical* level.⁹

People usually construct sacred spaces in order to come into contact with supernatural forces, which are believed to influence human life, but on another hand, may be controlled and manipulated.¹⁰ Therefore, sacred spaces are always functional and instrumental. Sacred places and sacred tools, accessed and used in the appropriate sacred instances of time,¹¹ serve to produce and reproduce sacred space for the needs of sacred communication. Sacred spaces of various kinds and different levels of access may be produced in order to meet the requirements of their producers' societies.¹² Once produced, they do not necessarily remain fixed, but can be adjusted, transformed, and terminated depending on developments within relevant social spaces. Therefore, I regard *sacred space* as a *socio-ideological construction*, embodied and manifesting itself in certain spatio-temporal realizations.

Visible and tangible material embodiments of the sacred are *sacred places* – natural, such as sacred mountains and springs, or artificial, such as temples and shrines, and *sacred tools*, such as altars, special furniture, and various ritual utensils. Functionally, places or tools both serve as means of sacred communication. They may function in a sacred sense permanently or temporarily, and be alternately regarded and used as sacred or profane depending on the concrete purposes of their users.¹³

⁸ As Marcel Mauss pointed out, “the sacred things are social things” (cf. Mauss 1899: 101). Within one cultural space multiple social spaces may exist simultaneously. In the case of Zhou China, there were some differences in the religious concepts and practices of nobility and commoners (cf. Poo Mu-chou 1998: 30-40), though they were not completely isolated from one another and contributed to the construction of a common *mental* space (cf. Poo Mu-chou 1998: 68). However, the ancestral cult was an especially socially limited enterprise. Access to this religion was available exclusively to the kin-related clansmen and women married to them, not to commoners, who were excluded from clan organizations, which at the same time functioned as liturgical communities. Therefore, the sacred spaces of ancestral worship, created and used by the nobility, were not equally valid for the society as a whole but only within social spaces of particular clans.

⁹ In order to let the sacred “reside in certain objects of experience” (cf. Berger 1969: 25) people organize places of worship, elaborate standard sets of ritual tools, establish requirements regarding the materials and ways these objects have to be produced, etc.

¹⁰ “There is no need to explain at length why the profane enters into a relationship with the divine: it is because it sees in it the very source of life” (Mauss 1899: 98).

¹¹ Cf. Mauss 1899: 25-7.

¹² These social spaces may be large, discrete and widely accessible, such as those of a large congregation of a major religion, or compact, coherent and hermetic, such as that of a small tribe practicing its specific cult.

¹³ For example, wine offered to ancestral spirits during a sacrifice would be regarded as sacred. But probably the same or a similar kind of wine could be consumed in daily use during profane meals.

Whenever people need to initiate and maintain sacred communication, they use both sacred places and tools as material components with which they construct the sacred space in the physical sense. Therefore, in studying representations of sacred *space* in certain societies not only sacred *places*, but also sacred *tools* should be taken into consideration.



Fig. I.: Bronze

As distinct from the immovable places, the tools, which at least theoretically can be displaced to other locations, allow for a greater degree of freedom in handling them. Therefore, sometimes they can bear more than one meaning and be used in variable ritual contexts. The investigation of ritual tools and their *usus* can open some new perspectives on the representations of sacred space in societies under study.

The specific sacred space in the focus of this study is one constructed within the social space of an ancient Chinese aristocratic clan¹⁴ in order to maintain their ancestral worship.¹⁵ I will concentrate on the role of sacred tools, namely ritual bronze vessels and bells, in the construction of a clan's sacred space. The usage of such tools

¹⁴ There is no agreement in the English-speaking literature on the terminology to be employed for designating the different types of kinship organization. In this paper the clan will be regarded according to the classification proposed by George P. Murdock, as different from residential (family, including large family) and consanguine kin groups (sib and its subdivisions), and representing a "compromise kin group, comprising a number of households whose heads are descendants from one common ancestor" (cf. Murdock 1949: 66-8). Mikhail Kryukov defines the ancient Chinese clan (*zongzu*) as the "group of hierarchically subordinated families, descending from a common eponymous ancestor" (cf. M. Kryukov 1967: 200). Like the sib, the clan was a patrilineal group, but, different from the sib, it included both consanguineal and affinal relatives, so that a female married to a clansmen became a member of his clan but lost her membership in her father's, while her membership in the native patrisib remained intact. Both structures, patrisib *xing* and patriclan *zongzu*, coexisted in Zhou China. The ancient Chinese clan represented a form of so-called conic clan structure based on primogeniture (cf. Kirchhoff 1959: 266-7). The elder sons represented the direct descent line and their families formed the "stem" or "major lineage" (*da zong*) of a clan, while families formed by their younger brothers were subordinate "branches", or "minor lineages" (*xiao zong*). They remained in the subordinate positions within one hierarchically organized clan (*zongzu*). With each generation the distance between "stem" and "branches" increased, and after the fifth generation membership of the lateral familial groups in the *zongzu* was discontinued (cf. Chang Kwang-chi 1976: 78-9). This was apparently related to the rank system of Zhou society, where only the elder son inherited the rank of his father, while the younger siblings descended one rank down until they reached the status of commoner, who did not participate in clan organizations (cf. M. Kryukov 1967: 92-3). This is one of the main reasons why this study is concerned with representations and practices of the ancient Chinese nobility only.

¹⁵ *Ancestral worship* was the central tenet of the religious life of the ancient Chinese (cf. Bodde 1954: 47; Vandermeersch 1977: 42-3), although other cults, such as the worship of Heaven, former Zhou kings, deities of various natural forces, spirits of mountains, rivers etc. were practiced simultaneously (cf. Maspero 1965: 130-46).

was essential to the ritual practice of the Chinese aristocracy during the Western Zhou (1046/5¹⁶ - 771 BC) and the Springs and Autumns periods (770-V c. BC),¹⁷ and thus these social and temporal limits define the social field and the time span of the present study. The ways these sacred tools were used, their appearance, and the inscriptions on their surfaces may shed more light on the idea of sacred space among the nobility of ancient China and on some social aspects of its realization.

Bronze: the sacred material

Ritual bronze objects often are regarded as symbols of the political power of noble clans, the attributes distinguishing aristocratic culture from that of the commoners.¹⁸ I do not intend to challenge the importance of these social functions of the bronzes, but rather to emphasize their substantive value in the nobility's religious practice as the tools of sacred communication.¹⁹

Ancestral blessings, in particular longevity and multiple progeny, or, more generally, *happiness*, were perceived as a final goal and the result of the sacred communication between the living and the dead.²⁰

Bronze was often explicitly referred to in a number of Eastern Zhou (771 – 221 BC) inscriptions as a “fortunate metal” – *ji jin*.²¹ The concept *ji* (“auspicious”,

¹⁶ The dates of the beginning of the Zhou, as well as its internal chronology, are subjects of ongoing discussion (see, for example, Nivison 1983: 481-580; Shaughnessy 1985-7: 33-60; Pankenier 1992b; Zhu Fenghan and Zhang Rongming 1998).

¹⁷ Communication between human and deified ancestors was based on reciprocal exchange, which supposed sacrificial offerings by the descendants and provision of patronage in return. Ancient Chinese aristocracy used special *bronze vessels* (see fig. I) in order to offer sacrificial food and wine to ancestral spirits, and *bronze bells* – to play music during ceremonies. The Zhou aristocracy had inherited this ritual practice already in the pre-dynastic period from the Shang [ca. 1600-1047/6 BC] (Cf. Ma Chengyuan 1981: 3-5, 12-8; Hsu Cho-yun and Linduff 1988: 311-2).

¹⁸ Cf. Chang Kwang-chih 1983: 95-106.

¹⁹ Cf. Chang Kwang-chih 1983: 101; V. Kryukov 2000: 335-6. The value of bronze as a medium of sacred communication in the rituals of the ancient Chinese nobility is often underestimated in works that concentrate on the political and economical aspects of ancient Chinese society (for criticism see Falkenhausen 1993: 152-67).

²⁰ For example, the inscription on the tureen *Shu Xiangfu gui* reads: “Shu Xiangfu ...made this venerated tureen for his ancestor You Dashu. He is elevated aloft. He will send me down a lot of happiness (cf. LZJW VII: 132). The ode *Han lu* from the compendium of ritual poetry *Shi jing* (“The Book of Poetry”, or “The Book of Songs” in different Western translations) sounds similar, referring to an ancestral sacrifice performed by a noble lord: “His clear spirits are in the vessel; His red bull is ready; – To offer, to sacrifice, to increase his bright happiness” (*Shi jing*: 392, *The Book of Poetry*: 445). Cf. also Poo Mu-chou 1998: 213.

²¹ Cf., for instance, the inscriptions on the *Zhu gong Jing zhong*, *Shu Yi zhong*, *Shu Shen fu* in LZJW VIII: 190, 203, 224.

“fortunate”²²) was the main mantic term used in Shang-Yin oracle bone inscriptions to define a positive prognostication.²³ It continued to be used in the same capacity in Zhou divinations.²⁴ Thus, this term was originally related to sacred interaction between human and the supernatural powers that were believed to be providers of fortune and happiness.²⁵ The term *ji* also referred to the sacred time, – auspicious days,²⁶ – chosen for important ritual ceremonies or for the casting of a sacrificial tool. The semantic field of the term *ji* intersected with that of the term *jia*²⁷: – happiness, fortunate omen, fortunate prognostication,²⁸ or, as the adjective “fortunate”, often used when referring to sacrificial food offered to the ancestral spirits.²⁹

I believe that the naming of proprieties of material components used in the sacrificial act as “auspicious” should have signified more than just a metaphor for their technical or esthetic qualities,³⁰ the same as the naming of the a certain instance in time “auspicious” was not just a mere reference to the profane calendar.³¹

²² *Ji* : “1). Good, fortunate omen, auspicious; 2) First day of a lunar month (the functions of this term in chronological records are a topic of ongoing debate, cf. ref. No. 31 – M. Kh.). 3) Ancient ritual of sacrifice to the spirits. One of the five types of rituals (*ji* – “good/happy”, *xiong* – “bad/unhappy”, *bin* – “entertainment”, *jun* – “military”, *jia* – “fortunate”); rituals alternative to *xiong* (“bad”, “unhappy”). (*Hanyu da zidian*: 242).

²³ Cf. Zhao Cheng 1990: 281.

²⁴ This term was used in divinations interpretation in the *Yi jing* (“The Book of Changes”), cf. Shchutsky (Scuckij) 1960: 96-102; Kunst 1988: XVIII.

²⁵ Cf. Poo Mu-chou 1998: 7. Ulrich Unger notes the relation of other concepts signifying different manifestations and aspects of “happiness” to the sacred sphere (cf. Unger 2002: 16-20).

²⁶ Cf. Huang Shengzhan 1988: 71-86; Keightley 1988; 2000: 33-5.

²⁷ *Jia*: “1) beautiful, fair; 2) happiness, fortunate omen; 3) to praise, to approve, 4) to rejoice, to gratify; *jia hunpo* - to gratify the spirits of dead”; 5) in ancient times – one of the five types of rituals, including the rites of capping, marriage, greeting, feast (*Hanyu da zidian*: 283).

²⁸ It was often related to health and reproduction (cf. Khayutina 2000).

²⁹ Cf. Khayutina 2000.

³⁰ Lothar von Falkenhausen mentions the suggestion of Murohashi that bronze was considered auspicious because it was used in auspicious rituals, but chooses to understand this definition in an esthetic and technical sense, as referring to the “metal of highest quality” that had to “be deemed for the ritual use” (cf. Falkenhausen 1994: 99).

³¹ The understanding of time recorded in the bronze inscriptions, in the documentary sense, is stressed in the works of Wang Guowei and his followers, who suggest that the term “first auspiciousness” (*chu ji*) designated the first quarter of the lunar month (cf., for instance, Wang Guowei 1964, I: 21, 71-86; Nivison 1983: 487). However, already Bernhard Karlgren had noticed the conventionality of the usage of “auspicious” dates in Eastern Zhou inscriptions (cf. Karlgren 1935: 25). Huang Shengzhan and David Pankenier suggest that even during the Western Zhou this term could refer to any “auspicious” day of the first decade (cf. Huang Shengzhan 1988), or even of the whole month (Pankenier 1992: 40). The last viewpoint is supported by the failure to locate many “auspicious” dates, recorded in the bronze inscriptions, in the reconstructed calendar of the Western Zhou. That means that at least in many cases the term *chu ji* referred not to historical and profane, but to sacred time.

Figure II schematically represents the interaction of objective and temporal components of the sacrificial message and their relation to the expected response on the part of the supernatural forces.

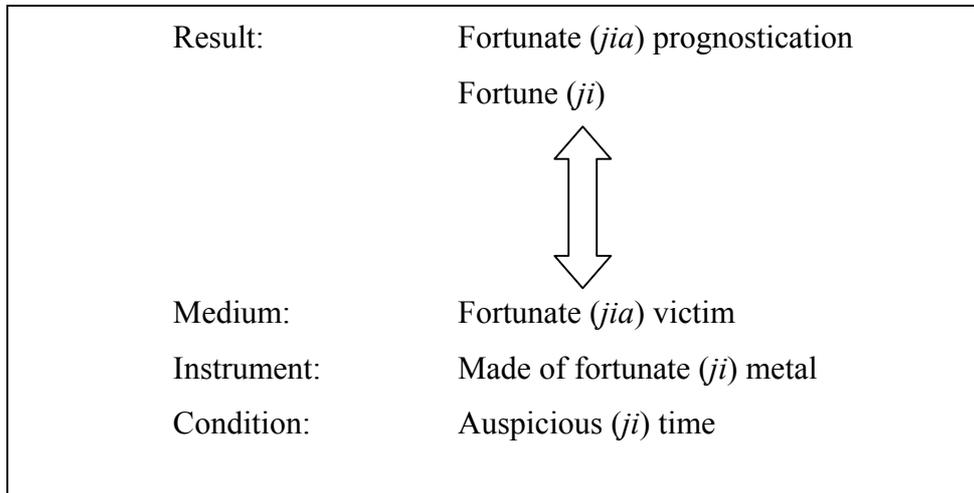


Fig. II: “Circulation of fortune”

This interplay of objects with similar qualities (“auspicious” and “fortunate”) having an “auspicious” result, to my view represents nothing other than an example of sympathetic magic,³² which appears very possible, considering the inherent correlativity of ancient Chinese thought.³³ Of course, the sacrificial act cannot be reduced to sympathetic magic alone, but could be part of it, a means to intensify its efficacy and assure the desired results. Therefore, the term *ji*, applied to the material the ritual utensils were made of, allows for the suggestion that bronze was believed to serve as a kind of accelerator in the process of “producing happiness”. In this manner, bronze vessels or bells were already related to the sacred sphere by their “fortunate” properties.³⁴

³² Cf. Fraser 1911: 9, Mauss 1902-03: 45-7. For other examples of sympathetic magic in China see Ngo Van Xuyet 1976: 195-202.

³³ Cf. Needham 1956: 280-1; Bodde 1991: 97-9.

³⁴ As Marcel Mauss pointed out, “magic property is conceived not as naturally, absolutely and specifically inherent to a thing, to which it is attached, but always as external and superimposed” (cf. Mauss 1902-03: 95). Magical qualities have a social convention as their source, while “the representation of quality in magic is very vague and always is mixed with a very general idea of power and nature” (cf. Mauss 1902-03: 96). Similarly, in Zhou China a rough lump of nephrite or raw bronze would not be regarded as sacred. But when objects were to be produced for use in a sacred sphere, these materials would be chosen for their manufacture and then treated as sacred. On the other hand, it is not the act of manufacture but its purpose that defines the way this material would be appreciated.

Bronze vessels: mediators of sacred communication.

Many bronze vessels were defined in inscriptions as *bao zun* – “treasured and venerated”, and were designed for “eternal treasured usage” (*yong bao yong*).³⁵ The vessels were “treasured” (*bao*) not only in the sense of “luxury items”,³⁶ but, above all, in that they were the main sacred objects of a clan, and the “treasured usage” supposed their usage in sacrifices.³⁷ The term *zun* (literally “venerated”) is often reasonably translated into English as “sacrificial”. This was a concrete meaning of the concept “venerated” in the context of ritual communication, as a pious descendant had no other way to express his reverence for his ancestors but through sacrificial offerings and appropriate ritual ceremonies.³⁸

The bronze vessels contained food (meat or grain) and wine, offered to spirits as *victim*, which served as the primary medium of sacred communication.³⁹ I would speculate that the function of sound, spread by the bells, was to a certain extent similar to that of the visible and tangible victims.⁴⁰ As I suggested in the previous section, due

For instance, bronze used for the production of working tools would usually remain in the profane sphere.

³⁵ See *passim* in LZJW.

³⁶ Marcel Granet noticed the importance of “treasure”, represented in different forms, but generally defined as *bao*, in the constitution of authority and seigniorial prestige (cf. Granet 1926: 92). Zhang Guangzhi argued that “possession of bronzes ... was a forceful symbol of power” (cf. Chang Kwang-chih 1983: 106). Lothar von Falkenhausen regards bronze “treasures” as “institutionalized status-markers” (cf. Falkenhausen 1994: 98). These authors, however, approach to the concept of treasure from the perspective of the anthropology of politics, which regards religion only as instrument of gaining political power. Changing the perspective to that of the anthropology of religion, one would certainly notice that “treasure” in the form of ritual bronze utensils was first of all a *sacred* treasure. The etymology of the character *bao* is also meaningful: it is not by chance that it comprises the graphs “nephrite” and “cowry”, both attached a sacred value, albeit being at the same time objects of economic exchange. As Vasily Kryukov claims, the “treasured usage” of the bronze vessels could not be reduced simply to possession and “preservation of a certain relic, venerated in a cultural tradition”, but this principle supposed “above all their sacred usage in the sacrificial rite” (cf. V. Kryukov 2000: 23, trans. from Russian is mine – M. Kh.).

³⁷ Cf. *Bo Ke hu*: inscription: “...Ke’s sons and grandsons will eternally use [this vase] as treasure for sacrifices” (in LZJW VII: 110).

³⁸ Cf. V. Kryukov 2000: 292.

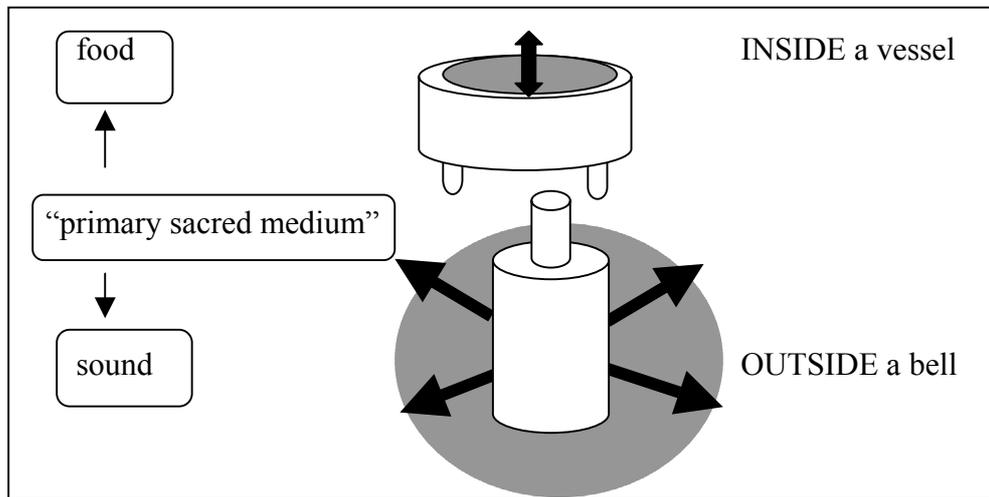
³⁹ “The procedure of sacrifice consists in establishing a means of communication between the sacred and the profane worlds through the mediation of a victim, that is, of a thing that in the course of ceremony is destroyed” (Mauss 1899: 97).

⁴⁰ As follows from the inscription on the *Yaner zhong*, the use of a bell as a ritual instrument should bring the user a result (longevity, i.e. happiness) same as that of a sacrificial vessel: “On the first auspicious (*ji*) day of the first month the sincere son of the Xu Kang-wang, Yan Er chose this fortunate (*ji*) metal and personally made this harmonious bell. Far away spreads its perfect sound. <...> The great fortunate prognostication (*jia*) will be completely fulfilled. [I will] use [the bell] to gladden and to treat with wine, to join the one hundred families in the harmony, to strengthen the greatness, to be sincere in oaths and sacrifices. I [will use it for] feasts and pleasure. [I will use it] to gladden the

to the “fortunate” propriety of bronze, these ritual objects served not as mere containers of a victim, but had their own value in the sacrificial act. They could be used even more effectively whenever supplied with inscriptions that were cast on their surfaces in order to convey the reports and prayers of men into the world of the spirits.⁴¹

Worthy of attention is the spatial aspect of the inscribing of the different kinds of bronze objects. The sacrificial vessels usually had inscriptions cast on their *inside* – on the bottom, or on the internal surface of their walls, or on the interior of their lid. The texts were hidden from the view of men, but not for extra security,⁴² but rather due to the idea of the function of these writings, which were supposed to transmit the prayer to the spirits after coming in contact with sacrificial food. It may be said that in this case the sacred communication proceeded through the inside of the medium.⁴³ On the other hand, the bronze bells were inscribed on the *outside*⁴⁴ (see fig. III).

Figure III:
Ways of communication.



fortunate guests (*jia bin*), the fathers and elder brothers and all the warriors-*shi*. Huang-huang, qi-qi! Longevity without limit! Sons and grandsons will eternally keep it and clang it” (cf. LZJW VIII: 160).

⁴¹ Cf. Falkenhausen 1993: 164.

⁴² Only authorized visitors assisted at the ceremonies, which meant that the sacred space of a clan was already protected from strangers. The content of the texts, commemorating the glorious deeds of ancestors and the owners themselves, as well as standard prayers, were usually well known to the attendants.

⁴³ Some vessels could be used not only for sacrifices, but also for feasts. However, only a very small number of Springs and Autumns vessels had inscriptions glorifying their owners on the outer side of their belly or on their mouth, while dedications to guests and relatives, probably bearing some magical significance, were still put inside the vessels, revealing the priority of internal over external, and of magical interaction over rational perception.

⁴⁴ It may appear that in this case a message was supposed to be read by men. However, the characters could be read only from a very close distance, while the participants of sacrifices were hardly intended to inspect the ritual objects as in a modern museum. A long inscription also might begin at the front and end at the back of a bell (cf. Rong Geng 1941: 495). Presumably, the message was meant to reach the addressees, whether the spirits or family members and guests, not through visual perception, but through the mediation of sound.

This probably presumed another vector of communication: since the sounds spread outwards from their sources, they could likewise be accepted from outside. Thus, one may speculate that writings “faced” the directions of the transmission of a sacred message.

The inscription of objects was not mandatory, which means that the capacities of food and sound as primary sacred mediums, and of bronze as an “accelerator” of their effectiveness, were believed to be higher than that of writings, which were only a supplementary means to facilitate and control communication with spirits.⁴⁵ However, the habit of producing the most important ritual objects in bronze, the high specialization of their types, their arrangement in specific ritual sets, and their sporadic usage as the physical medium of articulated sacrificial messages allows one to regard them as *mediators* of sacred communication.

Markers of private sacred space

The ancestral temple (*zong miao* or *zong shi*) was the main *locus sanctum* of an aristocratic clan under the Western Zhou and the Springs and Autumns periods. Naturally, it was located in the residence of the clan head, who acted as the host (*zhu*) of sacrifices on behalf of the whole clan body before the spirits.⁴⁶ The *Zuo Zhuan* chronicle says that “The spirits of the dead do not enjoy the sacrifices of those who are not of their kindred, and ...people only sacrifice to those who were of the same ancestry as themselves”.⁴⁷ This means that only authorized users, members of a clan, lineage, and family could take part in communication with more or less distant ancestors.⁴⁸ Put another way, the deified dead had power, but just over their

⁴⁵ Cf. Falkenhausen 1993: 167; V. Kryukov 2000: 22, 105.

⁴⁶ Cf. *The Book of Rites* II: 67, Vandermeersch 1977: 45, 53, Granet 1948: 210-3. Marcel Mauss noticed that a sacrificer, i.e. the subject ‘to whom the benefits of sacrifice will accrue, or who undergoes its effects (“le sacrifiant”)’ can be individual or collective – “a family, a clan, a tribe, a nation, a secret society”. In the last case the collectivity can fulfill the function of sacrificer collectively, that is, “attend the sacrifice as a body; but sometimes it delegates one of its members who acts in its stead and place” (cf. Mauss 1899: 10). In ancient China the communication between men and ancestral spirits was organized closer to the third model. The head of a clan played the principal role in ceremonies of ancestral worship due to the rule of primogeniture, which often “...has the effect of placing the elder sibling in a special and sacred category” (cf. Hage 1999: 372). However, he did not face the deities alone, but as the representative of the whole clan body. The presence of other members of the clan was necessary during sacrifices, they executed some ritual roles, and the results of the sacred communication with deities were supposed to serve the well being of the whole clan.

⁴⁷ Cf. *The Zuo zhuan* I: 157. See also Bodde 1954: 47.

⁴⁸ In the same passage it is explained further that even if foreigners were to make sacrifices to a dead person, it would be the same as “no sacrifice”, i.e. it would be simply absolutely ineffective (cf. *The Zuo zhuan* I: 157).

descendants, while foreigners had no way of benefiting by sacrificing to them. Therefore, a sacred place in the ancestral religion had sense only within the social space of one particular clan, and the temple, this sacred *center*⁴⁹ of the clan, was placed in a fixed geographical point only while the clan resided there.

The tablets inscribed with the names of ancestors were placed inside the temple in appropriate order.⁵⁰ It may be said that they physically represented the ancestral spirits when sacrifices were performed in front of them.⁵¹

The ritual bronze objects normally also were used in sacrificial ceremonies inside an ancestral temple.⁵² It is noteworthy that the shortest inscriptions on Shang-Yin ritual objects included at least a clan emblem and often a name of a particular ancestor. Zhou bronzes usually were dedicated to specific ancestors, and the owners indicated their personal names. This clearly suggests that, similarly to the temple building and the spirit tablets, these tools of sacred communication could only within this single clan, i.e. within a private, i.e. removed from the common space of the whole society, social space.⁵³

All these material objects – temple, tablets and ritual bronzes – allowed the believers to recognize the presence of the sacred, i.e. served as the *markers* of sacred space, which distinguished it from the profane rest of the physical world.

In its turn, the temple with its tools, this physical sacred symbol, served the self-identification of the clan as a social body. A clan was represented in the Zhou image of the world as an infinite continuity of generations of ancestors and descendants. It may be said that the social space of a clan comprised not only all living persons, but also all its members whether they were or were not yet born. The ancestral temple, where the spirits of dead clansmen descended to partake of the viands and wine during the sacrifices, assured the unity of the clan body. It allowed the community of its members, who exclusively possessed this channel of sacred communication, to distinguish their common social space as sacred, when compared to the profane world of other humans. This social space included all the clansmen, but only the names of

⁴⁹ Cf. Granet 1926: 2.

⁵⁰ When a head of a clan died, a new tablet should be made with his name on it, and placed in the shrine of the ancestral temple. The temple of the royal family had seven shrines (five in the temple of a ducal house): the first one, at the northern end, was dedicated to the grand ancestor to whom the family traced back its line. South of it, to the left and right, were the shrines of the founder kings of the Zhou dynasty, Wen and Wu respectively. The four next shrines were dedicated to the four kings immediately preceding the reigning king (Cf. *The Book of Rites* II: 60-7).

⁵¹ In some cases the spirits could be represented by human impersonators (*shi*).

⁵² Some inscriptions explicitly state that the objects should be used in *zong shi* or *zong miao* (cf., for example, *Dou Bi gui*, *Shi Fu zhong* (LZJW VII: 77, 126).

⁵³ Cf. Khayutina 2002: 91.

the chiefs or other most important figures, living or dead, appeared in the inscriptions. Their names in the inscriptions may be interpreted as *landmarks* for the mapping of the sacred social space of the clan. In this sense, the bronze vessels together with spirit tablets served as the markers of sacred space not only on the physical, but also on the social level.

Though the sacred space of a clan was *valid* within this clan only, it was easily recognizable within the whole Zhou cultural *oecumene*. Therefore, on the mental or cultural level, non-members of a clan could also unmistakably identify the temple, the tablets and the bronze vessels and bells as markers of the sacred space.

Expropriation of private sacred space: how was it possible?

In the event that for any reason a clan could not maintain its ritual practices, its sacred place could be abandoned, and the sacred objects hidden, evacuated, destroyed or transmuted. Numerous caches of bronzes, made by the Zhou aristocrats who fled from barbarian invaders or other dangers to safer places, have been found in various parts of China.⁵⁴

In the case of invasion, a conqueror would seize the sacred bronzes of the noble clans in order to confirm his victory and prevent the possible revival of his rivals. He might well keep “profane” weapon and ornaments as trophies,⁵⁵ but he would certainly recast ritual vessels in order to dedicate them to his own ancestors.⁵⁶

In this connection, the story of the “Nine Bronze Tripods” (*jiu ding*) deserves attention. . According to the *Zuo zhuan*,⁵⁷ these ritual bronze vessels were cast during the Xia dynasty,⁵⁸ and served to obtain heavenly blessings.⁵⁹ When the Xia “lost its

⁵⁴ Such caches are especially numerous in the region of the Western Zhou capital in present-day Shaanxi province (cf. Chen Quanfang 1988: 14-8).

⁵⁵ *The Zuo zhuan* under the 19th year of Duke Xiang reports: “When a great state conquers a small one, it makes ritual articles of that which was taken” (Cf. *The Zuo zhuan* II: 480). This *Zuo zhuan* example mentions a bell recast from weapons. I assume that this does not mean that such implements would always be recast - a good weapon could be retained for further use.

⁵⁶ A ritual wine vase *Yuan yu* bears the following inscription: “Yuan followed Shi X in the military campaign against Kuai. Yuan was the first to enter the city. Yuan captured metal [and] used [it] to make the camp ritual vessel” (cf. LZJW VI: 28). More likely, Yuan did not seize the raw material of a foundry but plundered the treasuries of noble families. Thereupon he recast those and made a new vessel.

⁵⁷ For a discussion and bibliography related to this account, see Dorofeeva-Lichtmann in the present collection of papers.

⁵⁸ The historicity of the Xia dynasty is not yet proven. Therefore, the attribution of the initiation of the bronze tradition to the Xia is, of course, putative. Bronze vessels cast for ancestral sacrifices are

virtue”, they were transferred to the Shang “for 600 years”. When the last ruler of the Shang proved himself to be “cruel and oppressive”, the tripods, in turn, “were transferred to the Zhou”.⁶⁰

Evidently, a conqueror intended if not to destroy the sacred space of the rival kingship completely, at least to level it to that of a regular aristocratic clan.⁶¹ The

known only starting from the middle Shang period. It is noteworthy that the “Bamboo Annals” (*Zhushu jinian*) report that in the 27th year of the reign of the founder of the Shang dynasty Cheng Tang, he “moved the nine tripods to the capital of Shang”. However, this chronicle never attributes them to the Xia dynasty (cf. *The Annals of the Bamboo Books*: 129).

⁵⁹ This myth operates with categories appropriate to the Zhou image of the world. Heaven was the supreme deity of the Zhou, while this was not true of its predecessors. However, the legend has its own internal logic, suggesting the easy transfer of the objects related to the cult of the Heaven – a deity of more universal character, if compared to the worship of the ancestors of a particular dynastic lineage.

As follows from this legend, the bronze tripods were not only mediators of communication with Heaven, but also the instruments of the construction and representation of the sacred space, this time not of one clan, but of the whole observable *oecumene*. According to the *Zuo zhuan*, “beings and things” (*wu*) from the “far-away lands” (*yuan fang*) were graphically represented on their surfaces. Most likely these were not geographical objects, but “pictures, sketches or diagrams” of local spirits (cf. Harper 1985: 479; Dorofeeva-Lichtmann in the present collection of papers). This detail allows one to notice the similarity of the ways of representing sacred spaces in the ancestral cult and in the worship of Heaven. Not geographical objects, but animate beings – various anthropo- or zoomorphous spirits – serve as the landmarks for mapping of the sacred space of the whole world, just as the ancestral spirits served as landmarks in the sacred social space of a clan. In both cases the sacred space is not a geographical, but, as one may call it, an *animate space*.

⁶⁰ Cf. *The Zuo zhuan* I: 293. The central figure of the Shang pantheon was Shangdi (“Lord on High” or “Supreme Ancestor”) – the progenitor of the Shang ruling house. It is also possible that the term Shangdi was applied to a body of Shang ancestors or to one of them depending on situation (cf. Eno 1990: 1-26). Accordingly, the right to worship Shangdi and other Shang ancestors was limited to the members of the Shang ruling clan, bearing the Zi surname. However, the oracle bones, unearthed in the ruins of the palace at Fengchu, a capital of the Zhou rulers before they conquered the Shang, record divinations related to sacrifices offered to the Shang ancestors Tai Jia, Tang and Di Yi (Cf. *Shaanxi Zhouyuan kaogudui*: 39-40). These divinations and sacrifices supposedly were performed under the chiefdom of the future king Wen-wang. While preparing for the war against the Shang, he probably sought ways to legitimate his right to replace the reigning dynasty through claiming his proximity to the Shang’s ruling lineage, because his mother was a Shang princess (cf. *Shi ji*, “Zhou ben ji” chapter: 115 and *Shi jing*, “Da ming” ode: 620). In a society built on the patrimonial principles, his attempts to justify himself by a relationship to maternal ancestors would be regarded as dubious at the least, but in the preparation of such great campaign probably no holds were barred. Immediately after the conquest of the Shang King, Wu might have performed a sacrifice to the Shang ancestors using captured ritual vessels in order to thank and pacify them. However, after the fall of the old dynasty, its ancestor gods quickly lost their authority in the eyes of the conquerors as no longer able to protect their descendants, and thus were not worthy to be worshiped anymore, and Heaven (*tian*), a deity of more universal, not kin-limited nature, headed the Zhou pantheon, though the king was respected as the “Son of Heaven” (*tian zi*), – and thus the cult of Heaven did not differ a great deal from the ancestral worship. Heaven was worshiped in the Chamber of Heaven (*tian shi*), the ancestors of the Ji clan, that of the Zhou, in their ancestral temple (*miao*).

instruments of sacred communication with the highest supernatural powers had to be expropriated. The legend suggests that these sacred objects could be appropriated and used for the usurper's benefit. However, even if the seizure of the Shang ritual bronzes took place in historical reality, this transfer was probably not so immediate, and would be not regarded as natural and legitimate by contemporaries.

Another passage from the *Zuo zhuan* demonstrates that the direct transfer of foreign sacrificial vessels was regarded as illegal. In the second year of the duke Huan of Lu (710 BC), this ruler received a bronze tripod *ding* as a bribe from Hua Tu, a magnate from the Song dukedom, who had recently murdered its legitimate ruler, replaced him by his creature, and now needed to square the rulers of the neighboring states in order to keep them away from Song affairs. This tripod was previously captured by the Song in the small state of Gao. The Duke of Lu put the vessel in the Great Temple of his state, dedicated to its first ruler and the progenitor of the Lu's ruling house, the Duke of Zhou (Zhou-gong). The duke was criticized for this action by his official Zang Ai-bo for "taking from Song what Song had no right to give, and he had no right to receive".⁶² In his argumentation Zang Ai-bo referred to the legend of the nine tripods, saying that when King Wu subdued Shang, he removed the nine tripods to the city of Luo, righteous men condemned him for it.⁶³ Bronzes, expropriated from the Shang, should somehow be dissociated from Shang ancestral worship,⁶⁴ either through their rededication, or by recasting. In this line, the "nine tripods", which, according to tradition, constituted the main sacred treasure of the Zhou dynasty, would not be the same as those received from the Shang.⁶⁵

⁶¹ After the Zhou's conquest of the Shang its descendants were granted a fief and were able to maintain their ancestral worship, though already only of local importance. Therefore, they may have retained some ritual vessels.

⁶² *The Zuo zhuan* I: 40.

⁶³ *The Zuo zhuan* I: 40. The polemist believed that such illegal appropriation was not only unrighteous, but also dangerous. Referring to the removal of the nine tripods of the Shang by Wu-wang at the dawn of Zhou statehood, he probably alludes to the revolt of the conquered Shang-Yin population that occurred shortly afterwards. Not by accident, the first action taken after its suppression was the new allocation of a domain to the descendants of the old dynasty, in order to let them maintain the sacrifices to their ancestral spirits.

⁶⁴ Since Shang and Zhou aristocrats cast ritual vessels for their ancestors on purpose, there is no reason to believe that Wu-wang would have acted in a different way, using secondhand vessels for his ancestral sacrifices when he no more needed to deal with the ancestors of the dethroned dynasty. A proverb from the "Pan-geng" chapter of the "Book of History" (though of relatively late date) may be relevant against the "secondhand" possibility: "In men, we seek individuals of old families; in vessels, we do not seek old ones, but new" (*The Book of History*: 230).

⁶⁵ The nine tripods that belonged to the Zhou royal house have not been discovered as yet. Sima Qian stated that the Qin kingdom captured them in 228 BC (*Shi ji*, "Zhou ben ji" chapter: 169), and then they disappeared. According to another version, represented in the Modern text Bamboo Annals

Relocations of Sacred Space

Sacred objects, the instruments of constructing the sacred space, were tied to the social space of a particular clan. They could not be directly “transferred” to another clan or associated with a foreign sacred space. Only through transformation of the old objects into new ones could this change in function be brought about. However, they could be moved with or within their home social space, changing their physical location.

Under the Zhou dynasty, the Chinese engaged in frequent and long military campaigns: they spent months and perhaps years far away from their native lands. The Zhou aristocrats - heads of clans, and, respectively, of military units⁶⁶ – still needed to be in the position of maintaining their regular ritual practices, not least because the dangerous and tiresome life in the field required intensive support on the part of the deities. The campaigners sacrificed to the ancestors at every stage of the march, performed divinations in front of the tablets or their substitutes about the success of their actions, and prayed to them before battles; oaths and covenants that required their surveillance.⁶⁷ Therefore, the sacred space, necessary for performing these actions, had to be temporarily reproduced in any location where the troops camped. One may wonder which components were required in order to construct a *temporal* sacred space?

As with the permanent sacred place, the ceremonies in the temporal one did not take place in the open air. As follows from the *Zuo zhuan*, a tent (*mu*) should be erected in order to substitute the building of an ancestral temple.⁶⁸

The ancestral spirits also had to be physically represented. The *Li ji*, or “The Book of Rites” states that in ancient times when the army went on an expedition the spirit

(*Jinben Zhushu jinian*) they had already been lost much earlier in the Si river (cf. *The Modern Text Bamboo Annals*: 326).

⁶⁶ Cf. M. Kryukov 1967: 86, Creel 1970: 91-2.

⁶⁷ Cf. Hsu Cho-yun 1965: 19.

⁶⁸ The *Zuo zhuan* under the 16th year of Duke Cheng describes the ceremony of divination performed in the camp of the ruler of Jin before the battle with the army of the king of Chu, as observed from the latter’s observation point:

“The king said, ‘There are men running to the left and to the right. What does that mean?’ ‘They are calling the officers’, replied Chow-le [Zhou-li]. ‘They are all collected in the army of the centre.’ ‘They are met to take counsel.’ ‘They are pitching a tent.’ ‘It is reverently to divine before the spirit-tablets of Tsin’s [Jin] former rulers.’ ‘They are removing the tent.’ ‘The commands of the marquis are about to be given forth.’” (Cf. *The Zuo zhuan* I: 396).

tablets, recently removed from their shrines in the ancestral temple, could be carried along.⁶⁹ The same source informs that the tablets were not always taken along on a military campaign, but the spirits could be represented through their “orders” transmitted to an object, made of jade, silk or skin.⁷⁰

The offerings of food and wine, according to the logic of reciprocal exchange, were an integral part of communication with the spirits. This was unimaginable without sacrificial vessels.

Bronze sacrificial vessels were evidently often encountered in a noble campaigner's luggage.⁷¹ For their expeditions Zhou aristocrats cast *portable* camp ritual utensils, while the principal ritual vessels of a clan, large and weighty, were stored in the home

⁶⁹ Cf. *The Book of Rites* I: 324. Since the number of shrines in the ancestral temple was constant, in order to make a place for the tablet of a newly deceased king, the tablet of the eldest of the four immediate ancestors would be removed and placed in a depository room, and the remaining tablets shifted accordingly. The *Li ji* argues that the spirit tablets taken along on an expedition were those from the depository, since “no shrine ... ought to be empty” (*The Book of Rites* I: 325). This argument was aimed against the “erroneous practice of nowadays” of taking along the tablets of the seven main temple shrines. However, it appears that the “nowadays” composers of the *Li ji*, who lived in the late Warring States or under the Early Han dynasty (206 BC - AD 8), were already uncertain of the content of some ancient rituals. Obviously, the tablets were taken along in order to perform sacrifices to the ancestral spirits. Legge, based on the commentarial tradition, translates the explanation to this ritual as “the need of taking along such object of honor” (*zun*) (*ibid*: 324), which erroneously represents them as mere symbolic objects, not as instruments of actual ritual practice. However, as I discussed above, in the inscriptions on the ritual bronzes, *zun* (“venerable”) evidently meant “sacrificial” in a very practical sense. As most of the bronze inscriptions show, the sacrifices were usually performed for the closest ancestors – fathers and grandfathers - whose support was regarded as more effective, probably simply because of their proximity. Therefore, it is very unlikely that the commander of an army would take along the displaced tablets of more distant and less powerful ancestors to assure success in such a dangerous business as war.

A passage from the “Records of the Historiographer” by Sima Qian, may serve a counterexample. It says that King Wu of the Zhou dynasty, while moving on a campaign against Shang-Yin, “made a wooden spirit tablet for King Wen, loaded it onto a chariot, and deposited it in his headquarters” (cf. *The Records of the Historiographer*: 59).

It is also possible that tablets were not removed from the ancestral shrines, but that duplicates could be manufactured for ritual practice while on expeditions.

⁷⁰ The *Li ji* says that in this case the “orders” (*ming*) of the ancestors instead of the tablets (*zhu*) should be worshipped. Before the expedition, the ruler should announce his plans to the tablets of the spirits in the ancestral temple, “using the silks, skins and jade scepters” (Cf. *The Book of Rites* I: 324). After the ceremony these objects should be loaded into a carriage and taken along on the march. At every stop on the march these articles should be laid out, and probably rituals were then carried out. Thus, they probably were regarded as a kind of material witness of divine approval (“order” *ming*, or the “order of the tablets” *zhu ming*). It is plausible that some ritual objects, especially jade scepters, could be used as ersatz tablets of spirits for the camp altars.

⁷¹ Cf. *Yuan yu*, *Mai zun*, *Mai ding*, *Yu yan*, *Lu dashi Shen ding* (LZJW VI: 28, 40-2, 60, VIII: 173).

treasury.⁷² The need to perform sacrifices on the march probably led to the invention of the special type of ritual vessel – the *xu* – a compact rectangular container, a modification of the *gui* tureen, introduced in the middle or late Western Zhou.⁷³ Such portable vessels often belonged to people charged with military missions or otherwise having to travel a lot.⁷⁴

As follows from the survey given above, the sacred space of a clan in Zhou times was not inseparably and uniquely bound to a definite *place*, but could be *transportable*. In the temporal location it could be constructed using the same tools as in the permanent one: a roofed room, the objects representing the ancestral spirits, and sacrificial vessels. All of these things seem to be produced as distinctly provisional substitutes for the main sacred objects, which did not leave the sacrificial center of the clan.

Similarly the custom of supplying the dead with sets of ritual bronze objects to let him maintain sacrifices to his ancestors in the next world may be interpreted as another example of the *relocation* of a clan's sacred space.

From Sacrifice to Feast: Other Manifestations of Sacred Space

The ritual bronze vessels served not only to offer sacrificial food to the spirits, but also to allow humans to partake of this repast. Some inscriptions state that the vessels were dedicated for sacrificing and feasting at the same time.⁷⁵ Similarly, bronze bells could be dedicated for playing music during sacrifices and for entertaining guests.⁷⁶ Such two-fold dedications are not surprising, since clan sacrifices were held in the “form of repast to which the ancestral spirits were invited into the temple”.⁷⁷ This way the sacrificed victim was “placed in contact either with the sacred world or with the

⁷² For example, the large cauldron of *shanfu* Ke is 93 cm high, 75,6 cm in diameter, and 201 kg in weight, while the container *xu* owned by the same person is only 19,9 cm high and 21,3 cm wide, excluding the handles (cf. Kelley and Ch'en Meng-chia 1946: 61).

⁷³ Cf. Rong Geng 1941, I: 360-1, Guo Baojun 1981: 136. Often in the inscriptions these containers were defined as *lü xu* – “camp *xu*”. This probably indicates that such vessels were produced especially for use on the march.

⁷⁴ Cf. *Shi Ke xu* (Guo Moruo 1962: 9), *Guozhong xu*, *Dubo xu* (LZJW VII: 120, 153).

⁷⁵ Cf. *Ling gui*, *Ke xu*, *Guaibo gui*, *Dubo xu*, *Zengbo Qi hu* (LZJW VI: 3, VII: 123, 147, 153, VIII: 186).

⁷⁶ Cf. *Yaner zhong*, *Wangsun Yizhe zhong*, *Zhugong Hua zhong*, *Qi Taoshi zhong* (LZJW VIII: 160, 191, 211).

⁷⁷ Falkenhausen 1993: 148. Cf. also Granet 1926: 129.

persons that were to benefit from the sacrifice”.⁷⁸ However, there are some examples of vessels dedicated especially for feasts with family members or guests that lack any mention of sacrifices.⁷⁹ This, however, does not mean secularization of their use,⁸⁰ just as the banquets of the Western Zhou and Springs and Autumns periods cannot simply be regarded as profane places of social interaction and entertainments.⁸¹ Feasts, these multi-media *festivities*, though different from sacrifices, were also events to a great extent different from the everyday “profane” life.⁸² It is not possible, within the limits of this article, to discuss ancient Chinese feasts at sufficient length, but at least one of their functions can be mentioned.

As in most ancient agricultural societies, the main concern of the ancient Chinese was the harvest, that it be sufficient to survive the next year. The ritual poetry of “The Book of Songs” demonstrates that abundant repasts were probably regarded as an effective method of agricultural magic.⁸³ Noteworthy is that food could be defined as

⁷⁸ Cf. Mauss 1899: 43.

⁷⁹ Cf. *Que Cao ding* (LZJW VI: 68), *Duo You ding* (YZJW: 575).

⁸⁰ Hsu Cho-yun and Katherin Linduff conclude that, in general, “the increase of bronze production” starting from late Western Zhou implied a tendency “toward commercialization of otherwise ‘sacred’ ritualistic vessels”, when “the sacredness of bronze vessels was reduced or even replaced by secularized use” (Cf. Hsu Cho-yun and Linduff 1988: 317). Although Hsu and Linduff do not mention the bronzes’ transition from the temple to the banquet as an example of their secularization, their other arguments, such as regarding mass production of bronzes or their usage as commemoratives as the signs of profanation, are not very convincing. However, the discussion of these problems goes beyond the scope of the present study.

⁸¹ One can get such an impression when reading about the banquets described in the ritual guide *Yi li* (cf. *The Book of Etiquette and Ceremonial*: 122-88). Albeit highly ritualized, these banquets did not include any ancestral ceremonies. However, this book was compiled much later than the period under study in this article, when traditions related to sacred bronzes were declining. A much earlier text, reflecting the situation of the late Western Zhou - Springs and Autumns period, namely the *Binzhe chu yan* ode from the *Shi jing* describes a very similar banquet, which, however, included an ancestral sacrifice (cf. *Shi jing*: 567).

⁸² As Mikhail Bakhtine pointed out on the other subject, the festivities “can become fêtes” only when “the element of the other sphere of the current life, that of the spirit and ideas, joins them. Their sanction has to emanate not from the world of indispensable *means*, but from that of superior goals of human existence <...> - resurrection and renovation (cf. Bakhtine 1970: 17).

⁸³ Houji (King-Millet), the legendary ancestor of the Zhou, whose name reveals his function as an agricultural god at the same time, taught farming and sent the men the “fortunate grains” (*jia zhong*) (cf. “Sheng min” ode in “The Book of Songs” (*Shi jing*: 666). When Houji reaped a splendid harvest, he made a sacrifice of the received cereals in order to ensure future prosperity and the well-being of his people. Similarly, the ode “Yu li”, a ritual song that could be sung during banquets by the participants, connects the abundance of food and wine offered to the guests with the expectations of future agricultural plenitude:

“His (i.e. the host’s – M. Kh.) things are *in plenitude* – will his (things) be *fortunate*,
His things are *good* – will his (things) be *in harmony*,
The things he *has* – will his (things) be *all in season*”
(cf. *Shi jing*: 383).

*fortunate (jia)*⁸⁴ if offered to either spirits in a sacrifice or humans in a banquet.⁸⁵ Apparently, by sacrificing to spirits or consuming the “fortunate” (*jia*) food in a feast, the participants intended in these two ways to acquire fortune and happiness. In both cases the food was used as a means of communication with supernatural powers – the providers of happiness – although these were perhaps not only ancestors but some other deities. The use of the bronze ritual objects, primarily related to ancestral worship, in a feast outside a temple probably reveals that they were not specifically and uniquely bound to the ancestral cult alone, but more or less freely manipulated and used in other ways where sacred communication was involved. The presence of these sacred objects at a feast, as well as some other parallels between ancestral sacrifices and banquets, allow one to regard a feast as another manifestation of a clan’s sacred space.

Own and Alien: Interactions between and within Sacred Spaces

Transformations in the clan sacred space happened not only in respect to the places of its manifestation, but, with the passage of time, also to the composition of the circle of humans who had access to it, and to the forms of this access.

During the Western Zhou the circle of persons mentioned in dedications on ritual bronzes was usually limited to kin relatives. Some late Western Zhou dedications mentioned “friends” (*pengyou*), but at this time this term apparently was also applied to the members of one’s own clan.⁸⁶

However, whereas the sacred space of a Western Zhou clan appeared to be self-contained and not related to sacred spaces of fellow clans, it was not completely isolated. An audience and receipt of gifts from a Zhou king in connection with one’s appointment to a post, promotion or the celebration of one’s merits in administrative or

The abundance of food and drink (*duo*) on the table ensures future blessings (*jia*). The best quality of the food and drink (*zhi*) shows that they coincide (*xie*) with one another, and thus symbolize harmony. The fact of possessing (*you*) such prosperity now assures the reproduction of the goods in due season (*shi*) in future. The food consumed at the banquet is not simply a meal, it is perceived not just physiologically, esthetically, or as a symbol of social status of a host. It is full of meaning, it serves as a means of practical manipulation of good fortune, and the banquet, above all its social functions, is a ritual of sympathetic magic, another way of controlling supernatural forces.

⁸⁴ Cf. ritual songs in the *Shi jing*: “Nan you jia yu”, “Zheng yue”, “Xing wei”, (*Shi jing*: 385, 449, 675).

⁸⁵ Consumed in the feast, the food, as Chang Kwang-chih pointed out, “could not be separated from the ritual” (cf. Chang Kwang-chih 1973: 117).

⁸⁶ Cf. Zhu Fenghan 1990: 311.

military service usually preceded the casting of a sacred object.⁸⁷ A charismatic ruler, the Son of Heaven, rewarded his subjects with gifts, appreciated no less than ancestral blessings, and to a high degree perceived as a result of ancestral benevolence. The lists of gifts included insignia of power, such as ceremonial clothes, weapons and carriage decorations, land possessions, human servants, metal for casting ritual utensils, wine for the offerings etc. Apart from bronze, other objects of a sacred nature – cowries and nephrite – were also distributed as gifts by the kings.⁸⁸ This way the Zhou kings shared their power and wealth, perceived of as being a result of their sacred communication with Heaven and their own ancestral spirits, with the nobility, and connected the sacred space of the royal house to those of aristocratic clans. Besides their direct functions, all these objects represented “fortune” and “happiness” for the recipients – the ability of a clan to keep its position in the state hierarchy, to earn distinctions by service, to get new awards, to use these to gladden ancestral spirits and thus to gain divine support. Commemorating the orders of sovereigns on the ritual objects used in ancestral temples and at feasts,⁸⁹ the aristocracy sanctified its loyalty to the central power and certified the sacredness of this bond. Thus, the sacred spaces of aristocratic clans under the Western Zhou period formed a radial network centered in the person of a reigning king, albeit not connected at the periphery.

The situation changed starting from the late Western Zhou and through the Springs and Autumns period. Due to the gradual weakening of central power, direct contacts between Zhou kings and the holders of domains became irregular, the system of royal donations declined,⁹⁰ and this radial network of ritual communication was disrupted. Local lords encroached upon the function of acting as donors of orders and awards. However, even if they became mighty and independent in their policies, they could not achieve the same level of sacred authority as was formerly attributed to the Zhou kings. The audiences and gifts received from the local rulers did not acquire an equivalent sacred aura, and thus were mentioned very seldom in contemporary bronze inscriptions, which then consisted mostly of dedications to ancestors and prayers for private happiness.

On the other hand, the inscriptions composed by local rulers or high officials from the states of the Springs and Autumns period often mention feasts involving participation of the owner’s subordinates, perhaps not related to his clan, and guests

⁸⁷ Cf. Shaughnessy 1991: 79-80; V. Kryukov 1997: 49-59.

⁸⁸ Cf. V. Kryukov 1997: 59-76.

⁸⁹ For documentary purposes the orders of Zhou kings were written on bamboo slips, while bronze inscriptions had meaning specifically in the context of sacred communication with the ancestors (cf. Falkenhausen 1993: 147).

⁹⁰ Cf. V. Kryukov 1997: 224-51.

(*bin*, *bin ke*).⁹¹ Guests, clearly distinguished from both clansmen and dependent associates, often were mentioned at the first, and thus most honorable, place in these inscriptions. Although such attention to guests, who might be leaders or envoys of neighboring states, can be explained through political and social reasons,⁹² I would suggest that ritual hospitality constituted at the same time an important part in the religious beliefs and practice of this time.

The concept “guest” in ancient Chinese texts was expressed as *bin*, *ke* or collectively *bin ke*.⁹³ The only, but frequent, definition associated with the terms *bin* and *ke* was *jia* – “fortunate”. I believe that the occurrence of this term in the context of ritual hospitality cannot be by chance.⁹⁴

Edward Shaughnessy’s analysis of different chronological layers of “The Book of Songs” distinguishes between two types of liturgy: the earlier represented a collective concelebration where all the attendants participated jointly, while the latter supposed a high specialization of ritual functions: ritual specialists and impersonators of ancestors took charge of the liturgy, while other attendants became alienated from immediate sacred communication and turned into spectators.⁹⁵ This change may have taken place at about the middle Western Zhou period.⁹⁶ It is noteworthy that mentions of guests appeared in the bronze inscriptions and ritual poetry also around the same time. I believe that these events are related to a certain extent.

During the late Western Zhou and Springs and Autumns period, rich and powerful aristocratic clans could (also due to political reasons) gather at their ritual performances not only their clansmen but foreigners as well. Since foreigners were not

⁹¹ An example is the text on the tripod-*ding* of Liang, the King of Xu state: “Xu-wang Liang used his fortunate metal to make this *ding*. [He will use it] to boil dried meat [in order] to feed the guests. Generations of sons and grandsons will keep it as a treasure” (LZJW VIII: 195).

⁹² While the Zhou state was gradually falling apart, the rising local powers were concerned with building inter-kingdom policies and creating unions. Rulers of the domains, higher and lesser officials, all were involved in the visit-entertainment exchange. The number of foreign guests indicated the political weight of a local court, and this can partly explain why they appeared in ritual dedications and poetry.

⁹³ The term *bin* usually was applied to more honored, distinguished, official guests, while *ke* was used with more modest, casual, private guests or visitors.

⁹⁴ Cf. Khayutina 2000.

⁹⁵ Cf. Shaughnessy 1997: 165-7.

⁹⁶ Shaughnessy associates this shift to the archaeologically witnessed change of ritual practice at the end of the Middle Western Zhou period, defined by Jessica Rawson as “ritual revolution”. It was marked by the reform of the standard sets of ritual bronzes used for sacrifices and funerals, and by the growth of vessels’ size, indicating an increase in the participants’ number, and the widening of the physical distance between the vessels and the spectators (cf. Rawson 1990: 93-6).

allowed to make sacrifices to the ancestors of the receiving clan,⁹⁷ specialization and assignment of different roles to the attendants of the ceremonies was inevitable. This specialization pushed forward the figure of an impersonator of an ancestor (*shi*) –, who received and consumed sacrificial food and wine before the eyes of spectators. After the *shi* was “drunk with good wine and full with fortunate (*jia*) food”,⁹⁸ he announced a “fortunate prognostication” (*jia*) to the host.

Guests were mentioned in ritual poetry also mainly in the context of feasts and eating. Participation of guests who made the “fortunate” food “work” might also be regarded as “fortunate”.

The poem *Xin nan shan* (“Truly, Southern Hills”) celebrates Great Yü, the inventor of agricultural husbandry, and the ancestors who continued to develop it. Rich harvests assure abundant sacrifices, which in turn advance happiness and longevity. The third stanza reads as follows:

The wine-millet and cooking-millet give good yield,
To be harvested by the descendant;
That he may have wine and food
To supply the Dead One (*shi*) and the guests (*bin*),
And so get life long-lasting.⁹⁹

According to this text, the holder of this agricultural feast would attain the divine gift of longevity on account of his hospitality to both the ancestral impersonator and the guests. Moreover, it is hard to differentiate between the *shi* and the guests, as these characters go together – *wo shi bin* – “my *shi* [and] guests” or “my *shi*-guests”. It seems plausible that for the author and readers of the poem the guests and the impersonator of ancestors did not substantially differ from each other.¹⁰⁰

A clue to this puzzle may be found in the very concept of *bin* – “guest”. In the Shang-Yin oracle bone inscriptions the character *bin* designated a type of sacred ceremony of entertainment for an ancestor or another deity by the Yin king.¹⁰¹ This

⁹⁷ Cf. *The Zuo zhuan* V.I: 157.

⁹⁸ Cf. “Ji zui” ode, *Shi jing*: 680.

⁹⁹ Cf. *The Book of Songs*: 196.

¹⁰⁰ Paul R. Goldin even suggests that the “lucky guest” (*jia bin*) was probably super-human, an ancestral spirit, who was hosted in a hierogamic ritual by a female priestess in the ancestral temple (cf. Goldin 1999: 41-6). Although some metaphors in the texts of the *Shi jing*, analyzed by Goldin, probably are related to the imagery of copulation, which is not surprising in the context of procreative magic at the feasts, I do not believe that the host of rituals referred to in these texts is a female. At least it is obvious that the authors of all inscriptions glorifying the “fortunate guests” on the bronze objects were male.

¹⁰¹ See Chen Mengjia 1956: 573; Chang Tsung-t'ung 1970: 138; Chang Kwang-chih 1983: 54.

original meaning may be also found in some texts dating back to the Western Zhou period.¹⁰² Later, the same character acquired new meanings, including that of the “guest”¹⁰³ proper.

I would guess that guests probably acted collectively as representatives of benevolent deities during sacrificial ceremonies and feasts. But when guests were mentioned at the honored place in dedications on ritual vessels, useable either in a feast or in the temple, it might mean that they shared with the *shi* the symbolic roles of ancestors.¹⁰⁴

Foreigners took part in the clan’s rituals in the capacity of transmitters of ritual gifts, while its members furnished the offerings. In this way the clan appropriated two outer spaces for its needs. One was of the dead, who had formerly belonged to the clan but then passed into the world of spirits, and the other of the living, who were not its members but could be involved by this means in the life of the clan. Thus, participation of foreigners – the guests – was desirable to the clan, and this is the reason why guests were regarded as “fortunate”. In this manner, the ancient Chinese clans overcame the local and blood-related insularity of their sacred spaces, and also benefited from interactions with foreigners in the religious sense.

¹⁰² Cf. Chen Mengjia, 1956: 573.

¹⁰³ Cf. V. Kryukov 1997: 87.

¹⁰⁴ Cf. Khayutina 2000. The ritual guides from later periods *Li ji* and *Yi li* contain information about the selection of a person to represent the dead in the mourning rituals. “Confucius said, ‘In sacrificing to a full-grown man for whom there have been the funeral rites, there must be such a representative, who should be grandson... If there be no grandson, someone of the same surname should be selected for the occasion’” (*The Book of Rites* I: 337). This rule was probably applied to private cases, while “a minister of a Great officer” acted as an impersonator of the dead for his ruler (*ibid*: 341). In the last case the *shi* was probably not a relative of the mourned. The chapter “Shi yu li” (“The sacrifices of repose for an ordinary officer”) of the *Yi li* states that in the case of mourning a man, a male impersonator should be chosen, while a female should be chosen for mourning a woman, and that the impersonator should be of different surname (*yi xing*) (Cf. *The Book of Etiquette and Ceremonial* II: 119. Steele translates the text as follows: “A man personates a dead man, and a woman a woman. In the latter case a woman of a different surname is chosen”). However, this requirement probably concerned not only the second case, but the first one as well. This makes the two sources contradictory, probably revealing that there was no single rule for the appointment of the *shi*. Another passage from the *Yi li* states, that “Then the host discourses with the senior guest as to which of the guests shall be appointed aide to the impersonator, the man selected being of a different surname from the personator” (*ibid*: 179). There would be no special reason to discuss the surname of the impersonator if it were the same as that of the deceased and the host. This means that the opportunity to represent the spirits of the host’s ancestors was open to guests who were not members of his clan. This could be possible especially at a feast that was related not to the mourning rites, but to agricultural festivities.

Conclusions

Ritual bronze vessels and bells were essential instruments of sacred communication and markers of sacred space. Consideration of them as material objects and the study of their *usus* allows one to make suggestions about the methods of construction and manipulation of the sacred space of an ancient Chinese clan. The analysis given above reveals the following:

1. The sacred space of a clan was constructed as private. It could exist and be used only within the social space of a unique human corporate body, although it could be recognized beyond these limits within the common mental space of ancient Chinese society.
2. Albeit the sacred space of one clan was private and protected from an unauthorized usage, it was not completely isolated from the outside world. During the Western Zhou period, the sacred spaces of noble clans were radially connected to the sacred space of the royal house, while under the Springs and Autumns period interactions between the sacred spaces of fellow clans were activated through the device of ritual hospitality.
3. The sacred space of a clan was produced primarily for the needs of sacred communication with the ancestral spirits. Therefore, its main manifestation was in the place dedicated for ancestral sacrifices, namely the ancestral temple. At the same time, it was used as an instrument of not only sacred, but also social communication, one hardly possible to separate from another. As far as clansmen worshipped some other supernatural forces besides the ancestral spirits, the functional field of the clan sacred space should allow for communication with these powers as well. On the other hand, when inter-clan interactions intensified, the sacred space was adjusted in order to conform to the new requirements of social life. These transformations of a clan sacred space apparently were manifested in its relocation from an ancestral temple to a ritual feast.
4. Sacred space is not a material but a socio-ideological construction. Therefore, it need not be inseparably bound to one fixed place, and could be moved in geographical space. It could be represented in various spatio-temporal realizations, such as in the sacred center of a clan, i.e. the ancestral temple, but also in other temporarily allocated places. These could even be located far beyond the territory owned and inhabited by the clansmen, when a group of clansmen needed to perform an act of sacred communication.

All these transformations of the sacred space of a clan demonstrate that it was a multi-functional instrument of maintaining the clan's homeostasis and achieving its various spiritual, social, political and economical needs, which could be adjusted in order to adapt to the development within this social unit and in society as a whole.

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¹⁰⁵ “The Book of Poetry” and “The Book of Songs” are two different translations of the same source – the *Shi jing* (for the original text see *Shi jing*). I have chosen one or other English translation for each text judged upon its adequacy when compared to the original.

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