

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-88447-1 - Bureaucracy and the State in Early China: Governing the Western Zhou

Li Feng

Excerpt

[More information](#)

Introduction

China was a bureaucratic empire for a long time in the past, and it still has one of the most complicated bureaucratic systems in the world in the present. In the Former Han dynasty (206 BC – 9 AD), the total number of officials in the service of the empire reached 130,285 (exclusive of military officials) in the year of 5 BC, as recorded in the *History of the Former Han Dynasty*.¹ It was remarked by historians of the Classical West that the Chinese Han Empire employed roughly twenty times as many officials as did the Roman Empire of the same time.² This figure, though it looks purely mathematical, suggests in its own historical context the fact that the Chinese in such an early stage of history had developed a culture that was deeply committed to ruling through constructing an elaborate bureaucratic machine. Needless to say, this profound reverence for bureaucratic order is still an essential part of contemporary Chinese culture. Because of its immense size and extremely long duration, the imperial Chinese bureaucracy has always been cited by social scientists as an example of the most thoroughly developed of ancient bureaucracies.³ How did bureaucracy originate in China? A number of recent studies

¹ For the total number of Han officials, see *Hanshu*, 19a, p. 743; see also Hans Bielenstein, *The Bureaucracy of Han Times* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1980), pp. 156, 205–6. This figure is strongly supported by a recent calculation conducted by Michael Loewe based on records on the bamboo strips from Yinwan, Jiangsu, that resulted in the account of a total of 99,214 officials at provincial level alone in 15–10 BC. See Michael Loewe, “The Administrative Documents from Yinwan: A Summary of Certain Issues Raised,” 4 (posted at the website of the Society for the Study of Early China [<http://www.lib.uchicago.edu/earlychina/res/>]; visited on February 15, 2005). On the magnitude of the Han government, see most recently, Michael Loewe, *The Government of the Qin and Han Empires, 221 BCE – 220 CE* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Co., 2006), pp. 71–85.

² See Peter Garnsey and Richard Saller, *The Roman Empire: Economy, Society, and Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), p. 20. Even a comparison of the above figure with the thoroughly bureaucratized later Roman Empire of the fourth and fifth centuries AD would yield four times more officials in the Han Empire than in the Roman Empire. See S. E. Finer, *The History of Government from the Earliest Times*, vol. 1: *Ancient Monarchies and Empires* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), pp. 65, 479. See also A. H. M. Jones, *The Later Roman Empire 284–602*, 2 vols. (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1964; repr., Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), p. 1057.

³ See, for instance, Eugene Kamenka, *Bureaucracy* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989), p. 22. Indeed, China has been recently again credited as the inventor of “modern-style bureaucracy,” while Europe is its re-inventor. See Finer, *The History of Government*, pp. 87–90. For such a view, see also earlier, Herrlee Creel, “The Beginning of Bureaucracy in China: The Origins of the *Hsien*,” *Journal of Asian Studies* 22 (1964), 162–63.

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-88447-1 - Bureaucracy and the State in Early China: Governing the Western Zhou

Li Feng

Excerpt

[More information](#)

2

Bureaucracy and the State in Early China

have indicated that the origin of the Chinese bureaucracy is to be found in the governmental practice of the Western Zhou state (1045–771 BC), one of the early dynastic royal states in Bronze-Age China before empire and the acknowledged fountainhead of the ancient Chinese political tradition.⁴ The period is rich in literary evidence, in particular the numerous contemporaneous inscriptional texts cast on bronze vessels, many of which have been brought to light by archeology in the past two decades. Archeology has also revealed the cultural and geographical perimeters of the Western Zhou state, centering on an increasingly clear political structure. Thus, the Western Zhou provides us with a critical time context in which we can investigate the conditions for the rise and early development of bureaucracy in China. It certainly also provides one of the well-documented contexts in which we can explore the concept of the state and the role of its government in the ancient world.

THE PURPOSE OF THIS BOOK

The purpose of this book is to discover the structural as well as operational characteristics of the Western Zhou government on the basis of the contemporaneous bronze inscriptions. These inscriptions cast on bronze vessels, large numbers of which have now been accumulated (13,371 in total by 2002 for all periods from Shang to Han, but the majority are from the Western Zhou) as the result of ongoing archeological excavations,⁵ contain authentic records of the Zhou government. In fact, many inscriptions preserve portions derived originally from the royal edicts issued during the court ceremony of appointment that were transferred onto the bronzes. Thus, the condition of sources of the Western Zhou period is quite similar to that of early Mesopotamia, where information on the archaic state and administration can be learned from the contemporaneous cuneiform texts. By examining these archaic records with conceptual tools developed by modern political scientists, I hope to achieve a systematical understanding as well as an analytical presentation of the fundamental characteristics of the Western Zhou government as the first bureaucracy in China, and one of the oldest bureaucracies in the ancient world. Through the study of the Western Zhou government, I hope also to clarify the nature of the Western Zhou state and the unique ways in which it achieved political authority

⁴ See Cho-yun Hsu and Katheryn M. Linduff, *Western Zhou Civilization* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988), pp. 245–49, 54–56; Edward L. Shaughnessy, “Western Zhou History,” in *The Cambridge History of Ancient China: From the Origins of Civilization to 221 BC*, ed. Michael Loewe and Edward L. Shaughnessy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 323–26; Li Feng, “‘Offices’ in Bronze Inscriptions and Western Zhou Government Administration,” *Early China* 26–27 (2001–2002), 51–54.

⁵ A total of 12,113 inscribed bronzes are included in the *Yin Zhou jinwen jicheng*, 18 vols. (Beijing: Zhonghua, 1984–94), of which roughly 350 are long inscriptions with more than fifty characters. Another 1258 recently discovered inscriptions are collected in the *Jinchu Yin Zhou jinwen jilu*, ed. Liu Yu and Lu Yan (Beijing: Zhonghua, 2002).

Introduction

3

and exercised administrative control, exemplifying the early royal states in China before the rise of empire.

All studies begin with a set of questions. The questions that have much motivated the present study and that will be subsequently discussed in this book include the following: What was the social and political reality in the Western Zhou that had conditioned the rise of the bureaucratic way of government? Was it a strategy adopted by the Zhou state to cope with outside stress caused by either the need for expansion or the loss of territory through the effective internal refinement of administration, or was it a process driven by internal new forces emerging from structural changes in Zhou society? What was the rationale behind the organization of the Western Zhou government, and in what way and to what extent had the functions of offices become specialized and their operation regularized? How was the relationship between the Zhou king as the ordering authority and the bureaucratic body of the Zhou government constructed and modified over time? Were there discernible official hierarchies in the Zhou government providing the principle by which administrative authority was also stratified? What was the nature of government service during the Western Zhou, or what was the social background of the Zhou officials selected for such service? What was the relationship between the central court in the Zhou capital and the numerous regional governments? What role did the regional states play in the overall political operation of the Western Zhou state at large? How did the Western Zhou bureaucracy transform or evolve into imperial bureaucracy, or was there such a process of linear transformation and evolution at all? Ultimately, was there awareness among the Western Zhou officials of the institution of the “Zhou state” rather than the royal house? What was the nature of the “Western Zhou state”?

Not all of these questions that one can legitimately ask about the Western Zhou can be satisfactorily answered on the basis of our present evidence. However, I believe that the current condition of our sources does allow us to answer many of these questions in such a way as to acquire a general understanding of the ways in which political authority was achieved through systematized administration. In this regard, the present study will be one that lays out clearly what we know and what we do not about the many interrelated aspects of the Western Zhou political system. As such, it certainly presents the first book-long analysis of the Western Zhou government based on the contemporaneous inscriptive evidence.

BUREAUCRACY, WEBER, AND CHINA

What is bureaucracy? Can the concept of “bureaucracy” be applied to an early state in China such as the Western Zhou? The discussion among the political scientists of the concept of bureaucracy and its applications in the twentieth century has not moved too much beyond the conceptual net cast

by Max Weber (1864–1920) at the turn of the century. However, Weber, the father figure of “bureaucracy,” never produced a statement that could be considered a definition of it, but has characterized in a number of places in his writing how “bureaucracy” should ideally work.⁶ These characteristics have been summarized by Martin Albrow in his most systematical modern exposition of Weber’s theory of bureaucracy and its influence on social sciences, including:⁷

1. The staff members are personally free, observing only the impersonal duties of their offices.
2. There is a clear hierarchy of offices.
3. The functions of the offices are clearly specified.
4. Officials are appointed on the basis of a contract.
5. They are selected on the basis of a professional qualification, ideally substantiated by a diploma gained through examination.
6. They have a money salary, and usually pension rights. The salary is graded according to position in the hierarchy. The official can always leave the post, and under certain circumstances it may also be terminated.
7. The official’s post is his sole or major occupation.
8. There is a career structure, and promotion is possible either by seniority or merit, and according to the judgment of superiors.
9. The official may appropriate neither the post nor the resources which go with it.
10. He is subject to a unified control and disciplinary system.

However, these characters make only a paradigm⁸ – the *ideal or pure type* of “rational bureaucracy” – that, according to Weber himself, was only closely approximated by the modern governments and only in the most advanced capitalist societies.⁹ It is clear that Weber’s description of the *pure type* of bureaucracy was based on modern Western governments and, as pointed out by David Beetham, reflects the perspectives of the liberal and non-bureaucratic European elites in the special intellectual context of the nineteenth century.¹⁰ Weber, in that regard, clearly saw the “rational-legal” authority of the modern state that promotes impersonal rules as the foundation of modern bureaucracy, and even considered the process of bureaucratization as having paralleled the progress of modern

⁶ For Weber’s theory of bureaucracy, see most importantly, Max Weber, “Bureaucracy,” in *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, trans. and ed. H. H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills (New York: Oxford University Press, 1946), pp. 196–244.

⁷ See Martin Albrow, *Bureaucracy* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1970), pp. 44–45. In a more simplistic way, other scholars such as Richard Hall summarized six points of Weber’s characterization of bureaucracy, including division of labor, hierarchy of authority, system of rules, system of procedure, impersonal relation, and promotion on condition of competence. See Richard H. Hall, “The Concept of Bureaucracy: An Empirical Assessment,” *The American Journal of Sociology* 69.1 (1963), 32–40.

⁸ See Kamenka, *Bureaucracy*, p. 2. ⁹ See Weber, “Bureaucracy,” p. 196.

¹⁰ David Beetham, *Bureaucracy*, 2nd edn (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1996), p. 6.

Introduction

5

democracy.¹¹ On the other hand, scholars have also identified a Marxist influence on Weber, very clearly in his characterization of bureaucracy as an institution that separates officials from the means of administration, closely paralleling Marx's notion of separation of workers from the means of production.¹²

While characterizing the *ideal* bureaucracy in the modern context, if not as a part of modernity, Weber clearly took also a historical-sociological approach, identifying a number of pre-modern bureaucracies: (a) Egypt during the New Empire; (b) the later Roman Principate; (c) the Roman Catholic Church; (d) China since the Qin unification.¹³ Weber called them "patrimonial bureaucracies," especially in the case of China, in contrast to the *pure* form of bureaucracy, because they employed "unfree" officials and were based on "traditional authority" but not the modern "rational-legal authority"; in the Chinese case, although officials were selected for qualification through written examination, they were qualified for humanistic learning and not the technical proficiency needed for administrative work.¹⁴ Despite these differences, Weber still regarded them as "distinctly developed and quantitatively large bureaucracies." In other words, even for Weber, bureaucracies do not have to be *ideal* or *pure* to be called such, and China had developed bureaucracies. Therefore, the issue is: How bureaucratic does a "bureaucracy" have to be? This aspect of Weber's theory certainly left ways open for further research.

The study of bureaucracy after Weber has taken many new directions, but has evolved in two main ways. The first took the form of debate against Weber, questioning on a number of key issues the validity of his characterizations as criteria even for bureaucracies in the modern European states.¹⁵ The severest case has been brought against Weber with regard to the total lack of concern with bureaucratic inefficiency: there have been a number of studies that show why and how the "superior bureaucratic machine" as described by Weber can instead result in actual administrative ineffectiveness and even failure.¹⁶ Through such debate, scholars have significantly modified Weber's original descriptions and have produced new definitions of bureaucracy, such as:

"Bureaucracy" means a centrally directed, systematically organized and hierarchically structured staff devoted to the regular, routine and efficient

¹¹ See Weber, "Bureaucracy," pp. 225–26.

¹² See *ibid.*, p. 197. See also Albrow, *Bureaucracy*, p. 41.

¹³ See Weber, "Bureaucracy," p. 204.

¹⁴ On this distinction, see Max Weber, *The Theory of Social and Economic Organizations*, trans. and ed. A. M. Henderson and Talcott Parsons (Glencoe: Free Press, 1947), pp. 62–63, 331–35, 351; see also Richard Bendix, "Bureaucracy," in *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*, ed. David Sills (New York: Crowell and Macmillan, 1968), pp. 206–7.

¹⁵ For a synthesis of these debates, see Albrow, *Bureaucracy*, pp. 50–61.

¹⁶ See David Nickinovich, "Bureaucracy," in *Encyclopedia of Sociology*, ed. Edgar F. Borgatta (New York: Macmillan Reference USA, 2000), pp. 233–34; Albrow, *Bureaucracy*, pp. 89–91.

carrying out of large-scale administrative tasks according to policies dictated by rulers or directors standing outside and above the bureaucracy. Such a staff, as Weber rightly saw, tends to become rule-bound, functionally specialized, elevating impersonality and *esprit de corps*.¹⁷

This definition suggested by Eugene Kamenka (1928–95) considers most of the widely accepted modern meanings of bureaucracy and emphasizes the core structural and operational characteristics of the bureaucratic government. It is adopted here as the working definition of bureaucracy in the present study.

The second way in which the post-Weberian study of bureaucracy has evolved is directed at examining the internal properties of the bureaucratic organization. Since no actual bureaucracies had ever matched exactly the Weberian *ideal* or *pure* type,¹⁸ there is certainly the issue of *degree* to which they approximated it. In a number of studies called “empirical assessments,” Weber’s characterization was recast as a number of variables including, most importantly, division of labor, hierarchy of authority, system of rules, system of procedure, impersonality, and competence, and bureaucracy is thus viewed as having existed in degrees along these variables (or dimensions).¹⁹ So, the degree of bureaucratization can be actually calculated quantitatively, as exemplified by the Aston University project.²⁰ It should be noted that all of these studies were based on modern governmental and industrial organizations, but their implication surely goes beyond the confines of the modern period. Not only should all ancient bureaucracies be studied in the same way, but all the variables of bureaucracy should and can also be studied historically to show how they appeared and grew in degree.

Putting China in this context (not that China has been left out of the modern discussion of bureaucracy), in fact, the Australian political scientist Eugene Kamenka has written a long treatment of the development of bureaucratic elements in China, drawing mainly on the works of Etienne Balazs and Hans Bielenstein on the imperial Chinese bureaucracy and Herrlee Creel’s study of the pre-imperial Chinese bureaucracy.²¹ Creel is widely acknowledged for his study of the origin of the territorial administrative unit *xian* (county) in the sixth century BC, which he considered as the beginning of bureaucratic administration in China prior

¹⁷ See Kamenka, *Bureaucracy*, p. 157.

¹⁸ See Stanley Udy, “‘Bureaucracy’ and ‘Rationality’ in Weber’s Organization Theory: An Empirical Study,” *American Sociological Review* 24.6 (1959), 792.

¹⁹ For a comparison of different variables given by different scholars, see Hall, “The Concept of Bureaucracy: An Empirical Assessment,” 34.

²⁰ See D. S. Pugh *et al.*, “Dimensions of Organization Structure,” *Administrative Science Quarterly* 13.1 (1968), 65–105. See also, Nickinovich, “Bureaucracy,” p. 232.

²¹ See Kamenka, *Bureaucracy*, pp. 22–39. See also Etienne Balazs, *Chinese Civilization and Bureaucracy: Variations on a Theme* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1964); Herrlee Creel, “The Beginning of Bureaucracy in China.”

Introduction

7

to the unification by Qin in 221 BC, the time that Weber regarded as the beginning of the Chinese “patrimonial bureaucracy.” Kamenka further traced the origin of bureaucratic officials to as early as the Shang dynasty (c. 1500–1046 BC). Unfortunately, his treatment of Western Zhou officials as “feudal administrators” was completely misguided by Creel’s conception of the Western Zhou government as “feudalism,”²² and his presentation of the Shang and Western Zhou states was very often inaccurate.

A generally better-informed presentation of the Chinese form of bureaucracy was written recently by the later British political scientist S. E. Finer in his masterful and highly praised comparative study of “all” governments.²³ While granting the Chinese bureaucracy of Han times a prominent position as the earliest “modern-style bureaucracy” in world history that was rationally organized, trained, and paid, which he recounted in detail with regard to both its central apparatus and local administrative framework, Finer was apparently unable to demonstrate its historical development in the pre-Qin periods. Simply, such scholarship was not available to him. Like Eugene Kamenka, Finer’s treatment of the Western Zhou state shows the strong influence of Creel’s “feudal” interpretation, which I have recently examined in detail and have shown to be an inadequate characterization of Western Zhou China.²⁴ Working on the “feudal” premise, and indeed unlike Kamenka, Finer shows little interest in considering the significance of the Western Zhou government.²⁵ However, as new archeological discoveries in the last thirty years have outdated many of Creel’s theses on the Western Zhou, it is important and indeed inevitable that any study of the origin of bureaucracy in China must take serious consideration of the governmental practice of the Western Zhou. The historical position of this crucial period in the development of bureaucracy and bureaucratic government in China can now be reasserted on the basis of new evidence.

²² Creel clearly saw “bureaucracy” and “feudalism” as two opposing institutions and contrasted them in the following words: “‘Feudalism’ is a system of government in which a ruler personally delegates limited sovereignty over portions of his domain to vassals. ‘Bureaucracy’ is a system of administration by means of professional functionaries, whose functions are more or less definitely prescribed. The distinction depends chiefly upon the locus of initiative and decision. A feudal vassal, in governing his domain, may do anything that he is not expressly forbidden to do. A bureaucratic official may not properly do anything that is not part of his prescribed function.” See *ibid.*, 163–64.

²³ See Finer, *The History of Government*, pp. 473–527. For two reviews of Finer’s book, see G. E. Aylmer, “Review: *The History of Government from the Earliest Times. Vol. I: Ancient Monarchies and Empires. Vol. II: The Intermediate Ages. Vol. III: Empires, Monarchies and the Modern State* (by S. E. Finer),” *The English Historical Review* 113.453 (1998), 953–55; Donald A. Bailey, “Review: *The History of Government from the Earliest Times* (by S. E. Finer),” *Sixteenth Century Journal* 30.2 (1999), 601–3.

²⁴ See Li Feng, “‘Feudalism’ and Western Zhou China: A Criticism,” *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 63.1 (2003), pp. 115–44.

²⁵ See Finer, *The History of Government*, pp. 488–50.

THE STUDY OF THE WESTERN ZHOU GOVERNMENT

Compared to other aspects of the Western Zhou, the Zhou government has received relatively more attention in previous scholarship, especially in China and Japan. However, the contribution of this scholarship has been limited by a number of key factors. The first negating factor is the reliance on some later ritual texts such as the *Zhouli* 周禮 “Zhou Rites,” known also as *Zhouguan* 周官 “Zhou Offices.” The text registers a total of 379 officials with their duty specifications divided into sections, each bearing the name of a season or of Heaven and Earth.²⁶ The text purports to describe in detail the royal government institution of the Western Zhou time, but it is nothing but a Utopian construction by political philosophers of the Confucian School in the late Warring States period.²⁷ Since the publication of Guo Moruo’s insightful study of the text in 1932,²⁸ certainly most scholars who use the *Zhouli* to study the Western Zhou government are aware of the pseudo-historiographical nature of the text, but it has been quite normal for scholars to use it as a manual to interpret the functions of the Western Zhou offices. To some degree, such references can even be justified because the text does describe many offices that we find in the Western Zhou bronze inscriptions, and it has also been suggested that even some archaic terminology as well as graphs are preserved in the text.²⁹ However, given the highly ritualistic nature of the text, and given the fact the named offices are constructed within a projected system that could be very different from that of the Western Zhou, such references could sometimes be very misleading, especially when evidence in the bronze inscriptions has not been fully analyzed; very unfortunately, this seems to have often been the case.

Secondly, there seems to have been a significant lack of conceptual tools in previous studies of the Western Zhou government, particularly in Chinese and Japanese scholarship. No study there has been conducted in the light of contemporary discussions of bureaucratic government, and no scholar has bothered to even bring Weber into the context. For this reason, most of the studies, as exemplified by Zhang Yachu and Liu Yu’s 1986 book,³⁰ have proceeded in a way the main purpose of which was to determine the specific functions associated with each official title that appears in Western Zhou sources. Such studies fall largely in the category

²⁶ The original entries in the “Winter Offices” section had long been lost and were substituted with thirty-one officials in charge of craftsmanship. See *Zhouli* 39, pp. 905–42.

²⁷ In Western history, one may think of the *Notitia Dignitatum*, which describes the offices of the Eastern and Western Roman Empires after the reform of Diocletian, but the *Zhouli* is bound to be more illusive and ritually constructed. On the date and textual history of the *Zhouli*, see Michael Loewe (ed.), *Early Chinese Texts: A Bibliographical Guide* (Berkeley: Institute of East Asian Studies, University of California, 1993), pp. 24–32.

²⁸ See Guo Moruo, “*Zhouguan zhizhi*,” in *Jinwen congkao* (Tokyo: Bunkydō, 1932), pp. 80–87.

²⁹ On this point, see Chen Hanping, *Xi Zhou ceming zhidu yanjiu* (Beijing: Xuelin, 1986), pp. 208–19.

³⁰ See Zhang Yachu and Liu Yu, *Xi Zhou jinwen guanzhi yanjiu* (Beijing: Zhonghua, 1986).

Introduction

9

of traditional encyclopedic study of the “system of offices” (*guanzhi* 官制) that goes back to at least some medieval works.³¹ Efforts have been made to recover the overall structure of the Western Zhou government, such as in the works by Yang Kuan and Kimura, who have brought to light some important organizational features of the Western Zhou government.³² However, while such studies contributed some important insight on the structural characteristics of the Western Zhou government, they also left out other aspects of the Western Zhou government, especially its operational characteristics. Certainly, the study of the Western Zhou government is much more than just the recovery of the system of offices, and only a fully fledged study addressing the various interrelated aspects can succeed in capturing its nature.

Thirdly, very often, the Western Zhou government was studied in isolation from the broad context of Western Zhou society, with little attention paid to the way in which the government was embedded in the overall political system of the Zhou state and the way in which the administrative structure was related to the distribution of power. Many of the studies were conducted within the Marxist framework in which the Western Zhou was conceived as either a slave or a feudal society. However, Marxist theory provides little if anything about the internal organizational and operational principles of government as part of the “superstructure” in a class-divided society. This lack of a theoretical foundation has led to a major break in Marxist interpretation between the construction of the Western Zhou government and the general configuration of the Western Zhou state. Certainly, the Marxist interpretation of the Western Zhou either as a slave-owning society or a feudal society has serious problems in itself that cannot be solved without reexamining the intellectual basis of these theoretical models.³³

Western study of the Western Zhou government has taken a much broader, and at the same time over-ambitious, approach as so manifestly shown in the work of Herrlee Creel. In his renowned book, Creel wrote three chapters dealing with three important aspects of the Western Zhou government: organization, finance, and justice.³⁴ At the same time, he wrote a long chapter on the so-called “Western Zhou feudalism,”

³¹ Such study has been an integral part of the versatile learning in medieval China; for instance, both the *Tōngdian* 通典 and the *Taiping yulan* 太平樂覽 offer a section on the organization of offices. See *Tōngdian*, 5 vols. (Beijing: Zhonghua, 1988), pp. 462–1119; *Taiping yulan*, 4 vols. (Beijing: Zhonghua, 1960), 4, pp. 981–1260. Studies by the Qing scholars of such official titles are best found in Huang Benji, *Lidai zhiguan biao* (Shanghai: Zhonghua, 1965). For a modern study of historical official titles, see Deng Delong, *Zhongguo lidai guanzhi* (Wuhan: Wuhan daxue, 1990).

³² See Yang Kuan, “Xi Zhou zhongyang zhengquan jigou poxi,” *Lishi yanjiu* 1984.1, 78–91; adopted in Yang Kuan, *Xi Zhou shi* (Shanghai: Shanghai renmin, 1999), pp. 315–35. See also Kimura Hideumi, “Sei Shū kansei no kihon kōzō,” *Shigaku zasshi* 94.1 (1985), 38–66.

³³ On this point, see recently, Li Feng, “Ouzhou Feudalism de fansi jiqi dui Zhongguo lishi fenqi de yiyi,” *Zhongguo xueshu* 24 (2005), 8–29.

³⁴ See Herrlee Creel, *The Origins of Statecraft in China*, vol. 1: *The Western Zhou Empire* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970), pp. 101–93.

providing a general theoretical framework for the whole book.³⁵ While seeing the Western Zhou government as structurally confused and operationally chaotic, Creel had the clear idea that the centralized administrative control was set up through, for instance, the implementation of a unified taxation system.³⁶ While the first view was necessitated by his “feudalism” premise, under which the Western Zhou government had to be judged non-bureaucratic or at best a “proto-bureaucracy” as in any “feudal” state, the second point actually created a contradiction with it and led to his suggestion of a “dilemma,” which he attributed to the Zhou state. Creel indeed had a hard time reconciling the two poles by making Zhou feudalism more “limited” and at the same time the Zhou centralized royal control more “elusive.”³⁷ Creel raised many meaningful questions regarding the Western Zhou state and its government that are still inspiring today, but in answering those questions, based indeed on very little evidence he also created a massive contradiction, owing much to his misconceived theoretical framework, “feudalism.”

Earlier, Cho-yun Hsu paid special attention to the actual workings of the Zhou administration. In an English article published in Taiwan in 1966, Hsu made a number of insightful observations such as the existence of jurisdictions attached to established offices, the succession of assistants to senior officials, and a possible separation of the royal household from the government.³⁸ Although at the time when these good points were made, and in the three decades that followed, the support of more inscriptional evidence was needed, such as that which the present study provides, it must be recognized that Hsu’s inquiry suggested a new dimension in the study of the Western Zhou government. Then, in his 1986 book co-authored with Katheryn Linduff, while accepting Creel’s position on “feudalism,” the two authors clearly thought that the Western Zhou government was a bureaucracy and spoke of a process of “bureaucratization” from the mid-Western Zhou, taking place first in the specialization of the official roles associated with the Secretariat.³⁹

Most recently, Edward Shaughnessy has also spoken about the process of bureaucratization of the Western Zhou government, which he thought had started first in the expansion of military offices as a part of the so-called “Middle Western Zhou Reforms.”⁴⁰ My own work was previously focused on recovering the operational characteristics of the Western Zhou government. Quite contrary to Creel’s view on Western Zhou government, I have found that there were certainly bureaucratic rules that had developed in

³⁵ See *ibid.*, pp. 317–87. ³⁶ See *ibid.*, pp. 114–21, 134, 152–53.

³⁷ For such discussion, see *ibid.*, pp. 423–24.

³⁸ See Cho-yun Hsu, “Some Working Notes on the Western Zhou Government,” *Zhongyang yanjiuyuan lishi yuyan yanjiusuo jikan* 36 (1966), 513–24.

³⁹ See Hsu and Linduff, *Western Zhou Civilization*, pp. 245–49, 54–56.

⁴⁰ See Shaughnessy, “Western Zhou History,” pp. 323–26.