The character tú 畫 has been the object of a number of fine studies surveying its usages in Warring States, Qin-Hán and post-Hán edited texts. These tend to stress the gradual development of the opposition between the nominal or verbal semantics commonly encountered with tú on the one hand, viz. ‘plan, chart, design, diagram, picture’ (n.) vs. ‘to plan, chart, map; consider, lay out; draw’ (vb.), and the words represented by shū 書 < *syo < *s-ta23 ‘to write’ → ‘what is written; document, letter, book’ on the other.4 This development is closely interwoven with the emergence of a theory associating tú-representations with the so-called ‘river-charts’ (hétú 河圖) and, slightly later,5 the ‘luò-writings’ (luòshū 洛書) since the late Warring States and Early Hán periods. In a second step, obliquely related to the process of ‘eu-

1 For various helpful comments and pointers I wish to thank Vera Dorofeeva-Lichtman (Paris), Rodo Pfister (Basel), and Axel Schüssler (Sedro-Woolley).
2 Reconstructions throughout this paper are cited in the following order and format: Pinyin transcription < Middle Chinese (MC) *transcription according to the system of Baxter 1992 < Old Chinese (OC) *reconstruction according to the system of Baxter (1992, including the changes in Baxter 1995), as emended by Sagart (1999). The “Pulleyblankian” A/B syllable-type contrast underlying the Middle Chinese division (等 děng) distinctions, represented by the presence or absence of *-j- in Baxter (1992), as vowel length in Baxter (1995), and by phonetically realization-neutral *h-superscripts in Sagart (1999: 42-49) is rewritten here by doubling the initial consonant of the root in type-A syllables. This follows a recent suggestion made by Baxter and Sagart (p.c., Chicago, May 2003), broadly indicating that the origins of the distinction are likely to be connected to the initial part of the syllable, rather than to the rhyme. Since it is possible that the final glottal stop (*-ʔ) also encoded morphological functions in OC (cf. Zhèng-Zhāng 2000: 18, 2001: 66 and Schuessler 2002: 36-42), it is rewritten here as *-q, if occurring in this suffixal position.
3 Huáng Shùxiàn (2003: 62/#17, 236/#7, 291/#1), reconstructs this word as *qhljə, applying ideas on the development of uvular initials and lateral medials outlined in Pān Wūyuán (2000: 333-350, 267-288). I see no good evidence for this assumption internal to OC in this case, and will therefore maintain a dental reconstruction throughout the GSR 45 series. This preserves the intriguing, if possibly contingent, apophonic contrast between ‘written’ (shū < *syy < *s-ta) and ‘oral’ (詩 shī < *syi < *s-ta) modes of OC literary production.
5 For a detailed reconstruction of the chronology see Zhū Zhēn (1995: 28-29).
hemerisation” in the realm of myth-construction and re-construction in historiographical narratives of the state and associated ritual procedures during this period,6 these symbol-bearing and inevitably “revealed” artefacts7 were instrumentalized in a plethora of divinatory and cosmological functions, and linked to the origins of numeracy and literacy,8 i.e. to a core discourse of political legitimacy and authority in the “empire of the text”.9 This eventually led to a vast body of divinatory tū-literature since the Eastern Hán period, and gradually eclipsed an earlier complementary relationship of tū with xiàng 象 < *zialq ‘image, icon, representation’.10

To add a few stitches to the semantic web entangling the word(s) represented by tū, this essay seeks to integrate recent advances in the reconstruction of Old Chinese phonology and morphology into a micro-study of its pre-medieval inscriptive usages (1.), but it refrains from perpetuating abundantly available speculations about the “iconic values” of the earliest attested character shapes. Exploring possible OC word-families11 of tū, which connect the word to notions of ‘position’, ‘orderredness’, and ‘display’ (2.), I will finally review more remote extra-Sinitic affiliations proposed for the word in the literature (3.), to conclude with a short comment on the typology of its semantic development (4.).

1. EARLY INSCRIPTIONAL ATTESTATIONS OF TŪ

The character tū has not been convincingly identified in the extant oracle bone inscriptions so far. However, it occurs as the personal name of a certain young nobleman ‘zi X’ 子$page$ in three short bronze inscriptions mentioning only the vessel type apart from this name.

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7 It is likely that at least hētū originally referred to some type of a treasured natural stone object or an artefact, see Wáng Kǎ (1994: 109-110).
8 For overviews of this process and the origins of the enigmatic terms hētū and luòshū see Saso (1978), Zhū Zhēn (1995), Lǐ Lìxīn (1995), and the texts translated in Reiter (1990: 318-321).
9 Cf. Lewis (1999); the convenient label is borrowed from Connery (1999).
11 The term “word-family”, which is often employed loosely in the sense of “group of words or characters belonging semantically and/or etymologically together” in the literature, will be used here in a more formalized fashion as: “words, which if stripped of all affixal material, and irrespective of the way they are represented in characters (i.e. whether they share a phonophoric or not), have an identical lexical root.”