

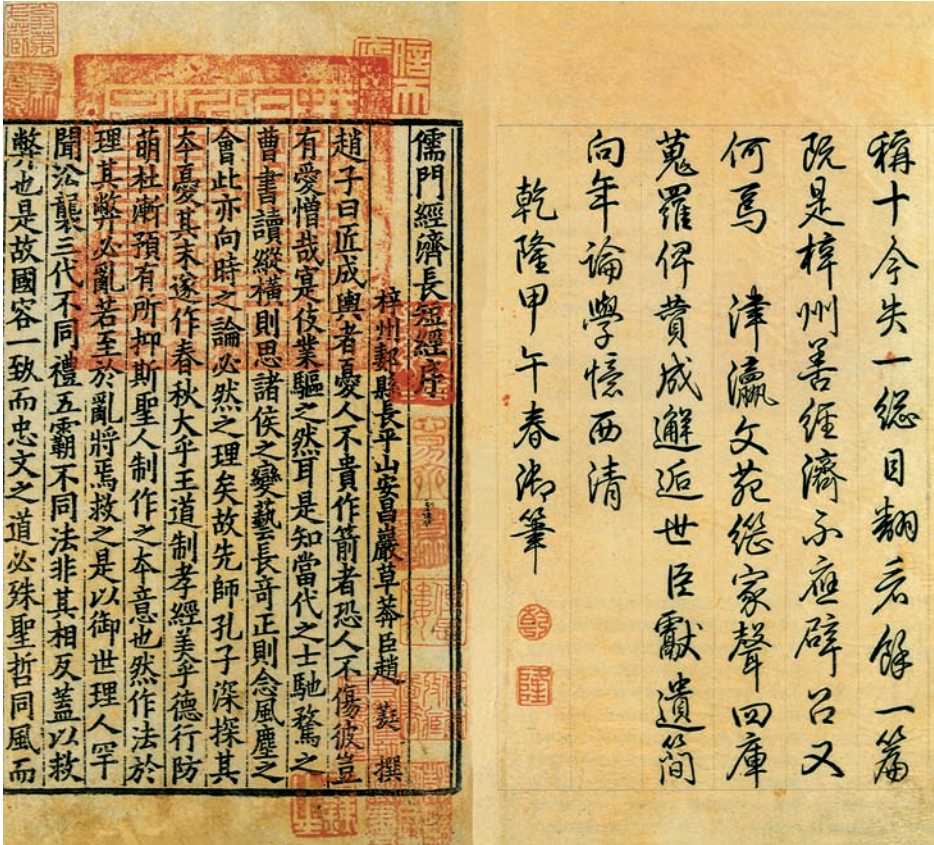
光頭赤足垂耳滿腹心廣體胖汝口何自佛中
 撒聖甘猶曾未對人唯笑不作威福在持布袋七解歸香
 袋在何物或曰牙銀吾高爾計何不撒之火陸傳年未年
 體聖聖普救有念曾生辨仇哭非慈者人呼爾善之詳
 活佛我斥爾為行屍走肉以賴之老姑圖爾像
 為眾生玩爾時我言母但竊天祿

昨嘉行市時見空門中富家私高華志
 袋中藏寶皆行云法法種種而非別舍也書鐵并記



身披百衲衣何心
 食而肥亦足踏偏
 大千界打騰箕踞忘
 機者人名利馬年走
 終自嗜笑爾已布紫
 中台乾坤在訪靈公
 鏡為友 甲寅孟秋月
 吳昌碩畫

Painting by Wu Changshuo – Monk with a Sack (1914)



Block-printed edition of the *Classic of Long and Short Scriptures* of the Northern Song Dynasty. On the right is an inscription by Emperor Qianlong of the Qing Dynasty, below which are two seals. The round one bears the character “乾” (*qian*), and the square one the character “隆” (*long*). On the left side on the top of the book cover is a large imperial seal; the others are mostly collectors’ seals.



The Historical Development of Chinese Seals

The Earliest Seals

Seals of the Spring and Autumn and
Warring States Periods

Qin and Han Dynasty Seals, and
Their Decline

Separation of Official Seals and
Private Seals, and the Appearance of the
Art of Seal Cutting



The Earliest Seals

China's earliest seal dates back to the Shang Dynasty. It is a fragment of pottery unearthed in the ruins of that dynasty in Anyang, Henan Province, as mentioned above. The piece is only half of a square seal, and was verified as a seal when three small similar seals of bronze were found in the 1930s. The inscriptions on all these seals are cut in relief.

Seals of the Spring and Autumn and Warring States Periods

During the Spring and Autumn and Warring States periods (722-221 BC), treaties and agreements between the various states, which were constantly at war with each other, called for ratification and guarantees, and these were provided by means of seals. It became the custom to issue a seal to a newly appointed official. At the same time, traders clinched business deals with



1 2 3

1. Ancient seal of the Warring States Period, bearing the characters “康都右司马” (*kang du you si ma*, or Right Minister of War for Kangdu)
2. Appeal and response in seal characters
3. A private seal of the Warring States Period. It is also called a “small seal.” The characters on it read “周常” (*zhou chang*), a name.

seals. Both the official and individual seals were called 玺 (*xi*). This was the first period of development of Chinese seals.

During the Warring States Period (475-221 BC), China already boasted a mature bronze casting industry, thus enabling the casting of bronze seals.

Some had inscriptions engraved on the faces of the cast bronze pieces, but most seals were cast with the inscriptions already on them.



Chiseled seal “振威将军章” (*zhen wei jiang jun zhang*, or Power-spreading General's seal)

Qin and Han Dynasty Seals, and Their Decline

After Emperor Qin Shihuang unified China in 221 BC, he adopted a series of policies and measures to consolidate his rule. As mentioned above, henceforth only the emperor's seal was called a 玺 *xi*, while the seals of the officials and common people were called 印 *yin*. Moreover, there were also strictly graded differences in the seals for different classes of people, including different types of handles and strings for attaching the seals to belts, etc.

The Han Dynasty inherited the



Mount Tai stone carving, Qin Dynasty, with seal characters in the *xiaozhuan* style