

## SAGE KING YU 禹 AND THE BIN GONG XU 鬻公盪

Constance A. Cook

By the beginning of the Chinese imperial age, in the third century B.C.E., the figure of Sage King Yu 禹 in transmitted texts was a symbol of control over and of the power to reshape land and government. Even before then, during the Warring States Period (481–221 B.C.E.), Yu was cited as the founder of the Xia 夏 Dynasty in the popular scheme of evolutionary government, the “Three Dynasties” (*sandai* 三代). Recent discovery of an inscribed bronze used in worship of a spirit-founder Yu reveals a much older role in ancient harvest and thanksgiving rituals. Yu was the servant of Heaven. He reshaped the land to make it suitable for agriculture and set in motion the spark of “de” 德 (a type of lineage potency) to the local people, who subsequently became fertile and good farmers. Yu ignited the spark through the performance of a “matching” ritual to Heaven. The people sustained it through annual ceremonies demonstrating their success in farming, paying back the founder ancestor with sacrificial feasts. The bronze inscription version of the tale dates back to around the mid-ninth century B.C.E., towards the end of the reign of King Xiao 孝, when there was no mention of “dynasties,” and ancestor worship was still key to power.

With the rise of the Ru 儒 scholarly definition of classic texts and the importance of regime-change narratives, particularly during the Han 漢 (206 B.C.E.–220 C.E.), Yu began to have a split personality. There was the Ruist model and also the popular earth god. Mark E. Lewis has shown that the worship of the figure of Yu had a vast appeal throughout early China, reaching as far west as Sichuan 四川 and east to the Pacific Coast. On one level, he was a good administrator and, on the other, he was a divine force that fixed disorders in physical systems, such as the environment and the human body. On a popular level, Yu played an occult role in shamanistic exorcism and other agricultural rituals.<sup>1</sup> These dual aspects of the Great Yu 大禹, also discussed by Marcel Granet, Don Harper, and others,<sup>2</sup> led Vera Dorofeeva-Lichtmann to show how the

1. Mark E. Lewis, *The Flood Myths of Early China* (Albany: State University of New York, 2006); “The Mythology of Early China,” in *Early Chinese Religion*, Vol. 1, ed. J. Lagerwey and M. Kalinowski (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 543–94.

2. See Marcel Granet, *Danses et légendes de la Chine Ancienne*, corrected and annotated by Rémi Mathieu, 3rd ed. (Paris, 1926, rpts. 1956, 1994); See Donald Harper’s introduction in *Early Chinese Medical Literature: the Mawangdui Medical Manuscripts* (London:

two roles resulted in different textual mapping strategies associated with Yu or cosmic plans. She has revealed a split between those texts depicting a “spiritual landscape” and those representing secular government. A landscape inhabited by spirits, such as the *Shanhai jing* 山海經, represented Yu’s occult role. Texts which mention Yu but include no mention of spirits, such as the recently discovered *Rongchengshi* 容成氏 text and the transmitted “Yu gong” 禹貢 chapter of the *Shang shu* 尚書, represented Yu’s official role. She suggests that the sanitized official story of Yu derived from Ruist 儒 discomfort with Sage King Yu’s occult role and led to censorship, particularly in light of popular movements favoring belief in spirits, such as the Yu-worshipping followers of Mozi 墨子, who modeled themselves upon the image of Yu as a farmer. She further suspects that perhaps an earlier version of the “Yu gong” chapter may also have been a spiritual landscape, which may have been mapped out similarly to the *Shanhai jing* text.<sup>3</sup> Examination of Yu’s role as an earth spirit before the time of Confucius supports Dorofeeva-Lichtmann’s suspicions. This analysis of the recently discovered Western Zhou 西周 bronze inscription, the Bin Gong *xu*, suggests that Yu was regularly worshiped in lineage rituals involving spirit founders, earth deities, and the harvest.

### Yu as Spirit Founder

Attempts over the ages to fit Yu and other pre-historical “kings” into dynastic lineages or official histories have led some to ignore Yu’s occult role. Despite the pervasive transmitted vision of Yu as a human founder of the Xia and of honest government, ever since Gu Jiegang’s 顧頡剛 (1893–1980) revolutionary studies showing that pre-historical founder kings and sages were mythical rather than historical figures,<sup>4</sup> many

Kegan Paul, 1998) and Hu Wenhui 胡文輝, “Qin jian *Rishu* ‘Chu bangmen pian’ xin-zheng” 秦簡《日書·出邦門篇》新証, *Wenbo* 文博 1998.1, 91–94.

3. “Ritual Practices for Constructing Terrestrial Space (Warring States-Early Han),” Lagerwey and Kalinowski, *Early Chinese Religions*, Vol. 1, 595–644.

4. Compiled into the *Gushibian* 古史辨 published in seven volumes between 1926 and 1941 by Beiping pushe 北平樸社, republished in 1982 by Shanghai guji. The myth of Gun 鯀 and Yu is found in volume 7. Since that time, there has been a great deal of scholarship and debate regarding whether or not Yu was a historical or mythical figure and whether or not a Xia dynasty existed (Gu did not express doubt that the dynasty existed). As the purpose of this essay is only to explore the mythical or legendary aspect of a figure that by around the 6–5th centuries B.C.E. was already understood in a historical sense (as coming before Cheng Tang 成湯, the Shang founder, see n. 23 below), I will not delve into this sensitive debate. I would simply suggest that even if there was an historical Yu, he, like many historical figures, seemed to acquire supernatural attributes over time. Readers are advised to look at Wang Guowei 王國維, *Gushi xinzheng*, *Yu* 古史新證·禹, *Guoxue yuebao* 國學月報, Special Issue 1927 (reprinted Beijing: Laixunge, 1935;

scholars consider Yu to be originally a nature spirit.<sup>5</sup> As Lewis points out, he was the “mythic prototype for the god of the altar of the soil,” with links to fertility and agricultural rites that cast him in the role of patron and protector of the kin group.<sup>6</sup> In an analysis of early Chinese religion published in 1991, Chen Shuguo 陳戍國 suggested that sage kings were not worshipped at the lineage shrines inside the city gates like other ancestral spirits but in the “suburban” or *jiao* 郊 ritual outside, where sky and earth deities were worshipped.<sup>7</sup> This practice associated Yu with nature rather than human spirits. Kominami Ichirō further links Yu to the earth altar, the *she* 社,<sup>8</sup> but he links earth worship to the fact that the ancestors were buried in it. He speculates that legends of Yu “spreading the earth” (*fu tu* 敷土)—a phrase we find in the Western Zhou Bin Gong bronze inscription and recorded in the “Yu gong” chapter (and elsewhere in myriad variant forms)—may derive from an ancient ritual where a

---

Tsinghua University, 1994); Li Xueqin 李學勤, “Lun Sui Gong Xu jiqi zhongyao yiyi” 論夔公盃及其重要意義, reprinted in Li Xueqin, *Zhongguo gudai wenming yanjiu* 中國古代文明研究 (Shanghai: Huadong shifan daxue, 2005), 126–36; Xie Weiyang 謝維揚, “Cong Bin Gong xu, ‘Zi Gao’ pian he ‘Rongchengshi’ kan gushi jishu ziliao de zhenshi guocheng” 從夔公盃、《子羔》篇和《容成氏》看古史記述資料的真實過程, *Shanghai wenbo* 上海文博 2010, 56–62. The focus of the present debates tends to be the veracity of “official” history and how to rationalize the conflicting systems of early kings presented within and among early texts. Discussions of their human or spiritual nature tend to focus on whether accounts prove that the figures were born with or without mention of a father. For a recent discussion of *Rongchengshi* as a late Warring states “philosophical” rather than “historical” text and the relevance of Gu Jiegang’s theories, see Sarah Allan, “Abdication and Utopian Vision in the Bamboo Slip Manuscript, *Rongchengshi*, *Journal of Chinese Philosophy* 37 (2010), 67–84.

5. For example, see Qu Wanli 屈萬里 on the “Three Lords” (*san hou* 三后), Houji, Boyi, and Yu mentioned in the “Lü xing” 呂刑 chapter of the *Shang shu*, “Xi-Zhou shi shi gaishu” 西周史事概述, *Zhongyanyuan lishi yuyan yanjiusuo jikan* 中央研究院歷史語言研究所輯刊 42 (1971) 4, 775–6.; see also Ai Lan 艾蘭 (Sarah Allan), *The Heir and the Sage: Dynastic Legend in Early China* 世襲與禪讓——古代中國的王朝更替傳說, *Ai Lan wenji* 艾蘭文集 2 (Beijing: Shangwu, 2010), 55 and see Xie Weiyang, “Cong Bin Gong xu ‘Zi Gao’ pian he ‘Rongchengshi,’” 56–62.

6. Lewis, “The Mythology,” 475–576; see also the discussion by Yang Kuan 楊寬, “Zhongguo shanggushi daolun” 中國上古史導論, *Gushibian* 古史辨 7 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji, 1982), 358. Warring States period versions of the archaic graph for Yu, as seen in the bamboo texts, was written with an “earth” 土 semantic underneath. This is not the case with older examples, including the Bin Gong xu form, where the semantic seems closer to representing a type of creature 虫 (see Fig. 1).

7. *Xian-Qin lizhi yanjiu* 先秦禮制研究 (Changsha: Hunan jiaoyu, 1991), 202.

8. The connection between the health of the earth altar and the polity founded is suggested in the Gongyang 公羊 commentary to the *Chun qiu* 春秋 (“Ai Gong” 哀公 4) where it states “the earth altar is the *feng* 封,” see *Chun qiu Gongyangzhuàn zhushu* 春秋公羊傳注疏 (*Shisanjing zhushu* 十三經注疏, ed. Ruan Yuan 阮元, [Beijing: Zhonghua, 1980]; rpt. 2008), 27.153.

conqueror carried earth from his ancestral lands and dug it into the earth of newly occupied territories, thus occupying the new land spiritually as well militarily. According to Kominami's research, the earth was not inanimate but rather was understood by the ancient Chinese to be living. In Yu's case, the earth he "spread" was brought from Heaven and could magically expand to any size to reshape the earthly landscape.<sup>9</sup>

The earliest mention of Yu as cosmic creator and lineage progenitor is found on the recently discovered ninth century B.C.E. Bin Gong *xu*. Because of the historical connection of the place Bin 鬪 to the early Zhou people, it is surprising to find Yu celebrated instead of the legendary Zhou agricultural and earth god, "Lord Millet," Hou Ji 后稷, whose birth and life are so famously honored in the ode "Birth of the People" ("Sheng min" 生民) in the "Daya" 大雅 section of the *Shi jing* 詩經. Universally it is Houji to whom historiographers attribute the role of founder of the royal Zhou Ji 姬 lineage. He was the one who "initiated the annual sacrifices" (*zhao si* 肇祀), and the one who, according to the *Guo yu* 國語, was worshipped by the Zhou in the *jiao* ritual.<sup>10</sup> Yet the Bin Gong *xu* inscription quite clearly makes the same claims for Yu.

### The Bin Gong *xu*, Founder Lord of Bin, and Yu

A corrosion-covered *xu*-style tureen was purchased by representatives of the Baoli 保利 Museum in Beijing from a Hong Kong antiquities shop in 2002. It is missing a lid and is slightly non-standard when compared to other *xu* vessels that have been excavated or are preserved in collections.<sup>11</sup> Even so, as Louisa Fitzgerald-Huber has shown, the vessel shared enough features with a Ying Hou 應侯 *xu* vessel excavated in Pingdingshan 平

9. "Rituals for the Earth," Lagerwey and Kalinowski, *Early Chinese Religion*, 201–34. He and Lewis both point out the relationship of this legend to Nü Wa's fixing the universe with plugs of earth or stone.

10. See Chen Shuguo, *Xian-Qin lizhi yanjiu*, 194, 203–5.

11. Liu Yu 劉雨 and Yan Zhibin 嚴志斌 ed., *Jinchu Yin Zhou jinwen jilu er bian* 近出殷周金文記錄二編 (Beijing: Zhonghua, 2010) 2, 138–39. The first set of scholarly discussions is published in the Chinese report *Zhongguo lishi wenwu* 中國歷史文物 2002.6. These were followed by a series of articles edited by Jao Tsung-i 饒宗頤 in *Huaxue* 華學 6 (2003), 49. The first scholarly opinions in the West were published after a conference at Dartmouth College in 2003; see Xing Wen 邢文, ed. "The X Gong Xu 斲公盪: A Report and Papers from the Dartmouth Workshop," A Special Issue of *International Research on Bamboo and Silk Documents: Newsletter* (Dartmouth College, 2003). In this issue, for a discussion on the non-standard nature of the vessels see Louisa G. Fitzgerald-Huber, 34–43 and Ifan Cheng 程一凡, "A Royal Food Container and its Discontents," 44–48. For comments on the late nature of the vocabulary in the inscription, see C. Cook, 23–28. A recent viewing of the vessel at the Poly Museum suggests to the author the need for a scientific study of its manufacture.

頂山, Henan 河南, tomb number 84, to confirm authenticity as well as to confirm a dating to around the early ninth century B.C.E. or later.<sup>12</sup> Some of these features, e.g., the horizontal ribbed décor on the body, the animal handles, and the long-tailed birds worked into a flat register of design under the rim can be found in the Ying Hou vessels in George Fan's collection, which Edward Shaughnessy dates to the Late Western Zhou period.<sup>13</sup> Liu Yu 劉雨, Li Feng 李峰, and others also date the Bin Gong *xu* to the Late Western Zhou period.<sup>14</sup> It seems safe to date the vessel and the inscription to sometime in the ninth century B.C.E., perhaps late Middle Western Zhou period or early Late Western Zhou period.

While the manufacturing of the Bin Gong *xu* shares features with the Ying bronzes, there is little else in common aside from a few scribal details. When the staff of the Shanghai Museum worked on cleaning the vessel, they discovered a 98-character inscription that mentioned a Bin Gong, a lineage patriarch and regional lord of Bin.<sup>15</sup> Liu Yu shows

12. See Henansheng wenwu kaogu yanjiu suo, Pingdingshan shi wenwu guanli weiyuanhui, "Pingdingshan Ying guo mudi bashisi hao mu" 平頂山應國墓地八十四號墓, *Wenwu* 1998.9, 4–16.

13. "Newly Discovered Bronzes," 21–24, paper presented at "Ancient Chinese Bronzes from the Shouyang Studio and Elsewhere: An International Conference Commemorating Twenty Years of Discoveries," The Art Institute of Chicago and The Creel Center for Chinese Paleography, The University of Chicago, November 5–7, 2010.

14. Edward Shaughnessy in a 2007 article followed the Shanghai Museum assessment that it may date as early as the first half of the ninth century B.C.E.; see "The Bin Gong Xu Inscription and the Origins of the Chinese Literary Tradition," *Books in Numbers: Seventy-Fifth Anniversary of the Harvard-Yenching Library, Conference Papers*, ed. Wilt Idema (Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 2007), 9.

15. The graph 燧 can be transcribed by the modern graph *bin* 鬮 (\*prən), a Zhou polity. The rationale for this is that the upper element is commonly simplified to 豸 and the "fire" 火 semantic and "mountain" 山 semantic were frequently confused in early paleographical writings. See Liu Yu, "Bin Gong kao" 鬮公考, *Xing Wen, Newsletter*, 7–8 and Chen Yingjie 陳英杰, "Bin Gong xu mingwen zaikao" 燧公盨銘文再考 (2007 ms. posted on www.gwz.fudan.edu.cn, accessed 10/2010; published in *Yuyan kexue 語言科學* 7 [2008], 63–77). While many scholars argued for different readings, the only other viable reading is that of Li Xueqin 李學勤 who early on suggested reading the core graph as 豸 for *sui* 遂 (\*səlut), a polity of Shun 舜 descendants in Shandong 山東 ("Lun X Gong xu ji qi zhongyao yiyi" 論燧公盨及其重要意義, *Zhongguo lishi wenwu* 2002.6: 7–9). This is intriguing because in transmitted literature there was also a legend about Sui 燧, Fire-maker, who descended from Tai Hao 太皞, see Xunzi jijie 荀子集解, ed. Wang Xianqin 王先謙 (*Zhuzi jicheng* 諸子集成, Shanghai: Shanghai guji, 1986, rpt. 1991), 225 ("Zhenglun" 正論). Han Feizi 韓非子 placed the ancient lineage of Sui 燧人 right before that of the water controllers Gun and Yu, see *Han Feizi jijie* 韓非子集解, ed. Wang Xianshen 王先慎 (*Zhuzi jicheng*), 339 ("Wudu" 五蠹). During the Han period, Sui 燧 was known along with Fuxi 伏羲 and Shennong 神農 as one of the Three Brilliant Ones 三皇. Unlike Yu, however, Sui 燧 was linked to Zhu Rong 祝融 and fire myths, see *Baihutong shuzheng* 白虎通疏證, ed. Chen Li 陳立 (*Xinbian Zhuzi jicheng* 新編諸子集成, Beijing: Zhonghua, 1994), 49 ("Hao" 號). In *Zhuangzi*, Sui 燧 and Shennong

how the vessel shares features with other vessels inscribed by a “king” of Bin and by “kings” of various local regions linked in a network of old families distantly linked to the Zhou royal family but still relatively independent.<sup>16</sup> In historical legend, Bin was settled by Gong Liu 公劉 and made into a state by his short-lived son, Qingjie 慶節.<sup>17</sup> For our purposes, most interesting is the fact that Gong Liu shares many attributes with the reputed Zhou spirit founder Hou Ji. In fact, the primary notable aspect of the Gong Liu legend is that he followed the path of *de* (accumulated merit or virtue) set by Hou Ji. In other words, he symbolized the organizing of local peoples to support an agricultural lifestyle, which, as many scholars such as Lewis have pointed out, is like flood control in terms of symbolizing the creation of human civilization.<sup>18</sup> In the *Shi ji* 史記 account of Zhou history, Gong Liu, also sharing many of the legendary attributes of Yu, plowed, planted, traveled, and crossed rivers to bring control to the early Zhou world.

公劉雖在戎狄之間，復修后稷之業，務耕種，行地宜，自漆、沮度渭，取材用，行者有資，居者有畜（蓄）積，民賴其慶。百姓懷之，多徙而保歸焉。周道之興自此始，故詩人歌樂思其德。

Even though Gong Liu lived among the Rong and Di tribes, he renewed and nurtured the work of Hou Ji, serving [it] by plowing and planting, and surveying the land, he set-up everything correctly. From the Qi and Ju river area,<sup>19</sup> he crossed the Wei River and took materials for use so that those travelers had stored goods (for trade) and the residents had stored (agricultural products for food) (thus causing) the people to rely on his awards. The aristocrats embraced [his leadership], many of them moving (to assigned areas) and going to him for protection. This was the beginning of the Zhou Way, what the poets sing of and make music about when they think of his *de*.<sup>20</sup>

---

worked together following the way of Huangdi 黃帝, see *Zhuangzi jijie* 莊子集解, ed. Guo Qingfan 郭慶藩 (*Zhushu jicheng*), 98, 111 (“Shan xing” 繕性, “Zhi le” 至樂). There seems to be a yin-yang split of fire and water in the later images of early earth spirits. Despite this intriguing evidence, this essay will pursue earth spirit legends linked to the place Bin as the more likely scenario.

16. Liu Yu, Xing Wen, *Newsletter*, 6–16.

17. I suspect this name was inserted into the legend later.

18. Lewis, “The Mythology,” 562–63; Qu Wanli, “Xi-Zhou shi shi gaishu,” 775–77.

19. Li Feng locates the Qi River near the Jing 涇 River in Shaanxi about 4.5 kilometers west of the modern Bin County, *Landscape and Power in Early China* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 2006), 161–62. The Ju River must have been nearby.

20. See *Shiji huizhu kaozheng fujiao bu* 史記會注考證附校補, ed. Takekawa Kame-taro 瀧川龜太郎, (Shanghai: Shanghai guji, 1986), *juan* 1, 75–76. (“Zhou benji” 周本紀). According to the “Liu Jing Shusun Tong liezhuan” 劉敬叔孫列傳, Liu Gong was

The idea of celebrating a founder of agriculture and civil society with music and song while also celebrating the Way of *de* (merit, virtue) will be key to reading the Bin Gong inscription discussed later. First, we will focus on the overlap between the images of founders Yu, Houji, and Gong Liu and show how they shared characteristics common to earth deities.

Of the many conflicting lineages of Zhou progenitors presented in transmitted literature, some trace a connection back to Xia, some to sage king Shun 舜, but none to Yu.<sup>21</sup> Although the Bin Gong inscription begins with the creation myth of Yu, there is no reference to a Xia state. The earliest transmitted literature that preserves aspects of the Yu myth includes the *Shang shu* and the *Shi jing*.<sup>22</sup> The language perpetuates most strongly the earth god qualities associated with his shaping of the rivers and mountains, but it also includes the idea of setting up government. The attempt to assign Yu an official role in the creation of a specifically named Xia dynasty (versus simply a creator or master of the Nine Continents 九州)<sup>23</sup> seems to be a later phenomenon, one supported by the attempt to supplant Yu as a Zhou god with Hou Ji.

Based on the *Shi jing*, the Zhou lineage traces back through Hou Ji directly to Heaven or Shang Di 上帝. The era of Hou Ji's activity as an official was Yu-Xia 虞夏 according Zhai Gong Moufu 祭公謀父, an official of early Zhou King Mu's 周穆王 court (quoted in "Zhou yu, shang" 周語上 chapter of the *Guo yu*). All the Zhou "Former Kings" descended from Hou Ji.<sup>24</sup> The attempt to replace Yu with Hou Ji is reflected in a passage in *Zuo zhuan* 左傳 ("Zhao" 昭 29).<sup>25</sup> In this passage, the shift to control by the spirit-officials of the Five Processes 五行 stamps out Yu,

chased to Bin by Jie, the evil last king of Xia (Takekawa Kametaro, *Shiji*, 2, 1684). In another account, it was the Di who chased him there. The "Zhou benji" passage was certainly inspired by a version of the *Shi jing* ode "Gong Liu" 公劉 (Mao no. 250), see *Mao shi zhengyi* 毛詩正義 ed. Kong Yingda 孔穎達 (*Shisanjing zhushu*), 17.3, 273–77.

21. For an analysis of the legends connecting Shun and Yu and the establishment of the Xia, see Ai Lan, *The Heir and the Sage*, 55–65.

22. The implications for the dating of passages in these texts or the texts as a whole has been discussed by many scholars; for a recent summary of the extensive Chinese scholarship see Chen Yingjie, "Bin Gong xu mingwen zaikao."

23. See the Spring and Autumn period bronze inscriptions belonging to Qin and Qi, *Yin Zhou jinwen jicheng* 殷周金文集成, ed. Zhongguo shehui kexueyuan kaogu yanjiusuo, *Kaoguxue tekan* 考古學特刊. (Beijing: Zhonghua, 1988), nos. 276, 283, 285, 4315 (hereafter *Jicheng* followed by the number).

24. *Guo yu* (Shanghai: Shanghai guji, 1978), 1, 2–3. The Yu and Xia are often written together as a single term, but read as if they are two separate eras.

25. *Chun qiu Zuo zhuan zhengyi* 春秋左傳正義, ed. Kong Yingda (*Shisanjing zhushu*), 53.420–21. Yu and Xia Hou Qi 夏后啟 (Yu's son?) appear as diviners (along with a variety of Qin period mythical figures) in the Wangjiatai 王家臺 divination bamboo text referred to as the *Guicang* 歸藏. In it, Xia Hou Qi flies to the sky on a dragon. See Wang Mingqin 王明欽, "Wangjiatai Qin mu zhujian gaishu" 王家台秦墓竹簡概述, *Xinchu*

the nature spirit. We see in this tale the suppression of one set of nature myths by another and the conflict between “Yu, the official” and “Yu, the nature spirit.” In the guise of the later Five Processes Water Official 水官, Yu, the Official, chases away the Yu represented by the dragons, the essential water creatures.<sup>26</sup>

Hou Ji is explained towards the end of the passage, where it is obvious he was originally a nature spirit. It states that annual sacrifices (*si* 祀) to a deity named “Millet” (Ji 稷, part of the name of the later Houji) began during the Xia and continued during the Shang, but that Zhou gave the deity the name, “Cast Off,” Qi 棄. This is clearly a reference to the tale of the divine birth of Houji and the Zhou people in the ode “Sheng min” 生民, in which Houji was initially cast off for having no father. The passage earlier explained that Ji was a field manager for “Lord Earth,” Hou Tu 后土, and also the deity in charge of the Earth Altar (*she* 社).<sup>27</sup>

The name Liu is also connected to the myth of these spirits. A certain Liu Lei 劉累 (which later commentators claim was the first “Liu”—a significant fact for later Han imperial rulers<sup>28</sup>) during the time of Xia Hou 夏后 proved to be talented at feeding dragons (he could also concoct a fine mincemeat stew out of dead dragons) so Xia Hou honored him with the title of “Guiding Dragons” (“Dragon Tamer,” Yu Long 御龍). According to the tale, Liu salvaged an ancient art of raising dragons, which had been actively practiced under the pre-Xia sage king, Shun. However, time passed and once again the art was lost. The officers of the Five Processes were “established as Supreme Lords, and sacrificed to as Honored Spirits, to receive the Five Annual Sacrifices at the Altar of Earth and Millet (封為上公, 祀為貴神, 社稷五祀).”<sup>29</sup> Apparently, by then dragons were a nuisance; therefore, since dragons were water creators, it was the duty of the “Water Officer” to “cast them off.” We see here a curious repetition of the idea of something being cast off as another deity was being born. In fact, the original deity was transformed to better fit the modern cosmological ideology. We must understand the

---

*jianbo yanjiu: xin chu jianbo guoji xueshu yantaohui wenji* 新出簡帛研究: 新出簡帛國際學術研討會文集, ed. Ai Lan and Xing Wen (Beijing: Wenwu, 2004), 30–32.

26. Shun of the so-called pre-Xia Yu “Forester” era was also associated with water and had dragon-like features, see Lewis, *The Flood Myths*, 36–38. Yu was born out of the belly of Gun in some versions of the myth. The graphs for Gun and Yu represented aquatic creatures, both associated with dragons, see Lewis, *The Flood Myths*, 103–106.

27. The “Tang Yu zhi dao” text from Guodian states clearly that Yu managed water and Hou Ji, the earth: Jingmen shi bowuguan 荊門市博物館, *Guodian Chu mu zhujian* 郭店楚墓竹簡 (Beijing: Wenwu, 1998), 39, strip 10.

28. G. Sukhu, “Yao, Shun, and Prefiguration: The Origins and Ideology of the Han Imperial Genealogy,” *Early China* 30 (2005–2006), 111–12.

29. See n. 25 above.



Water Officer to be none other than Yu himself. The “Teng Wen Gong, xia” 滕文公下 chapter of *Mengzi* 孟子 says explicitly that it was Yu who drove off the dragons.<sup>30</sup>

The connection between earth deities Ji and Yu is also suggested in the *Zuo zhuan* passage. As we learn much later in the passage, coincidentally the original name of the Lord of the Earth was “Hooked Dragon” (Gou Long 句龍). Mark Lewis takes this as confirmation that the figure of Yu was derived from the image of a dragon. In other texts, Yu was the founder of the altar of soil, a role derived from his restoration of the dry land by taming the flood.<sup>31</sup> In the tangle of mythology and lineage history represented in the *Zuo zhuan* passage described above, we see overlap between the worship of the earth gods for control over Grain, Earth, and Water. The idea that the progenitor of the Liu family name was a Dragon Tamer also suggests a connection between the myths of sage king Yu and Gong Liu.

The Bin Gong *xu* inscription is our earliest mention of Yu. It was also around that same time that we see the earliest mention of Hou Ji. The Bin Gong inscription does not mention Hou Ji, although it is likely that the Hou Ji myth was already active in the middle Western Zhou period; the Shi Qiang *pan* 史牆盤 inscription<sup>32</sup>—the calligraphic style of which is somewhat similar to that of the Bin Gong inscription—notes that the Son of Heaven (King Gong, reigned during the last decades of the 10th century B.C.E.) was protected by Shang Di and Hou Ji. We might understand Shang Di and Hou Ji as complementary gods of the sky and the earth, those worshipped at the earth altar.<sup>33</sup> In his inscription, Shi Qiang, unlike Bin Gong, celebrated his ancestral connection to the Zhou court beginning with the foundation of the Zhou state and the shift in allegiance of his ancestor of that time from the Shang to the Zhou court. Bin Gong, on the other hand, made no effort to prove any relationship to the Zhou court, but rather traced history back through the making of “our king” by the people themselves who relied on Yu’s Mandate of Heaven, not that of the Zhou founder kings Wen and Wu as was common in Western Zhou inscriptions. So while both inscriptions seem to include rhythmic song-like language celebrating founders, the purposes or audiences of the songs seem to differ, just as the type of earth spirit worshiped also

30. *Mengzi zhushu* 孟子注疏 ed. Zhao Qi 趙岐 (*Shisanjing zhushu*), 6.2, 50.

31. Lewis, *The Flood Myths*, 104; See also the discussion by Ai Lan, *The Way of Water and the Sprouts of Virtue* 水之道與德之端——中國早期哲學思想德本喻, *Ai Lan wenji* 3 (Beijing: Shangwu, 2010), 50–51.

32. Jicheng10175.

33. See Ding Shan 丁山, “Houtu Hou Ji Shennong Rushou kao (shang)” 后土后稷神農收考 (上), *Wenshi* 文史 55 (2001) 2, 1–13, (下), *Wenshi* 56 (2001) 3, 1–16 and Kominami Ichirō, “Rituals for the Earth,” 228–34.

## LATE SHANG

a. Zu Xin Yu *ding* 祖辛禹鼎

## MID AND LATE WESTERN ZHOU

b. Shi Qiang *pan*c. Bin Gong *xu*d. Yu *ding* 禹鼎e. Yu *gui* 禹簋

## SPRING AND AUTUMN

f. Qin Gong *gui* 秦公簋g. Shu Yi *zhong* 叔夷鐘

## WARRING STATES

h. Guodian 郭店 “Chengzhi  
wen zhi” 成之聞之 Strip n. 33

Figure 1. Archaic graphs for Yu 禹 showing the addition of the earth radical (壘) in Warring States bamboo texts. It appears as a phonetic in *yu* 字 in b, and as a name other than for the sage in a, d, and e. Sources: a, b, d, e, f, g are *Jicheng* nos. 2111, 10175, 2833, 4242, 4315, 276; h is from Jingmenshi bowuguan, *Guodian Chu mu zhujuan*, 51.

differed: “grain” in the case of Shi Qiang and “water” in the case of Bin Gong. Eventually, when the spirits were assigned official roles, Yu could simply be dismissed as a ruler of an earlier era. Sarah Allan has pointed out that Hou Ji was commemorated in the “Bi gong” 閼宮 ode in the Lu 魯 elegy preserved in the *Shi jing* as “continuing the work of Yu.”<sup>34</sup> This

34. “Some Preliminary Comments on the 夔公盃,” Xing Wen, *Newsletter*, 22.

recalls the passage translated above noting that Liu Gong continued the work of Hou Ji, suggesting that by the Han period, Yu was no longer a viable progenitor.

### The Relation of Bin to the Issue of Earth Deities

The Bin Gong *xu* has a number of unique features that distinguish it from the average Western Zhou inscription. Most Western Zhou bronze inscriptions eulogize the receipt of the Mandate of Heaven by the Zhou founder kings, Kings Wen and Wu, and their subsequent founding of the Zhou nation (*zuo bang* 作邦). This served as an introduction to the present rulers' continuation of ancestral merit or *de* through the "spread" (of the Zhou mandate or plan) throughout the Four Regions (*fu you sifang* 敷有四方).<sup>35</sup> The Bin Gong *xu* inscription begins instead with Heaven mandating Yu, who then proceeds to "spread the earth" and regulate the mountains and rivers.<sup>36</sup> Most Western Zhou inscriptions record a promotion ceremony, gift-giving, or, more rarely, a lineage narrative detailing the accumulated merit of the Zhou kings and the merit accrued by a series of specifically named ancestors in service to the Zhou kings. The Bin Gong inscription, on the other hand, describes the accumulated *de* of the "people" after the creation of government and sacrifices caused the descent of *de* from Heaven (or Sky) by Yu. Then the people create a "king" (which was necessary in order to receive the *de* from Heaven).

Most Western Zhou inscriptions document the name of the vessel-maker (or, more correctly, "owner" of the finished vessel), the reason for the casting of the vessel (such as an award), and perhaps an oath of obeisance to his royal patron (the king or other high official). The Bin Gong vessel ends with an oath by the Lord or Patriarch of the Bin people, Bin Gong, who exclaimed that all was satisfactory, much as one might expect after the performance of divination or a sacrifice to the spirits in which negotiation with supernatural presences was a cause for concern.

35. Since "earth" is not the antecedent to *fu* in this phrase, it is safer to assume that what was being "spread" was the Zhou mandate from Heaven, which is often the antecedent in longer Western Zhou inscriptions. For example, see the Da Yu *ding* 大盂鼎 (*Jicheng* 2837).

36. The only other inscriptions that mention Yu are dated to the Chunqiu period and were made by the states of Qin 秦 and Qi 齊 (see n. 23 above). See Constance A. Cook, Xing Wen, *Newsletter*, 27–28, and *Shang Zhou qingtongqi mingwenxuan* 商周青銅器銘文選, ed. Ma Chengyuan 馬承源 et al., 4, 610 and nos. 546, 848; Gil Mattos, "Eastern Zhou Bronze Inscriptions," *New Sources of Early Chinese History: An Introduction to the Reading of Inscriptions and Manuscripts*, ed. Edward Shaughnessy, (Berkeley: University of California, Society for the Study of Early China and the Institute of East Asian Studies, 1997), 114; Darrel Doty, "The Bronze Inscriptions of Ch'i: an Interpretation" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Washington, 1982), 1, 280.

No specific names were mentioned other than Yu. Even the title Bin Gong was generic. The text of the Bin Gong inscription reads as a song of worship and thanksgiving to the progenitor of the Bin people. It was not a lineage narrative or a historical record.

Although the Bin people were, according to legend, among the oldest of Zhou peoples, the inscription has no obvious reference to a Zhou state, the royal family, or even the royal calendar. Perhaps, we are to understand that since Bin Gong was a member of an ancient and relatively independent branch of the Zhou family, there would be no need to legitimize his power, unlike that of the Wei 微 or Shan 單 family members in the lineage narratives on the Shi Qiang 卣 and Lai 逯 vessels (recently discovered in the ancestral Zhou region in the Wei 渭 River valley of modern Shaanxi 陝西 Province) which had lineage histories that could be traced back to the Shang.<sup>37</sup> Scholars suggest that perhaps the name Bin, which was also written 邠, (\*prən),<sup>38</sup> originated in the Fen 汾 River area in neighboring Shanxi 山西 province, north of the Erlitou 二里頭 cultural heartland, which many archaeologists assume must have been Xia, since it is the first large-scale bronze-making culture.<sup>39</sup> Although Warring States *sandai* historiography emphasizes an evolutionary historical connection from Xia via Shang to the Zhou, the Bin Gong inscription is of no help at all in this debate.

The mirroring of passages from the Bin Gong inscription in a scattering of transmitted texts has led many scholars to focus on re-dating texts assumed to be late forgeries to the Western Zhou era. Others have emphasized that what we see are multiple strands of myth and tradition reflected in different texts at different times, and hence we learn nothing new about the absolute date of when a particular transmitted text was formed.<sup>40</sup> If we examine the strands of the Hou Ji versus the Yu myths as reflected in the texts with older layers, the *Shang shu* and *Shi jing*, the latter opinion seems to make the most sense. Interestingly, Hou Ji is mentioned less often than Yu in both texts. Hou Ji is mentioned only once in the *Shang shu*, as a minister under Shun called upon to relieve the

37. Shaanxi sheng kaogu yanjiusuo, Baoji shi kaogudui, Meixian wenhuaguan, "Shaanxi Meixian Yangjiacun Xi Zhou qingtongqi jiaocang" 陝西眉縣楊家村西周青銅器窖藏, *Kaogu yu wenwu* 考古與文物 2003.3, 3–12.

38. Most reconstructions follow the Old Chinese reconstruction by William Baxter and Laurent Sagart (pdf version 20 February 2011). In the case of words not included in that pdf, some have been worked out through private consultation with Baxter and Sagart, others may be mistakes on my own part.

39. Qian Mu 錢穆, *Zhou chu dili kao* 周初地理考, *Yanjing xuebao* 燕京學報 10 (1931), 1955–2008.

40. See n. 22 above.

people's starving.<sup>41</sup> In the *Shi jing*, Hou Ji is mentioned in the "Da Ya" songs, the "Sheng min" and the "Yun Han" 雲漢, the first in terms of his magical birth<sup>42</sup> and role in the production of agriculture and food, and the second in terms of his effort to deal with a drought, a role one might expect of a water deity. Hou Ji's birth and subsequent descent of good fortune and the power to grow grain from Heaven is again celebrated in the Lu elegy the "Bi Gong" but this song specifically noted that Hou Ji was picking up where Yu left off.<sup>43</sup> Like Yu in the beginning phrases of the Bin Gong inscription, Hou Ji is celebrated in the Zhou eulogy "Si wen" 思文 for "matching" Heaven and providing for the people.<sup>44</sup>

By contrast, Yu is mentioned in the "Xiaoya" 小雅 ode "Xin Nanshan" 信南山 and in the "Daya" ode "Hanyi" 韓奕 as the one who set up and governed (*dian* 甸) the mountains mentioned in the previous phrases. Both songs celebrate later ancestors.<sup>45</sup> The "Daya" ode "Wen Wang you sheng" 文王有聲 and the Shang eulogy "Changfa" 長發 celebrate Yu's "work" in flood control or dredging rivers, which resulted in the Four Regions coming together and the initiation of a Brilliant King 皇王—a sequence of events vaguely reminiscent of the Bin Gong version. In the Shang eulogy "Yin Wu" 殷武, Heaven "mandated" the setting up of capitals with their many rulers in the land set up by Yu (such as the setting up of boundaries after the flood mentioned in "Changfa"). The ode notes that these rulers must then report on the annual harvest.<sup>46</sup> If we see Bin Gong as one of those rulers, then the inscription might be placed within the context of reporting on the harvest. Yu is mentioned repeatedly in the *Shang shu* with passages from the "Yu gong" and "Lü xing" 呂刑 most reflective of the Bin Gong inscription. The examples in both texts reveal the deep embedded nature of the Yu myth and song and the similar importance of both Yu and Hou Ji to agricultural production.

The separation between these two earth deities may also be reflected in Shi Zhilong's 史志龍 recent argument for a separation in the identity of "First Farmer" (Xian Nong 先農) from that of Hou Ji in Qin 秦 and early Han sacrifices.<sup>47</sup> Although both received sacrifices at the year-end

41. *Shang shu zhengyi* 尚書正義, ed. Kong Yingda (*Shisanjing zhushu*), ("Shun Dian" 舜典, 3.18).

42. His magical birth is also the focus of references to Hou Ji in the bamboo texts "Zi Gao" and "Rongchengshi," see Luo Xinhui 羅新慧, "Cong Shangbo jian 'Zi Gao' he 'Rongchengshi' kan gushi chuanshuo de Hou Ji" 從上博簡《子羔》和《容成氏》看古史傳說的後稷, *Shixue yuekan* 史學月刊 2005.2, 14–20.

43. *Mao shi zhengyi* (*Shisanjing zhushu*), 22.346.

44. *Mao shi zhengyi* (*Shisanjing zhushu*), 19.2.322.

45. *Mao shi zhengyi* (*Shisanjing zhushu*), 13.2.22; 18.4.32.

46. *Mao shi zhengyi* (*Shisanjing zhushu*), 16.5.258; 20.4.358, 360.

47. "Qin 'Ci Xian Nong' jian zai tan" 秦 "祠先農" 簡再探, *Jianbo* 5 (2010), 77–89

La 臘 festival (Xian Nong first, then Hou Ji), they received separate sacrifices during the rest of the year. Xian Nong in *Shi jing* odes was also called “Field Ancestor” (Tian Zu 田祖) which the *Zhou li* 周禮 notes was celebrated by singing Bin odes accompanied by a ceramic drum called an “earth drum” (see full quote below). In the Qin rite to Xian Nong examined by Shi Zhilong, we see also a link created between human fertility and the harvest that is suggested in the Bin Gong inscription. In the Qin sacrifice to Xian Nong, a young woman begins the sacrifice with an announcement: “Everyone is sacrificing to the Supreme Father (Tai Fu 泰父), I alone sacrifice to Xian Nong.”<sup>48</sup> The use of a young woman to invoke the First Farmer’s presence suggests the generative coupling of Yu with Nü Wa 女媧 noted by Lewis, and the concern with fertility inherent in annual agricultural rituals. The young woman set out meat and ale at the base of the grain silo and then performed the “Steps of Yu” (Yu bu 禹步) three times before the ceremony moved to the planting area, where more prayers for continued wealth and longevity were said. The party then moved back to the silo to sprinkle its base with blood from a piglet’s ear.

Since the performance of the Steps of Yu by then was a common exorcism performed before setting out on a journey or exiting a gate,<sup>49</sup> it is possible that it would also be performed for the subsequent sacrifice to Hou Ji as well. Nevertheless, even though Yu’s role by that time was relegated to a small step in the larger earth deity sacrifice, a tentative link might be drawn from the parallelism between Hou Ji “following the work of Yu” and Hou Ji as second in sacrificial rank to Xian Nong. The absorption of Yu, exorcist and earth deity, into the figure of Xian Nong is also suggested by the fact that the presentation of sacrifices caused Xian Nong “to expel (evil from) the domicile” 為先農除舍 (a phrase later used for welcoming an official to the court where he would take up his duties). We find too an obvious link to early agricultural deities. After the young woman successfully invoked Xian Nong’s presence, the invocator continued to request from him an increase in wealth, grain, and animal husbandry for the farmers 農夫. He was also to eternally provide

48. See n. 47 above.

49. See n. 2 above. The connection between the Steps of Yu and a diagram of the Big Dipper is already apparent in the Qin period “Day Book” found at Fangmatan 放馬灘 in Gansu (see Yan Changgui 晏昌貴, “Tianshui Fangmatan Qin jian Yi zhong “Ri Shu” fen pian shiwen [gao]” 天水放馬灘秦簡“日書”分篇釋文(稿), *Jianbo* 5 (2010), 30. An obscure reference to Yu might be found in the section of the Day Book dedicated to curing illness. When divining about sacrifices for expelling illness there might appear the sign of the “Nine Continents,” meaning Great Water 大水. “Nine” the text goes on to explain refers to the head (body-part). What symptoms or sacrifice is implied by the text is not exactly clear. See Yan Changgui, “Tianshui,” 38.

the “Former Supreme Fathers” (Xian Tai Fu) with food 先農恆先泰父食.<sup>50</sup> In the Bin Gong inscription there seems to be a similar hierarchy extending down from the spirit progenitor to the first couple (who created a “king”) and from there to the farmers or “people.” There were likely many former rulers of Bin that required sacrifice along with Yu.

The occult role of Yu demonstrated in the Bin Gong inscription was linked to the establishment of the Bin people and the initiation of their fertility (their *de*). Proof of the successful maintenance of this *de* was offered up with a food sacrifice to the invoked spirit by Bin Gong. Although many contemporary bronze inscriptions began with eulogies to founders and ancestors, unlike other inscriptions, the Bin Gong inscription does not record any battles, awards, promotions, or anything else that would suggest an official or strictly “historical” document. If we compare the Bin Gong inscription, and indeed other inscriptions that begin with ancestors’ names, with the Qin account of the sacrifice to Xian Nong, then we see that the first step in the sacrifice employing the song was to invoke the spirits with their names and the deeds with which they were historically associated. The scenario was no doubt a feast. The presence of ancestral spirits at such feasts is clear from the famous ode “Chu ci” 楚茨 in the “Xiaoya” section of the *Shi jing*.<sup>51</sup> The ode describes the preparation and performance of a sacrifice in which the founder and other ancestral spirits are entertained with grain dishes, meats, drink, and music. The ode mentions the role of the Invocator (*zhu* 祝 or *gongzhu* 工祝) and the presentation of meat offerings to entice the spirits into the feast. The Invocator reported to the spirits (*gao* 告) and also interpreted the spirits’ intent to the “filial descendant” (*xiaosun* 孝孫), who would in turn make sure that the participants received the spiritual blessings. In the Bin Gong inscription, Bin Gong may have played the role of both invocator and filial descendant. It is unfortunate we do not know the original archaeological circumstances of the Bin Gong vessel’s preservation since the ninth century B.C.E. Perhaps it was not buried in a tomb like most vessels we know of but was used continuously in a Bin shrine during harvest festivals as a testimony of past success and spiritual approval.

50. Shi Zhilong, “Qin ‘Ci Xian Nong,’” 77.

51. *Mao shi zhengyi* (*Shisanjing zhushu*), 13.2.199–203 (Mao 209). William Baxter mused that Verse 1 and 4 of this ode reveal rhyme contacts that suggest a dialect similarity to the Bin Gong inscription (personal communication, 11/2010). The most recent study and translation of this ode is by M. Kern, “*Shi jing* Songs as Performance Texts: A Case Study of “Chu Ci” (Thorny Caltrop),” *Early China* 25 (2000), 49–112. Kern analyzed the multiple voices in this ode. See also his study “Bronze inscriptions, the *Shijing* and the *Shangshu*: the evolution of the ancestral sacrifice during the Western Zhou,” Lagerwey and Kalinowski, *Early Chinese Religion*, 143–200.

### The Matching Ritual and Thanksgiving

It seems likely that the title “Bin Gong,” like that of Zhou Gong, was filled in successive generations by different worthy members of the community. The title could at once indicate that of a legendary ancestor,<sup>52</sup> such as Gong Liu, the human designated as “our king” over whom (in a curious reversal to Warring States rhetoric) the “people” functioned as father and mother. This generative process did not occur until Yu (and perhaps Gong Liu as a human incarnation) descended to oversee the manifestation of *de* and had, like all founders in transmitted and inscribed texts, “matched” (*pei* 配) the plan/intention/image of Heaven or Shang Di. Yu performed the matching ritual as part of the presentation of the first sacrificial feast. In Chen Shuguo’s study (based on a Han quote of a lost line from the “Yi xun” 伊訓 chapter of the *Shang shu*), the “matching” ritual was performed by the Former Kings (*xianwang* 先王) to Shang Di through worship of the “regional luminescent (spirits)” (*fangming* 方明) of the sky and land.<sup>53</sup> The “Jiao tesheng” 郊特牲 chapter of the *Liji* 禮記 explains that since all things come from Heaven and people come from their ancestors, the ritual of “matching” Shang Di was a *jiao* sacrifice providing a kind of “Great Pay Back” or thanksgiving, a *dabao* 大報. It was performed with clothing and flags decorated to reflect the signs 象 (*xiang*) displayed in Heaven that “the sages had followed.”<sup>54</sup> The *Rongchengshi* describes such flags as the invention of Yu: the flag for the East was marked with a sun, the one for the west with a moon, the south with a snake, the center with a water creature (Nai 熊 written as 鱉), and the north with a bird.<sup>55</sup> Celestial and earthly images on ceremonial clothing, termed the “signs of the ancients” (*guren zhi xiang* 古人之象), are also described in the “Yi Ji” 益稷 chapter of the *Shang shu* that celebrates Yu’s achievements and ends with a musical celebration of song and dance.<sup>56</sup>

The “Mingtang” 明堂 chapter of the *Li ji* 禮記 further explains that a “matching” ritual with the sun and moon emblems was performed as an annual sacrifice to Di 帝 at the *jiao* “by means of Hou Ji” 配以后稷 and elsewhere in the *Li ji* “by means of the ancestors 祖” in a *di* 禘 ritual.<sup>57</sup>

52. Allan and others have suggested that Bin Gong might not be a living person (see Xing Wen, *Newsletter*, 22 ff.).

53. *Han shu buzhu* 漢書補注, ed. Wang Xianqian (“Lüli zhi” 律歷志) 21 xia, 49; see Chen Shuguo, *Xian-Qin lizhi yanjiu*, 197.

54. *Li ji zhengyi* 禮記正義, ed. Kong Yingda (*Shisanjing zhushu*), 26.225.

55. “Fulu 6, Shiwen” 附錄 6, 釋文, *Shanghai bowuguan cang Zhanguo Chu zhushu* (1–5) *wenzi bian* 上海博物館藏戰國楚竹書 (一–五) 文字編, Li Shoukui 李守奎, Qu Bing 曲冰, Sun Weilong 孫偉龍, eds. (Beijing: Zuoja, 2007), 802. For the definition of a Nai as a three-legged tortoise or dragon, see Lewis, *The Flood Myths*, 103.

56. *Shang shu zhengyi* (*Shisanjing zhushu*), 5.29.

57. *Li ji zhengyi* (*Shisanjing zhushu*), 31.260.



While the *Li ji* elaborates on the nature of thanksgiving rituals to the sky, the earth, and the ancestors, earlier texts and the inscriptions generally limited it to matching Heaven or Shang Di's "mandate" (*ming* 命), but give few descriptive details. David Pankenier suggests that astral signs apparent in the sky on the eve of the Shang conquest by the Zhou indicated the mandate of Heaven. The matching ceremony may have involved a mimetic performance of Heaven's signs.<sup>58</sup>

In the case of the Bin performance, the "mandate" to Yu was not a conquest over a former regime, but a fundamental reconfiguring of the earth for civilized life. Since there are no bronze inscriptions or early evidence for matching rituals to the earth (versus the sky)—matching rituals to the earth are seen in late Warring States and Han texts—most likely, Yu's matching ceremony also involved astral images.<sup>59</sup> However, the Yu performance (perhaps a dance with shields and feathers as described in the "Da Yu Mo" 大禹謨 chapter of the *Shang shu*),<sup>60</sup> must have been that of an earth god, in the style perhaps associated by other Zhou groups with Hou Ji (such as the dance of animals, the male and female phoenix, in nine movements described in the "Yi Ji" chapter of the *Shang shu*).<sup>61</sup> The promise of fertility inherent in the ritual is suggested in the use of "matching" males and females or the sun and moon, both mentioned in the *Zuo zhuan*.<sup>62</sup> This fits with Lewis's analysis of the later legend of Nü Wa as Yu's female counterpart.<sup>63</sup> In the Bin Gong inscription, Yu's "people" become fathers and mothers after the "matching" ritual and give birth to "our king."

Differences and similarities in myths regarding matching ceremonies attributed to Yu and Hou Ji (and his human doppelganger, Gong Liu)

58. "Astronomical Dates in the Shang and Western Zhou," *Early China* 7 (1981–1982), 2–37. For a study of the dances associated with individual sage kings, see D. McCurley, "Performing Patterns and Numinous relations in Shang and Zhou China," *The Drama Review* 49 (Fall 2005) 3, 135–56; for a study of the importance of musical performance in ceremonies for founder ancestors for the transmission of literacy, see C. Cook, "Education and the Way of the Former Kings," *Literacy in Early China*, ed. Li Feng and D. Branner (Seattle: University of Washington, 2011), 302–36.

59. The *Zuo zhuan* records that in order to "restore the work of Yu, one performed the matching ritual to Heaven while sacrificing to Xia," see *Chun qiu Zuo zhuan zhengyi* (*Shisanjing zhushu*), ("Ai Gong" 1, 57.452). The "Si wen" 思文 ode in the *Shi jing* "Zhou song" section notes that Hou Ji performed the "matching" ritual to Heaven and established the people *Mao shi zhengyi* (*Shisanjing zhushu*), 19.2.322.

60. *Shang shu zhengyi* (*Shisanjing zhushu*), 4.25.

61. *Shang shu zhengyi* (*Shisanjing zhushu*), 4.32.

62. See *Chun qiu Zuo zhuan zhengyi* (*Shisanjing zhushu*), ("Yin Gong" 隱公 8, 4.31; "Zhao Gong" 昭公 7, 44.349). In the first example, when sending a woman in marriage, one first performs the *pei* ritual and then the *zu* 祖 ritual, understood as a travel ritual. In the second example, a *chen* 辰 is defined as the *pei* of the sun by the moon.

63. Lewis, "The Mythology," 575–76.

may have led to a need for rationalization in terms of priorities. The *Shi ji* “Fengshan shu” 封禪書 attempts to reconcile the Yu and Hou Ji performances and explains that Zhou Gong 周公 during the King Cheng 成 period performed the *jiao* sacrifice to Hou Ji and the *zong* 宗 (main ancestral shrine) sacrifice to King Wen 文 at the Mingtang 明堂 in order to “match” Shang Di. But it also claimed that only after Yu restored the *she* 社 sacrifice, was Hou Ji able to spread seeds and store harvests. Then there came about a Ji 稷 sacrifice followed by the *jiao* and *she*.<sup>64</sup> In the “Yi Ji” chapter of the *Shang shu*, Yu worked with Ji to spread the seeds and teach the people how to feed themselves<sup>65</sup> in a manner similar to the earlier *Shi ji* passage describing Gong Liu’s achievements.

The worship of Gong Liu during a harvest ceremony is suggested by many of the *Shi jing* odes associated with the Bin people or Gong Liu per se, such as “Qi yue” 七月 in the “Bin Feng” 邠風 section and “Gong Liu” in the “Da Ya” section.<sup>66</sup> According to “Qi yue,” the harvest feast was held in the tenth month beginning in the threshing ground with alcohol and feast preparations. The slaughter of a lamb reminds us of the need for blood from the piglet’s ear in the later Xian Nong sacrifice. In “Qi yue,” the party troops up to the “Patriarch’s Hall” (*gong tang* 公堂) to raise their drinking cups in toasts and wish the Gong a long life. Further links between Bin musical performances and agricultural deities are suggested by an entry in the “Chunguan zongbo 春官宗伯” section of the *Zhou li*:

籥章：掌土鼓、豳籥。中春，晝擊土鼓、吹<豳>詩，以逆暑。中秋，夜迎寒，亦如之。凡國祈年于田祖，吹<豳>雅，擊土鼓，以樂田峻。國祭蜡，則吹<豳>頌，擊土鼓，以息老物。

The Officer of Panpipe Melodies manages the earth drum and the Bin pipes. In mid-Spring, strum the earth drum during the day and play Bin odes on the pipes so as to welcome warm weather. In mid-Autumn, they are likewise played in the evening to welcome cold weather. Generally, when states pray for a good year from the Field Ancestor, they play *ya* (=xia 夏) style Bin odes and strum

64. See Takekawa Kametaro, *Shiji*, 28, 7.

65. *Shang shu zhengyi* (*Shisanjing zhushu*) 5, 29.

66. According to the Kong Yingda commentary on a passage in the *Zuozhuan* (remarking how the grand music of the songs of Bin, being joyful but not loose make one think of Zhou Gong’s mission to the East) notes the connection of Bin music to the tale of how Hou Ji’s descendant, Gong Liu, settled among the Rong and Di peoples in Bin and how that paralleled Zhou Gong’s going off to the east to continue the agricultural work of Hou Ji and the Xian Gong (Gong Liu). Kong claimed that the difficulties Zhou Gong ran into there led to the ode “Qi Yue,” see *Mao shi zhengyi* (*Shisanjing zhushu*) 8.1, 120–26. The “Gong Liu” is found in *Mao shi zhengyi* (*Shisanjing zhushu*) 17.3, 273–76.

the earth drum to entertain the farmers. When states perform the La rite, they play Bin eulogies and strum the earth drum to give everything old a rest.<sup>67</sup>

We can interpret the Bin Gong *xu* inscription within the context of Bin music and agricultural rituals celebrating the spiritual founders such as the Field Ancestor in the passage mentioned above or the First Farmer in the Qin sacrificial ritual discussed earlier. The Bin inscription (or song) suggests the seasonal *di* 禘 or annual La 臘 ceremonies recorded in later texts.<sup>68</sup> First, just as in Hou Ji or Gong Liu legends, Yu's first act of *de* is invoked: his making the world fit for human habitation and agriculture and the people's appreciation and conversion to the way of *de*. This is followed by a self-reference to the initiation of the feasting sacrifice, the use of the *xu* vessel itself in this celebration of the generative abundance of the people, their creation of a "king" (possibly Liu Gong or his son), and Heaven's continued award of their people for loyally maintaining the initial *de*. Bin Gong or his "personator" then announced to the spirits the successful cultivation of *de*.

This type of ceremony is reflected in a number of Western Zhou inscriptions which describe the "grasping" (*bing* 秉) of ancestral *de* by descendants through a process of "opening" (*pi* 辟) or "broadening" (*guang* 廣) their hearts. These could be expressions of the successful learning of the rituals or simple oaths of loyalty to the ancestral way, but the style of the inscriptions suggests also a musical performance. They often began with the invocation of the Zhou founder kings and the ancestors and ended with oaths or prayers by the owner of the vessel (who described himself as someone still in mourning for his father, a "youth," *xiaozhi* 小子).<sup>69</sup> The *de* was traced back to the founders' "matching" (*pei* 配) of Heaven's mandate. The vessel owners themselves describe the merit they accrued through military or ritual deeds for the Zhou court as part of the ceremonial process for legitimatizing their advancement in the Zhou court, often taking up their ancestor's position. Although there is no promotion ceremony at the heart of the Bin inscription, it seems likely that music and dance were also part of the Bin thanksgiving ceremonies, which celebrated the people's *de*.

67. *Zhou li zhushu* 周禮注疏 ed. Zheng Xuan 鄭玄 (*Shisanjing zhushu*) 24.163–64. Kong Yingda notes that both ceremonies were to agricultural deities. The earth drum was a hand-held earthenware drum with a large funnel shape on one end and a small one on the other, both ends covered with leather.

68. See C. Cook, "Ancestor Worship during the Eastern Zhou," Lagerwey and Kalinowski, *Early Chinese Religion*, 262–71. The La ceremony included the Grand Exorcism, see summary by M. Bujard, "State and Local Cults in Han Religion," Lagerwey and Kalinowski, *Early Chinese Religion*, 801.

69. See for example, the Shi Wang *ding* 師望鼎 (*Jicheng* 2812).

### The Inscribed Text as Ode<sup>70</sup>

Punctuating the Bin Gong *xu* inscription as an ode—one that should include rhyme and rhythm—helps punctuate cryptic phrases and provide a new interpretation. Using the Old Chinese reconstruction by William Baxter and Laurent Sagart (Version 20 February 2011) with some comparison to that provided by Axel Schussler,<sup>71</sup> we can make a number of observations that support musicality:

- Each line ends with a velar final, either an \*-ʔ, \*-ŋ, or \*-k except line 1.
- Almost every other line ends with the word *de* 德 (\*tʰək).
- Key terms are used repeatedly, for example: *de* six times, *tian* 天 three times, *hao* 好 three times.
- Three sets of rhymes and hedge-rhymes may have been included at the end of each line: (A) \*-ək and \*-əʔ in lines 2, 3, 4, 6, 8, and 11 (there is also internal repetition of these finals), (B) \*-aʔ and \*-aŋ in lines 5 and 7, and (C) \*-iŋ in lines 9 & 10.
- Repetitive use of words with similar medials also suggests rhythm. For example, in line 1, we find -i- -i- -a- -a- -a-, -a- -a- -u- -u- (following Schussler which shows less variation than in the second half in the Baxter and Sagart version).
- Rhythm is also revealed in the repetitive use of words with high, low, or rounded vowels, in some cases all in a row (see line 10 in the Baxter-Sagart version). Notable is the repeated series of three low-vowel-words in a row; see lines 1, 4, and 10 in either version.

If we combine some of these observations and create a visual format highlighting medials followed by the symbols “*n*” for nasal and “*v*” for velar finals, we end up with a display revealing a melody of sorts. In the two versions below, similar vowels in rows are underlined and in columns marked in **bold**. To the right of each version is an attempt to further simplify the vowels into high (H), low (L), rounded (R), or neither of the above (-). Rhyming (including slant or close rhymes) at the end of a line is marked with an asterisk (\*) or a raised plus sign for secondary

70. M. Kern saw increasing “euphonic features” in Western Zhou inscriptions as a function of “the consolidation of the royal institution of ancestral sacrifice during the mid- and late Western Zhou” (“Bronze Inscriptions, the *Shi jing* and the *Shang shu*,” Lagerwey and Kalinowski, *Early Chinese Religion*, 194–95).

71. *Minimal Old Chinese and Later Han Chinese: A Companion to Grammata Serica Recensa*, ed. V. Mair, ABC Dictionary Series (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i, 2009).



## Translation and Analysis

1 天命禹專 (敷) 土	隨 (墮) 山濬川
2 迺差方設征 (政) <sup>73</sup>	降民監德
3 迺自作配饗	民成父母
4 生我王作臣	厥顯 <sup>74</sup> 惟德
5 民好明德	食 (飩) 在天下 <sup>75</sup>

73. Li Xueqin explains that *shezheng* 設征 refers to the setting up of land tariffs (“Lun X Gong xu,” *Zhongguo lishi wenwu*, 10). My reading of *zheng* 政 is drawn from contemporary inscriptions lauding King Wen, see Cook, “Bin gong xu and Sage-king Yu,” *Xing Wen, Newsletter*, 24n.7. For a collation of the various transcriptions of the inscription, see Chen Shu’s article in this volume, “Collected Interpretations of the X Gong X.”

74. The archaic graph 顯 is generally interpreted as consisting of 日 on top of 水 on the left and 頁 on the right. Li Xueqin read it as 貴 and Li Ling 李零 as *mei* 昧 \*m<sup>h</sup>ət-s a graphic loan for *mo* 沫, used as a descriptive for *pan* vessels in other bronze inscriptions (“Lun X Gong xu faxian de yiyi” 論斁公盥發現的意義, *Zhongguo lishi wenwu* 2002.6, 38, see my discussion in Cook, “Bing gong xu,” *Xing Wen, Newsletter*, 25n.10). This latter reading is also found in Liu Yu and Yan Zhibin ed., *Jinchu Yin Zhou jinwen jilu er bian* 2, 139. Earlier I have followed this, but in this essay, I test the idea that it should really be read as simplified variant of *xian* 顯 \*q<sup>h</sup>enʔ, “to make lustrous, manifest.” The immediate problem with this idea is that *xian* almost always appears after *pi* 丕 in the bronze inscriptions. This is true for many transmitted textual usages as well, however the *Shi jing* does also use it in a verbal sense of “to be visible, manifest” as in the presence of an ancestral spirit (see “Si qi” 思齊 and “Yi” 抑, *Mao shi zhengyi* (*Shisanjing zhushu*), 16.3.249; 18.1.288). There are two Zhou eulogies preserved in the *Shi jing* that describe *de* as being “manifest” (*xian*). The first example also includes the phrase *wei de* 維德. This occurs in the “Lie Wen” 烈文 (Mao 269, *Mao shi zhengyi* (*Shisanjing zhushu*), 19.1.317): “Limitless are the people, obedient in all quadrants of the world; So manifest is the *de* modeled by the 100 Rulers” 無競維人、四方其訓之; 不顯維德、百辟其刑之. In the second example, *xian* is the desired quality of *de*, a quality conferred by the ancestors, see “Jing zhi” 敬之 (Mao 288, *Mao shi zhengyi* (*Shisanjing zhushu*), 19.3.331): “reveal to us the way of making manifest our *de*” 示我顯德行.

75. This phrase is full of problems. Inscriptions with Tianxia indicating a location (versus a subject + verb) date to the late Warring States period. On the Zhongshan bronze *fangding* inscription, we find “protect all things (located in) Under Heaven” 開 (閑) 於天下之物矣. The archaic graph for the first word in the Bin Gong phrase was composed of 頁 (\*lep) with 倉 (\*s-mə-lək) underneath and is read as 憂 (\*ʔiw) “anxiety, concern” (see Shaughnessy, “The Bin Gong Xu Inscription,” *Idema, Books in Numbers*, 18–19) or 優 by Chen Yingjie in the sense of widespread harmony (following Mao 304; support can also be found in the “Gaozi, xia” in *Mengzi* in the line 好善優於天下, “Bin Gong xu mingwen zaikao”). While these readings are convenient, neither interpretation works with either element in the original graph phonetically. A weak case could be made for 閑 (\*g<sup>h</sup>ren) (as seen in the Zhongshan inscription) if we assume fluidity in the element 倉 as all commentators have done so far in their attempts to interpret this graph. If, on the other hand, we retain the 倉 element but consider it a mistake for the graphically similar phonetic 含 (\*Cə-m-kəm-s), then we come up with the graph 頤 (“the jaw,” “lower the head” in *Zuozhuan*) or loan word 預 (“bald”) both

- |    |                    |                         |
|----|--------------------|-------------------------|
| 6  | 用厥邵 (昭) 好          | 益敬懿德                    |
| 7  | 康亡不懋 <sup>76</sup> | 孝友孟 (訃) 明 <sup>77</sup> |
| 8  | 經齊好祀               | 無期心好德                   |
| 9  | 婚媾亦惟協              | 天釐用考神                   |
| 10 | 復用祓祿 <sup>78</sup> | 永御于寧                    |
| 11 | 燹公曰民惟克用茲德亡侮        |                         |

BAXTER-SAGART

- |   |  |   |
|---|--|---|
| 1 | ʃimʔ-s məriŋ-s ɕʷaʔ p <sup>h</sup> a t <sup>h</sup> aʔ                                 | sə.loj s-ŋrər s-q <sup>wh</sup> in-s tʃun               |
| 2 | n <sup>s</sup> ərʔ ts <sup>h</sup> raj paŋ ŋet teŋ                                     | k <sup>s</sup> ruŋ-s miŋ kʃram t <sup>s</sup> ək        |
| 3 | n <sup>s</sup> ərʔ S.bit-s ts <sup>s</sup> ak-s p <sup>h</sup> əj-s q <sup>h</sup> aŋʔ | miŋ deŋ N-paʔ məʔ                                       |
| 4 | sreŋ ŋ <sup>s</sup> ajʔ ɕʷaŋ ts <sup>s</sup> ak gin                                    | kot q <sup>h</sup> enʔ ɕʷij t <sup>s</sup> ək           |
| 5 | miŋ q <sup>h</sup> uʔ-s mraŋ t <sup>s</sup> ək   | s-m-lək- dz <sup>s</sup> əʔ ʃimʔ-s m-ɕ <sup>s</sup> raʔ |
| 6 | mə-loŋ-s kot daw-s q <sup>h</sup> uʔ-s   | qek kreŋ-s qik-s t <sup>s</sup> ək                      |
| 7 | k-ʃaŋ maŋ pə mus   | q <sup>h</sup> <r>u-s ɕʷəʔ q <sup>wh</sup> a mraŋ       |
| 8 | k <sup>s</sup> eŋ dz <sup>s</sup> əj q <sup>h</sup> uʔ-s s-ɕəʔ                         | ma ɕə səm q <sup>h</sup> uʔ-s t <sup>s</sup> ək         |

read \*ɕ<sup>s</sup>əm and possible dialect loans for 閼 or 捍 (both read \*k<sup>s</sup>ar) for 閑 (\*g<sup>s</sup>ran) “to protect, bar against trespass” (with the shared phonetic 干). However, it is much less convoluted to go with the original ignored element 食 and look for words compatible with the common theme of feeding the world in transmitted texts, hence the choice of 飩 (\*s-mə-lək) “to feed.” Liu Yu and Yan Zhibin transcribe *ren* 任 (\*nəm-s), but the rationale is unclear (*Jinchu Yin Zhou jicheng erbian* 2, 139).

76. Chen Yingjie reads 亡 as 無 as a loan for 娛 which seems unlikely, however his reading 不 as 丕 in bronze inscriptions finds strong support in the inscriptions. In the case where the people and not the king is the subject, Shaughnessy’s reading of “diligent” or perhaps “energetic” is probably better—the sense being that they are diligent in performing the sacrifices (“The Bin Gong Xu Inscription,” Idema, *Books in Numbers*, 15; Chen Yingjie, “Bin Gong xu mingwen zaikao,”). In this case, I would read 亡 more like 罔 as in the *Shang shu* “Duofang” 多方 line 罔不明德慎罰 or the “Lü xing” 呂刑 line 罔不惟德之勤, see *Shang shu zhengyi* (*Shisanjing zhushu*), 17.116, 19.136.

77. The word *yu* written with a “heart” semantic and the phonetic 孟 (\*ɕʷa) and is read as *xu* 訃 (\*q<sup>wh</sup>a) “big, ample, to enlarge” by most scholars and as found in a number of odes in the *Shi jing* (in Mao no. 245, “Shengmin,” for example, it describes infant Hou Ji’s loud crying). Chen Jieying suggests *xu* 卹 (\*s-mit) in the sense of “take care with” (the rites, etc.) (“Bin Gong xu mingwen zaikao,”) but that ignores the phonetic 于.

78. Baxter pointed out that \*b<sup>s</sup>ot 祓 cannot be a loan for \*pək 福 (personal communication). Most scholars prefer to read it as 福祿 because this phrase is extremely common in both the bronze inscriptions and the *Shi jing*. The word *fu* 祓 is found only on a handful of inscriptions from the Fufeng 扶風 region in Shaanxi 陝西. The unusual phrase *fulu* 祓祿 is found also on a Xing bell inscription (*Jicheng* 246). Xing was a descendent of Shi Qiang whose lineage narrative is mentioned above. This helps to confirm a time period and regional affiliation for the Bin Gong inscription, although still leaves us in doubt as to how to interpret the phrase.

- 9 m<sup>5</sup>un k<sup>5</sup>o-s cak c<sup>w</sup>ij c<sup>5</sup>ep            ʃimʔ-s rə mə-loŋ-s k-r<sup>5</sup>uʔ Cə.liŋʔ  
 10 N-pruk-s mə-loŋ-s b<sup>5</sup>ot r<sup>5</sup>ok        c<sup>w</sup>raŋʔ ɲaʔ-s q<sup>wh</sup>a n<sup>5</sup>iŋʔ  
 11 prən C.q<sup>5</sup>oŋ c<sup>w</sup>at miŋ c<sup>w</sup>ij k<sup>5</sup>ək mə-loŋ-s tsə t<sup>5</sup>ək maŋ məʔ

## SCHUSSLER:

- |    |  |                               |
|----|--|-------------------------------|
| 1  | thîn min waʔ pha thâʔ                          | s-wai srân sjuns k-hlun       |
| 2  | nəʔ tshrâi paŋ ɲhet <sup>79</sup> teŋ          | krûŋh min krâm tāk            |
| 3  | nəʔ dzih tsāk phâs haŋ                         | min deŋ baʔ məʔ <sup>80</sup> |
| 4  | sreŋ ɲâiʔ waŋ tsāk gin                         | kot hênʔ wi tāk               |
| 5  | min hûʔ mraŋ tāk                               | m-lək dzəʔ thîn grâʔ          |
| 6  | loŋh kot dauh hûʔ                              | ʔek kreŋh ʔits tāk            |
| 7  | khâŋ maŋ pə mûh                                | hrâuh wê wa mraŋ              |
| 8  | kêŋ dzî hûʔ s-ləʔ                              | ma gə səm hûʔ tāk             |
| 9  | hmân kôh jak wi gêp                            | thîn rə loŋh khûʔ m-lin       |
| 10 | bukh loŋh pats rôk                             | wraŋʔ ɲrâh wa nêŋ             |
| 11 | prən klôŋ wat min wi khâk loŋh tsə tāk maŋ moʔ |                               |

## Translation

- 1 Heaven charged Yu to spread the earth, collapsing mountains and deepening rivers,
- 2 So he distinguished the Regions and set up the governing (structures), descended among the people and examined their *de*
- 3 So, based on this, (Yu) created the sacrificial feast matching (his sacrifices in return for Heaven's mandate) and the people became parents,
- 4 Giving birth to Our King and acting as his servants, what they displayed was *de*.
- 5 The people cared for (the king's and Yu's) luminous *de* and provided food for All Under Heaven.
- 6 Employing it to glorify and care for (the king's and Yu's way of *de*) and to abundantly pay their respects to (their) refined *de*,

79. This is Schussler's second reading (see *Minimal Old Chinese*, 227, no. 20-8). The other is \*nhet, however since the word in front ends with a -ij, a similar initial following it seems most likely.

80. This is Schussler's second reading (see *Minimal Old Chinese*, 105, no. 4-64). The other is \*môʔ, which rhymes less well.



- 7 Contentedly, they all worked hard and behaved in filial and collegial manners, enlarging and illuminating (the King's and Yu's way of *de*),
- 8 Practicing purification, they took care with the annual sacrificial performance, (performing it) endlessly;<sup>81</sup> the people nurtured *de* in their hearts.
- 9 Married relations are likewise all harmonious so Heaven's gifts are used for Deceased-father spirits,
- 10 May (they) repeatedly expel (bad fortune), (provide) wealth, and eternally guide (the people) towards tranquility.
- 11 Bin Gong said: "The people have been able to employ this *de* without harm."

Line by Line Comments and Notes

LINE 1

天命禹敷土墮山濬川	Heaven charged Yu to spread the earth, collapsing mountains and deepening rivers
-----------	--

Variations of this line can be found throughout transmitted literature—a topic documented thoroughly in previous studies of this inscription.<sup>82</sup> Particularly striking for this study are the similarities with language in the *Shang shu*, particularly in the “Yu” and “Xia” sections of the transmitted *Shang shu*, suggesting that the content for these chapters borrowed from older texts and tales. Jiang Linchang 江林昌 feels that the “Lü xing” chapter of the “Zhou” section also shows influence.<sup>83</sup> The argument regarding how old *shu* style texts can be dated has been given renewed energy with the publication of some of the Warring States period bamboo texts stored at Tsinghua University. These texts preserve alternate and lost versions of chapters preserved in the *Shang shu* and *Yi Zhou shu* 逸周書. As far as I know, Yu does not appear in these published texts (although Xia is mentioned), which focus on Zhou history. Reference to Hou Ji receiving the Mandate appears once.<sup>84</sup>

81. Following Shaughnessy, “The Bin Gong Xu,” Idema, *Books in Numbers*, 19n.12 for the reading of 無期.

82. See n. 11 above.

83. Jiang Linchang 江林昌, “X gong xu mingwen de xueshu jiazhi zonglun” 夔公盤銘文的學術價值綜論, *Huaxue* 6 (2003), 35–49.

84. *Qinghua daxue cang Zhanguo zhujian* 清華大學藏戰國竹簡, Qinghua daxue chutu wenxian yanjiu yu baohu zhongxin and Li Xueqin, ed. (Shanghai: Shanghai wenyi, 2010) 2, 74 (“Zhai Gong zhi guming” 祭公之顧命 strip 13).

The notion of different versions of the Yu tale preserved in different places and times supports Martin Kern's idea of the oral nature of the transmission of hymns in ancient China, especially those reflected on bronze inscriptions.<sup>85</sup> If we consider the Bin Gong inscription as a record of a religious song sung at a harvest or thanksgiving ceremony, then we might understand that the mythology of Yu may have been transmitted orally as well as in occasional written forms over the five or more centuries separating the Bin version from the later bamboo textual versions consulted by even later editors when they pulled together the transmitted *Shang shu*.

LINE 2

迺差方設政降民監德	So he distinguished the Regions and set up the governing (structures), descended among the people and examined their <i>de</i>
-----------	--

This eulogy to founder deity Yu's setting up of government might be compared to a line from the eulogy to founder king Wen found on the roughly contemporary Shi Qiang basin inscription: "It is said that in antiquity King Wen first brought harmony to government so that Shang Di sent down Refined Power (*yi de* 懿德) and Grand Protection (*da ping* 大粵>屏) and (they) spread (it) to the Four Regions, convening with and receiving (the submission of) the ten thousand nations" (曰古文王, 初懿齋于政, 上帝降懿德大粵, 匍有四方, 合受萬邦).<sup>86</sup> The term "Refined Power" here and in line 6 of the Bin inscription should be understood within the context of Western Zhou inscriptions which emphasize that *de* is a quality received from Heaven by the ancients and then continuously sustained and accrued over the generations.<sup>87</sup> The mention of *de* with various types of adjectives (refined, respectful 敬, unified 雍, practiced 經, etc.) is common in Western Zhou inscriptions.

The Bin Gong inscription is the first and only inscription to mention *de* six times.<sup>88</sup> It is tempting to try to link this phenomenon to sets of Six De

85. See *The Stele Inscriptions of Ch'in Shih-huang: Text and Ritual in Early Chinese Imperial Representation* (New Haven, American Oriental Society, 2000), 59–105.

86. Shi Qiang *pan* (*Jicheng* 10175), Group B Xing bells (*Jicheng* 251–56).

87. The Western Zhou meaning of *yi* 懿 is no doubt lost to us. Han scholars explain it as something that that becomes "beautiful" after a long time or is "deep" as in a basket, see *Shuowen jiezi* 說文解字, ed. Xu Shen 許慎 (*Shuowen jiezi gulin zhengbu hebian*, comp. Dingwen, Zhongguo xueshu Series, Taipei: Dingwen, 1977), 8, 989–90 and commentary to "Qi Yue" 七月 in *Mao shi zhengyi* (Shisanjing zhushu), 8.1.121. Since *de* was the product of merit and wealth (awarded for merit) accumulated over time, I translate the adjective *yi* as "refined."

88. See the discussions by Liu Yu, "Bin Gong kao," 6–7 and Jiang Linchang, "Sui gong xu mingwen," 46–48.

mentioned in transmitted texts. For example, the ‘Gao Yao mo’ chapter in the Yu section of the *Shang shu* mentions a gradation of Three, Six, and Nine De for service in the home, nation, or as an official (presumably for an empire).<sup>89</sup> In the *Zhou li* the Six De are listed in the ‘Diguan Situ’ 地官司司徒 section as Confucian virtues: “knowledge, humanness, sageliness, righteousness, loyalty, and harmony” (知仁聖義忠和). In the ‘Chunguan zongbo’ section discussing the duties of the Grand Master 大師, the Six De are the “basis” 本 (*ben*) of the six types of odes and the six tones used in the performance of grand sacrificial rituals along with drums, flutes, and other musical instruments.<sup>90</sup> This latter meaning is also reflected in the ‘Lu Yu, xia’ 魯語下 of the *Guo yu* which talks about which songs and music were to be used in official ceremonies. For grand rituals to bestow gifts upon ministers, the Six De were considered essential, although the passage does not state clearly how this relates to the music.<sup>91</sup>

Jiang Linchang feels that the six *de* in the Bin Gong inscription fall into three categories of virtues: paying respects to Heaven, acting with filial piety to the ancestors, and protecting the people.<sup>92</sup> In fact, if each *de* is understood as a reference to a single generative force sent down by command (*ming*) from Heaven to Yu, and to the first and subsequent “kings” and maintained by the “people” (through happy marriages and good harvests), there is no need to force the early use of *de* into later Confucian “virtues.” However, the connection in the ancient mind to grand musical ceremonies may have a link to our inscription, in the sense that it was an ode focused on the praise and continuous generation of *de*.

The notion of Heaven or Shang Di descending to inspect the *de* of those below is found in the ‘Lü xing’ chapter and ‘Yin Wu’ 殷武, ‘Da Ming’ 大明, and ‘Huang yi’ 皇矣 odes.<sup>93</sup> In the ‘Lü xing,’ after protests of innocence are sent up by the people to Shang Di blaming their behavior on the bad treatment at the hands of the Three Miao 三苗 (the barbarians that Yu is credited elsewhere with suppressing), Shang Di examined the people, finding them completely devoid of the fragrance (of *de*), and so he cut off communication with the earth. Eventually communication was re-established after the appearance of the Three Lords (San Hou 三后) Bo Yi 伯夷, Yu, and Ji who instituted law, landscaping, and agriculture

89. *Shang shu zhengyi* (*Shisanjing zhushu*), 4.26.

90. *Zhou li zhushu* (*Shisanjing zhushu*), 10.68, 23.158.

91. *Guo yu* 國語 (Sibu beiyao 四部備要 ed.), 5.1–2a.

92. He sees reflections of these *de* in the ‘Daya’ odes: Juan A’ 卷阿, ‘Min Lao’ 民勞, ‘Huang yi’ 皇矣, and ‘Ban’ 板. Although some of these odes address Heaven or the Happy Junzi (who might be spirits), the odes are not celebratory in the same manner as this inscription (see ‘X gong xu,’ 45).

93. Pointed out by Jiang Linchang, ‘X gong xu,’ 45

and who were able to “match” Heaven’s *de* with offerings from below.<sup>94</sup> The “fragrance” of *de* and the supply of offerings during the “matching” ritual confirm the idea that the display of *de* was associated with a thanksgiving sacrifice.

In the ode “Yin Wu,” Heaven descended to inspect the people below after Yu’s work setting up the many rulers in capitals was done and agricultural stores were successfully accumulated.<sup>95</sup> Heaven was pleased enough to command the states below to “create boundaries and establish” their good fortune (*fengjian jue fu* 封建厥福), a reference similar to the setting up of government structures (for the sake of tithing).<sup>96</sup> Inspection of *de* is also the issue in the “Da Ming” ode. Heaven inspected those below and sent down a mandate after King Wen of Zhou exhibited *de* in service to Shang Di.<sup>97</sup> The ode “Huang yi” likewise glorifies King Wen’s *de*. In this ode, the “brilliant” Shang Di looked upon those below (*lin xia* 臨下) and inspected the people’s *mo* 莫 in the Four Regions. Kong Yingda’s explanation that *mo* refers to the settlement of the people seems to be based on the general pattern in these odes that after Shang Di’s inspection, states are established

There are a number of examples of Heaven or Shang Di “looking upon those below” in late Western Zhou bronze inscriptions. In the case of the Shi Xun *gui* 師詢鬲, “Brilliant Heaven” looks down and protects the King’s control over Zhou, making sure the people were content and tranquil (康寧). The exact same sentence appears in the Mao Gong *ding* 毛公鼎 except that it is the preservation of the Former King’s “matching” of its mandate that is mentioned instead of the people’s contentment. However, if we understand that “matching” requires sacrificial grains and animals provided by contented farmers, then the two statements are not that divergent. The *mo* of the people which is sought by Brilliant Heaven might be a “model” 模, someone capable of matching Heaven’s mandate and bringing contentment to the people, just as we see in the Bin Gong inscription.

94. *Shang shu zhengyi* (*Shisanjing zhushu*), 19.135–137.

95. *Mao shi zhengyi* (*Shisanjing zhushu*), 20.4.359–360.

96. Traditional commentaries read *feng* 封 as either meaning “great” or “land grant.” The Western Zhou meaning was simply to prescribe a territory with a boundary as with mounded earth and trees. By the Warring States period, *feng* could refer to a land grant or a grave mound. Based on the *Zuo zhuan*, Li Feng understands that *fengjian* was a Zhou policy of setting up a fence of polities run by relatives with clear obligations to the Zhou court around the Zhou center for protection (see *Landscape and Power in Early China: The Crises and Fall of the Western Zhou, 1045–771 BC*, [Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University, 2006], 110–16). I suggest that there was a relationship between mortuary ritual, tombs, and the rights to rule a territory (“Ancestor Worship in Eastern Zhou,” 241–44).

97. *Mao shi zhengyi* (*Shisanjing zhushu*), 16.2.239.

LINES 3, 4 AND 5

迺自作配饗民成父母	So, based on this, (Yu) created the sacrificial feast matching (his sacrifices in return for Heaven's mandate) and the people became parents,
生我王作臣厥顯惟德	Giving birth to Our King and acting as his servants, what they displayed was <i>de</i> .
民好明德飭在天下	The people cared for (the king's and Yu's) luminous <i>de</i> and provided food for All

Yu performed the first “matching” ritual to Heaven by providing sacrificial foods in gratitude for the gift of Heaven’s mandate.<sup>98</sup> This initiated the way of *de* for the people, blessing them with fertility. The people needed a king to represent them and safely transmit *de* from the ancestors. With a king as mediator, the people were able to sustain the way of *de*, which like the spirits was “luminous” (*ming* 明). The fertility provided by the *de* was enough to feed the whole world, the same type of achievement linked to Houji and Gong Liu in later texts. The ability of the people of Yu’s Nine Provinces to provide sacrifices is reflected in the “Ji dong ji” 季冬紀 chapter of the *Lushi Chunqiu* (and repeated in the “Yueling” 月令 of the *Li ji*). The people (like Yu in other texts) worked their utmost to provide for the sacrifices to Bright Heaven, Shang Di, the Altar of Soil and Grain, the back and front rooms of the shrine, the mountains and forests, and famous rivers (凡在天下九州之民者, 無不咸獻其力, 以供皇天上帝社稷寢廟山林名川之祀).<sup>99</sup>

LINE 6

用厥昭好益敬懿德	Employing it to glorify and care for (the king’s and Yu’s way of <i>de</i> ) and to abundantly pay their respects to (their) refined <i>de</i> ,
----------	--

The promise to use the ancestral *de* properly and to return the benefits to the ancestors in the form of sacrifices is a common notion found in the inscriptions and in many *Shi jing* odes. In many inscriptions, use of the bronze vessel or bell in the ceremony was itself proof of the user’s loyalty. For example, we find on a middle Western Zhou period Cuo

98. In the *Shi jing*, “matching” is performed by various regime rulers; the Shang could “match” the mandate and Shang Di before they lost it (“Wen Wang”); in “Huang yi,” the ruler after hacking down trees was set up by Shang Di to “match” his mandate; King Wu matched the mandate in the capital (“Xia Wu” 下武), and, in “Si Wen” 思文, Hou Ji matched Heaven providing grain to the people, see *Mao shi zhengyi* (*Shisanjing zhushu*), 16.1.237, 16.4.251, 16.5.257, 19.2.322.

99. *Li ji zhengyi* (*Shisanjing zhushu*), 17.156.

盧 chime bell inscription the injunction to “use (the bell) to pursue (in memory) and express filial devotion for Elder Ji, use (it) to present mortuary offerings in the Great Ancestral Shrine, use (it) to entertain and care for guests, may Cuo and Cai Ji treasure it forever and use (it) to glorify (the ancestral spirits in) the Great Ancestral Shrine” (用追孝己伯, 用享大宗, 用樂(樂)好賓, 盧眾蔡姬永寶, 用邵(昭)大宗).<sup>100</sup> The verb *hao* 好 in the Bin Gong inscription expression “care for guests” (*hao bin* 好賓) likewise refers to presenting sacrifices to the ancestors and entertaining guests and friends with music. The verb *hao* is found in this context on Chunqiu period inscriptions (especially on bells) and on a Late Western Zhou period *xu*-style vessel, the Du Bo *xu* 杜伯盃: “Elder Du made a treasured tureen. May he use it to present mortuary offerings and express filial devotion to the Brilliant Spirits, Ancestors, and Deceased Father and to care for friends and colleagues; use it to seek longevity and to plead for eternal life; may he for ten thousand years forever treasure and use it” (杜伯作寶盃, 其用享孝于皇神祖考、于好朋(朋)友, 用求壽、丐永令(命), 其萬年永寶用).<sup>101</sup> Once again we see that “caring” involved the presentation of sacrifices.

## LINE 7

康亡不懋孝友評明    Contentedly, they all worked hard and behaved  
in filial and collegial manners, enlarging and  
illuminating (the King’s and Yu’s way of *de*),

The importance of happiness and contentment among the people as a corollary to their continued diligence in the fields is a common theme in texts of early China. On the other hand, the rulers should not express their contentment lest it be mistaken for idleness. In the admonitions to Heir Feng 小子封 in the “Kang gao” 康誥 of the *Shang shu*, Feng was warned to use his heart in dealing with the people so that he would govern “without acting happy or enjoying ease” 無康好逸; he must be generous without seeming to be generous and encouraging without seeming to be encouraging (懋不懋).<sup>102</sup> In the Bin inscriptions, if the people are content they will continue to provide foods for the sacrifices.

Contentment among the people leads to largess and the development of loving relations in two directions, one vertically between the living and the dead, and the other laterally between brothers. The term for loving relations, *xiaoyou* 孝友, also appears in the Shi Qiang *pan* inscription. The graphs for *you* on the Shi Qiang *pan* and on the Bin Gong *xu* were

100. *Jicheng* 88.

101. *Jicheng* 4448.

102. *Shang shu zhengyi* (*Shisanjing zhushu*), 14.91.

both written with double 又 elements. This shared allograph suggests also shared regional or scribal traditions in the Zhouyuan 周原 region of the Wei River Valley. The Western Zhou concept is similar to the later more secularized term *xiaoti* 孝弟 “to behave in a filial manner (to one’s parents) and a fraternal manner (to one’s brothers)” found in the *Lun yu* 論語.<sup>103</sup> The notion of comradeship between “brothers” (and I suspect this included all male cousins of similar rank) is reinforced in the *Shi jing* ode “Liu yue” 六月,<sup>104</sup> which celebrates a successful battle with a feast. This is also made explicit in the “Jun Chen” 君陳 chapter of the *Shang shu* in which the king appointed Jun Chen to a post in the eastern suburb based on his *de* and his expression of *xiaoyou* to his older and younger brothers when governing. Jun Chen was to take Zhou Gong as a model.<sup>105</sup> In later ritual texts, such as in the *Zhou li* chapter “Chunguan zongbo” for example, *xiaoyou* was one of the “virtues” (*de*) that the Da siyue 大司樂 officers taught elite children through singing and dancing.<sup>106</sup> This further supports the idea that the ceremonial display of *de* involved musical performance.

In the Bin inscription, the largess of the people’s expressions of devotion and collegiality are described as both abundant and luminous *yu ming* 訃明. There is a late Chunqiu bronze inscription from Yan 燕, the Da Shi hu 大師壺, in which this abundance clearly applied specifically to the sacrifice. Da Shi made a fine wine vessel to eulogize his own merits, and once he had expressed care (with food offerings) to his many guests (spiritual and human) with great largess, he used the vessel to wine and dine them in the family hall (吾以為弄壺。自頌既好，多寡不(丕)訃。吾以匱(宴)飲，盱(于)我室家).<sup>107</sup> The combined concepts of happiness through music (*kang* 康), expressing caring for friends and relatives at a feast with music (*hao* 好), and the singing of eulogies (*song* 頌), are also recorded on the late Chunqiu period Cai pan 蔡盤 where the announcement of a marriage and a dance displaying “awesome decorum” (*weiyi* 威儀) are performed during a *di* 禘 ceremony.<sup>108</sup> Marriage was an expression of *de* as a type of fertility and the dance display “awesome decorum” was an expression of a youth who successfully completed his or her training

103. *Lun yu zhushu* 論語注疏, ed. He Yan 何晏 (*Shisanjing zhushu*), (“Xue er” 學而, 1.1).

104. *Mao shi zhengyi* (*Shisanjing zhushu*), 10.2.157. Noted by Li Ling in “Lun X Gong xu,” 38.

105. *Shang shu zhengyi* (*Shisanjing zhushu*), 18.124. This line from the *Shang shu* is quoted differently in the *Lun yu*, see *Lun yu zhushu* (*Shisanjing zhushu*), (“Wei Zheng” 為政, 2.7).

106. *Zhou li zhushu* (*Shisanjing zhushu*), 22.149.

107. *Jicheng* 9715.

108. *Jicheng* 10171.

in the arts, especially the musical arts. A *di* ceremony was a seasonal celebration involving ancestor worship.<sup>109</sup>

LINES 8 AND 9

經齊好祀無期心好德	Practicing purification, they took care with the annual sacrificial performance, (performing it) endlessly; the people nurtured <i>de</i> in their hearts.
婚媾亦惟協天釐用考神	Married relations are likewise all harmonious so Heaven's gifts are used for Deceased-father spirits,

In later ritual texts, purification through fasting and the washing of the exposed parts of the body such as hands and face with grain infused liquids was necessary before entering the ancestral shrine. This is the earliest suggestion of that ritual step. Much later, Mencius also noted that purification through fasting and washing was necessary before performing the rites to Shang Di.<sup>110</sup> In lines 8 and 9, we see reconfirmed that *de* was fostered during the ritual performance of thanksgiving for "Heaven's gifts," i.e., the fertility of the people and the land.

The prosody and rhythm of the Bin song forces the two character expression of "limitless" (*wuqi* 無期) into the beginning of the second phrase in line 8; yet, as Edward Shaughnessy has correctly pointed out, this phrase is elsewhere always found after the verb it modifies. In addition we find with this phrase a shift in rhythm from 4 character phrases into 5 character phrases. The verbal expression "limitless" (*wuqi*) had a transitional function in the shift of these modes. First it modified the previous expression "care of the annual sacrificial performance" *hao si* 好祀. In other words, the people performed the sacrifice year after year with great largess. But, parallel to *hao si* was the final expression this same line, "care of *de*" *hao de* 好德, which was also a limitless action, but one that was expressed inside the "heart" 心 at the same time as the sacrifice was performed outside. We find a somewhat similar ambiguity

109. Cook, "Ancestor Worship in the Eastern Zhou," 260–71 and "Education and the Way."

110. *Mengzi zhushu* (*Shisanjing zhushu*), ("Lilou, xia" 離婁下, 8b.66). For a discussion of the purification ritual in pre-Qin China, see Ke Heli 柯鶴立 (C. Cook), "Gudai Zhongguo de zhai yishi yu shensheng kongjian gainian" 古代中國的齋意識與神聖空間概念, *Disijie guoji Zhongguo guwenzixue yantaohui lunwenji* 第四屆國際中國古文字學研討會論文集 (Hong Kong: Chinese University of Hong Kong, 2003), 653–62; C. Cook, "Moonshine and Millet: Feasting and Purification Rituals in Ancient China," *Of Tripod and Palate: Food, Politics, and Religion in Traditional China*, ed. Roel Sterckx (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 9–33.



and transitional function of the phrase *wuqi* in the ode “Jiong” 騶 in the Lu eulogy section of the *Shi jing* where *wuqi* comes between repetitions of the sound word *si* 思 (*si wuqi si ma si cai* 思無期思馬斯才 “so limitless so, the horses, being of such quality”) also disrupting the prosody of the preceding four-character lines. In this song the limitlessness referred to the horses, which were of great abundance and variety.<sup>111</sup> The shift in phrase length beginning in Line 8 and continuing into Line 9 suggests a musical shift too, with perhaps a varied emphasis on some words or a changed tempo.

## LINE 10

復用祿永御于寧 May (they) repeatedly expel (bad fortune),  
(provide) wealth, and eternally guide (the  
people) towards tranquility.

Given that the link between Sage King Yu and exorcism rituals is clearly evident by the end of the Warring States period, one is tempted to translate the word “guide” *yu* 御 with one of its oldest meanings “to exorcise, drive out,” but by the time of this inscription, *yu*, which could also mean “to drive a chariot,” also clearly had the metaphorical meaning of “to guide.” We find the combination 御于 in the “Siqu” 思齊 ode of the “Daya” section in the *Shi jing* (Mao no. 240) in the sense of “to control, direct, guide” one’s home and country by means of model behavior. The word could also mean “to welcome a spirit” (or “to guide into”) in a sacrificial context. For example, in the “Xiaoya” ode “Fu tian” 甫田 (Mao no. 211) the Earth Spirit and the Field Ancestor (the First Farmer) was welcomed (*yu*) into a feast with the music of zithers and drums.<sup>112</sup> On the other hand, the sense of exorcism could also have been intended. The “Jifa” 祭法 chapter in the *Li ji* clearly states that when the sage kings were arranging the sacrifices, they performed an exorcism ritual when beginning the ritual plowing. In this passage, the earth spirit Houtu was credited with flattening out (平 *ping*) the Nine Continents and instituting the *she* rites, whereas reference to Yu was simply to his continuing his father Gun’s work of controlling the floods; yet the confusion between the two makes it obvious that Yu was an earth spirit.<sup>113</sup> Further proof is found in a similar passage in the “Lü xing” of the *Shang shu*, which specifically credits Yu with flattening out (平) the rivers and lands,

111. *Mao shi zhengyi* (*Shisanjing zhushu*), 20.1.341. The first five words of this phrase may have sounded something like \*sə magə m’ra? revealing an almost chant-like quality to the song.

112. See Qu Wanli 屈萬里, *Shi jing shiyi* 詩經釋義 (Taipei: Huagang, 1977), 183n.12; *Mao shi zhengyi* (*Shisanjing zhushu*), 14.1.26.

113. *Li ji zhengyi* (*Shisanjing zhushu*), 46.362.

naming the mountains and rivers. He was followed by Ji (Hou Ji), who “sent down” (降) the art of sowing so that farmers (or the Farmer, Nong) could cultivate the grains.<sup>114</sup> The multivalent nature of the word *yu* suggests that translating it simply as “guide” results in the inevitable loss of the original connotations. On the simplest level, we can understand that it was an act performed by the spirits “eternally” with the result of “tranquility” for the people.

LINE 11

燹公曰民惟克用茲德亡侮 Bin Gong said: “The people have been able to employ this *de* without harm.”

The pronouncement that a certain action has been performed or occurred “without harm” is common in a divination text like the *Zhou yi*. Bin Gong, the host of the ceremony, like a diviner, announced the successful nurturing of the ancestral *de* by the people over time as well as the acceptance of the thanksgiving sacrifice by the spirits.

### Conclusion

The Bin Gong inscription records a sacrifice in song form to Yu, the founder spirit of the Bin people and earth spirits similar to Houtu, Houji, and Gong Liu. We can understand it as a song that was performed in the context of a thanksgiving sacrifice testifying to the fertility of the people and their agricultural production. This inscription fits with a number of odes with similar themes. For example the “Chu ci,” as mentioned above, describes the preparation and performance of a sacrifice in which the founder and other ancestral spirits are entertained with grain dishes, meats, drink, and music. Ode “Da Tian” 大田 in the “Xiaoya,” “Fu tian” section (Mao 212) has similar language to “Chu ci” and was a farming song also involving grain sacrifices and drinking to the spirit of the Field Ancestor. The ode “Han Lu” 旱麓 (Mao 239) in the “Daya” “Wen Wang zhi shi” 文王之什 section features a Junzi for whom blessings descend and spirits work during a ritual of presenting “clear ale” 清酒 in the wilds. The ode “Qian” 潛 (Mao 281) in the “Chen gong” 臣工 section of the Zhou eulogies, like “Han Lu,” sings about nature and sacrifice, but in this case it specifically refers to the Qi 漆 and Ju 沮 rivers, rivers that also appear in the Gong Liu legend. The odes “Da Tian,” “Han Lu,” and “Qian” also share some phrases, such as “to present the feast, to present the sacrifice, so to enlarge the glorious fortune” 以享以祀、以介景福. These songs and the evidence presented earlier on Bin music strongly

114. *Shang shu zhengyi (Shisanjing zhushu)*, 19.136.

support the idea that the Bin Gong inscription records a song used in a harvest ritual including their founder spirit.<sup>115</sup>

The idea that Yu was first celebrated as an earth spirit in ancient thanksgiving ceremonies supports Dorofeeva-Lichmann's idea of an earlier occult role and also suggests that perhaps secularized texts such as the "Yu gong" may have originally mapped out a spiritual landscape. Study of the Bin Gong *xu* also warns us against over-secularizing the reading of Western Zhou texts and against misreading later textual meanings, such as "virtue" for the word *de*, into earlier texts.

---

115. *Mao shi zhengyi (Shisanjing zhushu)*, 14.1. 208–9, 16.3.247–48, 19.3.327.