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THE WRITING OF A LATE WESTERN ZHOU BRONZE INSCRIPTION

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Abstract

In January, 2003, a cache of twenty-seven inscribed bronze vessels was discovered at Yangjiacun, Meixian, Shaanxi. The vessels belonged to a single family, the Shan family, and most of them probably to a single individual, named Qiu, who held the official title of Warden. The vessels include three very long inscriptions, one on a *pan* with 373 characters, which provides a sketch narrative history of the Western Zhou dynasty, and two on *ding* with 281 and 316 characters, the latter two dated to the forty-second and forty-third years of a reign that is certainly that of Zhou Xuan Wang (r. 827–782 B.C.). The inscriptions provide evidence concerning numerous issues in late Western Zhou history. However, this paper focuses on how the inscriptions were composed. They were stimulated first by a “command document” (*ming shu*) written on bamboo strips in advance of a court investiture ceremony and issued therein by the king to the investee, in this case Qiu. The investee then quoted and/or paraphrased this command document in preparing the inscription to be cast into the bronze vessel, adding to it a dedicatory prayer. In the case of the lengthy *Qiu pan* inscription, he may also have referred to a saga or sagas of the Zhou kings and also textual materials in his own ancestral temple. By examining evidence of the compositional process, we can deduce something about the sorts of literary sources available at the time.

On the evening of January 19, 2003, five peasants collecting soil at Yangjiacun 楊家村, Meixian 眉縣 county, Shaanxi, unearthed a cache containing twenty-seven Western Zhou bronze vessels, all of them bearing inscriptions. This was immediately hailed as one of the great archaeological discoveries of the new century.¹ Its significance is multi-faceted: the intrinsic interest of the inscrip-

- 1 Shortly after the discovery of the cache, the vessels were sent to Beijing for a special exhibition at the Chinese Century Altar Museum (Zhonghua Shiji tan yishuguan 中華世紀壇藝術館), which issued a catalog: *Sheng shi jijin: Shaanxi Baoji Meixian qingtongqi jiaocang* 盛世吉金: 陝西寶雞眉縣青銅器窖藏, ed. Shaanxi sheng wenwuju and Zhonghua Shiji tan yishuguan (Beijing: Beijing chubanshe, 2003). For initial reports of the discovery in the scholarly press, see Shaanxi sheng Kaogu yanjiusuo, Baoji shi kaogu gongzuodui and Meixian wehuaguan, “Shaanxi Meixian Yangjia cun Xi Zhou qingtongqi jiaocang fajue jianbao” 陝西眉縣楊家村西周青銅器窖藏發掘簡報, *Wenwu* 2003.6: 4–42; Liu Huaijun 劉懷君 and Liu Junshe 劉君社, “Shaanxi Meixian Yangjia cun Xi Zhou qingtongqi jiao-

tions, including one, on the *Yu Qiu pan* 虞逖盤,² 373 characters long, which provides a sketch history of almost the entire Western Zhou period much like the famous inscription on the *Shi Qiang pan* 史牆盤, discovered three decades earlier in the neighboring Zhou Yuan 周原 or Plain of Zhou,³ and two others, the 42nd Year *Yu Qiu ding* 虞逖鼎 and 43rd Year *Yu Qiu ding*, also very long (281 characters and 316 characters), which provide important information on military and legal matters near the end of the Western Zhou; the full-date notations in the two *Yu Qiu ding* inscriptions, which require a radical rethinking of late-Western Zhou chronology;⁴ the cache's relationship with three previous discoveries of

cang” 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. Also of interest are “Shaanxi Meixian chutu jiaocang tongqi bitan” 陝西眉縣出土窖藏銅器筆談, *Wenwu* 2003.6: 43–65, and “Baoji Meixian Yangjiacun jiaocang Shan shi jiazhu qingtongqi qun zuotan jiyao” 寶雞眉縣楊家村窖藏單氏家族青銅器群座談紀要, *Kaogu yu wenwu* 2003.3: 13–16.

A Chinese version of the present paper, entitled “Shi lun Xi Zhou tongqi mingwen de xiezuo guocheng: Yi Meixian Shan shi jiazhu tongqi wei li” 試論西周銅器銘文的寫作過程: 以眉縣單氏家族銅器為例, was presented to the conference Xin chutu wenxian yu xian Qin si-xiang chonggou guoji xueshu yantaohui 新出土文獻與先秦思想重構國際學術研討會, Taiwan daxue, 25 May 2005. An English version was prepared for the conference “Chinese Paleography: Theory and Practice,” The University of Chicago, 29 May 2005.

- 2 The initial publications transcribed the name of the patron of the vessel as Lai 逖 (read as “Mai” in Lothar von Falkenhausen, “Issues in Western Zhou Studies: A Review Article,” *Early China* 18 [1993]: 158–9). Other transcriptions have been suggested as well: Qiu 逖, for which see Chen Jian 陳劍, “Ju Guodian jian shi du Xi Zhou jinwen yi li” 據郭店簡釋讀西周金文一例, *Beijing daxue Guwenxian yanjiu zhongxin jikan* 北京大學古文獻研究中心集刊 2 (2001): 378–96, and Dong Shan 董珊, “Lüe lun Xi Zhou Shan shi jiazhu jiaocang qingtongqi mingwen” 略論西周單氏家族窖藏青銅器銘文, *Zhongguo lishi wenwu* 中國歷史文物 2003.4: 42; Zuo 佐, for which see Li Xueqin 李學勤, “Meixian Yangjia cun xin chu qingtongqi yanjiu” 眉縣楊家村新出青銅器研究, *Wenwu* 文物 2003.6: 66–73, and Tang Yuhui 湯余惠, “Du jinwen suoji (ba pian)” 讀金文瑣記(八篇), *Chutu wenxian yanjiu* 出土文獻研究 3 (1998): 60–61; Bi 羣, for which see Zhang Zhenglang 張政烺, “He zun mingwen jieshi buyi” 何尊銘文解釋補遺, *Wenwu* 1976.1: 66; and Su 逖, for which see Noel Barnard, in association with Cheung Kwong-yue, *The Shan-fu Liang Ch'i Kuei and Associated Inscribed Vessels* (Taipei: SMC Publishing Inc., 1996), p. 336–41.
- 3 For the *Shi Qiang pan* inscription, see *Yin Zhou jinwen jicheng* 殷周金文集成, ed. Zhongguo Shehui kexueyuan Kaogu yanjiusuo, 18 vols. (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1984–1994), vol. 16 #10175; hereafter all references to bronze inscriptions will be to this collection, in the form *Jicheng* 16.10175.
- 4 There have been several studies of the dates of the inscriptions and of their implications for late Western Zhou chronology; see, for instance, Li Xueqin 李學勤, “Meixian Yangjiacun qi ming liri de nanti” 眉縣楊家村器銘曆日的難題, *Baoji wenli xueyuan xuebao* 寶雞文理學院學報 2003.5: 1–3, 9; Chang Jincang 常金倉, “Meixian qingtongqi he Xi Zhou nian-

Western Zhou bronze vessels in the same area that allow the makers' family—the Shan 單 family—to be mapped both historically and geographically;⁵ and for the rewarding and public lionizing of the peasants who discovered the cache, which it is to be hoped may help to turn the tide on the tomb robbing that has plagued China for the last decade or more. As the scholarship mentioned in the notes above attests, these topics have already stimulated a great deal of discussion and will certainly repay attention for years to come. However, in the present paper I propose to examine the Shan family bronzes for a different purpose—for the evidence they shed on the writing of a Western Zhou bronze inscription.

The Two *Yu Qiu Ding* Inscriptions

As mentioned above, the 42nd and 43rd Year *Yu Qiu ding* inscriptions both have considerable historical significance, the 42nd Year inscription providing information about a campaign against the Xianyun 狹狁, and the 43rd Year inscription narrating a command to Qiu to be in charge of the people of Li 歷, including broad judicial responsibilities. Structurally, both of these inscriptions are typical of late Western Zhou court-audience inscriptions, with a three-part structure: prefatory remarks setting the time, place and participants in the audience; the king's address; and the donor's dedication of the vessel. What is of particular

dai xue yanjiu de silu tiaozheng” 眉縣青銅器和西周年代學研究的思路調整, *Baoji wenli xueyuan xuebao* 2003.5: 4–9; and several of the contributions to “Shaanxi Meixian chutu jiaocang tongqi bitan” (see above n. 1). For my own contribution to this effort, see Xia Hanyi 夏含夷, “42 nian 43 nian liangge Yu Lai ding de niandai” 42 年 43 年兩個吳迷鼎的年代, *Zhongguo lishi wenwu* 中國歷史文物 2003.5: 49–52; “You 42 nian 43 nian Qiu ding tan Zhou Xuan Wang zai wei niandai, tongqi mingwen yuexiang dingyi he Xia Shang Zhou duandai gongcheng zhu wenti” “由 42 年, 43 年《迷鼎》談周宣王在位年代, 銅器銘文月相定義和《夏商周斷代工程》諸問題,” paper presented to the 16th meeting of the Chinese Paleography Association, Guangzhou, China, 13 November 2006.

- 5 For this I have benefited from reading “What’s in a Name? Appellations of the Living and the Dead in the Inscriptions of the Shan Lineage,” Chapter Two of David Sena’s doctoral dissertation “Reproducing Society: Kinship and Social Organization in Western Zhou China” (University of Chicago, 2005). Just as the present paper was going to press, I received Lothar von Falkenhausen, “The Inscribed Bronzes from Yangjiacun: New Evidence on Social Structure and Historical Consciousness in Late Western Zhou China (c. 800 BC),” *Proceedings of the British Academy* 139 (2006): 239–295, which presents a highly imaginative interpretation of this evidence.

interest for my purposes here is that both of the inscriptions explicitly mention that the king had the text of his address written on bamboo or wooden strips, which were presented to Qiu at the end of his audiences. This feature, seen previously on the *Song ding* 頌鼎 and *Shanfu Shan ding* 膳夫山鼎 inscriptions, both also late Western Zhou vessels, is an important key to understanding the process by which bronze inscriptions were written.⁶ It seems desirable to begin with complete translations of both the 42nd Year and 43rd Year *Yu Qiu ding* inscriptions. For clarity of presentation, I will break the translations into constituent parts. Since the purpose of this essay is not strictly paleographical, I will forego detailed notes substantiating each transcription and translation.

42nd Year *Yu Qiu Ding* 四十二年虞述鼎

隹卅又二年五月既生霸乙卯，王才周康穆宮。旦王各大室即立。鬲工
棹右吳述入門立中廷北卿。尹氏受王賚書。王乎史減冊賚述。

It was the forty-second year, fifth month, after the growing brightness, *yimao* (day 52); the king was in the Mu Hall of the Kang (Hall) in Zhou. At dawn, the king entered the Great Chamber and took position. Supervisor of Works San at the right of Warden Qiu entered the gate and stood in the center of the courtyard, facing north. Yinshi gave the king the award document. *The king called out to Scribe Huo to make the award to Qiu in writing.*

王若曰：述。不顯文武 雁受大令，匍有三方，勳繇隹乃先聖且考夾鬻
先王，爵堇大令，奠周邦。余弗段鬻聖人孫子，余隹闡乃先且考有爵于
周邦。隹余乍口沙匄。余肇建長父戾于鬯，余令女奠長父休。女克奠于
畢白，女隹克井乃先且考閱嚴[執]。出戩于井阿于曆 曆。女不戮戎。
女兕(𤝵)長父 呂追博戎。乃即宕伐于弓谷，女執嚙獲職俘器車馬。女
晦于戎工，弗逆朕亲令。賚女鬻鬯一卣，田于鄴卅田，于隰廿田。

The king approved of saying: “Qiu, illustrious Wen and Wu received the great mandate and extended it to the four quarters. Then it was because of your prior wise ancestors and deceased-father’s assisting the prior kings to have merit and care with the great mandate and stabilized the Zhou state, I have not forgotten the wise men’s grandson, and it is that I remember your

6 For the *Song ding* (there are also similar inscriptions on the *Song gui* and *Song hu*), see *Yin Zhou jinwen jicheng* 殷周金文集成, ed. Zhongguo Shehui kexueyuan Kaogu yanjiusuo, 18 vols. (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1984–94), vol. 5 #2827–29; for the *Shanfu Shan ding*, see vol. 5.2825.

prior ancestors' and deceased-fathers' having merits in the Zhou state, and so I made [...] court interview. When I initially established Changfu to be lord in Yang, I commanded you to stabilize Changfu's benefices. That you were able to bring stability among his troops is because you were able to take as model your prior ancestors' and deceased-fathers' stopping the Xianyun, and went out to defeat (them) at Jing'a and at Liyan. You were not wearied by the warfare, and you accompanied Changfu to pursue and hit the belligerents. Then engaging and broadly attacking (them) at Bow Valley, you manacled prisoners-to-be-interrogated and caught chiefs, and captured weapons, chariots and horses. You have been diligent in military work and have not transgressed my personal command. I award you one *you*-bucket of black-millet wine and (the following) fields: at Hui thirty fields, and at Yi twenty fields."

逯𦣻頤首，受冊賚呂出。逯敢𦣻天子不顯魯休𦣻，用乍𦣻彝，用𦣻孝于𦣻文人。其嚴才上，𦣻才下。穆秉嗣德。𦣻𦣻𦣻𦣻。降余康𦣻屯又通𦣻永令𦣻𦣻𦣻𦣻。𦣻臣天子。逯其萬年無𦣻，子=孫=永寶用𦣻。

Qiu saluted and touched his head to the ground, *received the written award and went out*. Qiu dares in response to the Son of Heaven's illustriously fine beneficence to extol (it), herewith making this ritual vessel to use to offer filial piety to the past cultured men; may they be stern on high and respected below, beautifully holding to bright virtue and abundantly sending down on me peaceful harmony and pure blessings, penetrating wealth and an eternal mandate, and long life everlasting to serve the Son of Heaven. May Qiu for ten-thousand years without bound have sons' sons and grandsons' grandsons eternally to treasure and use (it) to make offerings.

43rd Year Yu Qiu Ding 四十三年虞逯鼎

隹冊又三年六月既生霸丁亥。王才周康宮穆宮。旦。王各周廟。即立。𦣻馬𦣻右吳逯入門。立中廷。北卿。史𦣻受王令書。王乎尹氏冊令逯。

It was the forty-third year, sixth month, after the growing brightness, *dinghai* (day 24); the king was in the Mu Palace of the Zhou Kang Palace. At dawn, the king went to the Zhou Temple and assumed position. Supervisor of Horse Shou at the right of Warden Qiu entered the gate and stood in the center of the court facing north. *Scribe Huo gave the king the command document. The king called out to Yinshi to command Qiu in writing.*

王若曰：述。不顯文武雁受大令。匍有三方。鼎繇佳乃先聖夾鬻先王。爵堇大令。奠周邦。隸余弗貽聖人孫子。昔余既令女疋熒兌。甄鬻三方吳鬻。用宮御。余佳至乃先且考。又爵于周邦。鬻鬻乃令，女官鬻歷人。毋敢妄寧。虔夙夕夷鬻我邦小大猷。零乃專政事。毋敢不斐不井。零乃囁庶又咨。毋敢不中不井。毋鬻鬻佳又宥從。迺殺侮鬻寡。用乍余一人咎。不雀死。

The king approved of saying: “Qiu, illustrious Wen and Wu received the great mandate and extended it to the four quarters. Then it was because of your prior wise deceased-father’s assisting the prior kings to have merit and care with the great mandate and stabilized the Zhou state, and so I have not forgotten the wise men’s grandson. Formerly, I had already commanded you to assist Rong Dui, and concurrently to supervise the four quarters’ game and forests, to be used for the palace’s supply. Now it is that I recall your prior ancestors and deceased-father’s having had merit in the Zhou state and extend and increase your command, commanding you to officiate over and supervise the people of Li. Do not dare to be negligently complacent, but diligently morning and evening help and support our country’s small and great plans. In the government affairs in which you assist, do not dare not to be square or a model. In your questioning of the commoners and neighbors, do not dare not to be centered and a model. Do not enrich yourself; if you enrich yourself, it will only be because there are bribes and indulgences, and then you take advantage of widows and widowers, and therewith make resentment for me the one man; those not good will die.”

王曰：述。易女鬻鬻一卣玄袞衣赤舄碼車萃輶朱虢鬻斷虎匱熏裏畫轉畫轡金甬馬鬻攸勒。敬夙夕勿瀆朕令。

The king said: “Qiu, (I) award you one *you*-bucket of black-millet wine, a black hemmed jacket, red slippers, and a colt chariot (with) an ornamented siderail, a crimson leather-covered frontrail, a tiger-skin canopy with a smoky-black lining, painted yoke-bar bindings and axle couplings, and bronze jingle-bells, and four horses with bits and bridles. Be respectful morning and night and do not neglect my command.”

述拜頤首。受冊佩呂出。反入堇圭。

Qiu saluted and touched his head to the ground, *receiving the strips and suspending them in his sash to go out*. In return he entered and presented a jade tablet.

述敢對。天子不顯魯休賜。用乍朕皇考鬻鬻鬻鬻。皇考其嚴才上。廩才下。穆秉明德。鬻鬻鬻。降康鬻屯右通鬻永令。鬻壽鬻。眈臣天子。述萬年無彊。子鬻鬻永寶用宮。

Qiu dares in response to the Son of Heaven's illustriously fine beneficence to extol (it), herewith making for my august deceased-father Gong Shu this ritual vessel. May (my) august deceased-father be stern on high and respected below, beautifully upholding bright virtue and abundantly (sending down upon) me peaceful harmony and pure blessings, penetrating wealth and an eternal mandate everlasting to serve the Son of Heaven. May Qiu for ten-thousand years without bound have sons' sons and grandsons' grandsons eternally to treasure and use (it) to make offerings.

It would seem that what I have demarcated as the first two paragraphs of the 42nd Year and the first three paragraphs of the 43rd Year inscription are more or less verbatim quotations of the award documents presented to Qiu upon his departures from the court audiences.⁷ Certainly the text of the king's commands must be as he had them read in the audiences, and there is at least one feature that suggests different authorship for these paragraphs (the descriptions of the time, place and participants in the court audiences; the king's commands to Qiu, and the king's awards of gifts to him) as opposed to the last paragraphs of the inscriptions (the dedicatory prayer): whereas the first paragraphs refer to the king simply as *wang* 王, the last paragraph in each inscription calls him *tianzi* 天子, "Son of Heaven." This distinction, which became common in these portions of late Western Zhou inscriptions,⁸ seems to reflect a neutral archival impulse in the use of *wang*, as opposed to the deliberately honorific *tianzi*. Presumably the patron of the vessel, Qiu, used the text on the strips given to him as the basis for the composition of the text to be cast into the bronze vessel, making use also of standard formulas to add his own personal dedication as a conclusion. When we turn next to examine the much more elaborate *Yu Qiu pan* inscription, it will be well to keep this compositional process in mind.

- 7 To my knowledge, the first person to have discussed the importance of this transfer of the king's address from the royal scribe to the guest at audience, and subsequently from the strips to the bronze vessel, is Herrlee Glessner Creel, "Bronze Inscriptions of the Western Chou Dynasty as Historical Documents," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 56.3 (1936): 342. Creel cited as evidence the inscription of the *Song ding* as well as a description of court audiences in the *Yi li* 儀禮 (*Yi li zhushu* 儀禮注疏 [Sibu beiyao ed.], 27.3a–b).
- 8 For a discussion of the differing usage of *wang* and *tianzi* in just the dedicatory prayer portion of inscriptions, see Musha Akira 武者章, "Sei Shū satsu mei kinbun bunrui no kokoromi" 西周冊命金文分類試み, in *Sei Shū seidōki to sono kokka* 西周青銅器とその國家, ed. Matsumaru Michio 松丸道雄 (Tokyo: Tokyo daigaku shuppankai, 1980), pp. 293–300.

The *Yu Qiu Pan* Inscription

As mentioned above, the *Yu Qiu pan* inscription resembles that on the famous *Shi Qiang pan* in juxtaposing a sketch history of the Zhou kings down to the time of the patron, Warden (*yu* 虞) Qiu, with laudatory comments about corresponding generations of his own ancestors. It differs from the *Shi Qiang pan* inscription in that, whereas that inscription segregated the two histories, first narrating the generations of the kings and then following it with those of Qiang's ancestors, the *Yu Qiu ding* inscription combines the two narratives into discrete textual units, first mentioning Qiu's own ancestor and how he was able to serve a particular Zhou king or two, and then, in most cases, continuing with a comment about the accomplishments of that king or kings. I will try to illustrate this structure in the presentation below, placing the transcription of the inscription and its translation side by side and making systematic use of indentations.

虞述盤

Yu Qiu Pan

述曰：不顯朕皇高且
單公：

Qiu said: "Illustrious was my august high ancestor
Shan Gong:

赳克明愍畢德，
夾鬻文王武王

So radiant, capable of making bright and wise his
virtue, he accompanied and assisted Wen Wang
and Wu Wang,

達殷雁受天魯
令，匍有三方，
竝宅畢堇疆土，
用配上帝。

who pierced the Yin, received Heaven's fine
mandate, extended it to the four quarters, and
widely inhabited the lands that they opened
and bounded, therewith serving as mates to
God on High.

雩朕皇高且公叔：
克述匹成王

With my august high ancestor Gongshu:
he was capable of joining and aiding Cheng
Wang,

成受大令。方狄
不宮，用奠三或
萬邦。

who successfully received the great mandate;
when the regional enemies were not obedient,
he therewith settled the four regions and the
ten-thousand countries.

雩朕皇高且新室中：

With my august high ancestor Zhong of the New
Chamber:

克幽明畢心，齔遠
能猷。會鬻康王，

capable of making both somber and bright his
heart, he was gentle with the distant and enabling

- 方褒不延.
 零朕皇高且惠中盞父:
 盞穌于政, 又成于猷, 用會邵王穆王,
 盜政三方, 斲伐楚荊.
 零朕皇高且零白:
 舜明厥心, 不豕口服, 用辟龔王, 懿王.
 零朕皇亞且懿中斁:
 諫=克匍保卑辟考王偃王
 又成于周邦.
 零朕皇考龔叔:
 穆=趨-, 穌匍于政, 明陵于德, 宮辟刺王.
 速肇屮朕皇且考服, 虔夙夕敬朕死事.
 肆天子多易速休. 天子其萬年無彊耆黃耆, 保莫周邦, 諫辭三方.
 王若曰:
 速, 不顯文武雁受大令, 匍有三方. 鼎繇佳乃先聖且考夾鬻先王, 爵堇大令.
- with the near, and met with and assisted Kang Wang,
 who just embraced the unsubmitted (i.e., the enemy states).
 With my august high ancestor Huizhong Lifu: bringing harmony in government and also being successful in his plans, he therewith met and assisted Zhao Wang and Mu Wang,
 who extended government to the four quarters, and struck and attacked Chu and Jing.
 With my august high ancestor Ling Bo: clear and bright his heart, he did not fail in his ... duties, and therewith served Gong Wang and Yih Wang.
 With my august secondary ancestor Yih Zhong X, so remonstrating, he was capable of advising and protecting his rulers Xiao Wang and Yi Wang,
 who again succeeded in the Zhou country.
 With my august deceased-father Gong Shu: so beautiful and so respectful, harmonious and compliant in government, bright and equable in virtue, he obeyed and assisted Li Wang.
 Qiu has begun by continuing my august ancestors' and deceased-father's duties, diligently morning and evening respecting my sworn service.
 And so the Son of Heaven has much awarded Qiu benefices. May the Son of Heaven for ten-thousand years without bound enjoy a yellowing longevity, protect and settle the Zhou country, and rule the four quarters.
 The king approved of saying:
 "Qiu, illustrious Wen and Wu received the great mandate and extended it to the four quarters. Then because it was your past wise ancestors' and deceased-father who accompanied and assisted the past kings to have merit and care with the great mandate,

今余佳丕乃先聖且
考鬻 豪乃令=女疋
燮兌甃 鬻三方吳
蓄, 用宮御.

易女赤市幽黃攸勒.

逖敢對天子丕顯魯休
賜, 用乍朕皇且考寶
璽盤, 用追宮孝于前=
文=人=嚴才上, 廩才
[下], 豐=彙 =降逖魯多
福豐蓄綽綽. 受余康受
屯又通泉永令霈冬, 逖
畹臣天子=孫=永寶用
宮.

now it is that I recall your past wise ancestors
and deceased-father and extend and increase your
command, commanding you to assist Rong Dui,
and concurrently to supervise the four quarters'
game and forests, to be used for the palace's
supply.

I award you red kneepads, a black belt, and a bit
and bridle."

Qiu dares in response to the Son of Heaven's
illustriously fine beneficence to extol it, herewith
making for my august ancestors and deceased-father
this treasured offertory *pan*-basin, with which to
send offerings of filial piety to the past cultured
men. May the past cultured men be stern on high
and respected below, abundantly sending down on
Qiu fine and many blessings and long life
everlasting, giving me peaceful harmony, pure aid,
penetrating wealth, an eternal mandate and a
numinous end, so that Qiu may serve the Son of
Heaven. May sons and grandsons' grandsons
eternally treasure and use it to make offerings.

From this inscription, it can be seen that Qiu was the scion of a family that traced its heritage back to the founding fathers of the Zhou dynasty. Indeed, there is evidence that confirms at least in part that Qiu's account of his family is not necessarily exaggerated. His fourth generation ancestor, Huizhong Lifu 惠中 盩父, described in this inscription as having served the Zhou kings Zhao Wang (r. 977/75–957 B.C.) and Mu Wang (r. 956–918 B.C.), was the patron of another group of vessels discovered in the same village of Meixian in 1955. Two of these, the *Li fangzun* 盩方尊 (*Jicheng* 16.9899) and *Li fangyi* 盩方彝 (*Jicheng* 16.9900), bear a lengthy inscription that seems to commemorate a command by Mu Wang making Li supreme commander of the Zhou armies.⁹

9 For a translation of the *Li fangyi/fangzun* inscription, together with a discussion presenting this analysis, see Edward L. Shaughnessy, "Western Zhou History," in *The Cambridge History of Ancient China: From the Origins of Civilization to 221 B.C.*, ed. Michael Loewe and Edward L. Shaughnessy (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 325.

A Possible Saga of the Zhou Kings

While the historical narratives of the *Yu Qiu pan* inscription command the greatest attention, I propose to focus first on the relatively brief quotation of the king's remarks to Qiu that follows them. This quotation is introduced by the phrase "the king approved of saying" (*wang ruo yue* 王若曰):

Qiu, illustrious Wen and Wu received the great mandate and extended it to the four quarters. Then because it was your past wise ancestors' and deceased-father who accompanied and assisted the past kings to have merit and care with the great mandate, now it is that I recall your past wise ancestors and deceased-father and extend and increase your command, commanding you to assist Rong Dui, and concurrently to supervise the four quarters' game and forests, to be used for the palace's supply. I award you red kneepads, a black belt, and a bit and bridle.

Bearing in mind the examples of the 42nd and 43rd Year *Yu Qiu ding* inscriptions, in which the texts of the king's address, written on bamboo or wooden strips, formed the basis for the composition of the bronze inscriptions, we might surmise that in this case too the king's address was instrumental in the writing of this inscription. Note that the king began by extolling the dynastic founders Wen Wang (r. 1099/57–1050 B.C.) and Wu Wang (r. 949/45–943 B.C.) and their receipt of "the great mandate" (*da ming* 大命), and then immediately gave credit also to Qiu's "prior wise ancestors and deceased-father" (*xian sheng zu kao* 先聖且考), who, he said, "accompanied and assisted the past kings to have merit and care with the great mandate." I would suggest that Qiu's decision to juxtapose the accomplishments of his ancestors with those of the Zhou kings was validated, at least in part, by these remarks of the king. Indeed, much of the wording of the encomium for Qiu's high ancestor Shan Gong 單公 can be seen to have been inspired by those remarks (here putting the encomium on the left and the opening of the king's command on the right).

[單公]夾鬻文王武王達殷廂受天
魯令, 匍有三方, 竝宅畢堇疆土, 用
配上帝.

[Shan Gong] accompanied and assisted
Wen Wang and Wu Wang, who
pierced the Yin, received Heaven's
fine mandate, extended it to the four
quarters, and widely inhabited the
lands that they opened and bounded,
therewith serving as mates to God on
High.

不顯文武廂受大令, 匍有三方.
鼎繇佳乃先聖且考夾鬻先王, 爵
堇大令.

Illustrious Wen and Wu received the
great mandate and extended it to the
four quarters. Then because it was
your past wise ancestors' and
deceased-father who accompanied
and assisted the past kings to have
merit and care with the great mandate,

Qiu effectively quoted the king in saying that his high ancestor Shan Gong "accompanied and assisted" (*jia shao* 夾鬻) Wen Wang and Wu Wang to "receive" (*yingshou* 廂受) the "mandate" (*ming* 令) and then "extend it to the four quarters" (*fu you si fang* 匍有三方). It is perhaps notable that the phrases he has added to the king's own wording, "pierced the Yin" (*da Yin* 達殷), "inhabited the lands that they opened and bounded" (*zhai jue jin jiang tu* 宅畢堇疆土), and "therewith served as mates to God on High" (*yong pei Shang Di* 用配上帝), have precedents in only three other inscriptions: the *Shi Qiang pan*, and the *Hu zhong* 馱鐘 (also known as *Zongzhou zhong* 宗周鐘; *Jicheng* 1.0260) and *Hu gui* 馱簋 (*Jicheng* 8.4317), the latter two of which were both made for Zhou Li Wang (r. 857/53–842/28) and thus are exceptional for representing in their entirety the wording of a Zhou king.

史牆盤: 翳圉武王: 適征三方, 達殷.

Shi Qiang pan: Capturing and controlling was Wu Wang: He proceeded and campaigned through the four quarters, piercing the Yin.

馱鐘: 王肇適胥文武堇疆土.

Hu zhong: The king for the first time proceeded through and examined the lands that Wen and Wu had opened and bounded.

馱簋: 王曰: 有余佳孚, 余亡康晝夜, 罔馱先王, 用配皇天.

Hu gui: The king said: "Although I am but the little son, I have no leisure day or night, but always recall and support the past kings, therewith serving as a mate to august Heaven."

Although the third of these precedents, that of the *Hu gui*, mentions serving as a mate to "August Heaven" (*huang tian* 皇天) rather than Shang Di, it is note-

worthy that, with but two exceptions, the *Hu gui*, *Hu zhong* and *Shi Qiang pan*, are the only inscriptions in the entire inventory of Western Zhou bronze inscriptions that mention Shang Di specifically (as opposed to unmodified mentions of *di* 帝 alone).¹⁰ Perhaps this suggests that a cult dedicated to Shang Di was reserved exclusively to the Zhou kings, as opposed to a more wide-spread cult of Heaven. Whatever the merit of this suggestion, that the wording of this encomium to Wen Wang is found only in inscriptions composed by or for Zhou kings perhaps points to a common derivation for them: a saga of the Zhou kings, from which they all quoted. An early version of such a saga might be seen in the “Zhou Song” 周頌 poem “Capturing and Competitive” (“Zhi jing” 執競; Mao 274):

執競武王	Capturing and competitive was Wu Wang,
無競維烈	Incomparable was his valor!
不顯成康	Illustrious were Cheng and Kang,
上帝是皇	The Lord on High exalts them.
自彼成康	Since the time of those Cheng and Kang,
奄有四方	(We) have covered and had all the four quarters.

A more elaborate version might be seen in the “Da Ya” 大雅 poem “King Wen” (“Wen Wang” 文王; Mao 235). For reasons of space, I will quote just the first stanza, though the entire poem furnishes numerous parallels with the wording and sense of the *Yu Qiu pan* inscription.

文王在上,	Wen Wang is on high,
於昭于天.	Oh, radiant in heaven.
周雖舊邦,	Although Zhou is an old country,
其命維新.	Its mandate is new.
有周不顯,	He who has Zhou is illustrious,
帝命不時.	Di's mandate is greatly timely.
文王陟降,	Wen Wang ascends and descends,
在帝左右.	At Di's left and right.

It is possible that there existed a more developed saga or sagas of all of the Zhou kings from which all of these poems and inscriptions drew, however sketchily.

10 Other inscriptions that mention Shang Di are that on the possibly pre-conquest *Tian Wang gui* 天亡簋 (*Jicheng* 8.4261), and that of the *Xing zhong* 夙鐘 (*Jicheng* 1.0247–56), the latter of which however derives in very large measure from the *Shi Qiang pan* inscription, Xing probably having been the son of Qiang.

As is the case with so much traditional literature from the Western Zhou, the *Shi jing* has preserved only that portion dealing with the founding fathers, especially Wen Wang and Wu Wang. With the *Shi Qiang pan* and now the *Yu Qiu pan* inscription, the saga of the following kings is finally coming into focus. The following comparison of their narratives of the Zhou kings might give some idea as to what such a saga was originally like (the inscription of the *Yu Qiu pan* is to the left, that of the *Shi Qiang pan* to the right).

虞逖盤

文王武王: 達(撻)殷雁 受天魯令, 匍有三方, 竝宅畢堇疆土, 用配上帝.

Wen Wang and Wu Wang: who pierced the Yin, received Heaven's fine mandate, extended it to the four quarters, and widely inhabited the lands that they opened and bounded, therewith serving as mates to God on High.

成王: 成受大令. 方狄不肅, 用奠三或萬邦.

Cheng Wang: who successfully received the great mandate; when the regional enemies were not obedient, he therewith settled the four regions and the ten-thousand countries.

史牆盤

曰古文王: 初敍龢于政. 帝(上帝)降懋德大嘏. 匍有三(上下). 迨受萬邦.

Accordant with antiquity was Wen Wang: He first brought harmony to government. The Lord on High sent down fine virtue and great security. Extending to the high and low, he joined the ten-thousand states.

韜圉武王: 遙征三方. 達殷. 畋民永不巩狄. 盧. 完伐尸童.

Capturing and controlling was Wu Wang: He proceeded and campaigned through the four quarters, piercing Yin and governing its people. Eternally unfearful of the Di, oh, he attacked the Yi minions.

憲聖成王: 丌右穀鰲剛鯨. 用簞斲周邦.

Model and sagely was Cheng Wang: To the left and right he cast and gathered his net and line, therewith opening and integrating the Zhou state.

康王: 方褻不延.

Kang Wang: who just embraced the
unsubmitted (i.e., the enemy states).

邵王穆王: 盜政三方, 廝伐楚荊.

Zhao Wang and Mu Wang: who
extended government to the four
quarters, and struck and attacked Chu
and Jing.

龔王, 懿王.

Gong Wang and Yih Wang.

考王緝王: 又成于周邦.

Xiao Wang and Yi Wang: who again
succeeded in the Zhou country.

刺王.

Li Wang.

 懋康王: 分尹啻彊.

Deep and wise was Kang Wang: he
divided command and pacified the
borders.

弘魯邵王. 廣讎楚刑. 佳寔南行.

Vast and substantial was Zhao Wang:
he broadly tamed Chu and Jing; it
was to connect the southern route.

甯覬穆王: 井帥宇誨.

Reverent and illustrious was Mu
Wang: he patterned himself on and
followed the great counsels.

釐寧天子: 天子圖履文武長刺. 天
子贊無咎穢邛三(上下). 亟獄逗
慕.

Continuing and tranquil is the Son of
Heaven: the Son of Heaven strives to
carry on the long valor of Wen and
Wu; the Son of Heaven is diligent
and without flaw, faithfully making
offerings above and below, and
reverently glorifying the great plans.

While isolating the praises of the various Zhou kings in this way reveals most clearly the quasi-historical nature of the *Yu Qiu pan* and *Shi Qiang pan* inscriptions, the comparison also reveals that the two inscriptions share primarily the tone of their language and style of phrasing; the historical information *per se* is sketchy at best. The only direct correlation between the praises of individual kings is in the mention of Zhao Wang's campaign against Chu 楚 and Jing 荆. As I have mentioned elsewhere,¹¹ the bare mention of this campaign, without

11 Edward L. Shaughnessy, *Sources of Western Zhou History, Inscribed Bronze Vessels* (Berkeley, Cal.: University of California Press, 1991), p. 181.

any explicit resolution, seems to be an oblique reference to the disastrous defeat inflicted on Zhou forces, as if the historian felt obliged to mention the event but could not bring himself to spell out the defeat.

Elsewhere in the *Yu Qiu pan* inscription, there are two more explicit absences that seem to me to be even more significant. Eight of the eleven kings mentioned are supplied with some sort of praise, whether individually or in pairs. However, in two cases—the joint mention of Gong Wang (r. 917–15–900 B.C.) and Yih Wang (r. 899/97–873 B.C.), and the single mention of Li Wang—the kings' names are left without any elaboration. In the case of Li Wang, it is perhaps not hard to see why he would be left without praise. Condemned in the traditional historical record as a paradigmatically bad king, he is said to have been driven into exile by the Zhou people, an event that seems to be reflected as well in the contemporary bronze inscriptional record.¹² The case of Gong Wang and Yih Wang may derive from a similar context. The *Shi ji* 史記 states that the decline of the Western Zhou began during the reign of Yih Wang:

懿王之時，王室遂衰，詩人作刺。

During the time of Yih Wang, the royal house thereupon declined and poets composed satires.¹³

The *Zhushu jinian* 竹書紀年 records also external incursions in the seventh and thirteenth years of his reign, and follows this with a terse mention of the king leaving the Zhou capital at Zongzhou 宗周 and moving some fifty kilometers west to Huaili 槐里.

十五年，王自宗周遷于槐里。

Fifteenth year, the king moved from Zongzhou to Huaili.¹⁴

12 In addition to bronze inscriptions, such as that on the *Shi X gui* 師頴簋 (*Jicheng* 8.4312), that seem to show Gong Bo He 共伯和 in charge of the Zhou government, thus confirming the tradition of a Gonghe interregnum during Li Wang's exile, the inscription of the *Ran xu* 鬲盥 (*Jicheng* #4469), apparently datable to the following reign of Xuan Wang, mentions that the “men of the country, men of the offices, and men of the legions” (*bang ren zheng ren shishi ren* 邦人正人師氏人) had “rebelled and driven off their ruler” (*nüe zhu jue jun* 虐逐厥君).

13 *Shi ji* (Zhonghua shuju ed.), 4.140.

14 *Zhushu jinian* (Sibu congkan ed.), 2.11a. The *Shi ben* 世本 also mentions this removal, stating that Yih Wang “*xi* 徙” to Quanqiu 犬邱 (another name for Huaili). While *xi* is synonymous with the *qian* 遷 used by the *Zhushu jinian*, it seems to carry the nuance of a forced removal; thus, the *Guangya* 廣雅 defines it as “*bi* 避” “to flee.”

Traditional histories also state that at this time there was a break in the regular succession of Zhou kings: Yih Wang was followed not by his son, the eventual Yi Wang (r. 865–858 B.C.), but rather by his uncle, Bifang 辟方, who reigned as Xiao Wang (r. 872?–866 B.C.). Finally, the chronology of the period during which Yih Wang and Xiao Wang reigned is particularly confused, with fully-dated bronze inscriptions showing several different and mutually incompatible regnal calendars. All of this has led David Nivison to suggest that Xiao Wang's interregnum may have begun even before Yih Wang's death, and that Yih Wang, like Li Wang after him, had been forced into exile.¹⁵ While this remains but an interesting hypothesis, the absence of any praise for Yih Wang in the *Yu Qiu pan* inscription would seem to be yet further indication that something went very wrong in the course of his reign.¹⁶

The Shan Family as Seen in the *Yu Qiu Pan* Inscription

The importance of the *Yu Qiu pan* inscription is doubtless greater for the information it provides regarding Qiu's own Shan family than it is for the historical information it provides concerning the Zhou kings. It provides a narrative of seven ancestors, beginning with the high ancestor Shan Gong 單公 and continuing generation by generation until Qiu's own deceased father Gong Shu 龔叔. As mentioned above, at least one of these ancestors, Li 釐, here given the apparently posthumous appellation Huizhong Lifu 惠中釐父, was already known from a previous discovery of inscribed bronze vessels. Although it does not seem possible to identify any of the other ancestors with other bronzes made for members of the Shan family, and so this family cannot serve as a yardstick for the development of Zhou bronze styles in the way that the Wei 微 family of the *Shi Qiang pan* does, the manner in which the ancestors are described in the inscription may still reveal some features of the Zhou lineage structure. Isolating

15 David S. Nivison, "Western Chou History Reconstructed from Bronze Inscriptions," in *The Great Bronze Age of China: A Symposium*, ed. George Kuwayama (Los Angeles: Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 1983), pp. 49–50.

16 The *Yu Qiu pan* inscription's praise for Xiao Wang and Yi Wang may also support this hypothesis: "*you cheng yu Zhou bang* 又成于周邦." It is certainly possible to interpret *you* 又 as *you* 有 "to have," as have all published studies that I have seen, and to read this phrase as an innocuous statement that these kings "had success in the Zhou state." However, with the historical context outlined above, it also seems possible to read *you* as "again," with the statement meaning something like the kings "again succeeded in the Zhou state."

this time just the portions of the inscription describing Qiu's ancestors, and here taking the liberty of arranging the individual descriptions in two separate columns by alternating generations, I believe that at least a couple of different patterns reveal themselves.

不顯朕皇高且單公: 赳 = 克明陞 卑德,
夾 鬻 文王武王.

Illustrious was my august high ancestor
Shan Gong:
So radiant, capable of making bright
and wise his virtue, he accompanied and
assisted Wen Wang and Wu Wang.

雩朕皇高且新室中: 克幽明 卑心, 曷
遠能 猷. 會 鬻 康王.

With my august high ancestor Zhong of
the New Chamber:
capable of making both somber and
bright his heart, he was gentle with the
distant and enabling with the near, and
met with and assisted Kang Wang.

雩朕皇高且零白: 遴明厥心, 不豕 □
服, 用辟 龔王, 懿王.

With my august high ancestor Ling Bo:

雩朕皇高且公叔: 克逮匹成王.

With my august high ancestor
Gongshu:
he was capable of joining and aiding
Cheng Wang.

雩朕皇高且惠中盞父: 盞 穌 于政,
又成于猷, 用會邵王穆王.

With my august high ancestor
Huizhong Lifu:
bringing harmony in government and
also being successful in his plans, he
therewith met and assisted Zhao
Wang and Mu Wang.

clear and bright his heart, he did not fail
in his [...] duties, and therewith served
Gong Wang and Yih Wang.

零朕皇亞且懿中數：諫=克匍保卑
辟考王弼王。

With my august secondary ancestor
Yih Zhong X,
so remonstrating, he was capable of
advising and protecting his rulers
Xiao Wang and Yi Wang.

零朕皇考龔叔：穆=趨=，龔匍于政，明
陵于德，宮辟刺王。

With my august deceased-father Gong
Shu:

so beautiful and so respectful, harmo-
nious and compliant in government,
bright and helpful in virtue, he offered
service to Li Wang.

All of the ancestors are described as assisting past kings, the various verbs used all being synonymous: *jiashao* 夾𡵓 “to accompany and assist,” *qiupi* 逌匹 “to join and aid,” *huizhao* 會邵 “to meet with and assist” (used two times), *bi* 辟 “to serve,” *fubao* 匍保 “to advise and protect,” and *xiangbi* 享辟 “to offer service.” It would seem that there is little to differentiate these terms. However, in the phrasing before these descriptions of service to past kings, that is, in the portion of the description dedicated just to the virtue of the ancestor himself, at least two patterns emerge from this division of the epithets by alternating generations. First, ancestors in the first, third, and fifth generations (i.e., the first three ancestors on the left-hand side of the display above) are all described as being able to make “bright” (*ming* 明) their “virtue” (*de* 德) or “heart” (*xin* 心):

單公：趨=克明慝卑德。

Shan Gong: So radiant, capable of making bright and wise his virtue.

新室中：克幽明卑心。

Zhong of the New Chamber: capable of making both somber and bright his heart.

零白：遴明卑心。

Ling Bo: clear and bright his heart.

In the case of the other ancestor on the left-hand side of the display, Qiu's deceased-father Gong Shu 龔叔, although the description in this inscription does not share this pattern, it may be notable that in the inscription on the *Qiu zhong* 逯鐘, a set of bells also cast for Qiu (and which, I will show below, were cast at the same time as the *Yu Qiu pan*), we find him described in the same way:

不顯朕皇考: 克殳明毕心.

Illustrious was my august deceased-father: capable of making clear and bright his heart.

One of the three ancestors in the even generations (that is, those on the right-hand side of the display above), Gong Shu 公叔 of the second generation (not to be confused with Qiu's deceased-father Gong Shu 龔叔), is lacking any personal description at all, while another is described as simply being "so remonstrating" (*jian jian* 諫). Even the redoubtable Huizhong Lifu 惠中盩父 of the fourth generation, who as mentioned above was made commander in chief of all Zhou armies by Mu Wang, is praised for his successful governance and planning, but not for his personal virtues:

惠中盩父: 盩穌于政, 又成于猷.

With my august high ancestor Huizhong Lifu: bringing harmony in government and also being successful in his plans.

On the other hand, as we see here in the case of Huizhong Lifu, in which "Li" 盩 is the ancestor's personal name, it is only with ancestors in even generations for whom personal names are mentioned; another case is in the ancestor of the sixth generation, Yizhong Kuang 懿中𡗗. Perhaps this usage of personal names indicates a degree of closeness since this latter ancestor was Qiu's grandfather, with whom he would have been most closely identified in the Zhou ritual system.¹⁷

I would like to suggest that these sorts of similarities between ancestors of alternating generations may have something to do with the composition of the Zhou ancestral temple. Ritual texts describe the Zhou kinship system as having been organized according to alternating generations, the so-called *zhao* 昭-*mu* 穆 system. This system was manifested in the ancestral temple by ancestors of the *zhao* generations being arrayed on the left hand side of the temple, and those

17 I here adapt an insight first made in Sena, "Reproducing Society: Lineage and Kinship in Western Zhou China," pp. 95–98.

of the *mu* generations on the right hand side.¹⁸ If this observation has any validity, perhaps the shared phrasing about the ancestors in the odd-numbered generations being capable of making bright their virtue or heart derives from the personal epithets written on their spirit tablets in the temple.

The Royal Command

Having considered how the beginning of the king's command to Qiu may have inspired in part the composition of the historical survey that opens the *Yu Qiu pan* inscription, it is now time to examine again the royal command in its entirety. Comparisons between it and the other vessels cast for Qiu will show, I believe, that this was the initial command given to Qiu at the royal court. The command of the *Yu Qiu pan* inscription reads:

王若曰：迷，不顯文武，雁受大令，匍有三方。鼎繇佳乃先聖且考夾鬯先王，爵堇大令。今余佳至乃先聖且考，鬯鬯乃令。女疋焚兌，鬯鬯三方吳鬯，用宮御。易女赤市幽黃攸勒。

The king approved of saying: "Qiu, illustrious Wen and Wu received the great mandate and extended it to the four quarters. Then because it was your past wise ancestors' and deceased-father who accompanied and assisted the past kings to have merit and care with the great mandate, now it is that I recall your past wise ancestors and deceased-father and extend and increase your command, commanding you to assist Rong Dui, and concurrently to supervise the four quarters' game and forests, to be used for the palace's supply. I award you red kneepads, a black belt, and a bit and bridle."

The first part of the king's address to Qiu is a recounting of his ancestors' assistance to kings Wen and Wu, which has already been examined above. This serves as the immediate context for the command proper, which is an extension (*shen* 鬯) of Qiu's hereditary position as assistant to Rong Dui 焚兌, simultaneously increasing his responsibilities to include also supervising the provisioning of the royal palace (*gong yu* 宮御) with the game and forests of the four quarters (*si fang yu lin* 三方吳鬯). As tokens of these responsibilities, he was awarded three insignia.

18 This description needs to be qualified in that the high ancestor of a family or lineage is said to have occupied a central position between the *zhao* and *mu* ancestors. In the case of the Shan lineage, the high ancestor would be Shan Gong.

Let us now compare this command to the other commands that Qiu received or recorded in the 42nd Year Yu Qiu ding, 43rd Year Yu Qiu ding and the Qiu zhong inscriptions. I will give only the first portions of the commands in the two ding inscriptions, the final portions not being directly comparable.

虞逖盤	42年虞逖鼎	43年虞逖鼎	逖鐘
王若曰: 逖, 不顯 文武雁受大令, 匍有三方. 剿繇 佳乃先聖且考 夾鬻先王, 爵堇 大令.	王若曰: 逖, 不 顯文武雁受大 令, 匍有三方, 剿繇佳乃先聖 且考夾鬻先王, 爵堇大令, 奠周 邦.	王若曰: 逖, 不顯 文武雁受大令, 匍有三方, 剿繇 佳乃先聖考夾鬻 先王, 爵堇大令, 奠周邦.	
The king approved of saying: “Qiu, illustrious Wen and Wu received the great mandate and extended it to the four quarters. Then because it was your prior wise ancestors’ and deceased-father who accompanied and assisted the past kings to have merit and care with the great mandate,	The king approved of saying: “Qiu, illustrious Wen and Wu received the great mandate and extended it to the four quarters. Then it was because of your prior wise ancestors and deceased- father’s assisting the prior kings to have merit and care with the great mandate and stabilized the Zhou state,	The king approved of saying: “Qiu, illustrious Wen and Wu received the great mandate and extended it to the four quarters. Then it was because of your prior wise deceased-father’s assisting the prior kings to have merit and care with the great mandate and stabilized the Zhou state,	
今余佳丕乃先聖 且考, 鬻鬻乃令= 女丕爰兌, 甄鬻三方吳鬻, 用宮御.	余弗段鬻聖人 孫子. 余佳鬻乃 先且考有爵于 周邦. 隸余乍口 沙旬. 余肇建長 父戾于粲. 余 令女奠長父. 休 女克奠于卑白.	隸余弗鬻聖人孫 子. 昔余既令女 丕爰兌, 甄鬻三 方吳鬻, 用宮御. 今余佳丕乃先且 考, 又爵于周邦, 鬻鬻乃令=女官 鬻歷人.	天子丕朕先且服, 多易逖休. 令甄 鬻三方吳鬻.
now it is that I recall your prior wise ancestors and	I have not forgotten the wise men’s grandson, and it is	and so I have not forgotten the wise men’s grandson.	The Son of Heaven recalled my prior ancestors’ service,

deceased-father and extend and increase your command, commanding you to assist Rong Dui, and concurrently to supervise the four quarters' game and forests, to be used for the palace's supply.	that I remember your prior ancestors' and deceased-fathers' having merits in the Zhou state, and so I made [...] court interview. When I initially established Changfu to be lord in Yang, I commanded you to stabilize Changfu's benefices.	Formerly, I had already commanded you to assist Rong Dui, and concurrently to supervise the four quarters' game and forests, to be used for the palace's supply. Now it is that I recall your prior ancestors and deceased-father's having had merit in the Zhou state and extend and increase your command, commanding you to officiate over and supervise the people of Li.	and greatly awarded Qiu benefices, and commanding concurrently to supervise the four quarters' game and forests.
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In the 43rd Year *Yu Qiu ding* inscription, the king's command to Qiu includes a verbatim quotation of his command recorded in the *Yu Qiu pan* inscription:

昔余既令女疋燮兌，𡗗𡗗三𡗗吳𡗗，用宮御。

Formerly, I had already commanded you to assist Rong Dui, and concurrently to supervise the four quarters' game and forests, to be used for the palace's supply.

This shows beyond question that both of these court audiences took place during the same reign, and that the audience commemorated by the *pan* inscription took place before the forty-third year of this *ding* inscription. Since the historical narrative of the *pan* inscription shows that it was composed during the reign of Xuan Wang, with mention of the reigning *tianzi* or "Son of Heaven" coming after the reign of Li Wang, there can be no doubt that this forty-third year refers to the reign of Xuan Wang. This of course has crucial implications for the chronology of the late Western Zhou, as many scholars have already noted.¹⁹ It also has important implications for the question concerning us here—the process by which inscriptions were written—since it shows beyond question that the king could make reference to commands that he had previously issued. This

19 See, above, n. 4.

corroborates previous evidence that the royal secretariat maintained archives of royal commands.²⁰

The comparison above also shows, I believe, that the inscription on the *zhong* refers to the same command as that on the *pan*, implying therefore that the two inscriptions were composed at the same time. Although the *zhong* inscription is much attenuated, it does contain the crucial information that Qiu was “simultaneously to supervise the game and forests of the four quarters” seen already in the *pan* inscription. When we now go on to examine the entirety of the *zhong* inscription, I believe we will find considerable other evidence relating the two inscriptions. Moreover, a comparison of the two inscriptions will go still further to illustrate the process by which bronze inscriptions were composed.

The *Qiu Zhong* Inscription

In August, 1985, sixteen bronze bells were found by brickworkers in Yangjiacun, Meixian county, the same village in which the *Yu Qiu pan* and other vessels were discovered in 2003. Like the *Yu Qiu pan* and the twenty-six vessels with which it was discovered, these bells had been placed into a storage pit, presumably at the same time, the two pits being less than sixty meters apart. Unfortunately, after discovery some of the bells were subsequently stolen and smuggled to Hong Kong, there being sold on the antiques market; only thirteen bells now remain in the Meixian County Cultural Relics Control Station (*Wenwu guanlisuo* 文物管理所).²¹ Three of the bells there have identical inscriptions of 117 characters, while one other has just the final 23 characters of the complete inscription.²² At the time of their discovery, these bells did not attract a great

20 For a similar case in which a king refers to a previous command issued to the same individual, see the *First* and *Third Year Shi Dui gui* 師兌簋 inscriptions (*Jicheng* 8.4275 and 8.4318); for partial translations of the inscriptions, see Shaughnessy, *Sources of Western Zhou History*, pp. 281–2, and for a suggestion regarding royal archives, see Edward L. Shaughnessy, *Before Confucius: Studies in the Creation of the Confucian Classics* (Albany, N.Y.: SUNY Press, 1997), p. 4.

21 Two other bells have made their way into American collections, one in the Cleveland Gallery of Art, and one in the collection of George Fan of Ossining, New York. For a detailed study of these bells, see Barnard, *The Shan-fu Liang Ch'i Kuei*, pp. 324–56.

22 The bell in the Cleveland Gallery of Art also bears the same 117-character inscription, while the bell in the Fan collection contains 20 characters of the dedicatory portion of the complete inscription. There is some overlap between this portion and the 23-character inscrip-

deal of attention, since even the complete 117-character inscription had seemed quite formulaic, and before the discovery of the *Yu Qiu pan*, there was no way to discern the identity or family background of the patron Qiu.²³ With the 2003 discovery of Qiu's second cache, however, numerous studies have pointed out its connection with this earlier cache, and shown that the two derive from the same individual. I would like to go further to show not only that the inscription of the bells was composed at the same time as that of the *pan*, but also that a comparison of the two inscriptions can show still further the process of their composition. Let us begin with a translation of the bells inscription.

Qiu zhong 逖鐘

逖曰：不顯朕皇考克膺明明畢心，帥用畢先且考政德，宮辟先王。逖御于畢辟，不敢豕，虔夙夕敬畢死事。天子丕朕先且服，多易逖休，令覲嗣三方吳蓄。逖敢對 天子不顯魯休賜，用乍朕皇考龔弔龔鐘，鎗=恩=，雉=鎡=，用追孝邵各喜侃前=文=人=嚴才上，豐=彙=降余多福康甦屯右永令。逖甘萬年豐 耄眈臣天子=孫=永寶。

Qiu said: "Illustrious my august deceased-father, capable of making his heart clear and bright, he followed and used his prior ancestors' and deceased-father's governance and virtue to offer service to the prior king. Qiu makes supplies to his ruler, not daring to fail, assiduously morning and evening respecting his sworn responsibility. The Son of Heaven recalls my prior ancestors' duties, greatly awarding Qiu benefices, commanding simultaneously to supervise the game and forests of the four quarters. Qiu dares to respond to the Son of Heaven's illustriously fine beneficence and to extol it, herewith making for my august deceased-father Gongshu these harmonic bells. *Cangcang congcong, yangyang yongyong*, herewith sending filial piety to, summoning to approach, and gladdening the past cultured men. (May) the past cultured men, stern on high, abundantly send down on me many blessings, peaceful harmony, pure aid, and an eternal mandate, and may Qiu for ten-thousand years have longevity to serve the Son of Heaven, and have sons and grandsons's grandsons eternally to treasure them."

tion on the bell in the Meixian County Cultural Relics Control Station, but they are not exactly the same.

- 23 Indeed, as noted above, n. 2, the graph of his name was variously transcribed as Lai or Mai 逖, or Su 逖.

Lothar von Falkenhausen presciently selected this inscription to illustrate what he termed the “subjective mode” of inscriptions, which he describes as taking “the form of a proclamation from the donor’s mouth, which sometimes paraphrases the contents of investiture records without quoting them directly.”²⁴ The opening of this inscription, which quotes the patron as “saying” (*Qiu yue* 逖曰) the contents of the inscription, is one feature of this mode. It occurs in only about ten mid to late Western Zhou inscriptions, and it is noteworthy that half of these are on bells.²⁵ It may be that the aural nature of the bells led to a focus on orality in the inscriptions on them. On the other hand, their inscriptions were, of course, very much written, and in the case of the *Qiu zhong* it is possible to demonstrate direct precedents for virtually all of its phrases in the *Yu Qiu pan* inscription. Some of these phrases were more or less transformed as they were adapted for the *zhong* inscription, and it is especially in these transformations that we can see the scribe at work.

On the basis of a comparison of the inscription on the *Qiu zhong* with that on the *Liang Qi zhong* 梁其鐘, another late Western Zhou set of bells, Noel Barnard made the interesting suggestion that some places in it “possibly stem from textual attenuation.”²⁶ The discovery now of the *Yu Qiu pan* allows us to

24 Falkenhausen, “Issues in Western Zhou Studies,” 158.

25 Among other types of vessels, inscriptions that begin by quoting the patron include (in rough chronological order) the *Dong fangding* 戎方鼎 (*Jicheng* 5.2824), *Meng gui* 孟簋 (*Jicheng* 8.4162), *Xing gui* 夔簋 (*Jicheng* 8.4170–4177), *Yu ding* 禹鼎 (5.2834), and *Da Ke ding* 大克鼎 (*Jicheng* 5.2836), as well, of course, as the *Yu Qiu pan*. Western Zhou bell inscriptions that begin similarly include the *Jingren Ren Ning zhong* 井人人女鐘 (*Jicheng* 1.0109–10, 0111), *Xing zhong* 夔鐘 (*Jicheng* 1.0247–0250), *Guoshu Lü zhong* 虢叔旅鐘 (*Jicheng* 1.0238–0244), *Liang Qi zhong* 梁其鐘 (*Jicheng* 1.0187–0192), and the *Shanbo Yi Sheng zhong* 單白旻生鐘 (*Jicheng* 1.0082). This last vessel doubtless derives from Shan family of which Qiu was also a member, and the wording is so similar as to suggest some cross influence between them:

單白旻生曰：不顯皇且刺考逖匹先王。爵堇大命。

余孚肇帥井朕皇且考敷德。用保奠。

Shanbo Yi Sheng said: “Illustrious august ancestors and valorous deceased-father joined and aided the prior kings, having merit and taking care with the great mandate. I the young son have begun to follow the example of my august ancestors’ and deceased-father’s fine virtue, herewith protecting and stabilizing it.

26 Barnard, *The Shan-fu Liang Ch’i Kuei*, pp. 346–7. Barnard goes on to attribute this “textual attenuation,” “effected by the artisan/scribe,” to “certain technical problems.” In a lengthy note to this idea, he discusses the process of an inscription’s composition, but concludes that a number of questions “constitute the unknowns which limit our powers of assessment.” It is not clear, to me at least, who he thinks was responsible for composing the inscription (as

demonstrate far more precisely just how this textual attenuation was produced. The inscription of the *Qiu zhong* can be divided into some seven discrete sentences, as in the following table. In the table, I provide also relevant parallels in the *Yu Qiu pan* inscription.

虞述盤

零朕皇考龔叔: 穆=趨=. 龔訇于政, 明
陵于德, 宮辟刺王.

With my august deceased-father Gong
Shu: so beautiful and so respectful,
harmonious and compliant in govern-
ment, bright and equable in virtue, he
obeyed and assisted Li Wang.

述肇屺朕皇且考服, 虔夙夕敬朕死
事.

Qiu has begun by continuing my august
ancestors' and deceased-father's
responsibilities, diligently morning and
evening respecting my sworn service.

肆天子多易述休. [...] 王若曰: [...] 今余佳至乃先聖且考, 鬲鬯乃令=女
疋燮兌, 覲鬲三方吳釐, 用宮御.

And so the Son of Heaven has much
awarded Qiu benefices. [...] The king
approved of saying: [...] now it is that I
recall your past wise ancestors and
deceased-father and extend and in-
crease your command, commanding
you to assist Rong Dui, and concur-
rently to supervise the four quarters'
game and forests, to be used for the
palace's supply.

述鐘

述曰: 不顯朕皇考克齋明明畢心,
帥用畢先且考政德, 宮辟先王.

Qiu said: "Illustrious my august
deceased-father, capable of making
his heart clear and bright, he
followed and used his prior
ancestors' and deceased-father's
governance and virtue to offer
service to the prior king.

述御于畢辟, 不敢豕, 虔夙夕敬畢
死事.

Qiu makes supplies to his ruler, not
daring to fail, assiduously morning
and evening respecting his sworn
service.

天子罔朕先且服, 多易述休, 令覲
鬲三方吳釐.

The Son of Heaven recalls my prior
ancestors' duties, greatly awarding
Qiu benefices, commanding simul-
taneously to supervise the game and
forests of the four quarters.

opposed to engraving it [in the clay model]), the term "artisan/scribe" allowing a consider-
able range of possibilities.

逌敢對天子丕顯魯休賜, 用乍朕皇且
考寶隤盤.

Qiu dares in response to the Son of
Heaven's illustriously fine beneficence
to extol it, herewith making for my
august ancestors and deceased-father
this treasured offertory *pan*-basin,
用追宮于前=文=人=.

with which to send offerings of filial
piety to the past cultured men.

(前文人)嚴才上, 虞才[下], 豐=臬 =
降逌魯多福豐耄 蕤綰. 受余康受屯
又通泉永令霈冬,

May the past cultured men be stern on
high and respected below, and
abundantly send down on Qiu fine and
many blessings and long life ever-
lasting, giving me peaceful harmony,
pure aid, penetrating wealth, an eternal
mandate and a numinous end,
逌眈臣天子=孫=永寶用宮.

so that Qiu may serve the Son of
Heaven. May sons and grandsons'
grandsons eternally treasure and use it
to make offerings.

There is no need to point out the numerous similarities between these two inscriptions; reading across the rows of this display should leave no doubt as to the relationship between them. More interesting, perhaps, are the divergences between the two inscriptions.

The most obvious difference between the two inscriptions, viewed as wholes, is in their length: the *Yu Qiu pan* inscription has 373 characters while

逌敢對 天子不顯魯休賜, 用乍朕
皇考龔弔龢鐘.

Qiu dares to respond to the Son of
Heaven's illustriously fine
beneficence and to extol it, herewith
making for my august deceased-
father Gongshu these harmonic bells.
鎗=恩=, 雉=鎗=, 用追孝邵各侃于
前=文=人=.

*Cangcang congcong, yangyang
yongyong*, herewith sending filial
piety to, summoning to approach,
and gladdening the past cultured
men.

(前文人)嚴才上, 豐=臬 =降余多
福康霽 屯右永令.

(May) the past cultured men, stern
on high, abundantly send down on
me many blessings, peaceful
harmony, pure aid, and an eternal
mandate.

逌廿萬年豐 耄眈臣天子=孫=永
寶.

May Qiu for ten-thousand years have
longevity to serve the Son of
Heaven, and have sons and
grandsons' grandsons eternally to
treasure them.

the various *Qiu zhong* inscriptions have only 117 characters. To some extent, this can be attributed to the differences in the bronzes that carry the inscriptions.²⁷ The *Yu Qiu pan* is a round basin affording a flat writing surface with a diameter of fifty-three centimeters. The three *Qiu zhong* with the 117-character inscription stored at the Meixian County Cultural Relics Control Station are larger (reported heights of the entire bells are 65.5, 65 and 61 cm), but the surface area available to carry the inscription is much more limited. It would seem that space alone was responsible for some decisions about what could be included in this inscription. Thus, the long historical narrative of the *pan* inscription could not possibly fit on a single bell. In its place, we find an opening sentence praising just Qiu's father Gongshu, some of the language being identical with language in the *Yu Qiu pan* inscription.²⁸

One other sentence reveals a subtle rewriting. Qiu praises his father for having followed and used his prior ancestors' and deceased-father's "*zheng de* 政德." Although this compound is perfectly understandable as an adjective-noun construction meaning "governing virtue," a comparison with the *Yu Qiu pan*'s praise of Gongshu suggests that it should be read instead as an abbreviation of the epithet applied to him there: *he jun yu zheng, ming qi yu de* 龢甸于政, 明淩于德 "harmonious and compliant in government, bright and equable in virtue."

Another abbreviation can be seen in Qiu's prayer for blessings from the "past cultured men" (*qian wen ren* 前文人). Whereas the prayer in the *pan* inscription includes thirty-two characters, the *zhong* inscription makes do with only eighteen characters. This sort of abbreviation may have been impromptu; since the *zhong* inscription fills all available space on all three of the bells that

27 Olivier Venture, "Étude d'un emploi rituel de l'écrit dans la Chine archaïque (XIIIe–VIIIe siècle avant notre ère): Réflexion sur les matériaux épigraphiques des Shang et des Zhou occidentaux" (Ph.D. diss.: Université Paris 7, 2002), pp. 99, 101, 134, makes observations on how inscriptions were influenced by their visibility.

28 As noted above, p. 864, Qiu's description of his deceased-father as "capable of making clear and bright his heart" is found in the *pan* inscription attributed not to Gongshu, but rather to Gongshu's own grandfather Lingbo 零伯. However, as discussed there, since Gongshu and Lingbo would have been arrayed on the same side of the Shan family ancestral temple, it is possible that they shared this sort of epithet.

It is also worth noting that whereas the *pan* inscription is dedicated generically to "my august ancestors and deceased-father" (*zhen huang zu kao* 朕皇祖考), which is appropriate given the lengthy narrative extolling the seven generations of ancestors that begins the inscription, the *zhong* inscription is dedicated only to "my august deceased-father Gongshu" (*zhen huang zu kao Gongshu* 朕皇祖考龢叔).

carry it, it may have been determined at the last minute that some portions of the prayer simply would not fit. On the other hand, it is also likely that the choice of what to delete—from the past cultured men being “respected below” (*yi zai xia* 虞才下),²⁹ to the desire for “penetrating wealth” (*tong lu* 通录) or a “numinous end” (*ling zhong* 靈冬)—indicates some scale of priorities.

It is in the presentation of the king’s address to Qiu that we find the *zhong*’s scribe taking the greatest liberties. Whereas in the *pan* inscription, the entire address is quoted, presumably from the bamboo strips presented to Qiu at the end of his audience, the *zhong* inscription provides a highly attenuated paraphrase, quoting verbatim only the new command “simultaneously to supervise the game and forests of the four quarters.” In paraphrasing the preamble of the king’s address, the scribe begins by changing the person of the speech: in the verbatim quotation in the *pan* inscription, the “king” (*wang*) speaks in the first person “I” (*yu* 余) and refers to Qiu’s ancestors as “your” (*nai* 乃); in the *zhong* inscription, the king is referred to honorifically as “Son of Heaven” (*tianzi*) and Qiu’s ancestors become “my” (*zhen* 朕). Despite the personal touch here, the following clause awkwardly reverts to referring to Qiu by name rather than by a transformation of the pronoun that the king used: “you” (*ru* 女).

More important, two other transformations in this clause introduce grammatical ambiguity. Whereas in the *pan* inscription, the king “recalls” (*jing* 烝) Qiu’s “prior wise ancestors and deceased-father” (*xian sheng zu kao* 先聖祖考), the *zhong* inscription changes this to the Son of Heaven’s recalling his “prior ancestors’ duties” (*xian zu fu* 先祖服). Although this is perfectly grammatical in English, and may also have been grammatical in the language of the Western Zhou, I suspect that the *fu* 服 “duties” marks contamination from a previous sentence in the *pan* inscription: Qiu’s characterization of his own accomplishments seen in the second row of the diagram above: *Qiu zhao zan zhen huang zu kao fu* 逯肇殄朕皇且考服, “Qiu has begun by continuing my august ancestors’ and deceased-father’s duties.”

29 It is perhaps worthy of note that in the *pan* inscription, the character *xia* 下 “below” apparently failed to register in the bronze, though there is a space for it. This might lead one to imagine that the person responsible for preparing the text of the *zhong* inscription, what Barnard calls the “artisan/scribe,” had the actual *pan* inscription before him as he was writing the *zhong* inscription, and was confused by the failure of the graph to register, and thus deleted this phrase *yi zai xia* 虞才下. However, such a scenario seems entirely improbable to me. I suspect instead that that a scribe wrote the text of the inscription on bamboo or wooden strips, and it was via this medium in which it was conducted to the artisan responsible for carving the inscription block.

The following five characters are also ambiguous: *duo ci Qiu xiu ling* 多易逮休令. Should the object of *ci* 易 “to award” be *xiu* 休 “beneficence” or *ling* 令 “command”? Although either reading is possible,³⁰ and *xiu ling* 休令 “beneficent command” is common in mid and late Western Zhou bronze inscriptions,³¹ such a reading here would leave the following direct quotation of the king’s new command to Qiu without a verb. Unless we posit the inadvertent omission of a duplication mark after *ling* 令 “command,” the reading I have given in the translation, awkward though it may be, seems to be obligatory.

Another example of awkward phrasing, this time produced by the presence of a duplication mark, is to be seen in the final sentence of the *Qiu zhong* inscription. When Qiu prays that for ten-thousand years he have longevity to serve the Son of Heaven and have descendants eternally to treasure the vessel, the juxtaposition of the *zi* 子 “son” of *Tianzi* 天子 “Son of Heaven,” and *zi sun* 子孫 “sons and grandsons,” with duplication marks after both *zi* 子 and *sun* 孫 (i.e., 天子=孫= or 天子子孫孫) produces the awkward phrasing “to serve the Son of Heaven, and sons (*sic*) and grandsons’ grandsons eternally to treasure” the vessel. In this case, the wording is taken over verbatim from the final prayer of the *Yu Qiu pan* inscription, and so is not the result of editorial transformation. I would suggest that in this awkwardness we see the trace of a writer struggling to reconcile wording that he has cut and pasted from different phrases,³² even if they are phrases that he may have written originally (assuming that the same scribe was responsible for both the *Yu Qiu pan* and *Qiu zhong* inscriptions).

- 30 It is interesting to note that the two published English translations of this inscription diverge on this point, Falkenhausen offering “many times bestowed his munificence on me. He charged me [...]” (“Issues in Western Zhou Studies,” 159), while Barnard gives “Su [has been] favoured with [royal] commands [=appointments]” (*The Shan-fu Liang Ch’i Kuei*, p. 346).
- 31 However, this would be the only case where *xiu ling* would be the object of the verb *ci* “to award”; all other cases involve the patron extolling (*yang* 揚) the Son of Heaven’s “beneficent command.”
- 32 For a study of inexpert editing of Western Zhou bronze inscriptions, see Li Feng, “Literacy Crossing Cultural Borders: Evidence from the Bronze Inscriptions of the Western Zhou Period (1045–771 B.C.),” *Bulletin of the Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities* 74 (2002): 210–42.

Conclusions

In this study, I have examined four bronze inscriptions written for a single individual named Qiu, who lived during the last years of the Western Zhou dynasty. Given the location where these bronze vessels and bells were found, Yangjiacun of Meixian county, Shaanxi, and given Qiu's office of game and forest warden, it seems reasonable to assume that he lived about one hundred kilometers outside of the Zhou capital, though evidence in the inscriptions shows that he was also temporarily posted to other locations and other duties. On at least three occasions, he was received at royal audiences in the capital, and the awards he was given at these audiences served as the occasion for his casting of the commemorative bronzes.

Two of these inscriptions, those on the 42nd and 43rd *Year Yu Qiu ding*, describe these audiences in some detail: Qiu was ushered into the king's presence; the head of the royal secretariat handed the king the prepared text of Qiu's award, written on bamboo or wooden strips; the king called on another scribe to read the text on the bamboo strips to Qiu; and then Qiu was given these strips as he exited the court. This coincides with descriptions of royal audiences in other late Western Zhou bronze inscriptions, and was probably the norm for all audiences, even those described in abbreviated fashion. The award documents given to Qiu then served as the basis for the inscriptions cast into the vessels commemorating these audiences and their awards. In the case of the 42nd *Year Yu Qiu ding* inscription, the award document is quoted verbatim and comprises the great bulk of the inscription, more than 200 of its total 281 characters. The remaining portion, added by Qiu or by a scribe in his employ, is a formulaic dedication of the vessel to Qiu's ancestors and a prayer for blessings for himself and his descendants. Differences in wording, especially in the mode of reference to the king, reveal the different authorial hands in these two portions of this one lengthy but structurally simple inscription.

The inscription on the *Yu Qiu pan* is far more sophisticated; indeed, there is only one other precedent for it in the entire inventory of Western Zhou bronze inscriptions, the famous *Shi Qiang pan*. I have suggested that this vessel commemorated Qiu's initial appointment at court, in which he was commanded to "continue" his "august ancestors' and deceased-father's duties." In making this command to Qiu, the king recalled how Qiu's ancestors had aided the Zhou kings Wen and Wu in establishing the dynasty and caring for the great mandate. In this inscription, Qiu again quoted the royal appointment verbatim, the text of which must also have been given to him on bamboo or wooden strips. However,

in the case of this inscription, the text of the royal appointment constitutes only a minor portion of the entire inscription, just about 65 out of 373 characters, even if it can be presumed to have inspired and legitimated the rest of the inscription. The great bulk of the inscription is comprised of a historical narrative relating—generation by generation—how Qiu's ancestors had aided the Zhou kings; this narrative runs about 240 characters, or two-thirds of the entire inscription. I have suggested that Qiu, or his scribe, may have drawn on a variety of sources in composing this narrative. He certainly drew in the first instance on the text of the royal appointment that had been given to him; he may also have had reference to a saga or sagas of the Zhou kings and their exploits that would have been widely known, either in written or oral form, at the Zhou court; and to this he probably added epithets and encomia found on the spirit tablets of the ancestors in his own ancestral temple. He closed the inscription with the obligatory dedication to these ancestors, and the prayer for their blessings on him and his descendants.

At the same time that he cast this *pan* basin and its lengthy inscription, he also had cast a set of bells. Several of these bells carry an inscription obviously related to that on the *pan*-basin, but quite abbreviated, with just 117 characters as opposed to 383. Much of the abbreviation was achieved by simply deleting the historical narrative of the *pan* inscription, but other changes required different juxtapositions of phrases taken over from the longer inscription. In at least a few cases, these transformations produced an awkward effect, apparently the result of the cut-and-paste nature of their production.

It is only due to the unique circumstances that two separate caches of vessels and bells, almost all made by a single individual, have been discovered that we can compare and contrast the inscriptions, and in their similarities and differences begin to see something of the process by which the inscriptions were written. Although this is but a single example, it is almost certainly representative of the writing that was taking place throughout late Western Zhou society, and thus is an important key to the development of the Chinese literary tradition.

