

Ancestral Designations Reconsidered in Light of Recently Excavated Bronze Inscriptions

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Inscribed bronze vessels, artifacts of Western Zhou ritual practices of ancestor worship, testify to the crucial role of ancestral pedigree in establishing claims of social and political legitimacy on the part of the Zhou elite. Part of that practice involved the creation of inscriptions that recounted the glorious merit of lineage ancestors and the dedication of vessels to the same. As part of a larger project on Western Zhou lineages, I have been seeking to understand how the arraying of lineage ancestors within bronze inscriptional texts reflects the social positions and agendas of their sponsors. Crucial to our understanding of this process is a correct interpretation of the ways in which ancestors were named and classified in inscriptions through the use of specialized naming conventions. In this paper I consider a set of ancestral designations based on *zu* 祖 and *kao* 考 that were used to classify and hierarchically arrange the ancestors, claiming that recently discovered inscriptions offer a new way of looking at these terms.

Mention of ancestors typically occurs in two places within bronze inscriptional texts, in a statement of merit and/or within a dedicatory statement specifying for whom the vessel was made. The dedicatory statement is one of the basic constituents of Western Zhou bronze inscriptions.¹ From the shortest inscriptions that make up the majority of the corpus to the longest, most historically significant inscriptions, a dedication of some sort is a component of most Western Zhou inscriptions. While certain types of inscriptions, particularly those made for

¹ Lothar von Falkenhausen, "Issues in Western Zhou Studies: A Review Article," *Early China* 18 (1993): 155. As Falkenhausen notes, the act of dedication, indicated by the verb *zuo* 作, may be more integral than the names of the sponsor (or "donor" in Falkenhausen's terms) or dedicatee. Numerous short inscriptions omit both.

women on the occasion of marriage, are dedicated to living individuals, the majority of Western Zhou inscriptions are dedicated to ancestors. Within the statement of merit or the dedication, ancestors can be designated in a variety of ways, through generic references to unnamed ancestors or to particular, named ancestors. Both varieties are common and typically make use of kinship terms and appellation formats that distinguish ancestors from living kin.²

Inscriptional texts typically employ a set of specialized terminology to designate ancestral relations. The most common terms are *zu* and *kao*, often translated as "grandfather" and "father" or "deceased father" respectively. Most dedications in Western Zhou inscriptions refer to only one or two generations of ancestors. Such references are often generic in nature, referring to the ancestors using only the ancestral kin terms without specific names. The inscription of the Bo Congfu *gui* 伯戣父簋 in the Shouyang studio collection is one such example:

用享于文祖考。用萬年鬯(眉)壽。其子孫永寶用享。³

Use it to make offerings to my cultured ancestors⁴ and thereby have ten-thousand years of long life. May sons and grandsons forever treasure and use it in offering.

In other instances, references to ancestors are more specific, employing not only ancestral kin terms but also appellations for specific individual ancestors, e.g. the Guo You Cong *ding* 鬲攸从鼎 (2818).⁵

² There are, of course, a number of ambiguous cases in which it is not completely possible to ascertain whether an appellation refers to a living person or to a deceased ancestor.

³ *Shouyang jijin: Hu Yingying Fan Jirong cang Zhongguo gudai qingtongqi* 首陽吉金：胡盈瑩范季融藏中國古代青銅器 (Shanghai: Shanghai Guji chubanshe, 2008), 106-07.

⁴ Of course the phrase *zukai* could be read more as a reference to two particular, unnamed ancestors, *zu* and *kao*. Other generic references distinguish *zu* and *kao* by using different epithets, such as the common four-character phrase *huang zu wen kao* 皇祖文考 "august grandfather and cultured father" (e.g. Third Year Xing 癸壺 [9726-27]). This too could be construed as a collective reference to one's ancestors.

从作朕皇祖丁公皇考夷公尊鼎。

Cong makes for his august grandfather, Ding Gong, and august father, Hui Gong, this sacrificial caldron.

Dedicatory inscriptions are overwhelmingly oriented towards recently deceased ancestors, individuals that had perhaps been known personally by the sponsor of the vessel. It may also have been the case that such ancestors were understood to have a greater influence on the fortunes of the living. Regardless of the reasons behind it, because of this trend, the terms *zu* and *kao* are sufficient to generationally distinguish ancestors in most inscriptions.

Only a handful of inscriptions contain lists of lineage ancestors that extend beyond two generations. Such lists are generally part of an extended statement of merit that praises the ancestors' achievements as a prelude to the sponsor's pledge to succeed his ancestors and live up to the illustrious precedent set by them. The most famous example is the narrative of lineage history provided within the *Shi Qiang pan* (10175), discovered in Zhuangbai 莊白 village (Fufeng 扶風 county, Shaanxi) in the Zhouyuan 周原 in 1976.⁶ The ancestor list of that inscription can be reconstructed as follows:

⁵ When applicable, initial references to bronze inscriptions are followed by the relevant index number(s) in *Zhongguo kexueyuan, kaogu yanjiusuo* 中國科學院考古研究所, *Yin Zhou jinwen jicheng* 殷周金文集成 (Beijing: Zhonghua, 1984-95).

⁶ The discovery was initially reported in Shaanxi Zhouyuan kaogudui, 陝西周原考古隊, "Shaanxi Fufeng Zhuangbai yihao Xi Zhou qingtongqi jiaocang fajue jianbao" 陝西扶風莊白一號西周青銅器窖藏發掘簡報, *Wenwu* 文物 1978, 3: 1-18. Early studies are collected in Yin Shengping 尹盛平, *Xi Zhou Wei shi jiazhu qingtongqi qun yanjiu* 西周微氏家族青銅器群研究 (Beijing: Wenwu, 1992). See also Cao Wei 曹瑋, ed., *Zhouyuan chutu qingtongqi* 周原出土青銅器 (Chengdu: Ba Shu, 2005), 3: 522-5: 967.



Once can see that the extension of the lineage beyond two generations allowed for, if not required, an elaboration on the ancestral kinship terms *zu* and *kao*. Two terms in particular stand out: *gaozu* 高祖 and *yazu* 亞祖. The first term was easily recognized both from its historical usage and its inclusion in the ritual canon. The "Sangfu" 喪服 chapter of the *Liji* 禮記 reads:

有五世而遷之宗，其繼高祖者也。⁷

As for lineages that break off after five generations, it is the case that they succeed the "high ancestor."

The *Erya* 爾雅 specifically defines the term *gaozu* as a great-great grandfather, i.e. a patrilineal ancestor in the fourth generation ascending.⁸ Including the "ego" generation, that would entail five generations, which is in accord with the description in the "Sangfu." Neither text mentioned the rare term *yazu*, unknown (at the time) from any source, epigraphic or received. But the same cache yielded other inscriptions that made use of similar terminology:

⁷ *Liji zhushu* 禮記注疏, in *Shisanjing zhushu* 十三經注疏, ed. Ruan Yuan 阮元 (1815; Reprint, Beijing: Zhonghua, 1980), 2: 1495.

⁸ *Erya zhushu* 爾雅注疏, in *Shisanjing zhushu* 十三經注疏, ed. Ruan Yuan 阮元 (1815; Reprint, Beijing: Zhonghua, 1980), 2: 2592.

Xing zhong 癩鐘 (247-250)

癩曰。丕顯高祖、亞祖、文考。克明昏心胥尹。

Xing declared "My greatly illustrious high ancestor, secondary ancestor, and cultured father were able to make bright their hearts in assisting the governors."

Xing zhong 癩鐘 (246)

癩桓桓夙夕聖爽。追孝于高祖辛公、文祖乙公、皇考丁公龠林鐘。

Valiant Xing morning and evening is sagely and bright, pursuing filiality with respect to his high ancestor Lord Xing, his cultured ancestor Lord Yi, and his august father Lord Ding [by making] this harmonious set of bells.

Based on the characterization of *gaozu* in the ritual texts and on usage in the Zhuangbai inscriptions,⁹ various theories have been offered to explain these ancestral designations.¹⁰ One of the most intriguing was put forward by Lothar von Falkenhausen and later elaborated by Li Ling 李令, arguing that *gaozu* and *yazu* were technical terms used to designate specific nodes within a system of segmented lineages. According to that theory, *gaozu* denotes the founding ancestor of a lineage, while *yazu* denotes a "nodal" ancestor that connected a lineage branch to the main lineage, defined by direct descent from eldest male to eldest male.¹¹ This theory has important

⁹ One other inscription, discovered in 1979, employs the term *yazu*:

Nangong Hu zhong 南宮乎鐘 (1.181)

先祖南公亞祖公仲比父之家

The family of "prior" ancestor Nan Gong and "secondary" ancestor Gong Zhong Bifu.

¹⁰ Different theories relating to these terms are analyzed in Cao Wei 曹瑋, *Gaozu kao* "高祖"考, *Wenwu* 文物 2003.9, 32-34, 59 and Wu Zhenfeng 吳鎮烽, "Gaozu yazu wangfu kao" 高祖亞祖王父考, *Kaogu* 考古 2006.12: 73-77.

¹¹ The most developed statement of this theory appears in Lothar von Falkenhausen, *Chinese Society in the Age of Confucius (1000-250 BC): The Archaeological Evidence*, 56-64, building on earlier discussions in Falkenhausen, "Ritual Music in Bronze Age China: An Archaeological Perspective" (Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 1988), 2: 994-99; and especially Luo Tai 羅泰, "Youguan Xi Zhou wanqi lizhi gaige ji Zhuangbai qingtongqi niandai de xin

ramifications not only for the understanding of the interrelationships among the Wei lineage ancestors, but also for the understanding of the Zhou kinship system.

Within the last fifteen years, as the Shouyang Studio collection was being assembled, several important inscriptions have come to light that allow us to reconsider the question of ancestral designations. In the remainder of this paper I discuss two recently discovered inscriptions, the Xian *ding* 衡鼎 and the Qiu *pan* 逵盤, that suggest new ways of looking at these ancestral designations.¹²

The Xian *ding* is an unprovenanced vessel that was confiscated by the Weicheng 渭城 Public Security Bureau in Xianyang 咸陽, Shaanxi Province in 1995. Though examined by Wu Zhenfeng 吳鎮烽 and a number of other experts at the time, the inscription was not published until ten years later in 2005.¹³ Although photographs of the vessel have not been published, the vessel is described as similar in style to the late Western Zhou Mao Gong *ding* 毛公鼎 (2841), hemispherical in shape, with upright ears, 21 cm in height, with a circumference of 21.5 cm.¹⁴

jiashuo: Cong shixi mingwen shuoqi" 有關西周晚期禮制改革暨莊白青銅器年代的新假說：從世系銘文說起, in *Zhongguo kaoguxue ji lishixue zhi zhenghe yanjiu* 中國考古學暨歷史學之整合研究 (Taipei: Zhongyang yanjiuyuan, 1997), 2: 651-76. Based on the Zhuangbai inscriptions and the recently discovered Qiu *pan* (see below), I myself put forward an alternative hypothesis that *yazu*, which tended to be used for ancestors in the second generation ascending, simply indicated an ancestral grandfather; see David M. Sena, "Reproducing Society: Lineage and Kinship in Western Zhou China," (Ph.D. diss., University of Chicago, 2005), 89.

¹² Throughout this paper the graph 衡 is used as a substitute for the proper graph for Xian, which contains the 言 element underneath 衡. Note also that the Qiu *pan* is referred to as the Lai *pan* 逵盤 in several studies.

¹³ Wu Zhenfeng 吳鎮烽 "Xian ding mingwen kaoshi" 衡鼎銘文考釋, *Guwenzi lunji* 古文字論集, vol. 3 (Xi'an: Kaogu yu wenwu, 2005); essentially the same article with the same title was later published in *Wenbo* 文博 2007.2: 16-19.

¹⁴ Chen Jie 陳絜, "Xian ding mingwen bushi ji qi xiangguan wenti" 衡鼎銘文補釋及其相關問題, internet resource: http://www.xianqin.org/data/chenjie_jianding_20070822.doc (dated 22 August, 2007), downloaded from <http://www.xianqin.org>, website of Xian Qin yanjiushi 先秦研究室, Lishi yanjiusuo 歷史研究所, Zhongguo shehui kexueyuan 中國社會科學院.

The inscription of 61 graphs is clearly incomplete and must have continued onto a second vessel.

It reads:

Xian ding

衡曰。丕顯天尹。匍保王身。諫又四方。

Xian said "The greatly illustrious heavenly lord¹⁵ extensively protected the king's person, admonishing and ruling over the four quarters.

在朕皇高祖師要、亞祖師夆、亞祖師甄、亞祖師僕、王父師彪于(與)朕皇考師孝獻作尹氏□¹⁶妾甸人。暈(得)屯¹⁷(純)亡(無)敗。□¹⁸尹氏家。

At [the time] when my august high ancestor Captain Yao, secondary ancestor Captain Feng, secondary ancestor Captain Yi, secondary ancestor Captain Pu, grandfather Captain Biao, and my august father Captain Xiao devotedly served as the servants and fieldsmen of the lord,¹⁹ they attained purity without defect, and...the lord's house.

衡夙(夙)...

Xian day [and night]...

In the *Xian ding*, the ancestral designation *yazu* is used for a range of ancestors that fall somewhere in the middle range of a longer list that includes *gaozu* at the top and *kao* at the

¹⁵ The term *tianyin* appears in the inscriptions of three other Western Zhou inscriptions: Tianyin *zhong* 天尹鐘 (5); Zuoce Da *fangding* 作冊大方鼎 (2759); and Gongchen *gui* 公臣簋 (4184). In the latter two cases, *tianyin* is a reference to a high official—perhaps of the royal court—mentioned in the inscription. In the Tianyin *zhong*, the term is a first-person reference on the part of the sponsor.

¹⁶ Chen Jie ("Xian ding mingwen bushi") suggests a reading of *tong* 童 here, based on the partial resemblance to the form of the graph in the Shi Qiang *pan*. The graph in the Shi Qiang *pan* clearly includes an additional element, 東, which serves as phonetic. Chen argues suggests that *tong* here is a masculine counterpart to *qie* 妾, such that the two-character phrase would mean "male and female servants. In the corpus, *qie* 妾 usually appears in the phrase *chenqie* 臣妾, perhaps with a similar meaning.

¹⁷ The graph 屯 is inverted in the inscription.

¹⁸ Chen Jie argues that this graph is actually an inverted form of *shi* 世 "for generations"

¹⁹ The term *yinshi* appears in many inscriptions and seems to indicate an official involved with handling written command documents. It is not clear whether *yinshi* should be rendered as a title or as a generic reference to such officials.

bottom. If we can accept the premise that the ancestor list was intended to establish a generation-by-generation pedigree for the sponsor, *yazu* clearly indicates a relative status in terms of generational hierarchy.²⁰

Instead of *yazu*, the Xian *ding* uses the kin term *wangfu* 王父 to designate the ancestor of the second generation ascending. Defined in the *Erya* as a grandfather,²¹ *wangfu* is also used within the *Liji*:

祭王父曰皇祖考。王母曰皇祖妣。父曰皇考。母曰皇妣。夫曰皇辟。生曰父，曰母，曰妻；死曰考，曰妣，曰嬪。²²

In offering sacrifice to one's grandfather, one says *huang zukao*. For one's grandmother, one says *huang zubi*. For one's father, one says *huang kao*. For one's mother, one says *huang bi*. For one's husband, one says *huang pi*. For the living one says *fu*, *mu*, *qi*. For the dead one says *kao*, *bi*, *pin*.

Such a distinction between kinship terms for living relations and those for ancestors is reflected in the corpus of Western Zhou inscriptions, in which the terms *zu* and *kao* are used exclusively for ancestors. Furthermore, the *Liji* passage implies that the term *wangfu* may have been a kinship term for the living in contradistinction to *zukao*. Were this to be the case during the late Western Zhou, the use of *wangfu* to designate an ancestor in the Xian *ding* inscription represents a deviation from the naming conventions that served to distinguish ancestors from living kin relations.²³

²⁰ Such a usage is obviously incompatible with my own theory, mentioned above, that *yazu* indicates an ancestral grandfather.

²¹ "Qu li" 曲禮, *Erya zhushu*, 2: 2592.

²² *Liji zhushu*, 1: 1269.

²³ Another potential explanation for this usage is simply that the sponsor's grandfather, Captain Biao 師彪, was still alive at the time when the vessel was inscribed.

The ancestor list of the Xian *ding* is atypical in its references to the ancestors for reasons besides the rare term *wangfu*. The names of Xian's ancestors all take the form Shi 師 X (Captain X). This appellation format, perhaps indicating a military or former military officer, is one of the most common in the inscriptional corpus. However, within the corpus of known inscriptions, such references are overwhelmingly to living individuals rather than to ancestors.²⁴ Other typical features that distinguish ancestral names from those of the living, e.g. temple names or heavenly stems, are also absent from the inscription.

One reason to explain this potential blurring between ancestral appellations and living appellations may be Xian's social status. Nowhere in the appellations used for Xian and his ancestors is there an indication of lineage name. While this is not *prima facie* evidence that Xian or his ancestors didn't have a lineage name, together with the above features of the inscription it suggests to me that Xian, descended from a line of hereditary servants in the households of high Zhou officials, may not have been a member of an aristocratic lineage, either because none of his ancestors had ever had that status conferred on them or because Xian had become sufficiently distant from the line of descent defined by the lineage of a distant ancestor. Ancestor worship was of course a vital religious practice among the aristocratic lineages of the Western Zhou period. How broad, socially speaking, such practices were is unclear and probably in flux throughout the period. One potential explanation of the anomalies within the inscription of the Xian *ding* is that the sponsor was not succeeding to a long tradition of ancestor worship, in which

²⁴ There is at least one unambiguous—and famous—exception to this pattern: the Ke *ding* 克鼎 (2836), cast in dedication to Shi Huafu 師華父. Of several hundred usages of the appellation format Shi X within the corpus of Western Zhou inscriptions in *Yin Zhou jinwen jicheng*, this would seem to be the only unambiguous case in which it applies to a deceased ancestor. The great majority of such references serve as the subject of verbs like *zuo* 作, *you* 右, or *bai* 拜 or as the object of verbs like *you* 右 or *hu* 呼. Such usages are unambiguous in their reference to living individuals.

the ancestral names and achievements of his ancestors had been well established in ritual practices and texts handed down through the generations.

If the Xian *ding* settles the question of *yazu*, the inscription of the Qiu *pan* provides equally important evidence on the term *gaozu*. Discovered in 2003 at Yangjia 楊家 village (Meixian 郿縣 county, Shaanxi), the Qiu *pan* was found within a large cache of vessels sponsored by a member of the Shan lineage.²⁵ Making use of the same ancestral kinship terms *gaozu*, *yazu*, and *kao*, the inscription provides a narrative of lineage history that stretches back over seven generations of the sponsor's ancestors. Though the text reads as a narrative, running chronologically from the inception of the Western Zhou dynasty until the then current reign of King Xuan 宣 (r. 827/25-782 BCE), the text and the ancestor list within it are actually projections backwards from the person of Qiu, serving principally to situate him at the end of a long and illustrious line of loyal servants to the Zhou kings. This pedigree can be reconstructed as follows:

²⁵ The discovery was first published in Shaanxi sheng kaogu yanjiusuo 陝西省考古研究所, Baoji shi kaogu gongzuodui 寶雞市考古工作隊, Meixian wenhuaguan 郿縣文化館 and Yangjia cun lianhe kaogudui 楊家村聯合考古隊郿縣文化館, "Shaanxi Meixian Yangjiacun Xi Zhou qingtongqi jiaocang" 陝西郿縣楊家村西周青銅器窖藏, *Kaogu yu wenwu* 考古與文物 2003, 3: 3-12. Photographs, rubbings and transcriptions of the vessels were published in Shaanxi sheng kaogu yanjiusuo 陝西省考古研究所 et al., eds., *Shengshi jijin: Shaanxi Baoji Meixian qingtongqi jiaocang* 盛世吉金: 陝西寶雞郿縣青銅器窖藏 (Beijing: Beijing chubanshe, 2003). The excavation report is available in Shaanxi sheng kaogu yanjiusuo, Baoji shi kaogu gongzuodui and Meixian wenhuaguan, "Shaanxi Meixian Yangjiacun Xi Zhou qingtongqi jiaocang fajue jianbao" 陝西郿縣楊家村西周青銅器窖藏發掘簡報, *Wenwu* 文物 2003, 6: 4-42. For a comprehensive English-language study of the discovery and translations of all the inscriptions, see 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): 268-270).

gaozu Shan Gong 高祖單公
 |
gaozu Gong Shu 高祖公叔
 |
gaozu Xin Shi Zhong 高祖新室仲
 |
gaozu Hui Zhong Lifu 高祖惠仲盞父
 |
gaozu Ling Bo 高祖靈伯
 |
yazu Yi Zhong Kuang 亞祖懿仲
 |
kao Gong Shu 考龔叔

In the inscription of the Qiu *pan*, the term *gaozu* is applied not to a single ancestor but to a range of the most distant ancestors, a usage that is incompatible with the definition of that term in the ritual classics to indicate specifically the apical ancestor of a lineage. In the Qiu *pan* inscription, the terms *gaozu*, *yazu*, and *kao* array the ancestors hierarchically in terms of remoteness from the sponsor, a usage that is consistent with that in the Zhuangbai inscriptions and the Xian *ding*. However, in the Qiu *pan* the term *gaozu* is applied to all ancestors beyond the second generation ascending, a range constituting the top layer of Qiu's pedigree. In comparison with the Xian *ding*, in which the term *yazu* was applied to a middle range of ancestors, the Qiu *pan* does not specifically mark the distinction between the apical ancestor and other distant kin.

Combining the evidence from the Xian *ding* and Qiu *pan*, it seems likely that the terms *gaozu*, *yazu*, and *kao* were used to differentiate relative degrees of remoteness among a collection of ancestors. Which ancestors fell into each category may well have depended on the specific context in which the ancestors were listed. In the vast majority of inscriptions, in which only one or two specific ancestors were mentioned, the terms *zu* and *kao* by themselves were sufficient to differentiate remote from near ancestors. However, when an inscriptional text mentioned more than three ancestors, the term *zu* was further elaborated to create additional

categories: *gaozu* and *yazu*.²⁶ Considering the different examples considered above, there seems to have been some flexibility with regards to the categorical distinctions between *gaozu* and *yazu*, though this does not preclude the existence of stricter conventions that may have pertained within specific lineages or even within specific chronological spheres. Obviously, with so few exemplars we lack the ability to make such fine distinctions. At any rate, the data we have suggests that *gaozu*, *yazu*, and *kao* denote relative categories of remoteness among the ancestors.

The inscription of the Qiu *pan* raises other questions about the identity of the sponsor and the nature of his relationships with the ancestors in his pedigree, questions that have implications for our understanding of the ancestral designations used in the inscription. Several theories have been advanced to explain the nature of the ancestor list in the Qiu *pan*.²⁷ The most important divisions among these theories depend on two interrelated questions: 1. whether or not the ancestor list represents direct, father-son relationships throughout and 2. what is the status of Qiu with regard to the main line of descent in the Shan lineage?

For those who argue that the ancestor list must represent direct, father-son relationships, the seniority markers used in the ancestor appellations show quite clearly that Qiu is not on the main line of descent insofar as that is defined by descent from eldest male to eldest male in each generation. Obviously with high mortality in the ancient period, it is quite understandable that a first-born son did not always live long enough to succeed a father as lineage head or to pass that status along to his own sons. However, given that only a single ancestor in the list is classified as

²⁶ The term *liezu* in the Shi Qiang *pan* might also be considered an example of this phenomenon.

²⁷ See Dong Shan 董珊, "Lue lun Xi Zhou Shan shi jiazuo jiaocang qingtongqi mingwen" 略論西周單氏家族窖藏青銅器銘文, *Zhongguo lishi yanjiu* 中國歷史研究 2003, 4: 40-50; Li Ling 李零, "Du Yangjiacun chutu de Yu Qiu zhu qi" 讀楊家村出土的虞述諸器, *Zhongguo lishi wenwu* 中國歷史文物 2003, 3: 16-27; Li Xueqin 李學勤, "Meixian Yangjiacun xinchu qingtongqi yanjiu" 郟縣楊家村新出青銅器研究, *Wenwu* 文物 2003, 6: 66-73; Qiu Xigui, "Du Lai qi mingwen san ze" 讀述盤銘文札記三則, *Wenwu* 文物 2003, 6: 74-77; Falkenhausen, "The Inscribed Bronzes from Yangjiacun," 278-79; and David M. Sena, "Arraying the Ancestors: Narratives of Lineage History in the Shi Qiang *pan* and Qiu *pan*," *Asia Major*, forthcoming.

the being the most senior member of his generation, indicated by the seniority marker *bo* 伯 (Elder), if we insist on interpreting the ancestor list of the Qiu *pan* as a list of Shan lineage heads, it would be difficult to reconcile that with the principle of primogeniture. Thus if the ancestor list represents direct, father-son relationships, either Qiu is only a very junior member of the Shan lineage or else we must accept that lineage headship was not regularly inherited by the eldest male.

I have argued against this proposition and that the ancestor list of the Qiu *pan* does not represent direct, father-son relationships, nor does it represent a genealogy of the heads of the Shan lineage. Read within the context of the inscriptional text and the claims made by the sponsor, I argue that the ancestor list serves as a pedigree for Qiu in his role as a younger son of the lineage. Qiu's predecessors in that role were not the Shan lineage heads but their younger siblings, who in each generation played a vital role in maintaining the lineage's connection to the royal lineage through their service to the Zhou court. Based on the appellations used in the Yangjia inscriptions, I believe that Qiu could not be only distantly related to the Shan lineage. Rather, as indicated by the title Shan Shu 單叔, used by Qiu in the inscription of the Shan Shu *li* 單叔鬲, Qiu was a member of a core group of males on the main line of descent that defined the aristocratic lineage—not as a conical descent group that was inclusive of all descendants of a common ancestor, but as a limited core of the most senior lineage sons, who were entitled to bear the lineage name, hierarchically ordered by the seniority markers assigned to them at maturity, and responsible for replicating the prestige and power of the lineage in each generation. According to my interpretation, Qiu is a younger son of the lineage very close to the main line of

descent, and the ancestors listed in his pedigree are predecessors who, biologically speaking, may not be his grandfathers and great grandfathers but the younger siblings of those figures.²⁸

Such an interpretation requires us to reconsider the meaning of ancestral designations such as *zu* and *kao*. As I read the inscription of the Qiu *pan*, the ancestral designations *gaozu*, *yazu*, and *kao* indicate lineage ancestors rather than particular biological relationships. The crucial connection between ancestor and descendant is membership in a common lineage. I believe that this status was far more restrictive than descent from a common ancestor. If we consider the apical ancestor Shan Gong 單公, by the eighth generation, which included Qiu, there must have been scores people who could trace their descent back to the lineage founder. Membership in the Shan aristocratic lineage must have been restricted to a core group, centered on the lineage head and the line of descent transmitted through him. However, because of the crucial role of younger sons in the maintenance of lineage fortunes, lineage ancestors included not only the lineage head, but also those younger siblings who, like Qiu, through their service to the Zhou court maintained the connection to the royal lineage. It is precisely such ancestors that Qiu has singled out to form his pedigree.

Such a system would reflect a generational conception of lineage ancestors that tended to blur distinctions between grandfathers and great-uncles by terminologically merging lineage ancestors into categories of relative remoteness for the purposes of ancestor worship. While such merging may seem intuitively reasonable with regard to the term *zu*, more controversial perhaps is the matter of *kao*. Could this term be used to refer to a paternal uncle as well as a father? While the current inscriptional evidence is insufficient to prove such a hypothesis, there is some precedent for these types of merging in the ancestral terminology employed within the Shang

²⁸ For the details of the argument, see Sena, "Arraying the Ancestors."

ancestral cult as represented in oracle bone inscriptions. These show that the terms *zu* and *fu* were used to indicate ancestral Shang kings regardless of whether they had been grandfathers or great-uncles, fathers or uncles from the perspective of the reigning Shang king.²⁹

Regardless of whether or not future discoveries support this hypothesis, the inscriptions of the Xian *ding* and Qiu *pan* clearly demonstrate the specialized nature of Zhou ancestral designations and the difficulty of using the ancestral designations to reconstruct the kinship system that pertained among the living. *Zu* and *kao* are not simply the "deceased" versions of terms that describe the relationships between living kin. At the most fundamental level, these terms indicate a relationship between ancestor and descendant rather than parent (or grandparent) and child. Such distinctions call to mind the divide between the social world of the living and the "ancestral landscape" created by the living within the context of ancestor worship.³⁰ This is not to deny the importance of ancestors or their constant presence in the lives of the living, but to assert that such a landscape was not simply the mirror of living kin structures. On the contrary, Zhou bronze inscriptions show quite clearly that ancestral pedigree was of paramount importance in staking claims of political and social legitimacy on the part of the Zhou elite. It is precisely within this context that we best understand how deceased kin were transformed into ancestors and arrayed to support such claims.

²⁹ David N. Keightley, *Sources of Shang History: The Oracle-Bone Inscriptions of Bronze Age China* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1978), 95-99.

³⁰ The term "ancestral landscape" is borrowed from David N. Keightley, *The Ancestral Landscape: Time, Space, and Community in Late Shang China, ca. 1200-1045 B.C.* (Berkeley: Center for Chinese Studies, University of California, Berkeley, 2000). On the transformation of deceased kin into ancestors see also David N. Keightley, "The Making of the Ancestors: Late Shang Religion and Its Legacy," in *Religion and Chinese Society*, vol. 1, *Ancient and Medieval China* (Paris : Ecole française d'Extrême-Orient, 2004), 16-20.