

THE RITUAL FIGURATION OF THE ZHOU KINGS

Techniques of ancestral worship provided the early Western Zhou kings with a framework for constructing a coherent group identity after the conquest of Shang. Ancestral ritual did not, however, make up the entire ritual program of the Zhou royal house. The Zhou kings supplemented it with ritual techniques framing the royal person against locations, tasks, and other populations. Certain rites performed during the early Western Zhou focused on the reach and potency of the king as a military leader, emphasizing his control over the Zhou sphere of influence. During the middle Western Zhou period, however, new forms of ritual recast the king as the driving force behind the production of key resources, focusing on his centrality to the state's well-being.

This chapter surveys the extant inscriptional records of three specific royal activities – an elaborate ceremony known as the “Great Rite,” ceremonial ploughing of fields, and the events surrounding the separating of foals from their mothers – that framed Western Zhou kingship against the backdrop of non-devotional ritual. Changes in the symbolic characterization of the king introduced during the middle Western Zhou, the chapter shows, sought to solidify the royal identity as a cultural linchpin, as part of a wider effort to intensify royal control over disparate aspects of the Zhou state. While this ritual program created strong motivations for commitment to the royal house, it also facilitated the crystallization of a Zhou elite identity divorced from royal interests.

FIGURING KINGSHIP

The core myth of dynastic kingship is that ultimate executive authority in a state is legitimately vested in a single individual and transferred across generations. In practice, a state large enough to have a king cannot exist without the complicity of additional groups with varying interests in supporting this vision of authority. Building and maintaining a monarchy is thus an ongoing exercise in negotiating the capacities and boundaries of both the royal person and the royal line. The individual designated as king may play a greater or lesser role in this process, depending on the balance of power and distribution of resources among the interests involved.¹

This process of negotiating the real and fictive power of the king – that is, determining both what the king as individual can actually do and what actions will be represented as those of the king, regardless of who or what else is involved – is a fine example of what Latour calls the “figuration of agencies.”² Throughout this chapter, I borrow Latour’s vocabulary to describe the various arguments, explicit and implicit, that particular Western Zhou ritual events posed about the nature and capacities of the king. I do not contend that ritual was the only vehicle for this process; one could undoubtedly study the same phenomenon through official documents and both settlement and mortuary archaeology if enough material were available. Ritual is, however, a particularly effective vehicle for arguments about individual and group identities and the relations between them, and given the emphasis on the ritual heritage of Zhou in early Chinese texts, the efforts of the Zhou in that direction deserve special attention.³

THE “GREAT RITE” (*DA FENG* 大豐/*DA LI* 大禮)

In early Chinese received texts, the term *li* 禮 refers to a broad category of behaviors encompassing everything from massive public sacrifices to individual greetings, as well as their moral implications. In the Western Zhou inscriptions, however, the term *li* 禮 enjoys nowhere near the breadth of use that it had in these later materials. It does, however, play a significant role in the vocabulary of Western Zhou royal ritual, as part of the name for a ceremony

¹ The degree of determinant power of the king varied wildly between different monarchies in human history; for a range of examples, see Bruce G. Trigger, *Understanding Early Civilizations*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003, 77–90.

² On the phenomenon of figuration of agencies, see Latour, *Reassembling the Social*, 52–54.

³ The importance of ritual as a constitutive factor in kingship has previously been noted; see for example Roy A. Rappaport, *Ritual and Religion in the Making of Humanity*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999, 486 n. 1.

that used the symbolic logic of space to express the extent of Zhou royal ambition.⁴ Considered together, the Mai *fangzun* 麥方尊 (6015) and Tian Wang *gui* 天亡簋 (4261) inscriptions provide a relatively complete description of this practice, called *da feng* 大豐 or *da li* 大禮 (the “Great Rite”).

The Mai *fangzun* (6015) is an exceptional vessel in every regard.⁵ Both its décor and its inscription are extraordinarily detailed, and it records a meeting between the king and one of the most powerful nonroyal personages of the early Western Zhou. The vessel’s commissioner, Mai, served the lord (Xinghou 邢侯) of a regional state called Xing as Document Maker (*zuoc* 作冊) when the latter was appointed to his position by the king.⁶ The Lord of Xing awarded Mai metal on his return from that audience, and Mai recorded

⁴ In early Chinese inscriptions, the term *li* 禮 is typically approached as one possible reading of a complex of characters that includes both *feng/li* 豐 and *feng* 豐. *JGWZGL* identifies three such characters in the oracle bone inscriptions. One (variant 2809) is commonly identified with the *Shuowen* entry for *feng* 豐 and often read as *li* 禮. In the oracle bones, this character appears to act as a noun referring to some kind of ritual implement; based on its frequent appearance with the term *yong* 庸, the *JGWZGL* editors suggest that it may have related to music. Variant 2807 in all its forms, on the other hand, they identify as a distinct character *feng* 豐, appearing in the OBI as both a personal name component and a stand-alone divination sentence. On these points see the discussion in *JGWZGL*, no. 2809, 2786–2788, as well as *JC* 6014, 6015, 4261. The Western Zhou inscriptions contain numerous instances of these characters, encompassing a variety of meanings that one must rely on context to distinguish. In three specific cases dating to the early Western Zhou period, however, characters belonging to this group refer to large-scale ritual activities conducted by the Zhou king and thus are often (and, I think, reasonably) interpreted as the character *li* 禮; see, for example, *MWX*, 14–15, 20–21, 46–47. One such case, appearing in the inscription of the Mai *fangzun* 麥方尊 (6015), clearly follows *JGWZGL* variant 2809, although the AS database glosses this character as 豐 rather than 豐. Of the other two, the instance in the He *zun* (6014) inscription, discussed at length in Chapter 6, might follow either 2808 or 2809, while that in the inscription of the Tian Wang *gui* 天亡簋 (4261) is too blurred to identify as any specific variant. Shirakawa gives a detailed summary of prior readings of the character in the Tian Wang *gui* and, in most cases, the Mai *fangzun* inscriptions. Most of these take the character as *li* 禮, though *Kezhai* and *Conggu* both apparently read it as the name of the city Feng 豐 (see Shirakawa 1.1, 5–9; *Conggu* 15.8; *Kezhai* 11.15V–11.16r).

In fact, as late as the Han, the two characters *feng* and *li* were considered related and somewhat interchangeable, as the *Shuowen* entry for *feng* 豐 shows: 豐行禮之器也。从豆。象形。凡豐之屬皆从豐。讀與禮同。 (*Feng* 豐 is an implement for the performance of rites. It is derived from the *dou* 豆 component and is pictographic. All [characters] in the *feng* 豐 category are derived from it. It is read in the same way as *li* 禮.) See *Shuowen*, 208.

⁵ The Mai *fangzun* is generally dated to the reign of King Cheng or King Kang, along with other bronzes connected with Mai; see *MWX* 46; Shirakawa 11.60, 645–646; *Bureaucracy*, 261 n. 58. A translation and discussion of the inscription appears in Chapter 4; textual notes here are therefore kept to a minimum.

⁶ For this interpretation, see *Bureaucracy*, 43 n. 3 and 260–263. Maria Khayutina disagrees; see Khayutina, “Royal Hospitality,” 22 n. 52. On the position of Document Maker, see *Bureaucracy*, 250, 310; see also Martin Kern, “The Performance of Writing in Western Zhou China,” in Sergio La Porta and David Shulman, eds., *The Poetics of Grammar and the Metaphysics of Sound and Sign*, Leiden: Brill, 2007, 117–119, 127–140.

the circumstances of his ruler's meeting with the king, which included an instance of the "Great Rite," in the inscription of the vessel he subsequently commissioned:

王令辟井(邢)侯出坏, 侯于井(邢), 雩若二月, 侯見于宗周, 亡述(尤), 迨迨(會)王饗莽京, 酏祀。雩若嘽(翌), 才(在)璧(辟)籩(雍), 王乘于舟, 為大豐⁷ (禮), 王射大龔禽, 侯乘于赤旂舟, 從, 死咸 ...

The king commanded [Mai's] sovereign, the Lord of Xing, to come out from Pei⁸ and take up the lordship of Xing. Around the second month, the Lord presented himself at Zongzhou; nothing went wrong. He met the king for a feast at the Pang Capital; a 酏-offering was conducted. The next day, at the *biyong* pond, the king rode in a boat and conducted a Great Rite. The king shot and bagged (a?) large bird(s?), and the Lord followed in a boat with a red flag; the affair was completed. (Mai *fangzun* 麥方尊 [6015])

After receiving his orders to take control over the state of Xing, the newly minted Lord of Xing had an audience at Zongzhou.⁹ During the Lord of Xing's visit to the Zhou heartland, he attended a feast that the king hosted at Pangjing, another frequent site of Zhou royal activity.¹⁰ The king offered devotions to his ancestors, probably during the feast. The next day, he performed the "Great Rite" in question on the *biyong* pond, a location described in later texts as a circular body of water with an island at the center.¹¹ In the rite, the Zhou king rode a boat around the pond and shot birds, while the Lord of Xing followed in a boat displaying red flags. Afterward, the Zhou

⁷ The AS database transcribes this character as 豐; however, as Figure 3.2 shows, it is clearly a case of 豐. I have altered the transcription accordingly.

⁸ I follow *Bureaucracy*, 261, and Lau, 107, in reading this character as *pei*.

⁹ The Mai *fangzun* is sometimes considered one of a small range of vessels that describe the installation of regional rulers by the Zhou king; see *Bureaucracy*, 43 n. 3. For a conflicting opinion, see Khayutina, "Royal Hospitality," 22 n. 52. The state of Xing was most likely in modern-day Hebei province; see *Landscape and Power*, 68–69; *Bureaucracy*, 262.

¹⁰ On Pangjing, see *Bureaucracy*, 152–153; Khayutina, "Royal Hospitality," 6–7 n. 15.

¹¹ Hence the pond's association with the *bi* 璧, a type of circular jade disk with a round hole in the center associated symbolically with the heavens; see Wang Junhua, "Biyong kao 辟雍考," *Xungen* 2007.3, 59, which brings together most of the relevant pre-Qin references. On the *biyong* pond, see *MWX*, 14 n. 2; *Bureaucracy*, 152–153. Li Shan and Li Guitian argue, based on their interpretation of the *Shi* poem "Wen Wang you sheng," that the *biyong* pond was built during the reign of King Mu and the bronzes mentioning it must therefore date to that reign or later; see Li Shan and Li Guitian, "Shi 'biyong' kao," *Hebei shifan daxue xuebao* 2003.4, 70–77. However, both Wang and Li and Li omit from their discussions a line statement from the "Di Xin" section of the "new text" *Zhushu jinian*: 三十七年周作辟雍 ("In the thirty-seventh year, the Zhou made the *biyong* [pond]") (*Bamboo Annals*, 140). Provided that one accepts the "new text" *Zhushu jinian* as a viable source – a controversial view – this line suggests an early (i.e., pre-Shang conquest) origin for the *biyong* pond and thus supports a more standard dating for the bronzes discussed in this section.

king received the Lord of Xing with unusual warmth, welcoming him into his personal chambers and awarding him gifts that included a chariot worthy of a king.¹²

The inscription of the Tian Wang *gui* 天亡簋 (4261),¹³ dateable to the reign of King Wu based on its inscription,¹⁴ describes a similar process but provides one additional key detail:

乙亥,王又(有)大豐,王凡三方,王祀于天室,降,天亡又王,衣祀于王不(丕)顯考文王,事喜(精饗)¹⁵上帝,文王德在上,不(丕)顯王乍(作)省,不(丕)隸(肆)王乍(作)虜(庸),不(丕)克乞(訖)衣(殷)王祀。丁丑,王鄉(饗)大宜,王降。亡¹⁶助爵、退橐,隹(唯)朕(朕)又(有)蔑,每啟王休于尊鬯(簋)。

On the *yihai* day (12), the king had a Great Rite (*feng/li*). The king boated in three directions. The king made offerings in the Hall of Heaven. He descended, and Tian Wang assisted the king in making bountiful¹⁷ offerings to his greatly brilliant deceased father King Wen and in serving food and drink to the High Lord. King Wen's virtue is on high. The great and brilliant king acts as overseer; the great succeeding king continues [his work],¹⁸ greatly managing to end the sacrifices of the Yin kings.¹⁹ On the

¹² Li Feng reads the inscription as stating that the Marquis was awarded “the right to ride in the royal chariot”; see *Bureaucracy*, 262. *MWX* seems to read the phrase as indicating the kind of chariot in which a king would ride, or, perhaps, a chariot in which the king had already ridden; see *MWX*, 46–47 n. 14. I follow the latter reading here.

¹³ The Tian Wang *gui* is also commonly known as the Da Feng *gui* 大豐簋, a name derived from just the event under discussion. It was reputedly recovered near Qishan, Shaanxi, in the early 1800s, based on its possible connection with the Maogong *ding*; see *Duandai* 1, 3, which synthesizes the sources on the vessel's origins. Translations in Western languages appear in Wolfgang Behr, “Reimende Bronzeinschriften und die Entstehung der chinesischen Endreimdichtung,” Ph.D. dissertation, Johann-Wolfgang-Goethe Universität, Frankfurt, 1996–97, 481–503; Pankenier, *Astrology and Cosmology*, 229–230; Pankenier, “Tian Wang *gui* 天亡簋,” 13–15; Jessica Rawson, “Western Zhou Archaeology,” in Loewe and Shaughnessy, eds., *The Cambridge History of Ancient China*, 366–368. I rely heavily on the reading in *MWX*, 14–16, in interpreting this inscription. Huang Ren'er and Zhu Renxian, *Tian Wang gui ming yanjiu*, Taichung: Gaowen, 2013, collects a broad range of scholars' interpretations.

¹⁴ It is accepted as a dating standard for the reign of King Wu; see *Sources*, 110.

¹⁵ Following the suggestion shared by *Duandai* 1.5, and *MWX*, 15 n. 6, that should be understood as 精 (or its equivalent 饗; see the discussion in *Duandai*); I have adjusted the transcription accordingly. There is a general consensus surrounding this reading, as reflected in the various interpretations collected in Huang and Zhu, *Tian Wang gui ming yanjiu*, 49–52.

¹⁶ The AS database inscription places a comma between *jiang* 降 and *wang* 亡; I have removed that comma to reflect the understanding that the latter is the indirect object of the former.

¹⁷ *Yi* 衣 is sometimes interpreted as a specific rite (and as equivalent to *yin* 殷) in early sources; see, for example, Chen Mengjia, *Guwenzi zhong*, 109, 138. It is also, however, a synonym for “great” or “extravagant”; see for example *MWX*, 14–15 n. 5, wherein Ma reads it as such in this inscription. I follow that reading here. For an alternative explanation of *yin* 殷 as representing *jin* 覲, “to have audience,” see *MWX* 115, 80 n. 1b.

¹⁸ Following the interpretation of *geng* 耿 offered in *MWX*, 15 n. 8.

¹⁹ Taking *si* 肆 as *si* 嗣, “to succeed to, to inherit.”

dingchou day (14), the king held a feast with a large offering-table.²⁰ The king sent ... [?] ... down to [Tian] Wang.²¹ I [Tian Wang] had a recounting (of merits) (*mie* [li]). [I] respectfully illustrate the king's beneficence²² with a *gui*-tureen for offerings.

Here two important points about the process are clarified. One is that the king himself rode in a boat to perform the rite; given the use of the term *cong* 從, “to follow,” in the Mai *fangzun* inscription, this was likely but had not been explicitly stated. The second is that the king boated around the entirety of the pond, traveling, however, in three rather than four directions. To move across a roughly symmetrical body of water in a boat, a launching point was of course necessary, and the “three directions” mentioned in the narrative of the ceremony probably refer to those from which the king did not launch his vessel.²³ The king would thus have reached the extremes of all four directions of the pond over the course of the ceremony: the three in which he traveled and the one from which he started. The center of Zhou culture was located on the western fringes of the sphere of influence of the Shang, from whom the Zhou adopted much, and textual sources suggest that the Zhou conceived of themselves as “men of the western lands.”²⁴ The procession of the *biyong* rite in three directions may have been meant to echo the extension of Zhou authority across the lands within the Shang cultural sphere.²⁵

Given the cosmological associations of the *biyong* pond, we may understand the *da feng/li* rite to leverage the spatial logic of ritual. By traveling to the extremes of the pond, the king symbolically extended his agency throughout the known world. Adding shooting, as in the Mai *fangzun* inscription, strengthened and clarified the implications of this act. By bringing down birds in this

²⁰ This translation of *da yi* 大宜 follows *MWX*, which identifies *yi* as a rhyme-loan for *fang* 房; based on its appearance in one of the “Lu song,” Ma glosses *da fang* 大房 as an offering table. See *MWX*, 15 n. 10.

²¹ This clause is very difficult to interpret. Ma refrains from rendering this sentence (see *MWX*, 15 n. 11), as does Chen Mengjia (*Duandai* 1.6); I do as well. Huang and Zhu, *Tian Wang gui ming yanjiu*, 68–72, assembles a number of opinions on the identification of these characters.

²² Following Ma's reading, which takes *mei* 每 as *min* 敏, here meaning respectful. See *MWX*, 15 n. 13.

²³ *MWX*, 14–16. On the *biyong* pond, see *MWX*, 14 n. 2.

²⁴ See James Legge, ed. and tr., *The Chinese Classics, Vol. 3: The Shoo King*, Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 1970, 300–301.

²⁵ Tang Lan makes this observation about three directions in his *Xi Zhou qingtongqi mingwen fendai shizheng*, Zhonghua shuju 1986, 11; cited in Li Shan and Li Guitian, 75–76. Li and Li cite Tang Lan's interpretation of the character here rendered 凡 as *tong* 同, as well as Guo Moruo's explanation of the character as *feng* 风 (see *Daxi*, vol. 2, plate 1), as preferable options to Ma's reading of *fan* 汎 (see *MWX*, 14–15 n. 2), based on the king's progression in three rather than four directions. This overlooks that Tang Lan's interpretation is equally applicable to movement in a boat. Wang Aihe notes the representative potential of the three directions for the Zhou as well, in *Cosmology and Political Culture in Early China*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000, 60–62.

symbolically significant space, the king stated in ritual form that his military might extended over the entire world. In the instance of the ritual described on the Mai *fangzun*, the king's overt proclamation of force must have intimated to the newly installed Lord of Xing – assigned to a distant domain in Hebei, beyond the immediate control of the royal forces – the perilous consequences of flying too high, as it were.²⁶ The Zhou king installed a safety valve in the threat, however, by assigning the Lord of Xing himself a place in the ceremony. Riding behind the king in a boat festooned with red flags, the Lord of Xing was construed as the king's bannerman, supporting him in military endeavors while also witnessing the symbolically enacted consequences of defying royal authority.²⁷ The king's warm and beneficent reception of the Lord of Xing after the ceremony – inviting him into the royal chambers and showering him with lavish gifts – was the carrot accompanying the stick of the ceremony.

To my knowledge, these two inscriptions are the only Western Zhou cases in which the term *feng/li* definitively denoted a specific ritual activity. The common appearance of the modifier *da* and use of a boat suggest that, in the early Western Zhou, the term *da feng/li* referred to a specific royal ceremony involving a boat rather than to rites in general. Given how frequently other ceremonies appear in the inscriptions, and given its relatively elaborate setup requirements, the small number of references to this ceremony probably reflects the rarity of its performance rather than a simple dearth of surviving evidence.

The Bo Tangfu Ding Event: An Occurrence of the "Great Rite"?

Another inscription survives that, though it lacks the term *da feng/li*, records a markedly similar event. The Bo Tangfu *ding* 伯唐父鼎 (NA0698), recovered from tomb 183 at Zhangjiapo, Chang'an county, Shaanxi, bears an inscription describing activities of the Zhou king on the *bi* pond (*bichi* 辟池) at Pangjing, the site of the Mai *fangzun* ceremony.²⁸ As this inscription contains several problematic points worthy of note, I present it here in its entirety:

乙卯，王饗茅京，王奉辟舟、臨舟龍，咸奉。白(伯)唐父告備。王各，盥(乘)辟舟，臨奉白 [伯?] 旂，用射絳、犛虎、貉、白鹿、白狼于辟

²⁶ On the location of Xing, see Note 21.

²⁷ Accompanying the king on campaign was a fundamental responsibility of regional lords under the Western Zhou political system; see *Bureaucracy*, 246–248.

²⁸ The Bo Tangfu *ding* was recovered from tomb M183 in the large Western Zhou cemetery at Zhangjiapo, just southwest of Xi'an. M183 itself, a rectangular shaft with a side chamber, fell within what the excavators designate as the "Jingshu family cemetery" (p. 68) part of the site; it yielded a wide range of prestige goods, including numerous bronze vessels, cowries, jades, and so on. See Zhongguo shehui kexueyuan kaogu yanjiusuo, ed., *Zhangjiapo Xi Zhou mudi*, Beijing: Zhongguo dabaike quanshu, 1999, 68–70,

池，咸奉。王蔑曆，易(賜)矩鬯一卣、貝廿朋，對揚王休，乍(作)安公寶罍彝。

On the *yimao* day, the king feasted at Pangjing. The king conducted an entreaty rite(?)²⁹ toward the *bi* [*yong* pond] boat,³⁰ approaching³¹ the boat-dragon.³² When the entreaty(?) was complete, Bo Tangfu announced that [the preparations were] complete. The king entered

136, 141–142; see also Zhongguo shehui kexueyuan kaogu yanjiusuo Fengxi fajue dui, “Chang’an Zhangjiapo M183 Xi Zhou dong shi mu fajue jianbao,” *Kaogu* 1989.6, 524–259. The excavators date the tomb to the early part of King Mu’s reign (see “Chang’an Zhangjiapo M183,” 528). As for the *bichi*, most scholars agree in considering it equivalent to the *biyong* pond; see Liu Yu, “Bo Tangfu ding de mingwen yu shidai,” *Kaogu* 1990.8, 741–742; Liu Huan, “Ye tan Bo Tangfu ding mingwen de shidu – jian tan Yin dai jisi de yige wenti,” *Wenbo* 1996.6, 27–29; Yuan Junjie, “Bo Tangfu ding ming tongshi buzheng,” *Wenwu* 2011.6, 38–43, esp. 39.

²⁹ Prior analyses of the Bo Tangfu *ding* inscription are unanimous in reading four characters in the inscription as *hui* 奉 and taking them to refer to the entreaty rite discussed in Chapter 1. See Zhang Zhenglang, “Bo Tangfu *ding*, Meng Yuan *ding*, yan mingwen shiwen,” *Kaogu* 1989.6, 551–552; Liu Yu, “Bo Tangfu *ding*,” 741–742; Liu Huan, 27; Yuan Junjie, 38–39. Syntactically speaking, this reading is logical and fits well in the phrase *xian hui* 咸奉, which, combined with the description of shooting animals, suggests a process rather than a single action. The use of the *hui*-entreaty toward a series of objects would, however, be the only such case in the Western Zhou inscriptions; to my knowledge, it would in fact be the only case anywhere in the inscriptions in which an offering was made to an entity other than an ancestral spirit or the Sky (*Tian*). This point by itself warrants a close look at the reading. Complicating the situation is the fact that the main readable instance of the character in the inscription (the vessel is badly corroded, and the damage shows in the published rubbing of the inscription) is morphologically unique, bearing as it does additional elements both underneath and to the sides of the core element. Without a clearer rubbing – which may not be possible due to the damage that the vessel has suffered – it is hard to judge whether this holds true for all characters rendered as *hui* in the available transcriptions. I believe it is at least possible that all of these characters may represent a different word entirely, as, indeed, is often the case with *hui* and modified forms thereof in the inscriptions; see, for example, Wang Hui, *Guwenzi tongjia zidian*, Beijing: Zhonghua, 2008, 187, 191, 516, 589, 753 (I am indebted to Ulrich Lau for these references). Accordingly, I have translated these characters as “the *hui*-entreaty” but marked them with question marks.

³⁰ Given the close parallels between the processes described in the Mai *fangzun* and Bo Tangfu *ding* inscriptions, the *bichi* can probably be identified with the *biyong* pond; see Note 40.

³¹ Both Liu Huan and Yuan Junjie suggest for *lin* 臨 the meaning of *zhi* 至, “to arrive” (see Liu Huan, 29; Yuan Junjie, 39), while Liu Yu takes it as “to be near to” (Liu Yu, “Bo Tangfu *ding*,” 741).

³² Most scholars have interpreted the phrase *zhou long* 舟龍 as referring to a particular kind of boat, the *long* indicating either that it was shaped or decorated like a dragon (for which see Zhang Zhenglang, 551, and Yuan Junjie, 39) or perhaps that it was large and meant for royal use (Liu Huan, 29). Liu Yu offers the alternate reading *long* 壟, suggesting that it referred to a raised area for mooring boats (see Liu Yu, “Bo Tangfu *ding*,” 741), whereas Yuan Junjie suggests that it may have referred to a completely separate entity associated, perhaps, with the water of the *biyong* pond and acting potentially as the target of the devotional rite (see Yuan Junjie, 41). I follow the first of these interpretations in the translation.

[the scene] and rode in the *bi*[yong pond] boat. [He] approached and conducted *hui*-entreaty(?) [with?] a white (Bo Tangfu's?) flag;³³ [the king] thereby shot an ox,³⁴ a striped tiger,³⁵ a panther,³⁶ a white deer, and a white wolf on the *bi* pond.³⁷ When the entreaty was completed, the king performed the recounting of merits, awarding [Bo Tangfu] a *you*-urn of dark liquor and twenty strings of cowries. [Bo Tangfu?] praises the king's beneficence in response, therewith making a precious offering vessel for Duke An.³⁸

The process that the Bo Tangfu *ding* inscription narrates is remarkably similar to that described in the Mai *fangzun* inscription. The king conducted a feasting event at Pangjing, carried out what may have been ancestral offerings, and then set out on the *biyong* pond in a boat and shot animals. The Bo Tangfu *ding* inscription does not specify that the king traveled to the sides of the pond, as does the Tian Wang *gui*. However, given that the targets of the shooting were all land animals, it is likely that this happened.³⁹ Ceremonial royal shooting of animals on the *biyong* pond, with elite guests playing a role

³³ The phrase *bai qi* 白旗 deserves consideration. All other treatments of the inscription have rendered it simply as *bai* 白, "white"; see Zhang Zhenglang, 551; Liu Yu, "Bo Tangfu ding," 741; Liu Huan, 27; Yuan Junjie, 38, 40–41. Certainly this is a viable reading; the subsequent occurrences of the character in the phrases *bai lu* 白鹿, "white deer," and *bai lang* 白狼, "white wolf," show that the color white held significance in the proceedings. However, the characters *bai* 白 and *bo* 伯, "Elder," as in "Elder Father Tang," are orthographically identical in the Western Zhou inscriptions. It might be that the 白 in the present clause referred to the "Elder" (i.e., Bo Tangfu) and that the phrase *bo qi* indicated the "Elder's flag." The reference to the flag of Nangong 南公 in the inscription of the Da Yu *ding* (2837) is a comparable example confirming the use of flags as personal emblems during the period. Comparison with the Mai *fangzun* ceremony, wherein the Marquis of Xing rode behind the king in a boat flying a flag during the *da feng/li* rite, strengthens the case for this reading somewhat. Elder Father Tang may have played a similar role in the Bo Tangfu *ding* event.

³⁴ Following Liu Yu in reading 紼 as an oblique term for a sacrificial ox; see Liu Yu, "Bo Tangfu ding," 741–742.

³⁵ Following Liu Yu's reading of *li hu* 虬虎; see *ibid.*, 742.

³⁶ Following Zhang Zhenglang's suggestion to read the character 貉 as *mo* 貊; see Zhang Zhenglang, 551.

³⁷ In the absence of measure words, there is no way to judge how many of each animal was shot. I have translated them in the singular by default.

³⁸ Unlike many inscriptions, that of the Bo Tangfu *ding* does not name the individual who received gifts from the king and commissioned the vessel in its final lines. Its designation as the "Bo Tangfu *ding*" is based on the reasonable assumption that the only figure named in the inscription beside the king was its commissioner. The contents of Zhangjiapo tomb 183 are of little help, since other inscriptions found in the tomb employ different names; see "Chang'an Zhangjiapo M183," 526–528.

³⁹ The king's shooting at the sides of the pond was of potential significance, especially given the historical context of King Mu's reign; see Chapter 3. Conceivably, however, land animals may have been placed upon islands in the *biyong* pond; I am indebted to Li Feng for this observation.

in the proceedings, thus happened at least once during the early phase of the middle Western Zhou.⁴⁰

The animals used in the Bo Tangfu *ding* event are crucial to both dating the vessel and interpreting the rite it records. The *Guoyu*, and the *Shiji* after it, contains an account of King Mu's military adventures in the western reaches of Zhou territory.⁴¹ In it, the king's advisors oppose his plans to campaign against the population known as the Quanrong/Xianyun.⁴² The king goes through with it anyway and brings "four white wolves and four white deer" back to the capital.⁴³ The Bo Tangfu *ding* is of likely King Mu date, and its inscription specifically mentions both white wolves and white deer as shooting targets. It is impossible to confirm that these were the same animals that King Mu supposedly brought to the Zhou heartland. Still, there is no mention of wolves anywhere else in the inscriptions, and deer are mentioned only a few times; they were not part of the usual range of reward items.⁴⁴ At the least, it is likely that wolves and/or deer were associated with the Quanrong/Xianyun population and that King Mu drew upon that connection in his ritual activities on the *bi* pond. In the case of wolves, the orthography of the terms "Quanrong" and "Xianyun" offers some small support to that assertion.⁴⁵ By placing such animals among the creatures to be killed at the edges of the pond, the king in the Bo Tangfu *ding* inscription – probably King Mu – strengthened the symbolic value of the rite in two ways: by reinforcing the correspondence between the edges of the pond and the edges of Zhou territory, and by shoring up the argument with tangible evidence of recent military "success" on the borders of the Zhou state.

⁴⁰ For the argument on the dating of the tomb containing the Bo Tangfu *ding*, as well as that of the vessel itself, see "Chang'an Zhangjiapo M183," 528. The excavators hold that Meng Yuan, mentioned in other inscriptions from the tomb, was its occupant and note that his relationship with Bo Tangfu cannot be determined. However, they also note that the vessels are generally comparable in shape, conforming to a type that they date to the King Zhao-King Mu transition (ca. 976 BCE, per Shaughnessy).

⁴¹ For a discussion of the role of King Mu's western campaigns in which this passage is mentioned, see *Landscape and Power*, 145–146.

⁴² On the identity of these names, see *ibid.*

⁴³ Dong Zengling, *Guoyu zhengyi*, Kuaiji Zhang shi shi xun tang, 1880, 23–43, esp. 42; *Shiji*, 135–136. The excerpt about wolves and deer is from the former. Liu Yu has noted this parallel; see "Bo Tangfu ding," 742. The *Guoyu* is of course a much later text, and so the usual caveats apply to its use as a historical source; still, the mention of white wolves and white deer in a passage concerning King Mu is a remarkable coincidence.

⁴⁴ These are the Ming *gui* 命簋 (4112) and the Haozi *you* 貉子卣 (5409).

⁴⁵ For an account of the connections between the terms "Xianyun" and "Quanrong," see *Landscape and Power*, appendix 2. Li Feng suggests that the association of the Xianyun with dogs, and hence the emergence of the term "Quanrong," developed later, when their name came to be written with the characters 獫狁. Indeed, the Western Zhou cases of the term do not normally contain the canine radical; see the inscriptions of the Duoyou *ding* 多友鼎 (2835), the Xijia *pan* 兮甲盤 (10174), the Guoji Zibai *pan* 虢季子白盤 (10173), and so on. Still, the Bo Tangfu *ding* inscription offers one small piece of evidence that the association of the Xianyun with dogs may have preceded its manifestation in orthography.

CEREMONIAL PLOUGHING (*JITIAN/JINONG* 籍田/籍農)

Ceremonial ploughing marking the beginning of the planting season is a common element of dynastic ritual.⁴⁶ The Inka, for example, held a rite in which the ruler, his consort, and his entourage tilled the first field of the season by ceremonially fighting and conquering the soil.⁴⁷ The famous Scorpion Macehead from predynastic Egypt (ca. 3000 BCE) (Figures 2.1 and 2.2) shows a king – identifiable from the Crown of Upper Egypt, a standard iconographic element – clutching a hoe, potentially intended for a ritual ground-breaking of irrigation facilities.⁴⁸ And in early China as well, both received texts and inscriptions suggest that the Zhou king conducted ploughing ceremonies as part of state ritual. The limited evidence that Western Zhou bronze inscriptions offer about the practice, however, falls much short of its outsize importance in constructs of Zhou social history, both ancient and modern; and the broader context of Western Zhou royal ritual as portrayed in the inscriptions suggests a different interpretation of its ideological significance.

Ceremonial Ploughing in the Western Zhou Inscriptions

The Western Zhou inscriptions record a single occasion when the king organized an agricultural rite. The inscription of the Ling *ding* 令鼎 (2803), a vessel discovered in Ruicheng County, Shanxi, and dated by *MWX* to the reign of King Zhao, reads:⁴⁹

王大耤(籍)農于謀田, 錫(觶)。王射, 有嗣(司)眾師氏、小子卿(會)射。
王歸自謀田, 王駿(馭), 濂(祭)⁵⁰仲廩⁵¹(僕)令眾奮先馬走, 王曰: 「令眾

⁴⁶ I am indebted to Li Feng, *Bureaucracy*, 71, for bringing the existence of this rite to my attention.

⁴⁷ Brian S. Bauer, “Legitimization of the State in Inka Myth and Ritual,” *American Anthropologist* 98.2 (Jun 1996), 328–332.

⁴⁸ The famous historian Yang Kuan has previously drawn a parallel between this example and the records of ritual ploughing from early China; see Yang Kuan, *Xi Zhou shi*, Shanghai: Shanghai renmin, 2003, 281. Yang describes but does not identify the Scorpion Macehead; on that item, see I. E. S. Edwards, “The Early Dynastic Period in Egypt,” in *The Cambridge Ancient History*: 1.2, *Early History of the Middle East*, Cambridge University Press, 1971, 3–10, 51–53, and Bruce Trigger, “The Rise of Civilization in Egypt,” in *The Cambridge History of Africa*, vol. 1, 521–524, 527. On Scorpion’s adornment with the Crown of Upper Egypt, see Edwards, 6, specifically. For the interpretation of its scene as a royal tilling/irrigation ritual, see Bruce Williams, Thomas J. Logan, and William J. Murnane, “The Metropolitan Museum Knife Handle and Aspects of Pharaonic Imagery before Narmer,” *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 46.4 (Oct. 1987), 265; for the suggestion that the depiction is symbolic, see Edwards, 6. For the date given here, see the chronology in Trigger, “The Rise of Civilization in Egypt,” 546–547.

⁴⁹ *JC* 2803; *MWX* 97, 69–70. This vessel was once held by a certain Xia Songru; see *Yunqing* 4.1, cited in the AS database. My reading of this inscription closely follows that in *MWX*. For a detailed analysis of the inscription, see Adamski, *Darstellung*, 159–209.

⁵⁰ In reading the character here rendered 濂 as *zhai* 祭, I follow Li Xueqin, “Shi Guodian jian Zhai Gong zhi guming,” *Wenwu* 1998.7, 44–45; *Landscape and Power*, 146; and Adamski, *Darstellung*, 177. I have adjusted the transcription accordingly.

⁵¹ The transcription of this character follows *MWX*, 70.



Figure 2.1 The Scorpion Macehead. Image courtesy of the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford. © Ashmolean Museum

奮乃克至，余其舍女(汝)臣卅家」。王至于濂(祭)宮，毘，令拜顛首，曰：「小子迺學。」令對揚王休。

The king greatly ploughed the land at the fields of Qi and feasted.⁵² The king held archery, and the Supervisors, the Marshals, and the scions shot together. When the king returned from the fields of Qi, the king drove, Zhai Zhong served as escort,⁵³ and Ling and Fen went in front of the horses [i.e., as the king's vanguard]. The king said, "Ling and Fen, if you acquit yourselves well [lit., "manage to arrive"], I shall transfer to you thirty households of servants."⁵⁴ The king arrived at the palace of Zhai

⁵² On the reading of *shang* 餽 (觴) as "feasting," see *MWX*, 70 n. 1.

⁵³ For the reading of "escort" for *pu*, I follow Shaughnessy, "Texts lost in texts: recovering the 'Zhai gong' chapter of the *Yi Zhou shu*," in Christoph Alderl and Halvor Eifring, eds., *Studies in Chinese Language and Culture: Festschrift in Honour of Christoph Harbsmeier on the Occasion of his 60th Birthday*, Oslo: Hermes Academic Publishing, 2006, cited in Adamski, *Darstellung*, 179.

⁵⁴ I follow *MWX*'s reading of the preceding two lines; see *MWX*, 70 n. 3–4. For the reading of *pu* 僕 as one who preceded the horses in a procession, see *Liji*, "Qu li," *Shisanjing zhushu*, 1252; this passage is cited in *ibid.*



Figure 2.2 Detail of the Scorpion Macehead. Image courtesy of the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford. © Ashmolean Museum

and was pleased.⁵⁵ Ling bowed and struck his head, saying, “[I,] the scion, am thus instructed.” Ling praises the king’s beneficence in response.

The key phrase here is *jinong* 籍農, a verb phrase or verb-object combination meaning that the king “[greatly] ploughed the land.” We may safely assume that the Zhou king did not regularly work as an agricultural laborer; the ploughing in question must have been ceremonial, although the syntax suggests that the king took a direct hand in the process. The situation appears as follows: The king, along with a number of other ranking elites, traveled to Qi and performed a ceremonial ploughing of the fields.⁵⁶ Afterward, the king hosted feasting and archery, in which his entourage participated. On the way back

⁵⁵ *MWX* reads this character as *xi* 嬰, which the *Shuowen* defines as “pleased”; see *MWX*, 70 n. 5.

⁵⁶ Scholars regularly characterize the royal performance of ploughing as “symbolic”; see *MWX*, 70 n. 1; Yang Kuan, *Xi Zhou shi*, 217. Undoubtedly there is some truth to this; however, I cannot discount the possibility that some, at least, held the king’s personal involvement in opening the agricultural season to have a genuine effect on the later growth of crops. Certainly, encouraging this viewpoint would have been one goal of the practice described in the Ling *ding* inscription. I thus hesitate to use the word “symbolic” here.

from the ceremony site, a group of people associated with the Zhai lineage handled the king's transportation needs, likely because the return trip passed through Zhai territory.⁵⁷ Figures called Ling and Fen rode out as the king's vanguard, for which service the king promised ten households of servants (*chen shi jia* 臣十家).⁵⁸ Once the royal caravan arrived at the Zhai headquarters, the king expressed his satisfaction with their performance.⁵⁹ Ling appears to have been able to respond to this acknowledgment in person, judging from the expression of gratitude and admiration near the end of the inscription.

On at least this one occasion, then, the king conducted a ceremonial ploughing event. The inscriptions offer limited further evidence that this was a regular practice. One late Western Zhou inscription, on the *Zai gui* 載簋 (4255), records its commissioner's appointment as Supervisor of Land (*situ* 司土), with the understanding that he was to "take official charge of the ploughing of fields" (*guan si ji tian* 官嗣[司]藉[藉]田).⁶⁰ Despite the clear interest of a Supervisor of Land in the management of agriculture, this statement is generally taken to refer to the royal ploughing rite rather than to the ploughing of fields in general.⁶¹ Given the rarity of the term *ji* 籍 elsewhere in the inscriptions, I am inclined to agree.⁶² The close dates of the *Ling ding* and *Zai*

⁵⁷ Several inscriptions of King Cheng's reign record the activities of a figure called the Duke of Zhai or Duke Zhai (*Zhaigong* 濂公); see the *Si ding* 嗣鼎 (2659), the *Hou Chuo ding* 厚越鼎 (2730), and the two *X ding* 簋鼎 (2740–2741). The further inscriptions of the *Zhai Ji li* 濂季鬲 (495), the *Zhai Ji gui* 濂季簋 (3978), and the *Zhai Sufu ding* 濂俗父鼎 (2466) confirm that the term designated a lineage as well as an individual. I find it likely that Ling and Fen were affiliated with the Zhai lineage; see, however, Adamski, *Darstellung*, 179.

⁵⁸ The inscription is somewhat ambiguous about the reward's recipient, employing only the term *ru* 汝, "you." Given the size of the reward and the concomitant cost of its upkeep, my sense is that it was probably intended for the Zhai lineage as a whole rather than for Ling, Fen, or both.

⁵⁹ On the question of *gong* as "offices" for individuals or lineages, see *Bureaucracy*, 116–117. Li makes specific reference to the Zhai Gong in this argument.

⁶⁰ *JC* 4255. It is difficult to date the *Zai gui* with exactitude, since it is known only from *Kaogutu* 3.22–23, the drawing in which is exceedingly rough. *MWX* dates the *Zai gui* to the reign of King Xiao (231), while *Duandai* assigns it to King Gong (175–176). Shirakawa suggests a late King Zhao–early King Mu dating based on the calligraphy of the inscription; see Shirakawa 20.110, 412–418. Here, however, I follow *Daxi* (which assigns the bronze to King Xuan – see vol. 3, 139–140), the AS database, and *Bureaucracy*, p. 71, in dating the bronze to the late Western Zhou period. *Kaogutu* 3.23r suggests that it was found in Fufeng County, Shaanxi; see also the AS database.

⁶¹ Yang Kuan, Chen Mengjia, and Li Feng all express this view; see Yang Kuan, *Xi Zhou shi*, 269; *MWX*, 231 n. 2b; *Bureaucracy*, 91.

⁶² The AS database records four total occurrences of the term *ji* in the inscriptions, two of which, in the *Ling ding* and *Zai gui* inscriptions, have just been discussed (results accessed 08/17/2015). One remaining occurrence (on the *Mibo Shi Ji gui* 弭伯師藉簋 [4257]) is a personal name. The other, on the *Mu gui*, is a likely misreading. Li Feng reads the character differently; see *Landscape and Power*, 100–101. The use of *ji* in the *Ling ding* inscription, then, does not seem to repurpose an otherwise common term to describe a ritual phenomenon. I am therefore inclined to take its use in that inscription as the basis for understanding its meaning on the *Zai gui*.

gui inscriptions thus suggest a concerted, multilayered effort to control agricultural land through royally sponsored ritual, beginning probably with King Zhao and extending into the late Western Zhou period.

Ritual Ploughing and Zhou Historiography: The “Thousand Acres”

A constellation of received texts from the Warring States and Han periods recalls Zhou royal ploughing as part of a broader argument about the role of ritual in legitimizing authority. The line of discussion centers around a location called the “Thousand Acres” (*qianmu* 千畝). This site is connected directly with state ritual in the *Guoyu*, which specifies it as the venue of the royal ploughing rite, as well as the **Xi nian* manuscript from the Tsinghua University slips, which notes that it provisioned state offerings.⁶³ The latter text identifies it with another term, the “Lord’s Ploughing” (*Di ji* 帝籍), which the *Lüshi chunqiu* notes as the site of the Zhou royal ploughing ritual.⁶⁴ The *Shuowen jiezi* entry for the character *ji* 籍 contains the line: 籍:帝籍千畝也 ... (*Ji*, “ploughing,” refers to the Lord’s Ploughing of the Thousand Acres ...); this seems to corroborate the identification.⁶⁵

The Thousand Acres was the location of a decisive battle at the end of the Western Zhou period, and one thread of the early Chinese historiographical tradition connected the management of this ritually significant site to the overall fortunes of the Zhou royal house. The *Shiji*, the *Houhanshu*, and the *Bamboo Annals* all assert the failure of King Xuan, the penultimate king of the Western Zhou, to cultivate the Thousand Acres properly, implying a connection to the subsequent military defeat of the Zhou at the same site.⁶⁶ The **Xi nian* manuscript’s opening explores this line of reasoning in detail:⁶⁷

昔周武王監觀商王之不葬帝= (上帝), 禋祀不蠶(寅), 乃乍(作)帝牲(籍), 以禋(登)祀帝= (上帝)天神, 名之曰【一】千畝(畝), 以克反商邑, 專(敷)政天下。孳 = (至于)東=王=(厲王, 厲王)大癘(虐)于周, 卿 季(士)、者(諸)正、羣萬民弗刃(忍)于卒(厥)心, 【二】乃歸東(厲)王于散(殽), 龍(共)白(伯)和立。十有四年, 東(厲)王生洹=王=(宣王, 宣王)即

⁶³ *Guoyu zhengyi*, 62–73; Qinghua daxue chutu wenxian yanjiu yu baohu zhongxin (Li Xueqin, ed.), *Qinghua daxue cang Zhanguo zhujian*, vol. 2 (“*Xi nian*”), Shanghai: Shanghai wenyi, 2011 (hereafter *Tsinghua* 2), 136–137.

⁶⁴ *Tsinghua* 2, 136–137; Zhu Yongjia and Xiao Mu, *Xin yi Lüshi chunqiu*, 2 vols., Taipei: Sanmin, Minguo 84 (1995), *juan* 1, 10–11.

⁶⁵ *Shuowen*, 184.

⁶⁶ *Shiji*, “Zhou ben ji,” 144–145; Wang Xianqian, *Houhanshu jijie*, Beijing: Zhonghua, 1984, 710; Legge, *The Shoo King, part 1, Prolegomena*, “Xuan Wang,” 156.

⁶⁷ The transcription of this portion of the manuscript appears on pp. 136–137. (I adopt here the practice of Matthias Richter in prefacing with an asterisk * names assigned to manuscripts by their modern editors; see, for example, Matthias L. Richter, *The Embodied Text: Establishing Textual Identity in Early Chinese Manuscripts*, Leiden: Brill, 2013).

立(位), 葬(共)白(伯)和歸于宋(宗)。洹 (宣)【三】王是, (始)弃(棄)帝敎(籍)弗畋(田), 立卅(卅)(三十)有九年, 戎乃大敗周白(師)于千畝(畝)。【四】

Of old, King Wu of the Zhou observed that the king of Shang did not revere the High Lord and that his offerings were not respectful. Then [King Wu] made the Lord's Ploughing,⁶⁸ in order to present offerings to the High Lord and the spirits of Heaven/the Sky.⁶⁹ [He] named it "the Thousand Acres,"⁷⁰ using [it] to greatly rebel against the city of Shang and to extend [his] governance over [all] beneath Heaven/the Sky.

Eventually, King Li came along. King Li was greatly tyrannical to Zhou. The high ministers, the many lesser officials, and the myriad people [could] not bear it in their hearts. [They] then sent⁷¹ King Li to Zhi, [and] Gongbo He was established.⁷²

In the fourteenth year, King Xuan, born of King Li, took the throne.⁷³ Gongbo He returned to [his] ancestral temple/house.⁷⁴

King Xuan then first abandoned the Lord's Ploughing and did not cultivate it. [He] was established (i.e., occupied the throne) for thirty-nine years. The Rong then greatly defeated the Zhou armies at the Thousand Acres.

According to the *Xi nian*, the Thousand Acres facility was established to support the ritual needs of the Zhou in the early years of the dynasty, providing a material basis for the sacred legitimation of the Zhou state. Its cultivation continued uninterrupted through the reigns of the first nine kings, only to be disrupted by the chaos surrounding the ousting of the tyrannical King Li, the regency of Gongbo He, and the installing of King Xuan.⁷⁵ Failure to cultivate this land constituted a lapse in the ritual responsibilities of the Zhou kings, placing them in the same position as the Shang rulers they replaced during

⁶⁸ *Tsinghua*, vol. 2, 136 n. 3 rightly connects this phrase with the royal ploughing ceremony described in the "Zhou yu" chapter of the *Guoyu* as well as in the *Lishi Chunqiu*; see Yang Kuan, *Xi Zhou shi*, 268–282, etc. While the term *ji* 籍 is clearly a noun both here and in the later *Zai gui* inscription, it appears to me to operate as a verb in the *Ling ding* inscription. I take it here as equivalent to the word *ji* 耤, "ploughing," in a nominal sense – that is, "area that is ploughed."

⁶⁹ Or "the High Lord, Heaven/the Sky, and the spirits."

⁷⁰ A historical *mu* was probably smaller than an actual acre, but its usage was similar – as a measure of area for farmland.

⁷¹ Meaning, exiled.

⁷² Or "took the throne," if one reads *li* 立 as *wei* 位. I am inclined toward the former, as *wei* is more regularly used in the phrase *jiwei* 即位, appearing in the next sentence of the manuscript.

⁷³ On the death of King Li in the fourteenth year of his banishment and the ascent of King Xuan, see *Landscape and Power*, 134–135.

⁷⁴ Or, perhaps, Gongbo He was exiled to his ancestral house, or even to Song (reading the last character of the line as written); the verb *gui* 歸 is the same used to describe King Li.

⁷⁵ Notably, no mention is made of the apparently irregular succession of the Yih–Xiao–Yi reigns preceding that of King Li, on which see, for example, *Bureaucracy*, 34.

their rise to power. The military consequences of this lapse then played out in the very territory the neglect of which caused them.

As exemplified by the **Xi nian* passage, this line of reasoning thus ties the historically situated story of the battle of the Thousand Acres to a broader conversation on the connection between royal ritual and the well-being of the state. The most detailed received account of a Zhou royal ploughing rite, appearing in the *Guoyu*, unfolds against the background of this vision of Zhou state ritual. That account has formed the basis for some problematic conclusions concerning the social history of Zhou kingship.

Ritual Ploughing in the Guoyu

The *Guoyu* account appears in the “Zhou yu – shang” 周语上 chapter, under the pretext of a memorial submitted to King Xuan protesting its cancellation; the common historical event referred to in the aforementioned texts thus serves as a framing device for a fuller account of the ploughing process. In his volume on the history of the Western Zhou period, Yang Kuan devotes a full chapter to this rite and his vision of its role in the exploitation of the populace by the Western Zhou elite.⁷⁶ Yang argues that the phrase *jitian* 籍田 originally denoted fields held and worked in common at the village level to provide emergency aid and support ritual offerings. As state-level organizations emerged, he suggests, the fruits of these fields were diverted to support elite interests. The term *ji* 籍 thus became a code word for the organized exploitation of common labor by aristocrats, and the *jitian* or *jili* 籍禮 ceremony was the ritual framework through which that practice was justified and maintained.⁷⁷ Based on the *Guoyu* account, Yang describes the rite in stages: its initial scheduling by royal officials; a preliminary round of drinking, in which hierarchical relations between the participants were set; the formal rite itself, in which the king ploughed a single furrow, the next grade of aristocrats ploughed three, the next nine, and so on until commoners completed the work on the allotted space; a round of feasting after the rite’s completion; and, finally, an extensive examination of the work done and exhortation of the aristocracy to ensure its quality and completeness. This last portion is the key to Yang’s argument, showing, he argues, how severely the Zhou elite appropriated the labor of the populace to support their interests.⁷⁸

Early though it may be compared to the ritual books, the *Guoyu* chapter probably still postdates King Xuan by several hundred years.⁷⁹ Using it

⁷⁶ Yang Kuan, *Xi Zhou shi*, 268–282; cited in *Bureaucracy*, 71 n. 63.

⁷⁷ Yang Kuan, 268–282, esp. 280–282.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 268–270.

⁷⁹ *ECT* cites Wei Juxian as dating the “Zhou yu” section of the *Guoyu* to 431 BCE; see Wei Juxian, *Gushi yanjiu*, Shanghai: Xinyue shudian, 1928, cited in Chang I-ren, William G. Boltz, and Michael Loewe, “Kuo yü,” in *ECT*, 264.

as a source on Western Zhou social history calls for extreme caution, especially since the earliest strata of received texts are silent on the topic of royal ploughing.⁸⁰ I would note two points of departure between the Ling *ding* account and Yang's description. First, the *Guoyu*-based account makes no mention of ceremonial archery, which the Ling *ding* inscription explicitly observes. Second, there is no trace of a quality-control phase – that is, an inspection of the ploughing and address toward responsible elites – in the Ling *ding* narrative. This difference is key, as such a process would have involved praise or criticism of elites, likely accompanied by awards, and would therefore spur the production of bronzes. Had the king's ploughing event included such a phase, it would be of intrinsic interest to an elite audience and therefore likely be mentioned in the inscription. That it does not appear suggests that it was not part of the events associated with the ploughing rite.

Judging from the Ling *ding* inscription, then, the focus of the Zhou king at the ceremonial ploughing event was not on maintaining the quality of local agricultural activities. Comparison with similar phenomena in other cultures may shed some light on the motivations behind the rite.

The Coercive Implications of Ritual Ploughing

All three examples of royal ploughing with which this discussion opened – from pre-dynastic Egypt, the Inka state, and the Western Zhou – share a symbolic association with war. Thanks to early ethnographic records, this connection is particularly well recorded for the Inka case, wherein songs of triumph were sung and the tilling of the earth was referred to as “disboweling.”⁸¹ The scene on the Scorpion Macehead includes bows, an element symbolizing Egypt's military opponents, and a number of dead birds that have been interpreted to represent defeated populations.⁸² The Ling *ding* inscription records that an archery competition was held in conjunction with the *jitian/jinong* rite; archery played a key symbolic role in the ideology of Zhou royal power. These chronologically and geographically disparate regimes all found that the king's performance as ceremonial “prime tiller” benefited from concurrent expressions of military might.

Yang's approach might suggest that in the Zhou case, the connection of the rite with military activities spelled out the consequences for any locals failing

⁸⁰ I have found nothing on *jitian* or *jili* in the *Shangshu*, the *Yizhoushu*, or the *Zhouyi*. The *Shi* refers briefly to *ji* in the “Zhou song” and Zheng Xuan's commentary; see Yang Kuan, *Xi Zhou shi*, 277.

⁸¹ Bauer, 328. In particular, Bauer cites Inca Garcilaso de la Vega, *Royal Commentaries of the Incas and General History of Perú*, tr. H.V. Livermore, Austin: University of Texas Press, 1989 (1609).

⁸² Edwards, 3–6; Williams et al., 265. The combination of bow and bird connotes civil violence in both the Egyptian and Chinese contexts; see the discussion of the Mai *fangzun* in Chapter 3.

to conform to the elite appropriation of their formerly shared institution. Commoners of the Western Zhou period undoubtedly experienced frustration at the need to work on behalf of others.⁸³ The existence of a former public institution such as Yang asserts is, however, impossible to prove, as little evidence of non-elite ritual practices survives from the Western Zhou and before.

The records of the *jitian/jinong* rite derive from sources serving elite interests, however, and one can certainly consider how the rite may have helped manage relations between aristocrats. In this context, the king's performance of ploughing must have served as a reminder of the reach of royal authority, since the host area of Qi was apparently held by a non royal lineage. The ploughing rite in the Ling *ding* inscription gave the king an opportunity to keep up relations with the local elites controlling Qi. The act of ploughing itself, here as among the Inka, ritually instantiated royal control of the local land and depicted the king as the starting point and source of agricultural activities.⁸⁴ The accompanying archery meet, in which royal representatives such as the Supervisors demonstrated their martial abilities, would have reinforced the coercive implications of this argument.⁸⁵

The king's subsequent honoring of the representatives of the Zhai lineage provided a carrot to go with the stick, soliciting the loyalty of a local power group. The gift of thirty households of servants was quite substantial by Western Zhou standards and must have materially strengthened the Zhai lineage, helping ensure that royal interests were represented in the area. Connecting this gift with the ploughing rite motivated locals to accept the understanding of the Zhou state that it promoted, in which the king enjoyed ultimate control over the land and was the necessary source of the resources it produced.

THE SEIZING OF FOALS (*ZHIJU* 執駒)

The Zhou king also conducted a ceremonial "seizing of foals" (*zhiju* 執駒). Several vessels discovered over the course of the second half of the twentieth century have furnished relatively rich records on this ceremony. First and most distinctive was the Li *juzun* (6011), a middle Western Zhou vessel found in Mei county, Shaanxi.⁸⁶ Its full inscription appears below:

隹(唯)王十又二月,辰才(在)甲申,王初執駒于啟,王乎(呼)師虞召(詔)盞,王親旨(指)盞駒易(賜)兩。拜頤首曰:王弗望(忘)辱(厥)舊宗小子,

⁸³ Other pre-Qin sources address the difficulties of labor exploitation; see, for example, *Mencius* 1.3, *Shisanjing zhushu*, 2666–2667.

⁸⁴ The traditional construction of Zhou genealogy, in which the Zhou were said to descend from Houji 后稷, "the Millet Lord," makes a related argument. See *Shiji*, "Zhou ben ji," 111–113.

⁸⁵ The pairings of competitors in the Ling *ding* archery meet are unclear, but other meets pitted groups of royal partisans against local representatives; see Chapter 3.

⁸⁶ See *Bureaucracy*, 153 n. 10; I am indebted to that source for bringing the foal-seizing rite to my attention. *MWX* dates the vessel to the reign of King Yi; see *MWX*, 189. The appearance

替皇盞身。盞曰：王棚下，不(丕)其則邁(萬)年保我邁(萬)宗。盞曰：余其敢對揚天子之休，余用乍(作)朕文考大中(仲)寶(尊)彝。盞曰：其邁(萬)年世子孫孫永寶之。

It was the king's twelfth month, on the *jiashen* day, [when] the king first performed the seizing of foals at An.⁸⁷ The king called on Marshal Ju to summon Li, and the king personally pointed out foals to Li and awarded him two.⁸⁸ [Li] bowed and struck his head, saying, "The king does not forget his scion of the old ancestral line/temple, but honors Li himself."⁸⁹ Li said, "The king is friendly to his subordinates. May he then for ten thousand years greatly protect our ten thousand ancestral lines/temples!" Li said, "May I dare to respond by praising the beneficence of the Son of Heaven. I therewith make a precious sacrificial vessel for my cultured deceased father Da Zhong." Li said, "May [my] generations of sons and grandsons' grandsons eternally treasure it for ten thousand years."

Unfortunately, no concrete details on the seizing of foals itself appear. Presumably, the process involved corralling the newest colts in the royal herds and breaking them to the harness.⁹⁰ As with the spring ploughing rite, the king's role was clearly demonstrative; others must have carried out the bulk of the actual work.⁹¹ The ceremony provided an opportunity, however, for the king to

of Marshal Ju in the events recorded problematizes this dating; see *Bureaucracy*, 231 n. 50; *Sources*, 249 n. 62 (note that Shaughnessy refers to the vessel as the Tuan *juzun*). The vessel probably dates to no later than the reign of King Gong. Zhu Fenghan has suggested a King Mu dating; see "Jianlun yu Xi Zhou niandaixue you guan de ji jian tongqi," in *Xin chu jinwen yu Xi Zhou lishi*, ed. Zhu Fenghan, Shanghai: Shanghai guji, 2011, 51. The unique appearance of the vessel makes it difficult to situate in standard typologies. It was unearthed by a local resident in Licun, Meixian County, Shaanxi, in 1956, as recounted in Guo Moruo, "Li qi mingwen kao," *Kaogu xuebao* 1957.2, 1.

⁸⁷ Li Feng cites the discovery of the Zhong Jiang *ding* (2191), commissioned by a king for a certain Zhong Jiang 仲姜, as further evidence of royal activity in this area in Mei county, Shaanxi; see *Bureaucracy*, 153 n. 11. Yang Kuan feels instead that it indicates the performance of the foal-seizing on the shores (*an* 岸) of the *biyong* pond; see Yang Kuan, "'Zhiju' de lizhi," in *Xi Zhou shi*, 828–829.

⁸⁸ This reading of the previous clause, and in particular the reading of 旨 as 指, relies on David M. Sena, "Li *fangzun* 盞方尊 and Li *juzun* 盞駒尊," in Constance A. Cook and Paul R. Goldin, eds., *A Sourcebook of Ancient Chinese Bronze Inscriptions*, Berkeley, CA: The Society for the Study of Early China, 2016, 82. I have adjusted the punctuation of the AS database transcription of that clause to match this source.

⁸⁹ The character *duo* 替 is problematic. Ma Chengyuan suggests a phonetic connection with *hui* 輝; see *MWX*, 190 n. 5. The meaning of *huang* 皇, however, is clear. In the translation, I have treated the two as a compound phrase.

⁹⁰ This was the meaning of the phrase in later texts; see the upcoming section "The Seizing of Foals in the Ritual Texts." In this work (in contrast with Vogt, "Between Kin and King"), I have adopted the translation "seizing" on the grounds that *zhi* 執 does not directly indicate that the foals were chased down. I am indebted to Enno Giele for this observation.

⁹¹ Indeed, diagnosing the foal-seizing as a rite relies on the assumption that the king's performance of such a menial activity must have been a ritual act. The appearance of the term in the *Zhouli* (see "The Seizing of Foals in the Ritual Texts") may have contributed to its interpretation as a type of ceremony among scholars, though it bears mentioning that, in that text, the term appears *in conjunction with* the name of an offering rather than as a ceremony name in itself.



Figure 2.3 The Li *juzun*. Image courtesy of the National Museum of China.

distribute resources and prestige through the established network of Zhou aristocratic kinship. Li, recipient of two foals and commissioner of this inscription, phrased his thanks to suggest that the gift fulfilled an expectation of royal patronage connected with Li's ancestral line/temple (*zong* 宗).⁹² Li evidently placed special importance on the nature of the king's gift or the context in which he received it – so much so that he made the unusual choice to commission the vessel in the realistic shape of a horse (Figure 2.3).⁹³ Given this fact, and since the king summoned Li through the intermediary Marshal Ju rather than calling him directly, it seems likely that Li himself was involved in the care or training of horses and that the gift was

meant to reward his performance during the foal-seizing rite. This possibility raises further questions about the relationship between the developing ritual apparatus of the Zhou and the royal kinship group.

The excavations at Zhangjiapo, Fufeng county, Shaanxi, in the 1980s uncovered a set of three vessels with identical inscriptions recording a second occurrence of the foal-seizing rite:⁹⁴

佳(唯)三年五月既生霸壬寅，王才(在)周，執駒于漏卮，王乎嵩趨召達，王易(賜)達駒，達拜頤(稽)首，對揚(揚)王休，用乍(作)旅盥。

It was the third year, the fifth month, the *jishengba* moon phase, and the *renyin* day. The king, at Zhou, conducted the seizing of foals at the Li 漏

⁹² As David M. Sena points out, the appearance of a Li in the inscription of the Lai *pan* seems to indicate that the Li of this inscription may have belonged to the Shan 單 lineage; see “Li *fangzun* 盞方尊 and Li *juzun* 盞駒尊,” in *Source Book*, 80–83, esp. 80. On the other hand, the possessive pronoun *jue* 厥 seems to imply a direct relationship between the king and Li's ancestral line, perhaps suggesting that Li was himself a royal relative. I therefore remain unsure of Li's kinship associations based on current evidence.

⁹³ Vessels molded in realistic shapes were not, by and large, the standard for any point in the Western Zhou period.

⁹⁴ Zhangjiapo, 310–311; Zhang Changshou, “Lun Jingshu tongqi – 1983–1986 nian Fengxi fajue ziliao zhi er,” *Wenwu* 1990.7, 32–35.

Residence. The king called on Sui Yi to summon Da. The king gave Da a foal. Da bows and strikes his head, praising the king's beneficence in response. [He] therewith makes a *xu*-vessel for display.

Zhu Fenghan has suggested dating these vessels, known collectively as the Da *xu* 達盨 (NA0692–4), to the reign of King Xiao (ca. 892–886 BCE) based on calendrical criteria; this accords with general knowledge about vessels of the *xu* type.⁹⁵ Their inscription offers us a few new tidbits of information on the rite's circumstances. It records the time of year when the rite was performed – late spring or early summer, judging from its assignment to the fifth month. It informs us that the venue, the “Li Residence” (*lijū* 漏居), fell within the overall location of Zhou; this means in turn that the Li Residence was seen as a facility or a sub-site rather than a location in its own right. But two commonalities between these inscriptions and the Li *juzun* account are perhaps most significant: first, that the king made contact with the vessel commissioner through an intermediary who “summoned” him; and second, that the commissioner received a foal, presumably one of those caught in the process. Despite the different location, then, there was a degree of continuity between the manifestations of patronage and reward in the Li *juzun* and Da *xu* foal-seizing events.

It has been suggested that Da was the name of Jingshu 井叔, the occupant of the tomb from which the Da *xu* were recovered.⁹⁶ It so happens that the inscription of the Chi *zhi* 趯觶 (6516) records an appointment ceremony in which a Jingshu serves as the sponsor to a figure called Chi 趯, the same name borne by the *sui* 騫 in the Da *xu* foal-seizing event. That event took place in the third year of King Xiao's reign, according to Zhu Fenghan; the Chi *zhi* inscription does not contain a year record, but it has been dated to the reign of King Yih, though not by all.⁹⁷ If the Chi *zhi* is in fact a King Yih-era vessel, it is entirely possible that the Chi mentioned in the Da *xu* inscription was the commissioner of the Chi *zhi*, and that the Jingshu who served as sponsor at Chi's appointment was the Da whom Chi later summoned to receive a foal from the king.⁹⁸ If, as I suspect, that is the case, then the two vessels provide us with a rare glimpse into relations of reciprocity between non royal elites at work beneath the surface of royal patronage.

One more pair of vessels – the Zuoce Wu *he* 作冊吳盃 (NB1215), a vessel in a private collection in Hong Kong, and the Zuoce Wu *pan* 作冊吳盤 (NB1336), held by a private collector – directly mentions the foal-seizing

⁹⁵ “Jianlun,” 51. This conforms to the Zhangjiapo excavators' dating of the tomb to their period 3, encompassing Kings Yih and Xiao; see *Zhangjiapo*, 368. Generally, bronze *xu* appear only in the latter half of the Western Zhou; see Rawson, “Western Zhou Archaeology,” 433–436.

⁹⁶ See Yang Kuan, “‘Zhiju’ de lizhi”; Zhang Changshou, “Lun Jingshu,” 33.

⁹⁷ On the dating of the Chi *zhi*, see the Appendix.

⁹⁸ Zhang Changshou, “Lun Jingshu,” 33.

process.⁹⁹ The dating of the former vessel in particular has engendered both interest and debate. According to previous models, its high year-count would seem only to fit with the reigns of King Mu or King Xuan, though King Li has been proposed as well.¹⁰⁰ Recently, however, both Han Wei and Zhu Fenghan have proposed, based on a broad range of inscriptional, paleographical, and art-historical criteria, that the Zuoce Wu *he* is a late King Gong bronze and that King Gong's reign did, in fact, extend for long enough to accommodate a thirtieth-year date.¹⁰¹ Briefly put, I find the evidence that Han and Zhu marshal to be convincing, and so I follow the King Gong dating.

Beyond the significance of its possible dates, the Zuoce Wu *he* inscription again adds some details:¹⁰²

佳(唯)卅年四月既生霸壬午，王在(在)𨾏，𨾏(執)駒于𨾏南林。初執駒，王乎嵩𨾏召作冊吳立唐門。王曰，“易(賜)駒。”吳拜稽首，受駒以出。吳敢對揚天子不(丕)顯休，用作叔姬般(盤)盃。

It was the thirtieth year, the fourth month, the *jishengba* moon phase, the *renwu* day. The king was at X.¹⁰³ The seizing of foals was held at the

⁹⁹ Zhu Fenghan, “Jianlun”; Xia Hanyi (Shaughnessy), “Cong Zuoce Wu he zai kan Zhou Mu Wang zaiwei nianshu ji niandai wenti,” in *Xin chu qingtongqi yu Xi Zhou lishi*, 52–55; Han Wei, “Jianlun Zuoce Wu he ji xiangguan tongqi de niandai,” *Zhongguo guojia bowuguan guankan* 120 (2013.7), 71–80; Shaughnessy, “Newest Sources of Western Zhou History,” 154–155. The character choice in the transcription here follows Xia Hanyi (Shaughnessy) except where noted; I have added punctuation and glosses for some of the more commonly recognized character readings. This vessel has apparently been in the collection of the National Museum of China since 2014; see Lü Zhangshen, ed., *Zhongguo guojia bowuguan bainian jicui*, Hefei: Anhui meishu, 2014, 104–105. The whereabouts of the Zuoce Wu *pan* follow the AS database entry (NB1336).

¹⁰⁰ Shaughnessy follows the King Mu option, based at least in part on the identity of Zuoce Wu with the figure of the same name and title who commissioned the Zuoce Wu *fangyi* (9898); see Xia Hanyi, “Cong Zuoce Wu,” 53. (Shaughnessy assigns the Wu *fangyi* to King Yih. *MWX* agrees with this, suggesting identity of the commissioner with the “Interior Scribe Wu” [*Neishi Wu* 內史吳] mentioned in the Shi Hu *gui* inscription; see *MWX*, 246. Li Feng supports the identification as well; see *Bureaucracy*, p. 76.) Zhu Fenghan opposes the King Mu dating based on a calendrical conflict with the date format of the Xian *gui*; see “Jianlun,” 51; Zhu Fenghan, “Guanyu Xi Zhou jinwen liri de xin ziliao,” *Gugong bowuyuan yuankan* 2014.6, 18. Zhu Fenghan also rejects the option of King Li on calendrical grounds (“Jianlun,” 51). Following the chronology adopted by *Sources*, xix, and shared by *Bureaucracy*, a King Li dating is likewise not possible. A dissenting opinion appears in Chen Xiaosan, “Shilun ‘Peng Shu hu’ he Zuoce Wu he (‘Peng Shu’ Bronze *Hu* and ‘Zuoce Wu’ Bronze *He*),” *Zhongguo guojia bowuguan guankan* 140 (2015.3), 64–67.

¹⁰¹ Han Wei, “Jianlun Zuoce Wu he,” 71–80; Zhu Fenghan, “Guanyu Xi Zhou jinwen liri,” 17–19, 23–24.

¹⁰² I leave the Zuoce Wu *pan* inscription out of this discussion for two reasons: because it is a less detailed record of the same event, judging from the dates; and because it appears to contain some textual corruption. On the latter point, see Wu Zhenfeng, *Shang Zhou qingtongqi mingwen ji tuxiang jicheng*, Shanghai: Shanghai guji, 2012, no. 14525; cited in Han Wei, “Jianlun Zuoce Wu he,” 71, 75.

¹⁰³ Zhu Fenghan, “Jianlun,” 46, notes the appearance of this place-name in the inscription of the Sanshi *pan* 散氏盤 (10176).

Southern Forest of X. When the seizing of foals was first¹⁰⁴ performed, the king called on Gui He(?)¹⁰⁵ to summon Document Maker Wu to stand at the Tang Gate.¹⁰⁶ The king said, “[I] award [Wu] a foal.” Wu bowed and struck his head, received the foal, and left with it. Wu dares in response to praise the great and brilliant beneficence of the Son of Heaven, therewith making a basin-ewer¹⁰⁷ for Shu Ji.

The seizing of foals at which Document Maker Wu was rewarded occurred not at the site of either of the previous examples, but at a third location called 𨇗. It would seem that the ceremony moved from place to place, perhaps to allow the king to distribute the privilege (or burden) of hosting between different groups. The party called upon to summon the reward recipient bore the title *gui* 禡; this was so in the Da *xu* case but not the Li *juzun* case, in which Marshal Ju did the honors. Perhaps most interestingly, the inscription specifies that Wu received the foal right away rather than as a later disbursement, taking it with him as he left; this may suggest that this instance of the ceremony took place in a location suitable for livestock.¹⁰⁸ Finally, the ceremony was conducted in the thirtieth reign-year, suggesting that the king was of relatively advanced age at the time. Zhu has suggested that the king’s seizing of foals was probably symbolic.¹⁰⁹ The late reign-year of the Zuoce Wu *he* inscription lends some oblique support to that assumption.

Since, as these inscriptions show, the seizing of foals was performed with some regularity, one might expect that the royal house would establish infrastructure

¹⁰⁴ Zhu Fenghan reads this character as *yi* 衣 and glosses it as *cu* 卒; see “Jianlun,” 46. The distinction is between whether the line states that the king “first” or “initially” caught foals, or that the following events occurred when the seizing of foals was over. Either viewpoint is supportable, the former based on comparison with the Li *juzun* inscription, the latter on the internal logic of the inscription itself.

¹⁰⁵ The intermediary responsible for summoning the grantee carries the title *gui* 禡 in both the Da *xu* and Zuoce Wu *he* inscriptions. Zhu Fenghan suggests that this referred to a type of body-servant or high-ranking valet for the Zhou king; see “Jianlun,” 46. In this regard Zhu adduces Li Xueqin’s argument in “Shang mo jinwen zhong de zhiguan ‘xie,’” in *Shihai zhenji – qingzhu Meng Shikai xiansheng qishi sui wenji*, Xin Shiji chubanshe, 2006. Since, as Zhu notes (46), the only Western Zhou inscriptions containing the title are those of the Zuoce Wu *he* and the Da *xu* – both of which describe the seizing of foals – it is worth considering whether the term may have referred to a specific role in the foal-seizing process.

¹⁰⁶ The term *tang* is quite rare in the Western Zhou inscriptions. According to the AS database, it appears in only seven inscriptions of Western Zhou date (the Bo Tangfu *ding*, discussed previously; the Tang Zhong Duo *hu* 唐仲多壺 [9572]; the Tang Zhong *ding* 唐仲鼎 [NA0707]; the two Tang Sisheng *guigai* 唐飮生簋蓋 [3984–3985]; the Tang Jun *gui* 唐君簋 [3578]; and the Xgong *gui* 覲公簋 [NB1210]) (data accessed 01/02/2021)). In all of these inscriptions, it serves as a name element, and so I reluctantly read it in the same way here, taking *tang men* 唐門 to mean “the gate of the Tang [lineage hall].” How and why the Tang lineage might have been involved in the foal-seizing process I cannot explain.

¹⁰⁷ The phrase 般 (盥) 盥 *ban* (*pan*) *he* refers to the use of *he*-ewers (like the Zuoce Wu *he*) and *pan*-basins together for washing one’s hands; see *MWX*, 179 n. 3.

¹⁰⁸ Zhu Fenghan draws attention to this detail in “Jianlun,” 46.

¹⁰⁹ “Jianlun,” 51.

to support it. One source hints at this possibility. The Ninth-year Qiu Wei *ding* 九年衛鼎 (2831) records the king's receipt of an emissary sent by Mei'ao, a figure known also from the Guaibo *gui* 乖伯簋 (4331), at a location called the "Zhou Foal Palace" (*Zhou Ju gong* 周駒宮).¹¹⁰ Li Feng has suggested that this location might have been dedicated to the ritual seizing of foals mentioned in the Li *juzun* inscription.¹¹¹ Without additional evidence, this cannot be stated with certainty; in fact, the inscriptions suggest that different instances of the foal-seizing were held in different locales. However, the general use-pattern of the place-name suffix *gong* 宮 suggest that the Foal Palace probably did host events associated with horsemanship or charioteering.¹¹²

The Foal-Seizing Rite and the Management of Horseflesh in Early China

Like the Shang before them, the Zhou practiced chariot warfare – possibly on a much greater scale than the Shang, in fact.¹¹³ Inscriptions like that of the Duoyou *ding* (2835) confirm that the Zhou fielded large numbers of chariots on campaign, as did some of their opponents.¹¹⁴ Possession and use of horses was a key element of elite military endeavor and, by extension, of status among the Zhou. The king distributing horses to client elites was not simply a material expression of patronage; it also marked individuals as participants in the upper echelons of Zhou elite culture.

By celebrating the king's role in the husbandry of horses, the seizing of foals emphasized provision, rather than demonstration, of military strength. As a counterpoint to the spring ploughing rite, it portrayed the king as the ultimate source of all resources, both agricultural and military. Naturally, to justify that portrayal, the king had to distribute the resources in question; and indeed, the inscriptions mentioning the seizing of foals all commemorate royal gifts of foals. The regular performance of the ceremony would have promoted its traditionalization and lent the vision of the king as resource arbiter a sense of inevitability and "inherited value," to borrow Baudrillard's term.¹¹⁵

¹¹⁰ I follow Ma Chengyuan's reading of the relevant lines; see *MWX* 203, 136–138, esp. 137. The Ninth-year Qiu Wei *ding* is a dating standard for King Gong; see *Sources*, 111. It was recovered from a cache of bronzes at Dongjiacun, Qishan County, Shaanxi, in 1975; see Pang Huaqing et al., "Shaanxi sheng Qishan xian Dongjiacun Xi Zhou tongqi jiaojue fajue jianbao," *Wenwu* 1976.5, 26–28, 39, plate 2.

¹¹¹ *Bureaucracy*, 162.

¹¹² The "Study Palace" (*Xue Gong* 学宫), for example, was actually used for the training of youths; see the inscription of the Jing *gui* 靜簋 (4273).

¹¹³ On the number of chariots found at Zhou vs. Shang sites, see Shaughnessy, "Historical Perspectives on the Introduction of the Chariot into China," *HJAS* 48.1 (June 1998), 189–237, esp. 190–191, 198–199.

¹¹⁴ See the translation and discussion of the Duoyou *ding* in Li Feng, *Landscape and Power*, 147–150.

¹¹⁵ Baudrillard, *The System of Objects*, 88–89.

How the seizing of foals related to the overall management of horseflesh under the Zhou is still unclear. Given how often chariot-and-horse teams appear as royal gifts in the inscriptions, the Zhou kings must have required a ready supply of trained horses; certainly, the existence of the Foal Palace shows that the royal house created some infrastructure to supply them.¹¹⁶ It is possible that all of the places where foal-seizing ceremonies took place were home to royal herds – An 駉 in Mei county, Li 漚, and 駉 – and that their management provided occasions for the Zhou king to acknowledge subordinate elites and confer gifts. Since each foal-seizing took place at a different location, however, it is equally possible that local lineages maintained the herds and that the king simply claimed some of them for his own purposes, whether personal use or redistribution to favored recipients.

The king's performance of the foal-seizing rite would then appear in much the same light as the ploughing rite – a ritual effort to figure the Zhou king as an “obligatory passage point” in local production activities, remind local elites of the reach of royal authority, and renew and maintain relations with valued allies on the king's own terms. Although the foal-seizing rite positioned the king as the ultimate source of equine resources, however, the involvement of an intermediary admitted indirect trajectories of patronage. Thus, alongside the king's present of foals to Li, which appeared (at least to Li himself) as an expression of favor and fulfillment of obligations to royal kin, we have the *Da xu* case, in which a lineage potentate was called to his royal reward by the same functionary whose appointment he previously sponsored.

The Seizing of Foals in the Ritual Texts

The term *zhiju* 執駒 appears a few times in later received texts, mainly in the ritual compendia.¹¹⁷ The “Xia guan – Sima” 夏官司馬 (“Summer Offices – Master of Horse”) chapter of the *Zhouli* discusses it under the sections on *xiaoren* 校人 and *souren* 廋人:

春祭馬祖。執駒。夏祭先牧。頒馬攻特。秋祭馬社。臧僕。冬祭馬步。獻馬講馭夫。

In the spring, [he] made offerings to the Horse Ancestor and seized the foals (*zhiju*). In the summer, [he] made offerings to the Former Herdsman

¹¹⁶ See Huang Ranwei, *Yin Zhou qingtongqi shangci mingwen yanjiu*, Hong Kong: Longmen, 1978, 173–184, 205–206 fig. 26; Chen Hanping, *Xi Zhou ceming zhidu yanjiu*, Shanghai: Xuelin, 1986, 239–250.

¹¹⁷ Specifically, the phrase is found twice in the *Zhouli*, once in the *Da Dai Liji*, and once in the “Da qu” chapter of the *Mozi*; in the latter, it forms part of a semantic argument with no contextual information of use here. See *Shisanjing zhushu*, 860–861; Wang Pinzhen, *Da Dai Liji jiegou*, Beijing: Zhonghua, 1983, 36–37; Zhang Chunyi, *Mozi jijie*, Shanghai: Shijie shuju, 1936, 383. Ma Chengyuan notes the *Zhouli* occurrences in his gloss of the inscription; see *MWX*, 190 n. 1a.

and distributed horses for training in specialties. In the fall, [he] made offerings at the Altar of Earth of the Horses(?)¹¹⁸ and took in servants.¹¹⁹ In the winter, [he] made offerings to the Horse Gait,¹²⁰ presented horses, and instructed the drivers.¹²¹

廋人掌十有二閑之政。教以阜馬佚特。教馱。攻駒。及祭馬祖。祭閑之先牧。及執駒散馬耳。圉馬。

The *souren* held responsibility for the governance of the twelve enclosures. [He] instructed [those concerned] in making the horses abundant and breaking them to specialties;¹²² [he] instructed the three-year-olds and trained the foals;¹²³ [he] also made offerings to the Horse Ancestors and the Former Herdsmen of the enclosures; [he] seized the foals, let loose the horses, etc.; and stabled the horses.¹²⁴

This study cannot rely on the *Sanli* to corroborate the existence or details of a particular rite, since one of its main goals is to establish a baseline understanding of Western Zhou ritual to which later ritual texts can be compared. As linguistic sources, however, the later texts do help support the basic assumption that the phrase *zhiju* 執駒, “seizing foals,” referred to breaking off young foals from the herds for training. The first passage, in particular, suggests an understanding of *zhiju* as the first point in the life cycle of the horse as work animal. The “Xia xiao zheng” chapter of the *Da Dai Liji* offers further detail:

執陟攻駒。執也者，始執駒也。執駒也者，離之去母也。陟，升也，執而升之君也。攻駒也者，教之服車數舍之也。

“To seize, advance, and train the foal”: “To seize” is to first seize the foal. To seize the foal is to separate it from its mother. “To advance [it]” is to present it upward; it is seized and presented to the ruler. “To train the foal” is to teach it to bear a cart for several *she*.¹²⁵

¹¹⁸ The traditional commentary describes the *ma she* 馬社 as “the first to ride horses”; see *Shisanjing zhushu*, p. 860.

¹¹⁹ Zheng Xuan explains these *pu* 僕, “servants,” as “the servants that drive the Five Roads”; see *ibid.*

¹²⁰ The “Horse Gait” or “Horse Step” (*Ma Bu* 馬步), the commentary suggests, was a spirit that brought harm upon horses; see *ibid.*

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, 860.

¹²² Following the traditional commentary in reading *yi* 佚 as *yi* 逸, meaning, as the commentary puts it, 用之不使甚勞, 安其血氣也 (“[So that] using them would not overly exhaust [them]; to calm the *qi* of their blood”). See *ibid.*, 861.

¹²³ The *Shuowen* identifies *tao* 馱 as three-year-old horses versus *ju* 駒 as two-year-olds; see *Shuowen*, 461. The traditional commentary notes this distinction as well; see *Shisanjing zhushu*, 861.

¹²⁴ *Shisanjing zhushu*, 861.

¹²⁵ *Da Dai Liji jiegu*, 36–37. The transcribed excerpt is taken from the CHANT database. However, the phrase 陟, 升也 does not appear in the CHANT version; I have added it to conform with the text as given in *Da Dai Liji jiegu*.

Its gloss attests that “foal-seizing” involved removing the foals from their mothers’ care and entering them into training, as well as that by the later Han, at least, the term referred to carrying out this process on a ruler’s behalf.¹²⁶

The use of the term *zhiju* in the inscriptions, then, seems to conform well with its meaning in the later ritual texts as far as the basic details go. This is hardly surprising, as the exigencies of large-scale animal husbandry probably changed little over the six hundred years or so between Li’s era and the Han dynasty. It is important, however, not to read too much into the similarity. The *Zhouli* passages pose a particular danger of this, with their detailed description of the ritual calendar of horse husbandry and their frequent references to supernatural forces associated with horses. None of these supernatural figures (the Horse Ancestors [*Mazu* 馬祖], the Former Herdsman [*Xian Mu* 先牧], the Earth Altar of Horses [*Ma She* 馬社], and the Horse Gait [*Ma Bu* 馬步]) appear in the bronze inscriptions, nor do they feature in any pre-Qin or Han-era received text other than the *Zhouli*.¹²⁷ Neither am I aware of any direct evidence that the Zhou venerated horses in a capacity beyond their value as prestige goods, military tools, and markers of elite status. The figures in the *Zhouli* passage portray a peculiar understanding of the ritual practices associated with horse husbandry that cannot be verified for the Western Zhou period – nor, for that matter, for any period up through the Han dynasty.¹²⁸

CONCLUSION: FIGURING AND REFIGURING THE ZHOU KING

Latour identifies four points of entry for inquiry into the formation of groups: (1) the designation of spokespeople to carry out the ongoing work of group definition; (2) the specification of “out-groups” to contrast with the “in-group”; (3) the demarcation of boundaries distinguishing the group from other threatening identities; and (4) the involvement of social scientists in establishing and perpetuating a definition for the group.¹²⁹ This last type of “trace” he associates

¹²⁶ The *Da Dai Liji* is probably later even than the *Sanli*. See Jeffrey Riegel, “Ta Tai Li chi,” in *ECT*, 456–459 (esp. 456); and on the “Xia xiao zheng” chapter, 458–459, as well as Benedykt Grynpas, *Les écrits de Tai l’Ancien et le petit calendrier des Hia*, Paris: Librairie d’Amérique et d’Orient A. Maisonneuve, 1972, cited therein. Its value here is mainly as a gloss of the phrase in the *Zhouli*.

¹²⁷ A search of the CHANT and AS databases produced no other results for these phrases.

¹²⁸ The *Zhouli*’s assertions on the timing of and party responsible for the rite should also be addressed. The Li *juzun* inscription states that the seizing of foals took place in the king’s twelfth month; this dating method is unfortunately ambiguous as to the timing of the rite within the year. As for the responsible parties, neither Marshal Ju nor Li verifiably held the position of *sima* 司馬. The inscription of the Li *fangyi* (9900), however, does record Li’s appointment to a position with authority over the Three Supervisors of the Six Armies; this would mean that Li had some *sima* as subordinates. On the connection between this bronze, the Li *juzun*, and the Shi Ju bronzes, see *Sources*, 249 n. 62; *Bureaucracy*, 231 n. 50.

¹²⁹ Latour, *Reassembling the Social*, 30–34.

with modern societies; we may leave it behind for now, although it may shed some light on Spring and Autumn-era approaches to the ritual component of Zhou identity.¹³⁰ The former three, however, provide a valuable framework for interpreting the ritual practices considered in this chapter. After the conquest of Shang, the new royal house leveraged its ritual prowess to promote a coherent group identity among its adherents. To maintain their position of ascendancy, however, the Zhou kings sought also to distinguish themselves as spokespersons, to borrow Latour's term, for a shared group membership.¹³¹ The rites considered here may be read as steps toward this goal; the particulars thereof – especially those of the “Great Rite” – show traces of an effort to define the borders of Zhou identity and the role of the king within it.

Historical traditions emphasize that the Zhou kings rose to power at the head of a military coalition responding to oppression at the hands of a central, theocratic authority.¹³² The Western Zhou repertoire of royal ritual framings conforms well to this model. Rather than propitiating natural spirits, as often seen in the Shang oracle bone inscriptions, the ritual framings of the Zhou kings against the surrounding world bore strong traces of military organization – even the single recorded instance of the spring ploughing rite happened in conjunction with an archery meet – and argued for the supremacy of human institutions over non-human forces, including land, animals, and even non-Zhou populations. Generally speaking, rites figuring the Western Zhou kings evoked specific geopolitical interests inherent to the establishment of the infrastructure of Zhou power – the founding of Chengzhou; the control of the borders of Zhou territory; the counterbalancing of delegated authority over outlying areas; the maintenance of control over the strategic chokepoint of Qi.

Outside the realm of ancestral offerings, the bronze inscriptions record one ritual technique that framed the image of the early Western Zhou kings against the surrounding world – the ceremonial boating called the “Great Rite.” Like much of Zhou ritual, the kings inherited certain aspects of this practice from their Shang predecessors, particularly the habit of shooting on a body of water.¹³³ The Zhou “Great Rite,” however, introduced innovations that emphasized the symbolic aspects of royal boating and shooting. By conducting it on the regularly shaped, cosmologically significant *biyong* or *bichi* pond, the Zhou kings made a statement about the extent of royal authority and its role in the new, post-Shang order.

The effectiveness of the “Great Rite” lay in its formulation of the Zhou state as a geographically delimited territory within which the king, assisted by

¹³⁰ See *ibid.*, 34.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, 32.

¹³² See “Mu shi” in *Shangshu zhengyi, Shisanjing zhushu*, 182–183.

¹³³ For a Shang example of archery near water, see the discussion of the Zuoce Ban *yuan* in Chapter 3.

elite followers, exercised the power of life and death. This idea took hold in both the governmental and ritual strategies of the Zhou kings from the earliest stages of the period. Li Feng has noted that, while the Zhou kings conceived of their state in territorial terms, their efforts to control it consisted of the delegation of administrative functions to regional rulers, together with the assumption that the king could carry out defensive military actions anywhere within the overall territory of the state.¹³⁴ The *biyong* pond rites neatly depict this state of affairs, portraying the king's ability to kill effectively in any direction within the known world. Limiting the activity of accompanying participants ritually counterbalanced the delegation of authority that was inherent to the composition of the early Zhou state. The king's ritual shooting of animals would have further reminded participants of the limitless reach of royal military power.

Cases of the *da feng/li* rite reach across the early Western Zhou and into the early stages of the middle Western Zhou, with the last one dating probably to the reign of King Mu (ca. 956–918). Further records, however, portray the introduction of new ritual models of the place of the king in the world around the beginning of the middle Western Zhou. The first case of the ritual ploughing of the earth by the king, and the only case of which a definite record survives, happened probably during the reign of King Zhao (ca. 977–957). Either King Gong's (ca. 917–900) or King Mu's reign saw the first recorded case of the seizing of foals, a ceremonial tradition repeated under later kings. Between them, these two rites moved toward depicting the Zhou king as the source and arbiter of the key resources of the Zhou state, both agricultural and military; they refigured the king as foundation as well as center. Over the course of the middle Western Zhou period, changes in the political and military situation shifted royal priorities, motivating the Zhou kings to intensify their control over various aspects of state operation.¹³⁵ The assignment of responsibility for "spring ploughing" in the Shi Zai *gui* inscription, and the existence of a "Foal Palace" as seen in the Ninth-year Qiu Wei *ding* inscription, show that this broadening repertoire of framing rituals accompanied changes in the institutional structure of resource control.

Though these new rites portrayed the king as a fundamental, indispensable player in vital production activities, evidence from the Da *xu* and Chi *zhi* inscriptions shows that they could also afford room for patronage relations originating outside, if still flowing through, the royal house.¹³⁶ In all likelihood, similar relations played out behind the curtain of official appointment rituals,

¹³⁴ *Bureaucracy*, 287–288.

¹³⁵ On the political changes made to the state during the middle Western Zhou period, see *Bureaucracy*, 34–38; Shaughnessy, "Western Zhou History," 326.

¹³⁶ This state of affairs epitomizes the "obligatory passage point"; see Callon, "Some Elements," 203–206.

royally sponsored archery meets, and other ritual activities arbitrated by the king but requiring intermediaries for their completion. By itself, this does not necessarily imply the subversion of royal authority. A “ruler” as a political individual is always a figuration of agencies, and to maintain its integrity, that figuration can and must constantly be reformulated to reconcile concurrent and competing visions of the group.¹³⁷ If the negotiated identity of the king can incorporate multiple interests, however, then some among those interests may have the opportunity to leverage the definition of royal authority for their own purposes.¹³⁸ The ritual refiguring of the king thus created powerful new motivations for allegiance, while, by emphasizing the qualitative distinction between the king and other Zhou elites, it also fostered the possibility of a Zhou elite identity separate from the ruling house.

¹³⁷ On the figuration of agencies, and in particular of individual identity, see Latour, *Reassembling the Social*, 52–58. Group identity is of course inherent in the figuration of rulership, in that a ruler is defined in terms of his or her relationship to subjects. The ruler is both the epitome of a group and the one person who can never be part of it, a sentiment expressed in the early Chinese expressions *guaren* 寡人, “the lonely man,” and *wo/you yi ren* 我/余一人, “I, the solitary man” (for the latter of which, see first the inscription of the Da Yu *ding* [2837]).

¹³⁸ Latour analogizes the postulation of anti-groups as part of the performance of groups to the denial of agencies as part of the figuration of other agencies; see *Reassembling the Social*, 56.