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Zeng: the Rediscovery of a Forgotten Regional State

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CHINA ACROSS THE CENTURIES
Papers from a lecture series in Budapest

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Zeng: the Rediscovery of a Forgotten Regional State¹

OLIVIER VENTURE
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In 1977, a unit of the People's Liberation Army discovered, during earthwork operations, a large tomb at Leigudun 擂鼓墩 in Suizhou 隨州 city (Hubei Province; see fig.1, site 1). It was designated as tomb number one, or "M1" in Chinese archaeological terminology.² Scientific excavation was undertaken in 1978. The grave was more than 11 meters deep.³ At the bottom of the pit was a large wooden structure, called *guo* 槨 in Chinese, which contained the coffin and a very rich assemblage of funeral goods. This *guo* was about 3 meters high, 20 m long and 16 m wide. This undisturbed aristocratic tomb is considered one of the greatest archaeological discoveries in China of the 20th century. Among the funeral goods found were bronze weapons, musical instruments, ritual and daily vessels, etc. Of special interest was a complete set of 65 bronze chime bells suspended on a 7.48-meter-long and 2.65-meter-high lacquered wooden chime stand. The tomb also contained the most ancient document on bamboo ever discovered in China. It is a list of chariots belonging to the aristocrats who participated in the funeral. Inscriptions were present on many bronze objects, such as weapons, vessels and bells. The name of the Lord Yi of Zeng 曾侯乙 appears more than two hundred times in these inscriptions as the sponsor of related objects. That is why he is identified as the owner of this tomb. He was a member of the high aristocracy and had a close

¹ The author would like to thank Ms Alice Crowther, who kindly undertook to revise the English manuscript of this paper.

² Here, "M" refers to the word *mu* 墓, "tomb" in Chinese.

³ The most detailed description of this tomb can be found in the official archaeological report. See HB 1989. For synthetic presentations in western languages, see Thorp 1982: 67–110 and Thote 1986: 393–413.

relationship with King Hui, of the kingdom of Chu 楚惠王 (488–432 BCE),⁴ who cast a bronze bell for him, which was also buried in this tomb. According to this bell inscription, Lord Yi of Zeng must have died in 433 BCE.

A few other bronze inscriptions discovered around Suizhou since the 1960s had already mentioned this lineage, indicating that a Zeng lineage, and probably a Zeng state, existed in this area from the Late Western Zhou period (c. 850–771 BCE) to the Warring States period (c. 481–221 BCE).⁵ Some inscriptions from the Spring and Autumn period (c. 771–481 BCE) seem to indicate that Zeng belonged to the same clan as the Zhou 周 royal family: the Ji 姬 clan.

These discoveries generated a number of discussions among specialists because no transmitted source explicitly mentions a Zeng state in this area. On the other hand, many ancient texts, such as the *Zuozhuan* 左傳 or the *Guoyu* 國語, evoke a Sui 隨 state in the region of Suizhou, belonging to the Ji clan. But the name of Sui was not attested in any contemporary inscription.

At the end of the official archaeological report, published in 1989, the authors mention five hypotheses proposed by different scholars:

1. Zeng and Sui represent exactly the same group, but for unknown reasons this group had two names.
2. Zeng and Sui are two separate groups. Only new archaeological discoveries will help to understand why Sui is not seen in the inscriptions.
3. Zeng destroyed Sui and was thereafter referred to according to its new land.
4. Sui destroyed Zeng and perpetuated the cult to the Ji clan.
5. Zeng had been destroyed by Chu quite early on. Then Chu also destroyed Sui and founded a new Lord of Zeng on the Sui land.

⁴ The dates of kings used in this paper are taken from Loewe and Shaughnessy 1999: 25–29.

⁵ See HB 1989: 470.

The first hypothesis, proposed by Li Xueqin 李學勤, is nowadays the most widely accepted. In recent years, the new archaeological discoveries that the authors of the report expected have become reality. In this paper, I would like to present these discoveries and to show how written and unwritten archaeological materials can shed new light on the history of Ancient China, and also how scholars react to those new finds and progressively improve our understanding of this period. Specific attention will be paid to epigraphical material which can provide invaluable and irreplaceable links between excavated material culture and transmitted written sources.⁶ Materials will first be presented site by site, before being put in a larger perspective, in a global discussion about Zeng state history.⁷

⁶ For this paper, the author's work was facilitated by access to the bronze inscription database developed by the Academia Sinica (<http://www.ihp.sinica.edu.tw/~bronze/>).

⁷ The importance of archaeological discoveries cannot be reduced to their contribution to the understanding of ancient historical events. These discoveries also provide information about ancient societies' organization, mode of production, artistic activities, religious practices and beliefs, etc. But those aspects will not be discussed in the present article. Some authors have already presented well-argued essays on this topic. See, for example, Ren 2004: 289–329 and Zhang 2009: 326–364. Archaeological discoveries presented in this paper partly support these two authors' conclusions, but several points clearly have to be reconsidered in the light of newly excavated materials.

I. New archaeological discoveries

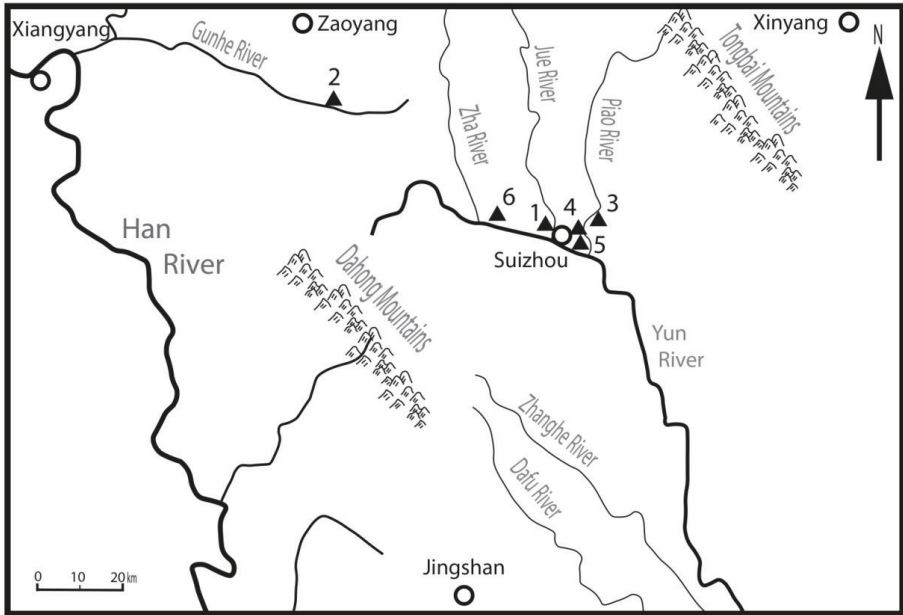


Fig 1: Map of Suizhou region sites quoted (adapted from Fang 2014b: 110).
 1. Leigudun; 2. Guojiamiao; 3. Yejiashan; 4. Yidigang; 5. Wenfengta; 6. Yangzishan.

I.1. Guojiamiao 郭家廟

Guojiamiao is situated about 60 km from Leigudun. Between 2002 and 2003, twenty-nine tombs were discovered at Guojiamiao, on the territory of the municipality of Zaoyang 棗陽 (Hubei province; see fig.1, site 2). Tombs were dated between the Late Western Zhou period and the Early Spring and Autumn period (c. 771–650 BCE), and more precisely from 800 BCE to 650 BCE. The final archaeological report was published in 2005.⁸ Unfortunately, all the tombs were in quite bad condition and most of the important funeral goods had been taken away by looters before archaeological excavation started. Furthermore, archaeologists were only able to excavate part of the original cemetery. However, through the study of the tombs' structure and remaining artifacts, archaeologists were able to gather important information about the group of people buried in this area.

⁸ XK, HWKY and HXXGK 2005.

The two biggest tombs, called M17 and M21, had an access ramp, an element which usually indicates that the tomb owner has a higher social status than the owner of tombs without a ramp. Tomb M21 still contained some bronze weapons and chariot parts. It was probably the burial of a lineage leader. Tomb M17 contained no weapons and no chariot parts, but a lot of jade ornaments. It is identified as the tomb of a lineage leader's spouse. The other tombs of Guojiamiao were less important. It seems that people with quite different statuses were buried in this cemetery. Three chariot and horse pits, also usually associated with the upper élite, were also excavated during this campaign. Ten tombs still contained bronze vessels and bells, used at that time by the élite during ancestral cult ceremonies. Other bronzes were collected from local people who found them in the area before official excavation started.

Altogether, nine inscriptions were found among both excavated and locally collected bronzes. Zeng was the most common lineage name for the bronze dedicators mentioned in the inscriptions. We find someone who had the title of Zeng Bo 曾伯, which means the "Elder of Zeng," as well as a Lord Qi of Zeng (曾侯崎). A Lord Yangbai of Zeng (曾侯絳白) is also mentioned on a bronze weapon accidentally discovered in the same area in 1982. Some other inscriptions also refer to women married to Zeng lineage members. As was the rule in Zhou aristocratic society, Zeng males had to marry women who did not belong to the same clan as their own lineage.



Fig. 2: Inscription rubbing from Guojiamiao M1: 06.
Zaoyang Guojiamiao Zeng guo mudi: 93, fig. 75.

曾孟嬴削自乍（作）行匡則永祜福

“Meng Ying Juan from Zeng made herself this *fu* vessel for travels, thus [may she] eternally be blessed and happy.”⁹

Through the name of the dedicator of this vessel, we understand that a woman called Juan, who was born into an unnamed lineage attached to the Ying clan (the same clan as Qin 秦 for example), where she was the eldest among her sisters, was married to a member of the Zeng family. This kind of inter-lineage marital alliance was very important for the cohesion of Zhou aristocratic society.¹⁰ Even if some other lineages are also mentioned at Guojiamiao, the name Zeng is still the most represented on bronzes excavated from this cemetery. So, despite the numerous pieces of evidence that were taken away by looters, and the fact that the number of tombs and inscriptions is quite limited, it makes sense to consider this cemetery as linked to the Zeng lineage. This identification was recently confirmed by new discoveries.

Between November 2014 and January 2015, a salvage excavation campaign was organized after looting activities were reported. No excavation report has been published yet, but some information can be found in specialized media.¹¹ Twenty-nine tombs and four horse and chariot pits from the Late Western Zhou to the Early Spring and Autumn periods were excavated at Guojiamiao. Tomb M1 was a large burial, with an access ramp, where the chief of a lineage was probably buried. It was looted several times, and most of the artifacts were taken away by looters. However, the tomb still contained a few remarkable objects. Of particular importance is a group of musical instruments. A quite well-preserved large lacquered wooden chime stand was excavated, as well as two less well-preserved lacquered wooden *se*-zithers (*se* 瑟 in Chinese). Associated with tomb M1 was a 32.7-meter-long chariot pit, containing twenty-eight chariots and a 9-meter-long horse pit containing forty-nine horse skeletons. Among the bronzes that have been excavated, four vessels have inscriptions on which can be read the names of two members of the Zeng lineage, who have a title which can be understood as “Hereditary-Prince of Zeng” (曾子).

⁹ Inscription no. 1199 in the *Xinshou Yin Zhou qingtongqi mingwen ji qiying huibian* 新收殷周青銅器銘文暨器影彙編 corpus, hereafter abbreviated as “XS.” See Jung et al. 2006.

¹⁰ For a recent study of this practice as seen in bronze inscriptions, see Khayutina 2014: 1–61. See also Chen 2007: 253–292.

¹¹ Fang 2015.

This new excavation campaign thus confirms that Guojiamiao was an important aristocratic cemetery linked to the Zeng family between the Late Western Zhou period and the Early Spring and Autumn period. Several leaders of the Zeng lineage and their contemporary relatives were buried in this area.

I.2. Yejiashan 葉家山

Yejiashan is situated in the north-east of the modern city of Suizhou, about 20 kilometers from Leigudun and about 58 kilometers from Guojiamiao (see fig.1, site 3). In 2010, local peasants found a group of bronze vessels in a field. Archaeologists established that it was the site of an ancient aristocratic cemetery. In 2011 and 2013, the Institute of Archaeology of Hubei province carried out two excavation campaigns, bringing to light the best-preserved Early Western Zhou aristocratic cemetery related to the leading family of a regional state.¹² One hundred and forty tombs, of various sizes, and seven horse pits were excavated. Fourteen large tombs were related to the upper part of the local aristocracy, including two burials with an access ramp, which were probably dug for local rulers (M28 and M111). As most of the tombs were unlooted, a very important number of artifacts was excavated. Bronze vessels particularly attracted the attention of archaeologists and epigraphers. On a significant part of those bronzes the name of Zeng appears.

Tomb M65 was described in a preliminary report published in 2011, a few months after its excavation.¹³ The grave has a rectangular shape, without ramp, and was about 5 meters long and 3.5 meters wide, for about 6 meters deep. The tomb contained many artifacts. For example, twenty-two bronze vessels, many weapons, and four glazed stoneware vessels (called “proto porcelain,” *yuanshi ciqu* 原始瓷器, in the report) were displayed on the platform surrounding the *guo* structure (*ercengtai* 二層臺), whereas the rest of the weapons and bronze chariot parts were placed inside the *guo* wood tomb chamber. Finally, as usual, some jades were put in the coffin. Inscriptions were found on half of the bronze vessels. The name of Lord Jian of Zeng (曾侯諫) appears on four different vessels (fig. 3a); another one is said to be cast for an unnamed Lord. Because of these mentions, the authors of the report considered M65 to be the tomb of a Lord of Zeng called Jian. But in 2013 the same team excavated tomb M28, which was bigger than M65 and possessed an

¹² HWKY and SB 2012b; HWKY and SB 2011b; HWKY and SB 2013c. See HB, HWKY and SB 2013.

¹³ HWKY and SB 2011a.

access ramp.¹⁴ The tomb contained twenty-six bronze vessels, among which twenty-one had an inscription. The name of Lord Jian of Zeng can be read on fifteen of those inscribed bronzes (fig. 3b). These new elements obliged archaeologists to reconsider their identification of the owner of tomb M65. The Lord Jian of Zeng was probably buried in one of those two tombs, but which one? As more bronzes inscribed with the name of Jian were found in tomb M28, it is quite tempting to identify M28's owner as Lord Jian of Zeng, but in their preliminary report the authors leave the question open. In 2014, Zhang Changping 張昌平 and Li Xueting 李雪婷 proposed to maintain the identification of M65 as the tomb of Jian, considering that M28 was the tomb of his son, his successor as the head of the Zeng Lineage, who took part of his father's bronzes to his last resting place.¹⁵



Fig. 3a: Yejiashan M65: 47
Jiangnan kaogu, 2011, 3: 9, fig. 6.



Fig. 3b: Yejiashan M28: 164
Jiangnan kaogu, 2013, 4: 13, rub. 3.

M111, with its access ramp, is the biggest tomb in Yejiashan cemetery, but little information has been published about it.¹⁶ An important number of bronze artifacts were excavated from this tomb. Among those bronzes was found a set of five bells, which is the earliest example of that kind ever discovered. Many scholars emphasized the fact that these chimes were about 500 years earlier than the famous set of chime bells of the Lord Yi of Zeng, but the scale of the two sets is of course completely different. The M111 set is composed of only one *bo* 罍 bell and four *yong* 甬 bells. A *yong* bell is characterized by its shank and its arc-shaped base, whereas the *bo* one has a flat base and a ring-shaped suspension device, which is often richly decorated.¹⁷ The discovery of the *yong* bell chimes from the tomb of the Lord Yi of Zeng, and its

¹⁴ HWKY and SB 2013b.

¹⁵ Zhang and Li 2014: 65–75.

¹⁶ HWKY and SB 2013a.

¹⁷ For a detailed study of bronze bells in Early China, see von Falkenhausen 1993.

inscriptions, revealed to modern scholars that *yong* bells were able to produce two different tones. On the other hand, a *bo* bell was said to be limited to a single one.¹⁸ But, recent experiments carried out by the Museum of Hubei province demonstrated that the *bo* bell from tomb M111 from Yejiashan was also able to produce two distinct tones.¹⁹ Thus the Yejiashan set raises new perspectives on the history of bell chimes in China. Finally, at least two bronze vessels bear inscriptions referring to a Lord Kang (?) of Zeng (曾侯犷²⁰), unattested in other tombs of the Yejiashan cemetery. This new Lord could be the owner of tomb M111, but this hypothesis still needs to be verified, once all materials from this tomb have been published. However, one inscription indicates clearly that Lord Kang (?) dedicated one of the vessels to his father Nan Gong 南公 (fig. 4).²¹



Fig. 4: Yejiashan M111 :67.
Jiangnan kaogu 2014, 2: 54, rub. 1.

Kang (?) made for his valorous Deceased Father Nan Gong this treasured, sacrificial vessel.

犷乍刺（烈）考南公寶尊彝 (M111: 67)

The general features of Yejiashan cemetery (tomb structure, bronze vessel shape, ritual vessel sets...) seem to correspond to the contemporary Zhou standard. However, some elements can be linked to Shang tradition. Such is,

¹⁸ See von Falkenhausen 1993: 169.

¹⁹ Fang 2014a, 1: 92–97.

²⁰ Note that the name of this Lord is transcribed as 犷 for convenience, whereas the original graph is clearly composed with elements 立 and 犬.

²¹ For a discussion about Nan Gong and for the first publication of the documents concerning this inscription (rubbing and bronze pictures), see Huang 2014.2: 50–55.

for example, the case of tombs M1 and M3, which have a waist pit. A waist pit, or *yaokeng* 腰坑, is a small pit placed under the coffin, where a sacrificial victim was buried, generally a dog. Waist pits are considered by many scholars as a characteristic element of Shang culture, which is not to be expected in the tomb of a member of the Ji clan. However several scholars consider that some Ji clan members may have followed this custom at the beginning of the Western Zhou period.²² Another element usually associated with Shang culture, and quite well attested in Yejiashan cemetery, is emblems (often called *zuhui* 族徽 in Chinese, sometime translated by “clan signs”). These signs were first used on their bronzes by members of the Shang aristocracy. In most cases, emblems represent groups, probably based on kinship relationships. Many different emblems were found on the bronzes excavated from Yejiashan cemetery. As no emblem seems to be particularly dominant in this archaeological site, it is quite unlikely that these emblems were directly attached to the Zeng lineage itself, but rather to other different groups.²³ Several reasons could explain the presence of such “foreign bronzes” in Yejiashan tombs, such as gift practice or the sharing of war loot. This last phenomenon was particularly important at the beginning of the Western Zhou dynasty, just after the collapse of the Shang Kingdom.²⁴ Finally scholars also noticed that most of the tombs were oriented East-West, unlike in most of the major cemeteries linked to the Zhou clan where a North-South orientation dominates.

Yejiashan cemetery is the earliest Zeng state aristocratic cemetery ever discovered. It proves that this lineage was already established in the Suizhou region as early as the Early Western Zhou period, probably around the end of the 11th century BCE.

I.3. Yidigang 義地崗

The site of Yidigang is situated at Suizhou, only 4.3 km from Leigudun (see fig.1, site 4). Since the 1970s, several tombs dating from the Early Spring and Autumn period to the Middle Warring States period have been discovered.²⁵ A few inscriptions mention names of different lineages, such as Wei 爲 or

²² See for example Wang 2014: 67–71. The author also underlines that only two tombs among 140 have a waist pit.

²³ About the use of emblems in Late Shang and Early Western Zhou China, see Venture 2017.

²⁴ See Hwang 2012: 607–670 and 2013: 1–82.

²⁵ For a presentation of these discoveries up to 1994, see HWKY, SZK and SB 2008: 4–6.

Chen 陳.²⁶ On one *ge*-blade the name of a high official of the Zeng state also appears: the Great Administrator of the Workers of Zeng, Li Dai (曾大攻尹季怠).²⁷ But it was only with the 1994 and 2011 excavation campaigns that this funeral site was definitively linked to the Zeng state.

A group of three tombs with rectangular pits, all containing bronze vessels, was discovered in 1994.²⁸ According to the tomb structure, excavated artifacts and bronze inscriptions, archaeologists identified M1 as a male member of the Huang 黃 lineage, Zhong You 仲酉, who had an important role in the Zeng state (Junior Steward, or *Shaozai* 少宰). The owner of M3 was probably a woman from the Zeng lineage, who was named Zhong Ji 仲姬 and who received a bronze from Lord Yue of Zeng (曾侯戊²⁹), who was perhaps her father. Lord Yue of Zeng is also mentioned on bronzes from various provenances; including several specimens excavated from the tomb of one of his successors: Lord Yi of Zeng.³⁰

In 2011 three other tombs were excavated on the same site.³¹ Tomb M6, which is also dated from the final phase of the Spring and Autumn period, contained ten ritual bronzes. Nine had inscriptions mentioning a member of the Zeng lineage: Prince Quji of Zeng (曾公子去疾).³² Some inscriptions excavated from Yidigang can be stylistically associated with the inscriptions made for Lord Yi (ex. fig. 5a and 5b).

²⁶ 爲 and 陳 were both originally written with a 攴 element on the right.

²⁷ SXB 1980.

²⁸ HWKY, SZK and SB 2008.

²⁹ 戊 was originally written with a 邑 element on the left.

³⁰ The name of Lord Yue of Zeng appears on twenty-seven bronze elements from various weapons excavated from Leigudun M1. See HB 1989: 254–294.

³¹ HWKY and SB 2012a.

³² The personal name, Quji, can be understood as something like: “eliminate the illness.” This kind of name is also attested in several Warring States seals.



Fig. 5a: Yidigang M6: 4
Jiangnan kaogu, 2012, 3 : 18, fig.10



Fig. 5b: Leigudun M1: C.170
JC9930³³

Archaeologists have established that Yidigang cemetery was in fact part of a larger funeral site which included several cemeteries, all dating from the Middle Spring and Autumn period to the Middle Warring States period. The content of the inscriptions and their style strongly suggest that relatives of Lord Yi of Zeng were buried in this cemetery.

I.4. Wenfengta 文峰塔

Wenfengta cemetery, also situated in Suizhou, is part of the Yididang large funeral area (see fig.1, site 5). In 2009, two Eastern Zhou tombs were accidentally discovered during earthwork activities. A joint team from the Hubei Provincial Institute of Cultural Relics and Archaeology and Suizhou Municipal Museum then proceeded to perform a salvage excavation.³⁴ Unfortunately, both tombs were already looted before being destroyed by earth-moving machines. Despite this very bad context, archaeologists were able to gather important materials and information from this campaign. First, the scale of these graves was quite large

³³ The abbreviation “JC” refers to the Yin Zhou jinwen jicheng 殷周金文集成 bronze inscriptions corpus. See ZSKKY 2007.

³⁴ See the preliminary report: HWKY and SB 2014b.

(more than 40 square meters at the bottom of each grave). It was also possible to determine that at least one tomb (M2) originally had an access ramp. M2 was nearly emptied by looters, but it still contained two supplementary coffins placed outside the *guo* structure, probably belonging to accompanying deaths. Furthermore, twelve musical stones from a lithophone were excavated from this tomb. All those elements reflect the high status of the tomb owner. The structure of the other tomb, M1, is less clear, but a badly damaged set of at least ten bronze bells was discovered by archaeologists. Even if bells excavated from M1 are less numerous than those from the chime set of Lord Yi of Zeng, the dimensions of the biggest bells and their quality are comparable. Their inscriptions permit us to distinguish three subsets, and to identify the Lord Yu of Zeng (曾侯與³⁵) as the one who cast at least two of these subsets. The longest inscription contains 169 characters and is stylistically close to Lord Yi's bell inscriptions (e.g. fig. 6a and 6b). It constitutes an important document for reconstructing the history of Zeng. If the main content is quite clear, many characters and expressions are still debated by paleographers.³⁶ However, a general outline of the text can already be proposed.

³⁵ 與 was here written with two supplementary elements: 月 and 父.

³⁶ Several articles have been published about this inscription in a special issue of the *Jianghang kaogu* journal. See *Jianghang kaogu* 2014.4.



Fig. 6a: Wenfengta M1: 1
Jiangnan kaogu, 2014, 4: 17, hand copy 1.

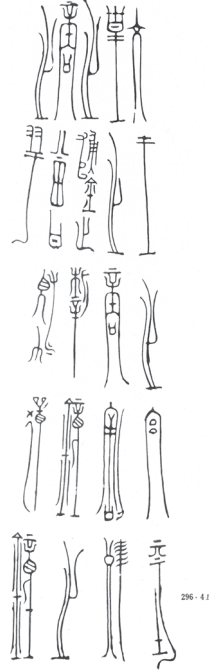


Fig. 6b: Leigudun M1: bell low 2.9
JC296

At the beginning of the inscription, Lord Yu of Zeng recalls that someone (probably one of his ancestors) helped King Wen 文王 (1099/1056–1050) and King Wu 武王 (1049/1045–1043) to defeat the Shang. Then a Zhou king ordered his ancestor Nan Gong³⁷ to move to the Huai River valley to rule local “barbarians” and to keep watch on the region. After the decline of the Zhou royal house, Zeng got closer to the Chu state. But the Southern state of Wu 吳 started to expand aggressively to the detriment of Chu. Fortunately, the Lord of Zeng, who was famous for his martial qualities, was able to fight against this enemy, to stabilize the Chu king’s position and to bring Zeng back into its frontiers. The inscription ends with the usual dedication and wish formulas.

This text sheds a new light on the Zeng state’s history and will be discussed as such in the second part of this paper. M1 and M2 are dated from the Late Spring and Autumn period, sometime after 497 BCE. Lord Yu was already

³⁷ Some scholars believe that this is the same person as the one who helped kings Wen and Wu.

known by an inscription on a bronze weapon excavated from Leigudun tomb M1. Another inscription on a bronze bell was discovered in 2011, in tomb M4. This tomb, which was nearly completely destroyed by earthworks, is dated from the Late Spring and Autumn period. The text also stresses the importance of the relationship between a king of Chu and the Lord of Zeng.³⁸

Between 2012 and 2013 new excavations were conducted at Wenfengta, and fifty-four tombs and three horse and chariot pits were excavated, all dating from the Middle Spring and Autumn period to the Middle Warring States period.³⁹ Among the seven largest tombs on this site, two had access ramps (M8 and M18). The biggest one, M18, with its 9-meter-deep grave, dates from the Warring States period and is perhaps a bit later than Lord Yi's one. It is said that it is the first cross-shape tomb that has been discovered for the Eastern Zhou period. This tomb has also been looted, but fortunately the eastern compartment of the *guo* was intact. It contained many bronze vessels, confirming the important status of the tomb owner. Three sacrificial pits were also dug around M18, and one contained two bronze square *fou* vessels (方缶) with inscriptions, including one referring to Lord Bing of Zeng (曾侯丙). Tomb M18 is considered to be a bit later than Lord Yi's one, so Lord Bing should be one of Lord Yi's successors and probably also one of his descendants. Other inscriptions found on several bronzes excavated from the other tombs also mention members of the Zeng lineage, but another name especially aroused specialists' enthusiasm.

M21 was a simple pit tomb, smaller than M18. It contained several bronzes with the name of Zeng, and one halberd-head cast for a "Minister of War of Sui" (隨大司馬). The mention of Sui in a cemetery clearly associated to the state of Zeng again brought to light the relationship between those two names.

With Wenfengta we have seen most of the major sites where remains directly related to the Zeng state have been discovered.⁴⁰ It can be noted, as is usually the case with archaeological research on Bronze Age China, that the information we have about the Zeng people is mainly provided by tombs and other related funeral structures, such as horse and chariot pits. But some scholars have pointed out that cemeteries where leaders of regional states were buried in this period were usually situated not too far from their capital.⁴¹ In fact,

³⁸ HWKY and SB 2015.

³⁹ HWKY and SB 2014a; HWKY 2013.

⁴⁰ A few bronzes cast by Zeng family members have been discovered in other places. For a more detailed overview of Zeng bronze discoveries, see Zhang 2009: 38–59.

⁴¹ This question has recently been discussed by Fang Qin (2014b: 109–115).

less than one kilometer from Yejiashan cemetery, at Miaotaizi 廟臺子, the remains of a walled city were found, with ditches and some large rammed-earth building foundations. Parts of these remains were contemporary with the Yejiashan cemetery. Important contemporary occupation remains were also discovered not too far from Guojiamiao cemetery, at Zhoutai 周臺 and Chongyizhai 忠義寨. Fang Qin 方勤 believes that these remains also correspond to Zeng state capital remains. An important settlement was also probably established in the vicinity of Yidigang cemeteries, but it has not been discovered yet. These architectural remains can provide supplementary information about the wealth and the power of the Zeng regional state. However, these kinds of remains are usually difficult to interpret, especially in the present case, as all the non-funerary sites have not been completely excavated, so we still ignore their precise size and organization. Therefore, one needs to be very careful with premature identification. In fact, to better understand the history of the Zeng state, the archaeological remains alone are not sufficient; we need to use both transmitted texts and other epigraphical sources.

II. Zeng in ancient books and other inscriptions

As mentioned at the beginning of this article, the character *zeng* 曾 never appears as a state name in transmitted texts, but two closely related characters were used in this way: *zeng* 繒 and *zeng* 鄫. Three characters share the same *zeng* 曾 element and were probably pronounced in exactly the same way in the Pre-Qin period. Stories about a Zeng state (and/or lineage) can be found in several ancient texts, such as the *Zuozhuan* 左傳, the *Guliangzhuan* 穀梁傳, the *Guoyu* 國語 or the *Shiji* 史記. *Zeng* 繒 and *zeng* 鄫 were clearly used in these texts as graphical variants which can both refer to the same entities.⁴² As early as the beginning of the 19th century, Ruan Yuan 阮元 (1764–1849) proposed to read the character *zeng* 曾 used in one Zhou bronze inscription as a state's name written as *Zeng* 鄫 in some ancient texts.⁴³

During the Spring and Autumn period, a regional state called *Zeng* was a satellite state of Lu 魯 before being destroyed by Lü 莒 in 567 BCE. This *Zeng* state was probably situated in the Shandong peninsula. According to the *Zuozhuan*, intermarriage relationships existed between Lu and *Zeng* during the Spring and Autumn period.⁴⁴ As the Lu lineage belongs to the Ji 姬 clan, the *Zeng* state from Shandong necessarily belongs to a different clan. In his *Shuowen jiezi* 說文解字, Xu Shen 許慎 (c. 55 – c. 149) indicates that the leading family of the *Zeng* state from Shandong belongs to the Si 姒 clan.⁴⁵ A set of inscribed bronzes was excavated in 1981 from a tomb located at Linqiu 臨朐, in the eastern part of the Shandong peninsula.⁴⁶ Inscriptions mention local political entities, such as Qi 齊 and Xun 鄆, but also a *Zeng* lineage which is here called “Shang *Zeng*” 上曾 or “Upper *Zeng*.” This specific mention may reflect the existence of at least two *Zeng* states at that time. But, as underlined by Zhang Changping, the style of the vessel and the formulation of the inscriptions itself are similar to those of the bronzes produced by the *Zeng* state from the Suizhou region, and different from the Shandong regional tradition.⁴⁷ So, even if two *Zeng* entities existed, there must have been strong connections between these two groups.

⁴² See Rong Geng, *Wuyingdian yiqi tulu* 武英殿彝器圖錄, 1934, quoted by Zhang 2009: 377.

⁴³ Ruan Yuan, *Jiguzhai zhongding yiqi kuanshi* 積古齋鐘鼎彝器款識, 1804, quoted by Zhang 2009: 3.

⁴⁴ Zeng Ji Ji 鄫季姬 was a woman from Lu 魯 who married a ruler from the *Zeng* lineage. See Yang and Xu 1985: 380, 887.

⁴⁵ *Shuowen jiezi*: 135b.

⁴⁶ LW and WDWGW 1982.

⁴⁷ Zhang 2009: 381.

Another important story about Zeng concerns the role played by a lineage called Zeng in the fall of the Western Zhou. Under the reign of King You 幽 (781–771), the Rong 戎 barbarians, who were probably located in the North or West of Shaanxi (or maybe in Gansu) formed an alliance with the Zeng and Shen 申 aristocratic lineages. Together, they attacked the Zhou royal house, obliging the court to leave the royal domain, in the Wei river valley, and to take refuge in its secondary capital, at Luoyang.⁴⁸ This important chapter of Early Chinese history also appears in the recently published *Xinian* 繫年 Warring States period manuscript, from Tsinghua University.⁴⁹ The character *zeng* 曾 was used in this document to note the name of Zeng,⁵⁰ confirming the identity between the Zeng 曾 lineage, or state name, as seen in excavated sources, and *zeng* 繒 or *zeng* 甯, as given in transmitted texts.

The location of this political entity is still debated by specialists. Most scholars rely on the traditional location of the Shen state in the Nanyang region, in the south of Henan province, to deduce that Zeng was probably also situated in the same area.⁵¹ But, as early as the Qing dynasty, Cui Shu 崔述 (1740–1816) expressed doubts about an alliance between groups that were separated by so great a distance.⁵² Following this reflection, some other scholars pointed out that the *Old Bamboo Annals*, or *Guben zhushu jinian* 古本竹書紀年, mentions the existence, at that time, of a “Western Shen” state (西申), probably not too far from the royal domain. The same appellation is also used in the *Xinian* manuscript in a similar context.⁵³ On the other hand, the discovery of two inscribed bronze vessels in 1981 in the Nanyang region, cast by a member of a Southern Shen lineage (南申) tends to confirm the presence of a Shen state in this region, but it also suggests that it was not the only Shen group existing at that time. For these reasons, some scholars consider that, if the Rong were close to the Zhou domain and if a Shen state also existed in this region, the Zeng group implicated in the fall of the Western Zhou must

⁴⁸ For an analysis of this historical event, see Li 2006 and Shim, forthcoming.

⁴⁹ The *Xinian* manuscript was published in Li 2011. For a presentation of the *Xinian* and of its importance for the study of Ancient Chinese history, see Pines 2014: 287–324.

⁵⁰ See *Xinian*, section 2, slip #3. See Li 2011: 138.

⁵¹ Nanyang is situated about 150 km from Suizhou.

⁵² Quoted by Li 2006: 223.

⁵³ *Xinian*, section 2, slips #5 and 6. See Li 2011: 138.

also have been situated not too far away.⁵⁴ But Zhang Changping rejected this interpretation, considering it quite unlikely that two Zeng states existing at the same time, one in the West and one in the South, would both be neighbors of a Shen state.⁵⁵ The debate about the location of this Zeng is not yet closed. In his commentary to a passage of the *Guoyu* concerning this historical event, Wei Zhao 韋昭 (d. 277), from the Eastern Han, gives the following explanation: “Zeng belongs to the Si 姒 clan. It is a descendant of Yu 禹.”⁵⁶ Yu, frequently called “Yu the Great” (大禹) in transmitted sources, is the legendary hero, founder of the Xia dynasty. So, this Zeng state could have the same origin as the one from Shandong. Rejecting, as Zhang Changping, the idea of two Zeng states and, because of the inscription from the Eastern Zhou period, evoked in the introduction to this article, which indicates that the Zeng was a lineage clearly related to the Ji clan, Ren Wei believes that Wei Zhao was wrong in associating Zeng with the Si clan.⁵⁷

Inscriptions excavated from other sites than those mentioned in the first part of this paper also provide important information about Zeng. The earliest testimonies can be found in oracle bone inscriptions from the Wu Ding 武丁 (? –1189) period. The form of the graph is not exactly the same as the *zeng* characters known from late Western Zhou inscriptions (the lower element of “曾,” which could be written as “口” or “曰,” is missing in this ancient form), but Yu Xingwu 于省吾 was able to identify it correctly as early as 1943.⁵⁸ Zeng appears there as the name of a place where Wu Ding may have stopped with his army.⁵⁹ The precise location of Zeng during the Shang dynasty is still unclear, but the recent Yejiashan discovery proves definitively that a Zeng

⁵⁴ This is for example the opinion defended by Li Feng (2006: 221–232) and by Dong Shan (2013: 154–161). Dong Shan (2013: 157–158) also mentions two interesting pieces of inscribed Western Zhou oracle bones excavated from Zhougongmiao 周公廟 (Shaanxi). He says that a character appears on these two pieces, composed by the old form of *zeng* 曾 associated with the elements 冂 and 王. He believes that this character designates a group of north-western non-Zhou people led by a ruler who held the title of king (王). Unfortunately, those inscriptions have not been published yet, so it is difficult to follow or to discuss the author’s interpretation.

⁵⁵ Zhang 2009: 379.

⁵⁶ 鄯，姒姓。禹後也。 See *Guoyu*: 522.

⁵⁷ Ren 2004: 309.

⁵⁸ Yu 1943: 12–13 (2009: 263–265).

⁵⁹ Three inscriptions, at least, evoke this stop at Zeng (HJ6536, 7353, 7354). The abbreviation “HJ” refers to the *Jiaguwen heji* 甲骨文合集 oracle bone inscriptions corpus. See Guo Moruo 1982. Considering the unity of content and writing style of these three inscriptions, it is quite possible that they could all have been carved during one unique divination.

state was already established in the Suizhou region in the Early Western Zhou period. It is also to be noted that the character *zeng* used at Yejiashan was also written systematically in the same manner as in Shang inscriptions, without the lower element.

Before the Yejiashan discovery, scholars had noticed that Zeng was also mentioned as a place name in two Early Western Zhou period inscriptions, the *Zhong yan* 中甗⁶⁰ and the *Jing fangding* 靜方鼎.⁶¹ Zeng was there associated with another place: E 鄂. Both inscriptions concern a military campaign in the South commanded by a king of Zhou, probably King Zhao 昭王 (977/975–957). According to the context, and to other inscriptions, Zeng must have been, at that time, not too far from E. According to transmitted texts, such as the chapter “Yin benji 殷本紀” of the *Shiji* or the *Zhanguo ce* 戰國策, an E state already existed at the end of the Shang dynasty. After the Zhou replaced the Shang, the E lineage served the Zhou kingdom. Among the information given about E in transmitted texts, two locations were given by a scholar from the Tang dynasty, Zhang Shoujie 張守節 (ca. 737).⁶² In his commentary to the *Shiji*, he quoted two authors who also lived during the same dynasty.⁶³ According to those quotations, the E state could have been located in the modern Ezhoucheng 鄂州城 region, in Hubei province, or in modern Nanzhao County (南召縣, in the Nanyang region), where a Western E County (西鄂縣) was established under the Western Han dynasty.⁶⁴ During the 20th century, a majority of scholars considered that the E state was situated in the region of Nanyang during the Western Zhou period. So, Zeng should also have been located in the Nanyang basin. This conclusion also fitted with the traditional location of the Shen state evoked above. Taking into consideration the discovery of the Leigudun M1 tomb in 1978, and some other previous discoveries, scholars then believed that it was only at the end of the Western Zhou that Zeng moved from Nanyang to Suizhou. But the excavation of Yejiashan cemetery proves that they were wrong.

E was indeed an important regional state during the Western Zhou period. Inscriptions indicate that E had marriage relationships with the Zhou family.⁶⁵

⁶⁰ JC949.

⁶¹ XS1795.

⁶² Date of the book preface.

⁶³ See Zhang Shoujie, *Shiji zhengyi* 史記正義. Quoted in *Shiji*: 1692. The authors quoted by Zhang Shoujie are Liu Bozhuang 劉伯莊 (in activity between 627 and 663) and Li Tai 李泰 (620–653).

⁶⁴ See Li 2006: 330. For a more recent discussion on E state location during the Western Zhou period, based on transmitted texts and archaeological material, see Xu 2013: 229–234.

⁶⁵ See the E *hou gui* 鄂侯簋 (JC3929).

A Lord of E is also mentioned in another inscription as what Edward Shaughnessy called a “Border Protector” 馭方.⁶⁶ But, during the Late Western Zhou period, the Lord of E took the head of a rebellion, allied to eastern “barbarians” 東夷 and to barbarians from the Southern Huai River 南淮夷. He was defeated by King Li’s 厲王 (857/853–842/828) armies. This event is related in a contemporary bronze inscription, translated as follows by Edward Shaughnessy in 1997:⁶⁷

Yu said, “Illustrious and great august ancestor Duke Mu was capable of standing beside and assisting the prior kings and settling the four quarters. And so Duke Wu has also not distanced or forgotten my sagely grandfather and deceased-father Youda shu and Yishu, commanding Yu to continue my grandfather and deceased-father’s governance at Jing state. And so Yu also does not dare to be disordered and myopic in supporting my ruler’s command. *Wuhu!* Oh woe! Since heaven has sent down great destruction on the lower state, and also it is when the Lord of E, the Border Protector, has led the Southern Huai Yi and the Eastern Yi broadly to attack our southern states and eastern states as far as Lihan, the king then commanded the Western six armies and the Yin eight armies saying, “Rip and attack the Lord of E, the Border Protector; do not leave either old or young.” And so the armies extensively feared and trembled, and did not succeed in attacking E. And so Duke Wu then dispatched Yu to lead one hundred of the Duke’s war chariots, two hundred charioteers, and one thousand infantry, saying, “In rescuing my resolute plan, assist the Western six armies and the Yin eight armies to attack the Lord of E, the Border Protector. Do not leave either old or young.” When Yu took Duke Wu’s infantry and chariotry and advanced as far as E, ramming and attacking E, he was victorious, capturing their leader, the Border Protector. And so, Yu, having had success, dare in response to extol Duke Wu’s illustrious dazzling glory, herewith making (this) great treasured caldron. May Yu for ten thousand years (have) son’s sons and grandson’s grandsons to treasure and use it.

⁶⁶ See Shaughnessy 1997: 82.

⁶⁷ The translation of the Yu *ding* 禹鼎 inscription (JC2833) is taken from Shaughnessy 1997: 82–83.

This inscription depicts quite well that it was not so easy for the Zhou armies to put down the rebellion. After this event, no trace was found of an E state in transmitted texts, and no later bronze inscription would mention E. That is why, until the beginning of the 21st century, according to transmitted texts, archaeological remains and inscriptions, most scholars agreed on this, and the state of E disappeared after this event.

In 2007, archaeologists discovered an Early Western Zhou cemetery at Yangzishan 羊子山, in Suixian county 隨縣 near Suizhou (see fig.1, site 6). No archaeological report (even a preliminary one) has been published up to now. But some bronzes excavated during this archaeological campaign were recently published.⁶⁸ The style of these bronzes is quite different from the classical Zhou ritual bronzes. Many of the published bronze vessels bear an inscription. Most of the inscribed bronzes were cast by members of an E lineage, and in particular by a Lord of E (鄂侯). This new discovery could lead one to conclude that Suizhou was originally the land of E. Then, after King Li's victory, E was destroyed and Zeng occupied its territory. But the discovery of Yejiashan in 2010 proved that Zeng was already present in the Suizhou region as early as the Early Western Zhou period. Then, in 2012, within the framework of the earthwork-related South–North Water Transfer Project (*Nanshui beitiaogongcheng* 南水北調工程), archaeologists discovered more than twenty tombs from the Late Western Zhou to the Spring and Autumn period near Nanyang. More than one hundred ritual bronzes were excavated at a place called Xiaxiangpu 夏響鋪, including thirty-eight inscribed bronzes.

According to the inscriptions, four tombs were identified as tombs of a Lord of E.⁶⁹ Unfortunately, many of them were looted in the past, two tombs were destroyed by earth moving machines in 2012 and, finally, tombs were also looted after the discovery and before archaeologists started their scientific excavation. However, this discovery proves that the E lineage did not disappear completely after King Li put down the rebellion and that the traditional location of E in the Nanyang region was not completely unfounded. At the least a group of the E lineage élite still existed during the Spring and Autumn period and was established in this area. One element has been remarked on by scholars. The bronze vessels cast by the E lineage during the Early Western Zhou period were very specific, very different from the Zhou models,⁷⁰ whereas the bronzes excavated from Nanyang were quite common. Does it

⁶⁸ See SSB 2009. For a reflection about the E bronzes from Yejiashan cemetery, see Zhang 2011: 87–94.

⁶⁹ Cui and Wang 2013: 8.

⁷⁰ On the specificities of Early Western Zhou E bronzes, see Zhang 2011: 90–93.

signify that the E élite had already completely abandoned their own traditions after the defeat, or does it mean that the E lineage from Nanyang were not descendants of the E from Yangzishan? It is still difficult to answer this question, especially because all the related archaeological material has not yet been published.

These debates illustrate quite well the complexity of the relationship between lineage names, place names and the location of those place names in Antiquity. In fact, if the clan name, or *xing* 姓, was supposed to be fixed for eternity, the lineage name, or *shi* 氏, could be easily modified or created. The lineage founder can choose, for example, a place name for its new lineage name. One can take the name of the fief or the domain given to him by the king, as did Shao Gong Shi 召公奭 (one of the famous Early Western Zhou Ministers). A fief can be given to one lineage, and then, for some reason, the king can decide to give it to another lineage. So, two states can have exactly the same name, whereas their leading families do not have any kind of blood relationship, as is for example the case for the two Yan 燕 states which coexisted between the beginning of the Zhou dynasty to the Spring and Autumn period: one situated in modern Henan province (also called Southern Yan 南燕), and another (also called Northern Yan 北燕) which became one of the most important kingdoms of the Warring States period, close to modern Beijing. The leaders of the first one belong to the Ji 姬 clan and the second to the Ji 姬 clan.

A fief, and its leading lineage, can also be transferred from one place to another. In some cases, only part of the lineage moves, and the others stay at the original place. In that case, it is frequent to then have two fiefs, or states, in different regions but with the same name. In transmitted texts, these different entities are sometimes differentiated by adding to lineages' names different attributes like "Northern" or "Southern," "Greater" or "Lesser," etc. This is often the case in later commentaries where scholars want to clearly differentiate the different groups or place names, even though these designations did not necessarily exist in antiquity. For example, at least three Guo 虢 states existed at the end of the Western Zhou period, two of them in Henan: one at Sanmenxia 三門峽, one probably around Yingyang 滎陽, and one in Shaanxi province, around Baoji 寶雞. It is only in Han texts that scholars started to use different designations such as "Eastern Guo" (東虢), "Western Guo" (西虢) and "Lesser Guo" (小虢). In the earlier sources, all those regional states were simply called Guo.⁷¹

⁷¹ Ren 2004: 227.

The little direct information that can be found in transmitted texts about a Zeng state situated in the Nanyang-Suizhou region contrasts strongly with the importance of the related archaeological remains excavated from this area. The silence of traditional sources about this state is even more surprising when we know that the attachment of the Zeng lineage to the Zhou Royal clan can be deduced from several inscriptions dated from the Spring and Autumn period.⁷² One of the bells recently excavated at Wenfengta gives the best evidence of this attachment.

The Lord Yu of Zeng said: “I am a descendant of Ji.”

曾侯與曰：余稷之玄孫 (M1:3)⁷³

Ji 稷 refers here to Houji 后稷, the mythic ancestor of the Zhou lineage. It seems difficult to explain how such an important state linked to the Zhou royal family, which occupied a leading position in Suizhou region during so long a period, could be ignored by ancient authors. A famous passage of the *Guoyu* 國語 gives a list of regional states and ethnic groups from the end of the Western Zhou period. Here is the part of the list concerning the Southern region:

“...in the South are the Jingman, Shen, Lü, Ying, Deng, Chen, Cai, Sui and Tang...”

...南有荆蠻、申、呂、應、鄧、陳、蔡、隨、唐⁷⁴...

Except the Jingman, who are often considered as a kind of “barbarian group,” the other names correspond to different states situated south of Luoyang. No Zeng state appears in this list. The Eastern Han dynasty commentator Wei Zhao specifies that Ying, Cai, Sui and Tang all belong to the Ji 姬 clan. Many ancient sources indicate that Sui was an important state situated in the Suizhou region.

After the excavation of the tomb of Lord Yi, and the discovery of many remains of the Zeng state around Suizhou during the 20th century, while no trace of Sui was found there, the hypothesis proposed by Li Xueqin became the most widely accepted. Zeng and Sui were two names used to designate the same state; if the first one was widely used by people of this lineage to refer to themselves in their ritual bronze inscriptions, the second has been preferred by tradition to refer to this group.

How can a state have two different names? Other cases have existed, as for the state of Chu 楚 which was also known as Jing 荆, both in transmitted

⁷² These inscriptions are discussed by Ren 2004: 291–292.

⁷³ See HWKY and SB 2014b: 26.

⁷⁴ See chapter “Discourses of Zheng (鄭語)”, in *Guoyu*: 507.

sources and in inscriptions. One possible reason why Zeng may have been called Sui is because Sui was the capital of Zeng. Dong Shang 董珊 recalls the example of the state of Wei 魏, which also happened to be called Liang 梁 in many ancient sources, because Liang was once the name of the Wei state capital.⁷⁵ But even if this example clearly shows that a state could indeed be designated by two different names, it does not explain at all why only one name appears in the inscription and only the other one is attested in transmitted sources.

Recently, a few new materials related to Sui came to light. One bronze halberd-head, on which appears the name of a “Minister of War of Sui,” was excavated between 2012 and 2013 from tomb M21 from the Zeng lineage cemetery at Wenfengta. The name of the state of Sui also appears once in the Tsinghua *Xinian* Warring States manuscript, published in 2011.⁷⁶ Finally, Chen Wei 陳偉, from Wuhan University, also pointed out that a “Lord of Sui” (隨侯) is mentioned in a Chu document on bamboo dated from the beginning of the fourth century BCE, excavated in 1994 at Geling 葛陵 in Henan province.⁷⁷ Those new materials do not definitely prove the identification of Suizhou Zeng with the Sui state, but they do at least show that the name of Sui was already used during the Eastern Zhou period. The Wenfengta discovery furthermore attests to a relationship between Sui and Zeng.

Conclusions

According to the confidence they put in transmitted texts (and on their understanding of these texts), scholars attach more or less importance to contradictions that exist between ancient literature and new elements brought by archaeology. Newly excavated epigraphical and archaeological materials have not solved all the problems raised by the discovery of the tomb of Lord Yi of Zeng in 1978, but today we know much more about Zeng history and its relationships with neighboring regional states. If we keep to those facts that seem to be quite certain, we can summarize the information we have as follows:

A place name called Zeng existed as early as the reign of Wu Ding. Transmitted sources evoke a Zeng lineage which must have existed at the time of the Shang dynasty. It is also said that this group was not linked to the Zhou

⁷⁵ See Dong 2013: 157.

⁷⁶ *Xinian*, section 15, slip #84. See Li 2011: 170.

⁷⁷ See HWKY 2003: 189 (slip #甲三 25). For Chen Wei’s identification of the Ji clan Sui state from Suizhou, see Chen 2006: 81.

house. We ignore the relationship between this lineage and the place name found in Shang oracle bone inscriptions. Then, at the beginning of the Western Zhou, a lineage of Zeng (same graph as the Shang place name) probably founded a city near Yejiashan. The leaders of this lineage bore the title of Lord (侯). About 25 kilometers from Yejiashan, another important lineage was present at Yangzishan. The E lineage, headed by a Lord of E, had an important role in the Zhou kings' defense system in the South; at least, this is mentioned in two important inscriptions, whereas nothing similar has been discovered about Zeng. During the Middle Western Zhou period we do not know exactly what happened to those two groups, because of the lack of related archaeological remains. Then, during the 9th century BCE, we know that a Lord of E led a rebellion in the South against the Zhou power. It was not easy for the king to defeat E, but he finally succeeded and the E state was annihilated.

From the Late Western Zhou period until the Warring States period, Zeng clearly appears as the main power in the Suizhou region. Meanwhile, a group led by a Lord of E established itself in the region of Nanyang. This group was quite wealthy, but we still cannot be sure, for the moment, that these people were the descendants of the E lineage from Suizhou. During the Eastern Zhou period, we have evidence that Zeng lineage members from Suizhou considered themselves as belonging to the Ji clan, declaring that they were descendants of the Zhou kings. Lord Yu of Zeng lived around the end of the 6th century BCE, and probably ruled the Zeng state just before Lord Yue and Lord Yi.⁷⁸ In one inscription, he evokes his ancestor Nan Gong, who was also the father of the Lord Kang (?) of Zeng, who lived around the end of the 11th century BCE and was buried at Yejiashan. This exceptional document confirms the continuity that exists between the Yejiashan Zeng lineage and the Wenfengta one (and probably down to Lord Yi of Zeng). Many scholars today believe that the major issues concerning Zeng history have been clarified, and that the Zeng state established at Suizhou since Early Western Zhou period originally belonged to the Ji 姬 clan, and that Zeng is usually designated as Sui in many ancient texts.

I recognize the important progress that has been achieved in recent years in the understanding of the Zeng state's history, but I think that some questions are not yet closed. First, I agree with Zhang Changping⁷⁹ that new archeological and epigraphical materials do not yet prove that Sui and Zeng were two different appellations used to refer to the same state. Some links exist between these two names, but more evidence is needed to understand the nature of this relationship. If the association between Zeng and the Ji 姬 clan is clear, especially

⁷⁸ On the succession of Zeng Lords, see Zhang 2009: 355–358 and Fang 2014b: 109–111.

⁷⁹ See Zhang, in JKB 2014: 59–60.

from the late Western Zhou period, some features are still difficult to interpret in this context. For example, Zeng tombs from Yejiashan, Guojiamiao, Yidigang and Wenfengta are generally East-West oriented, whereas the tombs in cemeteries of well-known Ji 姬 clan lineages usually follow a South-North orientation principle.⁸⁰ This difference in funerary practices, maintained over several centuries, may reflect some differences between the lineages concerned.

Chang Huaiying alluded to the possibility that Zeng might originally have been a non-Ji lineage to whom a king of Zhou conferred the Ji clan name at the beginning of the Western Zhou – a practice well attested to in ancient literature.⁸¹ It also seems important to make a distinction between early Western Zhou historical events and a discourse inscribed on a Spring and Autumn period bronze bell about ancestors who lived several centuries earlier.⁸² One can hope that many problems will be solved in the future, with archaeologists able to bring to light new remains related to the Zeng lineage, and especially Middle Western Zhou period remains, to better understand the evolution of this group.

The Zeng state constitutes a wonderful example of what archaeological discoveries can afford scholars working on the history of Ancient China. Material remains can provide important information about many aspects concerning the human groups which occupied China at that time: size, wealth, geographical location, period of activity, social organization, material culture, contact with other groups, and so on. Then, when inscriptions are found in an archaeological context, it becomes possible to rely on written evidence to make new connections inside the archaeological site (between different artifacts or sets of artifacts, or between different tombs for example), but also with other archaeological sites, and, finally, with transmitted texts. Due to later destructions, looting, bad preservation conditions and the impossibility of systematic archaeological surveys applied to the whole land area in China, archaeology will only ever be able to bring us fragmentary information about Chinese history. But as seen in the case of Zeng, those pieces of the past can afford important information about a specific region, as for Suizhou. Without archaeological and epigraphical materials it would have been impossible to imagine, for example, that two regional states (i.e. Zeng and E), only about 25 kilometers apart, could have been established in the Suizhou region during the Early Western Zhou period. Just as for Zeng history, large parts of Ancient Chinese history are still waiting to be written or revised.

⁸⁰ This is evoked by Chang Huaiying 常懷穎, in JKB 2014: 53.

⁸¹ See Chang, in JKB 2014: 53.

⁸² This idea is, for example, evoked by Yu Wei 于薇, in JKB 2014: 58.

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