

## Analysis on the Geographic Location of “Shu” in Oracles

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**Abstract:** The symbol 𠄎 in oracle inscriptions of Yin Ruins is interpreted as Shu, but scholars cannot reach consensus on its geographic location. From analyzing the relationship between Shu and Shang as well as the geographic positions of other countries related to Shu, this paper tries to find out the specific geographic location of Shu as well as its political status during the Yin Dynasty.

### 1. Introduction

Since Yi-rang Sun interpreted 𠄎 in oracle inscriptions of Yin Ruins as the Chinese character of Shu, the academic circle has adopted this theory with little disputes. However, there are many controversies about the geographic position of Shu, and there is no final conclusion on this issue yet. The core of analyzing the geographic position of Shu lies in two points. First is the relationship between Shu and Shang (another name of the Yin Dynasty); second is the geographic position of other countries related to Shu. According to records in oracles, we can roughly classify them into following categories.

### 2. The King of Yin Dynasty Went to or Stayed in Shu

- (1) Gui Si Oracle, I, divined, went to Shu because of disasters. (Collection 21723)
- (2) Gui You Oracle, divined, went to Shu because of disasters. Yu Xian. (Collection 21724)
- (3) Gui Wei Oracle, went to Shu because of disasters. (Collection 21724)
- (4) Gui You Oracle, divined, stayed in Shu for ten days. (Hebu 13245)
- (5) Gui Si... stayed in Shu. (Collection 20854)
- (6)... stayed in Shu because of disasters. (Collection 20584)

Yu in (2) oracle has two meanings in oracle bone inscriptions; one is the first person pronoun, the other is a name.<sup>[1]</sup> Yu in Yu Xian is the first person pronoun of the King of Yin Dynasty. Xian (fourth tone) is the classical style of Xian (second tone), which has the meaning of continuity. The term indicates that the King of Yin had stayed in Shu for a long period. Other oracles also include contents about the King of Yin “went to Shu” or “stayed in Shu”. The contacts between Yin and Shu were very close, represents that the two places could not be far away from each other. “Disasters” in Shu are also worth noting. Whether there were “misfortunes” in Shu was not a trivial matter for Yin; the King of Yin went to Shu for many times because of that reason. It shows that the place of Shu was not at the border of Yin, but at the center of its regime. Hou-xuan Hu once expressed, “it’s not easy for Yin people to enter Sichuan because of the danger of Yizhou Mountain. Shu in the Oracle cannot be so far away.”<sup>[2]</sup> Jie-gang Gu also holds this opinion.<sup>[3]</sup> *Kung Sun Ch’ou (Part one)* in *Mencius* wrote, “After Xia Dynasty, Yin and Zhou Dynasties were prosperous. But their territories were no greater than thousands of miles.” The chapter of *Xuan Bird* in the *Ode to Shang* also describes that in the peaks of Yin and Shang Dynasties, the kingdoms had territories of “thousands of miles”. In the part of *Wei Strategy* of *Strategies of the Warring States*, Qi Wu said, “the territory of Yin borders Mengmen on the left, Zhang and Wei on the right, as well as rivers in front and mountains behind.” *Biography of Sun Tzu and Wu Qi* in the *Historical Records* has following description. “The kingdom of Yin bothers Mengmen on the left and Taihang Mountain on the Right. Changshan Mountain locates in its north while a big river runs through its south.” Xuan Zheng

wrote in *Bei Yong Wei Pu* of *Mao Shi Pu* that, “Bei Yong Wei is a place in Shang’s territory which has thousands of miles. Its feud is in *Yugong*, east to Daxing of Jizhou and north to Hengzhang. The place borders Hengzhang in the north and Chongzhou with mulberry fields in the south.” Today, Xin-chao Song also insists on above opinion.<sup>[4]</sup> It can be seen that the views of the two scholars are supported by sufficient literature.

### 3. The King of Yin Dynasty Subjugated Shu

#### (1) Divined, \* Wu Fu Qi \* Qiang and Shu (Heji 6633)

The divination inscriptions convey a lot of messages about battles between Yin and Qiang; they can be roughly divided into four categories. First, the King of Shang personally participated in the campaign against Qiang. Second, the King captured Qiang people with the assistance of generals. Third, ministers and generals led the fight against Qiang. Fourth, campaigns were led by princes of Yin. [5] Most academics believe that Qiang was in the west of Yin Dynasty, and its geographical location was in the west of Henan and the south of Shanxi. That opinion is reasonable. [6] Qiang and Shu usually appeared in descriptions together. Obviously, the two countries were adjacent to each other. Shu should be not far away from Henan and Shanxi. Also, No. 6699 of Hebu mentioned the place of Bei, which also appeared with Shu. That place often contacted with Zhao Fang. For instance in Ding Wei divine, the King went to conquer Zhao Fang, and divine in Bei (Collection 33025). During the regimes from King Pan Geng to King Wu Ding, Zhao Fang was the enemy of Yin; during the reign of King Lin Xin and King Kang Ding, Zhao Fang once subordinated to Yin but then went back on their words. The divination recorded that King Wu Yi went to fight with Zhao Fang personally for many times. Most scholars believe that Zhao Fang was in the northwest of Yin, while others hold that it located in Henan and Shandong provinces. [7] The King wanted to conquer Zhao, and chose to divine in Bei. It shows that Bei was closer to Yin. This area was often mentioned with Shu, which shows the location of Shu should be also close to Yin. From this, the King’s expedition to Shu was reasonable. Relevant oracle inscriptions are as follows.

#### (2) \* Yin Oracle, Que divined, (went to fight with) Shu together (Collection 6858)

#### (3) \* Yin Oracle, Que (divined), the King (went to fight with) Shu together (Collection 6859)

Under the strong military pressure of the Yin Dynasty, the Kingdom of Shu was subordinated to Yin and became a vassal of Yin. Sometimes the King of Yin went to Shu to hold sacrificial ceremonies. For example, Ding Mao Oracle, Gong divine, I went to Shu for events (again) (Zuan 547). In the chapter The 13th Year of Chenggong in The Commentary of Zuo, there’s the saying: “the most important national events are military affairs and sacrificial ceremonies”. “Events” in above sentence should be related to sacrifice. Another example is Shu royal affairs (Collection 5563). According to Shuo Wen Jie Zi, “royal means sacrifice”. It seems that when Yin held sacrifices, Shu should provide services. There is also the sentence “Wu Geng showed in Shu” (Nanming 613). Xiang Lin believes that “Wu Geng” is the god’s name. [8] From these examples we can see that Yin and Shu were closely related. When the King of Yin held sacrifices, Shu people needed to assist; sometimes the King went to Shu to hold sacrifices personally.

After the King of Yin conquered Shu, the Yin Dynasty sent envoys to Shu for political surveillance and conscription. From the perspective of conscription, there were descriptions like: ... She 300 in Shu (Iron 2.3.8). She is the name of army; “She 300” is the same as “300 She”. Meng-jia Chen explained that, She can be used as a verb or a noun. The verb of She can be interpreted as teaching somebody archery. The noun of She is interpreted as a kind of official which relates to divisions and brigades. [9] In both cases of noun and verb, “She 300 in Shu” links Yin, Shu and army affairs.

The Yin Dynasty also sent envoys to Shu for political surveillance. Oracle records, divine went to Shu; I sent envoys (Collection 21730). “I” should refer to the central government of Yin Dynasty represented by the King of Yin; “envoy” is a noun. The King of Yin sent envoys to Shu to show that Yin could supervise and control Shu, which was the same as “envoys” sent by the Yin Dynasty to Qiang. The oracle inscriptions also contain the following record. Jia Yin Oracle, the minister Zi came to Shu (Collection 22374). “Zi” is a name. “The minister Zi came to Shu” can be understood

as a minister of Shu called “Zi” went to Yin to report various situations of dependent countries.

Shu was not far from Yin. On one hand, the King of Yin used military means to “conquer Shu”. On the other hand, he “went to Shu” and adopted other measures such as sending “ambassadors” and “imperial officials” to intervene the political, spiritual and cultural development of Shu. Therefore, Shu was gradually incorporated into the political system of Yin Dynasty and became one of its dependent countries.

#### 4. Harvests in Shu

The Yin Dynasty concerned the economic situations of itself and other dependent countries; there were many divination questions about “harvests”. Shu is a part of the unified state system of Yin Dynasty. Oracle records about harvests in Shu can also be found.

(1) Divined that Shu harvested; divined that Shu did not harvest in Qi (Collection 9774)

(2) Fou, Da and Shu harvested (Yi 6423)

The quality of crops directly influenced local food collection and the political stability of Yin Dynasty. Yin people were fond of wine, “they drink all night long” and “smell badly”. (Wine Mandate in Shang Shu) They could not cultivate enough crops to make wine all by themselves. Therefore, the Yin royal family regarded the harvest of crops as an important issue. Yu Duan holds that “the Shang Dynasty was facing a serious threat caused by the contradiction between population pressure and food shortage”. [10] It is a brilliant idea. Farming has seasonal demand; peasants cannot catch up with farming season after long-distance travel. The harvest of crops will be affected in that case. Therefore, the land of Shu was not far away from Yin. In fact, as the sovereign, Yin Dynasty “had to take the moral responsibility for the economic development of its vassal states and people’s living in these countries”. [11] It is the basic obligation of Yin Dynasty. Thus, the kingdom attached great importance to agricultural production. According to The History of Yin Dynasty in the book Records of the Historian, the king told his ministers that, “you must work hard for the people and do your work well. Otherwise, I will punish you severely.” This oracle has the same form with divination of “harvest in Que” (Collection 9763), “harvest in Cha” (Collection 9791), “no harvest in Zhi” (18805), and “harvest in Yang” (Collection 28215). They are all vassal states of the Yin Dynasty. The oracle “divined, I am in Dian because of harvest in Gong” (Collection 9770) makes it clearer. Harvest in Gong is interpreted as “in Dian”. The chapter 21 years of Xiang Gong in The Commentary of Zuo recorded, “(the person) wanted to escape from punishment. But in Jiao Dian he made mistakes again.” Yu Du interpreted the words as follows. “The area outside the town calls Jiao, while the area outside Jiao is called Dian”. Meng-jia Chen once pointed out that “the influence of Yin Dynasty and the relationship between it and its vassal states can be inferred from records about harvest in oracles”. [12] This view is very unique.

According to Meng-jia Chen’s research, in divination inscriptions, countries which had been “visited” or “stayed” by the King of Yin had following obligations to the Yin Dynasty. First is the obligation to pay tribute of grain; second is to participate in royal expeditions and battles; third is Ru Gui to the Royal family; fourth is to offer cows and horses; fifth is to record royal affairs. [13] Shu needs to fulfill some of these obligations. From above inscriptions, “divined that Shu harvested” and “divined that Shu did not harvest in Qi”, we can see that Shu fulfilled its first obligation to the Yin Dynasty. Other oracle related to this issue can also be found.

(3) Ding Mao Oracle, Que divined, the King 𠩺 Fou in Shu (Collection 06860, 06861, 06862, 06863)

(4) Geng Chen Oracle, Que divined, the King 𠩺 Fou in Shu (Collection 06864)

𠩺 is Dun, which means expedition or attacks. “𠩺 Fou in Shu” indicates that Shu was already the military stronghold or military alliance of Yin King’s army at that time. It conforms to the obligation of “participating in royal expeditions and battles”.

Like the joint military actions between Qiang and Shu, the operation between Fou and Shu should also be noticed. Fou can be found in many oracles. Examples include follows.

(5) (Geng) Shen Oracle, (the King) divined and went to Fou. Second Announcement (Collection 6834)

(6) Geng Shen Oracle, the King divined, Que didn't go to Fou. (Collection 6834)

(7) Que didn't go to Fou (Collection 6834)

(8) Gui Hai Oracle, Que divined, I sent envoys to Fou. (Collection 6834)

(9) Gui Hai Oracle, Que divined, I didn't sent envoys to Fou. (Collection 6834)

(10) Gui Hai Oracle, Que divined, in second day of Yi Chou, many ministers went to Fou (Collection 6834)

From these oracle inscriptions, we can see that the King of Yin, as well as “envoys” and “many ministers” went to Fou for expedition. Therefore, the distance between Yin and Fou was not too far. According to the research of Meng-jia Chen, Que was “near to the west of Henan”. [14] Xiang-jie Zheng thinks that Que was in the northwest of Zhengzhou. [15] Their researches were basically conform with the location of Fou. In divination inscriptions, Que often connected with record about “affairs of ancient kings”, which were all divined during the regime of the King Wu Ding. According to the study of Fu-lin Chao, a person's “affairs of ancient kings” should be interpreted as “a person acts on behalf of the King, rather than fulfill missions appointed by the King of Yin.” [16] In the oracle, Que is also called as “Ya Que”. “Ya” is an official position, indicates that Que was a minister of the Yin Dynasty. Therefore, in oracles, there are also terms like “Que baron” and “Que official”. As the king's minister, Que had the right of speech in events such as expedition and sacrifice, which also evidences the distance between the Que and Yin. Since Shu and Qian were not far apart, it also showed that Shu located near Henan. According to ancient accent, Fou can also be interpreted as Bao. The Kingdom of Bao was established by the Bao family who were decedents of Yu. The History of Xia in the book of Records of the Historian explained that part of history. “Taishi Gong said, Yu was the surname of Yi; then the enfeoffment was carried out, these rulers adopted their surnames according to their feud. Thus, there were surnames of Xiahou, Youhu, Younan, Zhenxun, Tongcheng, Bao, Fei, Qi, Zeng, Xin, Ming and Zheng.” According to the quotation of Qiao Zheng in Bi Luo's Guo Ming Ji of Lu Shi, it was believed the place was in “Baoxin of Cai”, which is the North Baoxin Ji located in Xixian County, Xinyang City of Henan Province today. Afterwards, the Bao family moved to Hanzhong area of Shaanxi Province. But in the middle and late of Yin Dynasty, the Bao clan was still lived in Henan Province as Qiao Zheng said, so the King of Yin could “often led the troops of these feudal states to go on expeditions.” [17] The sentence “Fou Se my army. Fou did not Se my army. January.” (Collection 1027) is another evidence. Shuo Wen Jie Zi explains that Se means “the grain can be harvested.” “Se my army” means to supply grain to the army of Yin Dynasty. Since Yin was particularly concerned about this issue and strived to gain control over food, that place could not be far away. According to Zhi-bin Yan's research, the Yin Dynasty exerted strong control over many surrounding Fang states for a long time, reflecting the unique status of the Yin Dynasty. Most of these Fang states distributed in Shanxi, Henan and Shandong provinces. [18] This is very insightful.

According to the research of Ya-bing Sun and other scholars, in inscriptions on oracle bones, some countries are called as “Fang” while other countries are not. The vast majority of “Fang” states betrayed the Yin royal family from time to time, while the vast majority of other states were always subordinate to the Yin Royal family. [19] Shu was not called as “Fang” in divination inscriptions, and had close relationship with the Yin Dynasty. In addition, in terms of archaeological features, SanXingDui Culture in the late Shang Dynasty roughly represents local features. Although there are some artifacts made in the Central Plains, the overall proportion is very small. The difference between the two regions is obvious, which seems to be inconsistent with a series of actions taken by Yin to Shu recorded in divination. To sum up, it is believed that the place of Shu in divination should be not too far away from Yin. It can be seen that at that time, Shu people still lived in the Yellow River Basin. But they were not as powerful as before, and became a dependent country of the Yin Dynasty. Therefore, the 2nd Volume of Yuan He Surname Codification describes, “Shu was a marquis state of the Yin Dynasty.”

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