

**[A] True Depiction [of] Yu [Jing],  
[The] Loyal Assisting Duke**

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# Emulate Our Model Ancestor!

Yu Jing lived during the Northern Song Dynasty (960 to 1125 C.E.) from 1000 to 1064 C.E. He was a native of Shaoguan 韶關 in northern Guangdong Province.

His 名 *ming*, formal given name, was 靖 *Jing*; this character can be understood to mean “quiet, to pacify, to assure, to conciliate.”

His name at maturity (age 20, or at marriage), often self-assigned, 字 (*zi*) was: 安道 *An Dao* which means “peaceful path.”

His usual sobriquet (art-name or nickname), often ascribed by others and accepted due to its complimentary nature, 號 (*hao*), was: 武溪 *Wu Xi*, which is literally: “fierce brook,” and that could be taken to depict his fresh and sincere character.

Today, we refer to him by a poetic phrase penned by a fellow scholar-official named Cai Xiang 蔡襄, praising how his “elegant demeanor (*feng cai*) 風采 uplifted the spirits of other court officials.” Because this was both memorably worded, and was personally apt, that honorific caught on immediately. One source avers that no less than the reigning Song Dynasty fourth Emperor Renzong 仁宗, whom he served his whole life, declared him to be “foremost in elegance” 風采第一.

His career as a Confucian scholar-official in the imperial civil service was capped by an appointment as the Minister of Public Works (equivalent today to a Secretary in the U.S. President’s cabinet).

On learning that Yu Jing had sickened and died, the Emperor Yingzong was indeed quite grief-stricken and decreed investiture as a Duke 公 *Gong* (traditionally highest non-royal noble rank) be accorded posthumously, specifically honoring his Loyalty 忠 *Zhong* and his Helpfulness 襄 *Xiang* to the Throne. *Xiang* etymologically depicts rolling up sleeves and pants to engage in the arduous labors of agriculture. Yu Jing’s prominence and provenance led to many clan halls in the south of China and abroad to honor him by that posthumous aristocratic title of 忠襄公.



*A Court Portrait of the 5th Song Dynasty Zhiping-era 治平 (a 年號 “reign or period designation”) Emperor Yingzong 英宗 (a 廟號 “temple name” conferred posthumously by official dynastic annalists ). While of uncertain accuracy, it is noteworthy for its plain white robes rather than usual imperial yellow or even the often-used red of the Song; white would be the norm in next era, the Mongol Conquest Yuan Dynasty 1280-1368 C.E.*

The practice of such honor, of clan halls and clan histories, of clan schools and clan closeness well reflects the transition from the late middle Golden Age of the Tang Dynasty 618-906 C.E. to the high industrial semi-capitalist Song Dynasty. (To be sure, the antecedents of some form of educational training, and then of assessment/testing, review and promotion in a burgeoning career of civil service began as early as the Han Dynasty 206 B.C.E to 220 C.E.) When the geographically-feasible Imperial Reunification after almost four centuries of disunity, foreign invasions, as well as mass migrations was achieved by the Sui Dynasty in 589 C.E., the momentum of transformation soon reached its mature height during the Song as the aristocratic families/status of time immemorial gave way to the new scholar-official class – the “mandarins” (proximately a term from Portuguese, but only after they had first reached Malay areas, with root ultimately back to Sanskrit and “mantra”) which was so uniquely characteristic of China before our modern era.

Thus: to study hard, to win the competitive examinations at the district levels, then at the provincial capitals, and finally at the imperial palace, formally presided over by the Emperor, became the model for all within the clan and beyond to emulate and constituted a real ladder of upward social mobility in China. It was almost 700 years old (and of course further altered/attenuated) when admired from afar by Voltaire and the Enlightenment. That admiration helped sow the seeds of the next Age in the West, that of Revolutions, beginning of course with July 4, 1776.

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Yu Jing is the “Model” but he is not the Founding Ancestor of the Clan. Rather, You Yu 由余 (sometimes rendered Yao Yu) is recognized. A native himself of the Duchy of Jin 晉, in the southern/central part of the modern Shanxi Province 山西,

his/our ancestral roots are yet further to the Northwest, likely Gansu Province 甘肅 at the outer limits of what history believes was Chinese. You Yu was originally on a diplomatic mission to Duke Mu of Qin 秦穆公, who ruled 659-621 B.C.E. during the fractious “feudal” Spring-Autumn Era 春秋時代 771-476 B.C.E. (when Annals were kept by referencing those two seasons). The Duke saw his talents and wisdom and was able to secure his services — he eventually appointed him to be Chancellor/Prime Minister 宰相. Gaining 1000 square miles from 12 “Rong barbarian districts,” he led the feudal counterparts of Duke Mu to recognize him as the “hegemon” 霸 *ba* of the west. As a result, Duke Mu decreed Yu should be a new family name; since You Yu already had sons, it was his grandsons first to be so surnamed.

That ducal realm of Qin would take up royal dignity in 325 B.C.E. and then expand decisively by gaining what is now Sichuan Province 四川 in 316 B.C.E. From that new strategic posture, Qin would achieve in 221 B.C.E. at last a unified *oecumene* for *Tienxia* “All Under Heaven” and inaugurate over two millennia of imperial dynasties until the Manchu Conquest Qing fell in 1911/12. The very name Qin (Romanized using Wade-Giles as Ch’in) became the modern name used by foreigners for “China.” The descendants of You Yu have moved from their northwest origins during the course of dynastic changes into central, and now mostly southern China. With the 1849 Gold Rush to California, the lineage reached not only the Americas but truly the whole globe; our next worldwide convention will be in Macao this November.

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The ceremonial respect accorded to the Model Ancestor is of course both parallel to similar rites observed in many family homes, especially at the Lunisolar New Year/Spring Festival and the Clear Bright (so-called Tomb-sweeping) Festival of 120 days after the Winter Solstice, and deeply rooted in hoary antiquity. To be sure, these rites do derive from the belief system of the kings during the Shang Dynasty [1600 to 1046 B.C.E.] when the monarchs certainly worshipped their powerful regal ancestors with sacrifice, including of humans. From their divinations on tortoise shell and shoulder blades come the earliest forms of China’s writing. From their tombs come evidence of climate change, for elephants and even one rhinoceros were interred as well.

In the millennia that followed, especially with the advent of Buddhism during the disunion with the fall of the Han Dynasty, where this reformed Hinduism fixed a goal after expunging all desire to achieve dissolution into an airless *nirvana*, and with an at-first alien but sophisticated cosmology: it is much less likely that such native rites could remain truly any form of worship; ancestral veneration today is generally more a cultural norm, or (at worst) a superstition. The filial piety at the root/core of Confucianism is perhaps a stronger, more sincere devotion – although this too has begun to diminish as all Chinese modernize/transform from agrarian life/stasis.

This transition can be easily seen in the “Chinese Rites controversy” as missionaries of Roman Catholicism began to arrive in numbers, and the disputes climaxed in the pontificates of Popes Clement XI and Benedict XIV. The Jesuits had advised that the Chinese were only venerating their ancestors, just as Catholics, the Orthodox, and Anglicans do of the Saints in whose communion we all are whether living or dead. The Dominicans and Franciscans declared that Chinese Catholics must not have rites too akin to worship. By *Ex ille die*, the first Pope afore-mentioned forbade the Rites in 1715, and in 1742 the second forbade further discussion.

Only the 2nd to rule south of the 10,000-li Long Wall, the Manchu Conquest Qing Kangxi-era Emperor [1661-1722 C.E.], observing the disputes, is on record in his 1721 decree with sentiments noteworthy to any evangelist (displaying simultaneously the degree of his assimilation in just two generations since his horse-riding ancestors had begun to rule Chinese in earnest in the Northeast):

*Reading this proclamation, I have concluded that the Westerners are petty indeed. It is impossible to reason with them because they do not understand larger issues as we understand them in China. There is not one Westerner versed in Chinese works, and their remarks are often incredible and ridiculous. To judge from this proclamation, their religion is no different from other small, bigoted sects of Buddhism or Taoism. I have never seen a document which contains so much nonsense. From now on, Westerners should not be allowed to preach in China, to avoid further trouble.*

He expelled Catholic evangelists and curtailed conversion: how could he allow some foreign Pope to interfere with his subjects’ moral foundation in filial piety? – which ironically is the subject of the 1st of the Ten Commandments both to relate to humanity, and also to convey a promise. Missionaries to remain in Qing China must adhere to the “Directives of (Fr.) Matteo Ricci” 利瑪竇規矩 who set the example in Ming Dynasty (1368-1644 C.E.) times of becoming fluent in Chinese and adopting even our customs in dress.

Eventually by end of that century, both the Dominicans and the Franciscans came to agree with the by-then suppressed Jesuits. In due course, on December 8, 1939, at the instruction of the newly enthroned Pope Pius XII, the prohibitions were “set aside” by the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith: the Chinese ancestral rites were an honorable expression of filial piety. On that basis, in 1943, the Republic of China established diplomatic relations with the Holy See. Despite the long winters after 1949, it may be hoped that Fr. Ricci may yet receive not merely delayed vindication, but even canonization under the first-ever Jesuit Pope Francis. In the meanwhile, in 1962, the Second Vatican Council similarly permitted non-Christian native rites as feasible to be honored in the liturgy of Roman Catholic faithful.

The eminent theologian/ethicist, H. Richard Niebuhr, in his 1962 work *Christ and Culture*, postulated Christ Against, or Of, a Culture as well as Above, in Paradox With, and Transforming Culture, as historical stages but also modern challenges. Since that First Pentecost, only one sophisticated culture has ever been converted, the Classical Greco-Roman one into which a Messiah of Israel was born. In an ever more multicultural America and our contemporary global village, converting not just the unchurched at home but the world requires much work and understanding indeed.

#### *Points of Personal Privilege... of a retiring Association President –*

- 1) *If anyone has an earlier edition of this document, please please discard. It was crafted hastily, without better (if yet still incomplete) research, poorly organized, and inadequately presented. My deepest apologies if anyone were misled and to my kindred for such a shameful episode.*
- 2) *If anyone would desire further or electronic copies of this version, please do contact me at [twcy85323@yahoo.com](mailto:twcy85323@yahoo.com).*
- 3) *No system of Romanization of the pronunciation of the Sinitic languages is 100%; moreover, the coastal east-to-south arc of the Wu, Min, and Yueh (“Cantonese”) differ markedly from the Standard Modern (so-called “Mandarin”) of the Central Plains, which even in that main tongue shows quite distinct accents or even dialects in the outlying regions/provinces.*
- 4) *Model Ancestor Yu Jing, the Loyal Assisting Duke, was Cantonese, and most of our lineage who honor him here and elsewhere are Cantonese due to the historic flows of migration. Cantonese, a form of Middle Chinese spoken during the Tang Dynasty, can be Romanized; I have however opted for the pinyin Romanization of Standard Modern, as now even the Republic of China on Taiwan accepts this format.*
- 5) *Although the written language, in contrast to the spoken, is historically uniform, there are now both a simplified script and the orthodox traditional characters. I opt for the traditional.*