



EARLY CHINA SEMINAR
LECTURE SERIES

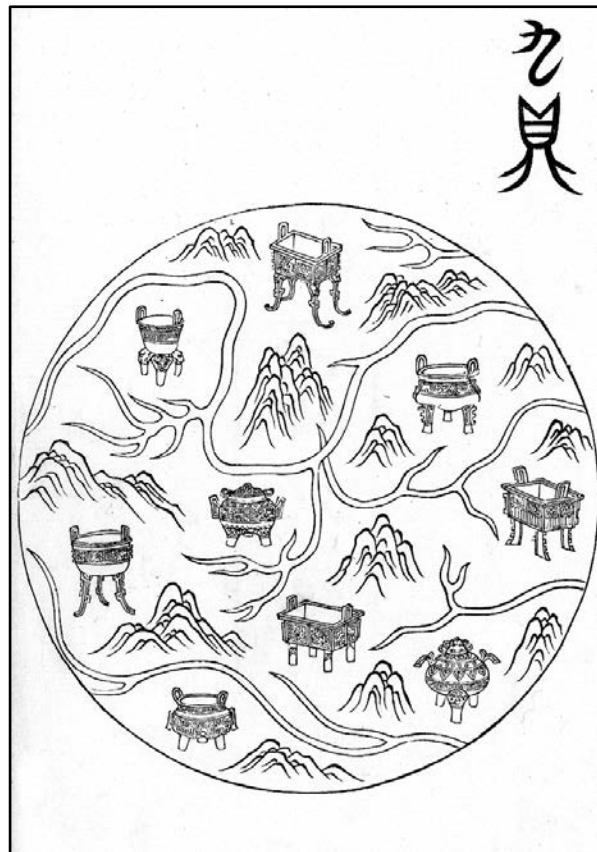
Charting the Early Chinese Oikumene

Min Li • University of California, Los Angeles

Yugong (Tributes of the Great Yu) presents an influential conceptual framework of ordering the early Chinese oikumene. Taking the Jinnan Basin as the center of its worldview, the text presents a nonary division of the civilized world known as the Yu's Tracks, where the legendary figure allegedly toured and drained flood water at the end of the third millennium BCE. With an inventory of tribute goods and an outline of tribute routes for each region, the text aims at making the landscape legible and subject to political control, thus becoming an integral component for the ideology of kingship and empire by the late first millennium BCE.

Based on the analyses of grammatical patterns and the geographic configuration in transmitted and excavated texts, this seminar will evaluate two alternative hypotheses about the date, purpose, and sponsorship for the creation of this ideological topography: a deeply rooted prehistoric religious tradition emerging from a ritual performance of space vs. a recent political myth invented in the fourth century BCE to project imperial ambition. Variation and commonality observed in these texts suggests multiple strands of transmission and shared cultural assumptions, indicating that this notion of a Chinese oikumene had become the cornerstone of Zhou classical learning. This

study calls for a significant expansion in the temporal and spatial frames for investigating the genealogy of knowledge in the *Yugong* tradition based on a critical understanding of the shifting archaeological landscape in Bronze Age China.



February 19, 2021

4:30–6:30pm EST

Seminar Co-Chairs:

Jue Guo, Barnard College, Columbia University

Glenda Chao, Ursinus College

Co-sponsored by The Tang Center for Early China, Department of East Asian Languages and Cultures, and The Columbia University Seminars, Columbia University