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978-0-521-85272-2 - Landscape and Power in Early China: The Crisis and Fall of the Western Zhou,  
1045-771 BC

Li Feng

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## LANDSCAPE AND POWER IN EARLY CHINA

The ascendancy of the Western Zhou in Bronze Age China, 1045–771 BC, was a critical period in the development of Chinese civilization and culture. This book addresses the complex relationship between geography and political power in the context of the crisis and fall of the Western Zhou state. Drawing on the latest archaeological discoveries, the book shows how inscribed bronze vessels can be used to reveal changes in the political space of the period, and explores literary and geographical evidence to produce a coherent understanding of the Bronze Age past. By taking an interdisciplinary approach which embraces archaeology, history, and geography, the book thoroughly reinterprets late Western Zhou history and probes the causes of its gradual decline and eventual fall. Supported throughout by maps created from the most current GIS datasets and by numerous on-site photographs, *Landscape and Power in Early China* gives significant new insights into this important Bronze Age society.

LI FENG is Assistant Professor of Early Chinese Cultural History at the Department of East Asian Languages and Cultures, Columbia University. He has undertaken extensive fieldwork on Bronze Age sites and is the author of numerous research articles on the Western Zhou Period.

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*The Crisis and Fall of the Western Zhou, 1045–771 BC*

LI FENG

*Columbia University*



**CAMBRIDGE**  
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*In Memory of*  
*Professor Chen Gongrou*  
*A respected teacher and a man of great intellectual depth*  
*who passed away on*  
*October 13, 2004*

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## *Acknowledgments*

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Quite a large part of the research presented in the book was done in the field, centering on my three trips between 1997 and 2003 to the regions discussed in this study during which I was honored with assistance from many fellow archaeologists in China. I would like to acknowledge in particular the following individuals: Zhang Long of Gansu Provincial Bureau of Cultural Relics, Luo Feng of Ningxia Institute of Archaeology (formerly the Guyuan Museum), Jiao Nanfeng of Shaanxi Institute of Archaeology, Hu Zhisheng of Baoji Museum, Jiang Tao of Henan Institute of Cultural Relics and Archaeology, Lin Xianting of Yantai Management Committee on Cultural Relics; and back in Beijing, my former colleagues who helped arrange my trips outside of the capital: Liang Zhonghe, Fu Xianguo, and Zheng Ruokui of the Institute of Archaeology, and Song Xinchao of the State Bureau of Cultural Relics. In this connection, I would also like to thank David Sena for his company on the long and dangerous trip we took together to northern Shaanxi in summer 1998, reaching as far as Yulin, and my brother Li Gang who took me on another difficult trip to the upper Wei River valley in summer 2003, reaching as far as Lixian.

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In many ways, the book marks a conclusion of my scholarly pursuits in the last twenty years as well as a milestone in my personal life. I would not have come to this point without the continual support of my wife Min and my son Richard, who have exempted me from almost all domestic duties in the last four years to concentrate on writing. I owe to them special thanks and appreciation that were orally expressed only very rarely.

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## *Scholarly conventions*

In general, the conventions established in Loewe and Shaughnessy, *Cambridge History of Ancient China: From the Origins of Civilization to 221 BC* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. xxiv–xxv, are followed in this book. These conventions are reiterated below with minor modifications and additional new standards introduced to meet the special purpose of this study.

### REFERENCES

For convenience, references to the “Thirteen Classics” are commonly made to the *Shisanjing zhushu* 十三經註疏, 2 vols. (Beijing: Zhonghua, 1979). For philosophical texts, references are to the *Ersbier zi* 二十二子 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji, 1986). For the twenty-four dynastic histories beginning with the *Shiji* 史記, the modern punctuated editions published by the Zhonghua shuju (from 1959) are used. For the Chinese texts included in these publications for which English translations are available, page numbers in both the Chinese texts and their English translations are provided. For the widely read *Analects* and *Mencius*, the English texts alone are referred to. For bronze inscriptions used in the book, references are commonly made to the *Yin Zhou jinwen jicheng* 殷周金文集成, 18 vols. (Beijing: Zhonghua, 1984–94) (hereafter, JC) and *Jinchu Yin Zhou jinwen jilu* 近出殷周金文集錄, 6 vols. (Beijing: Zhonghua, 2002) (hereafter, JL). Those that are not included in the two works, usually the very recent ones, are separately noted. References to archaeological reports and secondary studies in the monthly or bimonthly Chinese journals are given with year followed by the number of the issue, and by page numbers (e.g. 1996.9, 20–35). Archaeological reports, monographs, and catalogues are listed by their titles alone without the usually lengthy institutional authorial names in Chinese.

### TRANSLATIONS

Except for the well-established English titles such as the *Book of Poetry* and the *Bamboo Annals*, the Chinese titles of most texts are directly used with English translations provided only at their first appearance. Quotations

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*Scholarly conventions*

from ancient texts are presented in both Chinese and English translation. For the *Book of Poetry*, I use the poetic translation by Waley in the *Book of Song* (New York: Grove Press, 1996). Translations of other texts and bronze inscriptions are all mine.

## CHINESE CHARACTERS AND ROMANIZATION

For smooth reading, Chinese characters are kept at the necessary minimum and are provided only for the *Pinyin* Romanization of personal names, place-names, and bronze inscriptions at their first appearance in the text and the notes. Alterations of the conventional rule of *Pinyin* are made to differentiate the following frequently seen homophones: Han 漢 and Hann 韓, Wei 魏 and Wey 衛, King Yi 夷王 and King Yih 懿王, Shanxi 山西 and Shaanxi 陝西. For the homophones that appear, though infrequently, in close context, Chinese characters are provided as needed to differentiate them.

## PLACE-NAMES

Place-names that represent ancient administrative units are rendered with the *Pinyin* Romanization followed by an English term describing their bureaucratic levels such as Mi County 密縣 and Yewang County 野王縣, or Anding Commandery 安定郡 and Henei Commandery 河內郡 (based on Han system). The term “Circuit” is used for *dao* 道, “Prefecture” for *zhou* 州, and “Superior-Prefecture” for *fu* 府 (based on Tang system). Modern place-names, where well known, are given without noting their bureaucratic levels, except for cases where the same name existed at different levels such as Baoji City 寶鷄市 and Baoji County 寶鷄縣. Terms that designate villages and other small areas are rendered in accordance with Romanization, for example Qijiacun 齊家村 and Mawangzhen 馬王鎮. For land features, I use their conventional Chinese names combined with English terms that explain their natures.

## POLITICAL AND ARISTOCRATIC TITLES

Translations of the aristocratic titles such as *hou* 侯, *bo* 伯, *zi* 子, and *nan* 男 with medieval European titles are avoided, but the well-established translation of *gong* 公 as “Duke” is maintained along with “King” for *wang* 王. In the same way, medieval “feudo-vassalic” terms such as “fief,” “enfeofment,” and “investiture” are abandoned to avoid the misplaced comparison of Western Zhou China with medieval Europe.

## SYSTEM OF DATES

For convenience, the dates of Western Zhou kings proposed by Shaughnessy in the *Sources of Western Zhou History* (Berkeley: University of California

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Press, 1991), p. xix, are systematically used in this book. While trusting that these dates reflect better the condition of our current evidence, it is to be noted that other systems of dating, e.g. the dates recently proposed by the “Xia–Shang–Zhou Chronology Project,” also exist (see *Xia Shang Zhou duandai gongcheng: 1996–2000 nian jieduan chengguo baogao* [Beijing: Shijie tushu, 2000], p. 88), and that conclusions on most of the dates still have to wait for further evidence. It should also be noted that Shaughnessy’s system of dating accepts the theory advanced by Nivison in 1983 that each king had two “First Years,” that in which he started his new reign, and that which came after the completion of the mourning period for his father. Therefore, in the Nivison–Shaughnessy system, two first years are provided for the majority of the kings.

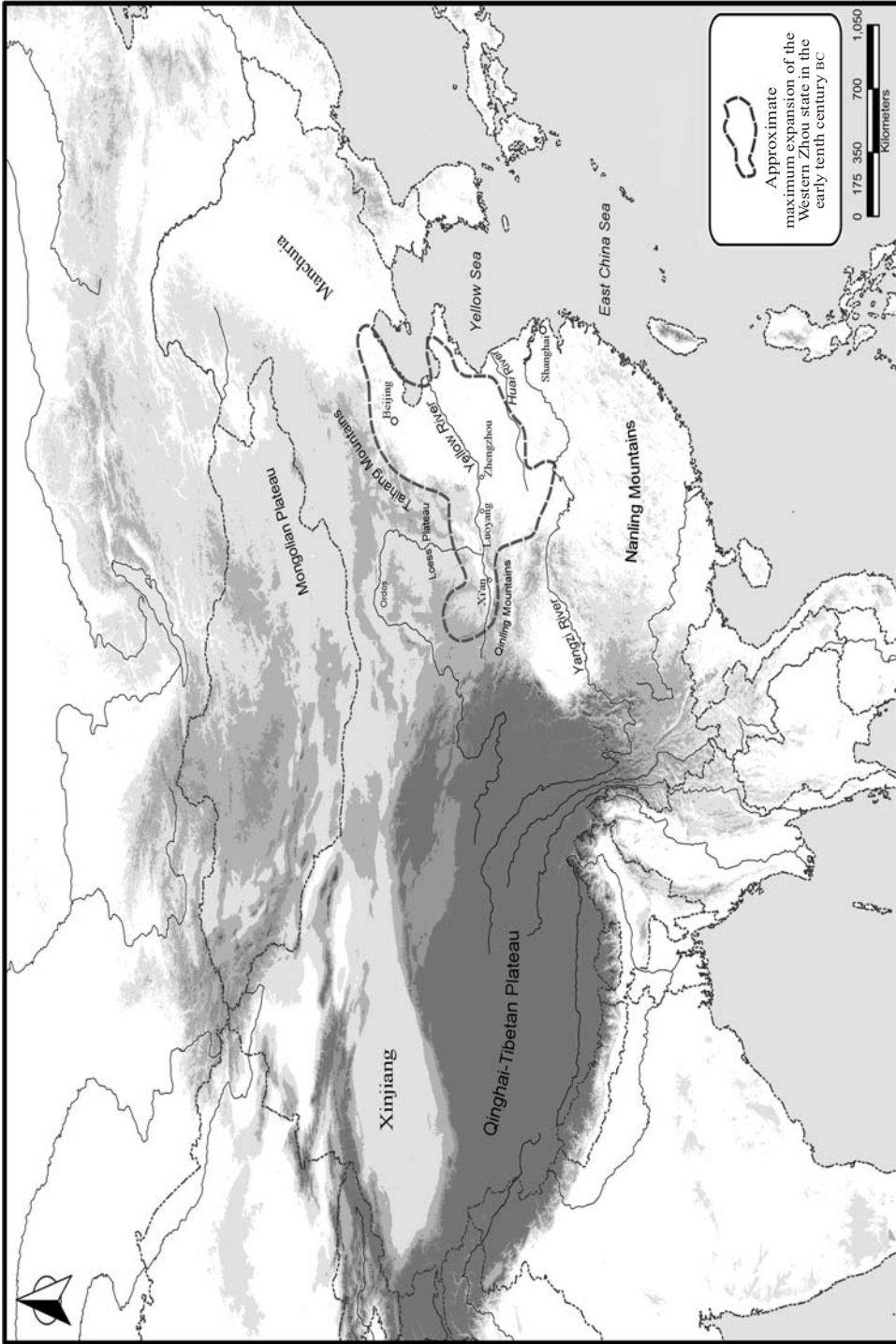
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Topographical map of China

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[More information](#)*Chronology of Western Zhou kings*

King Wen	1099/56–1050 BC <sup>a</sup>	
King Wu	1049/45–1043	EARLY WESTERN ZHOU <sup>b</sup>
Duke of Zhou	1042–1036	
King Cheng	1042/35–1006	
King Kang	1005/3–978	
King Zhao	977/75–957	
King Mu	956–918	MIDDLE WESTERN ZHOU
King Gong	917/15–900	
King Yih	899/97–873	
King Xiao	872?–866	
King Yi	865–858	
King Li	857/53–842/28	LATE WESTERN ZHOU
Gong He	841–828	
King Xuan	827/25–782	
King You	781–771	

<sup>a</sup> Absolute dates for Western Zhou kings proposed by Edward Shaughnessy; see Shaughnessy, *Sources of Western Zhou History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), p. xix.

<sup>b</sup> Periodization follows the widely accepted system proposed by Chen Mengjia; see Chen, *Xi Zhou niandai kao* (Shanghai: Shangwu, 1945), p. 55; “Xi Zhou tongqi duandai 1,” *Kaogu xuebao* 9 (1955), 138–39.



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*The sixty-day circle*  
(*Ganzhi* 干支)

<i>Jiayin</i> 甲寅 51	<i>Jiachen</i> 甲辰 41	<i>Jiawu</i> 甲午 31	<i>Jiashen</i> 甲申 21	<i>Jiaxu</i> 甲戌 11	<i>Jiazi</i> 甲子 1
<i>Yimao</i> 乙卯 52	<i>Yisi</i> 乙巳 42	<i>Yiwei</i> 乙未 32	<i>Yiyou</i> 乙酉 22	<i>Yihai</i> 乙亥 12	<i>Yichou</i> 乙丑 2
<i>Bingchen</i> 丙辰 53	<i>Bingwu</i> 丙午 43	<i>Bingshen</i> 丙申 33	<i>Bingxu</i> 丙戌 23	<i>Bingzi</i> 丙子 13	<i>Bingyin</i> 丙寅 3
<i>Dingsi</i> 丁巳 54	<i>Dingwei</i> 丁未 44	<i>Dingyou</i> 丁酉 34	<i>Dinghai</i> 丁亥 24	<i>Dingchou</i> 丁丑 14	<i>Dingmao</i> 丁卯 4
<i>Wuwu</i> 戊午 55	<i>Wushen</i> 戊申 45	<i>Wuxu</i> 戊戌 35	<i>Wuzi</i> 戊子 25	<i>Wuyin</i> 戊寅 15	<i>Wuchen</i> 戊辰 5
<i>Jiwei</i> 己未 56	<i>Jiyou</i> 己酉 46	<i>Yihai</i> 己亥 36	<i>Yichou</i> 己丑 26	<i>Yimao</i> 己卯 16	<i>Jisi</i> 己巳 6
<i>Gengshen</i> 庚申 57	<i>Gengxu</i> 庚戌 47	<i>Gengzi</i> 庚子 37	<i>Gengyin</i> 庚寅 27	<i>Gengchen</i> 庚辰 17	<i>Gengwu</i> 庚午 7
<i>Xinyou</i> 辛酉 58	<i>Xinhai</i> 辛亥 48	<i>Xinchou</i> 辛丑 38	<i>Xinmao</i> 辛卯 28	<i>Xinsi</i> 辛巳 18	<i>Xinwei</i> 辛未 8
<i>Renxu</i> 壬戌 59	<i>Renzi</i> 壬子 49	<i>Renyin</i> 壬寅 39	<i>Renchen</i> 壬辰 29	<i>Renwu</i> 壬戌 19	<i>Renshen</i> 壬申 9
<i>Guihai</i> 癸亥 60	<i>Guichou</i> 癸丑 50	<i>Guimao</i> 癸卯 40	<i>Guisi</i> 癸巳 30	<i>Guiwei</i> 癸未 20	<i>Guiyou</i> 癸酉 10