

The Jyǒu Gàu 酒誥

A Taeko Brooks 白妙子

University of Massachusetts at Amherst

(3 Jan 2006)

The Jyǒu Gàu (Shū 38) is one of the documents which are thought to imply an early Jōu date for the beginning of codified law in China. It contributes fewer details to that project than its neighbor, the Kāng Gàu (Shū 37), but whether few or many, those details are better assigned to the 04c, where they have a credible social context. There is a link with the disapproval of drunken behavior in the Shī poems.

Content. The Jyǒu Gàu is an attack on intemperate drinking. It purports to be the order of an unnamed King to a vassal who is called Fǎng 封 (the Kāng-shú 康叔 who was given control of part of the capital region of the conquered Shāng). Fǎng is told to suppress such drinking in his territory. The King is usually identified as the son of the conqueror Wǔ-wáng, the underage Chǐng-wáng (for whom, he being young, his uncle Jōu-gūng 周公 is actually speaking). It was however seen by several Sùng scholars that it is more natural to take the King as Wǔ-wáng himself, who in this piece is thought to be assigning this territory to his younger brother Fǎng.¹ I accept that interpretation in what follows, leaving open for the moment the question of whether the document reports the actual words of the historical Wǔ-wáng.

Text. A detail which is crucial for identifying external testimony is the supposed ancient proverb (古人有言曰) “go not to water for a mirror” in Legge §12. In the Thirteen Classics edition of Rǎn Ywán 阮元 (1816), based on the Táng Stone Classics (833-837), this reads 人無於水監, 當於民監 “let men not mirror in water; they should mirror in the people” – rulers should estimate their success by noting the condition of the people. Extant fragments of the [Latter] Hàn Stone Classics (175-183) do not include this line of the Jyǒu Gàu. Pí Syí-rwèi cites these quotations:

- Gwó Yǎ 7/1:1 王其蓋亦鑑於人, 無鑑於水. “The King ought to mirror in men [past events] and not mirror in water.” The speaker proceeds to cite a *previous event* as a warning to the King.
- Jūng Lùn [quoting 周書; that is, the Jyǒu Gàu]: 人毋鑒於水, 鑒於人也. The text proceeds to explain the logic of the saying: the latter will know what is virtuous [and what is not].

Pí concludes that the Jyǒu Gàu also had 毋 “let them not” for 無 “do not,” and 人 “others” [historical precedent] for 民 “the common people.” I accept his conclusion. These quotations, and the Jyǒu Gàu itself if read consecutively, are also warnings to consider historical precedent [the loss of the Mandate by the last King of Shāng], not to investigate the opinions of the people. “Mín 民” may have crept into the §12 maxim from the sufferings of the Shāng people as described slightly earlier in the text (§11).

¹For a brief summary, see Karlgren ad loc, and for further references, Creel **Origins** 451.

Form. The Jyǒu Gàu falls readily into three divisions, the first two of which end in a line that can be construed as a concluding blessing.² The third division is notably harsher than the preceding two, and concludes not with a blessing but with a threat. I label them A, B, and C. In terms of Legge’s section numbers, we have this outline:

A

- §1. King says 王若曰: Make known my commands in Mèi 妹
- §2. Cites Wǎn-wáng’s rule on wine 酒 [spiritous liquor]
- §3. Ruin of states is due to abuse of wine
- §4. Wǎn-wáng limited wine to sacrificial occasions
- §5. Parents should teach children hard work and moderation
- §6. If the people of Mèi work hard, they may use wine in sacrifices
- §7. If the officials do their duty, they may eat and drink to satiety
So that you may never be forgotten in the Royal House 永不忘在王家

B

- §8. King says 王曰: In the west, people were temperate, and received Mandate
- §9. King says 王曰: Early Shāng rulers were wise and temperate
- §10. Shāng officials were diligent
- §11. But the last Shāng King was addicted to wine and lost Mandate
- §12. King says 王曰: “**Let people use others as their mirror.**”
Should we not much look to secure the repose of our time? 大監撫于時

C

- §13. I say 予惟曰: Caution **your friends** 太史 and 内史 . . . to be sober
- §14. Arrest any drinking groups 群飲 and send them to Jōu to be killed
- §15. Need not at first execute Shāng officials who are addicted to drink
- §16. But if you disregard my teaching, *I will show you no mercy*
- §17. King says 王曰: Fǎng, *heed my warnings*, else people will be lost in drink

The first division (§1-7, introduced by the typical bronze inscription formula 王若曰 “thus spake the King”), permits the use of wine in sacrifices by both the common people and their officials, only insisting on Wǎn-wáng’s rule about limits. The second (§8-12) introduces the idea of dynastic insecurity, and the Bad Last Ruler theory of history; though saying that with sufficient attention to the lesson of the fall of Shāng (the bad example which Fǎng is to heed), the current age can still be made tranquil. The third division (§13-17) declares a campaign against nonsacrificial drinking, and rather than letting Fǎng administer his own domain, orders that violators be forwarded to the King’s domain (“Jōu”) to be executed. It ends with a note of fear: If the evil of drink is not eradicated, general dissolution will continue, and the Jōu Mandate will be in danger. The tension is notably higher than in the preceding section, and the threat to the state is different: not only the intemperance of the officials, but also that of the larger population (the concluding line is 民湏于酒 “the people will be lost in drink”). This suggests that considerable time elapsed between the composition of the three divisions of the Jyǒu Gàu, and perhaps particularly between the last two.

²Perhaps implying the use of presentation bronze inscriptions as a literary model, since many of these end with a formula wishing that the person so honored may enjoy his family sacrifices “unto sons’ sons and grandsons’ grandsons” 子子孫孫永寶用.

External Attestation. For the maxim quoted in §12 (Jyǒu Gàu B, amended as above), we have this similarity:

Jyǒu Gàu [B]12: 古人有言曰，人毋水監，當於人監
MZ 18 [非攻中]: 古者有語曰，君子不鏡於水，而鏡於人

The quotes come at the ends of the respective pieces; both cite examples from history. We might then regard MZ 18 (c0362)³ as based on the formal model of Jyǒu Gàu B. I conclude that this much of the Jyǒu Gàu (its A and B divisions) existed as of c0362.

Jyǒu Gàu C (in §13) includes, among those to be warned, officials to whose titles 友 “friend” is appended. This usage is challenged in a Mencius passage from c0270:⁴

Jyǒu Gàu [C] 13: . . . 太史友，內史友 . . .
MC 5B7:4: 子思不悅曰，古之人有言曰，事之云乎，豈曰友之云乎

Again, much of MC 5 consists of objections to false traditions about antiquity, and this quarrel with the idea of officials being “friends” fits that larger purpose.

Date. I have elsewhere shown⁵ that concern with intemperance exists in the Shǐ, and also in the more readily datable Analects and Dzwǒ Jwàn. Fitted into that context, we arrive at something like these circa dates for the divisions of the Jyǒu Gàu:

0380: LY 10:6c forbids drinking to the point of intoxication
0380: **Jyǒu Gàu A** reflects a similar concern for propriety
0370: DJ 3/22:1a reflects a similar concern for propriety
0365: **Jyǒu Gàu B** is concerned for the *dynastic implications* of intemperance
0362: MZ 18, modeled on the end of Jyǒu Gàu B, expresses similar concern
0358: DJ 9/30:10a reflects a similar concern for dynastic instability
0276: **Jyǒu Gàu C** implies a new level of alarm about popular drinking
0275: MC 5B7:4 criticizes the implications of a phrase in Jyǒu Gàu C

This dating of Jyǒu Gàu A and B agrees with earlier studies suggesting that, on the whole, the Shū are later than the Shǐ.⁶ It follows that the Jyǒu Gàu cannot be used as evidence for legal procedures, or legal ideals, earlier than those of the 04th century.

Works Cited

- A Taeko Brooks. Disorderly Intoxication 醉 in the Shǐ. WSP v2 (2018) 195-198
A Taeko Brooks. The Mician Ethical Chapters. WSP v1 (2010) 100-118
E Bruce Brooks. Fěi 匪 and Certain Related Words. WSP v2 (2018) 9-12
E Bruce Brooks. Shǐ 195 and Shū 32. WSP v1 (2010) 55-61
E Bruce Brooks and A Taeko Brooks. The Nature and Historical Context of the Mencius; in Chan (ed), Mencius, Hawaii (2002) 242-281
Herrlee G Creel. The Origins of Statecraft in China. v1 Chicago 1970
Bernhard Karlgren. Glosses on the Book of Documents. BMEFA v20-21 (1948-1949)
Pí Syí-rwèi 皮錫瑞. 今文尚書考證. 1897; 中華 1989

³For this date, see Brooks **Ethical**.

⁴For this date, see Brooks **Nature**.

⁵See Brooks **Disorderly**.

⁶See Brooks **Fěi** 12 and Brooks **Shǐ** 195 45.