

Genealogy of Yang (楊/杨) Surname: An Introductory Guide

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Chinese family surnames has a long influential history in Chinese civilisation. Chinese surname or clan genealogy records, *jia pu* (家谱) or *zu pu* (族谱), documents a surname's family history, ancestral biographies and lineage, migration data, family moral values, rituals and customs, and other related information. However, these documents are predominantly recorded in Chinese, which often included ancient scripts too. As a result, this makes it difficult for persons who are not proficient in the Chinese language to appreciate or understand the etymology of the family name. In addition, a basic knowledge of early Chinese history would be helpful.

Many Chinese descendants, after migrating to a country that speaks and writes a different language, find the practice of maintaining and archiving their family lineage records interrupted by the assimilation and integration of their younger generations into the dominant culture of the residing country. Many immigrant Chinese families has also come to realize that the continuity of their family or branch history is affected after two or three generations of settlement in the residing country. With limitations due to a lack of Chinese genealogy records in language other than Chinese, persons not proficient in the Chinese language face great challenges in maintaining their family ancestral genealogy linkage and continuity. Hopefully, this guide will be of some help.

Chinese Genealogical Record, *jia pu* (家谱) or *zu pu* (族谱)

Chinese family genealogy record, namely *jia pu* (家谱) or *zu pu* (族谱), some of which have existed as early as five thousand years ago, keeps a record of a clan's familial history and lineage, notably the origins of the clan's surname, ancestral biography, and clan members' migration patterns. Descriptions of each descendant also include information such as generation name, given name and aliases, date/place of birth and death, burial site, official ranks and/or achievements, and other glorious deeds that distinguished descendants have achieved in the political, military and academic arena. It also eulogizes and promotes positive family moral values that encourage the future generations to do worthy causes as well as maintaining the good name of the clan.

With massive information collected over a long period of time the composition of *jia pu* or *zu pu* has exceeded the purpose of mere eulogies highlighting ancestral past achievement or motivating the continuation of future family traditions. As a result, family record keeping has transcended within a wider scope to the history of a clan, providing rich information on population migration, distribution, rituals and customs. Its structure mirrors the cultural characteristics of a group of people and models the evolution of a heritage from collective memory.

In this sense, *zu pu* does form a significant supplement to China's formal historical records, which are based principally on official or scholars' records, provincial/local gazettes, and archaeological findings. Because *zu pu* contains entries about the migrations and social evolution of people, historians and researchers have been studying Chinese genealogies as a supplement to standard historical research practice. On the other hand, as *zu pu* may also contain invalid and unverified or even wrong information, its authenticity need be validated by triangulation with official historical records and archaeological findings.

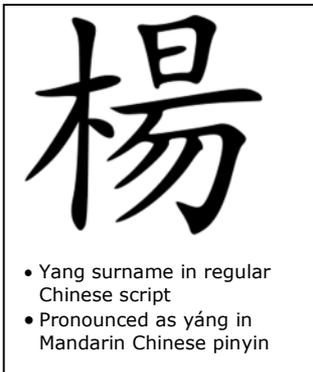
Chinese Names

With some few exceptions, most common Chinese names are generally made up of three character: the **first** being the family surname, the **second (middle)** being the generation name, and the **third** (last) being the given name. Generation name did not exist initially. Later, generation names were developed through the use of a poem composed and decided upon by the family clan leaders and scholars. The number of characters in the poem constitutes the number of generations to be followed.

In a *zu pu*, the family primogenitor or *shi zu* (始祖) that first settled or moved to a place and started his family there is the central figure. Information on his earlier ancestral linkage are also presented. This is followed by the tabulation of his descendants in descending order of generations, and finally ending with contemporary generation. The genealogical records are generally updated roughly every 30-35 years.

Chinese *zu pu* has always been a gender specific publication, placing emphasis only on the sons to carry on the family surname. Although the daughters' names may be mentioned in some *zu pu*, their significances are marginalized in terms of extending the family's lineage because they would be considered part of their husbands' family *zu pu* once they get married.

The Chinese Surname: Yang (楊 or 杨)



Yang (楊) is the *sixth most common Chinese surname* among the Chinese. The Yang script is composed of two parts, the left part (木) means "tree" or "wood", and the right hand side is the character 易 (also pronounced as "yang"; *note*: not to be confused with the script 易, which is pronounced as "yi"). Historically, the Chinese script 易 is the ancient Chinese oracle bone script for "direct sunlight". The current simplified Chinese script for yang is 杨. The Yang (楊 or 杨) script is commonly associated with two types of tree: poplar or aspen (杨树) and willow (杨柳). In ancient China, the script 扬 was also used interchangeably with 杨 as the surname for Yang. Phonetically, 杨 also sounds the same as 羊 (yang), the Chinese script for "goat"

or "sheep".

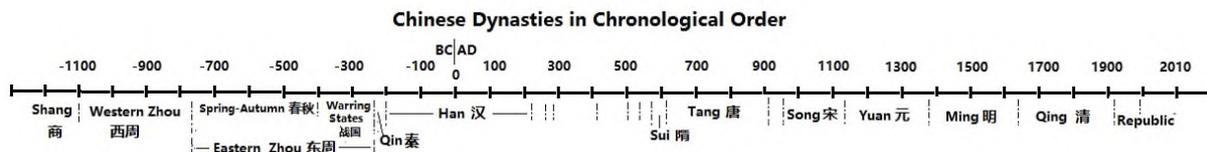
Alternative Romanized Spellings of Yang Surname: Transliteration of Chinese family names into foreign languages poses a number of problems. Chinese surnames are shared by people speaking a number of dialects and languages which often have different pronunciations for the same surname. The spelling of the Yang surname may thus take various other forms, depending on the spoken dialect used to pronounce it. As a result, it is common for the same Yang surname to be transliterated into different Romanized spelling. In Mandarin Chinese pinyin, it is pronounced as "yáng" – hence the Romanized spelling **Yang**. Listed below are some of the more often encountered alternative Romanized spelling of the Yang 楊 surname:

- Yeang/Yahng/Young (other English phonetic Romanization from Mandarin)
- Yeung/Yeong/Yong (Cantonese, notably Guangdong and Hong Kong, Hakka)
- Yoong/Yung (Cantonese)
- Yeo/Yeoh (Hokkien, Teochew and Hainan, notably Singapore and Malaysia)
- Eyu/Er/Eu/Iyu/Io/ Eav/Eaw (Keowchou dialect, notably Singapore and Malaysia)
- Yiu/Yio/Yoo/Yu (Hokkien, notably Hong Kong and the Philippines) (rare)

- Iyo/Yo/Jo Ian/Iyan (Old Indonesian pronunciation) /
- Njo/Nyo/Injo/Inyo (Hokkien, Teochew notably Indonesia)
- Ngeo (Hokkien, Malaysian Peranakan pronunciation)
- Ieong (Cantonese, notably Macau - Portuguese pronunciation)
- Jong (Hakka, notably Indonesia; Singkawang, Sarawak)
- de Jong (European Phonetic Romanization)
- Yaaj (in the Green Hmong dialect) / Yaj (in the White Hmong dialect)
- Dương/Duong (anglicized) (Vietnamese)
- よう Yo/やなぎ Yanagi (Kun) (Japanese) / Yang (양) (Korean)

Surnames in Chinese History

To fully appreciate the history of the origin of Yang surname and the migration of the Yang family descendants, a knowledge of the chronological order of Chinese dynasties as shown below would be helpful:



Generally, all scholars of Chinese genealogical records agreed that the Yang surname, as one of the oldest Chinese surname, was descended from the *Ji* (姬) family line of the Emperors of Western *Zhou* dynasty. The *Zhou* Emperors' ancestral lineage, according to Chinese mythography, was traceable to *Huang Di* (黄帝), the ancestor of *Han* Chinese.

The Western *Zhou* Dynasty (西周) was founded by Emperor *Wu* (周武王). He established the feudal system whereby the *Zhou* dynasty throne was succeeded by the elder son while the other sons were awarded land as fiefdoms (small vassal states) with the conferment of noble titles equivalent to that of Duke or Marquis (侯爵). The *Zhou* Emperors had granted as many as 71 fiefdoms to their descendants and some distinguished ministers. *Zhou* Emperor *Wu* also invoked the concept of the Mandate of Heaven (天子) to legitimize his rule over these vassal states. By the 8th century BC, the Western *Zhou* Dynasty regime was at its final years and the power of the *Zhou* emperors had declined to mere ceremonial role as various vassal states grew in strengths. Civil wars were rife among the vassal states.



Xing shi (姓氏) in Chinese means surname. In ancient times, Chinese surnames existed in two forms: *xing* (姓), the *ancestral name* and *shi* (氏), the *clan name* or sub-surname. Historically there was a difference between *ancestral names* (*xing* 姓) and *clan names* (*shi* 氏). Ancestral surnames were often used as symbols of nobility. Only the royal family and the aristocratic elite could generally take up ancestral surnames. The nobles would use their surnames to trace their ancestry and hence gain advantages in competing for seniority in terms of hereditary ranks. Notable *xing* surname was the *Ji* (姬) family line of the Western *Zhou* Emperors. Examples of early genealogies among the royalty can be

found in *Si Ma Qian's* (司马迁) *Historical Records* (史记), which contain tables recording the descent lines of noble houses called *shi biao* (世表). These tables were used by prominent families to glorify themselves and sometimes even to legitimize their political power.

On the other hand, *shi* (氏) which is a clan names or sub-surnames were created when vassal states were created. Descendants of the fiefdom Marquis (侯爵) tended to adopt the respective vassal state name as their *shi* (氏) clan names or sub-surnames. Thus, *shi* clan was created to distinguish between different seniority of lineages among the nobles, though they shared the same ancestor and have the same surname. Prior to the Qin Dynasty (3rd century BC), a nobleman could hold both a *shi* and a *xing* while ordinary people neither have *xing* and *shi*. It was only after China was unified by *Qin Shi Huang* in 221 BC that surnames gradually devolved to the lower classes and the difference between *xing* and *shi* was blurred and merged as one single entity as family surname.

The *Tang* Dynasty was the last period when the great aristocratic families held significant centralized and regional power. The surname was used as a source of prestige and common allegiance. During that period a large number of genealogical records called *pu die* (谱牒) were compiled to trace the complex descent lines of clans and their marriage ties to other clans. A large number of these were collected by *Ou Yang Xiu* (欧阳修) in his *New History of Tang* (新唐书). During the Song dynasty, the use of surnames were already widespread among the general population. Ordinary surname clans began to organize themselves and produce genealogies, using their common ancestry and surname to promote solidarity. Ancestral temples were also erected to promote surname identity and to continue the tradition of tracing their ancestry to the distant past as a matter of prestige.

Origin of the Surname Yang

The Yang surname, which ranks 6th in the Chinese surname list, is one of the oldest Chinese surname. With a history that dates back over 2500 years ago to the Western *Zhou* (西周) dynasty (1046-771 BC), it is not unreasonable to expect that there might be many different sources that the surname Yang might have originated from. Currently available editions of *Yang zu pu* were mostly derived from the *Ming* (明), and *Qing* (清) dynasties. *Yang zu pu* records dating back to periods earlier than the *Yuan* (元) dynasty (1271-1368) had been lost, but fragmented information of older editions were quoted in some official Chinese historical records and existing *zu pu's*.

Written records of the history of China can be found as early as 1200 BC during the *Shang* dynasty. The monumental *Historical Records* (史记) compiled and written by *Han* dynasty official *Si Ma Qian* (司马迁) around 109 BC set the model for subsequent Chinese dynasty rulers to maintain the practice of keeping officially sanctioned written national historical records (国史). In addition, written historical records were also kept at the provincial and district governmental levels (县志/地方志). Traces of early genealogical records of Yang family surname did appear in many of these ancient official Chinese historical documents. By triangulating these records with findings from archaeological excavations and compare them with the records kept in various *Yang zu pu's*, it may be possible to verify the authenticity of the origins of Yang surname.

Cuting Pualownia Leaf as Enfeoffment (桐叶封侯): Most mainstream Yang genealogical records emphasized that the origin of the Yang family surname was traceable to the Western *Zhou* dynasty. According to *Spring and Autumn Annal of Li* (吕氏春秋) compiled in 239 BC and *Si Ma Qian's Historical Records* (史记:晋世家) written in the *Han* dynasty, young *Zhou* Emperor *Cheng* (周成王) cut a pualownia leaf into the shape of double land (圭) while

playing with younger brother *Shu Yu* (叔虞) and kiddingly awarded it to *Shu Yu* (桐叶封弟 or 剪叶封侯). An imperial recorded this act, which signifies an act of offering fiefdom. When the emperor grew up, he was reminded to keep his promise and in 1033 BC, he enfeoffed the *Tang* state that he annexed to *Shu Yu*. Later, *Shu Yu's* eldest son *Xie* (燮) inherited the state and rename it as *Jin* (晋), which evolved into a strong autonomous state during the Warring States periods (春秋战国时代). Under their reign, records showed that at some point in history, the *Jin* ruler enfeoffed the state of Yang as fiefdom to his descendants. Consequently, the state name of Yang was adopted by the descendents as the *shi* clan sub-surname.

The existence of Yang state had been noted in many Chinese ancient historical records, suggesting that Yang as a tribal sub-surnames or *shi zu* (氏族部落) existed before the Western *Zhou* dynasty. The geographical locations of the ancient Yang state were in the same region as the present *Yang* village in *Hongtong County, Shanxi Province, China* (山西洪洞县杨邑). Currently, relics of the ancient *Yang* state ruins are still found in this village. Below are some available records in support of the existence of Yang states:

1. **Ancient Yang (𠄎) Tribal State:** An ancient scripts carved on unearthed bone oracle from the *Shang* Dynasty (商朝, 1700-1100 BC) mentioned the name of *Yang Bo* (易伯), 易 (𠄎) being the early oracle script for Yang (杨) and 伯 being a honourable vassal title accorded by the *Shang* Emperor to a tribal clan. According to Chinese historians, 易 was the name of a tribe (under *Shang* rule) who resided in the same geographical region (*Hongtong County, Shanxi*) as that of the other Yang states established later in the *Zhou* dynasty. Thus, it may be possible that an ancient Yang vassal state might have existed as early as the *Shang* dynasty. The existence of this Yang vassal state of *Yang Bo* was, however, not found in any official historical records or writing.



Ancient oracle script for Yang 𠄎

2. **Yang State of Ji (媯) Surname:** In 1993, Chinese archeologist unearthed bronze artefacts from tomb No. 63 belonging to the *Jin* Marquis *Bang Fu* (晋穆侯邦父) and wife at *Tianma Quwo* village(天马曲沃) in Shanxi Province, China, which was the location of the Yang states established later in the *Zhou* dynasty. The inscriptions on a bronze vessel labelled by archeologist as *Yang Ji* (杨媯) Pot revealed that an ancient Yang state of Ji surname (媯姓杨国) probably existed in the *Jin* state during the *Zhou* dynasty. The inscriptions also reveal the evolution of the Yang script from 𠄎 (易) to 𠄎 (楊). Chinese historians concluded that *Yang Ji* was the name of *Bang Fu's* wife who probably was also the princess of the last Marquis of the annexed Yang state and that the Yang state then was of *Ji* (媯) *shi* surname and not Yang (楊) *shi* surname.



Yang Ji Pot and inscriptions
“杨媯作羞醴壶，永保用”

3. **Yang State of Ji (姬) Surname:** By the time Western *Zhou* Dynasty was under the rule of Emperor *Xuan* (周宣王, 827-782 BC), the dynasty was at its final years. During that period, the Yang state of Ji surname (姬姓杨国) was annihilated by the *Xian Yun* (狝狁) tribe. After striking back in 786 BC, Emperor *Xuan* annexed the Yang state and enfeoffed it to his youngest son, *Zhang Fu* (长父) with the conferment of the Marquis (侯爵) title. This was compiled in official historical records edited by famous official scholars of the *Song* dynasty, notably *New History of Tang* (新唐书) and *Clan Affair Broadsheets: (通志:氏族志)*. The validity of this record was further confirmed with the discovery of a text inscribed in the 42-Year *Zhou* Dynasty bronze cooking cauldron (四十二年迷鼎) unearthed at the Yang village in Mei County (眉县), Shaanxi (陕西) Province, China in 2003. It should be noted that *Zhang Fu's* Yang state was of *Ji* (姬) surname (姬姓杨国), not Yang. According to official historical records from the Autumn-Spring period (春秋时代, 771-476 BC), *Zhang Fu's* Yang state was annihilated and annexed by the *Jin* state during that period. Many Yang *zu pu* noted that the surname Yang might have originated from *Zhang Fu's* descendants.



42-Year *Zhou* Dynasty bronze cooking cauldron

4. **Yang Territory of Yang She (羊舍氏) Sub-surname:** A famous Western *Han* dynasty philosopher and scholar *Yang Xiong* (扬雄, 53 BC-18 AD) stated in his "Poetic essay on Sorrow at Parting" (反离骚赋) that the Yang surname sprout from *Ji* (姬) surname, and that his ancestor was traceable to *Bo Qiao* (伯侨). *Bo Qiao* was the son of *Jin* Marquis *Wu* (晋武公), the 11th generation descendant of *Jin* Marquis *Xie* (夔). This information was also recorded by the Eastern *Han* dynasty scholar *Ban Gu* (班固) who wrote the *Biography of Yang Xiong* in the *Book of Han* (汉书·扬雄传). In ancient times, the scripts 扬 and 杨 were used interchangeably as Yang surname. According to the *Variant of Surnames* (元和姓纂) written in the Tang dynasty (812 AD) and some Yang genealogy records from the *Song* dynasty (e.g., 宋杨栋撰: 杨氏大同谱序), *Bo Qiao* was also bestowed the Marquis of *Yang* state by Emperor *Xiang* (周襄王) of Eastern *Zhou* dynasty (during the Spring-Autumn period). Thus, *Bo Qiao's* descendants were said to have taken Yang as the family name.



That Emperor *Xiang* (周襄王) bestowed the Marquis of *Yang* state to *Bo Qiao* was disputed by many scholars. It should be noted that during these periods, *Xing* surname and *Shi* sub-surname were separate entities. According to *Annal of Zuo* (左传), which was written by official historical scholars during 400 BC, *Bo Qiao's* surname was *Ji* (姬) not Yang. Historians also pointed out that by 400 BC, the power of the *Zhou* emperors had declined to mere ceremonial role and he was unlikely to have bestow fiefdom, especially when the Yang state was already annexed by the considerably autonomous *Jin* state. The *Jin* Marquis, however, did accord the title

of Senior Official of *Yang She* (羊舌大夫) to *Tu* (突), the grandson of *Bo Qiao*, in the territory of *Yang She* (羊舌), which included part of the annexed Yang territory. *Yang She* (羊舌) was taken as the *shi* sub-surname for *Bo Qiao's* family lineage although the family surname still remained as *Ji* (姬).

5. Yang Territory of Yang (杨氏) Sub-surname:

The fiefdom of *Yang She* included 3 territories, among them the annexed Yang territory. According to records in *New Tang History* (新唐书: 宰相世系) and the *Annal of Zuo* (左传), *Bo Qiao's* great grandson, *Yang She Xi* (羊舌肸) @ *Shu Xiang* (叔向), was a brilliant politician of *Jin* state, serving under *Jin* Marquis *Pin Gong* (晋平公). He was also a tutor (太傅) to the crown prince. Because *Yang She Xi* (羊舌肸) had made significant contributions to *Jin* state, he was awarded the fiefdom in the Yang territory. *Yang She Xi's* son, *Bo Shi* (伯石) alias *Shi Wo* (食我) adopted *Yang* (杨) as *shi* sub-surname. The lineage of *Bo Qiao's* descendants is listed as shown below:



The ancestral surname of *Bo Qiao* and his grandchildren was *Ji* (姬), whereas *Yang She* (羊舌) and *Yang* (杨) were the *shi* (氏) sub-surnames of his descendants. It was significant to note that the same person had been named using both *shi* (氏) sub-surnames, namely, *Yang She Xi* (羊舌肸) and *Yang Xi* (杨肸), in the official history records in *Annal of Zuo* (左传. 昭公五年). *Yang Xi's* son was also recorded as *Yang Shi* (杨石) alias *Yang Shi Wo* (杨食我), his other name. That *Yang Xi* (杨肸) was the first person to be mentioned as having the Yang sub-surname in official historical records suggests the validity of his position as the primogenitor for one of the Yang family clan lineages.

Around 514 BC, a rebellion involving 6 high ranking officials (六卿之乱) was put down in the *Jin* state. *Yang Shi Wo* (杨食我) was implicated and killed in the aftermath. This led to the descendants of *Yang* and *Yang She* being persecuted by the *Jin* authority, forcing them to flee the *Jin* state. *Yang Shi Wo's* (杨食我) son *Yang Dao* (杨道) escaped to the deep ravines of Mount *Hua* (华山) with the help of his grand-uncle *Yang She Ji Su* (羊舌季夙). Here they lived in seclusion, concealing their identities long enough until political situation became safe for their descendants to re-emerge. About 150 over years later, a lineage of Yang descendants emerged in the township of *Huayin* (华阴) at the foothill of Mount *Hua*: the *Yang* family clan of *Hong Nong* (弘农杨氏). *Hong Nong* was the name of a prefecture created during the *Han* dynasty (206 BC-25 AD) covering the neighbouring areas around the borders of present Shaanxi, Shanxi and Henan provinces.



Stone Carving on a Cliff in Hua Mountain commemorating the escape of Yang ancestors

Hong Nong Yang as Mainstream Yang Family Lineage: The primogenitor of *Hong Nong Yang* was *Yang Zhang* (杨章), the 10th generation descendant of *Yang Xi's* (杨肸). *Yang Zhang* (杨章), who was a famous general, made significant military contributions to the *Qin* state during the Warring States period (around 300 BC). His descendants who settled in *Huayin* (华阴) began to move back into the military, political and academic arena. Since then, various brilliant military, political and academic officials and scholars emerged, bringing fame and honours to the *Hong Nong Yang*. The most famous of them was *Yang Zhen* (杨震), the top cabinet minister (太尉) and Confucian scholar of the West (关西夫子) during the Eastern *Han* dynasty (25-220 AD).

6. **Yang Surname Attributable to Yang Yu (杨于) @ Yang Gan (杨干):** According to some Yang genealogical records from *Jiangshu* Province (e.g., 江苏芒砀杨氏宗谱), their ancestral root was traceable to *Yang Yu* (杨于) @ *Yang Gan* (杨干), the great grandson of *Jin* ruler *Jin Xiang Gong* (晋襄公: 627-621 BC). *Yang Gan's* (杨干) name had been recorded in the official history of *Annal of Zuo* (左传. 襄公三年), thus legitimized his existence in history, and hence the likely primogenitor of another lineage of Yang family surname clan.
7. **Yang State Attributable to Yang Qian Gu (杨千古):** According to the epitaph inscribed on the stone tablet unearthed from the tomb in *Luo Yang* (洛阳), the deceased *Yang Cao* (杨操) alias *Lu Zhen* (履贞) was the Minister of war (司马) during the *Tang* (唐) dynasty. He was also a descendant of *Yang Qian Gu* (杨千古), the brother of *Jin* ruler *Jin Xiang Gong* (晋襄公: 599-81 BC). Thus, there exist the likelihood of *Yang Qian Gu* being the primogenitor of yet another lineage of Yang family surname clan. (Reference: 隋唐五代墓志汇编: 洛阳卷第三册, http://www.360doc.com/content/14/1220/21/8378385_43445123.shtm).

Yang State Attributable to Yang Zhu (杨杼):

According to some Yang genealogical records from Southern China, notably *Meizhou pu* (梅州谱) of *Guangdong* Province, *Qingtian pu* (卯田谱) and *Chengbu pu* (城步谱), both of *Hunan* Province, *Ji Zhu* (姬杼), the second son of *Shu Yu* (叔虞) and younger brother of *Jin* Marquis *Ji Xie* (姬燮) was awarded the fiefdom of Yang State by *Zhou* Emperor *Kang* (周康王) in 1805 BC. As a result, his descendants acquired the state name of Yang as the family surname. Thus, *Ji Zhu* (姬杼) or *Yang Zhu* (杨杼) was considered the grand ancestor of *Han* Chinese with Yang surname. This version of Yang origin received wide spread circulation due to its inclusion in the book *Narrative History of Chinese Yang Surname* written by *Yang Bu Sheng et al.* (1994, 2000).

Scholars of Yang genealogy, however, disputed the authenticity of this version of Yang origin. The 3000 over year information about the first 20 generations of descendants of Yang Zhu was so perfectly detailed, calling into question their authenticity. Each of the 20 generation records included date/time of birth, birth place, official titles, date/age of death, posthumous title, burial site, detail of tomb structure and direction. However, much of the information full of discrepancies and are illogical from the standpoints of Chinese history. In particular, the official titles and date usage in many of the records were not those of that era. For example, the second generation descendant *Yang Geng's* (杨庚) high official rank was recorded as 中卿大夫, but this title did not exist until 200 over years later (during

the Spring-Autumn period). There are so many more such errors and discrepancies in other generations' individual records. Similarly, the date system used in many of the records was only available in 14-15 centuries AD.

Considering that these people had lived and died over 3000 years ago, it is amazing and unbelievable that such detailed records can be maintained till now. Moreover, none of these people, including *Yang Zhu* (many of whom were supposedly high ranking officials and descendants of *Ji* emperors) were ever mentioned in official historical records or in engraved scripts found in *Zhou* dynasty archeological artefacts unearthed to date. In particular, none of the Yang genealogical records in and around the ancient Yang state territory (*Shaanxi*, *Shanxi* and *Henan* triangle) had ever mentioned *Yang Zhu's* name, let alone identifying him as one possible origin of the Yang surname. Thus, the credibility of this version of Yang origin is questionable.

Summary of Yang Surname Origin

Given that there are an estimate of about 42.7 million Chinese with Yang surname (2015 statistics of China) it is logical to expect multiple sources for the origin of the Yang surname. From the foregoing discussions, it is clear that the mainstream of Yang family surname was descended from the *Ji* (姬) surname lineage of the Western Zhou emperors. Although there were disputes among genealogical scholars as to which of the following persons was the first primogenitors for the mainstream lineage of Yang family clans: *Zhang Fu* (长父), *Bo Qiao* (伯侨), and *Yang She Xi* (羊舌肸), it should be emphasized that these people are genealogical related since all of them were descended from the *Ji* (姬) surname. It was *Yang She Xi* (羊舌肸), however, that was first named as *Yang Xi* (杨肸) in official historical records, thus legitimized his position as the primogenitor of mainstream lineage of Yang family surname.

Moreover, when the ancestral surname (*xing* 姓) and *clan* sub-surname (*shi* 氏) merged as one single entity after the *Qin* dynasty, previously existed *clan* sub-surnames (*shi* 氏) also became ancestral surnames too, thus leading to the proliferation of hundreds of surnames (百家姓). Thus, persons with the ancestral surname (*xing* 姓) and/or the *clan* sub-surname (*Shi* 氏) of Yang from the time of *Emperor Wu* of Western *Zhou* (1000 BC) to the *Qin* dynasty (221 BC), could possibly have descendants taking up the Yang surname, too. They might also become probable primogenitors of Yang surname.

In fact, the *Duo Yu* Cauldron (多友鼎), an artefact of Western *Zhou* dynasty unearthed in rural area in the outskirts of Xi An (西安), Shaanxi (陕西) in 1980 was found to contain 279 ancient Chinese characters inscribed in the inside wall of the vessel. The scripts gave an account about a battle in around 858 BC between the *Zhou* kingdom and *Xian Yun* (狝豸), a nomadic tribe. In it was a description about the *Zhou* people, after defeating the nomadic tribe, chasing them to a "Yang burial ground" (杨冢). This burial ground, according to a study by a Peking University archaeology scholar Li Bo Lian 李伯谦, turned out to be in the vicinity of *Hongtong* County, *Shan Xi*, the location of ancient Yang states. This provided additional evidences that people with Yang surname (*xing*) or sub-surname (*shi*)



DouYou Cauldron (多友鼎) of Western Zhou dynasty

did live in the *Hongtong* county location during the Western *Zhou* dynasty. Thus, the origin of Yang could be traceable to this period.

In particular, the following persons with ancestral surname (*xing*) and/or clan surname (*shi*) of Yang had been mentioned in many official historical records or archaeological artefacts: *Yang Bo* (易伯) from the ancient Yang states of Shang dynasty; *Yang Ji* (杨姑) from the Yang states of *Ji* (姑) surname during the Western *Zhou* dynasty; *Yang Yin Yi* (杨尹宜) from the *Chu* state (楚国) in the Spring-Autumn period; *Yang Yu* (杨于) @ *Yang Gan* (杨干) and *Yang Qian Gu* (杨千古) from the Spring-Autumn period; and *Yang Zhu* (杨朱) from the Warring States period. Thus, descendants of these people and many more other people with names that begun with Yang could also have possibly taken up Yang as their family surname, making them probable primogenitors of Yang family clans.

In conclusion, irrespective of whether they held *Ji* (姬) surname or *Yang She* (羊舌) or Yang (杨) sub-surnames, the legitimacy of *Zhang Fu* (长父), and *Yang She Xi* (羊舌肸) @ *Shu Xiang* (叔向) as primogenitors of Yang family genealogical lineages is generally substantiated while *Bo Qiao* (伯侨) despite being the ancestor of *Shu Xiang* was not of Yang sub-surname. In general, most of the present Yang genealogical records of *Han* Chinese in China identify their lineage linkage with *Hongnong* Yang, making it the Chinese mainstream Yang family lineage. Nonetheless, there existed also other lineage of Yang family clans that are not descended from the *Hongnong* Yang, though most of them may be related in the sense that they were all descended from the *Ji* (姬) surname of the Western Zhou emperors.

Other Origins of Yang Surname

1. **Chinese Minority Nationals with Yang surname:** Beginning from the Northern *Wei* dynasty (386-557 AD), many ethnic minorities began to follow the *Han* Chinese culture by taking up surnames. Many of these ethnic minorities took up Yang as their surname, making Yang a multi-ethnic surname.
 - a. The most prominent case was the ancient *Di* (氏) tribe of the Pre- and Post-*Chou Chi* (仇池) Yang states created by *Yang Mao Sou's* (茂搜) descendants during 296-371 AD and 385-443 AD, respectively. *Yang Mao Sou*, from the *Di* (氏) tribe, was the adopted son of General *Yang Fei Long* (杨飞龙), who in turn was the descendant of the first magistrate of *Ji* (冀) county *Yang Zhu* (杨朱) during the reign of *Qian* (around 350 BC). *Yang Zhu's* ancestry was traceable to *Hongnong* Yang.
 - b. Yang is also the main surname of the *Bai* (白族) nationals in *Yu Nan* Province, especially in *Xi Zhou* area. Yang surname also presents in *Na Xi*, *Miao*, *Tong*, Korean, Manchurian, and Mongolian national minorities of China.
2. **Imperial Conferment and/or Conversion from other Surnames:** *Yang Yi Chen* (杨义臣), from the *Xian Bei* (鲜卑) nomadic tribe, whose surname was originally *Wei Chi* (尉迟氏) was a top official of *Sui* (隋) dynasty. In commemorating his father *Wei Chi Song's* (尉迟崇) contribution to the establishment of the *Sui* dynasty, he was bestowed the surname of Yang by Emperor *Wen Di* of *Sui* dynasty (隋文帝) whose surname was also Yang.

There are many more similar examples of imperial conferment of Yang surname and conversion from other surnames.

Yang Zhen (杨震) - An Irreproachable Functionary and the "Four Wisdom Hall"

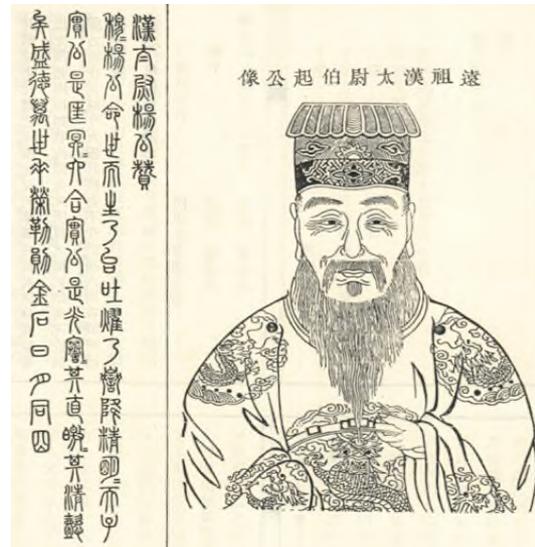
Yang Zhen (杨震), a descendant of mainstream Hong Nong Yang family lineage, lived in the Eastern Han period. He was also known as "Confucius of the Western Land" (关西夫子) and was well versed with the classics and history. Being committed to an academic life, Yang Zhen taught students for more than twenty years. Later, when a senior general Deng Zhi heard of his ability, he appointed him to an official position. In the course of his official duties, he was always upright and honest and never accepted any bribes.

Prior to departing for Jing Zhou (荆州) as the governor of that prefecture, Wang Mi, who had been recommended by Yang Zhen for an official position, visited him deep in the night and brought 10 catties (about 6000 grams) of gold as a gesture of gratitude. Yang Zhen refused to accept the gold. Wang Mi replied, saying "no one will know about it." Yang Zhen who was very angry at Wang Mi for failing to understand his character, said categorically: "Heaven knows, god knows, you know and I know. How dare you say no one knows?" Wang Mi left extremely ashamed.

Yang Zhen was promoted four times successively, including the rank of a cabinet minister (太尉). He never accepted any private invitations. He lived a thrifty lifestyle - his descendants ate only simple foods and never traveled in a vehicle when they went out. Old friends and elders in the family advised him to acquire an estate for his descendants. Yang Zhen said: "I want to be an irreproachable functionary. I want people in later generations to know my descendants are the descendants of an irreproachable functionary. I leave this tradition to my descendants. Isn't this the richest inheritance for them? His three generations of grandsons also achieved the rank of distinguished ministers (太尉) in the cabinet (四世三公).

This "4-Know Saying" (or "4-Wisdom Saying") and the related "midnight offer of gold" (暮夜却金) episode, was officially recorded in *Si Ma Qian's Historical Record* (史记), and served as anti-corruption education standards for subsequent generations of Chinese, notably as a compulsory text for secondary schools in present day China. Descendants of Yang Zhen, in particular the Hongnong Yang surname lineage, adopted this four wisdoms as the title of their clan hall - *Shi Zhi Tang* (四知堂) or the "Hall of Four Wisdoms"/ "Hall of Four Knows".

As different lineage of Yang family were cadet branches of Yang family lineage, many different Hall names (堂号) also exist. For example, the "Hall of Hongnong" refers to the branch of Yang surname lineage descendants who acquired distinguished achievements during the Qin-Han dynasties. A large number of Yang descendants in Malaysia placed the



Yang Zhen



A tablet for "Hall of Four Wisdoms"

"*Hong Nong*" signboard on top of the door entrance as a notification of that their Yang surname originated from the *Hongnong* Yang. Another Hall name is the "Hall of Confucius of the Western Land" (关西夫子), which was derived from the recognition of *Yang Zhen's* commitment and contribution to education and academia.

Yang Emperors of Sui Dynasty (隋朝)

The *Sui dynasty* (隋朝), although relatively short-lived (37 years) compared with other dynasties, was founded by the Yang Emperor, *Yang Jian* (杨坚) or *Sui Wen Di* in 581 AD and succeeded by his son *Yang Guang* or *Sui Yang Di* (隋炀帝) till its disintegration in 619 AD. Both the Emperors were credited to have undertaken the following significant centralized reforms: the equal-field system intended to reduce economic inequality and improve agricultural productivity; the institution of the "Three Departments and Six Ministries" system of government (三省六部) which was inherited by subsequent dynasties; and the standardization and re-unification of the coinage.



Yang Jian



Yang Guang

They were also instrumental in spreading Buddhism throughout the empire. Notable contributions were the monumental construction projects of expanding the Great Wall of China and construction of the Grand Canal. The dynasty's short duration is often attributed to its heavy demands on its subjects, including taxation and the compulsion of labour demanded by its ambitious construction projects.

Yang Shi, the Primogenitor of Fujian Yang Family Lineage

Yang Shi (杨时: 1053-1135 AD) @ *Zhong Li* (中立) was a famous ethics (道学) scholar of Southern *Song* dynasty. Hailed from the foothill of Guishan (龟山: Tortoise Hill) in *Jiangle* county (将乐县), *Fujian*, he became the successful candidate (进士) in the highest imperial civil service examination in 1077. Since then, he served as district judge in *Liuyang* (浏阳), *Yuhang* (余杭), and *Xiaoshan* (萧山), professor of *Jingzhou* (荆州教授), assistant minister of transport and irrigation (工部侍郎), and imperial academy scholar (龙图阁直学士) specializing in writing and lecturing. He had studied under *Cheng Hao* (程颢) and his younger brother *Cheng Yi* (程颐), inheriting and spreading their teaching of ethics in *Wu Yi* Mountain and *Wu Xi* areas. Having taught for more than 18 years, he also established the well-known *Dao Nan* sector (道南系) of ethics studies.



Yang Shi

A Chinese idiom (成语), “*Cheng Men Li Xue*” (程门立雪) that was derived from an episode involving Yang Shi and his teacher *Cheng Yi* was recorded in *The History of Song Dynasty: Biography of Yang Shi* as follow: One day when Yang Shi and close friend You Zuo (游酢) made a visit to *Cheng Yi*’s home in Henan, they saw him sitting in the house with eyes close while nodding to sleep. Not willing to disturb him, they stood outside waiting without moving. When *Cheng Yi* woke up, he found that one foot of snow had accumulated outside the house where the duo stood. The idiom, which literally meant “Standing Still in the Snow in front of *Cheng*’s Door”, stands metaphorically for a moral value held by *Yang Shi*: eagerness to study and respect learned elders.



“*Cheng Men Li Xue*” (程门立雪)

The majority of the Yang family lineages in Malaysia, irrespective of whether their ancestors were from *Fujian, Guangdong, Guangxi* or *Hainan*, have their surname traceable to *Yang Shi*, who was recognized as the primogenitor of the Yang family clans in Fujian.

Migration of People with Yang Surname

The origin of Yang surname has its root in *Hongtong* (洪洞) county, *Shanxi Province* (山西), the geographical location of various ancient Yang states. When the Yang state was annihilated, descendants of Yang fled to *Huayin* (华阴) county region in *Shaanxi Province* (陕西). From there, the Yang family community expanded to nearby regions of *Tongguan* (潼关) and *Lingbao* (灵宝) area in *Henan Province* (河南) forming the famous *Hongnong* Yang family nuclei.

As early as the *Qin* and *Han* dynasty, people with surname Yang began moving to *SiChuan* (四川) as well as eastward to *Shandong* (山东) Province. Others move southward to *Jiangsu* (江苏) and *Anhui* (安徽), and subsequently extending their population to the middle and lower reaches of the Yangtze River. During late Tang Dynasty and Song Dynasty, people with surname Yang mainly settled in *Hunan* (湖南), *Hubei* (湖北), *Zhejiang* (浙江), *Jiangxi* (江西), *Guizhou* (贵州), *Guangxi* (广西), *Fujian* (福建), *Taiwan* (台湾) and *Guangdong* (广东). The coastal regions of *Guangxi, Fujian, and Guangdong* became the centres for the overseas migration of the Yang people, notably to countries in Southeast Asia.

People of Yang Surname in Malaysia: Brief History of Migration

By the 17th and 18th century, Western colonial powers began setting up colonies in South-east Asia. The colonial powers in South-east Asia, British Malaya in particular, were encouraging Indian and Chinese settlers to help pioneering and developing their colonies. In China, people under the final years of *Qing* dynasty and early years of Republic rules were living in dire poverty, severe hardship, and misery. Starvation and deaths were abundant and people were forced to leave their hometown to seek better living for themselves and their families back home. People from the coastal regions of South China were generally best positioned to go overseas to seek opportunities and better living in the South-east Asian countries. The earliest recorded migration of people with Yang surname to Malaysia occurred in Penang and Malacca during the Ching dynasty.

The first Yang primogenitor and his descendants from the *San Du Xia Yang* clan (三都霞阳社) in *Zhangzhou* (漳州) *Haideng* (海澄) counties, Fujian settled in Penang in early 19th century, participating in the development of the early township under British governorship. They set up the Ancestral Hall, known as *Xia Yang Zhi De Tang Yang Gong Si* (霞阳殖德堂

杨公司) for the *Xia Yang Yang* family clan, which also function as the assembly place for *Xia Yang Yang* descendants in Penang. The *Xia Yang Yang* descendants were also instrumental in assisting and developing barter trades between Penang and nearby ports in Burma, Sumatra and Thailand. They settled in waterfront floating squatter housing on bridge lines built along the sea shore in the port area – hence one of these was named the Yang Surname Bridge (姓杨桥). The contributions of *Xia Yang Yang* descendants and the *Yang Gong Si* to Penang’s development was acknowledged by the British colonial government in their official records.

Other descendants of Yang arrived in Penang later, most during late 19th and early 20th century. These included Yang descendants from *Tongan* (同安) *Bixi* (碧溪), *Nanan* (南安) and *Changle, Fuzhou* (长乐福州) counties in *Fujian* (福建) Province, *Dabu Bai Hou* (大埔百侯), *Meizhou* (梅州), *Jiexi* (揭西), *Puning* (普宁), *Chaoxian* (潮仙), *Chaoan* (潮安) and *Chaoyang* (潮阳) counties in *Guangdong* (广东) Province.

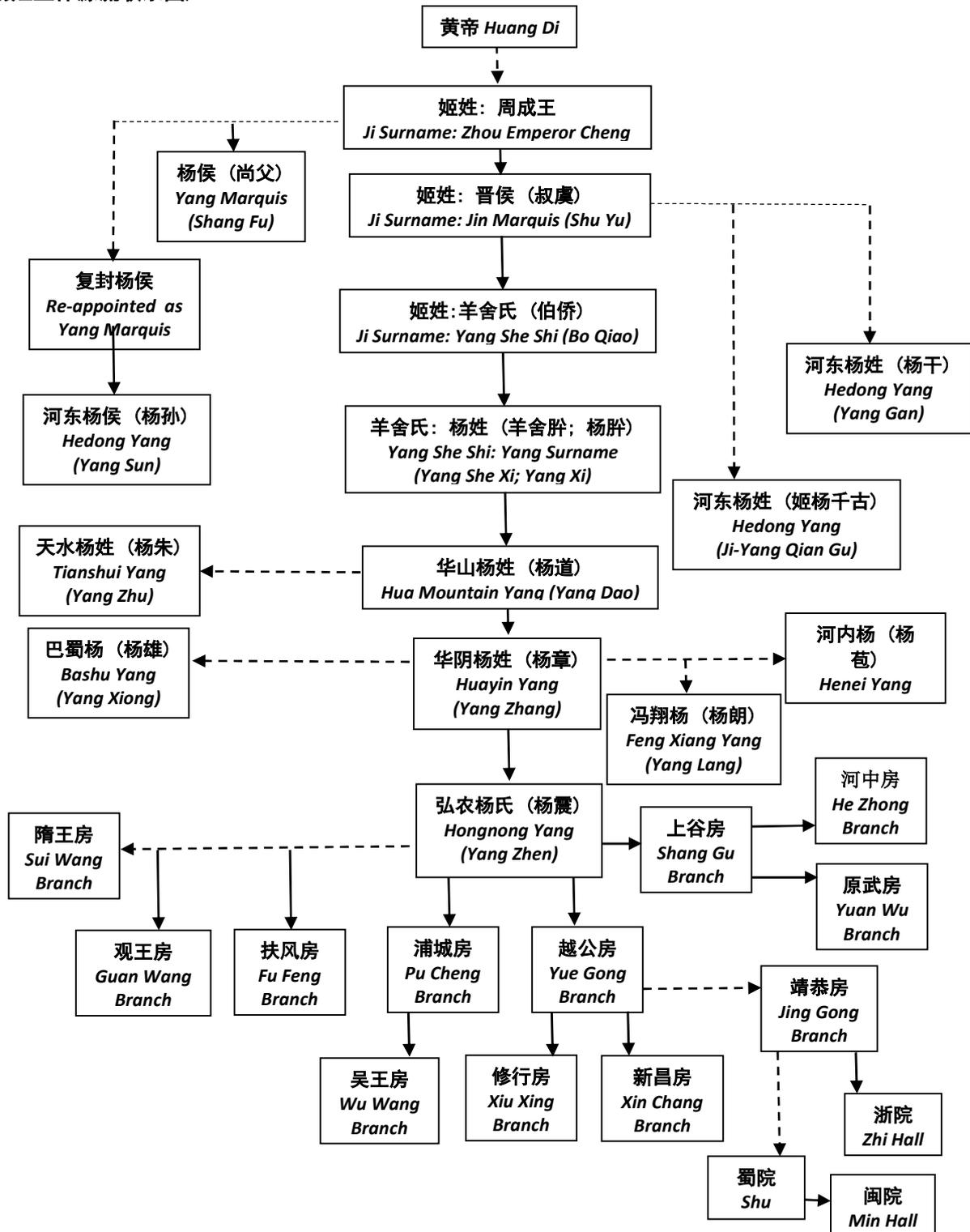
Generally speaking, early Yang descendants arriving in a particular place tended to congregate together, providing mutual supports to each other, especially in the face of language barrier in a foreign land. Many of them later migrated and settled in other parts of Malaysia looking for new opportunities. Over the years, Yang descendants had achieved significant status in pioneering land development, agriculture, trading, commerce, construction, industry and many more sectors in Malaysia, as well as excelled in the academic, legal, engineering, and medical fields.

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Appendix: Evolvement of Mainstream Yang Surname

(杨姓主体源流联系图)



Source (取自): 杨年建 (2010). 杨氏命脉回朔. 上海古籍出版社