Great Yu Controls de Flood (Chinese: 大禹治水)

During the reign of Emperor Yao (c. 2356 – 2255 BCE) and emperor Shun, the Chinese heartland was frequently plagued by floods that prevented further economic and social development. Yu's father, Gun, was tasked with devising a system to control the flooding. He spent more than nine years building a series of dikes and dams along the riverbanks to block the water, but all of this was ineffective. As an adult, Yu continued his father's work and made a careful study of the river systems in an attempt to learn why his father's great efforts had failed.

Instead of directly damming the rivers' flow, Yu made a system of irrigation canals which relieved floodwater into fields, as well as spending great effort dredging the riverbeds.

Yu is said to have eaten and slept with the common workers and spent most of his time personally assisting the work of dredging the silty beds of the rivers for the thirteen years the projects took to complete. The dredging and irrigation were successful and allowed ancient Chinese culture to flourish along the Yellow River, Wei River, and other waterways of the Chinese heartland.

The project earned Yu renown throughout Chinese history, and is referred to in Chinese history as **"Great Yu Controls the Waters**" (Chinese: 大禹治水; pinyin: Dà Yǔ Zhì Shuǐ). In particular, [Mount Longmen](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mount_Longmen_%28Shanxi%29) along the [Yellow River](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yellow_River) had a very narrow channel which blocked water from flowing freely east toward the ocean. Yu is said to have brought a large number of workers to open up this channel, which has been known ever since as "Yu's Gateway" (Chinese: 禹門口)

**This suite of displayed paintings is about Yu chiseling Mount Lingmen.**

In one common story, Yu had only been married four days when he was given the task of fighting the flood. He said goodbye to his wife, saying that he did not know when he would return. During the 13 years of flooding, he passed by his own family’s doorstep three times, but each time he did not return inside his own home. The first time he passed, he heard that his wife was in labor. The second time he passed by, his son could already call out to his father. His family urged him to return home, but he said it was impossible as the flood was still going on. The third time Yu was passing by, his son was older than 10 years old. Each time, Yu refused to go in the door, saying that as the flood was rendering countless numbers of people homeless, he could no rest.

In a mythical version of this story, presented in Taoist scholar Wang Jia’s 4th century AD work Shi Yi Ji (*Record of Heretofore Lost Works*), Yu is assisted in his work by a yellow dragon and a black turtle. Another local myth says that Yu created a Sanmenxia “Three Passes Gorge” of the Yangzi River by cutting a mountain ridge with a divine battle-axe to control flooding.

Due to his contribution and his upright moral character, Yu founded Xia Dynasty (c. 2070-c.1600 BCE) inaugurating the dynastic rule in China.

Yu and other “sage-kings” of Ancient China were lauded by Confucius and other Chinese teachers, who praised their virtues and morals. He is one of the few Chinese rulers posthumously honored with the epithet “the Great”.

Artist:

Wang Wen (Chinese: 王問; Pinyin: Wáng Wèn; 1497-1576), courtesy name ZiYu, was also commonly called Master Zhongshan, was born in Wuxi, Jangsu Province. His talent for poetry, literature and painting started with his childhood. The painting we see here was done by Wang Wen when he was ten years old.

He passed the imperial exams at the provincial level in old China when he was twenty-two. Later he became a successful candidate in the highest imperial examinations. He was authorized as the Chief to the Board of Revenue and Population in Xuzhou, then relocated to the city of Nanjing, the capital of Ming Dynasty. As a dutiful son, Wang Wen asked his father to join him. Unwilling to leave hometown, his father decided to stay. Instead, Wang Wen drew his father 30 fan leaves, inscribing each with poems. When his father used them each day, he felt his son’s attendant upon him.

Wang Wen was promoted and asked to relocate further south. In order to be with his father, he decided to give up his official position and return home.

Wang Wen’s paintings, including landscapes, figures, birds, and flowers are exquisite and unique. The stroke of calligraphy is forcible and vigorous, evolving a style of his own.

**Title:**

Painting of Yu Chiselin (cutting into) Mount Longmen by Wang Wen

**Inscribed by**

He Guanying (Chinese: 何冠英; 1791-?), courtesy name Jue Fu (Chinese: 杰夫), was born in Ming County in Fujian Province in Quing Dynasty.

In 1836, he gained second place at palace examination. Next year, he undertook different positions in compiling and collating information at National Historical Institute. Three years later, he took the position as official examiner for imperial exams at the provincial level.

In 1840, he started to supervise central granary. Emperor Dao Guang personally dispatched him to survey the granary transportation industry.

He felt sick from long term overwork. He was a governor of GuiZhou Province when he passed away.

**Captions**

**Panel 1**

Emperor Yao, Shun were tasking the flood control project to Gun (father) and Yu (son)

Inscription: 正德丁卯冬日 – Winter of 1507 by Weng Wen

Stamps: a) 王何之印 - Wang Wen’s Stamp; b) 仲山 – Zhong Shan, Wang’s Courtesy Name

**Panel 2,3**

Mount Longmen along the Yellow River had a very narrow channel which blocked water from flowing freely east towards the ocean. Yu brought a large number of workers to open up this channel by making a system of irrigation canals to relieve floodwater into fields, as well as to dredge the riverbeds, which has been known ever since as “Yu0s Gateway” (Chinese: 寓門口)

**Panel 4**

Yu (second from right in red) ate and slept with the common workers and spent most of his time personally assisting the work of dredging the silty beds of the rivers for the thirteen years the project took to complete.

**Panel 5**

Right: Painting of Yu Chiseling (Cutting Into) Mount Longmen By Wang Wen

Left: to confirm