Wang also clarified why there are so few Chu remains in the Three Gorges area. Based on written records, it is stated that Ba and Chu were on good terms during the eighth century B.C. and that as late as 590 B.C. the Chu King Gong took a Ba woman in marriage. By the fourth century B.C., and after a great deal of warfare, Chu evidently penetrated Ba territory. What appears amid Warring States and early Qin and Han period remains in the Three Gorges is in fact primarily Ba; Ba never foregoes its cultural heritage of weapon and musical instrument types. From the one published tomb at Xiaotianxi there are numerous Ba artifacts, including round or boot-shaped yue, revolver-shaped ge, short-handed zheng, willow-leaf-shaped lian, but most importantly, chunyu and Ba writing. The inlaid bronze hu and 14 bianzhong (chime bell) set found within the same tomb at Xiaotianxi conforms to the current fashion of northern central China during the late Warring States and early-Qin-to-Western Han periods. The inlay technique and design of vessels and bells can be compared with others excavated from Chu tombs of late Eastern Zhou date at Jiangling, or of Han date at Mawangdui in Hunan Province. The inlaid vessel and bell type, nonetheless, are bronze types popular throughout China during the Warring States period and should not be interpreted as objects unique to Chu.* Due to the traditional Ba paraphernalia of zheng and chunyu, the site is unequivocally Ba, not Chu under Ba influence. The drum and gong were used in Ba ritual performances and evidently were accoutrements reserved for the Ba elite.

Finally, the problems facing archaeology in the Three Gorges area are manifold and profound. If we are to understand the southern contribution to Chinese civilization, then archaeology must be supported in this area. To inundate the Three Gorges would not only eradicate the only source of our understanding but would also eradicate completely the contribution of the little understood but uniquely creative Ba peoples and their relationship to Shu and Chu.


*See, Lothar von Falkenhausen, Suspended Music: Chime-Bells in the Culture of Bronze Age China (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993).