

The Transformation of Burial Space

*There is no architecture without action, no architecture without events,
no architecture without program.*

—Bernard Tschumi

The period between the Warring States era and the early Han dynasty marks a transition in Chinese mortuary practice and burial ideology during which horizontal chamber-style tombs gradually supplanted vertical pit tombs as the dominant form of burial structure.¹ What factors caused this transformation is an age-old question in the study of Chinese tombs. Certainly, the historical process was multifaceted and took place in fits and starts over a broad area. Scholars have focused primarily on formal aspects of the tomb, such as precedents of the horizontal orientation in the catacombs, the uses of different construction materials (stone, brick, wood, etc.), the expansion of storage pits to contain more burial goods, and the evolution of burial types.² Others attempted to explain it in ideological and religious terms.³ Building on previous scholarship, this chapter presents three direct driving forces behind this transformation.⁴ The first is the shift in burial ideology from the hiding of the corpse in the Shang and Western Zhou periods to its luxurious public display in the Warring States period and the early empires. The second is the pragmatic demand for burying a husband and wife together in a single burial space, a demand that reflects fundamental social changes in early China from a lineage-based structure to a more family-based structure.⁵ For example, while the husband and wife recovered at Jiuliandun were buried side by side in two vertical pit-style tombs, after the middle Western Han period, they likely would have been buried in the same chamber in a horizontal tomb. This practice started among members of the middle and lower levels of Western Han society and gradually spread to the upper level of society as well. Indeed, even some princely and imperial tombs adopted this practice of joint burial in the same chamber.⁶ To inter the second coffin the tomb

must be reopened, and the horizontal chamber-style tombs not only made this easier but also enabled people to construct and decorate tombs for a longer period than did the vertical pit-style tombs.

The third direct driving force behind the spatial transformation was the new conception of the dead as baleful and potentially threatening ghosts that needed to be pacified and segregated. The mortuary transformation was closely linked to the establishment of sacrificial spaces inside tombs—a new feature of the horizontal chamber-style tombs⁷—which reflected changes in the status of the dead and the sacrificial rituals associated with them. Formalizing the longer mourning period (up to three years) in the Han period meant prolonging the deceased's liminal period, which starts at death and ends after the spirit tablet is enshrined.⁸ The horizontal chamber-style tombs created a home-like tame environment that afforded mourners the ability not only to walk into the tomb and perform funerary rites within it, close to the bodies of the deceased, but also to use rituals more efficiently to separate the dead from the living and manage the pollution and contagion caused by death. As the liminal space for the recently departed, the tomb became the locus for the cult of the dead, aimed at helping the deceased transform from potentially dangerous ghosts into benevolent ancestors.

Methodologically, archaeologists and social anthropologists have long recognized that space may be used as a means of categorizing the world and classifying human experience.⁹ Changes in the symbolic use of mortuary space can help us to understand the social transformations that were underway. In addition, theoretical developments in the studies of ritual through the lens of performance-as-spectacle and through its architectural settings shed new light on early Chinese alterations in tomb structure.¹⁰ Particularly, the analysis here is influenced by the architectural theorist Bernard Tschumi's concept of architecture as event-places, that is, as a combination of spaces, events, and movement.¹¹ This is definitely the case for the horizontal chamber-style tombs in early China. Concern for the efficacy of the ritual and for the well-being of the departed ancestors compelled the early Chinese to create a sacrificial space within the tomb. This interpretive strategy combines both the material aspects of tomb structure and furnishings and the nonmaterial aspects of funerary rites. The structure of a tomb not only provides the space for burial ceremonies but also is an integral part of the mortuary rites. Tombs and their contents essentially reflect a funerary ritual process.

The Vertical Pit-Style Burial and Its Ideology

The dominant form of burial in early China was inhumation in a vertical pit. The philosophical debates of the Warring States period considered not only human nature and the organization of government but also funerals and mourning.¹² Nearly all thinkers of this period voiced opinions about how the dead should be buried and mourned, variously advocating moderate, frugal, or elaborate burials.¹³

Archaeologically, burial in vertical pits can be traced back to the fifth millennium bce at Neolithic sites. These earliest burials consisted of a small ditch just big enough to contain a body and a few funerary objects such as tools and ceramic vessels. As social complexity increased, burials became more elaborate. As early as the Majiayao culture (ca. 4000–ca. 2250 bce), many tombs, like those at Liuwán in Ledu County, Qinghai, contained a wooden coffin along with ritual pottery vessels.¹⁴ The early development of burial structure culminated in the late Shang royal tombs at Anyang, where large vertical shafts with one, two, or four ramps led to a burial pit. The large excavated tomb at Houjiazhuang, Tomb 1002, consists of a rectangular pit with four ramps in the shape of a gigantic cross (fig. 2.1). At the bottom of the fifteen-meter-deep pit is a wooden encasement containing a lacquered wooden coffin and grave goods. Because this tomb was repeatedly plundered before its excavation in 1935, we do not know how richly the grave was furnished. The sheer size of the tomb, however, indicates the high rank of its occupant. On the other hand, the smaller, undisturbed tomb at Anyang, that of Fu Hao (or Fu Zi), consort of Wu Ding, yielded more than six thousand cowries and nearly two thousand bronze objects (together weighing more than 1,625 kg), as well as jade, stone, bones, ivory, clay, and shells. This is a simple rectangular pit lacking even a ramp. It is just eight meters deep and about twenty-two square meters at bottom. In contrast, Tomb 1217 at Houjiazhuang measures 330 square meters. Burial grounds of average noble tombs



Fig. 2.1. Aerial view of the royal tomb (M1002) of the Shang dynasty at Houjiazhuang, Anyang City, Henan. Collection of the Institute of History and Philology, Academia Sinica, Taiwan.

ranged from about ten to twenty square meters, whereas the size of a commoner's burial was sometimes less than two square meters. Other features of the Shang tombs include the extensive use of human and animal sacrifice and a small waist pit.

Burials of the Western Zhou dynasty and the Spring and Autumn period continued the basic Shang forms with a few innovations, such as the use of "piles of stone and heaps of charcoal" to surround the wooden encasement, keeping off moisture and fortifying the grave (figs. 2.2a and 2.2b). Archaeological evidence suggests that starting from at least the ninth century bce strict sumptuary rules restricted the use of ritual vessels and chariots. Although the scale of these burials is much smaller than that of the Shang royal tombs, excavated elite burials in vassal states such as Yan (in Beijing), Jin (in Shanxi), Guo, Ying, Wei (all in Henan), Lu (in Shandong), and Yu (in Shaanxi) indicate that the Shang tradition of vertical pit-style tombs continued in the Zhou cultural sphere during the subsequent Spring and Autumn period. Following the Spring and Autumn period, the Zhou vassal states in the Central Plains as well as peripheral polities such as the Qin and Chu adopted in varying degrees the Shang-Zhou burial tradition. These rival states accepted the Shang-Zhou burial tradition but added their own regional innovations.¹⁵

The religious ideology underlying the vertical pit style was the hiding (*cang* 藏) of the corpse. This is evident linguistically in that the word *zang* 葬, "to bury," was a cognate of the word *cang*, "to hide."¹⁶ In the Eastern Zhou period, the Qi nobleman Guo Zigao explained this concept further: "Burying means hiding away; and that hiding of the body is from a wish that people should not see it. Hence the clothes are sufficient to adorn the body; a coffin encloses the clothes, an encasement encloses the coffin, and earth encloses the encasement. And shall we go further and raise a mound over the grave and plant it with trees?"¹⁷ This definition of burial as the process of hiding the corpse also occurs in other early Chinese texts such as *Master Lü's Spring and Autumn Annals* (*Lüshi chunqiu*, third century bce).¹⁸ Certainly, it is possible that these are Warring States and Han rationalizations of contemporary burial practices.¹⁹ Nevertheless, it is significant that people of the time understood not only that one reason for burial was to conceal the corpse but also that a proper burial of the physical remains ensured the well-being of the deceased in the afterlife.

The spirits of the dead were eventually transformed into venerable ancestors, but their bodies needed to be hidden and securely interred. Early Chinese texts describe incidents of death pollution and explicitly place taboos on the handling of the bones and flesh of the dead. Magical ritual performances to exorcise evil influences were also developed. As a practical ritual manual dating to the Warring States period, the *Protocols of Ceremonies* (*Yili*) prescribes that during the funerary rites, clothes, quilts, and tents were utilized to cover the corpse in order to hide it from view.²⁰ When approaching the corpse (and the coffin) during funerary rites, people were advised to take precautionary exorcising measures to avoid death pollution.²¹ Although early Chinese did not preserve corpses as systematically as the ancient Egyptians,²² they

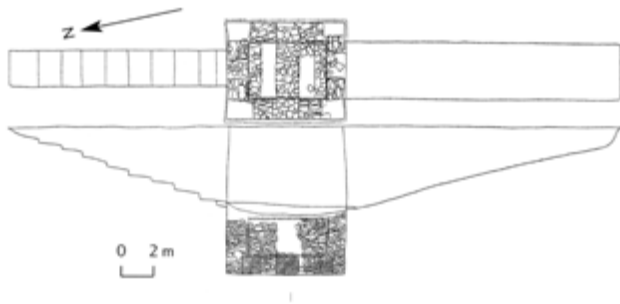


Fig. 2.2a. Aerial view of the Western Zhou elite tomb in the cemetery of the state of Jin at Tianma-Qucun site in Quwo County, Shanxi.

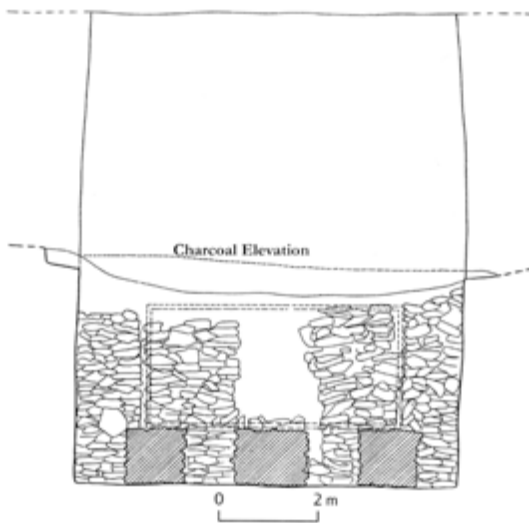


Fig. 2.2b. Line drawing of the Western Zhou elite tomb in the cemetery of the state of Jin at Tianma-Qucun site in Quwo County, Shanxi.

did make an effort to keep the physical body intact and understood this as important for ensuring the well-being of the deceased's soul.²³

This is the religious background for the stories of Wu Zixu, a hero of the Spring and Autumn period, who fulfilled his vendetta against the King of Chu by exhuming the king's corpse and lashing it three hundred times.²⁴ Anecdotes about the Han imperial court struggles among consorts and concubines describe the mutilation of their rivals' corpses as a magic measure to impair the spiritual power of the enemy,²⁵ a practice similar to the punishments of the dead in the political struggles among the lineages of the Spring and Autumn period.

Shifts in Ancestral Sacrifice in the Afterlife

Not only were corpses properly concealed, but grave goods were also interred with the dead to keep the spirits content in the afterlife. In Shang or Western Zhou elite tombs, bronze ritual vessels were typically grave goods accompanying the deceased in the other world. For the early Chinese elite, the bronze ritual vessels were the "inalienable possessions."²⁶ This understanding is evident in the ubiquitous formula found at the end of bronze inscriptions, a practice that began during the mid-Western Zhou: "May sons and grandsons eternally use this [vessel] for sacrifice." Sets of bronze sacrificial vessels symbolized one's rank and status. But why were they, if precious and inalienable, buried in tombs? What ideology supported this practice of burying ritual vessels in tombs? The Japanese scholar Hayashi Minao (1925–2006) raised this paradoxical issue in early Chinese burial practice: If these treasured bronze vessels were buried in the tomb, then how could the sons and grandsons of the deceased use them and treasure them forever? What were the functions of these ritual vessels in tombs?

Hayashi believed that the bronze vessels buried in tombs were for the deceased to continue sacrificing to their ancestors in the afterlife, and that the sons and grandsons would eventually join the ancestors in the lineage cemetery in the afterlife. Bronze inscriptions and anecdotes in the *Zuo Commentary* suggest that at that time family members of different generations were understood to meet again after death,²⁷ and thus they could use and treasure the bronze heirlooms eternally, just as they had done in life in their lineage temples.²⁸ This chain of ancestral sacrifice—the living to their deceased ancestors and the deceased ancestors to their ancestors in the afterlife—explains the mechanism of early Chinese ancestor cults.

This insight has tremendous implications for understanding early Chinese mortuary religion. It shows that, despite having themselves joined the ranks of the ancestors, the dead have to continue sacrificing to their own ancestors in order to maintain their social status. For the early Chinese elite, sacrifice to their ancestors was an essential part of everyday life. As indicated in the five ritual cycles practiced during the late Shang dynasty, the communication between them was on daily, weekly, monthly, and yearly bases.²⁹ Ancestral spirits reciprocated by playing an im-

portant role in maintaining the social and political well-being of their descendants. Typically, one's social and political position was determined by how many generations of ancestors one was entitled to sacrifice to and how many bronze ritual vessels one was permitted to use in the ancestral sacrifice.³⁰

In the Shang and Western Zhou periods, ancestor cult worship was not just a private or personal religious practice; instead, it was a symbolic act, a political competition among powerful clans and lineages to provide their own ancestors with the "richest" and "best" offerings. In this process of political strife, ritual bronze vessels played a vital role. The display of bronzes in ancestral temples as well as in funerals was a sign of political power and religious devotion. The control of copper, tin, and other natural and social resources was converted into political authority through the mechanism of ancestor cults.³¹ Thus, ritual bronze vessels previously used for everyday eating and drinking, especially the cooking and serving cauldron (*ding*), became symbols of political power in early China.

Therefore, the use of real and prestigious bronze ritual vessels for sacrifice as grave goods expressed the seriousness of the worshipers' commitment to the spirits. As H. G. Creel has pointed out, "The Shang people buried with their honoured dead objects in such quantity and of such quality as must have in some measure impoverished the living, especially when we consider that bronze was almost certainly scarce. They did not, of course, consider these things wasted. The help of ancestors on the battlefield was considered far more valuable than the possession of a few extra weapons."³² The bronze sacrificial vessels solidified the chain of ancestral sacrifice in the afterlife and connected the living with the dead.

In an imaginary, unspecified location in the afterlife, the ancestors continued the luxurious life they had enjoyed while living and retained all of their former social relations. This elite view of their continued and privileged existence after death manifested in the cosmology and the abode of the dead in the Shang and Western Zhou dynasties. We have no strong evidence for the exact place to which the ancestral spirits would go; early literature speaks only vaguely and abstractly about the departed ancestors residing somewhere underground or climbing up and coming down (*shangxia*) and ascending to and descending (*zhijiang*) from the "court/place of the god" (*diting*, *disuo*, or *dizhipi*).³³ An inscribed bronze tripod excavated from a late Spring-and-Autumn-period tomb (Tomb 439) at Luoyang City, Henan, speaks of the tomb occupant, posthumously named Ai Cheng Shu, who continued to serve his former lord in the underground (*xiatu*).³⁴ Another set of bronze vessels, including inscribed *ding* and *fou*, excavated in a Spring-and-Autumn-period tomb in Xiangyang City, Hubei, were made by the grandson of Lord Zang of Zheng for his deceased parents, who were "moving to the underworld" (*xi yu xiadu*).³⁵ This underworld of the dead, it seems, was not yet as gloomy and perilous as "the Dark Capital [of the dead]" described in the "Summons of the Soul" (Zhaohun) chapter of *Songs of the South* (Chuci).

In the Shang and Western Zhou burial ideology, although the ancestors' physical

remains were “hidden” underground, their spirits could roam freely up and down. The cross-shaped burial structure of the Shang elite symbolized the center of the tomb, the center of the kingdom, and the center of the universe in Shang cosmology.³⁶ Probably from this center, the ancestral spirits could ascend and descend. The *Book of Poetry* (Shijing) and paleographical data envision the afterlife of the ancestors as one in which they can freely travel between the heavenly and earthly realms and be “in the entourage of High God” (*zai Di zuoyou*), and “oversee (their descendants) from above” (*yan zai shang*). As a result, these ancestors brought blessings and protection to their descendants below (*yi zai xia*).³⁷ The deceased ancestors became new “bureaucrats” in the Shang political system who received “salaries” in the form of sacrifices for their jobs as intercessors between the king and the High God.³⁸

In Shang-Western Zhou religious practice, the ancestral spirits played an important role in maintaining the political legitimacy of the royal house and the social status of their descendants. Not only the Shang and Western Zhou royal houses and their allies but also other states, such as Qin and Chu, adopted this political ideology of ancestor cults. From very early in the Spring and Autumn period, the royal houses of Qin and Chu identified with the Zhou royal house, thereby forging a political connection with the royal Zhou and wholeheartedly adopting the Zhou political ideology as well as its burial tradition.³⁹ In this burial tradition, the mortuary space was constructed to reflect the sociopolitical status of the deceased, reflected in both the size of the tomb and the number of funerary objects.

Texts from the Warring States period preserve the idea of a location wherefrom the deceased continue to conduct ancestral sacrifice in the afterlife. The grave goods inventory excavated from Tomb 2 at Baoshan refers to a dining hall or sacrificial chamber (*shishi*),⁴⁰ under which heading bronze ritual vessels and foods were listed. Most scholars have assumed that this refers to the eastern compartment of the Baoshan tomb because some objects listed under this heading were discovered there. But the eastern compartment, like most Warring States burial compartments, is rather small and cramped; therefore, it could not have been used as a real space for conducting ancestral sacrifice.⁴¹ Instead, it is my contention that the term refers to an imaginary place, just like the place of the god, in the afterlife—a place where the tomb occupant’s sacrifice to his or her ancestors took place. This is a case of the strong conceptual continuity between the Shang and Western Zhou and the Warring States period. The term used to refer to a dining hall or sacrificial chamber was, as I will show later, also the name for the stone shrine near the burial sites in the Eastern Han dynasty.⁴² In this case, an imagined place in the afterlife is materialized in architectural form (according to Wu Hung, in a process of “architecturalization”).⁴³

As status indicators, ritual bronzes were still present in elite graves during the Warring States period. However, they occupied increasingly less important positions in the grave goods.⁴⁴ In fact, the most valuable objects in the Warring States, Qin, and early Han tombs were no longer the bronze ritual vessels, for which ceramic imitations were gradually substituted, but the newly added luxury objects, including

personal adornments and utensils made of gold and silver, precious beads and jewels, expensive silk clothes, and lacquered vessels of high quality. For example, the ritual bronze vessels found in Tomb 2 at Baoshan were conventional and plain and neither inscribed nor elaborately decorated. They are in fact bronze spirit artifacts with many cast defects. The most significant objects were found inside a lacquered cosmetic box excavated from the northern compartment (Item 432; about 27.8 cm in diameter, 10.8 cm in height). A band of narrative, figurative painting occupies the upper register of the box. Inside, archaeologists found two bronze mirrors, one square and one round, a pair of clamshells, two bone hairpins, a silk cosmetic applicator, and two small wood pieces of unknown function. These changes in the grave goods indicate that, although the sacrificial chain continued, it had gradually weakened and the emphasis had shifted from ancestor cults in the afterlife to the cult of the recently deceased ancestors. The sacrificial vessels and foods reappeared in Han burials at a later time but for entirely different purposes (these were sacrificial offerings to the dead, rather than to the ancestors of the dead).

The Warring States Innovations

The horizontal chamber-style tombs, as a new architectural form, marked a dramatic change in the concept and function of the burial.⁴⁵ The alteration of the physical space significantly changed the relationship between the dead and the living, which in turn had an enduring impact on later developments in Chinese burial practice. Not only did tomb chambers grow large enough to accommodate visitors, as well as mortuary ceremonies, but the grave also developed into a structure with multiple openings appropriate for the interment of couples and other family members.⁴⁶

Although burial practices began to change in the Spring and Autumn period, the rate of these changes intensified in the Warring States period and continued in the Qin and Han dynasties. The burial practices in the state of Chu, which had already adopted the standard set by the Shang and Western Zhou tradition, with vertical pit-style tombs and the associated burial ideology, began to innovate and to assimilate eclectic elements from various sources. As regional contact among states and cultural spheres increased, cultural conflicts and contradictions appeared, followed by adaptation and acculturation. Amid this seemingly chaotic period of change, some general trends and logics in the development and the transformation of the burial space can be discerned. Many experimental changes aimed at issues related to the developing burial ideology and the redefined relationship between the living and the dead originated in Chu and its adjacent areas. Some of these changes had lasting universal effects, and some had only temporary or regional impacts. In these endeavors, however, we begin to see the logic behind the spatial developments and to sense the concerns and possible motives for the transformation of burial architecture in early China.

The spatial transformation of burial architecture in early China has been charac-

terized as the transference of religious activities “from temple to tomb.”⁴⁷ According to this theory, during the Shang and Zhou dynasties, temple and tomb coexisted as twin centers of ancestor cults. In the Eastern Zhou period, however, the balance began to shift to the tomb. This culminated in the Eastern Han Emperor Ming’s (r. 58–75 ce) abolition of temple sacrifice; as a result, the cemetery became the sole center for ancestor cults.

This interpretation, however, has met with serious criticism.⁴⁸ Because we have less archaeological data for the home than for the tomb, we know less about the religious activities that took place in domestic households and temples. The altars excavated from Warring States, Qin, and Han tombs mention “sacrificial chambers” (*jishi* in Jiudian Strip 49, *cishi* in Shuihudi rishu A, Strip 18 back 5),⁴⁹ which referred to the places in ordinary households where descendants sacrificed to their ancestors. Nevertheless, the religious functions of the temple were not completely replaced by those of the tomb, even in the Han dynasty. Temple-tomb dualism did not entirely disappear, and, at other levels of early Chinese society, both types of sacrifice remained.

Moreover, even at the imperial level, not all temples and temple sacrifices were abolished. As late as the Western Han dynasty, imperial ancestral temples were established not only in the capital Chang’an but also in local kingdoms and provinces (similar to “the royal household cult,” in the Qin legal documents)⁵⁰ for the purpose of establishing religious authority and orthodoxy in the newly established empire.⁵¹ Furthermore, following the practice of the First Emperor of Qin, who considered himself a deity and established for himself the Temple of Pivot (Jimiao), the Han emperors began to establish their own temples devoted to the cult of themselves, during their lifetimes. Emperor Ming specified in his will that a separate imperial temple for him be abolished; however, his spirit tablet (*zhu*) is housed in the temple of the founding emperor Guang Wu (5bce –57ce) (Shizumiao) in Luoyang, a practice more or less followed by later generations of Eastern Han emperors.⁵² In addition to the High Temple (Gaomiao) housing the spirit tablets of the Western Han emperors in Chang’an, at least two imperial temples held regular sacrifices through the Eastern Han dynasty. Although, after Emperor Ming’s reform, imperial temples, specifically, the chamber of rest (*qin* 寢), were relocated to an area near the tombs, the religious importance of the temple increased rather than declined.⁵³ Eventually, at the end of the Eastern Han dynasty, the dualism between temple and tomb was revived.⁵⁴

The factors that caused the spatial transformation of burial architecture in early China are certainly complex. Besides religious and ritual reasons, there are pragmatic aspects relating to architectural construction. For example, in the vertical pit-style burial tradition, while the coffins, grave goods, and other burial apparatus could be prepared a long time before the burial, the excavation of the vertical pit was a one-time event, and the duration of the excavation corresponded to the scale of the tomb. In horizontal chamber-style tombs, on the other hand, many ready-made materials, such as bricks, stone slabs, and wooden planks, were used, and the tombs

have a more complicated, decidedly architectural form, including developed interior spaces with doors and windows, a drainage system, and security measures. Artisans were able to spend more time on the construction and decoration of these tombs. The more grandiose the tomb construction, the more time it took to build it.

Another pragmatic consideration was the accessibility of the tomb space. In horizontal chamber-style tombs, people can, at least theoretically, repetitively open and enter the tomb chamber without damaging the structure, a feature that is almost impossible to achieve in the vertical pit-style tombs. In the vertical pit-style tombs, once the pit is excavated, the encasement is constructed, and the coffins and grave goods are lowered vertically into the encasement. The encasement is then sealed with a heavy lid made of planks, the pit is refilled with layers of charcoal and clay, and the mound is built on top. If the need to reopen the tomb were to arise, doing so would be rather inconvenient, although not impossible; the horizontal chamber-style tomb construction eliminates this problem.

Scholars have also suggested external influences for the shift in construction style. For example, some suggest that the horizontal chamber-style tomb developed as the result of outside influences, especially the catacomb from the northwestern state of Qin.⁵⁵ This burial style, characterized by a vertical pit with a lateral burial cave at the bottom, was indigenous to northwest China. In central China, it first appeared in Western Zhou-period cemeteries, in Fufeng County, Shaanxi, and in Zhangjiapo near Xi'an City, and then mysteriously disappeared, only to reappear several centuries later in the middle Warring States period in Qin territory (present-day Shaanxi).⁵⁶ Nevertheless, as other scholars have pointed out, the structure and burial ideology of the catacomb are aligned with those of the vertical pit-style tomb.⁵⁷ As a regional burial style influenced mainly by the local cave dwellings in the loess plains of Shaanxi, then, the catacombs are unlikely to be the antecedent of the horizontal chamber-style tomb.

As I show below, the archaeological evidence suggests that the inspiration for the transition to the horizontal multicompartmented chamber-style tomb may have come from the Chu and adjacent regions in the south.⁵⁸ Certainly northern and southern influences were not mutually exclusive, and acculturation did not develop in a strictly linear fashion. Moreover, the Warring States period was a time when multiple cultural elements converged to create the basis for a unified empire. Nevertheless, some prominent southern contributions likely transformed burial space in early China.

Burial Mounds “as Tall as Mountains”

In the Warring States period, grandiose burial mounds were erected as ostentatious displays of power and wealth. This development in burial construction accompanied rapid developments in urban planning and palatial architecture, brought about by technological advances in the Warring States period. Writing in the late third century bce, the authors of *Master Lü's Spring and Autumn Annals* declared that the con-

temporary burial mounds were “made as tall as mountains, and the trees planted on them are like forests.” Architectural features, such as towers and courtyards, chambers, halls, and stairways, “make the burial resemble a city” and “make a spectacle for the world to see and are a means by which to display one’s wealth.”⁵⁹

Scholars have different views on when and how this practice of erecting burial mounds started. Confucius reportedly stated, “I have heard that the ancients made graves, and raised no mound over them,” and other similar passages in early texts have led some scholars to conclude that burial mounds appeared only in the late Spring and Autumn period.⁶⁰ But other scholars posit that Shang elite tombs already had mounds and ritual structures built on top of them.⁶¹ Because most ancient mounds eroded away over time, it is difficult to determine whether they ever existed. Recent archaeological discoveries in the Shang elite cemetery at Qianzhangda in Tengzhou City, Shandong, have shown that, indeed, there were ritual structures above the tombs, but it seems there were no mounds.⁶²

Some of the earliest burial mounds appeared in the cultural interaction zone in the Huai River valley in southeast China. The earliest mound, dating to the early Spring and Autumn period, is at Huang Jun Meng’s and his wife’s tombs at Baoxiangsi in Guangshan in southern Henan. The mound, reaching about seven to eight meters in height, covered the tombs, which consisted of two connected pits, each containing a wooden encasement and a coffin.⁶³ In addition, archaeologists excavated another tomb, Huang Ji Tuofu’s tomb, 165 meters away that had a mound about 10 meters high.⁶⁴ Scholars have suggested that this was the cemetery of the small polity of Huang, which the state of Chu annexed in 648 bce.⁶⁵ Probably belonging to the Pan clan,⁶⁶ another tomb (Tomb 5) discovered at Pingxi in Xinyang City, Henan, also featured a mound; we do not know its exact height, because local farmers removed some of the clay to manufacture bricks before the excavation.⁶⁷ Archaeologists also excavated an early Spring-and-Autumn-period tomb at Hekou in Shucheng County, Anhui, which local people reported had had a mound about two meters high. But the layers of pounded earth before excavation were only about 0.25 meters high.⁶⁸ It seems that this region of the Huai River valley is where the burial mounds first became popular in the early Spring and Autumn period.⁶⁹

The best-preserved mounded tomb of the Spring and Autumn period is Tomb 1 at Hougudui in Gushi County, Henan. It is a single-occupant burial with a cone-shaped mound seven meters in height and fifty-five meters in diameter. The mound was made of pounded earth and was constructed layer by layer, each layer being about forty to fifty centimeters thick.⁷⁰ The tomb is in the vertical pit style with one ramp entering the pit from the east. At the bottom of the pit is a large encasement with the coffin of the tomb occupant at the center, surrounded by six companions in death (*xunren*) within the encasement and an additional eleven surrounding the encasement. Skeletal analyses indicate that the tomb occupant was a woman about thirty years old, and among the companions in death, all of whom had their own coffins and simpler burial goods, twelve were female of about the same age or younger,

and five were adult males. Among the rich grave goods of bronzes, lacquerware, jades, and ceramics are proto-porcelain cups, indicating a close cultural tie with the southeast, where such glazed and high-fired ceramics originated.⁷¹

Not only the burial goods but also the burial structure of these tombs linked southern Henan with southeast China. From the early Shang period, mounded burials (*tudunmu*) were indigenous to the Lower Yangzi area in southeast China, in present-day Jiangsu, Anhui, and Zhejiang. These mounded burials differ from the Shang–Western Zhou vertical pit-style tombs in that there usually was no pit. Instead, stones were piled to prepare the burial ground where the body and grave goods would be placed. The grave was then covered with layers of pebbles and earth to form a mound.⁷² After the middle Spring and Autumn period, stone-lined cists or wooden encasements and coffins gradually replaced this southeastern burial tradition, which began to incorporate the structural elements of the vertical pit-style tomb, especially of Chu tombs. It is in such settings, where local traditions weakened and outside influences dramatically increased, that innovations occurred. For instance, the late Spring-and-Autumn-period tomb at Zhenshan in Suzhou City, Jiangsu, is situated on the peak of the highest rocky hill. The burial pit is cut into the bedrock and a mound about 8.3 meters (from the bottom of the pit to the summit of the mound) was constructed on top of it. The tomb is the largest of a series of burials on top of the hill, where the royal cemetery of the state of Wu was located. Scholars have identified many “Chu” cultural elements in these burials.⁷³ However, these cultural influences were not unidirectional. A heavy traffic of goods and, possibly, of ideas took place in the cultural interaction zone among the Zhou in the Central Plains, the Chu and adjacent polities in the south, and the Wu, the Yue, and many other polities in southeast China.

In the Chu region, before the Warring States period, burial mounds were rare, if used at all. During the Warring States period, however, almost all the tombs of occupants from above the middle elite stratum feature burial mounds and tomb access ramps. Moreover, the higher the social rank of the tomb occupant, the larger the scale of the mound, and often the richer the contents of the tomb. Archaeologists have divided the more than eight hundred burial mounds discovered in the suburbs of the Warring States–period Chu capital of Ji’nancheng at Jiangling County, Hubei, into four categories according to the diameter of the mounds (A: 100–80 m; B: 80–50 m; C: 50–30 m; D: 30–10 m).⁷⁴ In the Paimashan cemeteries in the south, of the seventeen mounded tombs, one is an A tomb, one is a B tomb, and fifteen are C tombs. In the Yutaishan cemeteries in the east, of the 103 mounded tombs, 5 are C tombs and 98 are D tombs. In the Jishan cemeteries (eleven km to the north), of the 134 mounded tombs, 1 is a B tomb, 20 are C tombs, and 113 are D tombs. In the Balingshan cemeteries (four km to the west), of the 274 mounded tombs, 1 is an A tomb, 9 are B tombs, 64 are C tombs, and 189 are D tombs. In the latter cemeteries, the largest mound is about 96 meters in diameter and 14 meters in height; the smallest is about 16 meters in diameter and 3 meters in height. These numbers suggest that

there were strict sumptuary regulations governing the size of the burial mounds, although we do not know exactly what those regulations were.⁷⁵ In addition, the layout of the cemeteries appears to have some regularity. Commoners' tombs (without burial mounds) were located within a distance of five kilometers around the city (especially to the south and the east), while the elite were buried far from the urban center to the north and the west.

Starting with the late Spring and Autumn period, almost all the major powerful states built their rulers' tombs on the outskirts of their capital and covered them with high pyramidal mounds. Archaeologists have studied these necropolises at Xintian, the last capital of the state of Jin (present-day Houma City in Shanxi);⁷⁶ at Handan City, Hebei (the state of Zhao);⁷⁷ at Guweicun in Hui County, Henan (the state of Wei);⁷⁸ at Yan Xiadu in Yi County, Hebei (the state of Yan);⁷⁹ at Xinzheng County, Henan (the state of Han);⁸⁰ at Linzi District, Zibo City, Shandong, the capital of Qi;⁸¹ and at Sanji in Pingshan County, Hebei (the state of Zhongshan).⁸²

However, some characteristics of the Chu burial mounds differ from those in the north within the Zhou cultural sphere. First, in appearance as well as in function, the Chu burial mounds are closer to the mounded burials in the Lower Yangzi area. They marked the tomb occupant's social status, rather than serving, as in other parts of the Zhou cultural sphere, as the foundation for the grand multistoried buildings erected on top of them. The never-finished necropolis of King Cuo's mausoleum of the state of Zhongshan at Sanji in Pingshan County, Hebei, is one typical example from the north.

Second, in the state of Chu, not only the rulers (the highest elite) but also the high and middle levels of the Chu elite could have a burial mound, albeit of a different scale, while in other parts of the Zhou cultural sphere, the gap between the higher and lower elites was more dramatic. The contrast between the rulers and the ordinary members of the Warring States elite reflected the growing power of increasingly despotic rulers and the decline of the traditional lineage-based elite.

The High Culture of Luxurious Public Display

Among the important forces driving the spatial transformation of burial architecture in early China were the changes in burial ideology. For the noble and powerful of the Warring States period, the occasion of death was no longer one of burying ("hiding") the dead body; rather, it became another opportunity to engage in increasingly intense status competition. If "burying" truly meant "hiding away," why, as Guo Zigao asked, did people raise high mounds and plant trees to identify the burial? Such mounds contradicted the traditional burial ideology of the Shang and Western Zhou dynasties. Burial mounds were considered fashionable and extravagant in the Warring States period, but the authors of *Master Lü's Spring and Autumn Annals* denounced the practice as improper.⁸³

Despite official regulation and some philosophers' and statesmen's advocacy of moderate and frugal burials, however, the obsession with extravagance and specta-

cle persisted. In the Warring States period and early empires, luxurious objects were added to the grave goods, including articles for personal adornment, such as silk clothes, high-quality lacquered vessels, gems, and beads. Burial practices engaged a new aesthetic that valued ostentatious public display and featured new styles of ornaments for grave goods.⁸⁴ This “high culture” of luxurious public display, according to Warring States philosophers such as Xunzi (ca. 312–230 bce), gratified the human desire for pleasure and material goods, reinforced the authority of the ruler and the solidity of an orderly society, and created a stable hierarchy by which goods were distributed and people rewarded according to a ritual norm of sumptuary rules. These philosophical texts and traditional historical accounts as well as modern archaeology testify to the lavish public display that characterized funerary practices in early China.⁸⁵

In many regards, the design of the Chu inverted-pyramidal pit, with its four stepped slopes and a ramp leading to the burial encasement, establishes the burial site as the focal point of funeral rites. A photo of the Baoshan excavation (see fig. 2.7) shows a group of local men, women, and children standing at the four edges of the pit, watching the archaeologists bring the burial goods one by one from the tomb compartment. This image suggests how the burial structure may have not only facilitated public viewing but also created an aura of mystery around that experience of participation by keeping the onlookers at a certain distance. Based on this photo, one cannot help but imagine how spectacular Shao Tuo’s funeral must have appeared to the participants and onlookers standing at those very spots more than two thousand years ago. Besides their practical function in preventing a landslide, the number of steps in a tomb also corresponds roughly to the scale of the tomb and the social status of the tomb occupant. The higher the tomb occupant’s social rank, the deeper the burial pit, the longer the ramp, and the higher the number of steps, although there is no fixed number of steps for each rank.⁸⁶ Tomb 2 at Baoshan has fourteen steps, as do Tombs 1 and 2 at Jiuliandun, while Tomb 1 at Tianxingguan has fifteen steps, the most numerous discovered so far.⁸⁷

“In Death You Shall Share My Grave”

In early China, the great shift in basic social organization was from the lineage of the Spring and Autumn period to the household of the Warring States period and the early empires.⁸⁸ The spatial organization of early Chinese burial practice also reflects this shift. The popularity of joint burials of husbands and wives in the same tomb space increased, the sentiment of which is expressed in the old poem: “In death you shall share my grave.”⁸⁹ Even in lineage cemeteries, the tendency was for husbands and wives to be buried in the same tomb space.⁹⁰ In the vertical pit-style tomb, husbands and wives were often buried side by side, in two separate pits. The earliest known case of a joint burial of a husband and wife in different pits was found in the Yu lineage cemeteries of the middle Western Zhou period in the southern suburbs of Baoji City, Shaanxi.⁹¹ This burial practice continued into the Spring and Autumn

period, as seen in the Yuan lineage cemeteries in Xiasi, Heshangling, and Xujialing in Xichuan County, Henan; the Warring States period, as seen in the Jiuliandun tombs (Tombs 1 and 2); and even the early Han dynasty, as seen in the Mawangdui tombs (Tombs 1 and 2).

In some regions, burial customs began to change as early as the Spring and Autumn period. One of the earliest joint burials of a husband and wife in the same pit is probably Huang Jun Meng's and his wife's tombs at Baoxiangsi in Guangshan County, Henan. This joint burial in the same pit was a rare occurrence in vertical pit-style tombs because of the great difficulty of reopening the pit for the second interment.⁹² In such joint burials, either the first coffin would have been stored or buried temporarily somewhere else while awaiting the demise of the partner, or the same pit would have been opened again. It is more common in vertical pit-style burials for the joint grave to consist of two pits laid side by side and covered by a single mound.

According to the bronze inscriptions on the ritual vessels found in the tombs, the northern encasement belonged to a lord of the local state of Huang, whereas the southern one belonged to a noble woman in her forties who in the inscriptions identified herself as the wife of the lord of Huang and a daughter of the Ji clan. She had the surname (i.e., the clan name) of the Zhou royal house, and the furnishings of her tomb were much richer than those of her husband. It is possible that the couple was buried under the same mound, because the wife, who had a high political status as a royal daughter, was treated specially.

The practice of burying a couple in vertical pit tombs continued during the Western Han dynasty in southeast China (present-day Jiangsu), but it generally died out once the horizontal chamber-style tomb had become popular.⁹³ From the middle Western Han dynasty onward, with the exception of imperial tombs, the joint burial of a husband and wife in a horizontal chamber-style tomb was popular among the middle and lower levels of Han society.⁹⁴ In any case, a growing trend toward joint burials propelled the transition from vertical pit-style tombs to horizontal chamber-style tombs.

The Tomb as an Underground House

In the Shang and Western Zhou vertical-pit-style burial tradition, the tomb was simply a space for "hiding" the corpse. Some scholars have suggested that the cross-shaped structure of Shang royal tombs may have been intended to invoke the Shang conception of the cosmos,⁹⁵ but these are still vague ideas. In the late Western Zhou period, the coffin began to be associated symbolically with the residential structure for the deceased. Archaeologists have discovered strings of small bronze fish in Western Zhou-period tombs at Zhangjiapo near Xi'an City, Shaanxi. This archaeological feature was convincingly linked to the coffin decoration described in early ritual texts, and a direct connection can be established between these decorations and those found on houses. The bronze fish were originally hung on the pall, which assumed the form of a textile tent from which the ornaments were suspended along



Fig. 2.3. The burial at Yinshan in Shaoxing City, Zhejiang, fifth century bce , one of the earliest instances of a tomb conceived as an underground house.

the eaves or gutters.⁹⁶ Motifs such as suspended fish and birds and grass were often painted on houses in ancient China.⁹⁷ In the middle Spring and Autumn period and even in some middle Warring-States-period tombs, small bronze fish were used to decorate the coffin.⁹⁸

Although the idea, as idealized in received texts, that tombs resemble an underground house or palace is well established, scholars have different opinions about where and when this idea first materialized archaeologically. Some scholars think it was in the Central Plains in the middle of the Western Han, while others think it was in the Warring-States Chu tombs.⁹⁹ A closer look at the archaeological evidence, however, suggests that these innovations came from many different sources and from culturally peripheral and politically weak regions (from the standpoint of the Central Plains).

Such was the case for one of the earliest discovered tombs that resembled an underground house or private domicile. The burial at Yinshan in Shaoxing City, Zhejiang, probably the tomb of a fifth-century bce ruler of Yue, is located at the top of a small hill surrounded by rectangular moats.¹⁰⁰ A rammed-earth mound surmounts a rectangular burial pit, and a fifty-four-meter-long ramp leads to a log house of sophisticated construction (fig. 2.3).¹⁰¹ This is not the usual rectangular box-shaped encasement common in the Shang–Western Zhou tradition but an inhabitable underground house shaped like a huge triangular prism and made of more than 170 wooden logs. The structure is about 5.5 meters high, and its base is 33.4 meters long and 5 meters wide. The interior space is divided into three sections: the ante-



Fig. 2.4. Aerial view of the tomb of Marquis Yi of Zeng at Leigudun, Suizhou City, Hubei, just before it was opened in spring 1978. Hubei Provincial Museum.

chamber; the main chamber, which contains the coffin, made of two halves of a log, 6 meters in length and 1.12 meters in diameter; and the rear chamber. Although the tomb was repeatedly robbed, eighteen jade mat weights, including two still resting on a fragmented bamboo mat, were discovered in the main chamber near the coffin; an additional jade weight was found in a tomb robber's tunnel. The division of the interior space into chambers indicates that this structure was regarded as a house.

The Tomb as an Underground Palace

The idea of the tomb as an underground palace derives from the tomb-as-house idea. The tomb of Marquis Yi of Zeng, for example, is extremely large, probably because of his rank as the ruler of the, albeit politically weak, polity of Zeng (fig. 2.4). The division of the interior space simulates the organization of a domestic dwelling (fig. 2.5). The burials conducted in the small state of Zeng, which was politically affiliated with the state of Chu, had some distinct features.¹⁰² Owing to natural erosion and human destruction, we cannot tell whether there was a mound above the burial. However, as at Yinshan, the tomb is situated on top of a small hill. The irregularly



Fig. 2.5. Aerial view of opened tomb of Marquis Yi of the state of Zeng at Leigudun, Suizhou City, Hubei. Warring States period, ca. 433 bce. The division of the interior space simulates the organization of a domestic dwelling. Coffins for thirteen female attendants are scattered about the western compartment. Hubei Provincial Museum.

shaped structure, with four interconnected large compartments made of catalpa logs, resembles the four main components of a palace compound.¹⁰³ The eastern compartment, where the marquis's inner and outer coffins (Plate 7) were located and his eight female companions in death (*xunren*) were buried, could be likened to a ruler's private quarters, just as the central compartment, where the famous bronze chimes and bells and ritual vessels were discovered, could be considered his ceremonial court. The northern compartment, where weaponry, shields, armor, and horse and chariot fittings were stored, could be considered his armory; and the western compartment, in which an additional thirteen coffins containing the bodies of maids were buried, could be his harem. Near the marquis's coffin, four identical bronze mat weights, bamboo mats, offering tables, lacquered vessels, and so forth were discovered. We cannot pinpoint the exact functions of these objects, but their purpose as ritual implements suggests that they were probably related to sacrificial activities of some sort within the burial space.

Similar to Marquis Yi's and the Yinshan tombs, many Chu burials of the Warring States period featured multiple wooden compartments around the coffin in which were placed different types of grave goods. This is in contrast to the Shang and Western Zhou tradition, wherein different types of grave goods were grouped together and placed in various locations in the space between the coffins and the encasement. This increasing compartmentalization of the burial space is an important feature of the Warring-States Chu burials. One, often central, compartment was reserved for the coffin, and other spaces were designated for various grave goods. Because the size of the tomb and the quantity of the grave goods were generally related to the sociopolitical status of the tomb occupant, the more spacious the burial encasements, the higher the social rank of the deceased.

The interior of Marquis Yi's tomb was designed as a continuous space, which was thought to increase the mobility of the soul. More than three meters in height, the encasements are large enough to walk through, although no ramps lead in or out, just small openings at the base of the interior walls symbolizing doorways or windows. Furthermore, the marquis's and some of the women's coffins are painted with doors or windows, indicating that the souls could move within the confines of the tomb space.¹⁰⁴ Many elite Chu tombs have similar structural details, either actual or painted on the panels that divided the interior.¹⁰⁵ These real and imagined passageways suggest the autonomous existence of the soul in the tomb.¹⁰⁶

The Tomb as Chariot

The tomb symbolized not only a house but also a chariot. The shape of a fifth-century bce tomb (Tomb 10) at Wanggou in Changdao County, Shandong, resembles a four-wheeled chariot: each side has two wheel-like structures, and the burial encasement represents the carriage (fig. 2.6).¹⁰⁷ The multiple conceptions of tomb construction in the Warring States period are also reflected in the *Xunzi* (third century bce) and other early Chinese texts.¹⁰⁸ These texts often make analogies between the tumulus,

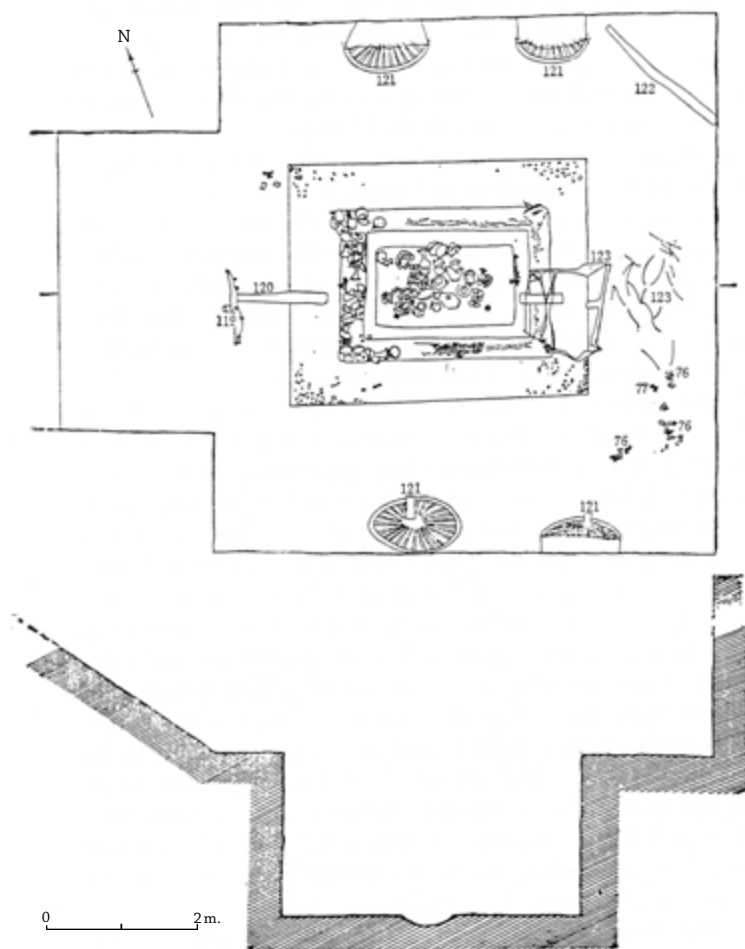


Fig. 2.6. Fifth-century bce tomb (Tomb 10) at Wanggou, Changdao County, Shandong, in the shape of a four-wheeled chariot, with two wheels on each side, and the burial encasement representing the carriage.

the coffins and encasements, the pall decoration, and the burial construction, on the one hand, and the house, the carriage of a chariot, the decorations of a tent, and the enclosing structure of a house, on the other. All of these architectural forms—houses, tombs, coffins, chariots, and tents—are simultaneously the bases and the products of religious imagination rooted in the cosmological notions of Heaven and Earth.¹⁰⁹ Likewise, the tomb, with its large, round aboveground tumulus and square underground burial pit, imitated the basic cosmological model of a round Heaven and a square Earth. As such, the structure of tombs imitated the structure of the cosmos.¹¹⁰

The Tomb as a Way Station

The idea of the tomb as an inhabitable domestic space should not be overstated. It was but one of many ideas circulating in the Warring States period. In some Warring-States Chu burials, such as Tomb 2 at Baoshan (figs. 2.7 and 2.8), the ways



Fig. 2.7. Aerial view of Tomb 2 of Chu elite Shao Tuo (d. ca. 316 bce), excavated at Baoshan, Jingmen City, Hubei. Local people standing at the four edges of the pit watch the archaeologists bring the burial goods out of the tomb compartments.

the tomb space was divided and the grave goods were stored suggest that it was not an inhabitable space. It is simply too cramped to be suitable for residential use. Rather, the Baoshan materials point to another important innovation of the Warring States period: the tomb conceived as a way station, a liminal place from which the soul would journey to a cosmic destination. First, the inner coffin at the center of the burial space is a rectangular wooden box that is 184 centimeters long, 46 centimeters wide, and 46 centimeters high (Plate 8). Unlike the inner coffin in Tomb 1 at Leigudun (see Plate 7), it has no window or door painted on its surface. Instead, it is covered with a polychrome decoration of seventy-two serpentine dragons and an equal number of mythical birds, which may have a protective and apotropaic function.¹¹¹ This decoration seems to indicate that the coffin was a container or storage for the corpse rather than its residence. Second, the inventory list excavated at the tomb divides the grave goods into several categories, and one category is explicitly designated as travel gear for the deceased to use in its spirit journey in the afterlife. Therefore, contrary to what many scholars have argued, the tomb was neither the deceased's sole destination, nor its happy home, nor the jail that would permanently imprison its spirit.¹¹²

Furthermore, while the tomb symbolized a domestic structure, it did not directly

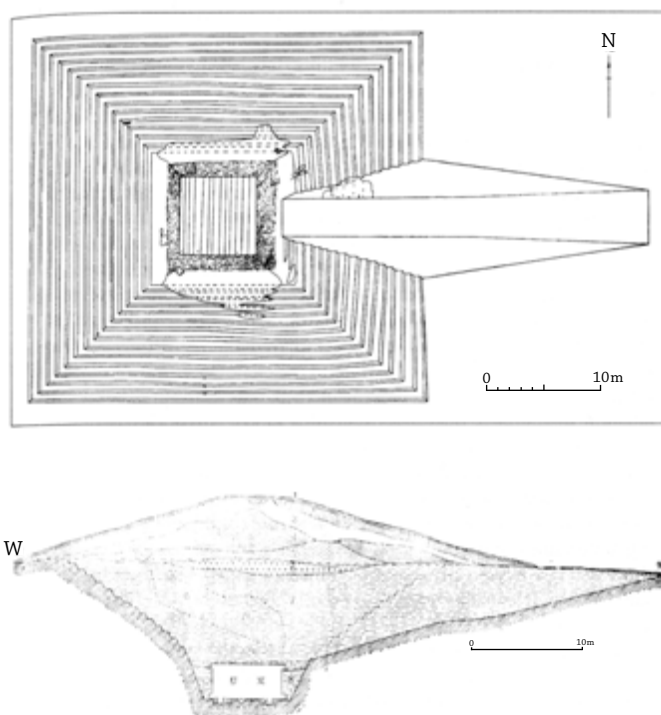


Fig. 2.8. Plan and section of Tomb 2 at Baoshan, Jingmen City, Hubei. Warring States period, ca. fourth century bce .

replicate a house. Rather, the tomb was meant to provide a tame, familiar, comfortable space for the deceased. The distinction between wild space and tame space was an important component of the conception of the afterlife in early China.¹¹³ During funerary rituals, old garments, recognizable objects, and personal belongings were used as tokens of familiarity in constructing a place of safety, comfort, and delight. The tomb simulated the old abode and served as a quiet and restful home for the departed soul.

The Tomb as Microcosm

The tomb was metaphorically constructed as a house, a palace, a chariot, a city, and ultimately a cosmos.¹¹⁴ The cross-shaped royal tombs of the late Shang period may be a precedent, but it was not until after the Spring and Autumn period that tombs were built as an alternative world, which aligned with strengthening ideology of the afterlife as parallel to the living world and increasingly elaborated in the latter's image. Some have suggested that several elements of burial construction—the presence of models, the homelike “catacomb,” ceramic human figurines in the Qin tombs—indicate that the tomb was conceived of as a microcosm.¹¹⁵

Recent discoveries of Tomb 1 at Shuangdun near Bangbu City, Anhui, and Tomb

1 at Bianzhuang in Fengyang County, Anhui, further indicate the importance of the Huai River valley to burial innovation.¹¹⁶ According to the inscriptions on bronzes that were excavated, the tomb occupants were two rulers of a small polity named Zhongli in the late Spring and Autumn period. The Shuangdun tomb has one of the earliest domelike mounds, sixty meters in diameter and nine meters high. Many features of this tomb lead scholars to think that it took as its model the configuration of the cosmos. For example, the mound and the circular burial pit were filled with clays of five colors: yellow, greenish grey, black, red, and white. The black and white clays were not locally available and must have been imported from somewhere else for this special purpose. The exact meaning of this is not clear, but a little later, in the Warring States and Han periods, the five colors figured among the elements in the five-agents cosmology.¹¹⁷ Under the burial mound is a huge ring-shaped white-clay layer about twenty to thirty centimeters thick. Like a huge disc, the white clay ring could symbolize the round Heaven in traditional Chinese cosmology. The burial pit is circular (fourteen meters in diameter), but inside is a cross-shaped burial ground on which twelve pits, three on each side, are arrayed, with companions in death and grave goods in them. The ruler of the Zhongli polity was buried at the center of the cross (fig. 2.9). The top of the Bianzhuang tomb was damaged long before the excavation, so we do not know whether there was a burial mound, but the layout of the burial pits is similar to that of the Shuangdun tomb (fig. 2.10).

In southern China, the concept of a round Heaven and a square Earth, well documented in the Warring States period, was reflected in tomb structure.¹¹⁸ Warring States burials featured a huge, rammed-earth hemispherical mound built atop a deep square pit. When first introduced in the late Spring and Autumn period, this tumulus form was limited to the graves of local rulers, but starting in the middle Warring States period, such mounds spread to the burials of lower-ranking individuals in southern China. The form also became popular in the Han dynasty.

The idea of a tomb as a cosmological model appears in a famous passage in *Records of the Grand Historian*, wherein Sima Qian describes the mausoleum of the First Emperor of Qin (r. 221–210 bce) at Lishan near Xi'an City as containing “[r]eplicas of palaces, scenic towers, and the hundred officials, as well as rare utensils and wonderful objects . . . brought to fill up the tomb. . . . Above were representations of all the heavenly bodies, below, the features of the earth [my emphasis].”¹¹⁹ In many respects, the tomb of the First Emperor of Qin combined the diverse burial trends of the Warring States period on an unprecedented scale.¹²⁰ The tomb has a huge, four-sided, truncated, pyramidal mound made of rammed earth. It now stands fifty-two meters high, but it was originally much higher. To the east of the mound, an underground army of life-size terra-cotta soldiers was discovered in 1974. The high concentration of mercury in the soil near the site corroborated the account in the *Records of the Grand Historian* that “mercury was used to fashion imitations of the hundred rivers, the Yellow River and the Yangzi, and the seas.”¹²¹

The desire to separate the dead from the living may have served as one motivation

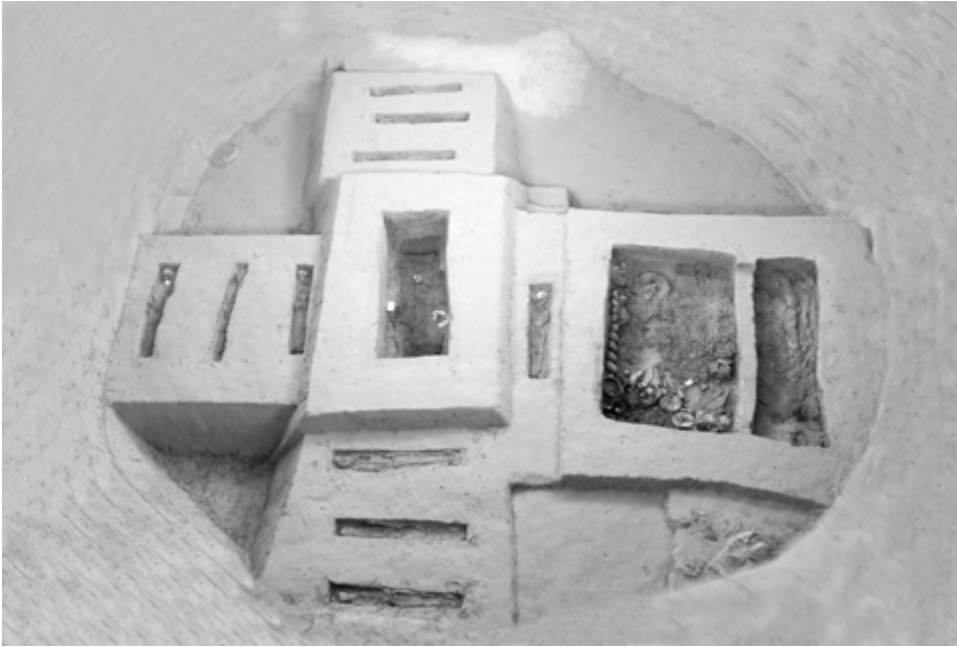


Fig. 2.9. Inside the circular burial pit at Tomb 1 at Shuangdun in Bangbu City, Anhui, the cross-shaped burial ground on which companions in death and grave goods were buried in twelve pits. The ruler of the Zhongli polity was buried at the center of the cross. Late Spring and Autumn period.

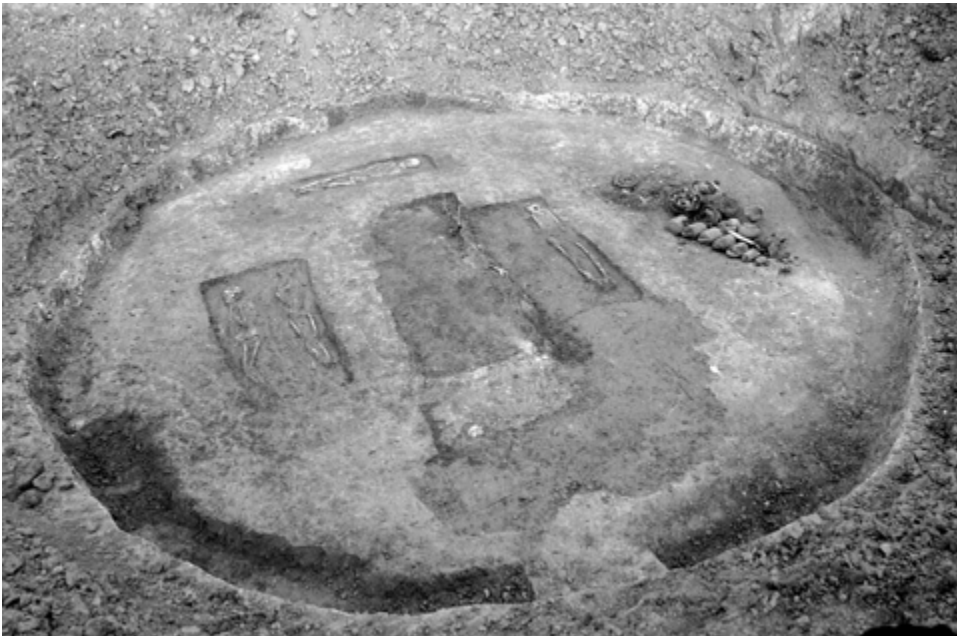


Fig. 2.10. Layout of the burial pit in Tomb 1 at Bianzhuang in Fengyang County, Anhui. Late Spring and Autumn period.

for fashioning the tomb as a microcosm. By the Warring States period the relationship between the dead and the living had changed drastically. Whereas the dead had once been regarded as benevolent supernatural helpers, they were now considered potentially harmful spirits. Presenting the tomb as a microcosm was meant “to separate [the dead] from the living and to secure them with a universe of their own.”¹²² This universe had two related functions: First, it controlled and protected the dead so that they would not wander around the world and harm the living. This led to the bureaucratization of the afterlife and explains the installation of clay figurines with outstretched arms in the access ramps leading to the Mawangdui tombs, as well as other horizontal chamber-style tombs near Changsha. The outstretched arms were believed to prevent evil influences from entering the tomb. Second, the universe served as a tame domestic environment that would protect the postmortem existence of the deceased. Thus, the burial chamber was filled with figurines, objects used in daily life (including lamps), and exotic luxury items intended to guard and entertain the tomb occupant.¹²³

The Appearance of the Horizontal Chamber-Style Tomb

The idea of the tomb as an inhabitable microcosm served as an important stage in the transition from the vertical pit-style tomb to the horizontal chamber-style tomb. The changes in burial ideology triggered a shift in the emphasis of ancestral sacrifice from the cult of benevolent ancestors to the cult of potentially malevolent recent dead. The latter cult required a sacrificial space within the tomb, and this requirement in turn transformed early Chinese burial practice.¹²⁴ What materialized in the early Han dynasty, however, was the physical fashioning of a sacrificial space from the abstract notion of a “sacrificial chamber” put forward on the Baoshan inventory list. Actual sacrificial spaces within tombs first appeared in elite burials but gradually spread to the lower social strata. The earliest horizontal chamber-style tomb appeared in the stave-walled¹²⁵ tombs (*ticou*) that started at the end of the Warring States period and flourished in the Western Han, particularly among the high elite of local kings and marquises.

The term *ticou* 題湊, meaning “gathered heads,” referred in early Chinese texts to a luxurious mortuary practice.¹²⁶ We have epigraphic evidence for the practice of stave-walled tombs in the Warring States period. Engraved on a bronze plate of 48 x 94 centimeters, a construction plan (fig. 2.11) for the tombs and sacrificial halls of the Warring States-period King Cuo (d. ca. 310 bce) of Zhongshan and his consorts was discovered at Sanji in Pingshan County, Hebei.¹²⁷ Although the funerary necropolis was never completed and several planned tombs were not finished, the construction plan specifies their details. The inscriptions in the two squares on both ends of the five squares in the middle of the plate state, “The hall for the royal lady (*furen*) measures one hundred and fifty *chi* square [1 *chi* is about 22 cm]. The sizes of her inner and middle coffins accord with those of Queen Ai. The length of

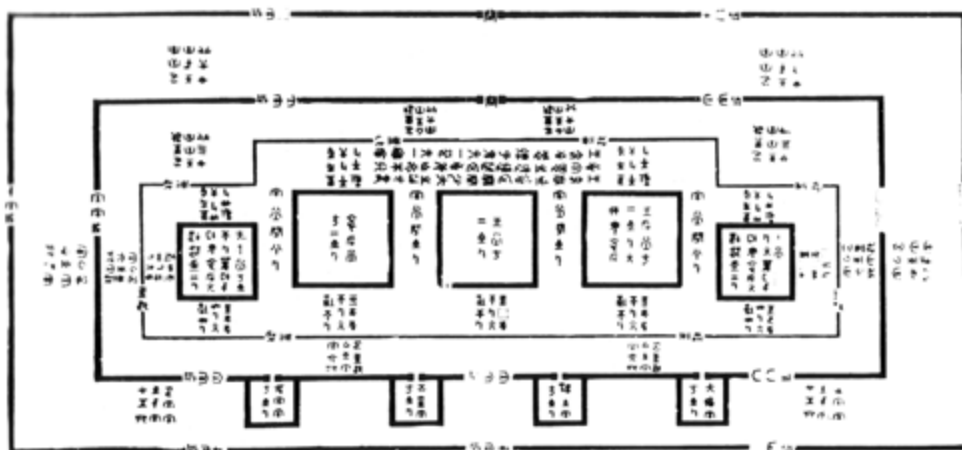


Fig. 2.11. Line drawing of a bronze plate inlaid with the construction plan of King Cuo's mausoleum in the kingdom of Zhongshan, discovered at Sanji in Pingshan County, Hebei. L. 94 cm, W. 48 cm. Warring States period.

the *ticou* is three *chi*.”¹²⁸ Because these two tombs were never built and King Cuo's burial pit was robbed, we do not know the exact format of this stave wall, but from Han dynasty literature and later commentaries, we know that stave-walled tombs constituted a barrier composed of stacks of timbers or stones surrounding the wooden encasement.¹²⁹ The burial pit of King Cuo's tomb was cut vertically into the bedrock of the mountain, after which the four walls were built of piled stones and charcoal was deposited around the wooden encasement. Thus King Cuo's is a typical Zhou elite burial with “piles of stone and heaps of charcoal,” as was common in northern China.¹³⁰ King Cuo's burial, along with such Warring States royal burials as the state of Wei at Guweicun in Hui County, Henan,¹³¹ and the royal mausoleum of the state of Zhao in Handan City, Hebei, is unusual in its aboveground pyramidal tumulus with an associated sacrificial structure on top. Although it differs structurally from the southern burials, with their deep vertical pits and hemispherical mounds on top, the burial ideology of luxurious public display is the same.

To date, Chinese archaeologists have discovered over twenty stave-walled tombs from the Western Han period. The early ones, such as Zhang Er's tomb at Xiaoyan village in Shijiazhuang City, Hebei, dated to 202 bce,¹³² are similar to King Cuo's Warring States-period mausoleum. In both cases, the main burial is in the tradition of the vertical pit but includes some of the features of the horizontal chamber style. The same is true of the famous Mawangdui tombs, although they had no stave-walled structure and adhered to the basic vertical pit-style burial structure with multiple compartments (fig. 2.12). These transitional examples are important for our understanding of the spatial changes in early Chinese burial practices.

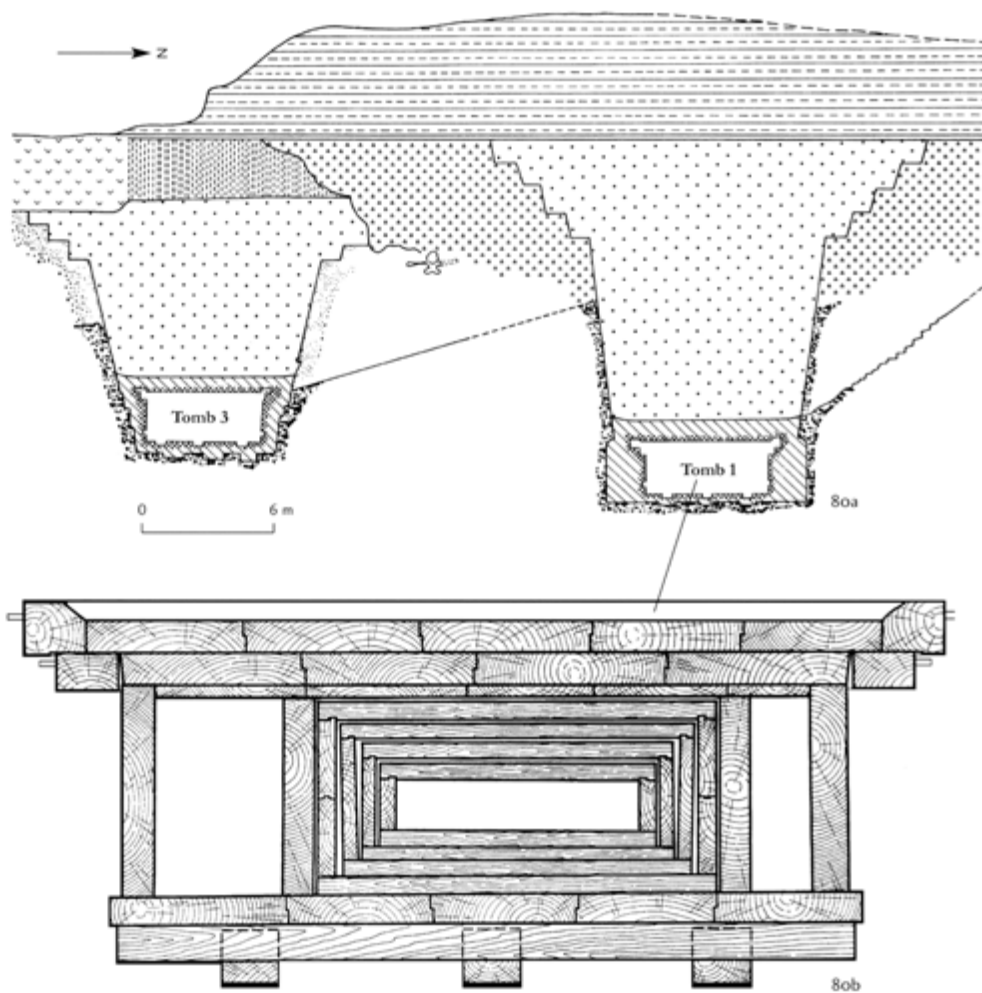


Fig. 2.12. Cross section of Tombs 1 and 3 (upper), and cross section of the inner and outer coffins of Tomb 1 (below) at Mawangdui, Changsha City, Hunan. Early Western Han period.



Fig. 2.13. Wooden encasement and four side compartments in Tomb 1 at Mawangdui, Changsha City, Hunan. Early Western Han period.

The burial space of Tomb 1 at Mawangdui was divided into five compartments: one in the middle, in which four nested coffins were located, and four additional spaces surrounding it, one on each side (fig. 2.13).¹³³ According to the inventory list buried in the tomb, the central compartment was “the middle of the encasement” (*guozhong* 槨中); the northern compartment, “the head of the encasement (i.e., the coffin case)” (*guoshou* 槨首); the southern compartment, “the foot of the encasement” (*guozu* 槨足); and the eastern compartment, “the left of the encasement” (*guozuo* 槨左).¹³⁴ The layout of the compartments conformed to the orientation of the corpse, aligned north to south, head to foot, in the innermost coffin. In other words, “the head of the encasement” (the northern compartment) is close to the head of the corpse, and “the foot of the encasement” is close to the feet. Therefore, the names of the compartments reflected the perspective of the deceased.

The compartmentalization of burial space also reflected the two stages of funerary ritual clearly distinguished in early Chinese ritual texts: the disposal of the dead



Fig. 2.14. Tomb guardian figure on the east side of the passage leading to Tomb 2 at Mawangdui, Changsha City, Hunan. Early Western Han period. The deer antlers on the head have been removed.

body (i.e., the “rites of disposal”) and the broader activities of mourning and celebration performed by the living (i.e., the “funerary rites”).¹³⁵ The enshrining and enclosure of the corpse in the coffin, according to the *Protocols of Ceremonies*, was a private act, hidden from public view and conducted in the residence of the deceased. The funerary rites, including the procession to the burial site, the public announcement of the funerary gifts, and the interment of grave goods, were for public display. Even funerary gift giving was divided between offerings to the dead (*zeng* 贈) and gifts to the bereaved (*fu* 賻).¹³⁶

However, the Mawangdui tombs did incorporate important new design features that appeared in other early Han elite burials. For example, tomb guardian figures, with deer antlers on the head and two extended arms (fig. 2.14), were placed in the two niches on the walls of the access ramp leading to the burial chamber in both Tombs 2 and 3.¹³⁷ In Tombs 1 and 3, of the four side compartments, the largest and the most spacious is the northern compartment, which in Tomb 1 measures about 296 centimeters wide, 92 centimeters long, and 144 centimeters deep (fig. 2.15). It had silk curtains hung on the walls and a bamboo mat on the floor (fig. 2.16). The west end contained a spirit seat framed by a painted lacquered screen (figs. 2.17a and 2.17b), a mat, a cushion, and other personal belongings such as a pair of silk shoes, a cane, two toilet boxes, lacquered dishes and cups and other utensils filled with food,

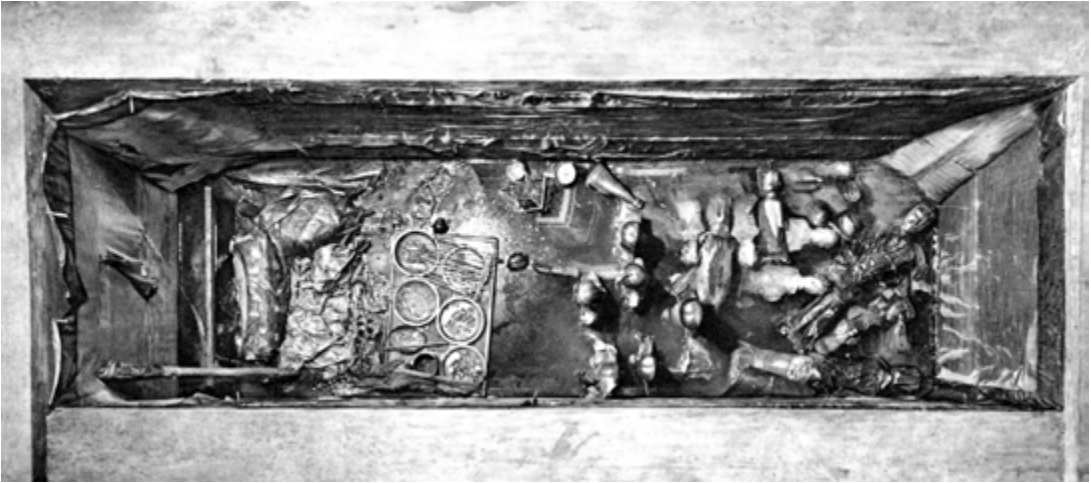
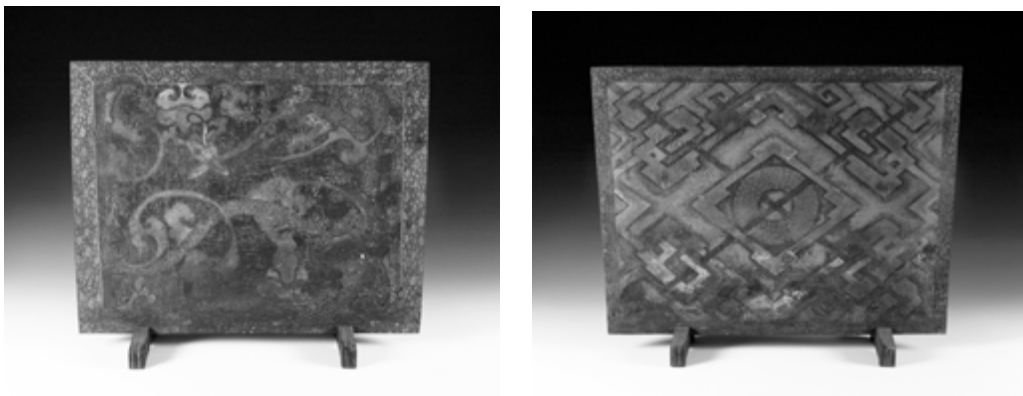


Fig. 2.15. Northern compartment in Mawangdui Tomb 1 where the framed spirit seat is located. Early Western Han period.



Fig. 2.16. View of the western half of the northern compartment of the encasement with burial goods, at the moment of discovery. Tomb 1 at Mawangdui, Changsha City, Hunan. Early Western Han period.



Figs. 2.17a and b. Painted wooden screen (front and back) used to frame the spirit seat, excavated from Tomb 1 at Mawangdui, Changsha City, Hunan. Early Western Han period. Lacquer on wood, H. 62 cm, L. 58 cm, W. 72 cm. Hunan Provincial Museum.

all designed to indicate the presence of the dead (fig. 2.16).¹³⁸ This space resembled a stage set for feeding the departed soul while entertaining it with music and dance. The presence of the tomb guardian and the spirit seat and the configuration of the northern compartment are the defining features of the horizontal chamber-style tomb (see below).

The next development, which marks the most important transition from the vertical pit style to the horizontal chamber style, appears in Tomb 1 at Xiangbizui and the so-called Yuyang queen's tomb, both in Changsha City, Hunan. Dated to 157 or 128 bce, the Xiangbizui tomb shares some features with vertical pit-style tombs.¹³⁹ As in the Mawangdui tombs, this vertical pit had one stamped-earth access ramp leading to the burial ground surface. Near the east end of the ramp stood a pair of tomb guardian figures (indicated by two small squares in the diagram in fig. 2.18). In this case, the end of the ramp was at the same level as the burial chambers. Similarly, in the Yuyang queen's tomb, at Wangchengpo near Changsha City, dated to between 168 bce and 150 bce, the burial chamber and the access ramp are in a spatial continuum (fig. 2.19). Based on the archaeological features, archaeologists have postulated that the funerary rites took place within the burial chamber before the doors of the burial chamber were closed and that the two tomb guardians with deer antlers and extended arms were placed at the tomb-level entrance of the access ramp.¹⁴⁰

The structure of the Xiangbizui tomb and the Yuyang queen's tomb had many new features.¹⁴¹ First, a wall of stacked timbers buttressed the wooden chamber from the outside. Second, the compartments that appeared in earlier stave-walled tombs were replaced by two concentric corridors (*huilang* 回廊).¹⁴² Third, in the Xiangbizui tomb, the length between the tomb-level entrance of the access ramp and the ground surface of the burial chamber is much shorter, and in the Yuyang queen's tomb, the burial chamber and the tomb-level entrance of the access ramp are spatially continuous. In Tomb 3 at Mawangdui, for example, the length between the

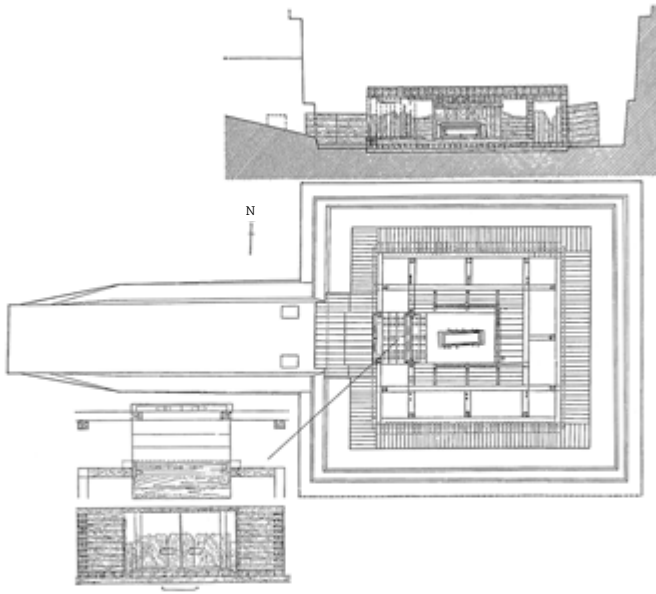


Fig. 2.18. Plan of Tomb 1 at Xiangbizui, Changsha City, Hunan.
Ca. second century bce .



Fig. 2.19. Stave-walled tomb of the Yuyang queen, the Kingdom of Changsha, excavated at Wangchengpo, Changsha City, Hunan. Early Western Han period.

tomb-level entrance of the access ramp and the ground surface of the burial chamber is 3.1 meters, while at Xiangbizui it is only 0.58 meters. This small gap is paved in logs, thus forming a corridor that leads to the double door of the encasement; wooden boards frame and protect both sides of the corridor. As Chinese archaeologists have observed, this spatial continuum is a defining feature of the horizontal chamber-style tomb in that it allows one to walk into the tomb chamber via the access ramp. Fourth, both the Xiangbizui tomb and the Yuyang queen's tomb had two tomb guardian figures with deer antlers, extending their arms to block the passage in the access ramps, to function as magic protective mechanisms to safeguard the burial chambers (fig. 2.20).

In the Xiangbizui tomb, the doors leading into the tomb are about 3 meters tall and 1.38 meters wide; no longer merely symbolic, these are functional gateways to the inside of the tomb and, from there, to the outside world. The coffin chamber, which sheltered the three nested coffins, was open on the side facing the passage-way. A visitor could easily walk into the interior of the burial chambers through a chain of connected structures: the access ramp, a functional double-door opening to the outside, a transitional space, and a second set of double doors to the coffin chamber, the final destination. The transitional space of the tomb thus expanded into a sacrificial space where rituals took place and vessels and offerings were displayed.¹⁴³ This spatial arrangement significantly departs from that of the stave-walled tombs. The occupant of the Xiangbizui tomb was probably the king of the local kingdom of



Fig. 2.20. Tomb guardian figures in the passage leading to the tomb of the Yuyang queen, the Kingdom of Changsha, excavated at Wangchengpo, Changsha City, Hunan. H. 88 cm. Early Western Han period. The deer antlers on the top of the heads have been removed.

Changsha, which the Western Han dynasty (206 bce – 9 ce) established in 202 bce in the former territory of Warring-States Chu and which the usurper Wang Mang (ca. 45 bce – 23 ce) abolished in 9 ce.

In both the Xiangbizui tomb and the Yuyang queen's tomb, the burial space is arranged not from the perspective of the deceased lying at the center of the tomb but from the perspective of a visitor, with an access ramp leading to the interior of the tomb and the corridors surrounding the central coffin chamber. It is also possible that these design features were meant to create a familiar (i.e., tame) space that could ease the dead's transition from the world of the living to that of the afterlife.¹⁴⁴ Scholars have convincingly argued that these new structural changes originated in the Chu elite tombs in the south and then spread to other parts of the Han empire.¹⁴⁵ The use of greenish-white oily clay to seal the burial chambers, characteristic of the southern Chu tombs, continued not only in southern horizontal tombs but also in some northern tombs, such as the Western Han princely tombs at Dabaotai near Beijing.¹⁴⁶

Pianfang as “the Chamber of Peace”

This strong southern connection in the burial architecture is supported in recently discovered Chu bamboo manuscripts. In Han literature, this type of tomb construction is called *huangchang ticou*, or “yellow battens aligned together,” after the bright color of freshly cut cypress or other timbers. Both historical records and archaeological data show that this burial practice was reserved for members of the Han imperial family. Nevertheless, in several cases such a burial was also granted as an imperial favor to high officials. For example, Emperor Xuan (91–49 bce) granted the famous military general Huo Guang (ca. 130–68 bce) a full imperial funerary treatment with “a jade suit (*yuyi*), a set of catalpa coffins (*zigong*), *pianfang* 便房, and a stave wall of the yellow cores of cypress.”¹⁴⁷ Much ink has been spilled on the terms that appear in this description. With the help of archaeological materials, we now better understand the structure and function of the jade suits, the catalpa coffins, and the stave walls; only the term *pianfang* remains a puzzle.

Based on the description of Huo Guang's burial, scholars agree that *pianfang* must refer to a structure located between the catalpa coffins and the stave wall, but they disagree on the form and function of this structure. Some also suggest that *pian* 便 in *pianfang* refers to the certain type of *pian* 榧 wood used in burial construction, while others variously suggest that the term refers to the front chamber, the side chambers near the coffins, the U-shaped corridor, the coffin chamber, the entire burial chamber, and so on.¹⁴⁸

Newly published Chu manuscripts collected at Qinghua University shed new light on this debate.¹⁴⁹ A middle Warring States-period bamboo manuscript that modern scholars named “the residence of Chu” (Chuju) and that narrates both the genealogy and migration of Chu kings and the origins of some ritual and religious activities mentions a term *pianshi* 榧室. From this context, it is clear that the term

refers to a structure in which the Chu king performed certain sacrifices, in other words, to a sacrificial hall.¹⁵⁰ This meaning is consistent with the claim that *pianfang* refers to the entire burial chamber as a place to pacify and offer sacrifice to the deceased, where the spirit seat of the dead is often located. Here *pian* means in the adjectival form “quiet,” “comfortable,” and “peaceful,” and in the verbal form “to pacify” and so on. This meaning also applies to the terms for “palace of peace” (*piandian*) and “spirit seat” (*pianzuo*) in Han literature.¹⁵¹ This linguistic connection between *pianfang* in Han imperial burial construction and *pianshi* in the Chu manuscript is significant. It strongly suggests that some of the standard Han imperial funerary nomenclature, as in the case of other religious practices, such as the cult of Taiyi (see chapter 3), may be of Chu origin.

The Establishment of the Sacrificial Space within the Tomb

The movement of the sacrificial space to within the tomb itself is the main distinguishing feature of the horizontal chamber-style tombs.¹⁵² As we have seen in the princely tomb at Beidongshan in Xuzhou City, Jiangsu, this innovation began in elite burials in southern China. Although the main features of the Mawangdui tombs reflect the vertical pit style, the northern compartment, with its spirit seat, sacrificial foods, and wooden figurines of musicians and dancers, certainly points to an early attempt at establishing a sacrificial space within the tomb. Both contemporaneous with the Beidongshan tomb, the Mawangdui and the Xiangbizui tombs enable us to see the process of the structural development from vertical pit-style tomb to horizontal chamber-style tomb—that is, the burial space develops from a self-contained compartmentalized storage space to an open, accessible sacrificial space. The renaming of this wooden encasement as *pianfang* or *pianguo*¹⁵³ marked its transformation in function from a space for storing grave goods to a place for offering sacrifice to pacify the potentially dangerous deceased. The main function of the chamber of peace is to offer sacrifice to the deceased. This separation of the sacrificial space from the coffin chamber is an important step in the development of the horizontal chamber-style tomb.¹⁵⁴

This early form of the horizontal chamber-style tomb with sacrificial space soon spread to other parts of the Western Han empire. Renowned examples include the Western Han princely tombs at Dabaotai (Tomb 1, dated to 45 bce; Tomb 2, late Western Han dynasty) near Beijing (fig. 2.21). In comparison with the Xiangbizui tomb, the sacrificial space in Tomb 1 at Dabaotai is considerably larger: the coffin chamber (the upper half of the central rectangle) has been pushed farther back into the interior, leaving a wider antechamber for ritual activities in front of the coffin. A tiger-shaped mat weight was discovered in the antechamber of Tomb 2 at Dabaotai, suggesting that these weights were used to mark a spirit seat for the dead.

In addition, the sacrificial space was established not only in the wooden chamber-style tomb but also in the other major type of princely burial: the rock-cut or rock-piled tomb. Popular in the eastern part of the Han empire (present-day Hebei, Shan-

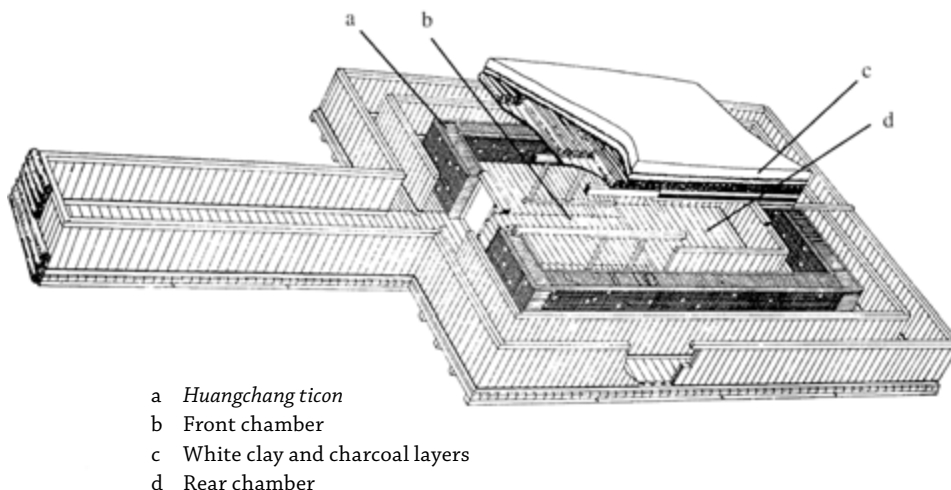


Fig. 2.21. Cross section view of the stave-walled tomb of Liu Jian, king of Guangyang (d. 44 bce) at Dabaotai near Beijing.

dong, Henan, and Jiangsu), these rock-cut tombs were often located at the foot or the middle of a mountain and cut horizontally into the mountain to create tunnels and caves. The tomb usually has an axial plan, with the access ramp, tomb-sealing devices (such as heavy stop-stones), double doors, sacrificial space, coffin chamber, and corridors aligned along the horizontal axis, and secondary chambers for storage, stable, kitchen, bath, toilet, and for many other purposes situated off axis. Some rock-cut tombs are constructed like an underground maze. Among these, the most important space is certainly the sacrificial space. Scholars have rightly insisted that there must also be chambers of peace in rock-cut tombs,¹⁵⁵ but the definition and the location of this space remains to be determined.

Take, for example, the twin burials of Liu Sheng (d. 113 bce, Tomb 1, fig. 2.22) and his consort Dou Wan (Tomb 2) at Lingshan near Mancheng County, Hebei. A younger half-brother of the mighty Emperor Wu (156–87 bce), Liu Sheng was the king of the state of Zhongshan, and these burials are famed for their jade burial suits.¹⁵⁶ The tombs were carved out of the rocky mountain. The tomb access ramp, or tunnel, leading to the interior was originally blocked by iron barriers poured on location when the tomb was sealed. Each tomb has two long, narrow side rooms: one a stable for horses and chariots, the other a storehouse containing wine and food. The coffin chambers, built as stone houses with gabled roofs that resembled the inner sections of a domestic residence, housed the coffins of the prince and his consort. Both bodies were shrouded in jade suits stitched with gold thread. A small side room adjoining the coffin chamber of each tomb resembled a bath.

It has been suggested that the coffin chamber in the back is the sacrificial space (*pianfang*), but the archaeological evidence suggests that the antechamber in Liu

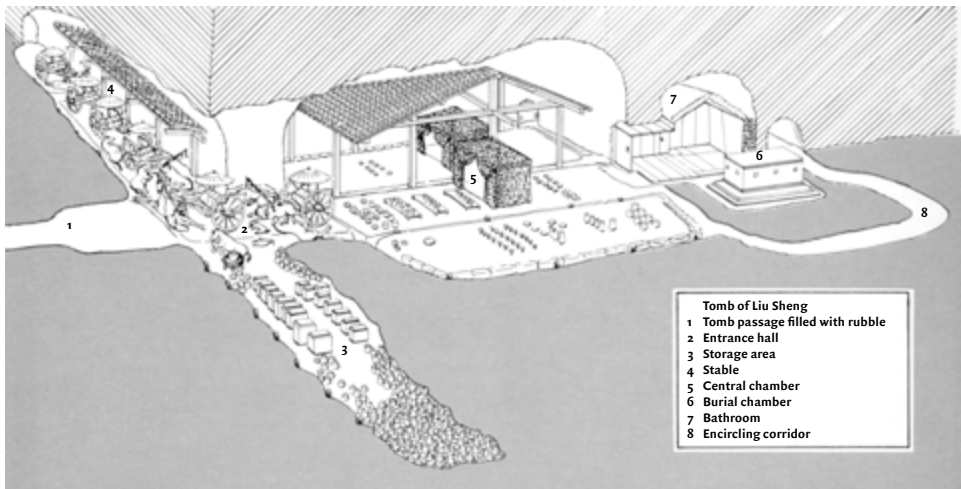


Fig. 2.22. Cutaway view showing a tentative reconstruction of Liu Sheng's tomb at the time of burial. Western Han dynasty. After *The Great Bronze Age of China*, fig. 112.

Sheng's tomb is where sacrifices were offered to both Liu Sheng and Dou Wan. The antechambers and the side rooms in both tombs were fitted with tile-roofed structures, which further recalled a palatial setting. The center for ritual activities was, however, the antechamber in Liu Sheng's tomb (Tomb 1), where two textile tents, various food vessels, drinking vessels, lacquerware, exquisite lamps, incense burners, and other ritual and everyday vessels and instruments were neatly placed (fig. 2.23). Although the coffin chamber in Tomb 2 is located off the horizontal axis, the antechamber remains the focus of the ritual activities performed before the tomb was sealed. A set of four leopard-shaped mat weights inlaid with precious stones, gold, and silver were discovered in the antechamber. Like many mat weights discovered in Han and later tombs, these demarcated the sacred boundaries of the spirit seat,¹⁵⁷ which is associated with bronze ritual vessels for eating and drinking.

Scholars have noted that two textile tents represent two spirit seats—both located in the antechamber of Tomb 1; Tomb 2 has none—and that both Liu Sheng and his consort Dou Wan must have received sacrifices in this shared sacrificial space.¹⁵⁸ According to historical accounts, Liu Sheng died in 113 bce, but Dou Wan, from the powerful Dou family (the natal family of Liu Sheng's grandmother), was buried several years later, an estimation based on the dating of excavated objects from the tomb.¹⁵⁹ Although we do not know exactly the length of this interval, it is conceivable that the entrance to Liu Sheng's tomb was either left unsealed or reopened after the death of Dou Wan, so that her spirit seat could be set up there. We do know that the stone double door leading to Liu Sheng's coffin chamber could be sealed only once because there is a mechanism built into the floor such that once the doors were closed they could not be reopened. However, the entrance to the antechamber, the sacrificial space, could be reopened when necessary. Han historical accounts also



Fig. 2.23. Archaeologists clearing the sacrificial space in the antechamber of Liu Sheng's tomb at Mancheng County, Hebei. Western Han dynasty.

suggest that the antechamber was accessed more than once; among these are accounts of people living near the tomb during the mourning period and of a man named Zhao Xuan who, in order to carry out his mourning rites in the burial access ramp, left his father's tomb unsealed for more than twenty years.¹⁶⁰

Converging Performance and Place

The *Book of Rites* (Liji) specifies that a deceased Son of Heaven be confined seven days after his death and interred seven months after, but where was the coffin located in the interim?¹⁶¹ In traditional funerary rites, as prescribed in the *Protocols of Ceremonies*, this period between the confining and the interring is called *bin* 殯, a word derived etymologically from *bin* 賓, or “guest.” From this point onward, the deceased is treated as a guest and no longer as the master of the household, and the coffin containing the corpse is placed at the guest's position in a ceremonial hall of the house.

This protocol marks a turning point in funerary rituals. As a rite of passage, the funerary ritual consists of several gradual transitions whereby the deceased transforms from a living person to a corpse, from the host of the house to a spirit-guest, and from a potentially harmful ghost to a benevolent ancestor. In the *Book of Rites*, Confucius's disciple Zi You described the funerary ritual process in terms of the spatial movement of the corpse:

Rice and precious shell are put into the mouth of the corpse under the window [i.e., in the southwest corner of the idealized chamber]. The corpse is washed and dressed inside the chamber door. Then the corpse is wrapped with more clothes and put into the coffin at the top of the host's steps. The coffin is laid at the guest's position [i.e., at the top of the west steps] for a period. Then the deceased bids farewell to the ancestors in the courtyard [of the ancestral temple]; and finally the coffin is buried at the grave.¹⁶²

Furthermore, the burial and the ensuing lengthy period of mourning, sacrifice for associating the tablet, and two sacrifices for good fortune are concluded with the final "sacrifice of repose" (*yuji*) to mark the end of the funeral process; the deceased person is then assumed to have transformed into a benevolent ancestor. The *Protocols of Ceremonies* and the *Book of Rites* prescribed these funerary rites, associated with the vertical pit-style burial tradition.

It has been suggested that the chamber of rest (*qin*) is probably where the corpse was housed during this liminal stage.¹⁶³ Recall that in Emperor Ming's ritual reform, the chamber of rest was the first ritual structure to be relocated to the burial site. After the coffin was interred and the mourning period ended, the chamber of rest near the tomb became the place where later generations could sacrifice to their ancestors; only in this sense did the chamber of rest share the same function as the ancestral temple. Apparently, in the Eastern Han dynasty, because of the changes in house structure and the new attitude toward death, the *bin* rite was no longer performed in everyday domestic settings, which could produce "offence to any scruples of sanctity or interruption of daily life." Rather, the *bin* rite was moved to the burial site, a special ritualized space. By relocating the chamber of rest to the burial site, people sought to avoid death pollution and to continue to sacrifice to the deceased emperor—a way of assisting the dead during their transformation in the afterlife.

The difference between the traditional account of the burial ritual provided in the *Book of Rites* and the Eastern Han practice is clear: the *Book of Rites* prescribes a potential temporal gap between the closing of the tomb and the end of the mourning period, especially when this mourning period is lengthy. During this period, the departed person, who is still in his or her liminal stage, had no formalized place to receive sacrificial offerings because of his or her in-between status. In the Eastern Han practice, however, the dead could receive sacrifice in the chamber of rest before the end of the mourning period. In this way, the bereaved by means of sacrifice could assist the dead in their transformation. This may well have motivated Emperor Ming's ritual reform.

This situation certainly characterized the imperial level during the Eastern Han dynasty. But what about the funerary rites of the horizontal chamber style at other levels of Han society?¹⁶⁴ Given the relatively poor preservation condition in the horizontal chamber-style burials and the paucity of available religious texts, we do not know much about the funerary rites. But archaeological materials show that among

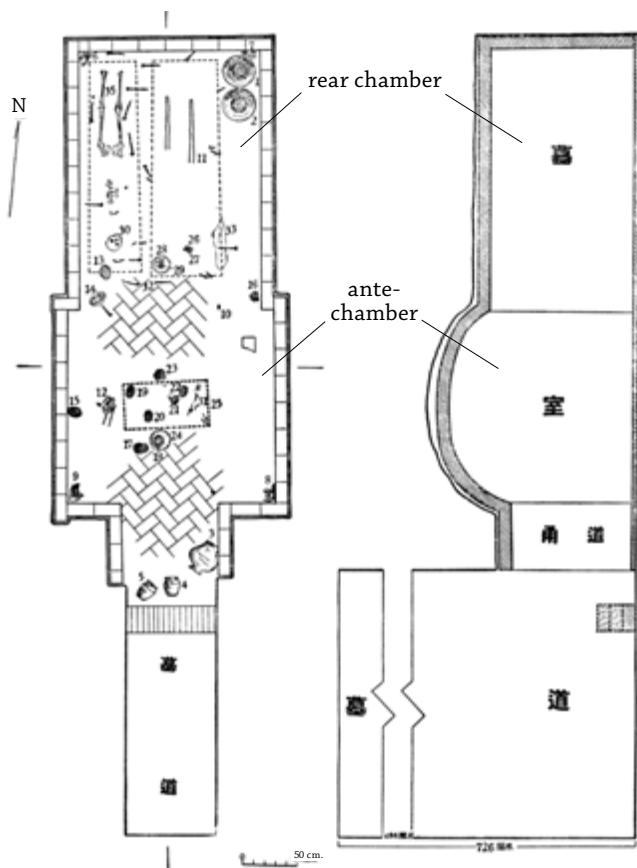


Fig. 2.24. Plan and cross section of Tomb 1026 at Shaogou in Luoyang City, Henan. Late Western Han dynasty.

the burials of the middle and lower levels of society, it had become customary by the late Western Han dynasty to set up sacrificial space inside the horizontal tombs. This space often housed a set of lacquerware including cups, a low table (*an*), plates, spoons, and sacrificial meats. For example, Tomb 1026 at Shaogou in Luoyang City, Henan, consists of an antechamber (1.74 meters long, 1.88 meters wide, and 1.76 meters high) and a rear chamber (2.36 meters long, 1.64 meters wide, and 1.390 meters high) where the two coffins were located (fig. 2.24). In the middle of the antechamber is a lacquered table with four lacquered cups with two attached ear-like hands on the top and several nearby. On the east end of the table are animal bones, and on the west end is a complete set of chicken bones.¹⁶⁵ These artifacts suggest that funerary ritual activities took place in the antechamber before the tomb was sealed. The archaeological report rightly states that such funerary ritual performance within the tomb propelled production of sacrificial space in the horizontal chamber-style tomb,¹⁶⁶ such as in the Western Han princely tombs discussed earlier.

Recent archaeological evidence shows that the underground sacrificial space, often considered a closed, private space for the dead, could be public space too. Not only could the bereaved hold the final funerary rite inside the burial chamber but

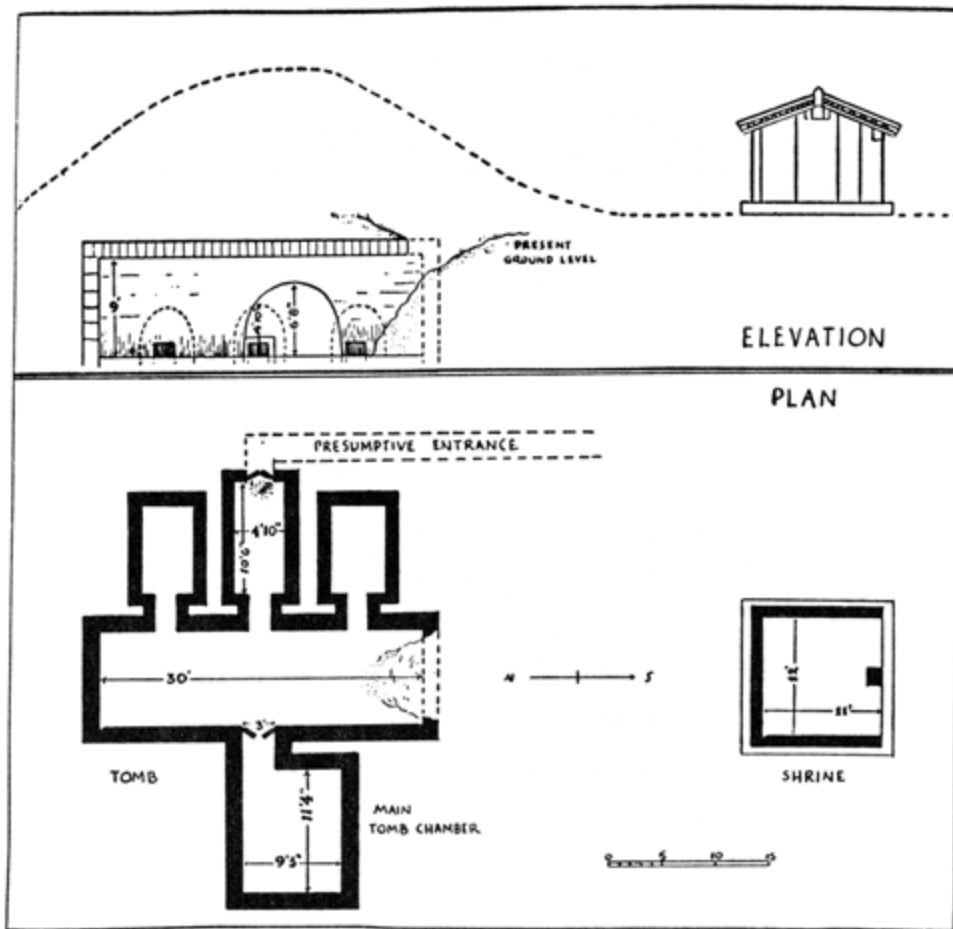


Fig. 2.25. Plan and cross section of Zhu Wei's tomb and offering shrine (*citang*), Jiaxiang County, Shandong. Eastern Han dynasty. After Fairbank, "A Structural Key to Han Mural Art," fig. 16.

the public could also visit the tomb. Two inscriptions in a second-century c.e. brick tomb at Baizicun in Xunyi County, Shaanxi, written on either side of the access ramp leading to the tomb chamber, state: "All viewers must take off shoes before entering" and "Those who wish to view must take off shoes before entering."¹⁶⁷ An ancient custom, removing shoes before entering a room was the proper social etiquette for meeting senior or high officials. Thus, removing shoes before entering the tomb was a sign of respect for the tomb occupant.¹⁶⁸ For a certain period during the funeral rites, at least in the Eastern Han dynasty, the tomb was not completely a private space; the public also had the opportunity to view the pictorial decoration and pay tribute to the deceased. As exquisite as it is, the Mawangdui silk painting, once buried in the innermost coffin after the funeral procession, would no longer be visible; the pictorial decoration on horizontal chamber-style tombs, however, could be viewed by the public before the tomb was sealed. This change extended the pro-

cess of assisting the recently deceased in their postmortem transformation, which appears to be the function of the silk paintings and other imagery. This accessibility of the sacrificial space is the fundamental difference between vertical pit-style tombs and horizontal chamber-style tombs.

In the Han dynasty, funerary shrines, monumental towers, and stone steles were common near burial sites. Funerary shrines were referred to as sacrificial halls (*ci-tang*) or dining halls (*shitang*) in some Eastern Han shrine inscriptions,¹⁶⁹ denoting these as places where descendants continued to offer food to their ancestors. As scholars have pointed out, many Han funerary shrines have two halls (*tang*)—one serving as the sacrificial space in front of the coffin chamber and the other as the aboveground shrine near the burial site.¹⁷⁰ Instead of seeing the latter as the effect of the relocation of religious activities from temple to tomb,¹⁷¹ we could see these aboveground shrines as spatial extensions of the underground sacrificial space devoted to the cult of the dead, as shown in the case of the “Zhu Wei” shrine at Jiaxiang County, Shandong (fig. 2.25).¹⁷² After subterranean burial chambers were sealed, sacrificial rituals continued in the shrines above. Accordingly, the chain of ancestral sacrifice continued, but the focus had shifted, as it had in many other aspects of the funerary rites, from the nexus between the dead and their ancestors to that between the living and the dead.

The transformation of burial space from vertical pit-style tombs to horizontal chamber-style tombs was closely related to the changing ideology around burial, the practical need to bury a husband and wife in the same burial chamber, and the changing religious status of the deceased ancestors. The change in mortuary architecture reflected a new conception of the postmortem residence of the spirit and the manner in which the living and the dead interacted during the prolonged mourning period. The change accommodated sequential tomb occupancy, which paralleled an apparent redirection of interest away from the greater lineage and toward the nuclear family among the elite as well as the commoner classes.

The establishment of sacrificial spaces inside tombs also reflected changes in the status of the dead and the sacrificial rituals associated with them. This spatial transformation represents the materialization of an “abstract” sacrificial space in the imagination of the afterlife as a “concrete” one within tombs and was the result of the transference of religious efficacy from benevolent ancestors, in the Shang and Western Zhou dynasties, to the potentially harmful dead, in the Warring States period and the early empires. This move owes much to the new awareness of the frightening potential of individual ghosts and reflects the bereaved’s increasing efforts to pacify the deceased by converging the funerary ritual performance and the tomb. This process started with the establishment of sacrificial space within the tomb and culminated in the Eastern Han dynasty with the construction of the aboveground shrine near the tomb.